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INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME
International students' experiences of courses, teaching, curriculum, and extracurricular activities

ABSTRACT

Marisa Honkanen: Internationalisation at home- International students' experiences of courses, teaching, curriculum, and extracurricular activities
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Internationalisation can be divided into internationalisation at home and cross-border education. Internationalisation at home includes all the students. Nowadays, internationalisation is also one of the major themes at the higher education. This bachelor's thesis will begin by describing internationalisation, and its huge impact on higher education, but the theoretical background in this study is particularly based on internationalisation at home.

This bachelor's thesis focuses on international degree students' experiences and how they experience internationalisation at Tampere University. The aim is to find out what kinds of possibilities and challenges they describe regarding internationalisation at home. The data was collected using the semi-structured thematic interview method. The themes examined students' experiences regarding the courses, teaching, the curriculum, and the extracurricular activities. The interviews were conducted during April 2020. The data was analysed using the content-based method.

The main findings were that the possibilities include the diverse learning environment, and teaching is supporting international students' learning process. Instead, the challenges are including the following aspects: a lack of social support and guidance, and a lack of interculturality and interaction. Some of the experiences were identified to be a possibility and a challenge at the same time. Therefore, some of the issues are also overlapping, such as the experiences of course contents. The participants did not attend many extracurricular activities, but the extracurricular activities were mainly found to be well organised. At the same time, the extracurricular activities were lacking the interaction with the domestic students, communication, and information availability. Furthermore, one reason for non-participation to extracurricular activities might be financial obstacles.

Keywords: internationalisation, internationalisation at home, international students, experiences, higher education, higher education institutions

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

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää kansainvälisten tutkinto-opiskelijoiden kokemuksia kansainvälisyydestä Kasvatustieteiden ja kulttuurin tiedekunnassa Tampereen yliopistossa. Kansainvälistyminen on yksi merkittävimmistä asioista, joka vaikuttaa korkeakoulutukseen. Kansainvälistymistä ja kotikansainvälistymistä onkin tutkimuskirjallisuudessa käsitelty monista eri näkökulmista. Kotikansainvälistymisen tarkastelussa painotetaan esimerkiksi paikallisten ja kansanvälisten opiskelijoiden mahdollisuuksia keskinäiselle vuorovaikutukselle sekä kansainvälisten teemojen sisällyttämistä osaksi opetussuunnitelmaa. Tässä tutkimuksessa oli painottunut varsinkin kotikansainvälisyyden näkökulma, sillä se käsittää myös kansainväliset opiskelijat tiedekunnan sisältä.

Tutkimusta tarkasteltiin teemojen avulla, jotka pohjautuivat tutkimuskirjallisuuteen. Ensimmäinen teema käsitteli kursseja, opetusta ja opetussuunnitelmaa. Toinen teema puolestaan keskittyi tarkastelemaan opetusohjelman ulkopuolisia aktiviteetteja, kuten ainejärjestötoimintaa. Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin haastattelemalla kolmea kansainvälistä kasvatustieteen pääaineen opiskelijaa. Teemahaastattelut toteutettiin etäyhteyksin huhtikuun 2020 aikana. Aineistoa käsiteltiin aineistolähtöisellä sisällönanalyysilla, jonka pohjalta oli mahdollista ryhmitellä opiskelijoiden kokemuksia erilaisiin luokkiin.

Kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden esille tuomia kokemuksia käsiteltiin mahdollisuuksien ja haasteiden kautta. Kansainväliset tutkinto-opiskelijat esittivät mahdollisuuksina kurssisisällöt, kansainvälisen oppimisympäristön, opetuksen tuomat mahdollisuudet oppimiselle, sekä opetussuunnitelman rakentumisen tuomat mahdollisuudet. Opetussuunnitelman rakentuminen ja kurssisisällöt koettiin samaan aikaan myös haastavina kokemuksina. Näiden lisäksi opiskelijat kokivat haasteina puutteet sosiaalisessa tuessa ja ohjauksessa, sekä yksipuoliset mahdollisuudet vuorovaikutukseen paikallisten opiskelijoiden kanssa. Opetussuunnitelman ulkopuolisissa aktiviteeteissa korostui koetut haasteet, joita olivat opiskelijoiden rajalliset mahdollisuudet vuorovaikutukseen paikallisten opiskelijoiden kanssa, informaation saatavuus ja taloudelliset esteet osallistumiselle.

Avainsanat: kansainvälisyys, kotikansainvälistyminen, kansainväliset opiskelijat, korkeakoulutus, kokemukset, sisällönanalyysi

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Internationalisation is one of the most important issues affecting higher education (Knight 2012, 1). There is an increasing number of the international students, for instance 3.7 million international students were locating around Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in 2017 (OECD 2019a, 229). The number of the international students in Finland has been increasing in recent years, too. The number is two percent higher than average percentage of the OECD countries. (OECD 2019b, 2.) Two years ago, there were 4314 foreign students who completed a higher education degree in Finland, 294 of these were completed in Tampere (Vipunen n.d).

The definition of internationalisation includes a variety of complex aspects and, additionally it can be divided into the following two categories: "abroad or cross-border education", and internationalisation happening at home. Abroad or cross-border education is focused for example on mobility of the people and programmes. Instead, internationalisation at home focuses on international aspects and activities taking place at home campus. (Knight 2012, 2.)

One of the strategic aims of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture is to promote internationalisation and internationalisation at home, as well (Kokko, Spens, Aholainen, Hakala, Hokkanen, Holmström, Lundin, Lähdeniemi, Paakkanen & Vihma-Purovaara 2020, 28-31). For instance, they want to develop structures that would simplify the process of coming to and staying in Finland for studies and work. This should be accomplished by 2025 (Kokko et al 2020, 24). In addition, Tampere University has launched the Action Plan for Internationalisation. One of the targets is to support the international degree students' integration and well-being at Tampere University. Every student should also take part in internationalisation at home activities as part of their personal study plan. (Tampere University n.d.)

Therefore, it is important to examine how internationalisation is affecting higher education, and how the students themselves are experiencing these effects of internationalisation. It is important to note that internationalisation at home includes domestic and international students (Beelen & Jones 2015, 69). The international students are studying here for a degree and, thus their current home university is Tampere university.

The topic of this bachelor's thesis started to interest me after I completed a course called "internationalisation in education" which was offered as part of the summer school studies at Tampere University. I learnt about internationalisation, and what is included within that wide concept. Furthermore, I was at the same time experiencing internationalisation at home myself. At that time, I was cooperating with students from various backgrounds, many of whom were already working full-time, and I gained more knowledge about internationalisation in education. I had an inspiring experience of our group work where I learnt more from others and of their different approaches of working. I gained considerable expertise and confidence from that course. My personal intercultural learning outcomes expanded even more than I expected at the beginning.

However, after that my own experience were that many exchange students and international degree students are separated from domestic students. I have enrolled to some other optional intermediate courses, but many of them were cancelled since there were not enough students enrolled or I was transferred to a Finnish version of the same course. Yet, I believe that cooperation between the domestic and the international students is an important part of the studies and can offer meaningful experiences and strengthen own expertise.

The international students are an essential part of internationalisation at home and therefore, it is justified to pay attention to their experiences. In addition, there are many international studies about international degree students' studies and their experiences. Instead, the studies in Finland have been focused more on exchange students' experiences, although they study here for a shorter period than international degree students. (Korhonen 2016, 159.)

The participants in this study are the international students from the Faculty of Education and Culture (EDU). There were three semi-structured thematic interviews conducted. This bachelor's thesis focuses on international degree

students' experiences of some structural possibilities and challenges regarding internationalisation at Tampere university. These university's structural possibilities and challenges concerning internationalisation at home are limited to certain aspects that will be examined further in the next chapter.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background of this bachelor's thesis focuses on the concepts of internationalisation and internationalisation at home. These concepts relate to the phenomenon of internationalisation in a broader sense and help to deepen understanding of this bachelor's thesis. Firstly, in the next section (2.1) the definition of internationalisation will be discovered. This section demonstrates how wide the concept of internationalisation is, and moreover how it is often misunderstood. Secondly, in the 2.2. section this bachelor's thesis will discuss internationalisation at home. This section elaborates the meaning of internationalisation at home and analyses the activities that it can include.

2.1 Internationalisation

Internationalisation is a complex term, as its definition is constantly changing and improving. Internationalisation includes many related concepts and approaches, such as transnational education and cross-border education. (Knight 2003, 2.) However, most commonly internationalisation is defined as follows:

> "Internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight 2003, 2).

In addition, the author suggests that internationalisation includes many levels: national, sector and institutional levels. Internationalisation can also be divided into different rationales. De Wit (2011, 245) states that literature often focuses on only one specific part of internationalisation. He suggests that the rationales of internationalisation include the following: "political, economic, social and cultural, and academic" -rationales. However, these rationales can overlap, and their meanings are alternating, as well. Therefore, use of these rationales can lead to different outcomes and approaches.

Internationalisation has always been a part of higher education institutions (Korhonen & Alenius 2018, 15-16). Nevertheless, there are also some misconceptions and myths connected to the term. For instance, Knight (2011, 14-15) remarks that internationalisation is a complex concept and often misleading. In her article, she debunks some of the common myths concerning internationalisation, but in fact which are not a part of the definition of internationalisation. These myths are covered next to help to understand better the definition of internationalisation.

According to the first myth, foreign students are generally seen as "internationalisation agents". The myth insists that a university is often considered international if it hosts several international students. In reality, however the international students often feel marginalised from social and academic culture. (Knight 2011, 14.) They often feel unsupported, too (Lee 2010, 66). Furthermore, international students often spend their time mostly with other international students. Therefore, the possibilities for them to integrate and engage in the local culture are restricted. (Knight 2011, 14.)

The second myth argues that internationality produces better reputation for the university. Nevertheless, it does not provide any quality itself. The third myth maintains that the university's reputation is improving if there are more international agreements and connections with other universities. However, as Knight (2011, 14-15) states, quantity does not equal quality. Moreover, the fourth myth involves international accreditations. For example, the global quality measurement status does not necessarily mean that one university is better than another.

The fifth myth is concerning global branding and internationalisation. It is claimed that a strategic plan of internationalisation is promoting branding of the university at the same time. Nonetheless, the successful internationalisation strategy can improve attractiveness of the university, but it should not be the aim itself. All of these myths are common, although they do not apply to every university. (Knight 2011, 14-15.) The different perspectives of internationalisation are often seen as more definite than it in fact is. These myths help to understand the extent of internationalisation, and its wide concept. This clearly explains how internationalisation has a major impact on higher education.

2.2 Internationalisation at home

The definition of internationalisation at home emphasises the dimensions of internationality in the curriculum. Its aim is to develop students' intercultural skills and learning outcomes. (De Wit & Hunter 2015, 45-49.) An intercultural dimension means a learning process between students from diverse backgrounds deepening their understanding of different cultures (O'Brien, Tuohy, Fahy & Markey 2019, 26). In addition, internationalisation at home includes the following aspects:" curriculum, teaching, learning, open access education, domestic students, faculty, international students and scholars, research and extracurricular activities." (Knight 2012, 2.) (see below)
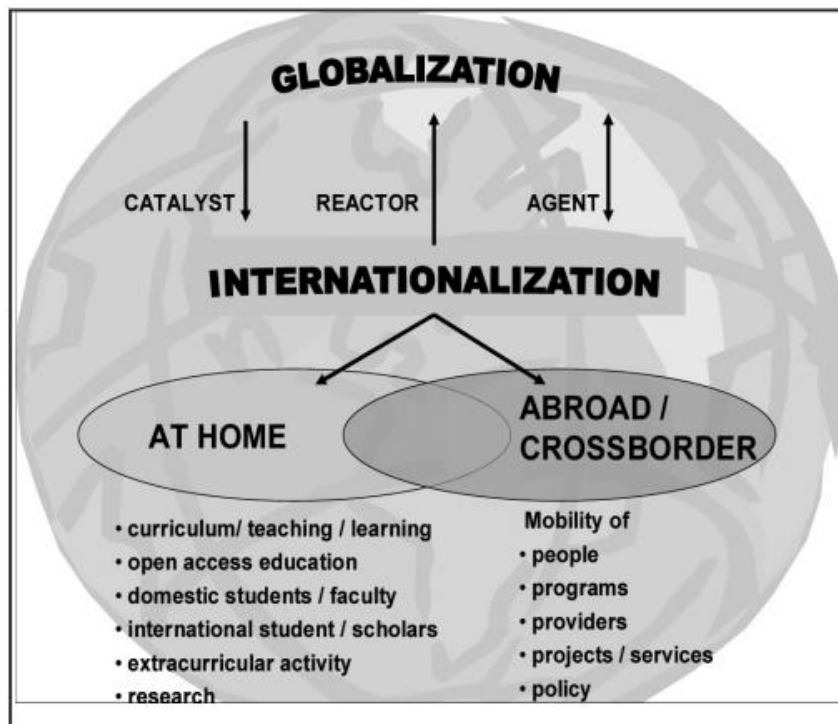
Figure 1: Two categories of internationalisation: at home and abroad or cross-border education (Knight 2012, 2).

These aspects of internationalisation at home, such as adding the components of internationalisation into the curriculum, are nowadays an important part of internationalisation and its strategies at higher education institutions. In addition, internationalisation at home provides more possibilities for a large number of students. (Korhonen & Alenius 2018, 305-307.) This bachelor's thesis focuses on

internationalisation at home. Many studies are already discussing cross-border education, hence more studies are needed from the perspective of internationalisation at home. Therefore, the following topics are selected from the Knight's (2012, 2) listing of internationalisation at home for this bachelor's thesis: the curriculum, courses, teaching, and extracurricular activities. The last-mentioned of these, extracurricular activities, applies mainly to activities organised by tutors and student associations.

A recent publication by Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture announces that internationalisation at home is still an unfamiliar concept for many academics at the higher education institutions. Some of the participants in that study did not know the definition of internationalisation. (Weimer, Hoffman & Silvonen 2019, 28.) For example, they sometimes referred to internationalisation just as a language related phenomenon. For example, they mentioned that they were using an international language in their teaching. (Weimer, Hoffman & Silvonen 2019, 41-42.) It needs to be clarified that international staff and students are promoting internationalisation at home, but the international language or the increased number of international students does not mean internationalisation itself.

Additionally, some international officers have criticised the lack of structures in the Finnish universities regarding internationalisation at home (Weimer, Hoffman & Silvonen 2019, 41). According to the study, the Finnish universities also have several favourable practices in use, for instance tutoring programmes, pedagogical training available for teachers, and summer schools for both international guest students and domestic degree students (Weimer, Hoffman & Silvonen 2019, 34). Internationalisation at home covers these local activities, such as adding international aspects to learning and curriculum (Korhonen & Alenius 2018, 19). Beelen and Jones (2015, 68-69) support this view. Moreover, authors emphasise the importance of including these international aspects also in an informal curriculum for all students, including the international students. Furthermore, the publication by Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture recommends:

> "Far more critical thought, fewer unquestioned assumptions, new types of dialog, and both strategy and intentional processes" (Weimer, Hoffman & Silvonen 2019, 48) for Finnish higher education.

Next, I am going to examine further the experiences of international students regarding internationalisation at home. For example, international students in the United Kingdom, have found that universities' structures of teaching allow international students to cooperate with other students from diverse backgrounds. They have also received support from the university, for instance a tutoring programme and extra language support. (Schweisfurth & Gu 2009, 469-470.) On the other hand, universities' structures are also limiting their possibilities for interculturality. If international students can choose the members for their group work themselves, they might still prefer to work with people whose cultural background is not different from theirs. Similarly, the possibilities for interacting with other people outside of the university are limited. (Schweisfurth & Gu 2009, 471.)

Some of the challenges international students have faced previously in the Finnish context concern the curriculum. In the beginning of the 21st century, 65% of all Tampere University's international students were satisfied with the quality of teaching, but just 35% were satisfied with the courses available in English. (Kärki 2005, 33.) Also, previously some of the international students have reported difficulties in finding suitable courses provided in English. In addition, some of the international students around Finland have reported poor quality of English teaching and separation between international and Finnish students in the courses. (Calikoglu 2018, 447-448.)

Similar problems have been recorded in other studies, as well. Exchange students usually do not form many friendships with Finnish students, and the process of making Finnish friends can be time-consuming and difficult (Taajamo 2005, 6). These challenges may partly be due to language barriers, as the, degree programmes are separated and most of the information is only available in Finnish. Additionally, many extracurricular activities, such as different societies and student associations, were reported to provide information only in Finnish. (Calikoglu 2018, 448.)

This is also connected to the Knight's (2011, 14) first myth about internationalisation. International students are meeting many other international students and therefore having an intercultural experience, but at the same time they might not engage regularly with domestic students (Knight 2011, 14). It is found in two universities in the United Kingdom and in Portugal that one of the

main challenges for internationalisation at home is the division between international students and domestic students (Robson, Almeida & Schartner 2017, 28).

Yet, domestic students are an important part of the internationalisation at home, too. It would be important that the structures of the university's curriculum allow more opportunities for internationalisation at home for both domestic and the international students. Therefore, this study is interested in the university's structures concerning the courses, teaching, the curriculum, and the extracurricular activities. A matter of great importance is to hear how the international degree students are experiencing these structures themselves, and, additionally, what kinds of structural possibilities and challenges these themes involve that the students are highlighting in their interviews.

3 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Over 90% of the students who took part in an online student survey from selected countries around Europe (Finland, Sweden, Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, Poland, the United Kingdom) have reported that the intercultural experience is one of the strongest motivations for them to go abroad (Beerkens, Souto-Otero, de Wit & Huisman 2015, 199). However, this raises the question, why the students do not consider it possible that they can achieve these experiences also at the home campus. In this bachelor's thesis, I am interested in discovering what kinds of experiences international students of the EDU have had regarding the courses, teaching, the curriculum, the extracurricular activities and internationalisation at home. In this chapter I will present and describe the research questions and the qualitative research method. In addition, I will cover the data collection process and the interview method. Furthermore, I will evaluate research ethics and the methods of analysis used in this bachelor's thesis.

3.1 The research questions

International students are part of the EDU's community the same way as domestic students. Additionally, they are part of the internationalisation that happens at the EDU. Regardless of their nationalities, the international students are studying here for a degree, hence Tampere University is currently also their home university. Therefore, the perspective for this bachelor's thesis is internationalisation at home, which includes international students studying at Tampere University. This bachelor's thesis focuses on how internationalisation at home, at the faculty of EDU is perceived by international students. Knight (2012, 2) has listed the topics that are part of internationalisation at home. In this bachelor's thesis' I have included the following parts from this listing: international students, teaching, a curriculum, and extracurricular activities. In

addition, I have attached courses to be part of this bachelor's thesis, because courses are a relevant part of the curriculum.

The research questions are the following:

1. What kinds of experiences do the international students have of EDU's internationalisation?

-What possibilities are they describing regarding internationalisation at the university?

-What challenges are they describing regarding internationalisation at the university?

2. If there are some challenges, how could these be improved from their point of view?

The extent of this bachelor's thesis is outlined, and it needs to be precise. Therefore, this research concerns only the international students who are studying at the EDU at Tampere university. The context of the EDU is selected because it is the faculty for which this bachelor's thesis is completed for.

3.2 Qualitative research

This study is conducted using the qualitative research method. Qualitative research itself includes several types of approaches and traditions. In any case, the basis of qualitative research is to study the diverse reality of people's lives. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2007, 157-158). Hence, qualitative research does not try to provide broad generalisations, but to deepen understanding of a specific phenomenon (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 74).

There are some other typical features for qualitative research, as well. Qualitative research often explores comprehensive issues and focuses on a subjective approach. The aim is not to test hypotheses, but to reveal specific details from the phenomenon and its multiple realities. Therefore, qualitative research is usually inductive and context dependent. Furthermore, qualitative research design is flexible and unique. The research methods for collecting data

are qualitative, such as a thematic interview. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2007, 160.)

My aim is to better understand the international students' reality and experiences regarding their studies at Tampere University. In addition, I want to hear their own voice, in order to learn and discover how internationalisation at home is constructed from their point of view. Every international student has their own personal experiences which I am interested in. All of these aspects are distinguishing for the qualitative research, so I have chosen to use the qualitative research method for this bachelor's thesis.

3.3 Data collection

The participants of the study are international degree students from the Faculty of Education and Culture in Tampere University. The original plan was to interview students studying either bachelor's degree of early childhood education and care (ECEC) or master's degree of teacher's education, but in the end all the participants in this study were those studying the master's degree of teacher's education.

First, the teachers who were responsible for the certain courses offered to these students, were contacted in order to get the participants for this study. Three teachers were asked to forward my cover letter to their students. Thus, the participants for this study were contacted by their teachers. The email's cover letter explained all necessary information to the participants, such as the research topic, context and the aims of the study. In addition, the participants' rights and privacy protection were clarified in the cover letter. The research ethics are explored in more detail in the section 3.6. The data was collected by using a semi-structured interview method. This data collection method was selected, because it offers a possibility for interviewees to discuss freely. The interviews were conducted during April 2020.

3.4 Semi-structured interview

An interview is interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee, and it aims to discover what people have in their mind and what they are thinking (Eskola &

Suoranta 1998, 65). The aim of the interview is also to gather as much information as possible from the interviewees (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 63). Therefore, the participants received the interview questions before the interview so that they were able to look at them in advance. This is recommended by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018, 63).

The methodology of this study is a semi-structured thematic interview, which is based on the focused interview method (see: Merton & Kendall 1946). The thematic interview method might not have detailed questions or the same question order for every interviewee. Instead, the thematic interview focuses on themes. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2011, 47-48.) The semi-structured thematic interview in this bachelor's thesis is constructed around two themes. The first of them includes the courses, teaching, and the curriculum in general. The second theme includes the extracurricular activities, especially the activities that student associations are organising for their students. The interview form is composed of 17 questions in total. The interview questions were compiled around the themes of the curriculum, teaching, the courses and the extracurricular activities (see appendix 1).

These themes are part of the Knight's (2012, 2) listing concerning internationalisation at home. These themes were selected because they offer a wide context for studying the phenomenon. The plan was to collect information from international degree students, and how they are experiencing internationalisation at the EDU. The research questions are particularly focused on the structures of the university and what kinds of possibilities and challenges they are offering for international students from their personal point of view.

The interview method has its own advantages and disadvantages. According to Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2007, 200-201) one of the advantages is the subjective approach. A person can freely describe their own experiences and be an active member of the research process. The interview method is context-dependent, and it offers an opportunity to deepen the understanding of a specific phenomenon. Therefore, the interview method was selected because it offers more freedom for the participants to describe their own experiences regarding internationalisation at home. The interviews were planned

to be conducted face-to-face, but due to the COVID-19 situation, three interviews were conducted via Skype or Microsoft Teams.

Deakin and Wakefield (2014) (cited in O'Connor & Madge 2017, 423) introduces some of the benefits and the challenges of Skype interviews. One of the benefits regards the recruitment process. Skype interview provides flexibility to conduct an interview at a suitable time for the participants. At the same time, some of the interviewees might not want to participate if they do not know how to use Skype. This might be a possible drawback in this study, even though the COVID-19 and the external circumstances also require students to adjust to the new conditions during distance teaching and education. Further aspects of research ethics are discussed in the next section.

The interviewer's role was similar in all of the interviews. It was important to give sufficient time for the interviewees to think their replies and process their own experiences. The interviews also included some extra questions which encouraged the participants to specify their answers further. This is part of the thematic interview method (Hirsjärvi & Tuomi 2011, 48). Interviews' duration was planned to last a maximum of one hour. The interviews varied in their duration, the shortest interview lasted 20 minutes and the longest interview 40 minutes.

3.5 Analysis

People have knowledge and experiences about the world around them. Regardless of their knowledge, this is not yet scientific research data. Instead, the results of the research are obtained after an analysis by the researcher. (Hyvärinen, Nikander, Ruusuvuori & Aho 2017,19.) There are different approaches to analyse the research data, for example theory based or content-based analyses. Qualitative content analysis focuses on describing a specific phenomenon. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 78.) The purpose of this bachelor's thesis is to understand international students' personal experiences and therefore, it is necessary to analyse their experiences with an open mind. Content analysis offers an opportunity to categorise their opinions and experiences concerning the research questions and to learn from the collected data.

In the next phase, content analysis aims to summarise the data and evaluate only the relevant aspects of the data concerning the research questions.

After that the relevant findings are listed in the paper and the findings are categorised in similar groups. Further aspect is the processing of the content of different concepts and selecting the relevant information concerning the aims of the research. This conceptual process is called abstraction. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 91-93.)

Firstly, the analysis process started by transcription. There are not accurate guidelines how precise a transcription should be (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2011, 139). Therefore, I decided to type all the words that were spoken in the audio recording. However, I did not type any personal information, such as names. In addition, I did not include sounds, such as laughs or sighs. I did not correct the grammar or rearranged the order of the words, either. I used a word processing program to conduct the transcription. There were 28 pages of transcribed material in total.

After the transcribing, I started reading through the transcriptions of the audio recorded data. I then started to summarise the data and colour code the themes of the interviews. In addition, I highlighted the references to the different possibilities and challenges concerning internationalisation in the transcription. In the third part of my analysis I started to mark similarities and differences between the participants' interviews and how many times they emphasised some specific experiences in their interviews. Then, I simplified their descriptions and next, I divided the similar expressions into different subcategories. After this clustering process, I started to process these subcategories more carefully. Subcategories formed main categories and concepts. The example of this analysis process can be seen in the table 1 below. Three selected examples are presenting different values which I discovered from the participants' interviews.

The original description	The simplified description	Subcategory	Main category
"And then we are given a lot of freedoms and space to decide what we like."	Freedom, individuality	Academic freedom	Values
"They give us many new ideas and they are, they give us the room to discuss and to discover"	The teachers support learning process, Equality in the classroom	Supportiveness, equality	Values
"Teachers, they are very supportive, and they try to listen to us and like if we don't know anything so they can help us immediately"	The teaches are supportive and helpful	Supportiveness, helpfulness	Values, social support and guidance

Table 1: An example of analysis process

3.6 Research ethics

Researchers have to make their own ethical decisions regarding their own research, but there are communally agreed research guidelines, too (Kuula 2011, 20). I have followed the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity's (TENK) the responsible conduct of research guidelines in every part of the research process. For instance, confidentiality, privacy protection and data protection are essential aspects in every part of the research, when collecting data, analysing, archiving and publishing the results. The guidelines also include for example that the participants for this research are informed about the study, its context, and their own rights as participant. (Finnish advisory board on research integrity 2012; 2019.) Also, Eskola and Suoranta (1998, 42) highlight the importance of confidentiality and anonymity in the research process.

In addition, the participants should be informed about the contact details, and they should know the aims of the research, the methods of data collection, privacy protection, voluntariness, and the use of the data collection (Kuula 2011, 73). The participants of this bachelor's thesis have received

adequate information of the aims of this study, and their own rights as participants. They have been informed that their participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw from the study at any time without providing any reason. All this information has been available to them in writing in the cover letter, and in the informed consent for collection of interview data.

Deakin and Wakefield (2014) (cited in O'Connor & Madge 2017, 423) describe the ethics particularly of Skype interviews. During the Skype interviews, ethical issues need to be explained to the participants. For instance, the participants need to be aware of any possible video and audio recordings, and they need to provide their informed consent for the interview. Deakin and Wakefield (2014) also mention that interviewers' have to take into account that the participants might feel more nervous when they are video recorded in their own home. On the other hand, interviewees can withdraw easily from the Skype interview. Their anonymity is also easily protected in the interview. (cited in O'connor & Madge 2017, 423.)

The participants' anonymity is guaranteed in this study, as well, and their identity cannot be recognised from the collected data. The interviews were audio and video recorded only with the informed consent from each of the participants. These applications are also encrypted, and they are using advanced encryption standard in their systems (Microsoft 2020). All the data collected was kept on a password protected memory stick. After transcription video and audio recordings have been destroyed. In addition, a permission to conduct research from the Faculty of Education and Culture (EDU) was acquired, and the participants read and agreed their informed consent for collection of the interview data. A research privacy notice form in Finnish and in English was also filled in. (Research Privacy Notice: EU General Data Protection Regulation, EU 2016/679, Art. 12, 13, 14. /in Finnish tietosuojailmoitus).

4 RESULTS

In this chapter, I will present the results of this study. This chapter examines answers to the following research questions:

1. What kinds of experiences do the international students have of EDU's internationalisation?

  - What possibilities are they describing regarding internationalisation at the university?

  - What challenges are they describing regarding internationalisation at the university?

2. If there are some challenges, how could these be improved from their point of view?

The themes are divided into possibilities and challenges of international students' experiences regarding internationalisation at home. The participants had some specific suggestions to improve the internationalisation at home, and these recommendations are introduced together with the challenges.

   The first section (4.1) will examine the results of the first theme regarding the courses, teaching and the curriculum. This theme was divided into different sections in my interviews, but these concepts were related to each other in the interviews and therefore presented together. In the second section (4.2) I will continue around the first theme and describe the participants' reflections on possibilities of these experiences. The third section (4.3) will demonstrate the challenges the international degree students are facing according to the interviews.

   Then, in the fourth section (4.4) I will continue to the second theme of this bachelor's thesis, which focuses on extracurricular activities. The fifth section (4.5) is presenting the challenges related to extracurricular activities. These challenges are student engagement, communication, information availability, and financial difficulties.

4.1 Experiences of the courses, teaching and the curriculum

In this section the participants' reflections on the first theme are presented. Experiences are divided into two categories: the possibilities and the challenges. The participants described for example that the possibilities and good aspects of their studies include the following elements: diverse learning environment, teaching, and the teaching methods. Instead, the challenges are including the following aspects: a lack of social support and guidance, and a lack of interculturality and interaction. Some of the experiences are identified to be a possibility and a challenge at the same time. Therefore, some of the issues are overlapping, for example the structure of the curriculum and the course contents. It is important to note that, for example the structure of the curriculum is not directly regarding internationalisation at home. However, it is presented here because according to the interviews, it was found to be important experience while studying at the Faculty of Education and Culture.

4.2 Possibilites

4.2.1 Internationalisation and diverse learning environment

All of the participants mentioned how diverse their learning environment is. There are international students from many different countries around the world. One participant mentioned how the presence of other international students make it possible to easily experience internationalisation at home, because the classmates are from different countries. Therefore, it is possible to analyse that these descriptions of their experiences regarding internationalisation, improve their own intercultural learning during the studies with others. Some of the teachers are also from diverse backgrounds.

Furthermore, from two of the participants' descriptions it was possible to detect how the course content includes the local and global aspects of education. The curriculum offers some courses directly focused on internationalisation. On the other hand, the participants noted how most of the courses are focused on Finnish education system and the Finnish perspective on education. One of the participants noted that internationalisation in the curriculum is not clearly structured, and it is not an important part of the courses, either. However, one of

the participants thought thoroughly the relation between local and global dimensions in their studies:

> "It is quite international, because our students are from different background[s] and the teachers are also from different countries, but we focus more on Finnish education system, so what we observe and learn and also the article we read, they are more from Finnish researchers. And when we come here most of us are [looking] for understanding the Finnish education system. We want to know more things about Finnish education. Actually, for us it is internationalisation, because we are from different countries. We -- learn other countries' education systems and improve our skills, and the technologies, and the way of thinking, the values, the teaching purposes… They are all new for us, so it is internationalisation [for us]." (P2)

This citation presents the view how internationalisation is a part of the international students' studies and it can include many different aspects, such as values and different ways of thinking. From the participants' descriptions of the experiences it was possible to detect different values that were present in their studies. These values are described in the next section.

4.2.2 Teaching

Teaching was mostly perceived to be well organised at the faculty. The teachers have many different methods to teach and this is seen to offer more possibilities for the courses and how they are organised. The teachers are often using group work and discussions as part of their teaching methods. It was possible to discover that this supports students' intercultural learning. Additionally, the descriptions of the teachers' different ways of teaching were analysed to allow the international students to explore different values in the classroom, and more broadly as part of the national education system in Finland.

The teachers at the Faculty of EDU were described to be understanding, flexible and professional. In addition, the following values were possible to found from the participants' descriptions regarding teaching: equality, academic freedom, empathy, individuality, and commitment. It was also possible to find from the students' descriptions of the experiences regarding teaching that teachers' social supportiveness and equal atmosphere are part of their courses. For example, two interviewees described the teachers' and their methods to teach as follows:

"They give us many new ideas and they are; they give us the room to discuss and to discover." (P2)

"They try their best to help us, they listen to us and yeah they, they are very nice, very supportive, I really like them. -- And I think, during the course we need to work a lot together, so it's good chance for us to know more about each other.-- We gain a lot of information from teachers, so how-to live-in Finland, how to study in Finland, something like this. I think the way they organise very well. -- It's really open. We can share our opinion, and we can share our point of view." (P3)

These descriptions cover how teaching is perceived, and how different values are present during their courses. These descriptions also note how the teachers' different teaching methods help the international students to enhance their learning process with other students.

4.2.3 The structure of the curriculum

The structure of the curriculum includes some mandatory courses and some elective studies as part of the master's degree of teacher's education. (see below)
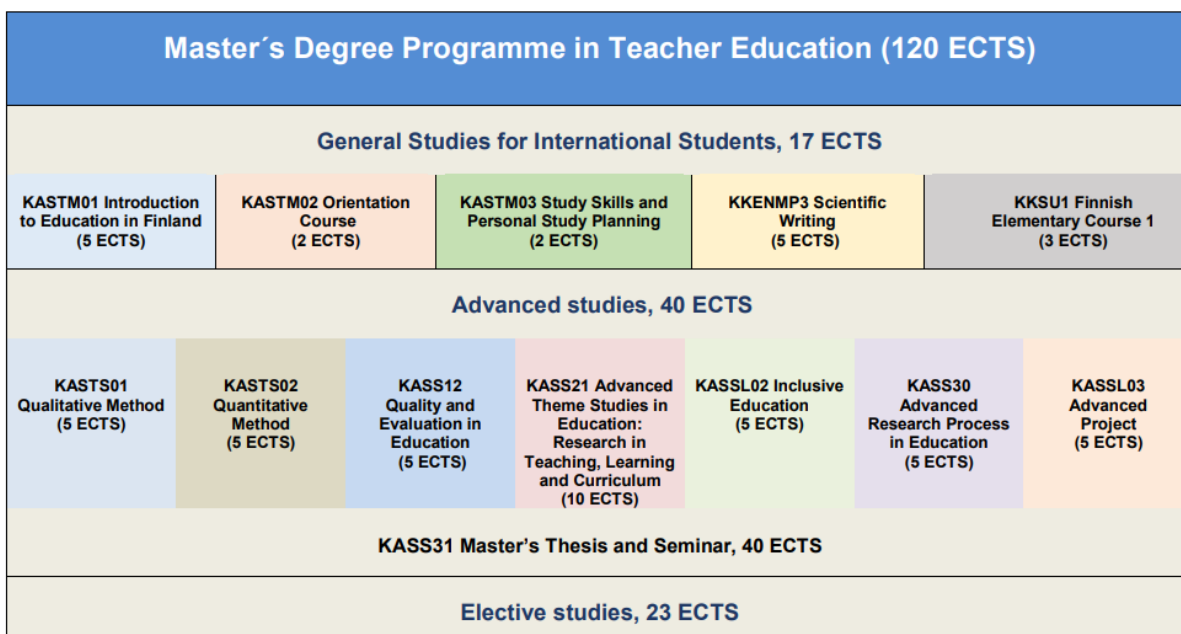

Figure 2: The structure of the curriculum in teacher's education programme at Tampere University, 2019-2020

This structure of the curriculum was mostly perceived to be well organised. Every participant evaluated the meaning of the elective studies as part of the curriculum. The elective studies were generally described to provide an opportunity to

deepen their own knowledge and to seek for different perspectives. Elective studies also balance the other studies.

> "I think it's good for us to make a balance between what we want to study and what we have to study." (P3)

The participants were particularly describing the structure of the curriculum in general. They did not mention how internationalisation is part of the curriculum, expect that the structure of the curriculum does not include courses with domestic students. Furthermore, every participant criticised the order of the courses in the curriculum, which is examined in more detail in the section 4.3.2.

4.2.4 Course contents

The observation courses were perceived to offer a good perspective to learn more regarding the education system in Finland and compare this system to other countries. Otherwise, the experiences regarding the course contents were divided between the participants. The participants noted that the course contents are mainly focusing on different theories and researching, rather than teaching methodologies.

Two of the participants criticised the course contents, but one of the participants offered a different point of view. This participant saw the course contents as an opportunity to deepen their own personal expertise and learning. Furthermore, the participant observed some development in their personal academic skills during their studies at the Tampere University, because the academic requirements are very different here than at the participant's previous university. For example, this participant has developed better personal critical thinking skills. The participant also mentioned how the programme is offering useful courses on study skills to support one's academic development. These courses were explained to be comprehensive, and they provide all the necessary information regarding the academic skills. However, the participant explained how it is essential to constantly practice these skills also on your own time.

4.3 Challenges

4.3.1 The students' experiences of the social support and guidance

Two of the participants were reporting on how they did not receive enough social support and social guidance at the beginning of their studies. For example, they felt that they did not have enough information at the beginning of their studies, so they experienced difficulties to select the courses. Some of their classmates even missed a chance to enrol for some elective courses, because they did not receive enough guidance from the faculty or from the university. The participants also mentioned that they have tutors, but they did not want to bother them too much with their questions. On the other hand, one of the participants did not share these feelings. This participant evaluated that information is well available from the programme coordinator or via many different electronic sources. The university is also trying constantly to contact the international students through emails.

However, even more social support and guidance is still clearly needed for international degree students. One of the participants explained how the university tried to guide the new students within a new international environment at the beginning, but they still have not received enough support and guidance during their studies:

> "University, they did a lot, like they have tutors, and every time they send emails to check [our well- being] --. They did a lot but, -- one thing I want to mention [is] that we really – were [not] on the track of the study -- We didn't know many things about this teaching process, for example our master's project, and who are our supervisor and what kind of elective courses we need to choose. --We don't really feel we learn something, -- some students they feel like they are struggling. I think university, they did a many things trying to let different backgrounding to international students en route to Finnish culture and the university, but still there have some gap. The teaching style is different, and every, each country's student they need to adjust." (P2)

4.3.2 The structure of the curriculum

The structure of the curriculum itself was perceived to be well organised. However, every participant in this study criticised the way how the courses are arranged in the curriculum. The order of the courses was the most emphasised issue in all interviews. Therefore, it is presented here, even if it is not directly relating to internationalisation at home.

> *"Some courses I don't feel satisfied, not because of the teachers, not because of the curriculum, but just like the orders of the courses."* (P3)

> "The placement of the mandatory courses wasn't right because they gave me several mandatory courses, like only a few in the beginning and now we ended up with a lot of mandatory courses." (P1)

The order of the courses in the curriculum was found to increase the negative emotions. The first semester involved mainly the elective studies. The second semester was more focused on the mandatory courses. The interviewees felt that suddenly they had much more requirements from the university and from the faculty. Many of the deadlines were overlapping and causing stress for the students. The teachers were supportive and very flexible, but the interviewees still hoped that the courses would be divided into several periods and it would be possible to study the mandatory and the elective courses at the same time.

That caused also some difficulties for learning. Some of the participants' classmates were planning the topic of their thesis based on a specific course, but they did not receive enough information and knowledge before they started to work on their thesis, because the other course was taking place at the same time as the thesis. In addition, one participant thought that the observation courses should be connected to other courses to enhance their learning process. It would have been better for their learning if they had some theoretical courses first and then later, they would have had some of the observation courses. This way they could better apply the theory for their observations at Finnish primary schools.

In addition, it is necessary to note that the language of teaching in the curriculum is mainly in English. Therefore, many of the international students are improving their foreign language skills, and the courses are more accessible for most of the international students. On the other hand, they also found the language as a barrier. For example, they felt that sometimes it was difficult to understand the teachers in English. Moreover, they expected that it will be challenging to become employed after the graduation, because of the lack of the Finnish language. Thus, the foreign languages might be challenging or even restrict some of the possibilities for the international students.

4.3.3 Interculturality and interaction

One interviewee also explained that there were not many possibilities for interaction with the domestic students. The interviewee suggested that there should be more courses in the curriculum for both international and domestic students to mingle together. In addition, there should be more diverse intercultural community inside the faculty to have more intercultural activities as part of the formal and informal curriculum.

> *"*It would be good if we had this kind of intercultural activity or community inside our faculty, as well, so international students can mingle as well with Finnish students and to get to -- know them more. -- A smaller separation between Finnish students and then international students based on joining the courses, because what I have known so far, most of the time I only studied together with my friends from international students." (P1)

> "It is really interesting to see them from different cultures and backgrounds, but what I feel, we only mingle with international students. It is quite difficult also with the Finnish students, probably we do not have the same course and probably the separation between- between Finnish students and international students, I don't know how, I don't know why, but --, we don't really have friends with Finnish students*."* (P1)

In addition, even if the international degree students are coming from diverse backgrounds, it does not always necessarily mean that international students are engaging in diverse environment. The participants mainly thought that they have the multicultural learning environment which supports their internationalisation at home. Nevertheless, one of the participants presented the view that some students might still prefer to engage only with students who speaks the same mother tongue than them or they are from similar backgrounds.

> *"*Actually, some – [of] the people who are from the same country or have same culture, like Asian culture or if my classmates they are from Europe, they will more have staying with European friends because they have many common ideas and common things." (P2)

4.3.4 The course contents

The course contents are selected to be covered as part of the results, because the participants described the meaning of the course contents many times, even if the some of the course contents are not specifically relating to

internationalisation. The courses were found to be well organised and some of them were perceived to be a high-quality. However, two of the participants criticised the content of the courses. They had an expectation to learn more teaching approaches and methodologies relating to teaching, but they felt that practicality was not part of their courses, expect the observation courses.

> *"The topic teach[es] you more to be a researcher than becoming a teacher, because you exposure yourself with a lot of theories. Well, that's a thing I didn't expect, because I thought, that you are going to have like teaching approaches, methodologies." (P1)*

In addition, two participants mentioned that they felt that course contents were overlapping. Both of them suggested that the teachers should cooperate more and discuss the content of the courses together to improve the curriculum in general. They presumed that the programme and many of their teachers are new at the faculty and, therefore they might not always know who they can contact.

4.4 Extracurricular activities

The second theme of this study covers the extracurricular activities. All three participants did not actively take part in many of them. Mostly they explained to prioritise their studies, and therefore they did not have much free time to join the activities. Another reason for non-participation was that there were not many different kinds of events available. The students were hoping that they will have better chances to attend more events and extracurricular activities in the future during the next semester. A few extracurricular activities which they attended were mainly well organised. Additionally, they thought the tutor programme to be a good thing. Regarding the participant's experiences it was possible to find that the tutors tried to create an open atmosphere for everyone to feel welcome. There were not many other possibilities covered during the interviews. However, there were some challenges related to the extracurricular activities which are examined next.

4.5 Challenges

4.5.1 Student engagement

One of the biggest challenges was found to be community involvement and student engagement. It was suggested that there should be more intercultural activities to construct more intercultural community at the Faculty of EDU. One participant emphasised how there are not many possibilities to involve to community and meet the domestic students. The Finnish students do not have the same courses and it is difficult to mingle with the domestic students at the beginning of the extracurricular activities, as well. There were explained to be some friendly domestic students, but some of them were perceived to be reluctant to join and discuss with the international students. All of the participants reported on having a few Finnish friends, but they were not really close, and it was difficult to form lasting friendships.

This was not limited only to domestic students. One participant explained how there were not many different kinds of extracurricular activities available. There are parties and different sorts of events organised by different student associations, but one of the participants described how it was still challenging to find closer friends to share more intimate matters with, since attending to parties is not necessary the right place to find close friends to spend more time with.

4.5.2 Communication and information availability

According to the interviews, another factor why it is not easy to meet domestic students is the language. Additionally, this is concerning the friendships with other international students, because some of the students might prefer to interact students with the same mother tongue even if they are from different countries.

In addition, information availability regarding extracurricular activities was another challenge. The information of the events is mainly available on Facebook. Therefore, information is only received from the friends if the students themselves are not using Facebook actively. It is suggested that there should be more information available and more sources to receive the information. On the other hand, one participant thought that there is enough information available, but it was mainly received from Facebook.

4.5.3 Financial difficulties

One of the participants also addressed the financial side of the extracurricular activities. The international degree students are coming from diverse backgrounds and the general level of prices might differ compared to their home countries. Some of the students have a scholarship to study at the Tampere University, but some of the students who do not have it, might experience financial obstacles. This might also be one of the reasons for non-participation to extracurricular activities, and it restricts the chances to meet domestic or other international students.

> *"I prefer to attend to some activities where I don't need to pay a lot or even if it is free, because I don't, I don't require they have, they need to give us a lot of things when we attend to activities. -- Every time when we consider to attend the activities we need to think how much we need to pay and I think for example ESN [FINT], I think they -- have -- organise a lot of activities, I think it's really interesting, but disappointing is we need to pay a lot. It's not too much, but it is not like really affordable for international students."* (P3)

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This bachelor's thesis discussed internationalisation at home. It was argued that it is important to focus on international degree students' experiences concerning the university's structures of the courses, teaching, the curriculum and the extracurricular activities. The aim was to find out what kinds of possibilities and challenges these structures offer relating to internationalisation at home.

The first theme was focused on the courses, teaching and the curriculum. These offer possibilities for internationalisation at home, such as diverse learning environment and intercultural teaching. The challenges included the lack of social support, guidance, interculturality and interaction between students from different backgrounds. The course contents and the structure of the curriculum offered some possibilities, but at the same time limited some of them.

The main findings are that teaching is organised well and the students are mainly enjoying their studies and life in Tampere. The international students are gaining new academic skills and improving their intercultural knowledge. Furthermore, they are exploring the values that are part of the teaching and education in the Finnish context. These values, knowledge, and academic skills might develop competence which helps to work in a global and a diverse environment in the future.

This view is supported by Reid and Spencer-Oatey (2013, 127). They confirm that the competency approach is relevant in internationalisation. This approach highlights the meaning of "development of intercultural practices, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes." In addition, this competence is improving an international student's experience and, thus the possible future employability. (Reid & Spencer-Oatey 2013, 127). Killick (2015, 54-56) adds that learning regarding different cultures' values, norms and interaction with locals, is at its best improving students' competence and experiences of intercultural learning.

The international students also emphasised many challenges which are occurring during their studies. One of the important findings in this study was that

even if the learning environment is diverse, the students still might prefer to engage more with the students whose cultural background is similar to their own background. The other main challenges are the order of the courses, the lack of social support and guidance, and separation from the domestic students. Similar problems have been recorded in other studies, as well.

Previous study has found that international students in Finland have experienced challenges meeting domestic students, and the lack of supervision and institutional support (Calikoglu 2018, 447-448). The international degree students still seem to be separated from the domestic students. Even if, one of the most important issues regarding internationalisation at home is engagement between the international and domestic students (Baldassar & McKenzie 2016, 87). Therefore, the findings support the view that it is important to know more regarding their experiences of internationalisation at home in order to improve their integration and learning environment with the domestic students.

In addition, there were many challenges concerning extracurricular activities. For instance, one of the participants mentioned financial difficulties, and this experience offered a new aspect in this study regarding participation to extracurricular activities. The informal activities are also an important part in shaping the student's experiences at the university, and these events can easily address even "the values of the others" even if some students do not even take part in these activities (Killick 2015, 174). This means that some aspects of the informal extracurricular activities can express if the events are made accessible only for some of the students. For example, the language, communication or the price of the event might restrict or increase the possibilities to attend for some of the students. Additionally, Korhonen (2016,170) argues that it is important to focus on many different aspects of integration, including social integration.

Therefore, it is important that this issue is taken seriously. The extracurricular activities should be accessible for every student at the university. There should be a wider selection of activities that everyone can find something to attend, if they decide to do so. Additionally, more events should be lower at cost, so the price does not become an obstacle for the students, either.

5.1 Confidentiality

The confidentiality is often identified by using the concepts of validity and reliability. Reliability refers to the repeatability of the study, and validity considers if the study reflects the specific phenomenon it argues to represent. However, these concepts are usually used in quantitative research. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 120.) The important issues to examine in the qualitative research are, for example the aims and the object of the research. For instance, these topics need to be demonstrated in the report: the reasons to conduct a research from the specific topic, and what are the aims of the research. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 122-123.)

Internationalisation has a strong influence on higher education and therefore it is essential to evaluate the effects of internationalisation. My decision has been to examine particularly internationalisation at home. Internationalisation at home includes *all* students, both the domestic and the international students (Beelen & Jones 2015, 69). My decision has been to focus on the international students, because it is necessary to hear their experiences regarding internationalisation at home campus. This is also providing a new perspective to examine internationalisation at home. My report includes the details of every step of the research that it is possible to evaluate and understand how this study has been conducted. I have used mainly peer reviewed literature in this study to strengthen the confidentiality. Furthermore, I have included many citations from the collected data to prove the evidence of the results.

5.2 Limitations and future research

This study had three participants, and therefore it is not possible to generalise the results from this study. However, this was not the aim of the study, either. Due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak and the resulting exceptional situation, it is possible that some of the international degree students went back to their home countries. Thus, they might not have been interested in taking part in this study. However, the data still provides a sufficient amount of information, even though there were only three interviews conducted. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018, 73) confirm that it is not possible to define properly the adequate amount of

participants. Instead, the aim was to hear the international students' personal experiences regarding internationalisation at home.

Therefore, these experiences did not cover all of the experiences that international students might have regarding their studies in Finland and at the Faculty of Education and Culture. For example, one of the participants mentioned only shortly how it might not be easy to get employed after graduation in Finland. Korhonen (2016, 168-169) has discussed more broadly international students' future plans and career integration. Work and career are for example one of the major aspects how people integrate into the society.

Thus, in the future it would be useful to research more regarding the international degree students' career and employability possibilities. Some of the industries might naturally be more international, but some of the industries might be more focused on using the Finnish language, such as the Finnish primary schools. Therefore, it would be useful to study for example how international graduates who studied teacher's education are getting employed after their graduation. In the future it would also be interesting to hear about the domestic students' experiences concerning internationalisation at home. It might provide a different perspective and allow comparison between international and domestic students if their experiences are differing from one to another.

6 LITERATURE

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Interview questions

1. How long have you studied in Finland?

2. How would you describe your stay at the Tampere University?

3. Why did you decide to study at the Tampere University?

Theme 1: Courses, teaching and curriculum

Courses

4. How easy or difficult was it to find and select courses at EDU?

5. How do you find your courses?

6. Has there been some challenges related to the courses? (Did you have to choose courses that you did not want to take because there were not enough suitable courses for you?)

7. How has internationalisation been a part of your courses?

8. What could be improved in your courses? (regarding internationalisation)

Teaching

9. How is the teaching in your courses? How is it organised?

10. How is the teaching here compared at your previous university? Is there something different? (if applicable)

Curriculum

11. What kinds of possibilities do you think the curriculum offers regarding internationalisation? For example, do you think the contents of curriculum support you in developing intercultural skills?

12. What challenges are there in the curriculum?

Theme 2: Extracurricular activities

13. Have you had a chance to meet some local students?

14. What kinds of extracurricular activities have you taken part in?

15. How do you find these extracurricular activities? (for example: informing about the activities, communication, engaging with other students…)

16. Is there something concerning extracurricular activities that could be improved?

17. Is there something else you would like to add?