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**BRAND FINLAND IN EDUCATION EXPORT**

—

A case study of an info-promotional video presentation of “Finnish Education Excellence”.

Master's thesis

Faculty of Education, Media Education

Autumn 2020

University of Lapland, Faculty of Education

The title of the pro gradu thesis: Brand Finland in Education Export – A case-study of an info-promotional video presentation of “Finnish Education Excellence”.

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Degree programme / subject: Media Education

The type of the work: Pro gradu thesis   X   Laudatur thesis    Licenciate thesis   

Number of pages: 101 + 2 Appendixes

Year: 2020

### **Summary:**

This Master’s thesis for MA in Media Education at the University of Lapland discusses education export as a part of country branding, especially in respect of self-perception and as experienced national identity. Education is an integral part of “Brand Finland”. Brand is a set of values, hopes and characteristics associated with any organization or a product. The Finnish government has included education to be one of the elements that encapsulate what Finland stands for.

To make the issue more concrete, the second part of the thesis discusses a video presentation created to communicate “Finnish Education Excellence” to selected audiences. The video presentation belongs to a genre of info-promotional material, as it is not only marketing a product, but also delivering information. Often marketing material is being analyzed in the context of the receiver of the message, however, in this study this setting is reversed. Analysing a info-promotional video is also bringing forth perhaps hidden or unconscious values through selection themes and how issues are presented to the viewer.

I analyse the research material with a tailor-made method combining semiotics, three-layered visual analysis and content analysis. The method proved out to be very fruitful in discussing and processing especially the multisensory nature of the audio-visual material.

It is evident that the themes selected for the info-promotional video analysed were consistent with the themes in more general “Brand Finland”. These themes included nature and sustainability, easy-going and simple living, high-technology, dynamic youthfulness, working together and solution-centred attitude. Furthermore, connections with visual narrative with Brand Finland were clear. Education, including education export, are an essential aspect of the nation brand of Finland.

**Keywords:** Education export, Brand Finland, info-promotional material, video analysis

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## 1. INTRODUCTION – FINNISH EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

This Master's thesis for MA in Media Education at the University of Lapland will discuss education export as a part of country brand building, especially in respect of self-perception and as experienced national identity. Education is an integral part of "Brand Finland". Brand is a set of values, hopes and characteristics associated with any organization or a product. The Finnish government has included education to be one of the elements that encapsulate what Finland stands for (Schatz 2016, pp. 17, 70). When education and especially education export is currently discussed, it stems from the point-of-view of strengths defined by government officials (Rossi 2017, pp. 268).

To make the issue more concrete, the second part of the thesis will discuss a video presentation created to communicate "Finnish Education Excellence" to the selected audiences. The video presentation belongs to a genre of info-promotional material, as it is not only marketing a product, but also delivering information (Bodström 2020, pp. 82). From this follows, that the presentation will be referred in this study as info-promotional video. Often obvious marketing material is being analyzed in the context of the receiver of the message. How the receiver is interpreting it? What kind of feelings and emotions it stirs? What are the cultural connections and perceptions? Are there any unintentional subtexts and are the intentional subtexts correctly understood? In my study the intention is to flip this situation around and ponder how the message is perceived by local, Finnish, audiences. What is the message we believe we are sending and how it is building, or resonating with, our own national identity? After all, every marketing activity also affects the sender of the message. Stating "this is what we are" is often translatable into "this is what we wish to be". It is important to distinguish the desired image from the image that actually is existing in the minds of the target audience (Karvonen 1999, pp. 44). Marketing activities can also reveal values, hidden or visible, and conscious or unconscious presumptions. It often communicates what kind of value-system is in place inside the organization sending the message. Brand is occasionally even seen as a manifestation of *raison d'être* of a society or organization (Olins 2003, pp. 111–129).

I will discuss what are the themes and why they have been selected and how do they connect to the wider framework of Finnish country brand? What is the message Finland is sending to the outside world? Furthermore, it enables us to ponder how it was able to withstand the test of time, has there been a change in themes and what is currently emphasized. The video was distributed through several channels and is readily available on YouTube (link in appendix 1).

Education export can be very tricky to define. It seems to be an over-simplification to state that it means direct “export” of know-how to another geographical area in exchange for direct financial benefits (payment). However, that is not the complete picture. Attracting exchange-students or degree-students is often considered education export, as can be different development programs in developing countries including education. Naturally, these audiences are not at all similar in their hopes and needs for efficient education. To sum it up, there still seems to be an on-going discussion on the true definition.

I believe firmly that the relevance of education does not need to be stated. It is something we take for granted. I feel that the true value of education is in empowerment and personal development in a very wide sense. However, the relevance of exporting education, or pedagogical know-how, is still sometimes undervalued. In some extent the importance of education export can be summarized by the old, and most certainly over-used, proverb, “give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime”. It potentially benefits all the participants. The financial gains for the exporting party are obvious but in addition the exporter can see its appreciation rise, it can create positive “vibes” of the nation and enhance its position in international stage. More connections mean more trade, common cultural activities and so on. A small nation can wield a larger importance than its size would permit in global politics through acquiring stature through e.g. culture (Nye 2004; Anholt 2007 pp. 125-127). Benefits for the receiving party are potentially huge as well, and maybe even more obvious. A whole thesis could be written exclusively on these issues. However, there are few potential potholes as well, with most of them to do with cultural issues and values. In this sense I also feel that this short video analyzed in my study is relevant.

My personal interest for the topic is clear. I have been fortunate enough to be engulfed by international students for years. This is my second English degree, my first being a BBA in a University of Applied Sciences, where a clear majority of students were international. During my previous studies I have been an exchange student on two occasions: 10 months in the Netherlands and 8 months in South Korea. I have worked with IR-Office at University of Lapland as well as in IR-Office of University of Zagreb, in Croatia. So, in a sense, I feel very much at home in this field. In addition, I have been engaged in public diplomacy -issues in several Finnish embassies abroad and foreign embassies in Finland. However, even though these country-brand -building activities included some elements of education, they were sometimes a bit overlooked. The importance of soft power, including international students, is, nevertheless, generally recognized (Nye 2004).

The field of education export is quite current topic for research. For example Lahti region, the regional tourism development organization of the Päijät-Häme -region, where I currently reside, is emphasizing professional school visit as one of their top-notch articles – and they are selling well. Especially Chinese groups of teachers commonly flock the local elementary and pre-schools. However, education export has been a central theme in Finnish education sector already for several years, so there is some earlier research available. For example Monica Schatz has written her Doctoral thesis on subject (Schatz 2016). However, I did not manage to find any work from the perspective of sender: what is the message doing with its secondary audience – the natives, whose identity is being affected by the message portraying them in a certain way for outside audiences. It has also been pointed out, that identity is an important factor in the way in which we construct knowledge and so, fluctuations in identity do have an effect on it (White 2014, pp. 42).

### **1.1 Background and the social framework**

I tackle the contemporary issue of education export in the context of country branding. Brands are said to be the manifestation of our time, they have become almost religion-like. They are a powerful social and cultural phenomenon. It has even been claimed that nowadays it is almost impossible to express ideas without branding them and even

religions are resorting to branding. (Olins 2003, pp. 11–23; Valaskivi 2019, pp. 311) The most simplistic way of seeing country branding is referring the use of simple branding and marketing communication techniques to promote a country. However, there are many other layers bubbling under. Branding includes some of the most difficult philosophical issues: the relation and the nature of perception and reality, relation of object and how it is portrayed or communicated, mass-psychology, culture and social cohesion, just to mention few. (Fan 2005, pp. 6)

Contemporary western cultures are often described as visual cultures. Even though these cultures have a strong tradition in written communication in transferring message and forming culture, currently there is an evident aspiration to visualize issues. Still, visual presentation is often seen as opposite to writing. (Seppä 2007, pp. 14; Kupiainen 2007, pp. 36) Nowadays even armies are now interested in aesthetics when designing military bases and the visual order in for example cities is highly controlled (Schmitt & Simonson 1997, pp. 14; Seppänen 2001, pp. 42). Every picture uploaded to internet can spread fast and have unforeseeable consequences as it is distributed globally almost instantly. This phenomena, brought forward by digital media, is occasionally referred as “greased information”. (Uskali 2007, pp. 141; Ess 2014, pp. 15–16) Still, visual images have been left relatively undisturbed in research conducted in the field of country branding, even though the importance of pictures in creating mental images is recognised (Hiltunen et. al. 2017, pp. 283).

This trend of growing importance of visual marketing is also affecting marketing of education. It is imperative for the education sector to “*fine-tune their image- and video-based marketing strategies*”. Even though the amount of time and the available image-based platforms, it has become more difficult to reach target audiences. (Meeker 2019) Several scholars have pointed out that with the abundance of information, attention is constantly more difficult to gain and harder to control as the supply of human attention is limited (Nye 2004, pp. 106; Valaskivi 2019, pp. 310; Webster 2014, pp. 1). According to Webster, “*in this heavily constested “marketplace of attention” visibility equals importance, prestige and meaning*” (Webster 2014). It has also resulted in customer acquisition costs to raise. However, possibilities are vast as it has been expected as many

as seven million new internet users coming online in next few years. What is worth noting is that many of the newcomers to internet are young adults residing in developing countries. (Meeker 2019) These same individuals are also a very attractive audience for education export.

Education is one of the main instruments to improve economic prosperity of a country (Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 17; World Bank 2011, pp. 2; Hanushek & Wössmann 2010, pp. 245). Education naturally also has wide social effects. As a former President of the World Bank, James D. Wolfensohn, once stated: “*All agree that the single most important key to development and to poverty alleviation is education*” (Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 18). Studies of economic results show that the quality of education is strongly linked with economic success as economic growth is dependent on the skills of workforce (Hanushek & Wössmann 2010, pp. 251). Labour market requires new competencies and the share of jobs requiring high-level skills is growing (Lim & Saner 2011, pp. 22). On wider significance of investing on education is well-discussed in a paper by the World Bank (2011). It has also been stated that currently a great share of the developing world is struggling in a midst of learning crisis in basic education. There is a tangible threat of world being divided into two: people who have access to good educational system and those who are completely failed by the system in place. Reinikka et. al remind that “*behind the learning crisis often lurks a teaching crisis*” (Reinikka et. al 2018, pp. 6).

In her thesis Monica Schatz brings up that Finnish education export endeavours are embedded in the international trend of commodification of education (Schatz 2016). As El Cheikh summarizes: “*The philosophical approach of “being the best in the world, the best for the world” is, indeed, a strong vision and message to send to the world about the Finnish education export intentions*” (El Cheikh 2015, pp. 51). Against this background, education export will increase its significance in the future as investing in education undeniably has wide benefits for any society. As Finnish education has a strong reputation, one could expect it to be not only a good export commodity, but also be a major component of development cooperation. (Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 17; Reinikka et al. 2018, pp.6) In this respect it is worth pointing out, that usually organizations and societies tend to overvalue their reputation and consider it to be more positive, than it actually is



(Bromley 1993, pp. 46). On the other hand, outside image is always based on inner image (Karvonen 1999, pp. 44).

Finland is in dire need of new sources of income and also public organizations are motivated to seek additional revenues. In addition to direct economic gains, the demographic trend of ageing population in Finland shows a need for “*international competence, experts and networks on a different scale compared to the previous millennium*” (EDUFI 2018). Transnational education advocates diversification of income, but also reputation and brand, new research initiatives, increased tolerance of diversity, innovation and mobility. (Mahlamäki-Kultanen et. al 2016, pp. 66). Exporting education can also help establishing strong relationships with other countries, both economic, diplomatic and social (AustraliaExpo2020, 2019).

The recent legislative and mental changes have opened possibilities for education export and are benefiting financially from the reputation of Finnish education (Halttunen & Kokko 2016, pp. 12). The education system of Finland is considered as one of the best in the world and it has raised international interest. The demand for the expertise is said to be constant and the supply has been lacking behind. Exporting education has huge potential for bringing business to Finland (Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 6–7). Finnish education is constantly getting free promotion in form of news, as evident (e.g. Hardy 2020). It is worth noting that news-publicity is considerably more efficient than paid promotion (Karvonen 1999, 85, 99; Anholt 2005, 119–121). Still, Finland is not tapping into its own reputation and expertise in education to the fullest (Reinikka et al 2018, pp. 7).

Globalization is increasing international mobility in also higher education sector. Already around 5 million higher education students study outside their native countries. The amount has doubled in a decade. (EDUFI 2018). All Finnish institutions of higher education have internationalization strategies and are seeking to increase their international network and degree students in order to raise their international profile (Crawford & Bethell 2012, pp. 190). So even though higher education is inherently international, the new trend is to provide cross-border education with commercial aspirations. Still, according to Cai et. al, this activity is lacking “the look or feel” of export

(Cai et. al 2012, pp. 219–220). However, as global paradigm shift is taking place in the governance of education towards business and marketing, internationally competitive education is considered an asset for governments. (Schatz 2016, pp. 15)

There has also been political demands for increasing internationalization of Finnish higher education and national interest in education branding and global marketing is evident (Saarinen 2012, pp. 235; Ministry of Education and culture, 2017; Reinikka et. al 2018, pp. 54; Schatz 2016, pp. 15). A steering group was created by the Ministry of Education and Culture at the wake of governments action plan of 2015. Its task was to make Finland more internationally appealing by increasing scientific quality and encouraging genuinely international higher education. Their report was published in 2017 and they presented several suggestions. Firstly, they proposed increasing Finland's international appeal through renewal of sciences and cutting-edge research and reinforcing those clusters that are internationally competitive, such as innovation, practice-oriented development work and R&D. They suggested increasing marketing of Finnish education services and establishing presence of higher educations and research in few selected crucial capitals. Finnish voice in international dialogues should be strengthened and Finland should actively invite Finnish expatriates and alumni from Finnish higher education to promote the cluster. Furthermore, procedures for studying and working in Finland should be simplified. (Ministry of Education and culture 2017; Reinikka et. al 2018, pp. 54). All these points fit to the vision presented by the Education and culture ministry in 2016 titled "Better Together for a Better World. It stated that Finland in 2025 will be an open and international country, linguistically and culturally rich (Ministry for Education and culture 2017, pp. 5).

Intentional crafting the perception of Finland in foreign audiences is not a novel or marginal phenomena. Questions concerning how foreign audiences see us has hounded us since the birth of our national identity. (Kivioja et. al 2015, pp.14) It is also clear that the way others see us, has an effect on our perception of ourselves (Seppänen 2001, pp. 24). Each nation is aiming to promote the individual set of culture, history and values it possess. These sets are, almost always, very idealized, yet recognizable. All countries do have a brand and unless you are controlling it yourself, someone else will. (Olins 2003,

pp. 158–159, 169) Finnish identity has been build and maintained through visual arts and design and these are closely connected to economic, cultural, social and emotional spheres. Visual presentations are very pivotal building blocs of Finnish national identity and being a Finn. (Mäkiranta & Timonen 2017, pp. 7–8). Education export can be considered as an integral part of culture export and in that sense, it is part of the fierce competition countries are engulfed in (Brown 2015, pp. 339–340; Heino 2015).

According to Kotler and Armstrong “*the solution to price competition is to develop a differentiated offer, delivery and image*” (Kotler & Armstrong 1999, pp. 272). The general country brand of Finland has been under public scrutiny and development especially during the past decade. In 2009 Finland was differentiating itself through trustworthiness, forthright and solution-centered way of operating and persistence. Central brand characteristics, or themes, to develop were global governance, products, society & security, education, wired society and nature. (Heino 2015, pp. 303–304) All of these have a connection with education. In the country-brand report published in 2010, education was raised as one of the three main features of Finland together with functioning society and the relationship with nature (Hiltunen et. al, pp. 287). As brought up earlier, Finland has a strong image in the field of education but is not been fully exploited yet. Productization and differentiation are one of the central tools, as are stories (Juntunen 2016, pp. 37; Apunen 2020).

Education is declared to be a central part of Finland’s country brand by the government. It follows that education export is government-driven initiative, not an organically born business practice. (Schatz 2016, pp. 17, 70) Furthermore, people tend to trust more to brands that are originating from somewhere, brands that have homes (Anholt 2005, pp. 143). For that reason the country brand of Finland is very closely tied to the brand of Finnish Education, hopefully to benefit both.

The semiotic logic by Charles S. Peirce is rotating around the idea that those believes, or notions, that prevail will eventually begin to direct actions and through these actions, start to have an effect on the factual world. Images have also considered to guide how an individual positions himself in relation to reality (Koski 2005, pp. 92). Images have

become a central success factor for all organizations in post-industrial societies (Karvonen 1999, pp. 17). In image economy, and society, reputation is crucial and for example the value of companies is based largely on intangible assets. Image has become reality, even though we cannot touch it. The most central arena in image economy is publicity and on this arena stories and narratives are pitted against each other. (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 22–37, 143)

Guy Debord has written on how a sort of image-society has been born. He claims that real social life has been replaced by representation. There has been a transformation from being to possessing and finally to appearing. Society, and life in general, have become a spectacle where passive identification with the chosen issues is more important than the activity itself. Debord is also criticizing the importance of images and visuality as he deems them being false and unreliable. (Debord 1995) The society as whole has become more mediatized, which is defined as a process “*whereby culture and society to an increasing degree become dependent on the media and their logic*”. In the same time media has become semi-independent institution and integrated itself into many almost every aspect of life. (Hjarvard 2013, pp. 153). It also means that modern identities maintain, or renew, themselves, in media. (Luostarinen 1998, pp. 189; Kivikuru 1998, pp. 320, 330). Currently, the society is even referred to as being in a state of “deep mediatization”, where the role of media is not only partial in social construction, but pivotal (Couldry & Hepp 2017, pp. 213). There are also clear connection points to the idea of attention economy. In the end, “*marketing communications need to be snappier than ever*” in education export (CIMO 2016, pp. 27).

Public opinion is strongly a phenomena of a modern society. It requires broad public discussion, which requires freedom of speech and freedom of thought. Public opinion, which can be the natural, and perhaps mortal, enemy of brand, is born when a vast number of individuals receive the same information and discuss it. Still, public opinion is very tricky and multifaceted as a concept. (Olins 2003, pp. 217; Suhonen 1998, pp. 171–188). Foucault has also considered population shifting toward being a audience (Foucault 2007, pp. 75). Furthermore, the emergences of social media and for example native advertising have been significant for this discussion, even though not all occurrences associated with

digital media are actually new (Ess 2013; Couldry 2012; Edström & Svensson 2016). What is interesting, however, is that it has been occasionally even claimed that “nation building” is not anymore important in digital media (White 2014, pp. 23).

## 1.2 Objectives and research questions

Finland, and the education export activities it is engaged in, is a productive case for me. I have sufficient cultural knowledge of the case as well as some international perspective on the matter. Although I studied English research material, I encountered that a fair bit of the relevant supporting material was in Finnish. Furthermore, cultural conventions in Finnish society are something I felt confident with and did not struggle with when conducting the study.

In my study I consider brands living somewhat independently of their creators. Especially multi-faceted non-commercial brands tend to live their own life after they have been created on purpose or are born unintentionally, without guidance. Naturally “truth” has significance for the brand and for the long run it cannot be steered heavy-handedly. To change an existing brand, you need to change “the truth” first and start communicating the change. Empty phrases do not work. (Anholt 2007 pp. 5–6). This contradicts for example the famous quotation by Claude Lévi-Strauss decades ago, when he claimed that “*a metaphor can change the world*”. (Lévi-Strauss 1958, pp. 223).

As in any research, formulating a relevant, interesting and appropriate research question is paramount. The question should be productive enough, without being too general. As this is a case-study, the questions should also remain practical without forgetting the theoretical framework in which the particular case is examined. After a considerable amount of consideration, the following set of research questions emerged:

- How is Finnish education export used as an integral part of general “Brand Finland”?
- What kind of image of Finnish education is portrayed through the informational video presentation analyzed?

- How are the underlying values of Finnish society and education as portrayed in the material? How are they communicated and visualized in the material?

I decided to have these few questions extremely open-ended as I did not consider it sensible to lock-in my attitude towards the material I analyze before the actual analyzing-phase. My intention was not to make any assumptions or hypotheses in the questions. I wanted to first let the material speak loudly and only then make a hypothesis. General idea was that when a study is conducted this way, questions will not restrict my thinking into a predestined mold. Still, as in any case-study, the role of the researcher remained central and understanding how it can effect the outcome is crucial.

I analyzed a short video presentation of 2 minutes and 32 seconds produced by Education Export Finland (Finpro) which is a part of Future Learning Finland -growth program. The analyzed video is titled “Finnish Excellence in Education” and was originally published in 2016. The link to the material is available at Appendix 1.

This work has evident connections to visual culture studies and visual literacy. In my study I consider visual literacy in a sense that it is seen as a set of social and cultural practices. This can be referred as a socio-cultural approach to literacy. (Kupiainen 2007, pp. 37) However, visual literacy is primarily an ability to understand visual means, but it also includes knowledge of advertising strategies aimed at manipulating consumers (Seppänen 2001, pp. 174). Central point is to be able to contextualise visible reality as a part of the net of wider meaning constructions. Seppänen iterates that the most important issue concerning visual literacy is to understand the mechanisms through which culture and society produce meanings, not mastering the basic rules of semiotics and visual perception. Visual literacy is challenging these cultural truisms and seeing meaning where meanings are most invisible. (Seppänen 2001, pp. 224)

### **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

In the first part of the thesis I will present background for the research conducted. I will discuss education export in general, why it is needed and what are the major hurdles.

What is currently the situation in the field in Finland. The third chapter of the thesis is dedicated to explaining why branding techniques are introduced in attracting customers for Finnish education and what are the special consideration when applying a method closely related to commercial world to something that can be considered as a human right; good and efficient education. In the chapter I will also briefly discuss the critique.

Fourth chapter is presenting the research material and methods used for analysing the video presentation. The chapter will discuss methodological considerations in detail. I have applied semiotics, three-layered visual analysis and content analysis when analysing the material.

To counter the perhaps heavy theories in the first part of the thesis, the second part will bring branding efforts in education export into plain sight. I will discuss and analyse a short info-promotional video presentation of “Finnish Excellence in Education”: What are the themes? How do they resonate with Finnish values and what is perhaps left out?

The final chapters of the thesis will present relevant conclusions together with afterwords.

## 2. EDUCATION EXPORT

Finland is internationally known for its high-quality education system. Finnish expertise in education and the results achieved internationally are a crucial part of the general brand of Finland. As a product, “Finnish Education” is already a brand by itself. Naturally, this is sought to be capitalized by exporting it abroad to foreign audiences hopefully in a way, that benefits Finland as well as the receivers. This action is often referred as “Education export”. Goal of the activity is to develop foreign educational systems as well as Finnish system in co-operation. Simultaneously, it fosters economic growth, creates new employment opportunities and enhances international exchange of skills, also in Finland. Education export as a phenomenon has grown heavily during the past decades and is still going strong, however, it has failed to meet the financial expectations on many occasions and is generally not yet a profitable business in Finland. (Koulutus.fi. 2016)

Domestic actors in education export are educational institutes, organizations and companies that offer education, educational expertise, educational tools or packaged educational solutions. At the moment higher education sector is the most popular sector of Finnish education internationally, which in practice means that Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences are the most experienced in the field. However, also vocational training is becoming more relevant product in educational export. In addition to these traditional educational organizations, also other educationally-minded organizations and companies who provide skill-development, such as updating training, are active.

A project to create a national cluster “Future Learning Finland” for education export in Finland was launched in 2009 by Finpro. In 2010 the decision in principle was made by the government to start backing up the education export effort. In autumn 2013 an investigative group in Ministry for Education and Culture drafted an action plan to improve the prevailing conditions for education export. The action plan was limited to cover only higher education, though propositions are adaptable in a manner that includes vocational education and the authors suggested that the plan can be fitted to suit continuing professional training (CPT). The action plan of 2013 included propositions



that were aiming to promote education export. The pivotal themes were quality control and learning. Quality of the endeavour should always be confirmed, before the actual marketing and selling of the product are launched. Through improving education export, the goal is to recruit more motivated students to Finland. When the action plan was created, there were 20 000 foreign students in Finnish higher education and the goal was set to attract 60 000 foreign students annually by 2025. (OKM 2013) The latest figure available is from 2018, when there were 20 237 foreign students studying towards a degree in Finnish higher education (EDUFI 2019). This suggests that no actual impact was made, though this can be due to multiple reasons and perhaps the amount of the students would have dramatically dropped, in case no action plan was implemented. It is interesting, that the top-year of Finnish education export in terms of foreign students studying in Finnish higher education has actually been 2016, when the number was 21 106 students. Apart from that peak, the amount has been quite stable from 2014 on (between 20 255 and 20 362) (EDUFI 2019). In relation to raising the amount of students, the plan suggested that part of the studying could actually take place at the native country of the student while being still enrolled to a Finnish institution. Second aim of the action plan was to remove any possible legislative hinderances that prevent educational export relating to degree-awarding education. In addition, there is a clear aspiration to transform education export into a profitable business. This would require educational institutions to invest more in sales expertise and development of products. They should also increase their understanding of international service business. Education export is also seen as a tool in development policy and in enhancing positive image of Finland. (OKM 2013)

Exporting updating training, or continuing professional development (CPD), differs from degree-awarding education in a sense that it seldom has any juridical obstacles. Naturally, this facilitates exporting, but does not remove the need for similar quality control as in higher education. (OKM 2013)

When the video analysed in this study was published, Team Finland -network was coordinating Finnish education export along its other operations in promoting Finnish business. Essentially, Team Finland -network is promoting Finland and advancing Finnish enterprises abroad. It encompasses all governmental or state-funded

organizations of Finland that are operating in fields of internationalisation of companies, incoming foreign investments or Finnish country image. In addition, education export program “Future Learning Finland” was active. The latter has been later renamed as “Education Finland”, by which name it still operates.

## 2.1 What is Education Export?

Historically, transferring knowledge, or even education, over national borders is not a recent phenomenon, however education export is still rather ambiguous concept. (Schatz 2016, pp. 46–47). Generally, education is considered to mean the delivery of knowledge, skills, and information from teachers to students (e.g. Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 17). In a broad sense, education export refers to exporting anything related to education. In this context “export” refers to customers being abroad or foreigners. Education can take place physically abroad or domestically in Finland, as long as the customer is foreign. (Koulutus.fi. 2016) Education export often refers to exporting educational services. Monica Schatz defines education export as plainly as: “*an intentional business transaction concerning degrees, educational practices, services, and materials from one country to another*” (Schatz 2016, pp. 21). Another definition for the very same phenomenon is “*educational services approach based on a public-private partnership with market-driven services that may provide surplus to the institution, high quality educational and pastoral services to students, and export income to the nation, within a strong national regulatory framework*”. This definition was brought forward by Adams in 2007. (Cai et al. 2012, pp. 216)

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) divides educational services into five main categories: basic education, secondary education, higher education and vocational education, adult education and lastly other educational services. Quite often the narrow definition of education export excludes the last category that includes supporting education and exchange programs. The narrow definition also excludes for example educational technology and solutions. (Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 19) Monica Schatz considers Finnish education export to include: (1) selling educational equipment to other countries, (2) selling educational knowledge to other countries and (3) selling Finnish

education know-how/programs/degree to other countries, including non-Finns both outside and inside of Finland. She also broadens education export to include professional visits and educational tourism. (Schatz 2016, pp. 16)

It has been suggested, that instead of the term “education export”, Finland should use more precise “export of education expertise” when referring to Finnish education export activities. Reasons for this are multiple, but firstly, it has been said that “education export” only refers to educational services and Finland is offering a lot more. For example technological solutions and consulting. Finnish “service tray” differs considerably from English speaking countries. Furthermore, expertise in education suggests that Finnish system of education is both high-quality and self-renewing, the concepts are future-oriented and modern in pedagogy, learning and learning environments. Export of Finnish education expertise was defined as “*export of the expertise in education based products, services and solutions for foreign clients and beneficiaries by tapping all potential modes of mobility of services across the borders*”. Still, in the end, the term “education export” was preferred for official use over “export of education expertise” mainly for the reasons of international recognizability. Even though wide meaning of “education export” was recommended, the precise definition of the term is still lacking and this can cause issues for example when complying statistics. Vague definition can also limit possibilities to expand the business. (Juntunen 2014)

General Agreement on Trade in Services defines four modes of mobility for education services: cross-border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence and presence of a natural person (GATS 1994, pp. 285–286). It is possible to classify parts of education export under each of them, although the consumption abroad has historically been the most evident way, as it includes the situation when the student goes abroad to study. (Lim & Saner 2011). Examples of other modes are presented in the table I below. In addition to traditionally attracting students to Finland for their studies, institutions can establish off-shore campuses and offer distance learning or provide consultancy. According to El Cheikh the dominance of traditional student mobility, where students go abroad for full-time studies, is decreasing. Instead taking a degree or other courses with foreign universities in their domestic countries is becoming more popular. (El Cheikh 2015, pp.

1) International mobility is taking place increasingly in programmes and institutions (Lim & Saner 2011, pp. 20). The current trend is that traditional institutions are adding more and more online content, which is attainable globally. The trend is fully understandable as digital learning is very familiar for Generation X. Another trend is awarding micro-credentials. (Meeker 2019) It is a telling sign of the contemporary time that private search engines have become the main source of scholarly information and replaced institutions of higher education (White 2014, pp. 22)

| Table I: Correspondence between modes of supply and forms of education services traded internationally |                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Cross-Border supply (mode 1)                                                                        | - Distance education<br>- Online education<br>- Commercial franchising/<br>twinning of a course                                                     |
| 2. Consumption abroad (mode 2)                                                                         | - Students abroad                                                                                                                                   |
| 3. Commercial presence (mode 3)                                                                        | - Establishment of an<br>educational institution or<br>satellite campuses<br>- Branch campus, including<br>joint venture with local<br>institutions |
| 4. Presence of natural persons (mode 4)                                                                | - Professors, lecturers,<br>teachers, researchers<br>providing education services<br>abroad                                                         |
| Source: Lim & Saner 2011, pp. 21                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                     |

It has been stated that degree-awarding programs and foreign students in Finnish higher education will struggle in the future for being the main product of Finnish education export. More efficient will be emphasising educational technology and solutions, naturally without forgetting the content. It has been visioned that the main customer for Finnish education should be foreign authorities instead of individual students. (Juntunen 2014)

## **2.2 Need & practice for education export**

Global trends behind education export include general globalization, expansion of free trade to trade on services and educational services (GATS) and the ever-growing internationalization of higher education combined with increasing student movement. Education is seen as an product that is exchangeable and has high international market value (Schatz 2016, pp. 50). Education export has also gathered steam in Finland through success in international Pisa-studies on elementary school as it has created international interest especially towards elementary school. Furthermore, in Finland higher education institutes are encouraged to recruit foreign students and the amount of degrees taken by foreign students has been a criteria for government funding (El Cheikh 2015, pp. 6).

### **2.2.1 Why is Finnish education exported?**

Motives for education export are various and not all of them are self-evident. As in any form of export, the underlying assumption is that it will be a profitable business with direct economic benefits. As Cai et. al put it, Finland has been seeking for new Nokia for a decade, and education export is considered as a potential sector to foster employment and gather significant income for the Finnish national economy. The trend of growing demand for high-quality education is set to continue globally also in the foreseeable future. (Cai et. al 2012, pp. 216) Currently international students generate income for the Finnish economy around 170 million euros annually and there have been estimations, that the turnover produced by education export could be as high as 6–8 percent of the total

turnover of any given Finnish institution of higher education. (Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 25; Juntunen 2016, pp. 33).

Keeping that in mind, what comes to profitability of an education export endeavour, it is not all smooth sailing. Halttunen and Kokko state that “*the general entry costs and costs related to the development of distribution channels tend to be high and it is only over time that the profitability will rise and actors will be capable of generating some much-needed additional profit*”. They urge also to consider the other potential gains: general mental impact, expansion of international network and the motivation boost it can give to local staff. These factors should not be underestimated. (Halttunen & Kokko 2016, pp. 13) The Future Learning Lapland -project listed benefits of successful education export to include, among others, expanding financing, transferring expertise, internationalisation and networking, strengthening profile and “*raison d'être*”, enhancing national service and cooperation and finally, increasing the general appeal of local higher education institutes. (Future Learning Lapland -project, pp. 3)

On Finnish society in general, education export can also have a direct positive impact if international students that have studied in Finland decide to stay in the country for their professional careers. (Crawford & Bethell 2012, pp. 189) Finland is struggling with ageing population and attracting new inhabitants does not only help to keep the wheels of economy rolling, but also fill in the gaps in labour-markets as well as in taxation.

Education export can naturally also have benefits for the receiving party – otherwise there would not be any customers. It has been pointed out, that education could be a natural part of Finnish development aid and it has not been yet fully utilized in this way. However, one has to keep in mind that these projects will take time and effort (Kajanus et. al 2016).

On education in general and why especially Finnish education expertise is worth exporting and dispersing, almost evangelized, has been addressed in a comprehensive way in a report commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and titled *Stepping Up Finland's Global Role in Education* (Reinikka et al. 2018).

### 2.2.2 How is Finnish education exported?

It is clear that there is not one, single, correct and efficient model for taking on education export. What is efficient is depending on a multitude of issues. However, what is evidently required in order to participate the global, highly competed, market is a competitive business model. Creating an effective business model for Finnish education export include specifying value proposition, the customer and customer relationships, channels, revenues, activities and resources and costs, as well as suitable partners for the endeavour. (Juntunen 2014)

Juntunen also points out that continuous investment is required to convince international customers in the sector (Juntunen 2014). Productization of Finnish education is needed. Productization can be summarised to refer to the activity of distilling expertise or know-how into a sellable, marketable and deliverable service-product (Parantainen 2007 pp. 11). Offerings has to be well-constructed and the mechanism for the delivery well-established (Vanhanen & Rissanen 2016, pp. 140). Helli Kitinoja states that continuous service design as well as product development are required as a shift “...*from offering ready-made products to providing services and products based on customers' needs: co-creation, flexibility...*” is essential. (Kitinoja 2016) Developing a hit-product includes two main phases: promise-phase, where a promise is made to solve a problem of a factual group of customers, and a redemption-phase, where the problem is actually solved. It is pivotal to define the requirements for service that is expected to solve the issue. (Parantainen 2007, pp. 133) This lack of market research was seen as the main challenge for Finnish education export by Monica Schatz (Schatz 2016, pp. 143). Knowhow and predictability are central themes, although consumer behaviour is full of bizarre peculiarities, as demonstrated by Ori and Rom Brafman in their book (Brafman & Brafman 2008).

Finnish exports in general are criticized on the lack of stories. Stories are very efficient when creating brands. According to some psychologist it is possible to transfer three times more knowledge than by using simple lists. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, pp. 116) On

top of it stories sell (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 21–22). Even though if the story is true, it does not facilitate creating a brand, if the story is not interesting or it is not told in an aspiring manner. Stories are destined to replace previous stories, so the new one has to be, by default, more interesting than its predecessor. A brand should be unique, focused, motivating, simple and relevant as well as creative. (Anholt 2007, pp. 16, 76–79) It has to be mentioned, that a myth, which a brand fundamentally is, does not have to be based on truth in order to be efficient. Still, if the myth is not truthful, it requires a considerable amount of goodwill on behalf of the receiver to operate effectively. (Lévi-Strauss 1972, pp. 197; Lévi-Strauss 1958, pp. 217–218). Brand has to be credible in order to work properly (Karvonen 1999, pp. 175).

Finnish education has obvious strengths. Finnish education system is competitive and has a good reputation internationally. Opportunities in the sector are on the rise as education market is globalizing. Wide selection of education as well as good services and facilities for international students are taken place in English. (Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 30) Already almost a decade ago Finland ranked second from non-English-speaking countries in Europe when measured by the share of English taught programmes against all programmes in higher education (Saarinen 2012, pp. 245).

Still, the lack of diversified courses and the outside environment for improving English language skills are seen as a hurdle for Finnish success in global education markets (Cai et al 2012, pp. 2016; Schatz 2016, pp. 17). The list of hinderances also include relative geographic isolation of Finland in relation to significant economic and industrial centres, high living expenses, climate and a difficult language. Other significant challenges, actual product aside, include lack of experience and marketing knowledge, motivational issues and commitment, lack of coordination and vision. (Cai et al 2012, pp. 216, 230)

Interaction between the student and the institution is crucial in marketing educational services. This product, or experience, can not be standardized as there are many people and other variables involved. It follows that offering high-quality tuition is not enough but the institute should offer a “non-limitable bundle of services” to their students. (Shaik 2005)



Finnish education export strategy of 2010 included networking, productization, quality, developing marketing, creating a educational export cluster and seeing higher education institutions as exporters. The vision was to have Finland recognized as one of the leading education-based economies in the world relying on its high-quality education system. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010, pp. 3–4) However, for example Monica Schatz criticise the objectives for being overly-ambitious as the gap between the policy goals and their implementation remained wide (Schatz 2016).

There is a mutual understanding that cooperation between the Finnish education exporters is required in order to successfully sell services abroad (Cai et al. 2012, pp. 227–228; Ministry of Education and Culture 2010; El Cheikh 2015; Kitinoja 2016, pp. 24). Creation of united front is needed to be recognized as a credible actor in the highly competitive market (Vanhanen & Rissanen 2016, pp. 140). Even though almost all of institutes of higher education in Finland have their own commercial entities for education export, a special cluster is needed as Finland and Finnish education exporters are small when compared to their rivals at the market (Reinikka et. al 2018, pp. 47; El Cheikh, pp. 2). Also digitalisation of global economy, including education, can offer support for Finnish education export (Vanhanen & Rissanen 2016, pp. 140).

Legislative changes during the last decade has made education export endeavours more attractive, and in some instances, even possible. For example exporting vocational qualifications became possible as late as in 2018 (Reinikka et. al, 2018, pp. 47). It is also quite recent development, that Finnish higher education institutions were allowed to implement fee-based education, with certain restrictions, which have made issue rather controversial in the society (Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 6; Schatz 2016, pp. 17). However, due to high levels of regulation in the past, Finnish education sectors has very limited experience in commercial export of education (Halttunen & Kokko 2016, pp. 12). In a sense, Finland has no history of education export, even through colonial history (Schatz 2016, pp. 17).

### 2.2.3 To whom is Finnish education exported?

The most considerable flows of international students are stemming from Asian countries towards western OECD countries, especially USA, Great Britain and Australia (EDUFI 2018). What comes to Finnish target markets and most selling products, it is important to have a clear vision as selling education is an expensive and complex process. Finding suitable niche-markets which are available, accessible and profitable, is not an easy task. El Cheik argues that “*the emerging markets, the developing countries or the markets where Finnish education does not disrupt the local education seem to be the best fit for exporting Finnish education*”. (El Cheikh 2015, pp. 61–62) There is also other opinions as some see Western Europe, Middle East, Northern America, Japan and South Korea as the most potential target markets for education export. Furthermore, education export has potential in developing regions. However, one has to bear in mind that the poorer the market, the less likely it is that the recipient is able to pay for the product itself. In these cases, often the bill is picked up by foreign financier.

Monica Schatz points out that as Finland is seeking to capitalize on its PISA-success, it actually means that Finnish education export spearhead is basic education. This differentiates us from many other markets that have their focus on higher education. (Schatz 2016, pp. 17) Learning solutions and teacher training are attracting attention and are already selling internationally. There has been interest also on Finnish curriculum development and early childhood education and care. In vocational education most attractive fields are qualifications in entrepreneurship, management, metal work and machinery, the processing industry, social and health care, electrical engineering and automation technology, engineering and product development. (Reinikka et al. 2018, pp. 47) Still, it is plausible to criticise Finnish education export for being an incoherent medley of issues relating to education as it includes also educational tourism and technology, training packages, policy counselling, teacher exchanges, school projects abroad and joint programs. (Schatz 2016, pp. 17)

#### 2.2.4 Where are we now?

International student mobility is very central aspect in global migration. It has been estimated that around 4,5 million students of higher education are studying abroad. (CIMO 2016, pp. 27) Latest numbers available for Finland reveal that from around 20 000 foreign students studying in Finnish higher education, 9 539 students studied in Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) and 10 698 were enrolled at Universities. Globally Finland seems to follow the trend of Asian students seeking education in OECD-member countries. Geographically most common sources were Asia (45,5%) and Europe (38,1%). Biggest individual nationalities represented were Vietnamese (12%), Russian (11%), Chinese (8%), Nepalese (5%) and Indian (4%). However, it is worth noting that there are great differences in nationalities according whether the student studies in University or in an UAS. Out of individual fields of study, most popular among the incoming international students were Business and Administration, IT and other technology, Humanities and Arts. Education was surprisingly unpopular, with only 4 % of foreign students studying in Universities being enrolled in 2018. (Opetushallitus 2019a, Opetushallitus 2019b, Opetushallitus 2019c, CIMO 2016, pp. 27)

In 2018 there were 2 750 international students in Finnish vocational schools. Historically, Europeans have accounted for more than 90% of the student movement and in 2018, only 6% of the incoming mobility was from outside the continent. Still, that share has doubled in ten years. Most popular fields of studies for foreign students in vocational education were “Natural resources and the environment”, “Tourism, catering and domestic services” and “culture”. (EDUFI 2019b; EDUFI 2019c)

In 2015 there were 10 474 international exchange-students studying in higher education in Finland (CIMO 2016, pp. 15) When exchange-student flows have been studied inside Europe within the Erasmus-program, it has been noticed, that when students are selecting their destination, country size, cost of living, distance, educational background, university quality, the host country language and climate are all significant (Gonzalez et. al, 2010, pp. 413). According to the International Student Barometer -study carried out in autumn 2018, the similar reasons are operating also when degree students are selecting their destination. The study revealed that most pivotal reasons for selecting Finland were the

content and cost of education, quality of research and the reputation of the institution providing the tuition. Proximity of the country of departure to Finland did seem to play a very minor role. (EDUFI 2018) In 2018 the global study-destinations on the raise were Canada, Germany and Ireland (ICEF 2019).

As in any migration, there are push and pull -factors in international student movement. Push factors are present in the home country of the student and are the reasons that initiate the decision to study abroad. Pull factors, on the other hand, effect the decision on destination, they make some countries more attractive than others. (Gonzalez et al. 2010, pp. 418–419) Two factors raise above the rest when studying the hinderances for studying abroad: language of studies and financial constraints, relating to possible study-fees but also on the general cost of living (Gonzalez et al. 2010, pp. 419). These same themes popped up in the study conducted in 2018. The latter study, however, pinpointed that finance and language were the most important concerns prior departing abroad, once studying abroad, they were replaced by cultural difficulties and difficulties with the programme. (ICEF 2019)

Students who had selected Finland to complete their studies were overall satisfied, according to International Student Barometer of 2018. More than 80% of the respondents were recommending Finland as a studying country. Learning facilities were seen as the major strength of Finnish higher education, but what strikes as a surprise was that tuition itself achieved the lowest satisfaction rate. In the case of Finland, especially issues related to expenses were brought up and making local friends was seen difficult. (EDUFI 2018) This issue has been acknowledged for some time and there has been for example, various buddy programs to address the situation (Crawford & Bethell 2012, pp. 196–201).

International students will benefit Finland economically the most if they stay in the country after their graduation, preferably working (CIMO 2016, pp. 26). However, according to the survey foreign students studying in Finland were concerned over their ability find employment during their studies and even after they will graduate. Still, half of the last year students were planning to stay in Finland after they have graduated, most of them to work. (EDUFI 2018) It is worth noting that, in Finland, on the contrary to e.g.

United Kingdom, freshly graduated students usually have high average occupational status in their first employment as well as the match between their level of degree and job requirements. Combining studies with working is one of the characteristics of the Finnish Higher Education culture and reflect the organization of the Finnish labour markets. (Merenluoto & Lindberg 2012, pp. 139, 144). Still, it is rather paradoxical that employers do not seem to value international experience as such, although they appreciate the skill-set that can be achieved through it: curiosity, tolerance and cultural and language skills (CIMO 2016, pp. 31-32).

Most effective marketing strategies, according to a survey conducted by a company specialised on international student movement, ICEF GmbH, in 2018 are visiting target markets. This can be being present at education exhibitions or visiting educational institutions. Naturally, also English material in general was considered very important. Relating to a common concern of the students, financing their studies abroad, offers on financial aid were also seen instrumental. (ICEF 2019) One significant pull-factor is peer-to-peer effect. In some cases sc. student ambassadors have surpassed for example “friends and family” in influence concerning the decision to study abroad. (ICEF 2020) In the survey of 2018, Facebook was considered as the favourite social media platform to reach target group, whereas Twitter was seen as the most unnecessary one (ICEF 2019).

### **2.3 Education export is not all rosy**

Education export can be criticised from several angles. Even the attitudes towards education export inside Finnish higher education sector are not all positive, as demonstrated by El Cheikh (El Cheikh 2016, pp. 63–66). On practical level, the inclusivity of export projects is occasionally questioned: are students and staff heard adequately? Is there a clear connection between the strategic aspirations and education export activities? (Savola & Vesa, 2016, pp. 123)

Neo-liberal framework for the education “*may be seen primarily as a production of disposable, and therefore both competitive and vulnerable, subjects*”. (Brunila & Rossi 2018, pp. 4). From that angle education is actually shaping individuals to become more

governable and, in the end, more productive subjects in the economic respect. (Brunila & Rossi 2018, pp. 16) It has been also questioned if it is appropriate consider education as a commodity, as by heart, it should be regarded as a human right. Still, there are huge differences in access to education and the quality of the education received. This discrepancy is maintaining and perpetuating social inequality across the globe. Against this frame, using business terminology can be considered even harmful. (Schatz 2016, pp. 46–47) There is an apparent “*difficulty of marrying the Finnish brand of social equality in education and education as a commodity or a brandable product is rather paradoxical in nature*” (Savola & Vesa 2016, pp. 120). Furthermore, in the same discussion, it is often feared that trade in education can increase privatization and deregulation of the education sector (Lim & Saner 2011, pp. 25).

Partly connected to the critic towards education export presented above, education export can be even seen as a form of cultural imperialism as education can also operate as a harbinger of other set of values (Schatz 2016, pp. 55). This is evitable even in the short info-promotional video presentation analysed in this thesis. When promoting a product, one has to believe its superiority, which easily leads to, even partly untruthful, glorification of Finnish education system and society. Export activities can draw an idealistic picture and leave something out as self-criticality is not often the most luring selling point. (Schatz 2016, 65–67) For example parties participating in cooperation under the Team Finland -banner are required to communicate in unison and especially on strengths defined by governmental officials (Rossi 2017, pp. 268). Furthermore, there is still going on an academic debate on whether it is feasible, or even possible, to transfer educational models into different cultures and societies. (Schatz 2016, pp. 53).

Another interesting nuance is relating to the English language. Saarinen has suggested that increasing international co-operation is actually causing linguistic homogenisation as global mobility is reducing the available common language to exclusively English. She questions “what kind of internationalisation is promoted by presenting English language programs as self-evidently international”? (Saarinen 2012, pp. 245–246) Still, English-language qualifications are having a competitive advantage (Lim & Saner 2011, pp. 22).

There are also doubts on how long will education be a lucrative export. It is suggested that as higher education sector in developing countries advances and the consumers in those regions become more sophisticated, it is likely that the demand for studies abroad will rather decline than grow at recent rates. In the future this change would have an effect especially on lower status universities who are relying on international students. (Healey 2008, pp. 354).

It is interesting to note that as the student flows are unpredictable, they also raise concerns, as dealing in any other commodity. While education is the third biggest category in Australian exports, it is fairly dependant on few markets. Around 25% of higher education students in Australia are international, still more than half of the incoming students come from only few countries: China (30%), India (11%), Nepal (5%), Malaysia (4%) and Brazil (4%). Especially the significance of China is crucial. (AustraliaExpo2020, 2019; Babones 2019) As the bulk of Chinese students in the country are concentrated in public institutions, universities financial dependence poses a risk to Australian taxpayers, argues Salvatore Babones in his study. Even though China has been the most fruitful market when attracting international students in the past, currently the growth rate has become modest, at best, and it is expected to gradually turn into decline as China is developing, also in education sector. Even more current risks are evident: macroeconomic downturns, such as slowing down of Chinese economy and currency rates can have an effect on the financial side.

Babones also recognizes a risk in lowering standards permanently as compromises are constantly made to accommodate international students. Babones claims that “... *Australian universities are in effect taking actions that reduce their financial risks by increasing their standards risks.*” (AustraliaExpo2020, 2019; Babones 2019) This same threat has been brought up also domestically in Finland. As Halttunen and Kokko point out: “*the current long-lasting and rigid procedure of selecting students does not correspond to the needs of an international student market.*” (Halttunen & Kokko 2016, pp. 12). A very interesting, yet grim, picture of education export.

### 3. BRANDING THEORY: REPUTATION, IMAGE AND BRAND

Discussing the wider frame of country brands and why they are needed is essential in order to fully understand the context in which the studied info-promotional video presentation is operating. The brand used and created in the video is part of general Finnish brand as the Finnish government has included education to be an integral part of what Finland stands for (Schatz 2016, pp. 17, 70). Branding is essentially a tool, or a medium, in mediatized society (Valaskivi 2016, pp. 8–9).

Reputation, brand and image are not synonyms. It can be said that reputation is, in fact, the image of the brand. Reputation is something that is discussed and communicated, and it always includes an evaluation. This means it mainly exists in audiences. Image is visual and based on graphicality, whereas reputation is the collection of the narratives that include an evaluational aspect to them. Brand, however, is an ensemble of all tangible and intangible factors of the organisation. Brand includes products, services, visions, position, reputation, behaviour and values. (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 33–36, 48–50, 58–63) Charles Fombrun refers reputation to be what is commonly communicated or believed on the nature of the issue. It, in essence, is the positive or negative testimonial of the people. (Fombrun 1996, pp. 1) Invariably, there are several opinions and impressions (Bromley 1993, pp. 2). Erkki Karvonen considers reputation to be the set of narratives communicated concerning the subject. (Karvonen 1999, pp. 48).

Reputation is often the factor that makes something to be “the first choice” among all the options for people (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 58–63). Anne Koski states that reputation differs from image most of all by its communal, or social, and empirical nature (Koski 2005, pp. 16). On the other hand, it can be argued that reputation is partly a product of indirect competition as it is formed from general values, opinions and ever rumours (Fombrun 1996, pp. 386). Reputation is born when the organisation and its public encounter. These encounters can be divided into three categories. First of all, the encounter can happen “eye-to-eye” and be a very personal experience. Secondly, person can meet the product of the organisation without ever meeting a representative of the organisation. On the third level the organisation itself is not in any way present. These



encounters include advertising and news concerning them. Especially in the encounters of the third level narratives and stories are important. (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 91–92)

Most of the literature discussing image have been written either from commercial or journalistic perspective (Karvonen 1999, pp. 3). In marketing literature perception of image and reputation are almost always cognitive (Karvonen 1997, pp. 152). Image is considered to be a subjective perception by a person and it can differ a lot from the actual reality (Karvonen 1999, pp. 89). In cognitive image-studies the central idea is that we observe an image in the same manner we observe reality. This implies that perceptions do have principles that cross cultural boundaries (Seppänen 2005, pp. 72). Still, the relation of perception and reality hold a vast amount of even philosophical issues.

The needs and wants of the person effect the image that is created in the mind (Karvonen 1997, pp. 32). Image has been referred as a set of beliefs, ideas and motives that an individual has on the given subject (Karvonen 1999, pp. 41). From this it follows that for example when referring to a product, image is not the factual quality. (Anholt 2005, pp. 4). Images are always based on interpretation (Karvonen 1997, 261–263). Recipient interpretes the information received instead of the information the sender was sending transferring directly to the mind of the recipient. The result of this interpretation can be very different from what the sender had originally intended. The simplistic model of communication includes two parties: the party of which the picture is created from and the party to whom the picture is born to. These parties interact in a way that the party to whom the image is created receives information to base his/her own observation on and so the image is born. It means that you can give ingredients to people, based on which they can themselves build the image they will have on the subject. Naturally, through communication the sender can suggest what types of interpretations the recipient is likely to make. Still, image is created based on all the information received from various sources and for the sender to have full control is impossible. Image will then circulate in society and during this circulation it can change. This is how myths are born. Erkki Karvonen states that managing an image is in a way managing perspectives. (Karvonen 1999, pp. 43–47, 62–52, 98)

Images have a link to imagination (Karvonen 1999, pp. 39). What we have seen has an effect on what we can imagine and on the other hand, what we can imagine, affects on what we can see. (Koski 2005, pp. 112). Image includes associations, expectations, memories and other similar emotions and feelings the recipient has on the issue communicated. For countries image is rather the context in which any message is received than the message itself. (Anholt 2007, pp. 5). On practical level it is visible on how the similar news on different countries are received differently in audiences. It is worth mentioning, that news are extremely efficient in building a brand for an organization (Anholt 2005, pp. 119–121). Cognitive separation of imaginary and pictorial influencing is tricky as same structures can be found in mind and imagination as well as in images and pictures. According to Koski, mediums of non-verbal perception and thought include pre-rational, even subconscious, proposition that should not be bypassed. It follows that our minds are filled with mental images that we are using to get a grasp of the reality surrounding us. These stereotypes and created meanings are never meaningless. (Koski 2005, pp. 10)

The word "brand" has both negative and positive connotations. It has even been claimed that it does not exist. (Lindroos, et. al 2005, pp. 11). Brand is a sign of quality, value or features (Anholt 2005, 127). According to Henderson brand is a "*name, term, sign, symbol, model or a combination of these elements*" (Henderson 2007, pp. 263). Brand can also be seen as a promise of something (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, pp. 6). Still, the *raison d'être* of a brand is clear and simple: to create a clear set of central intangible values in the mind of the recipient (Hall 1999, pp. 230). This entity should be simple, clear and differentiating, yet flexible enough to be used with different audiences and situations. This set has to be such that it can be symbolized both verbally and visually. (Olins 2003, pp. 167; Fan 2005, pp. 6) Brands can be studied also through their effect on people and their behaviour (Lindroos et al. 2005, pp. 12).

Brands are very strongly culture-related and one has to bear in mind that identity management and brand management are not the same thing, although they are often mixed. (Schmitt & Simonson 1997, pp. 35–43; Forssell 2007) According to David Aaker

brand-identity is the combination of all the associations relating to the brand and it has to be based on fundamental understanding and perception of customers, competitors and strategy. Brand can be rationalized from many viewpoints: is it bringing additional value to the customer, supporting the customer-relationship, differentiating the brand from the competitors, inspiring personnel and it is generally credible. Often the brand identity is distilled into very few words or a short sentence. This slogan is reflecting the communicational goals and position to outside audiences. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, pp. 31, 71, 76, 89, 108).

The roots of commercial brands can be traced back to medieval Italy, where merchants emphasised the importance of “good name”. You could achieve this by being an well-known and respected part of social fabric by supporting arts and charity. (Anholt 2005, pp. 19) Image-marketing began amidst US commercial life, but soon it spread to other domains. It is for example stated that Dwight D. Eisenhower was the first politician to have won elections due to image marketing in 1953, when he became the president of United States. Post-modern era itself has been considered have started around that time. Nowadays, also public sector is using image marketing as many public or ideological organisations are thriving to create a positive image of themselves. Image is providing additional value especially when the level of abstract in the product is high and they are not evidently different. (Karvonen 1997, pp. 17–23) This is very clearly the case in the product discussed in this study.

Similarly to reputation, also brand is born in encounter (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 230). These encounters can be generally divided into four sub-groups: planned messages such as advertising, product messages such as the factual features of the product, service messages and unplanned messages such as news and rumours concerning the sender (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, pp. 14). It is waste of resources to build a brand if the reputation of the organization is not in order, as even the best processes of marketing cannot sell an unpopular product. Actions still speak louder than words. (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 227; Nye 2004, pp. 110; Fan 2005, pp. 12). Organizations should become personalities that still refer towards the factual and relatively stable set of characteristics (Karvonen 1999, pp. 45).

Simon Anholt defines brand as being a product, service or organisation combined with its name, identity and reputation. He sees branding activity as a process where that name or identity is planned and communicated in order to build or control reputation. Although a country usually has a brand, it is generally impossible to brand it in a same way as conventional products. It is essential to notice and separate the four aspects of brand: brand identity, brand image, brand purpose and brand equity. Out of these aspects, for countries, perhaps the most complicated and challenging is the brand identity, which should include the basic concept of the product in explicit way. (Anholt 2007, pp. 4–7)

A brand is created and resides inside the mind of the consumer. It follows that it is not owned by the organization nor can it directly control it. Still, a good brand always includes a good product. Brand itself refers to the set of emotions the user has when using the product. What does he or she feel, experience, know or believe when using the product and what are the perceptions it is stirring. A brand can also refer to the good-will -value of the product. (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 53–56, 75). The power of brand is based on an interesting mix of what it means and on the other hand, how it has performed in the past (Olins 2003, pp. 16). It results in a contrast to traditional art-studies where the role of the sender, or the creator, has been strong (Seppänen 2005, pp. 65). Although the creator of any advertisement usually has a clear and planned agenda when preparing the message, it can not be guaranteed that this agenda will be met as the recipient has the control when interpreting the message. It results in a situation where the brand image is divided between many safe and distant locations, so building or controlling it can feel wishful thinking. It also means that one can occasionally polish the image endlessly and still make no factual change to it. (Anholt 2007, pp. 5–6) In essence, external image is born based on internal actions and the internal image is developing through receiving outside feedback (Valaskivi 2014, pp. 196).

In branding the audience is a group of individuals with factual or potential needs that the organization aims to serve. Kotler and Andreasen divide these audiences into four main groups. First of these is “input public”, including suppliers of materials, resources and laws and regulations concerning the organisation. Second group are the inner audiences,

which mainly refer to the personnel of the organization. Third group of audiences consist of parties that play a role in marketing and distributing the product and lastly, the fourth group are the consumers themselves. (Kotler & Andreasen 1991, pp. 89–99) Actually, this vast amount of audiences or publics prevent, on their part, creating a one single comprehensive theory concerning them. (Seppänen 2005, 182). This kind of typical post-modern dispersed audience consisting of individuals pose a considerable challenge (Herkman 2002, 162).

### **3.1 What a brand is doing?**

Brand affects the exchange value of a product, not the functional use value, that is considered to be for granted. By choosing a brand people want to have additional symbolic value. Consumption is more and more consuming signs and symbols and these symbols belong to our cultural and social reality. (Karvonen 1999, pp. 25–28; Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, pp. 10) According to Karvonen, branded products emphasise these symbolic factors that are differentiating them to be its own, unique, concept. Symbolic consumption is basically consuming meanings (Karvonen 1999, pp. 45, 212). It has been argued that we are currently living in a promotional culture, where brands are the main form of intellectual capital. They produce, control and assess information and communications. They are not only tools for selling, but they are creating complete contexts, platforms, where their users can attached themselves. Brands are also an integral part of a process producing and reproducing social values. (Valaskivi 2014, pp. 201)

A brand is communicating something of its user (Anholt 2005, pp. 4). It can be divided into three levels: functional level, social identity -level and spiritual level, last of which is expressing the values and wishes of the person (Forssell 2007). It has been claimed that brands are now actually not as much part of the image of the products, but the image of their consumers. They convey a message about our way of life, our values and choices. In addition to commercial brands this includes our hobbies, vacations spots and employers. (Olins 2003, pp. 14, 17) It is fair to assume that also education belongs to that list. On the other hand, symbolic features are occasionally claimed to be, not only artificial and shallow, but even deceitful and untruthful (Karvonen 1999, pp. 225).

As described, brand includes a lot more than the factual product: they include limits and shortcomings, aims and possibilities, symbols, users, country of origin, associations and many other dimensions and features. Those brands and identities that are based purely on factual attributes are easy to copy and reproduce. Furthermore, they do not differentiate. They also assume that customers are rational. (Aaker 1996, pp 73–76; Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, pp. 82) Brands are also rhetorics in a sense that they aim to activate the recipients and suggest them to attain certain position towards the subject of the message. This is done by selecting different signs that are used in communication. (Karvonen 1999, pp. 270) Brands are not only visible signs, logos and slogans but they include vivid experiences. These are born through associations. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, pp 76; Lindroos, et. al, 2005, pp. 12)

Brand equity, in short, means that if an organization manages to acquire a strong, positive and stable reputation, it becomes invaluable resource for them. The value of a brand can occasionally exceed the value of factual organisational assets. (Anholt 2007, pp. 6–7) All organizations have identities that has three dimensions: central features of the organization, originality of the organization and its historical continuity (Lehtonen 1998, pp. 136). However, stories from the history of the organization tend to evolve to myths that inspire both inside and outside audiences (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 25). Claude Lévi-Strauss points out that myths are born out of repetition and the aim is to create a narrative that can withstand experiences countering the myth. (Lévi-Strauss 1972, pp. 206–230; Lévi-Strauss 1958, pp. 227–255). Whereas an individual myth can disappear, it never completely vanishes but rather evolves to something else, still maintaining something from the original myth: a message, a code or some other feature (Lévi-Strauss 1978, pp. 256).

According to some theories, marketing is only selling concrete commodities, whereas branding is considerably more challenging. It has been said, that anyone can produce and distribute goods, but the additional value created with a brand is something truly unique (Klein 2001, pp. 36). Brands create loyalty (Aaker 1996, pp. 21). Still, images have to be sustained and constantly nurtured (Karvonen 1999, 100). Reputation and brand also mean

trust and especially financial recessions tend to emphasise its significance. (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 66–67). People tend to rather co-operate with actors they know and trust. When activities expand outside the immediate surroundings, one has to somehow transmit the ”good reputation” forward. The birth of brands can be seen as a consequence of the growing distance of buyer and seller (Anholt 2005, pp. 19–20) In minds of people trust and respect are closely linked (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 109, 227).

Images are created to please people (Karvonen 1999, pp. 212). Brand make life easier and more attractive as we can easily define ourselves through them. Humans seem to be attracted to the way they emphasise and bring forward our personality and the way they are a medley of feelings, emotions and function. Through them we can tell something about ourselves. We possess the power to craft brands into our liking and through this we can craft society. This change has been brought upon by changes in society, such as globalization, and increasing flow of communication. Wally Olins summarises that our world is full of noise that has made purely factual decision making almost impossible. In this racket brand represents clarity, continuity, reassurance, status and sense of cohesion – everything people use to define themselves. Brands represent identity and often branding process turns into a discussion on its true essence (Olins 2003, pp 27, 249; Valaskivi 2019, pp. 322). Katja Valaskivi states that “*Branding does provide a tool for discussing the core values of the institution and insists on building its strengths on those values* (Valaskivi 2019, pp. 322).

### **3.2 Why regions need brands?**

Brands have been very efficient in the commercial world for a long time and currently places are developing and implementing them strategically in order to be competitive in any given sector (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, pp. 3). Country branding is a transnational practice in which individual country branding processes appear local and are always attaching to prior tradition or national imagination. There is a clear connection to imagined communities presented by Benedict Anderson. (Valaskivi 2014, pp. 195; Andersson 2006) Monica Schatz defines country brand as “*a brand designed to increase a nation’s global competitiveness*” (Schatz 2016, pp. 21).

Concepts of the corporate world are increasingly important for regions and countries. The most crucial difference between branding a product or branding a country is the obvious fact, that brands for countries can not be invented, as countries already have their respective brands. These brands are often very strong. Simon Anholt also reminds, that in the end people create a place as their image. Without people, and their culture, a place is nothing but empty landscape. Empty place does not have a brand. National identity and brand go hand in hand and in a way, brand can be seen as being the identity in a tangible, robust, communicatable and usable form. (Anholt 2007, pp. 75).

Country image is a term that is often used (Karvonen 1997, pp. 11). These images are, however, very stereotypical. They are stemming from the collection of the qualities and characteristics that come to mind when a person is thinking of a certain nation. These images have formed in history, which results that images of older countries are more profound than the images of more recent additions. (Koski 2005, pp. 89) As stated, image is more precisely on how the subject is perceived, not what the subject is in factual reality. Images are often very caricature-like sketches, a pattern, model or a perception of the issue. When the issue is recalled from them memory, it is actually reconstructed by filling the gaps in the model with common knowledge. Erkki Karvonen encapsulates image to “*a model that concretizises and simplifies issues*”. (Karvonen 1999, pp. 52, 139) Still, these images and classifications affect decision-making (Koski 2005, pp. 89). Countries and regions operate in many ways as brands as they are perceived in a certain way within audiences and are associated with certain characteristics and attributes. Image of a country is predestining how the world sees and treats it. (Anholt 2005, pp. 105)

It is important to remember that branding a nation and the brand of a nation are different concepts as a country inevitably has a brand, even if it has not been knowingly branded. For individuals, the image of the country is a combination of wide array of issues: personal experiences, education and knowledge, products originating from the country, stereotypes and media. (Fan 2005, pp. 5, 10–12). Although some researchers see images constantly shifting, it is extremely hard to change the image or the identity of a country



(Koski 2005, pp. 98; Hülse 2007, pp. 24). Seppänen points out that this is typical with visual and linguistic constructions in general (Seppänen 2001, pp. 218).

Each inhabited location in the world has a reputation, a brand, if you may. According to marketing theories this brand offers a shortcut to an informed decision. Countries must realise this and seek to control their inner identity and external reputation. It can be argued that perceptions can sometimes have a bigger impact on reality than the factual reality itself. A location can have a strong reputation, which means that it is perceived the same way by most of the people aware of the country, or then it is possible that the location has hardly any meaning to the majority of the people or the perceptions vary greatly. This means the location has a weak reputation. Naturally, strong reputation or fame are not necessarily positive. Being well-known does not mean being liked. Still, the image of the country affects greatly on how people outside and inside the country perceive it, and on how they act or on how they receive and welcome a person or a product originating from the country. Internationally, the image of the country has a direct and measurable effect in almost every field, though especially strong affect is has on economic, social, political and cultural spheres. (Anholt 2007, pp. 8–9)

Countries holding strong brand values seem to have to strongest brands. Usually this appears to mean stable, liberal and democratic Western countries that hold a tendency to being neutral and which are producing several well-known and successful branded products. Furthermore, it assists if the country has strong presence in international media, which might be achieved through culture, entertainment or tourism. Anholt also suggests, that it appears to be easier to build a good brand slightly off the center-stage of the international politics as a bad reputation for any industrialized country almost always stems from unpopular foreign policy. (Anholt 2007, 45–46) According to Country Brand index by FutureBrand, the commercial leader in the industry, in 2019 the top-five of country brands were Japan, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden and Finland. It is worth noting, that Finland has been moving up the most of the Top-20 -countries: eight positions since 2014. According the study, the main associations for Finland in 2019 globally were health & education, standard of living, safety & security, good infrastructure, natural beauty and

a desirable holiday-destination. (FutureBrand 2020) All of these associations can support a successful education export endeavour.

Small country brands tend to include only few characteristics. Finland is typical brand of this sort. These brands communicate certain issues to a part of people, but in contrary to stronger country brands, their meanings are not quite as clear, strong nor are they global. As expected, brands of countries vary depending on the country in which the study is conducted. (Anholt 2005, pp.10; 110) Brands are also partly shared through for example geography: Nordic countries, Africa and so on (Anholt 2007, pp. 53).

Naturally each country is trying to build a brand that is truthful, strong, appealing and does justice to the country. Furthermore, it should be truly useful to economic, political and social aspirations of the country. A brand has to represent truthfully the spirit of the country and the will of its inhabitants. (Anholt 2007, pp. 2) Furthermore, the values of being fashionable, contemporary and up-to-date are at the heart of any branding process (Valaskivi 2019, pp. 322).

Simon Anholt is listing benefits of brands as follow: clearer national identity and social aspirations, innovation-friendly environment, more efficient attraction of international events, investments and travellers, healthier country-of-origin -effect, better profile in global media, easier access to international actors and organs and more beneficial cultural exchange with others. Anholt also considers nation brand to have three special attributes: it attracts (people, investments, attention), it transfers appeal (for example from country to products or people originating from the country) and it has the ability to create order in chaos through inner order and co-operation. (Anholt 2007, 28–29)

As stated, one of the major uses of nation brand is attracting people. Quite often the most obvious field is **tourism**, which is also connected to especially international exchange-students. It is a major factor in country brand and also a large beneficiary, as it is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Tourism is also a sector, where differentiation is especially important (Henderson 2007, pp. 262). Still, tourism-brand is only a part of country-brand and it is often a bit irrelevant or even harmful to other international

aspirations of the country (Anholt 2005, pp. 126). Travel-destination image is frequently only a part of wider tourism strategy and it occasionally even contradicts the other parts of the brand of a country. Still, Henderson argues that the perception of the country is often tightly tied to its reputation as a travel destination. The value of the brand for tourism is enormous as if the country has a general reputation of being an unstable location, luring tourism is extremely difficult. (Henderson 2007, 262–265)

At the simplest, nation brand can be seen as the reputation of a country as a producer of a product (Fan 2005, 6). This is called **country of origin -effect**. There exists a theory that all human decisions are based on lists that never include more than seven options. In practice it would mean that if the country is not on this shortlist, it can not be selected. Some psychological experiments appear to back the theory. For a country it means that in order to be on the list and have an opportunity to become selected, it has to overthrow one of the countries already on the list, being it wine production countries, holiday destinations or education providers. (Anholt 2007, pp. 81) It is claimed that the success of a specialist depends mostly on how well it can narrate his or her knowhow (Parantainen 2005, pp. 108). For example students having a degree from certain countries are seen better educated than students from some other countries, even though it might have nothing to do with the factual quality of education.

In commercial life the earnings of branded organizations are even as much as 15–20% higher than the companies lacking a brand. According to studies the likelihood of organization making a considerable break-through or innovation almost doubles with branded organizations. Still, it is hard to assess whether it is the cause or the effect of the brand as good products build strong brands and strong brands build demand for even better products. (Anholt 2005, pp. 6–7, 39) Still, strong brand is an option for competing with price and often the importance of price is over-estimated (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, pp. 34–35).

Country of origin -effect is still occasionally debated and the possible additional value it can provide depends on the product category (Aaker 1996, 82). In some products it has no effect at all (Olins 2003, pp. 142). Still, in some products origin is a crucial part of the

tradition and narration. This partly explains why strong brands in certain categories tend to cluster geographically. (Anholt 2005, pp. 79; Porter 1991, pp. 188–190; Pike 2009, pp. 619–645). Certain countries and regions are well-known for certain products and so the pure essence of the country of origin gives them credibility (Trout & Hafrén 2003, pp. 149). This holds true also with education.

As marketing services is very demanding, it is important to find a way to differentiate the offering. Service can be defined as follows “*a service is any activity or benefit that one party can give to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to a physical product*”. (Kotler & Armstrong 1999, pp. 13) It has been argued that a service is built surrounding an immaterial core that can be seen as an abstract idea (Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 15). Service differ from tangible products on six points, according to Kotler et. al: intangibility (1), inseparability (2), variability (3), perishability (4), criteria for satisfaction is different (5), and the customer participates in the process (6) (Kotler et. al 2002, pp. 12–14). Marketing services by itself can be complicated, as it is often intangible. To make things even more complicated, nowadays the situation in many cases is that products are partly tangible, partly not. However, one central feature in service is, that the customer is participating the process in a significant way. (Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 13)

Defining professional services, as products marketed under the umbrella of Finnish education are, can be even more difficult as they are essentially plans, instructions or even plain ideas (Immaisi 2014, pp. 8). Quite often the buyer of a professional service needs to take a gamble, as it is impossible to be certain that the solution purchased actually works before the purchase is done and the implementation is taking place (Sipilä 1996, pp. 17–18). Furthermore, education is a field where seldom the purchaser and end-user are the same. One option to combat this is by productizing (Parantainen 2009, pp. 9).

Attitude towards a country and the brands originating from there is unpredictable, emotional and fluctuating. It is based on myth, legend, narrative or occasionally on rumour. Wally Olins believes that true national brand is actually vanishing and it is being replaced by a kind of falsified national brand (Olins 2003, pp. 143, 147). It means that

products are given nationalities which actually have nothing to do with the actual product. Simon Anholt gives “Bailey’s Irish Cream -liquor as an example. (Anholt 2005, pp. 107). Using origin, or nationality, in branding seems to often aim to amplify stereotypes and it can end up consolidating wrongful image of the country in question (Olins 2003, pp. 160).

**Attracting skilled immigrants** has become a central theme in most of the western societies and for example in Finland it has been called for at least a decade and the quest is still continuing (Koponen & Vuoristo 2009; Heikkilä 2016). Declining birth-rate and combined with high education rate have created a situation, where workforce in general is in decline and educated workers are not interested in heavy and low-paid positions. Also the ageing of the society is creating demand, especially in care-industry. (Heikkilä 2016) As discussed, increasing immigration is considered to be one of the central solutions to the issue for years and one way is to encourage foreign students to stay in Finland after their graduation (CIMO 2016).

According to Anne Koski, communication can increase the likelihood of **change** (Koski 2005, pp. 97). In addition to external target group, a brand also always have an inner audience (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, pp. 31). Furthermore, brand often acts as a crucial clue within a community and creates **communality**. It has become, in a sense, a manifestation of the existence and purpose of the organization or community. (Olins 2003, pp. 111–129)

Choice characterizes culture according to Erkki Karvonen (Karvonen 1998, pp. 30–31). It follows that advertising can have an effect on people and even on culture in the long run. Inner image is always the basis for the outer image (Karvonen 1999, pp. 44). Taylor and Saarinen, on the other hand, suspect the autonomy of culture to be purely an illusion (Taylor & Saarinen 1994). In that case it would be easier to mold. It has been even stated that at the beginning the image follows the organisation but in the end their roles change as the organisation has evolved into suiting its image – both in good and evil.

Brands also affect personel or citizens. People can take **pride** in being a part of the chain producing something special. This, in turn, provokes team-spirit that is invaluable in

ensuring high quality and productivity. Brands also facilitate recruiting and retaining employees. (Anholt 2005, pp. 39) In the case of countries this brand can mitigate brain drain. It is also interesting to note that in this setting nationalism plays a part as the views of inhabitants of a country affect the external brand of a country greatly. In almost every country studied own compatriots were considered as the best people. (Anholt 2007, pp. 56–58) The image of a country should be therefore studied both internally and externally. Inner perception of a state on its external image is typically overly positive, whereas from the outside any country is seen from multiple angles (Bromley 1993, pp. 46).

It is often considered that the brand reflects the personality and self-esteem of the country. Culturally rich countries have good self-esteem and on the other hand it is hard to respect something who does not appreciate itself. For a culture to produce and invent something new, it must believe in itself, its originality and uniqueness, even in its superiority, states Levi-Strauss. Still, regrettably often this takes place on the expense of others. (Levi-Strauss 1989, pp. 20)

Choices are naturally always based on differences (Trout & Hafren 2003, pp. 26). According to Porter countries also gain advantage through differences, not through similarities (Porter 1991, pp. 667). **Differentiation**, that is crucial in brand building, has been partly overlooked in the past (Trout & Hafren 2003, pp. 25). Differentiation is one of the major tools to fight the problematic of dispensability. In a modern world almost any country can be replaced in any sector. (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, pp. 3–4) In globalizing world products are transforming to resemble more and more each other, choices are increasingly based on image (Hülse 2007, pp. 24). Claude Levi-Strauss suspected that wide communication between cultures might eventually lead into a one, homogenic, global culture. This, in turn, would lead to the end of competition and development and improvements. (Levi-Strauss 1989, 20) That is a grim prospect.

Interestingly, some organizations still do not aim to differentiate consciously. Instead they believe that their excellent products will do the trick. In fact factual quality, price or creativity seldom promote differentiation. Instead one can be different by being “first”, “market leader”, “highly specialized” or by achieving sort of social acceptance, a

preference. (Trout & Hafrén 2003) Furthermore, in some segments differentiation through product is nearly impossible, as is the case with electric companies. In these segments the only possible competitive advantage is image and that the brand is preferred over competitors. (Olins 2003, pp. 21)

### **3.3 Is there something wrong with branding theory?**

Where there is power, there is always critique – as it should be. One of the most common critique claims that our economic system, which brands are a part of, is purely based on dissatisfaction and discontent. Perhaps rational “homo economicus” has been partly replaced by a human, that is buying and consuming images, symbols and narratives, perhaps even on the expense of the product itself (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 116–117; Klein 2000). This has been affected also by the growing wealth and overall selection. Perhaps symbols are not meant to satisfy physiological needs but social and communicational and symbolic gravings. (Karvonen 1999, pp. 230–232) Perhaps our downfall will be acquiring products just to raise our social status? (Anholt 2005, pp. 4)

Naomi Klein considers the product to be only a marketing gimmick of the organisation that is producing it (Klein 2001, pp. 37–38). Although the theory might first sound like something you might hear from a conspiracy theorist, it has a certain amount of truth in it as product is enabling the organisation to survive and perhaps even grow. Furthermore, Klein is critsising branding on being competitive by the very nature (Klein 2001, pp. 47).

Anti-globalization movement is not interested in brand itself, rather they see brands as a symptom of capitalism. They consider brands to be tools of oppression as they create a foul impression of freedom of choice. Wally Olins, however, states that the major problem with this critique is that it only considers brands to be commercial and completely forgets the other usages of brands, such as politics, education, sports and voluntary work. Brand itself is not good or evil, instead it matters where and when it is used. One might argue that for example WWF, UNICEF and Oxfam are all very powerful brands, and without the brand they would not be closely as efficient operators as they currently are. In addition to the mentioned ones, many other charitable organisations

depend on brands. (Olins 2003, 10–11; Saxton 2002) To put it blunt, all charity is most of all emotions, and hence branding: blind people, kids with cancer and third world countries are all engulfed in a fierce competition on attention and financial support. For example the Red Cross is one of the most recognizable and efficient brands of the last century and it is representing few simple values and worldview. (Olins 2003, pp. 22–23, 246–247)

Olins points out that large part of the critique on brands also appears to forget the fact, that humans seem to like brands. If that would not be the case, they would not exist, he claims. It is also visible in the fact that brands are controlled by consumers, or receivers, not the senders or producers pouring money on them. (Olins 2003 pp. 15–16; Anholt 2005, pp. 4) We seem to rather believe that unknow cynical agents are manipulating us than that we simply like consuming. Still, Anholt reminds, that even though branding mechanism has proved out to be durable, it does not mean it is completely healthy or even morally sustainable. Still their success suggests that they touch something very real in human nature. (Anholt 2005, pp. 4–6)

The thought of branding countries is commercialising higher national ideals has also been brought forward. Especially tourism marketing is claimed to commercialise destinations, regions and people inhabiting them in order to make them easy to consume for the arriving tourists. (Henderson 2007, pp. 263–265; Dicks 2003, pp. 17). Globalisation is seen to equalize tastes and preferences of consumers in a way that finally the ancient cultures and inherited brands are forced to bend and adapt to commercial demands (Fan 2005, pp. 10). Giving a new logo, slogan or name for a region does not improve the image and the future of the location. Instead, in the worst-case scenario, designer-logos can promote a feeling of the place, or an institute of higher education, actually being a commodity. Still, branding in its heart is democratic as it based on persuasion rather than forcing and endorsement rather than commanding. (Anholt 2007, pp. 29–30, 39–40)

Brands have also been criticized on being, in essence, dead. If everything is brand, is then anything factually brand? In addition, many scholars, such as Simon Anholt, are consciously attempting to use other terms instead of “brand” when dealing with countries.



According to him, interpretation of the term is complicated and it is littered with unnecessary connotations. It is seen as purely selling and as a term, it might sound cynical, calculating or even malicious or sinister. (Anholt 2007, pp. 4) Leena-Maija Rossi criticises using the term “country image” for being ideologically structured and purpose-driven term. Country brand is distinctively created and distributed by official parties. It is typically created with very limited and selected materials and narratives. Rossi considers it to be different from the reputation that is based on the true cultural or social circumstances. (Rossi 2017, pp. 265, 268)

On a more philosophical note images, and their contemporary manifestation, brands have been criticised by for example Guy Debord. He connected images with capitalistic production and modern consciousness industry, including marketing, with an attempt to replace the real use-value of a product with commodity-on-display -value (Seppä 2007, pp. 24).

## **4. METHODOLOGY – ON HOW TO ANALYZE AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIAL**

Firstly, the chapter will present the research material. It will discuss details surrounding the info-promotional video, its creation and usage. I analysed the research material with a tailor-made method combining semiotics, three-layered visual analysis and content analysis. This method, together with the argumentation for it, will be discussed in the latter part of the chapter. There are two appendixes attached to this chapter, first of which is the “Fact File” of the analysed material, including the description/subtext as it appeared on YouTube and the link to research material. Second appendix includes textual transcriptions of two first sets of the audio-visual presentation in order to demonstrate how the material was initially tackled in the analysis. As every transcription includes interpretations and, in a way, is superficial analysis by default.

### **4.1 Presentation of the material**

The video presentation of 2 minutes and 32 seconds is divided into 21 sets. The presentation was divided to sets according to the caption included in the video. This way it was possible to divide the large pie into more digestible pieces. After all, there were altogether more than 50 different visual scenes in the material that together created a compilation which was intended to persuade viewers to believe in Finnish Excellence in Education. Visual scenes were bound together with music, which also is to be discussed. Mainly the the video presents Finnish education through ordinary people in ordinary surroundings performing everyday tasks. Living and breathing Finnish education and society.

Although the info-promotional video analysed in the study is not the most wide-spread official presentation promoting Finnish education, it is one of the first ones after exporting education was raised in the position of being a star-export produce of Finland in the future. Compared to some other video presentations, it was less professional, more authentic, less polished and in a sense more revealing of how its creators themselves saw Finnish Excellence in Education. When education and especially education export is now discussed, it stems from the point-of-view of strengths defined by government officials

(Rossi 2017, pp. 268). Even though carefully crafted advertisements or info-promotional material are a productive field of study, some originality is often lost in the process.

All public relations -activities of organizations aim to maintain the trust and mutual understanding between the organization and all its audiences. It is goal-directed, planned and continuous. The traditional view sees marketing communications and pr-activities differing mainly through their communicators and audiences. Marketing communication is commercial and using emotions whereas public relations is social and using financial or social argumentation. The current trend of social advertising has been blurring this clear division. The video analysed in this study is a clear example: it is appealing to emotions even though it is promoting essentially official entity. By heart, social advertising is aiming audiences to have positive attitude toward the aspirations and actions of the organization (Lehtonen 1998, pp. 119–124).

The more important the decision, the more people tend to trust their intuition and feelings rather than logic (Anholt 2007, pp. 10–11). Generally, these types of videos are used in raising awareness of the product at hand and creating positive vibes. They do not include hard facts or sell, at least directly, anything. They exist to raise interest and to motivate interested persons to seek further information. Even though the video presentation has some resemblance to infomercial, which is defined by Oxford Languages as “*an advertising film which promotes a product in an informative and supposedly objective style*”, it is actually an info-promotional product. However, there is arguably a lot of aspects that resemble image marketing at its purest. Promoting lifestyle, making connections and suggestions to affect the general attitude towards the advertiser. Even though there might be, and most certainly should be, truth to all the claims presented in the video, finding them is left to the viewer.

Nowadays emphasis in marketing communications, also in education, has shifted to internet, instead of guidebooks and leaflets. Study in Finland -webpage had almost 1,3 visitors annually (CIMO 2016, pp. 27). Putting these numbers next to the 2 500 viewers of the presentation studied in this paper suggest that it was not marketed efficiently. Official marketing material does need to be produced professionally and it needs to be

the “best in the world”. Whatever convinces and appeals to Finnish youth, is not necessarily efficient globally. (Immaisi 2014, pp. 12–13) Still, viewer count in YouTube does not need to represent the whole audience and reach of a video as there are plenty of other mediums. Furthermore, these types of presentations are commonly used in business negotiations or presentations to raise the mood and break the ice. Whether this info-promotional product has been travelling around the globe on USB-sticks of sales agents of Finnish Education Excellence, I have no knowledge.

As stated before, the material is always interpreted against the experiences and preferences of the individual receiving the message and doing the transcription. According to semiotics, the impression is created when the message and the recipient meet, in a way the message is interpreted. Selection plays an important role both in sending and receiving a message. (Karvonen 1999, pp. 62–63). This is a very important issue to keep in mind as the impressions and analysis following are not the one undeniable truth, but rather an individual impression affected by the personal experiences and background of the researcher. However, all the scenes were transcribed and few examples of this work are attached to this thesis as appendix 2. These short descriptions became the basis for the analysis presented in the next chapter and can be considered as a “pre-analysis”. Hopefully these short descriptions will showcase the general mood of the presentation as well as reveal something on the methods applied to the research material.

## **4.2 Methodological considerations**

This part of the thesis will address the methodological issues. The material analysed in this case study is a info-promotional video presentation promoting Finnish education. I have tackled the research material transcribed with a tailor-made method combining semiotics, three-layered visual analysis and content analysis. The study conducted is of qualitative nature as it allows describing different processes in their context. What are the visual constructs included in the research material and how are they semiotically constructed? (Seppänen 2001, pp. 223).

Visual culture can be plainly defined as a field of study that is focusing on aspects of culture that rely on visual representations. It includes actions mainly based on visual perception, and the results of those actions, such as public imageries. These imageries are inevitably social as they are produced in, and by, society at large. This applies to for example news and advertisements. Meanings are created and attached to these messages by excluding other possible meanings. It follows that a vast amount of selection is included. Furthermore, both publicity itself, and the meanings included are fiercely competed. (Seppänen 2005, pp. 15–17)

Janne Seppänen concludes that in principle visual culture can be studied with the very same methods than any other social phenomena (Seppänen 2005, pp 27). For example, any picture can be processed and analysed by dividing the work roughly to issues relating to the birth, or creation, of the image and the image itself. The birth of the image mainly includes the hopes and motives of the sender, but it is vital also to include the viewer, or receiver, and the situation in which the message is received. When analysing the image itself, the principal focus should be on the content, and the artistic and communicational characteristics and goals it is carrying. The aim is to avoid the intended analysis turning into a mere transcription where the background of the image is, almost mechanically, reiterated. It is important to ponder the illusions and the symbolism the image is containing. (Keskitalo 2009). "Hunting for conventions", as Anne Koski put it, should never be the only objective of the analysis, but instead the researcher should seek to find the messages that are communicated under these shared conventions. (Koski 2005, pp. 152). Janne Seppänen concludes that visual literacy is, by heart, challenging cultural truisms and finding a deeper meaning from where they are most invisible (Seppänen 2001, pp. 224). It is central to understand how language, and other existing symbolic systems, construct our understanding of the environment (Von Bonsdorff 1997, pp. 30).

Traditionally science has been trying to avert from impressions, feelings, tones and moods. In the past, and partly still today, this division is occasionally well founded. However, already in 1970's, for example Claude Lévi-Strauss stated that this era was already being left behind (Lévi-Strauss 1989, pp 6–13). Whereas printed words emphasize ideas, the digital and electric media emphasise appearances and moods.

(Meyrowitz 1994, pp 58). In the past images were often considered as unreliable and purely entertaining, in a negative sense. Furthermore, they were seen as irrational factors, appealing to emotions and intuition (Lindroos 2004, pp 114–115, 129–136). Still, it is interesting that in totalitarian societies controlling imageries is more crucial than controlling texts (Uskali 2007, pp 131).

Brands are myths by heart. Therefore, it is impossible to read them the same way than other messages, or texts, in Western cultures: from left to right, from top to bottom. They do not consist of a set of occurrences, but rather a bundle. These occurrences, however, have been divided in different points in history. (Lévi-Strauss 1989, pp. 44–45) Visual material can not be logically and coherently structured by the side of text. This is already due to the fact, that different tools are required to study and analyse visual material than which are needed when dealing with traditional textual messages. Types of visual material are plentiful and, according to Lindroos, it means that is impossible to produce a one single methodological model, that would comfortably suit any research conducted in the field. Instead, each method should be tailor-made to suit the research material and the research questions. (Lindroos 2004, pp. 114–115)

Models, theories and techniques used in movie- and photography -research can prove to be useful in the type of study conducted in this thesis. Still, when dealing with social advertising it is more important to emphasise the message and the meaning rather than angles and technical side of the video presentation. To succeed in this, the researched must recognize the framework, ideologies and other relevant underlying issues. (Lindroos 2004, pp 117; Seppänen 2005, pp 19)

Picture, or an image, has replaced text as the principal medium of information (Taylor & Saarinen 1994, pp 4). Kia Lindroos emphasizes the pictorial turn and the visual character of contemporary culture and society. She states that processing visual material requires intuitivity as well as ability to contextualise visual and aesthetic experiences. No longer images and visual culture in general are considered to represent the factual reality in true sense. Texts and images can be manipulated in a way that they not only reflect each other, but also produce one another. (Lindroos 2004, pp 119–123, 137) Furthermore, the fairly

recent changes in advertising and marketing itself have led to a new situation when it comes to analysing and studying them. It is quite commonplace to consider aesthetics and other qualities that make them, in fact, resemble other cultural products. According to Harri Sarpavaara, the contemporary advertising can be compared to post-modern art and in doing so we admit that the aesthetic innovations in them can also give us experiences parallel music, films or visual art. (Sarpavaara 2004, pp 20–21)

The research conducted in this thesis is a *case study*. Case studies have been traditionally conducted when the object of the study is to explain or understand a contemporary and real-life -connected issue. Furthermore, case studies are especially useful when the researcher has only limited control on the events taking place and then “how” or “why” -questions are asked. (Yin 1989, pp. 13) As in any credible research, researcher subjectivity is to a prerequisite for a successful study, these issues are not to be overlooked. The amount and quality of personal involvement has to be considered. (Simons 2009, pp. 24)

There are also challenges for case study -approach stemming from the individual and specific nature of these studies. Case study is not aiming to generalizations, instead it is seeking conceptions and understanding. It follows that the conclusions of the researcher can actually be the most generalizable aspect of the study. Even though data is specific to a single case, the explanations can be useful in other similar cases as well. The aim of these studies is to expand and generalise theories, not to make statistical generalizations. (Timmons & Cairns 2010, pp. 100–103; Aaltio & Heilmann 2010, pp. 67–78; Gillham 2010, pp. 12; Yin 1989, pp. 21)

Methodology used in case studies is typically flexible and can include a mixture of several methods (Timmons & Cairns, 2010, pp. 100–103; Hamel et. al 1993, pp. 1). Aaltio and Heilman consider researchers role in the process being pivotal in the context of implementation of the research but also connecting the work to existing theories. They also call for using various methods in order to ensure reliability in the process. Furthermore, intuition and surprise should be allowed to play their parts as the case study is essentially an attempt to understand individual case in its unique environment (Aaltio

& Heilmann 2010, pp. 69–71). In this study apply content analysis, three-layered visual analysis and semiotics in the analysis. With content analysis, it is possible to study possible wider connections and sequences in the material as well as observe different actors and their quantity (Seppänen 2005, pp. 27). Also three-layered visual analysis has undeniable strengths in the type of study I performed. However, crucial part of the methodology was semiotics, which will be discussed last of the methods applied. Ultimately, I have ended up with a tailor-made hybrid-method with features from all these three methods.

In *three-layered visual analysis* the material studied can be, true to methods name, divided into three separate levels: denotation, connotation and abstract. Denotation level refers to analysing the superficial level of the image. How does the image look like on the surface? What kind of story it is telling? What are the details, persons, objects and items or sceneries presented? (Seppänen 2005, pp. 106–133) These themes resample closely to textual elements presented in very basic movie-analysis (Kovanen et. al 2013, pp. 65).

The second level is the level of connotation. It can also be referred as a level of meaning. In this level one should be able to pinpoint the values and additional meanings the image is carrying, as well as associations and suggestions included. On this level also the symbols and possible myths should be discussed, as well as the background of the image. (Seppänen 2005, pp. 106–133) It is also claimed, that the level consist of “left-overs” from the previous level. Seppänen encapsulates this as on denotational level a hare is a hare whereas on the connotational level it is also a furry and cuddly creature. (Seppänen 2001, pp. 182)

Third level is the abstract level of the image. On abstract level attention should be paid on form, mood, atmosphere and other similar issues. One should not only seek clearly technical issues, such as “golden ratio”, layout and the emphasis of the picture. According to Janne Seppänen, the main attention should be instead directed towards the visual appearance of the image: colours, lines, shapes, balance, locations, directions, perspective, proportions and dimensions, tensions and so on. (Seppänen 2005, pp. 106–



133) Occasionally, also a fourth level has been justifiably added: the message itself. By this it is meant the goals and aspirations of the actor sending the message, or image.

In this study the high applicability of three-layered visual analysis stems from the ability to divide the material into clear and evident levels. The material covered in analysis is very multi-faceted so treating it as one, sole, level can not be justified, nor would it be feasible. The method also enables studying the background, possible presumptions and symbols more carefully.

Although *content analysis* often includes a comparing aspect, it has clear benefits also in the analysis carried out in this study. The method has traditionally been very popular in Mass media -studies where the general idea has often been to study values, and perhaps variables, in the material probed. Material is viewed mostly on the surface: what are the images presenting, who are the actors and where have the images been taken? Often content analysis requires another method to be used in conjunction with it. This co-method is very commonly based on semiotics. (Seppänen 2005, pp. 142–176)

Based partly on what stated above, I use a fair amount of *semiotics* in analysing the research material. The semiotic school is based on the idea that any message is a collection of signs and the meaning is attached to it when the message meets the society at large, including the recipient. It implies that no meaning has been attached to the message itself, or the set of signs, prior to them being in interaction with the human factor. These meanings are therefore produced, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Semiotics is well suited to analysing impressions, brands and other similar cultural phenomenon. Study of rhetoric can also be seen as a part of semiotics. Selection is at the heart of both sending a message, and receiving it, according to semiotics. (Karvonen 1999, pp 62–63) Kia Lindroos states that this selection highlights the issue that in order to be able transmit concepts to one another, we need signs that are constructed of words, images or other similar symbols. These signs are interpreted through themselves, but also from the angle of their impact on individual cognition. These actual meanings are in constant transition. (Lindroos 2004, pp. 124–125)

The most central concept of semiotics is the concept of “sign”. Erkki Karvonen sees these signs having three characteristics: a sign must have a physical form, it must represent or indicate something else than itself and, lastly, people must recognise it and use it as a sign. Naturally, the same sign can imply very different issues in different environments, societies and eras. Sign is very strongly culture-related. Semiotics sees building a brand as an attempt to establish a convention on the meaning and underlying message, a code, that concludes that the organisation represents certain, selected, positive features. (Karvonen 1999, pp. 65–66)

Each word and image are portraying the object from an angle. By selecting these signs, the aim is to active a certain pre-existing understanding or meaning related to the sign. Intention can be to give positive or truthful image of the sending party. Naturally, in optimal situation these two images would be the same. Still, according to Erkki Karvonen, marketed image seldom even aims to convey reality, but instead it echoes the needs and wants of the receiving party. (Karvonen 1999, pp 77–78, 83) This is often the case especially with commercial brands. Sender of the message has to ponder carefully what is worth communicating and what should not be presented. On the other hand, these decisions, although very central, are not necessarily conscious. Depicting messages is filled with conscious and unconscious selection, as well as intentional and unintentional, obvious and hidden, meanings (Sarpavaara 2004, pp. 32).

Ferdinand de Saussure based his theory of semiotics on the idea that language is a system of signs. Each bilateral sign includes two parts: the signifier and the signified. Signifier is the tangible and sensible figure, whereas signified is the intangible impression or image inside our mind. In a sign, these two sides have, however, merged into something completely new. (Karvonen 1998, pp 36) De Saussure claims that a single signifier does not have an independent and self-sufficient identity as it receives its identity negatively from what it does not represent (Karvonen 1999, pp 70). The problematic of image can, however, be seen from the semiotic point of view also in a way, in which sides of the message are not the sender and receiver, but two social actors. These two actors are creating meanings to the reality and define the situation differently, from their own

respective points-of-views. The receivers of the message have positioned themselves differently and it evidently has an effect on how the message is interpreted. Messages are comprehensible due to socially shared structures. (Karvonen 1997, pp 33; 47–51)

Charles Sanders Peirce considered signs as versatile clues, or symptoms, from which the essence of things can be deduced. It implies that the relation is implicit and the meaning of sign is deduced based on the context and object. (Peirce 1991) Semiotic presentations are basically created by selection. In practice it means that a symbol can not be tied to a one, single, way of use. Instead, it can be seen as part of various usages in different contexts. (Karvonen 1997, pp 145, 242) The transmission model of James W. Carey suggest that the sender encodes his or her ideas into signs that are transmitted through the selected channel to the receiver. The receiver then decodes the signs into ideas after receiving them. (Karvonen 1999, pp 48)

In order to study the sign-structure of an image in visual analysis one needs to understand referent, reference and symbol. Through this, one can truly start to grasp on what makes the image symbolic, iconic or index. (Fiske 2011 pp. 38–60) In a way a symbol and an index are at the opposite ends of the spectrum: symbol is strongly shaped by the human action, whereas, at least in principle, index is independent of human actions (Koski 2005, pp 151). Index has a direct link to the object it represents and is quite often product of causality. Icon, in its part, is a sign that “reminds” of the object. (Seppänen 2001, pp. 178–179)

Interpreting any message is an ongoing, or even never-ending process, according to semiotics. These interpretations stem from the practices that are created in social activities and contexts. Interpretations of prevalent reality are most of all social. Still, as meaning in the end is related to practices and operating in the reality, they can not be completely contractual. Furthermore, also the relation between the signifier and the signified can be studied. (Kunelius 2001, pp. 135–157) In addition to all this, the iconic nature of pictures as well as linguistic and visual metaphors often offer a highly interesting and fruitful field of study, although they often are so obvious, that are hardly noticed (Seppänen 2001, pp. 185).

There are several challenges and potential potholes in using semiotics in analysis. The very latest being that the possibility to use digital tools on the material has become very accessible and affordable. Also, the quality of such manipulations has increased and it is not always clearly evident that the image has been manipulated (Lindroos 2004, pp 126). This has led to a situation where in production of images, the role of technology is discussed and recognized more willingly (Mäyrä 2007, pp. 209). Still, these manipulations, or enhancements, are to be expected also in my research material. The decision to use manipulation in selected parts of the message obviously has a story to tell. However, it may well be that some digital manipulations were left unnoticed, and these are the potential problem. On the other hand, using digital manipulation in a material such as advertisement is not as reprehensible as using the very same tools in for example news images. Manipulation is, as stated, expected in advertisement, but in the field of delivering news, the requirement of objectivity became clear the very latest after the first world war (Karvonen 1997, pp 56). The fact that the material produced by official parties is traditionally seen more trustworthy and unmanipulated than commercial actors brings an interesting nuance in my study. What is more official than a state, and its Ministry, itself? Still, the material is clearly advertisement, as it aims to raise awareness and motivate viewers to apply a positive stance towards Finland and especially Finnish education.

According to Karvonen, cultural studies aim to avoid normatively dividing material into “high culture” and “low culture” (Karvonen 1998, pp 31). It suggests that a contemporary audio-visual advertisement as a research material is as valuable as, let say, *Night Watch* by Rembrandt Van Rijn or any given news-photo. Mass media can be understood as a ritual representation of the prevalent order in the society, where the order of issues is represented repeatedly. In this way the presentation in a sense becomes the reality in both, the receiver and the sender of the message. Still, Karvonen points out that in this case it is not question of transferring information, but rather showing and communicating the commonly shared beliefs. (Karvonen 1998, pp. 33) This tendency complicates considerably changing the brand, or image, that the organization has created or been given before.

Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen write that a word is never just a word. It is also an image. These images are not only objects of study, but also tools and vessels for thoughts, actions and communication. This implies that meaning is assigned to everything as every word is carrying its own power and influence. (Taylor & Saarinen 1994)

Visual communication is not as established and stable as verbal language. From this follows that it is not yet possible to express the meaning quite as precisely as verbally. (Koski 2005, pp 123) Visual experience is transferred differently from the textual experience and it enables textual message to be free of explanations and interpretations. Subjects can be shown simultaneously while communicating them verbally. It also means that already when the message is communicated there can be contradictions, different views and stories. (Lindroos 2004, pp. 129) In marketing it has been rephrased that if a good image speaks more loudly than thousand words, a good demonstration speaks more loudly than thousand images (Parantainen 2005, pp. 245). Still, image can also be seen as illusion brought up by perception (Taylor & Saarinen 1994).

Although it adds to the challenge, it is important to keep in mind the multisensory nature of the material, when analysing the audio-visual presentations (Keskitalo 2009). Understanding and internalising the concept of multisensory were one of the major hurdles when analysing the material. There are relating sounds, scents and emotions to accompany the visual images, and these issues are as important as the visual images themselves. Still, one has to bear in mind that this is where the role of the researcher is extremely central as all the issues associated this way are often highly individual and personal. For example when going through the material, as someone who has been through Finnish educational system, experienced our mid-summer sun, and walked in Helsinki at dawn or participated the morning rush-hour at Helsinki railway-station and subway, relates the message differently to someone to whom all these things are more abstract. Can they feel the first rays of sun on their face after long winter and smell the grass, hear the distant rumble of busses mixed with tweeting sparrows when the city is just awaking? Do they feel the pavement under their feet? However: realising and understanding multisensory factors are irreplaceable and valuable factors for successful analysis. Using multisensory models also inevitably results in making the researcher

clearly visible by acknowledging that the background, personality and knowledge of the researcher have an effect on the outcome of the analysis (Tuomainen 2017, pp. 179). Furthermore, even though visual and linguistic are in many ways intertwined, person can have visual perceptions, or sensations, that can not be structured using the symbolic system of language. (Seppänen 2001, pp. 36–37)

In many ways typical advertisements can be also studied using methods created for music videos. There are some differences, as most obvious being the lack of evident star, which could have easily been replaced in my research material by “Finnish Education” starring the video. In my study I found the adaptation by Richard Littlefield of Andrew Goodwins division of “Textual Systems in Music Video” useful. Basically, these systems are different semiotic levels. First of which is music itself, including melody, harmony, rhythm and other musical elements with lyrics. Second level is the narrative. It holds for example the drama and narrative in on-screen imagery and star-text. Third level is the level of filming techniques: types of shots, editing, perspective, panning, all of which affect the narrative. Lastly, there is the star-text, which Littlefield sees as procedures of maintaining and producing certain public image. (Littlefield 2003, pp. 597) Still, as music videos are essentially an Anglo-American invention, also their aesthetic conventions are relatively similar all around the globe, which makes it harder to differentiate in the genre (Kärjä 2002, pp. 642).

It is possible to apply semiotics in music and the audio-track used in the video. Music holds a heterogenous realm of mobile meanings in a similar way to visual material (Välimäki 2003, pp. 256–257). As Mark Reybrouck writes “*The proper effect of music is not an immediate fuction of the sign vehicles, but is dependent upon the processing by the listener*” (Reybrouck 2003, pp. 283). Even something as simple as cell-phone ring tones carry with them an underlying message and as such, provide a fruitful field of study using semiotics (Pekkilä 2003, pp. 110–120).

## 5. ANALYSIS – 152 SECONDS OF FINNISH EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Even though the language of brands is often considered international, or even global, branding activity also often has strong cultural characteristics (Anholt 2005, pp. 4). Brands are always cultural products and culture related as they are based on values and what is being appreciated. And that depends on culture (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 41–43). These differences can also be very practical. For example in Finland, and in Northern Europe in general, gestures, facial expressions and postures are not as central as in Asia. This difference is often referred as high-context and low-context -cultures (Puro 1998, pp. 109). In high-context cultures the form of the communication is more important than the function and being precise is not as important as being effective. It leads to visuality being emphasised over meaning. (Aula & Heinonen 2002, pp. 41)

The same complications are affecting aesthetic codes. They are strongly affected by the cultural context and they vary greatly, are in constant movement and loosely defined. John Fiske points out that “conventional aesthetic codes acquire their agreement amongst their users from shared cultural experience”. (Fiske 2011, pp. 76) In aesthetic experience is all about how issues “appear”, rather than how they “are”. How issue appears is defined when experiencing something. The event of experiencing is interactive and it does include our knowledge and prior experiences. (Von Bonsdorff 1997, pp. 27) It is crucial to admit that observing the phenomena from a completely neutral stand, from the outside of the society, is impossible (Karvonen 1997, pp. 73).

Analogists consider mental images to stem from certain brain structures and see them as a central part of human observation system. According to them people rely on representations in the memory already when identifying objects. By doing this, we bring visual mental images alive. The structure of the set of images presented to us effects greatly on what kind of “big picture” we perceive. (Koski 2005, pp. 111; 130)

An advertisement, as analyzed in this study, can be seen as “pathos” from the argumentation theory of Aristotle. It is influencing us through emotions. The power of image in communications is based on its evidentiary effect as well on its ability to provoke

feelings (Uskali 2007, pp. 121). Seeing is believing and showing equals truth of the issue. Mechanical picture has been considered as an exact replication of the factual issue, but this traditional view has been diminishing through the possibilities modern technology is offering in image manipulation (Koski 2005, pp. 142; 378; Uskali 2007, pp. 141). Still, images are powerful in opinion-forming and it even seems to have power to make us ignore the facts (Brafman & Brafman 2008). Video is a very powerful medium to create brands and their cultural and technological forms have and a strong effect on audiovisual narratives and aesthetics (Herkman 2002, pp. 144).

In addition to the challenges described above, still some remains. Even though visual and lingual are intertwined in many ways, visual experience can not be completely transcribed using written language. People tend to think and feel far deeper than they are able to express in language. (Seppänen 2001, pp. 36–37; Seppänen 2005, pp. 28) Mark Taylor and Esa Saarinen pose an intriguing question: *”What does it mean to write with sound or even with smell?”* (Taylor & Saarinen 1994). The same issue has been brought up by Pierre Bourdieu: *”The work of art is never just this cosa mentale, this kind of discourse destined only to be read, decoded, interpreted as the intellectualist vision does... It contains always something indescribable, not by surplus... but by lack, something that communicates, if one can say, from body to body, as the rhythm of the music or the taste of the colors, i.e. prior to the words and concepts”*. (Lima 2003, pp. 582) To sum all these challenges it is fair to say that the most important factor in analysing art is to remain open and sensitive to the plurality the situation offers. If not, we will only end up detecting what we already knew and project our prejudices on the object. (Von Bonsdorff 1997, pp. 27)

Analysis was conducted by a tailor-made method combining semiotics, three-layered visual analysis and content analysis. Furthermore, the material was divided into several categories and sub-categories. This categorizing allows understanding the reoccurring themes and how they were addressed in the research material. This approach also allowed quantitative analysis of certain factors. In addition to purely visual, or graphic content, attention was paid to soundtrack, filming and post-production techniques and movement. From all these aspects a narrative and a clear set of values emerged.



## 5.1 Themes

As evident, education has been seen as an integral part of “Brand Finland”. Prior to performing the analysis the presumption, or the hypothesis, was that themes and brand attributes used in the info-promotional video resonate strongly with the themes used in general country brand. For that reason it is fruitful to consider how “Brand Finland” was constructed around the time when the material was created and how those themes evolved during the decade. Did the themes and brand attributes in the video created all those years ago still managed to stay relevant in 2020?

The major event for Finnish country brand around the time of the creation of the video was establishing of working group to define “Brand Finland”. The group was headed by Simon Anholt, whose work I have used extensively in this paper. Their work was finally concluded in 2009 and their findings were that our core values are dependability, downright and solution-centered way of operating and persistence, which is separating Finns from other Nordic Countries. The most potential suggestions for the differentiation factors for Finland were:

- *Global Governance*: Finland has the potential to create a more efficient way for solving problems in the world that is currently used.
- *Products*: Finland should focus on developing truly functioning and durable products and service.
- *Society & security*: an opportunity to productize Finnish society and sub-sectors.
- *Education*: utilising high-level basic education in international setting.
- *Wired society*: is signalling on technological and social progress of Finland.
- *Nature*: the unique of nature-relationship of Finn allows approaching global problems in a way that are both interesting and emotionally appealing, in addition to concrete environmental actions.

(Heino 2015, pp. 303–304) Many, if not all, of the themes can be directly linked to education export and to the info-promotional video analysed in this thesis.

Ten years after the video was published, an interesting vision paper titled “*Better Together for a Better World*” was published by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland. In the paper the Finnish brand is distilled as follows: “*Finland believes in equality, democracy and taking good care of each other. Good education is the cornerstone of our society. These are the reasons why we are among the top countries in different rankings from clean air to quality of life.*” (Ministry for Education and Culture 2017) The themes are still the same as they were in 2008, as they should be: education & knowledge, Nordic nature (inc. clean technology and sustainability), solution-orientedness and trustworthiness. (Ministry for Education and culture 2017, pp. 22). Another list of official attributes connected to Finland was offered by Rossi: “*problem-solving and innovations, trustworthiness, fluency, equality, safety, well-being, friendliness and easy-going, internationality and multiculturalism, design, culture, education and language skills, environmental friendliness and ‘nature know-how’.*” (Rossi 2017, pp. 277). It is striking how the themes and visual narrative from 2006 still feel contemporary!

In the same paper Ministry for Education and Culture set a vision for Finland: “*Finland in 2025 will be an open and international country, linguistically and culturally rich.*” For education export the set of visions appear bright as Finland has achieved “*greater international attraction through focusing on the latest science and leading-edge research*”. Furthermore, Finland “*is the home of high-quality education*”, has “*momentum for sharing Finnish knowledge, expertise and educational innovations*”, and “*Finland is heard internationally*”. From the practical side Team Finland -network is fully operational and Finnish experts abroad and the alumni educated in Finland are more involved in promoting Finland. (Ministry for Education and culture 2017)

## **5.2 Values**

Naturally all brands do carry a set of values. When branding a country, or a product as closely tied to the brand of the country as education is to Finland, a set of values is to be expected highly visible. Brand values of Finnish education were mainly discussed earlier together with the themes set for the Finnish education export.

Values visible in the analysed material were mainly soft values as they are appropriate for a small country and to the precise sector, education. These values are equality, fairness, the importance of education, nature and environment and doing together. Even though from harder values technology was visible, it was brought up as an auxiliary aid to achieve good results and a pleasant study environment. A clear sign communicating sustainability was presenting bicycles several times a preferred mode of transport. This set of values is clearly tied to the list of success factors behind Finnish education presented by Monica Schatz: *equality and equity within the school system, autonomy and freedom and appreciation of teachers and trust in the educational system*. (Schatz 2016, 59–65). All of these are powerful values.

On the other hand the lack of obvious references to equality was surprising. There were no disabled people nor older people, males were slightly more present than females. Explanations to the gender issue can be several, one of which is brought up by Laura Saarenmaa. She expects that in the brand of 2010 gender equality was left intentionally out from the Finnish brand as it was considered self-evident and well-known Finnish value globally. It was not even brought up as a strength of Finnish society. (Saarenmaa 2014, pp. 223) Another explanation can be that during the time the video was created, there had been signs of boys falling behind girls in education in Finland (Yle 2016a and Yle 2016b). This might have caused intentional or unintentional bias in selecting the scenes for the presentation.

It has been argued that Finnish education is titled best in the world purely for marketing reasons even though it is not the whole truth. *“The product value consists of its superiority above other educational systems.”* (Schatz et al., 2015) Speaking of superiority in a field as closely tied to culture as education, can be dangerous. People can detect a hint of cultural imperialism lurking behind, which would be in direct conflict with the values selected to present Finnish education and society.

### 5.3 People

People on the info-promotional video are not stars and heroes, bar for one particular set, which will be discussed later. Seldom people are presented alone, as individuals. Main focus is presenting people in different ensembles: students, families, work teams. Groups that appear coherent and working together in harmony. They are presented in common situations, performing everyday tasks in their ordinary surroundings. Many of the people, even the youngest ones, are having the aura of concentration to the task at hand, and many of the school-children are wearing glasses, to hint of scientificity or academic.

In addition to mundane tasks and environments, people are presented wearing rather everyday clothing and accessories. Clothing is distinctively inconspicuous in colour: light colours and grey. White, grey and brown is accompanied with blue, though still not bright blue but rather toned down shades of the colour. An exception to this set of clothing-colours is the group of pre- or lower elementary school children playing outside. In the set bright colours are present to enhance the mood of the happy, or even boisterous, moment.

People in different age groups are not presented in a credible way. By first glimpse it seems that there were more visual presentations of adults than children and more males than females. After compiling statistics, this really is the case, although the difference is not as significant as it first appeared. Again, it might be accidental, as I am certain it is with the gender division, or planned, as with age groups. After all, adult education is something still occasionally overlooked in many of the target markets and something Finland can offer. In addition to the lack of obviously older learners, it is also significant that older teachers are completely missing. Every person giving tuition or presenting something, appears to be in their twenties. That is contradictory in many ways. First of all, it is not a truthful, or even credible picture of Finnish education, nor should it be the aim and the manifestation of what we wish to be. Furthermore, having young teachers can be a double-edged sword in some markets and for example in East Asia, which perhaps was one of the main target-markets of the info-promotional video, age and experience are highly valued, even to the point where young professionals are not

appreciated as much as they should due to their age. This lack of older age-groups does not only mean that there are no obvious seniors presented, but you will also struggle to find middle-aged person, especially if you left out one set, set 13, that states that Finland offers “*Tailored educational programs available for every citizen*”. In the set you find the only senior of the video, Nobelist Martti Ahtisaari, and a man working in a shipyard, who is at least flirting with middle-age. In the set it would have been easy to add a reference to life-long learning and good and active seniority – which is actually true in many respects in Finland. Perhaps the intention was to communicate dynamism, openmindedness and being up-to-date, features which are assimilated with being young.

Another group that is clearly lacking in the material are the people with disabilities. We have learned to consider the education of girls and children with disabilities as our major achievement and selling-point (Reinikka et. al 2018, pp. 7). However, there were no disabled persons visible in the presentation. This lack, as the lack of seniors, is rather unexpected as presenting these two groups would have not only worked in increasing good-will -value of the presentation, but also provided a platform to present the solutions Finland can offer, for example in technology, to assists these groups.

Poses and postures of the people presented are worth discussing. A gaze aimed upwards ore to the right is associated with future and moving forward. On the other hand, people looking back or down are less dynamic and inviting, and these scenes are hard to find in the video. The direction of the gaze also signals a willingness to communicate and create connections with the outside world. In a same way movement is mainly from left to right, which is associated with moving forward and being extroverted.

It is also interesting to pay attention on who “The Finns” are? Who are presented as Finns in the imaginary that is used in the info-promotional video presentation. Often belonging to a nation and differentiation with the others, who do not belong to the nation, is under constant fluctuation (Hiltunen et. al 2017, pp. 285). Tall and fair-haired women are seen as a stereotypical representation of a Finn (Rossi 2017, pp. 276). This was also evident in the material analysed. However, through using these stereotypes can strengthen and

instrumentalize national stereotypes. Idealized “Finnishness”, can, according to Schatz et. al, lead to diminishing others. (Schatz et. al 2015)

Ethnicity is presented in the video in a way that does not feel artificial or overly emphasised, as in set four, with three women practicing needle injections. They are happy and laughing, and with non-Finnish ethnic background. Still, majority of the people are stereotypically Finnish: blonde and blue-eyed. What was surprising that our local ethnic minorities Sami and Roma -minorities were completely left out. However, it would have been difficult to present them globally recognizably, yet without using stereotypical representations. So perhaps this has been intentional decision in order to avoid a potential minefield as unfortunately ethnic groups outside the main culture are still often marginalized (Hall 199, pp. 234–235).

Another aspect worth pondering is the gender of people presented. Quite often individuals selected as icons of national competitiveness are masculine. When Finnish nation brand was discussed in 2010, the persons listed as best presenting “Finnishness” were all male: Lordi, Linus Torvalds, Matti Nykänen and Spede Pasanen (Country Brand Report 2010; Saarenmaa 2014 pp. 223). There are obvious contradictions in the list, at least for us Finns ourselves. In the video analyzed there were two internationally know people presented, both of them male: Nobelist Martti Ahtisaari and Formula 1 -driver Kimi Räikkönen. Still, I find adding Kimi Räikkönen here a bit superficial and even pure name-throwing. Another issue with the use of Räikkönen and Ahtisaari is that their achievements were already old when the video was first published in 2016, and now they are closing on being ancient, in terms of publicity. President Ahtisaari won his Nobel 12 years ago, Kimi Räikkönen his championship 13 years ago. Still, Räikkönen has remained in global view and has been highly popular for an extended period of time, also with global audiences. What is also interesting is that the person Räikkönen is portrayed with, Lewis Hamilton, has been the single most popular Formula One -driver of recent years. The popularity of these two drivers seem to come from different geographic areas: Hamilton is popular especially in Europe, Africa and Americas whereas Räikkönen is the favorite in Asia. (Burrows 2017, pp. 40) So perhaps this image works well internationally placing the Finnish representative next to the global favorite? Already Machiavelli stated that

selecting the right analogies can add additional symbolic value (Machiavelli 1993, pp. 38; 98–100). The decision to include these two persons to the presentation is understandable: Martti Ahtisaari assimilated Finland with the global political elite, Kimi Räikkönen assimilated Finland with leading global commercial brands, such as Ferrari, Shell (Royal Dutch) and UPS. Furthermore, it portrays Finland with sporting success in one of the most competed and selective global sports.

When studying the material through people it presented an impression of peaceful, correct and functioning, although perhaps a bit joyless, everyday life. This impression was created partly by plain colour-scheme and the serious, or focused, expressions of the people in the advertisement. Real heart-felt, natural, joy and playfulness are not in abundance, though there were few exceptions.

#### **5.4 Activities**

Most of the scenes are presenting everyday situations in schools, studying and working. Mood is stable and peaceful, even as time would stand still. This is understandable when describing the moment of utter concentration to studying and learning new skills. Learning is what matters! This same mood has been transferred to workplaces. Meteorologist is sitting by his desk, people working in health care are gathered together to seek knowledge, not to treat patients in urgent need of help and the fireman is sitting leisurely in the crew-cabin of a fire-truck. Teachers in the video are in quiet classrooms, having time to meet individual students. Some more physical activity has been included when presenting children outside. Still, the general impression is of people sitting in groups, conversating, processing knowledge and waiting for the future. Although some professions are presented, they are clearly secondary – goals and achieving them is presented surprisingly little.

Arts are not present in the info-promotional video bar from one scene, scene 15. A male teacher with grey hair and black collared shirt is ticking all the boxes of stereotypical classical music teacher. He is advising, or perhaps conducting, a young girl wearing pigtails and playing violin. Behind the action is huge tv-screen with a line of adults and

young adults sitting in front of a wooden panel, perhaps assessing the girl. On the down-right -corner of the screen is also a probable stream send out presenting the girl herself. This stream is apparently sent to the audience, or perhaps a jury. The theme here is obvious: digital tools, high-tech and their utilization are self-evident in modern Finnish classrooms and education. It is also worth mentioning that these tools can also benefit arts education, such as music presented here.

Especially in the beginning of the video there are some hectic and busy scenes. Trains and railways are popping up as a sign of urban life and rhythm. However, peacefulness is strongly present in the sets presenting family; bicycles are driven in leisurely slow speed, with no hurry, which makes it pleasurable. Children are appreciated and time is taken for them. Their passage towards the future is calm, guided and safe. Most important thing is not to advance forward, but to bring out group dynamics. This very same signal is communicated in many sets throughout the video. It is worth noting that people in the video are not usually speeding to anywhere: they are walking, cycling or even using snowshoes – hardly the modes of transport in hectic life. These modes of transport can also refer to a certain freedom to roam instead of using for example cars, that are assimilated with efficiency but also forced to use pre-existing roads. Cars are also assimilated with being a bit outdated, a dinosaur. On the contrary, especially cycling is seen as a modern and conscious way of transport and considered to represent dynamic, trendy and progressive youth.

Especially set 10 left me to ponder how different genders are portrayed in professional setting. In the four scenes included in the set men are doing the serious work: being surgeons (the only woman in the scene seems and outsider, perhaps a nurse assisting), engineers, firemen and construction workers. Women are nurses chit-chatting and laughing around a table while learning something as trivial and secondary as giving injections, and not even taking that seriously. Also in many other sets women are either working in health care or in offices. Teachers appeared to be more often presented as males than females.



People are not only working, but also having leisure time. This duality has been presented in the video by showing the viewer some possibilities for leisure activities. Perhaps the most exotic was snow-shoeing. However, nature and activities in nature are not in significant role in the info-promotional video. Instead, nature has been used a kind of “breather” or a transition between different themes.

### **5.5 Background, surroundings and landscapes**

In many occasions in the material analysed the background seems almost accidental. They do not appear to be important, but rather a setting or a stage, a coulisse, against which people are presented. The selection of indoor settings presented in the advertisement is rather limited and predictable. Spaces are appropriate, functioning, clean and lacking in emotion. One could argue that they are outright boring. Still, they are a perfect match for their intention: they are not taking any attention away from the pivotal themes. The hero of the set is never the background but the people and occasionally the modern and appropriate study-equipment and -material that is used already with young children. As an example the various digital devices are presented in many of the sets. This feels natural as the aim of the info-promotional video is to market education – environment is functional. It is also worth noticing that almost all teaching or education situations can be considered unconventional and for example the traditional, or conservative, classroom setting with rows of individual or paired desks is only shown once. Instead, students sit in fat-boys, are gathered freely around round tables or sitting in smaller groups. Combined with young and approachable teachers and modern technology, this seems to communicate that students are met as individual and the general mood of education is relaxed – the modern way of arranging education.

Even though there is a clear thrive for trendiness, which is linked to being dynamic and ever-evolving, and high-class Nordic architecture also more mundane scenes are present. For example the setting in set 18 seems very typical urban “lower-income” residential suburban in Finland. A scene that for as Finns is very familiar: low two-storey red brick-buildings. Not perhaps the most inviting environment, but still warm, cosy and safe with lines of trees and peaceful rhythm of life. The scene is very credible.

Much of the sets are taking place indoors but when the set is filmed outdoors, it almost always includes vast portions of sky. In the analyzed advertisement the sky is not always blue, but clear blue sky is globally widely used regardless of the product or the target group. In a sense clear sky is a universal convention in commercial communications traditionally signalling freedom, but it can also signal future and advancing towards bright and happy tomorrow. It also signals clarity and pureness, carefree existence without dark clouds of worries lurking in the horizon. It has many connections with morning and waking up, the other reoccurring theme in the material. Still, in the video analyzed dark clouds are often obscuring the sun, creating dramatic scenes, as in set 3 where clouds play their part in making the scene quite dark and even a bit intimidating or threatening. Night is the darkest just before the sunrise.

Often when a country is branded, elements of nature are presented in abundance. In the material analyzed it was mainly hinted, not as much presented. There are clear blue skies, raising sun, green trees, open waters and red apples. On the other hand, there are students wearing knitted caps even inside, as a reminder how the nature is affecting everything in Finland. Still, nature presentation is lacking something. This something is well visible even in the idyllic setting (20) of a family cycling over a body of water using a pedestrian bridge. Family is crossing the bridge from left to right, and slightly outwards direction from the camera. They are advancing future even though it is clearly evening. Although the set has all the hallmarks of advancing into the bright future: young family, light, nature, a bridge and dynamic movement, it still fails to convince. The mood is still a bit grey, even a bit “public-servant-like”. On the other hand, this single set includes many important themes evident in material: cycling, green cities, environment and nature, city planning, transport and the whole modern way of urban life. The water is not sparkling, on the contrary the attention is drawn to the mighty achievement of engineering, the bridge itself. The impression is that man is conquering nature. Still, in the same set one can see deeper meanings also in the use of bridge itself as a gateway to someplace new, progress.

It is interesting to pay attention to the scenes outside. Landscapes can be seen in three ways. Firstly, as actual and objective figures of earth and topography (1), as a content of a mind, which is subjective and includes experiences and emotions (2) and as linguistic meanings (3). The third is representative: what are the constructed meanings, signs etc. (Karjalainen 1997, pp. 13–14) Von Bonsdorff reminds that landscape is never just visual as it is full of sounds and smells, even certain weather-types are associated with certain landscapes. Experiencing landscape is, by definition, multisensory. (Von Bonsdorff 1997, pp. 28). Looking at a given landscape is always loaded with cultural values, ideologies and expectations. It follows that landscape, or scenery, is not what we see but rather what we, as viewers, interpret it. (Mäkiranta & Timonen 2017, pp. 10)

Understanding landscape requires three knowledge sets: general knowledge, natural sciences and history (usage now and in history). In addition knowing myths, symbols and art is culturally relevant, although not strictly essential. Still, they affect through images and mental pictures how the landscape is approached in each culture. (Von Bonsdorff 1997, pp. 30). Finnish national landscape is constructionistic by essence. The identity was created mainly through literature, but also using visual arts and music. It is interesting, that even Finnish national anthem is actually giving a description of a landscape. Water and shores, islands, ridges, hills and high-view are still part of Finnish ideal landscape. (Ilmonen 1997, pp. 21–22) And they all are present in the analysed material.

An interesting twist for Finnish national landscape construction is that the intention was to create landscape that is differentiating Finland mainly from Sweden. It meant that even though most of the Finns lived in coastal areas and west, cultivated fields and cities did not appear appropriate. Instead, national scenery was found inland: lakes, forests, ridges and swamps. Now this landscape is taken for granted as the national landscape and used in all publications presenting Finland: high-view of “thousands of lakes” and green forest through transparent northern light. (Ilmonen 1997, pp. 24) This same issue of differentiation of Finland and Sweden is still very current. If national landscape was not reflecting the reality for majority of Finns upon creation, it still fails to do so. An interesting theme in the material was the relation between urban scenes and nature. Rural areas and nature are still very central for Finnish identity, not city and urban life (Ilmoinen

1997, pp. 25). However, in reality, Finns live in cities and their everyday landscape is urban, as presented in the video. Perhaps our identities are also moving towards a more plural image.

## **5.6 Movement**

Anne Koski divides movement into three categories. Primary movement means movement, where the object that is being filmed is moving. In secondary movement the camera is moving. This movement can be done either physically or optically. Techniques available include zooming, camera runs, camera lifts or tilts and other similar actions. Tertiary movement is done by editing. (Koski 2005, pp. 129)

Even though there is a fair amount of still photographs in the material analyzed, the movement is always present. In the parts consisting of moving picture, or video, quite often both primary and secondary movement are present. In still-parts of the video tertiary movement is commonplace. Movement brings dynamism and adds energy to the presentation.

As mentioned, the video in big picture, is rather peaceful. The same goes with movement. Each set is short but still it offers enough time to grasp the meaning of each set. This makes the video presentation pleasant to watch. This peaceful and slow movement on the picture feels natural when presenting studying or working. These situations are almost serene and time stands still through concentrating.

An interesting exception to the tendency of subtle movement comes during the third set. In the set the camera holds mainly still but the objects of filming, the sky, the waking city and a morning railyard, are sped up. The speeding up combined with the colours, does bring an essence of drama to the advertisement. There are also some quick cuts and changes in shooting angle in this set, on the contrary to the other 21 sets of the presentation.

## 5.7 Light, shade and colour

A central aspect in any audio-visual material is the use of light and colours. I have combined those intertwining themes under the same subheading.

According to the controversial colour theory by Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe each colour has its own effect on an individual. A type of colour symbolism has been created. (Sällström 2009, pp. 140) Colours are not only aesthetics and how they are experienced is varying to some extent depending on age, ethnicity or ancestry, gender and culture. In the most simple form, people associate a certain colour with something they have experienced in the nature. For example as clear sky is light blue, the colour is considered open, spacious and liberating. Blue is also associated with water and considered clear, airy and cool colour, it is restful and soothing. Still, part of the colour symbolism is highly culture-related: in Western world death is black, in Eastern Asia it is symbolised by white. This difference in symbolic traditions can cause different reactions and experiences to same colours. (Rihlma 1992, pp. 66–71)

Colours also play their parts in building visual meanings that create gender. In Western culture pink is littered with connotations associated with tenderness and other supposedly feminine qualities whereas light blue is more distant, colder and more inconspicuous. Seppänen has seen this urging baby-boys for consideration, distancing and rationality. Pink, on the other hand, is full of emotions and has irrational and decorative relation with the reality. (Seppänen 2001, pp. 184-185) Still, these conventions are not set in stone and it is remarkable to notice, that for example red was the colour of kings and aggression not too long ago whereas light blue was exclusively reserved for innocent and delicate baby girls.

The colour scheme in the video analysed was quite toned down. Colours are peaceful, inconspicuous and hold many dark and cold shades. Main colours are blue, white, grey and shades of green.

Much of the material included in the video is presenting indoors, and lighting in these sets is mainly rather matter-of-fact -like. Outdoors sets are perhaps more rewarding for analysing what comes to light. Especially the beginning of the video oozes the feeling of awakening. Bringing light to darkness has so many connotations that it is almost impossible to start listing them, but receiving education is definitely one of them. Morning evidently brings hope and new opportunities, it is a chance to start all over. Something is definitely brewing.

### **5.8 Filming techniques and post-production**

Music Video -aesthetics have been very central in creating current success-story of “audio-visual attractions and associations”, as Juha Herkman states. It refers to a technique where fast cut-aways and changes in filming angles are used, animation is combined with human acting and collages, montages and non-narrative visions are presented. (Herkman 2002, pp. 146) It can easily lead to over-production. However, in the material analyzed in this thesis the post-production fell a bit short. In addition, the resolution of the published video was fairly low. It did not suit well to the story of Finland as a high-tech country. Still, on the other hand, using high resolution can lead to losing authenticity and emotion. These same threats would have been lurking if an array of digital effects would have been used. It has been claimed that reporters, other professionals in communications and media tend to feel sympathy towards actors who are evidently amateur. Their plight is often considered innocent and unselfish, even altruistic. (Luostarinen 1998, pp. 195) Perhaps the decision to leave post-production to minimum was conscious?

Another interesting issue was the distance from which the objects were filmed. It was evident that there were a lot of close-ups. On the other hand, no huge crowds were presented. This all goes well together with the idea of working in small groups together, but still being individuals. Also as students and learners. In addition shooting angles are worth inspecting. If the object is filmed from a downward angle, it often creates a feeling of respect and admiration. Shooting from the angle also increases and emphasises the power of the object.

Changes in tempo, having quiet waters and action-packed fastflowing rapids, is very typical for av-pieces aiming to be dynamic. Still, this tool was not used in the analysed material as much as one could have expected. The flow of the pictures and the accompanying music was fairly stable and predictable throughout the info-promotional video.

The use of obvious stock videos in set 19 is surprising. Although the people do not feel un-Finnish, the landscape and the lack of detail gives reason to believe so. Although their smiles suggest they are open and eager to help you, they do not strike as authentic people in real situations – the way the rest of the presentation was created. Still, using stock material makes it unpersonal and eats away some of the credibility. Especially as the caption, or the title, refers to “Us, the Finns”. These types of scenes and small decisions can make a presentation considered as a “fake” commercial, instead of “credible” public announcement by and official institution.

### **5.9 Captions and narration**

Overall, there are very few surprises in the titles and narration on the analyzed material. Mainly all texts and captions are very matter-of-factly and clear. Occasionally there are captions, that are not fitting the timeslots they are allocated. Still, in set 14, the use of word “citizen” seems a bit questionable in this context of promoting paid education for non-Finnish audiences. Strictly speaking that is precise and a fact: education in Finland is free for citizens, bar from certain exemptions. However, the word does have a certain ring to it. It is carrying different connotations than using something as simple as “everybody”.

### **5.10 Music and soundtrack**

The sound environment of the video presentation consists solely of music. This combined with the subtle changes in sound-track (beat, rhythm) evokes an urban and dynamic feel. The credits for the music cannot be found, which is a bit unconventional. The track is not

any well-known piece and can well have been acquired from any sound-library, even for free. However, had it been free, I suspect the credits would have been more visible. The track is uplifting, even somewhat pompous and clearly building up more visual climaxes, which in the end fail to materialise. It creates a flow and dynamics, which are not always met in visual narration. The feeling is, that the balance between the music and visual part are not coherent, synchronized or well-balanced. Music seems to be just “clued on”, as there had to be something on the soundtrack.

### **5.11 Target audience**

Another important feature to keep in mind while analysing an advertisement is the target group. To whom it is created for? As evident, target groups for Finnish education in general are far and wide. Still, it is almost impossible to create a cultural product that pleases everyone and is effective globally. Often such videos are aimed to “go viral”, which is harder to achieve than marketers claim. It requires a fair bit of luck in addition to all other elements. “*The influencer is one of the major myths of the web*”, claims Webster, and it is often hard to find the logic of why something has become viral. (Webster 2014, pp. 42–43)

Content and mood of the communication often stems from the values we believe others are either associating us with, or issues we believe other are seeking from us. This is related to knowing your potential customers, the target audience. In close link to the previous, many aspects of the presentation analysed are actually internal marketing and resonating better with domestic audiences. Often marketing is seen to be exclusively external, whereas in reality internal marketing is as important. It takes place inside the organization, between the organization and its employees. (Immaisi 2014, pp. 29) In the material analysed one clear example of this can be found already in the very beginning of the video. The location of Finland is presented through an aerial run approaching from the west. Still, it manages to pass by most of the globally recognizable landmasses, such as Central Europe or British Isles. I cannot help but to wonder how helpful this would be to someone not familiar with Northern European geography and actually has no clue



where Finland is located. Whereas for myself, the run is straight'n'forward, it might not be the case for other audiences. These are some of the issues that need to be recognized.

Often the citizens of the branded countries are strikingly similar to their target audiences. In case of Finland it would make the target group to be educated, financially well-off youthful and have technological know-how. They are innovative, entrepreneurial pioneers. This is the visualised ideal Finnish citizen, and as branding nationality is performative, it also means that one of the central target groups are the people who are being branded. (Hiltunen et. al 2017, pp. 289)

### **5.12 Summary – This is Finnish Education Excellence**

What is there to take away from this info-promotional video? Short, punchy slogans were carefully and well selected. They were simple and brief enough, suiting the issue at hand well. It is probable that the viewer does not need longer explanations in this format. The aim is to raise interest and awareness. Still, short slogans might have needed a bit stronger visual expression than what was visible on the video. Often the clear and evident link between the caption and the visual representation was missing or required some pondering. Perhaps credibility was considered to be best achieved by selecting photos and videos portraying certain mundality and naturality, everyday situations. In a sense there is nothing wrong with the approach, it just left a bit vague feeling as the visual part often failed to deliver anything extra to the caption. Probably this feeling was partly provoked also by how the pictures and video-clips included were technically cropped: faces, upper bodies and single parts of human body, occasionally the focus on machines and devices. People were very serious, perhaps focused, and repeatedly perplexed. Later being again a clear sign that no professional models were used, bar from the set 19, which made the set stand out. Genuine joy and happiness were playing the second fiddle. Still, when promoting education for children and youth those two feelings should be communicated – even though the issue itself, education, is dead-serious for societies.

Another clear impression is that the whole info-promotional video presentation was somewhat dull-coloured. I first suspected it to be due to my screen, but after I tried the

video with several devices, I became convinced it was no fluke. The video is based on white and grey background, with occasional splashes of more vibrant colours or brown. This might have been, once more, a conscious choice, or just a coincidence. Maybe there was an aim to assimilate and associate Finnish education with well-known Scandinavian design and its values and traditions of simplicity and clarity? On the other hand, it might as well have been unintentional. Pictures seemed to portray everyday situations, and being such, they were not perhaps planned or colour-coordinated. Perhaps our world in 2015(?) was really that bleak? This lack of vibrant colour made the whole presentation appear a bit dull, and not catchy or worth a hype, which could have resulted in “free publicity” as it might have been more willingly shared in social media by viewers.

The constant movement in visual narration combined with the music made the video feel dynamic. Still, if you take a look at the individual images, they quite often are lacking that ingredient. However, a piece of art, or cultural product, is a combination and sum of all the parts. It has a clear rhythm and it seems to be following the traditional formula of highs-and-lows, though it is not just doing it very convincingly.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Katja Valaskivi sees branding a country as recycling meanings actively from outside to inside and vice versa (Valaskivi 2014, pp. 196). Communicating a brand evidently transfers a set of values. In the case of education export this set of values associated with Finnish education is considered worth spreading throughout the world “*for the sake of peace, equality and global justice*”. (Schatz et. al 2015). The justification for exporting exactly Finnish education is closely related to the success in PISA rankings (Schatz 2016). Communication is a promise, that must be fulfilled, otherwise bad reputation will follow (Karvonen 1999, pp. 7; Henderson 2007, pp. 263) Visual orders include unconscious values, attitudes and dispositions (Seppänen 2001, pp. 219). The tone of the message is not inconsequential as same images can be interpreted entirely differently depending on the tone. One should not confuse information and content with meaning and purpose. Often when the amount of information increases, the meaning of it is decreasing. (Taylor & Saarinen 1994)

One obvious pothole in branding Finland is how to differentiate ourselves from our closest competitors. As brands are partly shared through for example geography, it can be very hard to achieve complete differentiation. On the other hand, maybe that would not be advisable as a good reference group can enhance any brand. However, “Nordic countries” is a common brand (Anholt 2007, pp. 120). For example the well-known brand, “Nordic Design”, which is associated often with clinical, industrial or even futuristic features, was evident not only in architecture and spaces, but also in objects presented in the analysed material. Furthermore, the colour scheme used in the info-promotional video seemed to be of the same origin: light natural colours and white. However, it was interesting that the evident symbol, or logo, of Finland, the Finnish flag, was not presented until one of the last sets, even though the design of the flag also clearly ties Finland to a certain reference group and the values they present: the Nordic Countries.

On many occasions the material analysed reminded tourism advertisement. People are experiencing things they would not encounter at their home countries. Tourism is often very central in branding a country as it is one of the few sectors that is entitled to directly

brand a country. It is also evident that branding a country as a travel destination is considerably faster and cheaper than developing a more diverse brand. (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, pp. 165) Anholt brought up the "mental postcard" -effect. If person has not personally visited a country, the image of the place is probably been created by tourism marketing. (Anholt 2007, pp. 89–91) In connection to this, the first sets that were tourism advertisement -like can be defended as they remind the audience of Finland and link this new information to the previous information and image they have. New information does not usually replace the old image but rather the new information is accumulating on top of the old (Lehtonen 1998b, pp. 160). For that reason, all linkages to the existing knowledge are welcomed.

An interesting nuance relating to the similarities of destination marketing of Finland and the material I analyzed was revealed when I encountered a research conducted by Leena-Maija Rossi on the image bank of Visit Finland. Rossi describes the opening, or title-photo, around the time the material studied in this paper was created, as follows (own translation): *"The login page... presents a solitary figure in wintery nature. The character is standing thigh-deep in snow in front-left corner. In front of the person is unfolding a forest of spruce-trees under a heavy burden of snow. The sky, the snow and the trees all are blueish and white and the colour scheme of the image is very plain."* Rossi sees the picture presenting a general Finn engulfed in nature: full of admiration and perhaps a little helpless. (Rossi 2017, pp. 275) It is hard to imagine this similarity with the opening scene of the info-promotional video presentation analysed to be purely coincidental.

Even as the benefits of stories are evident, there was no clear narrative storyline in the analyzed material. Instead, it appeared to be a montage of values and possibilities. Naturally one can find small stories in all the themes discussed in the previous chapter as each and every set has its own substory to tell. Still, individual stories were not really tied into a one coherent presentation celebrating Finnish education. Values presented were simple. Everyday situations demonstrating the importance of education for brighter future and people learning skills that benefit society very directly and tangibly. Children are appreciated and although modern technology is used, learning is human-centered. Digital tools, high-tech and their utilization are self-evident in modern Finnish classrooms and

education, but still the tasks emphasise comradeship and joy of doing things together. A very appropriate ending encapsulating the general content is the last image of the video. It holds laughter, communality and happiness, even simplicity. Supposedly all attributes of Finnish education. A good image to wrap up the presentation.

Another evident issue was a certain aura of unprofessionalism. There were obvious intentional imperfections but often the video was unpolished. The implementation of the table at the set 6 was questionable. Obviously, Pisa-scores and tables are documented proof of “Finnish Excellence in Education”. Still, it has dull colors, plenty of information that you have no opportunity to take a deeper look at and with the title above, it all becomes messy. The whole table is somehow underproduced. It is true that overly polishing and too careful post-production often leads to a loss in credibility so perhaps it was an intentional decision to leave it a bit amateurish?

Even though most of the images appear very authentic, there are striking exceptions that pop out because rest of the images feel rather everyday and credible. For example the use of image-bank -material at the very pivotal moment is an unnecessary shortcut. Set 17 is peculiar: first it presents the “innovative school building” from the outside and it is clearly summer. Then, as it cuts to inside view, people are wearing thick clothes and you can spot a grey winters day outside. If aim was to juxtapose different seasons, it all is slightly undermined by students wearing warm fur-collared jackets and woolly beanies inside a warm and inviting space. The whole set is just confusing, especially if you do not have the time to notice the wintry conditions outside. The question lingering on is how much of the visual side was carefully planned and how much was purely accidental?

The lack of viewers suggest that the info-promotional video was not marketed properly and efficiently, which must have been intentional as the publisher most likely had the know-how and resources available. Was this just a practice-run or was their main media, or medium, something else? The type of presentation presented here is occasionally used to set the mood in sales presentations and in that case it would mainly be imbedded with other sales material. That is what is one possible explanation for the very few views the video has gathered.

## 7. AFTERWORD

Around the time the material analyzed was published, there were a lot of commotion around Finnish education export and the brand. In 2016 Center of International Mobility (CIMO) crafted a vision titled “Open Finland 2025”. Amids the objectives were that Finland should acquire a “*new type of open and positive attitude towards people and the surrounding world*” making Finland unique. They continue: “*Finland is a top-ranking country in education, expertise, and modern learning. The educational competence of Finland is highly valued. The internationality of education and research has increased, and universities as well as universities of applied sciences are internationally strong, competitive operators. We are open-minded and innovative. Finland is an attractive country to study and work in, and our unique reputation brings students, researchers, teachers, and developers of learning into the country. This makes Finland an even stronger country when it comes to high competence. Finland also interests commercial operators, and some educational institutions are already owned by a foreign party. Our functional processes of student selection, entering the country, and initiation of studies as well as our support forms are a substantial asset in attracting international talent. We also wish to encourage the people who have studied and worked in Finland to stay. We will have enhanced co-operation both inside the administrative sector of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and between different administrative sectors. Together, we have decided on national-level actions to improve our position in the competition for international talent.*” (CIMO 2016) All these hopes and aspirations are hopefully not abandoned, although they might seem to be but on hold due to COVID-19 outbreak. They continue on how recent changes have created new opportunities for education export (CIMO 2016, pp. 34).

In 2014 a study was conducted on This is Finland -webpage and the images it was using. Their findings ring all very true with the analysis conducted in this Master’s thesis. They conclude that “*close images are emphasise, movement is zoomed in rather than out. Only few objects that are filmed from a distance, such as complete buildings, instead many details. With buildings also more interiors than buildings from outside. Activity and sociality in content and composition. Many still images appear to be random, as stills*

*taken from videos. This highlights movement and reciprocity. Images present Finnishness through people. The focus is in people at front, even when there are significant landscapes or buildings behind, out of focus, but still somehow recognizable. The decision to focus on people and leaving the background unfocused on purpose can be seen as emphasising social interactions. A image that encompasses dynamism, urban culture, open-mindedness and gender equality sums the mood. Using plenty of close-ups and images of people are strategies that serve the aims of Finnish nation brand. Close-ups emphasize emotion and detail. In a way it creates an impression of social media, where people are sharing images of their own everyday life. This association creates an illusion of a self-image legitimated by the citizens, even though it is not the case. In the material people a wandering in the nature, students are hanging out together and engineers finding innovations. Still, the equality of age-groups is not achieved as no seniors are presented.”* (Hiltunen et al. 2017, pp. 291–293, authors translation) When reading the description it appears as if they have analyzed the very same material as I have in this work. However, it is evident, that the similarities are not accidental and the material I analysed was in-line with general Brand Finland not only in themes and images, but also in techniques and production. It suggests an amount of coordination.

Education itself has been a theme that has been quite widely covered in research in the past. Naturally this research is very important as for many people education gives better career opportunities and job prospects, for others education is quality of citizenship but others just want literacy, critical thinking and creativity. (Balbytskaya 2015, pp. 17) Education export, on the other hand, has not been as widely studied and from it follows that there are still plenty of potential fields and questions left unanswered. Personally, I see two especially interesting fields of study in the field of education export. As brought up by for example Katja Valaskivi, branding is by heart recycling perceptions and identities. When we are discussing Finnish education, we are simultaneously branding our education professionals as well as students, already from the lower grades. Are these inner audiences relating with the message and how their existence, values and capabilities are communicated to the world by the party crafting the message, or the brand? Are their identities actually shifting towards the image portrayed in branding purposes? Another theme I found interesting and potentially very rewarding is related to the one described

above. As Savola and Vesa state, "*Finnish tradition of student involvements is one of the defining features of the Finnish system*" (Savola & Vesa 2016, pp. 120) It includes that students in higher education are considered as experts on study experience and their insights are valued. On its part it helps to create inclusive community within the institution which leads to more student ownership of the activities taking place. (Savola & Vesa 2016, pp. 122) Still, the role of active students is often overlooked in education export even though I believe there could be huge potential benefits.

Later in the very same year that the material analyzed in this work was published, another, slightly more polished, info-promotional video promoting Finnish Education was published<sup>1</sup>. It appears, also by the amount of viewers, that the video was promoted much more actively than the one analysed. It might be that the analysed material had been a sort of practice-run. However, if this is the case, it would be perhaps worth studying how the presentation has evolved: after all, the core message is the same. What has been added and what has been left out? Somehow the first video felt more candid, perhaps due to imperfections.

In addition to the possible subjects for further study mentioned above, there are a wide array of interesting issues relating to ethical questions, one of which is perhaps the most pressing. As evident, education is a powerful tool to promote growth, wellbeing and development, both social and economic. One can almost describe it as a water to society – without it life can be bare existence, without an opportunity to reach full potential, let alone blossom. However, this raises a question: is education really a commodity that ought to be exported for financial gains? And if it is sold, how is it ensured that those in need of it most, really receive it? How to avoid the situation we currently have with water: some are dying of thirst while others have the luxury of choosing between Evian, Fiji and dozens of other branded products. Still, Finnish education and the set of values it present is worth sharing with the world in a mutually beneficiary way!

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZkPgsgLnP4>



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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix 1: Fact file of the clip

#eduexportFIN #eduexport

Finnish Excellence in Education - Education Export Finland

Link to material: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moCq70Oo6gY>

Duration 2 minutes 32 seconds

Views: 2443 (21<sup>st</sup> September 2020)

Published 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016

Description / subtext:

Finnish companies and institutions have compelling credentials in providing pedagogical expertise, innovative technologies and programs for learning, as well as physical products to improve the environment and conditions for learning. Our solutions are offered to organizations, institutions and companies all over the world who are interested in customized, made-to-measure educational solutions from Finland.

Learn more: [www.eduexport.fi](http://www.eduexport.fi)

3.5.2016

Social media:

#eduexportFIN #eduexport

Image credits:

Riitta Supperi/Finland Promotion Board

Sakari Piippo/Finland Promotion Board

Class: Education

## Appendix 2: Examples of initial textual transcription

### *Set 1 - There is a small but gutsy country on the outskirts of the planet.*

The first set of the clip begins with an aerial, or should I say, atmospheric, run, approaching Finland from the west. It begins by fading in from the North-East coast of North American continent. The run is evidently and clearly graphic, not actual view from a satellite. The colour scheme is quite toned down: shades of green, blue and white. At the very end of the map-scene, Finland turns into a purplish colour while the added transparency already distills the scenery behind into vision: what this country is made of. The overall set presenting the location of this “small and gutsy country” on a global map is gradually faded out and replaced by a aerial shot of white: spruce-trees under a heavy snow. Sunlight is strong and the shades are clear. Duality is very much evident. Although it is probably meant to be a distinctively bright set, it somehow manages to come through a bit grey.

The set introduces the location of the country as well as sets the mood. Still, you do not have to travel there from very far. The map graphic -set is executed in a way that the zooming gives you a feeling that Finland is on the edge of Europe, but still somehow central. However, you need to know the geography of the region to be able to pinpoint it, as Europe slides by quite unnoticed, almost in the periphery, perhaps the best clue being the British Isles. I personally wonder, how helpful the scene is for someone who barely knows Europe and northern Atlantic, let alone Finland.

The second visual scene, trees under heavy snow, seems to portray the exotic nature of Finland. This really is something special. Glittering snow is often associated with purity, clear air and waters. A message very appealing to several audiences. Furthermore, the play of light and shadow brings another dimension the scene: it might be dark and cold, but there is still light shining through.

The caption, combined with the visual clues, reminds us of the secluded location of Finland neighboring the vast taiga to the east. The last stronghold of the western

civilization. The people who live there have proven themselves and fought valiantly against a far larger villain – an old cliché so commonly used domestically. Still, it feels a bit outdated and perhaps does not ring a bell in international audiences, especially of younger generation. On the other hand, a story of a small underdog beating the odds can be something that audiences in countries or regions in similar plight might be able to relate to. National identities are still being born and crafted, even created out of thin air.

***Set 2 - They are known for many skills and success stories.***

Sharp transition to a new set, first image portrays an arctic scenery, which is still greyish, although you can perhaps faintly make out the cold light of sun behind the horizon. There is a single person, a man, in focus, though in the very end you can spot another person appearing from the right. The man is wearing a dark-blue and black winter-overall and a furry cap. He is making his way through the landscape and obstacles the environment offers by snowshoes and skiing poles. You can feel his breathing turning into vapor. It resamples a tourism advertisement: people experiencing things they would not experience home. The mood in the set is fresh and frosty, although this is one of the sets in the material where my personal experience differs from the one portrayed: snowshoe-walking in very cold weather, thankfully, well-cled, is not always pleasant nor is it fresh. It can be sweaty and hard work!

The direction of movement is interesting as people are moving from left to right, which can be associated with going backwards. Still, people are doing things and not letting the environment slow them down. The image ties the scene nicely to the message in the first set.

Another cut into a young redhaired woman, presumably working, on her computer in what seems like an home-office. However, after freeze-framing the set, it is evident that the scene is taking place in a more traditional office, as you can spot out a straight line of monitors. Still, the ornamental, greyish-blue, wallpaper and other office “bits’n’pieces” hint of creative work. She is wearing a black and white square-patterned buttoned shirt and her hair is on a bun, hinting of professionalism. The expression on her face is very



focused. Although the light is in the foreground and evident, the scene still feels a bit grey. The camera run is from right to left, removing the viewing obstacles and giving us an unobstructed view of the woman in the end.

Still with same title on “skills and success stories” a new set emerges. It is a jam-packed space, perhaps a laboratory or a classroom in a university. There are people of different ages and genders, a woman wearing a shemagh-scarf hints of internationality and different ethnic backgrounds. One of the men seems to be presenting something relating to the picture of a human brain on the computer screen while some are listening to him. Still, it seems there is something more interesting going on outside his presentation as many of the members of audience are directing their attention to left, perhaps to the next room. The space is crammed and labyrinthine with a window giving light to the room. Still, in 2020, this one of the sets that has not been able to withstand time particularly well and seems very much outdated. The room, tools, graphics, clothes people are wearing, all are from years back. Overall tone of the set is brown.

The next cut focuses on the young man that seemed to be presenting something in the previous picture. Now previous interpretation is confirmed: he is speaking rather enthusiastically, gesturing with his hands. The man seems evidently young and is wearing a brown-checked buttoned shirt.

The second set is presenting different skills and activities taking place. These skills can vary a lot and the individuals carrying these skills, or teaching or learning them, can be of any kind. Different circumstances where different skills are taking place are portrayed and that using skills or learn them can happen alone or in a tight group. A success story is born!