Socio-Cultural Adaptation of Foreign Professionals in Finland: The Case of Cameroonian Professionals

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Abstract: This master's thesis investigates the adaptation process and coping mechanism of Cameroonian professionals in Finland. Its objective is thus to examine the behavioral patterns that they have adopted in order to integrate themselves professionally. The study seeks to find out their cultural and psychological change after their settlement in Finland and its influence on their identity. Moreover, the various sources of emotional and practical support that have contributed in their adjustment, as well as, the role of the Finnish society in enabling the integration of its foreign professionals are examined. The study ultimately seeks to elaborate a model that could further knowledge on the socio-cultural adaptation of foreign professionals in Finland.

The frame of reference thus presents relevant theories of socio-cultural adaptation both at the societal and the organizational level. First, the various modes of cultural and psychological adjustment in new societies are presented, as well as the common dimensions for measuring adaptation. Also the controversial issue of the cultural fit proposition as opposed to the adaptive personality role in adjustment is discussed. In addition, theories on immigrants' support systems in host societies are elaborated. The second part on the other hand concentrates on diversity management at the organizational level. The various discussions in this part explore what is required in a diversity valuing organization. The primary focus is therefore on strategic human resource management and its role on diversity trainings and talent management.

This qualitative study uses an inductive design. The empirical research is hence based on 16 in-depth interviews, the respondents are professionals from various regions of Cameroon, they work in a variety of business fields, and their demographics, as well as, their Finnish language skills also vary tremendously.

The results suggest that the Cameroonian professionals have retained their Cameroonian identity but they have also adopted certain Finnish behavioral patterns in order to function well in the society and especially at work. Among other sources of emotional and practical support, the universities rise as the most important in integrating students professionally through their bilateral cooperation with companies. At the work place, diversity management programs that encompass concepts such as ethnicity and race are still lacking, however the professionals see good career prospects in their future; they believe in the fairness of the system and most especially in the good leadership of their superiors.

Keywords: adaptation, acculturation, identity, adjustment, talent management, diversity management
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1 INTRODUCTION

Africa’s migratory movements had been relatively low in the world’s migration scheme, despite the massive gain that they could bring to the migrants and the continent at large. Observers attributed this to among others severe immigrations policies, poverty, or plain lack of interest in migrating out of Africa (Adepoju, 2008: 5-6). However, in the recent decades, the flux of migrants from Sub Saharan Africa to industrialized countries and especially to Europe has been on the rise despite the tightening of the Schengen area’s borders. In spite of the increasing difficulties to legally immigrate in Western Europe, large numbers of unskilled, qualified workers, students, refugees or asylum seekers do so every year (International Labor Organization, 2003:1-2).

Stories of illegal flows between North Africa and Southern Europe have made headlines numerous times as African immigrants try to circumvent the immigration hurdles. Their proportion is likely to be even greater in the future as most continue to seek employment opportunities in Europe in the hopes of improving their standard of living (Hatton and Williamson, 2003:13). Migration experts explained the ever increasing movement out of Africa by the worsening of poverty, the reduced employment prospects, the large wage gap between Africa and the West, low salaries and saving rates, slow economic growth, but also high fertility with a rapid increase in the amount of young adults and thereby the increase in the number of unemployed. (Fleisher, 2007:421-426; The International Labor Organization, 2003:3-6). Africans immigrate primarily towards industrialized countries in their quest for a better life, in other words, a better education, more favorable employment opportunities, earning more money. Studies on their activities are usually difficult to find as they often do not possess official papers, they lack formal employment, they move from country to countries, spend time in their home country rather than settling indefinitely in the host country (Peil, 1995: 345).

The migrant’s destination is an essential point to be considered in order to analyze their possibilities of integrating in the new environment. Olwig (2000:7-9) points out that migrations tend to have a social, cultural and historical significance. In Africa, their directions have often been towards countries with historical or political links, for example: francophone countries will migrate towards France. Scientists, technical, as well as professional workers on the other hands showed more interests in Germany and the US (Odepoju, 1991:209). Finland’s relations with Africa have been particularly
limited, but increasingly, the Finnish foreign policy goals have been focusing on increasing activities with or in Africa through bilateral operations, the European Union and various multilateral organizations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2010: 5). The total number of Africans living in Finland was recorded at 21872 people, amounting to 21% of the total number of foreigners. Immigrants from Cameroon accounted for 497 people in 2009, whereas in 2004 there were only 90, and in 2000 just 25 people (Statistics Finland, 2010). Although their number is considerably small, it is obvious that Finland is more and more regarded as an interesting destination by Cameroonian immigrants, thus a study of their activities, in this socio-cultural different environment from theirs, bears great interest.

Also the migration from Cameroon to Finland is worth analyzing as it bears a contextual complexity because of the apparent dissimilarities between the two countries. There are obvious geographical, institutional and cultural differences, no historical links and limited political or bilateral operations, which raises the question on the motivation for Cameroonians to immigrate to Finland. In addition literature on Sub-Saharan Africans in Finland is rare and generally concentrates on refugees from Somalia. This thesis research contributes in filling this gap by investigating whether the socio-cultural adaptation of Cameroonian immigrants in Finland can predict outcomes across life sphere. The study is organized around four fundamental questions which are: How are the immigrants adapting to the Finnish culture and to what extent do they maintain affiliation to the Cameroonian culture? What is their social support system? How have they adjusted to the Finnish society with respect to satisfaction in life and employment? How can the Finnish society and employers support the acculturation of Cameroonian immigrants so that they can contribute to society and economic productivity?

1.1. **Aim of the Study**

The primary aim of this study is to explore the socio-cultural adaptation of Cameroonian professionals in Finland. The idea is to determine their adaptation process and coping mechanisms in this culturally different society so as to uncover the various patterns of behaviors they have endorsed in order to integrate themselves professionally, but also, the role that the society at large and especially their employers have played in their socio-economic adjustment. The present research will fill a literature gap by providing knowledge on the activities of Cameroonian professionals in
Finland, but it will also develop a model on their socio-cultural adaptation. My interest in this topic stems from the fact I am a Cameroonian who migrated to Finland seven years ago. Having gone through many integration challenges myself, I felt the need to discover how my fellow countrymen experienced such challenges. I intend to develop a model that could, first of all, guide and support future immigrants from Cameroon. Secondly I seek to help those immigrants who have not yet completely integrated into the Finnish system; they will appreciate to find out the adaptation mechanisms used by the successful ones.

Moreover, careful generalization of the findings can be done regarding the acculturation of other culturally distant nationalities in Finland. Finnish employers will be interested by the findings as they will provide them a better understanding of the challenges that Cameroonian immigrants encounter, thereby helping them to enhance the productivity of the Cameroonian employees. The results of this research could also interest the Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for integration issues in Finland. The findings of this study also have implications beyond the Finnish context. Although cautiously, they may be generalized to the socio-cultural adaptation of immigrant groups generally. Finally, this study will also contribute to the academic research on the acculturation process of immigrants; moreover it will contribute to the diversity management literature by shedding new light on talent management and cross-cultural management in Finland.

This qualitative research, therefore, explores the individual experience of established Cameroonian professionals in the metropolitan area. The theoretical framework and empirical research is supported by existing theories on first of all acculturation, social support, cultural identification, and social integration of immigrants. Secondly, the theoretical framework also goes through relevant theories regarding the challenges involved in managing diversity.

1.2. Delimitations of the Study

This thesis is an inductive research that aims at expanding theory on the methods of adjustment of foreign professionals in Finland. The concentration on Cameroonians that reside around the Helsinki area makes generalization uncertain for other contexts (Finnish/European). Since the participants in this study are not representative of the entire population, this research would not be exactly replicable within other foreigners’ groups. In addition, Cameroon is a diverse country with regards to ethnicity,
languages, beliefs and religious affiliations, which means that the idea of a cultural adaption process of Cameroonians must be approached with some care. Moreover, the data analysis of this study is prone to subjectivity. Having gone myself through an adaptation process in Finland, my personal experience, beliefs and feelings are likely to influence the direction of my findings. Finally, this study solely focuses on the Cameroonians who are working in a profession; hence it excludes many others (students, graduates, low skilled workers, and unemployed people) who might also have given an interesting input to this study.

1.3. Definitions

**Professionals** is used in this study to refer to skilled workers, in order words, people who have received a special training or education and who are working in a field related to their educational level (Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia 2011)

**Acculturation** is a term that has been generally used to describe the various ways immigrants transformed after their arrival and settlement into new societies. More recently, the majority of acculturation studies have focused on how ethnocultural groups connect to each other and the change that occurs as they try to survive in multicultural societies (Berry 1997:17, Meiser 2000:209) In other words, *acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological change that follows intercultural contact* (Berry 2003)

**Adaptation** refers to the changes that occur in a person or groups as a result of environmental demands. Adaptations may happen immediately on a short term basis or they may occur after a longer period of time. ( Liebkind 2001)

**Adjustment** is referred to as general well-being and social adaptation. It is measured by self esteem, satisfaction in life, and psychological stability (absence of acculturative stress in a form of anxiety, depression and somatic symptoms) (Neto 2002).

**Diversity Management** is a term used to describe the deliberate and systematic commitment of organizations in recruiting as well as retaining employees that have a variety of backgrounds and capabilities. (Basett-Jones 2005)

**Talent management** refers to as “the process through which organizations anticipate and meet their needs for human capital. Basically, it involves getting the right people into the right place at the right time”. (Evans, Pucik, and Björkman 2010:257)
1.4. **Contextual Background**

Cameroon is situated in central and western Africa and it is often called “Africa in miniature” due to its great geographical as well as cultural diversity. The country features geological diversities such as deserts, rainforests, beaches, savannas and mountains. French and English are the two official languages; however there are also over 250 linguistic and ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has its own unique culture; tradition, music and dance, cuisine, arts and craft. The Cameroonian constitutions guarantees religious freedom, thus there are several religious affiliations Islam, Christianity and many other traditional or animist affiliations. (Mbaku 2005: 39)

In 2009, the total population was estimated at about 19.5 million people, with an annual growth rate of nearly 2 %. The fertility is rather high with 4.65 children per women. Over 40 % of people are under 15 years old, while just 3.7% are above 65 and the average age is estimated at 18 years old. (United Nations 2009). The majority of the population therefore comprises young people who usually seek employment opportunities in foreign countries when do they do not find any in their local community (Fleisher 2007)

Cameroon economical activities rely heavily on agriculture of timber, cocoa, and rubber, as well as few oil resources. A terrible economic crisis hit Cameroon in the 1980s, the country accumulated very heavy debts during the years that followed and it is still suffering today from the negative consequences of the crisis (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2009)

In an attempt by the government to recoup, salaries were reduced by 25% in 1993; they were cut again by 75% the same year. However, such developments deteriorated the situations for families, while unemployment grew; the costs of living were also on the rise. (Fleisher 2007: 419) Despite unfavorable economic circumstances, the literacy rate has steadily increased over the past decade (UNICEF 2009) probably because public primary schools are mandatory and free of charge. In 2006 the country entered a debt relief program under the umbrella of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) after having addressed a series of reforms and serious attempts to decrease corruption. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2009)

A Cameroonian identity is a concept rather new in Cameroon. Before colonization, the various ethnic groups were antagonistic; they lived in their respective regions and had
their own polities. A Cameroonian national culture was originated later on through colonization: First the German in 1884, and then the British and French in 1916. After the independence, the British and French territory finally became one country in 1961; that unification marked the beginning of the creation of a common identity (Mbaku 2005: 40). Takyi-Asiedu (1993) notes that still today many people think in terms of their ethnic group rather than their nation. Hence ethnic loyalty exceeds any commitment to the nation (Beugré and Offodile 2001:539)

Despite the great diversity in Cameroon and in Africa in general, there are many similar features that characterize most societies in Africa. First, the elders are usually much respected, as oral tradition is still quite prevalent in the societies, the elders are possessors of knowledge and experience that they have gathered through the years. However it is worth noting that this cultural feature is mostly present in the rural areas, the urban areas are generally much westernized which means that authority is often in the hands of those with modern skills and wealth. (Beugré and Offodile 2001:537)

The extended family is a focal point in the Cameroonian society; it comprises grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins who are all regarded just as close as the Western nuclear family. Family obligations precede everything; retirement homes do not exist as younger people are supposed to care for the elders. Nepotism is considered a way of life; in effect, hiring relative guarantees that the family is cared for but it also makes sure that trusted people are recruited. There is division of labor and status by gender; and men usually have higher social status compared to women (Mbaku 2005: 140)

The African culture is essentially collectivist (Hofstede 1991). Thus the success within a group carries greater importance than the individual success and the average person feels more at ease inside a group than alone. Consensus building is a requisite in decision making and the tendency is towards harmony. In addition, people tend to avoid uncertainty; they prefer complying with the external environment instead of controlling it. More stable situations are preferred, and change just like risk is avoided. (Beugré and Offodile 2001:538)

Traditional values are detrimental to improvement in general, as people take things the way they are without questioning their merits. Such patterns often accentuate blind compliance to authorities. As a result, there is a prevalent corruption and social injustices, in effect, Gundykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) argued that cultures that
Encourage acceptance of power differences cause people to anticipate, accept, and consequently not become annoyed about injustices (Beugré and Offodile 2001:539)

The above discussion presented main features of the Cameroonian history, economy and culture. The economic situation is mainly responsible for emigration from Cameroon in the quest for better opportunities. The described cultural patterns probably have shaped the behavioral patterns of the Cameroonian immigrants that are found in Finland. However, the westernization of the Cameroonian society is also not a negligible element, as globalization has made available many features of the Western society to the Cameroonians.

1.5. Outline of the Thesis

After general background information necessary to understand to context and the direction of the research (Introduction chapter), the rest of the thesis is built upon four important blocks. The subsequent chapter (Frame of Reference) will present the relevant theories on socio-cultural adaptation not only in the general society but also at the place of employment. The chapter is subdivided in two main parts; first the acculturation part presents various theories on cultural and psychological adaptation of immigrants. The various acculturation modes and their consequence on immigrants’ identity are thus discussed as well as the common cross-cultural dimensions. Moreover, the much disputed issue of the cultural fit and the adaptive personality role in adjustment are elaborated. This section also stresses the importance of immigrant’s emotional and practical support and their effect on integration. This first part of the Frame of Reference creates a platform for understanding the multitude of cultural, psychological but also societal issues that may hinder or encourage immigrants as they try to adjust in new societies. The second part of the Frame of Reference discusses integration at the workplace. Relevant theories on diversity management are thus presented. The role of strategic human resource management is accentuated as well as the significance of diversity trainings, and effective talent management. This chapter provides grounds for understanding socio-cultural adaptation at the organizational level and in the society at large.

The Methodology chapter will explain the research approach, the design as well as the data collection methods and analysis that will be used for the investigation. The reasons surrounding the choice, the possible shortcomings, and advantage of the research method, interviews and data analysis techniques are discussed. This chapter therefore
aims at presenting to the readers the decision process that will lead to the final results. Such an exhaustive presentation of the methodology that takes place during the empirical research, will thus guarantee transparency and credibility as regards the final conclusion of the thesis.

The Result chapter describes the outcome of the empirical research. This chapter combines and relates the various socio-cultural adaption issues that were discussed by the respondents during the interviews. The findings of the data analysis are therefore supported by interviews ‘excerpts which explicate the conclusions that are drawn. The results thus speak for themselves as they give way to the emerging socio-cultural adaptation model of foreign professionals; this chapter ends with a presentation and explanation of the developed model, which is the ultimate outcome of the study.

The final chapter (Discussion and Conclusion) sets to answer the objectives put forward in the introduction by first of all responding to the research questions. The answers are revealed by comparing the Frame of Reference chapter with the new findings. Finally, practical recommendations are provided and the limitations of the thesis are discussed while avenues for future research are laid out. This final chapter thus gives meaning to the findings presented in the previous chapter; it states the importance of this study in relation to not only earlier socio-cultural adaptation studies but also future ones.
2 FRAME OF REFERENCE

2.1 Acculturation of Immigrants

2.1.1 Acculturation Models

Numerous studies have investigated cultural changes resulting from the contact of two or more cultural systems; this concept has grown in importance over the years when investigating the adaptation of immigrants in culturally dissimilar societies. As a result, two central theories of acculturation have been developed over the years: first the assimilation or bipolar one, which proposes an assimilative model of acculturation. Secondly there is the bidimensional theory which promotes multiculturalism.

- The Unidimensional Model of Acculturation

Earlier scholars have associated acculturation to assimilation, that is, immigrants would inescapably be immersed into the receiving society, in a unilinear, unidirectional manner; they will abandon their original values and ideals in order to embrace those of the new culture. Gordon (1964) theorized that assimilation happens in sequences, starting with language and behavioral acculturation, then structural assimilation that is immigrants’ ability to incorporate themselves socially and economically into the foundation of the host society. The final step of the assimilation process entails identification with the national culture and the discarding of identification with the initial culture (Gordon 1964: 60-62). Gordon added that assimilation of first-generation adults immigrants might be however only partial, while for the second generation immigrants, the process is complete (Gordon 1964: 244).

The strength of the unidimensional model or assimilation model lies in its simplicity, its ability to seize the assimilation process concisely through a few notions (Nguyen and Von Eye 2002: 202). Such parsimony has however led that model to be greatly criticized, in that it denies the possibility of immigrants to a bicultural identity; the ethnic culture fights against the host culture and the individual has to select either one of those identities. The assimilation model has also been faulted due to its bias against the ethnic culture. It implies that good groups are those that incorporate into the receiving culture whereas the bad groups are the ones that preserve their traditions (Dona and Berry 1994:57-58). According to Oetting and Beauvais (1991), this view raises considerable issues as it suggests that the ideal is for every minority group to
disregard their ethnicity and to blend in the receiving society, and not doing that will lead a group or individual to be considered weak or inadequate. Nguyen and Von Eye 2002: 203). Thirdly, the bipolar model is inadequate to represent the zeitgeist of present societies. The world of today is so diverse that immigrants do not only acculturate by assimilating in the receiving society. Assimilation might have been the only option decades ago but nowadays, there are greater opportunities to maintain one’s traditions as diversity is better appreciated, there is more contact with a plurality of minority groups, there exists much more ethnic communities and greater resources, etc. Nguyen and Von Eye 2002: 204). Furthermore, other adaptation modes other than assimilation have been made possible thanks to globalization, which has enabled immigrants to maintain the connection with their home countries. (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder, 2001)

Finally, the major setback of the assimilation model stems from the fact that it recognizes biculturalism only with regards to equivalent involvement in both cultures, without setting measures for assessing such equality. Such a distinction is worthwhile since full-blown involvement in the ethnic and host culture should reflect true biculturalism, whereas, equally low involvement in both cultures is claimed to indicate alienation or marginalization. (Nguyen and Von Eye 2002: 204) Such are the inconsistencies that have made way to a bidimensional view of acculturation.

- The Bidimensional Model of Acculturation

The bidimensional model consists in adopting the receiving cultures’ customs, values and behaviors while at the same time retaining the ideals of the country of origin (Cabassa 2003:135). Many studies have conceptualized the bidimensional process of acculturation in various frameworks; however the most common was developed by Berry (1980). Berry has theorized that acculturation has many dimensions; it involves complex variations with people moving between many poles overtime. Consequently, there are four different orientations to consider:

- **Assimilation** may occur when people do not want to preserve their cultural identity as they interact regularly with other cultures.

- A **separation** strategy can be used also when individuals or groups consider their original culture as valuable, thus they prefer to avoid interacting with others.
Marginalization does occur when the desire to maintain own culture is rather low and at the same time there is no interest in other cultures. Lastly, the integration strategy refers to when people seek to maintain their original culture when interacting daily with others. (Berry 2003: 23-24)

The presentation of the above acculturation models was necessary because it suggests that individuals of non-dominant groups in a society have the liberty to select their acculturation mode. However, Berry (1991) argues that an integration strategy may be freely selected only when the host society is welcoming and has an inclusive propensity towards different cultures. Thus the ethnic and national communities need to be ready to accommodate each other; minorities have to adopt the fundamental values of the larger society, whereas the dominant group needs to be ready to adjust governmental institutions (schooling, health, employment ...) so as to better serve the needs of every group residing in the multicultural society. (Berry 2006: 721).

As a result, Kalin and Berry (1995) propose certain prerequisites for a successful integration: a) widespread acceptance by the society of the value of cultural diversity (presence of multicultural ideology) b) relatively low levels of prejudice, (minimal ethnocentricism, racism, and discrimination) c) positive mutual attitudes among ethnocultural groups, and d) a sense of attachment to or identification with the larger society by all individuals and groups. (Berry 2003: 24)

Certain immigrants groups may however experienced integration constraints more than others. Immigrants whose physical features are clearly different from those of the nationals (Koreans living in Canada, Turks living in Germany) might be victims of greater prejudice as well as discrimination and consequently be unwilling to practice assimilation so as to avoid possible rejection (Berry 2003: 25). Similarly in the Finnish context, the Somalis were reported to show higher levels of perceived discrimination compared to Vietnamese and Turks because of their extreme visibility. Interestingly, just like Somalis, Russian speakers equally perceived high level of hostile reactions from the Finnish society; however, such discrimination was explained by the historical antagonism between Russia and Finland. For Somalis and Russian speakers perceived discrimination did not influence their efficacy based self esteem or the belief in their own competence and ability to perform. However it did negatively affect their global self esteem, which is the belief that others in the society view them as able or competent. (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti: 2000b: 464)
The bidimensional strategy of acculturation has been examined among several immigrant groups in a wide range of countries. Research reveals strong connections between acculturations orientations and certain personality and psychological factors. The integration orientation is especially linked with evidence of positive adaptation, such as tendencies towards positive academic achievement, school adjustment, high level of self worth, and greater general well-being as compared to the other modes of acculturations. (Sullivan, Schwartz, Prado, Huang, Pantin, Szapocnik, & and 2007: 4)

A number of studies have also linked the assimilation orientation to serious societal issues. Epstein and Diaz 1996; and Vega and Gil (1998) have associated it with high rates of substance abuse in adolescents, and Kaplan and Marks (1990) linked it to depression in adults (Sullivan et al 2007:5). Marginalization appeared to be the least satisfactory option among all the other orientations. Loneliness may affect many aspects of wellbeing by causing poor social skills, emotional problems (depression, anxiety, and neurosis), low self esteem, as well as negative attitudes (hostile behaviors and pessimistic attitudes regarding people, life in general and the society at large). (Neto 2002:633)

Interestingly, the separation orientation has been proven to have rather positive outcome. According to Buriel, Cascada and Valquez (1982) there is evidence that Latinos who are less acculturated in the United States are healthier, have lower rates of participation in delinquency, have less psychological distress and have higher scores on achievement tests than those immigrants who are more exposed to the mainstream culture (Booth, Crouter and Landale 1997:176).

- Acculturation and Identity

The unidimensional and the two-dimensional models of acculturation have different implication on cultural identities. Two underlying issues come into questions: the extent to which it is considered valuable to maintain one’s cultural identity and heritage and the degree to which building relationships with the national society is considered to be of value (Berry 2003: 27).

In the first model, ethnic and national identities have a negative correlation, that is, there is one identity that dominates over the other one. Therefore, immigrants would have either an assimilated or a separated identity. The bidimensional model recognizes the fact that preserving one’s heritage culture and adapting to the new society differ
conceptually and vary independently. Hence ethnic and national identities do not necessarily interfere with each other and an immigrant may have any of the four identities. (Berry, Phinney, Sam and Vedder 2006: 306).

Consequently, an integrated or bicultural identity entails that the individual maintains a strong ethnic identity and identifies with the receiving society at the same time. An individual who retains a strong ethnic identity while failing to identify with the new culture exhibits a separated identity, whereas an immigrant who abandons their original identity and identifies only with the host culture displays an assimilated identity (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder 2001: 495-496).

As a result, the four orientations acculturation model of Berry suggests that there are a variety of identities that may be demonstrated among an immigrant group that have settled in a certain environment. According to Phinney et al some societies support the integration possibilities and thereby facilitate the development of a bicultural identity, while others make it difficult. Inversely, others might encourage separation instead of integration. If the new society does not foster or enable immigrants to retain their original culture while integrating, many will feel coerced to choose either separation or assimilation. (Phinney et al 2000: 499).

There is an undeniable link between acculturation and adjustment across life spheres, the acculturation experience determines the satisfaction with the settlement in the new society. A successful cross cultural adaptation thus implies great adjustment in all areas of the immigrant’s life.

2.1.2 Dimensions of Cross Cultural Adaptation

Despite intensive research on cultural differences, there is limited consensus on measurements of immigrants’ adjustment to new cultures. A number of researchers have embarked upon creating systematic models of cross cultural transition and adaptation. Ward and Kennedy (1993) have introduced one of the most commonly used dimensions of cross cultural adjustment with two dimensions. First of all: psychological adjustment (emotional/affective), which stems from the stress and coping mechanism with a strong consideration on the emotional well-being and satisfaction with the sojourn or residence. Secondly, the socio-cultural adjustment (behavioral), which originates from the social/learning cognitive models and emphasizes the capacity to “fit in” as well as the skills to handle interactive aspects of the national cultural context.
Socio cultural adjustment is thus a function of several dimensions many of which are closely interrelated and thus do not stand easily on their own, these are: Individual attributes, language competence personality, cultural fit, social networks.

- Individual Attributes and Resources

Individual attributes consist of personal skills that are indispensable to function well in a cross cultural setting. Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) consider those attributes very important to minimize the acculturative stress, and necessary to truly evaluate the receiving society as well as to create interactions with its actors. It is therefore a question of not only innate qualities but also acquired ones. All in all educational performance, hard work, and utter willpower are such cultural values that have a crucial role regarding socio-economic success of immigrants (Portes and Zhou 1993, Poston 1994; Portes and Rumbaut 1996). It is observable that European immigrants, as well as people from other origin with great credentials are most likely to progressively assimilate into the mainstream culture and economy because they can readily penetrate the higher echelons of the labor market. (McKeever and Kilneberg 1999: 34-35)

Consequently, the intangible as well as tangible resources that the immigrant possesses upon immigrating in a new country affect their aptitude to integrate. This implies that people who arrive with noteworthy human and social capital such as good education, wealth and local connections will definitively find it easier to integrate, whereas those who lack all of those advantages will face more challenges. In the United States, immigrant professionals like doctors, nurses or engineers and computer scientists are often keenly recruited and they find well paid position waiting for them upon their arrival. Such immigrants obviously have better career prospects, and higher salaries than their counterparts with little credentials (Kanjanapan 1995)

- Language Competence

There is a unanimous agreement that intercultural communication skills and linguistic competence are predictors of cross-cultural adaptation as they enhance chances to satisfy daily needs and create a sense of well-being during adjustment. Possessing appropriate communication skills is however much more than being fluent in the national language. Clément (1980, 1986) presented a socio contextual model of
bilingualism that relates intercultural contact, self-confidence in speaking another
language, as well as the acculturation patterns. Self-confidence is defined as great
perception of competence in the second language together with less anxiety when
communicating with that language. Numerous other studies (MacIntyre, Clément and
Dörnyei 1998; Noels and Clément 1996) have proven self-confidence to be more
important than actual linguistics skills, and it also predicts better language usage and
positive acculturative outcomes. For example, English and French Canadians with a
higher level of language confidence of the other culture adjusted better psychologically
in Noel and Clément’s study. In addition, they found out that Chinese students enrolled
in Canadian universities who interacted more with the Canadian society perceived
better psychological adjustment partly thanks to confidence in their English language
skills. (Yang, Noels and Saumure 2005:490-491)

Birman, Trickett and Virnokurov (2002) also put great emphasis on language fluency
in their model of adaptation in new cultures; LIB (Language competence, Behavioral
participation and Identification). This multidimensional model suggests that
integration to a new culture starts with language competence, followed with
identification and ending with behavioral acculturation. Language and behavioral
competences are measurable indicators of adaptation; they enable positive outcomes
and especially better achievement at work or school. Birman, Trickett and Virnokurov
2002: 587-588)

- Length of Residence and Age at Migration

Another element that goes hand in hand with the second language proficiency is the
length of stay in the new society. A study conducted among adolescent immigrants in
Finland shows that immigrants that have arrived earlier possessed better Finnish
language skills, this proficiency obviously led to a greater self esteem as well as the

Similarly the age at migration also determines language proficiency as well as the
extent of acculturation (Cortés et al, 1994; Ying and Lee 2000). Younger immigrants
are able to much faster learn the new languages as well as the culture, traditions and
other behavioral patterns, whereas immigrant adults have a higher degree of retention
of their original culture because their identities have already been consolidated.
(Birman and Trickett 2001:458)
Figure 1 presents the main points of the above section on dimensions of cross-cultural adaptation. Such dimensions are thus psychological (emotional and affective) and socio-cultural (behavioral). However, there is an interaction between two dimensions, as they affect each other considerably. Immigrants possessing agreeable individual attributes, self-efficacy, and good mechanisms for dealing with stress will thus have more confidence and a sense of mastery. Such self-confidence and sense of mastery will transpire as they interact with nationals, learn the host culture, language and behaviors, which will in turn cause them to identify with the host society. Equally, knowledge in the local language, behaviors and overall tenets of the local culture will give them a sense of mastery and confidence. A psychological and socio-cultural adjustment will ultimately lead to positive outcomes and better achievements at work and school.

Figure 1 Cross-Cultural Adaptation
2.1.3 Personality and Culture

Literatures on cross-cultural literature is inconsistent about the role of adaptive personality in acculturation and adjustment. Locke and Feinsod (1982) argued that authoritarian, rigid and ethnocentric personalities hinder psychological adjustment, while an extroversive, sensitive and agreeable personality can adapt more easily. (Ward, Leong and Low 2004: 137) A study among Singaporean students in Australia also links psychological and social adaptation to personality traits such as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and low neuroticism (Ward, Leong and Low 2004: 145).

Similarly, Markus and Kitayama (1991) introduced the concept of self-construals. These self conceptualization and behaviors molded through the primary culture, they can be delineated in two types: independent self-construal which is the tendency towards achieving great success independently, keeping control and responsibility of personal behavior and outcome. This individualistic view of self characterizes the European and American culture. Markus and Kitayama (1991) labeled the second type as interdependent construal, individuals belonging to this group are interpersonally connected, emotionally interdependent, and they have the tendency to foster collective needs and goals and harmony. In this collectivist perspective, in-groups acceptance and contribution is much more valuable to the well-being of people. This collectivist view represents East Asians and African cultures. (Yang et al 2005:489)

As a result of self-construal differences cross cultural adjustment can be problematic when individuals transit to a host society with dissimilar self-construal. Ward et al reasoned that having a personality profile that concords with the host society stimulates better interaction with the nationals of that country and thereby enables the new comer to learn the culturally accepted skills more easily. Nevertheless they added that, in many cases personality alone is not sufficient to predict adjustment, but what determines a successful adaptation is the cultural fit between the person who is acculturating and the cultural norms of the society of settlement. (Ward, Weining and Chang 1997: 531-532)

Likewise, a study conducted among immigrants adolescent in Finland corroborates the cultural fit theory. The Russian speakers and Turks are culturally less distant to the Finnish culture, which explained why they scored higher in well-being. On the other
hand, Vietnamese and Somali which are culturally more distant from the Finnish culture scored low on well-being. (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti: 2000b: 463)

Many studies however have faulted the cultural fit proposition. It might be as difficult to adjust to a culturally similar country as it is to adjust to culturally distant countries, individuals may experience a cultural shock entering into any foreign location, due to difficulties and frustrations trying to adapt to the new life. Moreover, adaptation to a dissimilar country might turn out the easiest as one is aware of the differences, while minor dissimilarities might be difficult to detect in an apparently similar country (Selmer 2007: 194).

The section on personality, culture and adjustment has shown that personal attributes of an immigrant determine their ability to integrate in the new society. An extrovert, and agreeable personality will therefore welcome novelty, whereas as, an introvert one will resist change. Moreover, the congruence between the features of the host and origin culture has been said to ease cross cultural adjustment. This cultural fit proposition however is not without faults and many of its opponents attribute cross cultural adaptation to other variables. Social support especially has been considered to definitively play a major role in immigrant’s adaptation.

2.1.4 Social Support and Networks

One very important post-migration factor that is discussed lengthily in the psychological adjustment of immigrants is social support. This is a fundamental issue because human beings are social as well as group individual, who are part of a family, an organization and other sub groups within the society, this implies that the social environment influences the achievement of one’s existence. (Jovanovic, Aleksandric, Dunjic, and Todorovic 2004: 266). Social support is crucial for immigrants refugees especially, Jovanovich and his colleagues argue that every misfortune surrounding an individual (demolition of institutions, alteration of cultural environment and especially the loss of the connection with cultural roots) has bearing in the appearance of psychotraumatic disorders (Jovanovic et al 2004: 266-267). Consequently, many countries provide the necessary services to facilitate successful resettlement; this might be a worthwhile investment if those immigrants are to become contributing members of the society (Beiser and Hou 2001: 1321).
Gellis (2003) suggests that the size of the networks in the host society has a positive effect on reducing the levels of depression. Similarly, Nicassio (1983) found out those Southeast Asian refugees with more American friends experienced less alienation in the United States (Birman and Tran 2008:111). Other immigrants that have moved earlier in the new country and who are ahead in the acculturation process might be very helpful for newcomers. Mullan (1989) has affirmed that there is an unwritten rule among migrants, which stipulates that essential information that make the migration process easier or smoother should be shared (Chioneso 2008:75).

In addition, the presence of similar ethnic community appears like a crucial source of social support. A like-ethnic community was an important mental health resource that sustained Vietnamese refugees in Canada (Beiser and Hou 2006:144). Adherence to traditional ethnic values also significantly impacted the well-being of the immigrant adolescents in Finland; it reduced acculturative stress and decreased behavior-related problems (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000a:465).

In contrast, it has been demonstrated that the absence of a significant supportive involvement within the ethnic community negatively impacts individual health and well being leading to stress, isolation, and other mentally and physically related health issues (Simich, Beiser and Mawani 2006:882-883). Social support enables immigrants’ health through various mechanisms. It may comprise a great resource of social capital which comprises knowledge about salutary behaviors such as nutrition and substance use, and knowledge about accessing health services. In addition higher degrees of social support may also imply greater tendency toward healthy interaction with other people; more participation in social activities. Moreover, it may include instrumental supports for instance the reassurance of the ability to count on others when the need arises. (Clark and Hofsess 1997; Napolitano and Goldberg 1998)

Finch and Vega also pointed out that despite low economic status, Mexican immigrants living in USA are observed to have good general health thanks to high level of social support. What is reported detrimental to health is the acculturation stress, immigration process itself, as well as discriminatory experiences (Finch and Vega 2003: 109-110).

Furthermore, ethnic enclaves play a major role in the incorporation of immigrants into the new societies. Newcomers reap the advantage of great social capital in the form of pre-established community networks, which usually comprise relatives and others originating from the same region in their home countries. Such people are able to
provide support in finding accommodation and employment. (Hagan 1998: 65) Nevertheless, human and social capital can be translated into economic achievement mostly in relation to the availabilities of wider social resources in the society. Therefore, pre-existing local networks vary considerably in the financial, political resources, and other types of social support that they can offer new comers. (McKeever and Kilneberg 1999: 35).

The pre-existence of social networks has also been shown to have facilitated the integration of Africans into the Western countries. Socio-economic mobility often motivates moving away from less privileged countries, therefore, many immigrants from Africa tends to see Western countries as “heaven” prior to their emigration. Upon their arrival in the new society, they are often very quickly disillusioned by the realities of racism, sexism and capitalism. The social networks provide great support and serve as insulation against such tribulations. Immigrants are often regrouped in reciprocal networks through which interactions and affiliation are kept between members living in the host country, in the country of origin, as well as in other countries. Reciprocal interactions consisted in among others support in the immigration process, information exchange, emotional and moral support and other services such as babysitting. (Chioneso 2008: 75)

Among other sources of social support, religious and ethnic organizations are reported to be the main supporters of Ghanaian and Jamaican immigrants in Canada for instance. Such organizations were considered important for maintaining identity and traditions, to expose their children to their own culture, and most especially they represented a very helpful social network. In the setting of ethnic and religious organizations, group interests were also lobbied, for instance to contest police brutality and to promote fair employment prospects. Furthermore, such organizations also organized leisure activities during which informal debates took place, interpersonal relationship were built, news and information was exchanged. (Chioneso 2008:76)

Likewise, ethnic enclaves are essential networks that can enhance one’s chances in the labor market by spreading information about employment opportunities. Moreover, newcomers are often hired by other ethnic employers or entrepreneurs. Working in such an environment has its advantages as immigrants are somehow protected against the discrimination experienced everywhere else in the labor market. (Edin, Fredriksson and Ålund 2003:336)
It is worth noting that although ethnic solidarity and its positive influences on adjustment have been demonstrated by many studies, numerous are those investigators who have questioned their merits. Research shows that living in an enclave or a closed ethnic community prevents members from acquiring skills of the society of settlement such as language proficiency (Edin et al 2003: 335). Moreover, Sanders and Nee (1987) also found that the enclave-economy model is mainly profitable for employers, whereas employees are considerably disadvantaged; their salary levels are generally lower than those offered in the national economy. Accordingly, Desbarats (1986) discovered that Chinese refugees in ethnic communities perceived considerable drawbacks with regard to cross cultural adaption and their ability to be economically self-sufficient. (Makija and Mullan 2002:74-75)

Figure 2 sums up the section on immigrants’ support system and networks. Immigrants get emotional and practical support from family members, friends (nationals, other immigrants), fellow countrymen, various community networks and religious organization. Those people help deal with acculturative stress; they help them to integrate into the system by providing vital information on employment and other social resources. They also provide practical help in terms of accommodations. They help reinforce ethnic identity and traditions, and are a great source of entertainment as well.

**Figure 2  Social Support**
Drawing on the cross-cultural dimensions of adaptation section, it is obvious that there are numerous measures for assessing the adjustment of immigrants into foreign societies. In sum cross-cultural adaptation requires psychological as well as socio-economic skills. Some of the skills are innate and are a question of a person character; many are anchored into the cultures of immigrants and are thus an integral part of their personalities. The personality type of the immigrants certainly mediates the impact of intercultural contact on adjustment. Just like personality and cultural behavioral patterns might also promote or hinder the ability to interact in the new environment and thereby interfere with the adaptation process. Valuable contributors to personal attributes are education and experience, as well as very tangible skills such as wealth.

Social support has been demonstrated to be important for immigrant's health, to preserve identity and tradition, to enable socio-economic integration and to help cope and function within the new society, since interactions with the dominant society often creates stressful social contacts and discriminatory experiences especially regarding employment. Therefore, social networks often represent a solid rock immigrants can rely on. However, a dilemma arises when a strong or close ethnic community also hinders immigrant ability to acquire necessary skills to function in the general society. Finally, the age at migration and even the length of residence in the new society has the ability to affect all the other dimensions, obviously younger immigrant can learn easily the new language, the new pattern of behaviors and therefore completely emulate the nationals. Whereas, older people or those who have resided in the foreign society for a shorter period of time might not easily do so.

2.2. Diversity Management

Diversity Management originates from the implementation of systematic social policies with the objective to promote equal access to opportunities for underprivileged social groups in the US and the UK societies. The issue of equality of opportunity became a matter of political urgency when the ethnic minority groups grew considerably; this was perceived to have social consequences and thus was important to be dealt with. (Basset-Jones 2005: 170). Integration policies generally aimed at encouraging immigrants to learn the local language, to improve their educational level, undergo vocational or professional training and to learn about the culture and institutions of the receiving society. Nevertheless, long-settled minority groups still find themselves
marginalized in the labor market despite fluency in the local language and similarity in education level (Wrench 2001:1)

The term diversity management has evolved from being a social issue to an organizational concern. Two general and different main approaches are usually followed when managing a diverse workforce; these are the Equality Opportunity (EO) approach and the Diversity Management approach (DM). The underlying difference between both forms is that organizations can either be reactive by abiding to an equal opportunity legislation wherein promotion and application of diversity values is realized by enforcing laws (EO), or they can proactively value people dissimilarities on voluntary grounds (DM) (Sippola 2007:10).

Unlike the Equal Opportunity approach, Diversity Management embraces differences and sees multicultural workforce as a valuable element of the organization’s strategy (Kandola and Fullerton 1998). Valuing diversity is perceived as positively impacting productivity, employee motivation, creativity and innovation, teamwork and problem solving, customer satisfaction, as well as overall competitiveness. (Sippola 2007: 24)

Kandola and Fullerton (1998) argue that managing diversity requires that the workforce comprises a variety of people. Such diversity might be obvious or not and may consist of variety of factors, the ultimate goal is therefore for an organization to harness these dissimilarities in order to build a productive environment wherein every person perceives that they are valued; their abilities are utilized to the fullest, while the goals of the organization are being achieved. (Lorbiecki and Jack 2000: 19)

Consequently, diversity management is more than providing equal opportunities to different types of people; on the contrary it is a long-term business strategy for gaining a competitive advantage. Arredondo (1996) sees the concept as encompassing development of differences, transformation of the culture of the organization, as well as the empowerment of the people. In other words, a pragmatic approach prevails, during which change is planned and anticipated, people’s differences are perceived as assets rather than a threat. Thus, the workplace represents a forum in which individuals can grow, interchange skills, and increase performance for the benefits of the organization. (Lorbiecki and Jack 2000: 19).

As diversity management is basically efficient management of people of different backgrounds, the Human Resource Management of the organization has an important
role to play. There are thus two main themes that need to come into consideration; these are Diversity Training and Talent Management. The readiness and willingness to recruit, to select and hire non-nationals applicants needs to be instilled in organizations. The staff would have to be prepared and informed and given the proper tools to understand, respect and value culturally different persons. This thus requires a series of diversity trainings. On the other hand, the talent management perspective necessitates managers and recruiters with a global mindset so that they will give opportunities for career development to all employees regardless of their backgrounds.

2.2.1 Human Resource Management and Diversity Training

Human Resource Management activities have long been considered vital for promoting strategy and bringing value to the organization. This implies that HRM has the potential to support diversity management and its incorporation with strategies through such activities as recruiting, training and development, retention, performance appraisal, motivation and rewards (Kirton and Greene 2005). The argument for aligning HRM activities to the business strategy is that employees are believed to be invaluable assets for the organization (Björkman et al 2010). A HRM function that concentrates on reactive routine HR activities do not necessary adds value. Thornhill (2000) suggest that activities such as recruitment and selection have greater power in enabling, supporting, instigating change in organizations. (Sippola 2007: 36)

There is a variety of practices that are used to promote diversity management in organization and more especially to ensure the employability of immigrants. A project developed by the International Labor Organization (ILO) involved all European countries with the purpose of achieving equal employment opportunities for migrants presented measures worth following in all organizations. The anti-discriminating measures concerned especially individuals with direct influence on the labor market. These are human resource managers and line managers who take part in recruiting, employees and officials in employment offices and responsible people in labor exchange agencies. Six different types of training were thus proposed.

1) Information Training consists of providing general information on migrants (e.g. country of origin, demographics, employment style) through lectures, videos, or printed materials. Intercultural awareness is this way promoted and communication as well as understanding is instilled. The principle guiding this approach is that people are generally fair, however they can be unconscious of the implications of racial
discriminations; this is why presenting them with accurate information will suffice to alter their behaviors. (Wrench 2001:3)

Secondly, *Cultural Awareness Training* gives information on culture but also involves participants in attitudinal changing exercises in a form of role play and exhaustive group discussions. Trainees are engaged to critically assess their own culture so that they can appreciate other cultures better. The assumption here is that creating awareness and erasing prejudices will lead decrease discrimination.

3) *Racism Awareness Training*, this approach is rooted in the White Awareness program by Katz (1978). The premise of this training is that racial discrimination exists among white people and works for their interests, consequently, they have the duty to tackle it. The program generally aims at creating self-awareness within groups through confrontational exercises and role-play. The expected result is a fast change of attitudes followed by a change in behavior.

4) *Equalities Training* differs merely seek to impact behaviors by informing participants about correct legal and professional behaviors, norms and skills. The aim of this training is to make sure that organizations abide by the law.

5) *Anti-Racism Training* builds on the Racism Awareness Training; this approach tries to revolutionize organizational practices instead of just concentrating on creating awareness in individuals. Self-awareness just like individual attitudes is targeted to create general support against what is perceived as endemic in institutions, society and culture. The Anti-Racism Training tries to combat discrimination based on race not only in recruitment but also throughout the organization. This training should be part of the organizational strategy to ensure effectiveness.

6) *Diversity Training* is seen as the logical step after the initial equal opportunities directives have been followed. This training is geared towards managers, as they possess the power to make the necessary changes in organizations. They are urged to fully utilize the human resources available within the firm. This training stresses valuing differences with the argument that the various ethnicities, races and gender differ in their work styles and cultures, which does not constitute a negative point. The aim here is to refrain from the assimilation of minorities (and female workers) into the prevailing white (and masculine) organizational culture. But instead the creation of a heterogeneous culture is sought. This approach goes beyond what is proposed by the
earlier approaches in the sense that it is more extensive, it has greater goals and it is a long-term program. This approach encompasses also many elements of the former approaches such as racial sensibility, cultural sensitivity, and fairness in recruiting. The ultimate aim is to create personal change in attitude and behavior while building long-lasting changes in organizations. (Wrench 2001:3-4)

Figure 3  Diversity Trainings

1. Information training  \rightarrow \text{Intercultural awareness and understanding through the provision of general information about immigrant worker}
2. Cultural awareness training  \rightarrow \text{Attitudinal changing exercises, critically examination of own culture, breaking down of prejudices}
3. Racism awareness training  \rightarrow \text{Self awareness created through confrontational exercises to tackle racial discrimination}
4. Equalities training  \rightarrow \text{Information on legal, professional norms and behaviors}
5. Anti-racism training  \rightarrow \text{Seeks to revolutionize practices throughout the organization, part of the organizational strategy}
6. Diversity training  \rightarrow \text{Valuing differences provides competitive advantage: racial sensibility, cultural sensitivity, fairness in recruiting}

A great number of international organizations have understood that effective diversity management can enhance productivity, facilitates innovation and ultimately increase competitive advantage. A diverse workforce also brings such advantages as better service to diverse groups of customers, more favorable image as well as more credibility for the organization (Thomas and Ely 1996, Panaccio and Waxin 2010: 54).

According to Iverson (2000) an organization that values diversity should exhibit such beliefs through its culture, opportunity, and leadership. Within the cultural aspect, the general image of the organization is demonstrated by its aptitude to encourage mutual respect, to promote inclusion, its acceptance of differences, and implementation of diversity programs. In addition, the organization shows concern for equality by
ensuring equal respect, performance expectations, rewards, pay and income for both minority and majority groups. Secondly, the opportunity element of Iverson’s model seeks to foster career development by cultivating a multicultural workforce, providing possibilities to develop new skills, as well as enabling minorities to receive promotions and to be considered for top management positions. Moreover, the hiring customs should be geared towards actively recruiting culturally different employees, providing equal opportunities to minorities and finally developing affirmative action plans. Lastly, Iverson sees the leadership role exemplified through management practices. In other words managers are required to show appreciation of their employees by recognizing everyone’s abilities, providing support and communicate with all groups, valuing multicultural teams, respecting culturally diverse beliefs and finally accepting non-native speaker employees. (Iverson 2000:36)

Figure 4  Diversity at the Workplace (Iverson 2000)
multiculturalism. (Cox 1993; Kirton and Greene 2005). The four modes of the acculturation process according to Berry (1990) also come into place here. The implication is that people working in an organization can be assimilated, segregated, marginalized or integrated, and the identity that they will have is influenced by the organization willingness or ability to enable the maintenance of their ethnical identity and culture (Sippola 2007: 26).

According to Herriot and Pemberton (1995) organizations have three ways of seeing diversity. They often pursue assimilation through recruitment and retention applicants that are similar to the current employees in order to preserve continuity. They practice protection by providing to minorities the necessary securities required by laws and equal opportunities demands. Finally, valuation of diversity occurs when people are appreciated for the enrichment that they bring to the organization in terms of creativity and innovation.

A different perspective is shown by Cox (1993) who sees the different kinds of diversities as blended within the setting of organizations. For him, they can be monolithic, plural or multicultural. All those three categories use dimensions such as acculturation, culture of the organization, formal and informal integration, cultural and institutional bias in Human Resource, as well as conflicts among groups. Organizations that operate within a monolithic framework hinder diversity, they practice segregation, or they assimilate ethnic groups, consequently, the workforce is essentially similar in terms of demographics and culture. An organization that is plural on the other hand, promotes inclusion and tolerance of diversity, nevertheless, institutional bias, assimilation, and discrepancies in Human Resource Management still prevail. Finally, Cox (1993) perceives a multicultural organization as the supreme model wherein cultural diversity is valued, cultural differences are encouraged. Moreover, institutional bias is decreased if not abolished in HRM, formal as well as informal integration is also complete. Intergroup conflicts are reduced to a minimum; the general atmosphere at work facilitates people to fully attain their potential. (Cox 1993)

Although diversity management is often publicly recognized by many companies as a worthwhile goal, few are those companies that put in practice measures to move from a monolithic organization towards a multicultural one. Some claimed that managing workforce diversity entails high costs which are attributed to high turnover, considerable interpersonal conflict due to differences in customs, habits, social practices and educational or professional level, as well as disruptions in communication
(Cox 1991: 34; Kossek and Lobel 1996). However, the above argument raises the question whether such negative repercussions are inherent to a multicultural workforce or whether it is rather an outcome of poor diversity management and failure to value the talent pool within the organization.

### 2.2.2 Human Resource Management and Talent Management

Talent management is one of the most important issues for Human Resource Management in international firms. Its importance stems from the fact the supply and demand for skilled employees fluctuates with economic cycles. This tendency has been especially driven by, first of all, the shift towards the knowledge economy, secondly the demographic changes worldwide, that is, the decrease in available workforce in the majority of western countries whereas, there is a fast growing workforce in the rest of the world. Thirdly, there is an increasing globalization of talent with western companies seeking talented employees in emerging countries. Finally, increased job mobility has been very noticeable as the balance of power has shifted from the firm to the worker, whose demands have become more and more sophisticated. Immigration is considered to be one vital mechanism in compensating for the declining talent pool. (Björkman, Evans and Pucik 2010:259-260)

It seems obvious that in order to sustain competitive advantages, organizations need to rely on the competences of employees from geographically different regions to execute intricate business strategies. This requires an openness as well as a positive attitude regarding other people and cultures. Björkman and his colleagues refer to such attitudes as a **global mindset**. They state that the globalization trend forces managers to acquire new skills in managing diversity as well as to tackle business problems. Therefore, a company with a global mindset “accepts diversity and heterogeneity as a source of opportunity”. Similarly, the term **transnational manager** has emerged to describe those individuals who know and appreciate many cultures, who are able to expertly mingle with different cultures. Björkman and his colleague believe that such people have a much broader perspective than those with a traditional and domestic orientation. They accept contradiction, tensions and conflicts as necessary forces influencing effective decision making, they appreciate diversity and view change as an opportunity instead of a threat. (Björkman et al 2010:243)

Failure to properly forecast the need for human capital and to establish workforce planning has caused even large firms to sway from surpluses of skilled employees to
shortfalls and back again. Effective talent management therefore requires ensuring that there is an available pool of talents through development programs (recruiting, induction or training), it also means hiring from outside the firm to meet shortfalls, the key here is being able to balance between building talent internally and hiring externally (Capelli 2008: 74). Similarly, Scullion and Collings (2006) proposed that multinationals combine hiring globally and locally, as well as, hiring culturally different and gender diverse people; only such a global base thinking will guarantee a good pipeline of talents for organizations. (Scullion and Collings 2006:98)

Selection bias is however very recurrent when MNCs select who to include in their talent pool. Research has found that the greater the institutional and cultural distance between the decisions makers’ and the candidate’s location, the lower is the probability that the candidate will be considered as talent (Mäkela, Björkman and Ehrrooth 2009: 5). This is also supported by other studies that found a negative correlation between national cultural distance and trust; indeed findings suggest a considerable lack of trust by decision makers towards the ability to perform of employees from culturally distant subsidiaries. (Luo 2002; Nes , Solberg and Silkoset, 2007) This distrust towards other cultures is attributed to homophily, that is, “the tendency to associate with people like yourself” (Watts 1999:13). This implies that individuals with greater similarities will relate more positively to each other than those with few. Similarities can be an outcome of geographical proximity, demographic closeness (gender, kinship, race, age ...), resemblance in culture (language, nationality, religion...), behavioral proximity (education, occupation, attitudes, social class, values, positions, abilities), as well as closeness in attributes. Therefore similarities or dissimilarities will have tremendous influence on the opinions that people will form regarding others. (Macpherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook 2001)

However, Mäkelä and her colleagues see similarities in language and culture as particularly influential when MNCs decide what individuals to include in their talent pools. Cultural and linguistic factors are said to determine congruence in views, thoughts and behaviors. (Mäkelä et al 2009: 5) This conjecture is also strengthened by research that found a positive correlation between a common language and perceived trustworthiness (Barner-Rasmussen and Björkman 2007).

Furthermore, the propensity towards selecting similar candidates is often a result of unconscious negative stereotypes, which in turn is driven by uncertainty or risk avoidance. Research in sociology suggests that similar people are interpersonally
considered more attractive, trustworthy and understanding; in addition, social identity theory states that there is a general tendency to favor in-group like nationality and negative association for out-groups, for instance minor nationalities, such a tendency however leads to potentially disruptive divisions within the organizations (Tajfel and Turner 1986).

Following this, Mäkelä, Björkman and Ehrrooth (2009) have proposed that the greater the similarity of a candidate and the decision makers establishing a talent pool, the more likely that candidate will be labeled as talent. Nevertheless, Mäkelä and her colleagues also recognize the effectiveness of the individual agency on the part of candidates, who aspire to be part of the pool. In other words, those who endeavor to be more visible through for example actively seeking assignments or great mastery of languages will have the advantage of potential halo as well as impression management effects. (Mäkelä et al 2009: 7)

This above section on diversity management has demonstrated how vital is for the organization to move away from its reactive role towards more proactive actions in dealing with diversity; the implication here is that, the issue of diversity needs to be a priority for the organization in order for Diversity Management’s plans and objectives to be incorporated into the business strategy. Also greatly stressed out was the key role of HRM in Diversity Management, whether is to recruit new talents or to promote Diversity Management ideologies among current staff, there are a variety of trainings that the workforce can undergo.

**2.2.4 Diversity Management and the Finnish Challenge**

The influx of foreigners in Finland has been on the rise every year, and those in the workforce amount to five per cent of the entire labor force. Immigrants seeking to study or work in Finland were recorded at 155,705 people in 2009 (Ministry of the Interior 2010). Although many are highly educated and/or skilled professionals, finding employment still remains a great challenge. There is an ongoing public debate regarding the employment of people from foreign origin in the Finnish labor market. The minister of Migration and European Affairs, Astrid Thors recently noted that, the discussion has so far been one-sided, as, it fails to distinguish between various groups of foreigners with dissimilar backgrounds. She also criticized the media for perpetuating a negative image of non-Finns. Mrs Thors further insisted on the fact that there is a necessity to create a new employment office in order to link foreign
professionals with Finnish employers as well as to better serve foreign residents in job searching. (Helsingin Sanomat International Edition 5/10/2010).

The bottom line is that the foreign professionals residing in Finland constitute a large pool of untapped labor force and the employment and economic development offices rarely provide those people interesting positions. Vehaskari (2010) lists various reasons why very attractive potential employees will choose to leave Finland in order to find better career prospects elsewhere. First of all, Finnish employers tend to put unnecessary hurdles on foreign job hunters by expecting them to master the Finnish language, even in those fields where English is the working language. In addition employers often are not very lenient to hire people with faltering skills in Finnish and thereby failing to see how fluency in other languages might also be beneficial. (Vehaskari 2010:11)

Furthermore, Vehaskari (2010) finds the Finnish bureaucracy rather complicated and unfavorable for people who do not speak Finnish or Swedish, making it difficult for them to get services from the economic development and the employment offices. Vehaskari (2010) also notes the existence of closed professional networks in Finland, where contacts are built among Finnish employees and employers in social clubs, during internship or studying years thus foreigners who enter Finland as adults find it hard to infiltrate those professional networks despite their education and expertise. Vehaskari (2010) states that many foreigners come to the conclusion that there are limited career opportunities in Finland, consequently, attractive employees will generally move abroad when they perceive that their career advancements are restricted just because they are foreigners. Vehaskari (2010) concludes that the labor market is critically inefficient in integrating foreign nationals into the Finnish workforce. (Vehaskari 2010:12-13)

It is however noteworthy to acknowledge that the challenges encountered by foreign professionals in Finland are common to most countries. Issues such as language and cultural differences, as well as red tape are common challenges faced by expatriates or immigrants everywhere in the world. Hiring a person of foreign origin is a challenge for local companies as well, as they are concerned by eventual communication problems with coworkers, managers and clients. Moreover Finnish employers might not be ready to face the potential cultural shock as a result of differences in work ethic. Indeed, the results of a survey conducted by Helsingin Sanomat indicate that Finnish companies are too lazy to recruit immigrants. In a study conducted among Finland’s 50 biggest
employers, only 7 admitted to have recruited an employee of foreign origin in an employment program or job position. (Helsingin Sanomat 23/9/2010).

The recent economic recession certainly has a major role to play in keeping the immigrants’ employment debate topical. Some believe that caring for the wellbeing of Finland’s immigrants undermines the country’s ability to care for the natives. For such people limiting immigration, restricting the careers of foreigners, excluding international students from entering the job market is believed to be the way out of the recession. However, it might not be economically sound to isolate Finland from immigration. There is a large gap between the amount of Finns retiring and those who start employment. According to Statistics Finland’s estimation the Finnish workforce will decrease by about 280,000 workers in a couple of decades if immigrants are not allowed into Finland. This is a considerable problem as the current workforce is not capable to sustain and finance the welfare of those who are not employed. (Statistics Finland 2009)

Vehaskari (2010) recommends finding a way to effectively utilize the available talents that already exists among foreigners living in Finland. She suggests that overcoming the challenge of foreigners’ employment will thus require the following: first of all, an Expat Liaison needs to be created, this means building cooperation between Finnish employers and the foreign talent pool, promoting networking and developing job opportunities. Secondly, she suggests making life a bit easier for the foreign resident population by for example providing valuable public service documents such as tax cards in English. Furthermore, non-EU students have only 6 months to find work in Finland after graduation. Given that Finnish government spends an average of 30,000 euros on every graduating student from a polytechnic, the 787 students that graduated in 2009 costed the state over 57 million, thus it is economical sound to give recent graduates more time to find work and pay taxes. (Vehaskari 2010: 27)

A suggestion to the question of language skills could be solved by institutions offering more adequate language training, which targets professional Finnish. The majority of the current intensive Finnish courses are reserved for permanent residents and refugees, while students are excluded. All in all, Vehaskari points out the need for shift in attitude because the lack of mastery in Finnish language does not equate with the incapability to successfully perform a job, especially when the working language is English anyway. She thus recommends that employers focus only on the necessary language requirements for the particular task, similarly, foreign job seekers also need to
reexamine their attitude and be careful not to put the blame on the language obstacle for every difficulty. (Vehaskari 2010: 22) Just like the ageing European population is estimated to cause a shortage of workers, globalization and the opening of markets will certainly exacerbate the war for the remaining talent. The challenge for Human Resource Management is to be procreative in integrating cultural diversity in organizations in order to utilize the current available talent pool, because failure to do so could turn detrimental in the long run.

2.2.5. Diversity Management in Finnish Organizations

Diversity management has been recommended by the EU, consultants, and several organizations for socio-demographic equity purpose but also as a business imperative proposition. However, the majority of Finnish employees seem to be uncertain of the competitive advantage they would gain through employing immigrants. (Trux 2010:9).

The importance of diversity management differs considerably between the private and the public sector. Multiculturalism in the Finnish society is noticeable in the diversity of the clients that utilizes services offered by the public sector. In a workplace and service quality study by Sippola and Hammar-Suutari (2006), employees pointed out the difficulties in fulfilling the needs of customers whose background, life situation, culture and language is unfamiliar. In order words, the strongly emphasized equity and democracy regulations are hard to abide to as employees lack the necessary skills to provide the same treatment to all clients. As a result, the public sector has made considerable effort to respond to such challenges by seeking intercultural and language skills for effective execution of work tasks. (Sippola and Hammar-Suutari 2006:20).

From a HRM perspective, the public sector is still challenged by the necessity to translate the diversity management concepts into operational measures. For the most, the equality policy implies that assimilation is also practiced by treating all employees similarly. A “reactive diversity management strategy” is thus pursued, which means that standardized policies and practices are implemented, which renders the workforce homogenous, similar and efficient. (Sippola and Hammar-Suutari 2006:21) Other studies have also reported the assimilative orientation of diversity management in Finland. Söderqvist and Juuti (2005) noticed the very little respect that cultural diversity is given in day-to day running of organizations. Vartia et al (2007) also found that Finnish organizations try to assimilate their diverse employees. Employers expect
that immigrants adhere to the dominating Finnish organizational culture. (Trux 2009: 42)

The laxity of establishing efficient diversity management practices have also been noticed in the Finnish private sector. Meriläinen, Tienari, Katila and Benschop (2009) reviewed corporate web pages of the 20 largest (measured by sales) Finnish companies in order to find out the kind of image that firms wish to portray regarding their diversity management activities. They analyzed corporate communication tools such as recruitment page, social responsibility reports, human resources segment of annual reports, as well as textual and visual representations of diversity to determine the presence of different nationalities, races, religion and gender. The results revealed that the very few companies that discuss the issue of diversity, equality and equal opportunity on their corporate communication gave them a rather vague and haphazard meaning. One interesting finding was that the then two biggest recruiters of foreign workers in entry-level cashier positions barely mentioned diversity in their corporate communication (SOK) or did not refer to it all (Kesko). Even though they were inclusive employers, they did not seem to have a well defined diversity management strategy. The section on “meet our people” showed only white Finns as a representation of their workforce. (Meriläinen et al 2009: 235)

Although, the issue of diversity management is growing in importance, Meriläinen and his colleagues (2009:239) conclude that the challenge of diversity in relations with people from foreign origin is still to be met, because for the majority of Finnish companies, equality in the workforce is still resumed to offering similar career opportunity to white Finnish women and men. A lack of a proper system for valuing culturally different employees may result in alienation of the non dominant groups. Indeed, Laurén and Wrede (2008) have found evidence of discrimination in Finnish workplaces; Finnish colleagues often create an informal hierarchy of work tasks for their sole benefits.

Other examples of discrimination and harassment against non-white people in hiring and at work abound. A study among immigrant workers in Helsinki suggests that about half of them experienced discrimination at work on issues of career advancement, discharge from work, racial transgressions or harassment in the workplace. Those immigrant workers perceived lower control and ability to influence any success in their working life, despite the fact that they were fluent in Finnish. (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000b: 231-232; Liebkind, Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti and Perholmi 2007:232)
Interestingly, the discrimination experience correlates with the cultural fit proposition. Liebkind and her colleagues found that those immigrants who are culturally more distant to the Finnish society also experienced more discrimination (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000c: 13; Liebkind et al 2007: 297). Croker and Major (1989) estimate that devaluing and stigmatizing individuals will lead to drawbacks, and damage to their self-esteem and self-concept (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000c: 14). Similarly, failure to effectively manage diversity may negatively affect employee satisfaction and productivity, because when workers do not perceive themselves as valued contributors to the organization, their conscientiousness, involvement and innovativeness suffer considerably (Esty, Griffin and Hirsch 1995: 9-12)

Nevertheless, the diversity management picture of Finnish organizations is not necessarily as dark as depicted in the above paragraphs. Although lagging behind, there is evidence of improvement. The electronics companies have been portrayed by many studies as great examples in employing and valuing ethnically diverse employees. Nokia is leading this trend by demonstrating an exceptional coverage and detailed discussion on the equal opportunity discourse throughout its activities. As the company puts it: “While diversity is one of the key drivers of our business success, it is also at the heart of Nokia’s Values and the Nokia Way” (Nokia Sustainability Report 2009). Numerous other large and medium IT firms practice “silent diversity”, that is, although they do not necessarily discuss it intensively in their corporate communications, the visual images of their workforce clearly show a wide range of nationalities and ethnicities (Trux 2010; Meriläinen et al 2009: 235).

In the recent years, Itella Group has risen to become one of Finland’s largest multicultural employers. On its website, Itella claims that “We promote tolerance and multiculturalism e.g. through the development of managerial duties, recruitment and job induction”. About their workforce: “Our employees form an integral part of a diverse, multicultural and growing Itella”. The company workforce is said to comprise over 70 nationalities and their diversity management activities consist of providing cultural awareness training, language training for workers and supervisors, as well as multicultural working groups to enhance diversity throughout the corporation. (www.itella.fi, [2011, 05/05])

Nevertheless, it is obvious that most companies that hire employees of foreign backgrounds do not necessarily have a proper diversity management strategy wherein individual differences are valued. The majority of such companies however seem to
recognize that for immigrant workers to work to the best of their abilities there is a need for a proper platform. Mohamed and Leponiemi (2008) conducted a study aimed at improving the integration of immigrant workers as well as enhancing their competences in Finnish private and public organizations through induction training. Their results reveal that most companies recognized the necessity to improve their practices in induction and work familiarization of the immigrant workers, however, the lack of resources and time cause the great majority to stick to minimal induction practices. Mohamed and Leponiemi (2008) also found many of the current information, evaluation and feedback systems inadequate. They suggest a reform in HR practices (recruitment, induction and work familiarization), that is, a more efficient human resource development. More importantly, they propose that all employees should participate in the induction training. Furthermore, the induction trainers themselves are requested to undergo additional training. They conclude that gaining the benefit of a diverse workforce entails flexibility and worthwhile improvements in the current practices. (Mohamed and Leponiemi 2008: 284-286)

To summarize, diversity management in Finnish organizations is a field that requires major improvements. As Trux (2009: 42) nicely puts it; “overall the story of immigrants in Finland is a struggle to get in and gain a foothold”. People of foreign origin find it hard to find employment in Finland even when they are fluent in Finnish. Among those workers who have managed to integrate themselves professionally, there are numerous evidences of discrimination. Moreover, the understanding of diversity management in Finland for the most differs from the mainstream definition, for the few organizations that have endeavored to implement it, diversity management either means assimilation of immigrant workers into the Finnish ways and for the rest it limits itself to providing better possibilities to Finnish women. When employees are assimilated and cultural differences are not valued, the business case in employing a multicultural workforce is negated.

2.3. Summary and Conceptual Framework

The chapter Frame of Reference presented major theories that discuss the socio-cultural adaptation of immigrants in new societies. The accumulated writings reveal contradictions or ambiguities among the acculturation modes and dimensions. The unidimensional model (Gordon 1964) is widely recognized as unfit to represent the dynamism of the present society, as globalization and improvement in communication
technology have enabled extensive exchange of information and means for immigrants to preserve contacts with home countries (Phinney et al 2001). The acculturation of immigrants into different cultural and contextual societies in nowadays recognized as a bidimensional or even a multidimensional process where immigrants adopt customs, values and behavior of the recipient society while at the same time maintaining the culture of their country of origin (Berry 2003).

Individuals immigrating to a foreign country therefore have more or less the possibilities to select their acculturation mode; to maintain an ethnic identity or to adopt the identity of the host country. However, the latter depends greatly on the receiving society’s willingness to accommodate immigrants and foster their integration (Kalin and Perry 1995). Cross-cultural adaptation is thus a function of psychological adjustment and socio-cultural adjustment, which boils down to: learning the skills necessary for daily interactions, among others language, behaviors, self efficacy as well as identification with the host society (Ward and Kennedy 1993).

The individual attributes of the immigrant are therefore very valuable for adjustment because attributes like credentials (McKeever and Kilneberg 1999), wealth and noteworthy human capital (Kanjanapan 1995) facilitate immigrants’ socio-economic adaptation. Also very essential was the personality of the immigrant; extrovert and confident individuals find it easier to embrace differences, whereas a rigid and ethnocentric personality inhibits adaptation (Ward et al 2004). The similarities in culture between host and home countries can arguably facilitate the acculturation process (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000b; Selmer 2007; Ward et al 2004), but for the most, the type of social support and network that immigrants find in the receiving countries might help cope with acculturation stress, provide emotional support and access to health and job related information, and ultimately facilitate productivity and contribution to the society (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000a; Gellis 2003; Finch and Vega 2003; Chioneso 2008). However, ethnic networks enable general adjustment as long as immigrants do not segregate themselves or function exclusively in ethnic enclaves. (Desbarats 1986; Sanders and Nee 1987; Makija and Mullan 2002; Edin et al 2003)

As has been mentioned before, the socio-economic adaptation of immigrants into new countries very much depends on the receiving society. This actuates the concept of diversity management in the society and within organizations. Embracing differences and valuing a diverse workforce is widely recognized to improve employee motivation,
creativity and innovation, customer satisfaction and overall competitiveness (Kandola and Fullerton 1998; Sippola 2007). Since Finland has been mostly insulated from the intensive immigration waves that were the rage in many other Western countries, managing diversity is still a rather new concept. Valuing diversity requires removal of major hurdles in society and organizations so that different types of people can enjoy equal opportunities. Moreover, recruiters, managers and employees might require a variety of diversity training so that talented employees are given proper development and career opportunities regardless of their origin (Vehaskari 2010).

Figure 5  The Conceptual Framework

This chapter has presented the major theories upon which the empirical research is built. This literature review as well as my own personal experience as an immigrant provides the necessary theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin 1990) or pre-understanding (Gummesson 2000) which have sensitized me to the cross cultural patterns in general. Such insight or understanding about a phenomenon increases interaction with data, which is effective questioning, comparisons, interpreting, making hypotheses and ultimately developing theories about concepts as well as their relationships (Strauss and Corbin 1990: 43). The subsequent chapter will illustrate the research methodology steps, techniques and approaches that have been followed during the empirical research, and which would lead to the results.
3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter will present the relevant strategies and research techniques that have enabled the gathering of the empirical data and its analysis. Also, the motivation for selecting the used research methods and their limitations are explained. In addition the criteria for choosing the sample, the steps followed during the data collection, and the procedure for the analysis and derived conclusions are elaborated. Such a thorough presentation of the research steps that guided this study will not only ensure credibility and transparency. But it will also support the reader in forming their own judgment on the final findings.

3.1. Research Approach

This thesis used a qualitative methodology in order to explore the adaptation processes of Cameroonian professionals in Finland. Qualitative research was selected for this study because of its ability to contribute in the understanding of human behavior in social contexts (Silverman 2006: 44). Indeed, the biggest strength of this type of research lies in its aptitude to utilize data that occur naturally to search sequences wherein people’s meanings are constructed. By this means, the spirit of a phenomenon is captured. Moreover, the qualitative research method provides in-depth information and it is sensitive to context, which makes it very suitable to address participants’ perspective, their interpretations of events, in order to comprehend seemingly stable phenomena (Gioia and Thomas 1996, Silverman 2006:44).

This study uses a phenomenological perspective in order to capture how Cameroonian professionals experience integration into the Finnish society, what affected these experiences and how they handled their integration process as a whole. The essence of phenomenology is to “explore how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness both individually and as shared meaning”. It seeks to capture and describe the way individuals experience a certain phenomenon – their perception and description of it, the feelings they have about it, how they remember and make sense of it, and most especially the way they discuss it with others. This allows the researcher to gain a more profound understanding of the significance of everyday experiences. (Patton 2002: 104)

The phenomenological point of view shows little interest in the factual status of events, what matters is what social actors experience and their interpretation of the world. It is
understood that every individual’s experience is unique and considered as a truth which influences their behavior. (Van Manen 1990:10)

This study seeks to expand the theory that explains the acculturation of immigrant workers. The study is inductive in nature as it aims at observing realities through the eyes of informants, investigating and observing irregularities so that concepts are developed essentially from the data in order to discover something new and ultimately developing a model. Induction is a process of progressing from the particular to the general, that is; the knowledge assertions are not analytically derived from the premises. Thus the final claims seek to amplify our knowledge (Ketokivi and Mantere 2010:4). in fact, an inductive reference entails making a number of observations of individual occurrences, then drawing general conclusions believed accurate concerning a larger number of occurrences than the ones observed (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen and Karlsson 2002:76).

Although very recognized as an effective qualitative methodology in building new theories, the inductive design comprises numerous shortcomings. Inductive reasoning has been criticized for its incompleteness leading to a practical reasoning dilemma, that is, the absence of commonly accepted valid principles to follow during the practical reasoning process (Toulmin 2003). As a result, Kilduff (2007) argues that without any established standards, uncertainty arises as there are disagreements regarding the ways theoretical conclusions are drawn from data. (Ketokivi and Mantere 2010:2)

The capability of findings of inductive research to be generalized overtime has also been much disputed. Induction aims at making generalization based on past events thus the generalization process is not based on current occurrences, this creates the challenge of generalization over time. Moreover, the observation of present or frequent events does not necessarily give any grounds for drawing conclusions on phenomena not observed at all. In addition, inductive method generalizes about a large population based on individual observations. This makes inductive reference methodologically incomplete, as there is a gap between empirical data and theoretical generalization. Therefore, no matter how well grounded the inductive premises are, complete knowledge of a phenomenon can never be reached. As a result, there are no absolute certainties that observed events are true also for unobserved ones. (Ketokivi and Mantere 2010:2-3)

There is no denial that the induction design presents a significant challenge when seeking to build generalization. However, the advantages of induction outweigh such
concerns. Induction allows for in-depth research making it possible to comprehensively explore the empirical context which is under study in addition to the subjective context or the social scientist ability to reason (Dyer and Wilkins 1991). It is thus necessary for the social scientist to grasp the logic behind various reasoning strategies to be able to instill consistency as well as transparency into their justification methods. This is because incompleteness of reasoning usually stems from the lack of a rich constructive dialog between writers and readers (Ketokivi and Mantere 2010: 4).

Consequently, such transparency and consistency guidelines will be the standard in the current study, that is the techniques and decisions process used to derive constructs from the empirical data, as well as, to develop the final theoretical interpretation will be clearly presented to the reader. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) state that “well done theory building is surprisingly ‘honest’. The data provide the discipline that mathematics does in formal analytical modeling”. Although, I do not pretend to remain objective or even impartial, I certainly aim to adhere to the honesty requirement by presenting my reasoning process so that readers can form their own opinions regarding the validity of the final claims.

### 3.2. Data Collection

The methods used to collect data in the phenomenology oriented studies are participant observation and in-depth interviews (Patton 2002: 106). Open ended interviews are generally used in life history interviews in order to gather a greater amount of data. The interviewer actively listens to the informant as he or she talks and attributes meanings, while keeping in mind the larger aim of the study. (Noaks and Wincup 2004: 80)

I conducted 11 interviews from January to March 2011. The interviews were conducted mostly at the homes of the informants but I also did a few interviews in the coffee room of the work place of some respondents. The in-depth, open-ended interviews lasted about 50 minutes. The interviews were conducted either in French or English depending on the native language of the interviewees; they were also tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim in order to minimize the possibilities of wrong interpretations of the interviewees’ responses. The transcribed copies of the interviews conducted in French were then translated into English. The phenomenology perspective guided my approach during the interviews, i.e., I formulated questions in such a way as to have the interviews not only tell their experiences but to also allow them to describe the nature of the meaning that they attributed to those experiences. An example of such questions
was: How did you feel when you first set foot in your current work place? Followed by a follow up question such as: Why did you feel that way? Although I had developed predetermined themes to be discussed during the interview, I left room for flexibility in case something new was to arise.

As an interviewer, I presented myself as a fellow Cameroonian who has more or less experienced similar adaptation difficulties in Finland and who would like to hear their viewpoint. This enabled me to create a good rapport with my interviewees and discuss freely in a conversation mode. This approach concurred with Silverman’s (2006:112) suggestion that “the interview is collaboratively produced...interviewers are active participants, while they do not attempt to monopolize the conversation, neither do they fade into the background...” Nevertheless, not all the interviews were as rich as I had wished for, some interviewees would just answer the question without any further comments, whereas, others would go on and provide a lot of information (the longest interviews lasted almost 2 hours). However, all the informants showed a rather positive attitude towards the study; they seemed genuinely interested in the matter and enthusiastically answered all the questions. I used a snowball technique to find my interviewees. I got the first names and telephone numbers from friends and acquaintances, later on the earlier interviewees also provide me with contacts information of other potential interviewees.

Initially, I intended to concentrate on Cameroonian residing in the metropolitan areas, but I later on realized that such delimitation will reduce my chances of having professionals from all fields. Thus, in the end my informants came from the capital area but also Turku, Oulu and Jyväskylä. Most of the interviews however took place in Helsinki because even those people who lived outside the metropolitan area frequently came to the capital. Two of my interviews were conducted by phone because the informants had to cancel our previously arranged meeting because their attention was required by other matters elsewhere. I was still very satisfied with the conversation that we had through the phone. I still gathered all the necessary responses, however, those interviews were a little more focused, and we did not wander away talking about other subjects indirectly relevant to the topic of the study.

The 11 different interviewees varied tremendously, 6 of the respondents are from the Anglophone areas and the five others from the French speaking area. Only five of them speak Finnish fluently. The length of stay in Finland is from 3 to 26 years; all the informants underwent various types of training in Finland, ranging from general
Finnish language courses to doctorate degrees. The fields of study however do not vary that much, many are in the so called hard science fields like medicine, chemistry, computer science. The position of the informants in their respective companies of employment varies from entry level position to team leader. Their employers are international organizations, domestic organization which are big and small in size.

This group of Cameroonian professionals who took part in this study is quite similar to other groups of foreign professionals that are found in Finland. Although the differences in culture may not be as obvious for some groups as it is for others; foreign professionals are more or less subjects to the same integration challenges, which are among others: adjustment in the general society and the ability to handle administrative issues and other practicalities, integrating in the workplace, learning the general accepted behaviors, and especially the challenge in learning Finnish. Therefore, the selected sample is representative of the general foreign professionals’ population and the conclusions that will be drawn in this study can very well apply to other immigrants’ groups. Table 1 presents the main characteristics of interviewees.

Table 1  Interviewees’ Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Years in Finland</th>
<th>Finnish skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Senior software engineer</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pediatrician</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Junior software engineer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Market researcher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Professional Chef</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Registered nurse/lecturer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chemist/medical researcher</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Service sales support</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Registered nurse</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Organic chemist</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Professional chef</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis focuses on techniques of inference to generate new information based on the collected data. The investigator's representation of the reality as determined by the data is possible after a thorough analysis and interpretation processes aimed at generating not only conclusions, but also relationships, meanings, patterns, concepts and theories. Therefore data analysis is a series of operations to break down the data, to shrink, classify and reconstitute it, reach certain conclusions, then develop or confirm conceptual frameworks and theories that explain the data. (Spiggle 1994: 492)

Kovalainen (2006) identifies several approaches to analyze qualitative data. The process starts by revisiting the research question and determining the issues whose answers will provide a meaningful explanation to that question. Secondly, categorization takes place, the data is sorted and subdivided to enable the development of patterns, finally interpretation takes place by seeking the explanation of the discovered patterns, as well as reflecting on them with the help of pre-existing literature.

As I collected the data, I also progressively analyzed it, which enabled me to constantly compare my answers as suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967:101-116). Such an approach allowed me to select further interviewees in the data collection process, furthermore, it built a foundation for obviously emerging themes and aggregate dimensions (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, Chittipeddi 1994) when the main points presented by the informants are progressively examined and compared. Consequently, comparing differences and similarities across events in the collected data gave guidelines for gathering further data.

As this study is inductive by nature, Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory procedures were the benchmark for the analysis. I started this process by an open coding, i.e., the major concepts emerging from the data were grouped into categories. The core of such categorization is to identify a passage in the transcribed text as representing, or forming part of a larger phenomenon. This step was followed by the abstraction process, it integrates empirically based categories into higher-order concepts, it does not only identify patterns but it gathers the categories into general conceptual constructs. (Spiggle 1994: 493) I then engaged in dimensionalization in order to explore the properties and dimensions of the identified categories. Dimensionalization enabled the development of strong theories by first of all, allowing
the methodical exploration of variation across events that represent a construct, so as to facilitate the enrichment of the conceptual meaning. (Bagozzi 1984) Moreover, properties and dimensions were identified to enable exploring and defining connections among categories and constructs. (Strauss and Corbin 1990: 69)

Secondly, I used axial coding in order to reconstruct the data. This was done by searching for connections among categories. Axial coding is used to specify a category or a phenomenon regarding the condition or context that caused it to arise, its foundation, the strategies used to handle it as well as the possible consequences that followed as a result of using those strategies. (Strauss and Corbin 1990: 96-97) The axial coding process was followed by a classification of related themes into several encompassing dimensions that gave rise to the emergent theory. It was a rather recursive process that went on until a better understanding of the developing framework was found. Table 2 presents the overall data structure of the study.
Figure 6 Structure of Data Analysis

First order concepts

- Retention of Cameroonian identity
- Adoption of Finnish values
- Caught in Between

- Determination
- Openness
- Interest

- Strengthening of identity
- Relaxation and fun
- Sharing of experiences
- Building a future for children
- Discuss about home

- Sense of belonging
- Enhancement of common values

- Friendship
- Advice on a variety of things
- Love and help

- Handling administrative issues
- Connections for work
- Advice of education
- Help with practicalities

- Orientation day
- Professors’ connections
- Practical training
- Partnership between universities and companies
- Alumni

- Finnish skills and employment
- Hindrance to learning Finnish

- Clashes with Finnish colleagues
- Perception of alienation
- Clientele uneasiness
- Hard work for lack of Finnish

- Special bond with team members
- Socialization after work
- Equality among all employees

- The importance of a good boss
- Advantage of being a foreigner
- Exemplary life for others

Second order themes

- Strike for cultural balance
- Bold personality type
- Socialization with the Cameroonian community
- Strength and spirituality from the church
- Central role of friends and family members
- Friends and family’s help in integrating the system
- Opportunities from the educational institutions
- Finnish skills and Education
- Heavy atmosphere in Finnish working environments
- Great atmosphere in international firms
- Career opportunities for all talented employees

Aggregate dimensions

- Individual adaptability
- Emotional support
- Practical support and employability
- Success as a result of good leadership in organizations

Socialization with the Cameroonian community
- Strike for cultural balance
- Bold personality type

Strength and spirituality from the church
- Central role of friends and family members

Emotional support

Practical support and employability

Success as a result of good leadership in organizations

Individual adaptability
4 RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the empirical research. The structure of the data analysis (Figure 6) is therefore elaborated in order to clarify the concepts and themes that have led to the final aggregate dimensions. Such clarification is enabled by excerpts tables of the conducted interviews. Finally, the aggregate dimensions are brought together so as to form the socio-cultural adaptation model of foreign professionals.

4.1 The Individual Adaptability

The individual adaptability dimension expresses the Cameroonian immigrants’ various patterns of handling the pressures that occur as a result of living in a culturally different society, their struggle to retain their Cameroonian identity as well as their willingness to compromise and adopt certain aspects of the Finnish cultures that are necessary to fit in this society and to find employment. The successful Cameroonians have been those willing to find a balance. The adaptability is also a question of personality type. The degree of openness and interest that the immigrants show in the Finnish culture thus determines their degree of assimilation of the Finnish values.

4.1.1 Strike for Cultural Balance

The Cameroonians professionals from this study still identify themselves as Cameroonians, even after living for up to 26 years in Finland; they believe that their identity has not changed. Some of the respondents have spent more of their lifetime in Finland than they did in Cameroon and others have even acquired the Finnish nationality, however, they are still all very much holding on to their roots. 10 out of 11 respondents believe that they will always be Cameroonians no matter how much time they spend in Finland; they believe values that they have been inculcated with during their childhood will always remain in them. They still speak the language of their tribes, they are in contact with their family and friends from Cameroon, they are well aware of what goes on in Cameroon by the help of the media. Moreover, the general belief is that even after spending the rest of their life in Finland, they could still never completely grasp all aspects of the Finnish culture, the identification with other Africans is even considered an option but not with the Finns. The racial differences has an important role to play, because as they visibly look different from the typical Finn; they are often asked where they are from, which intensifies their Cameroonian identity retention.
Although the professionals have retained their identity as Cameroonians, it is sometimes more like a label and does not necessarily depict their everyday behavior. They admit to have assimilated certain aspects of the Finnish culture in order to fit into the system. Change has occurred in order to be more in line with the Finnish ways.

This also implies that they have had to give up certain patterns of behaviors from the Cameroonian culture because keeping them would have inhibited their adaptation into the Finnish society. As one of the respondents put it, they consider themselves “improved Cameroonians” (Professional chef). Living in Finland has caused them to rely less on their family and start being more independent. They have learnt true honesty, avoid innuendoes and say what they mean. Their mentality and conception of life has also been altered. They now work on objectives, and they respect the notion of deadline, they like the concept of team work. They also appreciate the Finns precision and organization skills at work and in the society. “Even the way they dispose of their trash is organized” (Registered nurse)

Their personalities also seem to have changed: they have lost their spontaneity; they are more reserved, less loud, and have even learned to appreciate the silence. It has thus been a struggle to keep their Cameroonian identity intact as they have been drawn to the values of this society in their search to fit and ultimately to find and keep their employment. Ultimately they have had to internalize both pattern behaviors. Therefore, they are able to switch behaviors according to the situation or the settings. It is a quest to find a middle ground where they can remain themselves without being viewed as odd by the Finns. The Cameroonian professionals are thus flexible, adapt their behaviors regarding to whether they are at work, with Finns or with other Cameroonians.
Table 2  Strike for Cultural Balance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retention of Cameroonian identity</th>
<th>10 /11 interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I am someone who is so anchored to their culture, it’s been 15 years since I received the Finnish nationality and my Cameroonian passport has been expired for ages, but I still feel 100 % Cameroonian, when I’m asked where I’m from , I always say I’m from Cameroon”. (Pediatrician)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They say in Cameroon that “if you throw a piece of wood in water, that piece of wood will never become a Fish” thus, I believe I’m African, I remain African and I will die African, I don’t perceive myself as a Finn although I have the Finnish nationality, I know that my roots are somewhere else”. (Medical researcher)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My roots haven’t changed, I’m still very much in contact with my family in Cameroon, I still speak the language of my tribe. Those values that I acquired in my childhood are like innate, those are something you can’t shake away that easily” (Professional chef)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adoption of Finnish values</th>
<th>7/11 interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Having been here for 12 years, during that time I visited Cameroon only 6 times for about 4 weeks each time, that is just 6 months out of 13 years! I studied with Finns, I work with Finns, of course you get affected by their behaviors and whether you want it or know, you start to change” (Professional chef)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In Cameroon we did not have this notion of time, the notion of objectives, and the notion of deadlines. Here we are forced to respect time, at least so that we wouldn’t penalize others, whereas in Africa one does as he wishes, you have an appointment at 10 am , you show up at 16 pm and you don’t even apologize (Laugh). ( Organic chemist)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Now I’m more logical more rational, everything is a little bit calculated. That’s the European system, I can count only on myself, it’s not like back home.” (Professional chef)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m 32 years old, I moved to Finland when I was 21, I learned to be a man in Finland I’m a Cameroonian by birth but in my thoughts I’m more Finnish. (Senior software engineer)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.2. Bold Personality Type

Being able to adapt to the Finnish culture requires certain willingness from the immigrant. They have to show interest and remain open to new ways of doing things. Adopting new pattern of behaviors however create a certain internal chaos, that is why a bold personality type is require in order to be able to stay determined and focused. Moreover, there are a lot of hurdles into the system that impede adaptation and Cameroonian immigrants that have succeeded have had to constantly push through in order to learn Finnish, find employment and find a place for themselves in this society. Whether it comes to learning Finnish, succeed in school, find work and succeed in life, perseverance and resilience are required.

Table 3  **Bold Personality Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determination</th>
<th>9/11 interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We are foreigners here; we are the one who should seek a spot here. No one would just make room for us…” (Chemist/Medical researcher)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was very active because I wanted to learn the language; I remember that I was walking all the times with an electronic dictionary that I bought for 150 Euros. I had it every time in my</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emotional Support

The Cameroonian professionals residing in Finland depend on the emotional support from their networks and friends for their survival in this society. The emotional support pocket, if somebody said something and I wasn’t sure what it meant, I looked it up. [...] I took responsibility of my language skills; It was constantly in my mind that this is the only way that I can better myself if I learn the language, otherwise it would be difficult for me to give my best and even now I’m still learning” (Registered nurse/ Lecturer)

“I did not call to ask for an appointment, I just walked into her office [...] she was like no, you have to come from the employment office and I told her: I’m not asking for much I just ask you to call me if someone is absent and you need someone to work. She wasn’t sure what to do with me, so she was like “we’ll see”. Two days later she called and said can you come to work? I worked for one day, she liked it, so she kept calling when she needed me until I finally had my interview at the employment office and they let me now work as a registered nurse”.

Openness and interest in the Finnish culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5/11 interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“They say ‘when in Rome do as the Romans do’. Being only among other Africans shut you down. You might end up living in this country for 30 years without even knowing what is going on” (Market researcher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When you come to Finland, if you really want get to the top quality job, the best option is to limit your African culture, look at the Finnish culture and get involved in it [...] At times when they conduct (job) interviews they want to find out if you have some social aspects that can easily work with the Finnish people [...] I spent the whole day reading about software books but when I got there. They asked me just few questions about software and during the rest of the time we talked about ice hockey” (Senior software engineer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It is just the kind of person that I’m...It was easy for me to adapt because I’m curious and genuinely interested in this culture...It’s my wife’s culture and my children’s too to a certain extent. When I step out of the house, I always speak Finnish even if some people often insist in speaking English to me, I pretend as if I do not speak it, I want to be fluent in Finnish” (Market researcher)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. Emotional Support

The Cameroonian professionals residing in Finland depend on the emotional support from their networks and friends for their survival in this society. The emotional support
comes from a variety of sources, the Cameroonian community, the church, family members and friends.

### 4.2.1. Socialization with the Cameroonian Community

The Cameroonian association (CAMCUDAF) is a good setting to strengthen the Cameroonian identity. The association organizes events and activities where the informants meet other Cameroonians, have fun, exchange experiences, eat Cameroonian food, dance and listen to Cameroonian music, discuss Cameroonian current events, as well introduce the children to their culture. The interviewees describe it as a place where they “can be themselves”, among people who understand them better. Members of association visit, call, and comfort each other in times of troubles. The following table supports the importance that the community has for many:

**Table 4  Socialization within the Cameroonian Community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengthening of identity, Experience sharing and Building a future for the children</th>
<th>4/11 interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

“Then I have the Cameroonian community where I can get some fresh air. Meeting other Cameroonian here… you kinda share something in common, so that is to me psychologically very important[...]. It is good to belong somewhere... To see other Cameroonians. We say something about home. We argue, we are loud. At the end of it we share something to eat and drink and then go home. To me... it gives me the strength to start the next week. I get a lot of strength and inspiration from those meetings. I go there with my kids, they know every other Cameroonians kids that have been coming there, you know, we are building a future for them. It’s a new generation; the kids already have that connection from the beginning. And they share something in common, so they can build something in the future.” (Registered nurse/lecturer)

“I have a lot of Cameroonian friends maybe that’s why I don’t have Finnish friends because I hang out with people that I understand better, the Finns are nice but[...] We share ideas, experiences(with Cameroonian friends). Someone will give you an idea, like “this is how I handled this situation” [...] They can tell you I know this place...call this number. There are
4.2.2. Strength and Spirituality from the Church

Another emotional support for some is the church; many Cameroonians practice Christianity. Among other Christians there is a sense of belonging, regardless of whether they are Cameroonians, Finnish or any other nationalities; they share the common values that are laid down by their religion.

Being a member of a church provides spiritual strength and serenity even in times of chaos. Some of the respondents serve in typical Lutheran Finnish churches, but most are members of international churches where services are in English. Members of the church referred to each other as brothers no matter their country of origin. The church community organizes fellowships and special events for men, women, the youth and children. It is also a good platform to make friends and get help for general matters, like apartments, connections for employments and such.
Table 5  Strength and Spirituality from the Church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of belonging, enhancement of common values</th>
<th>3/11 interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

“People in my church are so warm and welcoming...As a believer...I have noticed that the typical believer in Finland is almost the same as one from Cameroon. The values don’t really change in that aspect”. (Organic chemist)

“I hang out mostly with friends from my church [...] It’s an international church with tens of nationalities [...]. We organize lots of activities...I sing in the choir every other Sunday it is a great place to be, without that church I don’t know where or what I would be today. [...] We have prayers groups to strengthen each other in any circumstances...we always close our services every Sunday with a buffet for all...which is a great way to chat with friends, meet new people. (Junior software engineer)

“When I moved to Helsinki 4 years ago, I immediately contacted one branch of the same church I used to go to when I lived in Turku...everything went quite smoothly actually[...]I just entered a community of friends who were willing to accommodate me in any way possible. Actually my best friend, Jussi is a Finnish guy I met during my first week[...]Jussi introduced me to my current employer” (Service sales support)

4.2.3. Central Role of Friends and Family Members

The respondents appear to socialize in various circles outside the Cameroonian community as well. They socialize with the Finns, other sub-Saharan Africans countries with whom they have cultural similarities, they also counts several Americans and Asians as their friends. Such people are good to hang out with because they provide substantial advice, help and understanding. They are also good friends to be around for relaxation and fun. For those with families, socialization mostly resume to spending time with wives, husbands, children, or siblings, this latter group only occasionally socialize with outsiders.
### Central Role of Friends and Family Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socialization in various circles</th>
<th>11/11 interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I played football in the past years here so, I know many people and many people know me. I have been coaching also.... That gives me a very wide network. I have close relationships with young players and their parents as well. That’s my way of relaxing myself...it takes away my stress.” (Senior software engineer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I often hang out with my colleagues after work and sometimes we also meet up during weekends to have a beer...&quot;(Market researcher)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I’m a member of the African Association in Jyväskylä. My friends are from everywhere... Nigeria, Zambia, Liberia. We also have a small Cameroonian community association here [...] I work with the city to help new immigrants integrate in the society. During my free times... we have many activities that we always do on weekends. We can go play pool, watch or play football, bowling, Chinese dinner. So we have a lot of things that we do together (Organic chemist)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I spend most of my free time my children, today I took my daughter to her basketball practice...we go there twice a week. And the boys play volleyball on weekends [...], at this stage of my life, my world revolves pretty much around my children...(Pediatrician)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice, love and help</td>
<td>9/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“People who give me emotional support, advice and strength are my wife, my children and my family in Cameroon (Professional chef)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If not for my fiancé, I would have gone from Finland a long time ago when I just had my degree. My fiancé is the reason why I’m here” (Registered Nurse)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I talk to my brother at least once a week[...]he arranged for me to come to Finland[...]I can always turn to him whenever I’m in need of anything...”(Chemist/Medical researcher)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My wife has a very close family, brothers and cousins; they are always ready to help out...(Chemist/Medical researcher)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.3. Practical Support and Employability

4.3.1. Friends’ Help in Integrating into the System

Friends and family do not only provide emotional support but they are also the main source of practical support. They enabled to handle the various administrative issues; their connections were used in finding employments or know people that can provide a professional job. They also advise on education and other practicalities in the society.

However, it is noticeable from the table below that the practical support that the respondents have received from their acquaintances is rather minimal. The understanding of the system and employability mostly come from sources other than families and friends.

Table 7  Friends’ Help in Integrating into the System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>2/11 interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Emma (a Cameroonian friend) was a big motivating factor, because when I came here I wasn’t sure I wanted to be a nurse... you know, I was mostly interested in IT, my sister had studied IT and the IT market had fallen, so she went to the States. Emma and my sister were always pushing me towards nursing. They were like... look around you, there are plenty of people who have masters in law and all that but they clean, they don't have a decent job. If you wanna have a real job, do something different, so that’s how I got here.” (Registered nurse)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When I arrived in Finland, the mother (a Finn) of my first daughter introduced me to some university professors; they looked for possibilities for me to integrate my education and experience into the system” (Pediatrician)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Practicalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My husband had come to Finland 10 years before I did, so I did not really have to find out about anything by myself...</th>
<th>(Professional chef)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

“I leave it to my wife to handle all the administrative stuff because anyway, no matter my great effort to speak the language, I’m a foreigner you know...when it is another Finnish person who is speaking, things run much more smoothly. | (Market researcher) |

### Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“I got one of my first job from Satu (a Finn), a classmate and friend, she introduced me to one of her relatives who had a sort of afterschool center for children...</th>
<th>(Junior Software engineer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

“When I just arrived in Finland, my wife helped me find a job in a small company of some of her friends” | (Market researcher) |

“Finns really are not usually very comfortable hiring people from certain countries, so the normal recruiting routes might not always work for us. So if you know somebody, who knows somebody who is hiring, you have a chance to get a job. The Finnish people trust each other recommendations, if they are told this guy is good, give him a chance. We are to be aware of this reality, we live in a very closed society, you have to find a way to get into the system” | (Senior software engineer) |

“When I was studying in the Oulu University of Applied Sciences, when I was in the second year. I got the first breakthrough of my career in Finland through a Finnish friend. I used to spend a lot of times with my classmates, in the summer of 2002, all the Finnish students had summer jobs in our class. The only option if I were to do something was to move to Helsinki and do a cleaning job. My best friend, a Finn told me he knows a company called CTT... he knew the professor who was the boss, I gave him my CV and then he talked to the professor. That was my 1st breakthrough in my career. I worked there for 2 years. In 2004 I graduated and I had the work experience to apply at Nokia. | (Senior software engineer) |
4.3.2 Opportunities from the Educational Institutions

The professional schools and universities provided remarkable help of various types to some of the respondents. Most of the Cameroonian professionals came to Finland as students, the schools orientation days were considered significant for those who did not have friends of family members in Finland prior to their immigration. The orientation days helped them to find their ways around the city and handle important things like registration at the magistrat, travel card, opening a bank account, finding an apartment. Albeit helpful, this orientation day was by many considered insufficient to function properly in the society, for those the other Africans immigrants provided precious information on little subtleties that made a great difference in their adaptation.

What was considered very important for employability are the practical trainings and the internships organized by the universities and professional schools. However, the practical trainings organized by the professional schools were more effective in the sense that they had pre-arranged a place for every student in various organizations, whereas in universities students had to look for internships by themselves, which rarely succeeded. The professional chef and medical personnel already had the necessary Finnish work experience to be able to work in Finland even before they graduated. Many of them even continued working in their respective internship places.

The university professors were also mentioned as being a good source of employment; two of the respondents were recruited as researchers or substitute professors, the university professors also often had connections to recruiters or managers of companies. In addition professors can provide a good recommendation for the immigrant job seeker who would not normally be considered at all because of his or foreign background. Moreover, alumni students from the schools and universities have also helped by bringing job opportunities to the students of their formal school. Having connections was deemed necessary for employability because it was believed that Finns have a hard time trusting foreigners.
Table 8  Opportunities from the Educational Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation day from the university</th>
<th>3/interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“At the university we had the student tutoring, to show you around., where u live, where the shops are, to do you registration, to open your bank account and stuff like that. This tutoring was quite helpful for the very important things; it is for the small things that it was quite difficult. You know this tutoring it was done by Finns and you know they don’t really know our culture and they cannot relate to you in that sense. Fortunately they were few Africans there. Some of them really helped us and advised us, they told us those things that the Finns would usually ignore or not even think about”. (Organic chemist)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practical training, universities partnering with companies</th>
<th>4/11 interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Already during my studies we did lots of internships, and through those internships we got some connections. My school has helped a great deal because they organized all those internships; the school was sending us to hotels, restaurants…” (Professional chef)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I had been working as a medical doctor for several years in Cameroon […] After I arrived, I took 6 months of intensive Finnish courses and after that I was working and studying at the same time in order to learn more about the Finnish medical system. I would for example have some courses certain weeks and others I would spend at hospital. […] It was all part of my training. (Pediatrician)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was working at the University as an assistant after my studies, I was teaching chemistry[…].And then we had a project with Orion Pharma and it lasted 2 years, after that they wanted to develop the project further[…] that’s why they asked me to start working for them” (Chemist /Medical researcher)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Professors’ connections and alumni | 2/11 interviewees

“When I came here, I started doing a master, I was fortunate to do well in the master so I was offered a doctorate position. I was also fortunate to do well in my dissertation and immediately after I finished I was offered a position here. I did not really search that much, it was just coming to me. My example is one of those exceptional ones, I was lucky even if I worked hard”. (Organic chemist)

“I found my current work quite easily actually. There was a girl who had graduated two years earlier from my school and they were looking for someone in the restaurant where she was working, so she asked one of our teachers if she knew someone who will be good for that task, and my teacher chose me...I have been working there for four years now”. (Professional chef)

4.3.3. Finnish Skills or the Right Education

Another very important aspect that emerged from the various discussions is the issue of the right education. Not all educations give immigrants a job in Finland. When one has the right degree in a field where there is a need for employees, a job is obtained right away no matter if the person speaks Finnish or not. Finnish language skills played a major role only in the recruitment of two of the studied professionals. For most, their education and their knowledge of English were sufficient to secure them a good job. In the health industry, the lack of workers forces hospital, retirement homes and other health services to hire people even with little Finnish skills. Such employees learn the language gradually as they handle their day-to-day tasks. Having an education in fields where employees are sought definitively facilitates integration into the working life. The nurses and professional chefs started working already during their study times and had already gathered enough experience by the time they graduated that they could basically choose where they wanted to work, and they are still constantly receiving new job offers.

Nevertheless, Finnish language is widely recognized as the key to integration by those who speak or do not speak Finnish. Knowing Finnish is supposed to open many doors in various life spheres. The ability to learn Finnish is considered a question of attitude
because people who try hard enough and who consider it necessary manage to speak fluent Finnish. Also, the general experience is that the Finns appreciate people who make the effort in learning their language, they take those people more seriously because they see it as a proof that they want to integrate in this society. Even the professionals that did not need Finnish at work and do not speak the language fluently claimed that they would consider themselves completely integrated only when they will master the Finnish language.

One noteworthy point that emerges from the Finnish language discussion is that learning Finnish is not very much encouraged by the universities. The few basic courses available in some of the businesses and IT, nursing, culinary schools were considered insufficient to help communicate and definitively inadequate to practice one’s profession in Finnish. Furthermore, the respondents considered that the society at large is not often conducive to speaking Finnish, since most people speak English in Finland.

Table 9  Finnish Skills or Right Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hired with basic Finnish skills in positions requiring fluent Finnish</th>
<th>4/11 interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I can honestly say that when they took me to work I could barely speak any Finnish but they know that at work we learn a lot. Everything I know, I learnt it in the work environment” (Registered nurse)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They knew that my Finnish wasn’t so good and they knew I would definitively keep improving because I had the foundation. I could communicate to an extent, I was using verbal and non verbal communication, I had a dictionary with me so that if there was a word I didn’t understand, I will easily check from there”. (Registered nurse/Lecturer)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in English</td>
<td>5/11 interviewees</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My work doesn’t require any Finnish at all but it might certainly help to speak some because they are some clients we get that don’t really speak English that well”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My job is completely done in English, Finnish wouldn’t really help me in any way, but Swedish would certainly help because most of my colleagues are Swedish speaking”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“I work in an international team and my colleagues are from all over the world...”</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The official language of our company is English anyway”.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoke fluent Finnish when hired</th>
<th>2/11 interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I speak fluent Finnish because I studied in Otaniemi in Finnish, I took intensive Finnish courses for a year before I started studying ...My work is completely in Finnish except when I am invited to seminars or requested by my employer to go have a presentation abroad in English or French...Or to deal with some international partner”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I speak good Finnish, it is as perfect as it would be if I was born here, but yeah I have been working in Finnish from the beginning”.</td>
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</table>
## The importance of Finnish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11/11 interviewees</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“When you live in a foreign country, you need to speak the language because if you don’t, there is a certain limit, a barrier between you and the people of that country”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If from the start I could have had that opportunity to speak the language as fluent, I would have gone places here. If we could speak the language as well even if we would study something else than nursing we would have jobs! Knowing the language will help you”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My number one advice is to learn the Finnish language. It’s a very difficult language but not one that’s impossible to learn. Always challenge yourself and ask yourself that if that person can, why can’t I, and put it deep into you that it’s a tool for my integration”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t think I considered myself completely integrated in this society until I’m fluent in Finnish”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Hindrance in Finnish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7/11 interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“When I came to Finland, most people at KELA and the employment office did not speak any English at all, but these days, everyone at the service desk seems to be fluent in English”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To get a student visa to Germany, you must study...you must pass the test and know German but for Finland we did not even know that it was an important thing to know or learn the language... It would have helped a lot more if I would have studied Finnish before coming here”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The one or two basic courses that were offered at my university didn’t really help me to get far”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My work is in English, I speak English with my friends and my language with my family...which means I have very little exposure to Finnish...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4. Success as a Result of Good Leadership in Organizations

The main idea of this dimension is that Cameroonian professionals that have managed to do well professionally have been enabled by great leaders in their respective organizations. These are their boss, recruiter, or responsible supervisors that have recognized the talent they possess and have presented them with interesting career prospects. The working environment is however very different between pure Finnish organizations where six of the professionals are employed, and international firms which are the work place of five of the respondents.

4.4.1. Heavy Atmosphere in Finnish Working Environment

There were 6 out of 11 professionals working in organizations where Finnish is the working language. They considered the atmosphere very heavy in such workplaces, when all the other employees are mostly Finns, the work tasks and socialization held in Finnish. In such a milieu, there are often cultural clashes with Finnish colleagues as they do not accept things being different from what they are accustomed to. From the Cameroonian part, there was perception of alienation especially in the beginning of employment. There are also reported work sabotage and discriminative comments. The shared experience of the two professionals that had positions of authority was that the Finnish colleagues were not very receptive of a Cameroonian being their boss.

The situation is even worse when the Cameroonian professional do not quite master the Finnish language. Socialization is quite limited with the Finnish colleagues, leaving them mostly feeling like outsiders. When confrontation arises they took the blame because they were unable to present good arguments in Finnish for their defense. The work place in those cases is a stressful environment where immigrants are trying to learn the job tasks, learn the language and fit in. Such workers also feel the need to compensate for their lack of perfect Finnish language skills by working even harder.

Moreover, customers also do contribute to the uneasiness at work as they sometimes have difficulties being served by the Cameroonian workers. It is again boils down to the issue of trust and the fear of the unknown.
Table 10  Heavy Atmosphere in Finnish Working Environments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clashes with Finnish colleagues, perception of alienation</th>
<th>4/6 interviewees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“When I started working as a registered nurse, I got a lot of teasing from the Finnish practical nurses; they did not like the fact that I was at a higher level than theirs...”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I had this tendency... I used to refer to my colleagues and patients as “my dear”, in the beginning I had some problems with the Finnish nurses because they thought that I'm flirting with the client if I'm calling them “my dear”(Registered nurse/Lecturer)</td>
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<td>“My colleagues are bit jealous, let's say it's the way the Finns are, when they see someone else go forward, they are a bit jealous, but it is normal because they are scared ...you see, you just arrived, they think you shouldn't come and occupy their place but my work speaks for itself. It's my work that has helped me to keep my place here...There are some small lab assistants that have tried to sabotage my work but you have to remain above all that because if you start fighting with people that call you “neekeri” that won’t take you anywhere. I know myself that the value of a man is not on its skin color but in what goes on in his head. But the small people when they are overwhelmed...they want to show that difference. I'm white you are black.” (Chemist/Medical researcher)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Like in every society, there will always be people who will give you the evil eye (laugh). There were colleagues who were always asking me: when are you going back to your country?” (Pediatrician)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“It was difficult to get into a team because some Finnish nurses did not want to work with me, which made me feel so bad. [...]There was once a situation with some medicine in our team and one nurse complained that we made a mistake because she didn't understand what I was saying. I just said ok. [...] It is sometimes hard and so stressful when I have to go to work, my brains are working so much [...] if I can't express myself, I rather stay quiet. Sometimes I find myself sitting alone quiet...” (Registered nurse)</td>
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4.4.2. Great Atmosphere in International Firms

Unlike the pure Finnish speaking working environments, the rest of the 5 professionals sing the praises of the international companies where the working language is English, and where there are several other foreigners. The atmosphere is labeled as great, relaxed, fantastic... The work colleagues and team mates are considered friends, workers socialize at work and discuss personal matters in the coffee rooms, and they

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Hard work for lack of Finnish skills</th>
<th>4/6 interviewees</th>
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<tr>
<td>“I'm hard working, I show interest in the job even when I find it difficult” I make up for not speaking perfect Finnish. So that they (employer and colleagues) don’t see it as a problem. They can always say “at least she can do the job [...] If someone says I need help here! I just go there, can you do this? I’m on it right away. I don’t go for hours on breaks, I just work, work and I think that, that’s what most foreigners do, when they can’t speak so well, they decide to just work.(laugh) so that they won’t have anything to complain about”. (Professional chef)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Clientele’s uneasiness</th>
<th>2/6 interviewees</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Like yesterday I went to a patient room and his wife was sitting here and the woman visibly shook when she saw a black nurse coming in. She said “a black nurse!” of course she tried to be quiet but I heard her. I’m so used to that type of comments that it didn’t even bother me. She looked as me distastefully; you could see that she wasn’t sure if she wanted me to touch her husband. But I understand that here in the countryside, there are not too fond of foreigners, there are some people who have never talked to a black person. I took one guy to the shower the other day because you have to help them basically with everything and first he was very shy... I tried to tell him that “I’m taking care of you today” and then after everything was done and I took him back to his bed, he told me “I’m going to tell my friends that a black woman gave me a shower for the first time” and I laughed...” (Registered nurse)</td>
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also meet each other after work for a drink or a dinner. The workers perceive that they have equal chances in their career. The teams often comprise different nationalities; they are rewarded equally and are all accountable for their success or mistakes.

Table 11  Great Atmosphere in International Firms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special bond with team members, equality among workers</th>
<th>5/5 interviewees</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The atmosphere at work is quite friendly, I do not feel like an outsider or a foreigner at all, maybe because everyone speak English at work, I'm quite at ease with everyone [...] Being a foreigner hasn't really influenced in anyway my career path, I was hired because of the skills I have and I don't see myself any less compared to my Finnish colleagues. We work in English, thus their being native Finnish speakers do not necessarily favor them in the day to day tasks&quot;. (Junior software engineer)</td>
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<td>The atmosphere at work is brilliant, we have so many nationalities here, my colleagues are quite nice, if you run into some trouble they will help and if they don’t have the answer, they will know someone who has the answer(Organic chemist)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The atmosphere at work is very comfortable, we are not only colleagues, we are also friends, we can sit down and talk over coffee. Share opinions about general things. Very relax, it is not always about the job, we have a real bond because we work here mostly as a team. We do something good, we are rewarded as a team, and if we screw up, we are accountable as a team as well”. (Senior software engineer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Things are good, everybody is guided by the principles of the Bible, the true sense of knowledge, how to treat your fellow people. In the morning we have our morning coffee with worship that is something most companies cannot offer you: work and time to pray... (Service sales support)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Socialization after work</th>
<th>4/5 interviewees</th>
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<tr>
<td>“ At work we often organized some events when we just all come together and relax, such as dinners at a restaurant, barbecue, cruises ...”(Professional chef)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“My colleagues are quite nice, we often meet after work or on weekends to have a beer” (Market researcher)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“ We often see each other on weekends” (Senior software engineer)</td>
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</table>
4.4.3. Career Opportunities for all Talented Workers

Whether they are employed in domestic or international organizations, the interviewed professionals believe in the special skills they possess, they firmly believe that their foreign background bring something new to the organization they work for. Many of them had studied for other degrees before coming to Finland, thus they bring knowledge from other fields to their current positions. Most Cameroonian speak French and English fluently, which is an asset in international firms. Their culture and international experience make them more fit to handle certain pressures in their workplace. Being a foreigner makes them more open minded and more ready to embrace differences than people who have lived in the same environment all their life.

The professionals that work in pure Finnish environment and those in international companies all see good career opportunities for themselves in those organizations. Good career prospects for all are often guaranteed by an exemplary behavior shown by the managers or superiors in those organizations. So the bosses in general treat them with fairness, encourage them in their work and give them promotion when they deserve it. The employer appreciates above all hard work and they compensate those employees who can deliver good results regardless of their nationality. The direct supervisors have been generally referred to as perfect, nice, fair by the interviewees.

It also worth noting that specific diversity management programs tailored to help the integration of immigrants in their work place were non-existent. Immigrants’ induction to the work process, tasks and environment were not different from the induction of the nationals. Assimilation to the main stream culture is generally the practice. However, in international organizations the mainstream or dominant culture at the work place was not necessarily the Finnish culture, those organization had their own company’s culture, wherein aspects such the general code of conducts, equal opportunities rules were to be adhered to by all.

Finally, working hard and being a role model for other immigrants was seen as a virtue, not only for one’s personal development but also to pave the way for newcomers who are still seeking to adapt in this environment. Living an exemplary life boils down to showing commitment, making a difference and eventually breaking stereotypes and prejudices.
### Table 12  Career Opportunities for all Talented Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The importance of a good boss</th>
<th>9/11 interviewees</th>
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<tr>
<td>“At beginning I had a mentor, an old Finnish friend from school, he helped me like a friend because we used to have each other back, back in school. It was a very relaxed atmosphere. He taught me the job as a good friend. We spent a lot of time going out on weekends. I did not have any pressure.” (Senior software engineer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I haven’t received a promotion but I have been working only for about half a year. But I do see it as an option in the future. I was told by my direct boss that if I managed to accomplish a certain series of tasks, it is most likely that I will be promoted.” (Junior Software engineer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“My boss, I always say is one of the reasons where I’m where I’m today, because she saw something in me and gave me the opportunity. So there were some responsibilities, some things I did, and I couldn’t have done those things if my boss didn’t trust me and gave me those responsibilities. And if I didn’t take those responsibilities, I wouldn’t have grown, that’s what I always tell to people that there is no way you can grow if you are not challenged”(Registered nurse/Lecturer)</td>
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<td>“With my boss everything is perfect, she always tell me that I have a special place in her heart (laugh)... In this country, when you do your job well, you are given the due respect. (Chemist/Medical researcher)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Advantage of being a foreigner</th>
<th>10/11 Interviewees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I bring diversity... I have travelled a lot. I am more fluent in English than some of my Finnish colleagues. I have 3 to 4 international trips every year. Last year I was a guest lecturer at one of the university in Berlin for 2 months... I bring a lot of different experiences to my unit”(Organic chemist)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Those who are curious have appreciated what I brought in the kitchen. We have the African weeks at our restaurant when I cook African food. There are some people who are really interested in other cultures and they also want to hear about Cameroon”(Professional Chef)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“My team adopted me right away because I had some new ideas and when I presented my...” (Professional Chef)</td>
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Exemplary life for others

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<tr>
<th>4/11 interviewees</th>
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<tr>
<td>“What we do here, it stigmatizes the lives of others. We need to live an exemplary life. For example, in our laboratory when one talks about Africans it is generally positively, they say they are people that are committed, they work hard…” (Medical researcher/Lecturer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In this institution, I was the first Cameroonian and there was a time where there were so many other Cameroonians… I always told them that you should leave a good impression as I did so that you will not mess it up for other Cameroonians. I can tell you for a fact that at the end of the day those are the things that make the difference…” (Registered nurse/Lecturer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Unfortunately, when Africans have made news in the past, it was always about the bad things they have done, if we could change that and start projecting a better image of ourselves and break those stereotypes…. As I said this integration is two sided, the host society has a lot to do to help immigrants integrate but immigrants themselves have a lot to do to integrate into the systems. One cannot succeed without the other!” (Organic chemist)</td>
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4.5. The Socio-Cultural Adaptation Model

The outcome of the data analysis is a model with four fundamental dimensions that explained the experiences shared by Cameroonians that are employed in Finland (See figure 7). At the heart of the model, is **individual adaptability**. Socio-cultural
adaptation is very much a question of immigrants’ ability to adapt. Immigrants adults who originate from societies with different set of values, norms, behavioral patterns and languages often find themselves caught between the person they were in their home country and the person they are expected to be upon integrating in the new society. The strike for balance often results in an altercation of identity, because for very culturally distant societies and especially when there are inherent and obvious physical dissimilarities between immigrants and nationals, complete assimilation into the host society is unlikely. Consequently, a bold personality type is essential to take on the numerous adaptation challenges.

The individual adaptability dimension is affected by emotional and practical support from family, friends, networks and educational institutions. They are very significant for the well-being and employability of foreign professionals. They are a source of entertainment, fun and relaxation and they provide advice on practicalities. The ethnic community is a network conducive for identity strengthening and a setting for the immigrants to reminisce former life, to discuss current events which helped them stay abreast of life in home countries. The church also emerges as a network providing spirituality, a sense of belonging to his members. The universities support immigrants that arrive as students by introducing them to the Finnish ways, as well as providing internship and practical trainings opportunities, which for many result in employment.

Consequently, an adaptable individual with the necessary emotional and practical support has the necessary strength and equilibrium to perform well at the workplace. Individual adaptability, as well as emotional and practical support affects not only employability but also success at the workplace. Success as a result of great leadership in organizations is thus the final point of the model. It describes the dynamics of the workplace where immigrants are employed and especially the condition for their good performance. Success at work is however not solely a question of employees’ skills but the employing firm also need to provide a proper structure for all employees to show their capabilities. The international organizations (small or large) are undoubtedly pioneering the diversity management trend by recognizing the contribution of talents from all over the world to their competitive advantage, the atmosphere in such work environment is generally welcoming and favorable for career development for all employees. However, in some domestic and in-ward looking organizations, foreign employees often have more problems integrating especially when
they are not fluent in the local language. Consequently, regardless of whether the organization is international or inward oriented, an especially good leadership is required in those organizations that employed foreign workers in order to be able to effectively harvest the various unique talents that they possessed and thereby offer attractive career prospects to foreign professionals. Therefore, leaders, managers and direct supervisors of the foreign professionals are best positioned to identify their special capabilities and provide opportunities for career development.

Figure 7  The Socio-Cultural Adaptation Model

- **Emotional Support**
  - Socialization in the Cameroonian community
  - Strength and spirituality from the church
  - Central role of friends and family members

- **Practical Support and Employability**
  - Finnish friends and family
  - Universities and schools
  - Finnish skills or right education

- **Individual Adaptability**
  - Strike for balance
  - Bold personality type

- **Success as Result of Good Leadership in Organizations**
  - Heavy atmosphere in Finnish working environments
  - Great atmosphere in international firms
  - Career opportunities for all talented employees
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study on Cameroonian skilled workers in Finland definitively sheds new lights on the activities of Africans in Europe, since they have in the past made headlines mostly on negative issues. Their illegal flows into Europe have been much reported (Hatton and Williamson 2003), the extreme poverty that is ravaging the continent has been lengthily discussed, as well as the slow economic growth and increasing unemployment rate (Fleisher 2007; The International Labor Organization 2003). The settlement of Cameroonian professionals in Finland is especially worth studying as the obvious socio-cultural differences between the two countries constitute grounds for an interesting research.

Socio-cultural adaptation engenders common challenges for individuals regardless of the circumstances surrounding their migration as they try to deal with being uprooted from their comfort zone and learn cultural patterns of their new environment. Thus, the disparity between what is familiar and comfortable, and the unknown of their new milieu often renders it difficult to function adequately. (Kim 2001:4) This thesis sought to expand our knowledge on the various ways culturally distant immigrants adapt to the Finnish society. The Cameroonian professionals that were the sample in this study shared their experiences on the circumstances surrounding their adjustment. The ultimate objective was to be able to give answers to the research questions that were put forward:

1. How are the immigrants adapting to the Finnish culture and to what extent do they maintain affiliation to the Cameroonian culture?

2. What is their social support system?

3. How have they adjusted to the Finnish society with respect to satisfaction in life and employment

4. How can the Finnish society and employers support the acculturation of Cameroonian immigrants so that they can contribute to society and economic productivity?

The analysis of the Cameroonian professionals stories, have led to a model that consists of four key parts with Individual Adaptability at the center, surrounded by the Emotional Support, Practical Support and Employability, and last but not the least,
Success as a Result of Good Leadership in Organizations. Research on sub-Saharan professionals is scarce; consequently, the findings of this thesis present an initial grounding, which can be the basis for further theoretical developments that explicate the rise of the Sub-Saharan professionals in western societies. Furthermore, more light was shed in general on adjustment patterns of foreign professionals in Finland.

5.1. Adapting to the Finnish Culture and Maintenance of Affiliation to the Cameroonian Culture

An insight into the specifics of the literature on the acculturation of immigrants reveals that the bidimensional model of acculturation (Berry 2003) is more descriptive than the unidimensional model (Gordon 1964) of the adjustment of foreigners in current modern societies. The Cameroonian professionals in this study have also to a certain extent followed this trend. They have managed to retain affiliation to their culture thanks to the Cameroonian community and family members in Finland, frequent phone calls and visits to Cameroon, and internet pages providing details on current events in Cameroon. On the whole the studied professionals cannot be considered assimilated (completely absorbed in the Finnish culture), they are neither separated (avoided contacts with the nationals), nor marginalized (not interested in either the Cameroonian or the Finnish culture), or integrated (maintained their original culture when interacting with others). This implies that unlike Berry (2003)’s model, they do not necessarily fit in one box, albeit the majority wish to be integrated. Their acculturation mode is one which is separated and assimilated at the same time. In other words, they practice assimilation and inhibit the obvious traits of their own culture at work or during interaction with the nationals, whereas they are separated or exhibit the Cameroonian behavioral patterns in the comfort of their home or among other Cameroonians. It thus boils down to behaving according to Finns when one is among Finns so that they would not appeared as odd, and returning to their old self when one is with other Cameroonians whether here in Finland or when visiting Cameroon.

10 out of 11 interviewees are firmly holding on to their Cameroonian identity, which makes complete assimilation to the Finnish society unlikely. This is probably exacerbated by the fact that they are always asked where they are from even for those who have spent most of their life in Finland and speak Finnish fluently. This is certainly
explained by their extreme visibility, because of their racial difference. Being asked
where they come from is a constant reminder that there are not from here. This result
confirms the findings of Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) and Berry (2003) that
immigrant groups that have different physical features from the nationals experience
more integration constraints and perceive more discrimination (e.g. Koreans in
Canada, Turks in Germany and Somalis in Finland). Socialization with other
Cameroonian is crucial because it is a great way of “being themselves”, and especially
to be among people who go through more or less the same challenges and who
therefore can understand them better. Similarly, Chioneso (2008) had previously found
out that ethnic communities can serve as insulation against racism, sexism and
capitalism for the African immigrants in western societies.

Individual adaptability proves to be one of the foremost criteria for integration. Indeed
the respondents displayed certain specific attributes that have favored their socio-
cultural adaptation in Finland, which confirms the finding of Portes and Zhou (1993)
Poston (1994), and Portes and Rumbaut (1996). Those scholars posited that there are
certain inherent and acquired attributes that are essential for the socioeconomic
success of immigrants; such as educational performance, hard work, and utter
willpower. The studied professionals are in possession of either both a bachelor degree
and a professional degree, two bachelor degrees, a master degree or PhD. Moreover,
they have been an exemplary student, which has led to some being offered a PHD
student position, being handpicked for a job by a teacher, or being offered a job in a
leading Finnish company after an impressive performance in a university project.
Furthermore they have shown determination in their willingness to learn the Finnish
language, they have demonstrated boldness and presented themselves to future
employers even when there were no advertised job openings. Their adaptation is also a
matter of interest in the type of activities that Finns practice, e.g. ice hockey, barbecue
parties, cruise trips. A special appreciation is shown also to Finnish values such as:
honesty and being on time.

Their exposure to the Finnish culture started during their studies, when they socialized
with Finnish students. As they started working, the induction period was a time when
they learned the practicalities at work as well as the behavior that is expected from
them. Moreover, many of the informants have Finnish spouses and partners, which
also is an advantage in immersing oneself in the Finnish culture.
5.2. Immigrants’ Social Support System

A social support system has been fundamental in the socio economic adaptation of Cameroonian professionals in Finland. Their social networks are their family in Finland (spouse, children, brothers and sisters), their friends (Cameroonian, Finns, and other immigrants), colleagues at work, professors and teachers in universities and schools, as well as the church. In their 2004 study, Jovanovic, Aleksandric, Dunjic, and Todorovic presented how much human beings yearn for belonging in a group, and immigrants especially because of the lost of the connection with their cultural roots can develop acculturative stress. Accordingly, Cameroonians have relied on their support system for their adjustment. The family members and close friends are the major source of emotional support; they provide love, strength and friendship. But they also provide practical support in the form of advice on education, practicalities and administrative issues. Friends and family members’ personal connections have also helped to find employment. However, other Cameroonians served as connections for employment only in jobs requiring low skills like cleaning and mail delivery, which were generally the very first jobs for most.

Numerous studies have presented the collectivist character of the African culture; Africans strive for interpersonal connection, emotional interdependence, collective needs and harmony (Hofstede 1991, Beugré and Offodile 2001, Mbaku 2005). It thus did not come as a surprise that the Cameroonian immigrants as they arrive in Finland seek the company of other Cameroonians. Accordingly, the Cameroonian community is one of the principal sources of emotional support. Even though all the respondents are not officially members of the association, many still take part in the open parties organized by the association or the private events organized by its members, which has led to basically most if not all Cameroonians meeting each other and many befriending one another.

Similar to the studies of Chioneso (2008) and Edin, Fredriksson and Ålund (2003), the existence of an ethnic community has also in this case been a platform for entertainment, identity retention, sharing of information; it is also a forum for learning and discussing social and political events in Cameroon and introducing the Cameroonian culture to their children. Previous studies have already stressed the importance of traditional ethnic values to immigrants’ children. Adherence to traditional ethnic values was positively related to the well-being of immigrant
adolescents in Finland; acculturative stress and behavior-related problems were altogether decreased (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000)

It is worth mentioning that the Cameroonian association was seen as helpful in providing information to newcomers. For the professionals in this study who have been in Finland for several years, it was mostly a source of entertainment. When they arrived in this country they did not know any Cameroonian who had successfully gone through the acculturation process and who could have provided them with sound advice on how to better adjust in this society. As a result, they mostly relied on all the help they could get from Finns and other immigrants. They are responsible for pioneering the association in order to unite all Cameroonian living in Finland. The newcomers on the other hand have received considerable help from the older immigrants in terms of work and accommodation. One of the most estimated types of advice is education in the right field. They stress the importance in studying nursing to ensure employability; other professional studies (e.g. cooking) and science related field are as well considered better than for example law or business.

The recent years have however seen the dislocation of the Cameroonian association. There exists now several other sub groups that unify Cameroonians from the same tribe, the same province, who also share the same language. There is stronger identification with tribal groups than with other Cameroonians, which confirms the findings of Takyi-Asiedu (1993) and those of Beugré and Offodile (2001). They also noted that for many people, there is stronger commitment towards individuals from the same ethnic group than with the rest. That separation is especially true for important matters, but the Cameroonian association is still the main venue for festivities and major celebrations (e.g. National Day), also it is good starting point for newcomers.

Mullan (1989) has suggested that there is an unwritten rule among migrants, requiring that important information that might facilitate the migration process be shared. This point has been also proven true in this study. Other immigrants and especially those from other sub-Saharan countries have been a source for friendship and practical advice in integrating the system. The respondents mentioned their Nigerian, American, Ghanaian, Phillipino friends to have been of great support in their adjustment.

Religious organizations play a certain role in the adaptation of the Cameroonian immigrants, though only few of the professionals relied on the church for socialization, spiritual guidance, strength and comfort. One important source of practical support
that emerged from this study was the role of the educational institutions for the adaptation of foreign students. The entire sample in this thesis research underwent some type of education in Finland, ranging from mere intensive Finnish language and Finnish working life courses to doctoral studies. For those immigrants that arrive in the country as students, the orientation day was the first step towards understanding how the system works. The internship and practical trainings were considered important introductions to the Finnish working life and more importantly, they provided the necessary Finnish working experience, which is crucial when looking for employment. Finally, the professors and teachers have also been great source of employment by either hiring the students or by providing connections to companies.

5.3. Adjustment to the Finnish Society with Respect to Satisfaction in Life and Employment

5.3.1. Cultural Adjustment

Cross-cultural adaptation in new societies has been presented as a function of psychological and behavioral adjustments (Ward and Kennedy 1993), which are generally measured by dimensions such as language competence, identification with host society and behavioral participation (Birman, Trickett and Virnokurov 2002). If the Cameroonian professionals that took part are assessed according to such measures, their socio-cultural adaptation would be considered negative for the majority. Few of them speak Finnish fluently, all of them have retained their Cameroonian identity. Although they admitted that they have adopted many behavioral patterns of the Finnish society (being silent, being on time, sitting at the back row in meetings, not interrupt others in discussions, being independent/individualistic), they also acknowledge to reverse to their old self in many ways when they are among other Cameroonians. Consequently, the language competence, identification and behavioral participation dimensions are to a certain extent inadequate to represent the adjustment mode of Cameroonians in Finland. The professionals are nevertheless satisfied with their life, having a steady job, a good social network and a family for them signifies that they have adjusted well, thus they are quite content with themselves.

Hofstede (1991) has stated that the African culture is essentially collectivist that is the achievement within a group has greater significance than the individual success.
Indeed for many their achievements being recognized within the Cameroonians community seem to carry great importance. One point that was recurrent in many discussions was the fact that the parties organized by the association were also a great venue to show off fancy cars, party limousines, and expensive outfits.

Although, the professionals believed they have adapted quite well in this society, the majority do not feel themselves integrated to the society. The ones who do not speak very good Finnish especially perceived that the lack of Finnish language skills interfere with their integration. Learning Finnish is thus the remaining barrier to tackle for a complete integration. Nevertheless, there are many that also consider complete adaptation to this culture impossible no matter their level of Finnish skills. Furthermore, there are certain aspects of this country that they are still frowning upon. Adjustment to the Finnish winter is still a challenge even after many years. The tendency of Finns to drink important amount of alcohol is still surprising for many female Cameroonians. Teenager and women smoking remain a shocking issue for some because in Cameroon, that is considered almost an abomination.

The difference in the fundamental values and norms between the Cameroonian and the Finnish culture certainly renders complete integration difficult. These findings concur with previous studies that stated that a successful cross-cultural adaptation is a function of cultural fit between the home country and the host country culture (Ward, Weining and Chang 1997; Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000). But this cultural fit suggestion only works to a certain extent, because the professionals’ conception of adaptation differs slightly from the mainstream definition. As was said earlier, they do not believe their cross-cultural adaptation is a question of Finnish language skills, identification and behavioral participation. Their adaptation and well-being is a question of having a job, a family and good friends here in Finland. Consequently, for them adaptation is not emulating the Finns completely but it is about creating an environment wherein they can remain themselves and function well without being a nuisance to the society.

5.3.2. Adjustment with Career

The respondents all claimed to be satisfied with their career as well. The situation is however quite different amongst those that are working in an international environment with many other foreigners and English as a working language, and those in domestics workplaces where the working language is Finnish. The atmosphere in the
international firms is one of camaraderie, interesting work tasks, international work trips, perception of self efficacy, good career prospects.

- Adjustment in Domestic Organizations

Cameroonian employees employed in domestic organizations with Finnish as the working language complained about the heaviness of the atmosphere in such environments. It is stressful to work and communicate with others when one does not master the Finnish language. This concern was already raised by Vehaskari (2010), she advanced that local companies see hiring a foreigner as a challenge because they are worried about potential language barriers when communicating with co-workers, managers and clients. Cameroonian with faltering Finnish skills also experienced alienation, discrimination especially in the beginning of their employment. They complained about Finnish colleagues teasing them and not wanting to be on the same team with them when work tasks were distributed, they took responsibility for mistakes they did not commit because they were unable to clearly express themselves. A previous study by Laurén and Wrede (2008) as quoted in Vehaskari (2010) also showed similar evidence of discrimination in Finnish workplaces; Finnish colleagues were said to create an informal hierarchy of work tasks for their own benefits. The Cameroonian employees in the current study dreaded going to work and felt much stressed out as a result. They did not socialize much at work, they spent coffee and lunch breaks alone, or skipped breaks altogether and kept themselves very busy at work.

The lack of good Finnish skills certainly inhibits integration and socialization at work. But, interestingly, racial transgressions were also experienced by Cameroonian that have close to native Finnish language skills. Cases of perceived discrimination among foreigners employed in Finnish organizations have already been presented by previous research. In the studies by Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) and Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti and Perhoniemi (2007), foreign workers experienced discrimination in terms of career advancement, discharge from work, racial transgressions and harassment in the workplace even though they were fluent in Finnish.

Croker and Major (1989) and Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) have concluded that the devaluation and stigmatization of foreign workers leads to drawbacks, damage to their self-esteem and self-concept. Such workers often feel powerless and incapable to influence their career path. Contrary to those studies, the Cameroonian professionals did not experience such inability to control their career path. They chose to react by
working hard on their Finnish languages to improve their self-efficacy, and by trying to excel at their work tasks to prove that they are good workers despite their difference. They believed in the fairness of the system and felt they could advance in their career without major obstacles. Such confidence has been created by their managers and direct superiors who have shown great appreciation of the input they bring in their respective organization. Indeed, Björkman; Evans and Pucik (2010) have previously explained how the shift towards the knowledge economy, the demographic changes worldwide and the decrease in the availability of employees in many western economies pressures companies to recruit talents from emerging countries.

Moreover, Scullion and Collings (2006) have added that hiring culturally and gender diverse employees was the only way to guarantee a good pool of talents in organizations. Accordingly, the superiors of the Cameroonian workers in Finnish domestic organizations have given them positive feedback, they frequently enquired about their wellbeing at work, they gave them opportunities to develop their skills and grow. They have been given the chance to apply the knowledge they have gathered from their previous studies in their current workplace (e.g. A nurse with an IT degree was the headperson of new medical software). Some of the organizations have perceived their diversity as a competitive advantage (Cameroonian recipes included in the menu of a Finnish restaurant, the molecules of Cameroonian herbs and tree barks examined in a laboratory in Finland). Some have been promoted to leadership positions and the ones who have not see it as a possibility in the future. Esty, Griffin and Hirsch (1995) have previously established that when workers do not perceive themselves as valued contributors to the firm, their conscientiousness, involvement and innovativeness is significantly sapped. On the contrary, thanks to good leadership in their respective organizations, the respondents in this research felt they had full control on their career path despite the negativity on some colleagues and subordinates.

Another explanation to their resilience is the fact that the Cameroonian professionals consider themselves fortunate to have jobs that match their academic achievement. The unemployment rate among foreigners in Finland is reported at 29 % (Statistic Finland 2010). In Cameroon, the situation is not better as the majority of the population comprises young people seeking for employment opportunities (Fleisher 2008). The Cameroonian professionals are very well aware of those facts; consequently they are making sure to retain a foothold in the organizations where they are employed. They
display conscientiousness, willingness to learn and hard work, which have earned them the trust of their superior.

- **Adjustment in International Organizations**

About half of the respondents were employed in international organizations with English as the working language. For those individuals, the situation was quite the opposite of the one in pure domestic organizations. The professionals in international organizations were completely integrated in the workplace. The workplace comprises numerous nationalities and the atmosphere at work is described as “friendly”, “great” and “brilliant”. The co-workers and team members support each other and also socialize after work. Half of those organizations have extensive operations in the global setting, thus have a clearly defined diversity management program with norms, value and code of conducts that are prevalent all through the organizations. As was verbalized in numerous earlier studies, diversity management is seen as positively affecting productivity, employee motivation, creativity and innovation, teamwork and problem solving, customer satisfaction, as well as overall competitiveness (Arredondo 1996; Lorbiecki and Jack 2000; Sippola 2007)

The other half of international organizations that employed Cameroonian professionals in this study were small organizations with no clearly defined diversity management programs but their line of activities (IT) forced them to have a global mindset. Those companies practiced what was coined by Trux (2010) as “silent diversity” that is they recruit and value their culturally different employees even though they appear to lack an established diversity management program in place.

The Cameroonians working in both domestic and international firms have integrated themselves at their work place by adopting the standard policies and practices laid by their employers. In the domestic organizations they were expected to assimilate to the mainstream Finnish organizational culture and learn the expected behaviors at work. In the international firms as well, the employees were expected to adhere to the organization’s own culture, but this did not necessarily relate to the Finnish culture. Several earlier studies have revealed that Finnish employers sought to assimilate their diverse employees to the dominating Finnish culture (Sippola and Hammar-Suutari 2000; Trux 2009). Similar research stressed the limited consideration that cultural diversity is given in the management of organizations (Söderqvist and Juuti 2005)
Adherence to standard policies was also expected from the respondents in this study. However, in business fields where novelty or innovation was imperative for business success, employees were given sufficient room to express their individuality and bring in their cultural inputs and previous experience to the benefit of the organization. However for the most, all employees regardless of their origin went through the standard induction and work familiarization period and they were treated similarly during their period of employment. In their 2008 study Mohamed and Leponiemi already found the current recruitment, induction and work familiarization inadequate for foreign employees. They concluded that such inflexibility of practices inhibits the organization from fully taking advantage from a diverse workforce. The employers of the Cameroonian professionals in this study have for the most demonstrated flexibility by harnessing the special skills of their diverse employees despite a seemingly absent diversity management program.

5.4. Possibilities for the Finnish Society and Employers to Support the Acculturation of Cameroonian Immigrants so that they Can Contribute to Society and Economic Productivity

The shared experience among respondents is that a more thorough plan on the integration of foreigners in Finland needs to be developed. The lack of Finnish language skills is the main impediment to the integration of the informants. They firmly believed that intensive Finnish courses at the beginning of studies, or specific Finnish courses in their field of study would have certainly given them more career options; many perceive that there is a glass ceiling for employees who do not speak fluent Finnish or even Swedish. Consequently, they believe intensive Finnish or Swedish courses need to be incorporated in the curriculum of foreign students. A similar suggestion was already presented in the 2010 study by Vehaskari. She proposed that institutions offer more adequate language training, aiming at providing professional Finnish skills to the immigrants. She further lamented the fact that the majority of the current intensive Finnish courses are reserved for permanent residents and refugees, whilst students are excluded.

Other studies have demonstrated that the longer immigrants stayed in the host country, the better their host language skills (Liebkind and Lahti 2000), similarly, immigrants who interacted more with the host society and had many locals as friends, also had better language skills. The experience of Cameroonian professionals in Finland however refuted such findings. A longer stay in Finland did not always
guarantee good language skills. Some of the respondents have been in Finland for over 10 years, they had an extensive list of Finnish friends and connections but they barely spoke Finnish. The recurrent thought among respondents was that acquiring Finnish language skills does not come automatically after a certain amount of time as it is often the case with easier languages. It requires hard work and motivation as well as a proper structure.

The university and educational institutions that admit foreign students are therefore requested to take a more active role in the integration of those students. All the professionals deplored the fact that there were few or no Finnish language courses in their place of study. The students who wanted to learn Finnish had to pay extra fees to take additional courses in other institutions. Host language proficiency has been shown by numerous studies to determine the extent of acculturation of immigrants (Ying and Lee 2000, Birman and Trickett 2001, Yang, Noels and Saumure 2005). Consequently, creating effective measures to enable to learn Finnish and/or Swedish is fundamental to the socio-cultural adaptation and integration of all foreigners in Finland.

Employability is a crucial element for adaptation in the eyes of the Cameroonian professionals. Having a job and being able to provide for one’s family in Finland and in Cameroon is a necessity, as most have immigrated in Finland in the hope of a prosperous life. They thus considered the internships and practical trainings required by their educational institutions, very important for introducing them to the Finnish working life. However, the practical trainings and internships programs wherein the schools or university took more action in finding placements for their students recorded better success than those where the students were merely given general guidelines and expected to find an internship for themselves. Students of culinary art and nursing, as well as, medical and chemistry students valued the close collaboration that existed between their universities and hotels, restaurants, hospitals, health centers and other private companies. Such ties had enabled them to all find trainings places and even be eventually permanently employed. General internships guides on the other hand do not always help foreign students who are confronted with discrimination due to their foreign name, foreign background, and lack of Finnish skills among others. Hence, internships need to be more structured; universities have to form partnerships with companies to provide work placements to the foreign students.

As for the integration in the work place, this study has demonstrated that the professionals have adapted relatively well in organizations where Finnish is the
working language despite the harassments of some colleagues and subordinates. The support of the superiors partially explained that adaptation, nevertheless, a proper diversity management program was not noted by any of the respondents in those firms. Rather, an assimilative induction and work familiarization was common. The findings suggest that the recommendations by the International Labor Organization (2001) on diversity trainings are much disregarded in many current Finnish workplaces. Trux (2010) had come to the conclusion that many Finnish organizations are still uncertain of the competitive advantage that they can gain by hiring culturally different employees despite the recommendations of the EU, consultants and organizations promoting equal opportunities. The tools necessary to create awareness on diversity issues are already available; it thus remains for Finnish domestic organizations to find them noteworthy enough to implement them.

The Cameroonian professionals on their part, implored tolerance and patience from the Finns, they request openness and interest in other cultures. Björkman, Evans and Pucik (2010) referring to such attitude as “global mindset”, explain that a company with a global mindset views diverse and heterogeneous employees as a source for opportunities. The risk in current Finnish workplace is that much untapped skills will remained ignored in the pursuit for assimilation. Albeit this study has demonstrated few cases where the culturally bound talents of workers have been harvested for the benefits of the organization, improvements remain to be made.

The respondents have also recognized that integration is a two-way process. The host society has to provide favorable conditions for integrating but immigrants themselves have to be willing to integrate. Accordingly, Berry (2006) has argued that the dominant group needs to be ready to adjust governmental institutions (schooling, health, employment ...) so as to better support the various sub-group residing in the multicultural community. The subgroups should also adopt the fundamentals of the host society. The professionals in this study align very much with that idea; they provided a series of integration advice that could help newcomers adjust better into the Finnish society. The main advice has been learning the Finnish language, which is the only way immigrants can really integrate in Finland. Without Finnish, immigrants will always be considered as “visitors and they would not be taken seriously” according to the informants. Studying for a whole degree program in Finnish was seen as an especially good way to learn the language and vocabulary related to one’s field of study.
Interviewees who had studied for their master’s degree in Finnish had less problems integrating into the working life.

Foreigners in Finland are also required to live an exemplary life in the way they work and present themselves in the society. Our professionals said they were exemplary students in their schools and universities, which has led to many other Cameroonians being given a study place in those institutions. Hard work also at the place of employment did not only help further their career prospects but it opened doors to other foreigners in those organizations. Being able to make friends and building networks and connections is also considered very important for emotional and practical support, employability, and integration. Thus the immigrant’s own attitude in seeking interactions with the society was deemed very important.

Having a plan B is also considered as a wise practice, because having a university or a professional degree does not always guarantee employment in the studied field. That is why it is important to undergo side trainings. One chemist also had massage training. A Registered nurse had an IT degree. A software engineer started as a professional football player and is still work as coach for the young players. Another software engineer worked as a cleaner for 2 years before she could find a job in her field.

5.5. Summary and Recommendations

The main outcome of this study is a socio-cultural adaptation model (figure 7) that explains the adjustment of foreign professionals in the Finnish society. The individual adaptability is the starting point but emotional and practical support is crucial for the adaptation of immigrants. Individual adaptability, emotional and practical supports equip the foreign professional to succeed in an organization with a proper structure and leadership.

In other words, immigrants from culturally dissimilar countries like Cameroon acculturate to western societies like Finland following the bidimensional model that was posited by (Berry 2003). They adopt some of the behavioral pattern of their new surroundings while keeping their identity and some of the values from their country of origin. They behave “Finnish” or “Cameroonian” depending on whether they are among Finns or their compatriots. This study also confirms the important role that support systems such as family, friends, ethnic enclaves as well as the church plays in providing guidance, helping with practicalities, as well as employability, similar to the findings of
However, the university or the educational institution’s role in integrating the immigrant professional was considered especially significant. The internships, alumni’s and professors’ connections were responsible for introducing the Cameroonian professionals to the Finnish working life. The Cameroonian professionals consider themselves fairly well adapted; although they do not fit the commonly used psychological and behavioral adjustment standards (Ward and Kennedy 1993, Birman, Trickett and Virnokurov 2002). Most do not master the Finnish language and none identify with the Finnish culture which disqualifies them from the standard adjustment dimensions. They are, however, very satisfied with their life and consider themselves well adjusted because they are employed, have good friends and a family in Finland.

Although, the professionals employed in international organizations are better integrated in their work place than those in Finnish speaking work places, they all believe in the fairness of the system and they trust they can advance in their careers, which to a certain extent contradicts Croker’s and Major’s (1989) and Liebkind’s and Jasinskaja-Lahti’s (2002) predictions that the devaluation and stigmatization of foreign professionals cause drawbacks and low self esteem. At the work place, assimilation is still very much practiced even though several supervisors have given the opportunities to their foreign workers to showcase their diverse knowledge. There is an urgent need to ally diversity programs to the business strategy in organizations. It is thus, imperative that diversity management be properly structured so as to become an integral part of the organizational strategy.

In the light of the various points that have been elaborated throughout the discussion chapter, below are a few practices that could facilitate the adjustment of professional immigrants in Finland. As most of the professionals in this study arrived in Finland as students, the recommendations are geared towards first of all universities and then companies.

- **The provision of adequate intensive language courses for students.**
  The courses should aim at providing students with the general language skills necessary to function well in the society, but above all they should be tailored to the field of studies in order to provide students with the necessary vocabulary to exercise their profession in Finnish after graduation.
• **Internships programs where the educational institutions are more active in integrating the students in their work place.** The educational institutions should aim at partnering with various organizations and companies in order to guarantee an internship place for their international students. This is the only way to create a proper linkage and ensure that those students are introduced to the Finnish working life. When universities are not involved, foreign students still find themselves subjects to the same discrimination practices present in the general labor market.

• **Schools and universities should create more avenues for their foreign students to meet potential employers.** The curricular could for example include activities and projects where students get to solve cases in real organizations. This way, international students will also get exposure to potential employers, for the common career fairs are generally considered ineffective for employment by students.

• **An orientation day with a multicultural flair.** The orientation day of new students at universities, as well as, the selection of tutors needs to take into account the diversity of the student body, because students with little multicultural experience might not be very well equipped to tutor students coming from totally different societies. Involving older international students with whom the newcomers could identify with would have a better effect.

• **The concept of diversity management needs to be extended in Finnish organizations so as to encompass elements such as ethnicity and race.** An important step towards that goal is for Human resource managers, middle management, placement agencies and other people involved in recruiting in Finland to undergo the proposed trainings by the International Labor Organization on the so-called ILO project of anti-discrimination training (Wrench 2001)

  ➢ Information training (intercultural awareness, information about immigrant workers)

  ➢ Cultural awareness training (critically examination of the Finnish culture leading to the breakdown of prejudices)
- Racism awareness training (self awareness exercises to tackle racial discrimination)
- Equalities training (information on legal, professional norms and behaviors)
- Anti-racism training (revolutionize practices throughout the organization)
- Diversity training (differences as a competitive advantage, racial and cultural sensitivity, fairness in recruiting)

**At workplaces, cultural awareness training involving all employees should take place.** All employees need to be prepared and informed on the consequences of conscious, as well as, unconscious discrimination and racism. The session should create a platform for group discussions and exercises where every nationality group critically assesses their own culture, the goal is thus to create awareness, destroy prejudices, quash discrimination and change participants' attitude towards other groups.

**5.6. Limitation and Avenue for Future Research**

In this thesis research, I have endeavored to provide insights on the socio-cultural adaptation of foreign professionals in Finland through the lens of the phenomenology perspective. As an immigrant from Cameroon, I am very much part of the phenomenon under study, which certainly affected my interpretation of the various stories provided by the respondents. The study used the inductive design, that is, the conclusions from the discussion were drawn so as to generalize the findings. Thus the little subtleties and differences that exist between subgroups such as tribes and demographics were excluded. Unfortunately, the Cameroonian culture does not constitute a monolithic block, thus an alternative research could be to conduct a narrative study where the individual voices of the respondents could be better heard.

This study's main limitation is its concentration on the Cameroonian professionals, studies on other groups will certainly elucidate the topic further. Other African groups would give a thorough picture of the acculturation of Africans in general by strengthening the ideas presented here or bringing out new aspects of the phenomenon. In addition, other samples of immigrants from other parts of the world
will definitively shed more lights on the cross-cultural adaptation of foreign professionals in Finland. Nevertheless, many studies have found a commonality in the cultures of the sub-Saharan countries (Hofstede 1980, Beugré and Offodile 2001, Mbaku 2005), also the majority of those countries share similar socio-economic conditions, which implies that generalization of this study’s findings to other sub-Saharan groups can safely be done.

The work of Hofstede 1980 has inspired numerous studies of multiculturalism and diversity studies. Similarly, this study presents Cameroonian as one entity while assuming that there is a unique mainstream Finnish culture. Although, that was necessary for the sake of generalization, this creates an opportunity for future research to develop a model that would capture multiculturalism or define cultural differences. That is, a socio-cultural adaptation model that would take into accounts sub-cultures, tribal traditions, world ideas, fads and fashions, political or religious ideologies.

From the organizational point of view, interviewing the human resource personnel, as well as, the managers and supervisors of the interviewed Cameroonian professionals would have shown us an interesting perspective, because their perceptions on the specific characteristics that they have noticed in their foreign employees would have taken this debate further. Moreover, their standpoint on diversity management programs or lack thereof would have given clear evidence on the importance given to diversity management today in Finnish based organizations.

The study draws on the premise that well structured and carried out diversity managements programs will facilitate workplace integration for immigrants and support their career development. Future research could explore whether, stereotyping, discriminations, and racial offenses are negated as a result of diversity management. The reasons for people’s behaviors are generally numerous and rarely exactly similar, thus tackling a certain pattern of behavior might require more complex solutions than the ones proposed here.

The mainstream research has used acculturation dimensions and standards aligned with theories for measuring socio-cultural adaptation. The findings of this thesis, stresses the intricacy in comparing cultures and in measuring adaptation. In my view, adaptation is a question of finding one’s equilibrium, thus instead of determining immigrant’s level of adaptation and adjustment based solely on pre-determined standardized measures, a greater importance need to be given to what constitutes
adaptation or adjustment to the immigrants themselves. This challenge could be met by including such measures as immigrants’ personal adaptation goals, and their values in life. This because adjustment can be best determined by the immigrants themselves.
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