DELAHUNTY, DAVID

EDUCATIONAL EXPORT: ASAP
An action research analysis of the pilot projects between Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) and the Extension School (TOPIK) of Oulu University

Master's Thesis in Education

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Master's Degree Programme in Education and Globalisation

2016
The motivation for this thesis is based on my experiences during the summer of 2014, during which I had the opportunity to participate in an educational export pilot project that took place between Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) and the Extension School of Oulu University (TOPIK) concerning in-service training for BMA teachers and administrators.

In addition to providing an insight into the background to the projects from the perspectives of BMA and TOPIK, and introducing the main players involved, the main aims of this qualitative study are: to work in collaboration with the stakeholders in identifying the main issues and misunderstandings that were encountered throughout the projects from their perspectives, in addition to identifying and recording the main factors identified by respondents as being responsible for overcoming these and other obstacles and issues.

In order to achieve these aims an action research methodology was adopted. Qualitative data used in this research was collected via face to face interviews with the main actors, with additional data obtained from the researchers own participation in the projects, in addition to observations and field notes based on numerous conversations with participants, and relevant documentation. During the thesis process, the author also had the opportunity to spend several weeks in Bangkok during which time additional data and observations were acquired, through interviews, meetings, and a variety of visits.

Theories of intercultural communication establish that when dealing with cultures as far removed from each other as the Finnish and Thai cultures, there are always going to be a number of issues which would need to be addressed during these types of educational export pilot projects. While there were a host of minor obstacles and issues that needed to be dealt with on a continuous basis, the major issues identified by participants throughout the project process were: date and format changes, practical and ethical issues concerning ‘deliverables’ and goodwill, communication issues, issues related to payments, in addition to issues concerning contracts and documentation. The factors identified by participants as being the overriding factors in overcoming these, and indeed other issues and obstacles, can be summarized as being related to authority, local knowledge and trust.
Acknowledgements:

A few years ago if you would have told me that I would be writing a Master’s thesis for an MA in education on educational export I would have thought you were insane. A few years ago I was only vaguely aware of the concept of international education, and even less aware of educational export. Indeed these were only a couple of the concepts out of a multitude of concepts and theories that I have had the opportunity to gain knowledge of since beginning the Edglo programme in 2013.

I am grateful to my fellow students from Edglo 13 and to my lecturers from the faculty of Education, for all the knowledge I have been fortunate enough to acquire, and will hopefully get around to using in the near future, in addition to encouraging me to think critically (some would argue maybe too critically). I would like to thank the Edglo coordinator, Raisa Suominen, for making sure that I managed to get this far, with constant reminders and help at all stages of the programme, indeed it was her suggestion that I contact the extension school, which eventually led to this thesis.

My deepest gratitude goes to Esa Niemi from the Extension school of the University of Oulu. First of all for giving me the opportunity to be involved in the projects, and trusting me with a level of responsibility for the projects. Secondly, I would like to thank Mr. Niemi for agreeing to act as my supervisor, and for providing continued support and encouragement throughout the thesis writing process. I would also like to thank Juha Pohjonen from the extension school, for keeping me involved in the project process, and for his help, guidance and advice throughout the writing process.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Professor Kongkiti Phusavat for his continued support and belief in me, in addition to providing me with the opportunity to visit places and meet people in Bangkok, which I never would have had the opportunity of having without his connections and assistance. I would also like to thank Professor Kongkiti and his family for taking care of my family and I, and their hospitality while we were in Bangkok.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner Sari Huittinen, for her help and encouragement in getting me to this stage, and her patience in listening to my frustrations and complaining throughout the process. I couldn’t have done this without her. The arrival of my son Kian, early stages of my involvement in these projects, has provided me with (in addition to joy, happiness, and many sleepless nights) the motivation and the determination to get to the finish line.
## Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 Research aims ............................................................................................................ 2
   1.2 Thesis structure ......................................................................................................... 3

2. EDUCATIONAL EXPORT ................................................................................................... 5
   2.1 Finnish Educational Export Strategy .......................................................................... 6
   2.2 The main players involved in Finnish educational export ........................................... 7
      2.2.1 Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) ......................................................... 7
      2.2.2 Team Finland ....................................................................................................... 8
      2.2.3 Future Learning Finland (FLF) .............................................................................. 8
   2.3 Educational Export Calculation .................................................................................. 9

3. ACTION RESEARCH .......................................................................................................... 15
   3.1 Characteristics and features of action research ........................................................... 15
   3.2 The role of theory in action research .......................................................................... 21
   3.3 The Role of the Researcher in action research .............................................................. 23
   3.4 Data collection ............................................................................................................ 24
   3.5 Interview format ......................................................................................................... 24
   3.6 Additional data used in the research .......................................................................... 25

4. EDUCATIONAL EXPORT PROJECTS BETWEEN BMA AND TOPIK .............................. 27
   4.1 Stakeholders ................................................................................................................ 27
      4.1.1 Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) ......................................................... 29
      4.1.2 Professor Kongkiti Phusavat ................................................................................. 29
      4.1.3 The Finnish ambassador to Thailand ................................................................. 30
      4.1.4 My role as a stakeholder ..................................................................................... 31
      4.1.5 Extension school (TOPIK) .................................................................................. 32
      4.1.6 Professor Pekka Kess ......................................................................................... 33
      4.1.7 Other actors ......................................................................................................... 33

5. ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECTS: BMA ............................................................................ 34
   5.1 Thai Background/context ............................................................................................ 34
   5.2 Project background .................................................................................................... 35
   5.3 The need for in-service training from the BMA perspective ....................................... 36
      5.3.1 Poor Student performance .................................................................................. 37
      5.3.2 Structural Issues concerning education in Thailand .............................................. 39
   5.4 Why Finland, and why Oulu? ..................................................................................... 41
      5.4.1 The Finnish Educational system .......................................................................... 41
1. INTRODUCTION

Educational export, is a “hot” topic at the moment in Finnish education. Hot in the sense that the current Finnish government has consistently cut education related funding for Higher education institutions (HEI’s) (see for example: ICEF, 2015), in addition to the recent decision by the Finnish parliament to introduce compulsory fees for all non EU/EEA students pursuing a higher education qualification in a language other than Finnish or Swedish, while removing previous legal limitations on customized training courses (The Parliament of Finland, 2015). These measures have resulted in a renewed media interest in educational export, in addition to HEI’s increasing focus on self-funding, as well as the continuous “search for the new Nokia.”

At the beginning of my studies, Oulu University and my Master’s degree programme (MA in Education and Globalisation) were chosen to participate in the tuition trail period introduced by the Finnish Ministry of Education and culture between 2010 and 2014 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015). As such there was a lot of interest and controversy, and opinions surrounding phenomenon of educational export, and I was eager to learn more. I assumed that being involved in an actual educational export project would give me more practical insight into the world of educational export in Finland than could ever be gained by reading any number of theoretical papers, or reports, and I believe that this was the case. The results of these practical experiences are this thesis.

In addition to the fact that this issue is topical at the moment, I also believe that my research is addressing a “gap” in the research. As Airola, (2014, p. 13) points out “in Finland there is neither much literature, nor research in the field of education export yet. “ Cai, Höltä, & Kivistö, (2012) also acknowledge that this type of research has been relatively scarce, and that their own research has been mostly focused on China as a potential market area. Additionally, it became clear during my research that in addition to the two separate strategies proposed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013) the majority of publications I encountered have been case studies, clarifications or investigations conducted on behalf of entities concerned with educational export, its potential, target markets, products etc. (see for example: Finnish Consulting Group, Haaga Helia Global Education Oy, & EduclusterFinland Oy, 2012; Jyväskylä education group, 2014;
Pirkanmaan Liitto, 2011). Based on my examination of relevant journals (e.g. Educational action research, Journal of International education, Journal of International education and leadership), and Finnish university published thesis, no-one that has ever actually been involved in an educational export project has written an action research based publication concerning their participation, and observations of these projects.

In essence, the goal of this thesis is to cover new ground, and not write solely on educational export from a theoretical viewpoint. My aim is in portraying what actually happens, and the practical problems that are encountered, and how they are handled during the course of an actual educational export project.

1.1 Research aims

The main goal of this research is to analyse the educational export projects that took place between Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (hereafter referred to as BMA) and the Extension School of Oulu University (hereafter referred to as TOPIK/Topik) in 2014, from the stakeholders’ perspectives by means of an action research approach.

In addition to providing background to the projects and an analysis as to how the projects were piloted from both the perspectives of BMA and TOPIK, while also introducing the main players related to the project, the main aims of this thesis are

- To work in collaboration with the stakeholders in identifying the main issues and misunderstandings encountered throughout the projects, and;
- To record the main factors identified by respondents concerning the successful conclusion of the projects, and which were responsible for overcoming these and other obstacles and issues.

It is hoped that by providing a record of these issues and recommendations that future practices between BMA and Oulu University can be improved, as well as providing insight for future educational export projects involving both the University of Oulu, and other entities either engaged in, or hoping to engage in educational export.

It should be noted, that while educational export is an intrinsic component of this thesis, the research conducted on educational export is mainly used to provide background and
context, in addition to providing an understanding as to the field and scope of educational export in the Finnish context.

1.2 Thesis structure

In the preceding chapter (chapter 1) I have stated the aims of my research, whilst also provided my justifications for conducting this research.

Section two focuses on the ancillary focus of my research, namely looking at educational export from the Finnish perspective, analysing Finnish educational export strategy and calculation, and comparing the Finnish educational export offering and its calculation with other counties that are identified as being the leading exponents of educational export globally.

Section three introduces my methodology and data collection methods. Here I provide an overview of action research and justifications as to why this particular methodology was chosen, in addition to addressing my role and positioning and epistemological and ontological pertinent to my research. This section provides an explanation as to what data was used in this thesis in addition to providing an overview as to how this data was collected.

Section four marks the beginning of my primary research goal. Here the main stakeholders are introduced, and their roles and relationships are explained. Sections five and six provide an analysis of the projects from both the BMA and Oulu perspectives. This analysis was constructed in cooperation with the main Thai and Oulu stakeholders, combined with my own personal observations based on my field notes taken during my visit to Bangkok, and my conversations with persons of interest concerning the projects. These sections provide background to the projects, from both the Bangkok and Oulu perspectives, as well as providing an overview as to how the projects were conducted. Section five concentrates on the Bangkok perspective, whereas section six provides an analysis from the Oulu perspective. In section six, I also briefly discuss continued cooperation related to the success of these projects.

Section seven presents my main findings based on my analysis of the projects, regarding the main issues identified during the project from the stakeholders perspectives, whereas
section in section eight I offer the main reasons identified by the stakeholders in overcoming these issues and obstacles. In section nine I present my conclusions from the research, followed by a discussion on educational export in section ten. In section eleven, ethical issues, and the trustworthiness of the research are discussed. While section twelve discussed the practical implications of this thesis and offers suggestions concerning future research in the field.
2. EDUCATIONAL EXPORT

There is no official definition of the Finnish term of “Koulutusvienti,” (translated to educational export), provided by the Finnish ministry of education and culture regarding what is considered as being educational export and what is not. As Juntunen, (2014) observes, the general Finnish conception of educational export differs markedly from other nations, as will be shown in later chapters, mainly in what is included (or perhaps more importantly what is not included) as educational export, in addition to its calculation, and estimated value.

As Schatz, (2015) and Juntunen (2014) point out there is a distinct lack of clarity and direction concerning government policies and definitions on what is considered and defined as educational export and what is not. In its initial strategy published on the topic, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2010, p. 12) defined educational export as “part of the global service economy… considered to be a sector which broadly combines different industries.” In its most recent publication on the topic, the MOEC (2013) offers a more detailed definition, defining educational export as

The sale of educational services to foreign based businesses, individual persons, in the private sectors or public sector representatives or organizations. Though the education/training itself does not need to happen outside of Finland’s borders, educational export can also be training tailored ‘to the customers’ needs that is held in Finland. In these circumstances the customer or entity responsible for payment must be foreign. (p. 7)

My understanding of, and definition of educational export is: commercial education related export activities that are profit orientated, wherein educational expertise, educational services or educational products are sold by a Finnish company/organisation, and the entity responsible for payment is/are foreign based business(es), individual private person(s), public sector representative(s) or organization(s).

So, in essence the projects between BMA and Oulu University are considered as being educational export according to these criteria, as in short educational export takes place
when educational based products and services are bought by any entity that is considered as being from outside Finland, and/or that the entity responsible for payment is also foreign.

2.1 Finnish Educational Export Strategy

“No new Nokia is emerging in Finland, so in this economic situation we need to search creatively for sectors which could bring employment and generate income. Export of education could easily develop into its own export business.” Heljä Misukka, Political Secretary of State. (Helsingin Samonat, 2010; quoted in Zheng, 2015). This statement sums up for many, myself included, the current interest in exporting Finland’s educational know how and expertise, as the search is on for the “New Nokia.”

The publicity over Finland’s consistent success in international testing comparisons, most noticeably in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), has unquestionably resulted in increased international interest and focus on the Finnish education system. This interest in Finnish education and the potential of turning this industry into a sustainable export sector, that would produce income, while both maintaining and creating employment, was recognized when the Ministry of Education and Culture (2010, p. 3), established a working group to “identify the bottlenecks and challenges of Finnish education export and outline the strategic lines and measures for it.”

This working group outlined the future aspirations for Finnish educational export with the aims of Finland being one of the world’s leading education-based economies resting on the quality of its education system. By 2015 it was envisioned that by utilizing and developing Finland’s strengths in the education field and turning theses into successful export articles, while maintaining and enhancing the international competitiveness of the Finnish education system, that the proportion of education and knowledge exports will have grown significantly in overall exports. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010)

In 2010, the official Country Brand Report ‘Mission for Finland: How Finland is going to solve the world’s most wicked problems’ acknowledged Education as a key element of the Finnish nation brand. This recognition of education as a key element of the Finnish national brand was not solely limited to the financial benefits that could be gained from
exporting Finnish education expertise, the spread of Finnish education the report maintains would improve teaching levels worldwide, helping combat global issues; “such as climate change, fluctuations in the global economy, ageing, risks arising from technology, pandemics and wide-scale migration.” (Country Brand Report, 2010, pp. 239-245)

In 2013, the Minister of Education and Science set up a second working group to come up with an action plan strategy to promote education exports, after the government approval of Team Finland’s strategy in June 2013. This strategy we are informed would emphasize innovation, new technology and knowledge led services, while improving networking, forming an educational export cluster and activating higher education institutes as exporters (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013, pp. 19-20). This working group it should be noted limited its focus to higher education institutions, and the recent changes in statutes for HEI’s to impose fees on non EU/EEA citizens, were based on this groups recommendations, as the introduction of a fee paying mechanism was seen as removing the last remaining barrier to Finland competing on an equal footing on the global education market.

2.2 The main players involved in Finnish educational export

In this section, I aim to briefly introduce the main players in Finnish education, briefly introducing the Ministry of Education and Culture, Team Finland and Future Learning Finland. These organisations are all state run and funded, and are the official “face” of educational export in Finland, as these are the entities responsible for both formulating and implementing policy concerning educational export.

2.2.1 Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC)

As previously mentioned the MOEC published its initial strategy concerning educational export in 2010, with a follow-up group assigned to explore the potential of Finnish educational export, which was published in 2013, with recommendations given based on their research (which have already been covered in the preceding chapters). The MOEC is the main power behind Finnish legislation concerning educational, and all official government policies and strategies related to this come through this organization. The other major role that the MOEC plays, is in assisting with the funding of Team Finland,
Future Learning Finland and its parent organization Finpro, as well as a number of other government led initiatives.

2.2.2 Team Finland

Team Finland is a state run, and state funded network consisting of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Ambassadors’), the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Prime Minister’s Office, as well as all organizations operating under their guidance. Team Finland’s efforts are a part of these ministries' export programmes and other projects supporting the internationalization of Finnish companies, including educational export. (Team Finland, 2015a).

While publicly funded actors make up the core of the network, cooperation with for instance, chambers of commerce, organizations and higher education institutions are highly important. The Team Finland network aims to bring together members operating in the region and other key parties with ties to Finland. Local teams offer corporate customers an easy access to all the information they need. The goal of the team Finland network we are informed is to promote Finland and boost Finnish enterprises abroad. The network brings together all services offered by state-funded actors which work for the internationalization of Finnish enterprises, advance investment in Finland and promote Finland’s country brand (Team Finland, 2015b).

Services offered by Team Finland comprise of market analysis, advice and training, financing (loans, grants and guarantees), networking, official contacts through participating in trade missions, and visibility by offering the facilities of the Finnish representatives in foreign countries for functions, as well as helping with media contacts. (Team Finland, 2015c)

2.2.3 Future Learning Finland (FLF)

Future Learning Finland (FLF) is a national export programme consisting of over 40 private companies, vocational institutions, universities and universities of applied sciences, offering Finnish educational know-how and learning solutions globally. The main aim of FLF is we are informed in matching Finnish educational exporters with potential partners
in other countries, in line with their four areas of expertise: Teacher training, Vocational training, Learning environments and Educational technology.

Future Learning Finland is led and coordinated by Finpro and powered by three Finnish government ministries: The Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Future Learning Finland, 2015).

2.3 Educational Export Calculation

The Finnish consulting group (Finnish Consulting Group, Haaga Helia Global Education Oy, & EduclusterFinland Oy, 2012) identified four main countries that have a strong historical profile concerning educational export, based on their intrinsic advantages and recruitment policy focus, namely: Australia, New Zealand, the USA, and the UK. In these countries, educational import could be a more appropriate term, as the income accrued from the import of foreign students, and their related spending, constitutes the most significant revenue source of the education export business.

Australia

The Australian government (2015) recognize that Australia is seen as being a world leader in International education, and continue to constantly monitor and improve their educational offerings and strategies to ensure that this remains the case in the future.

The Australian conception of “Educational Export” comprises of “on-shore” and “off-shore.” The onshore component comprises of costs associated with studying in Australia, while off-shore refers to students that study outside of mainland Australia, with the financial benefits going to an Australian educational institute. The main factor and focus for the Australian government is onshore, (see table 1), or as the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) refers to this income ‘education-related personal travel.’ It is estimated that 96.4% of Australia’s educational export income accrues from students that reside either long-term or short-term in Australia. Only 3% of income comes from “off-shore” educational export sales, and earnings from other services, royalties, etc. (Australian Government, 2014; Australian Government, 2015)
Table 1: Australia’s Total Exports of Educational Services 2011-2014 (A$ Million) (Adapted from Australian Government, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spending on fees, goods and services by onshore students</td>
<td>14790</td>
<td>14553</td>
<td>15743</td>
<td>96.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other educational services (Not including income generated by the operations of offshore campuses of Australian institutions.)</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royalties on educational services</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total education related services export</td>
<td>15331</td>
<td>15112</td>
<td>16324</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**New Zealand**

In New Zealand during 2012, the total output of International education was almost 2.6 billion NZ dollars, ranking fifth on the countries list of export products (Education New Zealand, 2013), latest figures produced by New Zealand Education, (2014) estimate that this figure has increased to 2.76 billion NZ dollars during 2014. As is the case with Australia, this sum was based on data concerning fees paid by International students and living costs incurred by these students while studying in New Zealand (onshore), compromising the majority of the income derived from educational export (Education New Zealand, 2013, p. 21)

**UK**

Her Majesties Government (2013), estimates that the overall value of educational exports to the UK in 2011 was £17.5 billion, As we can see from table 2, what constitutes educational exports, and the incomes associated with these activities are clearly defined, and student spending, and other non-academic related expenses are included in these calculations, and account for a large proportion of the final numbers. Student spending alone accounts for 44% of the total value of educational exports in 2010, and is expected to maintain that level in 2020.
Table 2: Value of Educational exports to the UK (adapted from HM government, 2013, p. 11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>Projected 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition fees</td>
<td>2,557</td>
<td>3,217</td>
<td>4,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other student spending</td>
<td>4,549</td>
<td>5,723</td>
<td>7,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,139</td>
<td>1,472</td>
<td>1,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher education total income</strong></td>
<td>8,245</td>
<td>10,412</td>
<td>13,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Further education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition fees</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other student spending</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Further education total income</strong></td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>882</td>
<td>755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Language Training</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition fees</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>1062</td>
<td>1244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other student spending</td>
<td>1152</td>
<td>1349</td>
<td>1579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English language training total income</strong></td>
<td>2080</td>
<td>2411</td>
<td>2823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other incomes</strong></td>
<td>3349</td>
<td>3906</td>
<td>4710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total value of education exports</strong></td>
<td>14684</td>
<td>17636</td>
<td>21533</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2013 a new Education UK unit was announced by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) and UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) to address the UK government’s stated ambition to access large-scale education opportunities abroad, via a new Industrial Strategy (HM Government, 2013) published in the same year. UKTI acts as a central point of contact within UK government for enquiries from overseas governments, agencies, companies and organizations seeking UK help with their large-scale education and training projects.

UKTI’s responsibilities include helping the UK education and training sector to identify, access and pursue high value education opportunities overseas, encouraging UK education organizations to collaborate on specific opportunities and helping to promote UK bids, helping overseas customers to find UK education and training organizations that can supply the services and expertise they need for their large-scale education and training projects, and raising the profile of UK education and training around the world. In 2013/14
UKTI assisted UK education organizations to win contracts to the tune of £400 million, as well as success in the Saudi Colleges of Excellence programme worth £850 million, resulting in the organization being involved in the awarding of £1 billion of contracts to the UK education sector by 2015. (HM Government, 2014)

USA

Concerning the USA, it is extremely difficult to estimate the value of educational export, due to the scope and number of operators operating within this industry in the USA, and the sheer number of American for profit Universities with a presence in other countries.

Table 3: Contribution to the US economy by foreign students (NAFSA, 2015)

| Net contribution to the US economy by foreign students (2013-2014) (US$Million)     |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Tuition and fees                  | 19,754          |
| Living expenses                   | 16,265          |
| Dependents living expenses        | 442             |
| Minus US Support                  | 9669            |
| Total net contribution to the US economy by foreign students and their families | 26,792          |

If we instead concentrate solely on student fees and the costs associated with studying at an American educational institution, research conducted by the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (2015), shows that an estimated 886,052 international students and their families at universities and colleges supported 340,000 jobs and contributed $26.8 billion to the U.S. economy during the 2013-2014 academic year (see table 3). Again as is the case with both the UK, Australia and New Zealand, non-academic living costs associated with studying are taken into account as being a major factor in contributing to the US economy.

Educational export calculation in Finland

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), estimated that in 2012 the total value of service exports from Finland was €15.1 billion (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013). These exports include IT services, royalties, license fees and other services that account for 86 percent of these exports, while maintaining that educational services
can be included in personal, cultural and official services. The value of educational export, it is acknowledged demands further investigation, due in essence to the lack of clarity and definition of what is construed as educational export, and what is not.

In 2012, the Finnish Consulting Group conducted a study which estimated the value of Finnish educational exports to be between EUR 4 and 5 million, (Finnish Consulting Group, Haaga Helia Global Education Oy, & EduclusterFinland Oy, 2012) which is in line with the figures suggested by Sahlberg, (2012b) concerning the same period. This figure can clearly be seen as miniscule when compared to some of the figures associated with educational export in the previous section. However, in 2015, the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation (TEKES, 2015) conducted their own survey, which estimated the value of educational export from 2014 as being EUR 268 million which seems a considerable increase. Nevertheless, there has been no attempts to question or verify any of these figures to the best of my knowledge, and none of these figures have been quoted as being official figures.

While there is a lot of confusion and uncertainty regarding the extent of, and monetary value of educational export to Finland, there have been numerous media reports of success stories of Finnish educational projects with foreign partners, and publicity concerning the huge sums of potential income that could be gained from these (Kauppalehti, 2015; YLE, 2015). Based on these reports and the increased onus on HEI’s to self-fund as a result in changes in their funding models, many Finnish Universities have developed their own educational export strategies, and identified specific target markets (see for example (FinnWayLearning, 2015; Helia Haaga: Global Education Services, 2015); while in recent times there has been a renewed focus due to the recent government cuts and legislation changes.

In many cases figures that have been produced by countries such as the UK and Australia are provided as examples of what Finland could and should aspire to, (see for example Stubb, 2014) while other factors contributing to these countries successes in educational export (mainly in attracting students); such as climate, language, manpower, resources, capacity, job prospects, etc., are largely ignored, as indeed are the basis for these calculations.
While information and figures, and the basis for these calculations are readily available from other countries engaging in “educational export” as we can see from the examples above. Additionally there are specific government agencies and units tasked with both tracking, and evaluating these figures, while also being responsible for the promoting, marketing and selling of their countries educational export related products and services, both on-shore and off-shore. In Finland, it seems that there are still no valid mechanisms for gauging the value of educational exports to Finland, or indeed of tracking the value of these exports. Indeed it is not even clear at the national level what is even considered as being educational export and what is not.
3. ACTION RESEARCH

For the purposes of this thesis, action research was identified as the methodology that best fit with my research goals. In their book “Becoming Critical” which is seen by many as being the seminal text on action research, Carr & Kemmis, (1986) summarize impeccably the goals of my research, and the justification of action research as a tool to do so, when describing the goals of action research as: the improvement of practice, the improvement of the understanding of practice, and the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place.

Koshy, (2010, pp. 1-8) explains that there has been growing interest in action research as a research approach, as it can be applied practically to produce knowledge across specific contexts. As Koshy goes on to explain, as opposed to other forms of research that are mainly theory led, action research aims to combine both theory and practise, with knowledge being created through these actions. Action research is used in real situations, rather than in experimental studies, since its primary focus is on solving real problems and issues. This practical, problem-solving nature of action research makes this approach particularly attractive to my research goals. The purpose of my research is indeed to produce practical knowledge and solve existing and future problems, so action research is the methodology that best fits my research goals.

As Herr & Anderson, (2005) explain, there are numerous genres and definitions of what actions research is, and what it is assumed to be. Action research can be (amongst others), critical, participatory, classroom, teacher orientated, individual, practitioner led, collaborative, school-wide, professional, personal or political (see: Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Kemmis, 2011; Koshy, 2005; Koshy, 2010; Noffke & Somekh, 2009). While this huge array of genres and forms of action research may cause considerable confusion, Kemmis, & McTaggart, (2000) simplify matters considerably when describing action research as being by its very nature participatory, meaning in essence that all action research can be understood as being participatory action research.

3.1 Characteristics and features of action research

There are a host of features and definition concerning action research, however, I believe that O'Leary’s, (2004, p. 134) description of action research as “a strategy that pursues action
and knowledge in an integrated fashion through a cyclical and participatory process… where processes, outcomes and application are inextricably linked,“ resonates most clearly in relation to my understanding of action research and its goals. Reason & Bradbury, (2001), Kemmis & McTaggart (2000), Carr and Kemmis (1986), and a host of others summarize a list of attributes associated with action research and its purpose. I have selected a number of these as being most relevant concerning my decision in adopting action research and it’s applicability to my research:

Action research is participatory: As Kemmis & McTaggart (2000) describe it, action research is by its very nature participatory, thus all types of action research can be seen as being participatory action research. Reason & Bradbury, (2001) also point to the participatory aspects of action research maintaining that action research is:

A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview…. (which) seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

(Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 1)

Participatory action research can also be understood Reason (1994), and Stringer (1999) explain, as a means or model for enacting local, action-oriented approaches of investigation, and applying small-scale theorizing to specific problems in particular situations. Whereas, Koshy (2010, p. 2) defines action research as an enquiry, undertaken with rigor and understanding so as to constantly refine practice; the emerging evidence based outcomes will then contribute to the researching practitioner’s continuing professional development. This participatory nature also holds true for my research as I have endeavoured to engage as many participants as possible in the research process.

Action research is collaborative, cooperative and addresses practical concerns: One of the main features of action research when compared to other research methods, is that it involves collaboration with practitioners and stakeholders.
As Reason & Bradbury, (2001) observe, this collaborative aspect creates new communicative spaces and promotes dialogue. Throughout the process I have been in continuous contact with stakeholders on both sides of the project, and have collaborated on a regular basis with the vested parties, I have also spent several weeks in Thailand to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to be involved in the process, while gaining an insight into the processes involved, and the educational system in Thailand. Heron & Reason, (2001) maintain that action research should work with rather than on people who have similar concerns and interests to the researcher, in order to take action to change things the researcher may want to change and find out how to do things better, with, according to Koshy (2010) the goal of taking systematic action being to resolve these specific problems. As the goal of my research is in seeking and implementing solutions, the problems that are being addressed in my paper are indeed practical, as they are aimed at finding solutions to problems encountered during the projects, as well as offering suggestions as to improving current and future practices.

Action research generates knowledge, and enacts change: The purpose of my research is as Koshy (2000, p. 33) eloquently puts it: “the production of knowledge to produce change and the enacting of change to produce knowledge.” As these projects are ongoing, with future projects linked to and building upon the pilot projects that are the focus of this study, the cyclical nature of the research means that changes are constantly being enacted, reviewed and observed.

Action research is a cyclical process: The projects that are the focus of my research are a "work in progress," meaning that similar projects are being implemented as a result of these initial projects. Thus, the process have been consistently planned, acted on and observed, and reflected, consistent with the features of action research identified by Kemmis and McTaggart (2000, p. 276) who described the action research process as self-reflective cycles of; planning a change, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, reflecting on these processes and consequences, re-planning, acting and observing, reflecting, and so on.
Figure 1: The action research model. (Adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000, p. 278)

Figure 1 demonstrates the basic components of action research, encompassing action, evaluation and reflection, based on gathered evidence changes in practice are implemented. The results of these changes are then evaluated and reflected upon, which for me is quite similar to how the process occurred during my research, as learning from experience is one of the main strengths of action research as a research paradigm.

My research shares these basic thought and action processes with those of action research, however, the processes involved were rarely as clear cut as they are displayed above. Additionally I believe that an additional cycle should be incorporated into this cycle concerning these projects, the feedback cycle (see figure 2). The role of this feedback cycle was an integral aspect at all stages of the project.

In order to avoid, and prepare for obstacles and issues, feedback and expert advice was sought from, and provided by the local partner at all stages of the project process. This ensured that that the previous stages of planning and observing were relevant, with additional feedback and confirmation, again being sought on all proposed changes, before steps were taken in moving onto the final process of assessment, and starting over again. While this was not a barrier against eliminating all obstacles and issues, this feedback from
the local partner did in large part provide solutions to, and answers to existing and future obstacles.

As Reason and Bradbury (2001) remind us, good action research emerges over time in an evolutionary and developmental process, as is the case with the projects I am researching, and these projects will continue to be constantly refined and reshaped as new knowledge and information becomes available.

3.2 Epistemology and ontology

My approach to this research is guided by a pragmatic theoretical approach, as the goal of this research is to uncover practical knowledge, or as Biesenthal, (2014) refers to this practical knowledge, knowledge that works in a particular situation, with regard to its problem-solving ability. This knowledge is evaluated by reference to its problem-solving capacity in everyday life situations rather than universal applicability, which is my goal. Biesenthal (2014) illustrates, that for the pragmatist knowledge acquisition is subject to the manifestation of an actual problem demanding a concrete response, and thus necessitates the active participation of an actor in a problem-solving process, or as James & Kuklick,
(1981) more simply define this participation; taking things from the abstract to the concrete.

Guba & Lincoln, (1994, p. 107) present the concept of a worldview, or a set of principles that guide actions, and “define, for its holder, the nature of the “world,” the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts.” My worldview could be seen as being constructive as I believe that people develop meanings based on their own experiences, historical and social perspectives. As stated, I tend to agree with Carr & Kemmis (1986), and Creswell (2007) who maintain that it is naïve to suppose that interaction and the creation of impressions can be achieved without taking various factors into account, and that all research conducted by humans is intrinsically bias.

The French philosopher Bourdieu referred to the notion of "Habitus,” which I believe also contributes to an individual’s subjectivity and bias. Habitus can be explained as how a person's attitudes and perceptions are constructed by their individual history, the entire collective history of their family, class, race and ethnicity, as well as the product of early childhood experiences that are continually modified by their experiences (Min Shim, 2012; Navarro, 2006). I believe that an individual, be they a researcher or a participant is never free of bias, and as Creswell (2007, p. 179) relates “what one composes is a reflection of one’s own interpretations based on cultural, social, gender, class and personal politics that each researcher brings to the research.”

An action researchers’ work as stated by Reason & Bradbury, (2001) is based on the epistemological assumption that the purpose of academic research and discourse is not just to describe, understand and explain the world, but also to change it. As action research focuses on knowledge in action, the knowledge created through action research is particular, situational and out of praxis, while all interpretation of data within action research can be seen as being immersed in the context, with the action researcher being immersed in the research setting. As Koshy (2010, pp. 24-25) explicates, for an action researcher the nature of knowledge and what constitutes knowledge are fundamentally different from traditional researchers, who see knowledge as being certain and discoverable through scientific means. The data collected, and its subsequent interpretation is more subjective, and every researcher uses their own “lens” based on their experiences and insights in order to interpret this data.
My positionality as a researcher, and the epistemological implications of this positionality should also be addressed, as Herr & Anderson (2005, p. 30) illustrate “the degree to which researchers position themselves as insiders or outsiders will determine how they frame epistemological, methodological and ethical issues.” As my goals were concerned with contributing improved practice and professional transformation, while working in collaboration with other “insiders,” my positioning could, according to Herr & Anderson (2005, p. 24) be seen as either that of an insider “studying their own practice, and of how a practitioner went about learning his/her craft, and what was learned along the way,” or alternatively, as an insider in collaboration with other insiders, with the goal of involving other insiders in collaboration. I tend to regard my positioning as a combination of these two; as both my own practice was studied, and the goal of the research is involving other “insiders” in collaboration. As Herr & Anderson (2005) point out, implicit in this “insider” positioning is the inherent difficulty in attempting to place myself as an outside observer, rather than as an insider committed to the actions that have taken place, which was one of the recurring issues I encountered throughout this thesis.

Additionally, it should also be noted that these projects took place between institutions from Thailand and Finland, and I am neither Thai nor Finnish. However, I have lived in Finland for a number of years, and have been involved in a variety of multi and intra cultural projects throughout the years. Additionally the focus of my studies (Education and Globalisation) has been on being aware of, and recognising that there are numerous ways of looking at and interpreting meaning, and the dangers of ethnocentric worldviews and the belief that there is only one way of knowing. During this process it has been my aim to use my own worldviews and experiences to look at mis-communications and misunderstandings, from neither the Thai nor Finnish perspectives, but by objectively looking at the ways in which information might be perceived by both parties.

3.3 The role of theory in action research

Herr & Andersen (2005, p. XV) illustrate my inherent difficulty in choosing action research as a methodology over more traditional methodologies as they point out that “the major goal of action research is to generate local knowledge that is fed back into the settings,” however Herr & Andersen continue, “dissertations demand public knowledge that is transferable to other settings and written up in such a way that others can see its
applications to their own settings.” John Dewey, as Biesta & Burbules, (2003) inform us, also reflects on the lower status conferred on the practical over theoretical, suggesting that the reason that the practical was given a lower status than the theoretical, was considering that practical confers a lower status than the theoretical, and that Greek philosophers assumed that “real” reality could not be the reality of practical life, but had to be the static reality of the life of theory. Concerning the theoretical foundations of action research in education, Herr & Andersen (2005, pp. 15-18) also explain that these foundations are grounded in the importance that Dewey placed on human experience in the generation of knowledge, and steps of reflexive thinking.

As Gustavsen, (2011, pp. 19-21) highlights, the increasing popularity of action research is based on the recognition of the increasingly pressing need to attack real problems, accompanied by a simultaneous belief that the enlightenment potential of pure theory has declined. Theory driven approaches imply that theory is created in a theoretical discourse, while paradoxically the use of theory in a real life setting implies a practical discourse. Choices made in action research are questions of practice rather than theory, thus, theory has little power to make change. Research processes Gustavsen (2011) maintains are essentially driven by an influx of practical problems and challenges that research has to respond to as well as it can. As mentioned earlier the goals of action research, and the goals of this research are in addressing practical problems, and improving practice for a small number of collaborators, my research is designed to be data, and not theory driven.

Whitehead & McNiff, (2006) propose that the whole purpose of action research is that the type of theory that is most appropriate for explaining its processes is already contained within the practice and emerges from the practice as the research develops.

The most appropriate theories contained within and emerging from practise relating to this research, can be attributed to theories of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication, Ting-Toomey (1999, pp. 16-17) define as “the symbolic exchange process whereby individuals from two (or more) different cultural communities negotiate shared meanings in an interactive situation.” The majority of tensions and challenges inherent to, and identified throughout the projects can be attributed to as Patel, Sooknanan & Li (2011, p. 140) relate, “The numerous ways in which the undercurrents of culture and differences in values and beliefs, are influenced by our own worldview, the environment and through various media.”
3.4 The Role of the Researcher in action research

The role of the researcher in the action research process involves recognizing problems, or in identifying a problem and bringing it to the attention of the stakeholders. Thus, an important step in this process was to concentrate as both an active participant and as a researcher in analysing the specific problems that were encountered by both sides before, and during the project process. The researcher’s role is in providing possible suggestions and recommendations to ensure that future collaborations between these two entities, and future educational export projects in general are aware of these specifically identified problems, and how they were overcome, and that best practices are recognized and implemented.

As Koshy (2010, p. 9) reminds us action research is a constant learning process during which the researcher learns and also shares newly created knowledge with those that could benefit from it. My central goal in engaging in this research is to learn the strengths and weaknesses of the projects from the stakeholders’ perspectives, and then share this knowledge with the stakeholders, i.e. those that may benefit from it. A number of upcoming projects are planned based on the initial success of the pilot projects, so my hope is that my findings can be used to improve, and better understand the processes and actions involved, through my own experiences and those of the stakeholders.

As I was closely linked with the projects that will be analysed for this thesis, I openly acknowledge my role as both an active participant and a researcher, and in doing so, I acknowledge that my position as a researcher is bias, and that my interpretation of the data is intrinsically subjective. I agree with Carr & Kemmis, (1986, p. 192) who maintain that action research is intrinsically biased as it involves the researcher examining his or her own practices, and that any science regarding praxis must represent values and interests, as objects of enquiry, and as knowledge-constitutive interests for the discipline itself.

Koshy (2010) also reminds us that the type of enquiry conducted by an action researcher involves an investigation of some component or aspect of a social system. Such a system is composed of humans engaged in interaction, using gestures and language, resulting in the creation of impressions and the transmission of information. As with any human interactions there is in my opinion an underlying individual bias based on these impressions, and in essence human nature. As Creswell, (2007) explains, data in qualitative
research is based on the perspectives of the respondents, thus, the researcher has to make interpretations regarding the meaning of this data, which in effect means that this very interpretation is subjective.

3.5 Data collection

Marshall & Rossman, (2006, p. 97) propose that qualitative researchers typically rely on one, or a combination of four core methods for gathering information: (a) participating in the setting, (b) observing directly, (c) interviewing in depth, and (d) analysing documents and material culture. I have used the first three of these methods to varying degrees in gathering information specific to the action research process, while documents and other materials have been used extensively for all other sections of the research.

3.6 Interview format

Interviews with the identified stakeholders were conducted via a number of face to face, or as Plano, (2008) refers to them, “in-person” interviews. In person interviews were conducted with three Thai experts in Bangkok. Professor Kongkiti, who was without doubt the most significant actor concerning the projects from the Thai perspective from conception to implementation, as all communication, correspondence and requests were conducted through him, was formally interviewed in Oulu. Face to face interviews were also conducted with the three key persons involved in the conception of, planning of, and execution of the projects from the Finnish side: Mr. Niemi, Mr. Pohjonen and Professor Kess, with all interviews conducted being between 45 minutes and one hour and fifteen minutes duration. (A list of persons interviewed can be found in appendix I).

All interviews were conducted used a semi-structured format. This semi-structured approach is recommended by Creswell, (2014, p. 190) when the goal of the interviews is to “elicit responses and opinions from the participants, rather than short prepared answers,” as was my goal. Semi-structured interviews James, Milenkiewicz, & Bucknam, (2008, p. 73) advise us, are recommended when researchers know what the literature says about their topic and map out pertinent questions with possible probing sub questions, which was the case with mine. Semi structured interviews also allow the flexibility to deviate from the main question elicit a response to more clearly understand what could be seen as a
stimulating or interesting remark by the interviewee. (A list of the main focus areas and questions concerning my interviews can be found in appendix II).

This flexible and fluid structure was important given the goals of my interviews, as there were specific topics and themes that I wished to cover which varied dependent on the roles of the participants in the project process. The interviewee, as Mason, (2004) points out has an active, reflexive, and constitutive role in the process of knowledge construction, the flexibility offered by this semi-structured approach was important, as emphasis is placed on the responses elicited from the interaction between myself and the interviewees rather than the answers given.

All interviews were transcribed using, the NVIVO qualitative analysis programme, and as I was particularly interested in interviewees' accounts of their own perspectives, perceptions, experiences, understandings, interpretations, and interactions, as recommended by James, et al. (2008) extra time and effort were taken to capture not only the subject’s meaning but the exact words of the response by transcribing the full interviews and quoting them in many cases verbatim as an expert source.

3.7 Additional data used in the research

In January of 2015, I had the opportunity to visit Bangkok for several weeks, (with support from the extension school, and Professor Kongkiti). During this time I had the opportunity to visit the BMA schools from which the training participants were selected, both teachers and administrators, in addition to interviewing experts on Thai education and culture. This opportunity provided me with a unique insight into the educational environment in Bangkok, and the participants’ roles and the context of the projects from their perspectives.

During this visit, I also had the opportunity to spend several weeks in the company of Professor Kongkiti, during which time we had numerous informal discussions concerning the projects, Thai culture, and Thai education. Additionally I had the opportunity to accompany Professor Kongkiti to meetings with the Finnish Thai Chamber of Commerce (FTCC), and the Joint Foreign Chamber of Commerce in Thailand (JFCCT). While these informal conversations and meetings cannot be construed as interviews, I did gain a vast amount of insight and appreciation of the Thai culture, education system, business
practices and perspectives based on our conversations, and on Professor Kongkiti’s observations, which were later reported in my field notes.

Additionally, in May 2015, the Deputy Governor of Bangkok and her team, travelled with the Finnish Ambassador to Thailand to Oulu in lieu of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing ceremony, between the University of Oulu and the Department of Education of BMA. During this time I had the opportunity to travel with, and speak with both the Deputy Governor and the Ambassador for a number of days, concerning the projects and Thai education in general. Similarly to the insight and information provided by Professor Kongkiti, information, and observations gained from my trip to Bangkok, talks with the Deputy Governor, her entourage, and the Finnish ambassador, while not obtained in a formal interview setting, were reported in my field notes, and upon further analysis provided enable me to gain a clearer insight and understanding of the projects and their background from these participants perspectives.
4. EDUCATIONAL EXPORT PROJECTS BETWEEN BMA AND TOPIK

I now move onto the “primary” component of my research: the analysis of the pilot projects that occurred between BMA and Oulu University during 2014. As stated previously my role here is as both a researcher and as an active participant in the project cycle. Firstly, I introduce the main stakeholders in the project in section 4. In section 5, I then present the background from the Thai perspective explaining the process from the projects conception, the reasons identified by BMA concerning the need for in-service training, through to the actual contact with TOPIK and Oulu University. Section six focuses on the Oulu perspective of the projects, of which I was a part.

4.1 Stakeholders

Figure 1, below attempts to explain the links and roles of the various actors, in both the project conception as well as execution. Blue lines show the relationships between the various actors, whereas red lines show the relationships of the actors that were responsible in developing and implementing the workshops, and the communication paths between these actors.
While there were no doubt a number of additional actors that played either major or minor roles in the projects, the following actors can be identified, based on my research and own experience as being the major actors that were responsible for the conception of, planning of, and execution of the projects. While some of the actors are self-explanatory, such as BMA (as the customer), and TOPIK as the (contracted organization), some of the other actors identified are not so obvious, and based on my interviews and research the roles of

Figure 3: The main actors and their relationships
some of these actors have not received the attention they deserve concerning the project. Here I have divided the actors into two “sides,” based on the geographical location in which they had the most input into the project process.

4.1.1 Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA)

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) has a special status within the Kingdom of Thailand as its administrative organization also serves the nation as its capital. It contains a total area of 1,568.7 km² with a metropolitan population of 5,710,883 people, operating with 50 divisions or ‘District Offices.’ (Nuchudom, Fongsuwan, & Trimetsoontorn, 2014)

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) is organized in accordance with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act 1985, to be responsible for the management of the city of Bangkok. It is the sole organization at the local authority level responsible for the well-being of Bangkok residents with some financial support from the central government. The Governor of Bangkok is elected by popular vote (this happens in only two cities in Thailand, Bangkok and Pattaya), and has four deputy governors who act as executive administrators (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, 2014). BMA is divided into 16 Departments and 50 district offices. The sixteen departments mostly cover the BMA’s functions specified by laws; city planning, environment, education, strategy and evaluation, public works, social development, health, etc. Each district office also provides services related to the city’s functions at the district level.

The Deputy Governor of Bangkok, Dr. Pusadee Tamthai, was the main political motivation behind the projects from the Thai side, as it was part of her vision to tackle various problems in Bangkok, of which education was at the fore-front. I was informed during my conversations with the Deputy Governor and Professor Kongkiti that BMA has responsibility for 438 schools at primary, lower and upper secondary levels, with more than 325,000 students and in excess of 14,000 teachers.

4.1.2 Professor Kongkiti Phusavat

Is a name that will be referenced more than any other throughout this paper, and I believe that it would be a good idea at this stage to give a brief introduction of Professor Phusavat.
and his role in this project as well as his links with Finland and work with “Team Finland” in Thailand. Professor Phusavat has an extensive and enduring relationship with both Finland and Finnish education. Professor Phusavat has been a visiting professor at both Oulu and Vaasa Universities’ on numerous occasions, combined with being a doctoral opponent for Finnish students at both institutions. Additionally Professor Phusavat has also arranged for Finnish interns to work with Thai companies, and facilitated exchanges, and assisted Thai students coming to Finland, as exchanges, and in pursuit of both masters and doctoral qualifications. In addition to roles as a board member of the Finnish-Thai Chamber of Commerce, and several other chambers, he has also been a member of Team Finland for a number of years, and was recently awarded the title of “Knight, First Class, Order of the Lion of Finland" for services rendered in promoting Finnish education in Thailand. Professor Phusavat is also a member of the Thai national education reform council, which is tasked with providing recommendations concerning educational reform in Thailand.

Professor Phusavat takes on a dual role concerning this thesis. His first role is as an integral part of the project process, as he probably the central figure involved in the projects conception to fruition, while his second role concerning my research is as an expert on Thai education, culture and business processes. The majority of the insight I gained into Thai education and culture were based on my numerous conversations, with Professor Phusavat and the people I had the opportunity to meet with in Bangkok through him.

4.1.3 The Finnish ambassador to Thailand

During my research the role of the ambassador in relation to educational export, has not been well reported; aside from the ambassadors traditional roles as a representative of the country in question, and their links with network building, and embassy services, which based on my research and experience is an oversight.

There has been a Finnish diplomatic presence in Thailand since 1980, when a Chargé d'Affaires ad interim was sent to lead a mission in Bangkok, and the Finnish Embassy was opened at the beginning of 1986, so in essence there has been a Finnish presence for the past 35 years, building relationships between Finland and Thailand. According to the
embassy website one of the most important tasks of the Embassy is offering consular services to Finns living in or visiting Thailand. (Embassy of Finland, 2013)

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to formally interview the Ambassador, however, based on my other interviews, my visit to Bangkok, as well as my informal conversations with Professor Kongkiti, the Deputy Governor and the Ambassador herself, it became clear that the ambassador’s role in the conception of, and the continuation of the projects between BMA and Oulu University was indeed crucial one. Professor Phusavat explained repeatedly stressed that the Finnish ambassador was very hands on, and had a real commitment in ensuring that Finnish education was represented in Thailand.

4.1.4 My role as a stakeholder

In May of 2014 I was contacted by Mr. Niemi via email, asking if I was still interested in completing my summer training at TOPIK, as I had earlier sent him an email regarding this. I met with him, and he told me the details of a project that had come up involving offering training for Thai teachers and administrators, and if I would be interested in being involved. I was indeed interested, as it was exactly the type of project I was looking to be involve in. There had been a lot of coverage and talk of educational export, and the topic came up repeatedly during many of my courses, so I was extremely interested in being part of the process, and finding out how these projects actually worked at a practical implementation level.

I was involved with this project from the very early stages, until the completion of the “first group,” as the project phases were referred to by the Thai coordinator (the projects were split into two phases for practical reasons, with phase one concerning the Bangkok workshops and the second phase regarding training of two “batches” in Oulu, teachers and administrators. So one “group” consisted of phase one, representing the Bangkok workshops as well as the training workshops in Oulu for both teachers and administrators.

Upon my involvement with the project, there had been correspondence involving Mr. Niemi, Professor Kongkiti and Professor Kess for a number of months, but, no concrete steps had been taking regarding the actual planning or execution of the project. Decisions as to the format and remuneration had already been agreed in principal, so I had no part in initial costing or negotiations regarding the monetary amounts concerning the projects.
My main roles were in coordinating with Professor Kongkiti to ensure that the content met with the objectives of the project (as defined by the Thai entities), developing timetables for all stages of the projects, and in meeting with the various representatives of the departments that would be involved in facilitating the workshops in Oulu, as well as the experts that would be sent from Oulu to Bangkok. The experts that would travel to Bangkok were identified by Mr. Niemi already, in cooperation with the faculty of education, with a team of three experts on Math and Science recruited from the Faculty of education and an expert on administration recruited from the teacher training school, whom would later be replaced by another expert consultant.

4.1.5 Extension school (TOPIK)

The extension school (Finnish: Täydentävien opintojen keskus) or TOPIK as it has been and will be referred to in this thesis, was the department identified as being the most competent concerning commercial education by Professor Kess when initially contacted by Professor Kongkiti.

The Extension School at the University of Oulu offers training which combines the latest information produced at Oulu University with strong practical competence. TOPIK provides continuing education in such fields as teaching and education, leadership and supervisor work, social and healthcare, languages and culture, and technology, from individual training days to qualification-aimed training courses spanning several years. (TOPIK, 2015)

TOPIK’s role in this project was as the central organisation in planning, developing and implementing the projects. All details of the project fell under TOPIK’s jurisdiction, whether interacting with other departments and identifying relevant and topical content and experts, to ensuring that meals and nametags were provided for the participants. All correspondence concerning the content and implementation of the workshops had to be approved by TOPIK and all decisions concerning the final timetables were made based on TOPIK’s authorization. As mentioned, I was employed by TOPIK for the duration of the pilot projects and worked closely with Mr. Esa Niemi (Director), and Mr. Juha Pohjonen (Development manager), in developing and implementing the projects.
4.1.6 Professor Pekka Kess

Professor Kess played an integral role in the conception and execution of the project, as he was the person that was initially contacted by Professor Kongkiti. Professor Kess had known Professor Kongkiti for a number of years, and they have a strong personal and professional connection. As well as having lectured at the corresponding universities, they were also responsible in establishing an exchange programme between Oulu University faculty of Engineering and Kasetsart University faculty of Engineering (Professor Kongkiti’s home university), as well as having co-authored a number of academic papers together. Professor Kess had previously worked on a number of projects collaborating with Kongkiti and various Thai governmental organisations that wanted to learn something about Finland. In addition to having completed a PhD from Kasetsart University, Professor Kess has travelled to Thailand regularly, organised programmes for, and hosted various Thai delegations in Helsinki on a pro bono basis.

While Professor Kess did not have a very “hands-on” role in these projects, his experience of Thailand, and his relationship with Professor Kongkiti were crucial. Additionally in practical terms, Professor Kess was invaluable in offering advice to both myself and the experts on Thai customs and protocols, as well as answering any questions the experts had ahead of the initial workshop in Bangkok. As the inaugural trip to Bangkok coincided with the military takeover of Thailand, there was perhaps understandably some nervousness from certain members in travelling to Thailand during this period, and Professor Kess’s assistance was key in helping to dispel these fears.

4.1.7 Other actors

In addition to the entities described above, additional entities were hired under a sub-contracting basis to provide services based on the goals and expected outcomes of the project phases. The City of Oulu, the Faculty of education of the University of Oulu, the LUMA centre, University of Oulu teacher training school, and other service providers (which included entities such as restaurants and transport providers) (see figure 2). Contact persons for all of these departments were identified and were worked with closely in order to develop the time tables and ensure that every area identified by BMA could be covered by the most suitable organization.
5. ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECTS: BMA

The aim of this section is to give an overview of the history and reasoning for the projects from the initial conception stages, and as to why Finland, and Oulu were the destinations chosen to conduct this training? This information was compiled based on an analysis of relevant documentation concerning Thai education, combined with my conversations with the main actors in the conception of the projects from the Thai side. I believe this background is essential in gaining an understanding and appreciation as to why the projects took place, and provides some insight as to the circumstances under which the projects were developed.

5.1 Thai Background/context

Both the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognize that there have been impressive successes in increasing participation and expansion at all levels of education in Thailand, and that Thailand has made great strides towards achieving the Education for all (EFA) goals. UNICEF, (2015) acknowledge that Thailand has made commitments to realize the right to education for all children in the country, under various laws and regulations. In addition to the 1999 Education Act guaranteeing the right of all children, without discrimination, to a quality education, a Cabinet declaration in 2005 reaffirmed the right of all children, including non-Thai children living in Thailand, to receive an education.

UNESCO, (2011) report that after the Thai government announced the extension of mandatory free education from 12 years to 15 years in 2009, access to basic education has been gradually expanded to an increasing number of children. The net enrolment rate for primary school age children (6 to 11 years) increased from 81.4 per cent in 2000 to 90.05 per cent in 2009. Similarly, the net enrolment rate for secondary school age children (12 to 17 years) increased from 55.4 per cent in 2000 to 72.22 per cent in 2009. Despite these impressive successes, UNICEF (2015) reports that studies have shown that the learning level of Thai children in major subject areas has declined over the past 10 years, with average scores for Grade 6 and Grade 12 students in core subjects in the National Achievement Test (NAT) being below 50 per cent. Additionally 65% of the 30,010
schools nationwide, fall below a ‘satisfactory’ level in terms of student educational achievement, the quality of teachers and overall school administration.

5.2 Project background

The Educa 2013 educational conference, which was held in Bangkok could be identified as the event that starting point for the projects, as it was here that the Finnish Ambassador and Deputy Governor of Bangkok were introduced (by professor Phusavat). Professor Phusavat related during our interview, that he suggested to the Finnish ambassador that unlike the previous ambassador who concentrated on the central government and the Ministry of Education (MOE), that the ambassador should concentrate on local government, and educational establishments belonging to the Ministry of the Interior instead, as there would be less obstacles to overcome.

The Finnish Ambassador in her role as part of Team Finland was interested in promoting educational projects and Finnish educational expertise in Thailand, in line with the direction she had received from the president of Finland in the summer of 2013. Coincidentally, the Deputy Governor of Bangkok was interested in beginning a pilot project in math and science at upper secondary level, and was interested in conducting research concerning this subject. Towards this goal, Professor Kongkiti was asked to be a part of the Deputy Governor’s advisory team, and after gathering and analysing data from 435 schools, areas in which Finnish educational expertise could be utilised, were identified and brought to the Deputy Governor’s attention.

One specific issue identified was a marked drop in student achievement when students are taught by teachers with 5-20 years of experience. A correlation was found between achievement and teachers experience. Student’s enrolled in classes being taught by teachers with 1-5 years’ experience displaying high achievement, with achievement levels then declining until the teacher has 20+ years of experience, results which are consistent with Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain’s (2005) research concerning correlations between student achievement and teacher experience. Based on this research it was found that each additional year of experience, particularly during the first five years correlated to increased student achievement, with achievement then steadily declining, before peaking again when the teacher has 20+ years of experience.
Based on the school analysis, a need for teacher and administrator training was identified, and as previous attempts at the domestic level were unsuccessful in tackling this problem, professor Phusavat identified Finland’s strengths in this area as being a possible solution to this issue. As a result, the Finnish Ambassador met with the Deputy Governor and the wheels were set in motion for collaboration between Finland and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration regarding in-service training for teachers and administrators.

5.3 The need for in-service training from the BMA perspective.

Hallinger & Bryant, (2013) identified two “gaps” between the design and implementation of the Thai national curricula, and the aims and attained results of students (see figure 4). As Phusavat, Kurniad, Skurzynska-Sikora, Hidayanto, & Delahunty, (2016) note, the national based curricula in Thailand tends to focus on the small percentage of students that will continue onto higher education, whereas in reality the vast majority of students that are enrolled in BMA schools are from poor socio-economic backgrounds, and have neither the desire, nor means to attend higher education, so the resultant curricula hold no relevance for these students.

![Diagram of gaps between design and implementation, and aims and achievements in Thai education](Phusavat, et. al. 2016, p. 3)

Based on my school visits while in Bangkok, these “gaps” are the major problems facing student learning and achievement in both BMA schools and in Thailand. As Dr. Pornpun pointed out:
Comprehension and application of higher order thinking skills are not being tested in students in Thailand, and this has manifested in the PISA results. Most Thai students are at 0 level, small numbers at 3-5, with only special schools scoring higher than level 5. So this is also a problem in practise replacing the correcting of education. (Interview with Dr. Pornpun).

The lack of relevance concerning the aims of the curriculum, and the curriculum requirements have an enormous role to play in this.

As well as the noted correlation between teacher experience and student achievement, and the gaps identified by Hallinger & Bryant (2013), professor Phusavat brought up two additional reasons for the instigation of these projects and the apparent need by BMA to look internationally concerning in-service teacher training for BMA teachers and administrators; a decline in student performance in Thailand, and structural problems regarding education in Bangkok, and Thailand in general.

5.3.1 Poor Student performance

As Professor Kongkiti related “student performance is in decline in Thailand, and has been for a long time, and there have been many attempts to tackle it.” For example in the 2012 PISA test, Thailand ranked 50th among 65 participating countries in math, while ranking 48th in both reading, and science (UNESCO, 2014). Concerning in-service teacher training in Thailand, both Professor Kongkiti and Dr. Pornpun related that there have been many attempts to solve these problems. Various initiatives have tried to look at the curriculum, namely the National Education act (NEA) in 1999 (Hallinger & Bryant, 2013), and the use of ICT, with a number of “Master plans” as Rassameethes, (2012) refers to them, being adopted; namely the 1st Thailand Information and Communication Technology Master Plan of (2002–2006), and the 2nd Thailand Information and Communication Technology Master Plan (2009–2013). Both Dr. Pornpun and Professor Kongkiti maintained that these efforts have not been comprehensive enough in in solving the problems of student performance, while Hallinger & Lee’s (2011, p. 153) research established that progress in implementing these reforms to a degree that impacts students across Thailand has been slow.
Thailand is still a developing country and is in a middle income trap. Flaaen, Ghani, & Mishra, (2013, p. 1) define a middle income trap as “a development stage that characterizes countries that are squeezed between low-wage producers and highly skilled and fast-moving innovators.” Japan; Singapore; Hong Kong, China; S. Korea, and Taipei are Asian countries that have all successfully made the transition from middle to high income economies, (Tran, 2013). As Professor Kongkiti related, Thailand believed that they would be follow these countries, but it just didn't happen. As education is seen by the World Economic Forum, (2015c) as being the foundation for economic and social development, as well as being a country’s foundation for long-term competitiveness, education is seen as being the solution to Thailand escaping from this middle income trap.

International test-assessments show that the learning achievements of Thai children of 15 years of age are far behind in learning than their counterparts in other countries. The results have been improving slightly (see figure 5) however, they are still considerably below the OECD averages indicating that there is still a long way to go for Thailand in terms of addressing quality of education, as assessed by international testing.

![Figure 5: Mean scores on PISA tests of Thai Students 2000-2012 (data obtained from Office of the Education Council: Thailand, 2012).](image)

UNESCO, (2011) identify one of the main reasons for poor outcomes for Thai students as being a lack of quality educators. This is indeed an issue that has been recognized and tackled by Thailand, but there are a number of underlying societal factors that should also be taken into consideration when talking of teacher quality, the perceptions of teachers in
Thailand, and problems concerning teacher recruitment. As Dr. Pornpun related. “There is a huge issue of attracting the highest quality individuals to the teaching field as society views teaching as being a low profession in Thailand. Respect for the teaching profession is also a huge problem, 30 years ago teachers used to be respected, but things have changed. Being a teacher is a hard job, and no one would like to be a teacher, so the motivation and motives for being teachers is quite low. This is why we cannot move quickly on education, even if we invest a lot on infrastructure and professional development, problems are low quality of education in primary and secondary schools in rural areas and in tertiary institutions in urban areas.”

5.3.2 Structural Issues concerning education in Thailand

Secondly, there is also a structural problem, in that the service delivery of education in Thailand is being managed by two ministries. One is the Ministry of Education, and the other, is the local government which belongs to the Ministry of the Interior, which includes BMA. The issues of responsibility and jurisdiction regarding education are incredibly complicated in Thailand. The Thai national commission for UNESCO explain the responsibilities as follows:

The Ministry of Education is the primary agency responsible for the administration of Education, in accordance with the stipulations of the Thai Constitution of 2007, the National Education Act of 1999 (as amended by the Third Revision of 2010) and the Compulsory Education Act of 2002. Responsibility for education also lies with the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority, the Border Police Department, the Ministry of Interior, the National Office of Buddhism, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Tourism and Sport, and the Ministry of Culture, all working to achieve the objectives of the revised National Education Plan of 2009-2016 to create a society of virtue, wisdom and learning. (UNESCO, 2015)
Initially, it was my goal to draw a chart or a mind-map describing the roles of these organizations and their responsibilities when related to education in Thailand and in Bangkok, but due to its complexity and the fact that no one could tell me the specific roles assigned to each organization it was not possible to do so.

Another structural issue that needs to be addressed is the structure of the school system, and how student progression and assessment are handled. Dr. Pornpun brought up the issue of how students are constantly assessed from a young age in Thailand. As students’ progress from basic, to middle, to upper level education, teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of students at an early stage and can monitor and encourage them to make selections based on this. In Thailand there is a disparity between the number of primary and secondary schools, which also exacerbates the issue of transition and assessment of students. As Dr. Pornpun explained there are 30,000 primary schools in Thailand, but only 1,000 secondary schools, so competition is high amongst students, and consequently all students can't be accepted into secondary education. Efforts been made to ensure that there is some continuity in schools, but the structure remains a problem, and that the organizational structure to manage student’s educational transition between primary to secondary should be developed. One of the main strengths of the Finnish system identified by Dr. Pornpun is that students can be seen developing from the beginning throughout the system, ensuring that students can be better monitored and nurtured throughout the system.

The final key structural issue identified is the disparity between individual schools, and the effects of this disparity on student achievement. Of the 30,000+ schools in Thailand, the 20% which are urban, are for the most part ok, but the vast majority (over 80%) are rural, and still need to be improved. Class sizes I was informed by Professor Kongkiti and Dr. Pornpun, can exceed 50 students in urban areas, and can be as low as 6-8 students per class in rural areas, so the average class size may be quite small, but the actual class sizes can be overwhelming for a single teacher. The gap between the educational attainments of students in larger groups when compared to the educational attainments of students in smaller ones is not so significant according to research conducted by Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain (2005), and Chingos, (2013) amongst others; however, these researchers have shown that smaller classes have smaller achievement gaps on average, and small class sizes may be more effective at closing achievement gaps. Thus, class size may have a significant effect on student achievement.
5.4 Why Finland, and why Oulu?

There are a number of elements that should be taken into consideration as to why Finland, and indeed Oulu were chosen as the educational institution that would be responsible for the in service training of the BMA teachers and directors. The roles of the Ambassador and professor Phusavat, in promoting Finnish education, have already been discussed and their roles were indeed vital, however there are also a number of other aspects that were responsible for Finland being chosen as the country, and indeed Oulu University being chosen as being the “service provider” responsible for providing the best training and focus for in-service training for BMA: the Finnish educational system, the reputation of Finland internationally and the most important reason, the personal relationship between Professor Kess and Professor Phusavat.

5.4.1 The Finnish Educational system

The success of Finland’s educational system in international testing has received worldwide acclaim, while It has been well documented that Finland has performed well in international tests such as PISA, TIMMS, etc. (see: OECD, 2010; Sahlberg, 2011; Sahlberg, 2012a; Sahlberg & Hargreaves, 2011). Indeed “Finland is one country that you are supposed to see when talking about high standards of education,” Dr. Pornpun pointed out, based on Finland’s success in international testing and the reputation of its education system. This success is indeed one of the main reasons that Finland is seen as a destination for teacher training, as when I asked from participants what they knew about Finnish education I was told “good test scores and the reputation of the Finnish education system and the quality of the teachers,” but, as Kongkiti pointed out these scores are not the only reason that Finland is seen as being an attractive country for in service teacher training. Finland also receives high rankings across a range of international rankings.

5.4.2 Finland’s International reputation

During my interviews, discussions and visit to Bangkok, a combination of factors were mentioned as making Finland an attractive provider when discussing educational export. While Finland’s rankings in standardised international educational tests provide enormous benefits, concerning Finland’s educational image and brand, these are not the only rankings and assessments that contribute to Finland’s strong international image. Finland
performs strongly in number of other rankings such as global competitiveness, human
capital development, global innovation, and corruption perception and Higher education
and training (see table 4) which also contributes to the attractiveness of selecting Finland
as a partner concerning in service teacher training.

Table 4: Finnish rankings in selected indices. (Sources: Cornell University, INSEAD, & WIPO,
2014; Transparency International, 2015; World Economic Forum, 2015a; World Economic Forum,
2015b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Corruption perception index</th>
<th>Global innovation index</th>
<th>Human Capital Report</th>
<th>Global competitiveness Index (GCI)</th>
<th>Higher Education and Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>U.S.A</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.3 The personal relationship between Professor Kongkiti and Professor Kess

Professor Phusavat related that the Thai national educational reform council are looking for
inspiration concerning educational reforms in Thai education, namely; Singapore,
Germany, Japan and Finland. As he related, while it is true that Finland has had success in
international educational tests, and that Finland’s reputation internationally is high, this
could be said for all of these countries, and their educational systems. The role of personal
relationships and connections is what sets Finland, and Oulu especially apart from these
other options.
The role of personal relationships is not one that is covered in the documents, publications, or strategies published concerning educational export, but, it was agreed by all persons interviewed, including Professor Kess and Professor Kongkiti, that the main reason that these pilot projects initially came to the attention of Oulu University; and indeed one of the main contributing factors to their successful outcome was the personal relationship between Professor Phusavat, and Professor Kess. Additionally it was agreed by all concerned, that in the absence of this personal relationship, these pilot projects would never have come to the attention of Topik, and the likelihood of them succeeding would have been greatly reduced.
6. ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECTS: TOPIK.

There were as mentioned earlier visits by various Thai delegations and ministries to Finland, but, this project was the first time that any of these parties would visit Oulu. Here I aim to provide a quick background into how the projects came to be hosted by TOPIK, and the initial considerations related to me by Mr. Niemi when initially approached concerning TOPIK’s possible involvement in the projects.

6.1 Oulu Background

Initially planning for the projects between BMA and Finland, was initially focused on the training taking place in Helsinki, under the auspice of a different University, but due to a variety of reasons this plan never came to fruition. (These reasons while related to me, must remain confidential based on the request of the source, however, intercultural communication issues were a major factor). As these negotiations between BMA and the contact provided by the Finnish Ambassador broke down, Professor Kongkiti was asked if he would have a possible remedy for this, as he had mentioned Oulu University previously to the Finnish Ambassador.

Professor Phusavat contacted Professor Kess, asking if Oulu University could help organise some training for some organisation in Bangkok. Professor Kess in turn contacted Esa and informed him that there would be an opportunity to help somebody that was in trouble, regarding the BMA training and could Oulu University take responsibility for the training? As professor Kess related to me, his reasoning for contacting TOPIK was that he recognised as a former director of TOPIK, that concerning education as a business, or commercial education, TOPIK would be the best department to handle this type of project, as this type of project fit well within TOPIK’s skill set. A quick answer was provided that Oulu University was willing and able to organise the necessary workshops, and the rest is history.

The project process and the initial considerations and background to this willingness will be covered in more detail in later chapters. It would be safe to surmise that Oulu was “chosen” mainly due to the relationship between Professor Kess and Professor Kongkiti. A quick response time, and the willingness of Topik, and the other faculties to take a risk and work on the project were also major factors.
Initial contact concerning Oulu Universities willing to provide the training was in late February/early March 2014, while the initial proposed dates for the training were late April/early May of the same year. Mr. Niemi related that initially there was some concern regarding the time scale and, but as Dr. Kess had a lot of experience in dealing with Thai organisations he assured Mr. Niemi that these would not be the final dates, and that the final dates are in the majority of cases very different to what are initially proposed.

During my interview with Mr. Niemi, he related that there had been a lot of publicity and talk about educational export, and that these types of educational projects were indeed a welcome focus for Topik. Mr. Niemi also provided a summary of the decision making and preparation process from his perspective, in deciding whether to accept the projects or not. As he had only a short time frame in which to make a decision, the decision was based on whether a number of criteria could be met. At the initial stages there was very little information available as to the actual content, format or focus of the training, other than that it would likely involve cooperation with the teacher training school and the faculty of education, and an as yet unnamed organisation from Bangkok (BMA).

The main criteria in considering whether to accept the project were surmised by Mr. Niemi as:

1. Cooperation: Initially the most important criteria identified was that cooperation with other departments (namely the teacher training school, and the faculty of Education) within the University was essential for concerning accepting and developing the projects. This cooperation was asked for, and was received very shortly after the initial contact.

2. Risk assessment. As Mr. Niemi related, there are always some risks when starting any project, however with international projects such as this, they can be exponentially greater as there are very few effective legal means of enforcing contracts and financial agreements. One example of a risk provided by Mr. Niemi was financial. If BMA decided not to pay, TOPIK would still be obligated to pay the other departments, and in the event of non-payment it is practically impossible recoup capital from International entities via legal means. However, Mr. Niemi judged that these were risks that were worth taking.

3. Departmental capacity: Mr Niemi related that his final consideration concerned human resources, and who would be allocated to, and responsible for the projects.
Mr. Niemi reasoned that if no one else was available then he take this responsibility as he believed it to be an important project for the department. This consideration also resulted in my involvement in the project, as Mr. Niemi related that he remembered that I had been in contact with him earlier, concerning possible opportunities working on international educational projects, and then contacted me to see if I was still interested, which I was.

As mentioned, Mr. Niemi identified that these types of projects were indeed within Topik’s core competencies, and additionally would provide a welcome reference in the future concerning additional educational export projects.

### 6.2 Content and workshop formats

After TOPIK had agreed to assume the responsibility for organizing the projects, the first major step was in identifying what was required regarding the actual training, and at the beginning the most important detail was the structure of the training. It became clearer after my involvement and contact with professor Phusavat that the training was to take place in two phases, (as illustrated in figure 6 below) with phase consisting of a workshop hosted in Bangkok by experts provided by TOPIK, and phase II comprising of two separate visits to Oulu: one group of Science and Math teachers, and a second group consisting of BMA school principals and administrators.

![Figure 6: The project phases](image)

The objectives of the projects, and expected outcomes were initially related by BMA through Professor Phusavat, to TOPIK concerning the in service training of teachers and
school administrators. These objectives outlined a number of expected tangible and intangible outcomes of the training, with an emphasis on improving teacher and administrators’ professional practices, as can be seen from the figures below.

**Figure 7:** Goals and expected outcomes of the projects (Teachers) (Source: Professor Phusavat)

**Figure 8:** Goals and expected outcomes of the projects (Administrators) (Source: Professor Phusavat)
The information provided by Professor Phusavat in the above figures (figures 7 and 8) was used as the main reference source concerning programme planning and scheduling in order to ensure that (where possible and ethical) as many of the expected outcomes and goals of the training related by BMA were met.

6.3 Phase I: Bangkok workshops

As the goals and outcomes of the training had already been related, upon further correspondence with professor Phusavat, the guidelines and subject matters that should be covered during the Bangkok training meetings were received.

Upon receipt of this information, meetings were arranged with the science and math expert team that were recommended by the faculty of Education, and faculty of education representative, and the administration expert who came from the teacher training school. The probable dates for the workshop were discussed, and the most pressing matter that needed to be addressed was providing a list of training topics (subjects, contents and methods) to BMA as quickly as possible, as a draft plan was expected as soon as possible, based on the information supplied by BMA. The primary focus for teachers during the Bangkok workshop was identified as being pedagogy-based subjects, i.e., subject matters relating to Mathematics and Science, while the administrative aspect would be focused on leadership in education.

Based on the information requested by BMA, concerning the science and math content and how it would fit with the goals and objectives of the training as related in figure 8. The following broad themes and topics were identified by the team of math and science experts:

- Biology, physics and chemistry in everyday life.
- Different methods of reporting experimental working in physics and chemistry.
- Experiments and observing in teaching biology and geography.
- Problem based learning (PBL) and inquiry based learning (IBL) in science and mathematics education.
- Environmental education as a theme of integration in science education.
- Manipulatives in mathematics education.
- Evaluation and assessment in mathematics education.
These subjects were then relayed for initial feedback from BMA, upon which small changes were asked to be made to the programme in order to incorporate additional aspects and requests by BMA, which included:

- How to use/apply basic mathematical thinking and skills (through applied technology) in solving simple/more complex situations
- How to develop and assign homework problems in Science subjects that are suitable to nearby learning sources (e.g., for Bangkok, rural schools are located near the ponds with more natural-setting while urban schools are located in the densely-populated areas)
- How to develop homework problems that motivate students to learn (by not focusing on searching for the right answer only).

All of these requests and clarifications were brought immediately to the attention of the relevant experts, and explanations/clarifications were given when required. The experts’ presentations and workshops were also altered to ensure that these additional requests, and focus areas were incorporated as fully as possible into the workshop programme.

Specific content for the subject matters it was agreed would be left to the experts discretion while, all the necessary equipment and materials needed for the successful implementation of the workshops were discussed with the experts and requests were relayed to Professor Phusavat. The format of the Bangkok workshops it was agreed would incorporate both parallel and combined sessions for both the administrators and teachers, based on Mr. Niemi’s suggestion, and a final draft (see appendix III) concerning the format and content of the timetable was accepted by BMA during July 2014.

During the Bangkok workshops Professor Phusavat provided us with continuous reports highlighting key findings, challenges, observations and future focus areas concerning both teachers and administrators. Upon completion of the workshops an overall summary was provided by Professor Phusavat (see appendix IV) that was to prove very informative concerning the planning of the future workshops which were to take place in Oulu. This summary was provided to the various partner organizations and faculties, in order to assist in the planning and development of the future workshops.
6.5 Phase II Oulu Workshops for teachers and administrators

After the successful completion of the workshops in Bangkok, the summary received from Professor Phusavat, and the observations of the experts sent by TOPIK to conduct the workshops were discussed. Based on this information, meetings were arranged with representatives of the various departments to concentrate on finalizing the timetables for the Oulu visits of the BMA delegates. As mentioned earlier the summary provided by Professor Phusavat, highlighting the key findings, challenges and future focus areas based on the Bangkok workshops were extremely helpful in developing the schedule for the Oulu phases of the workshop, while ensuring that the proper experts and content had been identified. Necessary changes were then made in cooperation with the partners to reflect the needs of the groups.

6.5.1 Content and workshop formats

The Oulu workshops were split into two separate groups, with various expectations and goals expected dependent on the groups involved. Twenty science and Math teachers travelled to Oulu as part of Group 1 (initially 25), whereas group 2 was composed of ten (initially 25) school directors and administrators.

Additional information was requested concerning these groups in order to tailor the content to the participants’ skills, interests, and backgrounds. Based on this request the following additional information, and requests were received from BMA.

1. The two groups that are trained in Bangkok will travel to Oulu. It was taken to mean that the groups that would be travelling were the same groups that had attended the Bangkok workshops.

2. Please provide us with brief information about the training subjects and methods (e.g., group, use of on-line, project, etc.) and how they could help BMA achieve the objectives.

3. BMA needs to have the accommodation prepared for both groups in addition to the facility for training in Oulu. Again it was important that the timetables were finalized as there were accommodation issues that needed to be covered by the BMA side.
Through these projects, there were a number of “slow” periods during which the projects seemed to come to a stop, due to waiting on input or feedback from BMA or some other partner. However, when answers, feedback, input was received it was always with stipulations to provide something as soon as possible (or ASAP), or as I learned when “please” was also code for the same. This was increasingly the case leading up to the Oulu workshops, as flights, hotels, etc. needed to be booked, and requests for information, and the number of “pleases” increased dramatically.

6.5.2 Project process

The Oulu workshops were operationally very different from the Bangkok workshops. As can be seen from figure 2, there were a number of partners that worked with TOPIK in developing and implementing both the Bangkok and Oulu phases of the projects. While the Bangkok workshops consisted of a small number of experts, from the faculty of education and the City of Oulu, the Oulu phases comprised of a number of partner organisations, which were engaged under a sub-contracting basis to provide services based on the goals and expected outcomes of the project phases. Contact persons for all of these departments were identified and were worked with closely in order to develop the time tables and ensure that every area identified by BMA could be covered by the most suitable organization. These representatives vastly reduced the number of people concerned in the decision making process, thus reducing the scope for confusion and error, while being responsible for all communications and practical arrangements on behalf of their specific department.

As the majority of the preparations for the Bangkok workshops and the provisional draft timetables for the Oulu phases, were already developed in late May, in cooperation with the faculty of education, and the teacher training school, it was a relatively easy process to meet with and talk over and make amendments to the schedules with the department representatives, as they were familiar with the projects and the objectives of the programmes. The city of Oulu’s involvement came at a relatively late stage in the process, via the city’s department of Education and cultural services, and arrangements conducted quickly as to the City of Oulu’s role in the workshops.
As with phase I, the initial draft plans were created by cross-referencing the information provided by BMA, however during this phase the summary of the Bangkok workshops provided by Professor Phusavat, and feedback from the experts that travelled to Bangkok were also used. Goals and objectives that were not specifically addressed by the Bangkok workshops were to be incorporated where possible into the Oulu workshops, as expertise, and suitable experts in specific areas, such as counselling and inclusive education were readily available through the partner faculties and the city of Oulu.

After numerous requests, meetings and clarifications, the final timetables were accepted by BMA shortly before the first group arrived. (See appendix III, for final timetables for the Oulu workshops). All partners were notified and further meetings were arranged with the representatives to ensure that all details and agreements concerning the workshops with the various partners were clear.

6.6 Continued cooperation.

During the writing of this paper, the third group of the original “cycle” of BMA representatives visited Oulu in August of this year. The first group of a new “cycle” visited shortly afterwards so a new training cycle has already begun. There have been some minor changes in format, in that the experts will visit Bangkok in January of next year, as opposed to the format for the initial projects, wherein the experts visited Bangkok initially, and the teacher and director groups came to Oulu afterwards. Plans are already in place for consecutive visits by corresponding groups from BMA to visit Oulu in for the next number of years. In addition there are ongoing talks regarding future collaborations with other educational and municipal entities in Thailand concerning educational services, and training.

In May of 2015, a landmark occasion came to fruition, which was the result of a number of months of negotiations and hard work by both Topik and Professor Phusavat, when a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between Oulu University and the education department of BMA. The purpose of the MOU was to encourage joint activities and projects in the area of educational development, with particular emphasis on educational provision in the public sector at primary and secondary levels, educational management, educational infrastructure and learning environments, classroom teaching methods and practices, initial teacher training an in-service teacher development. In honour
of this occasion, the Deputy Governor of Bangkok, and the Finnish Ambassador to Thailand travelled to Oulu to witness, and take part in the ceremony.

While the deputy governor and the other delegates were in Oulu, a number of meetings and visits were arranged by Topik. During these meetings and visits, in addition to meeting with the main actors from Oulu university, the Deputy Governor, her advisors and the Finnish Ambassador to Thailand were also provided the opportunity to witness first-hand what the Oulu region, and the university of Oulu had to offer regarding future focus areas identified by the Deputy Governor, such as early childhood education,
7. MAJOR ISSUES ENCOUNTERED

As this was BMA’s first time in directly conducting business with an international entity, and Topik, while being experienced in international educational projects, had very limited knowledge of BMA. Both the Thai and Finnish cultures, protocols and ways of conducting business, were mainly unknown entities, and therefore it was inevitable that there were going to be a variety of obstacles that would be needed to be overcome throughout the course of the projects. The main obstacles and challenges identified by the participants during the project will be addressed in this section.

Additionally, it should be remembered that there is an overriding obstacle and challenge present in every project involving educational export, as the “selling” of education and pedagogy are very sensitive areas.

> If we are selling goods, the cultural issue is not so big, but when you come to abstract things, like pedagogy, etc. it becomes a very sensitive area. It's good to understand, that you can't export the culture, or social innovation. You can provide best practices, innovations, know-how, consulting, etc……but, when talking about abstract things, that are embedded in culture, then you need a specialist know-how, and you need to understand the clients environment.” (Interview with Mr. Pohjonen)

While there were a host of minor obstacles and issues that needed to be dealt with on an almost daily basis, the following issues were identified by participants as being the main issues present throughout the project process: date and format changes, practical and ethical issues concerning deliverables and goodwill, communication issues, as well as issues concerning payments and contracts and documentation required by both parties.

7.1 Date and format changes

The first major obstacle that identified by myself and the participants, were the continuous requests for changes to the workshop format and dates. Initially the proposed schedule and dates were accepted and approved of by BMA, and work began on building a programme
around these dates. However, continuous changes to the dates and the workshops formats had to be made based on requests by BMA.

For example, changes were made to the programme from an initial 5 day programme designed to encompass all the BMA’s requests, to a four and a half day programme for the first group and a four day programme for the second group., while the Bangkok workshops also had to be changed to include a workshop on Saturday, due to a national holiday in Thailand. As can be expected this difficulties on the Oulu side, as additional meetings had to be arranged on a regular basis to discuss the latest changes with the partners and schedules and availabilities re-checked and re-confirmed. This constant changing of dates would be recurring trend based on future cooperation’s with BMA. These date changes however, are perfectly understandable from the BMA perspective if we take into account the Thai Fiscal year, the Thai school year, and assumptions and uncertainty related to the payment of Value Added Tax (VAT), which will be explained in detail in the payments issues section.

As opposed to Finland (where the fiscal year is the calendar year), the fiscal year in Thailand is from the 1st of October until the 30th of September (CIA, 2015). As explained by Professor Phusavat all budget proposal at BMA are submitted well in advance of October in order to assure that the relevant funds are allocated to that specific project for the next fiscal year. As funds had already been allocated in the BMA budget based on the figures quoted initially by Topik, funds (exclusive of VAT) had already allocated in the yearly budget. When the price suddenly increased (from the BMA perspective) by 24%, extra funds had to be reallocated, which involved funds being transferred from other projects, and indeed fiscal years, necessitating repeated changes in the dates in order to ensure the projects commencement.

During my visits to schools in Bangkok and my discussions with professor Kongkiti, the structure of the Thai school year, surfaced as another issue which contributed the continuous changes to the initial proposed dates, The Thai school year is structured around the “3 seasons” as Thai’s refer to them of, hot, very hot, and wet. Temperatures peak in Thailand during March and April, and as many schools do not have air conditioning traditionally the school year in Thailand begins in mid-May which coincides with the Monsson season, with the first semester ending in early October. As opposed to western countries, teachers and administrators in Thailand are obliged to spend a considerable
amount of time preparing their school for students, both in terms of infrastructure, and in terms of class preparation, both before, during and after the academic year. Additional, teachers and administrators also bear the responsibility of raising funds for the school, which leaves only a select few dates that are seen as being feasible concerning international training workshops. Late March/early April and September are seen as being the best month for these visits, as after these periods time is traditionally used by teachers and administrators to prepare and maintain the schools.

7.2 Ethical and practical issues related to deliverables and goodwill

During the negotiations on the contract/educational agreement, some unforeseen aspects occurred related to payments and what was expected of Oulu University in return for said payment. These deliverables and goodwill gestures were unexpected, and caused considerable confusion on the Topik side.

Deliverables was a term that both myself and Mr. Niemi were introduced to, when it was initially brought up by BMA. In essence “deliverables” are links to payments. These deliverables were linked initially to what BMA perceived as the key milestones of the projects. These deliverables and payment schedules caused considerable confusion on the Oulu side, as some of the linkages with payments proposed by BMA were seen as being neither practical, nor possible to grant from the Oulu side.

Deliverables listed by BMA and their links to the payments were:

1. First payment- training schedule and training materials in Bangkok,
2. Second payment- training packages and materials, reports on training in terms of the lessons for future training with BMA and preliminary assessment of learners in Bangkok , and
3. Third payment- training packages and materials, reports on training in terms of the lessons for future training with BMA and preliminary assessment of learners in Oulu.

In addition to these deliverables, there were also requests and recommendations for Topik to provide goodwill gestures in order to build trust and cooperation. These gestures were not compulsory and were not discussed when the training was initially discussed, however,
Topik were informed that it would be a good idea to provide “something extra,” at no additional cost in order to show commitment.

The items proposed by BMA to create “goodwill,” comprised of:

- Development of a standardized BMA exam for mathematics and science
- Establishment of a counselling unit in school
- Accessibility to the database and knowledge resource centre at Oulu University Teacher Training School
- On-line discussion with the experts after the completion of the projects

However, the majority of these requests could not be agreed to. Throughout a number of meetings with the partners and experts, possible solutions to these issues were assessed. Accessibility to the database and knowledge resource centre at the teacher training school could not be agreed to, as the teacher training school did not have a database and resource centre, as such. The experts agreed immediately to the final proposal of an online discussion with the experts upon completion of the projects.

As mentioned previously, it was agreed by all concerned that as Oulu University, or the experts employed to run the workshops did not have any experience or expertise concerning the Thai education system or the Thai culture. As Sternberg, (2007) reminds us:

> Instruction and assessment need to be understood and thought about within the cultural context in which they occur. Educators and educational researchers may make assumptions that apply in their home culture but not elsewhere, and even different subcultures within an overall mainstream culture may have different views on instruction and assessment, and what constitutes intelligent performance in each. (Sternberg, 2007, p. 1)

Additionally it was also explained that the educational systems main emphasis in Finland is on student motivation and learning, not testing (see: OECD, 2010; Sahlberg, 2011). Thus, it was not seen as being ethical for Topik or the participants to agree to provide or
participate in any of the other gestures suggested by BMA, and it was indicated to BMA that would not be possible, to provide these gestures.

This caution and use of deliverables was perhaps understandable from the BMA perspective, considering that there was no previous relationship between TOPIK and BMA. Indeed, based on my subsequent conversations and visit to Bangkok, this appears to be a common standard stipulated in projects between Thai institutions and international partners.

7.3 Communication Issues

While there are no doubt a multitude of cultural aspects and business practices that could be included under communications issues, the main communications issues involved in this project can be broken down into the means of communication, the style of communication and the language of communication.

The first issue concerning communication was that virtually all correspondence was handled through email, which was not seen as being the most appropriate tool for the job at hand.

Communication, can't be based on emails. Meetings and negotiations need to happen face to face, and there needs to be direct contact. Additionally, responses are usually required quickly and there are far more effective and quicker modes of communication available than email. (Interview with Mr. Pohjonen)

The importance of face to face communication and direct contact is emphasised by Anderson, Hecht, Hoobler & Smallwood, (2003) who relate that communicators should be able to recognize each other’s needs, by both paying close attention to what partners say or do and perhaps more importantly what they do not say or do. Email, while a useful tool, is by no means the best tool for this form of communication, if used exclusively.

Another major underlying issue that was prevalent was the different cultural communication styles of the partners. Hall (1990, pp. 6-10) differentiates cultures into
either high context cultures or low context cultures based on their communication style, or what are perceived as being typical communication patterns of various nationalities. In low context cultures information is generally compartmentalised and controlled, and this information is used to as Hall relates “command and control,” commonly resulting in information blockage. Low context cultures, such as Finland expect that most information will be transmitted in the message and communication is direct, and precise. In contrast, in High context cultures, such as Thailand, according to Hall (1990) meaning is usually embedded deep in the information, and the listener is expected to be able to read between the lines to understand the hidden meaning. These issues were in large negated by the presence of Professor Kongkiti, but it is important to identify that they were present, as every person is influenced by the level of context, and the language used in communicating this context.

Another issue identified from the Topik participants was that all communication from and to BMA was conducted via Professor Phusavat. While myself and everyone else involved with the projects will be eternally grateful that he was the contact person on the BMA side, and without his language skills and knowledge the projects would have taken on a very different complexion. However, as Professor Phusavat himself related, he is a very busy man, with a number of roles in various organisations, and he has volunteered his services to ensure that the projects would run smoothly. As could be expected he was not always available to answer enquires immediately as he had many pressing matters to attend to. As Mr. Niemi pointed out, there was also the additional worry that if something happened to Professor Kongkiti during the planning stages there was no one else with whom we could communicate.

The third aspect, concerning communication relates to the (lack of) English skills of participants, which brought with it a number of problems. Education First, (2014) rank the average Thai as having very low English proficiency, which based on my experiences and observations of the projects and my visit to Bangkok is true to a large extent. The lack of English language skills were to be a major issue concerning the projects for a number of reasons:

- The lack of English skills were an issue concerning documentation and contract issues. Upon BMA’s receipt of the educational agreement (see contracts and documentation section) TOPIK was sent a “counter-contract” by BMA, which was written in Thai.
This contract was sent we were informed in order to show BMA’s commitment, and Professor Phusavat was tasked with translating and drafting an English version of a proposed BMA contract and assured Topik that he would get around to it as soon as possible. During our discussions, Professor Phusavat informed me that (in addition to the lack of recognition or value places on such a document) no one within BMA had the necessary expertise or language abilities to perform this task of preparing such a document in English, and that this type of work would have to be outsourced, resulting in additional time and expenses for the projects. This document it should be noted, was eventually received, in a mixture of Thai and English, near the end of the projects.

- The issue of translations and interpretations were identified as an issue during the initial workshop in Bangkok. It was assumed that the participants would have sufficient language English language skills to understand and engage in the workshops, by both Topik and indeed Professor Phusavat. However, his was not to be the case.

- Additionally, as Mr. Niemi stated during out interview, another factor concerning the language abilities of the participants concerned the structure and format of the workshops. This structure and format would have been approached much differently if Topik been aware of the poor English skills of the participants at the very early stages of the project planning. Alternative arrangements would have been made, with an emphasis on observation rather than lectures, and more reliance on field trips, and visits, etc.

### 7.4 Payments

Normally when dealing with international educational projects, as was explained from the Finnish perspective by Mr. Niemi and Mr. Pohjonen, there are negotiations to schedule the payments, and dates are set as to when the payments are expected to be received, and usually everything goes more or less according to plan. However, concerning the projects with BMA, payment issues were not so straight forward, and some of the major obstacles and mis-understandings identified concerning payments are addressed here.

The first issue relates to the instalments that were to be payed, and the percentages of each instalment linked to key phases of the projects. Traditionally payment stages, percentages and amounts are agreed at the early stages of the project process, and these payments are
phased, in order to spread costs out over the life of the projects, as well as to provide a form of guarantee to both the buyer and seller. Usually milestones are related to the different payment phases and amounts, or as they were referred to by BMA, deliverables, which have been covered in the previous section.

Included in the educational contract (mentioned in the contract and documentation section,) was an annex with a proposal by Topik, that the payments be split into three payments linked with the milestones of the project: 20% before the Bangkok workshop, as it was explained that it was necessary that this payment be received in advance of the Bangkok workshop to cover pre-costs (flights, compensation, etc.) associated with sending experts to Bangkok to conduct the workshops. 40% of the total payment was proposed to be received before the commencement of the Oulu workshops, and the remaining 40% was linked to the successful conclusion of the projects. However, in line with BMA procedures, BMA insisted that the final payment be 5%, which met with some confusion on the Oulu side, as it was assumed that 40% was a better guarantee than 5%. After some explanation and negotiation, it was agreed that the payments would be structured per the model proposed by Topik. This however did not mean that the amounts and methods of payment bore any resemblance to what was proposed, or agreed upon.

Additionally, as Thailand is a cash culture, at one stage a proposal was suggested by BMA in which cash was offered as part of the initial payment. From Topik’s perspective this proposal was seen as being highly unconventional, as in Finland business is traditionally conducted via bank transfers, which, is also traditionally the agreed upon form of payment concerning international projects at the University level.

Installments and the amounts to be paid were paid contrary to the prior arrangements and agreements, causing a great deal of confusion and uncertainty. Due to a combination of Professor Phusavat’s personal determination to ensure that the projects progressed, and Mr. Niemi’s trust that the payments would be received, the agreed sums were received and the workshops were a success, which from the perspectives of both BMA and Topik was a satisfactory conclusion.

The issue of Value Added Tax (VAT)
The issue of Value Added Tax or VAT, was one of the main issues concerning payment, and as Professor Phusavat informed me one issue that “almost killed the project.”

From Topik’s perspective, in line with how business is conducted in Finland, and common University practice, the initial proposal sent to BMA was not inclusive of this VAT (24%), as it was assumed that BMA would be aware that VAT would have to be added to this amount. Finnish companies and organisations are legally required to include this VAT charge in the final total of the cost of the services, to be paid by the consumer and then remitted to the state (Finnish Tax Administration, 2013). So in essence Topik assumed that the final sum to be payed, was the original quoted sum + VAT.

However, from the BMA perspective, VAT was not seen as an applicable concept as it is a Thai governmental entity, and as was common practice within BMA and Thailand, the quoted amount quoted by Topik, was seen as being the final sum to be payed. This sum (exclusive of VAT) was then applied for, approved, and allocated for the following year’s fiscal budget, during which the projects would take place. This mis-understanding resulting from the issue of VAT only came to light when the addition of VAT was included in an annex to the educational agreement, where payment was indicated, inclusive of VAT, much to BMA’s surprise.

As BMA is a public agency, its budget had already been allocated for that year, so as not to incur a surplus. Thus, the sudden addition of 24% in excess of the final amount that was budgeted for was quite unforeseen, and as all funds had already been allocated, where to get this additional 24% was unprecedented. However, the deputy governor had the necessary power and authority to ensure that funds were reallocated, and redistributed and that this additional amount was found for the projects.

In order to try and get some clarification on this issue for the purposes of this thesis, I contacted the Finnish tax authorities, and was put in touch with a VAT expert. I explained the circumstances and was informed that, either article 69d, or article 65 of Finnish VAT law 30.12.1993/1501 could be seen as being applicable in this circumstance, whereas additionally various European Union VAT laws were also seen as being applicable:

Article 69d, (Finlex, 2015) relates to short-term events such as seminars which take place over fewer than five days, and in which the participants’ role is seen as that of an observer,
not an active participant. In this case the goods or services are seen as being sold in Finland, and the seller has a legal obligation to collect vat on behalf of the Finnish government.

The general rule of article 65 (ibid) is if the service or good can be seen as being a long-term service, and whether the services are specifically customised for the customer. In these circumstances the seller is obliged to seek clarification on whether they are obliged to register for VAT payments in the customers’ country of origin. The seller has no legal responsibility to collect VAT on goods or services sold in Finland or outside, on behalf of the Finnish government, as the general taxation rules of the country of the buyer should apply.

In addition, EU law seems to back this stance of not charging for services sold to customers outside the EU. According to the European Union (2015) website concerning cross-border VAT payments;

If you provide services to customers outside the EU, you normally do not charge VAT (but if the service is used in another EU country, that country can decide to levy the VAT), though you may still deduct the VAT you yourself have paid on your related expenses (goods/services bought in specifically to make those sales).

While article 44 of the COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2006/112/EC of 28 November 2006, on the common system of value added tax states that:

“The place of supply of services to a taxable person acting as such shall be the place where that person has established his business. However, if those services are provided to a fixed establishment of the taxable person located in a place other than the place where he has established his business, the place of supply of those services shall be the place where that fixed establishment is located. In the absence of such place of establishment or fixed establishment, the place of supply of services shall be the place where the
taxable person who receives such services has his permanent address or usually resides.” (European Union, 2006)

It can be clearly seen that the issues concerning VAT, and the applicable laws related to VAT and educational export are unclear and scope for mis-understanding related to Vat involving international entities is considerable. This issue has resulted in (and indeed continues to result in) misunderstandings and mis-interpretations which are beneficial for neither entity concerned. These mis-understandings and mis-interpretations can have costly legal, and financial implications if interpreted incorrectly, and are detrimental to the trust built amongst entities and long-term sustainability of educational export projects.

7.4.3 Payment issues within the University

It should be recognized that issues concerning payment were not only restricted to the cooperation between Oulu University and BMA, but also to the cooperation between the different partners and in particular University faculties. Topik assumed the lead role in administrating, managing and planning the workshops, while the actual “technical” implementation was sub-contracted to the various partner departments. Departments and partners were informed of what was required, and then a suitable fee was agreed upon. All further responsibility for the agreed upon segment was then transferred to the relevant department to arrange and handle all other practical arrangements.

Two main issues were encountered related to payment issues concerning partner faculties and partners: The willingness of the faculty staff to participate in the workshops, and difficulties in transferring funds between departments at the University of Oulu, due to university protocols and bureaucracy.

By in large there were no major issues with the other faculties concerning any practical arrangements concerning the arranging of the workshops. There were however internal issues within departments, in trying to recruit faculty members to give lectures and/or presentations, which will be explained in more detail in the practical implications section of this thesis.
Concerning the difficulties in transferring funds to departments and faculties within the university, (which I personally had no actual experience of), I was informed during my interviews that due to the complexity of university bureaucracy, protocols and systems, it is generally easier to transfer funds to an external firm for services, rather than to another department within the University. Additionally it emerged during my interviews, that as these procedures are so complicated, departments specifically try not to involve other departments and concentrate on handling all details themselves, as it is seen as an easier solution rather than have to deal with the bureaucracy and difficulties that is seen as going hand in hand with University channels.

7.4 Contracts and documentation. (Bureaucracy)

The lack of clarity and direction in organizational policies and strategies, combined with the lack of cooperation among actors has created as Schatz (2015) notes, “a vicious circle of uncertainty between sellers and customers.” This vicious circle was nowhere more evident that in the issues concerning contacts and documentation required by both sides during the pilot projects, and the emphasis and importance placed on these by the different entities.

On the Oulu side, the lack of capacity and flexibility needed to conduct international educational projects by an organisation such as the University, became all too evident concerning the apparent need for such documentation. From the University perspective a legal document, a contract, or Educational agreement as it was sometimes referred to, was stated as being an unequivocal necessity by the university administration in order for the projects to continue, and follow the university protocols, and be accepted into the system as a university project.

Such a document was sent to BMA, however, the need for such a contract I was informed by Professor Phusavat was seen as being superfluous by BMA with numerous clarifications asked for, and as mentioned, a “counter-contract” was then sent to Topik by BMA in Thai, which caused considerable confusion. Additionally Professor Phusavat remarked that the concept of this type of contract was something that BMA was not familiar with, due in large part to BMA’s lack of previous cooperation with international
partners. Additionally, even if such a document were signed I was informed, it would be seen as “a piece of paper that could be thrown away.”

Thus, the necessity for such a contract, or related documentation was not seen as a pressing matter by BMA, and no contract was signed before the projects were completed. As both Mr. Niemi and Professor Phusavat were aware, this document would not be legally enforceable in any case, and in the case of non-payment, the chances of gaining the outstanding funds via legal means would be futile. This was as mentioned earlier, seen as being an acceptable risk by Mr. Niemi. However, from the University administration perspective the projects, in theory could not begin, or exist until there was a valid contract between BMA and TOPIK; whereas in reality, the projects did progress and indeed succeed without this document.

It should again be remembered that this was the first time that BMA had worked with a non-Thai entity on educational projects, and as such there were a number of documents required by the Thai side in line with their procedures and protocols. While these were seen as being perfectly reasonable requests by the Thai side, they were quite unusual from a Finnish perspective, and the requests and demands from the BMA side continuously changed with constant additional requests for documents and signatures on a variety of documents, with the majority being in Thai.

The need for this variety of signatures, documents and papers is understandable (while being extremely frustrating), if the BMA project procurement process is taken into account. This project procurement processes consists of five separate stages as related to me by Professor Phusavat:

1. Initiating a plan
2. Inserting a plan for budget appropriation
3. Preparation [after the approval]
4. Approval for foreign travel
5. Payments (on receipt of the proper documentation)

Every stage of the process could involve one direct, and up to four indirect agencies: the Department of Education, Department of the Budget, Office of the Permanent Secretary, the Office of Civil Service Commission (as the plan was related to a trip abroad), as well as
BMA. Every step and every department has its own procedures and protocols that need to be followed, and specific documentation is needed in order to approve that specific step, and for the project process to advance to the next stage. At every stage of the process, the various departments involved would need specific documentation based on that departments protocols, in order for the project process to progress.

Additionally, as Professor Kongkiti explained that in order to avoid the difficulties of the public procurement process, which is even more complex and in many cases corrupt, this collaboration with TOPIK was not viewed as a typical project, but as a “training project.”
8. THE MAIN FACTORS IDENTIFIED IN OVERCOMING THESE ISSUES

As mentioned this was a pilot project, between BMA and Topik, and was the first time that BMA had worked with a Finnish partner concerning educational export. Indeed it was the first time that BMA had worked with any external international partner concerning education related projects. While there were numerous difficulties and solutions that have been covered, be they related to contracts, payment, or scheduling. Based on my involvement in the process and my interviews with the other participants, a number of overriding factors were identified as being paramount in overcoming these issues and were key in the ultimate successful completion of the projects. These following factors were identified as being some of the key factors in overcoming issues and that should be taken into consideration when engaging in educational export projects, and can be summarised as being related to authority, local knowledge and trust.

8.1 Persons with the necessary authority were involved from the projects conception
(Authority)

The major factor in overriding seemingly insurmountable difficulties both during the planning as well as the execution stage was, that persons with sufficient power and authority were involved in the process as well as being the persons that were initially contacted.

On the Oulu side the person responsible for the projects had enough authority to “forget” and bend some of the practicalities and protocols that were supposed to be followed. Additionally as Professor Phusavat pointed out, more importantly this person was also in the position of being the decision maker, and he alone was responsible for the decision to take a risk on the project. Someone in a lower position of authority or responsibility would not have been able to take either this risk, or be flexible regarding procedures and protocols. It is also vital, that this person was identified and contacted by Professor Kess initially. If someone else would have been contacted, they would not have been able to take the necessary decisions and risk of taking responsibility for the projects.
On the Bangkok side in the form of the Deputy Governor, there was someone that had the necessary political power and authority to override existing protocols. As Professor Phusavat related concerning the issue with VAT; in theory BMA should have had to go through all five steps of the procurement process, which would have resulted in a delay of up to a year. However, the involvement of the deputy governor, ensured that the projects would go ahead as planned despite the need to allocate additional funds: as she had the necessary political power, and will to ensure that the additional funds were found, by transferring funds between projects in order to account for this extra expense.

8.2 The involvement of the Ambassadors’ (Authority)

As mentioned previously, the role of ambassadors’ deserves more consideration in any future projects concerned with “educational export.” I have already briefly covered the involvement of the Finnish ambassador, in the conception and continuation of the projects. Additionally, the involvement of the Thai Ambassador to Finland at the later stages of the project processes, also served to solidify relationships, not only between BMA and TOPIK, but also between Finland and Thailand, as the projects were raised in essence, to a diplomatic level.

As Hardy, Phillips & Lawrence (1998) explain, Inter-organisational relationships and cooperation can be built on either trust or power, and when new relationships between different organizations are considered, the norms and values concerning what constitutes trustworthy behaviour often differ markedly between partners.

In Thailand there is a culture of (as the Thai’s refer to it) “change,” or to put it more openly corruption, when engaging in any form of business practise or procurement procedures. Transparency International’s (2014) corruption index, ranks Thailand at 85 out of a total number of 174 countries ranked, with Finland occupying third position. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth office (2014) identifies corruption as being a major issue in Thailand, and indicates that corruption in one form or another will be encountered when doing business in Thailand. This corruption can take a variety of forms, such as; facilitation payments, bribes and the giving and receiving of expensive gifts in order to develop business relationships (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, U.K., 2014). As Professor Phusavat pointed out, in Thailand when the ambassador becomes involved, the traditional
local processes that take place “below the table” are negated or eliminated. The ambassadors’ presence as a diplomatic entity helped ensure that everything was above board and legal, and that the proper protocols and processes were followed, as the projects were now seen as being international, where local business practises would not be applicable, or tolerated.

Another major role of the ambassadors’ was in providing a form of guarantee. As BMA and Oulu University had never done some business before, there was no previous relationship on which to base trust, especially regarding payment terms and means, and as mentioned there was unease on the University side concerning the financial risks involved. When both the Finnish Ambassador to Thailand, and the Thai ambassador to Finland become involved these worries were cast-aside, as the projects had high ranking political backing from both sides, and the risk of non-payment was seen as being practically non-existent. In fact the ambassador role was seen as being better than a contract, as the political and diplomatic power of ambassadors are an extremely strong guarantee against foul play or non-payment.

8.3 The role of the local partner (Local knowledge)

The importance of Professor Kongkiti’s involvement as a local partner and coordinator was also key. Not only did Professor Phusavat have the necessary connections, skill and expertise to negotiate what is an incredibly complex bureaucratic process, and walk TOPIK through the steps and procedures. He also acted as an interpreter, a liaison, a translator and a guide between BMA and Topik, both throughout our correspondence as well as for the workshops in both Bangkok and Oulu, as previously mentioned the English levels of the BMA employees were virtually non-existent in most cases, and this project would not have been possible without this assistance.

The role of the local partner, and his expertise and local knowledge was also key in not only translating, but also in interpreting information between the entities, and in providing feedback (as can be seen from figure 2) at all stages of the projects. As Hall (1998, p. 54) points out, humans are guided by two forms of information, manifest and tacit, or non-verbal information which can only be acquired by growing up, or being in different environments, Cultural communications are deep and complex, and importance should be
placed on releasing the right responses over sending the right messages, and Professor Phusavat role as a possessor of both forms of information, was vital in ensuring that these responses were indeed sent and received.

Professor Phusavat is not a BMA employee, and volunteered his services, so he was also unfamiliar with a lot of the protocols, documentation and requests requested by BMA, and he was acting as a messenger in relating requests from various BMA departments, and then preparing the documents and walking TOPIK through the procedures. This “blind faith” as it may be refereed to, in the complete trust in Professor Phusavat, and the readiness of Mr. Niemi to provide and sign documents (some in Thai) were also key in the successful outcome of the projects.

It should be noted, that Professor Phusavat has signalled that he will have to withdraw from his role as coordinator/translator/local expert, in the near future due to work commitments, and the language and communication issues may become an even larger issue in the future.

**8.4 The importance of personal relationships (Trust)**

Finns have earlier tried to enter the (Thai) market and it has been very difficult, trying to compete with the US, UK, etc. Suddenly, BMA are sending their most important people to Oulu, all due to 2 people meeting and talking and getting the top layers involved, and using the initial pilot projects to open doors.” (Interview with Mr. Pohjonen)

Hardy, Phillips & Lawrence (1998) describe trust as an outcome of a communicative procedure in which shared meanings either exist, or are created through a mutual relationship involving all partners, while maintaining that in the absence of this relationship the creation of trust is unlikely. Thus, in the absence of any previous reciprocal relationship between the entities, the importance of personal relationships and the trust created due to these relationships, was a prevailing trend throughout the project process.
Trust from TOPIK’s perspective took a somewhat different approach, as there was no such relationship built on trust initially, necessitating Professor Kess’s heavy involvement at the initial stages, as there was mutual trust, and a history of reciprocal relationships between both Professor Kess and Professor Phusavat and Professor Kess and Topik. Additionally, as Mr. Niemi points stated concerning the issue of trust “for educational export, you need to find people you can trust, but, you can't know who to trust until you try it.” So, initially it could be said that Topik was hoping that everything would turn out for the best, rather than trusting that it would, but the experiences gained through these projects have also dispelled many doubts, and a number of future projects and the MOU signing ceremony have stemmed from the trust generated by these pilot projects.

Trust was not only needed between the “seller” and “buyer,” but also between the local partners as well. As mentioned there were repeated changes made to the timetables and to the dates, and this resulted in considerable internal challenges for many partner departments. Additional/replacement lecturers and facilities had to be searched for on a number of occasions, and the flexibility and willingness of the partners to accommodate these changes also results in an increase in the level of trust at the local level.

### 8.5 Flexibility and willingness to take a risk

As I have aimed to point out throughout this thesis, almost every aspect of this process was cyclic in nature, as almost every detail had to be negotiated, discussed, and re-negotiated based on the wishes and requests of BMA, and what was seen as being acceptable based from the perspective of TOPIK. Payments, schedules, programmes, dates, participants, etc., were all changed on a regular basis, and this flexibility by Topik professor Phusavat assured me, was paramount in ensuring that the projects were successful.

These projects were carried out in collaboration with, and in cooperation with BMA in order to ensure that a mutually beneficial relationship was established, and every step and change in the process had to be discussed by both sides until changes and solutions that were mutually acceptable were agreed upon. The key here is in collaboration with, and in cooperation with. It has to be remembered that there have been many educational institutions that have tried and failed to work with Thai entities before, and this lack of flexibility was one reason cited, as possibly being the main reason for this failure.
The importance of taking a risk is another key contributing factor identified concerning the successful conclusion of the projects. According to Hofstede (2001) generally Finnish people have a high uncertainty avoidance index, meaning that they are used to strict codes of behaviour and rules. This uncertainty avoidance Hofstede explains also leads to an inherent reluctance to take risks, which may explain why Finns have had very little success in entering the Thai market previously. This inherent reluctance to take risks and strict codes and behaviour were present at the institutional level, however, Mr. Niemi indicated that he was indeed willing to take a risk, as he acknowledged that “these types of risks need to be taken in order to learn the business of educational export, as well as to build relationships, trust and networks.”

8.6 The importance of quick responses

When dealing with cultures as contrasting as the Finnish and Thai cultures, both in terms of business culture, language, history and cultural identity, it is understandable, and inevitable that there were always going to be a succession of mis-understandings and miscommunications. There were a host of puzzling issues that needed to be resolved and clarified throughout the process as I have mentioned throughout this paper. Many of these issues and miscommunications had the potential, if not addressed quickly to turn into major issues, and indeed some of them very nearly did. I have mentioned some examples such as the VAT issue, payment schedules and amounts, misunderstandings concerning who should sign certain documents, and indeed what documents would need to be signed, etc. In addition to these “bigger” issues there were also a host of “smaller” issues that required clarification between both BMA and TOPIK, and indeed between TOPIK and its Finnish partners.

Hall (1990) recognised that cultural differences in information flows are often the greatest stumbling blocks to understanding, and identified two differing perceptions of time: Monochromatic and Polychromatic. Monochromatic cultures are concerned with paying attention to a single task at a time, taking deadlines seriously, and adhering religiously with plans. It could safely be said that Finland fits the profile of a monochromic country. Thailand on the other hand more fits the profile of a polychromatic culture, as many tasks are done at once, people consider time commitments as an objective to be achieved (if possible), and have a strong tendency to build lifetime relationships
During my discussions with Professor Phusavat, while we were evaluating the projects and our perceptions of what had actually happened at different phases, it became abundantly clear that one aspect of the process that was paramount in their success was the speed with which replies were received, and with which possible misunderstandings and miscommunications were addressed. As Professor Phusavat related:

You also have to do things very fast as you don't want to leave the misunderstanding out there for so long. We (you and I) we communicated quickly, and for me was important, as if for example I write you an email and it took you 2 weeks to reply, then maybe I would just have given up.

(Interview with Professor Phusavat)

The speed in answering requests and in addressing potential issues can additionally be seen as being important he elaborated, as it builds trust, it reduces the risk of misunderstandings and miscommunications escalating, and additionally it establishes a relationship.
9. CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this study was to analyse the educational export projects that took place between BMA and Oulu University in 2014, from the perspectives of the stakeholders, by using an action research approach.

The main aims of this research were: to provide the background to the projects from both the BMA and Oulu perspectives, including an introduction to the main players involved, as well as to provide an analysis of how the projects were piloted from both the perspectives of the BMA and the Oulu stakeholders. To work in collaboration with the stakeholders in identifying possible issues and misunderstandings encountered throughout the projects, and finally to record the main factors identified by respondents concerning the successful conclusion of the projects, and which were responsible for overcoming these and other obstacles and issues.

Through my own participation, interviews with the stakeholders, field notes and visit to Bangkok, I have provided an overview and insight into the background and project processes from both the perspectives of BMA and Topik. It is hoped that by providing this background and explaining the various justifications and processes from both sides, that future practices and projects between BMA and Oulu University can be improved. Indeed as expected there were a number of factors and justifications concerning the, why’s and how’s of engaging in this educational export project that have been answered in this section. BMA needed to look externally for solutions to improve and address educationally issues that were not seeing as being available domestically, whereas from the Topik perspective educational export was seen as being within the departments core competencies and the project was seen as providing a welcome means of gaining additional international experience.

The second goal of this research was to work in collaboration with the stakeholders in identifying possible issues and misunderstandings encountered throughout the projects. When dealing with cultures as far removed from each other as the Finnish and Thai cultures, in terms of business culture, language, history and cultural identity, it is perhaps understandable, and indeed inevitable that there were always going to be a number of issues that would need to be addressed during the course of the projects. While there were a host of minor obstacles and issues that needed to be dealt with on a continuous basis, the
following issues were identified by participants as being the main issues present throughout the project process: Date and format changes, practical and ethical issues concerning deliverables and goodwill, communication issues, as well as issues concerning payments and contracts and documentation required by both parties.

The major factor identified by stakeholders in overcoming seemingly insurmountable difficulties both during the planning stages, and during the execution of the projects was that persons with sufficient power and authority were identified and involved in the projects process from its conception, on both sides. The involvement of the Finnish and Thai Ambassadors, in the projects also provided considerable power and authority and elevated the projects to the diplomatic level. Authority was key in overcoming various financial and bureaucratic obstacles on both sides.

The importance and involvement of the local partners’ skill and expertise in negotiating complex bureaucratic processes in addition to providing constant feedback and clarifications, was also essential in ensuring that the projects reached a successful conclusion. The local partners’ advice and knowledge helped both parties to reach compromises and agreements, and indeed ensured that mis-understandings were addressed in a timely fashion in order to minimise their potential for disruption.

The role of personal relationships was another key factor identified by stakeholders, and these relationships were present at all stages of the project, from its conception to conclusion. These relationships were responsible for ensuring that there was trust and cooperation during the projects, in lieu of any previous experience or history of working together. Flexibility and willingness to take a risk, and the importance of quick responses were also identified by stakeholders as being important factors in overcoming issues that arose throughout the projects, and in building trust.

The main conclusions gained from this research are that throughout these and other educational export related projects, when doing business with and communicating with contrasting cultures, that there will inevitably be a variety of issues, obstacles mis-conceptions and mis-understandings that will need to be overcome. It is important that these issues of re both identified, respected and taken into consideration when engaging in any form of international business, particularly business that is education related, and that ethnocentric views and orientations are recognised and addressed. Additionally rigid
structures and bureaucracies, do not encourage trust, quick responses or flexibility, some of the main factors identified as being the main factors associated with overcoming such problems. Power, Authority and various relationships exist and are intrinsic in all types of business and social situations, however, the roles of both power, authority and these relationships are instrumental in pilot projects concerning educational export, where no previous knowledge of the culture or indeed of how different bureaucracies or ways of doing business are conducted within these cultures.

10. DISCUSSION

I have to acknowledge that I was openly sceptical concerning the Finnish approach to educational export at the beginning of the process, and of the view by many that the search for the “new Nokia” has ended, and that education will be the next big export commodity from Finland. Based on my participation in this project and my research on educational export, I have found nothing to alleviate this scepticism, on the contrary I am probably even more sceptical now.

Throughout these projects, there were a number of challenges that needed to be addressed, and it became very clear quite soon, that in order to address these challenges, they first needed to be identified. The majority of the challenges related throughout this thesis can be traced to issues concerning intercultural communication and ways of doing business, and solutions were mainly based on first identifying that there had indeed been a miscommunication or misunderstanding. Only then could steps be taken, while taking the various cultures into consideration, as to how to address these issues to ensure that misunderstandings and miscommunications were addressed, while paying attention to protocols and bureaucracy. Equally importantly, as Chang (2011) points out, in any form of International or intercultural communication, communicators must also be aware of “face” or "socially situated identity," and ensure that no “face” is lost by either side. This form of cultural sensitivity and understanding is a major factor when building any relationship with, or in doing business with people and cultures with different beliefs, perceptions and worldviews.

Cai, et al (2012, p. 230), observed that many Finnish higher education entities do not feel as if they are ready for educational export, due to the “lack of experience in knowledge and
marketing, insufficient motivation and commitment, the lack of coordination in exporting education, and the need for a clear vision on export of education.” Indeed a lack of motivation and commitment was evident at the University level, concerning the Universities reluctance to implement clear strategies, allocate additional resources into the promotion of and execution of educational export projects, or indeed in allowing any flexibility concerning the handling of such projects. It is clear that here is a great deal of knowledge and expertise at the University level, however, the rigidity and lack of flexibility provided by university protocols and procedures stifle and restrict this knowledge and expertise.

This lack of flexibility, and cultural awareness needs to be addressed concerning future projects involving international entities, as decisions need to be taken quickly, and different cultures, and ways of conducting business need to be accommodated, and the current rigidity within the system, and the prevailing Finnish ethnocentric perspective of, “this is the way things are done in Finland, and these are the rules” is not conducive to this.

The prevailing “passive” approach to educational export that has been adopted by both the Finnish government and HEI’s in Finland in the past also needs to be addressed if Finland is to compete with the traditional powerhouses of education (UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand) on the open market, particularly now with the introduction of a fee paying mechanism which puts Finland in direct competition with these powerhouses. While, Finland does indeed have a great number of strengths and opportunities concerning education export, these strengths are not unique to Finland and many other countries can claim to have these same strengths. However, these other countries have been actively investing in, and marketing their education at the national level, while adopting clear strategies and policies at local and governmental levels to support educational export, has left Finland with a lot of work to do. As Cai, et al (2012) note: unless there is a willingness to invest in (higher) educational export by both policy makers and HEI’s and other service providers, the discussion on Finnish education export it seems is merely concerned with creating policy, with no concern for practical implementation, or in other words it’s time to take action.

It also became apparent that while there are a number of government supported entities that have been given the task of promoting and facilitating Finnish education export, the role of these entities concerning educational export needs to be examined and scrutinised. These
agencies have bold statements, goals and missions, however, they have very little concrete results to show for, or indeed justify tax payer investment concerning their roles in the promotion of Finnish educational export. The role of both these “expert organisations” and the relevant ministries when compared to their counterparts from, for example the UK, USA, or Australia, illuminates for me the lack of focus and investment concerning educational export Finland. Additionally these entities should also provide clear and detailed assistance, and instructions concerning practical and legal issues related to educational export. Concerning the interpretation of “grey” issues such as VAT, which are subject to variety of interpretations, and which have the potential to “kill” projects and create distrust if not handled correctly; clear and detailed advice should be provided to organisations and companies concerned with engaging in educational export.

Finland it seems has stood still basking in the praise given to its education system and reputation, and waiting for people to come to their “shop,” and do business on their terms. Other countries with vastly inferior international rankings scores have been slowly colonising and monopolising the education world, as they have been actively building and maintaining relationships, through large investments at the national and institutional levels. In short, if Finland, and its HEI’s are serious about educational export, a great number of changes are needed in terms of how educational export is approached, in addition to increased investment, and these changes are needed sooner rather than later.
As Creswell (2013) points out, ethical issues are central to conducting any action research that involves participants in a substantial way, and that the researcher needs to be both aware of these issues and how to address them. In order to do this Creswell (2012, p. 592) recommends that the action researcher conduct the inquiry in a way that respects the care of the participants, while involving them collaboratively in all phases of the research. This aspect was an overriding concern throughout the research process, as Heron & Reason, 2001, point out that paramount importance should be, and indeed was attached to this feature of collaboration, and “working with, not on” participants and involving them at all stages of the research. Throughout the research process I have made every attempt to ensure participants involvement, and have been in continuous contact with stakeholders on both sides of the project, and have collaborated on a regular basis with the vested parties.

Permission and consent were sought, and obtained from all participants concerning the use of material related to the project, as well as the inclusion of information gathered thought-out the interview process, and its inclusion in this thesis in line with Koshy’s (2010, p. 81) recommendations. The purposes and the goals of the study were explained to the participants and all participants were aware that they would have the right to withdraw at any stage of the process. Consent forms were not used, or sought or signed, as I had a working relationships throughout the projects with all persons interviewed, and again as the goal of the projects was to work in collaboration with these actors in order to improve practise, the use of such forms was seen as being superfluous. In hindsight, some sort of form or document, may perhaps have been a good idea in order to expressly identify my role, (from both the participants and my own perspectives) during the interviews from that of a participant to that of a researcher,

Kaiser (2009, p. 1632) points out that when conducting qualitative research the issues of confidentiality can be complex, as there is an inherent “conflict between conveying detailed, accurate accounts of the social world and protecting the identities of the individuals who participated in their research.” Concerning this issue of confidentiality, Koshy (2010, p. 81) recommends that real names and identities should be kept confidential and unrecognisable, in order to protect people from any possible harm as a result of their participation in this research. The option of using pseudonyms was considered at the early
stages of the research process, however, it was decided that due to the small number of participants, and the issue of “deductive disclosures,” or internal confidentiality, as Sieber & Tolich (2013) refer to issues wherein traits or descriptions provided would make the participants easily identifiable, that the use of such pseudonyms would be counter-productive. All participants were then contacted and asked if they had any objection to their identities being disclosed, and that the option of using a pseudonym was available if they were not comfortable in having their own names included. All participants agreed that the use of pseudonyms was not seen as necessary, thus participant’s real names are included and referenced in this thesis.

Another ethical consideration proposed by Koshy (2010, p. 81) concerns the sharing of information with colleagues and others whose responses I am interpreting, so that they can verify the relevancy and accuracy of my reporting. This issue was addressed somewhat insofar as Mr. Niemi with whom I had worked with on the projects, was also one of the supervisors for this thesis, and was able to provide feedback on a regular basis, however due to practical issues and being situated in Oulu, all participants were not involved to the same extent, and this could be interpreted as a weakness concerning the research process.

In order to address aspects concerning the accuracy and relevancy of my reporting, Creswell (2013, pp. 202-203) proposes that the final report should be sent to participants, in order for the participants to verify that the information and references attributed to them are indeed valid, and not taken out of context or misinterpreted. This sending of the report and verification by the participants was additionally important, as I am aware that none of the participants (apart from myself) are native English speakers. While there were no concerns regarding language proficiency, as all participants English levels were near native, there is always the possibility of mis-interpretations and mis-understandings whenever interviews are conducted, and these possibilities are magnified when using a language that is not your mother tongue. Thus, it was vital that the participants had the opportunity to view material and references attributed to them, and by providing participants with access to the final version of thesis pre-submission, participants were in a position to verify that these comments and references were not taken out of context, and were indeed attributable to them, and any changes and recommendations that were suggested and/or provided by participants concerning comments attributable to them were made in order to ensure validity.
One additional ethical issue arose concerning sending the report to the participants. In addition to verifying the information, advice and suggestions were received from the respondents, and one respondent pointed out that they felt that some details should be omitted. They perceived these details as being sensitive and felt that the inclusion of these details could possibly compromise certain persons, and endanger future projects. My role as a researcher was to take these opinions into consideration, and the guiding cornerstone principle of “do no harm” was used in deciding to make changes, and omissions. These changes were then confirmed to ensure that no harm would ensue based on these subsequent changes, before being included in this thesis.

As Stringer (2007, p. 57) points out, action research being essentially qualitative, uses a different set of criteria to commonly established routines adopted by traditional research concerning reliability and validity. Additionally, Heikkinen, Huttunen & Syrjälä (2007, p. 6) propose that the concepts of validity and reliability are no longer seen as being valid by many writers of qualitative reports and that there are an abundance of criteria that have traditionally been used to judge research quality, and that there are an abundance of additional concepts and criteria proposed concerning action research.

While it is not possible to address all of these concepts and criteria, concerning the validity, validation or reliability of my research, Stringer (2014, p. 92) identifies “systematic and rigorous processes” as being the assurances of good research, with emphasis on whether the outcomes of the research are trustworthy, and do not merely reflect the particular perspectives, biases, or worldview of the researcher. Thus concerning issues of validity, reliability, and validation, it was decided that in line with Stringer’s (2007, 2014) recommendations, that I would focus on the trustworthiness of the research, and checks concerning trustworthiness were established in line with Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) proposals to assess the attributes of the research based on four attributes: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose a number of measures to ensure credibility and ensure that participants trust the integrity of the process. Participants should be openly involved with, and have extended opportunities to both engage with and observe the processes, as well as ensuring that the stakeholder perspectives and experiences are acknowledged are clearly represented. Additionally they recommend the use of triangulation, or the inclusion of perspectives from different sources, as the credibility of a study is enhanced when
multiple sources of information are incorporated. As the goal of this research was to work in collaboration with, and not on the stakeholders in order to improve practice, participants were openly involved in, and were welcome to engage, question and observe any, and all processes. Additionally the active involvement of Mr. Niemi as my supervisor and my extended visit to Bangkok aimed to ensure that perspectives, and experiences were represented, and wherever possible a variety of perspectives and sources were used, in order to ensure credibility. One aspect that should be addressed concerning the credibility of the thesis, is that the vast amount of information from the BMA perspective of the projects and indeed their background is heavily reliant on one person, Professor Phusavat. While there can be no doubt that Professor Phusavat, was an integral part of the project and that all correspondence and practicalities were handled through him, it may be argued that I was overly reliant on his perspectives and opinions. Where possible, additional resources were used to expand on information provided, but due to my lack of Thai language skills and the relative lack of availability of information concerning Thailand in English, this was not always possible.

Action research outcomes apply in large to the particular people and setting involved in the study, as there is an inherently close relationship between the researcher and participants (Stringer, 2007, 2014; Creswell, 2012). This focus and relationship Stringer (2007, p. 59) maintains “mitigates the need for procedures that ensure the possibility for people who were not part of the study to make judgments about whether or not the situation is sufficiently similar to their own for the outcomes to be applied.”

As Guest, MacQueen & Namey (2012) point out replication (and thus transferability) is usually not a goal in qualitative research as most studies are descriptive, and secondly, similar results cannot be expected across individuals or time, since the questions that are asked may very well be different for each participant or interview context. The issue of transferability was not one that this thesis was overly concerned with, as the circumstances and stakeholders involved could in no way be replicated, and as mentioned my own perspectives and biases as both a participant and a research cannot be replicated by anyone else. However, even though the results of this thesis cannot be transferred or replicated, it was acknowledged during the writing of this thesis that the practical experiences encountered, may no doubt be encountered throughout other educational export projects
(between Thailand and Finland in particular) in the future, and thus may offer some level of transferability and replication.

Dependability, Stringer, (2014, p. 92) maintains, focuses on the extent that people can trust that all measures of a systematic research approach were followed. While this was my first time adopting an action research approach, and this was a learning process, requiring constant re-assessment and re-evaluation, of both the project process and of my role in this process, every effort was made throughout the research process to endeavour to ensure that the process was systematic and logical at all stages. Philosophical assumptions, methodology, bias and data collection and analysis are explained and addressed in chapter 3, and limitations, and possible issues concerning the trustworthiness of the research are addressed in this chapter. However, I am aware that as Reason and Bradbury (2001) remind us, good action research emerges over time in an evolutionary and developmental process, and as the projects were (and still are) constantly developing, the information I have obtained and reported quickly loses relevance and becomes outdated, even as it is being reported.

The final attribute proposed by Lincoln & Guba (1985) is confirmability: Here Stringer (2014, pp. 92-93) maintains that researchers should have an “audit trail” wherein observers can view the data collected, instruments, field notes, tapes, journals, or other artefacts related to the study, to confirm that procedures described actually took place. While I have no such official “audit trail,” journals, field notes, and transcribed records of recorded interviews, in addition to a multitude of email correspondences could be used for confirmation if needed. Again, as this was my first time in adopting an action research approach and in analysing a project as in depth as this, it was a learning process. While a form of “audit-trail” does exist, a lot of the information was and still is sensitive and confidential between a very select number of persons. Thus, the actual practical process of observing and confirming the conformability of this study is not a possibility.

One additional issue that should be addressed concerning trustworthiness of the research, is the use of sources for this thesis. English language sources are used wherever possible, however in the case of some sources, particularly those concerning educational export, and the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish language reports were used in lieu of the provided English documents. Original language documents were used wherever possible, as documents in the original language invariably provide more information and detail, when compared to the English language resources provided, and all translations from these
publications into English were undertaken by the author. While my Finnish language skills are good, having lived in Finland for a number of years, I acknowledge that there is the inherent risk of mis-interpretation or mis-translations concerning my interpretations and translations, and that there is always a danger that some of the original nuances and emphasis could be “lost in translation.”
12. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS THESIS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this section I highlight the main practical implications of this thesis and provide a number of suggestions concerning focus areas concerning future research related to educational export, and educational export projects.

12.1 Practical implementations

The main practical implication concerning this thesis is to provide an overview of and an account of the projects and the inherent difficulties encountered by both BMA and Topik throughout the project processes. In addition it is hoped that by identifying the main factors responsible in overcoming these difficulties, while identifying the role of players, the role of relationships and indeed the role of, and techniques of developing trust from both perspectives, that the importance placed on these factors will be taken into account concerning future educational export projects. This particular thesis was a combination of a specific set of variables and stakeholders perspectives, which cannot be replicated, however, it is my belief that the factors and issues identified are present in all educational export projects, and that this thesis can be used to inform practise for future educational export projects.

One additional practical implementation of the projects and this thesis is in establishing operational procedures and protocols related to future educational export projects and cooperation between University departments.

In Finnish universities, accordance with the General collective agreement for universities the total annual working time of teaching and research staff in universities totals 1,600 hours. This collective agreement requires that a work plan should be completed for the full working year, in cooperation with the supervisor and employer (The Union for University Teachers and Researchers in Finland, 2015). As no allowance can be made for these types of projects, (as they very rarely happen with such notice), educational export projects cannot be included in an employee’s work-plan, therefore employees are not legally obligated to participate or assist in these projects. Compensation can be separately agreed with the employer, but the employee is under no obligation to participate, and in some many cases lecturers can demand exorbitant consultant fees, or demand that extra holidays,
etc. are granted. Few departments, or faculties within the University have had operational procedures in place concerning such matters, as none were previously needed, as there is no university policy concerning educational export, however, I was informed during my interviews that this was a useful learning process within departments, and that allowances have been made for this type of circumstance in the future at the departmental level.

One perhaps, naïve hope of the researcher concerning practical implementations of this thesis, was to some of the difficulties facing Finnish educational export, and highlight that if Finland is serious about competing on the international educational market, it has to realise that how things are done in Finland is not how things are done in the rest of the world. The “Finnish way” of rigid bureaucracies and hierarchies at institutional and domestic levels, needs to be dealt with, as these mechanisms are not flexible enough to deal with, or indeed take into consideration other ways of doing business and different world views, perceptions and assumptions. These projects succeeded in spite of, not with the support of these mechanisms, and the very same issues addressed in this thesis are it seems still present, almost two years later, in the current cycle of projects.

12.2 Future research

The field of educational export is quite a new one in Finland, and with the current focus on the internationalisation of Finnish higher education, and increased pressure to self-fund being placed on these same institutions, there is indeed scope for a wealth of future research on the various aspects of educational export.

Indeed, as the projects have at this present date started upon their third “cycle” there is an opportunity to engage in further analysis and evaluation of the projects. These pilot projects could be used as a base line, while analysis of the subsequent projects could be undertaken in order to analyse how the projects have evolved, and if indeed, the same observations contained within this thesis are still valid, or applicable.

In the researchers’ opinion, the current sparse research in Finland related to educational export has been an over reliant on theoretical investigations and policy analysis, aimed at identifying the roadblocks, bottlenecks and problems concerning Finnish educational export, while not enough research into how to overcome these problems has been conducted. More research and publications are needed from the perspectives of persons
actually involved in educational export projects, who have first-hand experience of
encountering these issues, and more importantly can relate how these obstacles have been
overcome. In essence there has been research into identifying the problems, there also
needs to be research into identifying the solutions.

Another possible focus for a future research problem could be in identifying and analysing
previous and on-going examples of educational export problems from the perspective of
“trust theory,” elements of which are briefly touched upon in this thesis. The main focus
could be to identify how various inter-organisational entities with no previous links,
history of cooperation, and vastly different cultures and ways of conducting business,
signal that they can indeed be seen as trust worthy partners/customers/sellers in educational
export? There are various theories on generating and creating trust, and I believe that it
would be very interesting and indeed practical to investigate how these theories relate to
(from both the perspectives of the “buyer” and the “seller”), and are applicable to
educational related projects, where in many instances the “products” are sensitive and
intangible,

As briefly touched on in this paper, Finnish parliament has approved the compulsory
introduction of fees for non EU/EEA citizens. While this issue of international fees was not
a focus of this paper, fees related to international students are a major component of
educational export, and provide a wealth of opportunities for future research concerning
the possible benefits and issues arising from this introduction of a few paying mechanism,
from a variety of perspectives.

Related to this previous point, the role of the main ministerial entities involved in Finnish
educational export also provided fertile grounds for an abundance of research. As briefly
mentioned in this paper, Finnish governmental policies, strategies’ and calculations
concerning educational export are scattered and for the most part directionless, with little
or no transparency, or indeed results to show for the “investment” of tax payer funds over
the years. The role of the Finnish ambassador was a key one in this project, but a study
could, and should be undertaken to gauge the actual efficiency and progress of
governmental, and diplomatic entities charged with promoting and facilitating educational
export, in relation to their effectiveness and involvement in similar projects.
REFERENCES

Airola, A. (2014). Education export to the international market. In A. Airola (Ed.), Koulu
usviennillä kansainvälisille markkinoille, (pp. 3–16). Joensuu: Karelia UAS.
Retrieved from
https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/80057/B23.pdf?sequence=1

communication across cultures. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), Cross-cultural and

Australian Government. (2014). Export income to Australia from international education
activity in 2013-14. Retrieved on 26 June 2015, from:
https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/Research-

Australian Government. Retrieved on 26 June 2015, from:
https://internationaleducation.gov.au/International-
20for%20International%20Education.pdf

Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. (2014). Organisation of BMA. Retrieved on 26

BBC. (2014). Thailand army's pivotal role in politics. Retrieved on 15 August 2015, from:


Ministry of Education and Culture. (2015). Tuition fees for higher education students from outside the EU/ETA area. Retrieved on 20 November 2015, from: 

http://www.nafsa.org/Explore_International_Education/Impact/Data_And_Statistics/The_International_Student_Economic_Value_Tool/


Stroombergen, Adolf.


TEKES. (2015). Education exports survey for companies in the learning sector. (Survey). TEKES. Retrieved on 15 December 2015, from:


luOsaPerustelut


http://www.oulu.fi/extensionschool/


APPENDICES:

Appendix I: List of persons interviewed

December 16, 2014 Professor Kongkiti Phusavat (Contact person for BMA/expert on Thai education and culture)

February 19, 2015:

Dr. Pornpun Waitayangkoon: (President) Institute for the Promotion of Science and Technology. Bangkok, Thailand. Expert on Thai education and culture.

Mrs. Kanyanat Sawadsawang: Expert on Thai education and culture

Mrs. Tanyakarn Yuentrakulchai: Expert on testing and assessment, Thai education and culture.

April 24, 2015 Mr. Esa Niemi: (Director, Extension school) University of Oulu

June 2015: Professor Pekka Kess: (University of Oulu)

May 22, 2015 Mr. Juha Pohjonen: (Development manager, education export) Extension School, University of Oulu
Appendix II: Flexible focus questions for interview participants

1. Can you explain the background to the projects and your role in the projects from your own perspective?
2. What do you identify as the main goals of the training?
3. Why do you think Oulu and Finland were chosen for in-service training?
4. What do you think were the main strengths and weaknesses of the projects?
5. In your opinion what were the main obstacles and issues that were encountered throughout the projects?
6. What do you think were the main factors responsible in overcoming these obstacles and issues?
Appendix III Workshop timetables

Phase I: Bangkok, Thailand. 11-16.08.2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday: 11/08</th>
<th>Friday: 15/08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00 – 12:00 Welcome: Introduction and schedule (Both groups together)</td>
<td>09:00 – 12:00 Environmental education (Both Groups together)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 – 13:00 Lunch</td>
<td>12:00 – 13:00 Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00 – 15:00 Leadership in Education (Admin.)</td>
<td>13:00 – 15:00 Community and School Cooperation (Both Groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00 – 16:00 Conclusion and Discussion</td>
<td>15:00 – 16:00 Conclusion and Discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday 13/08</th>
<th>Saturday: 16/08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00 – 12:00 Problem based learning (PBL) (Both groups) Different Pedagogical knowledge approaches</td>
<td>09:00- 12:00 Evaluation, assessment and capacity building (Both Groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 – 13:00 Lunch</td>
<td>Learning Café method: participants split into 4 groups and spend 30-45 mins., with each expert)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00 – 15:00 Curriculum planning and development (Admin.)</td>
<td>12:00 – 13:00 Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00 – 16:00 Curriculum subject planning (Teachers)</td>
<td>13:00 – 14:00 Feedback and discussion (All)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion and Discussion</td>
<td>Preparation for workshops in Oulu, Finland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thursday: 14/08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00 – 12:00 Experimental learning (Both groups together) Creating a positive learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 – 13:00 Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00 – 15:00 Educational technology: Opportunities and Challenges (Admin.) Learning sources (ICT, local innovations) in subject teaching (Teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00 – 16:00 Conclusion and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Phase II: Group I.

**Oulu, Finland 25.-28.8.2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Monday 25/08</strong></th>
<th><strong>Wednesday 27/08:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.00</strong></td>
<td>Arrival to Oulu University Faculty of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.30</strong></td>
<td>Welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.00</strong></td>
<td>Research based Teacher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.00</strong></td>
<td>Aquarium discussion on Teacher Education in Thailand and Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12.00</strong></td>
<td>Lunch at the University Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13.15</strong></td>
<td>Inclusive Education and Supporting Different Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14.30</strong></td>
<td>Workshop 1: Mathematics teaching in Teacher training – experimental learning and developing skills for differentiation in teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15.15 – 16.00</strong></td>
<td>Workshop 2: ICT enhanced teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>08.00</strong></td>
<td>Departure from hotel for school visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>08.30 – 12.30</strong></td>
<td>School visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12.30 – 13.30</strong></td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14.00 – 16.30</strong></td>
<td>Introduction to the Center for Internet Excellence (CIE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tuesday 26/08:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Thursday 28/08</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>08.45</strong></td>
<td>Arrival to Oulu University Teacher Training School Norssi,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09.00</strong></td>
<td>Welcome: Teacher Training Schools in Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09.40</strong></td>
<td>The classroom as a learning environment: Classroom visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.15</strong></td>
<td>The classroom as a learning environment: Classroom visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.55 – 11.45</strong></td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.45</strong></td>
<td>The classroom as a learning environment – case UBIKO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13.05</strong></td>
<td>Presenting of Finnish standardized tests for grades 9 and 12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13.30</strong></td>
<td>Using ICT in practice in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14.30 – 15.15</strong></td>
<td>Coffee &amp; Discussion (All participants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.30</strong></td>
<td>Experiential learning in Science at the University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.30</strong></td>
<td>Assessment and Evaluation. Learning Café Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.30 – 13.00</strong></td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12.30</strong></td>
<td>Transportation to Timosenkoski nature school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13.30</strong></td>
<td>Timosenkoski nature school Presenting the nature school concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14.00</strong></td>
<td>Introduction to City of Oulu’s Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14.30</strong></td>
<td>Workshop 1. Global Citizenship Education Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14.30</strong></td>
<td>Workshop 2. Collaborative Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16.00</strong></td>
<td>Summary of workshop discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18.00</strong></td>
<td>Closing ceremony at the Hotel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Phase II, Group II

**Oulu, Finland 08.-11.9.2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday 08/09</th>
<th>Wednesday 10/09:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.00 Arrival to University of Oulu, Faculty of Education</td>
<td>08.30 – 12.30 School visit, Kastellin koulu, Observing learning environments in the Finnish context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30 Welcome</td>
<td>09.15 – 10.00 Principal Timo Salmi presents the school and other functions of the multi-purpose building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00 – 11.45 Research based Teacher education</td>
<td>10.00 – 11.00 Tour of the building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.00 – 12.00 Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00 Lunch</td>
<td>12.15 – 12.45 Introduction to City of Oulu’s Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.15 – 14.45 Inclusive Education and Support for Different Learners</td>
<td>12.45 – 13.45 In-service training provision and other expertise services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.00 – 16.00 Workshop: ICT enhanced teaching and learning, and 21st Century learning skills</td>
<td>13.45 – 15.00 Schools’ management and administration systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday 09/09:</th>
<th>Thursday 11/09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00 Arrival to Oulu University Teacher Training School</td>
<td>09.00 Arrival University of Oulu, Faculty of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.10 Teacher Training Schools in Finland</td>
<td>Assessment and Evaluation in Finnish Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.45 The Unesco School concept</td>
<td>09.30 - 10.00 Assessment and Evaluation. Learning Café Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.15 The classroom as a learning environment: Physics / scientific experiment in a classroom</td>
<td>10.00 – 11.00 Leadership and Management in Finnish Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.55 – 11.45 Lunch</td>
<td>11.15 – 11.45 Experimental learning workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45 The classroom as a learning environment – case UBIKO</td>
<td>12.00 – 13.00 Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.00 Presenting of Finnish standardized tests for grades 9 and 12. Expected skill levels and necessary learning outcomes</td>
<td>13.00 In-service training in the educational sector and online course production and delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.15 – 15.00 Coffee &amp; Discussion (Tukemo Environment)</td>
<td>14.30 Introduction to the operations of Luma Centre of the University of Oulu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.00 - Visit to Tietomaa Science Center</td>
<td>16.00 Back to Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18.00 - Closing ceremony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix IV: Summary of Key findings of the Bangkok workshops

Education approaches and models are generally similar between Finland and Thailand. BMA educational reforms have stressed the linkage among the five components—teacher, curriculum, textbook, students, and equipment/other “manipulative” items such as ICT. The use of contextual approaches and experimental learning have been applied and practiced in the classrooms, whereas the use of textbooks, equipment, and other “manipulative” items for teaching and learning has strong interconnections with the curricula.

BMA teachers and school administrators are apparently familiar with emerging and innovative ways of teaching such as flipped classroom, individual learning methods, and self-paced learning. They are aware of new wave education practices, including experimental learning.

There is a great deal of knowledge and competence available to provide excellent science and mathematics education within BMA. In the future, collective trust and confidence should be built and enhanced, as BMA teachers apparently have the foundation to apply experimental learning and have tried to insert this teaching method into lesson development for students. The ability to apply the emerging practices of subject convergence or integrated studies (e.g., biology, chemistry, and environmental science by measuring NO2 and air quality highlighting the importance of critical thinking, working and interaction, planning and ability to construct the future, media and usage of ICT, and self-awareness) depends on teacher-teacher collaboration, or in other words the practice of “common teachership.”

Other main findings identified can be listed as:

- Environmental education should be viewed similar to ICT education as well as English, health and safety. Environmental subjects should be integrated into all subjects—ranging from science, mathematics, and social studies.
- Willingness of teachers to learn—well-motivated group
- English proficiency “may” hinder the long-term ability of BMA teachers to learn and adapt new practices immediately.
- Working in a small group can eventually form a community of learners (which can help address the above future focus areas).
• Classroom research cannot be sustained without school support as well as the consent of the school director.

• It is essential that modern ICT equipment at some schools is used effectively to enable emerging and innovative teaching methods and new learning practices.

• Given previous investment in ICT, BMA schools in general should be able to utilize existing ICT programmes, such as “Socratic.”

• Teacher and school roles in curriculum development are extremely restricted.

• Apparent age discrepancy between school administrator and teachers.

• It has been acknowledged that pupils within the classroom have different types of special needs, which require methods that can provide aid with practical solutions.

Challenges:

There are problems concerning large class sizes when attempting to adopt an experimental learning approach (i.e., problem-based or inquiry-based learning), class sizes can be in excess of forty to fifty students with only one teacher. Concerns on class size, the ability to practice subject convergence through experimental learning, and the ability to handle extra tasks which can take time away from using experimental learning should be examined and discussed. The use of student-student collaboration as a teaching method represents a potential alternative for teaching and learning when dealing with a large class size, but school support during classroom research is important.

Clarity is needed in identifying teaching and learning targets, as well as a need to identify contextual problems related to the sciences and mathematics related to project or group work. There should be a clear linkage between the solutions (which can be diverse) from individual groups or projects with the theory or concept. The current mathematics and science curricula facilitates high standard subject knowledge and learning objectives, to provide good results in standardised tests within the frames defined in the national curriculum, however this direction can complicate the deep understanding of 21st century skills.

Future focus areas:

Providing teachers with the following required skills for extensive use of experimental learning:
- Project management skills- group planning, teamwork in a group, and group diversity
- Classroom discussion for difference scenarios which requires analysis and synthesis skills with extensive practices- when dealing with diverse solutions to the problems in a classroom.
- Lesson development
- Assessment and evaluation- in class and for preparing students when they take the university-entrance examination
- Textbook evaluation, especially in mathematics and science subjects

Innovative ways to link science with environment teaching should be developed, combining research in class size and the successful use of experimental learning- interaction with students, quality of the solutions to the given problem, and maintaining student and group motivation

Use of experimental learning and the efforts to strengthen school’s counselling unit, including research into students’ behaviour and life-skill development. Revising the methods and analysing the information from students’ assessment and evaluation which reflect emerging and innovative teaching methods and new learning practices

Teacher skills in planning for the convergence of subjects with science and mathematics teaching, such as ICT/ science/ environment and ICT/ mathematics/ arts. Blending environments, ICT, English, health, and safety contents into teaching and learning in science and mathematics through project development should be planned within and across BMA schools.

Early intervention in classroom- using flipped classroom or experimental learning to help students identify their problems and weakness and linking with school support. Emphasis on student self-evaluation- strengthening critical thinking of students.

In future teacher-teacher collaboration could be also enhanced by targeted development assignment or projects specifically designed for collaborative teacher teams, directors, and school communities.

School Director Group
The curriculum has been extensively used as a primary management tool in communicating the contents and how the subject matters are taught, as well as, goals, learning environments, working approaches and teaching methods, classroom support, and assessment criteria for students. However, the BMA curriculum has often been added with special initiatives which effects activities inside and outside the classes.

A common training period between teachers and their corresponding school administrators can possibly be used as a workshop platform in the future. As mentioned previously there is an apparent age discrepancy between teachers and administrators, with administrators nor being “in touch” with the needs and wants of a younger generation. Even more significantly based on my experiences and interviews, in the majority of cases the school administrators have never been teachers themselves, thus the teachers feel that they can’t relate to the teachers problems and complaints, as they have no first-hand experience of the teachers’ role. The role of administrators is seen by many teachers as ticking boxes, and producing paperwork. Indeed it was mentioned during a number of my visits that the perception of a good administrator in BMA schools is that they produce a lot of paperwork. The more paper, the better the administrator, not surprisingly the teachers feel differently. These types of common training periods, and partnerships with key stakeholders, while understanding the roles of schools in communities are essential.

**Challenges:**

- Student motivation at the upper secondary level is generally very poor. The majority of students at BMA schools are from a poor family background, and experience a great deal of difficulty in continuing to higher education.
- Adapting to subject convergence in science, mathematics, and technology
- Impacts from classroom assessment and evaluation, in-class examination, and external examination on teaching and learning skills in the curriculum
- Utilization of ICT to maximize teaching and learning within and outside the classroom
- Ability to prepare and provide special support- lack of proper background in special education

In Finland, there is no dedicated ICT and environmental classes. Review and understanding the impacts from how ICT and environmental subjects on behaviour, usage, and skills should
be brought up for further discussion. In general, individual BMA schools have ongoing activities to increase the problem awareness relating to the environment.

**Future focus areas:**

- Establishment of vocational education at BMA upper secondary schools.
- Curriculum development for vocational teachers and vocational students
- Training on preparation and provision of special support for students
- Environmental teaching - lessons development, project and group work, working with surrounding communities and stakeholders, and assessment and evaluation should be examined.
- Effective group assessment methodology should be studied at the school level so that the school-wide efforts can be made.
- Student’s psychology (in parallel with ongoing school support) should be constantly assessed, with regard to the effects of classroom layout - forms and shape, colour, and light on teaching and learning.

**Key observations:**

High school studies are not recognized as valuable investment (due to family’s social background) and, in the future, vocational studies/ entrepreneur ship education should be combined to high school education.

Wichutit School bakery represents a good opportunity to combine subject studies to authentic, real life environment - record keeping and applying mathematics for sale forecast and experimental learning on determining product’s expiration dates through the knowledge of biology. At the time of writing this paper, there were concrete proposals concerning this, in cooperation with the JFCCT, “social angel” concept. (See http://mexcham.or.th/news.html)

The physical learning environment in pre-primary classes is excellent and this could be used as an example also in higher-level classes in a form of exchanging group or project work possibilities.

Encouraging the integrating of ICT (to strengthen the use of ICT as a learning and knowledge acquiring tool), environment (to strengthen awareness), and health (to strengthen physical
well-being) require gradual efforts and long-term strategic thinking by school administrators.

Encouraging more and support of classroom research by focusing on the agreed areas (based on the 21 Century or Life skills)