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Analysis of Export Education System (Finland to Nepal)

DEGREE PROGRAMME IN MBA- BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
2024

ABSTRACT

Tamang Ghising, Deepa: Analysis of Export Education System (Finland to Nepal)
Master's thesis
Business Management and Entrepreneurship
December 2024
Number of pages: 94

The primary objective of the thesis was to analyse the export education system from Finland to Nepal, identify challenges in the current education export scenario. The aim was to widely study and investigate the causes of transfers from Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) to other universities of Finland.

To study the current export education system, PEST analysis was done. To better understand the factors for transfers from SAMK to other UAS, SWOT analysis was performed along with survey of Nepalese students studying at SAMK. Similarly, to understand the agency's role, open-ended interviews of recent autumn intake students were taken before they arrived in Finland.

The thesis was a case study of SAMK and followed the pragmatism philosophy and inductive approach of research. In the theory part, background study of the export education system was reviewed. The theoretical data were collected from secondary resources, such as books, articles, reports, official websites while the empirical part of the thesis consists of primary data collected via questionnaires and interviews and secondary data collected from various sources including SAMK's database. For data collection and analysis mixed method was used as both qualitative and quantitative data were presented.

Finland has been able to transition from a free education provider to a major player in education export activities. The policies, reforms and plans were amended throughout different government terms that has strengthened Finnish education export. However, the major issues identified in the system is not being able to retain the international work force in Finland. The main reason behind the issue seemed to be the language barrier and lesser networking opportunities. To tackle the issue integration of more intensive language courses in the degree program could play a positive role. The findings indicated that while SAMK offers a solid educational foundation and cultural exposure to international students, there are substantial areas for improvement. The findings also suggested that agencies should provide more holistic support that encompasses cultural orientation, language preparation, accommodation assistance and information on job market to educate the international students adequately in their beginning of the journey.

Keywords: export education system, analysis, UAS transfers, agency, SAMK

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND TERMS

SAMK - Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

MOU - Memorandum of Understanding

MOEC - Ministry of Education and Culture

MOE - Ministry of Education

OPH - Opetushallitus

VET - Vocational Education and Training

NCC - National Core Curriculum

IB - International Baccalaureate

ECTS - European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

MPI - Multidimensional Poverty Index

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

ILO - International Labour Organization

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund

OPHI -Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

FNCCI - Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce & Industry

ECEC - Early childhood education and care

PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment

EDUFI - The Finnish National Agency for Education

CIMO - The Centre for International Mobility

NCP – National Coalition Party

VFIS - Vietnam-Finland International School

GUSE - General Upper Secondary Education

UAS - University of Applied Sciences

HEI - Higher Education Institution

FINEEC - Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

NOC - No Objection Certificate

RQ - Research Question

RO - Research Objective

VET - Vocational Education and Training

PEST - Political, Economy, Social and Technology

SWOT - Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Being a student of Nepalese origin seeking higher education in Finland, the author was interested to learn about the current scenario of students moving from Nepal to Finland in pursuit of acquiring higher studies. The thesis is the study of current state of education export system from Finland to Nepal; PEST is used as a tool to analyse the system. The Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors in the current education export system is discussed in sixth chapter. The research also provides insights on how these challenges could be handled. Author of the thesis is also an employee at SAMK thus, the idea of this research culminated after the author had received queries from recently arrived international students regarding transfer to other UAS and even about possibility of attending online classes. It was quite strange to receive these kinds of queries from students who have neither started attending their lectures nor had got acquainted with SAMK's services and facilities in details. As there is a correlation between their demotivation to study in SAMK and their arrival process which is mainly via agency or consultancies in case of Asian countries, the aim of this research is to find the root cause behind students' motive to transfer to other UAS and degree programs. Although most of the students who inquired about the transfer possibilities were of other nationalities, the author was very intrigued to study about the situation with Nepalese students.

1.2 Overview of current scenario

Export education has grown significantly over the last 40 years, from 0.8 million students in 1975 to 4.5 million by 2012 (Healey, 2018, p. 212). Education export has now become a vital part of universities. The motive of export

education is not only commercial but, it is also required to attract new talents, scholars and to strengthen the country's position by increasing the number of skilled professionals. Increasing higher education for international students makes viable economic sense not only because the service itself is an extremely profitable one, but also because it will help meet future labour market and growth needs of the country, and fulfil a diplomatic and cultural mission like no other form of trade (Don, 2011)

Nepalese students are migrating abroad at an alarming rate, over 100,000 students moved abroad for education purposes in 2023. Based on the data of the branch of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, over 110,000 students applied for No Objection Certificate (Lamichhane, 2024). No Objection Certificate (NOC) is a legal document required to go for abroad studies issued by Ministry of Education (MOE) Nepal. The underlying reasons for students to move abroad for studies are sociocultural barriers, financial barriers, and infrastructural barriers. In the article, Researcher and Sociologist, Dr. Ishwari Bhattarai said "A large number of Nepali schools and colleges face lack of infrastructure, shortage of quality teachers, and outdated curriculum. While some of the countries that are considered best in education system prioritise quality teachers, student-centered learning, and innovative teaching methods, we lag behind them." (Lamichhane, 2024)

The mission of Education Finland programme is to increase the value of education exports to Euro one billion by 2030. There are about 120 education export companies as the member of Education Finland programme. The main objective of the programme is to enhance networking nationally and internationally while reducing administrative barriers for education export activities (Education F. N., 2023). On one hand, Nepal lacks quality education while on the other Finland has the best education system. Therefore, there is perfect balance between the importer's demand and exporter's supply in case of Finland-Nepal education system.

1.3 Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK)

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) is a multi-disciplinary and an international higher education institute located in the west coast of Finland, in Northern Europe. SAMK is the commissioner of this thesis. The university is profiled as an industrial higher university institution as it belongs to the industrial and innovative region of Satakunta which produces an export surplus, food and energy for other parts of Finland (Work & Study In West Coast Finland, n.d.). SAMK is located in four different cities of Satakunta regions: Pori, Rauma, Huittinen and Kankaanpää. In 2022, SAMK celebrated its 30 years anniversary as the university started its journey in 1992. These 30 years of journey has been a time of intense advancement for the entire UAS system alongside the development of the dual structure, i.e. the co-existence of universities of applied sciences and universities (Wahlman, 2022). As of 2023, SAMK has 487 staff members, 7407 degree students out of which 1024 students are of 101 nationalities. SAMK offers nine degree programs in English and 29 degree programs in Finnish. SAMK is known for its best quality in teaching and extensive cooperation with companies. According to Statistics Finland's ten-year statistical average, SAMK graduates are the most employed among the universities of applied sciences outside the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (SAMK, n.d.) .

2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Objectives and research questions

This research will investigate on following research objectives and research questions (respectively) revolving around Finnish education export system, SAMK and Nepalese students. RO1 is mainly based on analysis of Finnish education export system while RO2 and RO3 is based on analysis of SAMK, Nepalese students and agencies/consultancies of Nepal.

RO1 Analyse the export education system and identify challenges that need to be addressed and how they can be handled in the current education export scenario.

RQ1.1 What is the state of current education export system?
RQ1.2 How effective is the current system?
RQ1.3 What are the challenges in the system and how can they be handled?

To accomplish the first objective, the roles of main actors involved like, UAS, Migri, agencies in the education export process will be systematically discussed. Then current education export system will be dissected using PEST analysis. Afterwards, the effectiveness of the education export system will be analysed. Besides, if there are any possible challenges in the system, these shall be discussed and suggestions to mitigate them will be outlined.

RO2 Identifying the key motivation factors for students choosing Finland as their study destination. Identifying SAMK's strength, weakness, opportunities and threats. Identifying motivation factors to stay at SAMK or demotivation factors to leave SAMK.

RQ2.1 What is SAMK's strength, weakness, opportunities and threats?
RQ2.2 Which factors attract student to Finland as their study destination?
RQ2.3 What are the motivation factors to study at SAMK and demotivation factors to transfer from SAMK?

To accomplish the second objective, firstly current scenario of Nepalese students at SAMK will be presented. Then after SWOT analysis of SAMK will be done. The SWOT analysis will help to identify SAMK's strength & weakness. A survey (questionnaire one) to identify the motivation factor for students to continue study or demotivation factor to transfer or leave will be performed. The (questionnaire one) will also collect information regarding if Finland was their first choice and the reason for ultimately choosing Finland. Finally, motivation/demotivation factor results from the survey will be mapped

with SWOT results to find if SAMK's weakness is causing students to leave or are there other factors in play.

RO3 Understanding the function of an agency. Investigation on awareness level of new students regarding SAMK and Finland recruited via agency/consultancy to find if there are other alternatives for agencies.

RQ3.1 Are agencies/consultancies equipping students with appropriate knowledge towards their abroad study journey?
RQ3.2 Are there other alternatives for agencies?

To accomplish the third objective, another survey (questionnaire two-interview) will be conducted of the accepted Nepalese students awaiting residence permit in order to check their knowledge regarding the UAS and study destination. The results from the interview will enable to check if appropriate information is being delivered to future SAMK students by Agency/Consultancy in the very start of their journey. The information from primary data and secondary data (role of agencies from chapter 5.2) will be analysed to conclude if exporting education via agency is the best approach or there are other possibilities.

2.2 Limitations

The first and foremost boundary is that it is not possible to study all the international students due to resource constraint and being time-consuming. This leads to another limitation that the sample size will be small to collect primary data as only Nepalese students are considered for the study.

Issues/ questions that will not be handled in the thesis are:

- The group of students who didn't apply for studies via agencies or consultancies.
- Although the effectiveness will be analysed it would not measure the increase or decrease in no. of accepted students.

- The thesis will not be able to present the impacts of education export activities on the importer/Nepal rather it focusses only on impacts to the exporter/Finland.
- The study will mainly focus on higher education export activities so, it does not study the export education activities of ECEC, VET, primary or secondary level of education.

3 EXPORT EDUCATION SYSTEM

3.1 Export education concept

The term “export education” is self-explaining to a certain extent. The term “export education” means educating, teaching and training to provide general knowledge and specific skills pertinent to the selling of goods and services to other countries, including knowledge of market conditions, financial arrangements, laws and procedures (Cornell Law School, n.d.). There are various ways of exporting education. In the world of digitalization, an educational institution can design a course or degree program fully online to which students from any part of the world can be enrolled. In such cases, the education export occurs without the student moving to the destination country. Similarly, international subsidiaries of education institution can be opened in target country and the students can benefit the curriculum of a foreign university without a need of moving from their country of origin. However, the term “export education” is normally reserved for students who travel abroad for their education (Healey, 2018, p. 212). Both the countries, importer and exporter benefits through this relationship. The importer will reap the benefits when the skills and knowledge acquired by students abroad will be implemented to the student’s country of origin whereas exporter reaps the financial benefit while also establishing its image as a valuable institution in the world. Globally, it is expected that education will be a seven trillion ($) dollar industry by 2025 (Administration, n.d.)

3.2 Overview of Finnish education export industry

A recent study which was commissioned by the Education Finland programme suggests that the target of one billion worth of education export will be reached sooner than expected. Study suggests that the export is already close to one billion Euros which is just a little bit less than 0.5% of Finland's GDP in 2019. Education exports refer to service exports related to education, training, and competence, such as selling education solutions abroad and training foreign degree students in Finland, as well as goods exports, such as the export of physical learning materials or environments abroad (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022) . The study commissioned from Labore took the turnover data from various sectors and took into consideration the costs and economic gains caused by foreign students in Finnish economy. The study results are promising and suggests education export will play a significant role economically in coming years. The review is new as such studies weren't done in the past and this study proposes how the value of education exports could be calculated in the future. According to Minna Kelhä, Director General of the Finnish National Agency for Education, "In Finnish education and training, we have promoted knowledge-based decision making for a long time. However, so far there is little research on the economics of education and training. The report to be published also adds to the knowledge base for assessing the significance of education exports" (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022). Education export activities impact directly to Finnish economy when foreign students pay tuition fees for studies whereas various other benefits are received parallelly for e.g when the graduates join the Finnish work force, they have a positive impact on Finnish economy. Study suggests that 4/5th of added value was generated from foreign students pursuing higher studies. The 1/5th share of the remaining gains in export education activity comes from exports related to publishing sector. According to the review 81 million Euros worth of positive impact was seen due to international student in Finnish economy in the year 2019-2020. The calculation includes cost that was accrued to provide education to the students during their degree program and was deducted from the gains. Indirect income transfer effect due to students'

consumption and work, income generated by graduates between 2000-2019 was also taken into account (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022).

Apart from export of higher studies, on 12th August 2019, Finland has successfully opened its first international school in Vietnam. The Vietnam-Finland International School (VFIS) provides education from grade one to nine using similar pedagogical technique as in Finnish schools. The school is operated under Ton Duc Than university and some teachers from Finland are also working there. The decision for opening the school was made by Vietnamese officials in November 2016. The chosen Finnish partner for completing the project was Wise Consulting Finland Ltd. In various stages the project was also supported by Educluster Finland and Finnish Consulting Group (OPH, 2019).

3.3 Finland-Nepal Relationship

Before digging deeper into the topic, it is also important to know about the relationship between the two countries. According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Nepal), Nepal and Finland established diplomatic relations on 21 September 1974. The relations between the two countries have been marked by friendship, cordiality and cooperation. The Finnish Embassy was opened in Kathmandu at the Charge d' Affaires level in 1992, which was upgraded with the appointment of its Ambassador from September 2011. Nepal has no residential Embassy in Helsinki. The Embassy of Nepal in Copenhagen is concurrently accredited to Finland (Ministry of foreign Affairs, 2020). On 20.02.2019 the first meeting of Bilateral Consultation Mechanism was held. Diplomats from both countries exchanged views on strengthening trade, tourism and investments. Regional and international issues were also discussed.

There has been various development co-operation between Finland and Nepal. The first co-operation began in 1982 with the grant assistance of chemical fertilizers. Nepal's Ministry of Finance and Finland's Ministry of

Foreign Affairs held Bilateral consultations on development cooperation in 2003, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2019 in Kathmandu. Besides, Finland also provides assistance through international agencies like FAO, UNICEF, ILO and UNFPA. Basically, Finland has been investing in over ten industries of Nepal. As of 15 July 2020, there has been an investment of 2.4 million Euros from Finnish side creating 260 jobs. On the other hand, Nepal exports handicrafts, woollen carpets, ready-made garments, woollen goods as well as wooden and bamboo goods to Finland (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). In education sector, Nepal's new project: School Education Sector Plan (SESP) in 2021–2030 is in its starting phase. The project's funding totals ten million euro, half of which is covered by Finland's appropriations for development cooperation and half by the European Union (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2024).

3.4 Overview of the Finland's education system

Finland has 100% literacy rate (WPR, 2024). Finland is one of the front runners when it comes to education (FINLAND TOOLBOX, 2022). The quality of education provided by Finland is regarded highly all over the world. The scores from PISA also suggest that Finland has good education system. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial survey of 15 years old students around the world that assesses the extent to which they have acquired the key knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society. The assessment focuses on reading, mathematics and science. According to the PISA results from 2018 students in Finland scored higher than the OECD average in reading (520 score points), mathematics (507) and science (522) (OECD, 2018). The different level of Finnish education system is categorized as:

1. Early childhood education
2. Pre-primary education
3. Comprehensive education
4. Vocational education
5. Upper secondary education

6. Higher education

Preschool education, comprehensive education and upper secondary education is free of charge and for the most part of higher education is also free of charge. In addition to the aforementioned education, adult education is also one education system which is intended for adults, and it includes a multitude of alternatives from comprehensive to higher education (InfoFinland, 2024).

Brief description of different levels of education system in Finland:

1. Early childhood education: When both parents are occupied with work or study, children can be a part of day care system where the local day care branch take care of children aged between one to five years. Children are taught communication skills, number counting and other day to day task that makes them more independent for e.g. wearing clothes, using toilet and so on. The municipalities are responsible for arranging the ECEC services. The quality of ECEC is improved through systematic evaluation. Families can also opt for publicly subsidised private ECEC settings. Participation in ECEC is subject to a fee which depends on family income and the number of children. Client fees in municipal ECEC cover about 14% of the total costs. Currently, the maximum fee charged for ECEC is EUR 295 and the minimum fee charged is EUR 28 (Finnish National Agency for Education, n.d.).

2. Pre-primary education: After ECEC the second phase of education is Pre-primary education. According to the law, children must attend pre-primary education or other similar activities for one year before compulsory education begins. Pre-primary education “esiopetus” prepares children for comprehensive school. Children normally enter pre-primary education at the age of six and comprehensive school at the age of seven. Parents enrol their children in pre-primary education in January or February. Pre-primary education is compulsory for all children, and it starts at the age of six. It is a preparatory class before

comprehensive school. The enrolment period for pre-primary education generally starts on January or February. Municipalities organise pre-primary education in some cases, municipalities can also purchase pre-primary education services from private day care centres. Pre-primary education is free of charge. During the day, the child will receive a free meal. If the child lives far away (over five km) or the route is difficult, he or she will receive free transport. (Infofinland, 2023)

3. Comprehensive education: Also known as; Primary and lower secondary education lasts for nine years, and it is for all youngsters between seven and sixteen (16) years. Primary and lower secondary education is provided in a single structure system. It includes grades one to nine. Municipalities are responsible for arranging education for all children between six to eighteen (18) years old. Pre-primary and primary and lower secondary education are free of charge for pupils. Pupils also get free learning materials, daily school meal, health and welfare services and transport from home to school if the way to school is long or dangerous. Every pupil is allocated a place in a nearby school, but they can also choose another school with some restrictions. The national core curriculum which includes objectives and core contents of different subjects is uniform in all schools. The school and municipalities design their own core curriculum by staying within the framework of the national core curriculum (Finnish National Agency for Education, n.d.).

4. Vocational education: Students who have completed lower secondary education choose their upper secondary pathway – general or VET – based on their interests, skills and success in previous studies. Both pathways are equal in value and provide access to further studies (OPH M. &., 2023, p. 8). The purpose of Finland's vocational education and training (VET) is to maintain people's vocational skills and competence, and to ensure that everyone completes at least an upper secondary qualification (OPH M. &., 2023, p. 6). VET is an integral part of Finnish Education system. Nearly 50% of the students opt to VET after completion of lower secondary education (OPH M. &., 2023, p. 8).

Since, VET equips student with real-life work experience using more practical approach as compared to conventional education and ensures high prospects of employment opportunities, it is very popular in Finland. Also, continuation of tertiary education is possible after completion of VET (OPH M. &., 2023, p. 9).

5. Upper secondary education: According to National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education, NCC GUSE 2019 its main objective is to guide the students towards drawing up plans for the future, growing into global citizens, and continuous learning. The Ministry of Education and culture & Finnish National Agency for Education work together to shape the upper secondary education. Finnish National Agency for Education is responsible for drawing up the national core curricula for GUSE. Local authorities provide their input to form the local curricula accordingly. General upper secondary is designed to be completed in three to four years while two years being the minimum and four years the maximum. During this period, students are taught to analyse problems critically, to use information from any given source for completing task & to engage in self-development. Students are provided with the opportunity to learn about Science, Arts, their identity, perception of humanity, worldview, and philosophy of life. To complete GUSE students have to successfully complete the general upper secondary syllabus and acquire 150 credits. The education is offered by GUSE schools, GUSE school for adults and institutions that are authorized to organise GUSE. Various study entities can be formed under the study units to meet the specific purpose. Modules act as a building block of study units. Each study unit may consist of several intersecting subject modules which will be graded separately. The study consists of optional studies which is 20 credits at minimum (Finnish National Agency For Education, n.d.).

   Finnish GUSE focuses on building transversal competence in students. Under transversal competence students are taught to interact to understand the societal behaviour, moral values and guided to build

global and cultural competence. Besides, they are guided through personal study plan. The main objective of PSP is to help them in successful completion of their GUSE journey. If some students need special aid and other support, the education provider must be ready to provide it. This ensures equal treatments of students (Finnish National Agency For Education, n.d.). Students will also compile their PSP that contains a study plan, a matriculation examination plan, and a plan for further studies and career. The assessment of student's knowledge gained during GUSE is done via matriculation exam. This exam checks whether they have achieved necessary skills and knowledge as per the core curriculum. This exam awards matriculation certificate to passed students which shall be used for applying to higher studies. (Finnish National Agency For Education, n.d.)

Apart from the general upper secondary path, some educational providers are chosen to provide special education task. These education providers can have a strong emphasis on music, language, arts, physical health or natural science. Students in these schools can engage more to their areas of interest by slightly reducing the hours to the main syllabus. However, these schools' primary objective is to complete the GUSE syllabus while also engaging pupils to special education areas (Finnish National Agency For Education, n.d.). Some GUSE schools provide special education according to the local needs. These schools focus on subjects such as arts, media, entrepreneurship, natural sciences, or languages. They primarily follow the national core curriculum but also provide optional subjects which gives student a chance to build a base in their subject of interest. The optional courses can be found in schools' websites. (Finnish National Agency For Education, n.d.)

International Baccalaureate (IB) also falls under special education group whereby curriculum is designed for two years. Before the studies, a year of preparatory class is provided. The first year is partly taught in English whereas the second and third year is primarily taught in English.

The certificate awarded after the completion of IB is same as Finnish matriculation Exam (Finnish National Agency For Education, n.d.).

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture gives authority for some education providers to offer GUSE based on Steiner (also known as Waldorf schools in English) pedagogy. The first preference would be Steiner school's students however, new students can also get enrolled. All subjects and training are provided in classroom until the completion of the program. Students can apply through national joint application for getting admission. (Finnish National Agency For Education, n.d.)

Some selective folk high schools also provide GUSE. Through this process GUSE graduation diploma can be achieved. Also, it is possible to do part of the syllabus and participate in the Matriculation examination. Exchange study is also possible during GUSE for students willing to learn in another Nordic countries. During the exchange program student get to know about another country's language, culture and study modules while living with a host family. It aids student growth by giving them an opportunity to be more independent and by teaching valuable lessons on decision making. According to GUSE agreement between Nordic countries student from one Nordic country has the same right to continue their study in another Nordic country (Finnish National Agency For Education, n.d.).

Besides, adult general upper secondary education and distance learning is also possible. The main objective of adult GUSE and distance learning is to facilitate adults to enhance their existing knowledge and make them eligible for applying to higher studies. Adult GUSE is mainly focussed for adults. The students enrolled to adult GUSE have their own personal study plan and individuals can select specific subjects in their syllabus, revise some subjects to increase their grade and have a right to a study adviser. The minimum credit to be completed in adult GUSE is 88 credits. Various modes of teaching technique can be used. For e.g. contact teaching, distance teaching,

online teaching and independent studying (Finnish National Agency For Education, n.d.).

6. Higher education: Higher education is provided by University of Applied Sciences and Universities. The UAS provides education with the practical approach to meet the demand of current work force in the job market. On the other hand, Universities provide education with emphasis on theoretical knowledge and focussing more on research work (Studyeu Team, 2024) . UAS focusses on promoting the regional development whereas Universities focusses in doing scientific research and increasing the overall knowledge base in a subject. Both UAS and Universities offers bachelor's & master's degree however, Doctorate degree is only offered by universities (Study in FInland, n.d.). Currently UAS offers around 100 bachelor's degree and over 20 master's degree which are taught in English. Bachelor's degrees are usually completed in three and half years and equivalent to 210-240 ECTS whereas master's degree is equivalent to 90-120 ECTS in general and lasts for two years (Studyinfo, n.d.). UAS may accept students for bachelor's or master's degree if they have other required qualification apart from GUSE. For getting admissions in bachelor's degree in UAS the most common process for international students is through entrance exam. The main objective of university is to conduct scientific research and provide scientific and artistic undergraduate and postgraduate education (Studyinfo, n.d.). Currently there are around ten bachelor's degree and about 100 master's degree in English provided by Universities in Finland. Usually, a student who has been selected for bachelor's degree in university is automatically selected for master's degree as well for the same university. The extent of bachelor's degree in university is approximately 180 ECTS and last for three years whereas master's degree extent is around 120 ECTS and last for two years. Finnish higher education institutions use the ECTS system (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) in measuring a student's workload. In this system one full-time academic year is equivalent to 60 higher education credits. The ECTS system is a tool

that helps to describe and compare study programmes and award higher education qualifications. It is used across the European Union and other collaborating European countries. (Studyinfo, 2024)

3.5 Current demand for Finland's degree programmes

Interest in Finland's education system is growing (Migri, 2023). There are three joint applications per year, two that offer study programmes in English (one in spring and one in autumn) and one that offer study programmes only in Finnish and Swedish (in spring) (Studyinfo, n.d.). Below is the table showing number of applicants by higher education institution in Spring 2023. According to statistics from 2023 spring joint application, majority of the applicants came from outside the EU/EEA area.

Table 1 International students pursuing higher education in Finland 2023, based on OPH website *(Finnish National Agency for Education, 2023)*

Number of applicants by higher education institution, first joint application to higher education, spring 2023

Higher education institute	Number of study places available	Total number of applicants
Aalto University	354	4 911
Centria University of Applied Sciences	126	11 820
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences	65	5 178
Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences	255	13 173
Humak University of Applied Sciences	28	795
Häme University of Applied Sciences	208	7 950
University of Eastern Finland	475	8 043
JAMK University of Applied Sciences	380	17 157
University of Jyväskylä	305	4 560
South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences Xamk	237	8 892
Kajaani University of Applied Sciences	125	6 588
Karelia University of Applied Sciences	125	3 885
LAB University of Applied Sciences	340	11 013
Lapland University of Applied Sciences	95	4 296
University of Lapland	25	384
LUT University	130	1 029
Laurea University of Applied Sciences	270	7 950
Metropolia University of Applied Sciences	538	9 456
Oulu University of Applied Sciences	243	4 881
University of Oulu	836	8 268
Savonia University of Applied Sciences	170	8 157
Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences	105	4 626
University of the Arts	129	4 233
Tampere University of Applied Sciences	290	7 533
Tampere University	110	2 028
Turku University of Applied Sciences	165	5 688
University of Turku	300	4 959
Vaasa University of Applied Sciences	250	7 920
University of Vaasa	190	3 228
Arcada University of Applied Sciences	55	1 782
Novia University of Applied Sciences	437	8 772
Åbo Akademi University	227	1 950
Total	**7 588**	**61 842**

In the table above, the application mostly contains of study programmes in English. The total no. of applicant was 61800 out of which more than 50000 applicants came from outside EU/EEA area. The number of applicants doubled from the corresponding joint application of 2022. 14% of the applicants were of Finnish nationality. The sharp increase in total no. of applicants was seen due to active student recruitment process and country branding work carried on by higher education institutes and national operators. According to Senior adviser Janni Jokela from the Finnish National Agency for Education, “reform to facilitate student’s residence permit was implemented in spring 2022 which must have had positive impact in Finnish education export” (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2023). Out of 61800 applicants only 7588 students will get a study place i.e., on average approx. 1/8 student will be selected. This shows that there is a fierce competition to get a place in Finnish higher education institutes. The toughest study place was in the field of health and welfare i.e. 1/19 applicant is selected. Similarly, in the field of arts & culture approx. 1/16 applicant is selected. However, the field of study with the least competition were humanities and education approx. 1/8 applicant is selected in both the fields (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2023).

In table 1, SAMK is not listed because SAMK did not offer joint application in Spring 2023. Based on the information provided by SAMK admissions, SAMK had offered 296 study places in total across eight-degree programmes in English. SAMK received 8688 applicants via separate applications in Spring 2023. Moreover, SAMK received 6477 applicants via separate applications in Autumn 2023 while SAMK had offered only 80 study places across two-degree programmes in English. Therefore, in general demand for Finland’s degree programmes is significantly high.

3.6 Overview of the Nepal’s Education system

Teaching and learning practices can be traced back to ancient times in South Asian countries since the time of “Gurukula” system. This traditional system

was practiced for 1000s of years in the region. According to the system students would live alongside their teacher while serving them and teacher would share their knowledge on various subjects like religion, philosophy, medicine, arts, practical skills etc (Adhikari, 2023, pp. 60-62) However, the first school with modern education system in Nepal was established during the Rana regime. Jung Bahadur Rana set up a school at his residence in 1853 with two teachers imported from England to teach children of the ruling families. The school was later shifted to Thapathali Durbar with an Englishman called Kenning as its first teacher named Durbar School (palace school), it marked the beginning of modern education in Nepal, but only the ruling Ranas and their sons could attend it. In 1876, the school began admitting children of high-class government officers too (Dixit, 2018). The Rana regime lasted for 104 years i.e., (1847-1951) due to which education was accessible only for higher class which was a handful no. of individuals during this era. Only after the fall of Rana regime education was accessible to everyone. The Nepalese government made efforts to improve access to education and to provide education to all sections of the population. The education system in Nepal was further expanded in the 1960s when the government introduced a policy of compulsory education, making primary education free and compulsory for all children. Currently, the education system of Nepal is divided into Primary, Secondary and Higher studies. Ministry of Education and Culture governs the education sector. Education is made free and compulsory for children aged five to 16 years (Collegenp, 2023).

Until 2016, elementary education in Nepal lasted for five years i.e. from grade one to grade five (ages five to nine). However, a new education bill passed in 2016 extended the elementary education cycle and established a new system of compulsory basic education that is meant to be accessible to every child in Nepal free of charge at public schools. Compulsory basic education now lasts eight years (grades one to eight) (Dragana Borenovic Dilas, 2018). It is the first formal level of education which starts after pre-school. The subjects include Nepali, Maths, Science and Social Studies.

Prior to the recent reforms, the secondary school system was divided into two years of lower secondary education (grades nine and ten) and two years of higher secondary education (grades 11 and 12), with both segments concluding with separate national examinations (Dragana Borenovic Dilas, 2018). Previously a single combined exam for grade nine & ten “School Leaving Certificate” (SLC) was held on national level but, now it has been renamed to “Secondary Education Examination” (SEE) and is done in regional level. The ultimate national final exam for leaving school takes place in grade 12 (Dragana Borenovic Dilas, 2018). After completion of SEE students can get admission for Higher secondary education grade 11 & 12. The main academic streams are 10+2 Science, Management, Humanities, and Education, GCE A Level (both Science and non-science), and CTEVT diploma/certificate programmes (Sharma P. , n.d.). Since 1982, Nepal has had a higher secondary school education system. Students in grades 11 and 12 are included in this level of education. You have the right to choose the subject in which you excel and are interested (Database, 2022). After completion of school, higher education starts. The higher education system in Nepal offers a wide range of programmes, including bachelor's degrees in arts, science, and commerce, as well as master's and PhD programmes (Collegenp, 2023)

According to the World Bank, the literacy rate of Nepal is 71% in 2021 (World Bank Group, 2024). The enrolments to Primary school have been growing steadily throughout the years. Statistics from 2019 suggests that the enrolment rate to Primary school stands at 85%. Government of Nepal have brought various programme in order to uplift the education scenario in Nepal. Programmes such as the Community Schools Program have successfully enrolled over 50,000 students from underprivileged backgrounds. The program provides free education, as well as other resources such as textbooks, uniforms, and meals to students in rural areas where access to education is limited (Collegenp, 2023). While government has been trying various ways in increasing the no. of educated individuals in the country lack of infrastructure, funding and political instability has caused a big setback in education development throughout the history. The major hurdles to get the literacy rate close to 100% are lack of strong-willed teachers willing to be

working in remote locations while recruiting and motivating student to learn. In remote villages since majority of population is illiterate and the weather, geographical condition is harsh being able to recruit students from these locations is very challenging. Apart from this, due to poor economic condition many children drop out after or during their primary education while trying to help their parents in earning their daily bread. Nepal has made substantive progress in reducing the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) from 30.1% (NMICS 2014) to 17.4% (NMICS 2019) over the timeframe of five years (OPHI, UNDP, UNICEF, 2021). Since economic indicators of a country and accessibility to education to its citizen are closely related, unless the poverty rate is close to zero it is hard to imagine the literacy rate to be 100%. Significant drawbacks in current education system of Nepal are as follows:

1. Quality of Education: Despite progress in increasing access to education, the quality of education remains a concern. Many schools lack basic infrastructure and qualified teachers, and the quality of education received by students in rural areas is often lower than that received by urban students.

2. Teacher Training and Availability: The Nepalese government has made efforts to improve teacher training and increase the availability of qualified teachers, particularly in rural areas. However, there is still a shortage of qualified teachers in many areas, and many teachers remain inadequately trained.

3. Gender Disparities: Despite progress in increasing access to education for girls in Nepal, significant disparities remain. Girls are still less likely to attend school and to complete their education than boys, particularly in rural areas.

However, there is a parallel system of education in Nepal whereby schools and colleges are funded by government or private sectors. Nepal has seen a massive proliferation in the number and share of private education institutions over the past two decades. Private schools are funded exclusively from

student fees, with the exception of some philanthropic support to low-cost schools (Tejendra Pherali, 2017). The private schools charge fees to the students and all subjects are taught in English medium. There could be significant difference in education quality provided by private schools and government schools. Since, government schools might have too many students and resource shortage; most citizens from middle class or upper class prefer private schools over government/public schools. There is also a growing penetration of 'international' education programmes in Nepal's school system, including the growth of franchise schools, and affiliation to international curricula, examinations and co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes (Tejendra Pherali, 2017).

Therefore, the education system in Nepal has come a long way since its inception, and it has made significant progress in recent years. However, it still faces a number of challenges, including a shortage of trained teachers, lack of adequate infrastructure and facilities, and lack of funding and resources particularly in public education sector. This might not be the situation in private education sector of Nepal however, as recommended by Tejendra Pherali and Pramod Bhatta in their report “Nepal: Patterns of Privatisation in Education”, for the development of education sector, there is a need to increase investments in public schools and develop stronger regulation for private schools (Tejendra Pherali, 2017, pp. 6-7).

3.7 PEST analysis and SWOT analysis

Concept of PEST analysis and SWOT analysis will be briefly discussed in this chapter to shed light on its theory and usage. It is believed that PEST analysis was first introduced under the name ETPS by Harvard professor Francis J. Aguilar. Subsequently, the letters were rearranged to create a convenient and quirky acronym used today as PEST. At present, there are numerous variations of the same analysis tool as PESTEL, PESTLE, PESTLIED, STEEPLE, STEPE and so on. (International Research Journal of Engineering and Technology, 2016) However, the idea of using this tool is identifying

current or possible future challenges, allowing for effective planning on how to best manage these challenges. Therefore, PEST analysis (political, economic, social, and technological) is a management method whereby an organization can assess major external factors that influence its operation in order to become more competitive in the market. As described by the acronym, those four areas are central to this model (Kenton, 2024). The political factors that help or hinder a business examines the government policies, employment regulations, political stability, trade restrictions and so on. The economic factors study the market conditions, economic growth or decline in economy, inflation etc. Similarly, Social factors cover the employment patterns, population health, population growth rate, social mobility etc. Finally, the technological factors consider the study of pace of technological advancement, innovation, research and development, social networking etc (Fairlie, 2024)

Before entering the international market, understanding and analysis of the macro-environmental factors of the host country is fundamental. Although the education is exported from Finland to Nepal, Nepalese students are moving from their home country to the host country- Finland. Thus, it is significant to study the Political, Economic, Socio-cultural and Technological aspects of Finnish education system rather than Nepal's education system as it has no relevance for the study. In some thesis, it was found that the authors have done PEST analysis of the country where education is exported. It is beneficial to study the macro-environmental factors to know if the international market is potentially worthwhile for exporting education or not. However, since Nepal already has a history of moving abroad for quality education thus, PEST of Nepalese education system is not required.

SWOT stands for Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats. SWOT analysis and strategic planning originated from the academics of Harvard Business School in the 1960s. The reason SWOT analysis is extensively and continuously used is that it is straightforward and requires little preparation (Hill T, 1997, pp. 46-52). SWOT analysis aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of an organization and the opportunities and threats in the environment. Having identified these factors, strategies are developed which

may build on the strengths, eliminate the weaknesses, exploit the opportunities or counter the threats. The strengths and weaknesses are identified by an internal appraisal of the organization and the opportunities and threats by an external appraisal (Dyson, 2004, pp. 631-640). Therefore, with the help of a SWOT analysis, a company gets a view of where it is succeeding and where it could improve its actions. In this thesis, SWOT analysis will be utilized to identify and analyze SAMK's Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology simply refers to the practical "how" of a research study. More specifically, it's about how a researcher systematically designs a study to ensure valid and reliable results that address the research aims, objectives and research questions (Warren D. J., 2020). It provides a framework and guidelines for researchers to clearly define research questions, hypotheses, and objectives. According to Saunders a research design of a research can be represented as an onion, which he refers to as the "research onion" (Dissanayake, 2023). There are six layers of research onion. Each layer represents a specific stage in the research process, from the broadest philosophical considerations to the most detailed practical decisions about data collection and analysis (Sharma S. N., n.d.). The below figure depicts the various layers and elements that form the research onion.

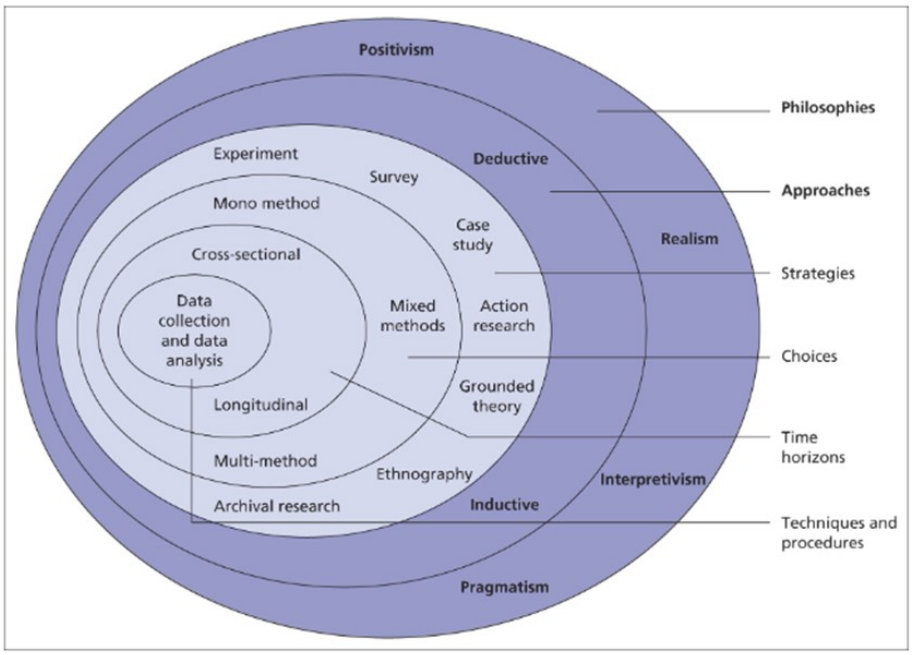

Figure 1 Research Onion by Saunder 2007

The chosen elements from each layer of the research onion to achieve the research objectives is explained below:

4.1 Philosophy

The term research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge (Saunders, 2009, p. 124). Research philosophy and research paradigm are terms that tend to be used pretty loosely, even interchangeably. In general, they both refer to the set of beliefs, assumptions, and principles that underlie the way you approach your study (whether that's a dissertation, thesis or any other sort of academic research project) (Jansen, 2023). It is important to discuss about the research philosophy since researchers might have different assumption regarding the nature of truth, and philosophy helps to understand the researcher's assumptions. Whether you are consciously aware of them or not, at every stage in your research you will make a number of types of assumption (Morgan, 1979). Defining the research philosophy in early stage is important as it guides the study to correct direction. The two main research philosophies are Positivism and Interpretivism. These philosophies represent two

fundamentally different ways that we as humans make sense of the world around us: in Positivism, reality is independent of us and researchers can therefore observe reality objectively. In interpretivism, reality is seen as highly subjective because it is shaped by our perceptions (Hussey, 2014). Commonly associated with experiments and quantitative research, Positivism is considered a form of progression of empiricism, first labelled as Positivism by Auguste Comte in the 19th century (Blackwell, 2018, p. 5). Positivism research philosophy states that the reality is one and it is independent of researcher's viewpoint. This type of research philosophy is mostly used in the field of natural sciences as quantifiable data are collected through this research. The findings obtained by following Positivism philosophy are replicable when performed under the same circumstances and is independent of researcher's opinion. For e.g. the speed of sound is 343 m/s and if someone wants to disprove this fact, it is simply impossible as it is the absolute reality. This kind of findings proven by an experimental research follow the Positivism philosophy. On the other hand, Interpretivism is the philosophy which falls on the other end of the spectrum. According to this Philosophy reality is subjective and it may vary from person to person. Interpretivism is more concerned with in depth variables and factors related to a context, it considers humans as different from physical phenomena as they create further depth in meanings with the assumption that human beings cannot be explored in a similar way to physical phenomena (Alharahsheh, 2019, p. 41). This kind of research is not focussed in finding general universal laws but is focussed to study social phenomenon and individual perspectives. Qualitative research is best suited under this philosophy as the research focusses on opinions of subjects and tries to find a deeper meaning of the topic being studied through words instead of hard data. For e.g. if you want to find out why people are migrating from one village to another, interviewing the migrating villagers would be the correct approach to know the actual reason of migration. The data collected would be the opinions gathered from the villagers which could later be interpreted by the researcher to explain the migration phenomenon. Apart from the main two research philosophies, the third research philosophy Pragmatism seeks to bridge the gap between Positivism and Interpretivism. It emphasizes the practical consequences of knowledge and encourages researcher to adopt a

flexible and problem-solving approach. Pragmatists believe that the value of knowledge lies in its usefulness and its ability to address real-world problems (Rashid, 2023). It uses mixed method technique (both qualitative and quantitative) and seek to develop the holistic understanding of the research topic. Pragmatists recognise that there are many different ways of interpreting the world and undertaking research, that no single point of view can ever give the entire picture and that there may be multiple realities (Saunders M. N., 2009, pp. 124-128). However, it doesn't mean Pragmatism philosophy always uses multiple methods it seeks to collect well founded, relevant and reliable data to move the research into right direction.

As the research aim (which is discussed in chapter 2) revolves around analysing a system, understanding the cause of a transfer phenomenon, understanding the function of an agency and measuring the effectiveness, both qualitative and quantitative approach is required to meet the research aim. The best way to understanding the students motive to transfer to other degree programmes could be gained by questioning the students themselves. To answer the research questions, problem-solving mindset, seeking practical ways will be adopted to achieve diverse research aims using mixed method and thus this research follows the Pragmatism philosophy.

4.2 Approach

Inductive approach, also known as inductive reasoning, starts with the observations; and theories are proposed towards the end of the research process as a result of observations (Goddard, 2004). On the contrary the deductive approach starts with a specific hypothesis development based on the literature review that has been observed by the researcher, and gradually tries to test this hypothesis and check if it holds in particular contexts (15writers, 2024). In this research, there is no hypothesis to test at the beginning and depending on the research findings a hypothesis could be formed towards the end part of thesis; thus, this research will follow an inductive approach.

4.3 Strategy

Case study research is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake, 1995). It is useful in gaining concrete, contextual, in-depth knowledge about a specific real-world subject. Case study research is supposed to be richly descriptive, because it is grounded in deep and varied sources of information. Similarly, Eisenhardt defines it as a research strategy that focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings and aims at providing a description, testing theory, or generating theory (Eisenhardt, 1989, pp. 532–550). Since the research topic is specific and revolves around understanding the current education export scenario from Finland to Nepal, case study is best suited strategy for this thesis topic, and thus will be implemented as research strategy.

4.4 Choices

Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process (Creswell, 2006, pp. 5-6). By using mixed methods researchers gain insights from different angles and better understand participants' perspectives and experiences. It's a powerful tool for robust descriptions, interpretation, and applicability of findings. Using different methods to collect data on the same subject can make your results more credible. If the qualitative and quantitative data converge, this strengthens the validity of your conclusions. This process is called triangulation (George, 2021). Considering that the research objectives are broad and diverse in nature, and only a single method is less likely to answer the research questions, the chosen method is mixed method for this research.

4.5 Time Horizon

The time horizon in the research onion, which is the timeframe relevant to the research, is the period in which the researcher is interested in studying the population (Alamgeer, 2023). The time horizon simply describes how many points in time you plan to collect your data at (Warren D. P., 2021). Here the population refers to the group of people on which data is being gathered and analysed. Generally, observations can be of two types based on time horizons, namely cross-sectional and longitudinal (15writers, 2024). If data is collected at only one point of time, then it is called cross-sectional time horizon and when data is collected in multiple point of time for the same population then it is called longitudinal time horizon. In this case the nature of research aim doesn't require data collection at multiple point of time so, cross-sectional time horizon has been chosen for the research.

4.6 Data collection and data analysis

This is the final layer of the research onion, where the researcher decides on the techniques and procedures for collecting and analysing data (Sharma S. N., n.d.). The process of data collection and analysis depends on the aim of thesis. If the aim is to test a hypothesis, measure something precisely, or gain large-scale statistical insights, collecting quantitative data is a must. If your aim is to explore ideas, understand experiences, or gain detailed insights into a specific context, collecting qualitative data is a must (Bhandari, 2022). The research questions of the thesis are mentioned below chronologically, and the construction of data collection technique is discussed thereafter.

RQ1.1 What is the state of current education export system?
RQ1.2 How effective is the current system?
RQ1.3 What are the challenges in the system and how can they be handled?
RQ2.1 What is SAMK's strength, weakness, opportunities and threats?
RQ2.2 Which factors attract student to Finland as their study destination?
RQ2.3 What are the motivation factors to study at SAMK and demotivation factors to transfer from SAMK?

RQ3.1 Are agencies/consultancies equipping students with appropriate knowledge to-wards their abroad study journey?
RQ3.2 Are their other alternatives for agencies?

The RQ1.1 - 1.3 are formulated from RO1. The questions are generated to understanding the state of existing education export system. In this section a brief overview of education export process is depicted via flow chart. Then after the Political, Economic, Social and Technological aspects of education export is examined using PEST analysis. For this study secondary data regarding education policies, economical aspects involved in the education export process, social impact caused by the education export process and technological impacts due to the existing system will be presented. Also, according to the result of PEST analysis challenges and hurdles will be identified and possible solution for the challenges will be outlined. The data collected will be mixed in nature as both qualitative and quantitative data will be presented to answer the research questions.

The RQ2.1 - 2.3 are formulated from RO2. The questions are related to identifying the cause for students transferring from SAMK to other UAS and degree programmes. To answer these questions first, an overview of Nepalese students studying in SAMK will be presented. Then after SWOT analysis of SAMK will be performed. The SWOT analysis will contain both qualitative and quantitative data and results from the analysis will provide an overview of SAMK's strength and weakness. Secondly, a survey will be carried out to find the Nepalese students' viewpoint regarding their experience of being an international student in SAMK. Also results from the survey and result from SWOT will be mapped to find if there is any relation between SAMK's weakness and students' transfer. The sample for the survey is limited to Nepalese students.

Since, the main aim of the survey is to collect students' viewpoint on SAMK, a big part of the survey consists of open-ended questions. However, essential close-ended questions are also incorporated in the survey. The results from the survey will be interpreted mostly qualitatively however, some important

data that needs quantitative interpretation will be presented accordingly as per the need.

The RQ3.1 and 3.2 are formulated from RO3. The questions are generated to understand the roles of an agency to measure their competences and to find if there are better alternatives to agency. For answering RQ3.1 & RQ3.2 the accepted Nepalese students of SAMK who have applied through agency/consultancy and are in the process for applying residence permit in Nepal will be interviewed. The interview will be taken through teams meeting and the interview is designed to extract information about how well informed the students are regarding their abroad study journey. The plan is to interview one to two students from each degree programmes. The interview is semi structured and open ended. The interview is chosen to be semi structured so that the main motive of the interview is not lost during the process. The information gathered from the interview will be then analysed to define the competencies of the agency/consultancy. Also, possible alternatives for agencies will be discussed after analysing the secondary & primary data respectively. Data collected will be analysed thematically and narratively.

5 UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT EDUCATION EXPORT SYSTEM (RO1)

5.1 Process of exporting education

Before implementing the research, a complete understanding of the current education export system is required. After a thorough study of all the information provided in different official websites, the current export education system has been depicted in a simple flowchart below. As the thesis focuses on study of export education of higher studies only, the process and actors involved for exporting higher education via agency, it have been presented in the figure. This figure is important since it helps to identify the different stages of the process, and the main actors involved in each stage. A brief overview

how the current system works is explained. Figure 2 explains the process and it is followed by figure 3 which explains the roles of different actors in this system.

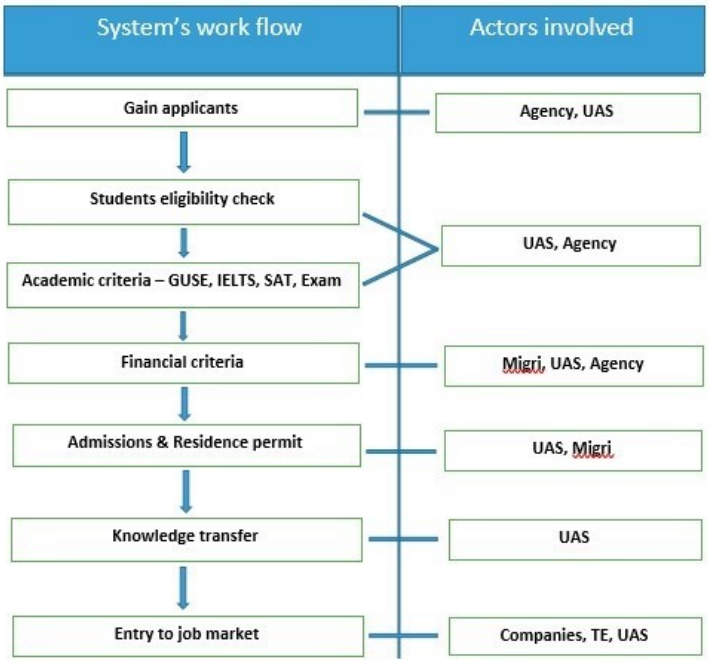

Figure 2 Current export education system

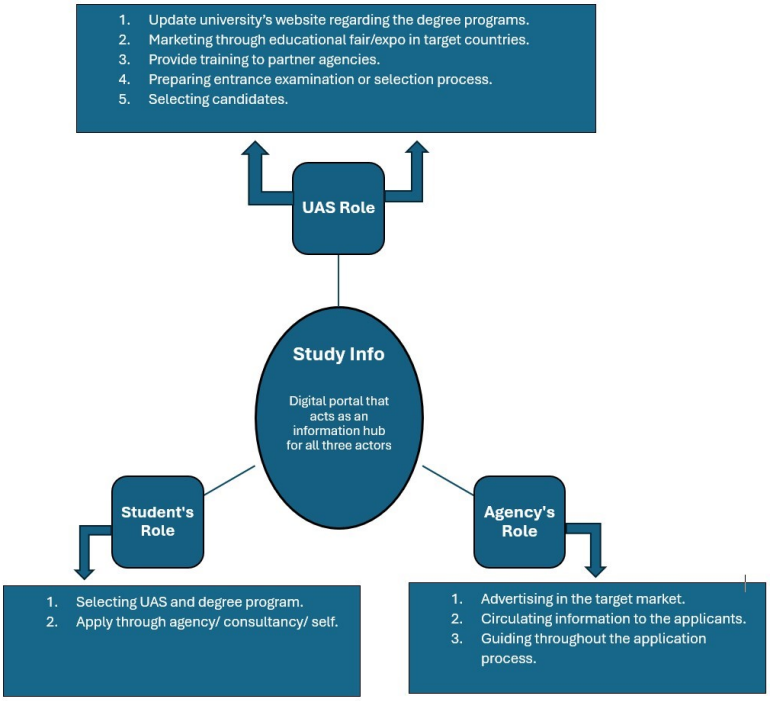

Figure 3 Roles of different actors in exporting education

The Export education process has been divided into seven stages. The first stage of the process includes student selecting the UAS and degree programmes. In this process the main actors involved are Finnish UAS and agencies. Finnish UAS are responsible for reaching out various target groups with the help of agencies. The main function of agency is to attract students for applying to Finnish HEIs and guiding the international students through the whole admission and residence permit process. The agencies are UAS official partners that help by enhancing marketing and business opportunities abroad. Once a student is willing to be a part of Finnish HEI, the eligibility of the students for the degree programmes is checked first by Agency and later verified by UAS. The academic criteria for international students to be a part of Finnish HEI is determined by the UAS. Similarly, the financial criteria which includes tuition fees and living expenses are determined by the UAS and Migri (Immigration) respectively. The financial criteria check is vital as it ensures incoming students will be able to manage their tuition fees and living expenses for the whole duration of their studies. For bachelor's degree there are basically two types of application: Joint and Separate application. In order to be invited to the International UAS Exam and to be selected based on the International UAS Exam selection method, the applicants have to prove their English language skills either by an internationally recognized language test or previous studies (Uasinfo, 2024). Besides, GUSE certificate is mandatory to be called for the entrance exam. The International UAS Exam is the part of student's recruitment process through joint application. According to the score obtained in the entrance exam student selection is done. For separate application student might be selected based on SAT scores too. The student selection process may vary from one UAS to another UAS so best way to check the admission criteria is through the UAS website. Also Studyinfo.fi is the official and up-to-date website with all the information about study programmes leading to a degree in Finland. The website is managed by EDUFI. At Studyinfo.fi information on different degrees and qualifications in educational institutions in Finland can be found. The service can be used to find different study options and apply for the studies online (Studyinfo, 2024). In most admission process of foreign nationals for bachelor's degree, students

are required to pass an online exam. For master's degree students are recruited based on their academic evaluation of their former degree and work experience. After the admission, non-EU students can apply for the residence permit which will be processed by immigration. Once a student comes to Finland, the main actor involved in the student's journey is the UAS. Student will be equipped with professional skills and competencies through Finnish way of learning. Companies and employment office (Te-Toimisto) are the next bodies for providing opportunity to join the job market.

The process of selecting students is vital since, it ensures quality of admitted students are not compromised. There are accusations that prestigious institutions in the United Kingdom are admitting overseas students with lower entry requirements than domestic students because they are desperate for the extra cash (Mitchell, 2024). Similarly, there are accusations that international students who cannot speak basic English are walking away from Australian universities with prestigious degrees (Guardian, 2024). In case of Finland, fair evaluation of international students according to their past academic records or UAS Exam to be eligible for admission is one of the key strengths of Finnish education export system.

5.2 Role of agencies

It is essentially important to study the roles of agencies in detail for this thesis as one of the research objectives is to understand the role of agencies to find out if the agencies are equipping incoming students with adequate knowledge or not. Agencies play a crucial role in education export by facilitating the international exchange of educational services and programmes. Due to the financial uncertainty world is facing, all education providers need to be conscious about their budget. Participating in international fairs, going on recruitment trips and organising mission trips to visit partners abroad can be highly expensive. To solve this problem international agents can help to recruit large no. of international students (Education E. A., 2022). Education agents' services for students range from a full set of information provision associated

with overseas education, to advising services, to assistance with applications, to visa processing services, to pre-arrival services (Mittelmeier, 2022). They can also help in conducting research to identify potential markets for educational institutions, helping them understand demand, competition, and local educational needs. They assist in forming partnerships between domestic and foreign educational institutions, fostering collaborations that enhance programmes offerings. Agencies help institutions navigate the regulatory landscape of foreign markets, ensuring compliance with local laws and accreditation requirements. They create marketing strategies to promote educational programmes abroad, often targeting specific demographics or regions to attract international students. Agencies work to recruit international students by providing information, guidance, and support throughout the application process. Education agents have local offices where they can assist interested applicants with things such as choosing universities and programmes, submitting applications, residence permits, language courses, test bookings, travel arrangements and so on (Aalto University, 2024).They offer services such as visa assistance, housing arrangements, and orientation programmes, helping students transition smoothly into their new educational environments. The ability to outsource the labour of producing application documents such as personal statements, CVs, reference letters, transcripts, and certificates of internships was often given as a key reason for using an education agent. Agencies may help institutions maintain and improve educational quality, ensuring that programmes meet both domestic and international standards. They promote cultural exchange initiatives that enhance the educational experience for both domestic and international students. Typically, agents account for about half of the international student referrals for leading study destinations (Tim Gonzales, 2020). Overall, agencies act as intermediaries that connect educational institutions with global markets, facilitating the growth of international education.

6 PEST ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION EXPORT SYSTEM

6.1 Political factors

One of the major factors for attracting foreign students are policies and environment built for them in the host country. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the planning and implementation of higher education and science policy, and it prepares statutes, national budget proposals and Government decision that apply to these policy areas. The Ministry also guides the operation of the higher education and science systems and supports the operating capacity of research organisations (MOEC, 2018, p. 20). Here, explanation on how Finland's Government policies have facilitated immigration and internationalization of Finnish HEI is discussed. One of the earliest document "Government Migration Policy Programme" dates to 19.10.2006. According to the document, overall purpose of the migration policy programme is to define migration policy values, with the aim of respecting human and fundamental rights, to reinforce a culture of good governance and to combat migration-related threats (Government Finland, 2006, p. 2). The document outlines a need of immigration and defines how to boost the recruitment of foreign employees and their family members to safeguard the availability of a skilled workforce and strengthen the skills matrix of the population (Government Finland, 2006, pp. 3-4). Similarly, the first strategy towards internationalization of HEI can be found in the report "Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009–2015" published by MOEC in 2009. The strategy is spearheaded by a genuinely international higher education community, increased quality and attractiveness, export of expertise, support for a multicultural society and the promotion of global responsibility. The strategy comprises over 30 concrete measures (MOEC, 2009, p. 5). The report emphasizes on creating Finland as top attraction for foreign researchers and talents. The internationalisation strategy was included in the Government Programme of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's second cabinet. The Development Plan for Education and Research for the period 2007-2012 provides added focus to the Government

Programme and sets priority areas for the internationalisation of higher education institutions (MOEC, 2009, p. 6). According to the report the strategy was drawn up through open interactive methodology in which views on the topics were accumulated from higher education students, personnel, experts as well as from the business community and other stakeholders. The report outlines five main aims (MOEC, 2009, p. 10).

-A genuinely international higher education community
-Increasing the quality and attractiveness of higher education institutions
-Promoting the export of expertise
-Supporting a multicultural society
-Promoting global responsibility

Some of the key measures taken towards achieving the aim are:

- The Ministry of Education will oversee the establishment of a fixed-term mobility funding programme for 2010-2015. The programme will be administered, and communications handled by CIMO. The programme expenditure will be five million euro annually, totalling 30 million euro for the entire duration of the programme (MOEC, 2009, p. 31).

- The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy will launch a nationwide ESF development programme Growth and Internationalisation of Competence Clusters, in which the Ministry of Education particularly emphasises the competencies of polytechnics to participate in international research and development activities (MOEC, 2009, p. 37).

- In order to support the export of educational services by higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education will appoint a cross-administration committee to prepare a development programme, which will support networking of higher education institutions and export organisations and the consolidation of structures and a knowledge base of educational exports (MOEC, 2009, p. 43).

- Together with other authorities, the Ministry of Education will study the opportunities to prolong the length of the residence permit given for seeking employment to a non-Finnish person who has graduated from a Finnish higher education institution from the current six months (MOEC, 2009, p. 47).

Other strategy reports include “Roadmap for Education-based and Work-based Immigration 2035”. The report was Published by Ministry of Education and Culture in 2021. The roadmap for education based and work-based immigration is a package of measures that specifies certain elements of the Government’s sustainability roadmap in more detail and strengthens general government finances. The measures included in the roadmap build and strengthen Finland as a globally attractive place for skilled and competent people and their families. The Roadmap for education-based and work-based immigration complements the aims of the programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin’s government in promoting skilled immigration. The government programme seeks to target work-based immigration in sectors suffering from labour shortages and to attract specialists, entrepreneurs, students and scientists in key and growth sectors of R&D and innovation (MOEC, 2021, p. 7).

One of the major policy reforms came on 15 April 2022. With the entry into force of new legislation on 15 April 2022, students were granted residence permits for the entire duration of their studies. Students and researchers were also eligible for a two year permit to look for work after graduating. Previously, students needed to apply for an extended permit every year even if their studies went on uninterrupted. The new rules also extend the time available for job searching after graduation. As from 15 April 2022, the changes concern all non-EU students who apply for a residence permit for their studies. The amended legislation will also see changes for researchers (Migri, 2022). Similarly, processing time for residence permit was shortened for highly skilled individuals. For specialists, growth entrepreneurs and highly skilled applicants who meet the criteria as well as their family members will be promised a

residence permit within 14 days (YLE NEWS, 2022). The delay in resident permit processing was a hurdle in attracting top talents. With this reform Finland shall be able to reap the benefits by enhancing its attractiveness. Simillarly In the applications for study-based permits, the processing times in 2022 have on average been 28% shorter than in 2019: they have been cut from an average of 32 days to 23 days (Government F. , Talent Boost 2023-2027, 2024, p. 22).

Other programmes that promote internationalization is EDUFI Fellowship. The EDUFI Fellowship is intended particularly for providing initial funding to carry out research for a doctoral thesis in Finland. The grant is aimed for a doctoral student or a young researcher from outside Finland. 1900 euros/month for three to twelve (12) months can be given through the fellowship grant for the eligible foreign researchers (OPH, 2024).

TFK programme - The purpose of the Team Finland Knowledge programme is to create and strengthen cooperation between Finnish higher education institutions and the target regions and countries selected to the TFK network, and to design new operating models for cooperation. The programme funds educational cooperation between higher education institutions through cooperation and mobility projects (OPH, 2024).

However, in the most recent scenario due to the gradual rise of right wing and nationalist parties throughout the western hemisphere, legislations for immigration have become tighter in EU. Finland has not been an exception to it. The current government led by Petteri Orpo of National Coalition Party (NCP) submitted its proposal on amendments to the Aliens Act to Parliament on 17 October 2024. The government proposes that an employee with a work-based residence permit would have three months to find a new job if their employment in Finland ended prematurely. If the holder of the permit does not find new work and there are no other grounds for staying in Finland, the person should leave the country (Finland M. o., 2024). Government justifies the implementation of this law will promote availability of labour in sectors suffering from labour shortage and to increase the chances of re-employment. Another

major reform related to the Citizenship Act has been amended. The amendments entered into force on 1 October 2024. The period of residence required for Finnish citizenship which used to be five years has now been changed to eight years (Migri, 2024). Besides, there are news regarding abolishment of scholarship system in tuition fees for non-EU students (YLE NEWS, 2023). These recent changes made by the government related to immigration could also have a negative impact in education export activities in the future.

6.2 Economic factors

Education export can play a vital role in strengthening a country's economic position. Modern economies depend heavily on a supply of highly skilled workers who in turn, reap substantial labour-market benefits (OECD, 2024, p. 78). Education export includes the international selling of a range of education goods and services, such as teacher training and teaching materials, education technology, education services and consultancies in various forms (Schatz, 2016 Vol. 14 (3), pp. 392-408). In 2020, 6.4 million tertiary students worldwide had crossed a border to study, more than twice the number in 2007 (Project Atlas, 2022). The top host destinations for international students in 2022 are United states (15%), UK (10%), Canada (9%), France (6%), Australia (6%) (Project Atlas, 2022). It is intuitive that international education not only generates economic and other intangible benefits to the education-exporting countries but also assists education receiving countries to acquire skilled labour force enable to participate in the more flexible, borderless, technology-based labour market (Chowdhury, 2021, p. 201).

The shortage of work force and need of work-based immigration has been reported as early as 2006 in the "Government Migration Policy Programme" report (Government Finland, 2006, p. 3). In the 2000s, Finland's population growth has been 0.3% a year on average. Since 2016, more people have died in Finland than were born. According to the population forecast of Statistics Finland, there would be a decrease of over 100,000 in Finland's population by

2050 if the 2019 birth rate and net migration rate were to continue unchanged (MOEC, 2021, p. 16). The report “Roadmap for Education-based and Work-based Immigration 2035” emphasizes in several topics like promotion of work-related immigration, promotion of student and researcher immigration, promotion of multiculturalism and non- discrimination. Immigration based on studies can be a beneficial solution to tackle the declining workforce. The talent deficit is accelerating and global. An analysis of the demand and supply of talent in key sectors in 20 countries around the world indicates that the global shortage of talent (talent deficit) will be as high as 85 million people in 2030 (MOEC, 2021, p. 18). When foreign students come to Finland, they get a chance to be a part of Finnish workforce. The direct benefit that the host country receives is from the tuition fees paid by the students during their studies. Besides, student who get the opportunity to work part-time while studying also bring positive impact in the economy. Although it is hard to depict the exact amount of financial benefit the host country receives from a student starting the studies until graduation, there is no doubt that exporting education is a beneficial transaction for both countries involved. Four fifths of the added value generated by education exports results from the training of foreign degree students in Finland, which creates significant added value through the students’ consumption, and particularly the work input of graduates. A significant share of the remaining fifth comes from exports related to education in the publishing sector. According to an estimate by the Labour Institute for Economic Research LABORE, the total value of the education export sector in the Finnish economy was already nearly EUR one billion (OPH, 2022).

In 2019, 4740 new foreign degree-students began their studies in Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences (excluding doctoral candidates). Of these, 1,857 began their studies at universities and 2,879 at universities of applied sciences. In 2019, foreign degree-students completed around 5,000 higher education degrees in Finland, of which around 450 were doctoral degrees (MOEC, 2021, p. 11). According to one review, in school year 2019–2020, foreign degree students from higher education institutions had a positive effect worth EUR 81 million on the Finnish economy (OPH, 2022). The calculations take into account both the resources used for the education of

students during the school year in question and the net tuition fees received from them. Indirect income transfer impacts through the students' consumption and work have also been taken into consideration, as have the income earned by foreigners who graduated between 2000 and 2019 (OPH, 2022).

Finland's overall expenditure on education as a share of national wealth is high by international standards. In 2016, expenditure on primary to tertiary education as a proportion of GDP, at 5.5%, was higher than the OECD average of 5.0%. Finland also dedicates one of the highest shares of national wealth to adult training programmes (0.5% of GDP in 2015, compared to 0.1% on average (Figueroa, 2020, p. 21). Since, a country's prosperity and availability of skilled work force is directly proportional, a larger share of investment on education is a wise choice for keeping Finnish economy intact in the future.

Findings above suggest that education system of Finland has always been one of the major cornerstones in boosting overall economic development of Finland. Education export can be one of the best solutions to combat aging population and talent shortage in Finland. Apart from direct financial benefits Finland has also been able to strengthen its reach and soft power. The international students who go back to home country after graduation still tend to have strong ties with Finland. These emotional ties or soft corner could further propagate business relationships and collaboration opportunities in the future. The economic benefits of education export are multifaceted and certainly have brought positive impact on the country's economics.

6.3 Social factors

Education is one of the important aspects in development of a society. Without education and knowledge, the world would not have stepped in to the modern age. We human have been able to dominate all other species on this planet because of our intelligence. Education and intelligence are intertwined to each other since we are intelligent being we discovered education. First, we

discovered to communicate through language and then learned to shape the alphabets, number and later discovered to read and write. The earliest confirmed writing is recorded on a limestone tablet, known as the Kish tablet, which dates to around 3,500 BCE. The tablet was found on the site of an ancient Sumerian city called Kish, which is located in modern-day Iraq (Moul, 2023). From this we can estimate that as early as 5500 years ago human civilization had discovered to etch the information that could be passed on to future generation for centuries. Education plays a pivotal role in advancement of society towards modernization. It has shaped our cultural norms, economic development and political viewpoints throughout the development of society. From sharpening our abilities to think critically to being able to solve problems and to gain the understanding of our surrounding and cosmos education plays an important role. While knowledge could be obtained by observing, self-learning or through personal life experiences modern day education gives opportunity to a child to become literate from an early age and guide them to gain knowledge in the field of their interest as they grow up. In this era of scientific research, modernization and technological advancement education institutions play a vital role in shaping societies. In an ideal society, everyone should have equal opportunities, zero discrimination, social harmony, respect of culture and integrity. With the help of education, the society can leap towards prosperity and development. The birth of great minds throughout the history of mankind has shaped the world for better. All the development that we have in the field of Arts, literature, Science and Philosophy is the product of education. In modern world the academic qualification and the economic stability of an individual are closely linked. Higher level of education possesses a greater value in today's labour market. An individual with a college degree is more likely to get a high paid job in a big company than the one without it. As the labour market is highly competitive and every individual is seeking to enhancing their skill there is a great demand for good educational institutions. Finland's education system has been highly regarded due to its good result in PISA. Besides Finland has been topping the chart as the happiest country of the world consecutively for the past ten years (Marnie Hunter, 2024). Parameters like gross domestic product, per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make your own life choices, generosity of the general

population, and perceptions of internal and external corruption levels were taken into account to rank the happiest countries (Marnie Hunter, 2024). This review as the happiest country has helped positively in establishing Finland's brand image and aided in attracting great number of foreign students. The surge of foreign students in Finnish society has been able to reap various benefits due to education export activities.

Education export enhances cross-cultural understanding and relationships, enriching both the host and home countries. This exchange enhances global citizenship and mutual respect. It also enables diverse learning environment by exposing local students to different perspectives ideas and culture. Competition for international students can drive institutions to enhance their quality of education, research capabilities, and overall academic offerings raising the quality standards of the institutions. Parallelly the Finnish society has been able to attract talented individuals who can contribute to their workforce, research, and innovation sectors. Education export activities has boosted partnerships and collaborations between institutions across borders, facilitating research projects, academic exchanges, and joint programmes. Institutions that successfully engage in education export can enhance their global reputation, becoming recognized for their quality and innovation. Offering programmes tailored to international markets can help students gain skills that are in demand globally, preparing them for diverse career opportunities. Education export can support educational development in countries with less access to quality education, contributing to global efforts to improve education equity. International students often travel with family and friends, contributing to the tourism sector and local economies. Some of the successful companies started by immigrants are Stockmann (German), Fazer (Swiss), Sinebrychoff (Russian), Paulig (German) (Inktank, 2019).

In 2023, over 73,200 people immigrated to Finland, the highest number in this period. During the period from 2013 to 2022, the number of immigrants fluctuated between around 28,700 and almost 50,000 per year (Clausnitzer, 2024). Students who are not citizens of EU/EEA countries completed over 2200 university degrees in Finland in 2023, according to the Uutissuomalainen

news group. This is nearly 800 more degrees that were handed out in 2022, according to the news conglomerate, using data from the education statistics portal Vipunen. Jukka Haapamäki, a senior adviser at the education ministry, confirmed that Finland saw an increase of people coming to study from outside countries belonging to the EU and EEA (YLE NEWS, 2024). Last autumn, PM Petteri Orpo's (NCP) right-wing government announced it wanted foreign students to cover the full cost of their education. Surveys have meanwhile indicated that nearly half of foreign students plan to leave Finland after graduating. Challenges in finding employment, poor career prospects and difficulties in making Finnish friends were all cited as reasons for plans to leave the country (YLE NEWS, 2024). According to the results of a recent survey carried out by the non-profit group E2 Research around two-out-of-five foreign skilled workers have experienced discrimination in a Finnish workplace (YLE NEWS, 2022). Another report outlines that foreigner in Finland's labour market face prejudice, unnecessary language requirements, discrimination, lack of recognition of their qualifications and lower pay than their Finnish counterparts. Engineering union TEK commissioned the report, which found several faults with employers (YLE NEWS, 2021).

OECD published its latest report on the attractiveness of its member states for international talents. The indicators used in the report include quality of opportunity, income and tax, future prospects, family environment, quality of life, inclusiveness, and visa and admission policy (Government F. , 2024, p. 9). For specialists, Finland was ranked 14th (18th in 2019), and the top positions were held by New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland. Of the other Nordic countries, Norway was ranked 5th, Denmark 11th and Iceland 16th. For entrepreneurs, Finland was ranked 11th (8th in 2019), with Sweden, Switzerland and Canada holding the top positions. For international higher education students, Finland was ranked 16th (4^{th} in 2019) among the OECD countries, with the United States, Germany and United Kingdom holding the top positions (Government F. , 2024, p. 9). The sudden downfall in ranks for attracting international higher education students which has change from 4^{th} to 16^{th} is concerning. This marker suggests further attention is required from Finnish government to retain the previous position.

Education Export has positive impact in the society. However, the integration of immigrants remains a major concern. Various survey results indicate that immigrant find it harder to get a job in Finland. Majority of foreign graduates get rejected with the reason of insufficient Finnish language proficiency. The unemployment rate is higher in immigrant when compared to native population (Times, 2024). Hence, successful integration of immigrant is a complex issue. Cultural adaptation and language integration of foreign students seem to be one of the major highlights in which Finland government should be focussed on.

6.4 Technological factors

The export of education, particularly through offering international students places in Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) in Finland, significantly contributes to the country's technological advancement. This process not only enhances the diversity of academic environments but also fosters innovation and knowledge transfer, which are crucial for technological development. International students bring diverse perspectives, skills, and knowledge from their home countries. This diversity fosters an environment of creativity and innovation, vital for technological breakthroughs. Research indicates that diverse teams outperform homogeneous teams in problem-solving and innovation (Page, 2007). Thus, the influx of international students can lead to enhanced collaborative projects and innovative developments in various technological fields. Finland's education system attracts top-tier talent, contributing significantly to research and technological advancements. Many international students engage in research activities, which help universities and industries address real-world challenges. In turn, this collaboration can lead to the commercialization of new technologies and solutions. International students often form networks that extend beyond Finland, creating global connections that can facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technologies between countries. These networks can be pivotal in promoting Finland's technological innovations on an international scale, allowing for collaboration

and investment in research and development initiatives that may not have been possible otherwise. As international students graduate, many choose to remain in Finland and enter the local workforce, contributing to various sectors, including technology. Their skills and insights can stimulate local industries, particularly in fields like IT, engineering, and biotechnology, which are critical to Finland's overall economic and technological advancement. The demand from international students is prompting Finnish institutions to invest in advanced educational technologies. These include digital learning platforms, online courses, and innovative teaching methodologies, which not only improve the learning experience for students but also position Finnish education as a leader in educational innovation.

Aalto University, known for its focus on technology, business, and arts, has a significant number of international students. It engages in various collaborative projects with global technology companies. Initiatives such as the Aalto Startup Center provide support for start-ups and innovations that arise through international collaborations, showcasing how a diverse student body can lead to real-world technological advancements (Aalto, 2024).

The University of Oulu has embraced the influx of international students to enhance its research capabilities. The presence of multicultural student groups has led to innovative projects, particularly in the areas of telecommunications and health technology. For example, the university's research on 5G technology has been partly driven by the diverse perspectives of its international student population (Oulu University, 2024).

The Talent Boost program in Finland focuses on attracting and retaining international talent, particularly graduates from Finnish universities. This initiative has led to increased technological expertise within local companies. One prominent example is the influx of skilled graduates into Finnish tech companies, such as Nokia and Kone, where these individuals contribute to cutting-edge R&D projects and product development. Half of the tech giant's recently recruited employees in Finland are from abroad, CEO Pekka Lundmark noted (YLE NEWS, 2024).

The presence of international students at Finnish universities has spurred innovations in EdTech. For example, the University of Helsinki's EdTech development initiatives benefit from international insights, which help create diverse learning environments. Programmes like the HEI Happiness project focus on enhancing student well-being and engagement through innovative educational technologies. Helsinki Education Hub (HEH) is an innovation and competence centre utilizing educational research and supporting EdTech solutions (Helsinki University, 2024).

The University of Lapland focuses on smart city solutions, a growing field of technological advancement. International students contribute to projects that aim to develop sustainable urban living solutions. Collaborative research with local industries demonstrates how these students enhance technological innovation in real-life applications, such as sustainable transportation and smart infrastructure (Lapin AMK, 2024).

In conclusion, the export education system of Finland plays a vital role in driving technological advancement within the country. This dynamic not only promotes innovation and R&D but also strengthens global collaboration and enriches the educational landscape, ultimately contributing to Finland's position as a leader in technology.

6.5 Current state, effectiveness and challenges of the education export system (RQ 1.1-1.3)

In this chapter the current state, effectiveness and challenges in the education export system has been analysed according to the findings of PEST and chapter 5.

Major takeaways from PEST analysis have been summarized in the table below.

Table 2 Takeaways from PEST analysis

Political
Government Migration Policy Programme (Published on 2006) Promoted immigration to tackle aging population and mitigate labour shortage
Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009–2015 (Published on 2009) Promoted internationalization of HEI setting AIMS and concrete measures
Roadmap for Education-based and Work-based Immigration 2035 (Published on 2021) Promotes immigration to target work-based immigrations in sectors suffering from labour shortage
Policy reform on 15 April 2022 Student residence permit granted for entire duration of studies instead of one year Eligibility of being able to search for work after graduation increased (Previously one year now two years)
EDUFI Fellowship The grant is aimed for a doctoral student or a young researcher from outside Finland 1900 euros/month for 3-12 months can be given through the fellowship grant for the eligible foreign researchers
TFK Program The programme funds educational cooperation between higher education institutions through cooperation and mobility projects
Amendments to the Aliens Act to Parliament on 17 October 2024 Work-based residence permit would have three months to find a new job
Citizenship Act 1 October 2024 Period of residence for being eligible for citizenship changed from five to eight years
Economical
Shortage of workforce and need of work-based immigration
Talent deficit is real it would reach as high as 85 million people by 2030
Value of Finnish education export sector nearly one billion Euros
Positive effect worth EUR 81 million on the Finnish economy from foreign degree students
Expenditure on primary to tertiary education as a proportion of GDP, at 5.5%, compared to OECD average 5%

Social
In 2023, over 73,200 people immigrated to Finland
Non-EU students completed over 2200 university degrees in Finland in 2023
Nearly half of foreign students plan to leave Finland after graduating
Two-out-of-five foreign skilled workers have experienced discrimination in a Finnish workplace
Technological
Research indicates that diverse teams outperform homogeneous teams in problem-solving and innovation
Aalto Startup Center provide support for start-ups and innovations that arise through international collaborations showcasing how a diverse student body can lead to real world technological advancements
5G technology has been partly driven by the diverse perspectives of its international student population of Oulu University
Half of the Nokia's recently recruited employees in Finland are from abroad

The success in education export activities that Finland has achieved is an output of long-term goals and vision that Finnish government has set for many years from the past. Throughout different terms of Government, study based,

and work-based immigration was given utmost importance. The policies were reformed to attract international students from different parts of the world. Various reforms took place throughout the years like short processing time of resident permits, providing residence permit for the full duration of studies, enabling dependent visas for the spouse of students has boosted Finland's position as an attractive study destination. Finland has been able to transition smoothly from a free education provider to a rising power in education export industry with great future potentials. There has been a close collaboration between HEI, Immigration, Ministry of Education and culture, EDUFI and introduction of various projects to facilitate the growth of education export industry. The system is quite effective however skilled work force shortage is still a burning problem in Finland like it is in many other developed economies. Countries with huge population like India and China might not have a shortage of talent but, for rest of the developed world with low birth rates talent shortage is inevitable. Finland has adopted student mobility and work-based immigration as the solution to address the issue. Usually, a student moves to host country in pursuit of better education and opportunities. Factors like possibility to get a job after graduation, economic stability, equity and feeling welcomed in the host country plays a huge role in whether the student will stay or leave the country after the completion of study. The rising no. of international students even after the introduction of tuition fees depict that Finland has been able to quantify its image of country with a high-quality education system. The country tagged as happiest country in the world seem to have a huge impact in creating influx of international students to Finland. Besides, in some English-speaking countries quality of student is compromised and education export is purely seen as a financial transaction as discussed in chapter 5.1. However, Finland's strict approach on selecting students based on scores obtained on UAS exam and grades from former education aids in getting good quality students. This is one of the strengths of Finnish education export system as it ensures that international students admitted to Finnish HEI were not just admitted for getting the financial benefits from tuition fees but, they do also meet the criteria to actually be a student at the university.

On the other hand, there are few proposals of Government that are under discussion which might have a negative impact in the education export activities. A proposal has been sent to pass the law of three months' time to get a job after being unemployed for work-based residents as discussed in chapter 6.1. Besides, news regarding abolishment of scholarship system in tuition fees for non-EU students also discussed in chapter 6.1 if came into effect might cause negative impact in the attractiveness of Finland in the future. Similarly, the attractiveness of Finland for international students has dropped from 4th to 16th as mentioned in chapter 6.3. The data suggests Finland might face decline in attracting international students in the future. The foreign students are already facing challenges to get entry to job market as discussed in chapter 6.3 after completion of their studies due to lack of Finnish language skills and fewer networks. This seem to be one of the major issues in export education system of Finland. As Finland needs skilled workforce, and international graduates could address the labour shortage problem. This issue should be one of the areas of attention of Finnish government. Either companies should be able to lower their criteria on Finnish language skills to recruit more foreign national graduates who come to study, or the language courses must be vigorously implemented in degree programmes so that Finland can reap the utmost benefits from export education.

7 NEPALESE STUDENT SCENARIO AT SAMK (RO2)

To get more insights on Nepalese students and their status in Finland the data were gathered from SAMK's education services. There were 41 students enrolled for the year 2017-2019. By the year 2024 only 19 (46%) had graduated from SAMK and 22 (54%) hadn't graduated. Five to seven years is sufficient time for completion of the degree and since majority i.e, 54% hadn't graduated it indicates that majority of Nepalese students from these 54% had either transferred or dropped out. Below is the graphical presentation of scenario of Nepalese students at SAMK.

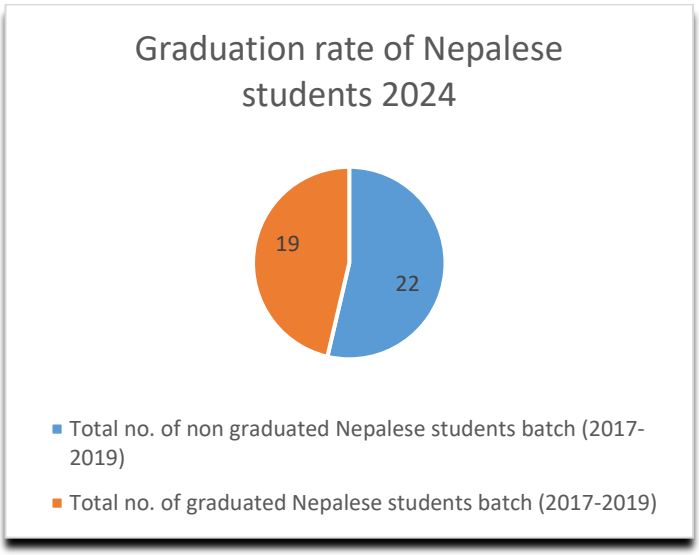

Figure 4 Graduation rate of Nepalese students (batch 2017-2019) by 2024 based on SAMK's database

The no. of admissions in the span of four years (2020-2024) for Nepalese students stood at 175. 60 (34%) had started their studies in Spring of 2024. 49 (28%) were enrolled for other than the first semester. During this time nine (5%) had graduated, 12 (7%) had transferred, 28 (16%) were absent and 17 (10%) had dropped out. The transfer rate and absent rate of Nepalese students were high. The high amount of drop out, transfer and absent student indicates that the performance of Nepalese students in SAMK particularly doesn't seem to be in an ideal shape.

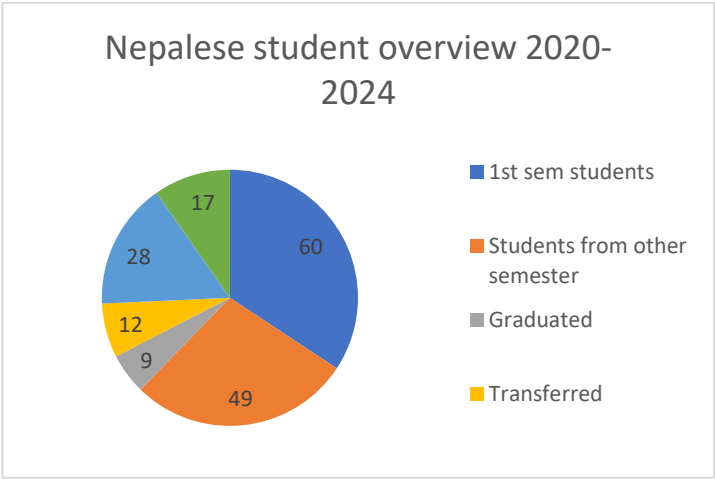

Figure 5 Overview of Nepalese students (2020-2024) based on SAMK's database

Below is the graphical presentation of transfer situation of international students.

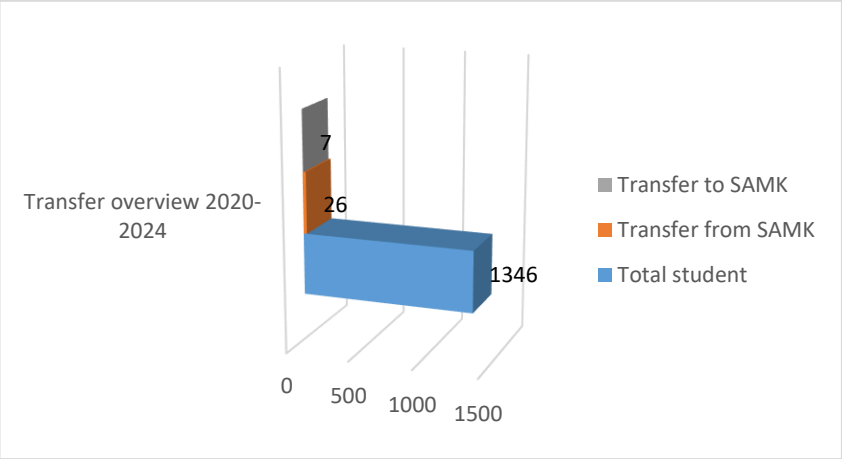

Figure 6 Scenario of transfers of international students based on SAMK's database

The graph was designed to have a transfer overview in the span of four years (2020-2024). There were 1346 international students in total, 26 had transferred out of SAMK and seven had transferred to SAMK. The most common degree programmes transfers to and from SAMK were International Business and Nursing faculty. Mostly transfers to SAMK took place from Haaga-Helia and Yrkeshögskolan Novia UAS. The data shows that total amount of transfer is relatively small. However, the fact that 12 out of 26 transfers (in the year 2020-2024) were made by Nepalese students indicate that transfer is relatively common in Nepalese group compared to other nationalities.

8 SWOT ANALYSIS OF SAMK (RQ2.1)

To study the internal strengths and weaknesses of Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) and external opportunities and threats of SAMK, SWOT analysis is performed. SWOT analysis will help to fulfil the second objective of the research. The table below represents the SWOT analysis of

SAMK. The detailed explanation of table3 is followed by subheading of this part. SWOT analysis answers RQ2.1 of the research.

Table 3 SWOT analysis of SAMK

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
• High quality of education and practical studies • International community • Research and development • Extensive cross-institutional study networks	• Few events and activities (in English) • Lack of well-being support informations for International students • Lack of International student tutors
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
• SAMK's new strategy • International environment • Visa application process	• Unemployment during studies leading to transfer • Services in the region • Tuition fees and scholarships

8.1 Strength

- High quality of education and practical studies

The high quality of education is created by the expertise of teachers, researchers and other personnel as well as modern working and learning environments. Pedagogical development has also been emphasized at SAMK. SAMK was ranked number one in terms of teaching quality in Finland by “Ammattikorkeakoulujen valmistumisvaiheen opiskelijapalautekysely” (AVOP). AVOP is a UAS feedback questionnaire asking graduating students to evaluate and provide feedback on their education. According to Statistics Finland, during the last ten years SAMK graduates have been employed the best in the category of universities of applied sciences located outside the metropolitan area. (Wahlman, 2020). Again in 2021, based on the results of the AVOP student feedback survey by universities of applied sciences and the Ministry of Education, SAMK was the best university of applied sciences in

Finland in student-oriented organization, planning, guidance and teaching. Among bachelor's degree graduates, SAMK ranks second best (out of 23 universities of applied sciences) in terms of AVOP indicators and third best among master's degree graduates. (Saarinen, 2022).

"KARVI" The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent authority responsible for the national evaluation of education. The evaluations of FINEEC cover the education system in its entirety, from early childhood education to higher education. Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) received a quality seal in the audit carried out by FEEC, which was valid for six years from 29 February 2016 (Länsi Suomi, 2016) . Again in 2022, SAMK received the quality seal valid for six years from March 16, 2022. SAMK also has an ISO 9001:2015 certificate issued by DNV Business Assurance Management System Certificate (SAMK, n.d.)

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) received international recognition of Physiotherapy education. The World Physiotherapy awarded the physiotherapist professional entry-level education programmes full accreditation for the term 23 March 2021 to 21 January 2025. (Höijer-Brear, 2021)

SAMK has yearly about 300 student projects together with companies and organizations. Cooperation with enterprises gives the studies a practical view. Practical training is a part of all degree programmes. This means that all SAMK students have a traineeship of their own field in an institution or a company. (SAMK, n.d.)

- International Community

In 2023, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) was awarded as the "International Employer of the Year" by JCI Finland (i.e. Junior Chamber International, Finland) for successfully recruiting and retaining international talents. SAMK has over 200 partner universities all over the world. International activities like student and staff mobility opportunities, international research projects and networks, internationalisation at home activities, double

degree programmes, pathway studies, winter and summer schools and a wide range of support services are provided for international degree students. International degree students are provided with guidance and support already before arrival and during their studies too. SAMK has diverse international networks and cooperation programmes like Erasmus+ mobility programme, Magellan network, Baltic University Programme. There are also field-specific networks such as NIBS, Businet, ENNE, ENPHE and TURID. Therefore, SAMK is truly an international educational institution with a wide international network. (SAMK, n.d.)

- Research and development

SAMK being located in Satakunta region, which is also known as industrial and innovative region, SAMK has been investing in research activities that support industrial renewal and strengthen the region's workforce. SAMK has established six centers to support companies and communities in developing their operations and finding future business opportunities. The research centers of SAMK are as follows:

- RoboAI Research and Development Center
- Business Intelligence Center BIC
- Maritime Logistics Research Center
- Research Center WANDER
- Center for Tourism Business Development
- Research Center for Human Functioning

Thus, SAMK is extensively doing research in the field of technology, innovation, business intelligence, logistics chains and maritime security & safety of supply, tourism industry, humane technology with social and health sector’s characteristics, well-being, development activities in - water, materials and indoor hygiene. (SAMK, n.d.) In addition to product and service development for industry and businesses via research centers, SAMK also work in the field of welfare services and their productization by working on numerous regional, national and international projects. In total, SAMK is/was

involved in 356 projects. While most of these projects are in ongoing status, many of the projects have ended as well. (SAMK, n.d.)

- Extensive cross-institutional study networks

Cross-institutional studying means that students can participate in the study at another higher education institution. This will help them to expand their study opportunities enormously by choosing to study at another Finnish higher education institution and incorporating these studies into their own degree. SAMK is involved in several cross-institutional study networks like; DiSata, KiVANET, KUPI and OsKuRi. (SAMK, n.d.)

DiSata is the cooperation between SAMK and Diak which aims to increase the opportunities to implement UAS education in the field of social services. This has also strengthened research, development and innovation cooperation between the universities of applied sciences in Satakunta. KiVANET is a cooperation network which offers online language courses strengthening the linguistic capital through higher education. There are wide range of languages to choose from: German, Russian, Spanish, French, Italian, Chinese, Portuguese, Japanese, Estonian, sign language and Korean. KUPI was developed by the degree programmes in mechanical engineering of four universities of applied sciences. Under the umbrella term of maintenance, students can participate in courses in maintenance (Lapin AMK), plastics technology (SAMK), engineering mechanics (LAB-AMK) and piping design (XAMK). OsKuRi is a network which offers studies for the students in the field of rehabilitation studies. (SAMK, n.d.)

In addition to these cross-institutional networks, SAMK has educational cooperation agreement with Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences which enables students from the two universities of applied sciences to have even wider study opportunities. (SAMK, n.d.)

8.2 Weakness

- Few events and activities (in English)

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) has been organizing various events and activities for the student's well-being however, only few events are targeted for international students. There are only couple of annual huge events for international students. Numerous small events and activities are organized every now and then however, mostly these events are in Finnish or only in Pori campus. Below is an example of activities organized by well-being tutors for the month of September in Autumn 2023. (SAMK Oiva, n.d.)

- ❖ Thu 14.9.2023 Finnish Chatbox club in students living room (part C) at 16.30-18.30
- ❖ Mon 18.9.2023 Painting workshop – Unleash your inner artist (5€) in Culture center Kruunupää at 16.30-18.30
- ❖ Tue 26.9.2023 Bike ride, start from Pori Stadion at 16.30-19. Opportunity to borrow a bike
- ❖ Thu 28.9.2023 Finnish Chatbox club in students living room (part C) at 16.30-18.30
- ❖ Fri 29.9 Smileycafé in Agora Hall at 11.30-13.00

However, in the year 2024 active initiation has been found for organising few of the same events and activities in both languages (Finnish and English).

- Lack of well-being support information for international students

It is supremely important to be aware of the physical and mental well-being specially when the international students are porn to homesickness, culture shocks, seasonal affective disorder etc in the new country away from home. However, mostly the information about support of well-being can be found only in Finnish language on SAMK's well-being page. (Support for well-being, n.d.) Although remotely, it is worth praising that Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS) has initiated to organize stressless coaching in English from Autumn 2024.

- Lack of International student tutors

During the beginning of the semester, international students are assisted by their international student tutors. The student tutors are usually the students studying in 2nd or 3rd year. Ideally, the student tutors are expected to guide the international students of their own degree program as the main purpose is to help the new international students with the adjustments of studies. Besides, student tutors also help new students to settle in and adapt in the new environment and help with practical matters. For this, international student tutors must be trained before they start the tutoring. However, there is lack of international student tutors at SAMK. Although the new students are expected to be supported from the very beginning of their semester, they are trained while the semester already begins. The challenge to find international student tutors could also be there because of the fact that international students transfer their studies on 2nd year of their studies however, the process of selection and training should be planned beforehand.

8.3 Opportunities

- SAMK's new strategy

Master's thesis "should I stay or should I go" written by Jaana Savel in 2022 explained about the reasons why the international students of SAMK often leave Satakunta after graduation (Savel, 2022). The study showed that unemployment after graduation was the root cause of leaving Satakunta region. Thus, SAMK has formulated the vision that all SAMK students will be employed. Furthermore, SAMK's new strategy "Our SAMK" which will be gradually implemented by the beginning of 2025; will focus on learning, aggregating force, integrating power, performance and internationality (Strategy, n.d.). As SAMK's president Jari Multisilta addresses the challenges faced by international students of not finding the work placements and summer job due to language barrier, SAMK demands the workplaces in Satakunta to offer work placements and summer jobs to international students as well because SAMK believe that one can also learn a language by working in an environment where the language is heard and needed (SAMK, 2024)

- International environment

Since SAMK offers an international environment as it was awarded as the “International Employer of the Year” by JCI Finland (i.e. Junior Chamber International, Finland) for successfully recruiting and retaining international talents. This certainly attracts international students to choose SAMK as their study destination. Every year SAMK attracts over 1000 international degree and exchange students from 100 countries. SAMK has over 200 partner universities all over the world (SAMK, n.d.)

- Visa application process

In the past, Nepalese students applied for the residence permit via enterfinland website. The processing time were usually longer and for the appointment, they visited Embassy of Finland. However, In July 2024, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs awarded contract to “VF Worldwide Holdings Ltd”; an external service provider for receiving visa and residence permit applications (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2024). After this, the visa processing has been easier and faster than before because VFS global has their service points in Nepal too. Nowadays, Nepalese students are granted visa decisions within few weeks although only the application process is being done by the VFS and the decisions are provided ultimately by the Embassy of Finland (VFS global group, n.d.). This has helped the students to arrive on time for starting their studies at SAMK.

8.4 Threats

- Unemployment during studies leading to transfer

As the international students are required to pay the tuition fees each year for their studies, it is very important for them to find a part-time job to be able to pay for their tuition fees. As the research already shows that there is lack of employment opportunities to the international students even after graduation, the struggle of being unemployed during the studies, makes the situation unfavourable for the students. In these circumstances, they are left with the

choice to move to other places which eventually results in failing to graduate on time or moving their studies to other universities. However, SAMK is optimistic that this threat could be overcome by the new strategy in implementation.

- Services in the region

One of the threats for SAMK is also the service aspects in the region in relation with job opportunities outside the region. Since language barrier is the key reason for not finding employment opportunities, students tend to apply for jobs in the regions where language barrier is lesser i.e. capital. Clearly majority of people live in capital because of the services, employment opportunities and English language. As capital is already the hub for immigrant to settle down conveniently, it is obviously the best choice for finding jobs to the international students too. When students find jobs in the capital city, they are most likely to transfer their studies because they would find more services, infrastructure and facilities in Helsinki than in Satakunta region. In such cases, it takes more than three hrs to travel to go for work (either by train or by bus) from Satakunta to Helsinki. Specially nowadays, since many students arrive with their spouse or children, they are more likely to consider health services, shopping centers, English speaking schools etc while making decisions on moving from Satakunta region to other places. Besides, accommodation issues have been one threat to SAMK. With rising number of incoming international students every year, the challenges of getting accommodation near to campus has increased.

- Tuition fees and scholarships

Having the above two threats taken into account, SAMK students might transfer their studies to other universities on the basis of tuition fees and scholarships as well. Below is the table which shows distinction of tuition fees and scholarships scheme for bachelor’s degree programmes among some UAS of Finland. The table3 has been prepared based on the information provided on the different UAS websites as of 20.10.2024.

Table 4 Tuition fees and scholarships in different universities of Applied Sciences in Finland

Name of UAS	Academic fee per year (in €)	Early bird discount 1st year (in €)	Success in studies scholarship (following years) & criteria	Scholarship based on studies success (in €)
SAMK	9500	1500	50% to top 5 (60ECTS of av. GPA 3,5)	4750
Arcada UAS	11000	2000	30% to all (55ECTS of av. GPA4,5)	3300
Centria UAS	9500	950 (10%)	20% to all, 100% to top 2 (60ECTS in case of 20%)	1900 or 9500
LAB UAS	8000	1600	50% to all (60 ECTS each year)	4000
Laurea UAS	8000	-	15% to all (60ECTS each year)	1200
Savonia UAS	9700	1940(20%)	20% to all (60 ECTS each year)	1940

The academic tuition fees per year is neither too high nor too low which is a positive aspect when attracting students at SAMK. There are various scholarship schemes offered by SAMK as well as other universities. In the above table, the same parameter for comparison has been taken thus, only early bird discount and success in studies scholarship is drafted. At a glance, the amount received as scholarship by SAMK students might look alluring however, this amount is received only by top five students whereas, in other UAS, some amount is received by all students who completes 60ECTS in a year. Thus, while students are struggling to pay tuition fees, receiving any amount as refund/scholarship might contribute to their other expenses. Additionally, since the scholarship is based on studies success, the students are more likely to stay motivated to study and complete the studies on time as well. However, these has not been considered by SAMK while formulating their scholarship schemes.

Currently, dynamics of scholarships scheme are changing. Many UAS along with SAMK has already started providing scholarship based on language proficiency as language barrier has been identified as challenge to the international students. Thus, the new scholarship schemes could change the scenario in near future.

9 DATA ANALYSIS

9.1 Data analysis of questionnaire survey

Primary data were collected from questionnaire survey to get the answers of RQ2.2 and RQ2.3. This research uses both the qualitative and quantitative data analysis method. Questionnaire were prepared using Microsoft forms for the survey. There were 24 respondents who participated in the survey however, two out of 24 were not Nepalese. No personal details were collected thus they were anonymously answered. The questionnaire was based on 23 questions of mixed standards, containing open-ended questions and selected multiple-choice options. The questionnaire was left online for 19 days. The data were analysed by identifying key themes, integrating with SWOT analysis and categorizing the responses.

9.1.1 Respondent demographics

The survey gathered responses from a diverse group of Nepalese students enrolled across various degree programmes. A significant portion of respondents reported being in their 1st year of the studies. Figures 7 and 8 are based on survey results.

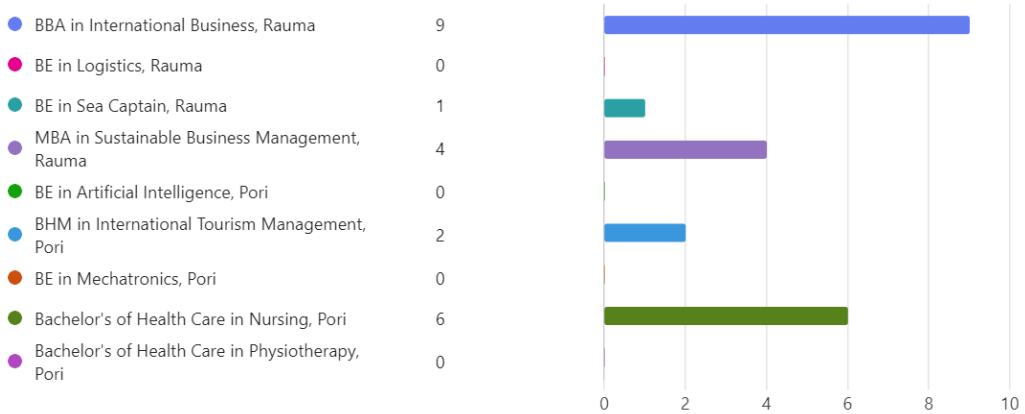

Figure 7 Respondent's degree programmes

Figure 8 Respondent's year of studies

9.1.2 Why did they choose Finland (RQ2.2)

While 50% of the respondents first choice was not Finland, while for the other half, it was the first choice of destination. Respondents highlighted following factors for choosing Finland:

- Quality of Education: A majority indicated that Finland's education system's reputation and focus on student welfare were significant draws.
- Career Opportunities: Many students mentioned the potential for career development and better job prospects in Finland compared to their home countries.
- Cultural Experience: The opportunity to immerse themselves in a new culture and environment was frequently noted, enhancing students' personal and academic growth.

9.1.3 Motivation and Demotivation Factors at SAMK (RQ2.3)

The survey sought to identify specific motivational and demotivational factors that influence students' decisions to remain at SAMK or consider transferring:

- Motivational Factors:

  Positive responses were noted regarding the supportive faculty, quality education and the collaborative learning environment that fosters engagement among students. Extracurricular activities and community

engagement were cited as contributing to students' connectedness and overall satisfaction.

- Demotivational Factors:

Language barriers emerged as a strong demotivational factor, along with challenges related to adapting to a different education system. Some students expressed frustration regarding communication issues and a perceived lack of inclusion. Furthermore, structural issues such as high tuition fees and inadequate job placement opportunities raised concerns about the viability and sustainability of their studies at SAMK.

9.1.4 Additional Information

Some other interesting data were available from the survey which might be useful for SAMK to look upon. Data revealed that 41% of the respondents from 1st to 2nd year of studies were interested in transferring to other UAS. The figure below is presented based on survey results

Figure 9 1st-2nd year respondent's opinion about transfer

9.2 Data analysis of interview (RO3)

The interview was taken from five students selected for five different degree programmes in English. The plan was to interview one student from each English degree programmes of autumn intake 2024. However, the author was able to take interview of only five students as only six-degree programs had selected Nepalese students and a student from one of the degree programmes

did not attend the interview. The idea was to collect view, opinion and experience of students from each degree programmes. The interviewee were the enrolled students of autumn intake who were in their home country at the time when interview was taken. The interview was done online via TEAMS in June 2024. On average, the interview lasted for 20 mins. The student details were provided by admissions office thus, the interviewer randomly sent invitation to the students from the list provided by the office. For the data to be reported anonymously, interviewees will be identified as Student A, B, C, D and E.

For the analysis of the data collected from interview regarding the role of agencies in their decision to study in Finland and at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK), a qualitative analysis approach was employed. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the students' experiences and perceptions regarding the consultancy services they utilized. The following methods were utilized for the data analysis:

- Thematic Analysis: This method involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. The data from the interviews were coded to highlight recurring themes or concepts that directly addressed the research questions.
- Comparative Analysis: Responses were compared across different students to identify similarities and differences in perceptions regarding agency support, expectations, and experiences with studying in Finland and SAMK.

9.2.1 Students’ Choice of Finland and SAMK

Below is the graphical presentation of the answer to the question: Was Finland your first choice of destination?

Figure 10 Was Finland interviewee's first choice?

Majority of the students initially considered other countries (e.g., Australia, Denmark, Canada) before eventually selecting Finland. This shows the students' proactive research into global educational opportunities, influenced by factors such as affordability, safety, and quality of education. Out of these factors, the common answers received from interviewee whose study choice was not Finland was that the tuition fees are relatively lower than other countries and scholarships were relatively higher than other countries. Regarding choice of study institution as SAMK, while some students indicated that SAMK was their first choice, others applied to multiple universities. The common things revealed by the study included scholarship availability, quality of education, and degree programmes fit.

9.2.2 Equipping with Appropriate Knowledge (RQ3.1)

In the interview, some questions were regarding the application process like: how did they apply to Finland? Below is the graphical presentation of the answers received.

Figure 11 How did they apply to Finland?

It was found that three out of five respondents had applied via consultancy and the rest of the two respondents had applied via agency. Although those respondents who had applied via consultancy repeatedly mentioned that they were self-involved in the process more than consultancy was. At some point, they even argued that consultancy support was not there throughout the process thus, can be considered as self. However, it depicts that the students at some point took aid from consultancy or agency in the application process.

Students exhibited varying levels of satisfaction with agency/consultancy in terms of information received. While some; like Student C who had applied via agency found the agency helpful in navigating the documentation and application process, and his queries were fulfilled by agency whenever required. Student C emphasized that he had already done thorough research thus, it was easier for him to get required information. However, student D criticized the same agency for a lack of comprehensive information regarding SAMK and living conditions in Finland. Moreover, Student D highlighted that he did not receive adequate guidance as expected. Similarly, in terms of services provided, responses from the interview indicated mixed satisfaction level. Student E mentioned he was satisfied but emphasized that the consultancies were often busy and not particularly helpful beyond the initial stages of the application process. This suggests a potential gap in ongoing

support once students have moved from application phase to next. However, some students were given support even after the selection process as well. It is understandable for the consultancies to fail on doing so however, responses from Student C and D which showed difference in experience from the same agency was the most surprising one. Besides, it was found that mostly, basic information about Finland was given by the agency/ consultancy however, detailed information about SAMK was not provided.

9.2.3 Alternatives to Agencies (RQ3.2)

Several students expressed a desire to navigate the application process independently, asserting that they could acquire most necessary information through online resources and personal networks. This sentiment was particularly emphasized by Student B, who suggested that relying on consultancy/agency might not be beneficial and that prospective students could seek advice from those who have already experienced the process. Besides, student A & B who had argued that they more prefer to say that they applied by themselves, although they had taken aid from consultancy in the initial phase of application process, they already had their relatives or friends in Finland and thus, they emphasized that they would not suggest students to visit consultancies or agencies rather, do the process by themselves. Also, most of the respondents highlighted the need for agencies to enhance their support services for the charge applied.

9.2.4 Additional Information

It was found during the interview that two of the students were already interested in knowing the transfer process to other UAS. Thus, on further enquiry it was found that they got the information on transfer possibilities from their relatives whilst the agencies/consultancies didn’t suggest them to transfer rather emphasized transfer was a tedious process and they should stick to the same degree programmes.

At the end of the interview, all the interviewees were asked about their status of visa application process, and it was found that three out of five students had already received their student visa. Among from the remaining two students, one had already given the interview at VFS while the other had interview scheduled for next week. This also shows that the visa application process has now been speedy in Nepal as recognized in SWOT analysis as opportunity. This aids SAMK to be able to start the intake with good no. of students on campus.

10 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finland's education export has grown significantly throughout the years. The success in education export activities is the result of well thought plans throughout different governments. The current education export process seems to be very efficient. Collaboration in between Migri, UAS and HEI from selecting the student to granting residence permit is carried out seamlessly. The high-quality education system of Finland has been able to attract large no. of international students for higher studies. Finland's image as the world's happiest country backed with one of the best social security systems has left a positive impact in attracting international students. Various programmes like EDUFI Fellowship, TFK, Talent Boost Finland are initiated to attract skilled individuals from different countries. The major reforms like student residence permit granted for the whole duration of studies has helped in attracting huge no. of NON-EU students. As aging population remain a major concern in Finland there is still shortage of work force which can't by tackled only by the native population. Foreign students travel to study abroad in search of better-quality education and many of them are willing to settle abroad if they get better opportunities compared to their country. Thus, increase in foreign students for higher education could help to tackle the shortage of work force. Currently, value of Finnish education export activity is close to one billion Euros. The revenue generated from the export activity could be further re-invested in the

education export sector to better the position of Finland's education system. Current Finland's education export activities however is mainly concentrated in higher education activities. Since, Finland has one of the best education systems on school level i.e, (ECEC, Primary, Lower Secondary, Upper Secondary). If these models could be branded to attract foreign stake holders' Finnish education export activities won't be limited just to HEI. All findings suggest that there is a huge potential for Finnish education export industry if capitalized towards the right direction.

On the contrary, according to the findings of PEST analysis, there are various issues which should be taken into consideration for the sustainable growth of Finnish Education export. Foreign students come to Finland not only to get a degree but also keeping in mind the future prospects of getting job after graduation. Policies regarding work-based residence permit is also vital for attracting foreign students as students' ultimate goal is to enter the job market. Some of the major issues are regarding the "Amendments to the Aliens Act to Parliament on 17 October 2024" which is scheduled to be in force from April 2025. According to this law foreigners under work-based residence permit have only three months of time to find a job. Otherwise, the right to live in Finland would be lost. Government justifies that the act would enable re-employment and addresses the issue of labour shortage in verified sectors. However, this act could be easily argued since, three months of time is too little to get a job in Finland as a foreigner. Besides, finding of PEST showed that Finland ranking went down from 4th in 2019 to 16th in 2023 in attractiveness for foreign degree students. This means Export education could face potential back lash in future. Also, one of the major findings from PEST suggest that foreign students find it harder to get a job after graduation when compared to native population. This means there is a hurdle for foreign degree student to enter the job market. Since, Finland needs skilled workforce, and foreign graduates could fulfil the shortage there is already a pool of resources to address the problem. The only question remains how it can be done. In case of Finland, introduction of Finnish language courses more intensively to the degree programmes could help students better their chance of entering the job

market after graduation and simultaneously Finland could tackle the Talent deficit issue efficiently in the future.

Although there were many motivational factors identified based on the responses received from the survey which indicated the quality of education, supportive faculty and cultural exposure offered by SAMK but there were substantial demotivation factors too. Therefore, it is highly recommended for SAMK to work on the demotivational factors identified in this study. As language barrier emerged as a strong demotivational factor, perhaps offering more Finnish courses or adding up the frequency of contact teaching of Finnish courses during their studies would be an alternative. The fact that international students usually enrol to elective courses during the summer holidays, perhaps SAMK could introduce an additional course (out of curricula) for example: a basic self-study course like “Summer Finnish learning” package for the international students which would cover the basic summer-job related exercises. The course could be structured in a way which would have assignments in relation to what they learn in their workplace and mostly targeting only interested international students having summer jobs. As the students have more free time for learning Finnish during summer and since many tend to find summer job, perhaps integrating their learning outcomes (Finnish language skills) with their summer job could be beneficial for them and would certainly aid the students to improve their language proficiency. Besides, this might also help to minimize the challenges of finding jobs to some extent.

Additionally, according to data revealed in chapter 9.1.4 only 1st and 2nd year students are more interested in transferring to other UAS thus, it would be very beneficial for SAMK to prioritize their retention first. Perhaps, initiating scholarship schemes targeted to the 1st and 2nd year students may help in retaining these students. On the other hand, it was found in the survey that 3rd-4th year students were highly motivated to complete their studies. Thus, if the 1st year students have opportunities to get along with 3rd year students in some ways through welcome party, events or organising weekly “international students club”, this might help information exchange and aids networking

opportunity within the international community among students from different year of studies. This could be initiated by international tutors however, as mentioned in SWOT analysis lack of international tutors is one of the weaknesses of SAMK thus, firstly prioritizing to provide international tutors for the international students is highly recommended to SAMK.

From the study of role of agencies in chapter 5.2, the findings suggest that agencies should provide more holistic support that encompasses advising services, to assistance with applications, to visa processing services, to pre-arrival services and information on job market to educate the international students adequately. However, the data analysis from interview showed that some students did not get the expected support from agencies/ consultancies. Mostly the criticism received from students A, B and C were mainly related with lack of support, information and high fees charged by agencies/consultancies. Therefore, Agencies must re-evaluate their services to include thorough information about Finnish culture, language barriers, housing options, and job opportunities. Agencies should reconsider their fee structure to ensure value for money, potentially offering tiered services based on the level of support required by the student. Inspired by the findings, constructing peer support networks where current students can connect with prospective students may bridge the information gap and foster a sense of community. Agencies could host informational workshops in collaboration with SAMK that prepare students for life in Finland, covering aspects beyond just application process. Perhaps, SAMK could consider providing regular trainings to their agents because changes are inevitable and if agents are updated with the existing information, it will aid the interested applicants to get right sets of information. Since most of the students in interview suggested the future students of SAMK to navigate the process by themselves, perhaps, SAMK might consider direct marketing by conducting information session in upper secondary schools of Nepal.

The results from interview showed that the accepted students (still in Nepal) perceive Finland’s quality education being offered in relatively affordable price and good scholarship programmes compared to other countries like Australia, Canada. However, the results from questionnaire showed that the students

(already in Finland) studying at SAMK perceive the same tuition fees to be higher and the same scholarship programmes to be limited. Firstly, the difference in perception is because the students living in their home country tend to compare the tuition fees with other countries while, the students studying at SAMK tend to compare the fees with other UAS of Finland. Thus, students' perception of fees changes significantly after starting their studies in Finland vs. while applying for studies in Finland. After the students are in Finland, the circumstances where there are lack of part-time job opportunities and services in the region, students are bond to compare fees and scholarship as well. It is also important to note that the tuition fees and scholarship as identified as threats to SAMK in chapter 8.4, perhaps it is the best for SAMK to restructure them. Higher tuition fees at the time of admission will still attract new students because they tend to compare the fees with other country's tuition fee however, providing scholarships that are commonly provided by rest of the UAS in Finland might help to retain the students from transferring to other universities. There are news regarding abolishment of scholarship schemes in tuition fees for international students, thus if this is implemented in action, then this recommendation can be ignored.

11 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

While the initial assumption of author before starting the thesis was that; there is correlation between their demotivation to study in SAMK and their arrival process which is mainly via agency or consultancies. Although there is relation between their starting journey and their interest of transfer while starting their studies at SAMK, however, it can be concluded that agencies/ consultancies have nothing to do with their interest in transfer. The study found that the interest in transfer of studies was mainly due to the influence from relatives or friends living in different cities of Finland i.e. outside Satakunta region and also mainly in search for affordable tuition fees. In addition to these factor, other

reasons for opting to transfer their studies were unemployment during studies and limited services in the region (as identified as the threats to SAMK in chapter 8.4). Besides, author had received transfer queries from international students who were not of Nepalese origin so, the anticipation was that transfers were not common in Nepalese students however, in chapter 7, it was found out that 12 out of 26 students transferring to other UAS were Nepalese.

During this thesis process, the author's knowledge on export education system has widened. From the very starting point of the thesis, the objectives of the thesis were quite clear for the author however, shaping the theoretical framework and planning the implementation were quite challenging and were revised in the process. Different official websites and various secondary sources like books, reports, articles, journals were utilized for the theory part of the thesis.

In the planning stage, the author had decided to take interview of SAMK's agents in Nepal however, since the author assumed that the results might be biased because they fail to critically review their own services. Therefore, later the author decided to take interviews of the accepted Nepalese students who had not arrived in Finland yet so that they would be able to share their recent experiences with agencies/ consultancies in details. For selecting the respondents of interview, author asked a list of three students from each English degree programmes from the admissions office. The author's plan was to interview one student from each English degree programmes however, it was notified from the admissions office that there were no accepted Nepalese students in two-degree programmes; MBA in Sustainable Business Management and BHsc in Physiotherapy. Therefore, the author had received a list of 18 students and the reason for asking three students from each degree programmes was to select only the ones who would be willing to give the interview and ones who would fulfil the research objective because only the students applying via agency or consultancy is taken into consideration. The author had contacted all the students from the list to ask if they were willing to give the interview and also to confirm if they had applied via agency/consultancy or not. Therefore, only the ones who replied and

confirmed were invited for an online interview. Since the author had received a random list of students from admissions office, there is no biasness from both the parties in selection of respondents because neither admissions nor the author had any information about their application process, the credibility of selecting the respondents for interview is not compromised. Similarly, while conducting the survey, the link to questionnaire were delivered from communications department to the international students via email and thus, there were no biasness in the data collected and the first question in the questionnaire was “Are you a Nepalese Student?” Those who were Nepalese students only had the possibility to see and answer the remaining questions in the survey. Therefore, credibility has not been compromised for the survey as well. However, considering that the sample size for survey and interview was small, to some extent the reliability of the data might be questioned because the results might have been different if the population size were greater. Nonetheless, this challenge was already mentioned as limitation of the study in chapter 2.2. and therefore, based on the collected data and analysis, the author has tried to present the data in the most accurate way possible. Besides, the results obtained from SWOT analysis regarding SAMK’s weakness and demotivation factors were mapped with each other and were found to be same, thus, the results are very reliable.

Regarding the ethical considerations, no personal details were collected in the survey, only the respondent’s degree programmes were collected to identify that the population size is from diverse demographics because the experience and thoughts of students from one-degree programmes may differ with another. Similarly, for the interview as well, no personal details were collected apart from the details provided by admissions office. The confidentiality has been highly regarded for this research hence, all the data were anonymously analysed and reported.

The author hopes that the recommendations would be considered by SAMK. This model of study can be useful for future researcher to analyse the export education system from Finland to their home country. Similarly, the same study model can be utilized to investigate the situation with the international student

of SAMK as a whole. If the researchers wish to extend the study of Nepalese students, future research could expand on this by examining long-term outcomes for students who utilized agency services versus those who navigated the process independently. Besides, the author had mainly focussed on the current education export system centered in Finland. For future research, impact on Nepal due to education export activities from Finland could also be an interesting topic. Additionally, there are many proposals for policies impacting education export activities. Thus, the future researchers may extend this study to again analyse the effectiveness of education export system after those policies are implemented and also evaluate has it improved or worsen the situation of export education.

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APPENDIX 1:

Survey questionnaire

1 Are you a Nepalese citizen?

2 Was Finland your first choice of study destination?

3 Why did you choose Finland?

4 Which country was your first choice? Why did you still choose Finland?

5 Do you like being an international student in Finland?

6 What is the best part of being an international student in Finland?

7 After you made decision to choose Finland for abroad studies, you applied via:

8 Could you please provide the name of the consultancy you applied through? (optional)

9 Please provide the name of the agency.

10 How did you know about SAMK?

11 What were the hurdles in transition of being a student in Finnish UAS? You may list them in two sentences.

12 Please list 5 best aspects of SAMK.

13 Please list 5 worst aspects of SAMK.

14 Are you motivated to complete your studies?

15 Please share why don't you feel motivated to study?

16 Overall, how satisfied are you with the teaching method in SAMK?

17 In which degree program are you currently studying at?

18 In which year of your studies are you currently at?

19 Since you are in 1st-2nd year of your studies, if it was possible for you to transfer your studies right away, would you transfer your studies to:

20 What could be the main reason for your transfer decision? You may list many if required.

21 Since you are already in 3rd-4th year of your studies, could you please let us know if you had or had not transferred your studies during your study period?

APPENDIX 2:

Interview questions:

1 Was Finland your first choice of destination? Why?
2 Why did you still choose Finland?
3 How did you apply?
4 What is the name of the consultancy?
5 What do you know about Finland?
6 What do you know about degree program and UAS?
7 Was SAMK your first choice?
8 Why did you choose SAMK?
9 What are your expectations from SAMK?
10 What information was provided to you by the agency or consultancy about SAMK and staying in Finland?
11 Are you satisfied with how consultancy/agency helped you throughout the application process?
12 Do you have suggestions for what consultancy/agency could have done better to help you?
13 Could you let me know which stage you are in with the visa application process?

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