

**BARRIERS AND AVENUES TO LABOUR  
MARKET INTEGRATION OF NEPALESE  
IMMIGRANTS WITH INTERNATIONAL  
DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS FROM  
FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION  
INSTITUTIONS IN FINLAND**

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Master's Thesis  
Master's Degree Programme in  
Development, Education and  
International Cooperation  
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University of Jyväskylä  
Autumn 2022

# UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

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Title Barriers and Avenues to Labour Market Integration of Nepalese Immigrants with International Degree Qualifications from Finnish Higher Education Institutions in Finland	
Subject International Development Studies	Degree submitted for: Master's Degree Programme in Development, Education and International Cooperation (DEICO)
Month and year December, 2022	Number of pages 73 pages, 2 appendices
Supervisor David Lawson	
<p>Abstract</p> <p>The research explores the obstacles confronted by the Nepalese immigrants with international degree qualifications from Finnish higher education institutions into the Finnish labour market and ways to overcome the obstacles or to facilitate their integration into the Finnish labour market. The research findings can be useful for the policy makers and concerned authorities to formulate policies and measures to facilitate integration of international degree students and graduates from the Nepalese nationality background into the Finnish labour market. They may also be useful for the community of international students and graduates from immigrant backgrounds looking to get integrated into the Finnish labour market.</p> <p>Qualitative research methods were used for the research. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were applied to select the interviewee participants. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. Synchronous method of technologically mediated interviews was conducted via zoom. Audio-recorded individual interviews were conducted. Implied consents were obtained for the interviews. Thematic analysis with inductive, semantic and essentialist/ realist epistemology were used for the research.</p> <p>In conclusion, the barriers confronted by the Nepalese international degree graduates into the Finnish labour market comprise personal and institutional barriers. Personal barriers include lack of Finnish language skill, lack of social networks/ professional connections, lack of work experience/ training/ practical knowledge, lack of confidence at workplace or to apply for field related jobs and lack of motivation to apply for field related works or dissatisfaction towards out-of-field works. Institutional barriers include lack of job opportunities, discrimination, lack of information flow and inaccessibility to integration/ training programmes. Likewise, the avenues to their labour market integration comprise personal and institutional avenues. Personal avenues include focusing on the Finnish language from the beginning and keeping trying to find field related jobs. Institutional avenues include relaxing Finnish language requirements, improving Finnish language teaching at schools/ universities, providing Finnish language course at workplace, providing internship opportunities, positive attitude towards immigrants, coaching employers/ companies about diversity and providing support programmes.</p>	
Keywords: barriers, avenues, immigrants, international degree, international students, international graduates, Nepalese immigrants, immigrant integration, labour market, Finnish labour market, labour market integration	
Depository University of Jyväskylä	
Additional information	

## ABBREVIATIONS

CIMO	Centre for International Mobility
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IT	Information Technology
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TE-office	Työ- ja elinkeino toimisto (Employment and Economic Development Office)
THL	Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare)
UAS	Universities of Applied Sciences
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN DESA	United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis studies barriers and avenues to labour market integration of international degree graduates from the Nepalese nationality background that migrated to Finland as international students. Increase in migration of students at an international level has become a global phenomenon alongside growth in international migration (King & Raghuram, 2013, p. 128). UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022) regard international student as a person crossing a territorial or national border for education purpose with his/ her enrolment outside his/ her country of origin.

Growing trends of migration of international students to Finland as indicated by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (n.d.) and increment of foreign degree students in Finnish higher education institutions according to Education Statistics Finland (n.d.) increases the need to facilitate their integration into Finnish societies. The European Commission Migration and Home Affairs (n.d.) has emphasized that integration of immigrants into the labour market is an effective way to integrate them into host societies. Immigrant is a person moving into a country (Finnish Immigration Service, 2022).

Given that employment prospects affect choices of international students of where to study as indicated by CIMO (2016, p.1), integration into the labour market of the host country becomes an important issue for international students and graduates. The European Commission Migration and Home Affairs (n.d.) defines host country or receiving country as the EU member state or country where the third country national or non-national resides. In the research, it refers to the country of residence of immigrants or the international students and graduates.

Oláh (2017, p. 801) indicates that possession of better adaptability skills of highly educated immigrants increases their likelihood to contribute better towards economic growth of the host countries. Moreover, the tendency of student immigrants to develop themselves even after migration to the host countries consider them to become more desirable (King & Raghuram, 2013, p. 127). Immigrants' participation in the labour market facilitates them by making their lives more fulfilling and contributes to the economic development (Federico & Baglioni, 2021, p. 1). This in turn helps to

promote positive attitudes of the locals towards immigrants as argued by Heilbrunn et al. (2010, p. 245) indicating that integration of immigrants into the labour market is necessary to make their migration successful.

The declining of working age population in Finland increases significance of immigration for sustenance of the economic well-being (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment/ International expertise and labour, n.d.). Furthermore, the reliance of Nordic countries (Finland in this context) on high employment rates for their generous welfare systems requires successful transition of immigrants into the labour market (Calmfors & Gassan, 2019, p. 12).

With the focus on labour market integration, the thesis focuses on economic aspect of the participants. The focus of study on employment as economic aspect has been emphasized by Colic-Peisker and Henderson (as cited in UDAH et al., 2019, p.1171) indicating employment as one of the fundamental aspects for immigrants to become successfully integrated into societies. Given that employment is imperative for successful integration, to become economically integrated is one of the predominant problems of immigrants according to Heilbrunn et al. (2010, p. 244).

The thesis explores the challenges and difficulties confronted by the Nepalese international degree graduates in the Finnish labour market by reflecting on their labour market experiences. In addition to the obstacles that hindered the Nepalese immigrants' prospects to integrate into the Finnish labour market, recommendations for overcoming the barriers as ways to integrate into the labour market are also sought for in the study. The research findings can be useful for the concerned authorities and policy makers to understand the obstacles confronted by the Nepalese international degree graduates in the Finnish labour market and ways to facilitate their integration into the labour market. They may also be useful for the community of international students and graduates from immigrant backgrounds looking to integrate into the Finnish labour market.

## **1.1 Research gap**

UDAH et al. (2019, p. 1166) indicated that non-recognition of overseas qualifications constrained employment prospects of immigrants from the African background by impeding their labour market access and making it difficult to find jobs in the Australian labour market. Moreover, Kogan (as cited in Heilbrunn et al., 2010, p. 245) indicated that recently arrived immigrants' high education level did not help them find jobs matching their skills and qualifications in Germany. These studies suggest that educational qualifications obtained abroad do not help immigrants to find



employment in their related fields or integrate into the receiving country labour market.

Provided that immigrants' overseas qualifications do not help them to find employment in their related fields, the research helps to investigate if educational qualifications obtained locally in the receiving country helps immigrants to find employment matching their qualifications or to integrate into the host country labour market. The utilization of educational qualifications of immigrants obtained locally in the receiving country has also been emphasized by CIMO (2016, p.5) indicating that working in fields irrelevant to the degrees is not profitable both for international students and the Finnish society despite many of the international students finding works and staying in Finland after graduation and statistics lacking the information whether they are working in their degree related fields or not.

As per the European Commission Migration and Home Affairs (n.d.), 40% of highly educated third country nationals work in employment that are incommensurate to their qualifications with lack of validation of skills and recognition of qualifications being the key issues. The research investigates impediments to employment prospects of international degree graduates or immigrants with locally obtained international degree qualifications into the labour market of the receiving country. In doing so, the research focuses on the aspect of migration research different to that encompassing overseas qualifications by focusing on barriers and avenues to labour market integration of Nepalese immigrants with educational qualifications obtained in Finland that match the requirements of the Finnish labour market.

## **1.2 Research objectives**

Immigrants' inclusion in all areas of the Finnish society is bolstered by the integration policy by promoting their employment and helping them gain membership of Finnish society. Various measures and services exist for supporting immigrants' integration that includes promoting their employment prospects. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment promotes immigrants' employment and TE-offices support them in seeking jobs upon registration as jobseekers. The Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration helps immigrants to gain equal membership with the majority population both in terms of responsibilities and rights (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, n.d.).

However, the research focus is not on the aspects supporting immigrants' integration into the Finnish labour market but on the factors that impede their labour market integration. Therefore, the research objective is to explore the difficulties faced

by the Nepalese international degree graduates that hindered their prospects of integrating into the Finnish labour market. Moreover, it explores suggestions and recommendations from the participants for overcoming the barriers or improving their integration into the Finnish labour market.

The research relies upon the experiences of the Nepalese immigrants that migrated to Finland as international students, have lived in Finland for a considerable time during their studies as well as after graduation and possess Finnish labour market experiences. Heilbrunn et al. (2010, p. 245) argue that barriers in the labour market of the receiving country must be encountered by all groups of migrants irrespective of their skill levels. Moreover, Udah et al. (2019, p. 1169) indicated that interpersonal and structural barriers hinder immigrants from getting employed in meaningful jobs thus leaving them marginalized. Meaningful jobs referred to jobs commensurate to one's skills and educational qualifications.

The research involves challenges experienced by the Nepalese immigrants both as international degree students and graduates or immigrants with locally obtained educational qualifications. The challenges concerning both out-of-field and field related employment are considered in the research. In addition to the hindrances, the research also seeks to explore ways to overcome the hindrances or avenues to the Nepalese immigrants' integration into the Finnish labour market. The research revolves around the two research questions as follows:

1. What are the barriers confronted by the Nepalese international degree graduates to integrate into the Finnish labour market?
2. What are the ways to overcome those barriers or the avenues for the Nepalese international degree graduates to integrate into the Finnish labour market?

### **1.3 Relevance of research to sustainable development goals**

Of the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all the UN Member States in 2015 that are fundamentally acting as a model for achieving a better and sustainable future for all (United Nations, n.d.), the thesis is connected to the SDG 8 that involves promotion of decent work and productive employment besides inclusive and sustainable economic growth (UN DESA, n.d.). Decent work encompasses opportunities for productive work delivering fair incomes, better prospects for developing personally and integrating socially, workplace security and social protection, freedom to expressing concerns and participating in the decisions

affecting their lives and equal opportunities and impartial treatment for all people (ILO, n.d.).

By identifying the barriers and avenues to Nepalese immigrants' labour market integration in Finland, the research seeks to identify the obstacles that are hindering the achievement of the SDG 8 of promoting decent work, productive employment and inclusive economic growth involving Nepalese immigrant participants and consideration of the hindrances from the policy level could help to achieve the goal of SDG 8.

The research is also aligned with the SDG 10 which is to reduce inequalities within and among countries and ensuring no one is left behind (United Nations, n.d.). The prevalence of barriers hinders the prospects of the Nepalese immigrant participants from integrating into the Finnish labour market thus creating disparities among population and putting them in unequal positions and in risk of being left behind. UN DESA (2020, p.12) indicates that impacts of migration on positive development can be maximised by removing barriers to immigrants' participation in the labour market through measures and the pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of "leaving no-one behind" can be fulfilled by the inclusion of migrants in development planning.

## 2 BACKGROUND

The research background encompasses history of immigration in Finland, statistics regarding Nepalese immigrants in Finland, Nepalese nationalities among foreign degree students in Finnish higher education institutions and foreign students from Nepalese background in Finnish higher education institutions compared to those from other background groups in Finland. Foreign students are non-citizens enrolled in higher education degree courses (Global Migration Data Portal, 2022).

### 2.1 Immigration history in Finland

According to the data obtained from the Statistics Finland/ Migration (n.d.), Finland was primarily a country of emigration until the end of 1970s and immigration began

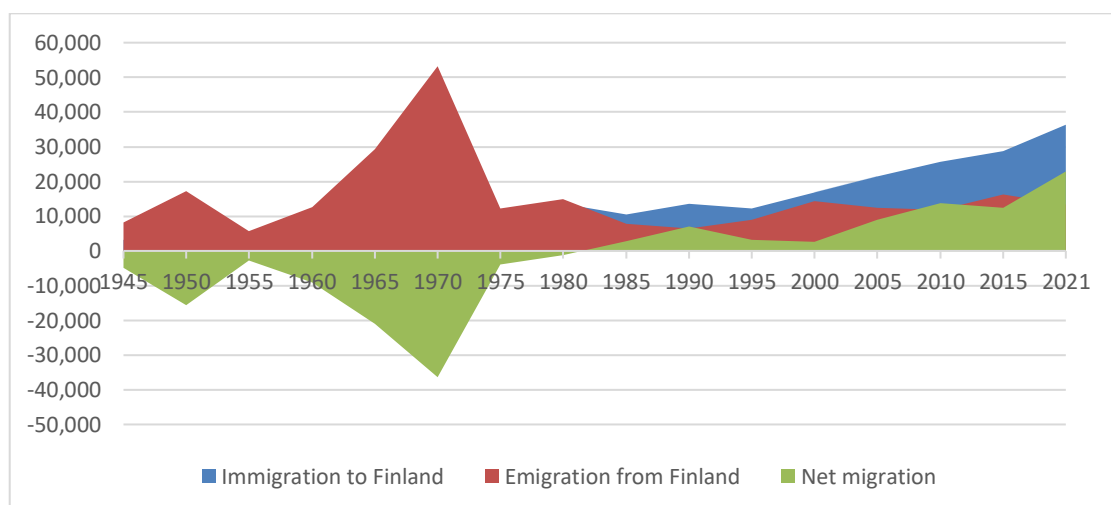


FIGURE 1 Immigration trend in Finland based on data obtained from Statistics Finland/ Migration (n.d.).

to rise only from the beginning of the 1980s with the considerable rise in immigration and net migration in Finland starting only from the mid-2000s as can be seen in Figure 1. The net migration in Finland was the highest in the year 2021 with the number approximately 23,000.

## 2.2 Nepalese immigrants in Finland

The migration of people from the Nepalese nationality background to Finland dates to the beginning of the 1990s but the noticeable rise in immigration of the Nepalese nationalities began only from the late 2000s with a noticeable drop in immigration in 2018 compared to the preceding years as can be seen in Figure 2 (Statistics Finland/ Migration, n.d.).

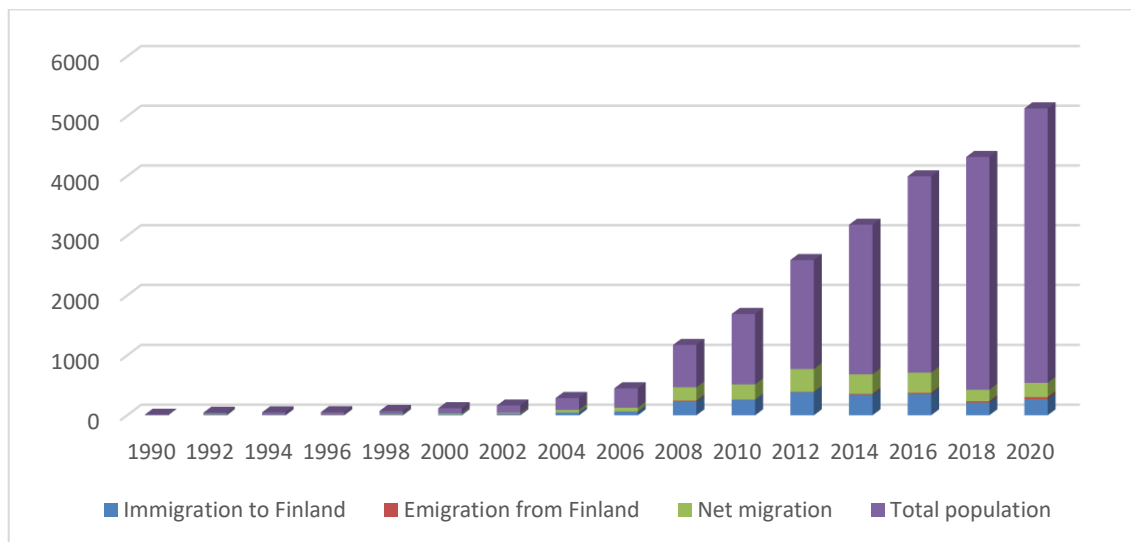


FIGURE 2 Immigration trend of Nepalese nationalities to Finland based on data obtained from Statistics Finland/ Migration (n.d.).

The population from the Nepalese background seems to increase only in the last decade as can be seen in the Figure 2. The total population of Finland in 2021 was 5,548,241 out of which people with immigrant background accounted for 469,633 and those belonging to Nepalese background accounted for 5,012 (Statistics Finland/ Immigrants and integration (n.d.).

### 2.3 Nepalese among foreign students in Finnish higher education institutions

The number of foreign degree students in the Finnish higher education institutions has been on a rise since the beginning of the 21st century with the number declining between 2017 and 2019 after which it has started to rise again both in universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS). The proportion of foreign degree students including the doctoral and licentiate degree levels in universities is higher than that in UAS as can be seen in Figure 3. However, the total number of foreign degree students in UAS exceed that in universities given that bachelor and master level degrees are only considered. The total number of foreign degree students in Finnish higher education institutions including both universities and UAS amounts to around 22,700 in 2021 (Education Statistics Finland, n.d.).

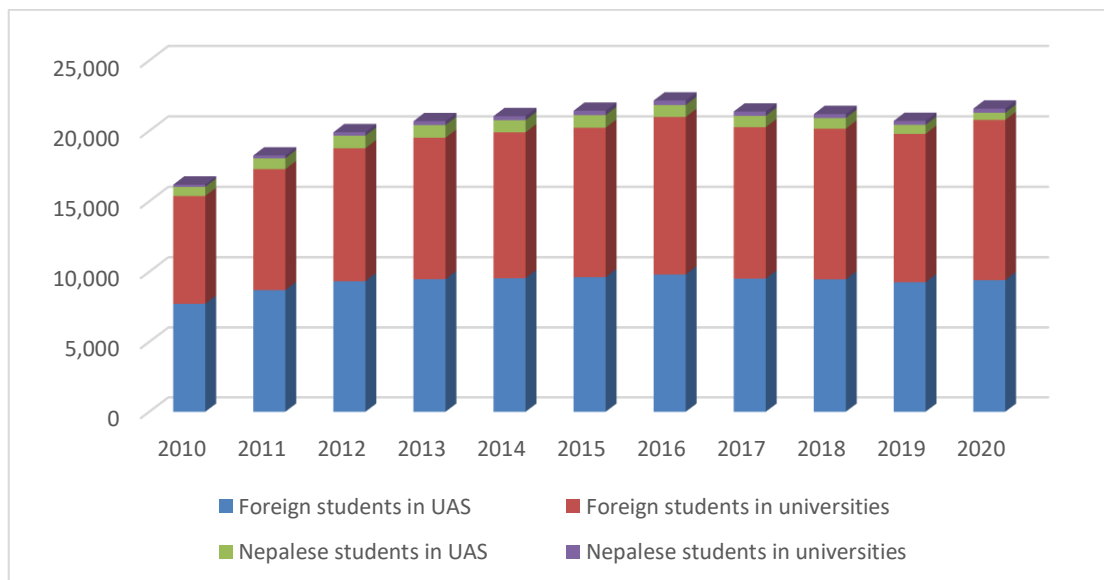


FIGURE 3 Degree students from Nepalese background and total foreign degree students in Finnish higher education institutions based on data obtained from Education Statistics Finland (n.d.).

As can be seen in Figure 3, the number of foreign degree students from Nepalese background has been on a rise until 2016 both in UAS and universities after which the number has started to decline in UAS where majority of them have been studying compared to those in universities. The number of foreign degree students from Nepalese background in UAS was almost five times than those in universities in 2010. But the trend has been shifting over the years resulting in the decrease in gap between those studying in UAS and universities. The number of those studying in UAS were only about twice than those in universities in 2020 (ibid).

## 2.4 Foreign students from Nepalese background compared to other background groups

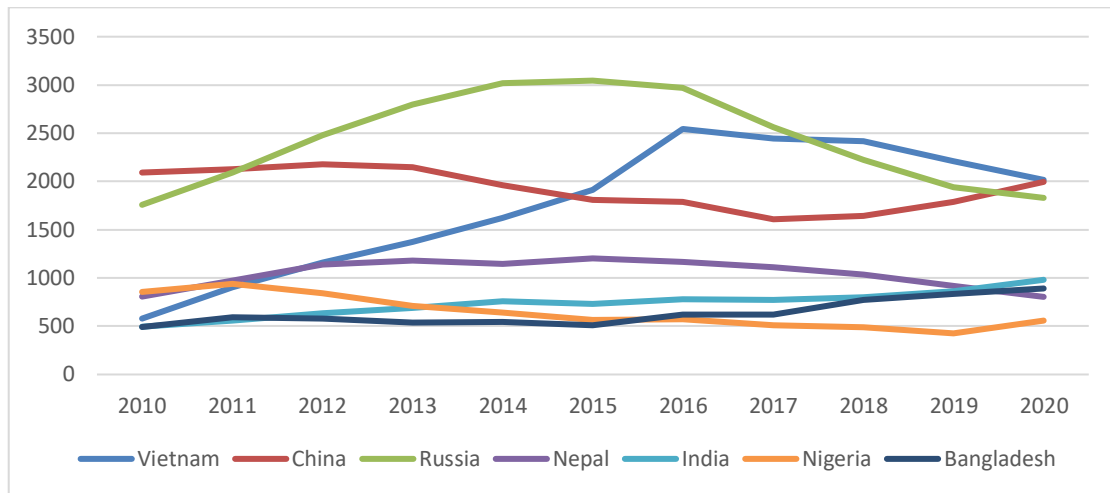


FIGURE 4 Foreign degree students from Nepalese background relative to other background groups in Finnish higher education institutions based on data obtained from Education Statistics Finland (n.d.).

The nationality background of the study group in the research i.e., the Nepalese nationality is among the most common nationality group among foreign degree students in the Finnish higher education institutions alongside Russian, Vietnamese and Chinese nationality backgrounds for the past decade as can be seen in Figure 4. Despite the notable decline in the number of students from the Nepalese nationality background in Finnish higher education institutions in 2019 and 2020, the number was still 804 in 2020 with 37% of them in universities and 63% in UAS (Education Statistics Finland, n.d.).

### **3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter consists of the concepts and previous findings related to the topic. The conceptualizations of the relevant terms for the study are subsequently followed by the previous findings related to the study topic.

#### **3.1 Concepts**

The concepts or important terms related to the study are conceptualized in this section. The terms to be conceptualized include labour market and immigrant integration.

##### **3.1.1 Labour market**

The labour market consists of the demand side on one hand that includes employers as purchasers of labour services and producers of goods and services and supply side on the other hand that includes households and individuals that supply or sell labour services (Sapsford, 2013, pp. 3-4). Possessing demand and supply sides as the constituents, the labour market is referred to as the contest between the demand and supply of labour in a given period of time and in a particular geographical area that is generally concluded via employment or with an individual employment contract (Beligrădeanu & Ștefănescu as cited in Serena, 2017, p. 201).

The neoclassical theory treats the labour market as the exchange system where buyers as the demand side and sellers as the supply side meet with one another individually and as equals and is independent of societal contexts (Loveridge & Mok (2012, pp. 27-28). In neo-classical labour economics, theory of demand depends on employers' behaviour of maximizing profits and a supply theory is based on workers'



behaviour of maximizing utility. The labour supply theory emphasizes issues related to individual productivity such as investing in human capital which determines individual's skills and occupation and choices of leisure that determine the amount of labour supply. Neoclassical theory holds assumptions that individual workers possess the freedom to choose amongst a wide range of job alternatives available in the labour market based on their skills, abilities and personal preferences and are rewarded based on their human capital endowments (Leontaridi, 1998, p. 64).

The segmented labour market theory questions the neoclassical ideology that the individual's productive capacities are directly linked to their allocation across jobs and wages. It contradicts the idea that the labour market is unified and competitive and comprises non-competing segments in forms of institutional barriers causing individual workers to be rewarded differently despite their possession of the same human capital thus restricting them from benefitting equally from their human capital in forms of acquired education and training (ibid).

According to the labour market segmentation theory, the jobs in the labour market are bifurcated into primary and secondary sectors. The primary sector comprises good jobs with high economic security, better negotiated wages and high prospects to career growth. Whereas the secondary sector comprises bad jobs which are generally unskilled jobs offering no prospects to career advancement and comprises competitively determined low wages (Leontaridi, 2002, p.69).

### **3.1.2 Immigrant integration**

Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines integration as incorporation of individuals from different groups as equals into an organization or society. Abdirahman (2017, p.2) defines integration as "the two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and host societies in which migrants are incorporated into the social, economic, cultural and political life of the receiving community". The aspect of integration as the "two-way process" has also been emphasized by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (n.d.) indicating that integration aims to help immigrants feel or gain full membership in the society of the receiving country. Feeling or gaining equal and full membership in the receiving societies promotes acceptance of immigrants as society members thus resulting in their successful integration (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland/ Integration of immigrants, n.d.).

Integration of immigrants into the labour market is an effective way to integrate them into the host societies and it involves fully using their skills and realising their economic potential (European Commission Migration and Home Affairs, n.d.). Moreover, jobs matching immigrants' experiences and skills and commensurate to

their educational qualifications constitute successful labour market integration (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007, p. 3).

Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines barrier as something that is not material which keeps progress apart or makes it difficult. In the research, barriers to labour market integration refers to something that hinders the individuals' prospects to find employment and incorporation as equals into the company organization. Heilbrunn et al. (2010, pp. 245-246) indicated that immigrants confront barriers arising due to their novice status and labour market situation of the receiving country i.e., objective barriers that are common to all cohorts of immigrants regardless of their ethnic backgrounds such as language problems, lack of experiences in the receiving country labour market etc. and subjective barriers resulting due to deficiency of the immigrants' human capital which depend on specific characteristics of the immigrants such as prejudice, lack of professional skills etc. Barriers encountered by the immigrants strongly affect their incorporation into the labour market (ibid, p. 247).

Lundborg and Skedinger (2016, pp. 315-316) indicated the challenges to labour market integration in three levels: individual level resulting due to deficiency in human capital, firm level challenge due to firms/ employers' attitudes towards recruitment of workers and wage determination that is driven by discrimination and policy level challenge that includes support for employment and allocation of minimum wages by labour market institutions.

Light and Rosenstein (1995, as cited in Heilbrunn et al., 2010, p. 246) indicated the occurrence of resource disadvantage when immigrants enter the labour market with limited amount of human capital such as self-confidence, social networks etc. and labour market disadvantage is independent of the productivity of the immigrants and eventuates due to discrimination based on sex, race and nationality backgrounds.

Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines avenue as a route or a way to accessing a place or achieving a goal. In the research, avenues to labour market integration refers to something that facilitates employment prospects of the individuals and their incorporation as equals into the company organization.

## **3.2 Previous Findings**

The previous findings related to the research topic are as follows:

### **3.2.1 Language**

Possession of the language skill of the host country provides immigrants with advantages in the labour market of the receiving country. Having the language skill of the host country helps to acquire more employment opportunities and immigrants possessing the mainstream language skill will be in a position to take advantages of the wider range of opportunities situated and prevalent in the wider labour market (Ahmad, 2015, p. 975).

As immigrants benefit from their possession of the host country language skill, the lack of such language skill has its disadvantages. For instance, the lack of the Finnish language skill hinders the integration of immigrants into the Finnish labour market according to Vålmaa and Weimer (2014, p. 706). But it was not only the lack of or insufficient language skills of immigrant applicants impeding their labour market integration but employers' inability to communicate in English due to insufficient English language skill also hinders recruitment of immigrants by the employers (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 34).

International companies operating worldwide preferred applicants to possess intercultural competence and knowledge of multiple languages as they are expected to interact with people from different cultures. Therefore, employers are benefitted by multilingualism of international students in terms of their proficiencies in their home-country language, host-country language and English as their academic study language adding to their versatility. However, the lack of host country language was seen as barrier to employment as it hinders the prospects of integrating and adjusting, developing trust among colleagues, meeting stakeholders' expectations and affects flexible deployment of employees as fluency in local language is required for fulfilment of some tasks (Shchegolev et al., 2016, pp. 103-104).

The extent of the requirement of the receiving country language depends upon work sectors and is not the same across all the sectors. Lyytinen and Toom (2019, pp. 31-32) indicated that insufficient Finnish language skill hindered recruitment of immigrants (esp. in customer service works) as some extent of the Finnish language (although not fluent) was required in some sectors such as health care, logistics, restaurants etc. whereas some minority employers had also hired immigrants that did not speak Finnish. Similarly, the Finnish language skill was not required in all the fields as noted by Shumilova et al. (2012, p. 65) indicating that the Finnish language skill was highly important for securing jobs in fields other than the IT. The requirement of the Finnish language skill also depended upon the availability of labour as the language requirement was waived in building or construction sectors where there was the shortage of labour (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, pp. 33-34).

Simply possessing the receiving country language skill was not adequate for the immigrants or international students and graduates to integrate into the host country labour market but the level of the language skill, accent and communication skills

affected and determined their integration into the labour market. For instance, the low-level proficiency in the English language and accent posed challenges to labour market accessibility in Australia (Udah et al., 2019, p. 1165). Weak language and communication skills hindered international students' prospects of finding jobs in their career related fields as they were judged by their prospective employers based on their communication abilities compared to the locals (Scott et al., 2015). Therefore, the immigrants are required to possess the host country language proficiency of higher or moderate level as indicated by Oláh et al. (2017, p. 798).

### **3.2.2 Social networks**

Information and connections obtained through the possession of social ties can be valuable in enhancing job searches according to Alho (2020, p. 6) and knowing people and having good social networks can be important and helpful in securing employment and for labour mobility (Udah et al., 2019, p. 1168). Possession of social networks benefits directly as well as indirectly. Social networks in forms of personal contacts need not only help directly in attaining jobs but they can also be the sources of suggestions or information for seeking jobs (Ahmad, 2015, p. 978).

Possessing social networks has advantages whereas the lack of those can also have its disadvantages. The lack of extensive job networks or inaccessibility to local employment networks denies immigrants' access to the labour market or increases their likelihood to remain at the periphery of the local labour market (Udah et al., 2019, p. 1169). The lack of or absence of social networks can also result in unemployment as has been indicated by Lyytinen and Toom (2019, p. 28) that youth immigrants' lack of social networks for gaining access to the Finnish labour market caused unemployment amongst them. Scott et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of networks for international students indicating that the lack of professional connections and networks during studies makes it difficult for them to get employed in their fields of studies after graduation.

In addition to securing employment, the nature of social capital possessed by the immigrants also determines the employment opportunities acquired by them in the host country labour market. Ahmad (2015, p. 977) indicated that the type of employment opportunities the immigrants acquired depended upon the nature of their social capital (Ahmad, 2015, p. 977). It has also been corroborated by Alho (2020, p. 6) arguing that getting a job or the type of job depends not just on the human capital but also on the job seeker's societal acquaintanceships.

Ethnic networks of immigrants are advantageous for securing employment opportunities but can be constraining factors for their occupational mobility especially through vertical lines. Finding difficulty to get into the labour market through formal job channels due to the reluctant attitudes of employers to hire immigrants, they have to rely on ethnic ties that land them in low-status employment for survival. Continuous concentration of immigrants in ethnic or low socio-economic networks constrains the better labour market pay-offs despite possessing language proficiency, work experience and longer length of stay in the receiving country (Ahmad, 2015, p. 982).

Social capital can be bonding or bridging depending upon whether the ties are with ethnic groups or co-nationals and with majority or mainstream population. Ethnic ties or ties with co-nationals i.e., bonding social capital in Finland did not have any value in attaining jobs commensurate to educational qualifications and professional aspirations and thus were not career enhancing (Alho, 2020, p. 14).

On the contrary, bridging social capital i.e., ties with majority or mainstream population helps to build connections to possible workplaces through connecting with majority population. Contacts with Finnish people or their references from work related contexts or apprenticeships help to overcome lack of trust that hinders employers and companies from recruiting international students or immigrants as indicated by Alho (2020, p. 15) which in turn facilitates their integration into the labour market. Bridging social capital can be useful as effective social capital which is required for human capital to yield good labour market pay-offs (Ahmad, 2015, p. 982).

The use of networks for employment was not limited to employees but employers also apply various methods according to their convenience to find suitable employees. Employers emphasized that hiring through employee's networks makes recruitment lot easier than through formal channels such as the TE-offices and employment agencies (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 31).

Given the importance of social networks for integration of immigrants and international students into the labour market of the receiving country, social capital can be built in various ways. Alho (2020, p. 15) indicated that by participating in networking events, internships, volunteering, hobbies and in various informal settings and in some multi-ethnic contexts helps to build social capital. International students in Canada used opportunities of volunteering, residence life, on-campus jobs, research experiences with lecturers at universities to build connections and networks that further helped them to secure future employment (Scott et al., 2015).

### **3.2.3 Discrimination**

Heikkilä (2005, p. 491) has emphasized that being a foreigner was a barrier to recruitment of immigrants. Discrimination towards immigrants in the labour market of the receiving country hinders immigrants' integration in various ways. It not just lessens immigrants' prospects to better employment opportunities and discourages further investment in their human capital but also pushes immigrants towards their ethnic groups resulting in the formation of ethnically dominated networks which in turn constrains them to low-status employment (Ahmad, 2015, pp. 982-983).

Discrimination occurs on various grounds such as based on skin colour, native language and nationality backgrounds of immigrants that affects their recruitment. Udah et al. (2019, p.1163) indicated that racism based on the skin colour impeded the labour market integration of African immigrants in Australia. The recruitment of immigrants is hindered by physical appearance, countries of origin and native languages of immigrants and practical reasons such as the lack of the Finnish language skills are used by employers as explanations or excuses for their reluctance to hire immigrants (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 28).

The reluctance of the employers to hire people with foreign backgrounds results in local applicants with less competence being hired despite applicants with foreign backgrounds having fluency in the local language skill (Alho, 2020, p. 12). The likelihood of immigrants to fall to discrimination depends upon the degree of distinction in terms of their colour and appearance relative to the local population. Visibly distinct immigrants compared to the local people are likely to confront discrimination in the labour market (Burstein as cited in Heilbrunn et al., 2010, p. 246).

Whether or not or to what extent a certain immigrant group falls to discrimination also depends upon the names and nationality backgrounds of the immigrant applicants. Immigrant applicants with non-European names were more discriminated than those with European names and the invitations for job interviews depended upon immigrants' names. The jobseekers of non-European backgrounds have to struggle harder to overcome discrimination than the majority population and their European counterparts despite possessing equivalent human capital endowments (Ahmad, 2020, pp. 487-488).

### **3.2.4 Non-recognition of overseas qualifications**

Qualified and skilful immigrants face challenges in the labour market due to the non-recognition of their skills and educational qualifications obtained in the country of origin. Uda et al. (2019, p. 1166) indicated that the non-recognition of overseas qualifications constrained employment prospects of immigrants by impeding their labour market access and making it difficult to find jobs. In lieu of such qualifications and skills, employers preferred locally trained applicants and considered employing workers from abroad only with specialist skills that were not locally available in Finland (Heikkilä, 2005, p. 492).

The international students have to start over from the scratch in the receiving country as their educational qualifications and work experiences from their countries of origin are of no use to them in the labour market of the host country in lack of their recognitions. Due to the non-recognition of overseas educational qualifications and work experiences, international students' career related work experiences and degrees from outside Canada that were directly pertinent to the searched jobs were discounted which considered the international backgrounds of international students as disadvantage in the Canadian labour market (Scott et al., 2015).

### **3.2.5 Legal barrier / bureaucracy**

The bureaucracy surrounding work permits and recognition of overseas qualifications hinder immigrants' integration into the labour market of the receiving country. Unnecessary bureaucracy makes having work permits difficult and therefore bureaucracy considering work permits should be made easier according to Lyytinen and Toom (2019, p. 38) indicating that proving abroad qualifications in Finland should be made easier provided that the immigrants with overseas qualifications have already graduated in their countries of origin and possess long histories of work (ibid, p. 37).

The bureaucratic complexities that employers have to confront by the recruitment of the international students and graduates hinder their employment prospects. Owing to the bureaucratic complexities, employers preconceive that recruiting international students cause them to deal with government agencies and paperwork that create and add administrative burden for them which cause them to be biased against hiring international students in Canada (Scott et al., 2015).

The legal barrier poses as an obstacle in hiring international graduates due to the lack of established practices for recruitment and integration of international graduates. The international graduates could not be hired to fulfil the required foreign labour force in the international companies in Russia owing to such a legal barrier and thus

the requirement of foreign labour force had to be met from within an organization operating in a different country through an outsourced recruitment service (Shchegolev et al., 2016, pp. 104-105).

### **3.2.6 Work experiences**

Possessing work experiences in a certain field can be an advantage for immigrants and international students and graduates to get integrated into the labour market whereas the lack of those can hinder their integration into the labour market. It is not always the lack of work experiences of the international students that hinder the prospects of their recruitment or getting employed but the employers' lack of experience of working with international students also refrain them from recruiting international students (Scott et al., 2015)

Lack of work experiences can cause unemployment whereas possessing those in the host country labour market can enhance occupational mobility. Insufficient or lack of previous work experiences was one among many reasons for youth immigrants to not find employment in Finland (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 28). The locally gained work experiences not only helped immigrants to get jobs or enter the local labour market but also helped them to attain professional skills and knowledge that supported their upward occupational mobility (Ahmad, 2015, p. 975).

The extent of work experiences required also depended upon the work sectors and was not uniform in all the sectors. Although the lack of previous work experiences was not an obstacle to getting employed in some places, it hindered immigrants' employment prospects in certain sectors such as immigrants' restaurants and barber shops, health care sector etc. (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 32).

Work experiences are also important for understanding the workplace norms and practices in the receiving country that helps in getting employed. International students in Canada emphasized the importance of understanding workplace norms to succeed during recruitment process as employers wanted them to look or act in a certain way. In the absence of off-campus working experience in professional settings, the knowledge of workplace norms and practices in the host country thus required could not be gained (Scott et al., 2015).

### **3.2.7 Cultural factors**



The cultural practices of people from certain religious and cultural backgrounds were seen to hinder the employment prospects of immigrants from certain ethnic groups. Attending prayers and wearing hijabs during working times were seen as barriers to employment to some extent by minority employers. However, these cultural factors weren't fully seen as barriers but as issues that could be talked about and negotiated (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 33). International students found themselves in chaos while trying to assimilate culture of the destination country. Their assimilation to the culture of the destination country caused their psychological identification to be sandwiched between cultures of home and destination countries affecting their well-being and their prospect to integrate into the Canadian labour market (Scott et al., 2015).

The relativity in terms of similarities and differences in immigrants' cultural and religious backgrounds determines their prospects to get employed. Immigrants from cultural and religious backgrounds that are relatively similar to the culture of the host country are found to get easily employed or integrated compared to those whose cultural and religious backgrounds are more different to that of the receiving country. Employment agencies found much ease in placing Russians, Estonians and Ingrian Finns to jobs due to their relative commonalities in cultural and religious backgrounds. On the other hand, finding jobs for immigrants from outside Europe such as Arabs, Iranians and Somalis was difficult due to greater cultural differences alongside language and attitudinal problems (Heikkilä, 2005, p. 492).

### **3.2.8 Inaccessibility to/ lack of support programmes**

With language and communication challenges being the major obstacles hindering the prospects of the international students to transition from students to workers in Canada, the international students reported that insufficient access to support services and programs for language improvement in the Canadian universities and campuses did not help them to overcome the barriers. Moreover, the international students that availed the services reported about continued challenges concerning specialized vocabulary necessary to succeed in professional settings (Scott et al., 2015).

It was not only the lack of or inaccessibility to support programmes from the universities that hindered the integration of international students in the host country labour market but also the length of the support services and programmes. Despite appreciating orientation and other programs offered during the initial transition phase in the beginning, the need for continuous support after the first year was expressed by international students in terms of finding and negotiating employment

opportunities outside the universities or campuses in the Canadian labour market (Scott et al., 2015).

The lack of meetings between the employers and potential employees does not allow employees to show their potential which hinders the employment prospects of the immigrants. The meetings can be arranged between employers and employees through open recruiting events to find the required new labour force that is often a challenge in some fields. The need for individual career guidance was emphasized for taking into consideration the labour shortages in fields that require new labour force and individual factors that include future aspirations and strengths of immigrants (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 37).

### **3.2.9 Lack of knowledge about working culture/ labour market**

Knowledge concerning the labour market and working culture is beneficial for integrating into the receiving country labour market. Lack of knowledge and understanding concerning practices and patterns of the Canadian labour market due to insufficient experiences of working in professional settings outside the universities or campuses hindered the international students' prospects to succeed during recruitment process as expectations of employers are not met (Scott et al., 2015).

Immigrants find it difficult to adapt to the working culture of the host country. Low extent of supervision due to flat hierarchy and Finnish straightforwardness are challenges to be confronted for adapting to the Finnish working culture by immigrants esp. from Asian backgrounds (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 65). Understanding the workplace culture can also help to enhance the immigrants' integration into the host country labour market according to Heikkilä (2005, p. 492) indicating that immigrants' opportunities for employment can be enhanced by tailoring and adjusting courses for them to understand workplace relationships.

## **4 BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

This chapter contains information concerning the participants for the research. It contains the background information of the research participants such as their educational qualifications, lengths of stay in Finland, their motives for moving to Finland and their current employment situations.

### **4.1 Educational background and lengths of stay in Finland**

All the research participants have completed their bachelor's degrees from the universities of applied sciences (UAS) in Finland. Garam (2017, pp.2-3) indicates that about half of foreign students in higher education in Finland study their bachelor's degrees at UAS. The barriers and avenues to successful integration of the Nepalese international degree graduates into the Finnish labour market is also worth contemplating in the sense that they all graduated from universities of applied sciences (UAS) and UAS' degrees involve work-based trainings and the objectives of such degrees is to get graduates employed in the labour market in Finland (CIMO, 2016, p.3).

The research participants have graduated from different UAS in different study fields. Some of the participants had more than one bachelor's degrees in different study fields whereas some were pursuing further studies in their own related study fields. The participants belonged to the study fields such as hospitality management, business and IT. Business and ICT are prominent study fields alongside engineering for foreign degree students in Finland (Garam, 2017, p. 3). All the research participants have lived in Finland for more than 9 years. All the participants have stayed in Finland after completion of their bachelor's degrees from UAS in Finland

that corroborates with Mathies and Karhunen (2021, p.884) indicating international students from non-EU nationality backgrounds tend to stay longer than those from EU countries.

## **4.2 Motivations to study in Finland**

International students' motives to study abroad are driven by factors such as desirability to develop international employability skills, limited capacity of the best universities at home countries to enrol students at higher education level and high quality of educational institutions abroad (Bhandari et al., 2018, pp. 5-9). In the beginning of the interviews, the questions were asked concerning the reasons for moving to Finland to ice-break the interviews.

Most of the participants stated that the reasons for migrating to Finland to study was due to free education and good quality of education for foreigners (all the participants had migrated to Finland prior to introduction of tuition fees for students from outside EU/EEA countries). Finnish higher education institutions have started charging tuition fees to the non-EU/EEA students since the autumn of 2017 (Garam, 2017, p.1). Stating the reason for migrating to Finland, participant A replied as follows:

After graduation from Nepal, I was looking for study abroad. I found Finland pretty appealing because of free education.

## **4.3 Nationality background and employment situation**

All the research participants belong to the Nepalese nationality background. Nepal is one of the countries alongside Russia, Vietnam and China where most of the higher education foreign students in Finland come from (Garam, 2017, p. 4). The research focus on the Nepalese international degree graduates strengthens the research essence provided that non-EU/ EEA students have to depend on employment for legally residing in Finland owing to their rights to stay in Finland depending upon finding employment in due time (Alho, 2020, p.11).

All the participants were working as of the date the research interviews were conducted. Two participants were working in their field related employment. One of the participants had changed his career field and was working in a different new field. Other participants were working in fields unrelated to their degrees such as posti (newspaper delivery), food delivery etc. Four participants were working full time and three participants were working and studying. All the participants during their long periods of stay in Finland have worked in various sectors including out-of-field and

field related employment. When asked how well-integrated the participants thought they were into the Finnish labour market, one of the participants replied:

You have a degree in a certain field and working in something else and you are not happy. And the same I am feeling currently. I will feel more integrated if I could work in my related field. I am doing other work and surviving but the job that I want to do is not what I am doing currently. (Participant B)

Other participants also expressed the desires of working in their study related fields to feel integrated into the Finnish labour market. Getting employed in related fields of studies is not tough only for the international students and graduates but also for the local or domestic students. The difficulty to get employed in field specific employment also depends upon the study fields. Scott et al. (2015) indicated that the labour market in Canada was also tough for the Canadian students but indicated it to be particularly tough for the international students in terms of finding field related employment and further emphasized that it was almost impossible for the international students pursuing humanities and social sciences degrees to find jobs in their related study fields.

## 5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research seeks to explore the experiences of the Nepalese immigrants concerning the challenges they confronted in the Finnish labour market and qualitative research helps to understand the contexts of people's experiences by mining them deeply for their experiences concerning the research topic (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 17). In addition to gaining insight into the Nepalese immigrants' experiences concerning the obstacles to their labour market integration, the researcher also seeks to explore their opinions regarding ways to overcome those challenges or to improve their integration into the labour market. Qualitative research focuses on lived experiences of participants in a particular context and interpret their viewpoints (Tracy, 2013, p. 5).

Qualitative research method allows to explore people's experiences in a comprehensive way by employing explicit set of research methods such as observation, content analysis, in-depth interviews etc. (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 10). Moreover, they are like umbrella concepts that encompass interviews (one-on-one or group), document analysis and observation of participants (Tracy, 2013, p. 28).

In contrast to the quantitative research method that converts data into numerical values where researcher and the research instrument are separate and is driven by the 'How often?' and 'How much?' questions; qualitative research method is used to understand stories, interactions and observations where research instrument is researcher itself as researcher's body and mind are used to register data in forms of observations thus considering self-reflexivity and biases to be particularly important (Tracy, 2013, pp. 24-25).

Moreover, qualitative research method is driven by "Why?", "What?", "How?" questions; contains purposively elected small sample size and analysis is interpretive whereas quantitative research method contains statistical analysis, large sample size and generalizes to a broader population (Hennink et al., 2020, pp. 16- 17). The researcher intends to interview a small number of participants that are suitable for the research and seeks to understand and analyse the data obtained via interactions with

the participants during interviews. Qualitative data analysis allows researchers to interpret the meanings participants give to their experiences and views (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 17).

## **5.1 Methods of data collection**

The data for the research was collected from January 12, 2022 until January 27, 2022. The research had seven interviewee participants altogether. All the interviews were conducted via zoom and the links for the interviews were sent to the participants prior to the interviews. Seven individual interviews were conducted in total out of which four were conducted in English and three in the Nepali language. The choice for choosing the language for the interviews was given to the participants as per their conveniences. The lengths of the interviews ranged from 17 to 47 minutes with the mean length of the interviews being 30 minutes. All the interviews were transcribed and those in the Nepali language were translated and transcribed. The interview transcripts were 52 pages in total with lines double spaced.

### **5.1.1 Sampling: Selection of interviewees**

Purposive sampling method was employed in the research for selecting the interviewee participants for the research and snowball sampling method was used to find more interviewee participants. Tracy (2013, p. 134) indicates that purposive sampling helps to choose data fitting into the framework of the research goals and questions. Researchers develop a purposive sample by using their special knowledge for selecting participants or subjects representing the population of the sample group (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 39). The researcher applied his knowledge to develop a purposive sample regarding the Nepalese immigrants that were in his personal contacts. Purposive sampling technique helps to choose participants deliberately owing to the qualities they possess (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2). The Nepalese immigrants that had migrated on study grounds and had graduated at least with the bachelor's degrees from the Finnish higher education institutions were contacted and four interviewee participants were selected from the researcher's personal contacts.

In lack of adequate number of participants for the research, the researcher applied snowball sampling technique to find more participants and therefore after the eligible candidates from direct contacts were interviewed, they were asked if they knew anyone in their circles from the Nepalese background that were eligible to

participate in the research. According to Tracy (2013, p.136), in the snowball sampling, researchers identify suitable participants for obtaining data for research and then ask them to suggest people in their circles and networks to participate in the research. In the snowball sampling strategy, several people with relevant characteristics are identified in the beginning and after data have been collected from them, referrals or names of other people possessing the relevant characteristics or attributes forms a referral-driven chain of participants until an adequate number of participants for the research has been enlisted (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 39). Three more participants for the research were found through snowball sampling method.

### **5.1.2 Collection of data through interviews**

In addition to possessing a pre-scripted set of interview questions for the interviews, the researcher intended to ask questions based on the participants' replies. As structured interviews lack flexibility and depth and unstructured interviews are too flexible and they give the chance for the interviewees to be heard without the strict constraints of scripted questions as indicated by Tracy (2013, p.139), semi-structured interviews were used to interview participants for the research as these types of interviews go between the lines of structured and unstructured interviews. Semi-standardized or semi-structured interviews allow the interviewers to digress or probe further away from the answers to their prepared set of structured or standardized questions (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 69).

The prepared set of interview questions asked to the interviewee participants is attached in Appendix 1. Individual interviews were conducted for collecting the data for the research in January 2022 in Finland during which covid-19 pandemic restrictions were effective as indicated by the "Uusimaa restrictions" (2022) that restrictions were tightened and continued throughout the month of January 2022. The applied restrictions did not allow face-to-face interviews to be conducted during that time. Considering the safety of the interviewee participants and abiding by the restrictions applied by the Finland government, the researcher opted for the technologically mediated interviews instead.

Joinson and Paine (as cited in Tracy, 2013, p.164) emphasized the advantageous aspects of employing the mediated approach of interviewing indicating that participants are more open when communicating online in platform than in face-to-face interviews. Mediated interviews could also be conducted in two ways: synchronous and asynchronous methods. In synchronous methods of mediated interviews, all parties meet and talk together at the same time in telephones, webcam conversations etc. whereas in asynchronous methods, two parties meet in different



times such as in emails, internet forums, social networking sites etc. (Ayling & Mewse as cited in Tracy, 2013, p.163). Synchronous method of mediated interviews was selected for the research as that would provide similar impression as face-to-face interviews in terms of asking follow-up questions simultaneously at the given real time.

Lune and Berg (2017, p. 80) have also emphasized that computer-based synchronous environments facilitate the “back-and-forth exchange of questions and answers” in real time and dig deeply into the areas “arising spontaneously in the course of the interview exchange”. Had the asynchronous method of mediated interviews been selected, the participants would need to be contacted via emails or other ways and based upon their replies, follow-up questions would need to be sent in case if any arose which the participants would need to reply again given suitable time at their disposal thus making the process sluggish, lengthy and time-consuming.

Moreover, the written accounts of conversations (in the emails of both parties although that can be agreed to be deleted afterwards) between the researcher and the participants also remains as the threats to confidentiality in the research. Therefore, the researcher opted for employing synchronous method of mediated interviews for collecting data for the research. Given the multiple choices available as the tools for conducting interviews such as telephone, Skype, Facebook messenger, WhatsApp etc., the researcher decided to conduct all the interviews via the zoom platform. The researcher was also familiar with usability of the zoom and trusted its reliability as it was widely used also for the class lectures and seminars during the times of covid pandemic as a tool for online teaching and distance learning.

## **5.2 Ethical considerations**

The ethical issues concerning confidentiality of the data obtained through interviews and anonymity of the participants’ involvement in the research were strictly followed throughout the research process from the beginning of the data collection process until the production of the final thesis report and will be followed thereafter. The propensity to protect the identities of the participants has also been indicated by Lune and Berg (2017) who emphasize the idea of “do no harm” as the fundamental principle to the research and indicate that privacy, rights and well-being of the study groups have to be safeguarded by the researchers (pp.43-44). The details of the participants’ jobs, study fields, educational qualifications, lengths of stay etc. were mentioned in a collective way and not individualistically to protect their identities as described in Chapter 4. Also, the details that could lead to the participants’ identities were

eliminated from the extracts taken from the data set for supporting the claims in categories.

Prior to the participants' involvement in the research, informed consent ought to be taken as a part of moral or ethical obligation that provides assurance regarding confidentiality of the research data and anonymity of their participation in the research. Lune and Berg (2017, p. 46) define informed consent as the "knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress or similar unfair inducement or manipulation". Since mediated interviews adopted in the research would not allow obtaining informed consents in writing from the participants, the researcher obtained implied consent instead. Lune and Berg (2017, p. 46) indicate that implied consent can be used in place of written informed consent or statement to conduct tape-recorded in-depth interviews. The semi-structured interviews were conducted for the research and were audio-recorded.

Given that the requirement to obtain signed informed consent statements in writing that are dated and signed by the researcher and the participants presents in itself the ethical dilemma as the informed consent slips contain the formal records of the participants, the implied consent is more beneficial as it does not contain any written records of the participants' names (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 46). In the beginning of the interviews, the participants were informed that the research is a part of master's thesis and stated that the interview data will be used solely for the thesis and for no other purposes. The participants were provided with the assurances regarding confidentiality of the data obtained through interviews and anonymity of their participation in the research. Lune and Berg (2017) indicate that confidentiality is an endeavour to eliminate any details in the research records that could reveal the subjects or participants' identities and anonymity is practised by not naming the participants or subjects in the research (p.48).

They were made clear that their identities will be hidden and the interview data will not be discussed, talked about or shared with anyone outside the thesis or thesis related matters. The participants were informed that no names will be mentioned during the interviews and that the recordings will be destroyed at the end of the research once its purpose is fulfilled. The participants were then asked if they had any questions, confusions or curiosities regarding the research and their participations and if they were voluntarily willing to participate in the research. And after the oral consents to participate in the research were obtained from the participants, the interviews were initiated and conducted successfully. Lune and Berg (2017, p. 46) argue that in the absence of a signed consent slip, the goal of implied consent is served by the approval of participants and the completed interviews.

The interview conversations between the researcher and the participants were audio-recorded via zoom. The recordings downloaded from zoom after the

completion of the interviews were stored in the researcher's personal computer but were not saved in the names of the participants as that could lead to their identities. Since every single word from the interview recordings was transcribed as it was in the first instance, the researcher did not feel the need to save the recorded files even in the names of pseudonyms. The recorded files are stored in the researcher's personal computer as they were downloaded from the zoom. The interviews were transcribed very carefully and the English alphabets such as A, B, C etc. were used as pseudonyms to denote the interviews while transcribing them and thereafter were used to denote interviewee participants in the analysis and research findings sections. Lune and Berg (2017, p. 48) emphasized the use of pseudonyms for the participants' real names during data reporting to maintain strict confidentiality as assured by researchers to the research participants.

### **5.3 Positionality/ reflexivity**

The researcher belongs to the same cultural group as the research participants. The researcher is also the Nepalese immigrant that migrated to Finland as an international student. Having lived in Finland for more than 9 years, the researcher has substantial experiences in the Finnish labour market. In that sense, the researcher acts as the complete participant for the research which Tracy (2013) defines as the one studying the context he/ she belongs to (p.107). As a complete participant to the research, the researcher has the advantages of understanding the themes and having some insights about the research but the researcher is aware as that can lead to the downsides by missing vital information during data collection which in turn can affect the research outcome.

Some of the participants were accessed through the researcher's direct contacts which means that the researcher was familiar with those participants. The familiarity with the participants was completely put aside during the data collection process and interviews to avoid the participants being too comfortable with the researcher as a complete participant in the research that may lead to the revelation of much sensitive information they may not have intended to reveal for the research report that is going to be published as indicated by Tracy (2012, p.107). The researcher maintained absolute professionalism during the interviews to avoid any bias that affects the collection and interpretation of the data as basic issues could be skipped by the participants knowing that the researcher also belonged to the same cultural group. The researcher was familiar with such an act resulting in the loss of data that affects the overall research outcome. Therefore, the researcher was fully aware of the positionality and acted as the neutral person leaving his bias aside while conducting

the interviews and analysed the data from the neutral perspective to avoid any misinterpretation.

## 5.4 Data analysis

The data to be analysed encompassed the experiences and opinions of the research participants and the researcher believed that the ideal way to analyse the data would be to identify interesting characteristics within the data in terms of patterns and themes. Therefore, the thematic analysis is used in the research as it helps to identify, analyse and report patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). A theme corresponds to some patterned meaning or response in the data set and captures important things about data regarding the research questions (ibid, p. 82).

The inductive approach has been employed to the research. Inductive thematic analysis is bottom-up approach (Frith & Gleeson as cited in Braun et al., 2006, p. 83) that is data-driven; not driven by the theoretical interest of the researcher and coding in this approach is independent of the researcher's preconceptions for analysis or any pre-existing frames for coding (Braun et al., 2006, p. 83). Whereas deductive approach is top-down method (Boyatzis & Hayes as cited in Braun & Clarke., 2006, p. 83) and is driven by the theoretical or analytic interest of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

In a qualitative investigation, Saldana (2013) defined a code as:

a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a proportion of language-based or visual data. The data can consist of interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journals, documents, drawings, artifacts, photographs, videos, internet sites, e-mail correspondence, literature and so on. (p. 3)

Interview transcripts are coded in the research. The sample for coding the transcribed research data has been illustrated in Appendix 2. Saldana (2013, p. 4) indicates that coding is the generation of ideas or concepts by the researcher that attribute meanings or interpretations to every individual datum for the purposes of identification of patterns, categorization, theorization and other analytic purposes. Since the bottom-up approach was applied to the research, coding and theming of the data were independent of any pre-existing theoretical perspectives and the data were observed and analysed simply keeping in mind the epistemology of the research. As indicated by Braun et al. (2006), the essence of the research epistemology can be found during analysis of data and conceptualization of research project in theorizing meaning of the data as it guides the way for data theorization (p.85). The data were

coded and themed indiscriminately based on their unique and interesting characteristics occurring repeatedly thus forming patterns.

Semantic approach was employed to the research. As indicated by Braun et al. (2006, p. 84), a thematic analysis at the semantic level depends on the surface meanings for the identification of themes and does not go beyond the participant's statements for analysis whereas that at the latent level examines the underpinning conceptualizations and assumptions to identify themes and thus goes beyond the boundary of the semantic approach. The words and statements were targeted by the researcher for analysing the data and not the underpinning theories or conceptualizations related to the statements and meanings.

Essentialist or realist method was applied to the research for theorization. Braun et al. (2006, p. 85) argues that the realist or essentialist approach is used to theorize experiences, motivation, and meanings in a direct way whereas constructionist approach overlooks the individual psychology and motivation but focuses on structural conditions and sociocultural contexts for theorization. Clarke et al. (2015) further support the essentialist/ realist approach indicating that "people's words provide direct access to reality" (p.224). The research relies directly on the participants' statements regarding their experiences concerning the research topic.

The six-phase guide of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87) as illustrated in Figure 5 was used for analysing the research data. In the beginning of the analysis process, the data were familiarized by reading repeatedly. Given that the researcher had interviewed the participants for collecting the data and transcribed the interviews word-by-word, the researcher was already familiar with the data to some extent and the repeated readings added to getting even more familiarised with the data.

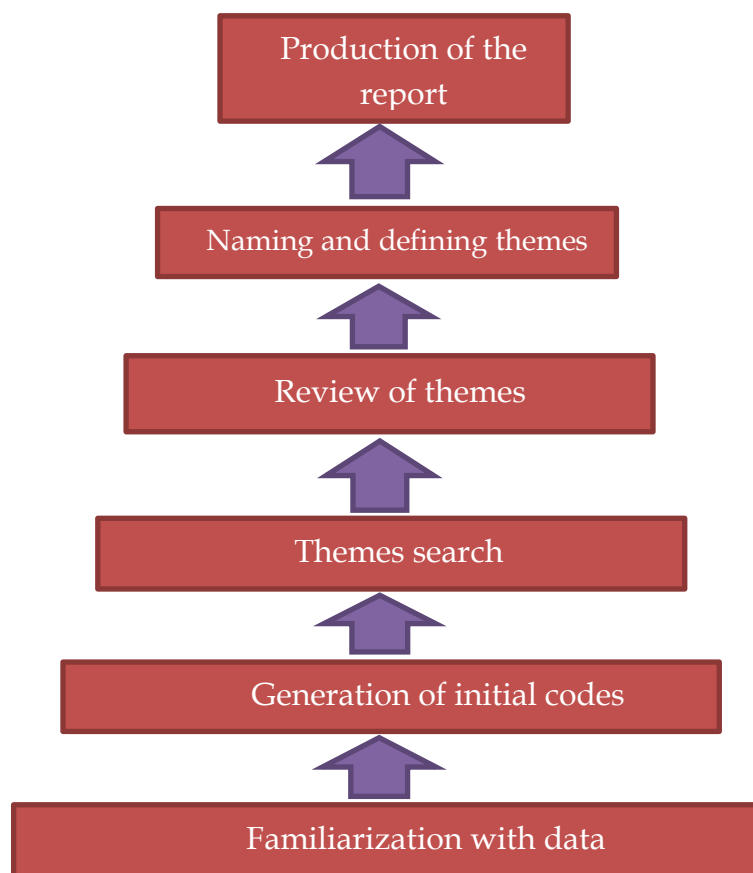


FIGURE 5 Six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

Codes were generated throughout the second phase of thematic analysis keeping in mind the epistemology of the research. Repeated patterns and interesting characteristics were identified in the data set and coded. The codes were then grouped based on their commonalities. In other words, the codes that were similar to one another or conveyed the same meanings were grouped together and categorised i.e., groups were named based on their characteristics. It was applied to all groups of codes forming categories.

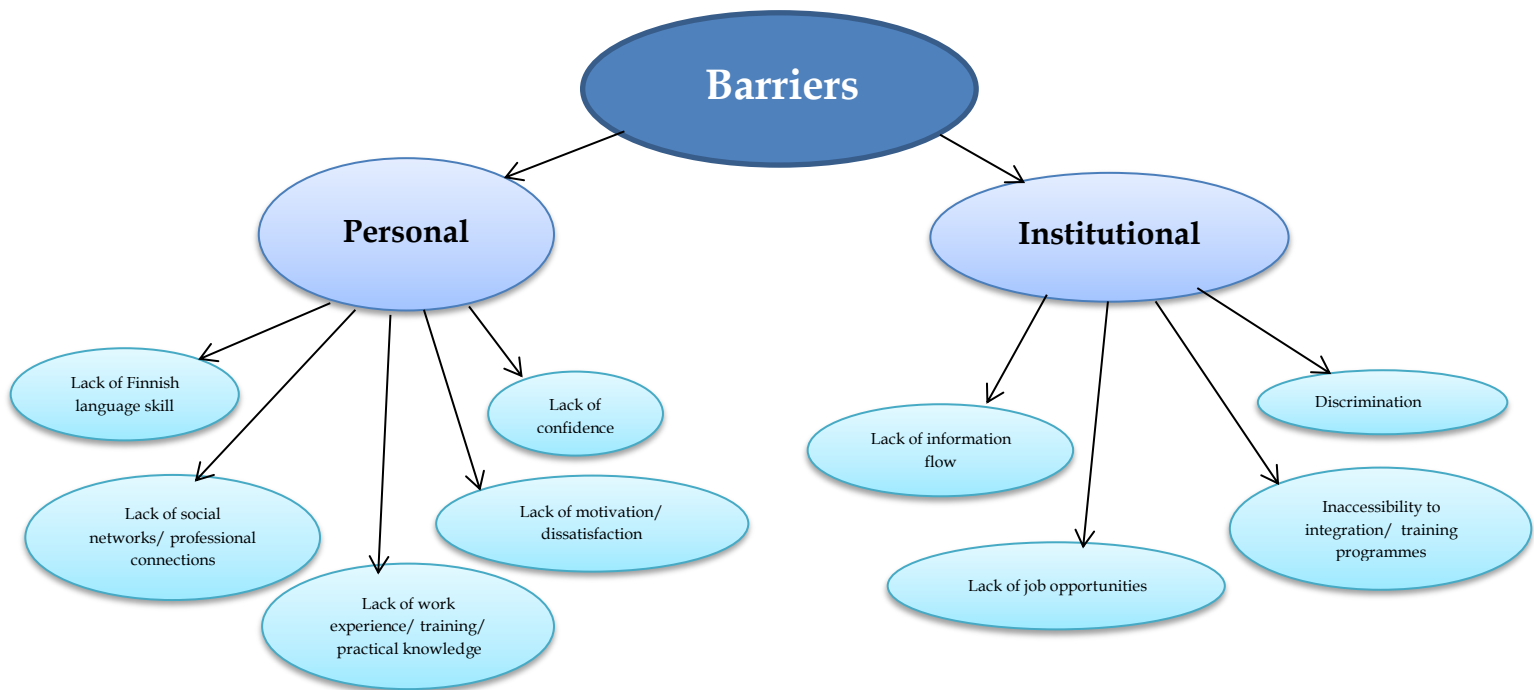


FIGURE 6 Thematic map showing barriers to labour market integration as identified in the research

The similar or overlapping categories were then merged to form a new category. However, it was applied only to categories that were similar in characteristics to one another and that could be merged and did not apply to all the categories. After the formation of categories, they were further classified into themes and sub-themes. At this point, a review was conducted to ensure if the coded data extracts corresponded with the categories leading to themes and sub-themes and then the thematic maps were constructed.

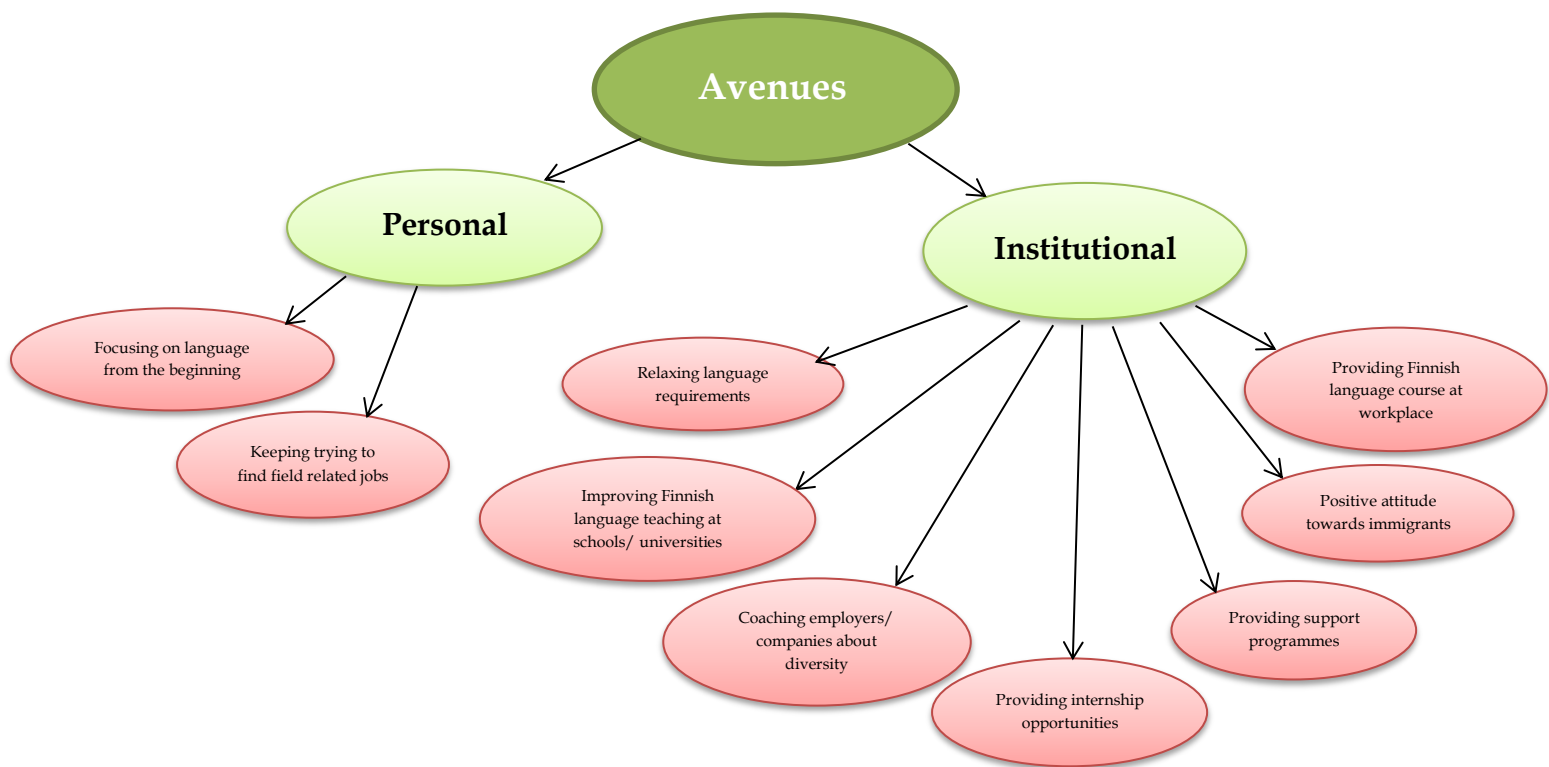


FIGURE 7 Thematic map showing avenues to labour market integration as identified in the research

Separate thematic maps were drawn as shown in figures 6 and 7 demonstrating two different themes identified as “barriers” and “avenues” and sub-themes as “personal” and institutional”. The final thematic map as shown in Figure 8 was constructed to establish connections between the two themes i.e., barriers and avenues. After that, the themes and sub-themes were clearly named and defined which have been included in Chapter 6. Finally, the compelling data extracts in forms of quotes were selected from the data set as instances for supporting the claims in the categories that were then reflected in relation to the previous findings related to the topic.



## **6 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

After thematic analysis was performed to the data set of interview transcripts, the categories, themes and sub-themes were identified as shown in Figure 8 that forms the overall findings of the research. Two broad themes were identified and based on the themes, the research findings include barriers to the participants' integration into the Finnish labour market and avenues to overcome those barriers or facilitate their labour market integration.

In this chapter, the obstacles to the participants' labour market integration mentioned in sections have been followed subsequently by the ways meant to overcome those obstacles in sub-sections. Not all the identified barriers contain the avenues meant to overcome those. The research findings in terms of barriers and avenues to the labour market integration of the participants have been defined and reflected in relation to the previous findings related to the research topic as follows:

### **6.1 Barriers and avenues to labour market integration**

The challenges and difficulties confronted by the participants that hindered their prospects to integrate into the Finnish labour market were termed as "barriers" and the ways identified to overcome those barriers or facilitate their integration into the Finnish labour market were termed as "avenues". The barriers and avenues to the participants' integration into the Finnish labour market were divided into personal and institutional.

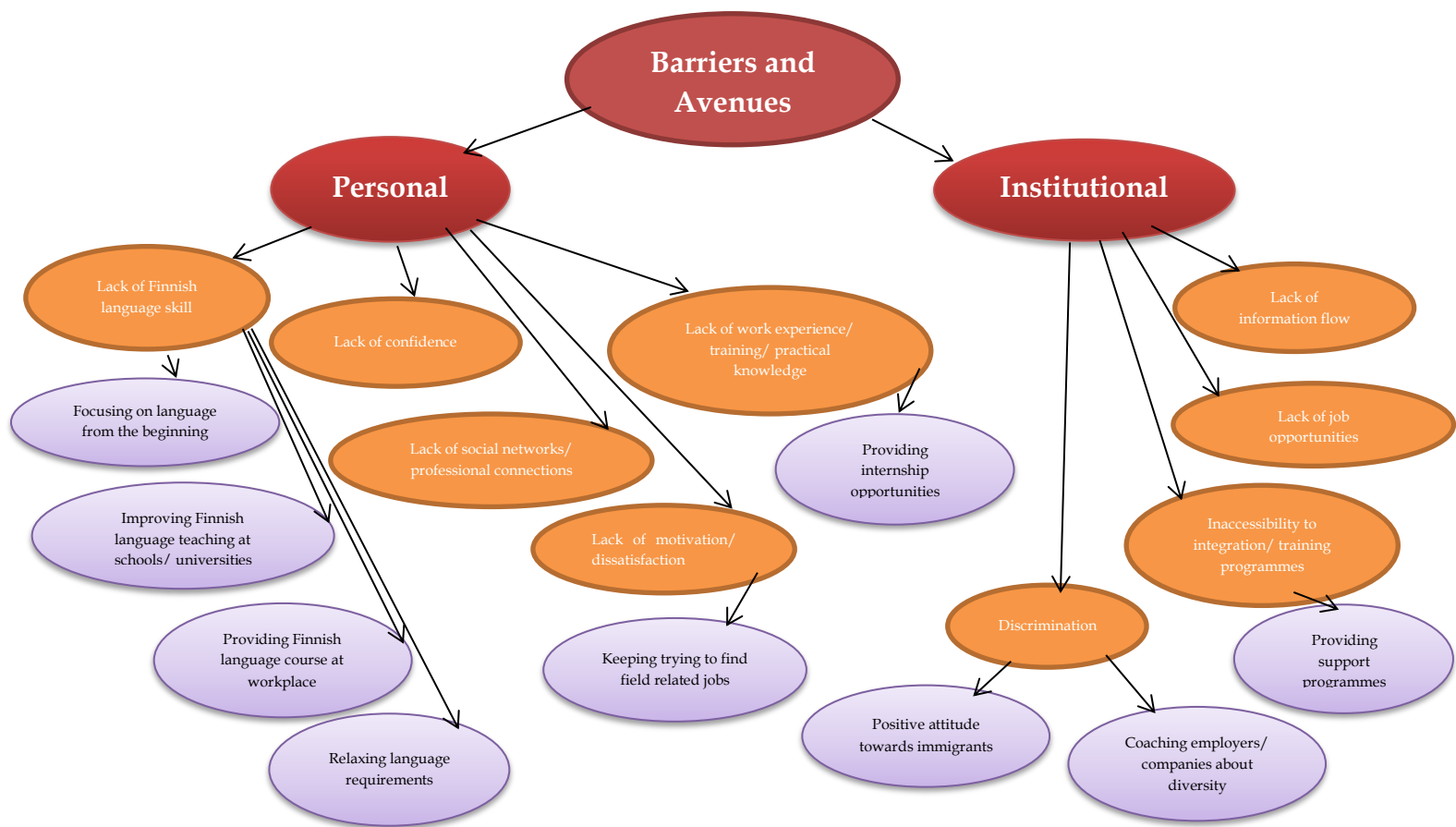


FIGURE 8 Barriers and avenues to labour market integration of the participants as identified in the research

### 6.1.1 Personal barriers and their avenues

The challenges confronted by the participants in the Finnish labour market due to the lack of their human capital endowments that hindered their prospects to integrate into the Finnish labour market were termed as personal barriers. Personal barriers as identified in the research are demonstrated in Figure 6. Lack of Finnish language skill, lack of work experience/ training/ practical knowledge, lack of social networks/ professional connections, lack of confidence at workplace or to apply for field related jobs and lack of motivation to apply for field related jobs or dissatisfaction towards out-of-field works constitute personal barriers.

The ways to improve the prospects to integrate into the Finnish labour market by the participants themselves were termed as personal avenues. Personal avenues as identified in the research include focusing on the Finnish language from the beginning

and keeping trying to find field related jobs. Personal avenues to the participants' integration into the Finnish labour market as identified in the research are shown in Figure 7. In this section, avenues to the participants' integration into the Finnish labour market have been placed subsequently following the personal barriers they are meant to overcome as shown in Figure 8.

For instance, the avenues for overcoming the lack of Finnish language skill are focusing on language from the beginning, improving Finnish language teaching at schools/ universities, providing Finnish course at workplace and relaxing language requirements. Having already incorporated in Section 6.1.1.2, increasing social networks/ professional connections has not been mentioned separately as the way to overcome the lack of social networks/ professional connections. Providing internship opportunities is the way to overcome the lack of work experience/ training/ practical knowledge and keeping trying to find field related jobs is the way to overcome the lack of motivation/ dissatisfaction.

#### **6.1.1.1 Lack of Finnish language skill**

The lack of Finnish language skill has been emphasized by the participants as the main barrier to their labour market integration. It was also perceived as a major hindrance to recruitment by the Russian immigrants (Heikkilä, 2005, p. 491). The lack of Finnish language skill hindered the participants' prospects to integrate into the Finnish labour market in various ways. For instance, the lack of Finnish language skills hindered the participants' prospects to employment, vertical occupational mobility, education for further career prospects, inability to find works in related fields, feeling sense of ownness at the workplace and having to face higher competition in the places where the language was not required.

Participant A emphasized the difficulty he confronted due to the lack of Finnish language skill as he stated, "After like one and half months of internship, I tried to ask for the job and it was like a big rejection and it was because of the language barrier". The lack of Finnish language skill during interviews as an obstacle to getting hired was also indicated by Shumilova et al. (2012, p. 70). Participant B indicated that the lack of Finnish language skill requires applicants to have more work experience and confront high competition to find jobs in the related fields as he stated:

Small companies' working environments are not so diverse and focus more on the Finnish. If you know the Finnish language, the door is open to every company and less competitive. But if you don't know Finnish language and apply for multinational companies, then there is high competition, and you require working experiences.

Small companies' lack of resources compared to large companies in terms of supporting foreigners especially in the beginning period of their employment cause them reluctant to hire foreign employees (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 80). Also, one of the participants didn't see the possibility of finding jobs in his related field and then changed his career where the language demand was not so high as in his related field of study. Even after changing the career and working in a completely different new field, the participant felt like his progress in the field was hindered by the lack of Finnish language skill. He felt that he could do better if he had good Finnish language skill which is evident from his response:

I think if I am able to speak Finnish well, let's say if I was a Finnish person, I would get more opportunities and I would be able to work in finer and bigger places. Many places still require the language. If I want to work in the bigger places, they still require Finnish. (Participant D)

Further, he indicated education as being the barrier to his labour market integration and he couldn't access those courses simply because the courses he was interested were taught only in the Finnish language. The lack of education hinders the employment prospects of both immigrants and Finnish youths (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 28). The lack of the Finnish language skill has impacted the prospect of his further education that he aspires to pursue.

If I want to prosper in a higher position, I have to study for a higher degree and there are many courses that are only taught in Finnish. I am kinda not able to enrol in those courses because of the language barrier. (Participant D)

The lack of courses in English is the weakness of the Finnish higher education institutions Shumilova et al. (2012, p. 68). One of the participants indicated that his integration into the workplace is hindered by the lack of the Finnish language skill thus limiting his propensity to feeling a sense of ownness at the workplace. He emphasized the difficulties in the workplace due to the lack of his Finnish language skill as he states:

When talking to the Finnish customers and when Finnish marketing person communicates with the Finnish customer, they use Finnish, and they will be having problems and when we have to solve the problems at that time the problem of language will come. There won't be problems in day-to-day work, but these kinds of small things come very often. (Participant F)

This indicates the difficulty of the participant to integrate into the Finnish labour market due to the lack of the Finnish language skill. Välimaa and Weimer (2014, p. 706) also emphasized the lack of Finnish language skill being the key obstacle for international students or graduates to get integrated into the Finnish labour market.

#### 6.1.1.1.1 Focusing on language from the beginning

Almost all the participants emphasized the learning of the Finnish language skills from the very beginning. Some of the participants indicated the importance of the Finnish language to enter the job market whereas some found it very useful even after entering the labour market. The Finnish language skill as per some of the participants can help to find jobs in the related fields and get well-integrated into the labour market. Even in the sectors where people tend to say that Finnish language is not required, certain jobs such as customer facing jobs can be obtained if people have Finnish language skill according to one of the participants.

Participant E prioritized the learning of Finnish language over the searching of jobs in the beginning as he stated, "Students who already come to Finland should work hard on the language right from the first year. Focus on language more instead of looking for jobs in the beginning". Intensive learning of the Finnish language skill was also recommended for international students and graduates for enhancing their employment prospects (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 71). Another participant emphasized the role of the Finnish language skill for entering the labour market which tends to be very difficult in the beginning. Emphasizing the importance of the language skill, he said:

For the job market, if you know Finnish, 50% is already solved and 50% remains in finding companies and applying for jobs. Language is 50% and the remaining others. If you know language, then 50% is cleared. If there is no language, then it's very difficult in any work also for entry. After entry you know people there and you might find other jobs through links. If there is no language, the first entry is very difficult. (Participant G)

The Institute for Migration survey also confirmed the Finnish language skills as being the single most important reason for employment success (Heikkilä, 2005, p. 491). One of the participants indicated that the priority is given to the people who speak Finnish even though the requirement is not Finnish. Participant F emphasized learning Finnish language seriously from the very beginning as it increases the scope of the job market:

If you know the Finnish language skills, the scope of the job market will be even much bigger and broader in any job. If speaking English only gets you the job, then speaking Finnish will get you even more jobs.

Finnish language skill was also perceived as the most important qualification in securing jobs by majority of the Russian immigrants (Heikkilä, 2005, p. 491).

#### **6.1.1.1.2 Relaxing language requirements**

Participants felt that the Finnish language requirement can be relaxed at work. De-emphasis on the language skill requirement can help to overcome obstacles to employment (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 73). Some of the participants also felt that Finnish language is demanded even if not required in certain jobs. Participant G stated, “Even in the background jobs where we don't have to face the Finnish customers, when they require the Finnish language, then it was surprising”.

Some participants raised concern over the demand for fluent Finnish language skill and expressed their dissatisfaction towards the requirement of such fluent Finnish emphasizing that it would be practically impossible for them to speak fluent Finnish like the locals. Highly international companies valued fluency in local language but had no problems with intermediate level language of employees but not knowing any local language was not acceptable (Shchegolev et al., 2016, p. 103).

Participant E recommended to lower the requirement of the Finnish language skill for jobs. When asked about what could be done to facilitate the labour market integration of immigrants, the participant replied:

In the globalised world like nowadays, there might be very few Finnish people who do not speak English and almost all people speak English. So, employers may interview the skilled people and whether to hire or not it's up to them but the Finnish language requirement can be lowered.

Some of the participants also raised the prospect of using English language at workplace as they think that majority of the Finnish people speak English and there should not be strict demand for the Finnish language skill. Emphasizing the use of English language at workplace, Participant D said, “Employers could also use English as the main language at work because most of the Finnish they do speak English, especially in the Helsinki region. I don't understand why they require the Finnish language”. Shumilova et al. (2012, p. 80) indicated that the complications arising in the whole team due to the need to change language for one person cause employers reluctant to hire non-Finnish speaking employees even though English is used to communicate.

#### **6.1.1.1.3 Improving Finnish language teaching at schools/ universities**

Some of the participants were found critical of the teaching of the Finnish language at the educational institutions they studied and called for the way of language teaching to be changed. One of the participants indicated that the Finnish language taught at school would not be enough and extra language courses were required. Emphasizing about the ineffectiveness of the Finnish language taught at the educational institution, the participant said:

In the school or college where I was studying, they used to teach Finnish language but it didn't use to be that effective because in the schools they used to teach very formal things and that didn't use to be that effective for us after completing the study and competing in the job market. (Participant G)

Shumilova et al. (2012, p. 66) also emphasized the need of more training and improved Finnish language teaching at the Finnish higher education institutions owing to the impracticality of the Finnish language courses at the institutions. One other participant was critical of the language teaching at the universities and seeing people residing in Finland despite expressing their uncertainties to live, the participant addressed the need to change the way of teaching Finnish language at the universities and proposes the way to do it. International students are recommended to study Finnish despite the uncertainty until graduation to stay in Finland (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 65).

Being critical of the language teaching at universities, the participant said:

In the beginning there will be an introductory Finnish class for 2 months and after that there will be another course in the university or in some university, there won't be any course. In those two courses, students get 5 out of 5 and after that students say they don't need this and stop language learning and there won't be progress in language. Whatever had learnt will also be forgotten. After that the problem came. (Participant F)

Emphasizing that the language cannot be known forever by just working hard for 2 months as it is the process to integrate on a day-to-day basis, the participant further proposed to prolong the language courses at universities and also indulge the Finnish students in the language learning classes by giving credits to them. The needs to provide intensive language teaching to the international students was also emphasized by the employers. Employers recommended the needs to focus more on the Finnish language teaching or provide the international students with more opportunities of language learning at the higher educational institutions for enhancing the labour market applicability of the programmes (Shumilova et al., 2012, p.77).

#### **6.1.1.1.4 Providing Finnish language course at workplace**

Some of the participants expressed their interest to learn the Finnish language at workplace. One of the participants raised the issue of motivation to learn language at workplace and indicated that people are not motivated to learn language when not employed. Participant E also supports the language learning at workplace and calls for the employers for their flexibility stating that, "Employers also can be flexible. If given a chance, then they learn language while working also. Not motivated to learn language when people don't get jobs". Participant C expressed his enthusiasm to participate in language learning if provided at the workplace:

Still in my workplace there are so many foreigners and we don't speak Finnish. So probably if the companies arrange some kind of Finnish classes for the foreigners that would be nice and I would definitely participate in that kinds of programmes. In workplaces if there are any kinds of programmes such as language courses, I think that will also help us more to get integrated into the labour market.

More language and profession related trainings were also desired for by Russian immigrants (Heikkilä, 2005, p. 491).

#### **6.1.1.2 Lack of social networks/ professional connections**

Although the participants did not mention the lack of social networks or professional connections as the obstacle to their labour market integration directly, given their emphasis on the importance of networks and connections in finding jobs, lack of social networks or professional connections has been considered as the barrier to their labour market integration. Lack of professional connections impede international students and graduates in finding employment in their related fields of studies. Scott et al. (2015) indicated that the failure to establish or lack of professional connections of international students during their studies would cause them to be side-lined in the local labour market consequently making them unable to find field related employment after graduation.

Most of the participants emphasized the significance of social networks in terms of finding jobs whether be those in the related fields or out-of-field works. The participants indicated that most of the jobs they found or can be found were through social networks and connections. The importance of connections and networks to find jobs in Finland has also been emphasized by Shumilova et al. (2012, p. 70). Participant E emphasized the importance of networks and connections by citing the way he got a job in Finland. The participant stated, "When I first came, I didn't find jobs for 5 or 6 months. One of the friend's tutors referred me to the job of paper delivery in Posti and therefore got a job". Another participant further added saying, "From an individual point of view, I think networking is very important. Networking is important in the



sense that in Finland most of the vacancies are fulfilled through recommendations” (Participant F).

Given the importance of social networks and connections to find employment, the participants recommended to increase social networks and connections. According to the participants, social networks can be increased in various ways such as by being social and meeting people, through internships, befriending someone with different cultural groups and indicated that jobs can also be found through references. International students can join some student organizations to bolster social integration where foreign students and graduates get to meet with Finnish people and establish connections and integrate (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 65).

Participant E who emphasized to increase the links whether in the school, university or with friends stated that, “Network alone also is enough without language. It is so important”. One other participant emphasized the importance of internship and indicated that even though not given the opportunity, the recommendation or simply keeping them as the reference also increases the chance of getting a job. Another participant indicated that it is easy to get jobs if someone refers.

Participant A emphasized the importance of internships to increase networks by building connections. Connections established with employers during studies enabled the international students in Canada to find employment after graduation (Scott et al., 2015). When asked what the international student wanting to integrate into the Finnish labour market should do, he replied:

In Finland, more often than not, it is through connections that you get jobs rather than through applications. Therefore, my vote goes to being social and meeting people. For students, I would recommend taking internships seriously as it not only gives you the working experience but also provides an opportunity to build connections and opens doors for opportunities.

Informal ways or strategies of finding jobs in Finland are more effective and important in finding jobs than the formal ones (Alho, 2021, p. 11). Being social, meeting people and establishing connections through internships help to build personal networks and connections. Personal networks and people’s recommendations are important to secure employment in Finland and connections with Finnish people and people living longer in Finland is crucial to find employment (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 27).

One of the participants indicated that there are also ways of finding jobs other than just by getting jobs through easy (own cultural circle) links and called out that the tendency to befriend with only people with similar culture or colour has to be broken down both in terms of people and in company. The tendency to only befriend with people with similar culture or ethnic background restricts people to ethnically dominated networks. The empirical observation shows that immigrants need to build networks and connections with the members of the mainstream society to access better

employment opportunities in the wider labour market as ethnically dominated networks of immigrants provide very few chances to getting employed in jobs commensurate to educational qualifications (Ahmad, 2015, p. 980).

### **6.1.1.3 Lack of work experience/ training/ practical knowledge**

Some of the participants pointed lack of work experiences as obstacles to find jobs in their related fields. When asked about the factors hindering their labour market integration, some of the participants indicated the lack of experiences, insufficient training or lack of practical knowledge as the impediments to landing jobs in their related fields of studies.

Participant C wasn't convinced of finding jobs in his related field due to lack of training and practical knowledge as he stated, "I don't have enough training and practical knowledge in my field. We just studied at school and practical implementation is another thing that we didn't have a chance for that in the school. Also, I don't have the experience". Practical knowledge can be obtained through internship trainings. Practical internships provide the employees with the qualifications required for the job (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 31). Likewise, the lack of work experiences and lack of internship at a proper place might have hindered participant E getting a job in his related field of study as he stated:

After graduation, I sent 4 or 5 applications and they said Finnish language was required. They also asked where the internship was done and when said at a X (pseudonym), then they shunned away. Also, they asked for experience and the newcomers don't have experience.

Employers' demand for local work experience also for entry-level jobs where work experience is not required cause difficulty for immigrants to gain employment opportunities (Udah et al., 2019, p. 1168). Most of the companies in Finland look for experienced workers and lack of work experiences has been one of the major hindrances to getting jobs in the related field as per participant B who stated:

Based on my experience, what I can say is that in Finland still most of the companies are looking for experienced workers so I don't have that much experience in this field so what I can say is that that is one of the challenges. Most of the job vacancies look for experiences.

Experiences are the keys to getting jobs in most places and lack of work experiences cause difficulty for international students to find employment commensurate to their educational qualifications. International students in Canada were not prepared for their field related off-campus employment due to their inability to accumulate professional experiences during studies (Scott et al., 2015).

### **6.1.1.3.1 Providing internship opportunities**

Some of the participants found it very difficult to get internship opportunities during their studies. Expressing the difficulty to get the internship, one of the participants states:

During the study or even after graduation, I applied to 3 or 4 companies for the trainings but I don't know if it was because of being an immigrant or not, that my friends and I didn't get the training. (Participant E)

The same sort of story was shared by another participant who stated, "There are also some companies that are hiring trainees. I don't know if it's so competitive. I have tried 7/8 times but I wasn't able to get in that position so I can say that it is more competitive" (Participant B). The difficulty to find internships for international students in Finland has also been indicated by Shumilova et al. (2012, p. 70). Similarly, the difficulty to get internship opportunities was also faced by the international students in Canada. Internship opportunities weren't offered to international students in Canada as much compared to domestic students and even if offered, they weren't hired due to lack of assistance during the internships (Scott et al., 2015).

The difficulty to find internship opportunities for the international students can also be overcome by the help and support from the concerned educational institutions. The need of more support from career services in higher education institutions was addressed by the international graduates in Finland in terms of finding internship opportunities (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 66). As internships can also be the way to gain practical knowledge and experience in the related fields and possibility to land jobs or build connections, some of the participants voiced for the employers and companies to provide internship opportunities to the international students.

One of the participants indicated that employers could give internship opportunities even if they don't give jobs as the interns can be helped with minimum resources and added that providing basic allowances/salary during internship would be nice. Lyytinen and Toom (2019, p. 38) also corroborated to the idea of paying the interns during the internship periods to maintain their motivation but at the same time indicated that some employers did not want to waste resources by organizing internships in absence of suitable candidates.

### **6.1.1.4 Lack of confidence**

Some of the participants didn't feel convinced to get field related jobs and therefore didn't try to find jobs in their related fields of studies whereas some lacked confidence

at workplace due to the lack of the Finnish language skill. One of the participants indicated that he wasn't confident enough to find a field related job due to unfamiliarity about the Finnish working environment and lack of Finnish language skill. When asked if the participant tried to find job in the related field of study after graduation, participant C replied:

I didn't try to find a study related job. Maybe I wasn't convinced that I would find a study related job. So, I didn't apply. I was just doing some other profession jobs. Probably because I thought like I wasn't familiar with the Finnish working environment. Also, I didn't speak Finnish. My Finnish level was really really low. So, I wasn't even ready for myself, so I didn't look for study related jobs.

The lack of confidence not only deters from applying for jobs but also hinders the prospects of the candidates to get employed. Feeling of low confidence due to language and communication difficulties hinders performance in job interviews which in turn creates obstacles in finding ideal job opportunities (Scott et al., 2015). Moreover, the lack of confidence also hinders the participants' prospects to get integrated into the workplace. One of the participants was not able to communicate at the workplace due to low confidence. Citing difficulties at the workplace, participant A said:

Because of the language barrier you don't have that much confidence at work. For example, I used to work at the restaurant as a dishwasher when I started work. Neither of the staff would communicate with me and neither would I be able to communicate with the staff. Most of the time I would be going to work, just doing my jobs and not many people were talking to me and those kinds of things.

Lack of knowledge about the Finnish working environment or low Finnish language skill and the language barrier at the workplace cause lack of confidence to apply for field related jobs or low confidence at workplace as per the research participants. On the other hand, knowing the language skill of the host country helps to augment confidence and communication skills that facilitate engagement in the communities which in turn helps in creation of new opportunities to improve language skill and build social and career networks (Scott et al., 2015).

#### **6.1.1.5 Lack of motivation/ dissatisfaction**

Having to work in sectors other than in own related fields, participants were found to be dissatisfied towards their out-of-field works and the motivation to apply for the jobs related to their fields was also declining over time. Lack of motivation, high expectations of young immigrants and their unwillingness to do jobs other than desired were some among many other challenges for youth immigrants to get

employed in the Finnish labour market (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, pp. 29-30). When asked how the participants felt working in sectors different to their fields of study and if they were satisfied or not with the jobs they were doing, participant B replied:

Of course, I am not satisfied with the work I am doing in Finland. What I am thinking is that I should get the job based on my educational background. So, when I get the job based on my educational background then I will be a bit happier than what I am doing. Meaning that I am not happy. Though I am surviving with the job that I am doing currently, I will be happier when I get a job with my educational background.

The other participant expressed his loss of motivation to find works in related field because of getting no response. Participant E responded as follows:

When I did not get any positive responses from anywhere, I had to survive and started looking for or doing some part time jobs and after a long time the motivation also faded away. When fresh there is motivation but it is lost with time. Also, in the circle around I haven't seen anyone finding jobs in my field of study. Even friends or their friends none of them have got jobs in my field. I have seen people getting jobs in other fields but not my field and maybe that also affected the motivation.

The participant further added that

In fact, I also think that in my field, language it is not required. Also, it's understandable that in Finland they ask their native language. I also have some Finnish and can speak a bit and not zero Finnish. If given the opportunity, I can do jobs, but they don't give. Applied a few times but now no motivation. (Participant E)

The situation of the participants corresponds to the finding by Ahmad (2015, p. 982) who indicated that immigrants tend to work in low-status jobs acquired through the networks of friends and acquaintances after failing to get jobs commensurate to their personal preferences and educational qualifications, lose hope with time and become content with those jobs and repeat the similar pattern in the long-run where they themselves become a source of low-status employment.

#### **6.1.1.5.1 Keeping trying to find field related jobs**

Some of the participants emphasized that the international student immigrants should keep looking for jobs in their related fields from their individual level. Alho (2020, p. 18) emphasized the importance of the right attitudes and not abandoning hope despite confronting obstacles indicated by the international graduates for securing employment in Finland. When asked about what can be done to get integrated into the labour market, participant F contradicted the mentality of some people who think they don't get jobs and therefore don't try to find field related jobs by saying:

There are many who think that they don't get jobs because others did not find them. There can be macro problems of the organisation, country, government but it is the individual problem if you don't apply thinking that you will not get jobs because others did not get.

Participant G indicated that it takes time for societies to change and that the international student immigrants should keep trying to find jobs in their related fields of studies:

Immigrants rather than finger pointing the people and government here, immigrants also need to keep working hard. If not today, tomorrow if not tomorrow then day after tomorrow, in such a way society changes. Immigrants should keep trying or pushing for jobs.

One of the participants indicated that the situation in Finland is changing and getting better. Learning about the job search was also important to the participant who hopes to find a job at least in his related field of study and thus indicated:

When I graduated the situation in Finland was not good enough and there were not many jobs based on my experience. But it's getting better and nowadays I think that anyone who gives time, like some period of months, he or she can land the job. I think it's still difficult but there is some hope. The current situation is better than the past that I experienced before. (Participant B)

Apart from the ways mentioned above to improve labour market integration of international students from the individual level, the participant also emphasized on being active apart from study such as by developing skills, participating in job fairs/ events, keeping oneself updated about the labour market, joining unions that helps to learn about worker's rights and improve job search techniques that facilitate entry into the Finnish labour market. Organizing open recruiting events to facilitate the meetings between potential employees and employers helps to overcome the challenges of finding new labour force in certain sectors (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 37). Shumilova et al. (2012, p. 71) recommended international students and graduates to be active in searching for jobs and not lose hope and call employers if appropriate.

### **6.1.2 Institutional barriers and their avenues**

The obstacles confronted by the participants due to the institutional arrangement or situation that hindered their prospects to integrate into the Finnish labour market were termed as institutional barriers. Institutional barriers as identified in the research depended upon employers or companies and government and include lack of job opportunities, discrimination, lack of information flow and inaccessibility to integration training/ programmes. Institutional barriers as identified in the research have been demonstrated in Figure 6.

The ways to be practised by the employers/ companies, government and higher education institutions to improve the participants' prospects to integrate into the Finnish labour market were termed as institutional avenues. The institutional avenues as identified in the research have been demonstrated in Figure 7. Relaxing language requirements, improving Finnish language teaching at schools/ universities, providing internship opportunities, providing Finnish course at workplace, coaching employers/ companies about diversity, positive attitude towards immigrants and providing support programmes constitute institutional avenues to the participants' integration into the Finnish labour market.

In this section, the institutional barriers have been subsequently followed by the avenues meant to overcome those as shown in Figure 8. Positive attitude towards immigrants and coaching employers/companies about diversity are ways to overcome discrimination. Providing support programmes is way to overcome inaccessibility to integration/ training programmes. Having included in Section 6.1.2.4, improving integration policy has not been mentioned separately as an avenue to inaccessibility to integration/ training programmes.

#### **6.1.2.1 Lack of job opportunities**

Most of the participants found it very difficult to find jobs when they first came to Finland and therefore took a long time to find the first jobs although they were just the part time jobs and not related to their study fields. In terms of any out-of-field jobs, it was very difficult to find jobs for the participants when they came almost about a decade ago. One of the participants wanted to work immediately after coming to Finland but he didn't find a job. Participant C expressed the difficulty of finding a job by saying:

I wanted to do the job immediately when I came to Finland but I had to wait for 5 to 6 months. If I had found a job, I would have been doing. But I didn't find any job and I had to wait for 5 to 6 months. So, it was difficult.

One other participant who came to Finland in 2009 found it very difficult to even find a part time job as he talked about the rumour of the economic crisis in 2008 then. It could also be due to the unwelcoming nature of the Finnish labour market brought about by negative attitudes towards immigration and prejudices at the aftermath of the financial depression in 2008 that hindered employment prospects of immigrants (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 28).

Apart from the lack of out-of-field part time jobs at that time, the participants also reported lack of opportunities for field related jobs as well. The other participant also talked about the lack of job opportunities in his related field of study at that time:

Back then, honestly speaking I didn't see any job vacancies like right now. I myself was doing out-of-field work, for example cleaning but after graduation, I tried to find field related jobs but during that time, it was very difficult. During that phase there were not many job openings but nowadays, it is getting better and a lot of vacancies are opening. (Participant B)

One other participant indicated that besides the language barrier hindering immigrants getting jobs in their related fields, even the locals were struggling due to the lack of job opportunities. When asked whether the participant tried or not to find jobs in his related field, participant A replied:

No no no no no..... I was quite clear that I was not gonna get, for example the jobs in my related field because I don't have the Finnish language and to be honest there were not many opportunities in Finland. You know, even the natives are struggling to get jobs.

However, there was a mixed-up response from the participants in terms of situation regarding the availability of job opportunities in the Finnish labour market as of now. Most of the participants that are not working in their related fields feel that it is still tough to find employment in related fields but at the same time, majority of them feel that it may not be that difficult to find out-of-field jobs and some were also found optimistic to find jobs in their own related fields.

Lack of opportunities for field related employment during studies as well as after graduation are found to have hindered the prospect of the international students and graduates to get employed in jobs commensurate to their educational qualifications. Inadequate opportunities for field related employment during their studies were reported to have hindered international students to find suitable and career related jobs in Canada (Scott et al., 2015). The size of the labour market also determines the extent of job opportunities available in the certain labour market. Small labour market or limited job opportunities in Finland were addressed as barriers for the international graduates to get employed in their fields of studies (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 71).

### **6.1.2.2 Discrimination**

Some of the participants indicated discrimination as one of the barriers to their labour market integration in terms of finding jobs. According to the participants, discrimination may have hindered them from getting normal manual jobs or jobs in their related fields of studies. Unwelcoming attitudes and behaviours at the workplace



were reported by one of the participants for impeding his prospect to integrate into the Finnish labour market. Discriminatory behaviours and prejudicial attitudes of employers were primary obstacles for international students in Canada to find off-campus employment in their fields of studies (Scott et al., 2015).

Some of the participants stated that priority is given to the locals and high and good level jobs are given to them and foreigners are left with the manual and low-level jobs. When asked about the reasons for not finding jobs in their related fields, one of the participants indicated the prevalence of structural racism in the country and stated that people in Finland don't like people with foreign names to have professional jobs and want them to do some sort of manual jobs. Discrimination towards the international students and graduates in the Finnish labour market based on their nationality backgrounds has also been indicated by Alho (2020, p. 12).

One other participant said that his chance of getting field related job is very low as he thinks that Finnish people are given the first priority, then Europeans and he places himself in the third or fourth category in terms of preference. Ahmad (2020, p. 488) emphasized that non-European job seekers have to strive a lot to overcome discriminatory barriers in the Finnish labour market despite possessing comparable personal characteristics and locally acquired human capital.

Another participant indicated that it was heard or seen that employers don't even open the applications when they see the odd or strange names and called that as blatant racism and thinks it should not be done. Ahmad (2015, p. 982) has also indicated employers' reluctance to hire immigrants in Finland.

#### **6.1.2.2.1 Positive attitude towards immigrants**

Some of the participants felt that immigrants are not perceived positively in Finland. One of the participants said that there should be positive attitude towards English speaking immigrants as English is used to communicate even between countries in Europe. Another participant expressed dilemma whether it is because of the language barrier or not but the immigrants are not perceived positively in Finland. The empirical study conducted to understand the anti-migration attitudes in Hungary reported certain participants fearing for the integrity of the national culture as they think that transnationalism and multiculturalism brought about by mixing foreign cultures hurt host country societies (Oláh et al., 2017, p. 798).

Participant G emphasized that the importance of immigrants has to be understood by the locals:

The locals need to understand that immigrants are for good. When they come here and work in society here, Finland will have the advantage and these things have to be understood.

The divided perceptions of the political groups in Finland towards migration also forms segregated attitudes towards them. On one hand, the liberal Finns perceive migration of highly educated and skilled people such as the international students important for the country's future and societal perspective sees the essence of integrating international students in the fast-ageing Finnish societies to fill the needs of talented labour force in the increasingly globalised marketplace. Whereas on the other hand, the negative attitudes of the traditional conservative Finns towards migration particularly from outside Europe poses a problem for the international students (Välilä & Weimer, 2014, p. 706).

#### **6.1.2.2.2 Coaching employers/ companies about diversity**

Some of the participants indicated that companies and employers have to embrace diversity and be open to hiring foreigners and some have indicated that trainings have to be provided to the employers so that they hire in an unbiased way. Participant B indicated that impartial hiring is only possible if government works in collaboration with employers and companies and therefore calls them to be open to diversity:

All the government, companies and employers have to be open to foreigners. If only the government has good policies but employers and companies are not open to foreigners, then policies do not work. Everyone from the government to companies and employers that hire workers have to welcome foreigners. I mean they should accept diversity in the companies.

One of the participants doubted if the government rules and policies regarding the immigrant integration in the labour market have been followed or not. The participant questioned about the implementation of government policies from the employers and companies and called for the establishment of the mechanism for inspecting if the rules and policies are being followed or not. Ahmad (2020, p. 493) emphasized that the policies and measures aimed to enhance labour market integration of immigrants would not produce desired outcomes in the absence of any change in the attitudes of employers towards recruitment of immigrants.

Participant G felt that employers have to be informed about the importance of immigrants so that they would hire in an unbiased way:

Employers also should have clear ideas that they need immigrants. Why is Finland importing so many immigrants? They should know about this. When they know these things then they will be unbiased while hiring workers. In lack of this truth, they can't hire without being biased and they will be biased. In my opinion when employers know these things then they will hire in an unbiased way. Therefore, employers should know the

importance of immigrants in Finland. I think providing these kinds of training before going to the hiring positions will be effective.

Organizations and companies can also benefit from international students' multicultural and international experiences and their unique cultural skills such as language abilities. But lack of appreciation for advantages of intercultural working force also refrains employers from recruiting international students and are therefore often biased against them (Scott et al., 2015). Shumilova et al. (2012, p. 73) indicated the need of employers to become lenient and more open-minded towards the international graduates to augment their employment prospects. Educating the Finnish employers to enhance their views so that they would be open to hiring immigrants has been emphasized which could be done by providing them with the cross-cultural communication and management related courses from the government level.

### **6.1.2.3 Lack of information flow**

Lack of information flow has been an obstacle for the participants on their endeavours to finding employment in Finland. When the participants migrated to Finland for the first time, they lacked information regarding the ways to find employment and about integration policies. One of the participants didn't have any idea regarding job search as he stated, "I didn't know where to find the job and where to look for it and then I didn't know the way to approach people in order to get the job" (Participant D). Another participant didn't know about the integration policies and thus stated, "I didn't know about the policies regarding integrating immigrants in Finland when I first came here" (Participant E).

The difficulty to access information due to lack of social networks and language barrier obstructed the flow of information for one participant concerning where to find jobs as he stated:

When I came to Finland, there weren't many Nepalese students and it was very hard to get the information because everything on the internet was in Finnish. It wasn't as digitalised as it is now and so it was pretty hard for me to access information like where to find jobs. (Participant A)

Participant B emphasized the significance of the information flow between the TE-office and the international students and immigrants thus stating:

If they say that they have certain training programmes and if the information flow is smooth, then that will make it easy. The most important thing is the information flow and you may not know anything if there's no information flow.

Apart from the lack of information flow concerning job search and integration policies as indicated by the participants, the lack of administrative support regarding information concerning significance of the Finnish language skill and labour market situation in Finland at the beginning were emphasized by Shumilova et al. (2012, p. 68). Moreover, the need for information regarding Finnish working methods, collective labour agreements and additional traineeships and courses concerning Finnish working culture and society have been suggested by some employers according to Lyytinen and Toom (2019, pp. 36-37).

#### **6.1.2.4 Inaccessibility to integration/ training programmes**

Inaccessibility to Finnish language learning courses as a part of integration programme has been indicated to hinder the improvement of the Finnish language skills of the participants which in turn affected their labour market integration. Some of the participants had wanted to learn the Finnish language as a part of integration training programme but were denied because of their ineligibilities as it was only for immigrants living in Finland for less than 3 years and being a full-time student.

When asked if the participants tried to improve their Finnish language skills, one of the participants said: “University provides Finnish classes to the students but the government doesn't. Maybe even nowadays, they don't provide”. (Participant F)

The same participant further added:

The way the government treats the students in such a harsh way gives me the feeling that students are not even immigrants. For immigrants they have programmes but they have nothing for the students. I had applied for the language course but they said I was a fulltime student and did not accept.

The other participant also felt that the international students are a bit marginalized in terms of accessibility to integration programmes relative to other groups of immigrants:

Coming to Finland as a student and as a refugee or dependent makes a difference. Refugees or other immigrants coming as dependents may have more knowledge and access to integration training and programmes whereas the international students do not have much of it. (Participant B)

In addition to the inaccessibility of the international students to integration training programmes as indicated by the participants, the ineligibility of the international graduates for social benefits unless they are employed or possess family ties in Finland also increases their vulnerability (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 72). Government investment in language training was emphasized and more resources for

training immigrants were desired for by employers to improve the Finnish language skills of immigrants for facilitating their entry into the Finnish labour market (Lyytinen & Toom, 2019, p. 36).

Some of the participants felt the need to improve the integration policies for the international students in terms of providing them with accessibility to the Finnish language training as a part of integration training programme. One of the participants was disappointed to learn about his ineligibility to learn the Finnish language through integration programme and therefore called for the policies to be reformed. He said:

When I came as a student, I was focused on studying and after completing the study went to learn the language through integration programme but by the time, the eligibility for the programme was over. This is one of the policies that needs to be improved. Perhaps this needs to be changed and whenever international students, particularly after graduation want to learn language skills, they need to be provided with. (Participant B)

#### **6.1.2.4.1 Providing support programmes**

Participants wanted support from the Finnish government and educational institutions for enhancing their labour market integration. They expressed their desires for the support programmes such as trainings, provision of the Finnish language courses and establishment of cooperation between the training programmes and local companies.

One of the participants emphasized the need of support programmes for the fresh graduates to get jobs:

If there are some facilities or some programmes, supporting programmes from the government like providing some training then that would make it easier for the fresh people to get jobs. Once you get the job and you have some experience, after that I don't think that it will be difficult for people who have experience. (Participant B)

Participants recommended for the provision of Finnish language classes both from the government and educational institutions. One participant suggested, "Schools can provide half or one full year language course to the students if the language requirement is a must" (Participant E). Another participant recommended for the compulsory Finnish language course for the international students:

Compulsory Finnish language courses for the first one and half year and at least up to the level B2.2 and after that they can apply any courses they want and they can do the jobs they qualify for. Government or some educational institutions can use these kinds of techniques. (Participant D)

Shumilova et al. (2012, p. 66) emphasized the need to provide intensive language courses/ studies for half or one year period and making Finnish classes compulsory

in the Finnish higher educational institutions for the international students. Participant E emphasized the need to teach the Finnish language skill to the international students in the beginning. He stated:

When students come for the first time, then teach them Finnish so that they can focus on the language if the plan is to send them to the labour market. In the beginning they have motivation to learn new things but later people do not care so much.

Välilmaa and Weimer (2014, p. 706) indicated that optional and compulsory language trainings are provided by the international degree programmes during periods of studies but language is not of high priority in the curriculum of the degree programmes and are not focused on the language required for the labour market. Participant B calls for the cooperation between the training programmes and companies to facilitate workers' entry into the labour market:

Many training programmes can cooperate with certain local companies so that when the workers are ready, they can just enter the labour market right away. Because being trained and not entering the labour market makes it difficult. That's why there should be cooperation between the training programmes and local companies and also other companies within Finland.

Alongside the cooperation between government training programmes and companies, collaboration of Finnish higher educational institutions with companies in Finland can also facilitate the employment prospects of the international students and graduates. The weak links between labour market and higher educational institutions hinders the international students and graduates from getting employed in Finland and therefore the Finnish higher educational institutions need to have close collaboration with the corporate world to facilitate the employment prospects of the international students and graduates (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 70).

Scott et al. (2015) indicated that finding suitable jobs for international students in Canada was impeded by the inadequate employment opportunities in their fields during the programme studies which emphasizes the needs of added incentives and cooperative education programmes for establishing connections between international students and industry partners. Moreover, the need of initiatives from university or government level was emphasized for establishing connections between off-campus employers and international students during the study programmes to help international students and graduates for securing adequate employment after graduation.

## 7 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

All the participants for the study are the male participants. Ahmad (2020, p. 490) indicated that non-EU female immigrants from Iraq and Somalia were found to be less discriminated than the male groups from such backgrounds. In that sense, the gender difference can be one of the constraints of the research. The labour market experiences for international graduates from different educational fields might be different given that the demands for people in certain fields with certain educational qualifications may differ from those in other fields which in turn leads to having different experiences regarding their labour market integration.

All the research participants did not migrate at the same time or at the same place/ city in Finland. Some of the participants had come just after the economic crisis in 2008 that made it more difficult for them to find jobs initially. Also, some participants came to remote cities where finding jobs may have been more difficult compared to other cities such as Helsinki which is the capital city of Finland. Given the differences in their study fields, cities/ places they lived in and jobs they worked at, their experiences vary and that may affect the outcome of the research. Also, opinions are built on experiences and experiences are built on confrontations. Confrontations vary depending upon the individuals and this research captures the experiences and opinions derived from the confrontations of a small group of Nepalese immigrants with locally obtained international degree qualifications which may not correspond to those of others.

Contrary to the research constraints, the long term stays of the participants for more than 9 years in Finland provides more basis for credibility of the research as they may have sufficient labour market experiences to reflect upon and more the reflections, better for the research outcome. Simultaneously, the longer stay is not entirely devoid of drawbacks as the longer the time of stay, the less is the tendency to remember the things or events of the distant past more precisely and in due time of the interviews. To recall all those life events of such a long period of time in just 20/30 minutes of

interviews is simply not possible. Therefore, it depends upon how much the participants could recall the events concerning their labour market experiences to reflect upon during the interviews.

Some of the participants were accessed through direct contacts whereas others were accessed through the participants' contacts using snowball sampling method. The researcher believes that it should not have affected the research outcome as sound professionalism was maintained abiding by all the ethical guidelines during data collection to prevent the "familiarity" factor affecting the research outcome. Provided that the researcher is merely involved in the research as an investigator but participants are the main source of data, it also depends upon how much the "familiarity" factor affected them during the interviews although the researcher tried to maintain absolute professionalism throughout the interviews by maintaining ethical conduct and distancing from the participants during the entirety of the interviews from his side.

Some of the interviews were conducted in English whereas some were conducted in the native language of the participants i.e., the Nepali language. The researcher felt that if conducted in the Nepali language, a few participants would feel more convenient to express themselves that might have slightly affected the research outcome. The way of collecting data was unconventional in a way that all the participants were interviewed through the zoom platform due to the covid-19 pandemic. But the researcher believes that it should not have impacted the outcome of the research as the researcher felt the participants were more comfortable to share their views and experiences virtually than in person.

Also, some of the participants might have had concerns regarding anonymity and confidentiality issues but the recorded implied consents obtained at the beginning of the interviews might have convinced them to fully participate in the research leaving any doubts behind. The research involves only the international degree graduates or immigrants belonging to the Nepalese nationality background and therefore the results may not completely apply to those belonging to other cultural backgrounds or nationalities. The inclusion of all the Nepalese immigrants in the research study brings homogeneity and uniformity in the research in terms of characteristics of the participants that increases the credibility of the research findings in relation to the group studied which in this case are the Nepalese international degree graduates from Finnish higher education institutions.



## 8 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research objective was based on the confrontation of obstacles in the Finnish labour market by the Nepalese immigrants with international degree qualifications obtained from the Finnish higher education institutions. The challenges and difficulties hindering employment prospects of the Nepalese immigrant participants or their incorporation as equals in the workplace organization constituted obstacles to their labour market integration in the research. Likewise, the ways to overcome those obstacles or improve their employment prospects or inclusion in the company organization were considered as the avenues to their integration into the Finnish labour market. The research objective was met by the identification of barriers and avenues to the Nepalese immigrant participants' integration into the Finnish labour market.

The barriers and avenues to their labour market integration in the research have been identified as personal and institutional. Personal barriers involved the challenges confronted by the participants in the Finnish labour market due to the lack of their human capital endowments that hindered their prospects to integrate into the Finnish labour market and personal avenues comprised the ways to be practised by the participants themselves to enhance their prospects of integration into the Finnish labour market. Likewise, institutional barriers comprised the obstacles confronted by the participants due to the institutional arrangement or situation that hindered their prospects to integrate into the Finnish labour market and the ways to be practised by the employers/ companies, higher education institutions and government to improve the participants' prospects of integration into the Finnish labour market were termed as institutional avenues.

Personal barriers include lack of Finnish language skill, lack of social networks/ professional connections, lack of work experience/ training/ practical knowledge, lack of confidence at workplace or to apply for field related works and lack of motivation to apply for field related works or dissatisfaction towards out-of-field

works whereas lack of job opportunities, discrimination, lack of information flow and inaccessibility to integration/ training programmes constitute institutional barriers.

Similarly, focusing on the Finnish language from the beginning and keeping trying to find field related jobs constitute personal avenues whereas institutional avenues include relaxing Finnish language requirements, improving Finnish language teaching at schools/ universities, providing Finnish language course at workplace, providing internship opportunities, positive attitude towards immigrants, coaching employers/ companies about diversity and providing support programmes. The identification of avenues to the Nepalese immigrants' integration into the Finnish labour market as personal and institutional corresponds to integration as a two-way process between the migrants and host societies as defined in Section 3.1.2.

Most of the personal obstacles that have been identified in the research correspond to the challenges identified in the previous findings such as lack of language skill, lack of social networks and lack of work experience, training or practical knowledge. However, lack of confidence at workplace or to apply for field related jobs and lack of motivation to apply for field related works or dissatisfaction towards out-of-field works constitute the obstacles to labour market integration different to those identified in the previous studies. Similarly, the institutional barriers to the Nepalese immigrant participants' labour market integration identified in the research such as discrimination correspond to the findings from previous studies related to the topic. However, lack of job opportunities, lack of information flow and inaccessibility to integration/ training programmes as identified in the research constitute the new findings related to the study topic.

Most of the previous studies were focused on the challenges faced by the international students and immigrants to integrate into the receiving country labour market but the ways to overcome the challenges or facilitate their integration were not sought for in most of the cases and were investigated only to a minimum extent based on the literature included in the research. The theories of personal and institutional avenues to labour market integration are identified and developed from the research alongside personal and institutional barriers. Although challenges to the Nepalese immigrant participants' integration into the Finnish labour market as identified in the research are found equally divided between personal and institutional as can be seen in Figure 6; the ways or avenues to facilitate their labour market integration or to overcome those obstacles are mostly institutional as can be seen in Figure 7.

Based on the findings of the research, the stakeholders that have affected the Nepalese immigrant participants' prospects of integrating into the Finnish labour market or can play important roles to facilitate their labour market integration include the participants themselves, higher education institutions, employers or companies and the government in Finland. The integration of the participants into the Finnish

labour market in lack of active involvement or participation of any of the stakeholders seems difficult to accomplish. The endeavours are required from all the stakeholders to facilitate their integration into the Finnish labour market. The sample size contained only seven Nepalese immigrants as the research participants. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct the research by involving a considerable number of participants. The larger sample size could involve the international degree graduates from homogenous or heterogeneous nationality and cultural backgrounds.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. How did you end up in Finland? Would you please share something about your background for e.g., your field of study and what have you been doing recently?
2. How was it to find a job when you first migrated to Finland? Did you experience any difficulties or challenges to find jobs? If yes, what were the challenges?
3. What kinds of jobs did you get or try to find before and after graduation? How were your experiences?
4. Were you satisfied with the jobs, and did they justify your skills and qualifications? Or how well do you think you are integrated into the Finnish labour market?
5. Did you experience any barriers that hindered you from getting integrated into the labour market in Finland?
6. What do you think are the reasons for those barriers?
7. What in your opinion can be done to overcome those barriers or facilitate your labour market integration from any levels such as individual, employer or government?
8. What would you like to suggest an international student immigrant coming to Finland in terms of getting integrated into the Finnish labour market?



## APPENDIX 2. CODING SAMPLES

Data extracts	Codes
In my opinion, in Finland reference is important to find jobs that someone you know refers to you for. May be if a good person I know referred me to the job then may be I would get the job despite not having the Finnish language skills. I think reference is more important than the Finnish language skill in Finland. It's easy to get jobs if someone refers.	Importance of reference to get jobs
May be in other European countries it's also difficult. May be in Australia or the United States, migrants are perceived positively but in Finland may not be perceived in such a way.	Negative perception towards immigrants
I thought about going abroad and looking for jobs in the Nepalese way. But the system here was different. I didn't know. I didn't know where and how to look for jobs. Who to ask and what to do. I didn't know anything about it. Because of this, it was very difficult to find a job.	No idea about looking for jobs
I used to ask friends and build networks and contacts asking to tell if they knew if there were any jobs available. In April 2010, through contact with one of the people who I have known, I found a cleaning job in the XYZ (pseudonym) for 2.5 hours per day from Monday to Friday.	Found job through social contact
I know very well that it is hard to learn the language especially when you are an immigrant student who must work to earn livelihood in Finland, but I would recommend learning Finnish seriously from the beginning.	Learn Finnish from the beginning
Whenever I have tried to apply for the jobs, I think because of my name or surname, most of the times I would get rejected.	Rejection due to discrimination
Also, I didn't know about the policies regarding integrating immigrants in Finland when I first came here.	Unfamiliarity about integration policies
I mean at school, you know when I was studying hospitality management at school you were working with hotel booking software and stuff, with all those cool sounding names, software and stuff and in reality, you were just carrying plates and washing dishes. So, there was a huge conflict of interest at what you are	Dissatisfaction towards out-of-field works

learning and what you are doing. So, how can I get satisfied? I always felt like I deserve better than this but I didn't have other options.	
I applied to about 20 companies and then went for an interview in 2 or 3 of the companies. And in all the interviews, the common questions used to be like how your Finnish is. I didn't get a job in one of the companies due to my lack of Finnish language skill. I got selected in 2 of the company interviews and then selected the ABC (pseudonym) company.	Rejection due to lack of Finnish language skill