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Intercultural Teacher Education Alumni Conceptions on Their University Education and the  
Qualification Demands in the World of Work

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Tämä laadullinen pro gradu -tutkielma pyrkii selvittämään Intercultural Teacher Education (ITE) alumnien käsityksiä ITE -koulutusohjelmasta sekä työelämän asettamista kvalifikaatiovaatimuksista. Empiirinen aineisto kerättiin alumneilta käyttäen avoimista kysymyksistä koostuvaa sähköistä kyselylomaketta. Vastausten perusteella ITE alumnit jaettiin kolmeen ryhmään heidän työkokemuksensa perusteella: opettajiin, opettaja-generalisteihin ja generalisteihin.

Teoreettinen viitekehys käsittelee siirtymiä korkeakoulusta työelämään opettajien sekä generalistien näkökulmasta. Viitekehysten toisessa osassa käsitellään työn luonnetta 2000-luvulla määrittelemällä asiantuntijataito, kompetenssi ja kvalifikaatio sekä pohtimalla näiden keskinäistä suhdetta ja rooleja. Väärälän (1995) kvalifikaatioiden luokitusjärjestelmä ja Stewartin ja Knowlesin (1999) taitojen luokittelu valikoituivat aineiston analyysiä ohjaaviksi teorioiksi.

46:n alumnin vastaukset analysoitiin teoriaohjaavasti käyttäen fenomenografista tutkimusotetta. Tulosten perusteella alumniryhmät olivat työssään tarvinneet kaikkia Väärälän (1995) kvalifikaation tyyppejä, erityisesti sosiokulttuurisia kvalifikaatioita. Generalistien ja opettajien käsitykset kuitenkin erosivat siten, että opettajat kokivat tuotannollis-tekniset kvalifikaatiot erityisen tärkeiksi, kun taas generalistien käsitysten mukaan innovatiivisten kvalifikaatioiden rooli korostui. Kaikki ryhmät vastasivat toivovansa lisää tukea opettajan ammattiin liittyviin teemoihin sekä avaintaitoihin. Generalistit ja opettaja-generalistit kokivat toisinaan, että koulutusohjelma ei tukenut heidän uravalintaansa. Usea alumni kuitenkin kertoi, että ei jäänyt kaipaamaan mitään erityistä koulutusohjelmalta, sillä se oli laadukas ja tarjosi esimerkiksi mahdollisuuksia muokata tutkintoa omien kiinnostusten mukaisesti.

Tulokset ovat linjassa aikaisempien tutkimusten kanssa, vaikkakin ITE koulutusohjelmalla poikkeaa muista, sillä verrattain yleistä pienempi osuus valmistuneista työskentelee opettajan ammatissa. Tutkielman tuloksista voisi olla hyötyä tuleville ja nykyisille opiskelijoille sekä mahdollisesti koulutuksen opetussuunnitelmatyötä tehdessä.

Avainsanat: työelämä, korkeakoulutus, kvalifikaatiot, avaintaidot, alumnit, opettajankoulutus

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This qualitative master's thesis aims at finding out the conceptions the Intercultural Teacher Education (ITE) alumni have on the ITE programme but also on the qualification demands posed by the world of work. The empirical data are collected from the ITE alumni through an online questionnaire, consisting of open-ended questions. Based on the work experiences, the alumni were divided into three categories: teachers, teacher-generalists, and generalists.

The theoretical background of the study first describes the transition from higher education to the world of work from the perspective of teachers and generalists. In the second part, the nature of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is discussed by defining the role and relationship between expert knowledge, competences, and qualifications. Väärälä's (1995) qualification model and Stewart and Knowles' (1999) categorisation of skills are theories chosen to guide the data analysis.

The 46 responses of the ITE alumni were analysed using phenomenographical approach. According to the findings, the alumni groups had needed all the qualification categories of Väärälä (1995) in their working life, especially the sociocultural qualifications. The generalists' and teachers' conceptions differed as teachers valued productive and technical qualifications, whereas generalists had needed abundance of innovative qualifications. All the groups reported hoping to have more education on both vocational, teaching related skills and in key skills. Generalists and teacher-generalists sometimes viewed the ITE programme to lack support for other than teaching related posts. Several alumni reported being satisfied with the programme due to high quality and chances to shape own studies.

The results are in line with previous studies conducted on other programmes, which all suggest the strong need for higher education graduates and teachers to have sociocultural qualifications. However, the ITE programme slightly differs from other programmes because less graduates are working as teachers. The results may be useful for the students of the programme and for giving ideas on curriculum development, although not being conclusive on the topic.

Keywords: world of work, higher education, qualification, key skills, alumni, teacher education

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# 1 Introduction

As a student of the Intercultural Teacher Education (ITE) programme in Oulu, I have wondered about the employment, transition to work after graduation, the career paths, the skills learnt throughout the studies, and the qualifications needed in the job market. Some of my teachers have claimed it being easy for the ITE alumni to find a job both in Finland and abroad, and that they have gained substantially from the studies in this interculturally minded program. Even though there seemed to be a consensus on this topic, I could not find any concrete evidence to prove it. My interest towards the understandings and views of ITE alumni stems from the need to have data on the experiences of the alumni. At the same time, I would like to know their views on how to improve the programme to match the needs of the working life today. To examine my interest, I aim to answer these following questions, using the data collected from the alumni: *What are the needed qualifications in the world of work according to ITE alumni?* and *What are the conceptions of ITE alumni on the ITE programme?*

The participants are graduates, or in other words alumni, of the ITE programme and the qualitative, empirical data are collected with an online questionnaire. The qualitative analysis on 46 alumni responses is conducted using phenomenography as I will be focusing on the conceptions of alumni rather than looking at the phenomenon itself. Analysing the empirical data, three groups of ITE alumni were identified based on their work experience: teachers, teacher-generalists, and generalists. These groups were analysed separately as there were notable differences in the conceptions of these alumni on both the skills and qualifications needed in the job market but also in terms of the needs from their initial teacher education.

The theoretical background focuses on the transitions from higher education to the world of work by looking at the phenomenon from general perspective, but also from the point of view of teachers and generalists. In the second part of the theoretical framework, I will describe the trends affecting the work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I utilise the assumption of today's society being knowledge-based, which poses its' demands on the knowledge, competences, and qualifications of higher education graduates.

The context of the study is the Intercultural Teacher Education Programme (ITE), formerly also known as the International Master of Education programme (1994–2010). It is a master's degree, primary school teacher education programme in the University of Oulu in Finland,

aiming at educating teachers to respond to the challenges of globalisation and diversity (Jokikokko, 2010, 40).

In addition to being a teacher education programme, it prepares the students to become educational experts in general (Jokikokko, 2010, 15; Intercultural Teacher Education, n.d.). The programme was founded in 1994, at the time when the trends of the 1980s could be considered influencing. The goal was to have independent teachers who were committed to lifelong learning and development. Through their active role and actions, they were expected to influence the society. This is accomplished by having scientific and concrete professional skills go hand in hand already during the studies. (Rinne, 2017, 41-43.)

All the Finnish primary school teachers hold a master's degree and have specialised in educational sciences as their major. The degree consists of theoretical, pedagogical, and didactical studies, minor studies to specialise in a field of choice, and the theoretical knowledge is applied during supervised teaching practices. (Jakku-Sihvonen & Niemi, 2006, 11-12; Koski & Pollari, 2011, 13.)

The University of Oulu web pages promise the ITE programme to offer a teaching qualification with the following special features (Intercultural Teacher Education, n.d.):

Consideration of teaching in a heterogeneous classroom

Courses on the background and shape of education abroad

Studies of global matters and international relations

Guest lecturers from other countries

A period of study abroad

Teaching practices abroad and in international schools

Internships in government and non-government organisations

Global education studies (peace and conflict research, equity and human rights, environment)

Study of overseas development policy

As there are many expectations and promises for the programme, I felt it is important to examine if these promises are met. This thesis, thus, aims at finding out the alumni conceptions on the ITE programme. Through these conceptions, combined with the conceptions on the

demands on qualifications, the programme may be evaluated and some improvements or considerations for further actions are presented.



## **2 The Transitions from Higher Education to the World of Work**

In this chapter, I will describe the characteristics of the transitions from higher education (HE) to the world of work because it provides the premises for the ITE alumni experiences. At first, the focus is on the definition of the term transition, moving then on describing the recent trends of educational policy that affect the transitions of graduates. Drawing from this background, the focus shifts to teacher transitions, mostly in the Finnish context. The section explores the general employment trends and difficulties the teachers in Finland generally face. The last section of this chapter focuses on who are generalists and what are the characteristics of their transition to the world of work. The reason for focusing on the teacher and generalist transitions is based on previous research, where HE graduates are often divided into two categories: generalists and specialists, teachers in this case representing specialist field (e.g. Alves & Korhonen, 2016; Mäkinen, 2004; Rouhelo, 2008; Teichler, 2007; Tuononen, Parpala & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2019).

According to Merriam-Webster online dictionary (Transition, 2019), the word transition refers to “passage from one state, stage, subject, or place to another: change”. Walther (2006, 120) further clarifies the term to refer to period of change in one’s life stages. The research on transitions may focus on different types of transitions: the passage from youth to adulthood or from secondary to tertiary education, for example (Walther, 2006, 120). In the context of this study, transition is defined as the passage between two roles in one’s life: from student to worker or employee, but also as the passage between two places: from higher education to the world of work. There is no clear understanding on when the transition from higher education to work starts or finishes (Teichler, 1998, 541). Approximately 40% of European students begin the job search even before graduation, which sometimes leads to overlapping the two periods of studying and working (Teichler, 2007, 20). Nowadays the transitions are often non-linear and thus, transition should not be understood too narrowly (Alves & Korhonen, 2016, 677, 689; Walther & Plug, 2006, 77). For example job search is not the determinant of the transition because after graduating, quarter of graduates do not look for a job because of continuing in the job they already had, they obtained a job without search, went back to complement studies (referred as yo-yo transition by Walther & Plug, 2006, 79), or embarked on other activities (Teichler, 2007, 21). Periods of unemployment are also often part of the transition period (Alves & Korhonen, 2016, 680; Teichler, 2007, 21).

The role of university education in Finland has changed due to the massification of higher education since the 1970s (Puhakka, Rautopuro & Tuominen, 2010, 45-47; Välimaa, Tynjälä & Murtonen, 2004, 5). Nowadays, university education does not automatically guarantee the graduates a highly appreciated professional position, but students rather expect the education or the degree to help them with the transition to the world of work by serving a qualifying function (Puhakka et al., 2010, 45-47; Teichler, 2000, 21). Thus, it may be debated if the universities' role is to prepare the students according to the job market needs by supporting their employability or if the responsibility is left for the graduates themselves to manage their own careers in the competitive job market (Jackson & Wilton, 2017, 747).

The massification of higher education increases the competitiveness of the employment (Teichler, 1998, 556-557). Brown and Scase (1994, 142) conclude that because now there are more people with higher education degrees, the job positions may be distributed differently than before: by habitus, shared cultural contexts, personality traits, social contacts or just by 'gut feeling'. Thus, the terms human capital and social capital are brought to the conversation. Human capital is the combination of abilities, capacities, knowledge, and competences of an individual that may be increased by educating oneself (OECD, 2007, 29). OECD (2007) has defined social capital as the "networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups" (103). As a result, if the employment relies on other factors, such as the human capital and the social capital, the employability of a graduate should be understood beyond a mere degree. (Ahola, 2004, 19-20, 26.) For example, Clark and Zukas (2013, 208) argue the connections made during the undergraduate years to be of great added value to social capital and employability. On one hand, human and social capital are being acquired since childhood. Hence, the transition to the world of work may be understood to start all the way from family background as the environment plays a substantial role in one's life (e.g. Clark & Zukas, 2013, 208-209; Hordósy & Clark, 2018, 174; Kivinen & Kaipainen, 2012, 54-55; Teichler, 2000, 29-30).

Expanding the educational trends of Finland to the European context requires the exploration of the Bologna Process in creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), where the aim has been in creating a system with comparable degrees with similar structures. The Bologna Process reshaped and unified the degrees across European universities, and it has emphasised the importance of employability in higher education. (Fernández-Santander, García-García, Sáez-Pizarro, & Terrón-López, 2012, 32; Kushnir, 2016, 664.) The comparable degrees have functioned as a tool to enhance the employability through offering chances for

labour mobility in Europe (Kushnir, 2016, 664; OECD, 2017, 115). This type of unification that offers more chances for employment abroad may also have had an influence on the lives of ITE alumni as 34% of the alumni reported having worked partially or exclusively abroad. Although direct conclusion cannot be made, the chances for working abroad appear to affect the ITE graduates' employment and possibly the transition to the world of work by offering chances outside of Finland.

In general, there appears to be a knowledge gap between the world of work and the higher education, according to studies (e.g. Blomberg, 2008; Mäkinen, 2004; Teichler, 2000). The newly graduates often report not having adequate skills after graduation but having to learn through practical work experience (Mäkinen, 2004, 68-70; Teichler, 2000, 21). Students in Mäkinen's study (2004, 69) reported that courses related to practical issues that involved guest lecturers supported their understanding of their field. Also, having optionality during studies was said to be important because it may shape the possible career path of a student (Mäkinen, 2004, 69). On one hand, the higher education aims at providing a strong theory base for the students, which sometimes is seen too far-fetched from the everyday life of the work but on the other hand, claims have been made that the higher education, and especially teacher education, has become too school-like and vocational (Honkimäki, 2001, 106). Therefore, there is a growing tension in the relationship between the theory and practice in higher education and the ratio between these affects the graduates' transition to work (e.g. Teichler, 2000).

## **2.1 Transition of Teachers from Higher Education to the World of Work**

The research shows the teacher profession to be especially difficult in terms of transitioning to work from higher education. In many other professions, the responsibility grows in accordance with the level of experience, while the teachers have full legal and pedagogical responsibility since the beginning of their career (Blomberg, 2008, 46; Jokinen, Taajamo, & Välijärvi, 2014, 37.) After graduating, the novice teacher may be for the first time alone with the students, which allows the teacher to define own limits, practice decision-making, and identify the different classroom situations (Blomberg, 2008, 55). However, the situation may be challenging because the teachers often feel they are left alone during the classroom situations (Blomberg, 2008, 46, 50). Partially, due to the demanding start, the teacher turnover rate in

the beginning of the career is quite high both in Finland and abroad (Harris & Adams, 2007, 333).

The proportion of teachers changing to other work, in general, is in accordance with other fields in Finnish labour market. It is estimated that depending on the group, 5-13% of teachers change their career and 20% consider changing (Jokinen et al., 2013, 38; Niemi, 2000, 177). Generally, classroom teachers change to other work inside the educational field, mostly to special education, secondary school or to work as a study advisor (opinto-ohjaaja). Reasons for this were a desire to advance own career, but sometimes it was due to coincidence, such as a job opening at a suitable time. (Jokinen et al., 2013, 35-36.) According to the study by Jokinen et al. (2013), 10% of teachers had changed their career altogether: to educational coordinators, leadership positions, researchers, or to work in an NGO, but changing to a different field, completely non-education related, was rare. The reasons for changing to other fields are versatile: moving abroad, interest in self-development, coincidence, advancing career, wanting change, or having difficulties finding a job in education. (Jokinen et al., 2013, 37.)

The unemployment of higher education graduates in Finland is lower than of those with no formal qualifications after the comprehensive school (Ahola, 2004, 18; Akava, 2018). The unemployment rate is generally lower, the higher qualification the individual has. Teacher unemployment in Finland is the highest during summers. This reveals the difficulty of young Finnish teachers to find permanent teaching posts because the temporary employees are not usually guaranteed a contract of employment over summer. (Tynjälä et al., 2013, 39.) Regardless of having short-term contracts, the graduates from the educational fields in Finland are able to attain a job that matches the degree. According to Sainio (2008, 20), 90% of graduates from educational fields were working in settings where the work matched or was slightly more demanding than the competence given by the degree.

The experiences from the teaching practices are expected to support the teachers during the transition by offering a bridge between the theory and practice. Teaching practices, however, take mainly place in university practice schools, that do not reflect the reality of school environments in mainstream Finnish school. The practice schools differ from other schools in terms of funding, number of students in a classroom, and teaching tools. Therefore, the teacher student may face difficulties during the transition as the mainstream school may not have such a high level of tools and resources that have supported the teaching before. (Jokinen et al., 2014, 37-38, 41; Jokinen & Välijärvi, 2006, 95.)

Blomberg (2008) studied the feelings of novice teachers during their first year of teaching and according to the study, the teachers found the profession to be emotionally draining. While the profession offers positive emotions when interacting successfully with students and their parents, the teachers reported the conflicts and violent behaviour of students to be draining. The teachers were surprised by the amount of time spent on resolving issues between students and reported that they have had to learn classroom management, conflict resolution, and emotional skills through experience. (Blomberg, 2008, 55-56.) These unexpected sides of teacherhood made it emotionally difficult for the graduates to transition to the work of a teacher (Blomberg, 2008, 55-56, 122; Flores & Day, 2006, 220-221).

Also, the socialisation during the teaching practices appears to be challenging. According to studies the student teacher is said to have both the role of a teacher and a student during the practices, resulting to socialising to the role of a student teacher within the practice school. The opportunities to multisectoral communication and collaboration with parents is also marginal, regardless of being a substantial part of teacher's job today. These collaboration skills are usually a topic missing from the initial teacher education programmes. (Jokinen et al., 2014, 37-38, 41; Jokinen & Välijärvi, 2006, 95.) The issues of socialisation to the role of a full member of the teacher body and a member of the school community is one of the apparent issues with the transition of a teacher.

Induction refers to the transition from student to a professional, which should be supported with additional training to get acquainted with the work environment and culture. The educational chain should, therefore, be as such: pre-service, induction, and in-service. (Blair-Larsen, 1998, 602; Jokinen et al., 2014, 38.) However, in the Finnish context it has been reported that approximately 30% of the newly graduated teachers are left without support in the induction phase, partially due to the lack of regulation (Jokinen et al., 2014, 38). Support and training in the induction phase will support professional growth, mental health and well-being, and social connections to the new working environment. This, in turn, is said to result in improved self-confidence and better professional competences. (Blomberg, 2008, 5; Jokinen, Heikkinen, Morberg, 2012, 171-172; Jokinen et al., 2014, 41.) A successful induction period also raises the likelihood of the teacher to stay in teaching (Jokinen et al., 2012, 170). Because a thorough induction and support for the newly graduate consumes the funds of a municipality, some municipalities see the investment towards the new teacher a burden. This accompanied with the short-term contracts results the municipalities not wanting to hire a

teacher with no previous experience from teaching. (Tynjälä, Heikkinen & Jokinen, 2013, 48.)

Tynjälä et al. (2013, 37) list the newly graduates to have the most challenges in employability, finding a permanent position, lack of self-confidence, lack of competence, feelings of stress, the role of a new employee in the work environment, challenges in learning at work, and considerations to change the field or career. These feelings of new teacher seem to be universal (Tynjälä et al., 2013, 37). Comparatively, new teachers appreciate the good work atmosphere and relationships to be a meaningful reason for staying in teaching (Jokinen et al., 2013, 44). The support of other people at work was mentioned to be more important than the formal support organised by the employer (Jokinen et al., 2013, 44). Considering the value of work atmosphere, it is alarming that novice teachers often face issues when integrating as full members of a school community due to the poor work atmosphere at school, poor leadership or unsupportive colleagues (Blomberg, 2008, 164-165).

Blomberg (2008, 3) argues the gap between the theory and practice of teacher education to be global. To make the gap narrower, the teachers should be supported with the practical demands of teaching profession by getting acquainted with the pace of work, ways of working (see normative adaptive qualifications, Väärälä, 1995), working in teams, collaborating (see sociocultural qualifications, Väärälä, 1995), and assessing and developing own work (see innovative qualifications, Väärälä, 1995) (Blomberg, 2008, 61-62).

Research-based approach is said to have contributed to the success of the Finnish educational system as it aims at developing professionals on a master's degree level and by creating the basis for lifelong learning (Sitomaniemi-San, 2015, 17-20, 55). By providing high level of education, Sitomaniemi-San (2015, 55-56) argues that Finland is creating the premises for teachers to adapt to the changes of society. The teachers are provided with tools to develop themselves and constantly seek for information to solve new problems that arise. Therefore, the extensive educational background can function as a support mechanism during the transition to work.

Krokkfors et al. (2009) have researched the Finnish teacher education and the attitudes of teacher educators towards research-basedness. According to the study, the teacher educators valued research-based education because it helps the future teachers to cope with the changes in the nature of work and gives tools for improvement. The study participants speculated that the current students may not understand the value of research-based education as the partici-

pants did. The research suggests that by maintaining the research-based approach, the Finnish education field can continue to develop as the new professionals enter the field with the most current knowledge, which is at least partially transferred into the school culture. (Krokfors, et al., 2009, 215-216.)

Compared to alumni study results from different fields, alumni from educational fields appear to be the most critical of their studies and how the studies prepare them to the world of work (Mäkinen, 2004, 103). However, Mäkinen (2004, 105) points out that this result does not indicate the lower quality of educational studies, but rather the critical assessment of the educators on their own studies.

## **2.2 Transitions of Generalists from Higher Education to the World of Work**

Rouhelo (2008, 81) defines generalists as higher education graduates with degrees with no specific professional qualification. Generalists' work descriptions often address the requirement for having a degree in higher education without specifying the type (Rouhelo, 2008, 81-82). As the term generalist is associated with vast field of knowledge and skills, those professional, specialist degree holders (e.g. teachers), whose work require such wide knowledge can also be considered generalists (Rouhelo, 2008, 81). Therefore, moving away from the specific job title provided by the degree, an individual may become rather a generalist based on the type of work they perform daily.

The changes in job markets affect especially the generalists. The careers are non-linear, and education does not guarantee a position in the job market, resulting in difficulties in career planning (Sainio, 2011, 23). The job market situation at the time of graduation may lead the graduates to work in an atypical environment considering their education. Atypical workplace in the beginning of the career is linked to atypical workplaces in later phases of the career (Rouhelo, 2008, 214-215; Sainio, 2011, 28).

Based on studies (e.g. Rouhelo, 2008; Sainio, 2011, 30), the generalists face more difficulties when transitioning to working life compared to specialists, such as primary school teachers in this context. In the beginning of the career generalists are more likely to have periods of unemployment and short-term contracts (Rouhelo, 2008, 164). Sometimes the weaker employability in the beginning of the career results in accepting work positions where the employee is over educated (Rouhelo, 2008, 164, 208).

The generalists typically have a weaker sense of profession as they are not certain of their future career path, opportunities, or work tasks. In a study where students from different fields were interviewed, only 2,78% of medical students, who are considered to be studying a specialist field, reported being uncertain of their choice of study programme, whereas 21,92% of people studying humanities reported uncertainty. This difference is explained by the uncertainty of the generalist fields. In generalist fields practice periods were said to have increased the understanding of what type of work is available in their study field. (Mäkinen, 2004, 61-65.)

Because of the uncertainties of future, generalists often start their career building during studies by getting to know the field better and making connections to working life. This has later advanced the employability of the graduates as studies have pointed out the growing importance of personal contacts in job search. (Rouhelo, 2008, 164, 209.) According to Mäkinen (2004, 59-60) the general experts are required to have good social and communicational skills, abilities to understand issues from many viewpoints, analyse critically, and update their professional knowledge regularly. Thus, the social and human capital of the generalists have especially high value.



### **3 The World of Work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

As this study is based on the current situation of working life, this chapter focuses on the typical demanded skills or qualities of employees in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The chapter examines key themes discussed by the literature related to the area. These themes include knowledge-based society, expert knowledge, competences, and qualifications. The chapter is first built on the notion of today's society being knowledge-based and the latter parts address the needs this type of society sets to an individual and the working life. The themes discussed in the chapter are intertwined and define the working life today. This chapter elaborates on the meanings of the above mentioned themes but also, clarifies the relationship between them.

#### **3.1 Skills in the Knowledge-Based Society**

Today's society is said to be knowledge-based, where the capabilities to produce, transmit, and apply knowledge are valued in the world of work because they are a source of economic success and competitiveness (Hanhinen, 2010, 34-35; Puhakka, 2011, 62; Välimaa & Hoffman, 2008, 266, 269). These kinds of skills enable adapting to new situations in the fast-paced globalised world (Puhakka, 2011, 62; Tynjälä, 2003, 85; Välimaa & Hoffman, 2008, 266), and in the world of non-linear, sometimes even precarious work patterns (Teichler, 1999, 87). In addition, the term is often related to information technology and its development as it changes the way people communicate, store, and share information (Tynjälä, 2003, 85; Säljö, 2003, 9), but also the knowledge-based society discussion revolves around life-long learning (Tynjälä, 2003, 85; Välimaa & Hoffman, 2008, 279). Tynjälä (2003, 86) points out that this type of society may also be called a *learning society* because it requires everyone to constantly learn and adapt in multiple ways.

Social skills and networking are becoming a necessity in today's world of work. According to a study, already in year 2000, 80% of Finnish people said they worked in teams (Pyöriä, 2001, 177). Shared knowledge among the, often multi-disciplinary, team members is seen as the key to both organisational development but also process development (Tynjälä, 2003, 87-88). In the knowledge-based society this information-sharing and collaboration is said to be part of the key skills.

The importance of key skills in the job market are a theme discussed by many researchers (e.g. Law, 2000; Stewart & Knowles, 1999). Stewart and Knowles (1999, 374) define key

skills as transversal skills that are needed in all spheres of working life in the western countries. These are, for example, basic literacy skills, good verbal skills, presenting skills, skills to collaborate, basic numeracy, interpersonal skills, basic ICT skills, problem solving skills, capacity to orient and plan own work and so on (e.g. OECD, 2017, 72; Stewart & Knowles, 1999, 374; van Dierendonck & van der Gaast, 2013, 695-696). According to Stewart and Knowles (1999, 374), the rest of the skills that are not key skills fall into categories vocational skills (e.g. skills related to a specific job such as lawyer or teacher posts) or job specific skills (e.g. a routine only performed in one particular firm, not transferrable to other work places). By having adequate key skills, the workers can function and adapt in today's constantly changing working life (Law, 2000, 243; Stewart & Knowles, 1999, 374). It has been even suggested that having key skills or competences have stronger implications on the early career success and transition of a graduate than their subject matter knowledge of the field (Stewart & Knowles, 1999, 375; Tuononen et al., 2019, 582; van Dierendonck & van der Gaast, 2013, 695-696). The strong emphasis on the importance of key skills may be rooted in the belief of specialised, vocational knowledge to quickly become obsolete in the changing world (Grubb, 2002, 123-124; Teichler, 1999, 71). In this thesis, the term key skills is utilised, but in other literatures the phenomenon may be called transversal skills (e.g. OECD, 2017), general skills, essential skills (New Zealand), common skills (UK), or key competences (Australia). The different names stem from cultural differences but often refer to the same phenomenon. (Hanhinen, 2010, 66.)

Mäkinen (2004) sums up studies on the most important skills needed in working life: the highly appreciated skills may vary from field to field but in general, social skills, collaboration skills, theoretical knowledge and understanding, and practical skills to apply the theoretical knowledge were the most mentioned in the different fields. (Mäkinen, 2004, 66-67.) Moreover, Tynjälä (2003, 93-94) has divided skills into three categories that are all needed when working: theoretical, formal knowledge (know that), practical knowledge (know how), and self-regulation skills. Based on Mäkinen's (2004, 57) study, the students were the most concerned in the skills related to know that and know how.

Niemi and Jakku-Sihvonen (2006, 44-45) further specify the most needed skills in the working life of teachers:

Ability support different learners (e.g. age, cultural background, learning difficulties)

Co-operating with other teachers

Co-operating with stakeholders

Develop and improve the curriculum and learning environments

Ability to solve problems

The ability to reflect on professional identity

As seen above, skills may be categorised and ranked differently from field to field. However, this classification of the most needed skills of teachers also expands the understanding of the teaching profession to not only focus on the pedagogical and didactical knowledge but also being part of the shift towards the knowledge-based society with strong needs to have key skills, in this instance, problem-solving skills and collaboration skills with different people.

### **3.2 The Role of Higher Education in the Knowledge-Based Societies**

Watts (2000, 259) talks about careerquake, referring the trend of discontinuity and non-linear careers in the knowledge-based societies. As a solution to the careerquake he advises the workers to become life-long learners, but also the educational institutions to replace the narrow approaches of education with a broad one (Watts, 2000, 264). The traditional approach to education is that education provides a permanent set of occupational skills, which match with the job market (Guile, 2009, 761). Now, the higher education should also support the development of the broad key skills, which are needed in all spheres of working life.

In a study, professionals from different academic backgrounds were asked where they thought most of their skills that they need in working life were acquired. 63,6% said they learnt those skills at work. Moreover, the most important roles of university were providing the students theoretical knowledge (73%) and to support research skills and critical analysis (14%). (Tynjälä, Slotte, Nieminen, Lonka, & Olkinuora, 2004, 101-102.) Therefore, it may be discussed if the role of university is to equip the professionals with theoretical knowledge and criticality as many of the other skills can be learnt at work.

There are tensions in the relationship between the universities and workplaces. Universities are considered places where new knowledge is constructed through research. The Finnish teacher education programmes are founded on this notion of being research-based, the teaching having academic roots and the students also being required to conduct their own research (e.g. master's thesis). At the same time, alumni research reports the university studies to lack

behind and the most important working life skills and key skills to be learnt at work (Mäkinen, 2004, 102-103).

According to Puhakka and Tuominen (2011, 8) higher education graduates in Finland ranked problem-solving skills, team working skills, communication skills in Finnish, information acquisition, and organisational skills to be the most relevant in their working life. Although the needed skills vary depending on the field, also professionals in the same field may have different needs based on the sector they work in (e.g. working for the municipality vs. a private company). Therefore, the results demonstrate why the education cannot be tailored for specific job needs. (Puhakka & Tuominen, 2011, 8.)

In a study Finnish university graduates were asked about the biggest limitations in their studies. 42% reported there being unnecessary courses, but also courses on important issues missing. 21% answered they would have hoped to practice their social skills. 21% also reported the university studies not being up to date in accordance to working life. (Mäkinen, 2004, 102-103.) Therefore, there should be considerations on what could be learnt from the world of work and how they should be applied into the HE programmes.

### **3.3 From Novice to an Expert**

According to research, it has been claimed that one grows into an expert in 5-10 years (e.g. Berliner, 2001, 477; Strasser & Gruber, 2004; 15). Therefore, the feelings of incompetence by graduates is an existing and natural phenomenon in all higher education fields (Teichler, 2007, 16). As mentioned in previous parts of the thesis, life-long learning is a necessity of working life, and thus, it is natural that the journey of developing own work is continuous. At the time of graduation, the individual is expected to have a set of vocational, in other words, professional skills and knowledge. In the novice stage, according to Labouvie-Vief and Hakim-Larsson, the emphasis is on creating routines to survive from the basic tasks and creating and maintaining the self-confidence to make decisions about own work (as cited in Väisänen, 2003, 8). Boshuizen, Bromme and Gruber (2004, 4-5) explain that professional knowledge of the graduate is transformed into academic knowledge through learning in the workplace.

As Tynjälä (1999) points out, there is a slight tension between the different approaches on how to attain expert knowledge. According to Tynjälä, there are two strands: learning through different stages and learning from the environment (Tynjälä, 1999, 360). The different stages

are based on Dreyfus and Dreyfus model of skill acquisition. The levels are novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. Expert is often defined as a top performer in the field but in the context of this thesis an expert is someone who achieves at least a moderate level of success in their occupation (Bozhuisen et al., 2004, 5). As the expert level is gradually reached through hundreds or even thousands of hours of practice, the person is able to plan effectively, abandon the strict rules and can use the analytical skills in the new situations. An expert also has the basic knowledge rooted in the thinking so that they can act intuitively and can envision what is possible in that particular situation. (Berliner, 2001, 463; Boshuizen et al., 2004, 5-6; Dreyfus, 2005, 179-181; Lyon, 2015, 92.)

The other way to gain expert knowledge is based on Lave and Wenger model of situated learning. There, the idea is to learn from authentic situations through communicating with the so-called old-timers. The learners are socialised as part of the community of practice as they observe the different actions and reactions of the professionals. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, 32-35; Tynjälä, 1999, 361-362.) The theory of Lave and Wenger also resonates with the Vygotskian zone of proximal development (ZPD) theory. This theory suggests that the learners can achieve higher level of knowledge by learning from the more experienced learners. (Tynjälä, 1999, 361-362.)

Based on Sitomaniemi-San (2015), Finnish teachers are encouraged to be autonomous in applying theory into practice. This is reinforced in the teacher education by requiring critical thinking, argumentation, and by providing justification. The idea is to create professionals who can solve pedagogical issues and dilemmas through the knowledge of theory. To support these kinds of ideals, the teacher education in Finland is research-based. (Sitomaniemi-San, 2015, 15.) Research-basedness requires the teacher education to be based on the most recent academic research and the teacher education itself should be an object of research to provide knowledge about the effectiveness (Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen, 2006, 40). If these goals of the Finnish teacher education are reached, they are in line with the characteristics of an expert listed above.

The application of theory into practice according to Jyrhämä (2006, 51) is challenging, and therefore, the teacher education should include supervised teaching practices. The practices offer a safe environment for experimenting teaching practices. Development in these environments require self-reflection skills to understand the decision-making during the classroom activities (Hayes, 1999, 350; Jyrhämä, 2006, 52). Willingness to take criticism and advice

from others teamed up with positive attitude also help to assimilate the new ideas into practice (Jyrhämä, 2006, 52). The practice periods play a key role in the formation of teacher identity building when the student teachers are accepted into the school community as a full member (Danielewicz, 2001, 112) On the other hand, the practices may be impair the development if the student does not feel like a full member of the work community, feels like they have not succeeded in the teaching activities or if the personalities with the supervising teacher do not match (Danielewicz, 2001, 113). A successful teaching practice may serve as a starting point in becoming an expert through learning from the environment and old-timers as suggested by Lave and Wenger (1991).

### **3.4 Qualifications and Competencies**

Often terms qualification and competence are used synonymously, but in research they may roughly be differentiated as following: qualifications are the demands the world of work and the society present to the individual, while competences are understood as the potential an individual has in terms of cognitive capacities and affective-conative motivations to learn constantly. Therefore, qualification appears to have more of a societal aspect and competences generally refer individual traits, capacities, motivations, or qualities. (Hanhinen, 2010, 142; Väärälä, 1995, 35; Weinert, 2001, 45-46.) In this thesis, the focus is on the qualifications that are needed in the world of work.

The debate around qualifications question the relationship of educational institutions and the demands posed by the world of work. Developing the programmes to match the work life is tempting as people generally see value in having these kinds of qualifications defined by the market economy (Väärälä, 1995, 39-40, 42.) This is being considered while analysing the data gathered from the alumni. There is an understanding that not all content taught in higher education needs to stem from the concrete experiences of working life but also, if these aspects are not addressed there may be a lack of connection to the world of work entirely.

In this thesis, the term qualification is expanded according to Väärälä (1995). He contradicts the traditional view on qualifications and explains the qualifications being the relationship between the individual and societally determined conditions. For example, when studying, it is natural to encounter demands of the society but at the same time, by participating in working life, one is part of the reproduction of demands or production of new demands. (Väärälä, 1995, 47.) In his work, the qualifications are divided into five sub-categories. Productive and

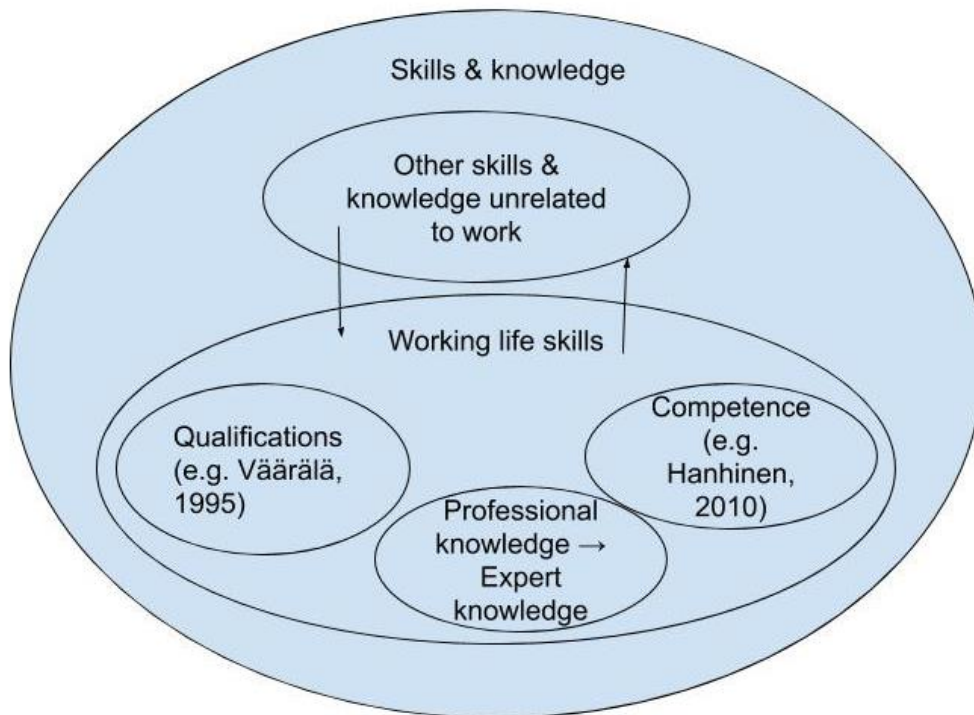
technical qualifications form the basic professional skills into which the normative adaptive, motivational, innovative, and sociocultural qualifications are attached (Väärälä, 1995, 44). In this thesis, the *productive and technical qualifications* naturally refer to the teaching profession and the core skills, which are needed to manage in the profession. *Motivational qualifications* are personal traits that are not necessarily learnt, but rather related to motivation to committing to work, being self-regulating, and self-reflecting when facing conflict within the work. *Normative adaptive qualifications* are determined by the work community in the form of, for example, working hours and the pace of work. The employee is expected to have the skills to adapt to these demands. *Sociocultural qualifications* require the employee to have group and team working skills, skills to learn from others, communication skills with different kinds of people, and understanding the organisational structures and relations. Finally, *innovative qualifications* refer to skills to change the routine procedures and function as developing the procedures and organisations. Learning to learn, creativity, and problem-solving are a substantial part of this innovativeness. (Väärälä, 1995, 44-47.)

### **3.5 Relationship Between Competences, Qualifications & Expert Knowledge**

Figure 1 visualises the relationship of qualifications, expert knowledge, and competences, which are all part of the skillset in the working life. The qualifications are set from outside. For example, the knowledge-based society has its characteristics that set needs for the individuals such as having problem-solving skills, collaboration skills or decision-making skills that all can be combined as key skills according to Stewart and Knowles (1999). Also, the fast pace of changes and non-linear careers are requirements set to individual by the society.

Competence here refers to individual capacities: affectively (temperament, emotions, emotional intelligence), conatively (motivation and will to act and develop), and cognitively (intelligence, knowledge, beliefs) (Hanhinen, 2010, 76). These capacities come from within the individual and set the framework for having working life skills.

Lastly, the expert knowledge is seen as the journey from being a novice and having professional knowledge to becoming an expert. According to the literature this may be a result of concrete practice, evolving step by step (e.g. Dreyfus, 2005) or by learning from the more skilled others (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, expert knowledge is built from within but also through socialisation to the environment.



**Figure 1.** The relationship between qualifications, expert knowledge, and competences (adapted from Hanhinen 2010, 16).



## **4 Phenomenographical Data Analysis & Collecting the Data from ITE Alumni**

### **4.1 Phenomenography as an Approach**

Phenomenography is a widely used method in educational settings, where it was originally created to study the conceptions of research participants (Niikko, 2003, 7, 10). According to Marton (1986), the founder of phenomenography, it is "...a research method for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them" (p. 144). It seeks to investigate the different understandings of reality and how people make meaning of it rather than focusing on the phenomenon itself (Marton, 1986, 141; Ahonen, 1994, 114).

Phenomenography may be interpreted as a mere analysing method or it may also be understood as a methodological approach with epistemological and ontological obligations (Huusko & Paloniemi, 2006, 162-163; Niikko, 2003, 7). Like Niikko (2003), I personally understand phenomenography as more than a method for analysis because in the core of phenomenography are the different conceptions of people. Therefore, the phenomenon at hand is seen through the experiences of the study participants, thus, phenomenography is interested in the second-order perspective rather than making statements about the world itself (Limberg, 2008, 613; Marton, 1986, 145-146). The meanings they give to certain issues are given a great emphasis. (Niikko, 2003, 9-10; Ahonen, 1994, 113-114.) As a result, in this study, phenomenography is understood to have epistemic and ontological obligations.

The basic idea behind phenomenography is that there is one world with its reality, but there are multiple ways of seeing, understanding, and interpreting it. The only world there is, is the one an individual experiences. The worldview is subjective; thus, it is not possible to directly compare the experiences of a research participant to the so-called real world. (Niikko, 2003, 14-16.) According to Huusko and Paloniemi (2006) the understanding of the world stems from a rational human being, who constructs the new on the previously experienced. Language is seen as a tool to form and explain those perceptions. (Huusko & Paloniemi, 2006, 164.)

In phenomenology, the aim of the researcher is to find the most relevant points of view, whereas in phenomenography, the interest lies in the variation of responses (Niikko, 2003, 22, 30) and their reciprocal relations (Huusko & Paloniemi, 2006, 163). To reach these aims, there is a need to categorise the perceptions. Marton (1986, 145, 147-148) justifies the conceptual categorisation by stating that a phenomenographer does not know the final result, thus, phenomenography cannot first choose the theory, but must rely on the data.

As in other qualitative studies, there are many issues with the trustworthiness of the research. The categorisation process of phenomenography is strongly subjective. Another person analysing the data may not come to the same conclusions, but the key is in elaborating the steps taken and communicating the whole process, including the decisions made along the way. (Marton, 1986, 147-148; Huusko & Paloniemi, 2006, 162.)

Another issue mentioned by Huusko and Paloniemi (2006, 165-166), is the difference between a conception and an opinion. According to them, conception has a deeper and broader meaning than the person has given to a certain phenomenon. Consequently, there should be a way to distinguish an opinion and a conception from each other. For example, the context of the answer, in this regard, is important to better understand the responses. (Huusko & Paloniemi, 2006, 165-166.)

## **4.2 ITE Alumni as Research Subjects**

The ITE programme annual intake of students is 20 persons. If all the students had graduated within the five-year goal time, there would currently be approximately 380 alumni from the programme. In total, there were now 47 answers within a three-week answer period.

The participants were from multiple cohorts, although not all participants wanted to specify their starting year. The earliest possible alumni have started their studies in 1994, when the programme was started, and have completed their studies in 1998-1999 the earliest. On average, the respondents had been studying 6,0 years upon graduating. I received responses from 17 different cohorts out of the possible 21 (starting years being 1994-2014). Thus, there are answers from alumni who have almost reached that 20-year mark in the workforce to newly graduates. Having answers from alumni in different stages in their career gives a versatile background for the responses and conceptions.

According to the data, 66% of ITE alumni had been working only in Finland. The remaining 34 % had been working only abroad (14,9%) or both in Finland and abroad (19,1%). These different experiences may have an influence on the responses as there may be different needs for working life outside of Finland. Because of this intercultural aspect, the programme should offer chances for its' students to pursue a career both in and outside of Finland. Thus, having multiple conceptions heard in this study is also imperative.

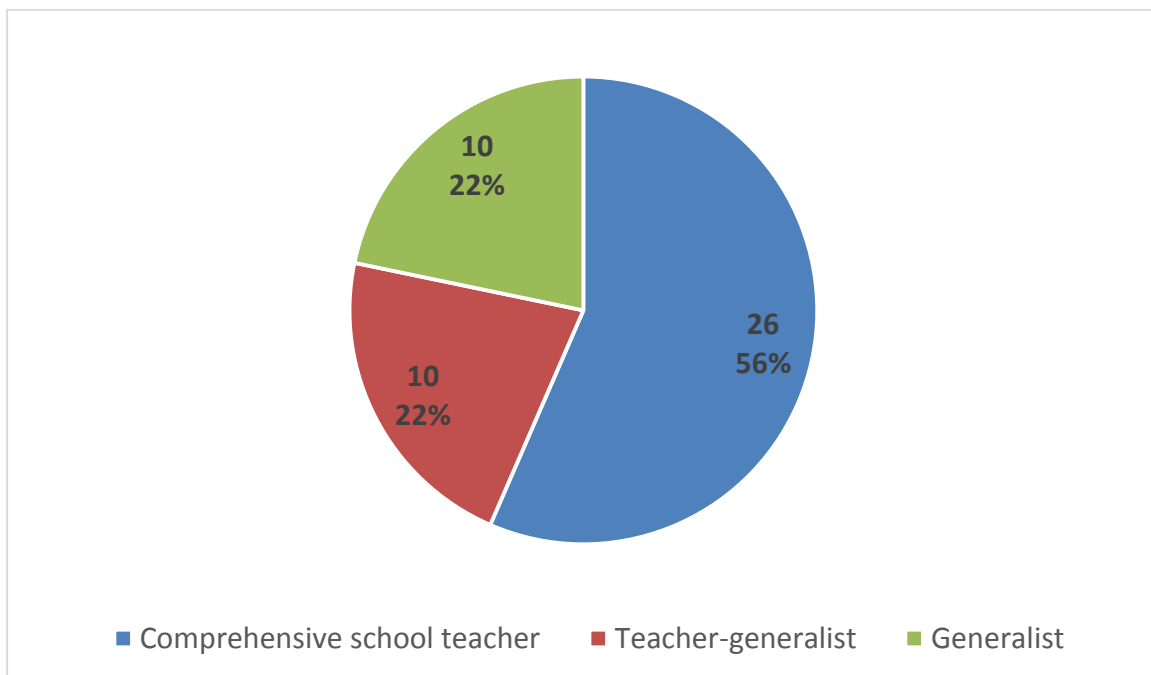
**Table 1.** The division of the ITE alumni into categories based on their career paths.

<b>Teacher (n=26)</b>	<b>Teacher-generalist (n=10)</b>	<b>Generalist (n=10)</b>
Primary school teacher	Combination of both teacher and generalist jobs, usually first working as a teacher and later moving to generalist posts.	Consultancy
International school teacher		Higher education
Public school teacher		Humanitarian organisation
Middle school teacher		International organisation
Elementary school teacher		Educational authority
Basic education teacher		Non-governmental organisation
Comprehensive school teacher		Private company
		Municipality/city

Another aspect bringing diverse background for the study was the career choices of the alumni. The alumni were divided into three categories according to their responses. Those who had only been working in the comprehensive schools were one category. They had been working in primary schools but sometimes also in grades 7-9 due to having a double qualification, allowing them to also work as subject teachers. In the data analysis, I will call this group the teacher group in short, although it refers to primary and/or comprehensive school teachers in Finland and abroad. The other end of the spectrum consisted of the generalists, who are ITE alumni who have been working in jobs, mostly in the educational sector, that do not require a specific degree or qualification but a master's degree in general and a vast range of general skills. The fluidity of the term generalist enabled me to expand it to ITE alumni who are typically understood as having a specialist (teacher) qualification (e.g. Rouhelo, 2008, 81). In the middle are those who have attended both generalist and teaching jobs. Table 1 demonstrates

the ways the responses were categorised. These respondents were coded according to the order of responses (numbers ranging from 1 to 47) and either T (for teachers), TG (for teacher-generalists), or G (for generalists) is added to the number to signify the category they belong to. In later parts I will quote these respondents by the number-letter combination.

According to research on the Finnish teachers, the teacher turnover is approximately 5-13% (Jokinen et al., 2013, 38; Niemi, 2000, 177), while in this cohort, the distribution is visualised in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of alumni by their work history (n=46).

Only 56% of the ITE alumni had worked entirely within the comprehensive school settings that their initial training generally aims for. The other 22% had been working as comprehensive school teachers, but also in other type of settings that are, in this study, referred as generalist jobs. And finally, the last 22% of the respondents had only worked in the so-called generalist posts. Comparatively the ITE alumni appear to work more in other than directly teaching-related posts more than their counterparts from other teacher education programmes.

### 4.3 Collecting the Data Through an Online Questionnaire

Nowadays, online questionnaires as a method for data collection are usual (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 71) and have partially replaced the paper questionnaires because of having a better response rate by being more accessible and less time-consuming (Valli & Perkkilä, 2015, 109). Especially the accessibility of an online questionnaire was an important factor because the ITE alumni have spread around the country, but also around the world. Therefore, I reasoned an online questionnaire would be the best option for getting abundance of responses that would be as versatile as possible. The questions in the online form were constructed together with multiple people. I started the process by jotting down questions that I wanted to know answers for and added some questions posed by my peers in the ITE programme. These questions were then shared with a professor and a peer who were working with me to gather information on the topic. We workshopped together around the questions and rephrased them to best fit our purposes. I wanted to have the questions open-ended to get a variety of responses and views. The questionnaire was piloted with three peers of mine, who were not ITE alumni though. They gave points of improvement in terms of order and the phrasing of the questions. After the feedback and piloting rounds, I published the questionnaire. The questionnaire was open for three weeks, receiving 47 responses.

The participants for this research were recruited using social media, personal contacts, and email lists. Additionally, snowball sampling was used to extend the participation beyond the online platforms. Snowball sampling made it possible for participants to recruit new members to the study using their networks, in this case often peers from study years (Goodman, 1961, 148; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 86). Distributing the questionnaire through a Facebook group dedicated to Intercultural Teacher Education students and graduates made it possible for anyone to answer. Moreover, giving such detailed answers might have been difficult for someone other than a graduate of the programme.

Even a relatively small sample is enough in qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019, 22), but generally, the number of participants in phenomenographical studies varies between 15-30, argues Limberg (2008, 612-614). As the data were collected using an online questionnaire rather than through interviewing, having abundance of shorter responses helped to form a clearer picture on the varying conceptions. This is also in accordance with the idea of phenomenography, where the researcher is guided by the aim of collecting rich material for the research (Limberg, 2008, 612-614).

Another advantage of an online questionnaire is that the respondents have time to read the questions and they have generally better constructed answers compared to interviewing methods. The answers provided are the respondents' own words, and thus, the researcher has a lesser impact on the responses. (Kothari, 2004, 101.) On the other hand, as there is no chance to clarify the responses that also leaves room for misunderstandings between the respondent and the researcher. Therefore, attention was paid to reading what was said before and after, and the responses were reread several times.

Kothari (2004, 101) problematises the inflexibility of an online questionnaire, which I agree. When creating the questions there are certain assumptions on the type of answers. When these assumptions are false, there may be different issues that arise from the answers. The questionnaire answers taking a different direction may change the research problem or question altogether, and when this happens, there is no way to ask further questions on these newly mentioned issues. Therefore, the questionnaire should be piloted (Kothari, 2004, 101), but in this case the piloting was done with peers who are not alumni and some shortcomings of the questionnaire were left unnoticed. The alumni answered differently than first assumed, which indeed changed the direction of the thesis. Because of the methodological choices, I relied on the data and changed the theory according to the results gained from the data analysis.

The questionnaire was structured, meaning same questions were presented to everybody in the same order (Kothari, 2004, 101). The questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice questions, partially dichotomous questions, but mostly open-ended questions. The aim of the questionnaire was to get long answers to get a better understanding on the conceptions of alumni. Some questions, such as *'Has the ITE qualification helped you to get a job?'* encourage to answer yes or no, which would categorise them being closed or dichotomous. However, these types of questions were often expanded by adding *'How?'* at the end of the question. This usually resulted in getting a yes or no answer and justifications to the response. Unfortunately, when they were presented together, some respondents answered only either of the questions. In these cases, the response was very short just stating yes/no or it was lengthy, while the actual response to the closed question was left to be interpreted by the reader. In conclusion, having the different types of questions is recommendable because they generally complement each other (Kothari, 2004, 103). For the purpose of phenomenographical analysis, the questions should be formulated in a way that able the respondents to reflect their experiences and

conceptions on the phenomenon (Huusko & Paloniemi, 2006, 163-164; Limberg, 2008, 613; Niikko, 2003, 31).

It was also mentioned in the beginning of the questionnaire that any question that feels uncomfortable to answer, may be skipped. The questionnaire questions were divided under three different sections to help the respondents to concentrate on the question at hand, as Valli and Perkkilä (2015, 115) suggest. As respondents, the ITE alumni were committed, because normally it is not recommended to have abundance of open-ended questions. However, to match the aim of the study and the methodological obligations, the open-endedness was justifiable.

Ahonen (1994, 115) suggests the researcher to first get acquainted with the theory before collecting the data. In this research, the starting point for the data collection was personal interest and the theory was formed and readjusted through reading and rereading the responses. Because the theory was not entirely formed before the launching of the questionnaire, there may have been more room for misunderstandings between the respondents and the researcher in terms of terminology or the wording of the questions.

#### **4.4 Steps in the Data Analysis**

In this section, the steps of data analysis (1-4) by Ahonen (1994, 115) are utilised.

1. *The researcher is interested in a phenomenon that people seem to have versatile conceptions on*

In my study the aim is to find out what kinds of different conceptions the alumni of ITE have on the programme and how it has prepared them for the world of work. My personal interest is in finding out the different meanings the alumni have given to certain skill sets and courses for example. The need stems from having too little knowledge on the topic.

2. *The researcher finds theoretical basis*

In this section I read about the different traditions of phenomenography and wondered about the ways of executing a study utilising these traditions in the context of my study.

The theory was redefined several times during the process of analysing the responses. My preliminary assumption was that I should know something about the research-based teacher education in Finland. I also started to read what type of research was done with alumni participants.

In this section, it is important not to predetermine the categories of conceptions as then valuable information is lost. Rather, the data serve as the starting point, and the theory is then formed in comparison to other studies and theories made prior to this study. (Ahonen, 1994, 123.) After reading the responses several times, I noticed that a similar type of research was conducted by Mäkinen (2004), which utilised Väärälä's (1995) categorisation of qualifications. I studied the theory further and noticed it matching with the responses of the ITE alumni. Thus, the results stem from the data but are guided by the theory (e.g. Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 117). Also, in terms of skills, I noticed some skills were more general and others particular to teaching as a profession. Therefore, I decided to utilise Stewart and Knowles' (1999) division and definitions of the key, vocational, and job specific skills.

### 3. *Interviewing people, finds different conceptions*

I created an online platform with multiple open-ended questions that aimed at not being leading. Many different opinions were expressed, and multiple different approaches were found already at first glance. Steps 2 and 3 were partially overlapping as I had to read more research while reading the responses.

### 4. *Classifying the perceptions, finds bigger entities/classification groups that describe the different perceptions*

When reading the responses, I noticed there to be different career paths. This resulted in categorising the alumni. One out of the 47 responses was left outside of the data analysis as it did not fit the categories of teachers or generalists but was rather in a field that required a separate, specialised training that the participant had undertaken after graduation. Thus, the master's degree in education did not affect the employment of this respondent and the conceptions on the needed skills in that job seemed irrelevant for the purposes of this study, regardless of being interesting in general.

The analysis was done abductively, moving between the empirical data and the theoretical concepts. Thus, the data had an impact on the theoretical framework and vice versa. The research gains from this type of analysis because I had preliminary knowledge on the topic, but also my understanding changed through reading about previous studies. (Limberg, 2008, 613; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 95.) The abductive analysis is sometimes connected to theory guided analysis, which also suggests that the researcher is aware of the theories, although they do not let the theory entirely determine the outcomes (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 97). The beginning of the category forming was done by relying only on the empirical data, which was later



categorised according to already existing theories of Väärälä (1995) and Stewart and Knowles (1999). To clarify the process step by step, I divided the process further using Niikko's (2003) model of data analysis, which is more detailed than Ahonen's (1994) steps.

In the *first phase* of the classification, I read the responses several times trying to find the meaningful conceptions of the respondents in relation to the research question. At this point, the researcher should also try to judge how big entities one wants to analyse. (Niikko, 2003, 33.) In the context of my study, I decided to focus on smaller entities, which still comprised of a complete thought. The reason for this was, that many respondents answered with a list of issues they thought were all important. The style of answers varied and other times I could also make a meaning of a longer sequence, if necessary. Based on Niikko (2003, 33), it is not important to focus on who said what, but rather focus on the important and meaningful ways of expressing a perception on the phenomenon. This was done by jotting down all the responses as a list, not including the respondents' identification details. There could be several different topics or themes mentioned in one response, all of which were considered.

In the first phase I could already distinguish that one of my research questions posed a yes or no type of situation (*Based on your work experience, was there something important missing from the program?*) The respondents either said that nothing was missing from the programme or wrote issues that should have been dealt with during their studies. Most of the respondents answered that there was something missing, but as many as 12 responses could be interpreted in a way that there was nothing they were missing. Many of the respondents said no right away, whereas others did not necessarily say no at all, but it could be interpreted from their response. Here below are some examples of answers I interpreted as nothing was missing:

No (25TG)

It did the job perfectly. There are lot of things you will learn only by doing the job, just have to give yourself a break and accept that not everything will work out perfectly in the beginning or even in the long run. (3T)

Hard to say as it was all so long ago already. After the two first years, all of us were really able to tune our studies to our liking with minor subjects etc. (46T)

By Niikko (2003, 34-35), the aim of the *second phase* of analysis is to categorise and group answers. The researcher should try to find similarities, differences, and even oddities. I started

to group some of the samples as they conveyed a rather similar idea. Some of the examples were easier to connect, and others seemed almost like outliers in a sense that no one else responded in that way. However, these also need to be taken into account because phenomenography is interested in the variety of answers.

By rereading the responses, I started to notice the different views of people with different career paths. Therefore, I categorised the responses into the three groups (teachers, teacher-generalists, and generalists) and started to reassess the answers into the categories. Many groups and categories still stayed the same, meaning the alumni had common conceptions, but for example the question about the topics missing from the programme highlighted the generalists' and teacher-generalists' views on needing also support in the tasks of generalists in HE or NGOs, for example. This categorisation changed the way the rest of the analysis was conducted.

The *third phase* should aim at making the first categories out of the research data. The responses should be abstracted and the criterion between the categories should be made clear; no overlapping of the categories should be possible. (Niikko, 2003, 36.) To avoid the overlapping, I created certain criterion for the categories that were guided by the theories of Väärälä (1995) and Stewart and Knowles (1999). In Table 2, I demonstrate how the responses were reduced into more abstract format so that the categories could be better formed.

The *fourth phase*, according to Niikko (2003), is for organizing bigger entities of the categories mentioned earlier. The aim is to form more theoretical categories out of the responses. These categories should summarise the different conceptions of respondents about the phenomenon at hand. (Niikko, 2003, 36-37, 55.) Important part of phenomenographical analysis is reflectivity and flexibility (Niikko, 2003, 33). This is ensured throughout the process by going back to the original data, rereading the material, rethinking the different categories multiple times, and referring to previous studies. The results of the fourth phase are discussed in the next chapters.

**Table 2.** Examples on how the original text was reduced.

Original text	Reduced to
<i>English and international/multicultural education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English → <b>Language didactics</b> rather than communication in English because background information revealed the respondent to be an English teacher</li> <li>• International/multicultural education → <b>Intercultural competence</b>, a phenomenon with many terms, but in this case interculturality suits better than for example international (e.g. Jokikokko, 2010, 24).</li> </ul>
<i>...Also, I often am asked about specifics on global education policy agenda, such as the development goals or unesco pilars of education, and I think it would be very useful if the ITE studies strengthened getting to know and analyze these policies.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>International policy analysis</b></li> </ul>
<i>Multicultural approach in my teaching, ethical thinking and knowledge on comparative education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Intercultural competence</b> (again, e.g. Jokikokko, 2010, 24)</li> <li>• <b>Ethical thinking</b></li> <li>• <b>Comparative education</b></li> </ul>

Niikko (2003, 38) further distinguished the categories having relational differences. In the case of my study, the categories are horizontal, in other words equal, and the only difference is in the content. In my opinion, the categories have the same value, however, it is worth noting that there are single issues mentioned relatively often. From phenomenographical point of view, the variation is the most relevant but if one wants to look from the development of the programme point of view, I would advise looking for these commonly expressed conceptions closer.

## 5 Results

The results of a phenomenographical study are the outcomes of the data analysis in the format of categories, according to Limberg (2008, 613). Substantial amount of the respondents reported having changed their career from the post of a primary school teacher. As a result, three different kinds of graduates could be identified: teachers, teacher-generalists, and generalists. The way these groups were formed was elaborated in section 4.2. The results are constructed around these three groups, discussing the differences and commonalities between the conceptions.

At first, in 5.1. the attention is paid towards the qualifications the working life has set on the alumni. The section answers question: *What are the needed qualifications in the world of work according to ITE alumni?* In this part, Väärälä's (1995) qualification categories are utilised because the responses were suitable for the use of it and made the results comparable between the teachers, the teacher-generalists, and the generalists, but also with other studies.

In 5.2., the focus shifts from the qualification needs posed by the world of work to examine the conceptions of the alumni set on their initial training in the ITE programme. The research question guiding this part is therefore: *What are the conceptions of ITE alumni on the ITE programme?* Väärälä's (1995) model was not utilised in this part as it did not fit the responses and made examining the question less flexible. Also, this question may also relate to other spheres of knowledge because the expectations and needs may come from competency or expert knowledge point of view. For example, the respondent may have personal wants and motivations for learning more on a certain topic or answering that one learns by doing the work may be more related to the idea of becoming an expert through socialising to the work environment and becoming more successful in one's work through concrete practice.

### 5.1 What Are the Needed Qualifications in the World of Work According to ITE Alumni?

As discussed before, the data were analysed by grouping similar answers to create more abstract, theoretical concepts. By grouping the answers and through reading other studies, the qualification model by Väärälä (1995) was chosen to serve as the theoretical framework. As a result, all alumni groups reported needing skills from all five qualification categories. The conceptions of alumni were in many ways similar. For example, all alumni groups had needed

abundance of different sociocultural qualifications in their jobs. Moreover, differences were found in the emphasis the different groups gave to different qualifications, and within the qualification grouping, different issues were mentioned. For example, the generalists reported more frequently that one of the most needed skills in working life was innovative qualifications in the form of developing own knowledge or the whole strategy of the organisation. Teachers reported also needing some innovative qualifications, but the frequency and the quality of answers was different. Comparatively teachers answered needing less innovative qualifications than generalists and while generalists had the emphasis on thinking skills and organisational development, teachers reported the world of work to require them to be creative and willing to learn new things.

#### 5.1.1 Conceptions of Teachers on the Needed Qualifications

As teachers are the biggest group, they also had the most versatile combination of all the different conceptions on what skills are needed in the world of work. This is to be noticed also in other parts of the study.

Within the answers from the alumni with only teacher background, all the qualification categories by Väärälä (1995) were presented. However, motivational and innovative qualifications were not given such a strong emphasis compared to other categories. The only mention of motivational type stated that they have needed planning skills. The innovative needs of teachers were related to two types of development: learning new skills and knowledge, and the development of processes. The nature of the ITE programme is highlighted for example in this response, which suggests the programme offering support for the development for innovativeness:

...The ability to...be brave enough to do things differently even as a young teacher. (46T).

**Table 3.** The most needed skills in the working life of teachers (n=24), the numbers in parenthesis refer to the number of mentions.

Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV (Väärälä, 1995)	
Planning skills (1)	Self-regulation (1)	Motivational qualifications (1)	
Creativity (3)	Developing oneself: developing processes (5)	Innovative qualifications (7)	
Being brave to do things differently (2)			
Willingness to learn new things (1)	Developing oneself: learning new things (2)		
Research skills (1)			
Flexibility (4)	Adaptation (10)	Normative adaptive qualifications (13)	
Skills to “wing it” (2)			
Being able to adapt (2)			
Understanding that you have done enough (1)			
Patience (1)			
Time management (2)	Management of time (3)		
Multitasking (1)			
Classroom management (3)	Management of students (4)		Productive and technical qualifications (24)
Behaviour management (1)			
Special education (2)	Special education (3)		
Differentiation (1)			
General didactics (1)	Didactical & pedagogical skills (15)		
Language didactics (French) (1)			
Language didactics (English) (8)			
Drama education (1)			

Pedagogy (2)		
Teaching skills (1)		
Raising kids (1)		
Understanding educational systems (1)		
Comparative education (1)	Understanding educational systems (2)	
Intercultural competence (8)	Values & ethics (10)	Sociocultural qualifications (24)
Ethical thinking (1)		
Open-mindedness (1)		
Organisational skills (1)	Work organisation (2)	
Leadership skills (1)		
Language skills, especially English (3)	Communication (3)	
Social skills (5)	Collaboration (9)	
Collaboration with parents (2)		
Collaboration with colleagues (1)		
Conflict resolution (1)		

The response is clearly directed to instruct a newly graduate but also offers inspiration on being brave. This is a common discourse in the responses of the alumni as they often see the role of the ITE alumni to be proactive in their workplaces:

Maybe more how to teach it [intercultural competence] to others, after you have learned yourself what it actually is. (3T)

ITEs know how school can look different and won't be afraid to challenge the system and find their own way of teaching instead of just following what others do. (40T)

The most common responses of alumni fell under the categories: normative adaptive qualifications (13 mentions), productive and technical qualification (24 mentions), and sociocultural qualifications (24 mentions).

A common conception among the alumni was that working life demanded them to think about their time management and adaptation to different settings by being flexible, patient but also by being forgiving of oneself in the constraints of the job. These skills were especially required in the beginning of the career as this respondent put it:

“Skills to adapt to different situations and to go with the flow. Beginning of career includes a lot of substituting and short term contracts. It is important to be able to adapt to different classrooms’ different ways of working... different facilities and materials...” (40T)

The category consisting of teachers, they naturally rated teaching-related skills high. The type of skills the teachers had mostly needed were general and specific didactical and pedagogical skills. Especially the need for language didactics were strongly emphasised by the alumni, but the practical applications of these seemed to be different: Finnish as a second language, English as a second language, CLIL, and English as a foreign language (n.b. all of these not visible in the Table 3 because they were specified in other part of the questionnaire but relevant to mention in this part). These results are in line with the definition Väärälä (1995, 44) has given to the productive and technical qualifications because these skills are needed to manage in the everyday life of the profession. Other skills often mentioned by the alumni were general management of classrooms and individual students, issues related to special education but also wider context, such as understanding different educational systems, which is also promised on the ITE programme website in the form of “discovering background and state of education abroad” (Intercultural Teacher Education, n.d.).

The sociocultural qualifications frequently mentioned in the responses. The teachers’ conceptions were that one needs to skills have strong communication skills to communicate and collaborate with parents, colleagues and students both in person but also via emails and written communications, as one respondent said the work nowadays increasingly requiring. Communication skills in English was mentioned to have high value due to working in multicultural settings in Finland and sometimes abroad. The multicultural nature of the graduates’ work is visible in the frequency of the sociocultural qualification category. There is a need to understand people from versatile cultural background, to communicate and collaborate with them flexibly, and also sometimes being able to solve conflicts between people, especially students.



Related to communication skills, collaboration was often mentioned to supplement the skill-set. The work life, thus, required the teachers to have strong social skills to communicate and to work together with parents, students, and colleagues in multiple settings. Most respondents had merely stated the strong need for collaboration, but this respondent also gave credit to the programme:

Good communication skills and “people skills” that I think ITE helped me acquire (T3)

Part of the sociocultural competence is the organisational understanding, which encompasses being a member of an organisation, understanding the structures and hierarchies, and having leadership skills. Part of the work environment was also ethical and value questions. When interacting and working with different type of people from versatile backgrounds, the ITE alumni reported needing strong intercultural competence and ethical thinking in their work life.

#### 5.1.2 Conceptions of Teacher-Generalists on the Needed Qualifications

The second category is the teacher-generalists that all shared a diverse work background both in comprehensive schools but also in other types of workplaces. In this group, the general conceptions of both the teachers and the generalists were manifested and combined, however, the teacher-generalists’ having more similar conceptions with teachers. Being a smaller group, consisting of 10 responses, the list of skills is not as long as in the case of the teachers, but encompasses all the different qualification categories of Väärälä (1995).

Similarly, to the alumni with teacher background, this group had emphasis on the sociocultural and productive and technical qualifications. In other words, these skills were the most needed in their work environments. The sociocultural aspect had similar categories to those with the teachers. Intercultural competence and sensitivity were, again, important to many alumni. They also viewed collaboration and communication skills to have been valuable to them. Again, having strong English skills was reported being important to communication.

**Table 4.** The most needed qualifications of teacher-generalists (n=10), the numbers in parenthesis refer to the number of mentions.

Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV (Väärälä, 1995)
Hard working spirit (1)	Motivation (1)	Motivational qualifications (1)
Research skills (1)	Learning new & updating knowledge (4)	Innovative qualifications (4)
Willingness to learn new things (1)		
Understanding current affairs (1)		
International policy analysis (1)		
Flexibility (2)	Adaptation (4)	Normative adaptive qualifications (4)
Adjusting fast (2)		
Special education (2)	Special education (2)	Productive and technical qualifications (11)
Practical teaching skills (3)	Pedagogy & didactics (7)	
Didactical knowledge (1)		
Pedagogical knowledge (2)		
Curriculum knowledge (1)		
Paperwork (1)	Bureaucracy (1)	
ICT skills (1)	ICT skills (1)	
Organisational skills (1)	Work organisation (2)	Sociocultural qualifications (14)
Organisational leadership (1)		
Collaboration (1)	Collaboration (2)	
Social skills (1)		
English language skills (2)	Communication (2)	
Intercultural competence (6)	Values & ethics (8)	
Values & ethics (2)		

This group of alumni had benefitted from having pedagogical and didactical skills and knowledge, but the teacher-generalists were not as particular as the teachers when communicating the needed teaching qualifications. This manifested in different ways as some felt their teaching skills were enhanced by having strong pedagogical foundation (39TG) and others emphasised the need for the pedagogical foundation together with practical experience (25TG). However, there were also examples of alumni who listed needing a combination of technical qualifications, such as respondent 18TG below.

Ethical reasoning and pedagogical understanding have given me a solid foundation. (39TG)

Sound theoretical knowledge and practical experience of pedagogical practices... (25TG)

Subject knowledge and skills but also special education knowledge and skills, knowledge of all the paper work... (18TG)

Special education was a topic brought up also in this group. As one respondent put it: concrete experiences in the field had made her realise she would need more skills and knowledge in special education.

In this group normative adaptive qualifications weren't as prominent as in the group of teachers, but again, the alumni had had to adapt fast to new situations and work environments. Motivational qualifications were only mentioned once, but the biggest difference between the teachers and the teacher-generalists was the need for innovative qualifications. In this category, the different types of work manifested as these alumni had experienced, they had to move beyond the immediate teaching skills and knowledge and expand and utilise it in other type of work, for example in an NGO. One respondent was elaborate on the needs of different approach for the programme:

Since I'm more leaned towards the NGO sector, I have wished we had more input on organizational and education leadership in the ITE studies. Also, I often am asked about specifics on global education policy agenda, such as the development goals or uncesco pillars of education, and I think it would be very useful if the ITE studies strengthened getting to know and analyse these policies. (4TG)

### 5.1.3 Conceptions of Generalists on the Needed Qualifications

**Table 5.** The most needed qualifications of the generalists, the numbers in parenthesis refer to the number of mentions.

Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV (Väärälä, 1995)
Dedication (1)	Commitment to work (2)	Motivational qualifications (2)
Passion (1)		
Strategic planning (1)	Organisational development (2)	Innovative qualifications (10)
Institutional development (1)		
Problem-solving (1)	Thinking skills (7)	
Critical thinking & analysis (4)		
Ability to see from different perspectives (2)		
Research skills (1)	Learning new knowledge (1)	
Flexibility (1)	Adapting to work (1)	
Understanding different educational systems (1)	Understanding educational systems (1)	Productive and technical qualifications (4)
Pedagogical skills (2)	Pedagogy & didactics (3)	
Substance knowledge (1)		
Intercultural competence (2)	Values & ethics (2)	Sociocultural qualifications (10)
Collaboration (3)	Collaboration (4)	
Negotiation skills (1)		
Communication skills (3)	Communication (4)	
Presenting skills (1)		

The generalists' conceptions put a different emphasis on the demands the work life has posed on them. In this group, normative adaptive qualifications were rarely mentioned in the responses. Only one respondent reported flexibility being one of the most important skills in their work. Meanwhile the teachers reported needing adaptive qualifications to endure the fast paced, changing situations of work, the time constraints, and to being forgiving of oneself.

Thus, the conceptions of the importance to adapt in the world of work differ between these groups.

The generalists reported sometimes needing motivational qualifications, but instead of focusing on self-regulation, both the generalists and teacher-generalists had more attitudinal topics, such as having a hard-working spirit or being passionate about own work.

Compared to teachers and teacher-generalists the generalists did not put as strong emphasis on the productive and technical qualifications. Especially teachers had a range of important qualifications needed on the job. The needed skills of generalists are similar to other groups but whereas special education is an often-mentioned topic in other groups, the generalists rather had needed general understanding of pedagogics and didactics. Thus, it appears that the generalists have the conception of needing a broad understanding of the educational field, whereas teachers need a vast set of specific methods for teaching.

The most needed skills of generalists were related to sociocultural and innovative qualifications. The generalists' responses exemplify the versatile nature of their needed qualifications, especially in terms of sociocultural and innovative qualifications:

Strategic planning, institutional development, collaboration, problem-solving. (11G)

The ability to critical analysis, gaining alternative perspectives to see and interpret situations and historic facts in society also the ability to work in groups and as a member of a team. (34G)

Holistic and pluralistic thinking. Understanding of different cultures (macro & micro)... Negotiation skills. Global perspective. (42G)

#### 5.1.4 Conclusions on the Comparison of Qualifications

Based on the analysis of data, categorised by the Väärälä (1995) qualification model, skills from all of the qualification categories were needed in the life of work of ITE alumni. Also, all the alumni groups reported needing vast skillsets of sociocultural qualifications in their work, which is typical and imperative to working life today (e.g. Tynjälä, 2003, 87-88). Usually biggest differences were noticed between the teachers and the generalists. The conceptions of teacher-generalists had generalist tendencies but were closer to those of teachers.

**Table 6.** Summary of the comparison between the alumni groups.

Similarities between the conceptions	Differences between the conceptions
<p>All qualification categories required and visible in workplaces</p> <p>Sociocultural qualifications have high importance in the world of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Similar type of answers: good communication skills, collaborating with different type of people, intercultural competence and ethicality needed in work</li> <li>➔ Especially teachers had listed the many stakeholders they need to communicate with (students, parents, colleagues)</li> </ul> <p>Teachers and teacher-generalists had especially similar conceptions</p>	<p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Viewed a range of practical skills to be important (productive and technical qualifications)</li> <li>➔ Pressure to adapt to work environments</li> </ul> <p>Generalists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Less pressure to have practical teaching skills (productive and technical qualifications)</li> <li>➔ Innovativeness important (thinking skills, organisational development, development of self)</li> </ul>

## 5.2 What Are the Conceptions of ITE Alumni on the ITE Programme?

This part focuses on the conceptions the ITE alumni have on their study programme in retrospect. Initially, the responses form a dichotomous yes or no situation, which is usually elaborated by the respondents. These elaborations are then categorised using data driven analysis that is suitable for phenomenographical approach. The categories are informed by the Stewart and Knowles (1999) categorisation of skills (key skills, vocational skills, and job specific skills), however, only vocational skills and key skills are, according to the ITE alumni, missing from the programme. Moreover, considerable amount of study participants, 12 out of 47, did not specify anything missing from the programme and had positive conceptions on the outcomes of their studies.

In the first parts, the different alumni groups are discussed separately and in latter parts, the reasons for not specifying anything missing from the programme are examined. In the end, there is a concluding graph and remarks on the conceptions.

### 5.2.1 The Teacher Conceptions

The teachers mostly responded with issues they thought the ITE programme should address more, however five respondents had opposing conceptions on the question (will be elaborated in later parts). In the teacher conceptions, the role of vocational skills is highlighted as there are several categories the teachers wished they knew better before entering the world of work. These skills are related to teaching itself as special education and special didactical issues are brought up. However, a considerable amount of issues related to the job as a teacher, but not directly teaching-related topics are missing from the ITE programme, according to the alumni conceptions. These important topics are the legal issues and paperwork, relationships and communication with families and management of students during classes but also how to address their wellbeing outside of the immediate classroom. For example, these teachers felt the pedagogy and teaching part was addressed in the programme, but were left with many questions about the other issues:

Everything that's not around pedagogy and teaching in itself. Like what do I say to parent's meetings when the year starts. How do I use wilma? What do I say in an interview? How do I even look for a job? How does substitute jobs work? Am I suppose to sign a contract? What kind of salary we have? What do all those lines in the salary sheet means?... (40T)

From the perspective of a public school teacher, I would have liked to have a bit more talk about the rutines of school (how to fill different forms, what to expect about the byrocracy, how to apply for positions etc) especially during the last few years. Although I do appreciate that ITE program is very versitile and it has many courses not available for other teacher students. (43T)

Often the teachers responded needing more both didactical knowledge but also support with the other than directly teaching-related issues:

Based on my first year of teaching, there wasn't a lot of emphasis on school-home communication and dealing with challenging parents. I would have liked more special education classes. I have two dyslexic students in my class and I don't think this was discussed at all during our studies... (26T)

**Table 7.** The topics missing from the programme according to the teachers (n=26), numbers in the parenthesis signify the number of mentions.

Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
Nothing (4)	Did not specify anything missing from the programme (5)	
Concrete experience teaches (1)		
Laws (1)	Legal issues (6)	Vocational skills of teachers (36)
Bureaucracy & paperwork (5)		
Special education (8)	Special education (8)	
Didactics (2)	Didactical issues (7)	
Early years learning (1)		
Language didactics (3)		
Teaching emotional skills (1)		
Producing materials (1)	Material production (1)	
ICT (1)	ICT skills in education (2)	
Copyright issues (1)		
Applying for a teacher position (2)	Applying for teaching jobs (2)	
Not enough school practices (1)	Practical experience (1)	
Collaboration with families (6)	Relationships with families (9)	
Communication in Wilma (3)		
Classroom management (4)	Management of students (6)	
Student wellbeing (2)		
Knowing about the hardships of work (1)	Own wellbeing (3)	Key skills: Management of self (4)
Own wellbeing (1)		
Being forgiving of yourself (1)		
Time management (1)	Time management (1)	



Because of the missing content of the programme, some participants also reported having taken extra courses in the area. Especially special education was a topic the teachers had had to supplement their knowledge later.

Some respondents felt they would have needed also more support in their key skills, especially in management of self to support own wellbeing in work. Here are examples of the ways the alumni wished these topics were handled:

As probably in every program, there was not enough discussion about the hardships of the work and how to find ways to deal with them... (1T)

Time management skills and how to take care of one's well being while working. (32T)

### 5.2.2 The Teacher-Generalist Conceptions

The teacher-generalists reported both having needed more skills in teaching but also support in pursuing a career in other settings, such as in NGOs. Compared to the teacher responses, the teacher-generalists also had slightly different emphasis on the skills needed.

Three respondents thought there was nothing missing from the programme, while the other responses highlighted the need for skills in the vocational area, in key skills, or working in the NGO sector. The generalists thought language didactics and assessment being the most neglected areas of teaching-related topics, but similarly to teachers, listed legal issues and collaboration with stakeholders (parents and other professionals) being something missing from their initial teacher training, which are common and acknowledged issues in other teacher programmes as well (e.g. Watts, 2000).

When discussing key skills, organisational leadership was mentioned, but similarly to teachers, more support for taking care of own wellbeing was said to be missing:

Well, from a personal point of view, maybe just a little something about how to cope with the pressure of the job, and how to take care of yourself mentally and physically. Of course you can and should do these by yourself, but it could be good to remind yourself about the importance of it, even before beginning your career. (9TG)

**Table 8.** The topics missing from the programme according to the teacher-generalists (n=10), numbers in the parenthesis signify the number of mentions.

Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
Nothing (3)		
Language didactics (2)	Didactics (2)	Vocational skills of a teacher (7)
Assessment (2)	Assessment (2)	
Collaboration with parents (1)	Collaboration (2)	
Multisectoral collaboration (1)		
Paperwork (1)	Legal issues (1)	
Organisational leadership (1)	Organisational leadership (1)	Key skills (3)
Coping with pressure (1)	Wellbeing & adaptation (2)	
Taking care of own wellbeing (1)		
Writing reports (1)	Work in NGO sector (2)	Work in NGO sector (3)
International policy analysis (1)		
Finding a job in the organisational sector (1)	Finding a job (1)	

Differing from the alumni with only teacher experiences, the teacher generalists had needs also outside of the teaching posts. This respondent hoped the programme to both assist with teaching-related bureaucracy and collaboration, but also to help with basic tasks in the NGO sector. However, there was a hesitation to expect the ITE programme to prepare for the work in the NGOs.

I would have benefitted from better knowledge of all the paperwork (kolmiportainen tuki [three-step intervention model]), in terms of how to fill it in, the language that must be used, what are the requirements of a meeting with parents / monialainen työryhmä [multisectoral team], what

happens in one... Also, better knowledge of report writing (not only academic style) would have helped in the humanitarian field, but it might be a bit out of the scope of ITE. (18TG)

### 5.2.3 The Generalist Conceptions

Similarly to the teacher-generalists, the generalists also had needs in vocational skills, key skills, but also in working in other than primary school settings, in these instances in NGOs and in higher education. Again, answering that nothing was missing was general in this group as it is within the teacher-generalist group. Also, vocational skills were not given such a strong emphasis compared to the teachers, while other areas were possibly more present in the answers.

**Table 9.** The topics missing from the programme according to the generalists (n=10), numbers in the parenthesis signify the number of mentions.

Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
Nothing (4)		
Language didactics (1)	Didactical & pedagogical skills (2)	Vocational skills of a teacher (2)
Special education (1)		
Professional communication (1)	Social skills (2)	Key skills (2)
Multisectoral collaboration (1)		
Educational policy (1)	Other educational sectors (2)	Work in higher education & NGOs (5)
Work in higher education (1)		
Leadership skill development (1)	Organisations (3)	
Job applications (1)		
Workplace culture (1)		

The vocational skills of teachers that were missing according to the generalists, were language didactics and special education. This is in line with all the other groups, which also highlight-

ed the need for these skills. Key skills, the generalists thought were missing, were related to collaboration and communication skills with professionals from different fields.

When discussing about the work in other settings, and the needs related to those, different attitudes and discourse could be identified. Some belittled their own needs, while others merely stated support for their career path to be missing:

My line of work is probably not in the jobs that this programme aims for. (42G)

Leadership skills development and preparation for working in the higher sector of education was formally missing or a non-option. (34G)

### 5.2.4 Summarising the Findings

**Table 10.** Summary on the issues the alumni reported missing from the programme.

Teachers (n=26)	Teachers + generalists (n=10)	Generalists (n=10)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing (5)</li> <li>• Vocational skills of a teacher (36)</li> <li>• Key skills: Management of self (4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing (3)</li> <li>• Vocational skills of a teacher (7)</li> <li>• Key skills (3)</li> <li>• Work in the NGO sector (3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing (4)</li> <li>• Vocational skills of a teacher (2)</li> <li>• Key skills (2)</li> <li>• Work in HE &amp; NGO (5)</li> </ul>

Out of the 46 possible respondents, 12 alumni did not specify anything missing from the ITE programme. These 12 were distributed relatively evenly among the groups, but considering the sizes of the groups, the teachers were the most eager to express issues they felt were missing. The type of answers by teachers were divided into key skills and vocational skills. The key skills the teachers mentioned revolved around own wellbeing and management of own

self. The teachers also had especially varied and long lists of vocational skills they wished they had learnt or acquired during their studies. The other groups also had the conception that some teaching related issues needed to be addressed more, such as special education, language didactics, legal issues and collaboration with parents and other stakeholders. However, the less the ITE alumni had been teaching in primary level, the less specific vocational teacher skills they reported missing.

The biggest difference between the groups was the generalist and teacher-generalist groups reporting other than teaching related topics. The skills that were missing were generally related to work in non-governmental organisations and in higher education: mainly on how to find a job in the different field but also some general tasks of the fields were mentioned. The way these needs were addresser was often hesitant because of not being sure if the programme should only focus on developing teachers or if there should be support for other type of work in addition.

**Table 11.** Reasons for feeling there was nothing missing from the programme.

Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
No elaboration (4)		
Good programme (2)	Quality of the programme (3)	Positive characteristics of the ITE programme (5)
Better than other teacher programmes (1)		
Programme offered chances for reflection (1)	Opportunities offered by the programme (2)	
Minors helped to mould education according to own needs (1)		
You learn the rest when you go to work (3)	Learning by getting concrete experience (3)	Learning at work (3)
Chose a different career path (1)	Career change (1)	
Being accepting of own shortcomings (1)	Critical expectations of self (2)	
Not enough language skills (1)		

I chose to analyse all the reasons for “nothing was missing from the programme” together to get a clear idea, rather than a fragmented, of why some alumni thought there was nothing missing from the programme. All the respondents answered the question about the possible missing competences (*Based on your work experience, was there something important missing from the program?*), however, not everybody elaborated on the issue. As seen in Table 11, four respondents merely answered to the question *no* or *nothing*. Moreover, there were elaborate answers, which included several conceptions for not listing any competences that were missing:

It did the job perfectly. There are lot of things you will learn only by doing the job, just have to give yourself a break and accept that not everything will work out perfectly in the beginning or even in the long run. Its a job where you learn something new everyday. (3T)

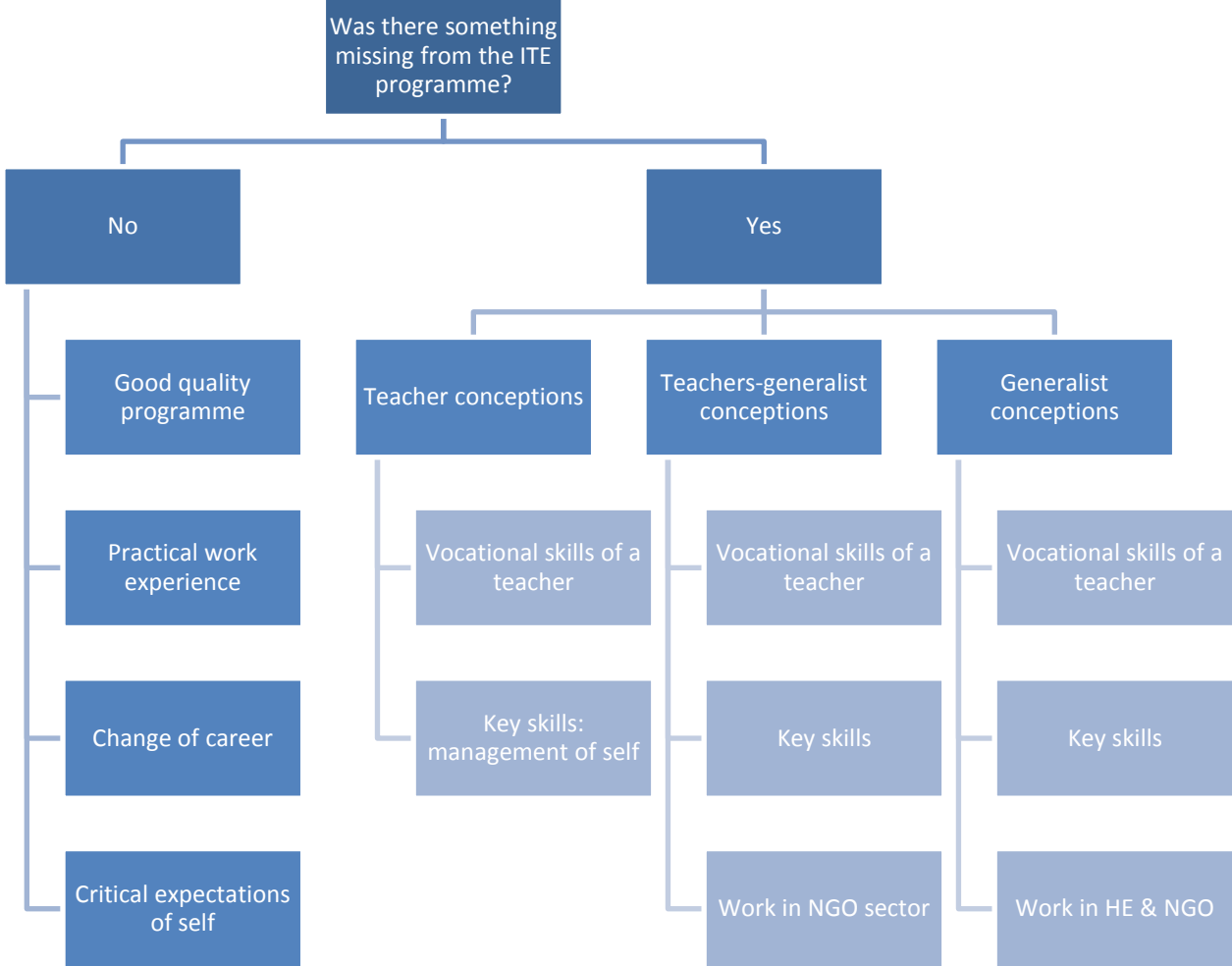
The conceptions on why the programme was not missing anything were divided into four categories: *the positive characteristics of the programme*, *learning at work*, *changing career path*, and *expectations of self*. In other words, the alumni had a conception that the education provided them with the relevant competences or if not, they had learnt the sufficient skills through their experiences at work. This respondent had experiences of both:

I think the program is very well rounded...I have learnt awfully lot over the years in the job to be able to act as a confident consultant now. (17TG)

The other two categories: *career change* and *expectations of self*, did not want to blame the programme for missing anything, but they rather focused on themselves, reflected through the programme. When changing the career, the programme cannot be expected to provide all the skills needed in that field, but as the respondent later put it, they had complemented the skill-set after studies in another educational institution.

One respondent thought that they did not have the needed English language skills in the beginning of the programme but learnt substantially because of that. Another respondent also decided not to express what was missing but rather wanted to emphasise that one needs to give time for the success, and to be forgiving of oneself. I categorised these responses to have criticality over themselves, and thus not wanting to blame the programme. The missing language skills or stating not being able to learn more during the programme were not exactly answering the question but a way to perceive the programme and own self in it in retrospect.

As a conclusion, Figure 3 summarises the conceptions of the alumni considering the limitations of the ITE programme



**Figure 3.** Summary of all the alumni conceptions on the needs from the ITE programme.

## 6 Conclusions

**Table 12.** Summary on the alumni conceptions.

	Teacher	Teacher-generalist	Generalist
Most needed qualifications in the world of work (Väärälä, 1995)	1. Sociocultural qualifications, Productive and technical qualifications 3. Normative adaptive qualifications	1. Sociocultural qualifications 2. Productive and technical qualifications	1. Sociocultural qualifications, Innovative qualifications
What was missing from the programme? (e.g. Stewart & Knowles, 1999)	1. Vocational skills 2. Nothing 3. Key skills	1. Vocational skills 2. Nothing Key skills Work in NGO	1. Work in HE & NGO 2. Nothing 3. Vocational skills Key skills

The qualification categories of Väärälä (1995) were used in the analysis of the qualification needs in the world of work. According to the analysis, all the groups needed all five categories of qualifications but the emphasis between the groups were different. The emphasis between the generalists and teachers are in accordance with Mäkinen's (2004, 99) study, where teachers and generalists in the field of education were compared. Both rated sociocultural qualifications to be the most important in their work. Similar to the responses of the ITE alumni, also in Mäkinen's study, the teachers said the normative adaptive qualifications to be big part of their work, while the generalists had to have innovative qualifications. Mäkinen (2004, 100) speculates if the nature of teaching is stable and once established patterns are mostly repeated, teachers thus needing more productive and technical qualifications than innovativeness. This speculation is interesting in the context of expert knowledge because to be an expert one needs to abandon the strict rules and to become intuitive and envision new possibilities rather than sticking to the old ones. (Berliner, 2001, 463; Boshuizen et al., 2004, 5-6; Dreyfus, 2005, 179-181; Lyon, 2015, 92.) Therefore, the speculation of Mäkinen (2004) on



the nature of teacherhood contradicts the general understanding of the profession and the understood demands the society sets on teachers.

Nevertheless, all ITE alumni rated sociocultural qualifications being the most needed qualification in their work. As sociocultural qualifications relate to the relationships, communication and collaboration among people, it is in line with the notion of the knowledge-based society putting strong emphasis on these skills. These type of skills are also appreciated by the Finnish higher education graduates in general (Puhakka & Tuominen, 2011, 8), by the generalists because of the need to generate social networks for better employment (Mäkinen, 2004, 59-60; Rouhelo, 2008, 164, 209), and in teaching where there are many stakeholders, which need to share their information and communicate effectively (Blomberg, 2008, 61-62). Especially the sociocultural qualification of intercultural competence was reported to be needed in all the work of alumni but also to be well-addressed by the programme.

Tynjälä (2003, 93-94) has divided skills into three categories: theoretical, formal knowledge (know that), practical knowledge (know how), and self-regulation skills. According to Mäkinen's (2004, 57) study, the students were the most concerned in the skills related to know that and know how. The study on the ITE alumni revealed that the teachers and teacher-generalists rated high the teaching-related skills (know that & know how) both by expressing the need coming from the world of work but also reporting the ITE programme not addressing all the needed topics of teacherhood (e.g. management of students, collaborating with parents, or the legal issues). It is natural that the alumni with teaching experiences had concerns on the teacher matters. However, there was a number of mentions about also self-regulation skills to be needed in work, and thus wishes for the programme to having addressed ways to cope with them and to seek help. The self-regulation skills are important especially in teaching where the transition to work happens usually through having shorter job posts before landing a permanent work position. This was highlighted in the answers of alumni but also in research (e.g. Tynjälä et al., 2013, 39). The alumni reported having had to adapt fast to different contexts and situations in the beginning of the career, which resulted also the alumni with teacher careers to rate normative adaptive qualifications higher than teacher-generalists or generalists.

The generalists' conception on the demands of work differed from the teachers and teacher-generalists in terms of innovative qualifications. The generalists reported needing more skills in thinking and problem-solving than their teacher counterparts. This is typical to 21<sup>st</sup> century, knowledge and learning societies, where the generalists may be seen as symbolic analysts,

whose work requires analysing information, working in teams, and solving problems often on the symbolic level. (Mäkinen, 2004, 97; Reich, 1992, 174; Rouhelo, 2008, 29, 34; Tynjälä, 2003, 89.) The generalists' job descriptions are also varied, which results in needing innovative qualifications. Moreover, the pressure to have a vast range of practical teaching skills was not visible in the generalist group as it was with the teachers. Neither the working life required them to have as many teaching-related skills, nor did the generalists express such a strong need for the programme to address more of these skills.

The teacher-generalists and generalists had the view that the programme did not always support their career choice and the skills needed in the different field. The way these conceptions were conveyed portrayed a conflict: they were aware of the aim of the programme to be educating teachers but wished the programme to support other type of work in addition. Some were hesitant to pose demands on the programme because of the career change and thought the programme did what it was supposed to by creating pedagogical and didactical expertise, which also the generalists had often needed in their work.

All the alumni groups had the wish for the programme to address more key skills that are needed in all type of work. These key skills, reported by the alumni, were skills to manage own wellbeing and time while working, having skills to collaborate with stakeholders and colleagues, having communicational skills, and adaptation skills to workplaces. The wishes are well in line with the needs the alumni reported the work life presented them and the suggestions of Watts (2000, 264) on the role that the education should nowadays play by also supporting the enhancement of key skills applicable in all workplaces.

The alumni were eager to list a vast range of qualifications they have needed in the world of work. However, when presented the chance to bring up topics that were not addresses enough by the programme, many did not have anything to elaborate on. The reasons for this are multiple and many expressed being satisfied with the programme's quality, scope, and content. One conception, on the other hand, was that one cannot learn everything beforehand and considerable amount of skills and knowledge can and will be learnt in work. These ideas reflect the model of becoming an expert where the idea is to grow from a novice into an expert through concrete experience (Tynjälä, 1999, 360). However, the ITE alumni seemed to rely more on the expert knowledge to come from within through stages, as the alumni did not put emphasis on the school community or peer learning (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991). Also, according to Blomberg (2008, 164-165) and Jokinen et al. (2013, 44), the young teachers often

benefit from having strong ties to and support from the school community, which was not mentioned in the responses of the ITE alumni at all.

## 7 Discussion

In the previous parts the focus has been on the ITE alumni conceptions, which forms the basis of the phenomenographical study. Therefore, the data were analysed reporting the alumni conceptions, rather than making generalisations about the phenomenon itself. In this chapter, however, I will firstly discuss more freely on the meanings and implications I see the results of this thesis having on the ITE programme. In latter parts the ethics, trustworthiness, limitations, and ideas for further studies are discussed.

The results of the study reveal that the ITE alumni have been employed in number of different settings, resulting many of them even abandoning teaching altogether. This poses an interesting starting point for the discussion around the programme. The programme's primary task is to educate competent primary school teachers to the Finnish job market, but the question is, whether the scope should be expanded.

The alumni themselves had a clear understanding on the aims of the programme, and thus did not always dare to criticise the programme. Across all the groups, the alumni had ideas on what kinds of teaching skills are needed in the workplaces and which didactical and pedagogical topics were not given enough emphasis during studies. This is natural as the programme is a teacher education programme, which allows the participants expect certain teaching related issues to be covered. The topics that were often brought up by all groups were, for example, the need for more skills and knowledge in language didactics and in special education.

Some, on the other hand, had clear wishes that other type of work, such as working in the NGOs, or in higher education settings, would be supported in one way or another. As one respondent put it, having even had the experience of an alumni tell about the different options would have helped in finding own way in the job markets outside of teaching positions. Over the years, according to the questionnaire responses, the programme has not addressed the fact that the graduates from the ITE programme work in other than primary school settings more frequently than their counterparts from other programmes (Jokinen et al., 2013, 38). This contradicts with the promises given on the ITE programme websites (Intercultural Teacher Education, n.d.), which emphasise the broad sense of the programme by stating the studies to cover for example: global education studies (peace and conflict research, equity and human rights, environment) and study of overseas development policy. By reading the description of

the studies it appears that there is support in other than directly teaching related topics and career choices (NB the programme webpages were updated towards the end of this thesis writing process, taking down most of the above mentioned promises and having stronger emphasis on being a primary school teacher in Finland with an intercultural emphasis).

In phenomenographical studies, the graphs and categories are considered the results of the study. Also, in this study, the categories provided important insight to the conceptions the ITE alumni had on the programme but also on the needs the working life has posed on them. However, the for the programme to learn from these alumni responses, taking a closer look at the categories is necessary because they may give concrete ideas on the improvement of the programme. For example, across the board and within all the alumni groups, the needs in special education was brought up: the world of work demands the qualification but also the alumni reported having had too little courses on the topic. Another example would be the need for key skills and sociocultural qualifications. Sociocultural qualifications are strongly needed by all the alumni groups in the forms of social skills, communication, collaboration, organisational leadership, and intercultural competence. Especially communication and collaboration with parents was reported to be important qualification that is missing from the programme, while also the research suggests it having been missing from teacher education programmes for years (Jokinen et al., 2014, 37-38, 41; Jokinen & Välijärvi, 2006, 95). Some of these topics may partially already be addressed by the programme, but it is worth reconsidering how these skills are incorporated into the courses and course structures.

## **7.1 Ethics, Trustworthiness, and Limitations of the Study**

This thesis is conducted using the guidelines of good academic practices, which require the researcher to honesty and openness of the research. The data analysis, recording, and presenting of the results was conducted diligently and carefully. The original authors were credited by referring to them within the text. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 150-151.)

The research participants were informed of the uses of the data as part of my coursework but also as part of this thesis. The participants gave their consent by answering the questionnaire, although they were given the opportunity to withdraw or refuse the use of their data by contacting the researcher, whose contact information was attached to the questionnaire. According to good ethical manners, and as agreed in the questionnaire form, the data were stored from third parties by a password. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 150-151.)

As Lichtman (2006) expressed, the researcher of a qualitative study is always involved with the process. Thus, it is necessary for one to self-reflect and to reveal own personal biases and connections. (Lichtman, 2006, 163-166, 281; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 151, 158.) In qualitative study, it is not relevant to talk about reliability as also the phenomenographical literature suggest. Thus, the trustworthiness of the study is evaluated. The results of a phenomenographical analysis are not transferrable or repeatable because they are a result of the subjective categorisation of the researcher. (Huusko & Paloniemi, 2006, 170; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 160.) To increase the trustworthiness of the study, I have attempted to make the research process as transparent as possible by elaborating the steps, explaining the choices made, and referring to the original quotes by the alumni (Marton, 1986, 147-148; Huusko & Paloniemi, 2006, 162). However, due to the subjectivity of the categorisation, the results of the study are not conclusive on the topic.

In this study, I have tried to voice the many perceptions of alumni of the ITE programme. As a student of the programme, I have the affordance of understanding the respondents' experiences but still, it creates a reason for not assuming too much. I have not graduated yet and I trust that the graduates have a different outlook on the studies and thus, I am trying to be more of a recorder and interpreter of these responses. To avoid being too biased towards the data, I reread the responses multiple times and re-evaluated my data analysis steps each time. I am curious about the different ways to perceive the programme based on the unique paths the careers of the alumni have taken and I believe the variation of responses is seen in the results of this thesis as well.

I recognise my relationship to the topic being personal also because the context of the study is the Finnish educational system, which I am also part of and therefore I have my own assumptions on the transition from higher education to the world of work. I cannot make generalisations only based on my personal experiences and thus, I have refrained from expressing them too strongly through my writing, relying on what is said by the alumni and authors of other studies. Even though the process is prone to be affected by the subjectiveness of the researcher, the results of this study are in line with previous studies (e.g. Blomberg, 2008; Mäkinen, 2004), which support my findings.

In addition of having a close relationship to the topic, I also know personally some of the respondents as I have reached to them in hope of answers for my study. I have acknowledged this and therefore looked the responses as a list of things people have said. I am not trying to

recognise people from the responses, quite the opposite, it is easier to analyse the data if I am not concentrating on what one person said. However, at times it was necessary to go back and read the previous answers if the respondent referred to something they had previously stated.

Phenomenography has been criticised to detach the phenomena from the context. If the researcher and the participant refer to different things, the validity of the research is compromised. (Limberg, 2008, 314.) In this research, the personal connection to the programme itself supports this common understanding between the researcher and the respondents. However, individual answers were sometimes hard to interpret because there was no chance to ask for clarification and the respondent was not elaborate about the context. The answers may have been more in depth, had the data collection done through interviews, which is also recommended in the phenomenographical methodology literature (e.g. Limberg, 2008). However, the questionnaire was chosen as the data collection method due to financial and geographical limitations in finding the research participants. In unclear cases, I tried to reason it from the context of the response; what was said before, what was said after. It usually solved the issue but other times I was left wondering if I had understood the respondent correctly.

As suggested by Limberg (2008, 613), the research question guides data collection. In addition, the researcher should be aware of the previous research (Limberg, 2008, 613). My data were collected as part of another project and based on my own and my peers' interests, resulting the focus being unclear. Had there been a narrower research interest the data may have been richer in one area. In the current form, the data give a broad picture of several aspects of the alumni's lives. Additionally, I did not study the topic beforehand because I felt I was not sure what type of answers I was going to receive. Therefore, it may be discussed if this way my interpretation was more open to the different conceptions as my theoretical background knowledge was not strong, or if it made it harder to construct meaningful questions. The questions are accessible for the reader (Appendix 1) to read and assess.

The use of Väärälä's (1995) and Stewart and Knowles' (1999) models in guiding my data analysis is to be considered as the theories are relatively old. However, there had been many studies more recently that also utilised these models (e.g. Hanhinen, 2010; Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Mäkinen, 2004; Väisänen, 2003) and I familiarised myself with alternative models, resulting eventually choosing these two because of the clarity they provided on the phenomena at hand. As a result of having a clear idea on how these theories categorised skills and qualifications, it made it easier for me to conduct the phenomenographical data analysis,

where it is important that the categories have definitions and they do not overlap (Huusko & Paloniemi, 2006, 169).

## **7.2 Suggestions for Further Studies**

Previously there has been a lack of knowledge on the ITE alumni as it has not been customary to collect data from the alumni of the programme. This study should only serve as the starting point for future research because the current students of the programme feel they lack this valuable information. Through the questionnaire I was able to gain contacts who were willing to participate possible further studies. This could result in gaining more collaboration with the alumni but also more in depth understanding on the programme.

As my questionnaire was focused on broad range of topics, there was a lack of focus on my part. I gained rich data and there are many topics still to be explored within the questionnaire responses. Moreover, another study could be done on a narrower topic or by choosing a different study method. Because there were found different career paths (teachers, teacher-generalists, and generalists), it would be interesting to see a narrative study conducted on the alumni. On one hand, the study participants could be somehow categorised because the alumni in different part of the career may view the field, profession, qualifications, values, and other things differently from each other. This was now ruled out of my study as there would have been too many variables fragmenting my study into too many small pieces.

The reasons for conducting more research in this field is justified as there has not been a strong emphasis on the alumni feedback or experiences altogether. It is particularly is important because the findings may be useful to the current and future students of the programme. The faculty may benefit from it by being more aware of the conceptions the alumni have on the content taught during their studies and in best case, the data may help to give concrete development ideas for future courses or curricula. Especially the often-criticised poor working life relevance of studies may be enhanced through the input of the alumni. The alumni themselves have also been interested in the study, and it may be of interest to hear what others have done with the degree, the research functioning as possible inspiration for future career choices.



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## **Appendix 1: Content of the ITE Alumni Questionnaire**

The aim of this survey is to collect information about alumni of Intercultural Teacher Education (ITE), or the previously called International Teacher Education. Answering will take approximately 20 minutes. Feel free to skip any part you feel uncomfortable answering.

This information is used to support the development of the program as well as give ITE students some career advice or perspectives in general. By answering this, you will be part of my research for a thematic practice. In addition, there may be theses made out of the data. The final product is a course work submitted to a teacher and in case it ends up being a thesis, it will be public in [jultika.oulu.fi](http://jultika.oulu.fi) around 2019-2020.

The responses are handled with confidentiality in accordance with the University of Oulu Code of Conduct and The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. Your information will be used for research purposes only and the data are presented in a way that does not single out individuals. In case there are relevant issues or improvements mentioned in the responses, those may be brought to the attention of the faculty working closely with the ITE program. Anonymous data will be stored and protected by passwords for further research for the ITE program.

Please answer the survey and tell about it to other alumni to get a broader point of view.

Thank you for your time!

Marika Tikkanen,

ITE-15

### **Personal details**

1. Which year did you start your studies in the ITE program? How long did you study?
2. Where have you worked after graduation?

- Finland
- Abroad
- Both

3. In which types of institutions have you worked in after graduating? (Answer as detailed as you feel comfortable)

4. How long did it take to get a job?

- Immediately
- Less than half a year
- Less than a year
- More than a year

5. How did you find applying for a job after graduating with the ITE certificate?

6. Which minors did you take? Did they help you to get a job? How?

### **Working life relevance of ITE studies**

7. Has the ITE qualification helped you to get a job? How?

8. Which skills have you needed the most in your working life?

9. Based on your work experience, was there something important missing from the program?

10. Which topics need to be addressed in the ITE program?

11. What are the needed qualifications in the job market in your perspective?

12. Would you be interested in taking professional development courses? What kind?

13. How do you feel about the amount and quality of practice periods you had during your studies?

### **Words of wisdom**

14. Would you recommend the ITE program? Why?

15. What advice would you give to current/graduating ITE students?

16. Thank you for participating! Feel free to leave a comment.

### **After answering**

Thank you for your participation!

If you have any concerns/questions/you want to withdraw from the research/comments, please contact me: [marika.tikkanen@student oulu.fi](mailto:marika.tikkanen@student oulu.fi)

Please leave your contact information here in order for us to contact you for further cooperation <[link to the survey](#)>