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KNOCKING THE DOORS:
*THE SITUATION OF VISIBLE IMMIGRANTS IN
THE FINNISH LABOUR MARKET*

University of Tampere
Department of Regional Studies
International School of Social Sciences
Master's Thesis
February 2006

DEDICATED TO ALL VISIBLE IMMIGRANTS IN FINLAND

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Masters Thesis : 66 pages, 4 Tables, 3 figures, 1 appendices.

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Abstract

There is high unemployment among immigrants living in Finland, especially, the visible ones and their situation seems to be worsening as more and more immigrants are coming from other parts of European Union. So this study is to create the awareness that immigrants are not a burden to the Finnish society but rather are a source of man power to fuel the Finnish economy. The purpose of this research is to demonstrate that immigrants are disadvantaged in the Finnish labour market due to their lack of formidable networks that would assist them to the labour market accession. Furthermore, it demonstrates that visible immigrants, who have been able to access the labour market permanently, have done that through their existing network or “middleman”.

The data used for this study was in part, based on my experience in the labour market as a visible immigrant, and the experiences of few others that I observed and interviewed on the one hand, and interviews with gatekeepers (employers and those working with immigrants) on the other, These two sources of information provided adequate information for the study. In addition to that, existing records and researches on immigrant issues were also exhausted.

Using qualitative methods this study examines the situation of visible immigrants through the theory of dichotomy and split labour market, and suggests network building as solution to this phenomenon. The findings indicate that there are number of reasons attributed to the existence of high unemployment rate among immigrants and most especially the visible ones, other than language skills and education. There is lack of trust between the two parties creating the way for “middle men”. Thus the theory of dichotomy and the split labour market explains vividly why most visible immigrants have unstable labour market status.

The result also depicts that social networks have played a key role for some visible immigrants in labour market accession. Thus a formidable immigrant network is recommended for visible immigrants to build strong and trustworthy ties with the key institutions and the society as a whole

The findings of this work will assist and share light on immigrants’ accession of the Finnish labour market, and also for policy makers in formulating policies concerning immigrants.

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INTRODUCTION

Knocking the doors is just a way of telling the employers that there are people ready to work with and for them. Immigrants need not to be, primarily, a social burden to the tax-payer, but rather a source of labour force to fuel the Finnish economy. This is a study of visible immigrants and their situation in the Finnish labour market.

Most people would agree that equal opportunity to participate as a full and functioning member of society is important. Nonetheless, existing social and economic disparities among Finns and immigrant groups suggest that the Finnish society has yet to achieve this goal. According to Forsander 2003, in her work, *Insiders or outsiders within? Immigrants in the Finnish labour market, 2003*, immigrants have higher unemployment rates than Finns. She affirms that over half of the immigrants who have lived in Finland for several years still have unstable labour market status and about one third of them live in the margins of the Finnish economy. Such labour market disparities are pervasive and may be the result of racial prejudice and discrimination, as well as different levels in language skill, differential access to labour market information, and institutional policies and practices.

Such disparities persist despite many legal and labour policy strategies that are meant to improve opportunities for immigrant groups in Finland. The Integration Act of 1999 and the Equality Act establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation and several other projects aim at alleviating high unemployment rate among immigrants as well as facilitating integration of immigrants.

Several factors may contribute to such high unemployment rate among certain immigrant groups, including level of education and geographical origin, differential

access to opportunities and information, language skills and others.¹ Another factor that should be considered is the role of racial discrimination in aggravating unemployment among visible immigrants. Overt discrimination against visible immigrant groups characterized some parts of Finland in recent years.(Paananen 1999).

Although researchers in specific institutions have investigated discrimination among immigrant population, there has been little effort to coordinate and expand such research in ways that could help determine the actual group that face extreme problems in the labour market. There are some positive stories of immigrants who have managed to secure stable jobs in Finland. Such stories pose a research question: “under what circumstances have they been able to secure their jobs? Who are they and where do they come from originally?”

Previous research in immigrant groups in the labour market depicts that immigrants with stable jobs have stayed longer in Finland and have acquired their university education here. There are quite a few immigrants with higher education from Finland but without jobs. What are then the employment opportunities for those immigrants who had had their higher education from abroad? The question is who succeeds in finding a job and under what conditions does it happen.

Studies depict that the problem of high unemployment among immigrants in Finland adversely affect the **visible immigrant** population. (Paananen 1999) The Integration Act passed on 1.5.1999 gives immigrants new rights and responsibilities as well as individual integration plans to assists them to integrate into the Finnish society. The rights include access to Finnish language courses and vocational training, after five months of arriving in Finland, in addition to access of information of the labour market. But has it been able to make immigrants to function as full members of the Finnish society?

¹ Integration Act was enacted into law that entered into force on 1.5 1999. The purpose of the law is to promote equal opportunities for immigrants belonging to the Finnish society.

Developing an immigrant network group is a potential solution to such problems such as differential access to information through collaboration and group work. The network will bring immigrants together to address the common problem facing them as well as designing strategies to solving labour market issues.

To address the problem of visible immigrants and the labour market, I examine the issue of discrimination, trustworthiness and proficiency in Finnish language among educated visible immigrants through interviews with immigrants and organisations working with immigrants. In addition to this a critical examination of existing material from various researchers and the ministry of labour would be exhausted. In doing so, most of the analyses would be based on my experiences in the labour market as compared to the data that I collected from the field. In order to distinguish my own experiences or opinions from the data; I will indicate my experiences with special formatting.

Overview

2.0. Immigration and the Labour Market

The situation of immigrants in the labour market poses serious questions, worth answering. One simple question to sum it up is; is there any particular gateway for immigrants to the Finnish labour market? The long term effect of large unemployment rate among immigrants in a welfare state like Finland with about five million inhabitants could not be overemphasized. My interest is not to find out the effects on the welfare state as a whole but to investigate the reasons behind the large unemployment rate among visible immigrants.

In this paper attempt will be made to look into the various factors other than origin of education and education level, even though they are important determinants into the labour market. One of the factors to be discussed is trust within the Finnish society towards foreigners and vice versa.

Key questions to be addressed include:

1. Why is it so difficult for visible immigrants to get jobs in Finland? Is it because of discrimination or any other reason yet to be determined?
2. What are the reasons for discrimination in the labour market?
3. What is the difference between professionals coming from Europe and the US compared to professionals coming from other parts of the world, e.g. Africa?
4. What role is being played by Trust, racism, xenophobia, discrimination or stereotyping?

The assumption for this research is that immigrants or foreigners who have been able to attain and sustain their jobs have lived long enough in Finland and have their higher or professional education in Finland. I further assume that these people secure their jobs through a go-between. Thus the number of years and the fluency of Finnish you speak

are only a pre-requisite but not a requirement for getting a job. Rather through the network of contacts that one is able to build during his/her stay in Finland.

Furthermore, it is also assumed that the visible immigrants find themselves among the low pay jobs irrespective of their educational level and profession and where they have acquired their education. However, the concealed nature of processes of discrimination in the labour market leads to the danger of understanding the extent of labour market racism at any time.

The Ministry of labour has implemented a Government Action Plan towards Ethnic Equality and Diversity to combat ethnic discrimination and racism and in addition to this, is an EU action program to combat various discriminations. These programs have been implemented both through national funding and by projects co-financed by the EU². However, it is recommended that visible immigrants join forces through their existing networks to share information as to how to fight unemployment.

2.1 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the study is to examine the future of visible immigrants in the labour market of Finland as the Finnish working population is aging while high unemployment rate remains among immigrants.

The following objectives are examined in the study.

1. To demonstrate that visible immigrants are at disadvantaged in the labour market due to their lack of networks.
2. To demonstrate that high unemployment among immigrants is due to lack of formidable visible immigrant group.

² ESR (*Euroopan Sosiaalirahasto*) is ESR in Finnish that means European Social Fund

2.2 The Rationale behind the Objectives

It has been acknowledged that the working population of Finland is aging and in the near future there is will be shortages of labour. As such the Finnish government has developed strategies for hiring extra labour from non-EU and non-EEA countries. “.. The project on the future challenges to the immigration policy”.

“.....With the baby-boom generation retiring, this decade will see the number of people leaving the labour force exceed the number of young people entering it by 10,000 every year. This gradual process of change will reach its peak at the turn of the decade. The change will affect all sectors and regions, with the strongest impacts, however, on the public sector and rural sub-regional units. As the younger generations grow smaller, changes in educational planning will not be able to help meet the demand for labour in the future. Instead, our labour policy should focus on developing the work organisations and providing continuous training for employees.”(Ministry of Labour 2002)

This new strategy to combat the shortage of labour in the future has not taken into consideration the already high rate of unemployment among immigrants in Finland. According to statistics at the end of 2003 there were about 107,003 immigrants living in Finland and out of this number about 30% of them are unemployed. This figure is twice as high as for the total population. Even though authorities are more optimistic that the rate of unemployment among immigrants will fall in the near future, such optimism in particular favours a particular group, non-visible immigrants (Caucasians).

Paananen demonstrated in his 1999 *Suomaliasuuden Armoilla* findings that employers or labour market gatekeepers prefer to recruit immigrants of the Caucasian origin than those from Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world. This is to say that immigrants of European origin or Caucasians are more preferable than those of visible physical characteristics. He also affirms that since the discussion about the employability of immigrants only focus on the large-scale policies, there is little or nothing they can do to affect those policies. (Paananen 1999).

Most industrial countries like those of central Europe or Britain have depended and are still depending on immigrant labour force, given immigrants a place in their labour market. For instance, in the UK Immigrants may be attracted to those areas that are enjoying current economic success even though it is not only immigrant inflows that are

driving labour market changes, also that labour market changes are driving inflows. The presence of immigrant workers does drive down wages for certain skill groups. This phenomenon has the tendency of driving resident workers of that skill type to move elsewhere to gain high wages. For example the presence of Polish immigrant workers in the UK has driven wages in the industrial parking jobs down. Thus competition in the labour market is, in a way, driven by the forces of the labour market, the demand and the supply of labour.³

The situation is not the same in Finland; It rather seems like the ethnicity or place of origin is the driving force of the labour market. Most immigrants in Finland have arrived for reasons other than employment and yet ended up in search of jobs to make ends meet as they make Finland their new home. Forsander 2003 calls them non-labour force immigrants, who immigrate to Finland for reasons other than work. Examples of such groups include returned migrants, refugees, and those who are there because of family or other reasons. Competition in the labour market is just between the Finns themselves or then between Caucasian living in there. Immigrants of the visible type find it difficult to compete in the labour market as individual job-seekers.

Some have managed to secure steady jobs in Finland, which is a very positive result indeed, but under what circumstances have they been able to get there? Who are they and where do they come from originally? Research shows that immigrants with steady jobs have stayed longer in Finland and have acquired their University education there. Yet there are people with similar status but without jobs. It turns out to be, in majority, visible ones.

What happens to those with university education from abroad! Who succeeds in finding a job and under what conditions? The employment rate of immigrants is considerably lower than among the rest of the population, and unemployment among those who are part of the work force is many times greater than the rest of the population (Forsander 2002). There are several immigrants who are in the margins of the labour market simply because of where they originated, their level of education or where they had acquired their education. Most of these belong to a group of visible immigrants be it refugees or regular migrants (Forsander 2003).

³ I had the opportunity to witness the situation in the Northamptonshire where employment agencies prefer the Polish and other Eastern European immigrant workers to the Blacks because they accept any wages offered to them, at least, in the first few months.

2.3. A Brief Contemporary History of Migration in Finland

In the first half of the 20th Century, over 33,500 refugees arrived in Finland from Russia after the Russian revolution in 1922. Some of the immigrants were Eastern Karelians and some Ingrians. In the early stage of Independent Finland, a total of about 13,000 refugees were recorded in Finland. This number was so negligible that it did not affect the Finnish labour market or the political arena. (Waris, 1975, 34 in Seppo Paananen 1999).

Finland as remote and poor as it was could not provide work and prosperity to its citizens as the structural changes from agriculture to industrial sector, rather its pulp for the paper industries, provided labour to other industries abroad. Lots of Finns migrated to North America and Sweden to work in their factories. Between 1946 and 1970 about a quarter of a million Finns left to Sweden. (Paananen, 1999. 51, 52).

Until a little over a decade ago, Finland had experienced net migration of her labour force for most of her history. Then the technological boom in the telecommunication sector saw an influx of both returnees and new immigrants alike into Finland. This marked the beginning of a real positive recording of net-migration; a time when more people arrived in Finland from Somalia, former Yugoslavia and possibly also from nearby Estonia and Russia. Among them were Finnish-Russian families (Yläänkö in Forsander 2003.pp 54).

However, there were also pockets of immigrants from African countries other than Somalia as well as from other European and non-European countries. It is therefore obvious that Finland is now ethnically more diversified with people of different ethnic backgrounds. However, some immigrants are easier to distinguish, making them more visible than the others.

When Finland Joined the European Union in 1995, by definition Finnish people became Europeans, yet they remain Finns as ethnically defined. In this contextual definition, what then would be a person from an EU country in Finland? It is obvious that such distinction could be made with the help of grouping people in terms of colour, ethnic background and other possible physical attributes. However, since there are not significant differences between most Western Europeans and Finns on the one hand and the fact that European Union citizens are covered with the European Employment and

Social Affairs Act⁴, on the other. Only visible immigrants would be identified as outsiders.

2.4 Review of Ethnographic Immigrants in Finland

The population of Finland is rather homogenous as one could imagine, united in their common and unique language. The number of immigrants living in Finland had increased considerably over the years. In 2003 the number of immigrants amounted to about 107 000. There are 90 000 immigrants who have naturalized and taken the Finnish citizenship. In addition to that are the national minorities, such as the indigenous people Sami, the Roma, the Jewish, the Tatar and the Russian traditional minorities which add up to about 50 000. In a nut shell the total number of people who belong to ethnic minorities is about 240 000, which in relative terms makes about 4.7 % of the total population of 5.2 million people.

The largest of the minority ethnic groups is the Swedish speaking population which has to some extent, melted into the society and is only differentiated by linguistic rather than ethnic background. However, there are also the Sámi and the Romany populations and smaller Jewish and Tatar groups. The focus of the research is on the new immigrant population and precisely speaking the visible immigrant population. They are mostly voluntarily and involuntarily immigrants among them are refugees and those who ended up in Finland because of family or work related reasons.

The table below shows the number of immigrants by nationality. The largest groups among immigrants are the Russians, Estonians the Swedes and the Estonians; all the three groups for part the invisible immigrants. The Somalis are next on the list followed by Iraqis, Yugoslavians FR as part of the visible immigrants; then follows the British and Germans as part of the invisible immigrants; and then Iranians and the Chinese as part of the visible immigrants.

⁴ EU commission has legislations on equal opportunity for all its citizens.

Table 1. Population according to nationality on 31 December 2003

Finnish	5112 729
Foreigners in Total	107 003
Biggest Groups:	
Russians	249 98
Estonians	133 97
Swedish	812 4
Somalis	464 2
Iraqis	348 5
Yugoslavia FR	278 2
British	265 1
Germans	256 1
Iranians	253 1
Chinese	237 2

In the tables 2 and 3 below immigrants are grouped into visible and invisible immigrants.

Visible immigrants	Population
Somalis	4642
Iraqis	3485
Iranians	2531
Chinese	2372
Total	13030

invisible immigrants	Population
Russians	24998
Estonians	13397
Swedish	8124
Yugoslavia FR	2782
British	2651
Germans	2561
Total	54513

Table 2. Visible immigrants**Table 3. Invisible immigrants**

The tables 1.2a and 1.2b depicts the number of visible and invisible immigrants by nationality derived from table 1.1. The statistics presented here only shows the larger groups of immigrants living in Finland excluding those who have already attained Finnish citizenship. The statistics exclude immigrants from the Philippines, Thailand, parts of Africa other than Somalia and some eastern European countries. However, it is enough to make the point that the number of invisible immigrants exceeds the number of visible immigrants.

According to the table 1.2a there are about a total of 13030 people from different countries belonging to the visible immigrants while table 1.2b shows that the invisible immigrants are about 54513 in Finland. Further analyses in the proceeding chapters will demonstrate that rather invisible immigrants have more stable labour market status than the visible immigrants.

Another point of interest is that of the Ingrians⁵, the return migrants from Russia who are part of the invisible immigrants were not specified in the statistic above. However their numbers are considerably significant to affect the employment issues. Unemployment rate among immigrants are falling considerably but, such immigrants are among others, the return migrants, Ingrians, Russians and Estonians and other EU citizens, all of which fall under the category of invisible immigrants. Thus unemployment rates among visible immigrants are still sky high.

2.5 Invisible and Visible Immigrants

By my own definition “invisible immigrant” is the one who enjoys the acceptance of the Finnish society and has integrated into the society. This definition is not mutually exclusive of race and ethnicity.

The concept of visibility is important because it clearly explains the existence of two distinct groups within the present Finnish society. Visibility takes into consideration a person’s physical characteristics irrespective of country of origin, whereas an alien or a foreigner in Finland means you are different and not part of us. To be an immigrant and invisible suggests that you are not considered to be a foreigner at first glance. Here it refers to people belonging to the same race but different ethnic groups. Often the only way to recognise a foreigner of the Caucasian race who is not a Finn is by the variation in his or her accent.

Thus a visible immigrant group, other than a minority group, is a group of immigrants that is visually identified at a glance that is to say, not one of “Us” – in the case of Finland, that is to say not a member of the Caucasian majority. In contrast, invisible

⁵ Today the ingrians are the descendants of Finns who moved to Ingria and are now returnees in Finland. These Finns are the ancestors of today's Ingrians. At the end of the century, 75 percent of the inhabitants in Ingria were Lutherans. The name Ingria is of Scandinavian origin (Finnish Inkeriamaa - the land of Princess Ingrid. Ingrians call themselves Inkeriläinen or Inkerinsuomalainen.

immigrants are those who have been accepted by the society irrespective of their racial or ethnic background or until they become 'visible' due to their accent or their country of origin.

Research on attitudes of Finns towards immigrants depicts that "Western people are the most wanted as immigrants, whereas "visible" minorities of mostly, developing countries and refugee-sending countries are the least wanted (Jaakkola 1999; Sörderlig 1997) (Forsander 2003, p.58). In addition there is the common notion that all visible immigrants are refugees and are there to leave on the mercy of Finnish tax payer's money. On the contrary invisible immigrants have not been labelled as refugees.

There is a common saying; *"they will take over our jobs or misuse our welfare system and "they" don't speak Finnish language."* This signifies the fear among the indigenous society. Salo-Lee's research is a testimony of how people are defined as "us" and "them" (Salo-Lee, 1995). Recent research have shown that immigrants actually face racial discrimination in Finland as pointed out by Huttunen 1999, 2002, and Jasinskaja-Lahti et al 2002 Lepola 2002. A Finnish magazine, *Monitori 2/2002* puts it flowingly:

"There has now been enough research done to point out the existence of racism in Finland – now it is time for action".

"Colour" makes one different in many respects and so is the language. One becomes suddenly conscious of oneself once one realizes that one is different. Similarly, thinking of Finland as new to influx of large scale immigration then colour might play a meaningful role in everyday life. Thus discrimination, racism ethnicity and xenophobia are some of the issues facing visible immigrant population. In an attempt to understand how these concepts and issues interplay to determine the situation of visible immigrants in the labour market, I will not rule out the role that the "Concept of Trust" play in these processes. By "these processes" *I mean the processes through which we come to experience some kinds of people as different from ourselves – as one of them.* (Farhat, 2004)

However, to sum up the issues that put immigrants into categories of visible and invisible immigrants, I will assume that colour and any physical attributes imply some of the critical differences used to differentiate visible and invisible immigrant communities so that the concepts of racism, ethnicity and xenophobia stand for the

mechanisms and structures; common implicit and explicit rules that make the lives of visible immigrants, refer to in the previous discussion, difficult in the labour market.

Due to the existence of visible and invisible groups in the society, there is bound to be division and tension that leads to allocating certain resources to particular groups that are denied to the others. The discussion below explains the reason why there are so many visible immigrants unemployed, or then are concentrated in a particular industry *such as* the cleaning industry.

2.6 The Labour Market and Immigrants

Very little research has used visible immigrants, either for case studies or comparative analysis. Relatively little quantitative research has disaggregated the immigrant category beyond the inclusive category of "visible immigrants" as distinct from subgroups (e.g. Africans, or Asians) or single country immigrants (e.g. Somali's).

My experience and observation in Finland as a visible immigrant depict that, there is substantial number of immigrants whose educational attainments could be matched or exceed Finnish levels who are without jobs or else stuck in the cleaning industry, the postal services or then have unstable status in the labour market. Most of such people have attained further studies in Finland and are graduates with master's degrees or post graduates.

Immigrants who arrived in the late 1980's and early 1990's and managed to acquire training in the IT field managed to catch up to secure their places in the labour market fairly rapidly. They have played a comparable role as job seekers and part of the labour force in Finland. But in recent years, it seems that the relative human capital advantages of immigrants have levelled off and they are taking longer time to catch up, if they ever will, because there seems to be a conflicting value of manpower provided by visible immigrants and their country of origin or ethnicity.

This is in part due the strong emphasis on Finnish language skills; According to the Ministry of Labour⁶ an important gateway to employment is acquiring enough Finnish or Swedish to cope in working life. As a part of the integration program, immigrants are required to take language courses together with values of Finnish society and how it functions. However, the second stage of the integration process that requires the use of the Finnish language in active level, in working communities when interacting with Finnish society is falling short. The problem may be caused, in part, by discrimination and inadequate language skills of some immigrants are their main barrier to employment.

There is substantial variation in the profile of immigrants here in Finland, in terms of socio-economic attributes. Majority of immigrants are concentrated largely in the lower socio-economic strata; while just a handful of immigrants have done well, most are concentrated in slower growth industries like the cleaning industry or under the mercy of social benefits (KELA)⁷.

Undoubtedly, earlier successes of immigrants, who came to Finland within 1980s and '90s, including a large number of visible immigrants, may have been due to the relatively buoyant advancement in Information Technology. In addition, the fact that the visible immigrants at that time were fewer in number within the immigration cohorts, and also in the country as a whole, may have dampened expressions of racism and discrimination.

As the number of immigrants increases the chances of visible immigrant in the labour market, on the average, decrease relative to that of Finns or Caucasians. In addition, the economy is allegedly less expansive in recent years than in earlier periods. Consequently the consensus that immigration plays a negative role in the Finnish social welfare system, and that immigrants are a drain on the public purse deepen. Why is it that so many visible immigrants have unstable labour market status?

There are some immigrant economic achievements despite major obstacles. For example the Chinese and the Thais have succeeded in their restaurants, while few Africans have managed with their cleaning companies. However, highly educated

⁶ Ministry of Labour Publication no 286, Helsinki 2001

⁷ KELA is the Social Insurance Institution of Finland

immigrants suffer doubly, both from devaluing their credentials and also as a result of difficulties in getting a job that they have been trained for end up with the social welfare. The latter possibility remains to be firmly established.

In any case, it is clear that immigrants continue to fill specific economic and occupational niches (as in the past) in cities like Helsinki and Tampere. Some of these may be low status, as employment in small businesses, as office cleaners, restaurant workers (dish washers), etc. But one must not lose sight of the fact that immigrants are also represented in some areas of scientific research and hi-tech occupations, a subject which has not been researched, yet could motivate other employers.

It is now a common knowledge that the baby-boom generation is leaving the labour market by the end of this decade. This phenomenon leads to labour shortages in all sectors of the economy. As part of the strategy to increase employment rates, The Labour Policy Strategy for 2003 to 2007 to 2010 aims at reducing structural unemployment and preventing exclusion and creating preconditions for an active labour immigration policy.⁸

The strategy include also facilitating the employment of immigrants by organising 40 credits of training for immigrants within the scope of the Integration Act⁹, increasing immigrants' practical training, coaching for working life and apprenticeship training as well as their participation in vocational training, and including in these training in Finnish and Swedish; as well as developing the employment and entrepreneur services to better meet the immigrants' needs.

Furthermore, Vision 2010 states that:

“Finland will be a knowledge-based welfare state providing employment opportunities for all. Employment services will have been reorganised to meet the challenges of the new labour market situation and the changing worklife.”

A key element of the emerging strategy is the view that, Finland needs extra labour force including immigrants in all the sectors of the economy. These discussions are a sign for more effective integrated policy and good prospects for immigrants in Finland.

⁸ Employment report 2004, Ministry of Labour, Finland

⁹ Immigrants who are not more than 3 years in Finland qualify to take part in the Integration Act projects.

Such policies are seen in the implementation of projects financed by the EU Structural Fund.

However, while these projects have recorded successes, their target groups has always been the refugees at the reception centres whose fate or future are not certain. Hence these projects exclude other immigrants from benefiting from the projects because of lack of information about them.

Does the current discussion bring new hope for visible immigrants? It is hard to predict given the sensitiveness of the concept of visibility that creates the dichotomy and the split labour market. However, the Finnish authorities and employers have the belief that conditions for immigration will improve as the Finnish population is aging. To sustain overall economic growth and competitiveness of Finnish enterprises, immigrants labour force is needed.

2.7. The Causes and Effect of Unemployment

The influx of voluntary and involuntary migrants influences legislation and the policies dealing with immigrants and unemployment. The number of immigrants and members of ethnic minorities is thus still rather low both in absolute and relative terms, especially in comparison to other industrialized countries. Nevertheless the demographic change has been considerable and rather rapid, as the number of immigrants grew over the last decade. This change brought new challenges to the Finnish society and the government has through the Integration Act of 1999, attempted to meet this challenges.

Immigration policies readily affect the lives of immigrants in particular and the entire population in general. Edelman writes that

“problems come into discourse and therefore into existence as reinforcements of ideologies, not simply because they are there or because they are important for well-being” (Edelman 1988).

Popular fear and concern about immigrants in Finland depends on how it is viewed; Immigrants are seen as a threat to the welfare system and to the scarce available jobs. However, as problems appear, responsible agencies search for the best way to cope with

them; or in the qualification suggested by Herbert Simon, they search for solution that is satisfactory. (Edelman 1988)

This perception also has an impact on how natives see immigrants. The Integration Act which aims at improving the lives of immigrants seems to have two polarized sides. On one hand there is the political rhetoric of the get-tough policies¹⁰. Programs¹¹, that came under the Integration Act that demands that “...*the immigrant acquires the knowledge and skills she or he needs to live in Finland and take part as an equal functioning member of society*”.

On the contrary, there is rather an assimilation process which is very slow, leaving some group of immigrants unattended. Thus some immigrants of the visible group seemed to be left out as they have fallen into the long-term unemployment trap.¹²

There are several possible factors that are responsible for high unemployment among visible immigrants in Finland, and unfortunately for governments, it is never easy to identify which is the most important and what to do about it. As Edelman puts it that “To evoke a problem’s origin is to assign blames and praises ...”. a brief overview of Economic theory divides the causes of unemployment into two parts the demand and supply of labour. In the first place, when there is insufficient demand, called aggregate demand, employers will not need any more workers. This is what economists rely on to make decisions on employment. Such unemployment is called demand-deficient.

Unemployment caused by the supply-side factors result in the imperfection in the labour market. In an ideal perfect market all potential job-seekers will have jobs where demand equals supply. Nevertheless, unemployment persists if the market does not clear; this scenario takes place when wages remain high. (Begg et al, 1991: 481 -496)

¹⁰ Introduction school fees for foreigners for example because most educated visible immigrants were students who decided to stay after their education

¹¹ Other programs include, the “becoming visible project”

¹² According to the Ministry of Labour, long-term unemployed trap is being unemployed for more than 6 months

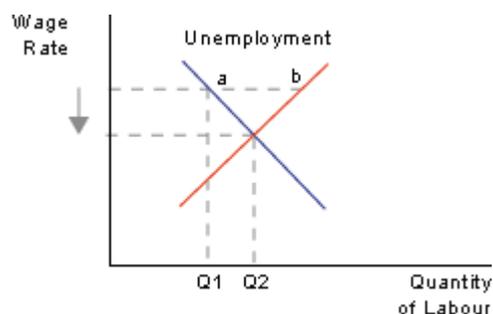


Figure 1
Demand and Supply of Labour¹³

In the figure above initial high wages increase the supply of labour creating unemployment of *ab* in the diagram above (supply is greater than demand). As wages fall it is likely to get rid of unemployment. However, this would not be easy to if there is sticky demand, and so unemployment remains.

Unemployment could also happen as a result of occupational or geographical immobility caused by lack of adequate information about job opportunities. This will lead to people taking a long time looking for jobs, increasing the level of frictional or search unemployment. It is possible, however, to explain high unemployment rate among visible immigrants to their inability to get adequate information about available jobs and how the labour market operates.

Finally but not the least, is the effect of baby-boom on the work force. This has turned out to have generated an ongoing discussion about the future of the Finnish labour market as the workers of the baby-boom are retiring causing major changes in the workforce. If there are the same numbers of people retiring from the work-force as joining in, then unemployment will stay the same. Normally, there are more workers joining the workforce than leave causing increase in the rate of unemployment, *unless* there are enough extra jobs created to employ the extra people in the work-force.

In the Finnish context the baby-boom is over and in the next 10 years the labour market, experiences increase in the demand for labour. Would that give the chance for educated immigrants to enter the labour market? In theory, this could be a possibility, but in reality, there are several forces working together or against each other on the issue of visibility of immigrants and the labour market.

¹³ The source of the diagram is from
<http://www.bized.ac.uk/virtual/economy/policy/outcomes/unemployment/unempth3.htm>

The effects of unemployment cannot be over emphasised. Perhaps, the consequence is felt more on personal level than on a societal level. Nonetheless, the multiple effects spread through the entire economy with time. Individuals may become depressed as a result of being long term unemployed, might lose their self-esteem and confidence, which demoralised them to work. The longer one stays unemployed the more he/she loses his/her skills and this obviously not a good thing for the economy.

The cost of unemployment to the society and the entire economy is huge in the long run. In Finland, increase in unemployment rate, in general, will put pressure on the social welfare system, even though this is not a trend at the moment, there is the possibility that it could happen very soon. Government expenditure to support the unemployed will increase, while tax revenue reduces. Crime is likely to increase as result of financial constraints that have been created by the absence of jobs.

Social cost of unemployment could be devastating to a nation known to be one of the most peaceful countries in the world. As more and more people become frustrated in their job-seeking processes, they might sort to easier means of surviving to providing for themselves and families.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0. Definition of Concepts

3.1. Immigrant

An immigrant in this study will refer to all foreigners who have permanent residence to live and work, or have naturalised in Finland. Such people have come to Finland for reason of seeking better economic life or for security reasons. Here the term immigrant includes voluntary and involuntary migrants; refugees and those who have entered Finland for work or to reunite with their families. For the purpose of simplicity and scalability, the scope of this definition will be limited to **visible immigrants**.

As defined in the previous chapter, invisibility means one is accepted as one of “us” and that any physical attributes and colour make no difference. The Canadian Employment equity Act defines visible minority¹⁴ as:

"Persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour."

Note: StatsCan considers that the visible minority population includes the following groups: Chinese, South [Asian East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.]; Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian [Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc.]; Arab, West Asian [Afghan, Iranian, etc.]; Japanese, Korean, and Pacific Islander."¹⁵ Statistics Canada, 2003:143)."

In the same way, the visible immigrants of Finland are persons other than indigenous Finns and people from European origin (Caucasians) who have immigrated to Finland for one reason or the other. As described in the previous chapter, they include people of African origin, and people from the Middle East.

¹⁴ Earlier immigrants who have legal rights to live Canada

¹⁵ Source: <http://www.canadaimmigrants.com/glossary.asp#V>
Read, 17.01.2005

3.2. Discrimination

To discriminate is to make a distinction. There are several attributes to discrimination, namely racial, cultural or ethnic discrimination; they all have a negative implication on the victim. Farhad¹⁶ refused to define separately these concepts of race, ethnicity and culture since they all bear some resemblance in meaning, because the actual definitions that seek to differentiate the idea of race from culture and from ethnicity continually collapse into each other (Farhad, 2004).

Discrimination involves formally or informally putting people into different groups and give the members of each group distinct, and typically unequal, treatments, rights and obligations. The criteria delineating the groups, such as colour, race, ethnicity and culture, determine the kind of discrimination. Here my emphasis is on discrimination because of colour, being conspicuously different, or visible because of physical attributes. This does not suggest that colour or physical attributes are the only channels through which discrimination occur. There are other differences such as culture, gender, class and religion, just to mention a few, that become not only critical but sharply visible. In other words, difference or being different draws the line between “us- and- them”.

Job Discrimination is defined as treating one person unfairly over another according to factors unrelated to their abilities or potentials to perform their duties, such as age, disability, sex, or national origin. In this paper discrimination in employment is defined as of taking place when immigrants are accorded inferior treatment in the labour market or in the workplace relative to nationals or Caucasians, despite being comparably qualified in terms of education, experience or other relevant criteria.

There are some who would explain prejudice and discrimination primarily in terms of economic competition, exploitative gains or indirect effects of political and economic variables through psychological mechanisms. (Hurbert M. Blalock 1967) Academic definition or intellectual arguments of what the concept of discrimination means would be avoided here. Rather, a more practical approach to what is happening would be used in the subsequent discussion. Arguably, there are different scenarios of what could be described as racism in different environment at a particular point in history, and according

¹⁶ Dr.Farhad Dalalin in a lecturer “Equality in the Work places: A real possibility?”

to whether the exclusionary doctrine or practice is directed against culturally or biologically difference (Wrench 1996). Most of the time people who are victims of racism are the “coloured - people”, non-whites, people with African descent or people from colonized countries and also people whose countries are characterized with war, sicknesses and diseases, and acute poverty. In short people who are different from us and are very visible in appearance.

Rex revealed that the criteria which mark a group for unjustified inequality in treatment may vary in different countries (Wrench 1996). Thus the present situation in the labour market of Finland is rather tricky to define as discrimination against immigrants; rather it would be appropriate to say that the particular target group facing discrimination in the labour market consists of “visible immigrants”, people from countries marked with poverty, diseases and war. Institutional discrimination makes it even more difficult for visible immigrant population to access the labour market. According to Blalock Jr. Prejudice is deliberately fostered by the economic elites in order to preserve their dominance.

Most of the attention is directed towards individual discriminatory behaviour, in so doing forgetting about the system as a whole. Individuals respond differently to immigrants in general simply because of colour and in the process their actions or judgements are directly or indirectly connote discriminatory act. However, institutions and employing organisations have ways that are overtly discriminatory, that is specifically excluding visible immigrants from services or then inherently discriminatory by adopting policies that indirectly exclude visible immigrants and consequently result in their exclusion from the labour market. Such institutional behaviour causes discrimination. According to Steven Laurence March 2000:

“The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin which can be seen or detected in processes; attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.”

Institutional racism is the most dangerous of all forms of discriminations. It regularly and systematically advantages some ethnic and cultural groups and disadvantages and

marginalises others.¹⁷ First, it is very difficult to realise, particularly when it is perpetrated by institutions and governments who do not view themselves as discriminatory. Secondly, when present in a range of social contexts, this form of discrimination reinforces the disadvantage already experienced by the visible immigrant community. Discrimination in employment, lead to fewer employment opportunities and higher levels of unemployment for visible immigrants. In this way, institutional racism may be particularly damaging for immigrants and prevents them to function as full members of society.

In situations where the outcome of established laws, customs or practices is racially discriminatory, then institutional racism can be said to have occurred. Although racism is rooted in widely shared attitudes, values and beliefs, discrimination can occur irrespective of the intent of the individuals who carry out the activities of the institution. Such institutional discrimination creates dichotomisation of the labour market; exacerbate the frustration of immigrant job-seekers. Without the existence of dichotomies the hiding rules and policies might not exist (Hurbert M. Blalock 1982)In the job sphere this dichotomization makes possible what has been termed a “segmented labour market”; so that a competition is regulated by the single device of allocating certain jobs to one category and a different set to the others.

In an attempt to examine the reasons behind the dichotomisation in the labour market, it is worth turning the attention from racial discrimination to other possible form of discrimination such as trust for immigrants. Even though “colour” and place of origin of the immigrant has played a major role in discrimination initially, the process of building trust and reputation makes the situation much more complicated than it is now.

¹⁷ Read <http://www.racismnoway.com.au>

3.3 The Concept of Trust

The concept of trust is something that I thought is worth examining. After all *trust is the bases of success in all transactions between two groups whether of the same ethnic background, religion, race or culture*, let alone doing business with immigrants from strange worlds, meaning all those with different cultural backgrounds and visible among the natives. It is obvious that inter-cultural communications and interaction is often more complicated than we think. Care and cautiousness are required to avoid many problems that are likely to occur.

Trust, between employers and prospective employees, is essential pre-requisite for job-seekers in general and immigrants in particular to acquire jobs. Gustafsson acknowledges that interviews with managers show that trust forms an essential base to all transactions. The question of trust is even more complicated when several cultures are inter-playing the day-to-day activities. Could trust be achieved in the midst of racism, discrimination and xenophobia? These remain serious questions worth researching into. To trust someone means to make sense of the other party's actions, but how do we make sense out of other peoples actions if there exist deeply rooted "mistrust" or "fear" that need to be uprooted. (Gustafsson 1996)

For immigrants and as such visible immigrants to integrate into the Finnish society the complexities of day-to-day activities involving immigrants must be reduced. Enormous attempts to reduce such complexities have been made as more and more Finnish language courses are being offered to immigrants free of charge or then at a very subsidised cost. However, these attempts fall short as few immigrants lay their hands to jobs they have been trained for.

Language and culture plays a very crucial role in integration processes as much as in the working environment. Full integration of immigrants, therefore, in to the Finnish society requires fluency in the Finnish language to facilitate communication. For such to be realised, among the majority, it takes a lifetime. Some researchers have acknowledged that for immigrants to get work in Finland they have stayed here for a long time; not less than 10 years of studying, practising and possibly living that culture getting a job in your profession. Gustafson describes this situation as paradox, since according to him going native means interacting and doing business with people.

3.4 The Interplay of Trust Visibility, and Discrimination

It is interesting to know which of the three phenomenon described by the concepts is responsible for high unemployment rate among educated immigrants in Finland. Previous discussion on the visibility affirms that being visible is associated with people from poor countries where poverty, famine and diseases are part of everyday life. Fortunately, such attributes determine their labour market status. The more visible an immigrant is the more obscure are his or her chances of getting a stable labour market status. Generally speaking, potential job-seekers have to overcome several obstacles which the natives or Caucasians would not have to face during the period when they are actively seeking for jobs.

The irony is that immigrants are not aware of such obstacles as they set off for the job market. As a matter of fact, vocational qualification and working experience are the expected pre-requisites for job applicant, not forgetting Finnish language. Many a time new obstacles are created as immigrants move forward in the job seeking process. More often qualifications that were obtained outside Finland are not acceptable to gate keepers¹⁸.

Furthermore, immigrants who have attained their vocational education in Finland are compared to the Finns, not by their abilities and attained qualifications or vocational skills rather by their Finnishness and through their language skills. Paananen 1999, rejects the use of Finnish language skills as the most important reason, rather he affirms that discrimination in many forms contribute the most even though, an inability to speak Finnish is frequently associated with a lack of sufficient vocational skills.

Racists' attitudes and discrimination have been proved by research to be non existent in the Finnish labour market, yet the nature of the hidden processes that has been built into the system through the use of language proficiency has aggravated the unemployment issues.

About two decades ago, there was an influx of immigrant workers into European community member states, which balanced the dramatic labour shortage at the lower

¹⁸ People who are in a position to influence the employment of an immigrant are referred to as "gate keepers" by Dr Paananen.

end of the skilled level. At the same period there was increase in the number of refugees and in the number foreign students from the developing countries to Finland. In contrast to that, employment and the demand for labour have changed radically since then: today the number of vacancies for less qualified worker is much lower: unemployment among them is high. However, in the service sector and construction a limited need for unskilled work still persist; demand for unskilled immigrants is likely to remain. ((Tassinopoulos Alexandros 1998)) Although some immigrants work in highly-skilled jobs, a far larger group of immigrants work at relatively low skill levels, especially in labour-intensive sectors such as catering and cleaning.

Overall, visible immigrants are frequently seen in blue-collar jobs than in white-collar jobs. This is explained by the fact that employers prefer to employ immigrants of Caucasian origin or EU nationals than visible immigrants from the developing world. (Paananen 1999). This explains the reason why most immigrants are having unstable labour market status. Even though the share of visible immigrants in the cleaning sector is high, such jobs are seemed as a way to survival. It is important to point out that even though cleaning and distributing news papers in the Posting services.(Paananen 1999) are seen as surviving strategy, it result in reinforcing existing inequalities in the society at large (European Foundation 1993:23)

According to Ministry of Labour report 2003, in overall, non Finnish nationals are disadvantaged in labour market compared to Finnish citizens. At national level, the employment rate for immigrants is very low. Unfavourable condition in the labour market does not necessarily imply that the immigrant's professional skills are less than those of nationals; rather one of the underlying problems is lack of trust. Even immigrants with profession skills and work experience from their countries of origin are still at disadvantage position due to lack of trust of the authenticity of their professional skills and working experiences.

There can also be factors of "ethnic or racial concerns" which refers to adverse attitude or behaviour towards a certain genetic or ethnic group. Such stereotypical way of looking at immigrants, most often, generates negative reactions in the society. Other authors have called this situation "*assumed*" xenophobia "*we can't employ you, our customers wouldn't like it*" (Claude-Valentin 1997:64) The situation of visible

immigrants in the labour market, however, has not changed much since 2002; their vulnerability remains higher than that of invisible immigrants.

3.5. Competition and Discrimination in the Labour Market of Finland

Dichotomy and a split labour market exist when there are ethnic or racial tensions which divide the society into two distinct groups. Dichotomy in the system defines competition in the labour market along group lines and eventually splits the labour market into two. Thus the existence of visible immigrants among indigenous Finns creates the scenario for such competition in the labour market divided along group lines.

Competition exists in the labour market because individual job seekers, on the one hand have the right to choose, and on the other hand, have the freedom to move. There are many actual and potential competitors in the labour market, only a few of which are members of an externally identifiable racial or ethnic minority, in other words, visible immigrants. In such a situation, there are a number of questions that need to be addressed. Furthermore, competition also calls for the demand and supply of labour to equal in equilibrium. Rather, the presence of the split labour market creates more supply of immigrant labour responsible for the high unemployment rate among visible immigrants.

Under what circumstances will individuals attempt to put obstacles in the way of other competitors, rather than competing strictly as individuals? Consciously or unconsciously, job-seekers tend to compete in the labour market as individuals, but whether they actually compete as individuals depends on the ethnic composition of the society and employers in particular.

Countless stories are told about the experiences of individual competitors in the labour market and some of these individuals could even recite the content of the replies received. Whenever there is a positive response from employers, attitudes are naturally different than when there is a negative one. In both cases we feel we are competing as individuals, which should be the case.

Competition comes to be defined along group-lines when individual applicants are classified according to groups, be they ethnic, racial or religious. Such group competition exists insofar as competitors come to be divided (dichotomised) along highly visible lines. If, for instance, competitors are characterised by age or ability, it is possible to make and justify sharp distinctions among them. On the other hand, religious distinction between Protestants and Catholics; Jews and Muslims; and more acutely, the distinction between blacks and whites in the United States are obvious.

Let us take as an example that an indigenous member of society applies for a job, obviously, his or her chances will improve if certain classes of competitors like blacks are involved. Generally speaking, the indigenous competitors themselves have no power to influence the application processes, but whenever they are aware of their competitors, and where the selectors belong to preferred group, informal or unintentional discrimination are expected. Perpetrators of such discrimination practices go unnoticed or then unpunished because of the fact that some acceptable justification for such a situation is made available by appealing to non-racist criteria such as language skills. On the other hand if all the applicants are from the same ethnic background, perfect competition is expected.

However, that is not to say that such dichotomies should exist. For example some Latin American countries are a good example of such scenario where there is no clear dichotomy between “Blacks” and “White”. Rather there is a finely graded set of terms that is used to distinguish the various shadings of skin colour; this continuum does not in itself lend to sharp distinctions of group or class. Nevertheless, the existence of a dichotomy facilitates the establishment of rules that are used to allocate certain privileges to the preferred group, while same privileges are denied to others, mainly the minority or visible ones. Sometimes these rules may be open and explicit, even though they are mostly institutionalised. (Hurbert M. Blalock 1982)

In the labour market today, this dichotomy makes possible what has been termed the “split labour market” (Hurbert M. Blalock 1982). In Finnish society, the dichotomy between indigenous and invisible immigrant groups on the one hand and visible immigrants on the other, allows for competition to be regulated by allocating certain types of jobs to certain people. For example, the Chinese and the Vietnamese in the restaurant business, or the blacks in the cleaning companies. However, if the actual

work that each group does is similar to that of the dominant group, the difference between them is made through a distinction in the job titles, together with a well-defined status distinction between them, or then salary differences.

In deduction, the existence of dichotomy in the society creates the split in the labour market as competition in the market is carried out on either individual lines or group-lines. Both can be used to the advantage of some employers at the expense of the underprivileged group. To combat such institutional discrimination, a coalition in the form of networks among the visible immigrants is a possible solution.

3.6. Developing Networks and Employment

This section attempts to explain the need for visible immigrants to have links and connections in the Finnish labour market as a gateway into that market. It is strongly believed that the labour markets are made up of networks of individual people, firms and companies, employment agents, potential job seekers and potential employers. All these players are linked together in one way or the other by means of the Internet connections, telephone lines, product, or any other means that establish communication between them.

The idea in this section is to open the argument for the possibility of establishing the fact that visible immigrants, as a single body (group), need to be connected to the existing networks of the labour market. In an attempt to explain this phenomenon, I will adopt two network theories to justify this view: Social network theory and a network hub as described by Barabasi's theory of networks, 2002

The importance of social networks as a means of information sharing media is key gateway to the labour market. According to Wikipedia encyclopaedia "A **social network** is a map of the relationships between individuals, indicating the ways in which they are connected through various social familiarities ranging from casual acquaintance to close familial bonds".

According to the source mentioned above, analysis of social networks has emerged as a key technique in modern sociology, anthropology and organizational studies, as well as a popular topic of speculation and study. Research in a number of academic fields have

demonstrated that social networks operate on many levels, from families up to the level of nations, and play a critical role in determining the way problems are solved, organizations are run, and the degree to which individuals succeed in achieving their goals.¹⁹

Social networks have existed in the form of relations between family ties, close relatives, friends, school-mates, colleagues and workmate either in a larger sense or then as in small groups. In social network theory such relationships are seen as nodes and ties. The nodes represent individual actors while the ties represent the relationship between them.

It is possible for different kinds of ties to exist between the nodes, but social network maps the relevant ties between them. Building a social network for employment and collaboration purposes require that two or more groups are linked together by a common denominator.

As stated in the previous paragraph, there are two parts of social networks, namely nodes (actors) and ties (relations) between them (Reference). In the context of this paper, immigrants represent actors while unemployment (job-seeking) represents the ties. The nodes share the common goal of getting employed in their professions and being able to function as a full member of the Finnish society. Such is the goal that would link visible immigrants living in Finland together.

Network analysis focuses on the relations among actors and not attributes of individual actors. In this particular case, unemployment is the “relations”. This, in a way, emphasises the need to focus on solving the problem of unemployment among visible immigrants in Finland. Social network theorists maintain that individual, group and organizational behaviour is affected more by the kinds of ties and networks in which actors are involved than by the norms and attributes they possess. According to Bates 1989 and Peacock 1987, aggregating data by some external criterion, such as membership in a division or organization, fails to show the complexity of interpersonal relations. Moreover, it fails to show how individuals may be constrained by their social networks to behave in certain ways.

¹⁹ Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_network; read 7.2.2005 22:51:34

Based on the arguments above, the kind of immigrant network advocated in this paper emphasises on the main issues that link immigrants together while at the same time focuses on contacts to employers, building up trust in the society, training, and educating immigrant. In this way, the hub tries to avoid the individual norms and attributes of the smaller networks.

The smaller networks include all the actors who occur within the same boundary or fall within the same category of visible immigrants, namely different nationalities from Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. As a matter of fact, the diversity in the culture and characteristics of the actors from different countries are enormous. But since network methods stress on the relations among the actors, i.e. unemployment, the norms and attributes, to some extent, would not affect the entire network. In other words, individual actors cannot be sampled independently.

There is already the existence of interpersonal relations that are one-to-one relations with other people nested in a kind of social network. Often these networks tend to be "social facts" and operate in their own way. For instance, an extended family is a network of close relations of people from the same gene. (Monge 2003).

In contrast, an institutionalized network of visible immigrants will have a name and operate strictly according to the relations between them. This is in contrast with the kind of social networks that are formed consciously or unconsciously by the networks one forms at leisure, nested in clubs and associations. This is not to downplay the importance of weaker links social network, rather to emphasis on a creation of a hub to link other hubs. Social networking is one of the possible solutions to the high unemployment existing among visible immigrants in Finland. It has been proved, at least, by the Thais, the Chinese, Vietnamese and the Turks in the restaurant business that having a good social network is an asset to the labour market.

Based on the concept of hubs in a networking society a hub of visible immigrants would be connected to other hubs. These hubs, among others, are employment agents industries, institutions and the employment office, working together in collaboration toward a common goal of meeting the demand and supply of labour in the labour market. (Getting visible immigrants employed).

Social networking, consciously or unconsciously has proved to be working among some immigrant groups. Immigrant restaurant owners in Finland have proved to be very effective in demonstrating the importance of social networking in the labour market. Among the Chinese, Turks, Vietnamese and the Thais, social networks have proved to be one of the ways through which immigrants could find their ways in the Finnish labour market. On the other hand, while this is only an example of self employment, it also portrays the effective use of social networks in finding oneself participating as full functioning member of society. The same principle could be applied to professional of immigrants. A social network of job-seeking professionals could bring all immigrants together to share common information including, job opportunities, the working culture of the Finnish society and even provide the trustworthiness required of immigrants.

METHODOLOGY

Ethnographic approach is used for collecting and analyzing the data because it goes beyond just reporting events and details of experience of visible immigrants but also works to explain well their situation in the labour market. The dual role played as a participant observer, sharpens my understanding on the situation of visible immigrant in the labour market. This approach is used to gather information from two groups that were studied for this research. The first group comprises organisation²⁰ that deal with immigrants, while the second group comprises educated visible immigrants.²¹

4.0. Defining the Target Group

This research is designed for highly skilled, professionals or immigrants with higher university education from Finland or Abroad. Respondents must have lived in Finland for more than at least five years, and have attained or upgraded their education or vocational skills from Finland or abroad. Respondents must also have the ability to express themselves in Finnish language. There were two informant groups for the study. The first and the main group is the visible immigrant community, while the second group comprises individuals from various companies and institutions, representing employers and social workers (from the employment office). As a member of the visible immigrant community, my role as a researcher played a very important role in selecting the informants from the visible immigrant group.

In order to accomplish this task I interviewed a sample of educated visible immigrants for this study. Here, the origin of the college or university attended was not as important as having the knowledge and desire and willing to share the information. Furthermore, nationality was not a factor of selection rather country of origin and physical characteristics was the main contributing factor of selection. This is because some of the members of the visible immigrants have acquired Finnish citizenship and are legally Finnish nationals.

²⁰ By organisation I mean employers, institutions and organisations which are working with immigrants or deal immigrants.

²¹ Refer immigrants with at least lower university degree or professional qualification from a polytechnic

4.1. Data Collection Procedure

Two sets²² of structured questionnaire were constructed to collect specific but open-ended responses from the two groups mentioned above, namely organisations and visible immigrants. The organisations comprise of *Aamulehti* (a leading media house in Tampere, Alma Media Oyj), The Unemployment Office Tampere Branch and Apprenticeship Centre Tampere.

While the visible immigrant group consisted of three different countries, namely Ghana, Lebanon, and China; these represent the visible immigrants from Africa, the Middle East and Asia respectively. Representatives of these three groups were interviewed.²³

I selected *Aamulehti* for this research because it is Finland's second largest media company in terms of annual turnover (Company annual report and other data, 2004). In addition to this it is one of the largest private sector employers in the Tampere region. A large number of immigrants, both students and those with permanent residents, are employed by *Aamulehti*. Furthermore, it is one of the news papers that have immigrant section, portraying its pro-immigration and their international section influences the entire public. Finally but not the least, I have once been a trainee, and an employee of *Aamulehti* for a short while. Thus it was imperative, therefore to tap their expertise in the immigrant work situation in Finland.

Training and upgrading skills of immigrants is as important as working with immigrants and as part of the processes of integration, the Apprenticeship Centre is one of the institutions that train and upgrade the vocational skills of workers including immigrants. Thus it is of great importance to this study to interview a representative of adult vocational institutes. Finally but not the least of the organisations was the immigrant section of Employment Office that facilitates the Integration Act.²⁴

In the initial state of conducting the interview a maximum of six respondents from each group were selected, but at the time of conducting the interview, six respondents from the organisation group and three from the Visible Immigrant group were interviewed. It

²² The questionnaire was different for each group

²³ The set of questions asked are in the appendix.

²⁴ The purpose of this law is to promote equal opportunities for immigrants belonging to the Finnish society

was as difficult to get the organisations that I had selected as getting immigrants for the interviews.

Finding the appropriate respondents for this research was quite frustrating. In fact it was impossible to get right personnel from Nokia Corporation Finland, a leading employer of immigrants, to interview. Nonetheless, Nokia Corporation is a multinational company with English as a working language. Most of the foreign employees are directly or indirectly recruited from their countries of origin. On the other hand based on the widespread deregulation which stimulated competition and customer expectations in the 1980s and 1990s, some immigrants who attained higher education in IT in Finland were assimilated into the labour market.

However, there was positive responds from organizations such as *Aamulehti*, (a leading media house in Tampere) where three key personnel officers were interviewed, at *Oppisopimus Keskus*, (Apprenticeship Centre) a training supervisor was interviewed, while two assistants at The Employment Office Tampere Branch were interviewed.

4.2. The Characteristics of the Immigrant Respondents

In all three immigrants were interviewed for the study. There was one African from Ghana, an Asian from China, and from the Middle East, a Lebanese. It is rather unfortunate that most of the respondents were male immigrants. This shows how hard it was to get the respondents.

<u>Country of Origin</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Profession</u>	<u>Number of years in Finland</u>
Ghana	Male	University degree from Russia.	Veterinary Doctor, Social Worker, IT Specialist, Entrepreneur	15 years
China	Male	Masters degree in International Relations	Teacher	Over 15 years
Lebanon	Male	<u>Master in Electricals and a Doctoral candidate in Telecommunications</u>	<u>Teacher, lecturer</u>	<u>Over 15 years</u>

Table 4: Characteristics of Immigrant respondents

4.4. Analyses of the Interviews with Visible Immigrants and Gatekeepers

This is a qualitative report on visible immigrants' experiences in the Finnish labour market based on interviews that were conducted for this particular research. In addition, gatekeepers' accounts on same issues would be discussed here. This research focuses on the experiences of visible immigrant in their search for a permanent or steady labour market status. The interviews were presented in a form of conversation to gather information that pertains mainly, to the labour market of Finland. Only, those that are of relevant importance to the research would be discussed in this chapter.

Some of the issues that were considered here are the importance of Finnish language as a working tool or a means of communication, the role of trust as against discrimination of many forms. The reasons why several educated immigrants are still without jobs (I mean jobs that are connected to their background of education). In addition to the above, the research also looked into ways through which visible immigrants could get employed. The aim of the interview is not to find out loopholes and point fingers at others, rather to find out ways that such obstacles and loophole could be overcome in order for visible immigrants to access the labour market at ease.

Interview Procedure

As stated in the previous chapters, this research aimed at finding the situation of visible immigrants in the labour market. Two groups were interviewed; gatekeepers and visible immigrants. In both situations, the researcher assumed himself as a “conversation mate” while being an insider or part of the visible immigrant group enhanced the ability to retrieve sensitive information, which otherwise could have been difficult to attain.

Each interviewee sat face-to-face by a table where questions were administered in a form of conversation. Some of the questions are leading questions that generated further discussion. An interview lasted not less than an hour. The maximum time spent per interview lasted for one hour forty five minutes; this was the case with gatekeepers when interesting points came across. The interviews took place in at a convenient time and place agreed upon by both parties (the researcher and the interviewee). That of the visible immigrants took place at the University of Tampere and Tampere Adult Education Centre (TAKK), while those of the gatekeepers took place in their respective workplaces. The language used for the interview was mainly English, but where it became necessary Finnish language was used to clarify meanings of certain words. The atmosphere in the rooms during the interviews was very pleasant and friendly and that contributed a lot to the way at which the interviewees felt during the session. Jokes were shared wherever it fits the situation making it easy to discuss sensitive issues. In addition to writing down short notes, permission was also granted to record the conversation.

In all, there were six gatekeepers and three visible immigrants who were interviewed. Three of them belong to Kustannus Oy Aamulehti, two from the Immigrant section of

the Employment Office and the other from the Apprenticeship Centre. The other three are the visible immigrants that represented Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Research Analyses

Language:

The main results of this research depict that Finnish language is very important. The accounts of the immigrants interviewed emphasises the important of Finnish language as a tool and as a means of communication at work. However, they all agreed the level of proficiencies in both writing and speaking depends on the type of job is seeking. As one of them expresses, that

“.. it is very important to speak Finnish in order to express yourself, ... it makes you feel comfortable if you can explain what you are doing” On another instance, another interviewee expressed that *“It depends on the job... if one is working in a highly skilled jobs one does not need Finnish so much and moreover, most of your colleagues are able to communicate in English. On the other hand, immigrants working in the cleaning jobs, for instance, would need more Finnish to be able to communicate with their colleagues”*

Both immigrants and gatekeepers agree that the role of Finnish language in the labour market is very important. Even though both groups have the same opinion that the proficiency depends on the type of job that one is seeking, however, they do not agree on the level proficiency required for potential immigrant job-seekers. To most gatekeepers potential job-seekers should be able to read and write the Finnish language so as to be able communicate both in writing and orally.

All the three immigrants interviewed for this research have lived in Finland for more than five years, and have very good command of the Finnish language, had had their education here in Finland or upgraded their vocational skills here, yet only one, in relative terms, has a steady labour market status. But as he acknowledged, that it has been years of hard work of studying and perseverance.

“It has always been difficult looking for job” one commented, *“... I compensated myself with cleaning jobs”* Another said, *“...Pretty hard, I have tried to get a job connected to my background but it's not easy”*

The ongoing discussion depicts that educated immigrants try really hard to get jobs that are connected to their background.

Gatekeepers agree that it is very competitive in the labour market even for Finns and as such for immigrants to get employed you should be as good as the Finn. The criteria gatekeepers are looking at are educational background, credible references and experience in the required field. In addition to the pre-requisite for the immigrant is language proficiency and trustworthiness. According to gatekeepers, having credible references from Finland guarantees that one can be trustworthy. This issue of trust and references are also a concerned issue to visible immigrants as well.

Immigrant respondents agreed to a high degree that having a middleman or a Finn as a reference is very important. Quoting from the responses, “...with my experience from the past, it is much easier to get a job if you a Finn as a reference”. While another thinks that, “.... It depends, but it would be very helpful, if a Finn introduces you, it adds to the trust”.

Job satisfaction is as important to immigrants as it is to all workers. Most visible immigrants are not satisfied with their present status in the labour market, either because they have not acquired jobs that they have been trained for or then they are hopping from one job to the other because of labour market strategies or any other reasons yet to find out. As noted above, only one of the immigrant respondents had a steady job, the rest are yet to find.

“No, I haven’t found one yet, because I need to find a job which is permanent and related to my background, but what I am doing is better than nothing”.

The other commented that he once had a job which was related to his background but was laid off because he was the only African among the group. He had two experiences to share. First, as a social educator, he worked as a substitute for more than a year, but when the same post was opened to be field, a young Finn who has just graduated from was offered the post. This incident motivated him to search for new profession; having been trained as Information Technology specialist, he got a job which was in connection with his background but was laid off during downsizing of the company ...”because I was the only African in the group”, he said.

It is difficult, however, for immigrants to get jobs of their dreams or Jobs related to their background. There are several reasons why some educated immigrants have not found any jobs of their dreams. Some of the reasons presented by the respondents varied

enormously. While others maintain that in part, pure economic mechanisms, such as competitiveness in the labour market and individual attributes as the main reason, others understand the situation differently.

Those that do not believe that purely economic factors are responsible for their situation maintain that discrimination is the reason. As one puts it

“I think it is this unofficial discrimination, you don’t see it, hidden discrimination, age discrimination, because presently a lot of employers look for people under 30 years of age and below”.

Gatekeepers maintain that there is hope for immigrants to take their place in the Finnish labour market, since the Finnish population is aging. But for an immigrant to get employed, they maintain that, Finnish language skills are as important as references and job experiences.

CASE STUDY

5.0. Immigrants and the Labour Market

It is now a common knowledge that the post-war baby-boom generation is leaving the labour market by the end of this decade. This phenomenon leads to labour shortages in all sectors of the economy. As part of the strategy to increase employment rates, The Labour Policy Strategy for 2003 to 2007 to 2010 aims at reducing structural unemployment and preventing exclusion and creating preconditions for an active labour immigration policy.

The strategy include also facilitating the employment of immigrants by organising 40 credits of training for immigrants within the scope of the Integration Act, increasing immigrants' practical training, coaching for working life and apprenticeship training as well as their participation in vocational training, and including in these training in Finnish and Swedish; as well as developing the employment and entrepreneur services to better meet the immigrants' needs. Furthermore, Vision 2010 states that:

“Finland will be a knowledge-based welfare state providing employment opportunities for all. Employment services will have been reorganised to meet the challenges of the new labour market situation and the changing workforce.”

A key element of the emerging strategy is the view that, Finland needs extra labour force, including immigrants, in all the sectors of the economy. These discussions are a sign for more effective integrated policy and good prospects for immigrants in Finland. Such policies are seen in the implementation of projects financed by both the EU Structural Fund and the Ministry of Labour.

However, while these projects have recoded successes, their target groups has always been the refugees at the reception centres whose fate or future in Finland are not certain. Hence these projects exclude other immigrants from benefiting from them.

Does the current discussion bring new hope for visible immigrants? It is hard to predict given the sensitiveness of the concept of visibility that brings about issues of trust,

discrimination and racism that creates the dichotomy and the split labour market. However, the Finnish authorities and employers have the belief that conditions for immigration will improve as the Finnish population is aging.

To sustain the overall economic growth and competitiveness of Finnish enterprises, immigrants' labour force is needed. It is strongly concluded that the situation with demographic decline call for exploring legal means for third country nationals to migrate to Finland to fill in the gaps that are being created by the immense number of people of retiring age. Changes are under way to reform the equality Act to provide more rights to immigrants to have easy access to the labour market. The outcome of those views will determine the future situation of immigrants in Finland.

Emerging labour shortages are currently on discussions throughout Finland. Though the demographic threat that there will be shrink of working age population is not disputed, there are different views on whether labour immigration is the solution to that or the labour market will be able to absorb the already immigrants already in the system. There is a false alarm that immigrants already leaving in Finland will help fill some gaps in the labour market but this has no impact on basic unwritten employment *policy* that "*the Finnish people first*". Notwithstanding some 'success stories', on the average immigrants, and especially non-EEA migrants, visible immigrants are in a disadvantaged position in terms of employment and unemployment rates, type of jobs and contracts, and pay and working conditions.

Whether the situation will change for third country labourer to enjoy the same treatment as Finnish citizen in regard to certain basic economic and social rights depends on the policy both at EU level and, in Finland. Nevertheless, it is better to point out that immigration is one of the politically sensitive issues; the way it attempts to balance economic need and political interest will determine the prospects of visible immigrants in Finland.

5.1. Education and Language Skills

Compulsory education for immigrants is required if the immigrants is to live and work in Finland. Education as emphasised in the Integration Act of 1999, states that:

“Integration means that the immigrant acquires knowledge and abilities that help him/her to live in Finland and take part in the working life as an equal functioning member of society. This requires above all, knowledge of Finnish or Swedish, knowledge about the functioning of Finnish society and customs as well as such professional skills that are needed to support oneself and one’s family.”

Breaking down the statement above:

- Language studies in Finnish or Swedish
- Acquiring knowledge about Finnish society and culture
- Acquiring or completing basic or vocational training
- Acquiring the abilities needed in the Finnish working life
- Establishing contacts with Finns
- Participation in other meaningful activities

What comes first on the immigrant’s education status is how Finnish an immigrant can become through the education programs suggested above. The immigrant is assumed to be invisible to the society as long as he/she fluently speaks Finnish.

Educational attainments are one of the requirements to every job that one seeks for. However, in the case of immigrants their education qualifications from their home country have not been taken into consideration whenever they apply for jobs here in Finland. To be able to execute your duties, any employee needs to acquire certain skills and trainings that are needed for that particular job. *“They don’t look for certificate and experiences outside of Finland”* as one of the respondents said. This clearly shows that the immigrant’s previous educational background is not taken into consideration when employers are considering employing an immigrant. The above argument leads to believing that it does not matter at all what previous qualifications and work experiences one has. As one of the respondents rightly put, *“It makes you feel and understand that your education is not accepted at all here in Finland”*.

Most immigrants would like their educational certificate be accredited according to Finnish standard, if this is what it takes to be recognised and accepted in the Finnish labour market so that, at least, they know where to continue from. When the question

was asked “*Do you think your certificate should be equated to the Finnish standard or be given the Finnish equivalent?*” The first reaction was yes! The explanation that follows expresses the feeling of frustration as most of the respondents had to study further or then change profession in order to get employed. One of the respondents exclaimed,

“...so they want us to put away our previous education and experiences to learn something new” the same respondent continued, that “*the lower version of your qualification is enforced on you*”

As he gave an example that a medical doctor from her/his home country changes to study nursing because he/she could not practice medicine as a doctor in Finland.

Concerning the accreditation of certificates, gatekeepers, at least, in the private sector do not express any interest in that, rather emphasis on skills and abilities backed by credible references or referees are more important.

5.2. The Gateway into the Finnish Labour Market

According to Blalock, economic theories, define the labour market as demand of labour and the supply of labour as a relationship between employers and potential employees in an ideal situation. However, in Finland, the individuals have few real choices, making it much more difficult to deal with the phenomenon (Blalock 1982:49). There are many actual and potential employees, only a few of them are of visible immigrant group. Is access to the labour market, in this case, defined along group lines or individuals are permitted to compete in the labour market strictly as individuals? There are several factors that determine the employability of a job-seeker. Some of them will be discussed in this chapter.

Assume a qualified individual applies for a particular position in a firm and supposed further that he or she is turned down; probably with a polite letter stating that since many other qualified applicants have also applied for the same position only the best could be selected. Although we would naturally expect you to be disappointed, we would also assume that the selection processes has been fair and that the one who has been selected is the best qualified. The cycle of application-replies continues till the applicant finds something less than he or she desires. In such an instance it is very

ambiguous to know whether decisions have been based on group affiliations or individual skills. (Blalock, 1982: 49).

An invisible immigrant from the countries of the European Union or from the United States has a higher probability to have a smooth labour market status. Such condition actually put immigrants to rich and poor country categories or then visible and invisible immigrant groups. Once an immigrant falls within the latter category his/her chances of finding a job is higher than an immigrant who is visible in all aspects and coming from a developing country.

To most immigrants, having a “friend” is hard to come by. A friend in this case is the one who trust you without any prejudice and can guarantee your ability to accomplish a task without having a second thought of what others (other Caucasians) might say. Most Finns describe themselves as shy introverts and finds it difficult to relate to strangers. However, there is one thing that easily opens up Finns to immigrants, that is, the sauna tradition. Once an immigrant has been in sauna with a Finn, the culture of trust begins and continues as bottle and crates and emptied. This should be a continuous process to build a bond between them. This bond becomes inbuilt and establishes a strong relationship between the parties with, at least a common interest. Based on my own experiences, it has always been easy to build relationships based on our common interest in sauna going which forms a very big part of Finnish traditions. While in some instances, abstaining from going to sauna negative affected my chances of getting employed.

I believe that, ironically, being in sauna exposes your nakedness that signifies that there is nothing to hide. Consciously or unconsciously, some immigrants are not aware of such tacit trust built by the act of being naked. It is also true that most immigrants, specifically from Africa, are not thrilled by the act of being naked among others in an enclosed room, and as a result avoid the sauna with other

The importance of Finnish language in the Finnish labour market cannot be over emphasised. For all the white colour jobs available, Finnish language is automatically, a pre-requisite requirement for immigrants. While some jobs require just the ability to express oneself, others require the proficiency of both oral and written. The bottom line

is that to be able to work in a Finnish firm one must at least have working language skills. It is one of the decisive factors for immigrant applicants; however, the degree of proficiency depends on the type of job or then the gatekeeper.

The above discussion marks the key elements that determine the fate of immigrants as potential employees. All the pieces together fit into the puzzle. As it has been acknowledged by several researchers of immigrant situation in the labour market, the longer an immigrant lives in Finland the better the chances of having a stable status in the labour market. Yet some pieces of the puzzle are still missing among some immigrants and so are still experiencing unstable labour market status.

The unwritten policy of “employing a Finns first is a contributing factor to the present situation of visible immigrants. Would an employer have the “courage” to employ an immigrant for a position that might as well be occupied by a Finn? This is probably a single question that almost every employer without thinking about it would say yes to avoid being labelled as discriminatory. Most gatekeepers did say, ‘yes’ they would employ an immigrant if he or she is qualified for the job. However further discussions around the question revealed that preferably, they will employ the Finn for the sake of time and cost consumption to re-educate the immigrant on the company’s working culture and how things are done there. Time saving is an issue yet every new employee undergoes some sort of orientation get customised to the working culture; However, in the case of immigrants it cost more. As a result, most employers are compelled to employ Finns.

During the interview with gatekeepers, they acknowledged that immigrants are needed and are employed for special projects. In most cases they have had immigrants working there for short periods. For example, in *Aamulehti* Russian journalists were employed for the purpose of covering news in Russia within a particular period; also in the Employment offices native speakers are employed as translators to assist work with immigrants. This actually confirms that immigrants are a reserve workforce to be employed last only to be laid off first as collateral of economic down turn.

Furthermore, the inconsistencies in the responses to the question of employing an immigrant comes out clearly when they express the need for language skills; a medium to communicate efficiently with workmate. The importance of Finnish language is

emphasised as the key to the labour market. On the one hand, it is understandable that to be able to work with the Finnish people, one needs substantial communication skills needed for everyday routines. On the other hand, there are certain jobs that require basically no Finnish language at all to get it done.

The level of language proficiency required of an immigrant to qualify for a job in a Finnish firm varies from an employer to an employer. It was rather difficult to find out what exactly is the level of proficiency that is required of potential immigrant job-seekers since almost everyone places Finnish language skills as a very important and essential pre-requisite to qualify for a job in Finland. However, it frequently came across that most of the time even though Finnish language is the most important of the prerequisite for a job; it widely depends on the kind and type of company or job that the immigrant is seeking. But for most Finnish firms, the oral and written skills are essential, at least, to be able to communicate in Finnish and read circulars or reply or send e-mails. For companies like *Aamulehti Kustannus* and most others, one of the job descriptions is to read and write emails, answer to phone and talk to customers, thus language skills are very important tool for work.

In addition to the emphasis on the importance of Finnish language, which is the official language for most companies or firms in Finland, it is essential that any potential employee has very good language skills in order to be able to contribute during meetings. According to the employers, if an immigrant speaks and writes good Finnish he or she is likely to be employed. As one of them puts it, *“If not perfect Finnish close to perfection, because our customers and clients are Finnish”* She continues that, *“One has to have the written as well as the oral so that part of the work is to answer the phone and also to see customers”*

Finnish language is one of the many barriers that immigrants need to overcome when applying for a job. Potential job applicants are often confronted with, the question or a clause how proficient they are in Finnish language. What is “enough”? Most of the immigrants respondents have been in Finland long enough to be able to at least express themselves in Finnish. So the question is what enough. There are possibly and undoubtedly, uncountable issues that employers have to deal with thoroughly with every potential employee before considering him or her as part of the team. But isn't it

that such issues are more difficult for immigrants to qualify than natives or otherwise invisible immigrants; call them Westerners.

With reference to the discussion above, some gatekeepers maintain that language is not the issue, rather, professional skills and the ability for one to perform allocated tasks. This suggests that language is not as strong but necessary a pre-requisite for getting a job in Finland as other requirements. They explained that the language is only required for communicating during meetings or reporting issues.

The presence of new immigrant groups from the Eastern European countries or new EU member states has contributed to the increase in high unemployment rate among visible immigrants. Even though the unemployment rate among immigrants in general has reduced considerably over the past few years it has not taken into consideration which immigrant groups are getting employed. When employers are asked whether they have immigrants working with them or whether they have had any immigrants working with them, the answer has always been affirmative in favour of Estonians or Russians.

Invisible Westerners are always at advantage to the labour market irrespective of their language skills or the number of years spent in Finland. They relatively get into the labour market provided there are jobs available for their qualification. For one company they have employed a German girl only for a project that needed a German. In another instance the employees were Russians and they were needed for a period of time to assist in translation. These are few examples of how the employers are employing immigrants in white collar jobs. Could this be the liberal stand for employers to take care of imminent labour shortage in many fields? Immigrants are needed not only for specific projects that include foreign language translations alone, but also in the main streams of the economy.

Employers prefer to employ immigrants of Caucasian origin to immigrants of the visible type. The issue being of different is always present in the job-sphere. All things being equal, may the best candidate win. On the surface, most employers think of professionals as what they can do, and this is brought to light by their working experiences and the number of references they have, rather than where they have attained their education. On the contrary it was very obvious that working as a language instructor or as a representative of your culture did not need any certification.

Thus most visible immigrants, who have been able to work with other companies for a while, were employed because of their language skills and cultural background.

5.3. Employability and Time

It has been scientifically proved that the longer an immigrant lives in Finland the better chances for him or her to have a steady labour market status. Immigrants, who have lived in Finland for a long period of time, acquired their vocational or university education and have very good proficiency in both spoken and written Finnish, are likely to have a stable labour market status. All things being equal, living in Finland for a long time guarantees that one gets a job. This is a single statement that most researchers have been referring to.

During the period within which an immigrant stays in Finland, there are a number of things that go on. The immigrant might, in most cases, engage him or herself in one or more of the following activities: spends time in educating him or herself, jump from one job into the other, or then seriously acquiring Finnish language skills and culture. Which of the above mentioned activities guarantee an immigrant a permanent place in the labour market? As a matter of practicality, all of the above are very necessary for anyone who wants to live in Finland. However, having achieved all of the above is not enough unless a very close relationship to the Finnish society is developed; a good education is not enough, having a good proficiency in both written and spoken Finnish is not enough, rather having contacts and credible experiences in your professional fields guarantee one a kind of job that one has been trained for.

On the contrary, most immigrants who have had their professional education abroad, find it very difficult to have their professional work experiences accredited, thus the number of years they spend in Finland does not improve their years of professional experiences because there is no continuity. Rather there is a change of profession into, what I call survival profession, where previous education and professional experiences are not a pre-requisite condition.

Similarly, the situation is not different for immigrants who have acquired their professional education in Finland. In the first place, those immigrants who find themselves in the humanities might find it very difficult to find a job in this field due to

the competitiveness of such white collar jobs even among the natives, and the high level of language proficiency required in such jobs.

Secondly, Immigrants who attend polytechnics or technical universities may find themselves in the situation where even getting a work placement is as difficult as getting a real job. Those who get the chance to do their internships face two major problems in the job training field. Compared to Finns, immigrant trainees find themselves in a situation where the purpose of their presences at the job-training places is not met. In most cases, there is no supervisor or a trainer to guide and teach how things are done there. Furthermore, the immigrant is accorded to do things far less below his or her expertise. Such situations may undermine the skills and proficiency of the trainee. At the end of the day there is no work done, time wasted.

Thirdly, there are problems of job description as to what the trainee should do or is suppose to do during the internship period. This eventually ends up in redefining the objectives of the internship for the immigrants. He or she might end up doing things that has no bearings with her education. At the end of the internship period, the immigrant has not gained any experience concerning his or education.

Consequently, there tend usually not to be continuation of internship for the immigrant as compared to the Finn. More often than not, most Finns get continuity of their internships, that is, if they want to pursue their career or some of them are employed even before they graduate. This situation is not in favour to immigrant professionals who have had their vocational education here in Finland.

In all, language skills play a very important role in determining the employability of an immigrant. However, it is not the decisive factor. Rather, the number of close contacts that one has determines his or her labour market status. In addition job trainings and internships for immigrants are as important as the language skills and contacts as long as the immigrant is allocated a devoted trainer and supervisor who make sure that proper training and attention are given to the trainee.

As long as people deny being racist or discriminatory in public but engaging in act that are difficult to prove as discriminatory, there trend of sky scraping unemployment among visible immigrants could only decline after one is dead. Generation after

generation will face and deal with the same issues over and over again. Time and the number of years one spends in a place is only a pre-requisite but not a necessary condition or a guarantee for visible immigrants in particular to get stable labour market status.

5.4. Possible explanation to Discrimination in the Labour Market

Open discrimination in the labour market does not exist in Finland, at least not in a visible way. The concealed nature of processes that lead to discrimination could not be overemphasised. Discrimination exists because the result is unconcealed. Well-known explanation to unemployment among educated immigrants is that of their language skills in particular. Generally speaking, it seems to be the reason behind high unemployment rate among educated visible immigrants.

Discrimination exists because it is built in the system that cannot be changed. Horrifying images portrayed by the media about the sick, the hungry and the war-torn people of Africa and the other developing countries aggravate the already existing stereotypical images in the minds of the people. Thus seeing a black person, is immediately associated with the horrifying image seen on the TV or unbelievable stories read from the dailies. The implications of such reactions come instinctively and are very difficult to avert with simple reasoning. This is so because the society is built upon “honesty” and a unique culture which are very difficult to penetrate from the outside.

Discrimination also exists because people are scared of “strangers”. They are afraid of what others will say about their affiliation to, se, a Blackman. They may be afraid of having a very visible person at their workplaces, and they are obviously afraid to communicate with them. Usually, it is ok for employers if they would not have to speak with the “stranger”. The common worker, who has no relationship, or so ever, with visible immigrants has to deal with the idea of having a Blackman as co-worker,

Finally, visible immigrants may be labelled victims of discrimination through being categorised into groups. Finns believe they work harder than anyone else, thus seeing an immigrant from a poor country associates him or her to incompetence and laziness. As one of the respondents said “For instance we have the prejudice that all black people are

lazy” The fact that visible immigrants are categorised into groups make them disadvantaged in the job-seeking arena. There is hardly any difference between an educated Blackman and uneducated one. As one friend commented “You will die with your degrees in your hands because you are no different to an uneducated Blackman. With all your degrees you are still *playing jääkiekko*²⁵”

5.5. Manpower and Ethnicity

The role of racism, xenophobic attitudes and stereotyping in shaping the labour market complicates the concept of discrimination as a whole. Stereotypical attitudes have been found to be the most influential factor in labour market accession. Images portrayed by the media about poor countries, especially, images and news from Africa, rather reinforces already existing strong mentalities and stereotypical issues from such countries. Such feelings and attitudes toward immigrants coming from poor countries make employers and decision makers forget about the manpower capabilities of such people, especially in the situation where the society faces labour shortage.

Labour market discussions evolves around the demand and supply of labour; manpower. Visible immigrants as a source of labour force are potential manpower to fuel the Finnish economy. The issue of visible immigrants has come about as a result of the fact that they as a single group, are disadvantaged in the labour market because of the fact that they are the least wanted compared to immigrants of western origin, or the immigrants from the new European Union member countries.

The issue of Trust in the Finnish labour market is associated with country of origin of the immigrants. In the mid-90s, there were few visible immigrants in Finland and they did not face as much problem in the labour market as those who arrived in the last decade. The reason is in part that immigrants from the Eastern European countries had not yet arrived. As immigrants from the Eastern European countries started to arrive, unemployment among visible immigrants also started to rise. This was evident in the fact that even the low earning jobs were reallocated to the new arrivals. Is this a matter of trust or inborn reaction to situations like these?

²⁵ Jääkiekko is a Finnish word for ice hockey, which is a phrase coined by some immigrants to describe cleaning jobs.

At this juncture, it is safe to speculate that, it is now a common knowledge that white Finns are the most preferred in the labour market, followed by immigrants from the original 15 members of the EU before the accession, then the 10 accession member countries and Asians. Those on the flow are the Anglo-Africans, like the Afro-Americans, Afro-Caribbean and Africans who have lived in Europe almost all their lives. Finally, those I call “out of Africa” that is, those who have arrived straight from Africa south of the Sahara.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

6.0. Conclusions

This research was set out to examine some of the reasons why high unemployment persists among visible immigrants, even the educated ones. Based on personal experiences, as a member of a visible immigrant community and the experiences of few others in the Tampere region, as well as respondents from gatekeepers (employers and institutions working with immigrants), adequate information was made available for the study. The aim was to identify some of the reasons why visible immigrants have unstable labour market status, and to demonstrate that visible immigrants are disadvantaged in the labour market due to their lack of formidable networks.

The first section was a review of existing research of immigrants in Finland in general and theoretical background of visible immigrants in particular. It also dealt with the concepts and theory that are used in the data analyses. The second section dealt with the analyses of the data collected through interviews of gatekeepers and visible immigrants in the labour market.

The results indicate that the level of education and Finnish language proficiency is only pre-requisite but not enough to aid in the labour market accession of visible immigrants. One must be trusted with the help of a “middleman”. While employers acknowledge the need for proficiency in the Finnish language and culture, visible immigrants with a good command of the Finnish language proficiency say otherwise.. Researches and theories that examine the issues of visible immigrants affirm that as long as there are significant differences in physical appearances between indigenous and visible immigrants the problem would persist.

However, some immigrants, namely, the Chinese and the Vietnamese, not forget the Turkish people, have been able to make use of their social networks to enter the labour market (restaurant business). Thus it is recommended that tight social networks among visible immigrants could be a stepping stone into the labour market.

6.1. Activeness in the Labour Market

“Being Active” is said to be the clue for immigrants to get into the labour market of Finland. What then is activeness in the labour market? For most experts that I spoke to for an immigrant to find a job, the immigrant is expected to play an active role by sending more applications to every possible job opening available that suits your qualification, even when you are rejected. Activeness is also seen in communal activities that are aimed at assisting immigrants in their integration processes. Of course, it makes sense in that one has to be very active in building social networks to facilitate the job seeking process, where competition is very keen (one opening about 600 applicants).

The equal opportunity for all requires that all people must be treated in the same way. This is to say that in the job seeking processes, both immigrants and indigenous Finns are treated the same way. Not forgetting that the application processes might not in favour of immigrants.

Assuming that two applicants, one an indigenous Finn and the other an immigrant, applying for the same job (bare in mind the equal right law). Both applicants have same qualifications but there are differences in their work experiences and language skills. Let’s say that the immigrants has very good Finnish language skills but not comparable to the indigenous Finn. The other differences are in the work experiences; that is while the indigenous Finn has real experiences required, the immigrant has experiences only in cleaning or in the news paper distribution. There are other qualities other than the ones mentioned above that are taking into consideration including references i.e. connections to the social networks familiar to the company, working culture of the company and of course in Finland and the finally but not the least, trustworthiness that is required of the applicants.

Based on the above description of a typical job-seeking process scenario that is possible in any up-coming multicultural society, it is my opinion that the projects aimed at improving the working conditions of immigrants, namely ETMO²⁶ (Multiculturalism as

²⁶ ETMO and Becoming Visible projects are some of the projects under EQUAL – a community initiative of the EU committed to combating discrimination and inequality in the labour market.

a resource in a working community), Becoming Visible, Moro Project, Becoming Even More Visible just to mention a few, be modified to take care of social network building and trustworthiness, and even more importantly the presence of immigrants expertise are needed when it come to issues pertaining to them are being decided²⁷.

In my opinion major roles should be given to immigrants experts. While such projects have recorded successes as some immigrants (refugees) have been trained for new professions, and also skills including Finnish language skills, on the other hand some educated immigrants who have been in Finland for quite a number of years are still unhappy about their present situation despite their activeness in the labour market. How are the EQUAL projects to help such people?

First of all, the target group for such projects are refugees or then those immigrants already at work, which exclude immigrants that came to Finland voluntarily with the intention of getting education or otherwise are in Finland for other reasons including family ties or seeking economic refuge. Such immigrant group are left out entirely from such projects. The second issue worth pondering about is that while such projects have recorded successes, they have not taking into consideration, the immigrants' previous educational and professional experiences.

The issue is that one takes the new profession offered as an opportunity to the readily available job-openings. Thus "activeness in the labour market" could be interpreted in different ways depending on which point of view one is talking about. There are several immigrants who are very active in establishing their own businesses including cleaning companies and restaurants, while others are active in applying for every possible job opening available.

Activeness in building a social network consciously or unconsciously has proved to be of great importance among some immigrant groups. A social network of immigrant restaurant owners in Finland has proved to be very effective. Among the Chinese, Turks, Vietnamese and the Thais, social networks have proved to be one of the ways through which immigrants could find their ways in the Finnish labour market.

²⁷ refer to Monitori 1/2003 Towards genuine equality by Salahudin Elmi
<http://www.mol.fi/monitori/moto103end.html> (2 of 3)27/08/2004 13:59:21

On the other hand while this is only an example of self employment, it also portrays the effective use of social networks in finding oneself participating as full functioning member of society. The same principle could be applied to the immigrants professional. A social network would bring all immigrants together to share common information including, job opportunities, working culture of the Finnish society and even provide the trustworthiness required of immigrants. Such social networks would work in collaboration with institutions that provide education and job-trainings for members of the network.

6.1. Activeness in the Labour Market through Social Networks

Social network is one of the possible solutions to the high unemployment among visible immigrants in Finland. In the first place, based on the concept of hubs in a networking society, a hub of visible immigrants would be connected to other hubs. These hubs include employment agents, industries, institutions and the employment office, working together in collaboration toward a common goal. The hub of visible immigrants would function as an institution on its own providing teaching services, training and counselling, action planning to all immigrants most especially visible immigrants; a recruiting agent, which in the first place provide work for immigrant experts, which otherwise would be unemployed.

Such immigrant expertise provides assistance to members in terms of information dissemination of available jobs and the requirements needed for particular positions. In some instances, assistance may include educating or training immigrants in specific areas of their profession in order to make them marketable in Finland. This is not to say that the old system that existed does not work. It works but not for visible immigrants.

The new model, which comprises networks of visible immigrants from various nationalities, creates just a new employment agent, similar to other private recruitment agencies, rather than a substitute for the existing system. Secondly, the model provides working experience to immigrant experts. Experiences required by most companies as a pre-requisite for certain positions. Thirdly, immigrants in such position of responsibility get recognition and respect in the society. Finally, it is very important that every person living in a society functions well as a full member of society. Thus being active in

immigrants' network building is the effective way for immigrants to make a difference. That is to say that most immigrant professionals and experts are able to demonstrate their skills in the Finnish society.

6.2. Network Development Collaboration and Employment Model

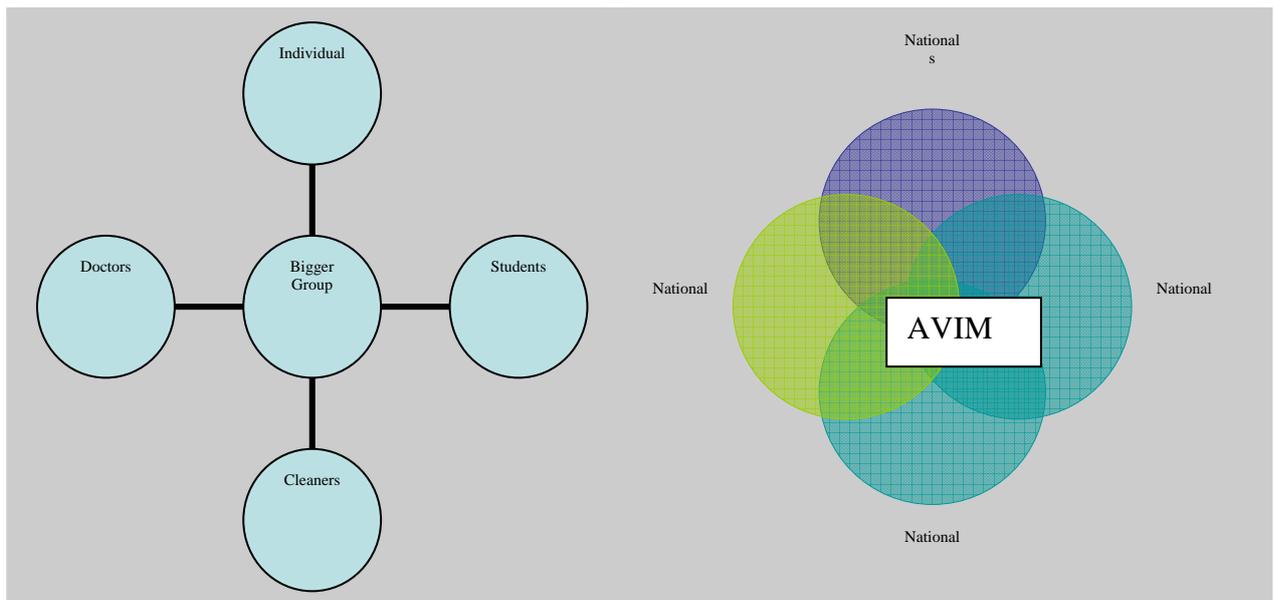
The following explains the model of network development collaboration and employment model needed to alleviate the sky rocking unemployment rates among visible immigrants living in Finland. The need for such a network has arisen as a result of inevitable need to get highly skilled or professionally qualified immigrants residing in Finland to work. It is of great importance that the network provides or assists such groups or persons with the opportunity to access the information, orientation, guidance and support needed to realistically and practically pursue employment in the profession in which they have been trained, or then to consider suitable alternatives.

In this respect, more work is need to finding out about the immigrants' educational background so as to accredit them with the Finnish equivalents of their overseas qualifications and work experiences. Further training, which is complementary and appropriate to their educational background, would be provided whenever needed. More opportunities for competence-based qualifications and the recognition of qualifications should also be found for them. Models for good practices ought to be created. This could remove obstacles from employing immigrants in workplaces while promoting multicultural personnel policy and improving employment opportunities for individuals of a different cultural background in personnel

Social networks of the kind described above are achieved through individual's connections that already in existence. Here, the links already existed among students, cleaners, engineers, teachers and all the possible professions that could be found among immigrants. These professionals or individuals provide the hub with experts whose duties are to perform specific tasks pertaining to their field of expertise. The experts are selected irrespective of nationality or ethnic background and this strengthens and unites the immigrant group. The experts in this case are to perform their tasks and remain as neutral as possible while maintaining professionalism at their work. The diagram below shows the network of individuals, professionals and students from which an expert is

delegated to work for immigrants. He or she is then represented in AVIM. (Association of Visible Immigrants) AVIM forms the core or the Hub that connect to other hubs.

Figure 2: The Network Model



Building Networks through collaboration with educational institutions, governmental organisations, Non-governmental organisations, the Employment Office, Employers etc.

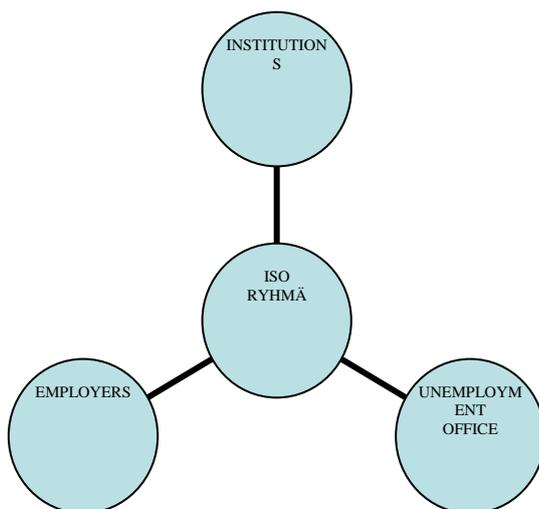


Figure 3: Collaboration Network

6.3. The Duties of AVIM:

The representative board of AVIM takes as responsibility, to ensure the following:

- Understand the issues concerning the labour market- locally and generally- including demand and supply mechanisms and future shortages.
- Research into specific branches where there is need for labour
- Visits to companies followed by research into companies' qualification needs in relation to participants' competencies and qualifications.
- Project work and reporting on the subject matter of labour market competency needs and gaps, etc.
- Teaching and training of communication skills.
- Development of personal skills – communication, learning styles and empowerment, etc.

The functions of the AVIM could be divided into three stages:

1. Selection of potential job seekers, for specific jobs, through interviews
2. Teaching, training and counselling
3. Monitoring and support for trainees or immigrant workers

This model will aim at bringing all immigrant professionals and potential job seekers together to empower themselves to effectively access the labour market on long term basis.

In addition, collaboration with other institutions such as the educational institutions, employment office and potential employers, AVIM will establish a counsel of experts from these institutions to monitor the professional developments of individuals (visible immigrants).

Finally, the processes are intended to assist visible immigrants to gain long term employment, or then have stable labour market status, in the areas where they have been trained for in the Finnish labour market.

Most visible immigrants living in Finland are located in the services sector of the Finnish economy where most of them, irrespective of the educational background, are either cleaners or then working in the postal services. However, there are others who have been unemployed for longer period of time, se one to three or even five years of

unemployment. They have either been continuously unemployed or have had unstable labour market status, in between jobs. Such jobs require just surviving language skills in Finnish and as such have no chance of improving their language skills to the extent to which they could be employed in the mainstream Finnish work.

As a matter of fact, most of the visible immigrants in such situations have very low esteem and there is no motivation at all or so ever to fight on. To some the only motivation is to move out of the country, on the other hand a handful of them are said to be stuck in the system because of their families and because of the fear of starting a new life in elsewhere.

Even though there seems to be barriers to this model as to how to gain recognition and Trust among both the collaborators and the members of the AVIM, through hard work and perseverance, with hands on resources and motivation, immigrant expertise as full time or part-time workers ensures that the work is done.

6.4. Trust Building Strategy through Collaboration

It is now a common knowledge that immigrants either trained locally in Finland or are foreign-trained professionals who want to integrate into the Finnish Society and contribute to the growth of the economy are facing major obstacles in their attempt to access the labour market. They end up unemployed or underemployed because of a variety of barriers preventing their formal accreditation of their previous qualification or then simply the ability of the gatekeepers to trust the skills of immigrants. There are also issues concerning visibility, the physical appearance of immigrants and their origins as a major obstacle to integration. These barriers are sometimes implicit or explicit rules that serve to unnecessarily limit access to professions and trades.

The challenges to breaking down the barriers for visible immigrants are enormous. Many projects financed both by the Finnish government and the European Union, are working to improve labour market access for immigrants. Undoubtedly, cohesive collaboration with gatekeepers will result in a well developed broader access strategies. In addition, immigrants should take a keen role towards empowering themselves by actively seeking the appropriate channels of empowerment.

Through collaboration and information dissemination, AVIM is informed of the available job openings that could be filled with potential immigrant job seekers. How are they going to be informed of the openings? Representatives of various associations advertise the openings to their members through word of mouth that goes through the network. Potential applicants will then submit their applications to the AVIM where selection of potential candidates is made.

The selection board comprises of the following members:

- Employment advisor
- Language advisor/instructor
- Cultural advisor in working culture

The composition of the selection board depends on the openings available and the requirements for the openings. In situations where further education is required a representative of an educational institution will be required to assess the need for further training.

6.6. Final Remarks

Job discrimination against visible immigrants even when these immigrants had attained Finnish citizenship is a common phenomenon. Compared to past immigrants to the western countries, recent African immigrants, for instance, are more educated and versatile in different skills. Most of them do not depend on welfare but rather engage in other jobs to keep up, no matter how degrading it might be. Laziness is out of the question; most of these immigrants migrated because of economic hardship at home, so the objective is to earn enough to be able remit families back home.

However, there are others who primarily migrated in order to acquire western knowledge and education. Having spent several years of their lives here in Finland some thought it wise to spend the rest of their lives here with their new families, eventually they naturalise as Finnish citizens. Inevitably, it has become very difficult for such category of immigrants to think of starting a new life elsewhere.

Press release by the Ministry of Labour Finland, on the 8th February 2005 acknowledged that recent research on immigrants and the labour market depicts that immigrants who have lived in Finland for several years have higher probability of getting jobs, on condition that their language proficiency is close to that of the indigenous Finn (meaning reading and writing). Unlike Visible immigrants living in countries, such as in the United States of America, Canada, Australia and United Kingdom for same number of years, proficiency in writing and speaking Finnish language has not been the easiest; one has to spend his or her lifetime studying Finnish language. (Press release, 2005)

Nevertheless, in some instances their command of the language often could be compared to that of a native Finnish. Despite the immigrants' proficiency in the language, they still find integration very difficult. There are tons of stories told by immigrants about their life experiences on discrimination. In some instances, proficiency in Finnish is not enough; immigrants are required in some cases to know Swedish, in the same way as the Finns themselves. Most immigrants, who have been rejected from work, have been asked to learn Swedish as well after proven proficient in Finnish.

Irrespective of their proficiency in Finnish language and their education, a visible immigrant who works at the lower level of employment strata may not encounter significantly high degree of job discrimination compared to someone who is a professional such as a teacher at the polytechnic or a lecturer at the university, an engineer, a computer specialist, etc. The reason has been that, such immigrant workers have very few contacts with their Finnish counterparts and as such their presence at work may not offend anyone. On the other hand, an immigrant in a higher position may face discrimination because his position is desired by a Finn.

One of the most severe handicap and frustration that affect most visible immigrant, which may lead to job discrimination, was lack of articulation and initiative. This has nothing to do with being loud, rather, the ability to express oneself effectively and clearly in Finnish. Most visible immigrants could express themselves well in Finnish but may not be able to articulate it well during job interviews, that is, if they get the chance.

The positive news is that, those who cannot stomach the insult and the frustration in the job-seeking process either went into establishing private enterprises or then left the country. These businesses range from cleaning companies, and restaurants to ownership of grocery stores that cater to African and Asian needs. On the other hand there are those who are not born to be businessmen or then lacked the motivation, knowledge and capital necessary to start their own businesses. These have no other choices, but to stick around the infested work environment hoping that some day they will find their place in the labour market.

In conclusion, whether the problems associated with labour market accession by visible immigrants are discrimination or any other reasons other than that, there were several issues that are critical for visible immigrants as a group to deal with in this respect. Even though, the labour market seems to deal with individual potential job-seekers, visible immigrants are dealt with and or categorised into groups.

Some of these issues among other things that make it difficult for visible immigrants to access the labour market with ease include Finnish language proficiency, working experience and referees, just to mention but a few. These problems vary from person to person. While working experiences and references are hard to achieve in the present situation, acquiring Finnish language proficiency has been made available by the authorities. On the other side of the coin, immigrants have to deal with day-to-day discrimination and racism individually together with their personal complexities and cultures. Some of the reasons why visible immigrants have a special case in the labour market are the fact that they are different: they do not speak the same language as we do; they have strange cultures that make it difficult for some Finns to understand and relate to them.

It is a good thing to be optimistic that the situation of visible immigrants in the Finnish labour market will improve eventually, under the current circumstances. First, because of the fact that, efforts are made visible by projects financed by the Finnish government, mainly, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of Education together with Funds from the European Union. Second, because of the fact that the Finnish labour force is aging and there would be places for immigrants in the future. However, what is left and missing in these processes is the collective consensus and efforts by visible immigrant groups to come together and collaborate with existing institutions to solve problems of labour market accession that would in turn facilitate integration of visible immigrants.

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APPENDIX 1

Administered questionnaire for the study

Immigrants and the labour market of Finland

Questionnaire for the Employers

1. In Brief, could you tell something about your organisation and the role you play in decision making?
2. Do you have any immigrants working in your organisation? If yes, from which countries and how many? How long have they been working or did you work together?
3. Would you take the chance to employ if an immigrant applies for a position in your organisation?
4. How do you see the importance of Finnish language as a pre-requisite to enter the labour market?
5. What level of language proficiency are you talking about?
6. What are the differences between professionals from Europe and the US compared to professionals coming from other parts of the world?
7. Would you prefer that their certificates be equated to the Finnish equivalent?
8. What role, in your opinion does trust play, in the decision to employ foreigners?
9. Research depicts that Finns are more prejudiced than the average European. Do you agree? If so tell how prejudice influences employers' decision to employ or get acquainted with immigrants.
10. What kind of position and importance do immigrants have in the labor market in the future?
11. Do you agree that immigrants are a reserve workforce to be employed last and dismissed first if the economic conditions deteriorate? What would you recommend to revise this kind of development?
12. What do images from war-torn Africa and poor countries portray by the media influences the way you think about foreigners from such countries?

13. Do you see me as an individual or as belonging to a group? E.g. Africans, or blacks, or Arabs.
14. According to my own experience, people would rather keep their status, reputation than to engage themselves with immigrants to lose their respect. To what extent would you agree to this?
15. Do you think that there is discrimination in the labour market?
16. How could discrimination in the labour market be prevented?
17. Do you see the need for immigrants in your organisation? Why or why not?
18. Do you see the need for immigrants in Finnish labour market? Why or why not?
19. What is the gateway /or: Are there specific gateways/ for immigrants into the labour market? /AND, a complementary question: Should there be specific gateways?
20. Are you optimistic about the future of immigrants in the labour market? Why do you say so?

Immigrants in the labour Market of Finland

Questionnaire for Immigrants

1. Age ____
2. Place of birth
3. Sex
4. Nationality
5. Where do you come from originally?
6. Marital status
7. How long have you been in Finland?
8. What is your educational background? Polytechnic, Lower University (with polytechnic qualification), Upper University, any _____
9. Where have you got your education?
10. What is your profession?
11. Do you think your certificate should be equated to the Finnish standard or be given the Finnish equivalent?
12. What do you do for living?
13. How long have you been employed or unemployed?
14. If employed, have you been trained for the job? And how long have you worked with this organisation? What is the role of Finnish language at your work?
15. Could you describe your experiences with your work mates, if any? Friendly, hostile, unfriendly etc.
16. What is your Finnish Language proficiency?
17. Do you think you should get somebody, mainly, a Finn to introduce or recommend you, before getting a job?
18. Have you received any social benefits?
19. How hard have you tried to look for a job?
20. What kinds of jobs have you been looking for?
21. Have you succeeded in looking for a job of your dream in Finland?
22. Are you satisfied with what you are doing at the moment?

23. Do you think of any reason at all, why you still haven't got a place to work?