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Talk Journal

ISSN 2984-4207

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Creating quality online education in Nepal with NEWSTEP Project

10.05.2024

Improvements in quality of online education will have direct impacts for the future of Nepal. At the moment, almost 80 % of Nepalese inhabitants live in rural areas but internet penetration is still below 40 %. Infrastructure around internet connections lags behind other South Asian neighbouring countries.

However, educational institutions must urgently secure their capabilities to plan and provide online education, as online education will benefit and cater to remote and hard to reach places in Nepal. This is both strategical and practical decision to be made in institutional, national, and international arenas. Nepal Way to a Sustainable Transformational Educational (NEWSTEP) Programme aims to foster innovation and enhance the quality of education in Nepal.

New online courses will fulfil learning objectives and develop students' competencies for working life. High-quality online education prevents unnecessary commuting and internal migration, thus meeting the standards of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). The integration of learner-centred methodologies in education with an orientation towards developing entrepreneurial mindset creates ground for a more innovative generation of students to fulfill labour market needs.

"New online courses will fulfil learning objectives and develop students' competencies for working life"

A key prerequisite for effective educational design is the development and pedagogical knowhow. The pedagogical approach in the NEWSTEP project is deeply rooted in principles that facilitate diverse study styles, drawing from experiences with Innopeda and online pedagogy programs at Turku University of Applied Sciences (Turku UAS), in collaboration with the ongoing Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) project.



Picture 1. Pedagogical competencies workshop in Nepal, October 2023

The project aims to improve quality of education by focusing on four principles:

- Developing teachers' pedagogical competencies and quality of education by adapting digital pedagogy in designing online courses in Nepal (online education tools, systems, and ecosystems).
- Enhancing collaboration and partnerships ecosystem by working towards quality, robustness, and efficiency in education
- Creating new online courses in collaboration with local partners to enhance entrepreneurial and digitalisation skills based on practical entrepreneurship course design
- Enhancing sustainability-oriented strategy at HEIs while ensures equality in society via integration and effectiveness of the sustainability strategy through initiatives supported by the curriculum, course activities and local eco-system initiatives.

First steps to new pedagogical approach

New Way to a Sustainable Transformational Educational Programme (NEWSTEP) project was successfully launched in November 2023 in Sindhuli, Nepal. The project initiated the introduction of the pedagogical approach to teachers in Nepal, where teachers and stakeholders from all partner institutions participated in an onsite seminar. One key seminar focus was on basic principles inspired by online and innovation pedagogy methodologies. Through development of various Modules by the Turku UAS team, in total 35 members from HEIs from Nepal and Spain were trained in the new pedagogical approaches. The workshop



Picture 2. The NEWSTEP Team



Picture 3. Sindhuli rural area.

The project is Funded by Erasmus+ Capacity Building for the years 2023-2026. This project is the first in the history of Erasmus+ Capacity Building having coordination in Nepal. The project team consist of Sindhuli Multiple Campus, Sindhuli Academy, Sindhuli Community Technical Institute, from Sindhuli Nepal; Siddartha Vanasthali Institute, and Padma Kanya Multiple Campus (Trivuban University) from Kathmandu, Nepal; Universitat Politecnica De Valencia, from Valencia, Spain; and Turku University of Applied Sciences, from Turku, Finland.