

VISIONS FOR FUTURE PARTNERSHIPS
BETWEEN FINNISH AND NEPALESE
HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS

Reflections from the EDUCase Platform

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Aalto University
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Higher Education
Platform for Global
Sustainability



This report is an initiative of Aalto University on behalf of the EDUCase Platform, a pilot network supported by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2021-2024.

The report is compiled by the author in close collaboration with higher education institutions from the network. The views and opinions expressed in the report are those of the author and may not necessarily represent the views or positions of the entities represented.



FOREWORD

EDUCase Platform is a pilot initiative established by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) for the period 2021-2024. It aims to catalyze collaboration between Finland and partner countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The network has engaged 26 Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) to promote practical case collaborations focused on education, research, innovation, and entrepreneurship skills development. EDUCase projects employ concrete collaborative case work to foster academic knowledge, peer learning and responsible partnership practices. Case-based cooperation has proven to be an effective method for addressing sustainable development challenges, incorporating insights from academic partners in both the Global North and South. These partnerships, led by multiple actors across diverse geographic locations, underscore the importance of direct peer collaboration in bridging cultural, institutional, and academic distances.

This report is an initiative by Aalto University, serving as the coordinating university of the EDUCase Platform. Among the countries included in the 2021-2024 MEC Global network initiatives, Nepal – a long-standing international development partner of the Finnish government – has been uniquely covered by EDUCase and therefore selected as a focus country for this report. Reflections from network members and Nepalese stakeholders indicate that despite significant differences between institutions and academic content, projects share a common alignment with policy objectives, efforts to achieve broader impact, and similar systemic and operational challenges in project implementation.

The aim of this report is to broadly examine academic cooperation between Nepal and Finland, including aspects such as academic mobility. Many observations presented are equally applicable to other regions and countries partnering with Finnish HEIs. I would like to extend my gratitude to the international team of the Erasmus+ CBHE PBL South Asia project, whose lively discussions also inspired the research plan for this report. The findings reflect voices of EDUCase network members and address broader North-South academic cooperation themes, highlighting the substantial efforts dedicated to creating enriching partnerships for all stakeholders involved.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|---|
| FOREWORD | 3 |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS | 5 |
| LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES | 5 |
| LIST OF BOXES | 6 |
| | |
| 1 | BACKGROUND 7 |
| 2 | METHODOLOGY 10 |
| 3 | FINDINGS 11 |
| | 3.1 CURRENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS 11 |
| | 3.1.1 Capacity building and collaborative projects 12 |
| | 3.1.2 Research 17 |
| | 3.1.3 Mobilities 20 |
| | 3.1.4 Finland as a higher education destination for Nepalese students 22 |
| | 3.1.5 Nepalese talent attraction and retention in Finland 28 |
| | |
| | 3.2 OUTCOMES AND IMPACT 31 |
| | 3.3 CHALLENGES AND GAPS 35 |
| | |
| 4 | RECOMMENDATIONS 41 |
| | 4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FINNISH-NEPALESE BILATERAL/ MULTILATERAL HEI PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS 46 |
| | 4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN FINNISH AND NEPALESE HEIs 47 |
| | |
| 5 | CONCLUSION 50 |
| | |
| REFERENCES | 53 |
| | |
| APPENDIX A. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES | |
| APPENDIX B. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FINNISH AND NEPALESE HEIs | |
| APPENDIX C. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FUNDERS/FACILITATORS | |
| APPENDIX D. THEORY OF CHANGE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN FINNISH AND NEPALESE HEIs | |



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|--|
| CBHE | Capacity Building in Higher Education |
| EU | European Union |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| HEP | Higher Education Partnership programme, formerly known as The Higher Education Institutions Institutional Cooperation Instrument (HEI ICI) |
| LDC | Least Development Country |
| TECSES | Technical Support Cooperation to School Education Sector in Nepal |
| CSO | Civil Service Organization |

LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES

Figure 1. EDUCase Platform's Road to Impact (EDUCase, 2022)

Figure 2. Evolution and features of typical collaboration between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs

Figure 3. Number of active projects with at least one Nepalese HEI as a partner or a coordinator of Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 'Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices' funded projects (European Commission, n.d.a)

Figure 4. Number of active projects coordinated by HEI country member with at least one Nepalese HEI as a partner (Call Years: 2015-2023, Activity Years 2015-2024) (European Commission, n.d.a)

Figure 5. New Nepalese students in Finland (Migri, 2024)

Figure 6. First residence permit decisions of Nepalese citizens based on studies to Finland (Migri, 2024)

Figure 7. Nepalese student applicant and those who accepted a place in a HEI (Vipunen, 2024b)

Figure 8. Number of Nepalese students applying to different types of Finnish HEIs (Statistics Finland, 2024)

Figure 9. New Nepalese students according to field of education across Finnish HEIs (Statistics Finland, 2024)

Figure 10. Top 10 Finnish HEIs by total applications from Nepalese students (2015-2024) (Vipunen, 2024b)

Figure 11. Top 10 Finnish HEIs by total acceptance Nepalese students (2015-2024) (Vipunen, 2024b)

Figure 12. Top 10 HEIs by total Nepalese students' acceptance rates (2020-2024) (Vipunen, 2024b)

Figure 13. Low 10 HEIs by total Nepalese students' acceptance rates (2020-2024) (Vipunen, 2024b)

Figure 14. First residence permits of Nepalese citizens to Finland (Migri, 2024)

Figure 15. Extended residence permits of Nepalese citizens in Finland (Migri, 2024)

Figure 16. Year-on-year Nepalese talent attraction and retention data in Finland (Migri, 2024)

Figure 17. Student % of total Nepalese talent attraction and retention (Migri, 2024)

Figure 18. Recommendations for Finnish-Nepalese bilateral/multilateral HEI partnership projects

Figure 19. Recommendations for strategic Finnish-Nepal HEIs partnership

Table 1. List of majority HEI projects between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs since 2015

Table 2. Finnish degree program students' mobilities to and from Nepal (Vipunen, 2024)

Table 3. Number of Nepalese students in different Finnish higher education sectors (Statistics Finland, 2024)

LIST OF BOXES

Box 1. Partnership emphasis of the EDUCase Platform initiatives (EDUCase, 2022)

Box 2. First Erasmus+ KA2 project led by a Nepalese HEI including a Finnish HEI as a partner

Box 3. EDUCase-facilitated HEP funded project in Nepal

Box 4. New HEI partnership model in capacity building under TECSES project

Box 5. Institutional research and developmental projects in Nepal

Box 6. Mobility example to Nepal in capacity building projects

Box 7. A practice example leading to better project coordination

Box 8. Ethical Guidelines for Responsible Academic Partnerships

Box 9. A research-based capacity building approach

Box 10. EDUFI model for facilitating strategic internationalization of HEIs

1. BACKGROUND

Finland's support to Nepal's education sector is part of a broader commitment to enhance the rights and status of women and girls, education, democracy, and sustainable development. This year also marks 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Finland and Nepal. Over the years, Finland has particularly supported Nepal on reducing gender and disability-based disparities at all levels of education, with specific focus on basic education, increasing participation and improving learning outcomes, and supporting decision-making. Through targeted interventions and policy dialogue, Finland continues to support in improving access to quality education and strengthening national systems to expand their reach, particularly for marginalized groups. In particular, Finland's strategic goals in Nepal's education sector aim to foster inclusive and resilient development and capacity building, with a focus on empowering women and vulnerable groups, promoting non-discrimination, and supporting the country's transition to a federal democratic republic and a developing country. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2024)

Finland has significantly contributed to Nepal's education sector, focusing on school sector reforms, teacher education, and development plans. Finland's bilateral technical assistance has supported policy inputs, infrastructure development, student assessments, curriculum development, and teacher education in primary and secondary education. Despite successes in access to education and the gender equality in school sector education in Nepal, challenges persist in meeting quality education targets, especially in rural areas, due to political and administrative challenges, and external factors such as the 2015 earthquake and COVID-19.

Some collaborations extend to the vocational and higher education sector. These are mostly self-initiated by HEIs themselves, with financial support from the Ministry of Education and Culture's current Higher Education Partnership programme (HEP) formerly known as the Higher Education Institutions Institutional Cooperation Instrument (HEI ICI); the Academy of Finland's DEVELOP2 programme; and the European Union's Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) Programme.

There has also been a steady increase of interest in recent years from Nepalese students towards vocational and higher education studies in Finnish institutions. Future recommendations and areas of cooperation development include creating specific programmes to match Finland's expertise with Nepal's needs, especially in the context of upcoming Least Development Country (LDC) graduation; learning from past experiences to address Nepal's evolving educational needs; engaging with both Nepalese diaspora in Finland and Finnish diaspora in Nepal; and exploring new forms of partnerships in trade and technology transfer (Dhital et. al., 2022).

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture established nine global networks, each coordinated by Finnish HEIs for the period of 2021-2024, with the view to collaboratively align Finnish HEIs' international engagement in education, research, development, and innovation partnerships with broader strategic Finnish international cooperation initiatives. Among these networks, EDUCase platform, coordinated by Aalto University, has been the only network with a geographical coverage of partnerships with Nepalese HEIs. (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d.)

EDUCase platform has 26 Finnish HEIs (11 universities and 15 universities of applied sciences) as members, representing a significant share of HEIs in Finland. The network promotes and supports practical case collaborations between Finnish and partner country HEIs, with a focus on sustainable development themes in education, research, innovation, and entrepreneurship. For example, problem-based case studies and challenges are promoted as a tangible modality of cooperation to develop competencies of faculty, students and societal partners, addressing intersecting sustainable development challenges with stakeholders representing various cultures, institutions, and areas of expertise. The role of case studies as a mechanism to impact strategic partnerships and cooperation in a scalable manner is depicted in Figure 1 and Box 1 below. (EDUCase, 2022)

ROAD TO IMPACT

From case studies to systemic partnerships

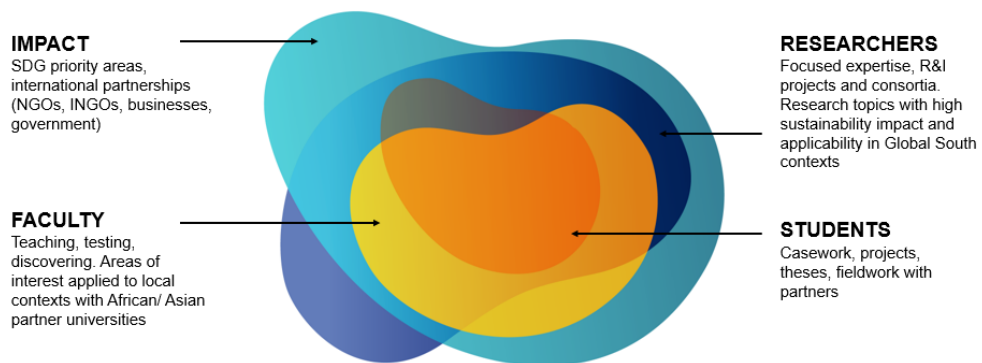


Figure 1. EDUCase Platform's Road to Impact (EDUCase, 2022)

Box 1. Partnership emphasis of the EDUCase Platform initiatives
(EDUCase, 2022)

Multicultural and multidisciplinary academic cooperation

- education and knowledge that is relevant to the challenges of sustainable development as applied to regional contexts of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia
- methods of student-centered education and peer work (e.g., problem-based teaching, entrepreneurship training, innovation, co-mentoring, and co-creation) in Finland and partner countries
- reciprocal and responsible academic and entrepreneurial practices and concepts of global responsibility
- working life and entrepreneurship skills, cross-sectoral critical thinking, and sustainability skills for students

Academic activities that connect to innovation ecosystems for sustainable development

- enhance practical cooperation between universities and innovation actors
- strengthen responsible innovation and entrepreneurship competencies at ecosystem levels
- contribute to increased academic engagement between Finland and partner countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia

2. METHODOLOGY

This report is developed through a study performed with a mixed-methods approach. It combined quantitative data on student flows, student acceptance rates and immigration with qualitative insights drawn from semi-structured and non-structured interviews. The interviewees were randomly selected from key stakeholder groups active in collaboration between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs in various capacities. Key stakeholder groups included representatives of HEIs, Funders and Facilitators, Students and Alumni from both Finland and Nepal (APPENDIX A List of Interviewees).

The interviews were carefully structured around key topics to ensure a holistic understanding of the Finnish-Nepalese higher education partnership. These topics (APPENDIX B. Questionnaire for Finnish and Nepalese HEIs and APPENDIX C. Questionnaire for funders/facilitators) included exploring the background and overview of ongoing collaborations, assessing their tangible and intangible outcomes and impacts, and examining the depth of stakeholder engagement alongside lessons learned from past initiatives. Additionally, the study addressed the sustainability and future prospects of these partnerships, identified strategic gaps and provided recommendations for improvement, and gathered further insights and feedback to enrich the overall analysis. This comprehensive approach enabled the study to capture nuanced perspectives and highlight critical factors in strengthening Finnish-Nepalese higher education collaborations.

Additionally, both publicly available external and project coordinators provided internal documents, reports, webpages and articles of various past and present collaborative projects were reviewed. Statistics related to the student mobilities, student numbers and immigration are drawn from relevant official sources.



3. FINDINGS

3.1 CURRENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS

The collaboration between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs has evolved over the years, in line with changing developmental cooperation priority themes and subsequently, the availability and accessibility of funding for these activities in both countries. It was discovered that many collaborations typically start small, through personal networks and gradually evolving to become institutional over the time (Figure 2). These collaborations are characterized by a range of activities, from joint research projects and capacity-building initiatives to student and staff mobility programmes. Thematically, they have focused on addressing global challenges through education and research, leveraging the strengths of mainly Finnish expertise and knowhow in building and strengthening education, research and innovation capabilities at Nepalese institutions.

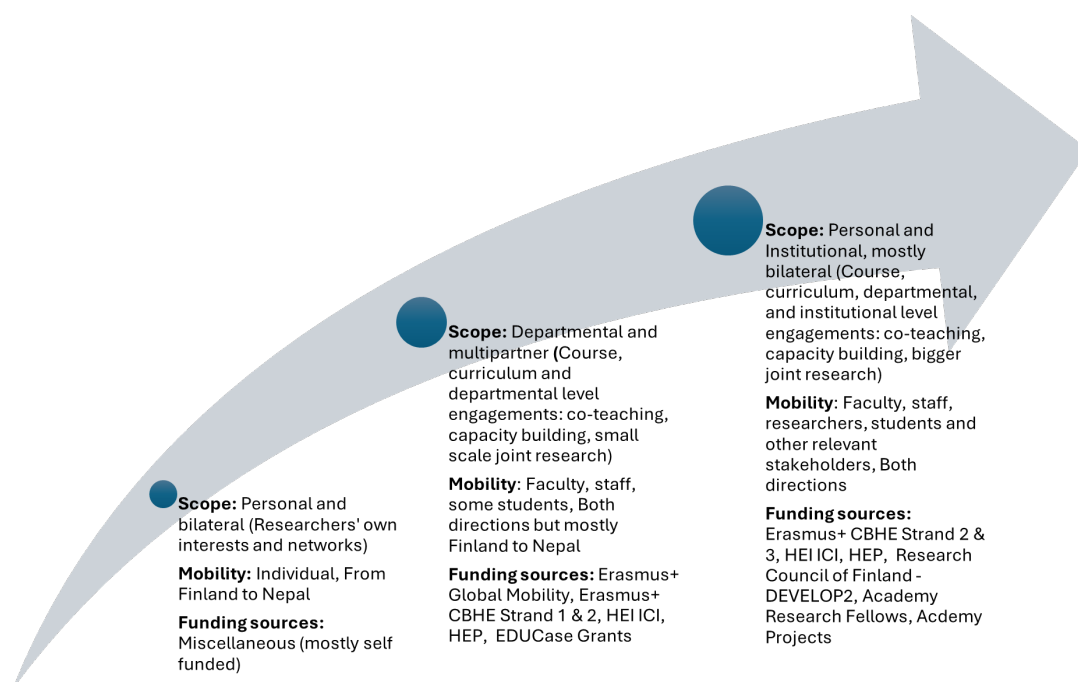


Figure 2. Evolution and features of typical collaboration between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs

3.1.1 Capacity building and collaborative projects

In recent years, many new collaborative and capacity building projects have been initiated between European (including Finnish) and Nepalese HEIs, many of which are supported by global funding programmes such as Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 funding, as can be seen in Figure 3 below.

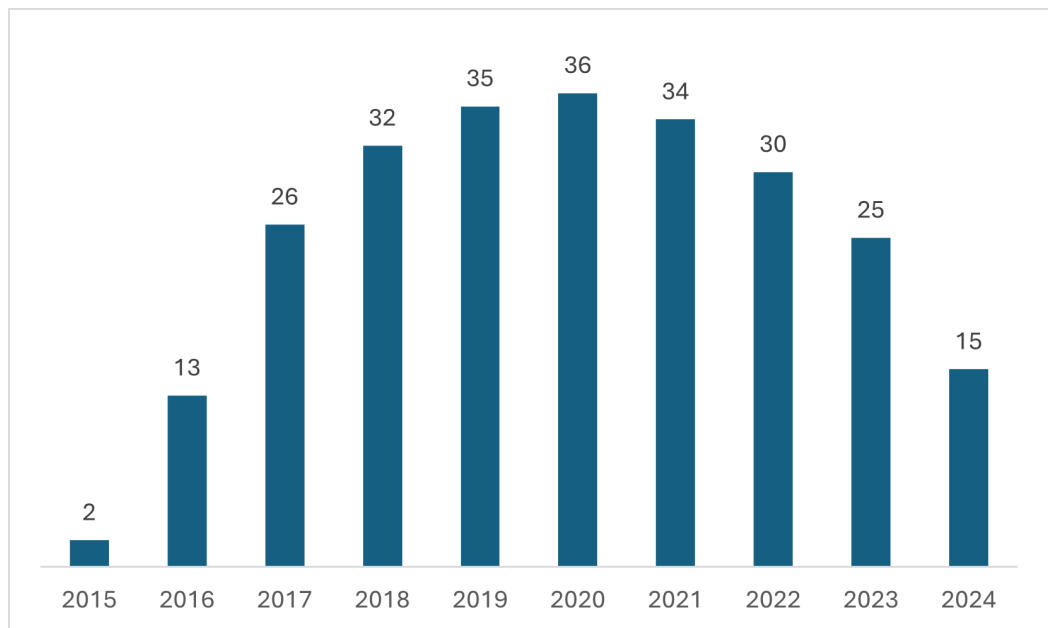


Figure 3. Number of active projects with at least one Nepalese HEI as a partner or a coordinator of Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 'Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices' funded projects (European Commission, n.d.a)

Finnish HEIs are among top 5 EU programme countries leading projects with at least 1 Nepalese HEI member under the Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 programme, with 6 such projects funded since 2015. (Figure 4)

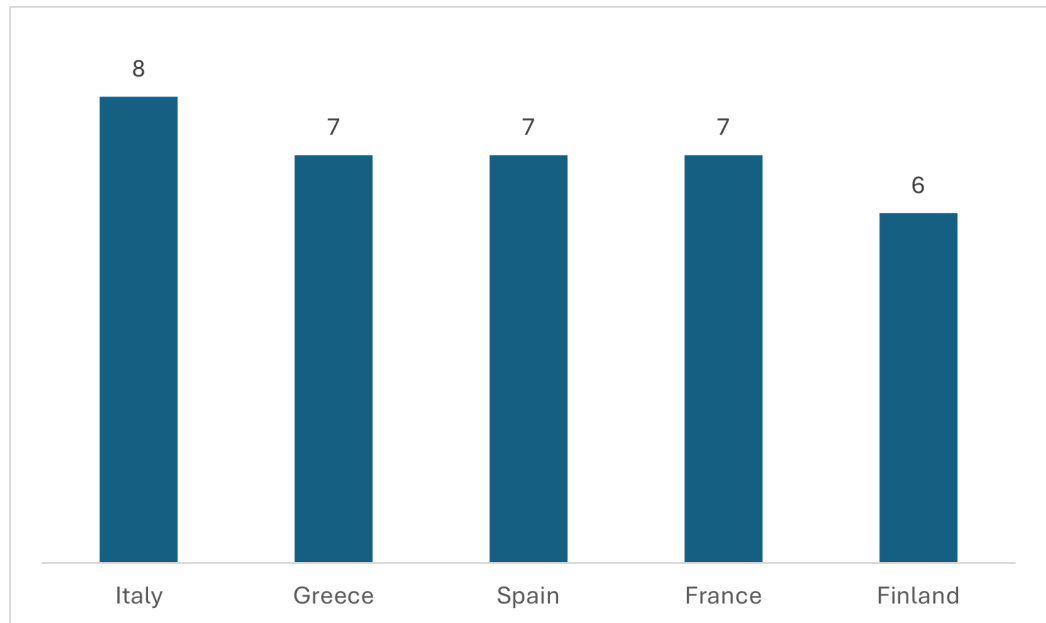


Figure 4. Number of active projects coordinated by HEI country member with at least one Nepalese HEI as a partner (Call Years: 2015-2023, Activity Years 2015-2024) (European Commission, n.d.a)

These Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 international cooperation projects often involve multiple stakeholders, including other European and Asian HEIs, in improving higher education systems in third countries not associated with the programme. Focus areas include enhancing education quality, inclusiveness, digital skills, and governance, while also addressing socio-economic recovery and growth. Typical thematic examples of projects are fostering innovation, digital transformation, and capacity development.

They develop opportunities for both small-scale initiatives and larger systemic reforms among HEI students, teachers, and administrators resulting in new or updated curricula and methods. (European Commission, n.d.b)

Box 2. First Erasmus+ KA2 project led by a Nepalese HEI including a Finnish HEI as a partner

A recent Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 -funded project entitled “Nepal Way to a Sustainable Transformational Educational Programme (NEWSTEP)” saw a first time Nepalese HEI coordinator, Tribhuvan University, with Turku AMK University of Applied Sciences as a Finnish HEI partner. The project includes other HEI partners from Nepal and Spain. Being the first Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 project coordinated by a Nepalese HEI, it has been reported that there have been some obstacles during early phases especially related to financial administration pertaining to Nepalese financial regulations. However, this gives an opportunity for a Nepalese HEI to learn to lead and coordinate similar projects, paving way for future HEI coordinators from Nepal.

NEWSTEP aims to enhance the online teaching competencies of partner HEIs in Nepal by introducing innovative pedagogical approaches and a competencies framework. It focuses on redefining the roles of teachers and students, providing both theoretical and practical insights into teaching and learning, and promoting a shift in learning culture. The project includes the development of new online teaching tools, collaborative learning methods, and the integration of educational technology. Additionally, it emphasizes sustainability by aligning with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, aiming to embed sustainability into the curriculum and ensure equality in society through explicit sustainable objectives and effective strategies.

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/101083210>

<https://newstep-nepal.edu.np/>

<https://www.tuas.fi/en/research-and-development/projects/nepal-way-to-a-sustainable-transformational-educat/>

Similarly, the Finnish Government's HEP programme (previously, HEI-ICI), funded by Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs and administered by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), supports cooperation between Finnish higher education institutions and institutions based in developing countries. Under the HEI-ICI programme, 3 projects involved cooperation in Nepal over the years 2017-2024.

Under the revised HEP programme, themes are aligned with Finland's official development cooperation policies, practices and priorities in the partner country. For example, the recent projects funded under this programme aim to enhance education provision with a focus on teacher education, climate change, circular economy, and food security, involving projects in countries such as Nepal, Zambia, Mozambique, and Tanzania. (OPH, 2024)

Box 3. EDUCase-facilitated HEP funded project in Nepal

At Tampere University, the pilot funding through EDUCase was instrumental in launching "Strengthening pedagogical and academic capacity in public health education in Nepal" together with Central Department of Public Health at Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

This initial funding enabled the development of crucial educational resources, such as online workshops on curriculum development and research ethics, as well as the training of public health students as research assistants. These early achievements fostered strong collaboration and produced tangible outcomes, including initiation of comprehensive nutrition database of Nepalese food and the enhancement of teaching methods in public health education.

The collaboration success directly contributed to the formulation and eventual funding of the follow up project "Strengthening Nutrition Education and Research Capacity in Universities in Nepal (NERC)" project under HEP. This example demonstrates how targeted small-scale funding such as EDUCase and consequent cooperation can catalyze significant, long-term educational and research collaboration between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs.

<https://www.oph.fi/en/projects/nerc>

<https://www.tuni.fi/en/research/strengthening-nutrition-education-and-research-capacity-universities-nepal-nerc>

Recently a new model of cooperation has been formed within capacity building initiatives between Nepal and Finland. The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the EU-funded “Technical Support Cooperation to School Education Sector in Nepal (TECSES) project” now has Finnish HEIs and a Civil Service Organization (CSO) partner collaborating in a bilateral official development cooperation project in Nepal, focusing on strengthening teacher education

Box 4. New HEI partnership model in capacity building under TECSES project

The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the European Union have jointly funded a new bilateral project in Nepal to enhance teacher education, implemented by the University of Helsinki’s company HY+, which provides education and development services globally. HAMK University of Applied Sciences, which has long-term experience of previous HEI-ICI funded capacity building projects in teacher education in Nepal, is also a partner.

The five-year Technical Support Cooperation to School Education Sector in Nepal (TECSES) project, in support of the long-lasting School Education Sector Plan (SESP), started in June 2024. It aims to improve education quality and inclusivity in teacher education targeting Nepal’s regions with the poorest learning outcomes and for the first time directly involves Finnish HEIs. HY+ will play a key role in developing teacher education in collaboration with Nepal’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and universities. The project, which was awarded EUR 10 million funding from Finland and the EU, will support Nepal’s Education Sector Plan and strengthen long-standing educational cooperation between Finland and Nepal.

https://um.fi/current-affairs/-/asset_publisher/gc654PySnjTX/content/nepal-in-ja-suomen-yhteinen-opetusalan-hanke-saanut-merkittavasti-eu-rahoitusta/35732

<https://tecses.org/>

3.1.2 Research

Collaborative research between Finnish and Nepalese higher education institutions is relatively rare compared to the number of capacity building projects they undertake. Most of these research projects are funded through the Research Council of Finland's core 'Academy Projects' funding, or specific 'International Joint Calls' or programmes such as 'DEVELOP2'.

The DEVELOP2 programme, funded by the Academy of Finland and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, focuses on addressing global development issues through multidisciplinary, problem-based research with priorities countries and themes similar to HEP. The programme aims to contribute to the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, such as sustainable economy in developing countries, creating a more efficient society, food security and natural resources management. (AKA, n.d.)

Over the years, there have been a few institutional development projects in Nepal funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and other bilateral partners in Nepal. These are aimed at institutions and civil service organizations, with research and educational elements but without formal and active involvement of HEIs.

Box 5. Institutional research and developmental projects in Nepal

- Cowater International Finland OY's Local Adaptation to Climate Change (LACC) project (2024-2029)
<https://www.cowater.com/en/cowater-international-is-delighted-to-announce-a-new-win-2/>
https://um.fi/press-releases/-/asset_publisher/ued5t2wDmr1C/content/ilmastonmuutos-kunnissa-hanke-jatkaa-suomen-vahvaa-hankeyhteistyota-nepalin-ja-eu-n-kanssa/35732
- Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE)'s "Green Resilient Agricultural Productive Ecosystems in Sudurpashchim and Karnali Provinces, Nepal (GRAPE)" (2022-2024)
<https://www.luke.fi/en/projects/grape>
- Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)'s "Towards arsenic safe drinking water in Nepal (NeAs)" (2020–2023)
<https://www.syke.fi/projects/neas>
- Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI)'s "Finnish-Nepalese Project for Improved capability of the Government of Nepal to respond to the increased risks related to the weather-related natural disasters caused by climate change (FNEP 1, FNEP2 & FNEP3) (2010-2021)"
<https://en.ilmatieteenlaitos.fi/press-release/721814202>
- Cowater International Finland OY (then FCG Finnish Consulting Group) led Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project in Western Nepal (RWSSP-WN, 2008-2019) & Rural Village Water Resources Management Project (RVWRMP, 2006-2022)
<https://www.rwsspwn.org.np/>
https://um.fi/publications/-/asset_publisher/TVOLgBmLyZvu/content/evaluointi-suomen-kahdenvalisten-vesihankkeiden-estimaatio-nepalissa/384998

An overview of these projects and their outcomes, as presented in the Table 1, highlights as a testament to the impact and potential of continued collaboration between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs. These efforts are not only enhancing educational practices and research capacity but are also contributing to the development of sustainable and resilient innovation ecosystems and communities in Nepal.

These ongoing and diverse nature of these collaborations reflects a robust and dynamic partnership between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs, with a shared commitment to addressing global challenges through education and research. As these partnerships continue to evolve, they are expected to yield significant benefits not only for the participating institutions but also for the broader societies in both countries.

Table 1. List of major HEI projects between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs since 2015

| Project Name | Finnish HEIs/Partners | Nepalese HEIs/Partners | Other HEIs/Partners | Total Budget | Funding Programme | Period |
|--|--|---|---|--------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Global Visions Through Mobilizing Networks: Co-Developing Intercultural Music Teacher Education in Finland, Israel and Nepal | University of the Arts Helsinki* | Nepal Music Center | Levinsky College of Education (Tel Aviv) | N/A | Research Council of Finland-N/A | 2015-2020 |
| Promoting Energy Efficient Lighting Education in Nepal and Bhutan | Aalto University* | Sagarmatha Engineering College, Kathmandu University, Nepal Engineering College | National Technical University of Athens, Royal University of Bhutan | 539,280 € | Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 | 2016-2019 |
| TPP-Nepal Teacher Preparation Programme through ODL Mode for Enhancing Quality in Education | JAMK University of Applied Sciences*, HAMK University of Applied Sciences | Tribhuvan University | | 665,954 € | HEI-ICI | 2017-2019 |
| Building University Capacity to Support Business Incubation in Nepal (BUCSBIN) | OAMK University of Applied Sciences* | Kathmandu University School of Management (KUSOM), King's College, Associated partners: idea Studio Nepal, Young innovations Pvt. Ltd. | | 694,785 € | HEI-ICI | 2017-2019 |
| Strengthening problem-based learning in South Asian Universities | Aalto University* | Sagarmatha Engineering College, Kathmandu University, Asian Institute of Technology and Management, Nepal Engineering College | Royal University of Bhutan, Delft University of Technology, Kaunas University of Technology, Indian Institute of Science, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay | 997,380 € | Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 | 2018-2022 |
| Equitable access to higher education for students with disabilities and students from marginalized groups in Nepal | JAMK University of Applied Sciences* | Kathmandu University, Nepal Open University Associated partners: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology | Alma Mater Studiorum-Universita Di Bologna, Masarykova Univerzita | 757,356 € | Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 | 2019-2022 |
| Holistic tools for competence-based curricula to promote Dignity in Vietnam and Nepal | DIAKONIA University of Applied Sciences* | Patan Academy of Health Sciences Associated partners: Nepal Jesuit Society | Gazi University, Hue University of Science, Truong Dai Hoc Y Duoc Dai Hoc Hue, Vid Vitenskapelige Hogskole AS | 941,420 € | Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 | 2019-2022 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---------------|--|-----------|
| Developing Pedagogy for 21st Century Skills in Nepal | JAMK University of Applied Sciences*, HAMK University of Applied Sciences | Tribhuvan University, Nepal Open University | N/A | 986,071 € | HEI-ICI | 2020-2024 |
| The Pollination of Nepal's Micronutrient-rich Crops in a Changing Climate | University of Helsinki* | N/A | N/A | 329 683,000 € | Research Council of Finland- International Joint Call | 2020-2022 |
| N/A | Kajaani University of Applied Sciences* | N/A | | 12,880 € | Erasmus+ Global Mobility (HE) | 2022-2025 |
| N/A | Tampere University* | N/A | | 25,980 € | Erasmus+ Global Mobility (HE) | 2023-2026 |
| N/A | University of Eastern Finland* | N/A | | 26,120 € | Erasmus+ Global Mobility (HE) | 2023-2026 |
| N/A | Kajaani University of Applied Sciences* | N/A | | 26,810 € | Erasmus+ Global Mobility (HE) | 2023-2026 |
| EDUCase Student Pilot | Aalto University* | Sagarmatha Engineering College, Asian Institute of Technology and Management | N/A | N/A | EDUCase- MEC Global Pilots | 2023-2024 |
| Capacity Enhancement in Electrical Equipment Condition Monitoring and Fault Diagnostics | Aalto University* | Kathmandu University, Tribhuvan University | Royal University of Bhutan, Tallinn University of Technology | 761,243 € | Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 Strand 2 | 2023-2025 |
| New Way to a Sustainable Transformational Educational Programme | Turku AMK University of Applied Sciences | Tribhuvan University*, Sindhuli Academy, Sindhuli Community Technical Institute, Siddhartha Vanasthali Institute | Valencia Polytechnic University | 788 411,000 € | Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 Strand 2 | 2023-2026 |
| Strengthening Nutrition Education and Research Capacity in Universities in Nepal | Tampere University* | Tribhuvan University | N/A | 629,550 € | HEP | 2024-2026 |
| Transition pathways towards gender inclusion in the changing musical landscapes of Nepal | University of the Arts Helsinki* Finnish Folk Music Institute | Kathmandu University, The Echoes in the Valley festival organization | N/A | 594,794 € | Research Council of Finland - DEVELOP2 | 2023-2026 |
| Technological and socio-economic solutions to reduce indoor air pollution in Nepal | University of Eastern Finland* | Kathmandu University, Tribhuvan University | N/A | 577,312 € | Ministry for Foreign Affairs - DEVELOP2 | 2023-2026 |
| Balancing secondary forests and agroforests to reduce livelihood vulnerability in the labor-constrained middle hills of Nepal | University of Helsinki* | N/A | N/A | 549,701 € | Research Council of Finland- Academy projects | 2023-2027 |
| Maps for development: Finnish mapping practices in the postcolonial world, c. 1970–2000 | University of Turku* | N/A | N/A | 567,744 € | Research Council of Finland- Academy research fellows | 2023-2027 |
| Advanced Climate Change Education for Sustainable futures and Systems change | University of Turku* | Kathmandu University, Purwanchal University | Wageningen University | 400,000 € | Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 Strand 2 | 2024-2027 |

* Coordinator

Sources:

Academy of Finland:

<https://research.fi/en/results/fundings?funder=0245893-9&page=1>

Erasmus+:

https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/?page=1&sort=projectCallYear_ASC&domain=eplus2021&view=list&map=false&searchType=projects

EDUFI:

<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/bRqg5/45/>

3.1.3 Mobilities

Student and faculty mobility programmes are a core component of the collaboration between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs. These programmes facilitate the exchange of knowledge and cultural understanding, with participants from both countries in largely short-term mobilities.

Short term mobilities (typically 1-2 weeks, less than a month) of students, teachers, staff, administrators, and researchers for field visits, workshops, trainings, seminars, case studies, project work, dissemination, and other project events are important aspects of project implementation in above-mentioned capacity building projects and research projects.

The majority of these project related mobilities are not part of official degree programmes or standard mobilities programmes, thus not comprehensively recorded in statistics at HEIs.

Box 6. Mobility example to Nepal in capacity building projects

Aalto University has applied student mobilities globally, including with Nepal, as an embedded element in capacity building, utilizing peer-learning mechanisms for teacher training.

Through an Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 project and EDUCase funding, approximately 30 Aalto students and staff participated in a mobility scheme supporting organized field work hosted by Nepalese HEIs in Nepalese communities, on themes such as disaster risk resilience and food security.

In addition to course requirements and learning objectives to students from all participating countries, this mobility scheme was designed to serve as a core element of hands-on capacity building for HEIs.

https://aaltoglobalimpact.org/pbl-south-asia/student_cases.html#nepal

<https://www.nepali.fi/>

Official degree programmes students' mobilities to and from Nepal, though smaller in scale, have been steadily decreasing in recent years. COVID-19 could have impacted especially Finnish students' mobilities to Nepal. Similarly, rigid curriculum structures, study visa matters and a lack of credit transfer/accreditation mechanisms back in Nepal, hamper Nepalese students' mobilities to Finland.

Table 2. Finnish degree programme students' mobilities to and from Nepal (Vipunen, 2024)

| | Outgoing to Nepal | | Outgoing total | Incoming to Finland | | Incoming total |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------|----------------|---------------------|------------|----------------|
| | < 3 months | > 3 months | | < 3 months | > 3 months | |
| 2016 | 9 | 48 | 57 | 1-4 | | 1-4 |
| 2017 | 24 | 45 | 69 | 1-4 | 1-4 | 1-4 |
| 2018 | 21 | 36 | 57 | | 15 | 15 |
| 2019 | 27 | 12 | 39 | 1-4 | 6 | 9 |
| 2020 | 6 | 1-4 | 6 | 1-4 | 1-4 | 6 |
| 2021 | 1-4 | 1-4 | 6 | | | |
| 2022 | 6 | | 6 | | | |
| 2023 | 9 | 1-4 | 12 | 9 | 1-4 | 12 |
| Grand total | 102 | 150 | 252 | 15 | 27 | 42 |

** Some of the reports are subject to data protection measures. In that case numbers of 1-4 persons are shown as "1-4" and larger numbers are rounded to the nearest multiple of three.*

Similarly, through the Erasmus+ Global Mobility grant, there have been many frequent short-term mobilities from Finnish HEI stakeholders to Nepalese HEI partners for pilots, explorative and scoping visits. As reported by HUMAK University of Applied Sciences, these visits aim to explore cooperation opportunities with Nepalese HEIs, including but not limited to future project ideas, educational cooperation, student mobility and internships (Ervasti, 2022). On the other hand, Metropolia AMK has recently visited Nepal for direct student recruitment in selected Bachelor's degree programme (The Kathmandu Post, 2024).

3.1.4 Finland as a higher education destination for Nepalese students

According to the recent data (Figure 5, Figure 6, and Figure 7), there has been a significant increase in Nepalese students enrolling in Finnish vocational institutions, universities of applied sciences, and university education programmes. The number of new Nepalese students in Finland has surged, with 2,200 students arriving between January 2023 and September 2024, compared to just 1,866 during the entire seven-year span from 2015 to 2022.

Since 2023, Nepalese students number also rank as top 3 non-EU/EEA students in Finland, falling slightly behind Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Nepalese students represent 13.6% of total new non-EU/EEA students during the period 01/2023-09/2024. Also, the year-on-year data of first time Nepalese students to Finland follows this upward trend as well. (Migri, 2024)

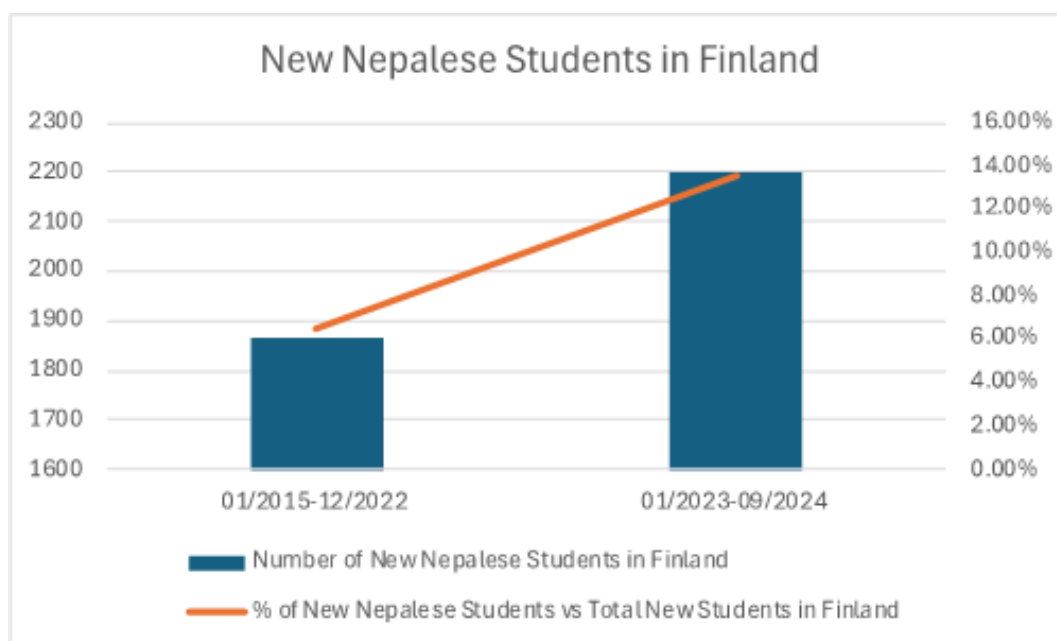


Figure 5. New Nepalese students in Finland (Migri, 2024)

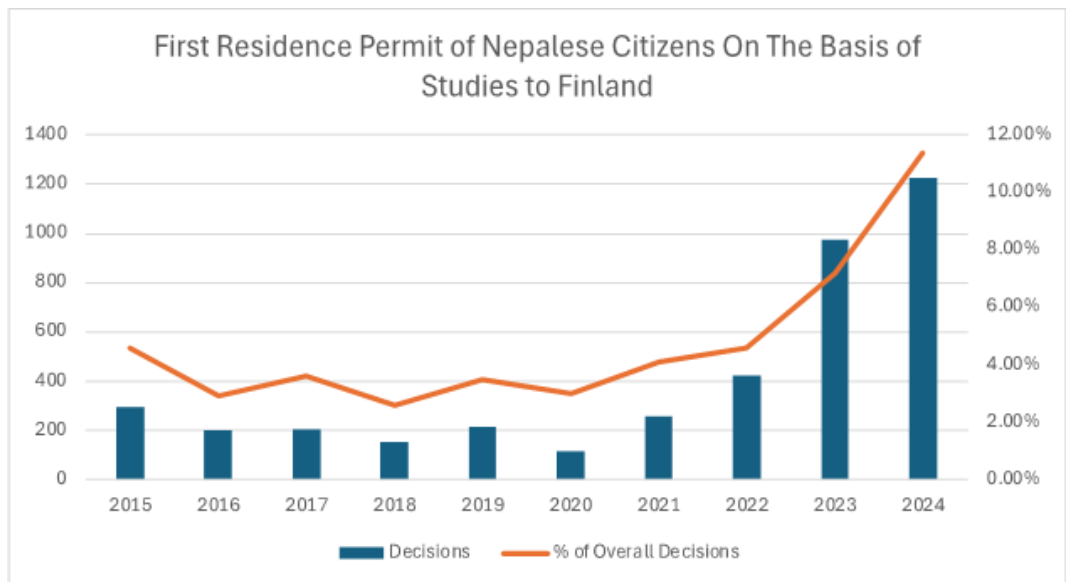


Figure 6. First residence permit decisions of Nepalese citizens based on studies to Finland (Migri, 2024)

This trend reflects the growing interest towards Finnish education and the opportunities it presents for Nepalese students to gain international study experience and expertise, with a possibility of future employment and relocation to Finland. There is a significant increase in the number of applicants starting from 2022, with a peak in 2023 (Figure 7).

The number of accepted students has generally increased over the years, but not as dramatically as the number of applicants. The gap between applicants and accepted students widened considerably in 2023 and 2024.

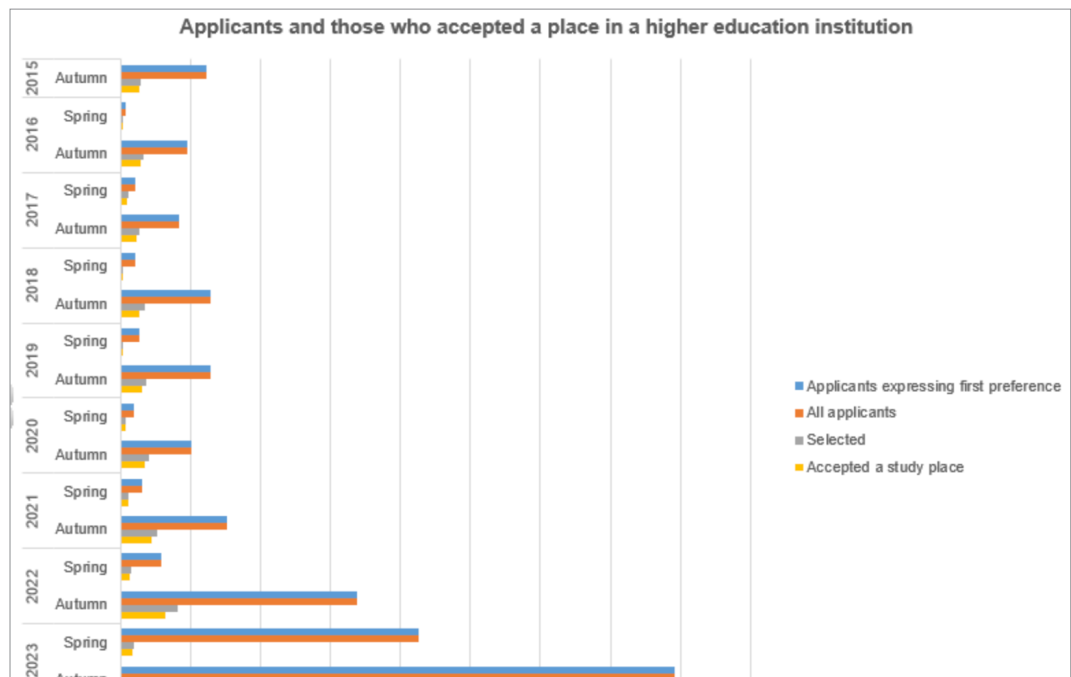


Figure 7. Nepalese student applicant and those who accepted a place in a HEI (Vipunen, 2024b)

Finland could have been viewed by potential applicants as an alternative study destination, as capping measures on international students have been imposed and proposed by Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, which are traditionally popular higher education destinations for prospective Nepalese students (Canada.ca, 2024) (Petrovic and Basta, 2024) (Croucher and Ziguras, 2024).

This growth trend can be observed in particular at universities of applied sciences and vocational education (Figure 8).

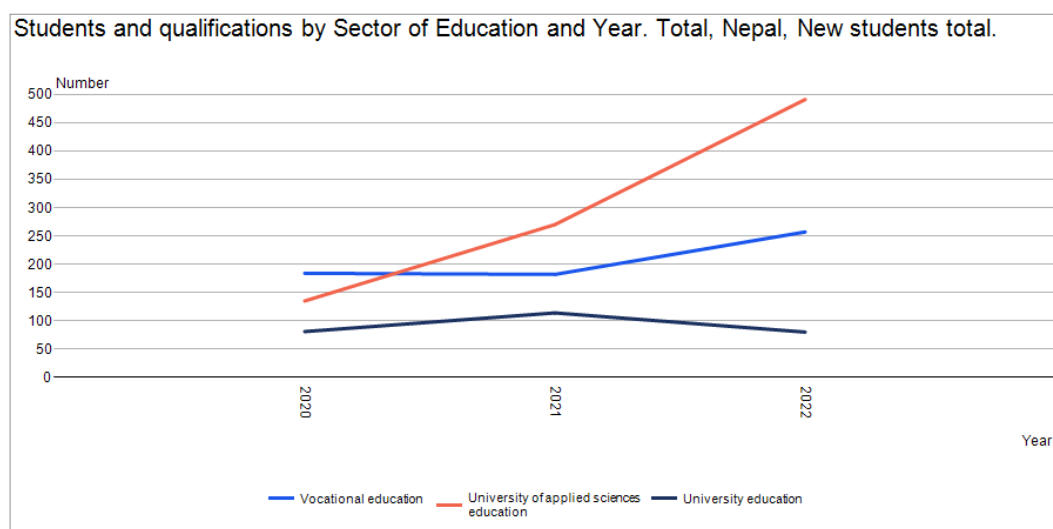


Figure 8. Number of Nepalese students applying to different types of Finnish HEIs (Statistics Finland, 2024)

It is important to also note that the popularity of vocational qualifications in Finland is higher among female Nepalese students, as seen in the Table 3 below.

Table 3. Number of Nepalese students in different Finnish higher education sectors (Statistics Finland, 2024)

| | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2022 | |
|---|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Vocational education | 67 | 117 | 77 | 105 | 91 | 166 |
| University of applied sciences education | 75 | 60 | 150 | 120 | 330 | 161 |
| University education | 62 | 19 | 84 | 30 | 56 | 24 |
| Total | 400 | | 566 | | 828 | |

Qualifications related to “Business, administration and law”, “Health and welfare”, and “Services” are gaining significant popularity among Nepalese students in Finland (Figure 9). This contrasts with the often-stated belief that most Nepalese students pursue “Information and Communication Technologies” and “Engineering, manufacturing and construction” careers.

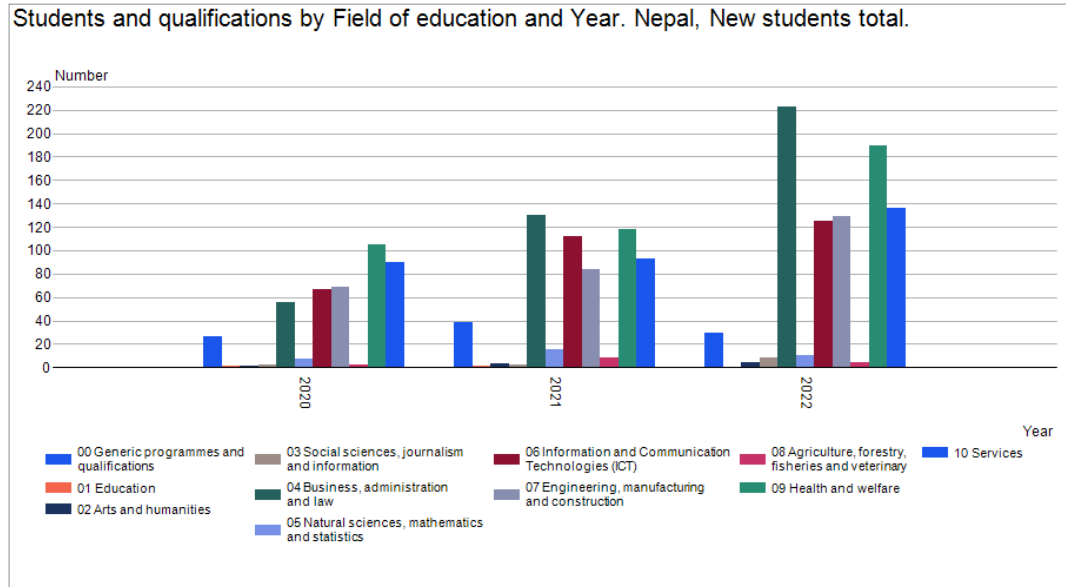


Figure 9. New Nepalese students according to field of education across Finnish HEIs (Statistics Finland, 2024)

In terms of individual HEIs, the following graphs Figure 10 and Figure 11 depict the top 10 HEIs receiving the highest total number of applications from Nepalese students, and subsequent acceptance numbers during the period 2015-2024.

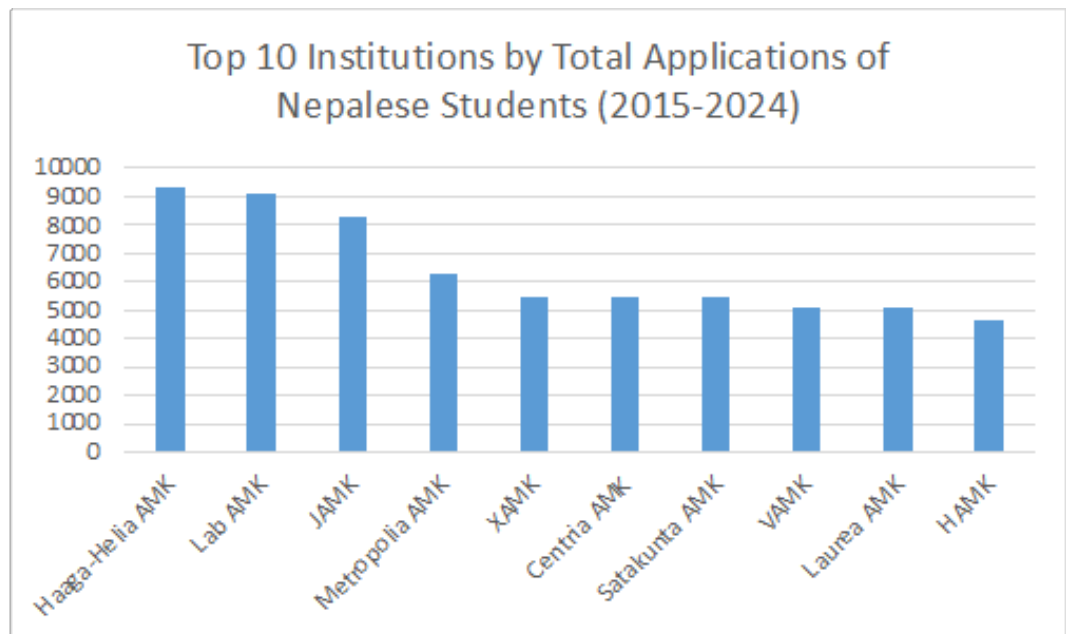


Figure 10. Top 10 Finnish HEIs by total applications from Nepalese students (2015-2024) (Vipunen, 2024b)

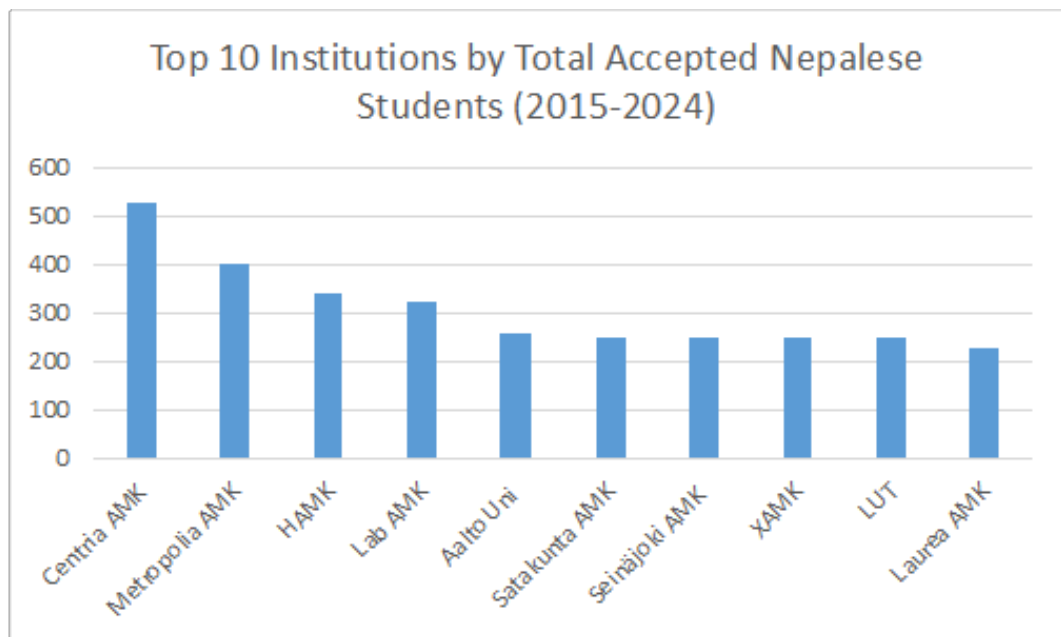


Figure 11. Top 10 Finnish HEIs by total acceptance Nepalese students (2015-2024) (Vipunen, 2024b)

Haaga-Helia AMK has the highest number of total applicants (9,324), followed closely by LAB AMK (9,105). JAMK, Metropolia, and XAMK also show high numbers of applicants (>5,000)- Some institutions such as Hanken, Humak, and Lapland University have relatively low numbers of both applicants and accepted students. The acceptance rate varies significantly between institutions. Some institutions such as Haaga-Helia AMK have very high application numbers but relatively lower acceptance numbers. Centria AMK has the highest number of accepted students despite being 6th in total applications. Aalto University, the only university to appear in the top 10 for acceptances but not for applications, has a higher acceptance rate as compared to other universities. Metropolia AMK has a relatively high rate in both categories, ranking 4th in applications and 2nd in acceptances.

Although AMKs in general receive high application rates from Nepalese students, and thus also acceptances, the most recent trends (2020-2024) in acceptance rates of Nepalese students in Finnish HEIs display higher acceptance rates at universities (Figure 12). Tampere University, Aalto University and Åbo Akademi acceptance rates for this period were 29.8%, 26.5% and 22.1% respectively. Similarly, Lappenranta-Lahti AMK, Arcada AMK and Seinäjoki AMK show highest acceptance rates among AMKs for Nepalese students.

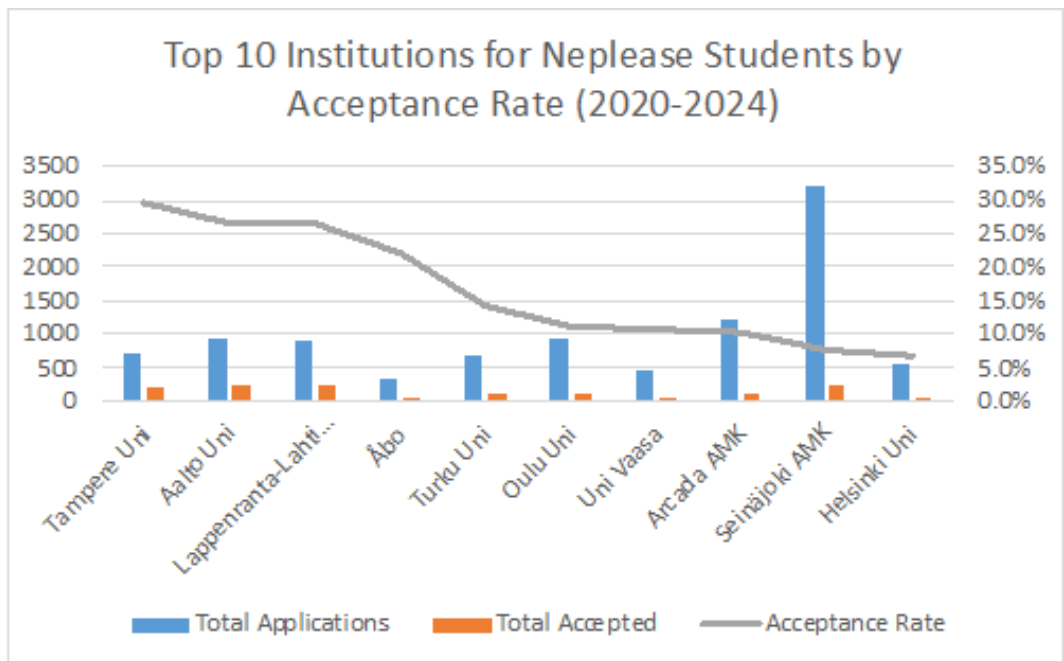


Figure 12. Top 10 HEIs by total Nepalese students' acceptance rates (2020-2024) (Vipunen, 2024b)

Hanken School of Business, Lapland University and Uni Arts have a lower number of Nepalese students in general, and no new Nepalese students in the last 5 years. Haaga-Helia AMK which received the highest number of applications from Nepalese students during the period, also has the lowest acceptance rate of 1.8% among those who accepted any Nepalese students (Figure 13).

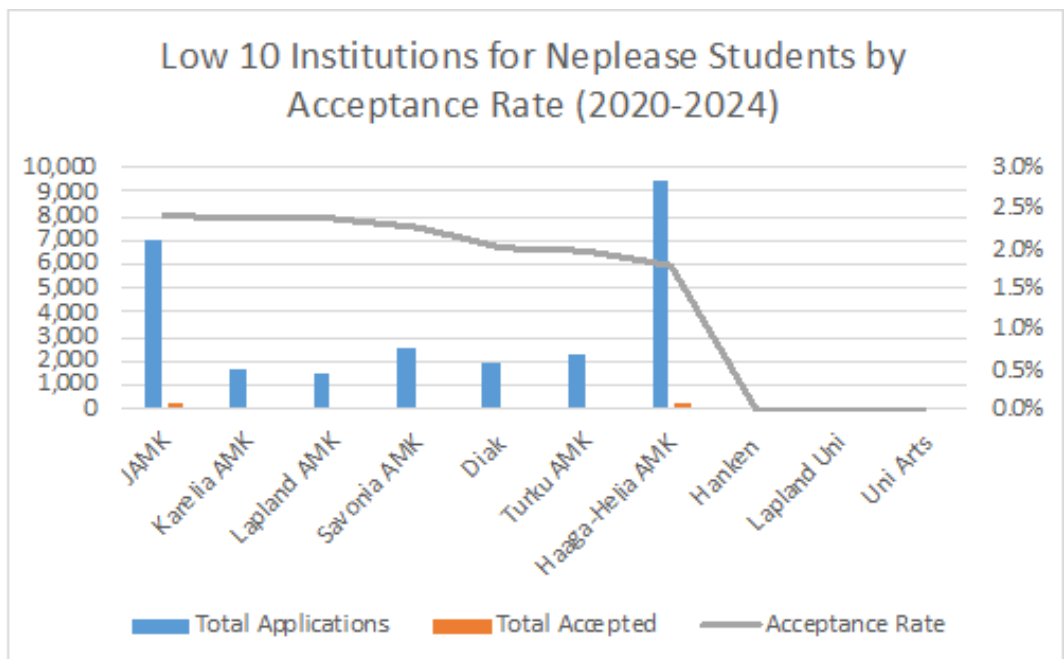


Figure 13. Low 10 HEIs by total Nepalese students' acceptance rates (2020-2024) (Vipunen, 2024b)

3.1.5 Nepalese talent attraction and retention in Finland

In accordance with official immigration statistics as reported for the period 01/2015 to 09/2024, talent attraction and talent retention are defined herein as:

Talent Attraction:

Number of Decisions related to **'First Residence Permit'** of Nepalese citizens to Finland (includes categories, such as Studies, Family, Work, and Other)

Talent Retention:

Number of Decisions related to **'Extended Residence Permit'** of Nepalese citizens in Finland (includes categories, such as Studies, Family, Work, and Other) + Number of Decisions related to **'Finnish Citizenship'** of Nepalese citizens in Finland + Number of Decisions related to **'Permanent Residence Permit'** of Nepalese citizens in Finland

As education is a major immigration driver for Nepalese citizens, the upward trend of new Nepalese students arriving in Finland (51% and 56% of total Nepalese immigration in 2023 and 2024 respectively), has increased overall immigration rates (Figure 14).

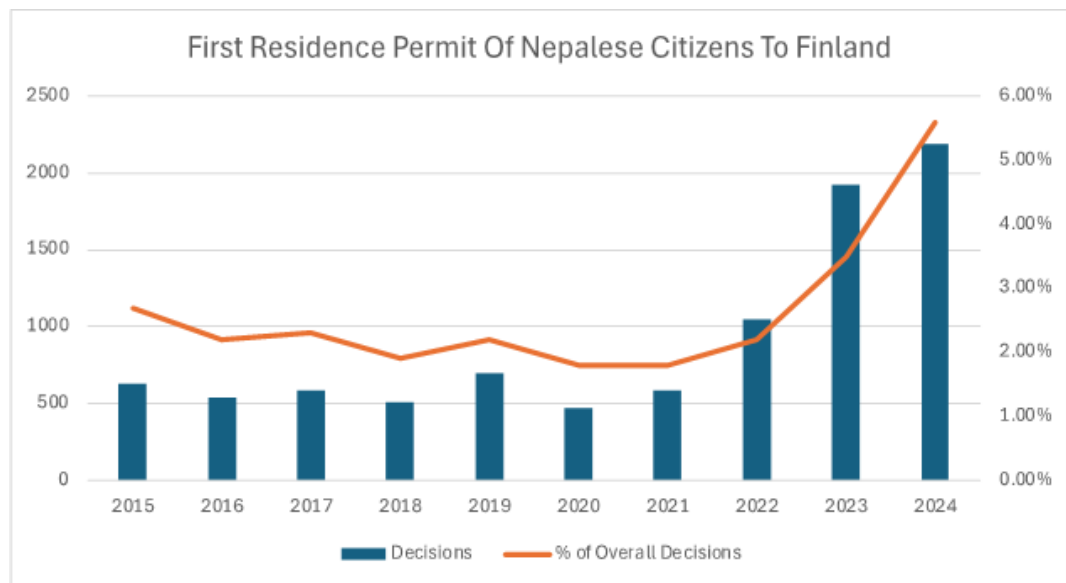


Figure 14. First residence permits of Nepalese citizens to Finland (Migri, 2024)

The retention of Nepalese talent in Finland is steady, as shown in the year-on-year progress graph (Figure 15). While there was a dip during COVID pandemic, the number is expected to rise, reflecting the large influx of students arrived in recent years.

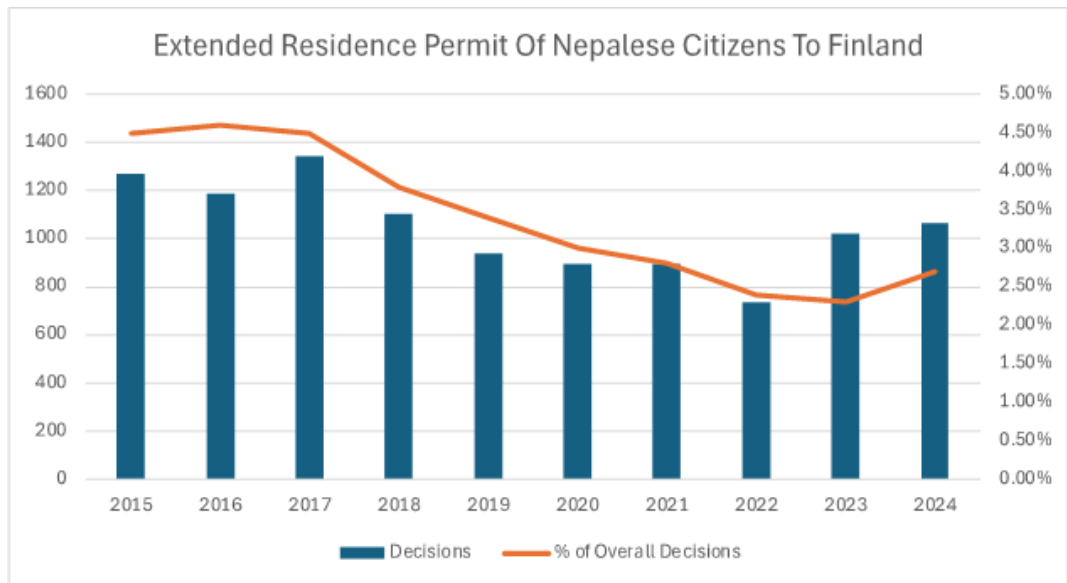
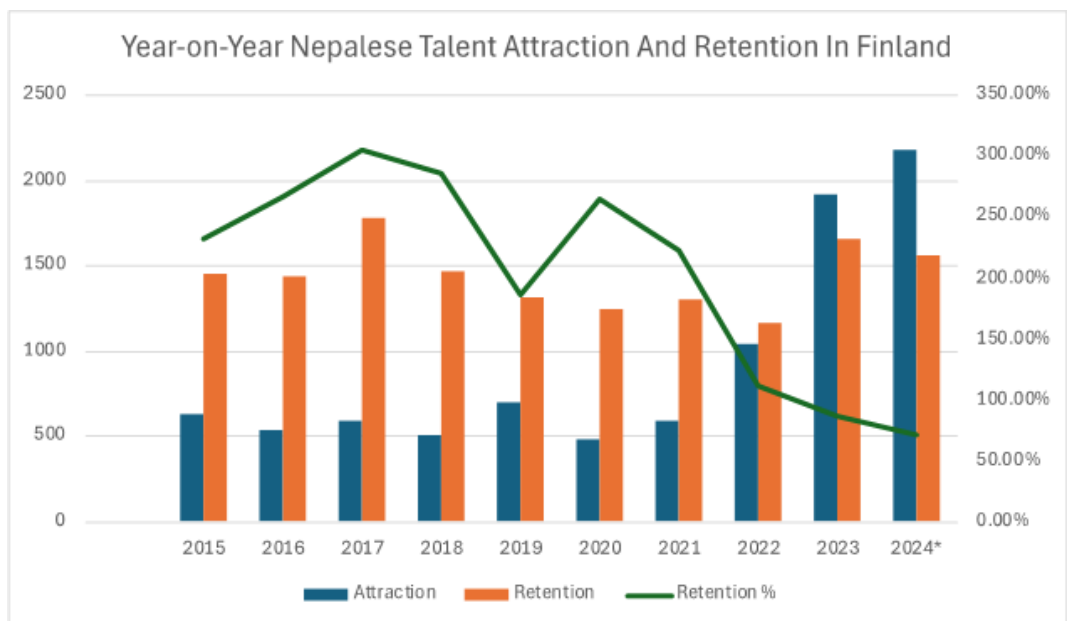


Figure 15. Extended residence permits of Nepalese citizens in Finland (Migri, 2024)

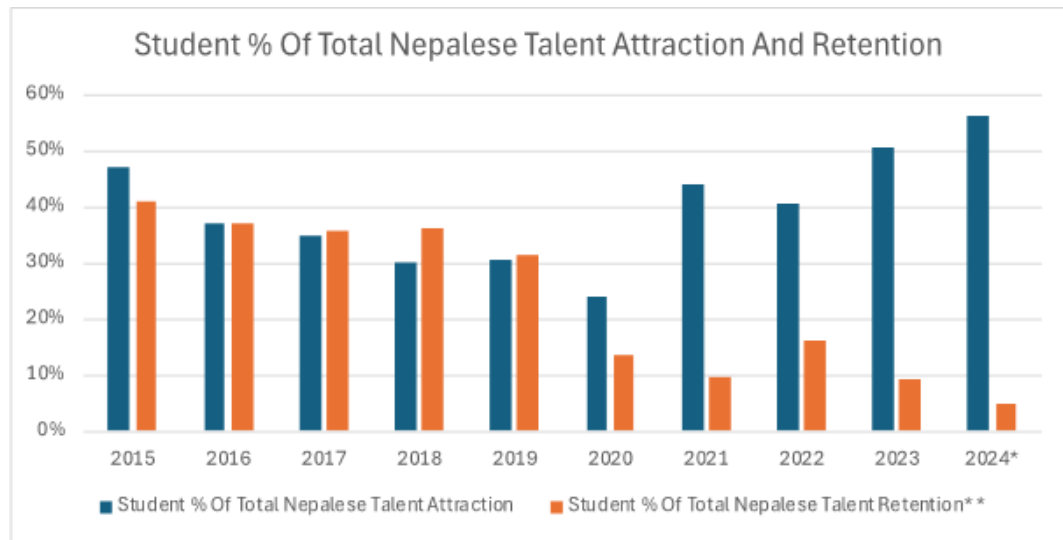
The year-on-year comparison of talent attraction and retention numbers of Nepalese citizens in Finland (Figure 16) indicates positive retention rates, peaking in 2017 (305% retained). In 2023 and 2024, the retention rates look comparatively lower, largely due to the high number of arrivals of new Nepalese students, however the retention numbers are generally steady if not on the rise.



*09/2024

Figure 16. Year-on-year Nepalese talent attraction and retention data in Finland (Migri, 2024)

The percentage of Nepalese students retained in Finland, measured by available extended study-based residence permits data, shows a decreasing pattern over time (Figure 17). Many factors could have influenced this, such as post-COVID and new stricter immigration laws in Finland. These could have resulted in increasing interest towards work-based residence permits, permanent residency, and/or Finnish citizenship; or for some, emigrating back to Nepal and/or third countries.



*09/2024

**Extended residence permit based on studies

Figure 17. Student % of total Nepalese talent attraction and retention (Migri, 2024)

The recent surge of Nepalese students towards Finland is in general viewed positively from Finnish talent attraction and retention perspectives. However, comments and concerns among the wider Nepalese student community in Finland (for example as represented in Facebook’s public group “[Nepali in Finland](#)” and in the form of informal videos posted by current Nepalese students in TikTok), present a harsh reality check. Many in the community, report significant difficulties in obtaining part-time jobs, internships, and employment opportunities. Educational consultancies and agencies in Nepal have been widely criticized ([here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) for exploiting social media platforms like TikTok to fabricate misleading narratives about studying in Finland, falsely portraying guaranteed job prospects, effortless admissions, high salaries, and rapid permanent residency pathways.

Many of the educational agencies also work directly with Finnish HEIs ([here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). More careful due diligence is thus required on the Finnish side, and efforts to select the right agencies, communicating reliable information originating from Finnish HEIs and relevant bodies and stakeholders both in Nepal and Finland, to attract the right students and to provide realistic orientation prior to their arrival. Additionally, new modalities of services, facilitation and orientation upon arrival to Finland ought to be considered, both for education purposes and to match international students in general with the job market as efficiently and as early as possible.

3.2 OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The partnerships between Nepalese and Finnish higher education institutions have yielded significant outcomes and impacts across various domains, particularly for Nepalese HEIs. The following analysis draws from the collected insights of interviewed stakeholders, project information and documents, aiming to present a comprehensive overview of the collaborations' effects on curriculum development, research capacity, pedagogical approaches, and institutional development.

Curriculum Development and Academic Innovation: The collaborations have led to substantial improvements in curriculum design and academic offerings in Nepal, largely because of capacity building projects.

Key outcomes include:

- New degree programmes
- Specialized specific courses in Engineering, Arts, Entrepreneurship, Education,
- Curriculum development workshops and curriculum updates



“Regarding development of teaching and curriculum development, in the past we have arranged a couple of workshops in Nepal when we visited them as a part of the project... At the same time, we have also had some expert lectures delivered online from Finland as a follow up.” – A Finnish HEI representative

“During the project we will train a few teachers and researchers from both departments... for development of teaching, and we will try to have such impact that our new revised courses would become a part of the curriculum in those departments” – A Finnish HEI representative

Research Capacity and Infrastructure Enhancement: Significant strides have been made in bolstering research capabilities in Nepal and involvement of both Finnish and Nepalese researchers across topics such as climate change, food and nutrition and music.

Key outcomes include:

- Establishment of advanced laboratory facilities
- Joint research projects
- Publication outputs
- Workshops and expert sessions on research ethics and methodologies



“We aimed from the start to engage with researchers in Nepal... Some of these researchers will pursue doctoral studies at our Finnish university, supported by project funding” – A Finnish HEI representative

With the project funding, the partner university in Nepal got a first laboratory of such kind for education and research in Nepal. With additional proactive follow up projects and fundings, they have now got a world class laboratory, even one of the best in South Asia.... Our university here in Finland do not even have a laboratory of such scale!” - A Finnish HEI representative

Pedagogical Transformation: The partnerships have catalyzed shifts in teaching and learning approaches as implemented by the partner HEIs.

Some highlights include:

- Adoption of Problem-Based Learning (PBL)
- Digital pedagogy and Open Distance Learning (ODL)
- Student-centered interactive and participatory learning
- Sustainability education
- Entrepreneurial education
- Integration of 21st century skills among educators and staff
- Reflective and public pedagogy
- Co-development of contents, tools, and methods
- Co-teaching and mentoring

“These PBL methods and mentoring approaches has not only inspired me but also has sparked a sense of excitement among my faculty. This is why I try to engage them as much I can in relevant trainings and workshops for skills building”- A Nepalese HEI representative

Institutional Capacity Building: The collaborations have strengthened institutional capabilities both at parent university level and affiliated colleges level in Nepal.

- Faculty development through exchanges and workshops
- International networking and formalized internationalization practices leading to expanded local, regional and global connections and partnerships
- Improved institutional communication and dissemination practices
- Mechanisms for industry and businesses engagement established
- Implementation of international quality standards and best practices in higher education delivery and assessment, including project and research management practices
- Formal certification of capacity with standard Finnish teacher education diploma

“Currently they have three teachers who have a PhD and then after the project there would be seven, if all of them complete the thesis... So, I think it would be good long term like capacity building for the department.”

- A Finnish HEI representative

Student & Faculty visits and Intercultural Competence: The partnerships have facilitated increased student visits and cultural exchange both for Finnish and Nepalese stakeholders. Capacity building projects have many levels of integrated thematic faculty and staff trainings and workshops for Nepalese HEIs. Similarly, these projects also have faculty and staff mobility, which have had strong contributions to the improved intercultural competences of participants at both ends.

- Short term independent exchange programmes (For e.g., among DIAK University of Applied Sciences, St. Xavier’s College and Patan Academy of Health Sciences)
- Selected institutions with established credit transfer mechanisms (For e.g., between Kathmandu University and Aalto University)
- Intercultural and multidisciplinary skills among both Finnish and Nepalese students
- Faculty and staff trainings and workshops

“We think this (interaction with Finnish students) will help us in our future career by virtue of networking.” – A Nepalese student representative

“They have much better technical knowledge on the topic from the field...I learnt many new things!” – A Finnish student representative

Industry-Academia Linkages: Industry-Academia linkages are still not common in Nepal. However, the collaborations have promoted stronger connections not only between academic institutions and industries but also with other stakeholders such as central and local governments, municipalities, regulators, NGOs/INGOs in Nepal.

- Industry-led collaborative projects and challenges
- Curriculum alignment with industry needs
- Improved engagement with stakeholders, including students, faculty, administrators, industry partners, and government entities
- Inclusion in general and project-specific networking, communication, and dissemination

"Introduction to PBL has opened up new avenues and modalities of cooperation for our faculty and students especially engaging with relevant external partners outside the institution. This is not normal in Nepal."

- A Nepalese HEI representative

3.3 CHALLENGES AND GAPS

Given the differences in educational systems, the nature of funding mechanisms, and existing institutional and individual relationships between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs, despite significant outcomes and impact over the years there remains an equal amount if not more challenges and gaps.

Generally, identified gaps include inconsistent leadership and lack of understanding of international collaborations at higher levels in Nepal. Another gap is the challenge of credit transfers and differing academic calendars between the two countries, limiting student and staff mobility for meaningful exchange. Similarly, the rigidity of funding systems, not catering for local considerations especially while navigating the hierarchical administrative system in Nepal are also seen as challenges to be addressed.

The majority of projects and partnerships are Kathmandu valley -centric, involving well-known partners, which has limited wider impact and adoption potential of the project results, outcomes, and outputs among other HEIs elsewhere in the country. Some communication on results and opportunities does take place at individual HEIs, but there is a general lack of coordination among HEIs themselves, their administrators as well as policy makers in Nepal related to internationalization and its implications for Nepalese higher education policy and practices.



"We have had some challenges in Nepal... There were some changes in the leadership... which caused some delays... There were some extra delays with communication as well. People don't always respond to your emails, and it was challenging to know how I should approach that?"

- A Finnish HEI representative

"I don't know how feasible it is, but it would be great if some kind of standard training(s) on international partnerships and collaboration could be arranged for the top leaders of the university... Also, the deans and management level authorities?" - A Finnish HEI representative

The following broader challenges and gaps were identified by several interviewed HEIs:

Logistical Challenges:

Communication barriers:

Differences in time zones, different academic calendars, and inconsistent internet connectivity in some Nepalese regions hinder effective communication. There have been reported delays in communication due to hierarchies, frequent changes in personnel at management level and related bureaucracy within Nepalese HEIs.

Administrative hurdles:

Rigid and lengthy visa processes and regulations for Nepalese stakeholders, including similar bureaucratic procedures for travel approvals internally at local Nepalese HEIs often delay mobilities and risk participation altogether. There are also various difficulties such as lengthy delays and rejections in understanding research contexts and obtaining ethical approvals for research in Nepal.

Cultural Challenges:

Cultural Differences:

Varying cultural norms and educational philosophies can lead to misunderstandings and mismatched expectations.



*“Despite great interest from the researchers and results from the project, the research topic in itself, was not deemed important by local authorities”
- A Finnish HEI representative*

*“Finnish expectations, often influenced by funders’ ‘Western’ perspectives and requirements, can be overly ambitious for higher education institutions (HEIs) in developing countries, pushing them to take on challenges beyond their current capacities—like expecting them to run before learning to walk. This can result in targets that are unrealistic in terms of sustainability. While Nepalese HEI partners typically fulfill project requirements, they may lack the cultural motivation or financial resources to sustain these changes over time. To ensure genuine and lasting impact, long-term partnerships must become the norm in development collaborations, with clearly defined, contextualized, and attainable targets set for each stage of the journey”-
A Finnish HEI representative*

Hierarchy and respectfulness:

The behavior of Nepalese partners in projects is sometimes seen as being too mindful of respectfulness, restraining active engagement and ownership and positioning Nepalese participants mostly in the role of recipients of Finnish methods and approaches. This is particularly true for new or first-time partner HEIs.

Adaptation to new methods:

Adopting Finnish pedagogical approaches such as in digital, sustainability, problem-based learning, reflective pedagogy etc. in Nepalese contexts requires significant adjustments, concerning all stakeholders engaged, especially students, teachers, and administrators.

Thematic collaboration domains:

Some thematic collaboration domains, such as in Arts and Social Sciences include sensitive intercultural nuances and implications, which are "difficult" at both ends, especially with wider stakeholders, to unpack, understand and collaborate on. These types of projects need more rigorous planning and longer engagement, thus also resources, with relevant stakeholders beyond HEIs to engage on "heritage/culture vs perceptions vs policies vs practices" for a successful and impactful collaboration.

Approach to projects:

Project participants sometimes have a narrow transactional and financial motivation and attitudes towards the partnership and lack ability to foresee and plan one's own institution's needs or wider opportunities within the project. The wider requirements, impacts and scalability of outputs and outcomes depend on commitment and management capabilities of participants/stakeholders.

"Participation is not about economies/money always."
- A Finnish HEI representative

Academic Challenges:

Resource constraints:

Limited access to and competences related to digital educational resources and technologies in Nepalese HEIs hamper the effective implementation of new teaching methods.

Financial limitations:

Limited funding and financial resources in Nepalese institutions have restricted the scale and scope of collaborative projects. This has impacted the availability of resources for faculty training, infrastructure development, and student exchanges.

Technological infrastructure:

Inadequate technological infrastructure in Nepal has posed challenges for implementing modern educational tools and methodologies, such as online learning platforms and digital resources.

“Access to online libraries, research databases, and scholarly articles for Nepalese HEIs would provide significant benefits. From my personal experience, it has helped me in my studies, assessments and as of now in my thesis.”

- A Nepalese student representative

Research capacity:

Insufficient research will, infrastructure and funding in Nepal restrict collaborative research efforts, especially for graduate and post graduate research collaborations.

Pedagogical approaches:

For example, the transition to problem-based learning (PBL) has been challenging due to differences in traditional teaching methods. Nepalese institutions often emphasize rote learning, whereas Finnish education promotes student-centered and inquiry-based approaches.

Systemic Challenges:

Policy misalignment:

Differences in educational policies and priorities between Nepal and Finland, and more so lack of relevance and linkages to local policies in Nepal create barriers to seamless collaboration and later wider adoption and sustainability.

Regulatory barriers:

Differences in administrative and regulatory frameworks have created challenges in formalizing agreements and ensuring smooth operational procedures. This includes issues related to financial administration, accreditation, credit transfer, and intellectual property rights.

"It took us more than a year, after project has started, to figure out mechanisms and then get approvals for financial transfer clearance in Nepal."

- A Nepalese HEI representative

Institutional rigidities:

Resistance to change within some Nepalese/Finnish institutions has slowed the adoption of new pedagogical methods and the implementation of equal, responsible, and collaborative initiatives.

Hierarchy:

Conflicts often arise, especially in Nepal, from high-ranking authorities who are not directly involved in the project. This, combined with a slow bottom-up approach, creates challenges. Additionally, the idea of teachers taking on leadership roles is contested at the local level. The differing perspectives are evident, with some Nepalese leaders seeing projects as opportunities for personal gain rather than as contributions to institutional or societal development.

"We had to wait long for a municipality mayor, who is not associated with the project, for official opening of our internal project meeting!" - A Finnish HEI representative

Dependency on key individuals:

The success of collaborations has often relied on a few key individuals. Changes in personnel or lack of succession planning, orientation to the new member and proper handover at Nepalese HEIs, have jeopardized the continuity of ongoing projects and prospects of future follow up projects.

Communication to wider stakeholders:

Communication and engagement with wider stakeholders have been inconsistent. Positive funding decisions were often shared only after projects had already begun, leading to a lack of early institutional buy-in. The hierarchical system meant that while teachers showed ownership, administrators were less engaged. Additionally, not all relevant stakeholders were prepared for partnerships, results, or the level of engagement expected. This contributed to challenges such as lower-than-expected enrollment in the new programmes.

“They only let us know about their issues much later after they tried everything first with their known personal networks! Had they informed us from the application phase, we would be much better position to inform and get approvals officially from higher authorities and thus help all the relevant stakeholders.” - A funder/facilitator representative

Inclusion:

Key gaps in inclusion include low female participation across the board in the projects, insufficient advancement opportunities for instructors from various regions in digital pedagogy, and inconsistent technology infrastructure across Nepal. The engagement of alumni and diaspora networks remains majorly untapped in both in Nepal and Finland.



*“I wished there were more female staff engaged in the project.”
- A Nepalese HEI representative*

“We are alumni of Finnish HEIs and now representing local Nepalese HEI. However, it feels we are not given enough opportunities nor heard well in terms of our expertise, strategic future projects and collaboration between HEIs and countries, despite meeting funders and facilitators locally in different forums. We are mostly left alone to drive partnerships forward through our personal networks.” - A Nepalese alumni representative

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4. RECOMMENDATIONS

International collaborations between Finnish and Nepalese higher education institutions have yielded valuable insights and lessons for future partnerships. These collaborations, while promising, have revealed several critical areas that require attention to ensure successful and sustainable outcomes. Key challenges include differences in institutional systems, communication patterns, and cultural contexts that affect project implementation and stakeholder engagement. Drawing from talent attraction and retention data, extensive interviews and project reports, this section presents some practical recommendations aimed at strengthening international academic partnerships, with a particular focus on enhancing institutional capacity, fostering effective communication, and ensuring sustainable long-term impact. The recommendations address various aspects of collaboration, from leadership engagement to cultural understanding, and provide practical guidance for future initiatives between Finnish and Nepalese institutions.

Strategic Talent Attraction:

To ensure ethical and effective recruitment, stringent screening mechanisms should be established for educational agencies in Nepal. Comprehensive pre-departure orientation programmes are necessary to set realistic expectations for students about studying and working in Finland. Clear communication channels should provide transparent information on academic and career prospects.

Supporting students' integration into the Finnish job market is another critical area. Collaborative efforts with Finnish employers can create structured pathways for internships and employment, while specialized language and professional skills training programmes will enhance students' readiness for the workforce. Initiatives such as mentorship programmes connecting students with successful Nepalese alumni in Finland can also foster professional and cultural adaptation.

Retention of talent is essential for both countries. Systematic tracking of student outcomes, institutional support systems addressing employment and cultural adaptation challenges, and robust alumni networks can aid in achieving this goal. Incentivizing longer-term professional engagement in Finland through supportive policies can strengthen the partnership's impact.

Leadership awareness and Communication:

The interviewees highlighted the difference in perspectives, with some Nepali leaders viewing projects as personal benefits rather than institutional/societal gains. Developing materials for new appointees on their roles and responsibilities in international projects could bridge this gap. In Nepal, there's still need for frequent face-to-face communication, clear task assignments, and managing expectations around responsibilities and benefits for different stakeholders, especially institutional leaders. In practice, this includes the need for better communication and understanding of expectations among top university leaders in Nepal regarding international collaborations, also including relevant funders and facilitators. Finally, engaging someone from Nepal or of Nepalese background to support in project coordination in Finland, has been documented as a positive leadership and project management practice.

Box 7. A practice example leading to better project coordination

Aalto University, Tampere University and Turku AMK have engaged staff and/or project coordinators of Nepalese origin to enhance the projects with language and cultural skills. This practice was observed as leading to better project coordination, management and communication at both ends.

<https://aaltoglobalimpact.org/pbl-south-asia/>

<https://www.tuni.fi/en/research/strengthening-nutrition-education-and-research-capacity-universities-nepal-nerc>

<https://www.tuas.fi/en/research-and-development/projects/nepal-way-to-a-sustainable-transformational-educat/>

Participatory Approach:

The projects actively involve various stakeholders, including students, faculty, administrators, industry partners, and government entities both in Finland and Nepal. Engaging these stakeholders on time and periodically with clear roles and ownership of initiatives ensures a participatory approach and a diverse range of perspectives in project planning and implementation. Competence mapping for the projects, at both ends, is needed prior to any engagement. Additionally, lessons learned emphasize the importance of a participatory approach in project implementation.

By involving stakeholders in decision-making processes and project activities, projects can benefit from diverse expertise and perspectives and avoid some problems arising from lack of knowledge/ understanding.

One needs to give double/triple time for partnerships, for established outputs to flourish (including negotiations, internalization, and ownership)."

- A Finnish HEI representative

Differences in HEI systems and administration:

Student exchanges are sometimes difficult due to differing annual/semester systems, with PhD student exchanges named as more feasible than master's or bachelor's levels in Nepal. There is a need for greater flexibility in the Nepalese system to allow for student exchanges and credit transfers, as well as addressing the hierarchical and bureaucratic challenges that can cause delays in decision-making and approvals for short-term mobilities.

Even though our students engage in mobilities, they do so voluntarily and missing their studies at home, which they need to take next year. We are not able to award them equivalent credits for their studies in Europe. Thus, we typically choose students who are almost graduated or even already graduated for these kinds of mobilities." - A Nepalese HEI representative

Cultural Understanding and gradual familiarization:

Considering cultural differences and context-specific nuances is crucial for effective stakeholder engagement. Recognizing and respecting cultural diversity can enhance collaboration and communication among stakeholders from different backgrounds. For example, different academic systems/calendars, frequent leadership changes in Nepal, bureaucratic delays in funding transfers, inflexible funding requirements etc. have influenced collaborations and required adaptations. Starting with limited scope and giving time for partnerships to evolve over a few projects with same partner(s) is also recommended.

"Be ready to do a lot of work locally, over many projects. Discussions, engagements, communications prior to the project applications are must!"

- A Finnish HEI representative

Box 8. Ethical Guidelines for Responsible Academic Partnerships

The recently developed “Ethical Guidelines for Responsible Academic Partnerships with the Global South” is a comprehensive framework designed to support effective and responsible partnership practices between Finnish actors and partners in the Global South.

Developed by the Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID) to complement existing guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK), the document outlines key principles, values, and ideals to guide researchers and institutions in fostering equitable and respectful partnerships, ensuring that collaborations are conducted with integrity and mutual benefit.

<https://helda.helsinki.fi/items/a2521ede-2fb5-43dd-81c4-4b55a0990355>

Diverse needs and institutions:

One key lesson learned was the importance of recognizing the diverse needs and contexts of partner institutions. Many projects had to adopt flexible working methods to cater to these varying requirements. There is no standard fit that would suit all actors. Even within one country, considerable work is required to adapt to each situation and circumstances.

“We managed to only update some existing courses at departmental level. As an affiliated college, we cannot create a new curriculum as expected by the project!” - A Nepalese HEI representative

Capacity Development at all levels:

Support for curriculum developers, including teachers, is needed in Nepal on many occasions from experienced Finnish experts. This support is vital for maintaining the quality and relevance of the developed courses and ensuring their successful implementation. Also, involving strategic human resource management and providing opportunities for different university hierarchies, teachers, students, and international partners in available workshops, trainings and sessions do help.

Box 9. A research-based capacity building approach

The new HEP project aims to ensure sustainability of nutrition education outcomes. The capacity building of Nepali faculty members through PhD programs at Tampere University is expected to have a long-term impact.

There are plans to disseminate the development work and results to other universities in Nepal through training sessions. Sustaining efforts involves training Nepali teachers, getting revised courses included in curricula through approvals, maintaining the dietary database, and planning for institutionalization with stakeholder involvement. Future opportunities may arise for expanding successful models to other countries or contexts.

<https://www.tuni.fi/en/research/strengthening-nutrition-education-and-research-capacity-universities-nepal-nerc>

Long-term Impact:

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project outcomes requires commitment from all stakeholders. Achieving goals takes many years, necessitating continuous dedication and adaptation based on lessons learned. This includes the institutionalization of outcomes and activities and the strategic planning of human resources to ensure programme efficacy and continuity, especially in Nepal.

Inclusivity and Diversity:

Efforts to increase participation of women, ethnic minorities, dalits, and other disadvantaged groups in the project(s) thematic scope and capacity building in general should be planned and integrated into project activities. Engagement with new HEI partners outside of the Kathmandu valley is also highly encouraged.

"We're also starting to notice some new colleges and universities in Nepal actively pursuing project applications and being successful. This is encouraging." - A funder/facilitator representative

Based on the above lessons learnt, outcomes and impact, recommendations for bilateral/multilateral projects are drawn below, and presented in the form of a project timeline (Figure 18). The timeline visualization outlines a strategic framework for Finnish-Nepalese HEI partnerships, highlighting recommendations across five critical phases. Each phase includes targeted guidance for both Finnish and Nepalese institutions, emphasizing the importance of early preparation and relationship building, the need for cultural and systemic understanding, a focus on institutional benefits, an emphasis on long-term sustainability, and continuous monitoring and adaptation throughout the project lifecycle.

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FINNISH-NEPALESE BILATERAL/MULTILATERAL HEI PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

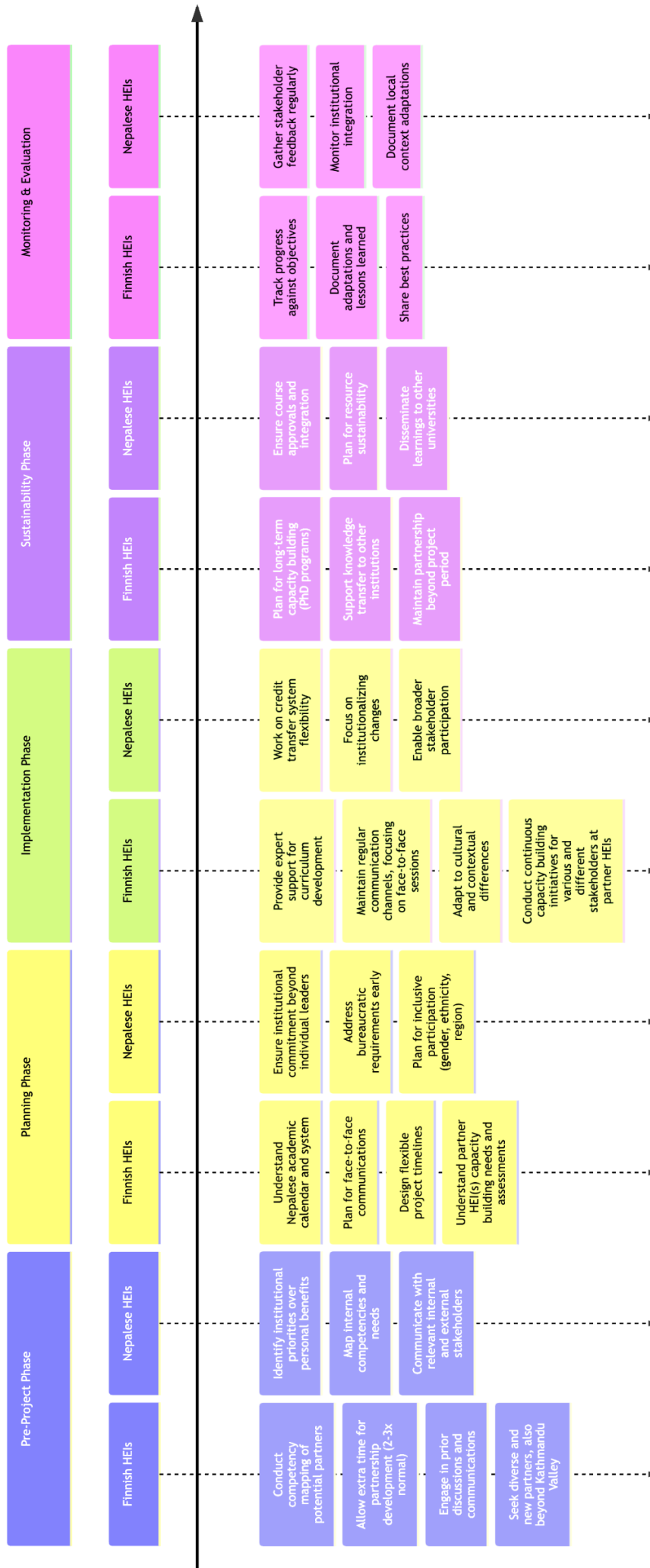


Figure 18. Recommendations for Finnish-Nepalese bilateral/multilateral HEI partnership projects

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN FINNISH AND NEPALESE HEIs

In the context of enhancing higher education collaboration between Finnish and Nepalese institutions at broader strategic levels, the rationale behind the hereby proposed theory of change (APPENDIX D. Theory of Change for Recommendations for Strategic Partnership) is rooted in the shared objective of addressing sustainable development challenges through cross-cultural academic partnerships in line with EDUCase platform's objectives and methods.

This proposed table seeks to leverage strengths, impacts, outcomes, lessons learnt and recommendations from past and current engagements of Finnish and Nepalese HEIs. It seeks to foster collaborative research, innovation, and practical problem-solving. The table outlines a detailed stepwise Theory of Change, mapping out activities, roles, responsibilities, and expected outcomes for key stakeholders (i.e. students, researchers, funders, policymakers, and external partners such as cities, businesses, NGOs, INGOs, alumni and networks). By aligning strategic priorities of these stakeholders with targeted interventions, the table serves as a practical guide for operationalizing the collaboration. The table is meant to be useful for example to HEIs when designing and implementing joint initiatives. It can also serve as a checklist to ensure efforts are systematically coordinated and attached to meaningful, sustainable impacts.

Box 10. EDUFI model for facilitating strategic internationalization of HEIs

The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), under the Ministry of Education and Culture, plays a pivotal role in advancing education and fostering international cooperation in Finland. By providing essential information, support, and development funding, EDUFI promotes the growth and internationalization of Finnish education.

It also periodically organizes coordinators' meetings for Finnish HEIs and their partners involved in various international cooperation projects. These events provide a platform for participants to exchange best practices, share insights on project cooperation, and reflect on the progress of educational partnerships, thus fostering collective efforts to advance higher education collaboration. Additionally, EDUFI hosts FinCEED - The Finnish Centre of Expertise in Education and Development, which aims to enhance Finland's role in addressing the global learning crisis and improving education and development cooperation by providing training, deploying experts, advocating for inclusive education, and fostering international collaboration. FinCEED hosts an annual forum, The Global Education Partnerships (GEP) Forum, which emphasizes co-creation in international education and fosters innovative partnerships across sectors. It targets a diverse audience, including public authorities, educational institutions, private sector service providers, global development organizations, and researchers. Finally, it also maintains publicly available visualization (data) of Finnish HEIs' cooperation with its Global South partners.

<https://www.oph.fi/en/about-us>

<https://www.oph.fi/en/finceed-finnish-centre-expertise-education-and-development>

<https://www.oph.fi/en/events/2024/global-education-partnerships-forum>

<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/bRqg5/45/>

While the Finnish model of educational coordination, as seen above in Box 10, offers valuable insights, establishing an equivalent agency in Nepal would require careful, context-specific consideration of the country's unique challenges and resource constraints. A potential approach might involve conducting a comprehensive feasibility study to map existing institutional capacities, consulting key stakeholders from Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Ministry of Foreign Affairs taking the lead with other relevant stakeholders in Nepal, and analyzing implementation challenges and resource requirements. The primary objectives would be to improve coordination of international educational partnerships, enhance strategic approaches to capacity building collaborations, and develop a centralized knowledge management system for international educational initiatives. Rather than proposing a comprehensive new agency, a more pragmatic strategy could involve creating a modest coordination unit within existing ministerial structures, allowing for gradual development and testing of such an institutional mechanism. This phased approach would minimize immediate financial and administrative burdens while providing an opportunity to meticulously tailor the structure and mandate to Nepal's specific educational internationalization needs, existing institutional landscape, and available resources. Careful research, stakeholder consultation, and adaptive planning would be critical to determining the potential viability and value of such an initiative.

Based on the theory of change table, the diagram (Figure 19) below, presents another comprehensive overview of stakeholder roles and critical relationships involved in Finnish-Nepalese HEI partnerships. The table has been structured to clearly illustrate five main stakeholder groups - Students, Teachers & Staff; Researchers; Funders/Facilitators; Policymakers/Regulators; and External Stakeholders - and their progression through the four key stages of the partnership process.

Each stakeholder group is represented by its own "swim lane," demonstrating the roles and responsibilities they take on at each step, from initial collaboration and capacity building to the project implementation and final evaluation and scaling. The diagram highlights the progressive development of these responsibilities, showing how the stakeholders' involvement and contributions evolve throughout the partnership lifecycle.

The cross-connections between the stakeholder groups are also prominently featured, illustrating key interactions and interdependencies that drive the success of the collaboration. These interconnections, such as the critical knowledge transfer between students/teachers and researchers, essential funding and policy alignment and the integration of real-world applications, are emphasized to underline the importance of stakeholder alignment. By focusing on these stakeholder-centric elements, the diagram aims to provide a comprehensive visual representation of the intricate ecosystem supporting Finnish-Nepalese HEI partnerships. This level of detail allows for a deeper understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and critical relationships that collectively contribute to the success and scalability of initiatives.

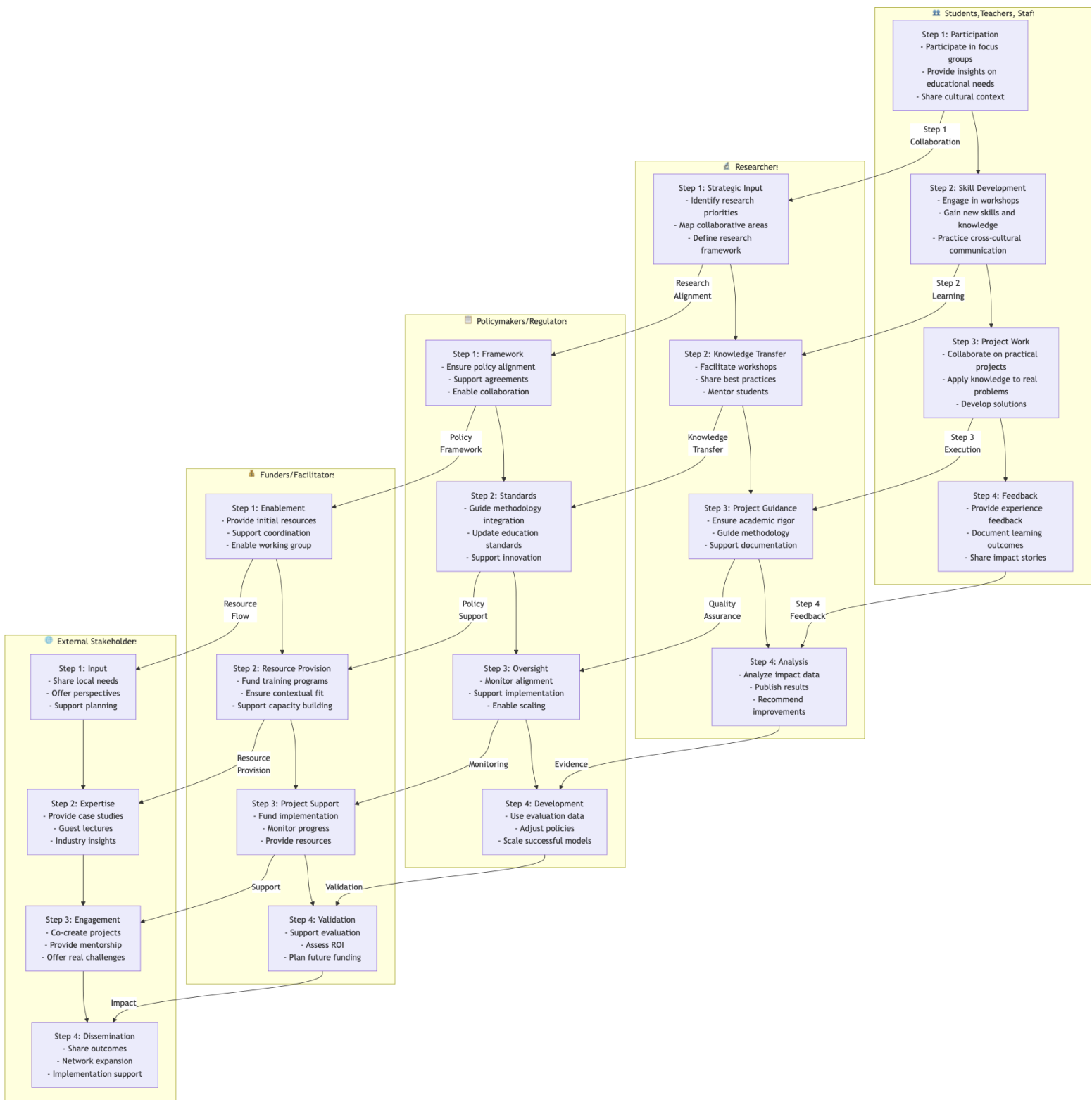


Figure 19. Recommendations for strategic Finnish-Nepal HEIs partnership

5. CONCLUSION

The partnerships between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs continue to demonstrate high potential and strategic importance. It is driven by increasing demand from Nepalese students for quality international education on the one hand, and Finland's long-standing development cooperation objectives agreed with Nepalese authorities on the other. As Nepal remains one of Finland's official development partners, this collaboration is not only a vehicle for academic exchange but also a means to support Nepal's upcoming transition from a LDC to a more sustainable and economically advanced nation.

Despite a promising foundation, the landscape of current collaborations reveals significant areas where enhancements are necessary to realize full benefits for both countries, and to improve the conditions in which practitioners manage their cooperation. Finland has become an appealing academic destination for many Nepalese students, yet Nepal's contributions remain conspicuously absent from broader conversations about talent attraction and innovation in the Finnish higher education and innovation ecosystems. This exclusion is notable as countries that are often highlighted in such discussions gain an advantage in securing major traction of innovation-driven projects, partnerships and resources, also for education and research. The Finnish-Nepalese academic partnership, while limited in scope is notable for example among European peers, as seen above, and can play a vital role in meeting Nepal's evolving educational and economic needs, particularly considering Nepal's upcoming LDC graduation. Ongoing collaboration is well aligned to catalyze innovation and entrepreneurship, leveraging Nepal's talent pool and context to foster sustainable development.

Nepal could be more prominently integrated in Finland's strategies around talent attraction and innovation. Though high application rates among new Nepalese students to Finnish HEIs are encouraging in general, these rates can become unsustainable and problematic in the long run, if talent retention and employment prospects are not fully addressed. The increase in application rates may point out more towards a sometimes dubious marketing-driven approach fueled by educational agencies, rather than one that genuinely aligns potential and eligible students with the host HEIs' capacity, offerings and broader labor market needs. A more sustainable model would prioritize organic, student-centric matching to create mutually beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders.

Embassies and alumni networks could be more actively involved in these partnerships. HEIs have relevant and meaningful initiatives, but project funding alone is insufficient to create a conducive environment, and to nurture knowledge-sharing over the long term. The role of embassies is indispensable also in engaging with the Nepalese diaspora and fostering a two-way knowledge exchange that can support business promotion, innovation, and deeper academic ties.

Alumni networks, along with diaspora communities, can act as cultural and professional bridges, facilitating collaborations that extend beyond the academic realm into sectors like trade, innovation, and entrepreneurship. This cross-sectoral engagement is pivotal for strengthening the ties between Finland and Nepal and for maximizing the impact of educational exchanges.

Despite the numerous benefits of past collaborations, the current approach remains fragmented, with projects operating in silos. This lack of systemic coordination limits the broader impact and sustainability of these initiatives. It is essential to create a collective and coherent mapping of ongoing and planned projects, ensuring that initiatives contribute to a shared strategic vision, more so in Nepal. The EDUCase cooperation framework has exemplified how coordinated problem-based collaborations can address complex global challenges with education, research and capacity building jointly co-existing, and how information on best practices can be shared among HEIs. Finnish universities focus on research and academic development, whereas Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences are better equipped for vocational training and faculty capacity building. Understanding these distinctions is critical to designing partnerships that leverage the strengths of each type of institution.

Yet, for partnerships to be effective, the roles and responsibilities of different institutions would benefit from rethinking and clearer definitions. In cooperations between the Finnish and Nepalese higher education sectors, related to systemic impacts and capacity development, HEIs and individual actors often must undertake roles and tasks that extend well beyond their recognized organizational duties. The lack of systemic planning for such gaps sometimes renders even effective, well-planned initiatives resource-heavy and cumbersome to implement. Also, many valuable results and opportunities are generated but then not fully utilized due to the sporadic nature of engagements. Institutions with relevant mandates exist, but gaps between roles, capabilities and actions are numerous.

The analogy of Finnish architect Pekka Helin's urban planning project in Nepal, as documented in the film "[A Plan for Paradise](#)," offers an apt parallel for higher education collaborations. The project to design a new city in the Kathmandu Valley highlighted the complex interplay of differing cultural norms and expectations. While Helin and his team aimed to create a modern urban environment, they faced unforeseen challenges rooted in Nepalese cultural values, such as the non-relocation of sacred temples (Docpoint, n.d.). Similarly, academic partnerships between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs must be culturally sensitive and adaptable. What may seem like a progressive pedagogical approach in Finland, such as problem-based learning or digital education methods, might require significant adaptation to resonate within the Nepalese academic and cultural context. An ethical, reciprocal, and responsible model of collaboration, as promoted by the EDUCase Platform, also considers the limitations and challenges unique to each context. Ethical partnership practices are not merely desirable but essential for fostering trust and ensuring that collaborations are mutually beneficial. Funders and facilitators play a prominent role in setting the tone for these partnerships, providing clear guidelines on roles and responsibilities, and supporting projects through strategic oversight and resource allocation.

Although there have been successes, research collaboration remains an underdeveloped area. Most projects have focused on capacity building, with few initiatives extending into comprehensive research endeavors. Expanding research collaborations can bring a deeper impact, especially on critical areas to Nepal such as climate resilience, public health, sustainable agriculture, entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems. The potential for joint research is vast, but achieving meaningful collaboration will require overcoming hurdles such as misaligned academic calendars, rigid funding mechanisms, and bureaucratic obstacles. For example, administrative delays and the inflexibility of Nepalese institutional structures have often hindered the timely and effective implementation of projects. Addressing these challenges may involve flexible funding models, phased project timelines, and clear mechanisms for credit transfers and institutional approvals.

The impact of these partnerships is evident in several key areas, such as curriculum development, research capacity, and pedagogical innovation. Yet, there is much room for growth. Projects could evolve from isolated initiatives towards a more integrated and impactful framework. For example, models like HEP and DEVELOP2 have demonstrated how strategic, problem-based research can address global challenges while contributing to local development goals. Moreover, the EDUCase Platform has shown the value of multidisciplinary collaboration, strongly validating the premises of the network – however, there is a clear need for more work at the level of public authorities and HEI actors to be done before aiming to align such frameworks with on-the-ground realities and institutional practices.

The Finnish-Nepalese higher education partnership has laid a strong foundation, but realizing its full potential requires further adaptation and commitment. The way forward is clear: a more coordinated, culturally sensitive and ethically grounded approach is needed to ensure that these partnerships contribute to sustainable development and academic excellence. By investing in deeper cultural understanding, long-term collaboration and incentive alignment for a broader range of stakeholders, both countries can create a lasting and meaningful academic alliance. Cooperation between higher education institutions is a formidable constellation that reflects the visions, ideas, knowledges and skills of both cultures, engaging both senior experts and students in purposeful work. Such initiatives can lead to transformative impacts that extend beyond academia into the heart of sustainable societal progress – they deserve a conducive environment to operate in.



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APPENDIX A.

List of Interviewees

| Category | Affiliation |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Nepalese student representative | Sagarmatha Engineering College |
| Nepalese student representative | Sagarmatha Engineering College |
| Finnish HEI representative | Turku AMK |
| Nepalese student representative | Asian Institute of Technology and Management |
| Nepalese student representative | Asian Institute of Technology and Management |
| Funder/Facilitator | The European Union in Nepal |
| Nepalese student representative | Sagarmatha Engineering College |
| Alumni & Nepalese HEI representative | Aalto University & Kathmandu University |
| Alumni & Nepalese HEI representative | HAMK, Aalto University & Kathmandu University |
| Nepalese HEI representative | Kathmandu University |
| Nepalese HEI representative | Nepal Engineering College |
| Finnish HEI representative | Turku AMK |
| Finnish HEI representative | Jyväskylä AMK |
| Finnish HEI representative | Uni ARTS |
| Finnish student representative | Aalto University |
| Nepalese HEI representative | Asian Institute of Technology and Management |
| Alumni & Funder/Facilitator | HAMK & SUMS Nepal Private Limited |
| Nepalese student representative | Sagarmatha Engineering College |
| Nepalese student representative | Asian Institute of Technology and Management |
| Finnish student representative | Aalto University |
| Nepalese HEI representative | Sindhuli Multiple Campus |
| Nepalese student representative | Asian Institute of Technology and Management |
| Nepalese student representative | Asian Institute of Technology and Management |
| Nepalese HEI representative | Sagarmatha Engineering College |
| Nepalese student representative | Sagarmatha Engineering College |
| Alumni & Nepalese HEI representative | HAMK & Kathmandu University |
| Funder/Facilitator | Embassy of Finland Kathmandu |
| Alumni & Funder/Facilitator | HAMK & Cogknit Oy |
| Finnish student representative | Aalto University |
| Nepalese student representative | Sagarmatha Engineering College |
| Finnish student representative | Aalto University |
| Finnish HEI representative | Tampere University |
| Funder/Facilitator | Embassy of Finland Kathmandu |
| Finnish student representative | Aalto University |

APPENDIX B.

Questionnaire for Finnish and Nepalese HEIs

Background and Overview:

1. Please provide an overview of your institution's involvement with Finnish/Nepalese partners including the primary goals, objectives, and selection criteria for collaboration. (Purpose)

Outcomes and Impacts:

2. What were/are the tangible or expected outcomes and impacts of collaborations in areas such as curriculum development, research projects, innovations, or specific thematic areas? (Thematic outcomes) (methods used)

3. Could you share some specific examples or success stories that highlight the positive impacts of these collaborations, as well as any challenges or obstacles faced during implementation? (Operational environment)

Stakeholder Engagement and Lessons Learned:

4. How were/are key stakeholders (students, faculty, administrators, industry, government partners) involved in the planning and implementation of the collaborations, and what mechanisms were in place to gather their feedback and input? (Stakeholders)

5. What lessons are being/were learned from navigating any cultural or contextual differences that influenced the collaborations, and how can these lessons benefit future similar initiatives?

Sustainability and Future Prospects:

6. How sustainable do you see the outcomes and impacts of the collaborations in Nepal beyond the initial programme funding, and what measures or plans are in place to ensure their continuity?

7. Are there any plans or opportunities for expanding or replicating successful models or initiatives in other countries or contexts?

Strategic Recommendations and Gap Assessment:

8. Based on the engagement thus far, what strategic recommendations would you provide to funding agencies, governments, and institutional leads for future initiatives focused on fostering North-South partnerships?

9. Are there any specific areas or gaps that still need to be addressed in Nepal's or Finland's higher education sector (in your thematic area/methods)?

Additional Insights and Feedback:

10. Are there any other notable achievements, challenges, or insights from your institution's involvement in the initiative in Finland that you would like to share?

APPENDIX C.

Questionnaire for funders/facilitators

Role and Background:

1. Describe your role in facilitating collaborations between Nepalese and European/Finnish HEIs, including your institutional objectives.

Facilitation and Communication:

2. How does your institution facilitate communication, coordination, and dissemination among participating Nepalese and Finnish HEIs?

Funding and Resource Allocation:

3. Provide an overview of the funding mechanisms, resource allocation, and criteria used by your institution to support collaborations. Themes/Methods?

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Challenges:

4. What monitoring and evaluation processes were in place, and what challenges or lessons learned were there?

Sustainability and Future Prospects:

5. From your institutional perspective, how sustainable are the general collaboration outcomes beyond initial funding? Any plans to continue or expand such initiatives?
Best Practices and Success Stories?

6. Based on the experience, what best practices or success stories would you highlight in facilitating effective Nepalese-Finnish HEI collaborations?
Recommendations & Additional Insights?

7. What recommendations would you provide for future initiatives fostering sustainable development education and entrepreneurship through North-South partnerships? Themes? Methods?

8. Any other notable achievements, challenges, or insights from your institutional involvement in HE collaborations in Nepal?

9. Any suggestions for improving facilitation, communication, and support mechanisms for future cross-border higher education collaborations?

APPENDIX D.

Theory of Change for recommendations for strategic partnerships between Finnish and Nepalese HEIs

| Step | Activity | Stakeholder | Roles/Responsibilities | Outputs | Outcomes |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Step 1: Initiating Cross-Cultural and Institutional Collaboration | Establish a bilateral working group comprising representatives from both Finnish and Nepalese HEIs. | Students Teachers Staff Admin | Participate in focus groups to provide insights on educational needs and cultural context. | Formation of a cross-cultural and institutional working group. | Greater engagement in the educational process through the inclusion of student voices in decision-making. |
| | | Researchers | Contribute expertise in identifying research priorities and potential collaborative areas. | Identification of mutual goals and strategic objectives for collaboration. | Clearer pathways for cross-border research collaborations. |
| | | Funders/Facilitators | Provide resources and oversight for setting up the working group and initial coordination. | Development of a framework for ongoing cooperation. | Established alignment of objectives ensuring efficient use of resources. |
| | | Policymakers/Regulators | Ensure that collaboration aligns with national education policies and international agreements. | | Policy alignment facilitating smoother implementation of international collaborations. |
| | | External Stakeholders (Cities, Businesses, NGOs, INGOs, Alumni, Diaspora) | Offer perspectives on local needs and potential impacts of collaboration. | | Early involvement, leading to more relevant and impactful outcomes. |
| Step 2: Capacity Building and Knowledge Exchange | Organize workshops and training programmes focused on methods of student-centered education, problem-based learning, and sustainable development. | Students Teachers Staff Admin | Engage actively in workshops, gaining new skills and knowledge. | A series of workshops and training sessions conducted. | Enhanced problem-solving, critical thinking, and cross-cultural communication skills. |
| | | Researchers | Facilitate workshops, share best practices, and mentor students. | Development of educational materials and resources adapted to local contexts. | Strengthened networks with peers, leading to potential joint research opportunities. |
| | | Funders/Facilitators | Fund training programmes and ensure that they meet the needs of both Finnish and Nepalese contexts. | | Demonstrated progress toward capacity-building goals. |
| | | Policymakers/Regulators | Provide guidance on incorporating new methodologies into national education standards. | | Adoption of innovative educational practices into national curriculums. |
| | | External Stakeholders (Cities, Businesses, NGOs, INGOs, Alumni, Diaspora) | Participate as guest lecturers or provide case studies relevant to sustainable development. | | Opportunities to contribute to education, leading to a more skilled future workforce. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| Step 3: Implementation of Joint Practical Projects | Launch joint case studies, problem-based projects, and innovation challenges involving students, faculty, and industry partners. | Students Teachers Staff Admin | Collaborate on projects, applying their knowledge to real-world problems. | Successful execution of joint projects addressing key sustainability challenges. | Practical experience in addressing sustainability challenges, fostering entrepreneurial and innovation skills. |
| | | Researchers | Guide project development, ensuring academic rigor and relevance. | Development of solutions with potential for real-world application. | Opportunities to publish and present findings from collaborative projects. |
| | | Funders/Facilitators | Provide funding and resources for project implementation. | | Tangible results demonstrating the impact of investment in joint initiatives. |
| | | Policymakers/Regulators | Monitor project alignment with national priorities and provide support for scaling successful models. | | Evidence of successful collaboration, informing future policy decisions. |
| | | External Stakeholders (Cities, Businesses, NGOs, INGOs, Alumni, Diaspora) | Co-create projects, offer mentorship, and provide real-world challenges for academic solutions. | | Access to innovative solutions and strengthened ties with academic institutions. |
| Step 4: Evaluation and Scaling | Conduct periodic evaluations to assess the impact of the collaboration on education quality, innovation ecosystems, and sustainable development outcomes. | Students Teachers Staff Admin | Provide feedback on their experiences and the impact of the projects on their learning. | Evaluation reports detailing the impact and effectiveness of the collaboration. | Improved educational outcomes and enhanced employment prospects. |
| | | Researchers | Analyze data, publish results, and suggest improvements. | Recommendations for scaling successful practices to other institutions. | Broadened research impact through dissemination and application of findings. |
| | | Funders/Facilitators | Support the evaluation process and ensure dissemination of successful practices. | | Validation of investment and a stronger case for future funding. |
| | | Policymakers/Regulators | Use evaluation results to inform policy development and support broader implementation. | | Data-driven policy adjustments and support for expanded collaboration initiatives. |
| | | External Stakeholders (Cities, Businesses, NGOs, INGOs, Alumni, Diaspora) | Participate in evaluations and share outcomes with wider networks. | | Broader implementation of effective solutions, enhancing the impact on local communities and industries. |