Tampere University of Applied Sciences

Business Ecosystem for Exporting Finnish Out-of-School Education

Yong Li

ABSTRACT

Tampere University of Applied Sciences
International Business Management
Growth Makers

Li, Yong
Business Ecosystem for Exporting Finnish Out-of-School Education

Master's thesis 52 pages, appendices 4 pages
October 2023

Finnish education has a high-quality system with an excellent reputation in the world. Exporting education is an important business area that is supported and promoted by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland, and regional authorities. It can evolve the Finnish economy by increasing sales and profit. Out-of-school education is the activities and programs that are operated out of school environment and time.

The key problem is loose cooperation between different companies, organizations, and educational institutions. Lack of business ecosystem and deep cooperation are the main reasons for slow business growth. The goal of this research is to find out a purpose-driven business ecosystem to create more new business products and service packages and add business value to the customers.

Two research questions were raised and answered, how to increase exporting Finnish out-of-school education globally with a purpose-driven business ecosystem? What kind of ecosystem framework should be established as a concrete solution? Surveys and interviews were conducted during the research. Analysis shows that common purpose is the driver for setting up a business ecosystem, which leads to strategic objectives and strong reasons why a business ecosystem is mandatory for business growth in exporting Finnish out-of-school education. Finnish companies and organizations have a strong motivation and common purpose to increase sales by creating new products and services with other partners.

Setting up a business ecosystem framework is a concrete solution to strengthen communication, trust, and operation. This framework covers the whole process of defining motivation, planning strategic objectives, selecting partners, planning projects, general operation, communication and trust, change management and risk management, innovation, and expanding business, etc., which builds a process for a complete, profitable, and valuable business ecosystem for exporting Finnish out-of-school education.

Keywords: out-of-school education, export, business ecosystem, purpose-driven ecosystem, business value, business network, business ecosystem framework

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Exporting education is one of the business opportunities and business operations that are getting more and more recognized by the global market. It is a business area that combines education and traveling, technology, or other elements. It combines customer experience, education, and business operations into one innovative solution, to satisfy the needs of international customers and different age of young students coming from different countries. Exporting Finnish education brings entrepreneurial success to Finland. However, the traditional business model for exporting education is driven by products and services and this business model is facing challenging situations and bottlenecks for business growth. Companies do not have a deep understanding of the business ecosystem and how to work together with other companies or organizations, even the competitors, to further improve their products and services and add business value to their customers.

This research aims to find answers to two questions: First, how to increase exporting out-of-school education globally with a purpose-driven business ecosystem? Second, what kind of ecosystem framework can be established as a concrete solution? This research project aims to create a potential business ecosystem for exporting out-of-school education in Finland, to achieve the business objectives by setting up and utilizing a new business ecosystem. We hope that the output of the research could benefit both Finnish economy and Finnish companies by sharing the same goals and business purposes in a new business ecosystem environment to increase sales and profitability with more thriving offers from different stakeholders. We also hope to bring international customers more business values and customer satisfaction by this business ecosystem and new products and services.

1.1 Description of the topic

We all understand that education is a purposeful activity directed at achieving certain aims, such as transmitting knowledge or fostering skills and character traits (Wikipedia, 2022). The concept of education can be segmented into two categories: formal education and non-formal education. Formal education can be

also called school education, which focuses on systematic studies in schools or higher educational institutions. Non-formal education refers to out-of-school education. Out-of-school education contains activities and studying programs outside of school and normally after school time or on the weekend. Out-of-school education is an educational concept initially proposed by Lauren Resnick in her 1987 AERA presidential address, which consists of curricular and non-curricular learning experiences for pupils and students outside the school environment (Wikipedia, 2022). The main difference between school and out-of-school education is the contents of the education. School education is more systemic and focuses on languages, sciences, etc. Out-of-school education focuses on learning by doing and studying in a hobby or other spare time activities. Despite these two kinds of education being different, both of them have an impact on the growth of young students from different aspects. Finland has gained an excellent reputation for school education in PISA, and Finland also created many excellent out-of-school education programs by various organizations and companies, e.g., youth centers, education technology companies, museums, hobby clubs, etc.

Out-of-school education is also defined as non-formal education. Non-formal education, which supports the Finnish curriculum and children's active learning with careful planning and execution of activities outside the school environment (Suomen Nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry, n.d.). This kind of education is commonly based on the activities and specific learning environment, and it is an unseparated part of the normal study, leaning on Finnish values and education (Suomen Nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry, n.d.). Out-of-school is also abbreviated into OST, i.e., out-of-school time, in another research. For example, Wiecha, Beets, Colabianchi, Ferree, Hall, Hofman and Rauworth (2014) pointed out that the OST umbrella includes before and after school programs and vacation camps and engages millions of U.S. children and youth each year in a range of extracurricular activities. We use the term out-of-school education in this thesis when discussing all relevant to non-formal education, while we are not using the abbreviation form of it.

Out-of-school education in Finland has also been widely recognized by other countries, and it is a part of the Finnish education system and shares the same reputation as the formal school education system which has gained top scores in the PISA tests. Exporting both of them is equally important for the Finnish

government, educational institutions, and business suppliers. Exporting Finnish education brings value to student groups for learning in fun and well-designed programs and a safe environment. We will work out how to export Finnish out-of-school education in a business ecosystem in this thesis.

1.2 Finnish national policy on education export

Exporting Finnish education is mainly operated by companies; however, the Finnish government and relevant organizations are playing important roles in making policies or coordinating the networks. Their functions are special and unique in making the policies, establishing, and leading the business network. Some of the education export promotion organizations are operated by local authorities and some of them by universities or other institutions. Even though the operational entities and sources of funding are different, the goals and policies are similar in each organization. They all focus on promoting the education export by establishing a business network and defining the policies.

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture has established a reforming project that focuses on competencies, aiming to reform the society and to reinforce economic growth through five strategic priorities (The Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland 2016,1). One of the strategic priorities is competence. The students will get even more competence from the out-of-school programs and this project sets up a good basis for shaping Finnish out-of-school education and makes the contents ready for exporting, i.e., competence-driven education and learning by doing out of the classrooms. Digital learning and new learning environments outside the classroom also require a new kind of pedagogical approach (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland 2016, 1), and this means that out-of-school education is also systematic scientific and productised for business.

Another coordinator is Business Finland. Business Finland describes that it helps its customer companies grow and succeed globally, develop solutions for the future and renew their business operations boldly. It promotes collaboration between companies and research groups, so that new endeavors can develop into international business ecosystems. (Business Finland, 2023) Education export is one of the areas in Business Finland. Education trip is one area of Visit Finland.

Education Finland is a governmental cluster program supporting the best education providers in their growth in the international market. The program is coordinated by the Finnish National Agency for Education. (Education Finland, n.d.) It coordinates around 125 Finnish companies from all aspects of education.

Finnish local regions and cities also work on education exporting in the role of coordinating the companies as a business ecosystem, e.g., Tampere, Helsinki, Oulu, etc. The common policies defined by local authorities intend to increase sales by establishing business networks.

1.3 Stakeholders

Stakeholders are the relevant parties who are involved in the business. As the key players in exporting Finnish out-of-school education, stakeholders can be divided into five categories:

- Out-of-school education exporters

  This group of companies are the organizers of the exporting business. They normally select different services and programs, integrate them into service packages, and offer them to the customers directly or via local agencies in foreign countries. These companies are normally competitors in the business field for different offers and prices. These companies are registered in Finland and their target customer segmentations and target market countries can be various and competitive.

- Out-of-school education program providers

  The role of this category is to create different programs and activities. Learning by doing, as an advanced idea and concept of education, is getting more and more popular among young students.

- Assistant service providers

  This category refers to the assisting entities for the students' out-of-school education activities, e.g., accommodations, restaurants, and transportation companies etc. They are not directly involved in the education programs and activities, but still have impact to customer experiences.

- Government or organizations for business promotion

Government or organizations are not directly involved in running the business; however, their roles are unique for connecting all the stakeholders and organizing them to one place or defining the policies for exporting education to the international market. Policymakers normally draw lines of scopes, set limitations, and promote the business by making regulations and rules. In facts, what they do for promoting business is only establishing a network, although the business network is really useful, but the business network is not a real business ecosystem that can benefit all the stakeholders in more detailed level and change competition into cooperation.

- Customers from abroad

  Customers are groups of people who make decisions to buy products or services and come to Finland for an out-of-school education experience. International markets are huge; however, focused markets are Asia, South America, and Africa. The customers can be segmented based on different standards, e.g., direct customers or indirect customers, only student groups or student plus parent groups, younger student groups or elder student groups, general activity groups or specific requirement groups, etc. Each segmented group has its characteristics and requires different business values.

In the Finnish out-of-school education export business environment, many companies and organizations can also be categorized into following five categories:

- Out-of-school edution export companies as key organizers
- Out-of-school education program providers. Finnish Youth Centers, museums, universities and schools etc., e.g. Finnish Design Museum, Arkitikum, Birthplace of Jean Sibelius in Hämeenlinna, the Finnish Labor Museum Werstas, hobby clubs, e.g., Ilves and Tappara and music institutions, e.g., Tampere Konservatorio, etc.
- Assisting service providers

  This category contains accommodation providers, e.g. hotels and youth hostels, e.g. Holiday Inn hotels, Scandic hotels, restaurants and transportation companies etc.
- Government organizations or non-profit organizations.

  Business Finland, Visit Finland, Finnish Youth Parliament, etc., are examples of this kind of organizations.

- Investment companies or organizations

  Providing funding services and investment capacities, e.g., Finnnvera, Business Finland, etc..

1.4 Current situation and problems

Finnish education exporting started to develop and increase continuously, and some education packages have been productized and packaged, however, some challenges and problems in this business area still exist.

The first problem is that not all the relevant companies and organizations have a clear motivation that they can be involved in education exporting and benefit from it. Lacking internationalisation knowledge and expertise prevents Finnish companies from expanding their business aboard. Jaakola (2021, 29-30) pointed out the same problem, that weakness is to transform regional activity into global activity because the benefit of low regional costs is lost. At the same time, small companies' ability to market and network globally may also be a challenge. We understand the same reasons that cause the weakness in the motivation for a business ecosystem, even Internationalisation has already been widely discussed at the general level from the national or regional level in Finland in other business fields; however, motivation for exporting, especially in out-of-school education, is still weak for further development.

The second challenge is in the business model. The current B2C business model limits the resources and networking and slows down the business growth. A traditional business model is the model which one company makes its products or services and sells directly to customers, and it might be unsuccessful in the more complicated and demanding market environment, e.g., international markets. For example, in many cases, if customers ask for a total solution offer, according to the traditional business model, a company most probably reject to offer because they do not have the service or product or have only part of it. They are not willing to find other business partners to offer the rest part of service package or create a totally new service which is out of their business scopes.

The third problem is unnecessary competition. Stakeholders in education export are operating their business individually with unnecessary competition on prices, and lack of efficient cooperation. For example, the price for similar summer/winter camp trips could be quite different, and some companies might offer very cheap packages to attract customers because they do not focus on creating better products or services that can bring unique and excellent experiences and business value but fight a pricing battle.

The fourth problem is lack of a platform to integrate different values and business competitive advantages. Visibility in the global market is not clear and strong enough. According to other research, the cluster is needed since Finland and Finnish education exporters are small compared to other established players in the international market, and together as a cluster they could flourish worldwide (El Cheikh 2015, 2).

As general challenges for companies and entrepreneurs, Wilson R. K. (2016, 82-84) pointed out six classic challenges which should be considered and need actions. Six challenges are limited experience, limited competency, limited bandwidth, limited resource, limited time, and limited cash. These are common challenges which also address to exporting Finnish out-of-school education.

1.5   Research questions

When the problems have been identified, it is necessary to work on a new research project to find out and create the solutions for solving the problems. Some researchers have studied Finnish education exports from different perspectives; however, so far, the business ecosystem has not been considered as a potential solution for business growth. Reponen (2022,66) claimed that ecosystems can't be established with an external order or individual motivation: all players must have their own will and reasons to participate in the ecosystem. From innovation policy point of view, platforms and ecosystems of various sectors are crucial for innovation activities and for harnessing the potential of green and digital transition (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Finland. 2021). The business

ecosystem should be crucial for education export, especially for out-of-school education export.

In this thesis, we raise two research questions: How to increase exporting out-of-school education globally with a purpose-driven business ecosystem? What kind of framework should be established as concrete solutions?

We understand that business could be developed and promoted by using different approaches. The first research question has two concepts, one is a purpose-driven business ecosystem and another one is how to increase. Increasing sales is critical for business. In fact, increasing sales can be achieved by many elements, and we focus on how the business ecosystem benefits sales. The second research question has two keywords: platform, and concrete solution. We need to achieve a target to create a concrete solution for the business ecosystem in practice. We assume that a new platform framework will be innovative and sufficient for the business ecosystem. To find out the correct answers to these two questions will be a fundamental basis for the creative solution to make exporting out-of-school education booming and growing significantly.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

Completing a literature review should increase your skills and knowledge and your ability to learn, to share, and to have the satisfaction of completing a successful project (Machi & McEvoy 2022, 2). As we understand, a literature review is important in setting up a theoretical basis and analysing collected data on top of that basis. By having an abundant literature review, we can find out what has been researched before and their relations with our current research, especially any relevance to the research questions and topics we raise in this thesis. In this research, we collect the research results from other researchers related to the business ecosystem, as a basis for the studies. One of the tasks that should be done in the literature review is to clarify the research basis and also gap in the research topics, so that something new, for example, new concepts, new ideas, new processes, or new solutions can be created beyond the existing research.

Business ecosystem, business ecosystem vs. business network, purpose-driven business ecosystem, and ecosystem framework are the main topics in the literature review. These topics will be reflected in the data analysis for answering the research questions that were raised in the introduction part of this research.

We noticed that plenty of research on exporting Finnish higher education has been identified in the articles or books, however, exporting Finnish out-of-school education is not such a popular research topic in current research. Most of the researchers focused on marketing issues of exporting Finnish education, e.g., to a certain country or market. The business ecosystem for exporting Finnish out-of-school education is a new research topic.

2.1   Business ecosystem

James F. Moore was the first researcher who raised the concept Business ecosystem. He described that business ecosystem is an economic community supported by a foundation of interacting organizations and individuals – the organism of the business world. This economic community produces goods and services of value to customers, who are themselves members of the ecosystem. (Moore 1996, 26) The term "business ecosystem" and its plural, "business ecosystems,"

refer to intentional communities of economic actors whose individual business activities share in some large measure the fate of the whole community (Moore 2006, 33) In business ecosystem, business partners can work together and co-operate to achieve the best result instead of competition.

According to Wilson.R.K. (2016, 105), a business ecosystem is comprised of components, including relationships, the interplay of business, specific products and services, social environment, technology, financial system, incentives and rewards, market sectors and niches, communities, the collective vision of its in-novators and stakeholders, the perceived competitors, the layer of interactions between participants, and more. This implies that all business ecosystems have these components, and these components work, and function to interact to achieve the best business results and add value to the customers.

Business value is another important research area in business ecosystem. The target for a business ecosystem is to create business value and do a sustainable business with profitability. Definitely an individual company can create business values, but in business ecosystem, many companies can co-create bigger busi-ness value. Adner (2022,85) pointed out that winning platforms require that both leaders and followers work to further other's interests. It is true that in a business ecosystem, different partners take other's interest and value into own account, so that they can make win-win business. How can all ecosystem players do bet-ter? They can anchor their notion of ecosystems in the value propositions that are being pursued, not in corporate identity (Adner 2022, 86). Rather than think-ing in horizontal and vertical market structures, the power of business ecosys-tems—as shown in the mobility-as-a-service context—emerges when others are excited to contribute to a focal value proposition. Leading by context, inspiration, and by enabling others is essential for companies looking to shift toward an eco-system world. (Hoeborn, Conrad, Götzen, Betz & Neudert. 2022, 50) Ecosystem are tailored to interactive co-creation of values, while systems are not (Smorodinkaya N, Russell M.G, Katukov D, Still K. 2017, 5248).

When studying the concepts and descriptions of the business ecosystem in the literature review, it is obvious to pop up several keywords of a business ecosys-tem, have repeatedly appeared in the existing research. The first one is a

business community, and another one is value co-creation. These two keywords illustrated the basic ideas of a business ecosystem, that business partners can co-create business values in a business community. No single business entity can operate a successful business without any partners. Brand, marketing, sales, sourcing, logistics and aftersales services, etc, all need more or less some collaborations with other partners or customers. Therefore, a business community can never be ignored, and when we talk about a business ecosystem, the business community should be enlarged, and its functionality should be strengthened. A lot of research emphasizes that the co-creation of value propositions can bring innovation, profitability, and sustainability to the companies. In the current business world, business value plays one of the most important roles which customers make decisions on buying the products or services according to their values. To develop our research on the business ecosystem for exporting Finnish out-of-school education, we need to address these two key topics, the business community, and business value, to a high level that they will be a significant core for theoretic input and research output.

Plenty of research has been concluded in the digital business ecosystem, which means that the business ecosystem has been widely discussed and studies in technology areas rather than other business areas. It was described that many IT firms, such as Intel, IBM or Microsoft used the business approach to describe inter-organizational structures related to strands of innovation, such as the PC ecosystem or the Internet technologies ecosystem (Corallo et. al. 2007, 19). To our understanding, IT is such a flexible and quickly changing business environment, that a business ecosystem is more important in IT companies than in other industries or businesses. Many successful examples of business ecosystems exist in the IT field, e.g., Apple Appstore, Google Play, Spotify, etc. However, some common features, open business community, co-creation value, interaction, common purpose, etc are in all business, either in the IT field or other business fields.

2.2 Business ecosystem and business network

Business ecosystem and business network are two different concepts. A network is the way to combine the organizations or companies in one place for communication, so that they know each other, or other companies or customers know

them. The main function of a business network is communication. The business ecosystem is more than a business network, and communication is one of the functionalities of a business ecosystem. In addition, the business ecosystem should be the platform to combine different business elements into one product or service package. For example, in a business ecosystem, a museum can integrate its services into an educational travel service package, while it enlarges the business values to the customers.

Wilson R.K. described that a business network is a particular grouping of elements of commerce that are, in one way or another, connected to a central (or common) connection point (Wilson 2016, 102). From this definition, we understand that a business network is the business community for communication, not creating new business elements or advantage-combined products or services, while a business ecosystem mainly functions as a business environment to benefit each other for shaping new products and services.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland indicated in Growth ecosystem as a tool in industrial and innovation policy, that ecosystems are interdependent networks between enterprises, entrepreneurs, researchers, public administration, and third-sector operators. Platforms are multi-directional interaction venues and marketplaces shared by a variety of operators and users (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2021). Ecosystem and platform are clearly distinguished as two different concepts, and we can see that an ecosystem can contain several networks and platforms which mainly focus on communication and sharing information.

Although the topic of business ecosystem is getting more and more popular, and the term appears in the business environment more regularly, still some business operators and business promoters have a wrong perception that a business network is the same concept as a business ecosystem. Although many such organizations are called business ecosystems, however, the main functions of those organizations are still targeting for general communications, not creating new products and services with added value for customers.

2.3   Purpose-driven business ecosystem

Wilson R.K. created a new concept of a Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem in the book "They Will Be Giant: 21st Century Entrepreneurs and the Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem". He explained that we have added the phrase **Purpose-Driven** to encourage the mindset that any business leadership team consciously, strategically plans, and executes much of the ecosystem in which it lives and flourishes (Wilson 2016,113)

Figure 1. Business ecosystem vs. Purpose-driven business ecosystem (Wilson 2016, 116)

There are some words indicating the differences between normal business ecosystem and purpose-driven business ecosystem. True business partners means that these business partners have a strong motivation to work together, and they take the cooperation more seriously. Their attitudes are proactive, and all the projects are well planned with thorough knowledge and excellent tools. All these differences are caused by the common purpose, that means why they want to join the business ecosystem.

Kola et al (2020) also describe the purpose as the motivation for a business ecosystem. Profit is an important point mentioned in the following figure which captured from the book Kola et al wrote in 2020. It is significantly necessary to define profitability as a strategic objective, because all the projects created by

ecosystem need to make profit. Without any profit, business partners will not work together.
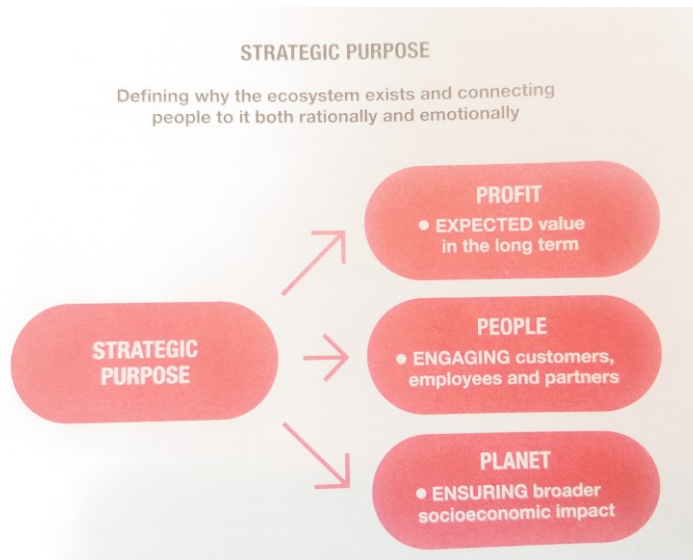

Figure 2.   Purpose of business ecosystem (Kola et al 2020, 24).

2.4   Ecosystem framework

The business ecosystem framework (BEF) provides the direct and indirect relations between different actors. The direct relations are those that derive as a natural result when actors work in the market environment and develop their businesses. Therefore, the business ecosystem becomes a platform for different types of cooperative forms (shown with the blue/bold connectors), such as business associations that can connect and impact other (digital) associations, as digital entrepreneurship automatically becomes part of the business network in a complex business ecosystem. (Georgescu, Peter & Avasilcai 2022, 10)
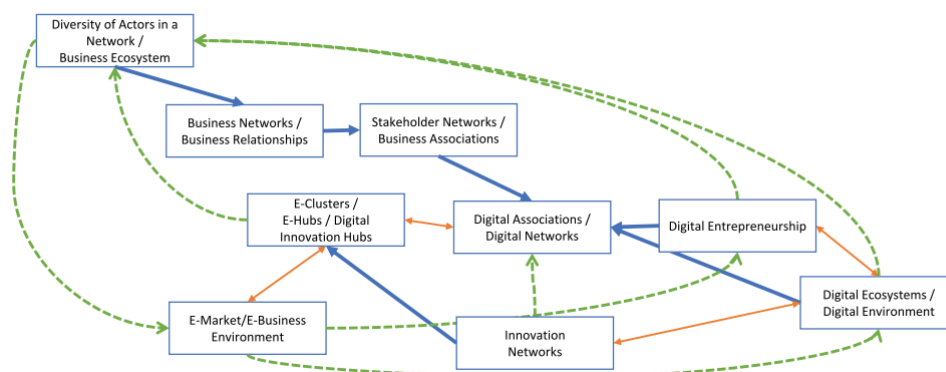

Figure 3. The business ecosystem framework (BEF) for the digital age (Georgescu et al 2022, 9)

Although the above business ecosystem framework was defined according to the digital ecosystem, it can clearly work out one type of business ecosystem framework, which focuses on business environment and interactions. That is a relationship-based framework and draws a picture of how different partners should interact, although it does not explain more details on how to interact in each phase as a process-based business ecosystem framework. Relationship-based frameworks and process-based frameworks have different focuses, and both take the core concepts of business ecosystems and can be utilized by companies when they cooperate with other business partners.

Concerning the process-based business ecosystem framework, a book named "Ecosystem Handbook: The ART of Leading and Creating IMPACT" was published in 2020, and the authors are Sari Kola, Ulla Koivukoski, Laura Koponen, and Markku Heino. A process-based business ecosystem framework was described in the book, and it was called Ecosystem Journey (Kola et al 2020,16). How an ecosystem is formed and how it works were described as the following:
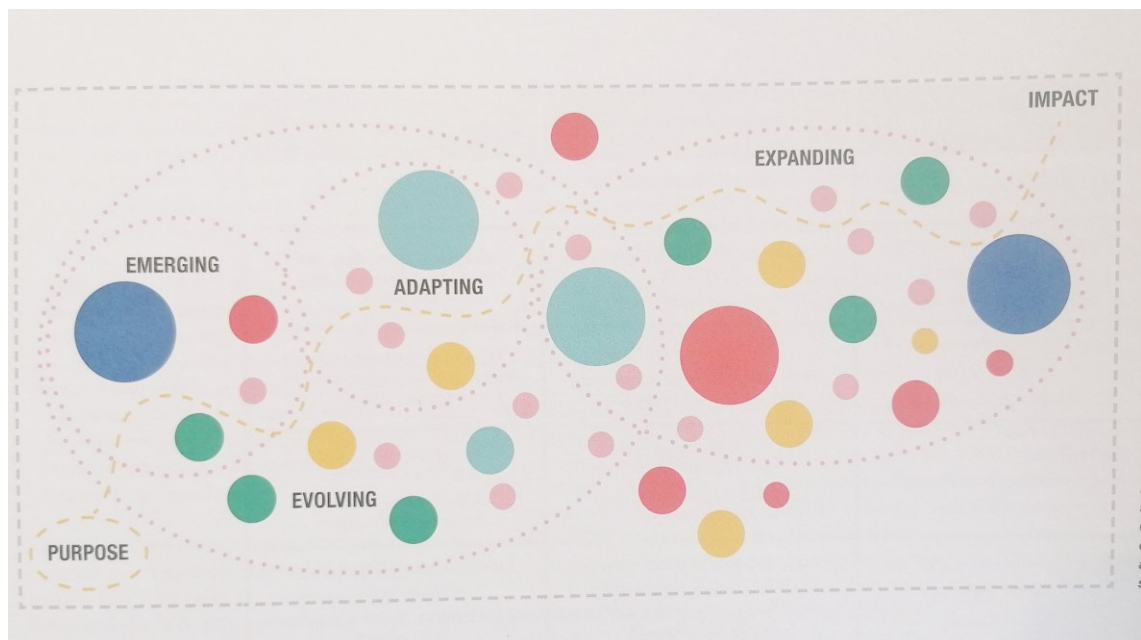

Figure 4. Business ecosystem framework (Kola et al 2020,16)

The first phase is finding out the **Purpose**, and the purpose is the motivation for starting to establish a business ecosystem. This step is also the same as in the

purpose-driven business ecosystem. What should be done in this phase is to define the purpose of why a business ecosystem should be created. The purpose is the foundation of all ecosystems (Kola et al 2020. 16). As already described, purpose is the key issues for starting a business ecosystem. The second phase is **Emerging**. The emerging phase investigates the key ingredients needed for building an ecosystem to start to act on a jointly agreed purpose (Kola et al 2020.17). The third phase is **Evolving**. This phase is about creating trust and commitment among the partners towards joint objectives that are aligned with purpose (Kola et al 2020.17) The fourth phase is **Adapting**. This phase is to make the necessary changes and updates according to the dynamic situation. The next phase is **Expanding**. In this phase, new partners come in and others may leave, and the business ecosystem starts transforming beyond the initial scope (Kola et al 2020.17). **IMPACT** is the final phase which presents in all the phases of the business ecosystem. Added value is more measurable in financial, environmental, and social terms (Kola et al 2020. 17)

Each of those phases cover the main objectives and tasks of those phases. In addition, it forms a big picture on who should be involved from the business partnership point of view. For the purpose of creating a concrete solution, this process-based business ecosystem framework can be used as guideline and reference for completing a draft version of a new framework for business ecosystem. Furthermore, technology and tools should be considered so that process planning, and management can be implemented more efficiently.

Wilson R.K (2016, 221-246) defined A 4-StepProcess for designing your Business Ecosystem. Step 1, defining your business ecosystem Purpose. Step 2, Determine what you have. Step 3, Decide what you need. Step 4, Mind the gap. We can see from this process, which can also be called as a framework, that some similarities exist comparing to the business ecosystem framework created by Kola et al. Both of them start with purpose, motivation, and reasons why a business ecosystem should be set up. Step 4 is an excellent point that it focuses on gaps, that business partner can really benefit from other partners and ecosystem to resolve the gaps. This is the way to lead added business value. Single business entity cannot resolve the gaps alone or need much more sources and budget to resolve the gaps. 4-StepProcess needs the change management

phase to indicate how to face the uncertainty, change or risks. Measurement also needs to add to the process, to measure the achievements when other steps have been implemented.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research objectives and answer the research questions reliably and scientifically, all the research work must be done based on a certain research methodology. Generally, there are two main research methodologies to choose for a research project: qualitative research method and quantitative research method. We select the qualitative method as the research method for this thesis.

3.1 Qualitative method

The qualitative method is a research method for collecting information - Interviews or observations – produce data, which are transformed into texts by recording and transcription (Flick 2014, 3). Flick (2014, 3) also pointed out that the qualitative research process can be represented as a path from theory to text and as another path from text back to theory. With this methodology, we plan to collect non-numerical data for analysis, to get a clear understanding of different elements of the research objectives, and after collecting the data, data will be analyzed according to the purpose of the research questions and research objectives. The reason why the qualitative method is selected is because the pluralization requires on the part of social researchers a new sensitivity to the empirical study of issues (Flick 2014, 12). We need to keep in mind that research questions are always the start points and also should be emphasised in all the research phases. As Flick indicated, the main reason for using qualitatative research should be that a research question requires the use of this sort of approach and not a different one (Flick 2014, 12).

The goal of this research is to provide a possible solution to address the problem of how to increase the sales for exporting Finnish out-of-school education, and this target requires that we use a suitable research method as a process that covers each phase of the research, and qualitative research methods match the requirement and research objectives. Our study pursues the question of how the business ecosystem increases sales and how to handle the business ecosystem in practice.

We conclude the interview and survey for focus groups. Focus Groups are a popular qualitative research method (Brennen 2013, 59). Focus groups are routinely used to identify participants' preferences, attitudes, motivations, and beliefs, they also provide researchers with interviewing flexibility and insights regarding group dynamics that product manufacturers and service providers find particularly useful (Brennen 2013, 59).

3.2 Qualitative interview and survey

An interview is one of the best methods to face the customer companies or organizations to get a deep understanding of their operation and business, and their problems and solutions. The contents are covered much more than a short survey. We can understand more with face-to-face discussion or an on-line meeting. According to the research questions, we designed questions for the interview and also chose the correct participants for the interview so that we could collect the feedback and data in a more reliable and correct situation.

The interview questions have been designed to meet the research objectives. Since the companies and organizations are different in their roles and operations, organizations do not have any profitability and product/service-related targets, and organizations are playing a leading or organizer's role and are not involved in the business directly. The companies are running business and making profit to survive or to make growth possible. For this reason, we define two sets of interview questions, and they are listed as follows:

- Interview questions for companies

  - Basic information about your company.
  - International export situation. e.g., to which countries and percentage of the whole sales.
  - What is current bottleneck for exporting?
  - How do you work together with other business partners?
  - What is your key business value to the customers?
  - Do you think you can have the same business purpose with other partners, even competitors? What purpose?

- o Do you think a business ecosystem can benefit your international sales? Why?
- o Do you think that a platform to work on the business ecosystem is a good idea and practical operation? Why?

- Interview questions for organizations:

  - o How many education companies are involved in your business network?
  - o Do you think business ecosystem can benefit all the stakeholders?
  - o How does your organization work together with all stakeholders to promote Finnish out-of-school education exporting?
  - o What do you think that different companies, even if they are competitors can cooperate for the same objectives?
  - o In your opinion, what is the best practice as a business ecosystem?

This Interview and survey can cover the areas in which information and data can be collected and analysed afterward. The coverage is carefully designed to meet the needs of research according to the research questions. The interview and survey questions are attached to Appendix 1 & and Appendix 2.

The survey is the process of collecting data from the target companies or organizations. Survey is in a written form, not face-to-face conversation. We design a survey form based on the research objectives and research questions, which includes the following topics:

- Information about the company or the organizations.
- Their role in exporting out-of-school education and the bottleneck for sales growth.
- Business purpose and business value for companies in the business ecosystem.
- Feedback and opinions related to the business ecosystem.

.

3.3 Practical operations of interviews and surveys

Based on the qualitative research method, target groups are selected for the interview and survey. Defining correct target groups is mandatory for collecting correct and reliable data to be analysed.

The principle for selecting the target groups is to select the different roles in the business ecosystem, so that the coverage of respondents is wide enough to represent categories that are defined in the introduction part of this thesis. The target groups are selected based on the stakeholders who are likely to be involved in the business ecosystem. For example, the authorities are mainly responsible for organizing or coordinating the business networks. The service/content providers mainly focus their business on providing different activities. Student camp organizers are the companies that focus on marketing and sales. Other target groups could be potential partners who might interested in exporting education but have not started the business yet, and this group makes the research expanded to the zero-experience companies or private persons.

We had two interviews with Business Finland and another Finnish out-of-school educational service provider, mainly online interviews, as representatives of public organizations and service/ content providers. Each interview was implemented according to the pre-defined questions and took place for about 30 - 60 minutes of online discussion. Another approach to collect data is a survey. We designed a survey that covers relevant questions related to a business ecosystem for exporting out-of-school education. More than 10 different companies and organizations have answered the survey, and their responses cover various business perspectives.

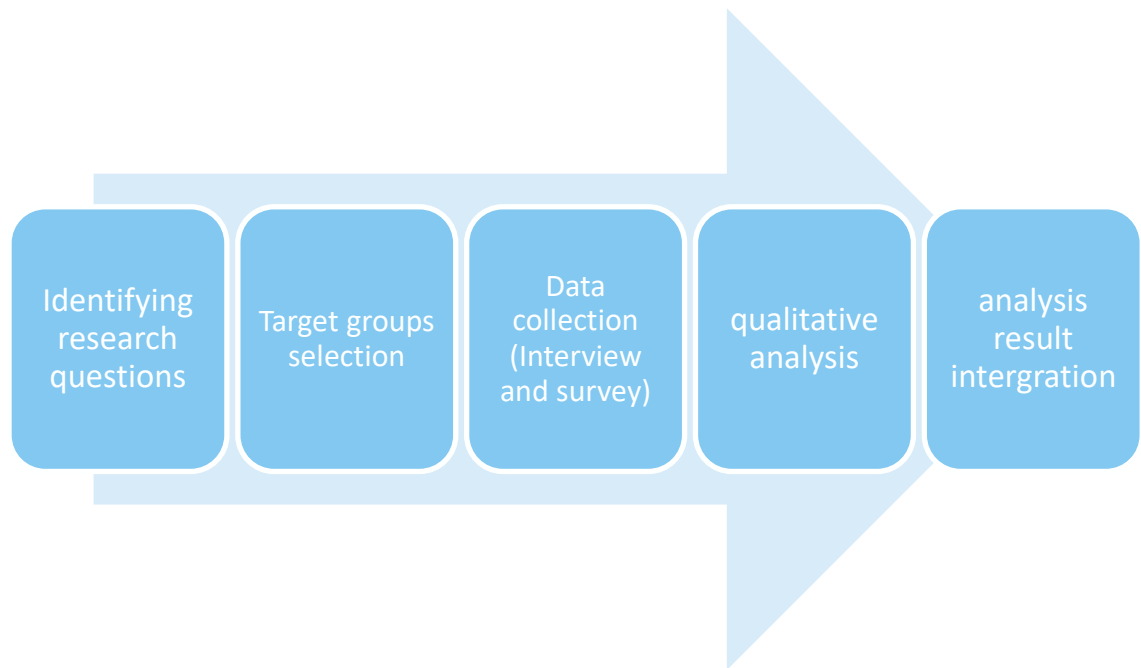The following figure is the qualitative research process that indicate tasks in each step of the process:

Figure 5. Qualitative research procedure

4 DISCUSSION

Data was collected from different organizations, including private companies, public organizations, and private persons. This coverage has a wide and reliable scope, and it indicates the target groups for exporting Finnish out-of-school education. The first phase of the data collection and analysis is all the elements relevant to the different organizations.

The roles of the companies and organizations were collected and shown in the following figures:

How do you define your organization?

- Private Company
- Public organization
- Government organization
- owned by the city of Virrat
- Finland Promotion Station of Dujiangyan city, China. (We are a representative office.)
- The Scout Association of Nigeria
- private person

Figure 6. Roles of the survey respondents

Your company/organization's role in export Finnish non-school education (non-school education refers to the programs and activities which are arranged out of school enviroment and schedule)

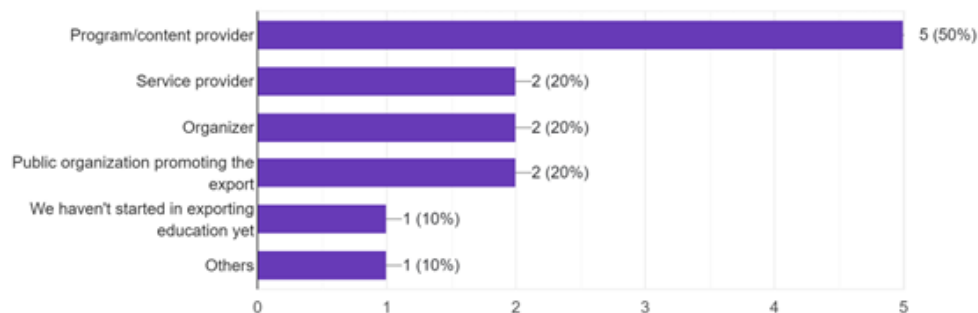| Role	Value
Program/content provider	5 (50%)
Service provider	2 (20%)
Organizer	2 (20%)
Public organization promoting the export	2 (20%)
We haven't started in exporting education yet	1 (10%)
Others	1 (10%)

Figure 7. Respondents' roles in exporting Finnish out-of-school education

Most of the companies and organizations are program/content and service providers, and a few respondents are public organizations and education trip organizers. It is interesting to notice that a few new organizations are willing to start the business, even if they have not been involved in the education business yet. Knowing the stakeholders makes it easier to analyse their business objectives further and shape the elements of the business ecosystem.

4.1 How to increase exporting by business ecosystem

How to increase Finnish out-of-school education exporting by business ecosystem? This is the first research question that should be addressed. We analysed the data collected from the targeted groups, i.e., companies and organizations. We analyse from two aspects: common purpose and business value. We also focus on why a purpose-driven business ecosystem is an approach to increase the exporting and necessary to be established.

4.1.1 Common purpose for driving a business ecosystem

The purpose that we discuss in this research is the reasons why a business ecosystem needs to be established, and from a strategic point of view, it means the strategic objectives. What is the common purpose for companies and organizations in exporting Finnish education? This is a question that has been clarified during the interview and survey. Establishing a business ecosystem needs strong motivation and clear reasons so that all the partners involved in the business ecosystem have a common base for the involvement and operation.
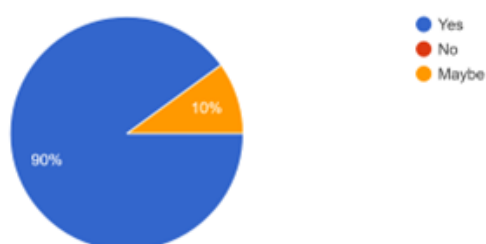

Figure 8. Respondents' willingness to export Finnish education directly or indirectly.

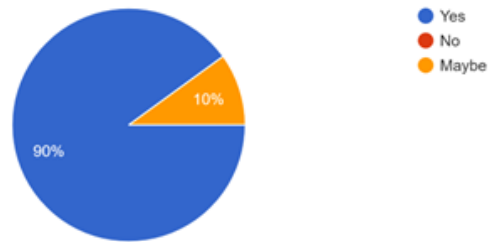Are you willing to improve your sales for exporting education?

Figure 9. Respondents' willingness to improve sales for exporting.

From the above figures, we can find out that around 90% of the companies provide services or products to foreign customers. It indicates that the involvement for out-of-school education contains both direct involvement and indirect involvement. Indirect involvement can be promoted or changed into direct involvement. Participating in a business ecosystem can make companies more directly involved in the business ecosystem, and this will be one of the tasks for a business ecosystem.

What is the current bottleneck for improving the sales?
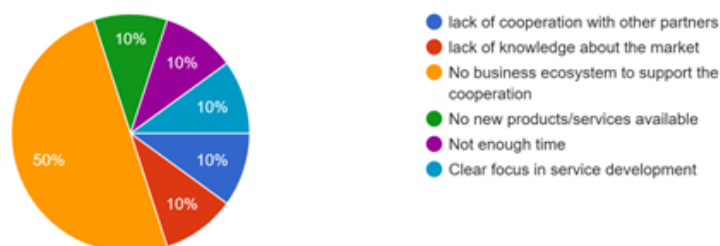

Figure 10. Current bottleneck for improving the sales.

Concerning Figure 10, it is obvious that Finnish companies and organizations are currently facing a bottleneck in improving their sales for exporting Finnish out-of-school education services and products, more than 50% think that there is no business ecosystem to support the cooperation, while others think that lacking

cooperation, lacking global market knowledge, and other reasons, etc. We have discussed this also with Finnish authorities about the business networks and found out that business network mainly works as a communication platform, not involved to details of business, which is not enough to increase sales.

Do you think current business networks/clusters which are coordinated by government or regional authorities strongly support your business growth?

- fully support my business growth
- some support
- little support
- not enough support
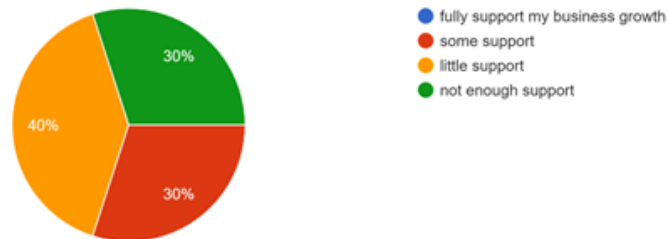
Figure 11. Respondents' opinion on support from different authorities

Current business networks and clusters are far away from strong support, that means many companies are working on exporting individually or have little cooperation with each other. In the survey, 70% of the respondents think that they have little support or no support. In our opinion, business networks already exist, and there are plenty of organizations in Finnish playing coordinating roles in different levels of business networks, both at national and regional levels. The key problem that Finnish companies still do not feel the support is their expectations. Most companies expect to get concrete support to increase the sales in business ecosystem rather than general communication inside a group of companies, which normally functions as a business network, not a business ecosystem.

Do you agree that you should work closer with other business partners?

- fully agree
- agree
- Maybe
- Disagree

Figure 12. Respondents' opinion on working closer with partners.

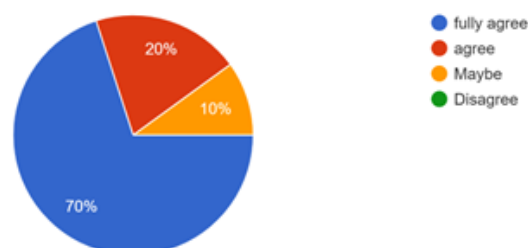Although Finnish companies and organizations are facing challenges or even bottlenecks in exporting Finnish out-of-school education, they have strong motivations to increase sales and make improvements to their business. This is also quite common in Finland that many companies are seeking for internationalization and expecting to expand their markets to other countries than the domestic market, which has a small capacity for growth. However, companies are still uncertain and hesitant about the new and unknown market, due to lack of the required knowledge and expertise, and for this reason, cooperation and creating a win-win situation are significantly necessary in a business ecosystem.

Do you think that your company has the common purpose with other business partners, even the business competitors?
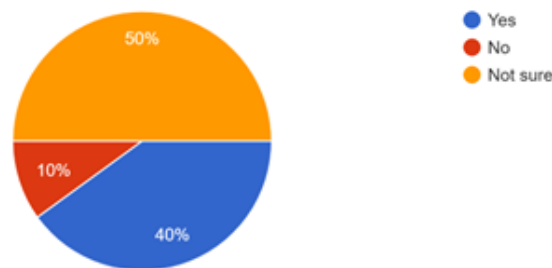
Figure 13. Respondents' opinions on common purpose with partners

Do you think that a business ecosystem can avoid unfair competitions?
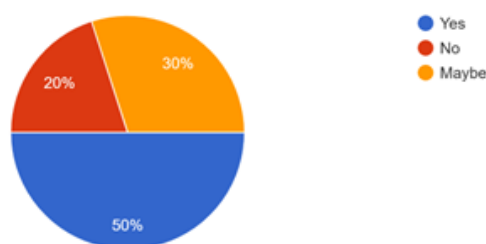
Figure 14. Respondents' opinions on whether a business ecosystem can avoid unfair competitions.

One factor that appears in the survey and is discussed in the business ecosystem is how to handle competition. In this survey, the finding shows competition is still uncertain from partner perspectives and almost half of the companies and organizations worry about or are not sure how to work with the competitors in practice.

However, 50% of them believe that the business ecosystem can avoid unfair competition, while 30% think that it may solve the problem. This means that business partners are quite concerned about how to work together with competitors even under a common purpose or common goals. Companies need to be more confidential on what they do as common projects for new products and services, while open communication and trust act as the basis for deep cooperation. Still, regulations and rules should be more transparent and acceptable to all the relevant parties.

4.1.2 Increasing Business value for customers

Business value is one of the most important parts of the purpose of a business ecosystem. Whenever customers recognize your products or services and think that they can get good experiences from what they buy, they feel that they get business value from your products or services. For exporting out-of-school education, as it belongs to the experience economy, the experience that the suppliers provide is the core part of the business value. A business ecosystem, especially a purpose-driven business, can increase the business values for customers from the following perspectives:

- New services and new products, new experience.
- Customer satisfaction.
- Service package as full solution. Not fragments or incomplete experience.

We had an interview with an authority that is responsible for coordinating a national-level business network for education trips, and their main role is to offer funding for Finnish companies and bring partners from Finland and other countries together, providing trainings and organizing events to share the market knowledge and let companies to know each other. As a business network, this is an excellent starting point for a certain level of support for more than 100 companies. However, from the interview and survey, we realize that Finnish companies think that they do not get enough support and expect more. Why is there a gap available in understanding the meaning of supporting? We know that companies need communication and network that many Finnish national or regional organizations already provide excellent services, but not focusing on business values from concrete products/services which can be created in a business ecosystem.

From the literature review, we can understand that it is a procedure of co-creation of the business values. This should be the reason why Finnish companies need a business ecosystem for exporting Finnish out-of-school education to increase business values.

An example comes from Finnish Youth Center M and Finnish Company L, on how to work together to co-create new business opportunities and new service packages for customer groups. When a group of Chinese students planned to come to visit Finland for a summer camp, they had clear expectations for the summer camp: 1) learning by doing 2) Finnish school and way of learning 3) visiting Helsinki and Tampere 4) Experience in Rovaniemi with Santa Claus 5) Trip to Stockholm, Sweden. To make customers satisfied with their trip, Youth Center M and Company L had a very deep cooperation with their competitive advantages and created a common offer. Learning by doing is the key and unique program in Finnish Youth Center M., including the programs for environment protection, picking up blueberries, lessons on Finnish plants, and other interesting programs for teamwork, etc. Company L provided translation work and took care of cultural issues. Chinese group wanted to visit one Finnish school to experience the classroom, and to see how Finnish students are learning in the classroom. This request also required Youth Center M to communicate with a local school to offer a new service to the summer camp group. Normally this kind of service is not in the ordinary package, and this school visit as a new service made the customers satisfied with a customization experience. When visiting Helsinki and Tampere, visiting some museums have been added to the trip, e.g., Finnish Design Museum in Helsinki and Tampere Moomin Museum. Finnish design is famous in the world, especially industrial design. Moomin is a fairy tale character in Finland, and young visitor can open their minds to think about how innovation should be done from what they learned in Moomin's story. Organizing trips to Rovaniemi and Sweden normally is not allowed by Finnish Youth Centers, because these kinds of activities are out of their business scopes, but other companies, e.g., company L organized the trips to visit Rovaniemi and Sweden. Company L cooperated with Arktikum, so that the student group received a wonderful experience about Lapland and its culture and nature. Finnish Youth Center M and company L co-created more and better business values for the customers, because they work together as a business ecosystem with many partners involved and this

collaboration can make a full package of solution that meets customer's requirements.

In the following table, as an example case, we list what kind of services or products can be offered together, business partners, and business values of the products or services, to have clear understanding of business value co-creation in a business ecosystem.

Table 1. A business case of education trip and its business value

Products/Services	Providers/Partners	Business values
Environment lesson with Chinese translation	Youth Center M Company L	Top quality of environment studies.
Teamwork games	Youth Center M	Strengthen team spirit.
Picking up blueberries	Youth Center M	Fun and happy. Taste something fresh directly from the forest.
Visiting Finnish school	Secondary school Youth Center M Company L	Getting to know the Finnish education system and understand why top ranking in PISA.
Visiting Design Museum	Design Museum Company L	Get to how Nordic design style,
Visiting Moomin Museum	Moomin Museum Company L	Moomin is famous and unique. Learn how to create innovative ideas.
Meeting Santa Claus in Rovaniemi	Santa Claus Village, Company L	A unique experience, photo with Santa Claus, Arctic Circle, Finnish VR night train experience.
Ferry Viking Line to/from Sweden	Viking Line, Company L	Leisure and fun
Visiting Stockholm/ Nobel Museum	Education travel expert, Company L	Know more about the Nobel Prize and encourage students to study

From all the findings and analysis, we can answer the research question: how to increase Finnish out-of-school education exporting by business ecosystem? Strong motivation as common purpose and business value are clearly shown in the analysis. The answer to the first question is that the approach to increase Finnish out-of-school education is a purpose-driven business ecosystem. It can be summarized as the following figure:
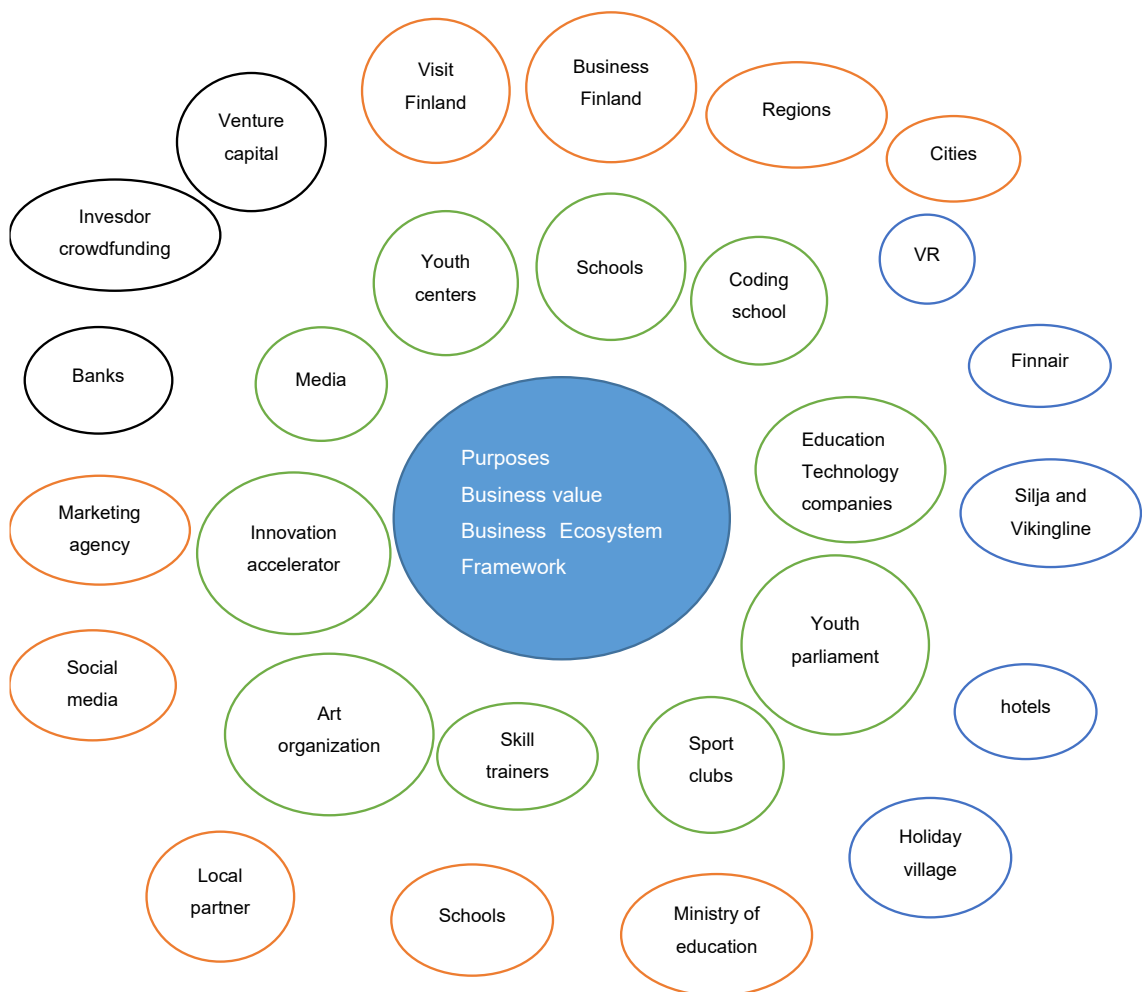

Figure 15. Purpose-driven business ecosystem for exporting Finnish out-of-school education

The core of the purpose-driven business ecosystem contains three most important strategic elements:

- Purpose: Motivation and strategic objectives
- Business value: Benefits that Finnish out-of-school education can bring to the customers, and added business value by deep and wide cooperations

by co-creating new products or new services. Expanding to new international markets.

- Business ecosystem framework: business ecosystem process in practice, operable and manageable.

The purpose-driven business ecosystem also includes business partners in the field of exporting Finnish out-of-school education in the following categories:

- Service/product providers (in green colour)
- Accommodation, transportation, and other supplementary service providers (in blue colour)
- Authorities and other promotional organizations (in orange colour)
- Venture capital and investors (in black colour)

A purpose-driven business ecosystem is a dynamic system that is proactive and efficient, and it should be flexible and reliable to all the partners. A flexible and reliable business environment reduces the uncertainty and all the business partners can work closer and communicate in a trustful manner on many new projects. More details on a business ecosystem framework will be discussed in the next chapter, to answer the second research question, i.e. what kind of framework can be established as a concrete solution?

4.2   Setting up a business ecosystem framework

Kola et al (2020,16) described a business ecosystem journey, which contains a process with purpose, emerging, evolving, adapting, expanding, and impact. They suggest the ecosystem journey as a framework for characterizing challenges that appear when organizations and people work together. This ecosystem journey can be used as a template for business ecosystem framework for exporting Finnish out-of-school education.

The purpose is the starting point and motivation for setting up a business ecosystem. From survey findings and analysis, two main problems currently occur in exporting Finnish education: one problem is that business growth is facing a bottleneck and companies still have a strong motivation to have a breakthrough for

increasing sales; another problem is that current supporting from authorities is only business networks, not a completely functional business ecosystem. Solving these problems is the driver for setting up a purpose-driven business ecosystem. Companies and organizations agree that a common basis for understanding the purpose exists as a starting point and foundation. The purpose phase contains the following issues which are critical as starting point:

- Expanding the international market and increase sales.
- Increasing profitability.
- Designing and creating new products together with other partners.
- Upgrading from business network to business ecosystem.
- Avoiding unnecessary competition and malicious price reduction.

These common purposes make the business ecosystem necessary and feasible for exporting Finnish out-of-school education. In this phase, all the relevant companies, especially those authorities who are acting as business network coordinators, should make a common understanding of all the purposes and define common vision and strategies for exporting Finnish out-of-school education, and long-term and short-term objectives, e.g., which international market we should go first, and what the priorities should be, any specific marketing strategies must be defined for certain markets, any cultural differences and influence, any market challenges, etc. Some Asian and African countries have developed quickly in recent years, e.g., India, Vietnam, Nigeria, etc. How to raise priority for exporting to these countries and meet their increasing requirements for improving their school education and out-of-school education. In figure 16, we can see what needs to be defined in the purpose phase.

Motivation
- increase sales
- create new products/services
- provide complete solutions
- attract investment

Business scope
- student camps
- learning environment, sciences, art, media, leadership etc
- online trainings and experience

Strategic purposes

Successful factors
- business models
- cooperations
- projects between partners
- new brands

Main target markets
- China, India, Vietnam etc
- Arabic countries
- African countires

Figure 16. Strategic purpose phase for business ecosystem framework

The second phase is Emerging. The Emerging phase looks into the key ingredients needed for building an ecosystem in order to start to act on a jointly agreed purpose (Kola et al 2020, 17). In this phase, we need to define the key partners and key projects. In the interviews and survey, we found out that supports from governmental or regional authorities, e.g., Business Finland, Business Tampere, etc., are very important as they are playing a very important role in connecting the business partners in the field of education export and establish an informative business network. Key partners are available in the existing business network, but if more new products and services need to be created, then more business partners should be invited. And besides, since the authorities are not directly involved in concrete product or services, key projects are missing in the business networks. Key projects should be one of the main tasks in a business ecosystem, not in a business network.

If more business partners can be invited to join the business ecosystem, more projects can be created according to each partner's expertise and knowledge. More projects can be also created targeting for bigger business value and better customer experience. Therefore, in phase Emerging, creating and implementing key projects is the most important objectives and tasks. Key projects can be negotiated and agreed between business partners according to the purposes that

we discussed above, which mainly focus on business development and growth. Key projects need to be defined according to the resources, schedule, profitability, and other factors. In the business ecosystem for exporting out-of-school education, the following key projects might be able to be created for the following areas:

- Environment study projects

  This kind of projects can mainly focus on teaching foreign students how the environment is protected in Finland, environment policy, or getting to know specific plants and animals in Finland etc. Learning to pick up mushrooms and blueberries is an attractive option. The potential service/content providers could be Finnish youth centers, Finnish environment associations, forest management associations, etc.

- Art exchange projects

  This kind of projects can mainly focus on art exchange with foreign organizations and students, e.g., art courses, joint concerts, painting exhibitions, music competitions, etc. The potential service providers are Music Finland, professional associations, music software companies etc.

- Sport projects

  This kind of projects can mainly focus on sports activities and hobbies, e.g., courses of ice skating or downhill skiing, team exercises of floorball or ice hockey, sailing, ice-fishing, etc. The potential service/product providers could be sports clubs, sport training companies, youth centers, sport associations, etc.

- Science study projects

  This kind of projects can mainly focus on out-of-school scientific studies, e.g., learning coding, gaming design workshop, industrial design workshops etc.

- Museum projects

  This kind of projects can focus on historical activities, e.g., UNESCO and world heritages, Jan Sibelius, Lapland and Sami culture etc.

- News and media projects

  This kind of projects can focus on student camps in news and media, e.g., media workshop, visiting TV channels, etc.

The list of key projects may change in the business ecosystem according to customer requirements. Several projects can be combined within one student trip, or online trainings.

Table 2. List of sample projects in the business ecosystem for exporting Finnish out-of-school education

Main Functionality	Company/organization names	Potential projects
Content providers	Finnish Youth Centers	Learning by doing, Environment studies, youth development programs, teamwork
	Finnish schools	Visiting schools, classroom experience
	Tappara/ Ilves sport clubs	Ice hockey course for beginnings
	Youth Parliament	Leadership courses, EU politics
	Arktikum	Lessons on Arctic nature and culture
	Coding school	Teaching students how to write codes
	Gaming design school	Gaming design workshop for students
Supplementary services	Holiday Inn Hotels, Scandic Hotels	Accommodation and food
	Santa Claus Village	Accommodation, food, and meeting Santa Claus
	Pohjolan matka, Atro Vuolle Oy	Transportation services
	VR	Transportation services
Investment and financial support	Finnvera	Business loan for Finnish company in education export
	Business Finland	Funding for SME
	Oppiva Invest	Investment in vocational training, learning, and competence
Authorities and promotion organizations	Business Finland	Networking, organizing events
	Education Finland	Networking, organizing events

Evolving is the third phase of a business ecosystem framework. Kola et al (2020, 17) indicates that the Evolving phase is about creating trust and commitment on the partners towards joint objectives that are aligned with purpose. We can see in the survey that some companies trust other companies, however, there are still almost 50% of the respondents are hesitated to cooperate and do not trust how to work with other competitors. No respondents are willing to be a leader of a business ecosystem, and they are willing to be partners or followers rather than leaders.

If a business ecosystem has been set up for exporting Finnish education, what kind of role you are willing to be?
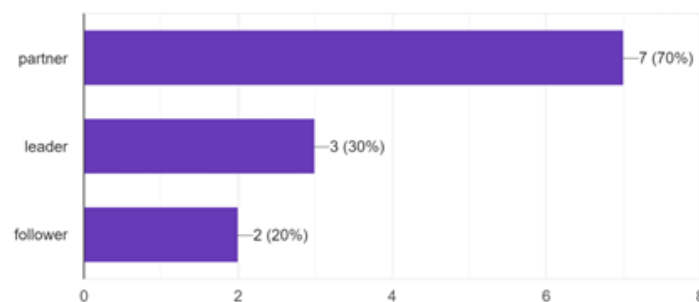
Figure 17. Respondents' opinions on their roles in a business ecosystem

This is a critical communication issue inside a business ecosystem. A business ecosystem will not be successful without trust between partners. It is reasonable that companies worry about project cooperation, for the following reasons:

- Project objectives might change during the project implementation, and one important partner or several partners might quit the unfinished projects without notice.
- Priorities set by different partners are different and this may cause the projects delay. Project schedules are not followed for various reasons, e.g., one partners might face resource or budget problem, or some companies might face other tight schedules of other projects which they set a higher priority.
- Information is not shared smoothly between partners. Business partners worry about confidential risks.

- Governance roles of the business ecosystem are not clarified, and willingness to be a leader is quite low, or a joint project may not have a proper leader.

In the evolving phase, two approaches are mandatory to make sure that trust between business partners can be established inside the business ecosystem. One approach is open and efficient communication, and another approach is defining roles clearly in advance before a project starts. To achieve these two approaches for business ecosystem of out-of-school education export, Finnish companies and organizations should always focus on the purpose, initial motivation to increase the sales. Communication should be open to achieve the common objective, and selecting the leaders should also follow this principle. Companies should be open-minded and discuss more clearly and transparently about how to co-create a new product or a new service.

Let's take an example: Company A has resource and sales channel in an Asian country, and this company is willing to organize a student camp in winter vacation. Company A can communicate with other partners in the business ecosystem and finds out that Association B and Company C can provide skiing courses, both downhill skiing and cross-country skiing to Finnish domestic schools and students, but Association B and Company C do not have any experience on providing foreign students short term skiing courses. Company A receives information from foreign marketing agency that skiing is a very attractive selling point and excellent experience for foreign students. Company A, Association B or Company C start to negotiate and communicate concerning making a service package together so that Company A can offer to foreign customers. All the partners need to discuss the schedule, content, price, requirements etc. They select Company A as the leader of this project and Company A coordinates all the business partners and also the customers in the Asian country, to give a commitment so that the education trip can be implemented according to all the business partners. The project must be clarified and defined clearly based on open communication to avoid confusion and misunderstanding in the project. The purpose and target for this project are offering business values to customers and making profit.

Adapting is the next phase for a business ecosystem framework. Adaption is an opportunity, not a threat. It can help frame the problem and approach the challenge in a new way. (Kola et al 2020, 57)   In this phase, business partners

should focus on change management in a business ecosystem. We know that business world is full of uncertainty and risks. In a business ecosystem for exporting Finnish out-of-school education, all the business partners should make a risk management plan and prepare possible changes to adapt to an uncertain environment. The business environment might be changed due to various elements, e.g., economic recession, regional conflicts, market regulation change, etc. A business ecosystem requires adaptation to these changes, which is normally complicated for an individual company, and even much more complicated for a business ecosystem which consists of a big number of companies and organizations.

Risks are analysed into the following risk matrix table:

Table 3. Risk Matrix

Impact			
	Low	Medium	High
Probability High	Lack of international marketing knowledge	Poor communication between partners, and losing trust	Customer requirements change in the period of a project, e.g., customers are willing to have ice-hockey training and change when the joint offer is almost ready
Medium	Not proactive	Not understanding the common purpose, rules, and process	No local market partners are involved, and customer requirements are not clear
Low	Lack of business tools to support	No leadership available for a project	Low motivation to participate in the business ecosystem

High impact and high probability risk is the requirement change. Customers always change their requirements for education trip for some reasons, e.g., if camp group are targeting for the middle school students, however the local marketing agency organize more younger students than original planned, then they change the requirements for the programs for younger students due to safety reasons. This kind of urgent change can cause the leader of the project to re-negotiate

with other business partners, e.g., to cancel the down-hill skiing course, or even change the business partners to adapt to the new change.

The next phase is Expanding phase. The expanding phase challenges ecosystems as they start transforming beyond the initial scope (Kola et al 2020, 17). Business ecosystem can become an innovation ecosystem. Unlocking value creation is about scale: Extending the scope of the ecosystem beyond the partners. (Kola et al 2020, 71) Before this phase, business partners in business ecosystem for exporting Finnish out-of-school education have worked on the projects with the right partners based on the understanding of the common purpose, e.g., summer camps or winter camps, which are currently most popular business activities in exporting Finnish out-of-school education. In this phase, ecosystem partners can utilize knowledge and expertise from other business partners, to prepare for enlarging the business values. Education trips, i.e., summer and winter camps are limited to the vacation seasons when foreign students have free time. Companies need to consider what they can do in other seasons. Some innovative ideas or projects need to work out, e.g., online trainings for foreign students can be done for the whole year. VR/AR programs can make educational projects more interesting. Innovation in the business ecosystem can be categorized into three areas:

- Innovation on products/services: This innovation contains new ideas and new concepts of new products or new services. As an example, this includes the online trainings we discussed above.
- Innovation in the business ecosystem: This innovation contains the changes, fine-tuning, or upgrading of the business ecosystem process. This part could include the innovative ideas on pricing systems for the projects, or how to work with other business ecosystem, any idea working with school education or even with an industry, for example.
- Innovation in technology and tools: This innovation contains new improvements on the tools or technology that are used in business ecosystem framework, e.g., communication channels, software, websites, etc. One example is VR/AR tool for education project, or some new education technology, e.g., a software application for learning music instrument.

The last phase of the business ecosystem framework is Impact, that means the measurement of all the achievements. Understanding the timeline and type of impact is essential to ensure continued commitment (Kola et al 2020, 89). As we see, achievements occur in each phase of the business ecosystem framework, and these achievements are measurable by completing pre-defined objectives. The measurements go back to the original purpose to check the financial targets. We analyse the business ecosystem for exporting Finnish out-of-school education, and business partners can pre-define some realistic and profitable targets, e.g., Company A has strong advantage and knowledge concerning country B, then a pre-defined target is to expand to country B. Other companies, e.g., company C and company D are willing to join the project to expand their education package to country B. The measurable impact can be time to enter the market, number of new services, number of increased visitors, sales growth, etc. A list of measurable impacts on the business ecosystem for exporting Finnish out-of-school education is shown in the following table:

Table 4. Measurable impacts on exporting Finnish out-of-school education in each phase of business ecosystem framework

Phases	Measurable impact on Finnish education export
Purpose	Common purpose analysed, strategies defined, number of target market countries confirmed, business growth objectives clarified, business ecosystem for exporting Finnish education created
Emerging	Finnish out-of-school education export projects planned (environment study, scientific study, art exchange, sport team exercises, learning by doing activities, etc.). Number of projects. Pricing. Marketing & Sales budget. Time to market. Measurable input and outcome.
Evolving	Key partners participated business ecosystem. Roles are clearly defined. Number of partners. Number of communications, monthly or bi-weekly.
Adapting	Change plan. Market change. Customer requirement change. Risk management. Number of visitors.
Expanding	New innovative solutions/services, e.g., some concepts for online trainings

Business ecosystem framework is the complete process and concrete solution. We design business ecosystem framework for exporting Finnish out-of-school education based on the template and show it in the following figure 18; however,

future research results could add other details to different phases, e.g., details of various business models, and how project management will be operated in detail.

Business Ecosystem Framework for exporting Out-of-school education

Purpose/ Defining reasons and strategic objectives for exporting education

Emerging/ Planning edudation export projects, proritising different markets

Evolving/ Finding the key partners, rule of partnership, leadership, discussions etc.

Adapting / Clarify export risks, and define possible change. Follow-up project.

Expanding / New potential market anaysis, New concepts and business models.

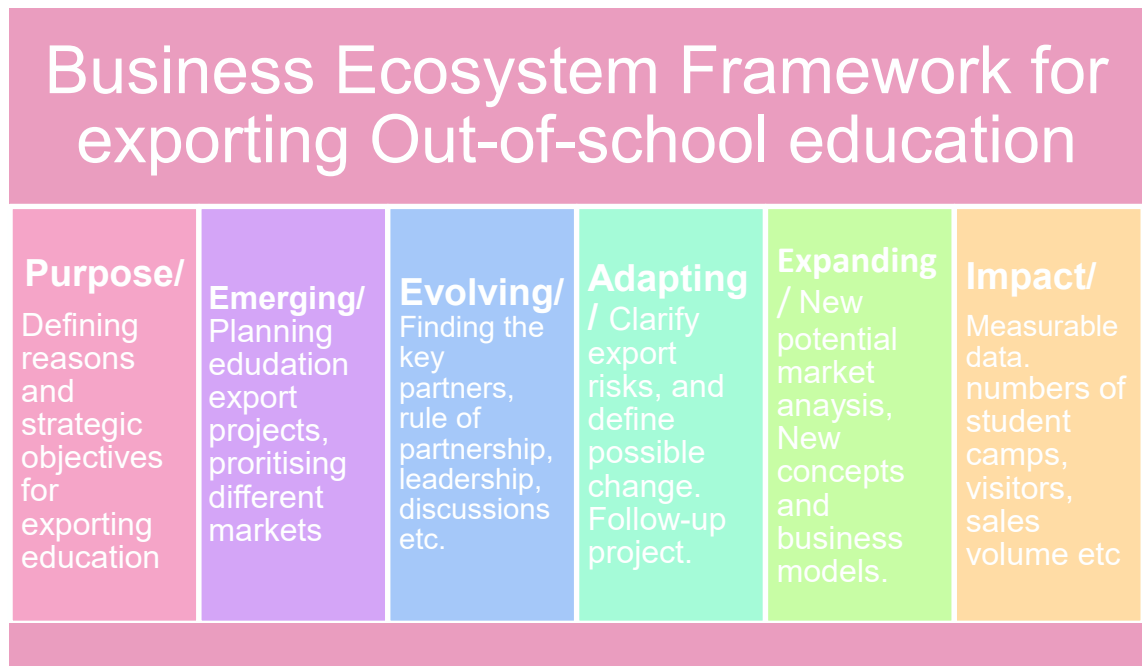**Impact/** Measurable data. numbers of student camps, visitors, sales volume etc

Figure 18. Business ecosystem framework for exporting Finnish out-of-school education

This business ecosystem framework gives an answer to the second research question: What kind of framework should be established as a concrete solution? Business ecosystem framework can draw a picture of business environment and interactions between business partners, but this approach is not a concrete solution. The business ecosystem framework we design based on the template which described as ecosystem journey (Kola et al 2020, 16) is concrete solution that covers all the objectives, tasks, and measurements for exporting Finnish out-of-school education. Concrete solutions means that this framework is practical and financially profitable. Some survey respondents mentioned about website, workshop, or alliance, and they are all different format under the business ecosystem framework.

5   CONCLUSION

As the research objectives, two research questions were raised and planned in the process of research, which target on business ecosystem and practical operations. Analysis has been done based on the data which was collected from focus groups. Concluding a conclusion is the final step in the research. In addition, the conclusion is also a starting point for future study in the field of business ecosystem in exporting Finnish education.

According to the analysis, we can get the answer to the first question: How to increase exporting out-of-school education globally with a purpose-driven business ecosystem?   Data showed that a business ecosystem needs to be established under a common purpose, and the common purpose is to increase sales in the global market by closer cooperation, hence a business ecosystem will be a purpose-driven business ecosystem. In addition, all the stakeholders involved in the business ecosystem need to work more closely with a better understanding of product competition. Almost all the stakeholders are not interested in leading the business ecosystem, while government organizations or a few private companies could lead it. The following business ecosystem can be established as described in the figure below:
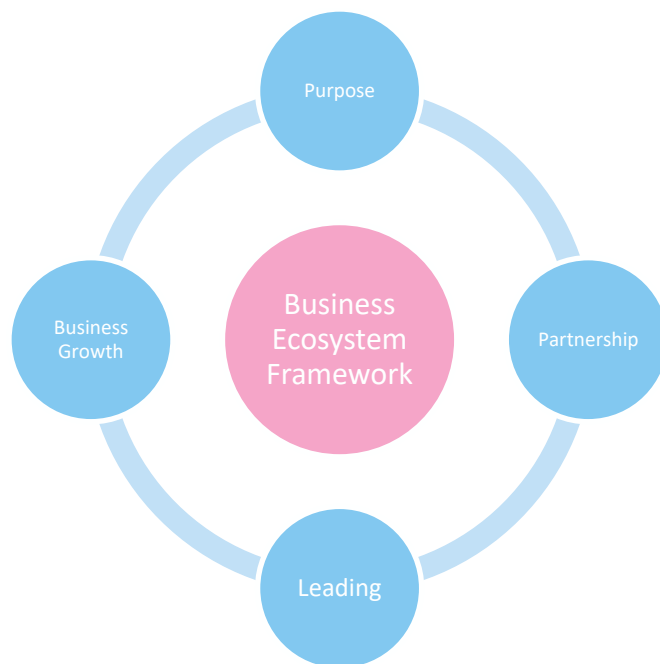
Figure 19. Business ecosystem operational model

In this business ecosystem operational model, the core is business ecosystem framework, which is the engine of a business ecosystem for exporting out-of-school education. The business ecosystem starts with the purpose, which clearly define the reasons, motivations and strategic objectives. Then partnership is the foundation for collabration, which can co-create business values in new products and new services. Leading is key element to make sure the projects in the ecosystem successful and going to the right direction without any mess in the complicated business environment. Business growth is the measurement for the achievements and also setting new goals for the future.

Concerning the second research question, i.e. what kind of business ecosystem framework can be established for exporting Finnish out-of-school, we conclude that the business ecosystem framework is a complete process that can be operated as a concrete solution. This framework shows a big picture of how business partners should work together to increase sales, open new markets, create new products or new services, and make business growth. This framework is also a principle to provide a guideline for all the stakeholders on the objectives and operations in each phase. However, more details in the framework can be continuously added based on further research and analysis. The following figure shows the business ecosystem framework for exporting Finnish out-of-school education:
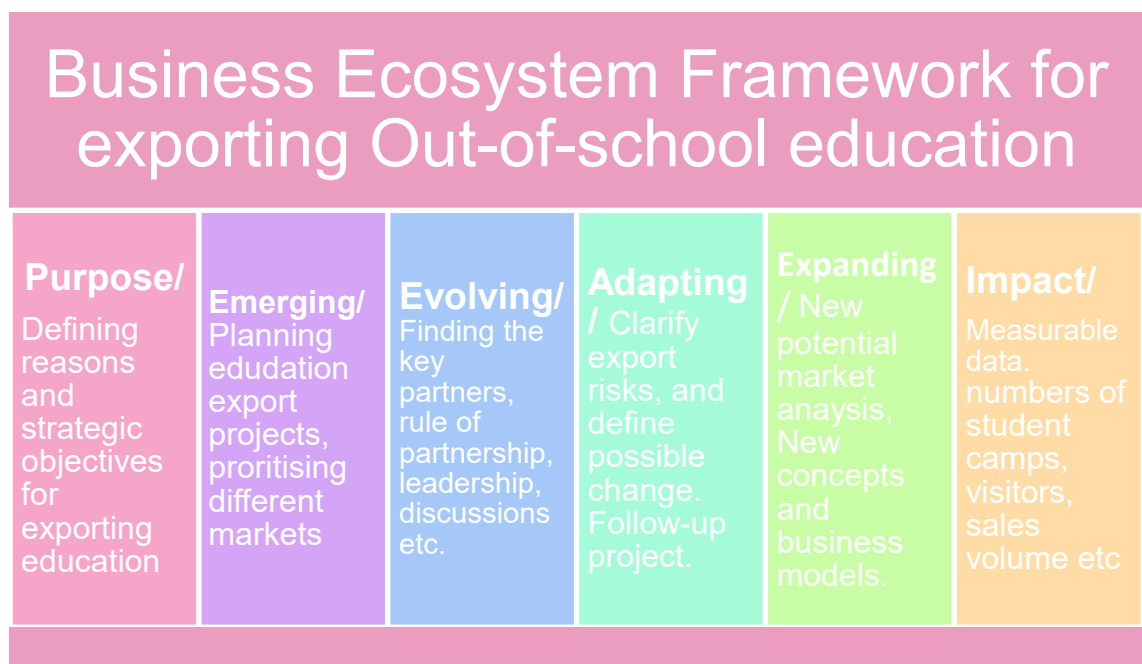

Figure 20. Business ecosystem framework for exporting Finnish out-of-school education

Current research on the business ecosystem for exporting Finnish out-of-school education is only a starting point, and further research on this topic is necessary to draw a bigger and more complicated picture, in which more concrete solutions and wide coverage will be identified. The business ecosystem is a complicated field that is infected by many business elements, e.g. business trends, global business change and uncertainties, customer requirements change, risks, etc. Using technology tools and making a profitable platform as business entity can upgrade the business ecosystem framework to a successful business, rather than an academic research.

The first potential research could be business models for the business ecosystem for exporting education. The business models for the business ecosystem indicate the diversity of business environment and market requirements, e.g., exporting education to Arabic countries and exporting education to China and Japan are different in business objectives and market requirements, and these elements need to be considered when designing business models for a business ecosystem. Meanwhile, cultural diversity should also have a clearer influence on the business ecosystem. How many business models can be available for the business ecosystem? What are the most common and most effective business models that are used in business ecosystems? How business model canvas can be used for business ecosystem? Value proposition in business ecosystem? All these topics are worth investigating and studying in the future.

The second potential and important research could be more detailed risk management in the business ecosystem. Benefits of a business ecosystem are visible; however, risks and uncertainties are hidden. Risk management should not be ignored. Even though a business ecosystem can bring profitability and competitiveness to companies and organizations, some risks may take place in the business ecosystem in different phases, which probably cause big loses in business. For example, some key partners who quit the business ecosystem most probably destroy the product or service that several companies are working on. Maybe some business partners lose trust or have poor communications due to the cultural diversity. All those risks of the business ecosystem can be analyzed deeply in separate research in the future.

The third hot topic in the business ecosystem could be cultural diversity and its impact at a business ecosystem, especially in a business ecosystem with many international business partners. How do they work together in a multicultural business environment and establish trust and efficient communication? Who should lead the business ecosystem, and leadership styles in different cultures might be different?

A business ecosystem, especially an international business ecosystem is much more complicated than we know. New research can be done based on the purpose-driven business ecosystem and business ecosystem framework which we have achieved.

REFERENCES

Adner R. (2022) Sharing value for ecosystem success. *Winter 2022 MIT Sloan Management Review 85-90.*

Brennen B.S. (2013) Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies. *UK: Routledge.*

Business Finland (2023)   https://www.businessfinland.fi/en/for-finnish-customers/about-us/in-brief

Corallo A., Passiante G., Prencipe A. (2007) The Digital Business Eco-system. *Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.*

Education Finland, https://www.educationfinland.fi/

El Cheikh W.O. (2015) Productising Finnish Education for Export: The Barriers and Enablers of Internationalisation A Multiple Case Study: Fifteen Members of Future Learning Finland Entrepreneurship. Aalto University. *Master's Thesis.*

Flick W. (2014) An Introduction to Qualitative Research. Edition 5. *SAGE.*

Georgescu A., Peter M.K., Avasilcai S. (2022) A business ecosystem framework for SME development through associative and non-associative business structures in the digital age. *Cogent Business & Management (2022), 9: 2143310*

Hoeborn G., Conrad R., Götzen R., Betz C. & Neudert P.K. (2022)

Understanding Business Ecosystems Using a Morphology of Value Sys-tems. *Research-Technology Management, 65:5, 44-53.*

Jaakola M. (2021) How to build trust in ecosystems – case Merikartta. *Turku University of Applied Sciences. Master's thesis.*

Kola S., Koivukoski U., Koponen L., Heino M. (2020) Ecosystem Hand-book, The ART of Leading and Creating IMPACT. *Alma Talent Oy*

Machi L. A., McEvoy B.T. (2022) The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success. 4th Edition. *A SAGE Publishing company.*

Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland. (2016) Key projects reform Finnish education. https://okm.fi/documents/1410845/4150027/Key+projects+reform+Finnish+education

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Finland. (2021) Growth ecosystems as a tool in industrial and innovation policy. https://tem.fi/en/ecosystems

Moore J.F. (1996) The Death of Competition: Leadership & Strategy in the Age of Business Ecosystems. *New York: HarperBusiness.*

Moore J.F. (2006) Business ecosystems and the view from the firm. The Antitrust bulletin: Vol. 51, No. 1/Spring 2006, 31-75.

Reponen J. (2022) Ecosystem, Export, Go? Potential of forming and exporting government platform ecosystem. *Aalto University. Master's Thesis.*

Smorodinskaya N, Russell M.G., Katukov D., Still K. (2017) Innovation Ecosystem vs. Innovation Systems in Term of Collaboration and Co-creation of Value. *Proceedings of the 50th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.*

Suomen Nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry, https://www.snk.fi/en/non-formal-education

Wiechaa J. L., Beets M.W., Colabianchi N., Ferree A., Hall G., Hofman J., Rauworth A. (2014) Promoting physical activity in out-of-school-time programs: We built the bridge—Can we walk over it? *Preventive Medicine 69 (2014) S114- S116. Elsevier Inc.*

Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education

Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Out-of-school_learning

Wilson R.K. 2016. They will be giant**,** 21st Century Entrepreneurs and the Purpose-Driven Business Ecosystem. *TCL Mind Publishing.*

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview questions

1. For companies

   - Basic information about your company/ organization
   - International export situation. e.g., to which countries and percentage of the whole sales.
   - What is the current bottleneck for export?
   - How to work together with other partners
   - What is your key value to the customers?
   - Do you think you can have the same business purpose with other partners, even competitors? What purpose?
   - Do you think a business ecosystem can benefit your international sales? Why?
   - Do you think that a platform to work on the business ecosystem is a good idea and practical operation? Why?

2. For organizations

   - How many education companies are involved in your business network?
   - Do you think a business ecosystem can benefit all the stakeholders?
   - How does your organization work together with all the stakeholders to promote Finnish education exporting?
   - What do you think that different companies, even if they are competitors can cooperate for the same objectives?
   - In your opinion, what is the best practice as a business ecosystem?

Appendix 2. Survey

Survey of Finnish education export

This is an online survey of Finnish out-of-school education export, for an MBA thesis purpose. We would appreciate your effort to finish it in around 10 minutes.

The main activities for out-of-school education are student camps, visiting museums, club activities, youth activities, etc. Organizing out-of-school activities for foreign students who are coming to visit Finland is one of the ways to export Finnish education. The research result and potential solutions will benefit Finnish companies/organizations to improve their sales and profitability for exporting Finnish education.

The data collected from the survey will be only used in the MBA thesis and your company/organization's name will be hidden in the research. Thanks for attending the survey in advance!

* Indicates a required question

How do you define your organization? *
- Private Company
- Public organization
- Government organization
- Others

Your company/organization's role in exporting Finnish out-of-school education (out-of-school education refers to the programs and activities that are arranged outside of the school environment and study schedule) *
- Program/content provider
- Service provider
- Organizer
- Public organization promoting the export.
- We haven't started exporting education yet.
- Others

Are you willing to export Finnish out-of-school education to increase your profit, either directly or indirectly? *
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Does your organization provide services/ products to foreign visitors? *
- Yes, directly.
- Yes, indirectly.
- No

Are you willing to improve your sales for export education? *
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

What is the current bottleneck for improving sales? *
- lack of cooperation with other partners
- lack of knowledge about the market
- No business ecosystem to support the cooperation.
- No new products/services available
- Other

What business value do you think that you can bring to your customers and partners? *

Do you agree that you should work closer with other business partners? *
- Fully agree.
- Agree
- Maybe
- Disagree

Do you think current business networks/clusters that are coordinated by government or regional authorities strongly support your business growth? *
- Fully support my business growth
- Some support
- Little support
- Not enough support

Do you think that your company has a common purpose with other business partners, even the business competitors? *
- Yes
- No
- Not sure

If a business ecosystem has been set up for exporting Finnish education, what kind of role you are willing to play? *
- Partner
- Leader
- Follower
- Other

Have you realized that you could create a new product/service with other partners that you have never thought about before? *
- Yes
- No

- Maybe

What kind of business ecosystem are you expecting?

Do you have any expectations on what kind of business ecosystem should be to benefit exporting Finnish education?*

Do you think that a business ecosystem can avoid unfair competition?*
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

What kind of operations in practice are you expecting for the existing or future business ecosystem? *