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Follow-up evaluation of programmes taught through a foreign language at Finnish institutions of higher education

The evaluation report 'Teaching Through a Foreign Language - From Tool to Empowering Mediator' was published by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) in 1999. At that time the need to evaluate the subject was regarded highly important due to the fact that teaching through a foreign language and other international activities grew rapidly in the institutions. Both the ministry of education and higher education institutions showed interest in the quality of these programmes and the main question was that in what way the programmes brought added value for the students, employers and to the institutions themselves.

The purpose of the evaluation in 1999 was to analyse the value of programmes, their advantages and disadvantages, and their strengths and weaknesses in the institutions. The basic aim was to improve the quality of such programmes. The key conclusion of the evaluation was that the situation could have been seen merely as a starting point and the role of the foreign language could have been expanded from a tool to its full potential. The report disseminated several recommendations on national, institutional and individual level.

In 2005 FINHEEC decided to implement a follow-up evaluation of the subject. The working group of the follow-up emphasised that the follow up should not only examine how the recommendations have been fulfilled in the institutions but also how the current objectives of internationalism have changed role and context of the programmes. The core of the follow-up is a questionnaire which was sent to all fifteen institutions which participated the evaluation in 1999. The questionnaire consisted in 27 questions - eight questions were allocated to the central administration of each institution and nineteen to the programmes directly. There were also additional questions to introduce basic numeral figures of each programme.

The themes of the questions were related to international strategies of the institutions, how the central administration is supporting the programmes, how teachers and students are encouraged to participate international mobility and what is the role of the programmes for supporting the mobility. The programmes were also asked about the changes after 1999 and e.g. what has been the influence of the two cycle degree system when planning the future of the programmes.