# Local Anchoring at Early Childhood Education Centre in Nepal

## How is Preschool Teacher Training relevant for Diakonia?

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## Abstract

In this project, I have chosen to do research on the transition from foreign to local Nepali management at ECEC (Early Childhood Education Centre) in Nepal who is offering Preschool Teacher Education (and recently Primary School Teacher Education). The research question is: How was the education at the ECEC (Early Childhood Education Center) in Nepal locally anchored and what factors contributed to making the transition to Nepalese leadership sustainable?

Interviews have been conducted with a selection of former foreign management, locally employed Nepalese and partner organizations from Norway and intercultural theory has been used.

Summarized the findings are: First, The Given cultural perspective has a limited value and impact. Second: The Cultural Creation perspective is a much better tool. Third: The "emic" perspective gives depth to the understanding of mentalities and cultures, Fourth: An understanding of diakonia as "Gospel in interaction» is supported. Fifth: ECEC's teacher education can best be understood as a hybrid with the best of Western education contextualized to a Nepali context. Finally: The Christian value-based perspective adds an extra dimension of insight into the interaction taking place at ECEC.

## Sammendrag

I dette prosjektet har jeg undersøkt overgangen fra utenlandsk til lokal nepalesisk ledelse ved ECEC (Early Childhood Education Centre) i Nepal. ECEC tilbyr Førskolelærer utdanning, og fra 2020 grunnskoleutdanning.

Forskningsspørsmålet er: Hvordan var utdanningen ved ECEC i Nepal lokalt forankret og hvilke faktorer bidro til å gjøre overgangen til nepalsk lederskap bærekraftig? Intervjuer er gjennomført med tidligere utenlandsk ledelse, lokalt ansatte nepalerne og partnerorganisasjoner fra Norge og belyst med interkulturell teori.

Funnene viser at det beskrivende kulturbegrepet en begrenset verdi og innvirkning. For det andre: Det dynamiske kulturbegrepet er et mye bedre verktøy. Videre: Det «emiske» perspektivet gir dybde til forståelsen av mentaliteter og kulturer. Deretter: En forståelse av diakoni som «evangelium i samspill (interaction)» støttes. For det femte: ECECs lærerutdanning kan best forstås som en hybrid med det beste fra vestlig utdanning

kontekstualisert til en nepalsk setting. Til slutt: Det kristne verdibaserte perspektivet tilfører en ekstra dimensjon av innsikt i samspillet som foregår ved ECEC.

## Preface

In this project, I have chosen to research the transition from foreign to local Nepali management at ECEC (Early Childhood Education Centre) in Nepal. ECEC have been offering Preschool Teacher Education from 2001 and Primary School Teacher Education from 2022.

The research question is: How was the education at the ECEC (Early Childhood Education Center) in Nepal locally anchored and what factors contributed to making the transition to Nepalese leadership sustainable?

A selection of people with close knowledge to ECEC were asked to participate. The informants are from tree main groups to get different perspectives on local ownership. The groups were 1. former foreign management, 2. locally employed Nepalese, and 3. Norwegian partners from Himalpartner and NLA.

Intercultural theory has been used with emphasize on Given Culture perspective and Creative Culture perspective and the Dimensions of National Cultures by Geert Hofstede. To aloud a critical interpretation and discussion of the data, triple hermeneutics have been used. Triple hermeneutics addresses power balance, unconscious processes, ideologies and other expressions of dominance and try to understand the reason why people act like they do.

Summarized this are the findings in this Research Project: First, The Given cultural perspective has a limited value and impact. Second: The Cultural Creation perspective is a much better tool. Third: The "emic" perspective gives depth to the understanding of mentalities and cultures, Fourth: An understanding of diakonia as "Gospel in interaction» is supported. Fifth: ECEC's teacher education can best be understood as a hybrid with the best of Western education contextualized to a Nepali context. Finally: The Christian value-based perspective adds an extra dimension of insight into the interaction taking place at ECEC.

I hope this research will add valuable insight about how to ensure a good transition to local management for organizations working in similar cross- cultural contexts and circumstances.

I will thank my supervisor Hans Morten Haugen for guidance, helpful ideas and patience through the project. Further, I am grateful to Pitambar Neupane, Heidi Westborg Steel and Ruth Mjanger for contributions to different parts of the project. Thanks to Karina Eriksen for language advice and proofreading. Finally, I am very thankful to my husband Kristian and daughters Petrine and Maja for help and patience during the last four years.

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# 1 Introduction chapter

## 1.1 Introduction

I lived and volunteered at ECEC (Early Childhood Education Centre) in Kathmandu Nepal, for five years from 2008-2013. At that time, ECEC was mainly conducting preschool teachers' training. It was remarkable to be part of the internal life of ECEC with committed and enthusiastic managers and employees. Although not being part of the administration, I was "in between" different groups of Nepalese employees, expats leaders, the donors from NLA (NLA University College), and Himalpartner. This was the mission organization where I was employed. I acquired different opinions, experiences, and occasional frustrations. Everyone strived for a strong ECEC with Nepali identity and future Nepalese leadership. However, there were contrasting ideas concerning how that would happen and how soon it should happen. The expats and donors were all attentive regarding how the quality could be maintained after transferring the organization to Nepalese hands.

I was a member of the board of Himalpartner for four years from 2013-2017 and have followed ECEC through Himalpartner and some direct contact with expats and local staff subsequently. Having said that, I was still interested in this transition and the ongoing situation in ECEC, now with Nepalese management. With this as a foundation, I decided to do further research. I am quite certain this research project could be valuable for other similar organizations working in cross-cultural contexts developing local strong organizations. After conducting the interviews, I realized that so far, the transition had been a success. As a result of this, the focus in this research project changed from examining the transferring process to identifying reasons due to why this particular process had such a productive result.

## 1.2 Research questions

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|---|
| How was the education at the ECEC (Early Childhood Education Center) in Nepal locally anchored and what factors contributed to making the transition to Nepalese leadership sustainable? |

### 1.2.1 Definitions

**"Locally anchored" and "local ownership"** is in this thesis used coincidently. Local Ownership has no clear definition and has been used in varies ways during the years. The quotes/definitions underneath describe how the terms are understood in this project. The first definition underneath is by Richmond (2012):

> "Local ownership, at least in the manner internationals envisage it, is impossible unless local actors define what it is they want to own and how they develop it through their relationship with international actors." (Rayroux A. and Wilén N, 2014, p )

> "What is required is not local support for donor programs and projects but rather donor support for programs and projects initiated by local actors." (Laurie Nathan)

In this research, local ownership and anchoring are also understood as a transition to local management and contextualizing to Nepali context.

**Sustainable:** In this research project, the broad definition by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 is used. Sustainability is economic-development activity that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (WCED, 1987) (Portney, 2015, s.3-5) At ECEC the emphasize is at sustainable leadership and organization. Hence, the ability to keep the quality of the education at same level after transition to Nepalese management.

## 1.3 History and Background of ECEC

ECEC was established as a company with foreign investment by the Dutch Reiny de Wit in cooperation with other Nepali and expatriate experts in July 2001. The vision was to improve the quality of education for young children of Nepal so they would receive care and education that would support their state of development. De Vit has been in Nepal since January 1985, mainly working with education. She realized that it would be much more efficient and

strategic to train teachers from several schools at the same time, than to improve schools individually. This was the background and foundation to commence ECEC teacher training Centre in June 2001 (ECEC, 2014, s. 4).

To start with, ECEC provided a two days capacity-building courses for preschool teachers. Later, this was replaced by week-long courses, and finally one-month courses were developed. These also contained practice at schools. A milestone was when the one-year academic courses were established in cooperation with KU (Kathmandu University) and NLA from Norway (ECEC, 2022) Not to mention, ECEC developed supporting services both for parents and school management. (ECEC, 2014, s. 4).

Since the beginning in 2001, the number of office staff has steadily increased and ECEC moved into its purpose-built building in Bhanimandal, Kathmandu in 2010. In 2012 the organization opened an outlet office in Chabahil, in the north of Kathmandu which made it possible for more teachers to participate (ECEC, 2014, s. 4). ECEC also started producing teaching materials such as calendar holders, hand puppets, and Muppets. Unfortunately, the production department was terminated in 2015 because of the products becoming available in Nepal (ECEC, 2014, s. 5).

Numerous primary schools requested help in transforming primary education as a result of the enrolling requirements for grade one. Therefore, ECEC started consultation and formal primary teacher training in 2012 (ECEC, 2014, s. 5). In 2014, ECEC made a business plan targeting to increase the number of courses, improve the quality of the training and services, establish a Bachelor level teacher course, and set up branches in some major cities. Some of these targeted aims were demanding to accomplish. Nevertheless, ECEC was still able to increase the number of training courses, start a one-year academic teacher training course in Chabahil, Kathmandu, develop teaching resources, increase the number of school consultations, and maintain the quality of training. The day-to-day management of the company was handed over to a Nepali Executive team in 2017 led by a General Manager (ECEC, 2014, s. 5).

ECEC has been part of the INCE (International Network of Christian Education) since 2018. In cooperation, the INTENT project (Introducing a New Triangle to Educate Nepalese Teachers) was developed. The aim was to improve the quality of basic education in Nepal. In 2020, the INTENT project's major focus was to develop model schools in the project area (ECEC, 2021, s.14).

Intending to improve the general teacher education in Nepal, ECEC planned to start up a Bachelor's basic teacher education program (ECEC, 2014, s. 6). To be able to do so, they needed grants and to cooperate with a Nepalese university, for accreditation of the course. In 2016, NLA together with ECEC and Tribhuvan University (TU) applied for funding from Norad [1] (NORHED programme), but did not succeed. In 2020, NLA tried again together with Nepal Open University (NOU), ECEC, Agder University (UiA), Norway and Driestar Christian University (DE), the Netherlands) and this time they received funding for a 6-year project (21-26) (Norad, 2022). The title of the program is: Establish research-based basic teacher education programs in Nepal and is related to the sub-program education and teacher training (NLA, 2022). The objectives of the project are:

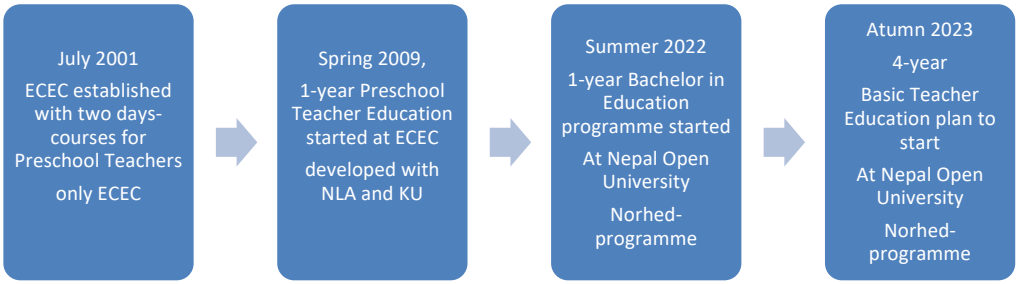
> 1. To build capacity in HEIs faculty and ECECs staff, for establishing an academic community interested in improved research and pedagogy in basic teacher education and basic schools (PEOPLE). 2. To improve curriculums, teaching, and research in education faculties at HEIs in Nepal. More specifically, to find cultural keys to succeed with pedagogy taught by education faculties for successful transferring into basic schools (grade 1-8), with a particular focus on developing sustainable solutions and practices (PROGRAMMES AND METHODS, SYSTEM). This evidence-based research will focus on local involvement to ensure applicability in Nepalese classrooms and include competence in research ethics when involving children and marginalized groups. The perspective of gender equality and inclusion will be mainstreamed in both capacity building, programs, and research. (NLA, 2020)

The research and development projects will integrate research and teaching, establishing the first research-based basic teacher education programs at the BA level in Nepal. NOU is the higher education institution (HEI-partner) in Nepal in this project and the courses will be operated by them. In summer 2022, a 1-year Bachelor in Education programme started. This is a pedagogical course for graduated students in other subjects and in-service teachers. In autumn 23, NOU plans to enroll students in a 4-year  Bachelor in Basic Teacher Education Programme ECEC will mainly contribute with their competence on practical assignments, curriculum development and development of model schools for students' practical training. (ECEC, 2014, s. 6). In addition, two staff members from ECEC will get a PhD scholarship

[1] Norhed is Norway's program for capacity building in higher education and research and was established by Norad in 2012.

and become part of international research teams. The NORHED project is a good opportunity for ECEC to expand their understanding about cooperation, teaching and research at an academic level.

The institutions (NOU, NLA, ECEC and DCU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2018, and after years of networking, planning and applying for grants, they are now about to established a value-driven, practice-oriented, and effective Bachelor level teacher education for Basic Education (4-12) year-old children. The curriculum framework for Basic Education (grades 1-5) is based on the concurrent model of teaching and learning with 30% of face-to-face teaching, 30% online mode of teaching, and 40% practical assignment incorporating value-driven and practice-oriented questions (NOU, 2022).




*Model: Timeline for courses and educations ECEC is offering or contributing to.*

The vision of ECEC is "All young children (0-12 yrs.) in Nepal will receive developmentally appropriate education and care" (ECEC, 2014, s. 6). The mission is "to realize this vision" and for the 5 coming years ECEC's mission is to: Educate teachers and caregivers, Engage in consultation with schools, Develop child-friendly resources, Develop a network of like-minded stakeholders who support and cooperate with Nepal government bodies, Expand ECEC's services in other major cities of Nepal, Conduct research for development and innovation in providing quality education (ECEC, 2014, s. 6).

## 1.4 Understanding of Diakonia

In my research I could not find the word *Diakonia* in any ECEC's documents. Nonetheless, when the core values are stated in the annual report from 2020, it says: "We are committed to being humble, forgiving and compassionate in all our relations with others as Christ has

exemplified." Under creativity, the organization seeks to develop in ourselves and others the potential, gifts, and talents that God has given to each of us." This is equivalent with the new paradigm of Diakonia (Dietrich S., 2014, s. 13).

Today the focus is not on helping people in need, but on partnership and empowerment. In international aid, the emphasis has moved from offering help to those in need to partnership between donors and receivers. The same paradigm shift has taken place within the understanding of church-based social work or Diakonia. The shift has been according to the understanding of what it means to receive and offer help. Today the main emphasis is on mutuality. We are both a part of the community and we are called to share and help each other. We are all givers and receivers at the same time, sometimes more as givers and sometimes more as recipients (Dietrich S., 2014, s. 13-14).

Rodreguiz Nygaard argues that an expanded definition might be closer to what diaconal work does involve. The definition of Diakonia in the Church of Norway does not correspond to the empirical findings of what deacons do according to Rodreguiz Nygaard in the article "Reflective Practice of Diakonia from the Margins: Ecclesiological and Professional Implications." The empirical findings show that the deacons use the word through Bible texts, one of the sacraments (Holy Communion), and actions in their interactions with participants. Rodriguez Nygaard introduced a new analytical unit based on interactions and not on the dichotomy between words and actions. By interaction, she suggests an analytical unit that emphasizes the interchanges between different agencies. She uses Vygotsky's theory to explain that learning is always mediated by tools or artifacts like Bible, food, liturgies, or language (Rodriguez Nygaard, 2017, s.175). The subject/agent cannot be analytically separated from its tools but must be understood in the interplay between the agent and the tools. According to Rodriguez Nygaard, words and actions therefore cannot be separated. Both are often used simultaneously in interactions between people. She suggests a third logic, the logic of interactions, and an expanded definition of Diakonia based on the empirical findings and replace "…Gospel in action…" with "…Gospel in interactions... (Kirkerådet, 2010, s.5)"

> Diakonia is the caring ministry of the Church. It is the Gospel in *interactions*, and it is expressed through loving your neighbor, creating inclusive communities, caring for creation, and struggling for justice. (Rodriguez Nygaard, 2017, s.175)

This research is done in a Norwegian church context, but still this can be adopted to a cross-cultural organizational context. In a new context with communication and cultural challenges, the combination of action and words, but also values, fysical environment and so forth will mutually strengthen each other and contribute to the Diaconal understanding. The interaction will happen in the space between the several elements.

The document Diakonia in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment says this about Diakonia:

> One is that Diakonia is a theological concept that points to the very identity and mission of the church. Another is its practical implication in that sense that Diakonia is a call to action, as a response to human suffering, injustice, and care or creation… (LVF, 2009, s.8)

Within international Diakonia and especially within the mission field, there has also been a change towards a more integrated view on mission in recent years. The relationship between the church's evangelistic and diaconal mission has also been a central theme within the evangelical movement as described in Lindheim's study of the Mission Alliance. The Lausanne Pact of 1974 states that evangelism takes precedence. However, the Cape Town Declaration of 2010, makes no theological prioritization of one over the other. Both describe our charity and our obedience to Jesus Christ (Lindheim, 2017, p.2).

The document called for transformation, Ecumenical Diakonia from the World Council of Churches (WCC) from 2022, advances one step further and emphasizes ecumenical Diakonia as faith-based and rights-based actions. The document conceptualizes ecumenical Diakonia from two perspectives. The first perspective presents a theological understanding of Diakonia and seeks to understand Diakonia as an integral dimension and the nature and mission of the church and as a biblical concept. The intention in this perspective is to identify motives and normative elements that guide the understanding and practice of Diakonia. We are human beings created in the image of God, the vocation to compassion and justice, Diakonia is also linked to serving as stewards of creation. The second perspective might be described as ecological Diakonia, with both prophetic and practical dimensions. This states that Diakonia expresses a strong link between what the churches are and do.

Ecumenical Diakonia requires a reflection of the understanding of both dimensions, their being, and joint action as a worldwide communion of churches and Christians (WCC,

2022, p.15). This document presents ecumenical Diakonia as faith-based and rights-based action. To be rights-based refers from one side to the biblical concept of justice and the prophetic heritage of working against systemic injustice and defending the rights of the poor. On the other hand, it refers to human rights and their central role in the formation of a just society. The commitment to human rights has convinced actors of ecumenical Diakonia to include advocacy in their work. (WCC, 2022, p.16). Advocacy is an integral part of diaconal work. The biblical roots and the distinct identity of Diakonia, compel ecumenical Diakonia to be prophetic. This means siding with the poor and marginalized, working against injustice, and promoting human dignity, justice, and peace (WCC, 2022, p.87).

Diapraxis is defined as inter-religious cooperation and is described as the interaction that happens when people from different faiths work together to improve the lives of their people (Larsen, 2016, s.67). The concept was launched by the Danish religion researcher Rasmussen. Dia comes from Greek and means through, and practice means action. By getting together and doing something together, a fellowship is built. Everyone can take part in this, regardless of faith affiliation (Haugen, 2018, p.94-95). The core of life in a diverse community can be summed up in vocation, justice, and dignity or more concrete relations, respect, and reciprocity (Haugen, 2018, p.97). ECEC might have this function and create good meeting places between Christians and Hindus in Nepal.

## 1.5 How is preschool teacher training relevant for Diakonia?

ECEC is similar to many faith-based organizations, based on Christian, humanistic values with Christian leaders and most of the staff are also Christian. ECEC seeks to build up a quality preschool teacher education and to work towards autonomy and local ownership in Nepal (ECEC). Himalpartner, the Norwegian mission agency and partner of ECEC, is also known for a strong diaconal identity. The organization itself defines its development work as diaconal missionary work intended to show Jesus' love unreservedly (Himalpartner, 2020, s. 6). Within the ecumenical organizations both the evangelical movement (The Cape Town Declaration of 2010) and WCC sees Diakonia as the nature and mission of the church (Lindheim, 2017, p.2). Also, in international aid and church- based social work or Diakonia

the emphasis has moved from offering help to those in need to partnership between donors and receivers. (Dietrich, 2014, s. 13-14). One of the four focus areas in the Plan of Diakonia is fight for justice (Church of Norway National Council, 2020, s. 15). The plan also says that the church is called to work for justice and human rights globally and locally and that Diakonia means to empower and equip people to stand up for their own rights and to participate in creating inclusive and democratic societies (Church of Norway National Council, 2020, s. 15). ECEC is educating preschool teachers and primary school teachers in Nepal, trying to improve the education system and work for the right for education for all children including girls and other disadvantaged groups. ECEC`s teacher training courses are value-based and built on Christian humanistic values (ECEC, 2022).

## 1.6 Research method

This was a qualitative study with semi-structured interviews. After getting approval on my NSD-application, nine semi structured interviews were conducted with three selection groups via zoom. Audio recordings were done during the interviews and the interviews transcribed. For the analyzing part method suggested by Gioia et al (2012) were used as well as Malterud (2012) for coding the information. These codes have been sorted in four aggregate dimensions that form the basis of the discussion along with relevant theory and examples of the collected data.

After looking at the main features of the interviews, intercultural theory was choosed to shed light on the issue. Considering different theories, I realized that intercultural theories would cover the complexity and conceivably add valuable insight. Within intercultural theories, the emphasis was set on cross-cultural communication and the theory of Geert Hofstede`s Dimensions of National Cultures.

## 1.7 Research structure

In the introduction chapter I briefly elucidated the history and vision of ECEC as well as describing my understanding of Diakonia. In the context chapter I tried to give a deeper understanding of the context through a summary of the process towards a new constitution in Nepal. Nevertheless, I emphasize the dominating culture and education system in Nepal. Here I also describe the SDG (United Nations' sustainability goals) and mention other services of

ECEC. Finally, I described the main international partners of ECEC. In the theory chapter, the focus is mainly on intercultural theories as mentioned earlier. Moreover, In the method chapter, the choices that have made through the process with qualitative interviews, selection of informants, interview guides, and the analyzing process are argued for. In the introducing data chapter, what the informants emphasized in the interviews is summarized with quotes. Furthermore, in the discussion chapter, the theory is connected with data from the informants and discussed in the light of Triple Hermeneutics. Finally, in the conclusion the findings are summarized along with some suggestions for further research projects.  that might be valuable for other similar organizations and agencies.

# 2 Context: Education in Nepal and ECEC's roles and relationships to foster better education

## 2.1 Nepal's National Framework for SDG 4 on education

SDG 4`s aim is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Nepal has made a commitment to fulfilling the right to education of its people and has made significant efforts towards ensuring access to educational services by all, including the poor and disadvantaged groups. As a result, the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) in primary education had reached 97.2 per cent in 2018/19, not very far from its goal of 99 per cent in 2030. The proportion of pupil reaching grade eight was 79.3 per cent same year, while the gross enrolment in secondary education was 60.6 per cent. Similarly, literacy rate of the population aged 15–24 years was 88.6 per cent in 2015 and reached 92 per cent in 2018/19. It is not very far from reaching its goal in 2030.

However, only 31 per cent of the working age population could get vocational and technical skills while the target was 38 per cent. The growth in Internet users is encouraging as 73 per cent of the adult population was using the Internet in 2018 (Government of Nepal, 2020, s.35). The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in enrollment for primary schools was 1.06 against the target of 1.01 in 2019. There were more girls in primary schools than boys. This shows that there have been improvements in gender parity. However, the GPI for secondary level was only 0.95 in 2019. Both Human Assets Index and Gender Development Index indicators show progress.

The government has recently approved the National Framework for SDG 4 - Education 2030. Some provincial and local governments have also started the process of developing their educational plans and programs. Though there has been significant development in SDG 4 as well, there are some issues that need attention. Apart from increasing the enrolment rate, efforts need to be made towards creating the necessary environment for the completion of secondary education (grade 12). The education sector requires further data strengthening and analysis disaggregated by age, gender, geography and disability. Similarly, more targeted programs need to be implemented in the provinces that are far behind others, with particular focus on the disadvantaged groups by identifying their

contextual equity barriers in those districts (Government of Nepal, 2020, s.35). Imparting quality education is another issue to enhance human capability and their contributions to society. Collaborative efforts among different layers of government and the private sector are also crucial for the development of the education sector, but attention needs to be paid to close the widening gap in the quality of education imparted through different institutions (Government of Nepal, 2020, s.36).

STG target 4.c is focusing on significant increasing the number of qualified teachers through international cooperation on teacher education especially in the least developed countries by 2030. This is in accordance with ECEC's primary task- namely to train good and competent teachers. STG target 4.2 emphasize good preschool and early care to ensure that children are sufficient prepared to start at school. ECEC contributes indirectly to this goal by equipping pre-school teachers to take care of children thoroughly socially and professionally. STG target 4.1 focuses on good primary and secondary schools with a satisfactory learning outcome. ECEC has started up a value-based bachelor's education for primary and lower secondary school teachers in cooperation with other institutions and organizations and will therefore be able to mean a lot for the quality of primary and lower secondary education in Nepal in the coming years (UN, 2022).

## 2.2 The new Constitution of Nepal

Nepal has undergone major transformations related to social, economic and political areas over the last few decades. The country went through a decade-long conflict starting from the mid-1990s, followed by another decade of political transition. However, there is now peace and stability in Nepal. Inclusive development creates social, political and economic changes. (Government of Nepal, 2020, p. 17). Natural disasters such as the earthquake in 2015 have also been part of the uncertain that has characterized Nepal for many years. The political challenges that followed after the constitution was implemented in 2015, had huge consequences for people's lives (the blockade against India in 2015, the restrictions on the religious freedom clause, national and regional elections, introduction of local democracy and so on.). The country is now characterized by large labor emigration, major social problems, including divided families and lack of infrastructure (Himalpartner, 2019, p. 7).

The aim with the new constitution was to institutionalize the far-reaching political, social and economic changes in the country. The Constitution of Nepal aims to guarantee inclusive socio-political and economic development and a wide range of basic and fundamental rights (Government of Nepal, 2020, p. 12). The constitution carved the new local level structure and, subsequently, the first local level elections were held in three phases in 2017. It has been implementing a republican, inclusive, competitive multiparty democratic federal system with three tiers of government: federal, provincial and local. A number of acts, rules and regulations, have been adopted for the smooth functioning of the new system. Subsequent budgets have also been based on the cooperative federal principles to work towards a peaceful and stable Nepal (Government of Nepal, 2020, s 17).

But there is a gap between the new constitution and the actual practice in the traditional Nepali society. In 2006 a peace deal brought an end to the 10-year conflict in Nepal with lots of gross human rights violations. It left over 13,000 people, included many civilians, dead. There has been no progress on transitional justice after Nepal got the new constitution in 2015, which was a key commitment under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) from 2006 according to UN (United Nations). Without a genuine transitional justice process, the needs of the victims will remain unaddressed, and unresolved grievances will hold Nepal back from full reconciliation and development. (UN, 2022).

## 2.3 Brief history of education in Nepal

According to The Advocates for Human Rights (2016), there was a high dropout rate and the significant inequality in access to education in Nepal. The Nepali Government has tried to address the barriers for children in getting their right to education. The School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) was implemented in 2010 with the goal of reducing gender and regional disparities by ensuring provisions for compulsory basic education. Seventeen percent of Nepal's budget was allocated, including free education up to grade 8. Strategic investment has been made in scholarships and infrastructure with the goal of reducing gender and regional disparities, particularly for girls, children with disabilities, and children from indigenous groups. These have resulted in increasing enrollment of children from marginalized groups like the rate of Dalit caste and indigenous children increased from 39.4% in 2004 to 66.2% in 2009; Nepal achieved gender parity in primary level education, reaching a total of 93% enrolled females in 2009.

Despite these positive trends, many Nepali children still meet serious problems in accessing their right to education. Students still must pay examination fees, uniforms, and textbooks and different kind of discrimination still prevents many children from accessing education. Improvements in access to education were disrupted by the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal. By estimates, the earthquakes damaged 7,093 school buildings in Nepal and 870,000 children was immediate unable to continue their education because of damage from the earthquake according to UNICEF estimates (The advocates for Human Rights, 2016, p. 2-4). The education sector has also felt the immediate fallout of the pandemic. Most schools and colleges have done the teaching online, but it may not be as effective as the previous learning method. The digital teaching may widen the existing gap in education (Government of Nepal, 2020, p. 93).

## 2.4 ECEC's roles and relationships to foster better education in Nepal

### 2.4.1 Other sevices of ECEC

Beside preschool teacher education and the newly started primary school teacher education, ECEC is involved in ICDP (International Child Development Program - Parent Education). The program was introduced in Nepal in 2014-15 supported by Himalpartner in order to increase the psychosocial wellbeing of the children of Nepal. ECEC was established as the central ICDP Nepal office in 2017. ICDP focuses on improved communication between children and adults (ECEC, 2014, s. 5). The aim of the program is to empower parenthood. In the past five years, ICDP, supported and facilitated by ECEC, has partnered with diverse organizations, working with children and those with special needs, schools, and government agencies. These interactions have helped to ensure the continuity and sustainability of this parenting program in Nepal (ECEC, 2020, s. 22). ECEC-ICDP Nepal recruits' trainers of facilitators, six of these trainers are from ECEC. ECEC has received support from HimalPartner until 2024 and ICDP facilitator training is now one of ECEC's regular training courses (ECEC, 2014, s. 5). Through the ICDP-program ECEC has got a new tool to reach the parents so ensure children get appropriate care through educating parents as the vision and mission says (ECEC, 2020, s. 3).

A qualitative pre- and post-assessment study examining the impact of a parenting program introduced by Save the Children in Nepal in 2018. Most of the sessions are based on the International Child Development Program (ICDP) and this report shares the findings of parenting skills and the relationship between parents and children in these three districts. The observations before and after the program show an improvement in parenting skills as emphasized by the ICDP, specifically showing more enthusiasm, verbal communication, praising and joint focus with the child. Somewhat less evident were the improvement of parenting skills in relation to supporting children in learning new things (comprehension) and setting limits positively (behavioral regulation). The report concluded that the parenting program had a positive impact on both the parents and children. In the future, it might be useful to focus more on the sessions related to the regulative and comprehensive dialogue (De Wit, 2019, s. 4).

## 2.5 International Partners of ECEC

ECEC have several international partners from around the world. It is mainly education institutions and NGOs. Here I will introduce the partners that are involved in the newly started basic teacher education program.

### 2.5.1 Himalpartner

Himalpartner is a small mission and aid organization working in Nepal and Tibetan areas of China. Edin Alfsen's and David Westborg`s departure in 1938, became the mission's (at that time Tibetmisjonen) actual founding date (Himalpartner). Himalpartner aims through word and service to bring the gospel to Tibetans, Nepalis and other peoples in the countries around the Himalayas (cf. HimalPartner's statutes). The overriding goal of the organization is to be a tool for God by stimulating local civil society and business actors who contribute to sustainable projects and dignity for the people. The organization itself describes the work as diaconal with the intention of showing Jesus' love unconditionally as part of his mission to the world (Himalpartner, 2019, p. 6).

Over the years, Himalpartner has been involved in health care, power plant construction, education, mental health and counseling projects to name some. Now the organization has the main focus on mental health and entrepreneurship. The organization is concerned that the work should be sustainable and not based on dependence and are encouraging their partners to work towards the Sustainable Development Goals (Himalpartner, 2019, p.6). HimalPartner has an ecumenic profile and is a part of the Cooperation Council for Congregation and Mission (SMM) in the Church of Norway (Himalpartner, 2019, p. 9).

Himalpartner is supporting ECEC through the ICDP-program at present time.

### 2.5.2 NLA University College

NLA is a private accredited Christian and value-based University College that offers education for everyone. It has campuses in Bergen, Oslo and Kristiansand. The core tasks of the college are research, development work, teaching, supervision and dissemination. Efforts are made at all levels to facilitate a good professional, social and Christian environment for students and staff - with respect for the individual's faith and values. NLA University College will contribute to forming an awareness and promoting basic Christian values such as respect for creation and human dignity, intellectual freedom, forgiveness and equality. NLA also wants to equip students for a demanding working life, where values, knowledge and attitudes are challenged (NLA, 2022).

In 2013, NLA University College in Bergen merged with Staffeldtsgate University College in Oslo and the Media College Gimlekollen in Kristiansand. What started as visions and commitment in three Norwegian cities, came together in a more robust organization (NLA, 2022). NLA is a private and value-based University College that wants to equip students for a demanding working life, where values, knowledge and attitudes are challenged (NLA, 2022).

NLA is the project leader in NORHED, the Norad-funded project ECEC is a partner in, and associate professor Ruth Hol Mjanger has been the project coordinator for the application process and the implementation of the project (NLA, 2022).

### 2.5.3 Driestar Christian University

DE started in 1944 as a small institute with teaching training for young Christian teachers. The University is based on reformed Christian principles and today the University inspires and supports teachers and schools in Christian teaching, in the Netherlands and in many countries around the world. Together with a network of partners and organizations they emphasize the challenges as well as the opportunities of globalization. They believe education is the passport to the future and that Christian value driven education offers a strong foundation to equip them to become responsible citizens of God's world. DE for Teacher Education wants to serve the family, the Church, and our globalized world. The University offers and provides masters courses, international classes and exchange programs to increase the quality of education worldwide (DE, 2022).

As a part of the NORHED- project, two students from ECEC will do a PhD in Christian Education at DE. The university offers blended PhD program in cooperation with Theological University of Appeldorn, another University in the Netherlands (DE, 2022)

### 2.5.4 University of Agder

UIA became a project partner in 2020, because of Dr. Helen Eikelands experience and knowledge about education and teachers in Nepal. She is employed as associate professor in pedagogy at University of Agder (UIA) and has done both a master's (Eikeland, 2007) and PhD (Eikeland, 2018) about Nepalese teachers (UIA, 2022). The PhD is entitled «The lifeworld of Nepalese teachers. Ideals, beliefs and agency». Eikeland grew up in Nepal and has worked as a teacher in Nepal several years (Eikeland, 2018).

In the NORHED project Eikeland is contributing with culture and language competence, contacts and network and knowledge about the education system in both Norway and Nepal. She is a central researcher in the project (R. Mjanger, personal communication, 7th of August 2022)

3

# 3 Research Theory- Intercultural Theory

In this chapter I will give a brief introduction to intercultural theories with the emphasis on cross-cultural communication, intercultural identity and discussion about the theory of Geert Hofstede and similar theories. I will not describe all work that is done within this field so far but choose to focus on the areas that are most relevant for the further analysis and allow us to go deeper into the main features in the collected data.

## 3.4 Culture

The word culture is based on the two latin nouns: *cultura*- cultivating the soil and *cultus*- worship the gods. It is a combination of a human activity and a spiritual activity. (Dahl, 2013, s. 34) It couldn`t fit better in Nepal where most people are farmers and the Hindu temple are the center in the villages who influence everyday life to a great extent.

### 3.4.1 Given Culture Perspective

There are different ways to study how culture influences perceptions, institutions and policies (Dahl, 2013, s. 34). A lot of cultural research compares national or societal cultures. It is therefore called cross-cultural. Comparative cross-cultural theory and practice of such kind assumes that aggregated national/societal cultures differ from each. This means: “Who I am” and how I interpret the world is to a large extent pre-shaped and limited by external cultural influences. Given Culture perspective means the paradigm that cross-cultural difference is an external given and that individuals cannot do much upon this cultural imprint. The most prominent cross-cultural studies based on the *Given Culture perspective* are those by Hall (1976) and Hall and Hall (1990), Hofstede (1980, 2003, Trompenaars and HampdenTurner (1997), and House et al. (2004). These theories refer to communication (assertiveness, high vs. low-context); the nature of relationship (specific vs. diffuse, neutral vs. affective). They also describe the relationship dimension like collectivism and humane orientation in work practice (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.57).

### 3.4.2 Cultural Creation Perspective

The Cultural Creation perspective is focusing on the intra-cultural which means the shared meanings that individuals create and negotiate through social interaction. Individuals constantly ask themselves “Who am I?” and are creating concepts of the self. This means “Who I am” as a social being is constructed through sensemaking in interaction with others (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.58). As the Given Culture perspective mostly focuses on the nation or the society. The Cultural Creation perspective mostly focuses on small-scale cultural settings like organizations which are called cultural fields. Given Culture and Cultural Creation lead to different concepts of culture. From a Give Culture perspective, culture and cultural borders exist “as such” and can be defined objectively. The cultural border is given; hence it is cross-cultural. Culture is a process of collective sense-making according to the Cultural Creation perspective (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.59). Culture is not something we have but something we do. Cultures are created between people when we communicate. (Dahl, 2013, p. 88). This means culture and cultural borders cannot be defined “as such” and they do not exist objectively. One must differentiate between two different sensemaking perspectives, namely the inside, “emic”, perspective and the outside, “etic”, perspective. Only the emic perspective will deliver the cultural meanings that groups of people give to themselves and to the world. The cultural border created is fluid and can be bridged which means it is inter-cultural (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p. 60).

## 3.5 Communication

The word communication comes from the Latin word «communis» which we find in the English “common.” We might say that communication is about creating community.
There are different communication models that all tell different things about reality. The classic communication model is linear and shows how the sender encodes what he / she wants to convey. The character or message is sent and received by the recipient who decodes the message based on their point of view, experience, language and context (Dahl, 2013, p.56-60). Several have criticized the linear models for overestimating the sender's and the media's power and underestimating the recipient's ability to sort out what is important in the message. We have overlooked the influence the recipient's cultural background plays in the process. Opinions cannot be sent, and it is the people who give the messages meaning. Communication

is about negotiating opinions, not only about sending them (Dahl, 2013, p.63). Context is also important element in communication. It helps us with interpretation (Dahl, 2013, p. 66). By learning a foreign language, we gain a new communicative competence that allows us to understand and use the language in daily life. Different cultures think differently and thus also express themselves differently. In Western countries, a linear model is mainly used, where we largely go "straight to the point" and seek to be factual and precise. This presupposes a logically structured train of thought (Dahl, 2013, p. 156). In Asia, it is more common to communicate according to the "spiral model". It is not polite to go straight to the point, the topic is suggested and as the conversation goes in circles without mentioning the issue, you get closer and closer to the core (Dahl, 2013, p. 158).

A current theory about communication as essential to achieving good understanding and communication between ethnic groups and cultures is the theory of high versus low context cultures by Hall from 1981. The theory says that those who are part of a culture will focus on and notice other things than those who are not part of the culture. In addition, those who are part of the culture will be able to interpret and understand differently. In high-context cultures, much information is indirectly communicated without being said explicitly. In low context cultures, people are more verbal and mostly direct and straight forward. One must not understand the context, the environment or the person to the same degree. High context cultures are often more rooted in the past and stable. But it is more difficult for others to fit into the culture. Low context cultures, on the other hand, are often more fluid, less stable and more vulnerable to changes in society. These are some of the High context countries: China, Arab countries, India, Spain. Low context countries are USA, Israel, Germany, Scandinavia. (Dahl 2013, p. 98).

## 3.6 Cross-Cultural Communication

Many aspects of culture and human behavior are common across all cultural groups. But to be able to respond appropriately in intercultural interaction, culture-specific variations in everyday life and communication must be acknowledged. Care needs to be taken in judging cultural practices, beliefs, values and behavior different to one’s own. This is mainly in order

to avoid appearing culturally superior or exercising a dominant imperialism (Fitzpatrick, 2020, s. 21).

### 3.3.1 Third Culture or Cultural Hybridity

We are all more or less a "hybrid" or mixed rase, also from a cultural point of view (Dahl, 2013, s. 23). Craidy is using "hybridity'' mostly to refer to culture like race, language, and ethnicity (2005, s. 17). Cultural hybridity is controversial term. Scholars have argued passionalely about the benefits and disadvantages of using "hybridity'' as one of the most disputed terms lately (Craidy, 2005, s. 18). A connected term is Third Culture and Third Culture Kid (TCK) as Van Reken introduced us to the term in 1999.

> A TCK is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents` culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK`s life experience, the sense of belonging is (often) in relationship to others of similar background (Pollock, 2017, p.15-16).

The experience of being a TCK and ATCK (adult TCK) can give enormous benefits. Many children that have grown up among different cultures are maximizing and using the potential of these benefits in their life, both professionally and private (Pollock, 2017, p.6) as expanded worldview, a deeper understanding view of the world and cross-cultural enrichment (Pollock, 2017, p.140-148). Positive personal characteristics of TCK`s can be adoptability, less prejudice, importance of now and appreciative of authority. On the contrary, some might get more challenges through fall into the opposite characteristics (Pollock, 2017, p.153-163). And for others, unfortunately the challenges of their experiences have been too big. That is a loss for both them and the society (Pollock, 2017, p.6). The new management at ECEC has a lot of exposure from other cultures and two or three are TCK/hybrid and not born or raised in Nepal.

### 3.3.2 Dynamic Cultural Identity

The word identity is mainly used for identification or affiliation. Descriptive cultural identity is most concerned with finding characteristics of groups such as what is typical Norwegian. A

dynamic cultural identity, on the other hand, is concerned with the fact that cultural identity is created between people and special situations. We say something about who we are and want to be through our behavior. Everything from skin color and home to profession and friends are dimensions of our identity. This will overlap and contribute to our dynamic identity. Identity thus becomes relationships between specific people and relationships to ideas, values and knowledge that are activated in specific encounters with other people (Dahl, 2013, p. 199-200).

While the actions and choices of individuals are not determined by any intrinsic quality, for instance their ethnicity and cultural background, group loyalty and identity may influence their behavior. Individuals may also express this sense of identity through the essentialist constructs like national or cultural stereotyped ways of viewing the world. For this reason, we should rather focus on building new inter-cultural perspectives during interaction. This can be done by analyzing how individuals interpret their experiences in different ways (Fitzpatrick, 2020, s. 21).

All interaction is intercultural in that it involves the interpretation and discussion of different perspectives and diverse worldviews. This characterizes international and multicultural workplaces and places of study. Professionals are encouraged to expect similarities in perspective, but embrace the complexity of culture, and respect difference. The focus should be on building the unique identity of their intercultural team (Fitzpatrick, 2020, s. 21).

### 3.3.3 Triple Hermeneutics

Simple hermeneutics is about the participants' interpretation of themselves and their intersubjective / cultural reality. Dual hermeneutics is what the interpretive social scientist engages in, by trying to understand and develop knowledge about this reality. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2010) call both interpretations of underlying, hidden interests, driving forces and critical interpretations for triple hermeneutic. They not only interpret participants' interpretations but are critical of these and looking for hidden agendas and needs. Such critical interpretations of for instance unconscious drives and needs, are more ethically challenging than of only double hermeneutics (Thagaard, 2018, s.38).
The triple hermeneutics of critical theory includes the double hermeneutics and a third, namely the researcher's critical interpretations of the structures and processes that influence the research subjects in different ways as well as the researcher. Critical interpretation

addresses unconscious processes, ideologies, power relations and other expressions of dominance that mean that curtain interests are hidden at the expense of other. A good interpreting may be to show that the action and identification strategies and self-understandings people have are understandable without implying that they, for example, act because of a false consciousness. The position they have in the socio-material structure, might tell us why they act as they do. (Thagaard, 2018, s.38).

### 3.3.4 Spiritual Development

Spiritual development is essentially about understanding one's purpose in life and one's overall relationships to self, others, nature and the transcendent. It is captured in the terms meaning-making, enhanced awareness and connectedness (Haugen, 2018).

Spiritual development is increasingly recognized as central to the overall development of any human being, and the first years are the most formative for such development. Impeded development might cause problems that can have an intergenerational character. Spiritual development of children is recognized in national law and in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), specifying requirements on public policies in order to foster such spiritual development for everyone under the age of 18 years (Haugen, 2018, s. 306).

## 3.7 "The lifeworld of Nepalese teachers"

In the PhD "The lifeworld of Nepalese teachers," Eikeland asks to what extent we base ourselves on historical, social, cultural and political circumstances and teachers' ideas, beliefs and behavior when we want to carry out reforms in the Nepali education system? (Eikeland, 2018) Worldview is the framework around a set of beliefs that affect how we see the world and our calling and future in it. The vision may be so integrated that we do not question it, but it is the one that gives direction and meaning (Sire, 2009, p.18).

Assessments from the teachers' experience from life and work have shown to transfer frameworks from Western traditions are insufficient to reveal the basic worldview and teachers' strategic position in Nepal. As an alternative, the thesis wants to present a contextual, cultural approach for understanding the teachers' ideas, beliefs and behavior. The

result shows that understanding of educational phenomena, Western approaches from outside and concepts to understand a Hindu cultural setting can be misleading. (Eikeland, 2018, p.6)

## 3.8 Geert Hofstede and his Dimensions of National Cultures

One of the most influential cross-cultural pioneers based on the *Given Culture perspective* is the Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.57). He defines culture as "The collective mental programming that separates the members of one human group from another." We are all individually exposed to different cultural influences at different levels like in family, social group and geographical region. Hofstede claims that most countries' inhabitants stand for some common (essentialist) values that are more visible to someone who comes from outside, than for those within the community.

Hofstede therefore tried to find criteria that could make it possible to compare trends in different countries. After an extensive study of the significance of different attitudes among employees in the IBM Group in over 50 countries, he defined four main criteria which he called "cultural dimensions." He later added a fifth dimension to. 1. *Distance in power* indicates the extent to which the members of a society accept that power in institutions and organizations is unequally distributed. 2. *Uncertainty avoidance* is about the extent to which the members of a society feel threatened by uncertain situations and therefore try to avoid such by determining fixed rules and do not tolerate deviant ideas or behavior. 3. *Individualism - collectivism* suggests the extent to which people are concerned with themselves and their immediate family - that is, individual-centered - as opposed to collective-centered, which implies strong loyalty to a close social network. 4. *Masculinity - femininity* says something about the extent to which the dominant values in society are masculine (characterized by persistence and preoccupation with material things and money rather than care, environment and quality of life.) 5. *Confucian dynamism* (or long-term vs short- term orientation) This dimension was developed later by Hofstede and Bond in 1988). The result of Hofstede's empirical research has been an important contributor to the discussion of cultural differences. One can set up a scale for different countries on a scale from 1-100 across the different cultural dimensions (Dahl, 2013, s.49-50).

If we look at the Individual and the collective in society, the majority in the world live in collectivist societies like Nepal. Children grew up as a "we" in an extended family. One`s lifelong loyalty to one`s group and breaking this, is one of the worst things a person can do. A minority of people live in individualist societies like Norway and Netherlands in nuclear families and think about themselves as "I" (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s.91). There are no data from Nepal yet, so I use data from India. On the individualism Index (IDV, IBM Database Plus Extensions) Netherland scores 80, Norway 69 and India 48 (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s.95-96).

Further looking at Power distance versus Individualism, Norway and Netherlands are both in the middle of the individualist with small power distance window as India is in bottom of the collectivist with large power distance window (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s.103).

If we look at the Masculinity index (MAS, IBM Database Plus Extensions) Norway and Netherland are among the 4 countries in bottom and scores 8 and14 as India are in the middle with 56 (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s.142-143). The masculine pole is strongly associated with the work goals earnings, recognition, advancement and challenge as the feminine pole is associated with the work goals good relationship with manager, cooperation, live in a desirable area and employment security (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s.139).

It has been a lot of discussion about Geert Hofstede´s definition of culture. It makes sense to talk about cultural differences with such a seemingly objective definition. It describes culture as something people have, or that one belongs to a particular culture (Dahl, 2013, s.39).

### 3.8.1 Impact and discussion about Hofstede`s theories

Since Hofstede's *Culture´s Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values* was published in 1980, a number of researchers has used Hofstede`s cultural values framework in empirical studies. Kirkman et. al looked at 180 studies, published from 1980-2002 in their study that was published in 2006 " *A quarter century of Culture´s Consequences: A review of empirical research incorporanting Hofstede´s cultural values framework.* " They discussed limitations in the Hofstede-inspired research and gave recommendations for future- research (Kirkman et. al, 2006, s. 285).

Hofstede was clear about that his operationalization of cultural values was only for the county level, but this research shows that researchers has freely adopted them for other kind of studies like main effect studies at the individual level (called Type 1 by Kirkman et. al) This adoption has both strength and weaknesses. From the positive side, it has given a new way to consider, describe and measure culture, the negative outcome has been clearly disconnecting between the methodical and theoretical underpinning of Hofstede (Kirkman et. al, 2006, s. 296). Kirkman et. al ask further, should Hofstede`s cultural values framework that are based on data collected in 1960-1970s still be used in cross- cultural research in the 21st century? They answer that Hofstede`s values are still relevant for additional cross-cultural research if researchers are adequately considerate (Kirkman et.al , 2006, s. 307-308).

When it comes to methodically implication, Kirkman et. al emphasizes studies has shown that people in one country on average can be more individualistic or collectivistic than people from another country. But researchers should be concerned about using county level value scores on individuals (Kirkman et. al, 2006, s. 296). Kirkman et. al further suggests that future research focus more attention on construct, measure and sample equivalence. Researchers often attempt to compare findings from cross-cultural studies with previous studies, often they ignore methodical equivalence issues like the studies might build on different measures. Rather than being able to compare, researchers should focus on developing valid measures within the countries they study (Kirkman et. al, 2006, s.312).

Another area for future research is a focus on *when* does culture matter rather than does culture matter and to continuously examine the impact of cultural values. Still after all this research, question about cultural differences remain. In many areas, research inspired by Hofstede is fragmented, redundant and overly reliant on certain levels of analysis and direction of effects. Often researchers studying cultural values in organizations rarely cite research done in non-organizational setting, and vice versa which leads to lack of synergy. Kirkman strongly recommend to not produce another study at the same level of analysis and with the same measures already well examined. Further studies can also focus on what Hofstede`s framework does not tell us. What complementary values exist beyond Hofstede`s five dimensions, what cultural values might be unique to countries and what individual attributes might be more proximate to employee feelings or actions rather than cultural values (Kirkman, 2006, s.313)

Another meta-study constructs a systematic framework encompassing values, beliefs and morality. This project reveals that within this area research remains heavily dominated by

research developed in the United States and Western Europe and then exported to other regions (Goodwin et. al, 2020, p.1). Recently Major cross-cultural studies have expanded to include data collected from many understudied countries. Still the theories, frameworks, research design, analyses etc. are still dominated by the West. The study suggest that further cross-cultural studies must be develop and completed by scholars with local knowledge of this under-studied world regions (Goodwin et. al, 2020, p.2),

Ingelhart and Welzel used factor analysis on data from several WVS and EVS waves to validate the importance of two spectra cross-cultural comparison. *1. Traditional vs. secular-rational authority and 2. Survivial vs. self- expression.* They also developed the " Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Maps." In the most recent version posits nine cultural groupings: African-Islamic, Baltic, Catholic Europe, Confucian, English speaking, Latin America, Orthodox, Protestant Europe and South Asia (Goodwin et. al, 2020, s.9).

A plot map from WVS further shows attitudes on a number of topics in different countries and how the countries are placed within survival values, self-realization values, traditional values and secular-rational values. We find Norway in the upper right corner with strong secular-rational and self-realization values and the Netherlands a little further down. India is in the middle of the map and balances between the four axes (Haugen, 2018, p.16-17).

## 3.9 Intercultural creation

If the cultural border is bridged through the creation of new emic concepts of the collective self, then intercultural actors indeed shape new cultural meanings. This process can be called Intercultural Creation. The word "intercultural" says something about the potential emergence of new integrative meanings beyond initial cross-cultural difference. The result will be a new interculture. (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.61) If such a creation of new meanings takes place between and amongst people from different national or societal cultural backgrounds, it can be conceptualized as inter-cultural creation which results in a new inter-culture. (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.62)

### 3.9.1 Summary

Dahl (2013) gives a basic and general introduction to Cross-cultural theories and perspectives for further discussion. Hofstede et. al (2010) along with Dahl (2013) provides insight to the differences between National Cultures and explain some of the reasons for the differences. Goodwin et. Al (2020) and Kirkman (2006) provide us with critical perspectives on the theory of Hofstede and suggestions for surveys in the future. Fitzpatrick (2020) contributes with an analytical and critical perspective on Cross-cultural challenges and joys. Mahadevan et. al. (2011), shows how the Cultural Creation perspective is a preferable tool to understand cultures and how this perspective facilitates new creation. Eikeland (2018) presents a contextual, cultural approach to understanding the teachers' ideas, beliefs, and behavior. Haugen (2018) shows us the importance of children's spiritual development and understanding to have a purpose in life. Rodriguez Nygaard (2017) is emphasizing the interaction between action and word that takes place in Diakonia. These theories will be used to explain and discuss the data along with the Triple Hermeneutic perspective of Thagaard (2018) for a critical interpretation.

# 4 Method

## 4.1 Qualitative research

Since I want to examine the local ownership at ECEC, qualitative methods are a good tool to get deeper insight into the unique experiences of the respondents. An important objective for qualitative research methods is to understand social phenomena. Qualitative methods are examining life from inside and drawing attention to how people in diverse settings reflect upon their lives and their contexts (Thagaard, 2018, p.11). During interviews listening actively- being able to ask questions for clarification- enabled understanding of experiences, choices and motivations. According to Thagaard the relation between systematic and empathy is an important characteristic of qualitative research. Empathy is important for developing an understanding of social phenomena we study. Systematic in terms of that all we do is based on thorough and comprehensive assessments (Thagaard, 2018, p.14). In my research I used mainly interviews, but informal I observed the ones I interviewed, and I analyzed the audio recordings I transcribed and the transcribed interviews. The issue changed during the process and the theory was finally decided after analyzing the data. Flexibility is also important in qualitative research. If the project plan is flexible, it is easy to change strategy to develop data while doing the analyzing part (Thagaard, 2018, p.28).

Brinkman notifies the shortcoming within qualitative research like asymmetrical power relation, the interview as a one-way dialogue, as an instrumental dialogue, it might be a manipulative dialogue and finally the interviewer`s monopoly of interpretation (2018, p. 588). I focused on creating a relaxed atmosphere, asking open questions and mainly listening. In addition to this there are a couple of other objections to qualitative research.

## 4.2 Data collection - Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews were conducted because they contribute to our understanding of how people interpret and reflect on their own situation (Thagaard, 2018, p.11). That reflecting part is important to get an answer to my research question because interviews give insight through experiences, views and self-understanding of people (Thagaard, 2018, p.12). Qualitative interviews are like a conversation with structure and a purpose. The person who is interviewing, asks questions and follows up the answers. The objective is often to understand

and describe something and is more like a dialog than only questions and answers. The questions might describe, translate or give theoretical information to illuminate events or actions (Johannesen, 2010, p. 135-136).

I roughly planned the first four phases of the research interview process before doing the interviews, but I did not have enough knowledge about what theories and analyzing strategies would be sufficient at that point. The research interview we can divide in 7 phases: 1) finding a theme for the interview project, 2.) design, 3.) the interview itself, 4.) transcription or writing down the interview, 5.) analysis, 6.) verification, 7.) reporting. According to Kvale and Brinkman it is important to clarify and conceptualize the theme before the interview as well as planning all those seven phases before starting the interview process (2015 p. 38).

The conducted interviews were semi-structured. Semi structured interviews can make better use of knowledge- producing potentials of dialogues by following up in whatever angles that are interesting for the interviewee. The interviewer is allowed to be more visible as a knowledge-producing participant and compared to less structured interviews the interviewer has a greater say in focusing the conversation on issues valuable for the research project (Brinkmann, 2015, p. 579). Both observation and case studies were considered, but the advice from the supervisor was that semi-structured interviews would be sufficient. With my background from working at ECEC and later through the board of Himalpartner, I have knowledge about the context. Semi structured interviews have an interview guide, but questions, themes and order can change from one interview to another (Johannesen, 2010, p. 137), a good alternative that gave structure and flexibility in this research project. To travel to Nepal was not possible because of the pandemic. Hence, the interviews were conducted through Zoom. It went well without any big challenges.

The interviewees were people from different cultural backgrounds. The informants were from 4 different countries. To define culture is not easy according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2019, p. 173). The challenges when doing interviews in cultural contexts where politeness and respect for authorities implies that interviewees do not reveal their real opinion on a given issue. In Nepal the communication is indirect as in most Asian cultures were communication goes in a spiral without mentioning the core (Dahl, 2013, s. 158).
This was important to be aware of while collecting the data.

## 4.3 Presentation of informants

A selection of people with close knowledge to ECEC were asked to participate. It was decided to divide in tree main groups to get different perspectives on local ownership. The groups were 1. former foreign management, 2. locally employed Nepalese, and 3. Norwegian partners from Himalpartner and NLA.

| Categories Informant within categories | Former foreign management (F) | Locally employed Nepalese (L) | Norwegian partners (Himalpartner & NLA University College (N) |
|---|---|---|---|
| A gender (F/M) | FA (F) | LA (M) | NA (M) |
| B gender (F/M) | FB (F) | LB (M) | NB (F) |
| C gender (F/M) | FC (F) | LC (F) | NC (F) |

When the selection is quite small, it is crucial that we use a selection process that is appropriate for the issue to make sure the analyzes of the data gives us an understanding of the examining phenomena. Strategic selection is based on systematic selection of people with characteristics and qualifications that are strategic according to the issue (Thagaard, 2018, s. 54). The former foreign management might have valuable experiences of how they did competence building and slowly built a new Nepalese management stone by stone. The locally employed Nepalese and new leaders of ECEC can share weather they feel they now have the competence needed to keep running ECEC. And finally, the external actors from Himalpartner and NLA will have the fresh outside view. NLA might provide valuable information with its academic expertise and Himalpartner can contribute to the organizational part. It will also be interesting to see if the selection groups have coincident experiences and thoughts or not.

With the time horizon of a master thesis, 9-10 informants should be sufficient to give a good answer to my research question (Kvale and Brinkman, 2015, s. 148). My supervisor suggested tree similar size selection groups with tree informants in each group. Resent interview research shows that it is better to have less interviews and to spend more time in analyzing the data (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015, s. 148).

I picked a mix of male and female respondents as much as possible, but there have been more women involved in ECEC through the years, so finally 6 ladies and 3 men was interviewed. From ECEC I wanted a combination with seniors that have been working a long time and juniors that has been working a short period and leaders and non-leaders. I was considering interviewing some staff that has left ECEC and ask about the reasons, but I decided to focus on local ownership and the diaconal part only. And all the Nepalis that were interviewed, are in different leading positions now.

## 4.4 Interview guide

One main interview guide was made. In addition, the selection groups got some separate questions each. The interview had first some introduction questions, then a part about ground ideas/philosophy, then questions about opportunities/ alliances, after that threats/challenges and finally a few specific questions to each of the selection groups. The questions were asked from different angels to help the respondent to remember different aspects. I also asked the question slightly different according to the one I interviewed and the respondent`s connection to the theme (Kvale og Brinkman, 2019 s. 166). But I realized while doing the interviews that each interview could have been better prepared in advantage. The questions were too long and for a few informants, the language sometimes too complicated. The question could have been modified even more to make sure different people got the same understanding as suggested by Kinsey (Kvale og Brinkman, 2019, s.166). To help with the language, I could have divided the questions in research questions and interview questions (Kvale og Brinkman, 2015, s. 164).

While working with the interview guides, I had to identify what and who I wanted to examine and what would be the key words in my research question (Johannesen, 2010, s. 59-60). I tried to find some literature about local ownership, but I hardly found anything. I probably didn`t search at the right places. But I realized that I had to define the term myself to make sure the respondents understood what I were asking about (Johannesen, 2010, s. 61). I decided to focus on tree areas within local ownership in the interviews: robustness of economy, level of competence and quality. I also asked a native English-speaking friend about what terms he would recommend in the English interview guide.

When talking about robustness of economy I mean not being dependent on foreign transfers. Another word that I didn`t know whether the respondents had a relation to was

diakonia and diaconal. It might have different meaning in different countries and cultures. Because of that I decided to explain that word as a part of the question, to make sure we had a similar conception about the concept. It was translated to *Christian social service/ practice, Christian social service-minded* and *Christian social serving.*

## 4.5 Information letter to respondents

Together with the interview guides an information letter about the project and interviews were prepared. It included information about what participation involve for the participants, how information is used and stored, rights of the respondents and consent form. Many get into the habit of just ticking the agree box without reading the information. To avoid that I tried to make the information letter as short and structured as possible, using simple language and added contact information to NSD, my supervisor and my university college as suggested by (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.99).

The notification received a rapid approval by The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), implying that the data collection and storage complies with Norwegian and EU data protection standards. The interview guides and the information letter in English and Norwegian were attached to the application. Since 7 of 9 interviews would be in English, I prioritized to get a as good English translation as possible.

Since the tree respondent selection groups might have different interests and experiences and because of privacy, I decided in collaboration with my supervisor and ECEC to choose interviewees and organize the interviews directly with each of the respondent. Thagaard emphasize the importance of not being more in touch with the managers than necessary to get accept, to be able to establish trust to the subordinate (Thagaard, 2019, s. 65). Because of that I made an agreement with ECEC that I could contact possible respondents instead of them choosing respondents and making a schedule for me. I made a schedule with time spots and the respondents chose a time that would be possible for them. Then I sent a zoom link a day or two before the appointment as a reminder. Some interviews were cancelled of different reasons and because of that, I spent two months instead of one collecting my data. Flexibility and possibility to change order of the question is important in qualitative research (Thagaard, 2019, p.28).

To record the interviews using a tape recorder, worked well. Then I could focus and be present in the interviews. The interview guides were quite long, and all the respondents know

ECEC quite well, so the interview became from 50-90 minutes long. I tried to help the respondents by specifying some of the questions (see annex 3, particularly questions 4,9,13,17). I tried to find an effective way to transcribe and ended up auto transcribing all interviews in word by using the dictation button. I could choose between English (Asian), English (USA) and Norwegian and the transcription also came with punctuation. Most of the interviews needed a lot on manual transcription as well.

## 4.6 The analyzing process

Interpretation of meaning has the last decades played an important role in qualitative circles of humanities and social sciences. One should, however, avoid overinterpretations. The feministic author Susan Sontag wrote in the essay" Against interpretation" "To analyze is to make the world poorer, to impoverish it in order to replace it with a shadow world." The literary theorist Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht is not against meaning or interpretation, even so he claims that what he calls "presence" is something deeper and more immediately than interpretation (Kvale og Brinkmann, 2015, s.245-246). This is an interesting point of view and I have tried to balance the analyzing part with a kind of "presence" through using the terms that the respondents use as far as possible and through direct quotes and using same terms as the informants.

During the transcription period, the main themes that were highlighted by the respondents were noted down. I became acquainted with various analytical strategies Malterud (2012), Braun and Clarke, (2006), Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), Thagaard (2018) and Gioia et. al (2012).

I decided to pick out the most important of the respondents' answers and placed them in the model developed by Gioia et. al. Furthermore the different answers from the informants were sorted according to the different questions. In the first column, quotes from the respondents were placed. (1st order concepts) In the next column, the essence of the quotes was taken out and put together with other answers to topics. (2nd. order themes) Based on this again, and the third column for main trends in the material (aggregate dimensions) (Gioia et. al, 2012, s. 1). This method makes it easy to track the process backwards. Emphasis is placed on using the respondents' own words in the beginning. Gioia et. al ask what it takes to ensure an inductive study has sufficient "qualitative rigor", while retaining the creative potential to generate new concepts and ideas (Gioia et. al, 2012, s. 21). After finding the 2nd order themes,

I sorted the questions into three main groups according to the main features I saw in the material. In that way the aggregate dimensions were not too many but including all the materials from the interviews.

| Preliminary themes: | Competent and equipped staff (blue) | Transition to Nepalese management (bluegreen) | Hybrid teacher training (green) | Diaconal organization and identity (red) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Themes with color codes and most relevant questions to each theme: | Quality of the new management dark blue, (question: 6,11,13,14 + selection group F 18,19,20 and N 18, 21) | Transition to Nepalese management, bluegreen (question 16, 17, selection group F 20 and N18, 21) | International competence and relations, dark green (question 12) | Christian identity, pink, (question 4 and 8) |
| | The distinctiveness and opportunities of ECEC, light blue (question: 7,9,15) | *Trust in Nepali management (emerged later)* | Relations to donors and foreign partners, light green (question: selection group N 21) | Diaconal organization/ education, red (question 4 and 8) |
| | Competence building, purple, (question 13,14 + selection group N 19, 20) | *Professional management (emerged later)* | | Contextualizing in Nepal orange, (question 5,10,12+ selection group 18 and 19) |

Model: Preliminary themes and themes with color codes and relevant questions from the interview guide.

To develop a good analytical code system, I decided to follow the strategy of Malterud (2012). First, I organized the questions in a table with all the answers of the different respondents on each question. I had already identified three preliminary themes beforehand and organized the data chapter according to those themes. Then I identified 8 themes that were not the same as the questions (Malterud, 2012, s.797). After that the questions that would be most relevant to each theme were sorted. Then I decided a color for each of the preliminary themes. Blue, green and red. Finally, I decided colors for the 8 themes that would

be the same and neighbor color in the color circle. In that way it became logical. I went through all the answers to the interviews and colored the interesting sentences in the appropriate colors. Then I copied the main sentences I wanted to bring further and pasted it in the next column. I collected the essence of the answers to each question and pasted it in the data chapter under the preliminary themes and according to the color codes where it was most appropriate. Then I had to go through all the different groups of color, read through it, look for patterns and repetitions and finally organize the text and add it to the draft text. I picked out some quotes that would underline some of the core points of the collected data and picked some from each respondent to hear the different voices and get a holistic view with different perspectives. Finally I realized the main group "competent and equipped staff" became too big. I decided to divide in two groups and the new main group was called "transition to Nepalese management." The orange theme "Contextualizing in Nepal" was moved to the main group "Competent and equipped staff. " (Malterud, 2012, s. 797). This form the basis for the structure of the data chapter.

During the whole process I was going forth and back to make sure I had the right direction and to make sure the theory would fit. I was also searching for important and repeated words that would draw my attention and give me a direction for the further choices to take. Interesting words were hybrid culture, intercultural, exposure to international culture, role models, Christian culture among others.

## 4.7 Researching Ethics

### 4.7.1 Confidentiality

All participants had to fill in a consent form before the interview to agree to the interview. Some had to be reminded of returning the consent form before the interview. In the information letters, the respondents were told the recorded interviews and transcriptions would be anonymized, stored safely, and deleted after the project is finalized (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, s. 105-106). All the materials would be anonymized in the thesis. They would also be allowed to withdraw their consent at any time without giving any reason.
To anonymize the transcribed interviews, a table was made as recommended by Thagaard (table p. 37). Any names or identifying information of the participants were kept on the

computer and the data stored on a safe pen drive. Personal information was deidentified and the finding anonymized in the published materials (Thagaard, 2018, s. 24).

To make sure the respondents did not tell more than they wanted, I tried to keep a professional distance to the informants. That was important since I knew all the informants. The empathic listening to personal stories had to be balanced with the scientific quality of the conduct of the interview (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, s. 107-108). In this project confidentiality has been prioritized before verifiability as Fangen and Thagaard suggest. It has been experienced that it can be a challenge to find a good balance between the participant's anonymity and verifiability when the research is focusing on small and transparent environments (Thagaard, 2018, s. 25).

### 4.7.2 Connections and Outcome

I knew all the informants from before and Himalpartner that was my mission agency, are still a partner of ECEC. I am also from same county as NLA og HIA that are supporting ECEC.

Consequently, I am aware of that there is a risk that the informants, didn`t tell me the whole story and that they might have talked more positive about Himalpartner, NLA etc. than they are. This also mean that some valuable information might have been lost in this project.

## 4.8 Validity and Reliability

The data chapter is only based on transcribed interviews with respondents who know ECEC well. This helps increase the reliability of the research. Interactionist perspectives have got more space within reliability recently.

In this project, new knowledge was gained which was followed up on to better understand the connections. This information is largely entered in, among other things, the context chapter and in footnotes. One question was left out and another modified after the reaction in the first interviews. During the project, others who know ECEC also gave useful input that has helped to see new perspectives (Thagaard, 2018, p. 188).

All the informants are familiar, and the connection was good during the interviews. It seems like the relationship from before was mostly helpful for the respondents and it was very interesting to listen to all their experiences and see how they and the organization have

developed during the last years. As a young woman that was not in the management at ECEC, I didn't have much power. The interviews were conducted with people that have different perspectives, so it has probably been a well-balanced picture. During the writing process, questions were asked and followed up to get more details and documentation on the ICDP project, and information about the primary education project etc.

Finally, on reliability and my role as interviewer and hence collector of data, all the interviews were done at Zoom. Preferably the interviews would have been conducted face to face. Even so, they were done at Zoom. It was good to see the respondent's faces, yet some body language and other nonverbal communication were missed out. In most of the interviews, a good connection was there from the beginning. The respondents were very engaged in sharing their experiences and it sounded like they talked quite freely. According to Thagaard we don`t consider the contact in the interview if it has a good flow. However, if things are not working well, we might feel bored, anxious, or tense (Thagaard, 2018, s. 109).

On Validity, there is a risk of developing an understanding from within when the environment is familiar that I am aware of (Thagaard, 2018, p. 190). Right from the start of this research project, it became clear that the organization has developed a lot since 2013. The research question was changed, and I became curious about the process until now. Himalpartner has been and is still a donor to projects at ECEC and as an earlier member of the board in Himalpartner in three years, I might be associated with Himalparter. Still the interviewees might not think of me as an important person for keeping the relationship, even if I come from the same country as Himalpartner`s main office. Nepal has a pleasing culture, and the respondents might want to tell things they know foreigners like to hear to give a good impression (Thagaard, 2018, s. 108). On the other hand, 9 years is gone, and all the Nepalis are also in leading positions now.

When it comes to the significance of the participants' assessments, questions in the interviews have got a variety of answers. People have spoken open on challenging issues as well and all the respondents know the organization quite well. I have a reason to believe the answers are valid. Conceptual validity is somewhat weakened as some of the interview questions were not intuitively understood by the informants.

# 5 Introducing interview data

## 5.1 Competent and equipped staff

### 5.1.1 Organization

The new motto of ECEC is Innovation in Education (FB(F)). That ECEC has capable staff to keep the high quality is mentioned both by former management, locally employed, and the partners.

LB (M) emphasizes that as a Christian organization ECEC is trying to solve the educational problem in the country. The informant further point out that values and culture cannot be separated, and norms can be included in education. One partner remark that ECEC has the vision to spread across the country. However, they should be careful not to go too fast.

Two years ago, the government contacted ECEC and declared they were not allowed to have branch offices without investing a huge amount of money. To solve the problem, ECEC had to lock down the Kathmandu branch office. Because of this, three senior staff from ECEC bought the shares and started Tree Star, TS Tech. Tree Star is a sister organization of ECEC. However, due to this being a Nepali company, KU did not allow them to do the one-year course anymore. All things considered, Tree Star being a new unknown name, Covid-19, and suspicion from other ECEC staff have made the start exceptionally demanding.

### 5.1.2 National Relations

Several informants from all selection groups emphasize the need for ECEC to keep updated on what the authorities are doing. It is important to understand more about what the authorities value and contribute to influencing priorities. The organization has a good reputation and many including governments ask questions to how the training can be so effective.

> "[…] What we teach is the same, but we implement it. We make them do it and we give them feedback and then over again. And I think that is the difference because in our training they have to process what we teach, and they have to do something with it[…] it is really skill teaching and life-changing (FC(F))."

One informant says the authorities are skeptical of the NGO sector in Nepal, even so there are tendencies for the government to realize they need private-public partnership. ECEC has high quality, and the authorities need ECEC. The same informant also thinks it is also a good idea to keep in touch with the UN system like UNICEF since they contribute with technical expertise. Some informants also suggest more collaboration with the university. ECEC and the employees need to get a status, and title and to be more included at the national level.

### 5.1.3 Contextualizing the courses at ECEC

**"**For local and by local to address the local issue LB(M)." ECEC. Nepali trainers have put a lot of effort to contextualize the courses and translate the academic content to Nepali reality with good help from the Nepali advisory board. ECEC was started together with resourceful educational people. Nepali teachers also contribute to the contextualizing of ECEC.

FC(F) said the organization have compromised on a few thing like subject teaching. The financial and sustainability part is based on mostly local income. For ECEC it is important that the courses are as practical as possible since many teachers have almost no experience in the teaching methods and in playing at school. When ECEC go out of valley, they try to contextualise the training and to use materials that are easily available in the local context like materials from the nature. ECEC started preschool teacher education to get more play in the preschools. Then they had to anchor in the school management, then towards the municipality and finally the parents had to feel confident that the children learned enough.

NC(F) emphasizes the importance of building a professional environment beyond ECEC in Nepal that works in the Nepal context. The knowledge must be rooted in the students, so they are able to teach to others and to ask questions about own practice like whether certain concepts are too Western. Many are not trained to be critical.
The education models at ECEC have been based on best international teaching practice in an organic combination contextual for Nepali students.

> “That’s why teachers come to ECEC, Because this is not only the foreigner curriculum, but this is blended and hybrid. Hybrid means they can experience some from the European culture in the context of Nepal (LA(M)).”

The informants from ECEC emphasize the importance of accepting people and give them their space to implement it in their own measures. Further, we need to understand the inner world of the Hindus and then brining in there the Christian aspects.
aspects.

### 5.1.4 Capacity building

The employees have increased both their professional and personal capacity during the years. Nowadays, the organization has six months of personality development training for new teachers and new staff. In the beginning, ECEC had a lot of short courses on different topics like education, Christian values, leadership, strategy, economics, etc. Gradually, there has been more focus on slightly longer courses (1-3-month). Now the focus has shifted more toward masters and PhD degrees.

Several international partners have contributed to the capacity building during the years and now two in the management have got their master's degrees. Other incoming resources have been used for capacity building and Scholarships. ECEC is trying to keep their staff trained and professionally developed so that they have the skills needed for the work that they are given the responsibility for. All the respondents agree that there has been a lot of training. Some believe that there are still topics that can be strengthened with courses.

The Nepalese informants are mentioning content and understanding of education and business management are lacking, and more masters in ECD, marketing, finances, and receptionist training. Another wants to be able to guide people regularly within management, leadership, and education areas, that the support staff needs a capacity building like some English. Some informants believe that now the focus should be on research-type projects.

> "So it is clear that there is a great need several places, […] If they are to be an educational institution, then they must invest heavily in capacity building for the people […] The positive thing is that they have a great desire to develop further […] (NB(F)).”

The same partner is wondering if ECEC has felt pressured to complete various courses to get money and thinks it may be unfortunate. The informant believes that ECEC in the future must become better at saying no. ECEC as an educational institution needs to gain the necessary depth.

Donors and previous management emphasize that the current management is competent and does a very good job. Two of the partners think it is perfectly normal for an organization with a slight downturn after a change of leadership. Even so, the informants has not experienced this downturn at ECEC to any great extent. On the contrary, things have gone just as well, if not better, after the change of leadership.

NLA is particularly concerned with the academic level and in-depth in longer educational courses, while donors from Himalpartner have a notable organizational look. This can create friction at times, but at the same time contributes to new ideas. This also shows the importance of thinking holistically. Now NLA will start up such a large project that they need to use much of the capacity of the staff at ECEC. Then it is an advantage if it is coordinated with Himalpartner and other partners so that the partners work together for the best of ECEC. The partners are impressed that the staff at ECEC are so eager to develop further. ECEC has been very much successful in creating this hunger for learning, this lifelong learning attitude.

There have been some disappointments along the road in connection with the capacity building. Several from the former management are mentioning that a colleague they had chosen to be the first Nepali manager of ECEC, did not return after she finalized her master's abroad. The education was funded through ECEC.  Some still don't understand how it could happen. The foreigners did not see any signs that she would not return to ECEC. But some of the Nepali staff, told the foreigners that she would not come back and that they were too good to believe in her.

## 5.2 Successful transition to Nepali management

### 5.2.1 Transition to Nepalese Management

One of the previous foreign-born managers is still working full time at ECEC and is in the Board of Directors. But Nepali people have the managing posts. The founder of ECEC helps when it is needed and is in the Board of Directors. According to a respondent the previous manager is a good example of “how to let it go.”  Both from previous management are both concerned about helping the Nepali management and are giving credit for all their new ideas.

They are flexible and creative. According to an informant the previous management know for sure that the Nepal management understands the staff better, but they might tend to have more Nepali standards of what is permitted.

The new management might sometimes try to “milaune” or fix things. Milaune means to find a way to solve a problem. It might involve not following the rules. It is almost like how you can get away with it, according to an informant from former management.

Nowadays the culture at ECEC has a good Nepali/Western balance, according to an informant. It is good that the Nepali teachers could visit Western countries, so they easier understand several things. The Nepali staff learned how to make team decisions through participating in the leader meetings, observing, sharing and learning how to think for the company or for the organization.

Getting new leadership in place was demanding and previous management felt that it was necessary to spend so much transition time. Some didn`t get the tasks they wanted. About the quality in changing processes this was said: “It forms and then it storms, but then you set the norms FC(F).” One in the previous management mentioned that because of her work experience from UMN (United Mission to Nepal)[2], she was trained to come, to empower people and then leave again. External partners felt it took an unnecessarily long time to hand over the leadership to the Nepalese.

One partner experienced an uncertainty and lack of trust among former management whether the Nepalese would make it. The informant believes it was an underestimation of the capacity of the Nepalese. Another partner mentioned that "You know them by the fruits" and what they have achieved shows that even though what we saw of management looked a bit strange from the outside, it was quite clear that they did what the situation required and with mistakes and shortcomings along the way.

After all, ECEC has come out of the transition brilliantly and it seems that the new visionary management is working well after some challenges in the beginning. Current management have higher ambitions than before and are planning higher and longer education. They are a mixture of visionary and concrete.

The new manager is male and NA(M) believe it was strategic to mentoring this man to take over to bring a good gender balance in the management. Several informants are

[2] United Mission to Nepal (UMN) is a cooperative effort between the people of Nepal and many Christian organizations from nearly 20 countries on 4 continents. The organization was established in 1954.

mentioning that they are impressed with the new manager and that he can think strategically. He has a unique combination of skill with an academic background and teacher training himself, as well as being a visionary leader and has ¨grown into the role through mentorship of primary the western leadership of ECEC. From 2014 onward, at least he said he haven't felt that he is lower than the foreigner are. The former manager had been very supporting and said: You lead the things and then you make the decisions. I don`t want to control you. One Nepali informant mentioned the role models of the foreign management as important for all the Nepalis included the new manager.

The previous management experiences that the current management sometimes wants too much too soon and believes it is necessary to slow down sometimes. The new management has partly experienced that previous management has been unnecessarily worried that things could go wrong. However, they accept input and takes the concerns into account. The new management seems to complement each other well and achieve a lot of good, also new and ambitious projects. A donor believes they have managed to put together a team where they complement each other with strengths and weaknesses. The partner informants experience that ECEC works very well under new management and that the new management is professional and dares to go their own way. They have not needed to mark a distance to previous management. There is a very competent group of employees. Some have two-tree master's degrees, and several are in the process of doctoral degrees. During the interview with a Nepalese, he received a phone call that the first research article had been published with enthusiasm.

Today's management and external informants highlight the period when the former director was on a long-term stay in her home country as a good transition period for the new leader to find his place and become confident in the leadership role. The new Nepalese director had a long study stay in England before, which gave him some distance made it natural to start in a new position when he returned.

The partners find the role change that has happened impressive. The new management have already done some changes. They have made a new structure with Executive team, team leaders and mentoring groups. During covid, they gave the teacher trainers development tasks. Now the curriculum for children at nursery (class one-tree) are developed as well as Curriculum for children in primary (class one-class tree). ECEC have also started to develop stories, storybooks and theme`s during covid. They hope to publish a holistic package of story books, workbooks, curriculum and the teacher guide and are planning to publish 300 stories that will

be a part of the curriculum at appropriate classes. Hopefully the product will support the service and service will support the product. The Nepali management has also started different groups like scholarship group, health and security group. And finally task groups have been started were the leaders have responsibility to follow up special courses. ECEC has managed to acquire a model, linked to a business thinking, where they actually have earnings on the preschool teacher education and on the ICDP course. And it accounts for about a third of their income. It is described as very impressive by a partner.

### 5.2.2 Nepali People Don`t Trust Nepali Management

According to a Nepalese informant Nepalis don`t trust Nepali management because they don`t know if they will take advantage. Further the respondent says "Most of the students come because of foreigners." (LA(M). Still he does not see that much difference in quality. It is mainly the culture or the mentality of Nepali people. But a one-year course shows that with quality, students come even with Nepali teachers. Last year ECEC had 76 students in this program with 90% of the teaching from Nepali teachers, according to the same Nepali informant.

It has also been a discussion about whether ECEC should open for Nepali shareholders or not. Maybe Nepali ownership will be increased if they can buy shares? Nevertheless, the Nepali Advisory Board at ECEC doesn`t want that. They have seen several examples where they think it hasn`t worked well. Among them United Mission to Nepal (UMN). If they have experienced that people have changed after getting in positions, it is understandable.

"When they get a lot of Nepali people in there, it goes down." (FB(F)

FB(F) can really can see the staff is equipped to do it. Another informant from the former management is mentioning that she has experienced that there is less trust of Nepalese in the management if there is only Nepali management.

### 5.2.3 Professional management in future

According to one former manager, some in the Nepali management want to be free and not limited by the by-laws which they have been involved in making themself. Further the informant remarked that maybe the western kind of working is more rules, still it is not a western way of working, it is a professional way of working. The new management has to work like that according to her.

Professional means to work according to project goals with Himalpartner er Driestar and follow procedures like have all bills signed for the auditor etc. This can be difficult to follow for the teacher trainers.

The respondents are not much worried about a possible development if the foreigners are completely withdrawn. But one the question whether Nepalese management is a threat for the robustness in economy, level of competence and quality of ECEC, one of the partners answered: " This is the worry we all have when we go through this process (NB(F))." Some pointed out how deeply traditional Nepalese organizational structures are in the culture and people's minds. Another partner emphasized that hypothetical one of the challenges of having Nepali leadership, is that the Nepali culture that is the backdrop for everyone working there. Further, the quality that is such an important core identity of ECEC, has the potential to become much more hierarchical over time.

NC(F) commented that ECEC needs to do more research to have documentation and academic work on the impact of their courses that are required to cooperate with Unicef and Save the children. Another issue is the agency for ICDP which is doing a tremendous job in the country.

## 5.3 Hybrid Teacher Training

### 5.3.1 Cultural differences

NA(M) vocalizes conflicts that typically occur between Westerners and Nepalese have to do with cultural differences in terms of communication, expectation, gender roles, and ways in which authority is seen. Nepal is much more of a hierarchical pyramid-type authority structure with shame-based culture and a focus on human honor. According to this informant we therefore easily embarrass or make people feel ashamed. This because we do not understand the importance of maintaining honor and integrity. Besides that, is honoring the

chain of command and adequately addressing people. These could be some ways foreigners unknowingly creates tension.

Nepal is a community-oriented culture, while the western ones come from more individualistic cultures. Nepalese experience that they must think before they ask foreigners about something. LA(M) remark that it is easier with Nepalese leadership. The foreigners tend to go straight to the point, which is unusual and demanding for Nepalese to deal with. It is rude in most Asian cultures. One of the former foreign leaders points out that even after many years in Nepal, she still feels very foreign. Several point out episodes of disagreement and discussions that are probably about cultural differences.

Having said that, it seems that the local informants do not experience cultural challenges as a major burden at ECEC. Of course, one is from different backgrounds and misunderstandings arise just as it is, still several informants point out that disagreements can often be due to personality differences. One informant mentioned that some of the staff are very visionary and want lots of new development, and others want stability mainly. The main features above indicate that the expatriates at ECEC have good cultural insight and understanding. Everyone has also learned the Nepali language, which can contribute to cultural understanding and respect among the local employed ones.

On the question of whether Nepalese culture has been adequately taken care of, several of the respondents point out that the culture overlaps to a certain extent. What is Dutch culture, what is Nepalese, and what is foreign culture? Even the Nepalese at ECEC also come from different cultures and ethnic groups in Nepal. Some have a Buddhist background, others Hindu, some are from the country, others from the city, some are from the highlands, and others from the lowlands.

### 5.3.2 International competence in new management

In the interviews with the Nepalese, it emerged that most Nepalese in the leadership have an international background. It was an interesting discovery. Several have a background from India/Bhutan, have studied abroad, or have otherwise been very exposed to international culture. Two or three are TCK or hybrid. One has been studying and living abroad for several years (Philippines and England). Only one of the five local employees in the management has not been living outside of Nepal for a longer period.

> You know, I believe in the synergy between the foreigners and the Nepalis. When that is right, that is strong […] I think at ECEC they are exposed to professional new ideas much because of foreigner visitors. It is the synergy with the new ideas and they can take it on and translate it to the Nepali culture-yes or no kind of thing. (FA(F))

### 5.3.3 Contact with foreign partners

It was pointed out from the previous and current management at ECEC that the foreign partners have primarily been a support working towards the vision of ECEC, financially and through intercession. Two of the former management found the contact mainly encouraging. However, the relationship with the donors has at times been perceived as demanding to a certain extent in terms of clear guidelines and conflicting wishes from different donors. The third representative from the former management felt some partners were too dominating, thinking that they know too much. One of the previous managers emphasizes to the Nepalese management that they must be aware that the donor not only does things for the best of ECEC but also for their own organizations.

One interesting word in the data is “in-between”. First, it is used by a partner about their role “in-between” in a type of translation between the former management and the employed ones. Then it is used by a former manager about her role “ in-between” ECEC staff and international partners and last of one of the Nepali staff about that the Nepali employed at that time felt “ in-between” the former management and the partners as a kind of mediator.

It was difficult for the former management when the foreign partner thought something quite strongly about something they did not experience in everyday life. The fact that the donors have money and opportunities to realize the vision of ECEC, means that the balance of power is not equal. This is something the donors try to be aware of. From the donor side, there was a recognition of some episodes where it had been too little listening. This coincides with the experience of an informant in the former management.

## 5.4 Christian Identity

### 5.4.1 Positive and Negative Nepali Values

When the staff at ECEC talks about positive values, it is very much connected with the Biblical-based Christian values about life. They work for equal opportunities for all and distance themself from negative values in connection with the caste system such as discrimination and different treatment of people. Girls should get an education, systems that also allow those with disabilities to participate, etc. This becomes a contrast to Hinduism according to a respondent.

One of the good Nepali values mentioned is the importance of relationships in Nepal. Another informant says the foreign staff must make an effort to learn the Nepali culture and language to a certain extent. Nepalese values that are mentioned as not wanted values at ECEC are the Hierarchal, bossy, and dominant nature of leaders. The same Nepali respondent is mentioning the Guru Deshi relation-structure (teacher-student) as an example.

> I taught in Preschool, but there was always a hierarchy in Nepali organizations or schools. But when I came to ECEC, I did not find that hierarchy with a bossy nature. (LA(M))

Along with that, the Nepali word "milaune" is mentioned mainly by the former management (Explanation at 5.2.1). An example from the data that both Nepali staff and the former management are mentioning is the discussions around taking leave. The foreigners want to follow the rules ECEC has, and the Nepali staff sometimes disagree with that and suppose taking care of sick family members in the extended family has precedence.
There were also mentioned Nepali time, different confrontation strategies, talking after the meeting rather than in the meetings, foreigners being straightforward and rude in Nepali eyes, and that foreigners like more structure.

### 5.4.2 Value-based Christian Organization

The organization was started based on a calling from God to build an education from a Christian point of view to see the children as a unique creation of God. ECEC has a unique combination of expertise in education and the Christian faith. It is designed as business as opposed to charity and has both aspects of faith and doing.

They had a vision that seems to be well rooted throughout the organization. Most of the respondents are mentioning Christian values as important. A value-based approach to the Christian faith from the beginning and Christian values naturally permeate the entire

organization. One Nepalese informant also mentioned that the foreigners and especially the management have been role models for the Nepali management. People are suspicious about Christian and foreign involvement, yet people meet Christians and Christian values in a non-threatening way through ECEC. Christian values like loving your neighbors and the golden rule were mentioned by the Nepalese staff. Most staff are Christian and try to keep thinking in a Christian way and practice in a Christian way. The holistic approach is reflected in the mix of ethnic groups, also as indigenous people, working side by side at ECEC. ECEC doesn't discriminate regarding ethnicity and cast, which is an issue in Nepal.

Himalpartner experiences that ECEC is Diaconal and part of God's mission and desires for His people. It is " no strings attached." The organization does this to show God's love in general, not only toward believers.

Most employees are Christians. One of the Nepali staff says that ECEC also wanted to build and help the staff. The leaders must spend around six hours every week on the leadership task to follow up with the staff. The staff has daily devotions and Christian fellowship altogether, department-wise, or in women's / men's mentoring groups. They pray for each other and discuss things they have learned. The staff also prays regularly for the students with flowers made for that purpose. ECEC has an impressive leader training strategy that includes mentoring and guidance from more experienced employees and a Christian capacity building based on Christian values. ECEC is actively discussing the organization's basic values within the departments and in different groups. Several of the informants were mentioning the organization's values during the interviews. ECEC has the benefit of a staff that is rooted in Christian values, and which are being imparted regularly. Some of the respondents feel there are fewer conflicts at ECEC than in other organizations and that they solve problems and forgive each other. One local informant is also mentioning that the staff are open to one another and confront each other. On the contrary, one in the former managing team says that Nepali people do not confront.

One informant also mentioned that the staff is not working at ECEC because of the salary. During covid, ECEC took care of financial support and scholarships to those who needed it. According to one informant, they were able to help and raise funds because of their “Christian heart.” The salaries during covid were divided upside down. The Management got 50% and then those below the management got 80%, the kitchen staff got 95% and the guards were given 100%. Some got more because of special circumstances like total income in the family.

Content and most of the courses are grounded, designed, and based on biblical values.

> Our lessons are also very much filled with our values. And I think that the most important thing is that we bring bible-based values about life and equality for example. There is a big difference with Hinduism. (FB(F)

ECEC listen to, give attention to, and care for the individuals, according to several of the local empled. One of the partners from Norway (NB(F) is quite sure the students notice that all are equal at ECEC. ECEC gets a lot of testimonies and positive feedback from the students when they leave and at graduation about how they relate differently to each other from other organizations. People feel the service ECEC gives and that they work with integrity. The students experience that there is something special about the teachers, with the building and the way they are met.

> Most of the students testify not because of content, but because of ECEC behavior. Because of the nature of trainers, they testify. At the end of the training, they tell […] ECEC cares for us, ECEC values us, ECEC respects us. (LA(M))

So those things they come to ECEC and they get to know; What is my strength, What do I want to do in life? An informant says it is a non-threatening environment at ECEC. In Nepal, people don't have the idea of professionality, professional strength, or weakness, so those things they come to ECEC and they understand. One girl with extra needs and Down's Syndrome has grown up in America and was sent by her parents. She told the ECEC staff that her mother said: “They are teaching inclusive education. ECEC believe children with special needs should also have a chance. Now they can practice on you.” (FC(F). The staff spent a lot of time facilitating and taking care of this student. It was probably noticed. Some other students wanted to leave because of her. The teachers gave her enough attention and she got through. And in the end, they let her do the final speech at graduation. Another former student came into the hallway at ECEC just to sit down for a moment and feel a good atmosphere. Otherwise, ECEC gets a lot of positive feedback after the courses. The students share that the courses have opened their eyes to how important it is to show children love.

### 5.4.3 Christian Culture

Some of the respondents pointed out that the culture that characterizes ECEC is just as much a Christian culture as it is Nepali. The “Christian culture” goes across the other cultures we find in the organization; it affects the environment, those who work there, and the way the students are met. ECEC gets individual talks about Christian faith from time to time even if they have no teaching in their training.

(FC(F) said they are looking for kingdom values and not Nepali values or Western values at ECEC. According to this informant, ECEC has talked more about Christian values than Nepali values or Western values. Nepali values like hierarchy, caste system, and the kinds of things they do not want at ECEC. Because those values are not Christian. According to an informant, the value process at ECEC went so quickly. That is not normal in Nepal. ECEC keeps coming back to the values, talking about it, and having bible studies about it. One of the partners was also mentioning this Christian rather than Nepali culture at ECEC.

# 6 Discussion

During this chapter the triple Hermeneutic perspective will be used to shed new light and gain a deeper understanding. Hopefully this will uncover some of the reasons behind some of the interesting answers in the data.

## 6.1 Competent and equipped staff

### 6.1.1 Organization

ECEC is a good example of the change in the Diaconal paradigm towards autonomy-oriented assistance. ECEC is working in partnership with partners and donors and is empowered through capacity building (Dietrich S., 2014, s. 13-14). The Nepali seniors are given responsibility and are now carrying the vision and working toward a better education for children based on Christian values. The whole ECEC is a visionary organization. Informants in all sample groups mention the vision and the motto and draw these to emphasize what will be appropriate concerning the vision. It has been a tremendous development within the organization, in the staff, and in preschools in Nepal, during the more than 20 years ECEC has been in existence. One reason might be that the vision seems to be deeply rooted in the employees.

The new courses and education ECEC are developing show how innovative the organization is. They started teaching via Zoom under covid at the same time as Norwegian organizations started using the digital tool. The new Basic teacher education is partly digital and partly present gatherings to make it available in other parts of Nepal. In addition to this, they show admirable creativity when it comes to earnings through the development and production of materials that will lead to those who buy materials, taking a course and vice versa. That they dare to think new and do new things is probably a bit of a reason why it goes well. From a Cultural Creation Perspective, this is an example of how new things are created in the space between different cultures and life worlds (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.58). As the respondent says, ECEC takes the best things from the west and contextualizes them in Nepali culture. In this way, new concepts are made for training, funding strategies, organizational structure, etc. However, from a hermeneutic perspective play and creativity isn't something that is appreciated in the Nepali school system. This can lead to some challenges and

disappointments like students that are not able to implement what they have learned even after a one-year course (Thagaard, 2018,s. 38).

### 6.1.2 National relations

Contact Contact with the authorities is mentioned by several informants in all sample groups as important. It is important to be up-to-date on what the authorities value and focus on that area. In the Nepali collective culture (Hofstede et. al, 2010, p.91), relationships are particularly important. Therefore, building relationships with the authorities is particularly strategic. It is important to be counted on and to gain access to meetings and committees the authorities are organizing. It is also mentioned to build relations with the UN and Unicef, the universities, and the NGO- sector. ECEC has been cooperating with Unicef about ICDP and after the earthquake, they made a big package with toys and educational materials for Unicef (ECEC, 2015). Unicef and ECEC are both working to give Children in Nepal a better life.

### 6.1.3 Contextualizing the courses at ECEC;

ECEC has built up a remarkable ability to contextualize. This is probably connected to the fact that the whole organization is dynamic and creative. The employees share, create and negotiate meanings through social interaction at ECEC (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.58), and new improved and more advanced culture is continuously being built. The local employees find their place and flourish.

Almost all the informants mention that ECEC also places excellent emphasis on personal development and follow-up. This is as important as the training at ECEC. In addition, the staff must continuously adapt the teaching to different contexts. As one informant mentions, the conditions are different in the city and the countryside, in the lowlands and the highlands, etc. ECEC's staff are therefore aware of the importance of adapting the teaching to different groups and contexts. The organization has developed an impressive strategy to consider the recipient's ability to sort out what is important in the teaching and to be aware of the student's background and culture. Communication is about negotiating opinions, so the students can receive and understand (Dahl, 2013, p.63).

Some of the material from the West might not work in the Nepali context at all, then the teachers need the ability and understanding to decide not to use it or to make their own created materials instead. However, contextualizing presupposes the ability to be creative.

And as mentioned in 6.1.2, creativity is a skill that is not encouraged in the Nepali education system. So this might be challenging for Nepali teacher trainers as well as the students. One reason that play and creativity are not encouraged might be the Power distance between leaders and employees, teachers and students are much bigger in Nepal than in the West. Another reason might be the collectivistic culture that does not appreciate autonomous individual development in the same way as in our Western countries (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s.103).

### 6.1.4 Capacity building

Former management and partners agree that ECEC has got skilled people in important positions. All the respondents agree that the employees have received a lot of good capacity building on various levels. Former management and partners are impressed by how eager Nepali staff are to learn. They have a high level of reflection and professional ambitions. The local employees have several ideas of areas they still want to gain more competence. It is quite clear that ECEC has succeeded in creating joy in learning. The impression is that the new management and staff generally have ownership of ECEC's vision. It is very interesting to look at the work goal items that are associated with the collectivist pole according to Hofstede: training, physical conditions, and use of skills. That ECEC has focused a lot on capacity building, built a practical and beautiful building, and focusing on that all staff shall use their skills, shows that they are very much tuned in to the Nepali collectivistic culture. For Western cultures with individualistic pole personal time, freedom and challenges are the most important work goals. (Hofstede, 2010, s. 92-93)

If we look at the Masculinity index ECEC needs to be aware that Nepali people might value earnings, recognition, advancement and challenges more than a good relationship with the manager, cooperation, living in a desirable area, and employment security that might be more important for the foreigners (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s.139). This might also be connected to the collectivistic society. For the Extended family, money is more important than that the one employed enjoys every day at work. Therefore, this might add to our understanding of why people make choices like changing jobs for a higher salary (Hofstede et. al, 2010, p.91). The capacity building is very much in line with the new paradigm in Diakonia and shows the importance of empowering the Nepali employees, so they develop themselves and can run the organization by themselves (Dietrich S., 2014, s. 13-14). The former foreign managers are all speaking Nepali quite well and are living close to the Nepali culture in many ways. That

might be a part of the success. They have much trust within and outside of ECEC. All three of them have also spent several years in Nepal. At the same time, one of them says she still feels very much like a foreigner. One reason that she still does not feel like a Nepalese might be that she is appreciating other values than those values that dominate in the given cultural context of Nepal (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s. 30). This shows how deep the culture is rooted in us.

Two of the partners, NC(F) and NB(F), felt the transition period took too long a time. But now, when they see the result, NB(F) believe it was a good reason and that the transition has worked well. NC(F) thinks the foreign management underestimated the Nepali staff. These are strong words, still perhaps easier to say for someone who is far away in everyday life and who does not feel the daily frustrations and cultural differences. The Distance of power in the Nepali society might be one reason that the former management felt the Nepali management was not ready to take over the management (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s.103). As a partner mentioned, some local employees might always ask their leader before even making small decisions because that is common in most institutions in Nepal (Dahl, 2013, s.49-50). Another reason might be that it is hard for the Nepali staff to understand what is expected by the management because of all the cultural differences in general (individualistic contra relations, huge power distance contra small power distance, etc. high context contra low context). To be able to respond appropriately to intercultural interaction, we need to acknowledge culture-specific variations between Nepal and Western culture in everyday life and communication. In judging cultural practices, beliefs, values, and behavior different from our own, care needs to be taken (Fitzpatrick, 2020, s. 21).

It is quite clear that previous management also cares for the staff by helping when it is needed. Still, the Nepali management is the one that is doing the day-to-day decisions. A reason that ECEC is still managed so well after they got Nepali management, might be that the Nepali management is not left alone. The previous management is still available to help when there is a need.

## 6.2 Successful Transition to Nepalese management

### 6.2.1 Transition to Nepalese management

As we read in 6.1.1 ECEC is an innovative organization. The Nepali staff has probably learned a lot of creativity and developed creativity themselves after working in such an environment for many years. There are several examples from the data like the manager has already established new cooperation partners and projects like INTENT. The new management is also creating new projects with previous partners such as NLA in the Norad-supported project.

The new management are proactive in thinking about earning money by producing materials the school's needs and mass production. ECEC designs and develops without having all the funds etc. available. Otherwise, they maintain a high level of activity with several projects at the same time. The new management also thinks holistically about the organization and the services it will offer. They have the vision to reach more people in other cities in Nepal as well as Kathmandu.

A disagreement between former and current management emerges. Previous management feels that there are too many projects and tries to slow down. Very likely they have precious experience from similar situations when they were struggling to follow up on too many big projects at the same time. A Nepali informant says they can talk openly about disagreements and settle when necessary. The Nepali management must not experience they can ask for advice and decide whether they want to follow the advice or not. It is unfortunate if the former management always has the last word in practice. It doesn't seem to be like that here. The foreigners need to consider and be aware of the imbalance in power between them and the staff at ECEC and must be extra careful when it comes to interference (Thagaard, 2018, s. 38).

The fact that three of the management at ECEC bought shares in the new training Centre Three Star on the other side of Kathmandu when it had to be closed, testifies to a personal and genuine commitment. Yet if we try to follow Nepali culture here, we can ask ourselves from the Triple Hermeneutic point of view whether they bought shares out of care and commitment or for another reason. The research data tells us about mistrust from Nepali staff and in general towards Nepalese people in leading positions. However, nothing in my data suggests that the Nepalese in the management of ECEC are not to be trusted. On the contrary, they have a lot of responsibility and work pressure and receive a rather modest salary. All have worked at ECEC for several years.

### 6.2.2 Nepali People Don`t Trust Nepali Management

An informant remarks “Most of the students come because of foreigners.” (LA(M) So far, the foreigners have had higher education and more experience than the Nepali staff, so it is not so strange that foreign teachers are associated with quality. But this has changed and now the Nepali teacher trainers' competence is high. As one informant mentioned, in the one-year course, there are 90% Nepali teachers, and this study programme has kept its attractiveness.

The resistance against having Nepali shareholders in ECEC can be explained by insight from triple hermeneutics. For me this say something about trust in Nepali society. The Board are afraid that some might take advantage. They might have experienced that people they trusted, changed after getting powerful positions, also in church and Christian organizations (Thagaard, 2018, s. 38). From that point of view, it is a risk getting Nepali shareholders.

Many senior staff have left ECEC for better-paid jobs and some did not return after getter studies funded by ECEC. It is easy to understand that the size of the salary means a lot if you for instance are the only one with income in the extended family in a collectivistic society like Nepal. Children grew up as a “we” in an extended family with a lifelong loyalty to one`s group (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s.91). It is hard for us from the West to understand that decisions are not taken only by the individual or by the close family, yet there might be a lot of pressure from the extended family as well like to afford school fees, pay the food in the household, send your children abroad for education, etc. On the individualism Index, Netherland scores 80, Norway 69, and India 48 (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s.95-96). Looking at Power distance versus Individualism, Norway/Netherlands are much more individualist countries with small power distances than India/Nepal which are much more collectivist societies with large power distances (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s.103). This might indicate that decisions are not taken alone, nevertheless together in the extended family in Nepal.

### 6.2.3 Professional management in future

According to one of the former managers, the Western way of working “following more rules and working according to project goals,” hence, is perceived as a professional way of working. She emphasizes that the new management must work like that. But is it objectively a

more professional way of working or is it just a more Western or international way of working? And is this necessarily the best way to work when you start up something new in a developing country? For instance, effective linear communication where you go straight to the point and seek to be factual and precise is not even polite in Asian culture (Dahl, 2013, p. 156). Is all this pressure on professionality and following rules necessary a good way to create real Nepali ownership? And are big projects with lots of money the best way to create local Nepali ownership? Eikeland emphasizes the importance of using the teacher's lifeworld and experiences as the starting point when we want to carry out reforms in the Nepali education system. Understanding of educational phenomena, Western approaches from outside, and concepts to understand a Hindu cultural setting can be misleading. (Eikeland, 2018, p.6)

A contrary perspective is to consider the actual experiences over more than 20 years at ECEC. To be able to create something big and change in the whole education system in Nepal, one must cooperate on an international level and follow the rules. I believe ECEC should always carefully consider professional and Western principles and work towards a good balance of necessary Western principles and Nepali distinctive traditions.

## 6.3 Hybrid Teacher Training

### 6.3.1 Cultural differences

One of the partners says that conflicts that typically occur between Westerners and Nepalese have to do with cultural differences in terms of communication, expectation, gender roles, and ways in which authority is seen. The informant mentions the hierarchical pyramid-type authority structure, shame-based culture with human honor, honoring the chain of command, and mindfulness about the proper title for the proper role as areas that can create tension. This is again connected with the distance of power in the Nepalese society (Dahl, 2013, s.49-50).

Communication is easier with Nepali leadership according to a local informant. With foreigner management, the informant said they had to think before they ask the foreigners about something. That might be because it is hard to predict what the response might be. This is a very good example of how easily a message can be misunderstood when people from two different cultural backgrounds communicate with different communication strategies and

different worldviews. Communication is about negotiating opinions and the recipient's cultural background plays an important role in the process (Dahl, 2013, p.63). We might say that communication is about creating community. Nepal is a community-oriented culture, while the western ones come from more individualistic cultures. Several informants point out episodes of disagreement and discussions that are probably about cultural differences. One reason for misunderstanding can be the differences in communication. Western people tend to use linear communication, go "straight to the point" and seek to be factual and precise. (Dahl, 2013, p. 156). Asian people might be offended because this is not polite. They tend to communicate in circles, and you get closer and closer to the core following the "spiral model". (Dahl, 2013, p. 158).

Still, it doesn't seem like the locally employed informants at ECEC experience cultural challenges as a major burden on ECEC. Several disagreements can often be due to personality differences. One informant mentioned that some of the staff are very visionary and want lots of new development, and others want stability mainly. The main features above indicate that the expatriates at ECEC have good cultural insight and understanding. That all in the former management learned Nepali, stayed in Nepal for many years and knows the culture quite well, providing respect among the local employed ones. Dahl emphasizes the importance of understanding the language and how it is used, the experience of the cultural context, and the ability to conclude when we get to know a new culture (Dahl, 2013, p. 272).

Hofstede's cultural dimensions tell us something about general features in different countries. This is also seen in this study. The same characteristics of Nepalese culture are repeated by several different respondents. Still in accordance with Hofstede's critics, this project shows that people within a country are different (ethnically and geographically different) and that personality type visionary or more systematist is just as important in a work community.

Kirkman is recommending focusing more on *when* does culture matter rather than does culture matter and to continuously examine the impact of cultural values in the future (Kirkman, 2006, s.313). It is no doubt that culture matter.

Therefore, I would argue that it is untenable to build a picture of Nepalese culture through Hofstede's five cultural dimensions or similar theories only. It shows little nuance and is a devalue of a nation. I will argue that culture is not “collective mental programming that separates the members of one human group from another” (Dahl, 2013, s.49-50). Culture is

something we do and is created between people as we communicate and interact (Dahl, 2013, p. 88).

### 6.3.2 International competence in new management

The employees at ECEC that have grown up among different cultures might have benefits like an expanded worldview (a deeper understanding) and cross-cultural enrichment (Pollock, 2017, p.140-148). As seen in chapter 5, personal benefits and characteristics can be adaptability, less prejudice, the importance of now, and being appreciative of authority (Pollock, 2017, p.153-163). All these might be appreciated qualities in the management and international relations of ECEC.

On the contrary, does the new management have enough depth of knowledge about Nepali culture? Is it only positive that they are so internationally exposed? Is it a danger that they don`t be fully Nepali? And what is the reason that so many of the new "Nepali" management is not Nepali? One informant mentioned that it is a challenge to get enough qualified staff that is Christian, so considering that it is maybe not so strange that some of the best qualified national employees are from the neighbors' countries where the education system also might be better. Anyway, all the employees are from Asian and neighboring countries. They have lived several years in Nepal; all speak Nepali and have quite good competence in Nepali culture. That makes the staff quite competent in both Nepali and international culture. It should be a good combination for managing ECEC and with all the visionary plans that ECEC have got, international competence is crucial. This might be a good way to slowly make ECEC more and more Nepali and still make sure the quality is high.

Several informants told me that the new manager is the one from ECEC that established the contact with a new partner from Driestar University in the Netherlands. It shows that the new manager and management are capable to build relations also outside Nepal and create new possibilities for ECEC. Those are important qualities to lead ECEC further. This intercultural competence makes the organization flexible; it opens up the world and gives amazing possibilities as we already see ECEC is taking full advantage of through for instance the Norad-supported project where they use contacts at Faith-based universities in both Netherland and Norway and connect them with secular universities in Norway and Nepal as well as ECEC to create a new Basic teacher education.

This is a good example of Intercultural Creation. “Intercultural” emphasizes the potential emergence of new integrative meanings beyond initial cross-cultural differences. The result will be a new intercultural creation (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.61) We can also assume that a deeper understanding of the world (Pollock, 2017, p.140-148), adaptability, and less prejudice might have contributed to this Intercultural Creation (Pollock, 2017, p.153-163). This Intercultural competence as the management of ECEC has got, is a competence for the future as the world is getting more and more connected via zoom, social platforms, and digital teaching.

### 6.3.3 Contact with foreign partners

The foreign partners have primarily been an encouraging support to work for the vision, financially and through intercession. But the relationship with the donors has at times been perceived as demanding to a certain extent in terms of clear guidelines and conflicting wishes from different donors.

One interesting word in the data is “in-between”. First, it is used by a partner about their role “in-between” the local staff and the management, then it is used by a former manager about her role “ in-between” ECEC staff and international partners, and last of one in the Nepali management about that the Nepali employed at that time felt “ in-between” the former management and the partners. This “ in-between” might address some of the cultural challenges with Asian spiral communication contra more directly Western communication (Dahl, 2013, p. 158). It might be easier to talk indirectly to someone than strait to the one you disagree with. One of the Nepalis points out that they could talk quite openly with the partners about things that could be experienced as demanding. In that way, it is conceivable that it may have been a good way to get some outlet for an understanding of disagreement and frustration. Nepal is a high-context culture where much information is indirectly communicated without being said explicitly. That makes it even more complicated to understand the culture of people from low-context countries such as Scandinavia and Holland according to Hall (Dahl 2013, p. 98).

Contradictorily, one of the Nepali staff also felt “in-between”, so it might be that the partners needed to talk to some “in-between" as much as the Nepali staff.
However, it might have been difficult for the former management when the foreign partner thought something quite strongly about something they did not have a clear picture about and

did not experience in everyday life. The fact that the donors have money and opportunities to realize the purpose of ECEC, means that they have more power. It is good that one of the donors realize that sometimes they misused their power. This coincides with the experience of an informant in the former management. It is positive that the partner takes self-criticism and realizes that they went too far. Awareness of power relations and other expressions of dominance that means certain interests are hidden at the expense of other is especially important to be aware of cross-cultural cooperation and communication (Thagaard, 2018, s. 28).

## 6.4 Christian Identity

### 6.4.1 Positive and negative Nepali values

The respondents are connecting the positive values to the Biblical-based Christian values such as equal opportunities for all, girls should get an education, and society with participation for all. On the other side, the negative values like caste system, discrimination and different treatment of people, hierarchal, bossy, domination nature of leaders like in the Guru-Deshi relation structure is connected to Hinduism and Hindu values.
The hierarchy relates to the caste system where people have different values and tasks according to their place in the hierarchy. This is again connected to the distance of power in Nepalese society. And when it comes to the education system, teachers are treated with respect and even fear. One informant comment on the Guru-Deshi (teacher-student) relation. The education process is teacher centered. The teacher initiates all communication in the classroom in strict order. Guru comes from Sanskrit and means “weighty” or “honorable” (Geert Hofstede et.al, 2010, s. 69). This is very different from how ECEC wants the class situation to be.

The Nepalese world “Mailaune” is explained in 5.2.1. and mentioned as a challenging and negative Nepali value by former management. One example of “Milaune” from the data that both the Nepali staff and the former management are mentioning is the discussions around taking leave. The foreigners want to follow the rules ECEC has, and the Nepali staff sometimes disagree with that. Relations are more important than rules in Nepali culture, and rules are more important in the West, so I assume that this is the reason that following rules

seems logical for the ex-pats and taking care of extended family and building relations feels more natural for the Nepali staff. They feel lifelong loyalty and the pressure on taking care of the whole extended family (Hofstede et. al, 2010, s. 91).

### 6.4.2 Value-based Christian Organization

After listening to the informants from former management and local staff at ECEC we see that the work and faith are intertwined and belong together. Christians are prioritized when hiring people. ECEC started based on a calling from God to build an education from a Christian point of view. They had a vision that seems to be well rooted throughout the organization. Most of the respondents are mentioning Christian values as important. The holistic approach ECEC uses in its teaching also applies to how the Christian values permeate the entire organization. This aligns with the Cape Town Declaration of 2010 which says that the evangelistic and diaconal mission has the same value (Lindheim, 2017, p.2) and that Diakonia is seen as a part of God's big mission. One Nepalese informant also mentioned that the foreigners and especially the management have been role models for the Nepali management. Those are powerful words about how our actions talk. The organization "is committed to being humble, forgiving and compassionate in all our relations with others as Christ has exemplified (ECEC, 2020)." In that sense, Christ is the role model for the organization. I assume that in the same way Nepali staff and management are role models for the students they meet.

The Christian values are also shown at ECEC through the staff having daily devotions and Christian fellowship altogether, department-wise, or in women's / men's mentoring groups. They pray for each other and discuss things they have learned. The staff also prays regularly for the students. ECEC has an impressive leader training strategy that includes mentoring and guidance from more experienced employees. They also have Christian capacity building based on Christian values and are regularly talking about/working with the Christian values. The leaders are assigned to spend a certain number of working hours every week on making sure everyone is doing well. This shows that at ECEC Diakonia is much more than just action. So I will argue with Rodriguez Nygaard that the subject/agent cannot be analytically separated from its tools but must be understood in the interplay between the agent and the tools. Word and actions therefore cannot be separated. Both are often used simultaneously in interactions between people. Rodriguez Nygaard suggests a third logic, the

logic of interactions, and an expanded definition of Diakonia. “Diakonia is the caring ministry of the Church. It is the Gospel in interactions… (2017, s.175). This research project has shown that in international Diakonia, an interaction happens between the actions and words. It also implies our values, the organization culture, the surroundings and several other factors.

This can be seen together with the word “intercultural” where we believe something new and creative can emerge beyond initial cross-cultural differences and the result will be a new interculture (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.61). We can also assume that Diakonia as the Gospel in Interaction means something valuable is created between the gospel, actions, words, values, mentoring, and colorful storybooks for children. I believe these different perspectives together might give an extra synergy compared to a basic diaconal as action understanding (Rodriguez Nygaard, 2017, s.175). This corresponds to Fitzpatrick who said that we should rather focus on building new inter-cultural perspectives during interaction by analyzing how individuals interpret their experiences in different ways (2020, s. 21).

Several informants voice that ECEC doesn't discriminate concerning ethnicity and cast, gender, or function ex. All are welcome at ECEC. This is also expressed through the way the staff meets and listens to the students through feedback, guiding, and mentoring. The students often share the impression this care and love for the individual has made on them on graduation. Diakonia is a theological concept that points out the very identity and mission of the church. LVF emphasizes that the practical implication is a call to action, as a response to human suffering, injustice, and care or creation. (LVF, 2009, s.8) Another example is how the salaries were divided during Covid where the management got 50 % and the guards got 100% salary. This is much in line with a Christian and diaconal way of acting towards those who are suffering. It shows that ECEC tries to follow biblical-based values in all areas.

One informant said many in Nepal are suspicious of Christianity. Through ECEC people meet Christians and Christian values in a non-threatening way. Thus, ECEC becomes a place for Diapraxis. Through getting together and doing something together a fellowship is built. Regardless of faith affiliation, all are welcome (Haugen, 2018, p.94-95). Through relations, respect, and reciprocity bridges might be built. (Haugen, 2018, p.97).

### 6.4.3 Christian Culture

Several informants talk about the “Christian Culture” at ECEC. The “Christian culture” goes across the other cultures we find in the organization. It affects the environment, those who

work there, and the way the students are met, which was also mentioned. A respondent said they are looking for kingdom values and not Nepali values or Western values at ECEC. Following the Cultural Creation perspective, we can look at this as a process of collective sense-making and newly created culture at ECEC (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.59). The Christian Culture and Kingdom values have become something new and better than focusing on the Nepali Culture or the Western culture. This Christian Culture has been created among the staff at ECEC as they have been communicating (Dahl, 2013, p. 88).

ECEC is very much rooted in Christian spirituality as an organization and spiritual development is essential when it comes to understanding av purpose in life and relationships to self, others, nature, and the transcendent (Haugen, 2018). One informant was amazed at how easy it was for the staff at ECEC to work with ECEC values. This may be an indication that the employees are concerned and conscious of the values in general. In this sense trainers at ECEC are well equipped to meet the student's needs but also to equip them to later give children a good foundation in terms of meaning-making and connectedness (Haugen, 2018). Especially in the first formative years, Spiritual development is recognized as central to the overall development of any human being (Haugen, 2018, s. 306). The ICDP- program is also a significant contribution to help parents to show children love and care, to show more enthusiasm, improve verbal communication, praise and joint focus with the child (De Wit, 2019, s. 4).

The organization has chosen a clear ecumenical Christian identity when it comes to the Christian values organization is rooted in. Christian values such as everyone’s equal value and respect for all regardless of gender and caste or ethnic group become a weapon in the fight against "negative" Hindu values such as the caste system and hierarchy that ECEC does not want to support. In this sense, we can say ECEC is silently practicing prophetic Diakonia. Advocacy is an integral part of ECEC`s work and diaconal work. The biblical roots and the distinct identity of Diakonia, compel ecumenical Diakonia to be prophetic. ECEC works for the poor and marginalized and tries to unmask systemic injustice and promote human justice and dignity (WCC, 2022, p.87).

Most students who take courses at ECEC notice, and comment on the special atmosphere. The students experience ECEC differently than other schools and institutions. They experience being seen, taken seriously, and shown care and love which is unusual in Nepal. Through the practical work ECEC is doing, they point out the very identity and

mission of the church (LVF, 2009, s.8). I believe this is a testimony of the love of God that is captured by the students at ECEC.

# 7 Conclusion

This research project shows how much value that can be created in the space and interaction between different cultures. The Christian value-based perspective adds an extra dimension and synergy to the interaction.

The Given cultural perspective has a limited value and impact because national and societal cultures are not one given culture. (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.??). But still, it can be useful to patterns in given cultures to get a basic understanding of the main tendencies in national cultures.

To understand the process with local ownership at ECEC, the Cultural Creation perspective is a much better tool. Culture is a process of collective sense-making that is ongoing (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p.59). In this research, it has been very interesting to see how new things have been created between the different cultures at ECEC. A new culture is created between the employees, between the teachers and the students, and between the partners and ECEC as new plans are made, and new courses are developed. Through this interaction, new and genuine culture is created and continuously emerging (Dahl, 2013, p. 88).

This leads to the definition of Diakonia as the "gospel in interaction." A synergy is happening between the different ways Diakonia emerges in actions, words, values, mentoring, and colorful storybooks for children. (Rodriguez Nygaard, 2017, s.175).

The focus is on the inside, the "emic", perspective gives much more depth to the understanding. The cultural border created is not given, but fluid and can be bridged. We can say it is intercultural. The Cultural Creation perspective focuses on the hermeneutical process of creating and constructing categories of collective self and other. The Triple hermeneutic perspective shows that the action strategies, identification methods, and self-understanding people have been understandable. The position they have in the society and structure they live in, gives us valuable insight. The emic perspective is focusing on understanding each other and the unique opportunities for something new and better to be created when different cultures meet (Mahadevan et. al., 2011, p. 60?).

This research project has shown that at ECEC there has been a lot of positive synergies and new unique Culture created because of a inter-cultural environment. The data shows that ECEC is an Innovative and creative organization, the new management is competent and equipped for the tasks they have, the teacher education is a Hybrid with the

best of Western education but contextualized to Nepali context and the organization has developed a remarkable Christian value-based identity which permeates the entire organization. The transition to Nepali management has gone very well so far.

Summarized this are the findings in this Research Project: First, The Given cultural perspective has a limited value and impact. Second: The Cultural Creation perspective is a much better tool. Third: The "emic" perspective gives depth to the understanding of mentalities and cultures, Fourth: An understanding of diakonia as "Gospel in interaction» is supported. Fifth: ECEC's teacher education can best be understood as a hybrid with the best of Western education contextualized to a Nepali context. Finally: The Christian value-based perspective adds an extra dimension of insight into the interaction taking place at ECEC.

## 7.1 Recommendation for further research

For further research projects, I will suggest using Hofstede, Hall, and similar theories mostly as a tool to understand general cultural differences among national groups. But as a tool to gain a deeper understanding in a small environment, a Hermeneutic perspective, as well as an emic perspective, will give deeper and more valuable insight.

I also believe there is a need for Research on management in cross-cultural contexts to gain more depth insight. The last area I will suggest for further research, is an awareness of the importance of applied religion in organizations.

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# Attachements

1 Information letter about the interview, English

2 Informasjonsskriv til intervju, Norwegian

3 Interview guide, English

4 Intervjuguide, Norwegian

**Attachment 1**

# Are you interested in taking part in a research project?

*"Local ownership at the Preschool Teacher Education at Early Childhood Education Centre in Nepal?"*

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project with the main purpose to get more knowledge about how the Preschool Teacher Education at Early Childhood Education Centre (ECEC) in Nepal was locally rooted, and the development at ECEC under mainly Nepalese management. In this letter, we will give you information about the project and what your participation will involve.

**Purpose of the project**
In all mission and development work, local ownership is crucial. In my master's thesis in Diakonia (Christian social service), I want to investigate whether the Nepalese have experienced that their culture, values, and mindset are valued at ECEC, what has been done of competence building among Nepalese employees, what has been done of contextual adaptation and to ensure financial independence in the long run. Finally, I would like to investigate whether there have been any changes after the management now is mainly Nepalese.

**Who is responsible for the research project?**
VID Specialized University in the institution responsible for the project.

**Why are you asked to participate?**
A selection of people with close knowledge of ECEC will be asked to participate. It will be a combination of former foreign management, locally employed Nepalese, and external actors from Himalpartner and NLA University College.
You will be asked to participate since you have close knowledge of ECEC and valuable thoughts and experiences from the process of local ownership.

**What does participation involve for you?**
If you choose to participate in the project, it involves an interview of about 45-60 minutes. You will have questions about your experiences related to the diaconal identity (Christian social service) of ECEC, the place of educations` local anchoring in the Nepali context, the competence development of local employees, and the transition to Nepali management. I take notes and audio recordings and the information is recorded electronically. Local Nepalese employees, (formerly) foreign management, and external supporters (Himalparter and NLA University College) will shed light on the issue from different points of view and some questions are adapted to the different selection groups. No questions are asked about individuals.

**It is voluntary to participate**
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving any reason. All your data will then be deleted. It will have

no negative consequences for you if you do not want to participate or later choose to withdraw.

**Your privacy – how we store and use your information**
We will only use your information for the purposes we have disclosed in this letter. We process the data confidentially and following the Data Protection Regulations. Only the student and supervisor have access to the material.
Your name and contact information will be replaced with a code stored on your name list separate from other data. I anonymize the information that comes in and you get a code according to which group you belong to (locally employed Nepalese/(formerly) foreign management/external supporters), but it should not be associated with your name.

**What happens to your information when we finish the research project?**
The information is anonymized, and recordings are deleted when the project is completed/the task is approved, which is scheduled to be no later than the 30th of June 2021.

**Your rights**
As long as you can be identified in the data material, you are entitled to:
- access to what personal data is registered about you, and to be provided a copy of the data,
- to have personal data corrected/rectified about you,
- to have personal information deleted about you, and
- to send a complaint to the Norwegian Data Protection Authority about the processing of your data.

**What gives us the right to process personal data about you?**
We process information about you based on your consent.
On behalf of VID Specialized University, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed the processing of personal data in this project following the data protection regulations.

**Where can I find out more?**
If you have any questions about the study or would like to exercise your rights, please contact:
• VID Specialized University by supervisor Hans Morten Haugen by e-mail: hans.morten.haugen@vid.no, tel: +47 224 51 797.
• Our Data Protection Officer Nancy Yue Liu, by email: nancy.yue.liu@diakonhjemmet.no or by phone +47 938 56 277.

If you have any questions related to NSD's assessment of the project, please contact:
• NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS by e-mail: personverntjenester@nsd.no or by phone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely

Hans Morten Haugen
(supervisor)

Veronika Gundersen Sævik
(master's student)

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# Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project “Local ownership at the Preschool Teacher Education at Early Childhood Education Centre in Nepal?” and have been allowed to ask questions. I give consent:

- ☐ to participate in an interview

I give consent for my data to be processed until the end date of the project, approximately the 30th of June 2022.

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(Signed by participant, date)

**Attachment 2**

# Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

## *"Lokal forankring ved førskolelærerutdanningen på Early Childhood Education Centre i Nepal"*?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å finne ut hvordan førskolelærerutdanningen på Early Childhood Education Centre (ECEC) i Nepal ble lokalt forankret, og hvordan utviklingen på ECEC har vært under hovedsakelig nepalesisk lederskap. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

**Formål**
I alt misjons og bistandsarbeid er lokal forankring et viktig element. I forbindelse med min masteroppgave i diakoni, ønsker jeg derfor i dette prosjektet å undersøke om nepaleserne har opplevd at deres kultur, verdier og tankesett blir verdsatt på ECEC, hva som er blitt gjort av kompetansebygging blant ansatte nepaleserne, hva som er gjort av kontekstuell tilpasning og for å sikre økonomisk uavhengig på sikt. Til sist ønsker jeg å undersøke om det har skjedd endringer etter at ledelsen nå hovedsakelig er nepalesisk.

**Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**
VID vitenskapelige høyskole er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

**Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**
Et utvalg av personer med nær kjennskap til ECEC vil bli spurt om å delta. Det vil bli en kombinasjon av tidligere utenlandsk ledelse, lokalt ansatte nepalesere og eksterne aktører fra Himalpartner og NLA Høgskolen.
Du blir spurt om å delta siden du har nær kjennskap til ECEC og verdifulle tanker og erfaringer fra prosessen med lokal forankring.

**Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**
Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det et intervju på ca. 45-60 minutter. Du vil bl.a få spørsmål om dine erfaringer knyttet til ECEC sin diakonale identitet, utdanningsstedet sin lokale forankring i nepali kontekst, kompetanseutvikling av lokalt ansatte og overgangen til nepali ledelse. Jeg tar notater og lydopptak og opplysningene registreres elektronisk.

Lokalt ansatte nepalesere, (tidligere) utenlandsk ledelse, og eksterne aktører (Himalparter og NLA Høgskolen) vil belyse problemstillingen fra ulike synsvinkler og noen spørsmål er tilpasset de ulike utvalgsgruppene. Det blir ikke stilt noen spørsmål om enkeltpersoner.

**Det er frivillig å delta**
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

**Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**
Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Det er kun student og veileder som har tilgang til materialet.
Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil bli erstattet med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data. Jeg anonymiserer opplysningene som kommer inn og du får en kode etter hvilken gruppe du tilhører (lokalt ansatt nepaleser/ (tidligere) utenlandsk ledelse/eksterne aktører), men det skal ikke kunne knyttes til ditt navn.

**Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?**
Opplysningene anonymiseres og opptak slettes når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er senest 30. juni 2021.

**Dine rettigheter**
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i materialet, har du rett til:
- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

**Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra VID Vitenskapelige Høyskole har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

**Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?**
Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:
- VID Vitenskapelige Høyskole ved veileder Hans Morten Haugen på e-post: hans.morten.haugen@vid.no, tlf: +47 224 51 797 .
- Vårt personvernombud Nancy Yue Liu, på e-post: nancy.yue.liu@diakonhjemmet.no eller på telefon +47 938 56 277.

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på e-post: personverntjenester@nsd.no eller på telefon: +47 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

*Hans Morten Haugen*
(veileder)

*Veronika Gundersen Sævik*
(masterstudent)

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# Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *«Lokal forankring ved førskolelærerutdanningen på Early Childhood Education Centre i Nepal»*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- ☐ å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

**Attachment 3**

# Interview guide:

**Start information to all: (5 min.)**

Catch up

The interview has about 25 questions and is suppose too last for 45-60 minutes. Don`t answer to detailed on all questions. Share some of the first things that cross your mind. First I have some questions about your relation to ECEC, then some ground ideas, some opportunities and some threats. In the end I have some specific answers to each of the tree groups (Local nepali staff, (earlier) expats leaders at ECEC, external supporters (Himalpartner and NLA University College).
How much time do you have?

**Introduction questions to all: (5 min)**

1. Where are you working? (Himalpartner, ECEC, NLA, other)
2. What position do you have?
3. What relation do you have/have you had to ECEC?

**Ground idees/filosofi (8 min)**

4. What makes the Preschool Teacher Education at ECEC Diaconal (Christian Social service)?
5. How is the preschool teacher education at ECEC locally rooted in the Nepalese culture?
6. What is your main impression about development at ECEC under mainly Nepalese leading?

**Opportunities/ Alliances (12 min)**

7. What benefits has ECEC compared to competitors?
8. What added values gives the Diaconal/Christian social values at ECEC?

9. What further development opportunities do you see for ECEC? Trainings, partners, Nepalese leaders?
10. What should ECEC focus on in the future to be relevant in a Nepali context?

***NB! Halvveis***

**Threats/Challenges: (15 min.)**

11. What kind of challenges has occurred in the transition to mainly Nepalese management?
12. What kind of conflicts according differences between Nepalese and western culture has occurred at ECEC?
13. Has the local staff got sufficient competence building and training? (preschool teacher education, management, economy etc.)
14. What kind of challenges have you met in connection with the competence building?
15. What has been done to do ECEC financially independent in the long run? (from foreign transfers)
16. In the transition to Nepalese management, what could have been done different?
17. Is the transition to Nepalese management a threat for the robustness in economy, level of competence and quality of ECEC?

**Selection group L (locally employed Nepalese): Extra questions to locally employed Nepalese (10 min)**

18. Have your Nepalese identity and your experiences been sufficient valued by ECEC?
19. Can you please describe how you and Nepalese colleges have been respected or not of the leaders of ECEC?
20. In what way have you or have you not been valued and got opportunities to personal and professional development at ECEC?

**Selection group F (former foreign management): Extra questions to former foreign management at ECEC (10 min)**

18. Did ECEC have a plan for transition to Nepalese management?
19. In what situations have you been disappointed with the local staff when they have been trusted and given opportunities?
20. What has been most positive and most challenging in the process of building a Nepalese management?
21. How has it been to relate to donors and foreign partners during this process?
22. What is your role and relation to ECEC now?

**Selection group N (Norwegian partners): Extra questions to Norwegian partners (10 min.)**

18. In what way have your organization required a transition-plan to Nepalese management from ECEC?
19. In the progression with competence building at ECEC, what has been positive and challenging?
20. In what way have your organization contributed with training and competence building of the staff at ECEC?
21. In the process of building a Nepalese management, what has been most positive and most challenging?
22. Is your organization still in touch with ECEC? How?

**Last information to all: (5 Minutes)**
That was last question.
Is it something you would like to say, that you have not said yet?
If you remember something later that might be valuable, write an e-mail and I can add it in the transcription.

## Thanks a lot for the interview!

**Attachment 4**

# Intervjuguide:

**Start information to all: (5 min.)**

Løst og fast

Intervjuet har ca. 25 spørsmål og varer i ca 45-60 minutter. Ikke svar for detaljert på alle spørsmålene. Del det du kommer på. Først har jeg noen spørsmål relatert til ECEC sin identitet og grunnholdning, deretter muligheter og utfordringer. Til slutt har jeg noen spesifikke spørsmål til hver av de tre gruppene (lokal nepali stab, (tidligerer utenlansk ledelse ved ECEC og eksterne støttespillere (HP og NLA høyskolen).
Hvor mye tid har du?

**Innledende spørsmål til alle: (5 min)**

1. Hvor jobber du?
2. Hvilken stilling har du?
3. Hvilken relasjon har du/ har du hatt til ECEC?

**Grunnideer/filosofi (8 min)**

4. Hva bidrar til å gjøre førskolelærerutdanningen på ECEC diakonal?
5. Nevn noen faktorer som viser at førskolelærerutdanningen på ECEC er lokalt forankret i Nepali kultur?
6. Hva er ditt hovedinntrykk av utviklingen ECEC under nepalesisk ledelse?

**Muligheter/allianser (12 min)**

7. Hvilke fordeler har ECEC i forhold til konkurrenter?
8. Hvilken merverdi gir det diakonale/ kristne verdigrunnlaget dere har?
9. Hvilke muligheter ser du i videre utvikling av ECEC? Kurs? Samarbeidspartnere? Nepali ledelse?
10. Hva bør ECEC fokusere på fremover for å være relevant i nepali kontekst?

*NB! Midtveis 30 min*

**Trusler/utfordringer: (15 min)**

11. Har det oppstått utfordringer oppstod i overgangen til nepali ledelse? Hvilke?
12. Har det oppstått konflikter mellom nepali og vestlige standarder i oppbyggingen av førskolelærerutdanningen?
13. Har de lokalet ansatte fått tilstrekkelig med kompetanseutvikling og kurs?
14. Hvilke utfordringer har dere møtt på i forbindelse med kompetansehevingen/ utviklingen?
15. Hva er blitt gjort for å på gjøre ECEC økonomisk uavhengig på sikt?
16. Kunne noe vært gjort annerledes i prosessen med overgangen til Nepali ledelse?
17. Er overgangen til nepali ledelse en trussel for robustheten til økonomien, kompetansenivået og kvaliteten til ECEC?

**Utvalgsgruppe L: Ekstraspørsmål til alle lokalt ansatte nepalesere: (10 min)**

18. Har din nepali identitet og dine erfaringer blitt verdsatt av ECEC?
19. Har du og nepali kollegaer blitt vist respekt av ledelsen på ECEC? Utdyp hvorfor og hvorfor ikke.
20. Har du blitt verdsatt og fått muligheter til å utvikle personlig og profesjonell kompetanse på ECEC?

**Utvalgsgruppe F: Ekstraspørsmål til tidligere utenlandsk ledelse på ECEC (10 min)**

18. Har ECEC hatt en plan for overgangen til nepali ledelse?
19. Har du blitt skuffet over de ansatte når de har blitt vist tillit og fått muligheter. I hvilke situasjoner?
20. Hva har vært mest positivt og mest utfordrende i prosessen med å bygge opp en nepali ledelse?
21. Har det vært å forholde seg til donorer og utenlandske samarbeidspartnere i denne prosessen?
22. Hva er din rolle i forhold til ECEC nå?

**Utvalgsgruppe N: Ekstraspørsmål til donorer og eksterne (Himalpartner og NLA) (10 min)**

18. Har dere stilt krav til at ECEC skal ha en plan for overgang til nepali ledelse?
19. Hva har vært positivt og hva har vært utfordrende i progresjonen med kompetanseheving og overgang til nasjonal ledelse?
20. På hvilken måte har dere bidratt til kursing og kompetanseheving av de ansatte?
21. Hva har vært mest positivt og mest utfordrende i prosessen med å bygge opp en nepali ledelse?
22. Har dere fortsatt kontakt med ECEC? Hvordan?

**Slutt informasjon til alle: (5 Minutes)**
Dette var siste spørsmål.
Er det noe du vil si som du ikke har fått sagt ennå?
Hvis du kommer på noe senere, er det bare å sende en mail og jeg kan legge det til på slutten.

## Takk for intervjuet!

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