

Integration of students from Bangladesh into the Danish labour Market

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Abstract

In the last 10 years, Denmark has seen an increase in international students who are coming from all over the world. However, due to challenges in the integration process that student's experienced in the country's job market and due to that they are leaving the country and moving to somewhere else. But, Denmark wants to retain these international graduates for the country's economic and labour market benefit, as the country reported that in the near future the country is going to experience a huge gap in skilled employees in the Denmark labour market due to ageing factor and lack of skilled factor. While going through this topic, the paper interest was found and that is the challenges that the international students experience in their integration process of getting a job in the Danish labour market and how they are overcoming the barriers and continuing on looking for jobs.

The research paper developed a case study which focuses on the international students and their challenges in the integration process of getting into the Danish job market. To continue with the research study, the paper will focus on the international students who came from the South Asian continent particularly from Bangladesh. The reason for such selection is because similar researchers considered international students from all over the world, whereas students from Bangladesh are not the same as the USA, Canada or Australia. Bangladesh is one of the third world countries who has a developing economy, also the cultural difference compared to Denmark is huge. So, the paper is interesting to find out the challenges that the international students from Bangladesh experience in the integration process in the Danish job market and how they are dealing with them. The paper follows a mono method and conducts 10 semi-structured interviews of international students who came from Bangladesh. All of the participants of the interviews have completed their higher studies and are currently working in Danish companies.

In order to decode the findings and to gather knowledge about the challenges of the international students that they experienced while integrating in the Danish job market. The findings will be interpreted based on the chosen literatures and theories, such as Activity theory and Work Adjustment Theory. Using thematic analysis, four major themes have been narrowed down and they are as follows: Language Proficiency, Job Market Dynamics and Networking, Workplace Integration, and Stringent Immigration Policy. Moreover, while analysing the data, suggestions from the participants were received for the educational institution and employers of the Danish companies because the students feel with their observation, experience and support the integration process can become less challenging for the future international students.

In conclusion, the research study's findings will be helpful not only for present and future international students but also for policy makers, Danish enterprises, and other scholars who are interested in studying the integration and employment of international students.

Keywords: International students, Integration process, Challenges, Danish labour market, Danish policies, cultural diversity, Language proficiency, mobility.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Integration of international students is always an important factor for countries because the number of skilled people that enter the country and integrate in the country impacts the labour market and the economy positively. International students are the best group of immigrants because this set of immigrants belongs to a certain age group and brings profitable skills into a country's economy (Malik, 2016). Due to globalisation, every sector of a country's economy has benefited so as the education sector around the globe. Every country is getting to learn about the education formats that exist in different countries and what other beneficial opportunities are available after completing the studies. With the help of globalisation, students are learning information about countries and are showing interest in moving to a developed country to achieve education and also where they can integrate further into the labour market for achieving a better career (Dong, L., 2008).

Moreover, international students who are pursuing their study in Denmark are getting more priority compared to other immigrants who gained their education and work experience from another country because Danish employers are not familiar with the education curriculum of third world countries (Mathias & Karhunen, 2020). International students for any country's economy are important because they have the potential to make the economy more competitive, successful, and innovative (Malik, 2016). For international students after completing their studies, the next step is to look for jobs that are related to their study field. The international graduates experience many challenges during their process of integration to the Danish job market but the graduates used various strategies to overcome the challenges and suggested universities and employers of the Danish companies to become a part of the integration process to make it less challenging.

Most commonly, it has been seen that international students, especially students who belong from Bangladesh, prefer to move to an English-speaking country because of the advantage of knowing the English language and better job possibilities that the developed countries offer. However, there has been a shift from English-speaking countries towards European countries. European countries are encouraging international students to consider them for education and jobs, and to make their decisions and journey effective, the countries are designing strategies that make the immigration process more controlled and improve the retention rates of international students in the country. One of the major factors that Europe is welcoming international students is due to the ageing population and the rate of birth is comparatively low (Mathias & Karhunen, 2020). The Danish labour market expects a deficiency in the labour market soon and to avoid such experience, the country is welcoming skilled immigrants and international or Non-EU students who can get skilled in Denmark and then get integrated into the job market filling up the forecasted gap in the labour market of Denmark (OECD, 2010). Once these international or Non-EU students have acquired the necessary skills and are prepared by the educational institution for the job market, they plan to integrate into the labour market and become a significant part of the economy (Mathias & Karhunen, 2020).

As mentioned earlier, international students are an important part of the country's infrastructure because they become a part of the culture, academic society, and reason of economic development. The number of international or Non-EU graduates in Denmark has increased in the last five years, in 2013 the number of international students that were in Denmark was 23,950 which increased by 42% in 2017 and it was 34,030 international graduates (ICEF monitor, 2018). The reason behind such an increase in international or Non-EU students is the introduction of English-taught degree programs in the country and Denmark has gained popularity for its degree programs and has become one of the top five universities in Europe (ICEF monitor, 2018). According to a survey conducted on Danish universities and international students, 70% of the international or Non-EU students choose to stay after completing their studies. The reason behind their choice is that they like the work-life balance of Denmark, also the workplaces offer a platform where the internationals feel empowered which works as a positive factor for them. The work assignments are challenging but worth learning because they help the internationals to grow personally and professionally (Damvad, 2012).

According to Statistics Denmark (2018), Denmark welcomes approximately 22,000 international or Non-EU students from all over the world annually. Denmark has become an attractive study destination for international or Non-EU students because of its competent, skilled economic infrastructure. Denmark is an EU Innovation leader and has high potential in the fields of research and development and promotes the concept of entrepreneurship (European Commission 2015; Woodside et al, 2016). To retain international or Non-EU students in the country, Denmark is using strategies to attract international students to apply for jobs in the labour market. International students outside Europe, especially those who belong from the Asian continent struggle a bit due to cultural differences, languages, etc but still, some graduates have successfully achieved positions in the job market. In a past survey, it has been observed that 61% of international or Non-EU students planned to stay and search for jobs after completing their studies. The reason they mentioned for staying in the country is the balance in work and leisure life, high salary and opportunities to grow more professionally and skillfully, and most importantly the safety that the country offers (Study in Denmark, 2015). Therefore, considering all the above-mentioned factors, Denmark is an attractive destination for international or Non-EU students for both employment and study purposes.

In the last 10 years, a massive number of international or Non-EU students have come to Denmark to pursue their higher studies and with time the number has increased. According to a study in Denmark, in the timeframe of 2000 - 2009, a total of 7,579 international or Non-EU students completed their higher education at a Danish university (SiU, 2011). However, another study results show that, in the timeframe of 2003-2007, 50% of graduates who completed their studies stayed back in Denmark, after two years the number reduced to 44%, and after three years the number dropped a little to 39% (SiU, 2011). Retaining international students was raised by the Minister for Science, Innovation and Higher Education, where it was mentioned that the reason for such a reduction in retaining international graduates is some barriers that they are experiencing. The possible barriers that were found are strict rules for international or

Non-EU students for long-term staying, cultural differences, language issues, and communication issues all of which affect the integration process (Damvad, 2012).

Problem Area

Bangladesh is a significant supplier of unskilled, semi-skilled, professional, and skilled labourers to more than 22 nations. A BMET (Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training) data states that around 49,219 Bangladeshis left their country in 2018 to work abroad. Consequently, academic institutions, governmental bodies, and non-governmental organisations have published literature about the lifestyles of Bangladeshi migrant labourers. On the other hand, very few or none of these research have particularly examined the lives of Bangladeshi immigrant students who are currently residing in Denmark. Bangladesh is one of the world's top sending countries for students, and student migration from Bangladesh is becoming a more significant occurrence. Students are studying overseas in order to enhance their possibilities for employment in the future and to acquire the credentials and abilities necessary to become global citizens. The migration of students has significant potential advantages but also raises certain issues for both sending and receiving nations. In the context of "brain drain" and "brain gain" mobility, student migration is important in bridging the professional gaps between sending and receiving nations (Dodani & LaPorte, 2005).

Bangladesh is still proving to be one of the South Asian nations with the greatest potential for sending students overseas. With almost half of its 160 million residents under 24, and slightly more than a third under 15, Bangladesh is the ninth most populous country in the world. Consequently, the rising wealth levels of Bangladesh's middle class have greatly encouraged the inclination to pursue higher education overseas. Just over 60,000 Bangladeshi students were enrolled in postsecondary education overseas in 2017, according to UNESCO (ICEF Monitor, 2018). Many Bangladeshi students are studying overseas in order to advance their careers, become global citizens, and increase their chances of finding work in the future. The top 10 countries for Bangladeshi students to study abroad are Malaysia, the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, India, Saudi Arabia, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates, according to UNESCO data. 33,155 Bangladeshis were enrolled in universities in Malaysia in 2017, 5,441 in the US, 4,652 in Australia, 3,599 in the UK, 2,028 in Canada, 2,008 in Germany, 1,099 in India, 870 in Saudi Arabia, 810 in Japan, and 637 in the United Arab Emirates, according to UNESCO data. Traditionally, upper middle class students from Bangladesh have also begun to travel overseas in pursuit of top-notch degrees; nevertheless, the majority of these students are from the wealthy class and have received at least some of their education in English (Alamgir, 2018). Together with the US, UK, Australia, and Canada, Denmark has seen an increase in the number of Bangladeshi students studying there in recent years.

Bangladeshi students have joined others from South Asia and elsewhere amid a great tide of educational migrants to Denmark. The growing global acknowledgment of the importance of integrating international students into host countries for a skilled workforce and positive economic impact is accompanied by a shifting trend in preferred study destinations. Recent

years have witnessed an increased preference for Denmark among international students. Despite Denmark's efforts to attract and retain international students, research reveals a decline in the long-term retention of graduates (Tange & Jæger, 2021; Stan, 2021; Dauncey-Elwood, 2019; Mosneaga & Winther, 2013). To make the integration process for internationals less challenging, the universities and companies are expected to collaborate to attract students to get them prepared and overcome the barriers or challenges that international students experience in the integration process.

Furthermore, students are heavily influenced by push factors—such as Bangladesh's political unrest and corruption—to relocate abroad rather than return to their native nation. Push factors have a bigger impact on Bangladeshi students' mobility than pull factors like better living standards, better job conditions, and more salary competition. The high rate of corruption in practically every industry in Bangladesh encourages students to stay and work elsewhere. Students believe that because power is sometimes given precedence over merit in Bangladeshi institutions, their efforts and accomplishments go unacknowledged. Because of this, intelligent students—especially those with no political connections—often think they may have a greater chance of succeeding overseas, where they prize skill and diligence over relationships and encourage exchanges. Better security outside has also played a significant role in encouraging Bangladeshis to pursue higher education elsewhere. Bangladesh's high crime rate and rising incidence of female sexual harassment urge postsecondary students, particularly female students, to study elsewhere if permanent residency is a realistic option. Bangladeshi students chose Denmark as their location for transitional education for a variety of important reasons. With a focus on the transitional experiences of Bangladeshi students in Denmark's labour market, this study aims to shed light on the problems that these students experience in the integration process..

1.2 Research Gap

One of the reasons that Denmark plans to emphasise bringing more international or Non-EU students is that the country is at risk of experiencing a shortage of skillful people in the labour market. To deal with challenges related to the ageing population and shortage of skilled workers, internationals are being offered positions in universities, and after completing studies they are integrating into the labour market. To make the integration process for internationals less challenging, the universities and companies are expected to collaborate to attract students to get them prepared and overcome the barriers or challenges that international students experience in the integration process. Similar research has been conducted on the integration process of International students in Denmark. However, the research does not focus on the internationals who come from Bangladesh, the research paper chose students from Bangladesh because of the obvious culture-related factor, languages, and many more. The challenges that international students from the South Asian continent and European continent experience are different from each other. Differences based on two continents' culture, infrastructure, language, etc. As Denmark is experiencing a shortage of skilled workers in the labour market it is affecting the country's tax sector which eventually affects the welfare of the society. To

retain international students for the benefit of the economy, universities and employers have to work together to find out about the barriers and come up with solutions to reduce the barriers for the international students to make their integration process less challenging.

1.3 Research Question and Objectives

The study aims to find out the challenges that international or Non-EU students who come from Bangladesh experience in the integration process in the Danish job market. Finding out the barriers is important for the paper because it has been established that international students are important for Denmark to fight problems like the ageing population and lack of skilled labour. So, the paper's objective is to see how the educational institution, employers of various organization, government, etc. help the international students in dealing with the challenges of overcoming the barriers and the students' integration process in the Danish job market. Also, the expectation of the international students that they have from the country, if they want to work in Denmark, they have to find ways to deal with the barriers.

The initial purpose of the paper is to present the barriers that students from Bangladesh experience in the integration process which includes job search tasks as well. The focus of the paper will be on international students who come from the Country Bangladesh. There are international students who come from the USA, Australia, Canada, Africa, etc but the reason the paper wants to focus on international students for South Asia is because it is expected that they will experience more challenges because of the huge differences in culture, language, and relevant work experience. Information based on the chosen topic can be found from the existing studies which are similar to this current study. To understand the barriers clearly and the experience of international students with the barriers and come up with solutions to overcome the challenging scenario, the main research question has been developed to get a better understanding of the integration process of international students (especially focusing on students who came from Bangladesh) in the Danish job market:

Main Research Question: How do students from Bangladesh integrate into the local job market in Denmark?

Two sub-questions are also developed which were made, first to get to the types of barriers that international students experience in the integration process. Second, how do international students overcome the barriers to make their integration process less challenging?

Sub-question: 1 What type of challenges do students from Bangladesh experience in the job market before/after getting a job?

Sub-question: 2 How did the Bangladeshi students try to overcome the challenges they experienced in their job search process?

The objectives for this research paper are to provide more focus and support to the main research question and the objective will also help to provide more information that is related to the chosen topic for the paper.

1. Finding the barriers or challenges that impact the integration process for international students (students from Bangladesh).
2. Through interviewing the participants, collected data will be analysed to find out how the international students dealt with the barriers.
3. Supporting the collected data with the chosen theories and literature.

1.4 Practical Relevance

The research on how international students integrate into the local job market in Denmark is very useful in terms of gaining knowledge about the integration process that generally takes place for international students, the barriers that exist in that process, and how international students are overcoming those barriers. For this paper, I focused on International students who came from the South Asian continent (particularly Bangladesh) and are currently working in Danish companies after completing their studies. I believe if I had more time, I could have made the paper more relevant to the situation that I tried to present in this paper. Engaging with the interview participants made the paper practically relevant to the integration process that exists for international students and I hope that other researchers will find it interesting and that similar research will be conducted in this field.

I think that the paper is relevant for the study which tries to find out the actual integration process that takes place for international students and it will help the government, universities, and employers to understand what improvements can be introduced further to establish a less challenging integration process which can tackle the complex challenges that the international students are experiencing in recent times.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

In this part of the paper, relevant literature on international students and their integration process in a foreign country will be presented, it will be helpful to understand the area of research that has been done on this topic and will try to critique the literature that was chosen to be used in this paper if it is relevant. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, the aim of the paper is to focus on the international students who come from the South Asian continent, especially focusing on the students from Bangladesh and their integration process in the Danish job market. However, there are papers on international students where students all over the world have been taken into consideration and the papers focus was not on a specific continent or country. As the current research paper focuses on students from Bangladesh and since similar research could not be found, a knowledge gap was discovered which this paper will try to fill up by expressing its contribution and will try to reflect upon the limitations and weaknesses of the past literature that this current paper tries to fill up.

The research topic for this paper is to understand the integration process of International students in Denmark, especially students from Bangladesh. In order to gather knowledge in

this topic, the paper looked for relevant literature whose research was conducted on this similar topic. While looking for scientific literature keyword titles were used such as: International students in Denmark, Student migration in Denmark/Europe, Employability of International students etc. All the papers that were found helpful have been presented in the literature review section, also there were some research papers which were conducted in other Nordic and Scandinavian countries, as Denmark is part of the Scandinavian countries and there are lots of similarities in infrastructure and culture that is why these papers have presented as well. However, after reading the literature thoroughly, the paper found some limitations in those papers that eventually became the knowledge gap for this paper. For example, there was no research paper that focused on students from Bangladesh and their integration process in the different foreign countries. The paper aims to find “how students from Bangladesh integrate into the Danish job market”. The literature that is presented below gives ideas about international students that are coming to abroad from all over the world for education and job purposes, international students in Denmark, migration of international students and employability of international students. However, information on the integration process of South Asian international students, particularly students from Bangladesh students in Denmark was not found and that is why the paper considers it as the knowledge gap that it will aim to fill up. In order to fill up the gap, the paper will reflect upon the relevant papers and chosen theories such as Activity theory and work adjustment theory. All these literatures and theories will be the lens for the paper through which it will relate to the situations that the paper will get to learn from the interview participants to see if they experience the same challenges that were mentioned in the past papers.

2.1 International students

According to Vaarala and Kyckling (2017), an international student is one who is travelling outside of their home country purely for the purpose of pursuing their education rather than holding citizenship or permanent residency in the nation in which they are enrolled. A person who has lived in multiple societies or cultures can also be considered an international student (Välimäa et al., 2014). It should be remembered that the terms "foreign student" and "international student" have different meanings. Students who are classed as foreign are those who are enrolled in courses in a country where they have a permanent residence visa, even though they may not have come for academic purposes. (Vaarala & Kyckling, 2017; Giang, 2014).

In this particular setting, international students have become a highly sought-after and contentious source of human capital, with remarkable assertions made regarding their potential as workers. One Canadian analyst has highlighted the potential for former students to both act as "agents of development for an economy seeking greater participation in a more competitive global market, particularly... new technologies" and "increase the economic competitiveness and creativity" of host communities (Belkhodja, 2011). According to a German study, studying abroad sends a message to employers that a student can "establish themselves and thrive in

foreign contexts" and that they "possess skills which can considerably accelerate their social and economic integration" (Mayer et al., 2012).

International students might be thought of as an auxiliary workforce waiting for a fast expanding and elastic resource in terms of human capital. 2.1 million students were studying overseas in 2002; in just 8 years, that number rose to 4.1 million at the tertiary level (OECD, 2012). Globally, 7.2 million foreign students are expected by 2025. By 2005, 38% of Chinese and 66% of Indian students in Australia had made the transition to permanent skilled migration. For almost ten years, New Zealand has had a study-to-work and then work-to-residence pathway that has kept one-third of its international student body. Canada introduced a plan in 2013 with the goal of increasing retention and then tripling international enrollment to 450,000 within ten years. In a period when "1.6 million Asian nationals migrated to the OECD area, accounting for one third of all migrants," and an estimated 15–30% remain in host countries, Asian students are increasingly seeking migration, according to a recent OECD research (2014).

An increasing number of global higher education institutions are incorporating internationalisation into their long-term strategies as a result of the phenomenon's rapid internationalisation. As a result, a growing number of international students are eager to pursue their degrees outside of their own nations (Malik, 2016). In addition to improving the demographics of the ageing Western world, where the labour force is dwindling, international students have become a highly sought-after resource globally. This is because host countries have recognized the numerous direct and indirect benefits that international students bring to their communities (Hughes, 2019). These foreign graduates are acknowledged for possessing a variety of desirable traits when they find employment, such as proficiency in the language of the host nation, locally recognized credentials, and domestically relevant educational backgrounds and abilities (Pham et al., 2018).

As Stiglitz (2002) points out, conceptions of market failure are actually dependent on opinions about what constitutes success. It's possible that the new arrangements better fit companies' definitions of success. In a labour market, employers and graduates represent the supply and demand sides, respectively. In other words, companies will be able to order graduates who are "oven-ready" rather than having to search for and then train personnel under the new, state-adjusted market conditions (Stiglitz, 2002). Employers may benefit greatly from large cost savings as a result. Due to massification and the ensuing increase in participation, many firms are now hiring recent graduates for positions that were formerly held by school dropouts who needed extensive and costly basic training (Brown, Hesketh, and Williams 2003). Even in positions that have historically been filled by graduates, businesses may now anticipate paying less for training after hiring. By manipulating supply at no cost to themselves, this shifts training costs onto the person (through their higher education costs) and may also release the employer from providing compensation rewards that align with supply conditions (Brown and Hesketh with Williams 2004).

According to Srathdee (2005), with the ability to define employability and to replace the function of labour markets, the state has: lowered the agency of most universities over the employment skills they develop, their curricula, and the type of education and graduates these provide; sparked the recasting of the student as a customer and of education as an investment that will bring generous and long-term financial returns; and created an expectation among employers that graduates should be ready for "the job" rather than prepared for employment. Conversely, universities now have significantly less strategic freedom to make decisions based on their professional judgement. Universities, according to Srathdee (2005), will try to enhance their reputations based on elements including the employability of students.

Host countries can improve the quality of higher education by enlisting the help of foreign students. This is because international students often contribute to scientific and technological research by asking questions about the status quo and bringing fresh perspectives to subjects. Hughes (2019). It has been demonstrated that having international students on campus increases graduates' employability since their exposure to multicultural and multilingual settings gets them ready for the global labour market, which frequently results in longer-term commercial partnerships and financial gains. (Kralikova, 2013).

The cultural diversity that foreign students foster can also introduce a fresh set of viewpoints, experiences, and skill sets to the host nation's workforce. It has been demonstrated that a diverse workplace fosters innovation and creativity, two qualities that are essential to the knowledge economy (Ritzen & Marconi, 2011). It's important to remember the social capital that foreign students contribute to their host nations. Companies can expand cross-border idea exchange to create opportunities for international trade through international contacts (Bonin et al., 2008).

Since they are more likely to integrate into the host country than other highly skilled migrants because they are already familiar with the local education and administrative systems, as well as the culture, international students can be thought of as the best resource for high-skilled migration to the host country (Kralikova, 2013). Because of their youth, they also create relationships with their peers more effectively and have a higher likelihood of starting families in the host nation (Kralikova, 2013). Due to their greater mobility than the local work population, international students also facilitate a more effective distribution of human resources in the labour market (Kahanec & Kralikova 2011).

2.2 International students in Denmark

Governments across an increasing number of OECD countries have created immigration policies aimed at choosing and keeping talented labour. They have increased the number of strategies for temporary entrance, focusing on sponsored workers and international students (OECD, 2010). By integrating supply and demand-driven initiatives, they have made the move from temporary to extended or permanent residence status less challenging. With the help of flexible entry requirements, they have created regional settlement options aimed at selecting talented migrants (ibid.). Furthermore, they have consistently employed more creative worldwide promotion techniques to let people know their initiatives (Hawthorne, 2010).

By 2018, Denmark had 7,113 foreign immigrants of working age between 20 and 64 years old, and 56,000 long-term, permanent residents. From 2000 to 2013, the number of foreign students attending Danish institutions increased from 3,503 to 13,647, or 8.7% of all students enrolled in 2013 (Tange & Jaeger, 2021). 15,000 foreign students were enrolled in Danish universities overall in 2014, making up 12.5% of the total student body (Wilken & Dahlberg, 2017). Furthermore, the number of international students was close to 8,699 in 2018 and 8,420 in 2019, respectively. There were roughly 15,071 Danish students studying overseas in 2018 and 14,034 in 2019 (Denmark Statistics, 2021). The aforementioned statistics show that a respectable proportion of Danish students are studying abroad for a degree or credit, and that a sizable number of foreign students are coming to Denmark. It has been proven that by paying income taxes, overseas students have in some manner aided in the socioeconomic development of the host nation (*ibid.*). They are also a source of labour for certain important sectors and improve diversity in the host society and educational environment. For example, tax income from 6,000 overseas students who graduated between 1996 and 2008 brought Denmark a net benefit of DKK 156.5 million (Tschötschel, 2015; Abdulai et al., 2021).

Additionally, participating in a degree or credit mobility program overseas exposes Danish and foreign students to intercultural abilities, which will be extremely useful when they return home because of the global experiences and knowledge they have obtained (Mosneaga & Winther, 2013; Abdulai et al., 2021). A new Code of Conduct for educators that outlines the rules for providing university programs to international students was presented by the Danish government in September 2015. The code, which was created in collaboration with members of the Danish higher education community, intends to increase inbound mobility in the context of an increasingly cutthroat global higher education market. "Danish higher education institutions wish to strengthen and improve international cooperation and promote Denmark as an attractive high-quality place of education for international students," according to the statement (ICEF, 2015). It also mandates that Danish institutions give prospective students with appropriate information about their programs, including details about their quality, placement within the Danish educational system, services provided, potential tuition fees, and living expenses. (ICEF, 2015). Institutions must also disclose any additional admission requirements, language requirements, and the language of instruction.

The code of conduct is being implemented at the same time that Danish schools are pushing for more recruitment efforts. International students contribute significantly to Denmark's economy. Even after removing educational expenditures from the overall amount spent by students, a recent study by the Danish think-tank DEA reveals that, in the 12 years preceding 2008, international students contributed about US\$24 million (ICEF, 2015). The same analysis discovered that the economic benefit—which would include the creation of a sizable number of jobs—would surpass the expense of teaching those foreign students if Danish firms were to recruit a sufficient number of them after they graduated from Danish universities (*ibid.*). Foreign students from outside the European Union and European Economic Area must pay fees to Denmark. These were first offered in 2006 and cost between €6,000 and €16,000 annually for students pursuing a full degree. The number of foreign students studying in Denmark has doubled in the previous several years, after originally declining (ICEF, 2015).

2.3 Student Immigration

Recently, public discussion about immigration in general has increased in Denmark and other European countries. It's a contentious matter, with proponents and opponents developing different stories. Demographics also play a role in immigration, as Europe's declining birth rate and increased life expectancy as a result of medical advancements have led to an ageing population (European commission, 2007). Welfare state pension systems are under increasing pressure as a result of a decline in the number of persons entering the labour force each year and an increase in the number of people retiring (ibid.). However, in order to maintain competitiveness going forward, there is an increasing need for skilled personnel across a range of industries as a result of the period of globalisation, free trade, and internationalisation (ibid.). While the advent of new technology has brought about job growth in certain sectors, such as paper and pulp in Denmark, it has also led to job losses and factory closures in other sectors. According to Refslund et al (2014), in Denmark the number of persons leaving the labour force in 2004–2005 exceeded the number of people joining it. Since then, it has been believed that immigration is a part of the answer and that more immigrants are needed to meet the growing need for skilled labour (Refslund et al, 2014).

The Danish government has a strategy of giving towns more authority over the integration of newcomers. The municipalities of Aarhus and Copenhagen have endeavoured to "mainstream integration," a term that denotes an endeavour to engage immigrants through specific social programs and policies (Jørgensen, 2014). Immigrants are often divided into two groups: those who are skilled immigrants and those who are refugees or migrants seeking humanitarian protection. Immigrants' lack of integration can cause a number of issues, including strain on the welfare systems of the host nation (Jørgensen, 2014). The costs of immigrants' health care and education also need to be considered. Furthermore, the surge of migrants entering European borders in recent times has sparked a heated discussion on matters pertaining to integration and migration. As a result, immigration can be considered a global phenomena, even though a large portion of it is driven by people looking for better business or employment prospects. But there has also been an increase in the number of people seeking security and escaping conflict and persecution (European Investment Bank, 2016).

2.4 International Student's contributions to the Danish economy

From 2007 to 2020, foreign graduates made total economic contributions to Denmark of around DKK 26.7 billion. Focusing only on the contribution made by graduates in technical and scientific disciplines, over the same 13-year period, the amount exceeds DKK 11.7 billion. "Danish society benefits a billion-fold from having international students. Denmark should be appreciative that they visit and that a sizable and increasing percentage decide to remain and work in Denmark. In addition to strengthening the educational environment, experts feel that they are critically needed in the workforce. By 2030, there won't be enough graduates in the sectors of engineering, technology, and information technology alone (OECD, 2014).

Therefore, it is recommended that colleges accommodate more international students in order to prevent a labour shortage. In the increasingly global competition for talent, international students are viewed as potential skilled workers (Mosneagu & Winther, 2013). But not much is known about the relationships between the choices made by international students to study abroad and their thoughts on staying in the host nation for an extended period of time or pursuing a job there after graduation (Mosneagu & Winther, 2013).

The desire to excel in one's future career and employment prospects are correlated with the capacity and reputation of education in specific countries which attracts many people to pursue further education abroad (Tran 2016; Tran and Nguyen 2016). However, immigration laws play an important role because their strategy can affect international students' future career paths and may help to lead to that level of excellence that the international graduates desire to achieve (Tan and Hugo 2017). Governments attempting to access international students as a pool of highly skilled migrants are partially to blame for this (Riaño, Van Mol, and Raghuram 2018; Suter and Jandl 2008; Tremblay 2005).

Universities are placing more emphasis on offering co-curricular programmes to improve students' employability and provide them a competitive edge after they graduate (Berger & Wild 2017; Green et al. 2019). Student clubs and societies, contests and hackathons, leadership and award programmes, community engagement and outreach initiatives, and volunteering hubs are a few examples. Paid work and a variety of extracurricular activities are generally regarded as ways to improve our four indicators of student employability, in addition to work integrated learning and co-curricular activities. Firstly, according to Clark et al. (2015) and Muldoon (2009), extra-curricular activities improve students' self-assurance, self-awareness, and capacity in a variety of professional abilities. While Coates (2015) noted that paid work has advantages for both discipline and professional skills-based learning, the researchers also discovered that paid employment is especially helpful for improving interpersonal and communication skills. It is believed that employment, both paid and voluntary, helps students form networks (Coates 2015; Muldoon 2009).

2.5 International Students and the Barriers in the Employability Process

The term employability means a set of skills, achievements, personal attributes, and understanding which are the requirements for graduates to get employed in an organization, and with such a set of requirements success can be acquired in an individual interested field of occupation which also benefits the economy, labour market, community, and the graduates too (Nguyen & Hartz, 2020). Employability is one of the major sources with which international students can be retained in a foreign country. International students who consider a foreign country to pursue their studies, not only want to stay in the host country for job purposes but also for the time that they have invested during their studies, they have acquired knowledge about that country's society, and culture and have developed social ties too. Due to all these reasons, international students wish to integrate fully into the host country (Nguyen & Hartz, 2020).

Similar studies that are relevant to this paper mentioned that there is a link between the educational credentials that are pursued in the host country by international students and the employers of that same country. One of the reasons for such a link is that the employer recognizes the study practice but if the international student had foreign education credentials that would be an issue for some of the employers as they have less knowledge about the study practice that takes place in other countries (Dauncey-Elwood, 2019). Employers feel comfortable when they are familiar with the education credentials of the international students who are applying for the job position. This is one of the barriers that international students experience during their integration process in the local job market. According to research, internationals will get jobs easily in their home country rather than in the host country (Cai, 2012). Besides education credentials from the home countries of the international students, there are other barriers that they experience while integrating with the local job market of that host country. The barriers that are presented below are some of the common challenges that are experienced by international students globally (ibid.).

2.5.1 Not knowing the local Language.

Each country has its local language and they expect international students to know the language at a certain level if they plan to work in the host country (Villa et al. 2016). Similarly in Denmark, Danish is the native language and in office both Danish and English are required and are an important factor for getting a job and for international students to integrate into the Danish job market (Christensen, 2019). However, it becomes a barrier when Danish becomes a mandatory job requirement which is difficult for international students to acquire.

Some of the employers have mentioned that, sometimes the reason for not hiring internationals is because they do not know the language. The same situation is seen in Denmark, in a research paper by Andreea M. Stan (2020) mentioned that there are fewer companies in Denmark willing to hire internationals who do not know the language. When the study was conducted, it was observed that in the majority of Danish companies, the native language is a requirement. Many employers in Denmark are offering suggestions or courses to international students when they are hired in the company to help them to learn the language because they believe that the internationals should have a basic communicative knowledge which improves with time (Stan, 2021). Also, if an international student knows the Danish language, he/she will be valued in the labour market. So, not knowing the language becomes a barrier for international students in acquiring a job. As it has been established here language is an important requirement for getting a job in Denmark but sometimes this reason is the only reason why an international is not hired even if the individual has all the needed skills in such a scenario the action is seen as discriminating and prejudice behaviour (Rask, 2021)

To deal with the language barrier not only the international students but also the educational institutions and the employers who are willing to hire international students can come forward to help them out from such a scenario (Rask, 2021). Danish companies can adopt the hybrid model of language for communication where the employees are allowed to use both Danish and English, also the usage of the language depends on the preference of a situation (Stan,

2021). The positive side of hiring international students who do not know the local language should be evaluated. If a company hires international students then the workforce becomes diverse and if both English and Danish are allowed to be used in the workplace, the labour force becomes more diverse and valuable, and more skilled people can take part in the company's decision and planning to make process, making the Danish work life more rich and diverse (Stan, 2021). When it is said that the requirement of the language should be reduced that does not mean that the international employee will not learn the language rather the company should offer them language courses where they can practise the language, employers do not need to change the whole language system in an organization but they can be a bit flexible if they are willing to hire international students and for those employers who are not interested in hiring should understand what opportunities they are missing out (Stan, 2021).

According to similar research, it has been found that half of the international students were more at ease with a basic rather than fluent language requirement for a job posting (Rask, 2021). When applying for available jobs, 81% of candidates also praised having the option to work in English. Researchers urged employers to reduce language requirements to draw in more foreign candidates and broaden the applicant pool (Tomperi et al. & Rask, 2021).

The significance of providing employer-sponsored language instruction during working hours is that this would increase inclusivity and promote work-life balance (Rask, 2021). Additionally, Tomperi et al. (2021) stated that the language classes higher schools gave would correspond with the student's overseas study program. Danish, for example, is used for business students, engineers, nurses, etc. The emphasis should instead be placed more on practical speaking and grammar, which are crucial skills for students to have when they enter the labour market after graduation (Tomperi et al., 2021).

2.5.2 Lack of knowledge about the Danish culture

Employers who hire people with similar cultural origins prefer to avoid hiring individuals from different cultural origins. It is challenging for international students to find employment because of these past views. Studies show that managers place a high value on recruiting workers who can adapt to different cultures. Additionally, the study shows that supervisors respect intercultural communication abilities as well as flexibility, sensitivity, and tolerance for cultural diversity (Schafel et al., 2007). As a result, it has been suggested that cultural competence, which is the capacity to work well in cross-cultural environments, is a crucial employability factor for overseas students. Cultural competence includes understanding the history, customs, culture, and beliefs of the host nation as well as having the capacity to interact with its citizens effectively. Furthermore, the secret to living enthusiastically and harmoniously in a multicultural culture is to grasp the legal, social, and economic systems of the host country (Nguyen & Hartz, 2020).

There has long been a claim that pursuing higher education abroad leads to cultural shifts. Therefore, many international students who study abroad experience culture shock while they adjust to their new country (Pyvis & Chapman, 2005). There has been disagreement that

studying overseas just serves to broaden one's horizons, rather than embracing the culture of the host country and neglecting one's cultural background (Ibrahim, 2017). For example, in Denmark, deeply rooted religious and cultural restrictions regarding Danish social behaviours, lifestyles, sexual morals, social regulations, and gender relations may present challenges for international students studying there in addition to the language barrier (Stan, 2021). It should be remembered that the likelihood of an international student experiencing culture shock increases with the degree to which their cultural background differs from that of the host nation (Ibrahim, 2017).

Most of the time, culture shock is seen as the first stage of learning about a foreign culture. The process of interacting with a foreign culture can also lead to beneficial and enlightening results, which support international students' assimilation and cultural competency. But it can also cause culture shock, and overseas students might struggle with deeply ingrained cultural understandings and beliefs (Gao, 2017). This could jeopardise their ability to integrate and become culturally competent, ultimately hindering their employability. Culture shock is a significant obstacle to international students' employability worldwide since it may also create a notion that encourages them to smoothly integrate into their new culture during times of crisis and adjustment (Gao, 2017).

Universities are vital in facilitating integration since, from the standpoint of international students, the academic environment is vital (Juusola et al., 2021). Villa et al. (2016) emphasise the significance of integrating international students into the host country's culture early on during their studies to address the cultural barriers affecting the employability of these highly skilled migrants. Research indicates that even a satisfactory level of knowledge about the host country's culture, society, and working life demonstrates better employability (Juusola et al., 2021). Before entering the workforce, students must become familiar with the culture of the place they will be studying to have an awareness of crucial customs. Higher education institutions should, therefore, assist this integration process by providing opportunities such as intercultural projects and group projects in which students from the host country and overseas students collaborate on projects and exchange cultural knowledge (Villa et al., 2016).

A work-life certificate is a tool that certain EU nations have implemented to measure and improve cultural competency for foreign students. The international student receives a work-life certificate that they can use to demonstrate their competencies and skills required for their work after demonstrating through a separate test that they have a satisfactory level of knowledge about that nation's culture, society, and working life (Stan, 2021). In many EU nations, like Finland, there are also numerous ongoing national initiatives aimed at enhancing the status of foreign students and other highly skilled migrants. Higher education staff and counsellors were given the chance to promote their abilities in assisting international degree candidates as they transitioned into the workforce, and employers were urged to seize the opportunities presented by international students, such as arranging networking events and providing assistance with language, culture, and work permit issues (Villa et al., 2016). Similarly, such events were also organised in Denmark for the international students in order

to provide them knowledge about Denmark's culture, work life balance and society (Stan, 2021).

2.5.3 Lack of relevant work experience

International students' work experience has been one of the main priorities of higher education institutions in the host countries. It's been demonstrated that not having job experience makes international students less eligible for jobs (Ollanketo, 2018). The best course of action for international students would be to look for an internship that would allow them to create vital networks for the future, acquire work experience, and learn about the work culture and procedures of the host nation (ibid.). Sadly, this is frequently not the case, and students typically apply to firms that they are already familiar with and located in their home country (Ollanketo, 2018).

This is largely because of the increased competition in the job market and the disruption of the conventional routes from graduation to work caused by the epidemic (Ball, 2021). International students encounter a relatively narrow labour market, especially in Denmark, which can intensify rivalry for internships (ibid.). Because native students have valuable work experience that international students might not have, they are likely to outperform their classmates from other countries in terms of employability (Stan, 2021). Furthermore, the employer's desire to hire an overseas student is influenced by both the job experience and the place from which the prior work experience was gained. As such, an international student's employment experience from home may not be worth as much in a foreign country (Giang, 2014).

According to Nykänen and Tynjälä (2012), universities were unable to provide their students with the abilities that employers were looking for. Employers have expressed concern about graduates' lack of practical knowledge and communication skills, which they were able to learn through their jobs rather than their education (ibid.). The study also reveals that although students recognize the benefits of work experience for both themselves and employers, they struggle to obtain it, which poses a serious obstacle to foreign students' employability (Nykänen and Tynjälä, 2012).

Villa et al. (2016) stress the need for higher education institutions to recognize and include the requirements and needs of business life in the curriculum so that students can gain competencies that match the needs of employers. This will help ensure that international students will graduate with enough experience to overcome the barriers to employment. Universities ought to allocate more resources towards hosting guest lectures featuring business leaders or collaborating on projects with nearby organizations and universities (Villa et al., 2016). This will enhance their comprehension of the business practices and necessary skill set of the foreign country. Additionally, more projects or assignment possibilities from local businesses might be made available to international students, allowing them to have more familiarity with the customs and business practices of the area before they graduate (ibid.).

Providing summer employment and internships to international students is a crucial step in addressing the issue of their lack of relevant experience (ibid.). However, employing foreign students may seem difficult to some businesses, and these viewpoints need to shift. According to Villa et al. (2016), corporations should adopt the notion of group recruiting, whereby colleges would provide multiple trainees to enterprises instead of just one.

2.5.4 Lack of networking and job search skills

It has been demonstrated that students who can network and build a big network of connections can connect with a greater number of companies, leading to a higher number of high-quality job possibilities (ibid.). For international students without local connections, employability is a major difficulty, including solely credentials and abilities acquired in their home country (Sofat, 2021).

The abilities required to successfully seek employment in a competitive labour market are known as job-searching skills (bin Hashim, 1992). The preparation of a competitive resume that meets the style and requirements of the host country, cultural and linguistic challenges during the employment interview, and unfamiliarity with the job search process are the most common barriers that international students face when it comes to job-seeking skills (Spencer-Rodgers & Cortijo, 1998). It's also critical to recognize that different countries may have different standards for job seekers, which makes the process more difficult, particularly for international students who might not be familiar with the norms and system of their new country (ibid.).

A "job search strategy" is a tactic that a job seeker uses to obtain employment. The job-seeking abilities that affect foreign students' employability can also involve a successful job-seeking approach. According to Alho (2020), international students must have a plan for their job search to compete in the local labour market. A crucial component of any job search plan is networking, and the many social networks that international students may have formed in their new country can play a significant role in supplying useful contacts and knowledge (ibid.).

According to bin Hashim (1992), overseas students need to understand the significance of developing a strategy for their job search because of the competitive nature of the labour market today, where the most qualified applicants will likely be given preference for available opportunities. According to a study by Brown & Konrad (2001), having a successful job search strategy is crucial in difficult financial times. This is relevant given the present global pandemic-related economic slowdown. Therefore, it can be said that major obstacles to overseas students finding work can arise from a lack of networking opportunities, job-seeking abilities, and an efficient job search approach.

According to Blasko (2002), the research has suggested that practical work experiences play an important role for international graduates to get a job and integrate their knowledge, abilities, and attitudes. Relevant work experience increases the chance for international students to get a job that matches with their educational background, also such corporate jobs come with a

higher pay and increased job satisfaction. The relationship between practical work experience and the development of other attributes that are relevant to the work experience factor has been discussed by other authors (Allen & van der Velden, 2011; Kapareliotis et al., 2019); such as "skills for job search," such as gathering knowledge about the style of interview and the proper way of preparing resume (Hillage & Pollard, 1998); learning about career management skills (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007); self-knowledge and self-efficacy (Billett & Ovens, 2007; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Van Dinther et al., 2011; Edwards, 2014); and learning about the work life balance of the foreign country (Beavis et al., 2005; Kapareliotis et al., 2019). However, the influence of practical work experiences may be different due to some factors, such as the task relevance to the field of study or the individual's capacity for learning and using these experiences (Allen & van der Velden, 2011; Harvey, 2005; Knight & Yorke, 2003).

Various student guidance programs offered by higher education institutions and employers in concert may be considered a useful instrument to remove obstacles to employment. Villa et al. (2016) report that successful trials involving employers and higher education institutions to provide international students with business life representatives' counsel and organised mentoring have produced positive outcomes. For international students to overcome job barriers, it is also crucial that they construct a career plan in collaboration with a career advisor during their studies and before entering the workforce (ibid.). It is advised that specific phases be omitted from the plan, such as instructions on how students maintain contact with the business world, network with companies while enrolled in classes, and create a strong résumé. Both the student and the university should keep a close eye on the plan's development (ibid.). To establish a community that supports foreign students' career development, Lee (2016) also recommends tighter collaboration between career advisors, employer relations, international student services, and alumni groups. Training university employees to meet overseas students' demands should also be carefully considered.

According to Villa et al. (2016), numerous higher education institutions in Scandinavia host networking events and workshops that give students the chance to interact with employer representatives from the Scandinavian working life and gain knowledge of the country's work culture and laws. Students have also discovered that these events are the most beneficial for networking and professional growth (Lee, 2016). According to Lee (2016), it is critical to customise workshops, programs, and networking opportunities to meet the demands of companies and students to maximise students' job search abilities in their new nation and help them connect with the appropriate individuals.

Organizing corporate events is a frequent guidance strategy used by Denmark's higher education institutions to introduce foreign students to Danish businesses and other groups. Additionally, several initiatives and campaigns have been launched in Denmark to connect companies and students (Stan, 2021). Numerous organizations work to increase the number of foreign students employed in Denmark by giving employers a place to post job openings, which students can apply for straight from the ad (Stan, 2021). Students must be motivated and diligent to network and acquire applicable job-seeking skills. According to Lee (2016), attending professional events and getting involved in campus life are the "best practices" for

overseas students looking to secure a job or internship since they help create a personal network that can be useful throughout the job search. Other excellent methods include exhibiting their best academic and professional achievements and using online job search resources (ibid.).

Denmark views international graduates as potential skilled labourers. Ana Mosneaga and Lars Winther (2013) conducted a study to examine the connection between the choice of international students to study overseas and their expectations for pursuing careers in Denmark following graduation. In order to address this topic, the study conducted 43 interviews with international students enrolled in postgraduate science and technology programmes at universities in the Copenhagen region as well as international graduates who completed their studies in Denmark and are currently looking for employment (ibid.). The interviews were conducted to analyse the perspective of these graduates on the study-to-work transition in Denmark. The study's findings demonstrate how various aspects of people's lives have an impact on the goals and career pathways of student migrants both before and after they begin working in the foreign country (Mosneaga & Winther, 2013). The study's conclusions unequivocally show that people's actions are greatly influenced by their skills of communication and social networks, which exist outside of any policy framework. However, these decisions are also impacted by "unforeseeable externalities of specific situations" (Mosneaga & Winther, 2013). In addition to these motivators, securing appropriate employment is thought to be a significant retention factor following graduation, with a focus on the idea that "social networking during study time is the key for offering knowledge to international students' about the country" (Mosneaga & Winther, 2013).

2.5.5 Experiencing discrimination and stereotypes.

Employers must be open to hiring overseas students, as must the educational establishments and the local community in the host countries. Numerous foreign students find it difficult to get employment because of acknowledged or unrecognised biases, attitudes, racism, and other forms of discriminatory conduct (Kinos & Kirjavainen, 2021). While many host countries view international students as the "ideal" immigrants and acknowledge their benefits, it has been demonstrated that they are not immune to prejudice, misinformation, and other forms of mistreatment that immigrants generally endure (Alho, 2020). International students have been observed to tolerate extremely low working circumstances because they are not in a position to bargain like local students (Soejatminah & Tran, 2019). It can be concluded, therefore, that unequal rules regarding permitted working hours force international students to take positions that are beyond their skill level, severely affecting their employability, and that a lack of awareness of their rights as workers may expose them to discrimination at work (ibid.).

According to research by Mosneaga & Winther (2013), there is a notable distinction in the way students from EU/EEA nations and those from non-EU/EEA nations are treated in the Nordic region. However, since their legal right to reside in the host country is dependent on finding employment within a specific period, residence permit regulations and a variety of judicial

restrictions for non-EU/EEA students place them in an unequal and stressful situation when it comes to finding employment in time after graduation (Alho, 2020).

Moreover, Mittelmeier and Cockayne (2020) assert that it has been demonstrated that sustained support and financing for organizations, campus activities, curricula, and instruction that foster intercultural engagement and interaction reduce prejudice on campus. Additionally, they recommend that colleges include foreign students on current equality and diversity committees and in faculty roles supporting anti-racism programs (-ibid.). The university staff must also receive training to recognize and address instances of discrimination that take place on campus and in the classroom. Universities can take full use of this countermeasure in their fight against discrimination by creating culturally sensitive procedures that include clear policies intended to address racism and discrimination when it has occurred (Mittelmeier & Cockayne, 2020).

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

The main theory chosen for this paper is activity theory and to support the main theory The Work Adjustment Theory will be used.

3.1 Activity theory

The origin of activity theory has been associated with the sociocultural tradition of Russian psychology and the involvement of psychologists such as in the 1920s Lev Vygotsky and in the 1970s Aleksei Leont'ev. In some theories activity is considered as a responses to a stimulus and mind is objectified in these theories whereas in activity theory, activity and consciousness are considered as same and activity leads to the development of mind which takes place through interaction with the world and through the construction process of artefacts (Leont'ev, 1978). The activity theory emphasises the human needs because of the needs, humans take decisions that satisfy their needs. Decisions in this scenario which interact with the objects of the world. There are objects which can be tangible and intangible and are responsible for directing and motivating activities. This is why to understand human activities it is important to understand the objects which influence human activities (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2009). Activity can be carried out by humans individually or collectively through collaborating with other humans. Human activity can be better understood and considered in a sociocultural context because the context consists of goals and motives for the activity and also the methods and tools of the activity (Leont'ev, 1978). Developed and influenced by Lev Vygotsky and Aleksei Leont'ev, activity theory suggests that activities encompass processes occurring at both the individual and social levels, whereby mediational tools connect these processes (Lim & Hang, 2003).

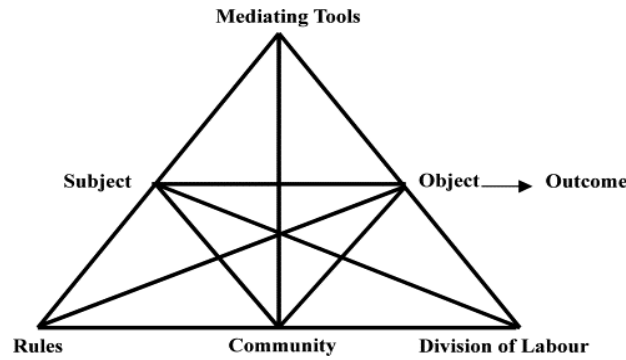


Fig. 1. The mediational structure of an activity system.

Human activities are designed in three hierarchical levels (Leont'ev, 1978), shown in a figure below. As shown in the figure, activity is at the highest level which is aligned towards a motive and trying to acquire a need. Here the motive is the object that a human needs to achieve (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2009). An activity can have more than one motive which can originate from different sectors of a life. Most often motives are unspoken or tacit and this is why it is hard to obtain if there is no activity. Activities took place through the help of actions which are consciously conducted as it had specific goals in mind. These actions are necessary to meet the requirement of the object (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2009). Sometimes, more than one action can collaborate to a same activity whereas sometimes a single action can come up with multiple activities. Each action has their own goals, and various activities give meaning to the various actions. Actions can take place in many ways, this includes unconscious processes which can take place because of specific social and physical conditions that are available at that moment. The three elements in the hierarchy activity, action and operation are not fixed which means changes can take place in the hierarchy constantly (Babapour et al., 2021).

Human activity can also be mediated because of psychological and physical tools which give a share to the interaction that takes place by a human being in a world, a place which human plans to use for achieving goals (Babapour et al., 2021). Furthermore, human activity is mediated by one or more physical and psychological tools that shape the way a human being interacts with the world and through which they achieve their goals (ibid.). An user will need a well-functioning tool that will mediate the user to focus on the object. However, if a tool does not work well it may cause breakdowns and user's will move its focus away from the tool.

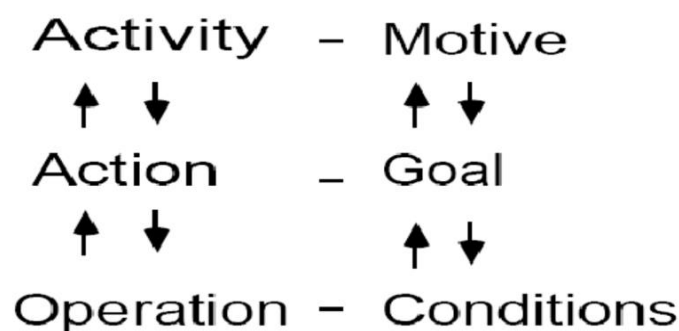


Figure 1: Hierarchical levels of an activity (Leont'ev, 1981)

Several researches are being conducted to understand if activity theory can be used in every field of study and according to Hashim and Jones (2007), activity theory is a very valued framework which can be used in any field of study. In their paper they have mentioned how activity theory have provided them a framework in the field of education, information systems and humanities and this is what this paper plans to use to understand the scenario of the international students and their integration process in the Danish job market and the paper will try to explain the human behaviour using the activity theory framework.

Applying activity theory as the theoretical framework provides valuable insights into the integration of international students into the Danish labour market.

- Firstly, activity theory views the labour market as an intricate environment where the cognitive processes of international students are distributed, considering factors such as cultural adaptation, language proficiency, and job search strategies as mediating tools in this context.
- Secondly, activity theory, in this context, acknowledges the significance of other individuals who must be concurrently considered with the international student as integral components of the labour market integration process. This includes interactions with Danish employers, colleagues, industry networks, and governmental agencies involved in the employment process.
- Thirdly, the theory recognizes that labour market integration activities are institutionally driven by factors more than individual, goal-directed efforts. This perspective allows for considering the broader institutional frameworks, policies, and cultural aspects that influence the integration of international students into the Danish labour market. This means examining the interplay between international students, employers, and the broader societal and cultural context within the labour market.
- Lastly, activity theory considers the historical and developmental phases of the labour market integration process for international students. It recognizes that the process evolves over time, influenced by changing economic conditions, policies, and societal attitudes.

However, from the above, it can be seen that activity theory lacks consideration of factors like individual traits that may influence relationships (Engeström, 1993; Lim & Hang, 2003). To address this, the below Work Adjustment Theory is used.

3.2 The work adjustment theory

This theory reflects and supports the concept of choice and development. When it comes to career development, work adjustment theory is an important framework for this context (Dawis, 2002, 2005; Dawis & Lofquist, 1964). The theory also supports choice and development that happens through a process of adjustment and accommodation of an individual. The adjustment in this theory is divided into four styles (Davis, 2005):

1. Level of tolerance that a person has for something happening in an environment and how the impact of the situation happening in an environment can make the person demotivated or dissatisfied.
2. The person being active in a way which makes him/her decide how to act on those environments to reduce the grip of the environment and occurrences of happening it again.
3. Reactiveness reflects how a person reacts to self-adjustment and due to such behaviour changes that are seen in the environment.
4. The ability to persevere which helps to deal with the environment through resolving, adjusting and accommodating.

The theory developed a link between satisfaction with needs and satisfactoriness with abilities. To observe the stated link, several internal studies have been conducted and mixed results were found while conducting the research paper (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008).

The work adjustment theory comprises two key elements: the individual worker's satisfaction with the work and 'satisfactoriness', an evaluation by the employer of the worker's proficiency in fulfilling assigned tasks (Sharf, 2013). Furthermore, the work adjustment theory classifies four work adjustment styles by examining individuals' responses to changes in their work environments (Sharf, 2013; Chen & Waglay, 2023).

- Inert Style: This involves ignoring change and maintaining or withdrawing from the old situation. It reflects the individual's tolerance for environmental changes and the impact on motivation or satisfaction.
- Active Style: This involves initiating change and adapting values or abilities to the new situation. It involves the individual taking proactive measures to reduce the grip of the environment and prevent similar occurrences.
- Reactive Style: This involves reacting to change and either resisting or complaining about the new situation. It reflects how an individual responds to self-adjustment and the behavioural changes observed in the environment.
- Flexible Style: This involves adjusting to change and accepting or accommodating the new situation. It is about the ability to persevere, dealing with the environment by resolving issues, adjusting, and accommodating as necessary.

Applying the work adjustment theory to the labour market integration of international students in Denmark offers important theoretical promise. The theory's adaptability is particularly relevant for this study population, as it considers the dynamic nature of international students and their work environments.

Applying work adjustment theory can support understanding the efforts of international students in their labour market integration. In situations where students may face uncertainty, the theory's practical nature and emphasis on self-assessment and understanding the job market offer practical and efficient strategies for finding employment. Crucial to this is the measurement of values and abilities. Given that international students might be less experienced in resume writing, unaware of current job market expectations, and workplace

culture, support for resume writing, socio-cultural orientation, and language support may become essential. Moreover, the theory helps to focus on personal strengths and characteristics. By identifying traits and strengths, international students can counteract integration challenges. In doing so, trait and factor identification within the work adjustment theory provides international students with the confidence to tackle the challenges of job searches and career development.

However, I found this theory more or less focused on students and their adjustments, which may contribute to simplifying the labour market integration process, narrowing down the complexities that the study population group often faces. Besides, the theory's focus on individual differences from person to person makes it difficult to understand the differences among different student groups.

In summary, the application of both activity theory and work adjustment theory offers a comprehensive understanding of the labour market integration of international students in Denmark. These two theories complement each other by providing distinct yet interconnected perspectives on the processes involved. The combination of activity theory and work adjustment theory offers a holistic understanding of the labour market integration of international students. Activity theory provides a systemic perspective, considering the broader context and collective dynamics, while work adjustment theory contributes practical strategies tailored to individual students, acknowledging their unique challenges and strengths. Together, these theories create a nuanced and comprehensive framework for studying the labour market integration of international students in Denmark.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

This section of the thesis paper will reflect upon the type of methodologies that have been used to collect data. Also, it will mention the tools and techniques that were used to achieve the purpose of the paper. The quality and validity of data will be investigated thoroughly to reflect the reliability of the collected data.

This chapter contains a methodological explanation to give the readers a clear idea about the methods and tools of this research paper. Methodology is a crucial part of research as it helps the researcher to create an alignment with the objectives and aim of the research by answering the what, why, and how of the research (Daniel & Sam, 2011). In this chapter, the readers will receive a detailed demonstration of the research philosophy, research approach, research choice, research strategy, time horizon, and lastly, the research techniques and procedures which elaborately narrate the data collection method and data analysis process (Saunders' et al., 2007) and finally the research ethics consecutively.

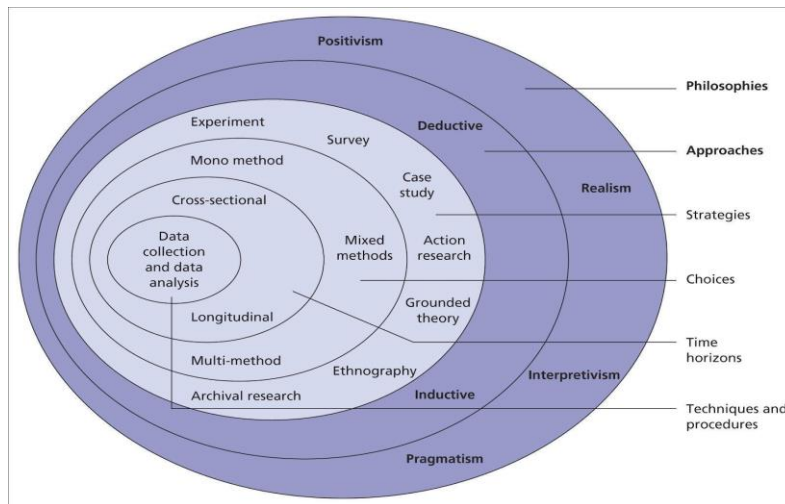


Figure 1: *Research Onion* (Saunders et al., 2007)

This section will try to follow Saunders Research Onion to develop a proper research method as the paper believes it will make the section look more systematic and organised. This methodology section will also clarify the reasons this paper chose to use the selected method for this research and reflect upon the medium through which the paper gathers the knowledge that the researcher was looking for (Easterby et al., 2018). For example, if a researcher selects to use a method that analyses the relationships, then one has to observe the social phenomenon that is taking place in the social world from an outside angle. If a researcher gets an opportunity to observe the relationships directly then one will consider the investigation. In this matter, a researcher will choose a methodology that helps to collect an individual's interpretation about a certain context, and which is based on that individual's real-life experience (Kuada, 2012).

The methodology consists of two approaches, they are: nomothetic and idiographic. The nomothetic approach is about analysing quantitative data such as surveys and objective approaches which are used to test the hypotheses that are developed by the researchers (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The idiographic approach is about the qualitative data that is collected directly from the individuals who are part of an organization and experience situations in their daily working lives (Emma. J., 2019).

This paper chooses to use an idiographic approach. The approach will help the paper get in touch with international students who are currently working in various corporate organizations, and the researcher gets to analyze their real-life experiences for this paper. The paper tries to collect information in an unbiased manner, especially in a manner that makes sure that correct information is collected.

4.1 Philosophy of Science

The philosophy of science is a philosophical discipline that reflects a study's assumptions, foundation and implementation of science which helps a researcher to develop a problem formulation, a strategy for the research, a method for data collection, coding and decoding of the findings (Moon et al., 2017). The philosophy that is chosen for the paper reflects critical

assumptions about the world and how it is viewed by people (Saunders et al., 2012). Understanding the assumptions is important because it then helps what information is necessary for the specific research subject. When a research philosophy is specified in the research study, it helps to avoid unnecessary data and focuses on the data that are relevant for analysis. There are four main traditional philosophical paradigms: Positivism, Interpretivism, Realism, and Pragmatism. All these traditional philosophies have given birth to several more philosophical paradigms (Saunders et al., 2012). All the new paradigms have roots that lead to the traditional ways of philosophising. To deliver the purpose of this paper effectively, constructionism has been chosen whose root is the interpretivism paradigm of philosophy (Honebein, 1996).

Ontology directs the researchers to recognize the certainty of the object's existence and nature they want to research (Smith, 2003). Besides, Epistemology deals with the techniques of acquiring knowledge, and the extent & authenticity of the gained knowledge (Moon et al., 2017). Epistemology is the theory of knowledge. It studies the nature, origin, and limitations of human-produced knowledge (Moon et al., 2017). Ontology discusses the nature of existence and epistemology reflects upon the nature of knowledge. So the paper believes that constructionism aligns with epistemology because constructionism is about the ways of "constructing" knowledge.

4.1.1 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is a theory of knowledge that is related to sociology. This philosophy believes that people construct knowledge through their interaction with each other and that human development is socially constructed (McKinley, J., 2015). To remodel the grounded theory, social construction is used as an instrument. Social constructionists argue that rather than being created, knowledge is constructed to gain an understanding of the social world (Collins, 1981). Social constructionism focuses on the nature of knowledge and the process through which knowledge is created. As social constructionism says that human knowledge is constructed socially, the paper believes that this philosophy of science is more aligned with the epistemological stance than the ontological stance. Social constructionism focuses on the concept that an individual participates in the learning process by interacting with each other. In this process, people generate knowledge by participating in the learning process within their minds according to their experiences (Young & Colin, 2004).

The social constructionist approach is related to the interpretivist approach to thinking (Andrews, 2012). Like interpretivists, social constructionists also believe in how meaning can be created, maintained, modified and expressed to the society (Schwandt, 2003). Though both of these approaches share a common philosophical root, social constructionism is different from interpretivism. Interpretivism reflects upon how people analyze data and constructionism is about how people construct knowledge socially (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

4.1.2 Reason of using social constructionism

The selected philosophy provides an explicit lens for the researcher to perceive the real-life experience of international students that take place in the integration process of getting a job in the Danish market, where the cultural contexts should be taken into consideration as the international students come from a culture which vastly different in compare to the Danish culture. As mentioned earlier the chosen philosophy of science talks about reality, which is constructed by people through their regular interactions, understandings & interpretations. It concentrates on the social, cultural & historical factors and how these factors shape the behaviour and perceptions of human beings. Using this philosophy as a lens for this study helped the researcher explore how the people of Denmark see internationals from different countries.

To understand how Denmark deals with internationals in different contexts with different perceptions and cultural relevance, this philosophy prioritises cultural intricacies. This philosophy is selected to avoid a shallow analytical perspective which will also provide a multifaceted angle. This philosophy will help the researcher to analyse the reaction that takes place due cultural narratives and identities. This philosophy facilitates the researcher to acknowledge international perceptions and interpretations of Denmark's job market, cultural aspects, and the country's integration strategies.

4.1.3 Limitations of using Social Constructionism

One of the significant drawbacks of using social constructivism is that it does not consider the consequences of social issues that exist in society. It is very challenging to evaluate the real impact or consequences of their constructions on the market. However, this limitation can be avoided as it is not relevant for the research area.

According to this philosophy, reality is subjective. Reality is evaluated and interpreted through social and individual perspectives which causes interpretation bias. In this case, the researcher might overlook objective aspects of the integration strategy by over emphasising their aspects as a result it creates a scope for lack of objective grounding which challenges the effects of an objective reality. It creates difficulties in the generalisation process as it focuses on individual and cultural interpretations and uniqueness. The findings might not be generalised as the philosophy creates a lens to observe from limited insights.

4.2 Research Approach

An inductive approach is chosen for this research process as it is a best fit for analysing qualitative data (Thomas, 2006). This type of research is more subjective and the outcomes of the research may often vary due to the paper's interpretation. Besides, as the sample size is usually small, the findings of the research can be less generalizable. An inductive approach requires an intensive reading of secondary data to generate concepts, themes, and models. That's why scholars widely use an inductive approach to analyze qualitative data. This approach starts with the selection of the area of research to construct a theory. An inductive

approach includes a summary that consists of a combination of a wide range of secondary data, a clear link between the outcomes of raw data and the aim of the research, a logical demonstration to make the links clear to the reader by explaining how the links are relevant to accomplish the research aim and finally a theory construction based on the process and experiences guided by the collected data (Jebreen 2012).

One of the most fundamental advantages of using this combination of research approaches for this study is that qualitative research is open-ended and flexible which perfectly suits the aim of this research. This study aims to probe the social, cultural as well as perceptual concepts that leverage internationals' emotions and perceptions toward Denmark's integration strategies for immigrants or non-EU internationals. The inductive approach considers these intricate aspects and assists the researcher in generating ideas from data by creating an alignment with the exploratory nature of the study.

4.3 Research Strategy

The Research strategy guides the researchers in the process of conducting research based on their research aim (Phair & Warren, 2021). The primary objective of the research strategy is to enable the researcher to answer the research question and achieve the research objectives.

There are several types of research such as experimental, case studies, surveys, action research, grounded theory, cross-sectional studies and so on (Saunders & Lewis, 2019). This study has selected a case study method to do the research. This method enriched this study by providing the opportunity to understand the phenomenon intensively in Denmark's context.

4.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The paper conducts interviews with international or Non-EUs who came from Bangladesh and are currently working in Denmark. Besides that, the paper aims to find out the challenges and opportunities that the students from Bangladesh experienced in getting to the Danish job market. Throughout this thesis, due to privacy reasons, participants were not comfortable sharing their names so the real names of the participants will not be mentioned rather they will be named as participants 1 or 2. Due to the nature of the research question, a qualitative approach is chosen; that is why semi-structured interviews are considered best fitted for the paper. The semi-structured interview combines structured and open questions; it is a mix of an interview and having a regular conversation where some of the questions are predetermined. Some questions occur in this form of interviews, and the questions are relevant to the research topic (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2008).

The advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that as a data collection method, this form of practice helps researchers to understand complex behaviour and motivations by observing the participant's opinions and experiences (Blumberg et al., 2008). Semi-structured interviews are flexible, which helps researchers to understand the answer based on the nature and the context in which it is produced (Blumberg et al., 2008). This form of the interview can create a sense of trust between the interviewee and the interviewer because a form of conversation

takes place in this method; as a result, biased answers can be avoided. There are some criticisms regarding this interview form: interviewers can influence their participants by asking leading questions.

The paper considered proper preparation for this type of interview, such as designing valid and about the interview topic. The responses that are received through these questions are in a descriptive form. Still, some open questions will allow participants to share their research topic opinions. The language used in the interview is easy to understand and neutral for the participants. It has been taken into consideration that it might become essential to explain a scenario to the participants so that they can interpret it easily. The paper tried to avoid double-meaning or misunderstanding questions to get valid answers from the interview questions.

4.4 Research Method

This part of the section will elaborate on the methodological choice for this research paper. Methodological choice means how many data types are used in a particular study. There are three types of research methods: mixed methods, mono-method and multi-method (Saunders et al., 2009). For this research paper, a mono-method has been selected.

4.4.1 Mono-method

This study selected a mono-method intending to do an in-depth exploration of cultural nuances. Qualitative data assists the research process by doing a deep exploration of the contextual factors that influence Denmark's integration strategies for non-EU internationals particularly from Bangladesh by focusing on those international perceptions and experiences. The entire study focused on intricate details of the contextual concepts and did an in-depth investigation into the complexity of the cultural dynamics which resulted in a more comprehensive understanding. Besides, it creates empathy and respect towards cultural identities as it allows the paper to dig deeper into a particular phenomenon.

4.5 Data Collection Method

4.5.1 Data Collection

This research aims to investigate the integration process of students from Bangladesh in the Danish job market. To understand how Denmark deals with different contexts without any sort of similarities it is vital to assemble the techniques and processes it follows to grab the attention of their internationals or immigrants. For international or immigrants, Denmark's values, norms, cultures, perceptions, environments, lifestyles, morals, ethics, language, and so on are different for them. It is equally interesting and challenging to understand how an organization successfully connects with the internationals, tries to understand their perspective, and continuously unfolds several strategies to make their integration process effective. This paper focused on collecting qualitative data through semi-structured interviews to disclose meaningful feedback from immigrants who are working in the Danish job market. Qualitative data is required for this research if the objective of the paper is to explore ideas, gain an in-

depth understanding of any concept, and achieve deeper insights into the chosen context (Wright, 2016).

4.6.1.1 Primary Data

For this research paper, the study focuses on the primary data which are collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews will be conducted on the participants who come from Bangladesh and are referred to as non-EU or international students. The chosen participants came to Denmark for their higher studies and later started their careers in various Danish organizations. The participants belong to different departments of different companies. The interview is designed in a way that focuses on some important factors which are as follows:

1. The background information of the participants and how they came to Denmark, what was their initial experience in job search, and their work experience in the current organization.
2. Details about barriers, challenges, and opportunities that they experienced in universities, workplaces, society, etc.
3. Strategies that the international students apply to improve their integration process into the Danish job market.
4. Challenges that the international students experience because of this integration process and the techniques they follow for dealing with these challenges.

It is believed that this technique of collecting data will help to understand the perception of the internationals about the integration process that exists in Denmark and the challenges and opportunities the internationals or non-EUs experienced in the integration process.

As mentioned earlier, the semi-structured interview is chosen for collecting data, the participants of the interviews are internationals or non-EUs and particularly came from Bangladesh. The reason for such location choice depends on the cultural aspect which is vastly different from Denmark, the difference in infrastructure between the countries, the difference in language, etc. The participants were contacted through social media platforms such as LinkedIn and some participants were known by the researcher. The selection of the participants was made based on where they come from, did they come as students, and whether they are currently working in an organization. The duration of the interviews varied from 60-90 minutes. Before the participant's knowledge the interviews were recorded and later on were transcribed using transcribing software for analysis purposes. A total of 10 interviews were taken, out of which 8 took place online through Zoom and Teams and 2 of them were face-to-face. For privacy reasons, the names of the participants will not be revealed but information like country of origin, study status, work status, etc will be provided.

The general information of the participants is presented below in a table. The table below shows information on the participant's home country, what study program they completed in Denmark, and where they are currently working, especially when they mention the position that they are working in. This background information was also used in analysis when some information seemed relevant to specific themes, themes that were made for analysis purposes.

Table 1: Background of study participants

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Home Country	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Bangladesh
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male
Higher Education Institutions in Denmark	Roskilde University	Roskilde University	DTU	DTU	Aalborg University	Copenhagen Business School	Southern Denmark University	Southern Denmark University	DTU	Southern University
Study Status	graduated	graduated	graduated	graduated	graduated	graduated	graduated	graduated	graduated	graduated
Employment status	full-time job	full-time job	part-time job	full-time job	internship	part-time job	student job	full-time job	full-time job	internship

4.6.2 Data Analysis:

For data analysis purposes, the study will consider an interpretive and qualitative approach. To get the optimal result from the collected data, they were structured and categorised into specific themes (Saunders et al., 2012). To analyse the collected data this paper will use thematic analysis. The Thematic Analysis is designed in a manner that "Identifies, analyses and finds a pattern from the collected data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The paper will follow the six-step process of thematic analysis to deconstruct the interview data according to the chosen themes for this paper.

1. Familiarising with the data

First, after recording the interview it is transcribed into texts, and then it is read and re-read to familiarise with the data. Second, through repeated reading, researchers try to find out what the interviewees communicated. Notes are taken when the pattern is found in the collected data.

2. Generate initial codes

After getting familiar with the data, coding is done by selecting a heading such as a word or a group of words representing the research paper's topic. Then data is found that attributes meaning under the chosen heading. Colour coding is used, for each theme, different colours

are used, and information that is collected is highlighted according to the colour that is similar to that specific coloured theme.

3. Search for themes

After coding is completed, the information is categorised and divided into themes and, if needed, sub-themes. For example, language proficiency is one of the themes and the colour chosen for it is yellow. A table is created where all the themes and sub-themes are recorded, also listing the relevant responses under themes and sub-themes.

4. Review the themes

The collected data which were associated with a theme was reread to see whether the data supports the theme. Also same is done with the themes, themes are reviewed again to understand that does it refer to the context of the data effectively. Since there were several interviews, the paper had to make sure that the chosen themes worked for all the interviews.

For example, initially, the paper chose a theme titled as “Barriers in language skill”, later on, some data were found which refers to challenges of not knowing the language, opportunities even after not knowing the language, and discrimination due to not knowing the language. So, the paper changed the primary theme to “language proficiency” and created some sub-themes under the primary theme such as opportunities of knowing the language and disadvantages of not knowing the language.

5. Define and name the themes

Continuous analysis of the data set is needed to find out the meaning behind each theme. After that, a more in-depth approach is required to understand how the study can use these themes in the paper. For example, to ensure that the primary theme language proficiency is relevant to the sub-themes that are created under the chosen theme.

6. Produce the report

This step is as crucial as generating codes or developing themes because if paraphrasing is not done correctly, it will negatively affect the analysing process. So, to make it less challenging, the paper will use data in writing, which will reflect the themes and explain how it complements the topic of the research question. A snapshot of the themes and sub-themes in a tabular form is provided below.

Theme: Language Proficiency	Theme: Workplace Integration	Theme: Job Market Dynamics and Networking	Theme: Stringent Immigration Policy
Sub-Themes: Navigating	Sub-themes: Factoring Cultural	Sub-themes: Understanding	Sub-themes: Navigating High

<p>Language Barriers to Entering Job Markets -</p> <p><i>Well, you know, it's a real challenge, the language thing. I applied for this finance assistant position, which seemed like a great fit for my skills. But boom! Right there in the requirements, 'you must speak Danish.'... I could bring a lot to the table, but the language becomes this barrier. It's like, how can I prove I'm good at the job if the language is holding me back?</i></p>	<p>Fitness in Recruitment -</p> <p><i>When I look at colleagues who secured jobs, sometimes I think of the subtle or explicit preference for local candidates. It feels like there's this assumption that being from here means you're more attuned to employment opportunities.</i></p>	<p>Danish Job Market Dynamics -</p> <p><i>For internationals like us, being engaged with potential employers helps expand our network, get job leads and referrals, and know the overall job scene better.</i></p>	<p>Salary Thresholds and Work-Permit Requirements -</p> <p><i>For us internationals, we have to work hard to get an entry-level job. We have to try hard to find a job that is relevant to our studies due to such hard work, most of the time internationals get stuck with low-qualification jobs like food delivery service, waitressing, etc.</i></p>
<p>Sub-Themes: Navigating Language Barriers in Workplaces -</p> <p><i>Sometimes in the workplace, I feel left out when my colleagues communicate with each other in Danish, and they are not even bothered to let me join in the conversation. From their attitudes, sometimes I feel they do not want me to be</i></p>	<p>Sub-themes: Upholding Religious Values -</p> <p><i>I wear a hijab as part of my religious practice. When I started looking for jobs in restaurants, I faced situations where employers seemed hesitant or had concerns about the hijab. Now as I am seeking a job in the professional sector, I feel I will not be welcome due to</i></p>	<p>Sub-themes: Creating Opportunities through Career and Events and Networking Platforms</p> <p><i>-...I went to this workshop at Aalborg University about developing your LinkedIn profile. It was eye-opening! After that, I finally understood what it's all about, and I started building my</i></p>	<p>Sub-themes: Fulfilling student work permit and internship visa requirements -</p> <p><i>The 80-hour work limit during studies is challenging. Employers sometimes hesitate to hire international students because they need more flexibility. It's a hindrance.</i></p>

<i>a part of that conversation. This is one of the reasons I am learning the language.</i>	<i>my Hijab.</i>	<i>profile and connecting with people. Those events are crucial, you know? But here's the thing, there were only a couple of them that year. I heard there would be more...I did not hear anything more.</i>	
Sub-themes: Fostering Integration through Language Learning - <i>The start-up job was a game-changer. No Danish required; they valued skills. Other companies later cared more about my experience and appreciated my efforts in learning language skills. It's been a journey.</i>	Sub-themes: Supporting Integration through Education and Voluntary Engagement <i>I wish there was some kind of course taught at universities that gives us an idea about Danish work and culture and universities taking steps to make more ways for networking with local people from whom internationals can learn more about culture and customs.</i>		

Table 2: Themes at the end of Step 4

4.7 Ethical Consideration:

Research ethics are important because such ethics refers to the guidelines that the researchers must follow to conduct responsible research (Resnik, 2020). Research ethics promotes good scientific practice by reflecting upon features like responsible, free and reliable research (NESH, 2021). In this study, I carefully considered some norms which are explained below:

The Truth Norm: The most basic norm of ethics is the truth norm (Merton, 1973). This research work was motivated to seek truth, integrity, honesty, and commitment to truth.

Methodological Norms: Methodological norms refer to transparency, accuracy, factuality, and accountability of the research (Tranøy, 1986) which this paper followed.

Institutional Norms: This paper considered institutional norms that indicate that the research is independent, open, collective, and critical also known as the ethos of science (Merton, 1973).

Dissemination of research ethics: It is also an important feature of research ethics which illustrates that research work must consider risk factors and should be non harmful to societal norms, nature, human beings, and the environment (UN, 1948). This paper considered all the factors sensitively.

Academic assessment: Researchers should be open to the interests and roles regarding academic assessment to facilitate learning, accountability, and critique (UNESCO,2017). That means while conducting research, the researchers must be open to different modes of traditional research thinking and consider arguments and limitations of their competence. This paper respected all the traditional contexts and mentioned the research limitations.

Values & motives: Researchers should respect different social values, norms, and motives while using and interpreting different theories and data collected from different sources. This paper considered this rule of ethics (NESH,2021).

Respect for cultural differences: In order to gather knowledge about a certain local context, researchers should give importance to aspects that are closely related with culture. Here, culture is used in a broad sense which includes different religious groups, subcultures, minorities, etc. (UN, 2007). This research considered and respected the difference of culture that the participants come from and also considered the sensitive factors & the personality of each interviewee. As some of my interviewees had socioeconomic differences, I highly respected their position & did not ask any sensitive questions. I prepared the questionnaire carefully to avoid any provoking questions.

The above discussion illustrates the rules of ethics that were followed to conduct this research. Norms of research are important for research as these promote crucial moral and social values. This research was conducted honestly and explained data results, procedures, and methods transparently to avoid any fabricated, false, or misinterpreted data. This research prioritises avoiding bias in data analysis, interpretation, and other aspects of research and reduced self-deception so that the research could focus on the objectivity of the research.

Chapter 5 Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents data and analysis. Themes and subthemes generated from the interview data are grouped under four major themes: the requirement of Danish language skills to enter Danish job markets, limited networking opportunities, inclusion biases, and stringent immigration requirements. The connection between the themes is also discussed at the end. Descriptions are explained using relevant theories and literature.

5.1: Language Proficiency

Almost all the participants have agreed to the struggles they have experienced due to the lack of knowledge of the Danish language. They have also shared possible opportunities around language learning. Based on the interview data, three sub-themes appeared: Navigating Language Barriers to Entering Job Markets, Navigating Language Barriers in Workplaces and Fostering Integration through Language Learning.

5.1.1 Navigating Language Barriers to Entering Job Markets

All ten participants mentioned that the lack of Danish language skills is a major barrier for international students to enter Danish job markets. They have experienced it to be a significant barrier affecting their employability. Participant 2 said—

Well, you know, it's a real challenge, the language thing. I applied for this finance assistant position, which seemed like a great fit for my skills. But boom! Right there in the requirements, 'you must speak Danish.'... I could bring a lot to the table, but the language becomes this barrier. How can I prove I'm good at the job if the language is holding.

Participant 4 also added that—

Learning the Danish Language is pretty time-consuming as it is considered as one of the hardest languages in the world. Expecting an immigrant who just came to the country to know the Language is not very fair. Students should be given opportunities for jobs even if they do not know the language.

Similarly, some participants shared that after learning the importance of knowing the Danish language, they took lessons and were willing to learn more. As mentioned by Rask (2021), expecting to have a requirement of language at a communicative level in employment expectations is understandable but at times this expectation can be used as an only cause for not hiring a candidate which can be expressed as discrimination and disadvantage. However, these participants experienced very few opportunities where they got to show their knowledge of the language as companies in Denmark often emphasize the importance of fluent language skills. There are even certain types of jobs such as sales personnel, marketing executives, and customer representatives that require applicants to know native Danish. As Participant 5 was saying:

If I didn't know any Danish at all they would not hire me, and that is understandable. But when the candidate learns the language and makes that effort to meet the job requirements and still is not given a chance then it is disappointing... I mean, I get it, customer interaction and all, but it feels like a locked door. I struggled with my application, trying to phrase things right, but it's hard when you're not fluent.

Participant 3 also mentioned:

There are several Danish companies whose Office Language is English but when they are hiring employees they are making Language a requirement. This also limits the job options for the us.

Moreover, participants who are currently working have shared that in many corporate places, English is the primary office language, everyone speaks fluent English, meetings are held in English, and communication between colleagues is in English as well. However, organizations expect everyone to have a basic knowledge of Danish to understand the cultural context of the country. As participant 3 said—

It is strange when recruiters expect an international student to know Danish, even if the company language is English. Sometimes the language requirement is mentioned as a plus but still, it seems they hire someone who knows Danish. It is a shame that they focus more on the language ...

Due to language limitations, participants often mentioned ending up in positions that may be perceived as less language-dependent, such as roles in dishwashing in restaurants, packaging in warehouses, and delivering foods where language proficiency is often not a primary requirement. Such jobs are often physically and mentally devastating and eventually affect their study performances and job aspirations. As participant 9 was saying:

".....Not knowing the language was a disadvantage and because of that, I had to do jobs like cleaning... These jobs took a heavy toll on both my physical and psychological health. It took me a long time to get over it and to work hard to get out of it....."

Another participant mentioned that—

I am a civil engineer. Back in my country I did jobs that were relevant to my Education but when I came to Denmark, initially I struggled finding a job relevant to my study and then I ended up doing odd jobs which was very frustrating.

For business and other social science students, the above situation is very common. Participants shared that knowing the language is necessary if you want a job in the marketing or HR field. Students' jobs for business background students with no requirements for language are limited and the number of applicants for those limited positions is usually large.

In summary, the focus on language proficiency becomes a significant factor in participants' experiences, impacting their ability to secure jobs aligned with their skills. From the above findings, two aspects of activity theory can be reflected upon, they are rules and community. The expectations of language proficiency are a rule that exists in the Danish labour market which international students have to take into consideration to secure a job in Denmark. As for the community, it represents the Danish job market which includes employers from different companies, members of the companies, government agencies etc.

5.1.2 Navigating Language Barriers in Workplaces

Participants reported the challenge of feeling left out in workplaces, particularly when colleagues engage in conversations conducted in Danish. This aspect of integration is multifaceted, reflecting the nuanced dynamics of workplace communication and the cultural fabric of Danish society.

Participants in the interviews shared poignant experiences of grappling with exclusionary practices rooted in language differences. Participant 3 conveyed a sentiment widely echoed:

Sometimes in the workplace, I feel left out when my colleagues communicate with each other in Danish, and they are not even bothered to let me join in the conversation. From their attitudes, sometimes I feel they do not want me to be a part of that conversation. This is one of the reasons I am learning the language.

Participant 10 mentioned that —

To become a part of the workplace you have to know the language and you need to show interest in learning the language because sometimes Danes appreciate that and it is very important to build a network in the workplace.

The above verbatim emphasises the challenges of engaging in workplace communication, particularly when conversations are conducted in Danish, with observing colleagues' conversations and responding to the exclusion by learning the language. The reported experiences of feeling left out and the sentiment expressed by Participant 3 illustrate the significance of others in the workplace integration process. Colleagues engaging in Danish conversations create a division of labour where tasks, powers, and responsibilities are negotiated among the participants. The exclusionary practices rooted in language differences reflect the institutional influence of workplace norms and communication conventions. This nuanced form of workplace dynamics calls attention to the importance of inclusivity and highlights the potential impact on team cohesion and overall job satisfaction.

5.1.3 Fostering Integration through Language Learning

Participants acknowledged the difficulty of learning Danish, considered it a “not-so-easy” process to learn the Danish language, and proposed strategies to address language-related challenges. Suggestions included hiring based on skills, allowing time for language learning after hiring, and integrating language courses into university programs.

Several participants shared positive experiences regarding job opportunities where language requirements were not strictly enforced, particularly in start-up companies operating in various locations in Denmark. Participants highlighted the emphasis on skills rather than language proficiency in such organizations, allowing international students to develop their careers and learn more about the Danish language and culture on the way. These opportunities were considered valuable for career growth. Participant 6 mentioned—

The start-up job was a game-changer. No Danish required; they valued skills. Other companies later cared more about my experience and appreciated my efforts in learning language skills. It's been a journey.

Another participant said—

Landing a full-time job is highly competitive and challenging as it requires lots of skilled and relevant work experience. To gain some job experience, startups in Denmark are good options. Many international students are considering this option and these startups welcome all kinds of students from all kinds of sectors.

In the above verbatim, the actions describe positive experiences where language requirements are not strictly enforced and operations within these actions (i.e., the transformative impact of a start-up job, the absence of Danish language requirements, and the recognition of efforts in learning language skills) illustrates how specific behaviours within language-neutral job opportunities contribute to the broader goal of career development for international students in Denmark. The aspect of the rule of Activity theory is relevant—the norm of not emphasising language proficiency is what the company follows and which eventually helps international students’ integration process in the Danish job market.

Furthermore, flexibility in language learning opportunities, especially for existing employees, was emphasised to increase integration and inclusiveness at workplaces. As participant 3 mentioned—

There should be a clear emphasis on flexibility in language requirements... I think this is important for the integration process into Danish culture.

Another participant shared that –

Companies should give some time to the non-EU in terms of learning language and other important factors specially for immigrants who come from the South

Asian continent because of the huge cultural differences in all aspects of a country's infrastructure and the adjusting period takes some time.

This verbatim also acknowledges that language proficiency alone should not be a strict barrier to employment, and a more flexible language policy can contribute to a more diverse and dynamic workforce. Participants have also shared that most of the time they feel left out because of not being able to communicate with their colleagues in Danish which affects their network-building process (this aspect is discussed in detail in theme 5.2).

To discuss further language learning within the job, participants highlighted the inadequacy of language courses in some job settings and the desire for sponsored language teaching during working hours. One participant proposed setting aside time for language training during working hours, which could contribute to “increased work-life balance” (Participant 5) and help keep focusing on learning the language. Considering Denmark's global image as a champion of ensuring work-life balance, the above proposal may integrate language learning into the daily lives of internationals in more sustainable and realistic ways.

Finally, the interviews revealed unanimous agreement among participants on the importance of higher education institutions offering comprehensive Danish courses. Participants suggested that language teaching should start at universities to facilitate early language acquisition. Participant 8 said—

We all agreed the other day at the career day seminar that universities should offer Danish courses. Starting at university ensures language learning is part of education; however, some may disagree as it's tough for some to juggle between studies, part-time work, and language learning.

Participant 7 also added—

When a university offers a guideline for students in terms of language learning and job networking it becomes less challenging for an international student. Students will be less confused and can be benefitted from the services that universities offer in the sector of integration to the local job market.

In sum, the above highlights a complex interplay of language learning and job opportunities as they navigate integration into the Danish job market. All these suggestions that are mentioned by the participants to deal with the challenges with language proficiency can become useful tools for future international students to improve their integration process. In activity theory, the division of labour suggests that tasks and responsibilities should be divided in the process of job integration. So, based on this aspect it can be suggested that the tasks and responsibilities should be divided into two parts: educational institutions and Danish organizations. For example, for language learning and preparing for a job, such tasks and responsibilities should

be designated to educational institutions, and offering students jobs or internships is a responsibility for Danish employers.

According to work adjustment theory, it helps international students by offering them a map on how to start a journey in a career and assists those individuals by providing choices for careers and concerns on adjustment (Leung, 2008). The overall sentiment reflects a collective need for more accessible language learning opportunities to enhance international students' integration into the Danish job market. According to past studies, if a company hires international students, then the workforce becomes diverse and if both English and Danish are allowed to be used in the workplace, the labour force becomes more diverse and valuable, and more skilled people can take part in the company's decision and planning to make process, making the Danish work life more rich and diverse (Stan, 2021; Rask, 2021).

5.2 Job Market Dynamics and Networking

Almost all participants emphasised the importance of understanding the nuances of Danish job markets. To discuss the challenges and opportunities of building networks and connections, several reasons were mentioned, which I grouped into three categories: language barriers (discussed in Section 5.1), cultural differences (discussed in Section 5.3), lack of familiarity with job market dynamics and limited exposure to networking opportunities. Since the first category on the language barriers and cultural differences has already been discussed in sections 5.1 and 5.3, this section focuses on the latter category: lack of familiarity with job market dynamics and limited exposure to career events and networking platforms.

5.2.1 Understanding Danish Job Market Dynamics

Several participants highlighted the importance of grasping the nuanced dynamics of the Danish job market. They mentioned that often meaningful but subtle issues like interpersonal relationships and soft skills may contribute to shaping professional interactions and opportunities. Some participants shared that they understand the importance of having a professional network or contacts and some have experienced the benefits of having a network in terms of getting a job. Lack of network and proper knowledge of job search skills are other struggles that students experience in the integration process. As Participant 3 said—

I think one of the struggles many of us face is understanding the job market here. It's not just about sending out resumes... Even the ways people network here, like coffee chats or meeting with prospective employers, are often not common for students from the global south.

Similarly, Participant 4 also added—

For international students, building a strong communication medium with the employer, gets a chance to build a strong job network, and a good network offers job leads and referrals, and gets a clear picture of the overall job scene better.

Another participant suggested that –

At times not knowing the language can be handled if an immigrant was successful in building a network. Networks not only help to secure a job, it also shares knowledge about the working culture that exists in the country, and is a medium to share the skills and work experience that an immigrant has achieved.

Furthermore, most participants highlighted the importance of understanding how ‘soft skills’ can be a crucial factor in the Danish job market. They argue they “were not very much aware of such things”, and emphasize internationals need to recognize and cultivate these soft skills to fit seamlessly into the Danish work culture. Employers often value individuals who not only possess technical expertise but also exhibit strong interpersonal skills, as teamwork and collaboration are highly valued in Danish workplaces. As participant 8 said *It's not just about technical skills; they value communication, teamwork, and adaptability.*

Moreover, participants mentioned they were unaware of the unwritten rules that would be important in securing opportunities in Denmark. For some, it “took a long time to believe” that the Danish job market operates beyond the confines of formal job listings as a significant number of job opportunities remain concealed within the realm of informal networks. A significant number of job opportunities “may not be publicly advertised”. Similarly, being referred by key players, and willingness to move to smaller cities are also highly valued. These unwritten rules impacted their job prospects.

The participants' experiences demonstrate how the job integration of international students in Denmark hinges on understanding the nuanced dynamics of the job market—emphasizing the grasping of cultural nuances and recognizing the importance of soft skills. Through the lens of Activity Theory, situations like “coffee chats” can be considered as “rules”, because the occurrence of such chats in between work is a norm in an office culture and international students should be aware of such situations as this could be an effective opportunity for developing network or communication purposes. Overall, grasping these intricacies significantly impacts international students' ability to navigate and succeed in the Danish job market.

5.2.2 Creating Opportunities through Career Events and Networking Platforms

Almost all participants shared how attending career events both outside and inside the university campuses helped them get introduced to the job markets and potential employers. There were specific examples of how they get a chance to interact directly with representatives from potential employers, guidance on preparing job applications and understanding the recruitment steps. However, while the importance of attending such career events was prominent in all interviews, most agreed that there were not enough such events to participate. Furthermore, while some participants had sought guidance from university career advisors, they felt the sessions were not extensive or intensive enough. As Participant 5 said—

...I went to this workshop at Aalborg University about developing your LinkedIn profile. It was eye-opening! After that, I finally understood what it was all about,

and I started building my profile and connecting with people. Those events are crucial, you know? But here's the thing, there were only a couple of them that year. I heard there would be more...I did not hear anything more.

They emphasized how dedicated career events could provide students with information and guidance on the job search process, resume preparation, and job application strategies in Denmark. Due to this reason, the job-seeking process becomes difficult for international students as they do not have proper knowledge about it (Spencer-Rodgers and Cortijo, 1998). This is particularly important as many expressed that being from Asian countries, they were initially unaware of the specific requirements for Danish resumes, cover letters, and the importance of local references. Participant 1 stated—

I was not receiving any responses from the places I was applying for jobs. Then, I realized my application did not even meet any criteria that the employers in Denmark usually want.

Most participants, therefore, argued for the need for professional advice on job search strategies, and participants expected universities to bridge this gap by collaborating with career advisors, alumni associations, and employers. This included proactively reaching out to students, offering support in crafting effective resumes, navigating Danish work culture, and building professional networks. They suggested that universities should offer more comprehensive career-related events, workshops, and networking opportunities. The desired courses should provide insights into Danish work culture, guidance on resume and cover letter writing, and strategies for effective networking. Participant 7 said—

It is a challenge to connect with people from the field that you have an interest in working in. Mostly, it seems that we know someone who works in a company from our field of interest, but we do not know the key person through helping directly get a job.

In summary, participants highlighted the need for universities to take a more proactive role in enhancing their job search skills, providing cultural insights, and facilitating effective networking opportunities. According to Villa et al. (2016), universities ought to allocate more resources to hosting guest lectures featuring business leaders or collaborating on projects with nearby organizations and universities. According to the activity theory, job-search processes are rules and the steps that are taken by international students to deal with the rules can be considered as tools. According to Lee (2016), attending professional events and getting involved in campus life are the "best practices" for overseas students looking to secure a job or internship since they help create a personal network that can be useful throughout the job search.

The participants' experiences highlight the importance of adaptability (flexibility) and proactiveness (activeness) in navigating the Danish job market. Their desire for more career events and comprehensive support from universities underscores the need for individuals to respond effectively (reactiveness) to the challenges of job searching in a foreign context. The perseverance (perseverance) displayed by participants in seeking professional advice reflects

their commitment to overcoming obstacles. This aligns with the theoretical framework of work adjustment, where these adaptive traits collectively contribute to successful integration into the workplace.

5.3 Workplace Integration

The workplace integration theme encompasses three subthemes: cultural factors, religious considerations, and educational and voluntary initiatives aimed at fostering integration. Examining the nuances within these themes provides valuable insights into the multifaceted journey of international students navigating the Danish job market.

5.3.1 Factoring Cultural Fitness in Recruitment

Several participants shared the perception that some employers might lean towards hiring locals due to cultural familiarity. This sentiment echoes through the narratives of Participant 2:

When I look at colleagues who secured jobs, sometimes I think of the subtle or explicit preference for local candidates. It feels like there's this assumption that being from here means you're more attuned to employment opportunities.

This participant's insight captures the subtle cues present in Danish job markets, hinting at a potential bias towards local candidates. The perceived advantage of cultural familiarity could create barriers for international students seeking equal opportunities in the job market.

Some participants were even more vocal about how Danish employers rely on cultural factors due to their perceived sense of possible cultural conflict. As Participant 9 said—

“Employers in Denmark don't hesitate to hire applicants not because of having proper skills, but rather because of cultural reasons. They are afraid of intercultural conflict and applicants' adaptability skills to Denmark's culture.”

Participants express a perceived preference among employers for local candidates, reflecting a potential cultural bias in the Danish job market. The sentiment that being from Denmark is associated with better attunement to employment opportunities highlights the cultural factors influencing hiring decisions. The above verbatim suggests that the community, comprising Danish employers and colleagues, plays a significant role in shaping the integration process. This cultural preference, as noted by participants, may lead employers to prioritize flexibility (adaptability) and activeness (cultural fit) over skills. The emphasis seems to be on the adaptability of applicants to Denmark's cultural norms and practices, suggesting that this factor could play a significant role in the hiring decisions made by employers in Denmark. This could pose challenges for international students seeking equal opportunities in the Danish job market, impacting their reactivity to potential biases.

5.3.2 Upholding Religious Values

Some participants mentioned the potential impacts of religious practices on job prospects. Wearing a hijab, a visible marker of one's religious identity emerges as a nuanced factor that may significantly influence job opportunities for international students. Participant 9 shared a personal account:

I wear a hijab as part of my religious practice. When I started looking for jobs in restaurants, I faced situations where employers seemed hesitant or had concerns about the hijab. I also had concerns about seeking a job in the professional sector, I felt I would not be welcome due to my Hijab.

Proving further on the religious aspect, one participant explained that for someone with religious beliefs that prohibit the consumption of alcohol, joining gatherings like “Friday bar” became a challenge. As the participant 4 was saying—

There is a common tradition ‘Friday Bar’ where colleagues meet for social gatherings on Friday evenings, and it helps with team building and networking. It has been hard for me to join such a gathering where they drink alcohol, which is prohibited in my religion.

These participants’ narratives reflect real-life experiences where the hijab and Friday bar influence their perceptions and integration into the Danish job markets. While the concerns over wearing a hijab may indicate a lack of flexibility in accommodating religious diversity within the workplace, participants’ experiences of facing hesitation regarding the hijab show a reactive approach, hindering her possibility of inclusion in the job market. Similarly, the participant who faced challenges in joining a “Friday Bar” due to religious beliefs highlights a potential clash between workplace traditions.

The participants' narratives illustrate the nuanced impact of religious practices on job prospects for international students in the Danish job market. The wearing of a hijab, as a visible marker of religious identity, becomes a significant factor influencing job opportunities, as indicated by Participant 9's experiences. The hijab is both a tool and a potential barrier in navigating the job market, affecting how employers perceive and respond to candidates. Additionally, the challenge faced by Participant 4 in joining social gatherings like the “Friday bar” reveals another layer of complexity. The cultural norm of socializing over drinks becomes a potential obstacle for individuals with religious beliefs prohibiting alcohol consumption, highlighting the need for international students to negotiate and adapt to these community norms. In essence, these experiences underscore the intricate interplay between the subjects, tools, rules, and community dynamics as international students seek successful integration into the Danish job market. The challenges touch upon the broader issue of diversity and inclusion in the Danish job market and underscore the importance of fostering a more inclusive work environment that respects and integrates individuals with various cultural and religious backgrounds.

5.3.3 Supporting Integration through Education and Voluntary Engagement

Almost all participants emphasized the importance of cultural integration for international students seeking employment in Denmark. Many of them expressed a strong willingness to learn about Denmark's culture, recognizing its positive impact on employability. A few advocated that educational institutions could play an active role in facilitating this integration through courses, events, and increased interaction opportunities with native students. As participant 1 said—

I wish there was some kind of course taught at universities that gives us an idea about Danish work and culture and universities taking steps to make more ways for networking with local people from whom internationals can learn more about culture and customs.

Furthermore, some participants highlighted how being engaged in voluntary activities emerged as a transformative experience for several participants. They shared compelling narratives of how their involvement in community service and volunteer initiatives facilitated a genuine introduction to the local way of life. As participant 7 said—

By jumping into community events, I wasn't just helping out—I got a first-hand feel for Danish life. It was like living the culture, not just reading about it.

Similarly, participant 2 was saying—

I spent time working with locals and other volunteers, and it immersed me in real Danish life. From local festivals to community projects, it was like my ticket to dive deep into Danish culture.

These narratives underscore the transformative impact of voluntary activities, as a dynamic avenue for cultural integration. Participants discovered that actively participating in the community opened doors to understanding, appreciating, and becoming an integral part of Danish culture. In these shared experiences, the importance of voluntary engagement as a cultural bridge became evident, offering international students a unique opportunity to build networks (section 5.2 describes more on networking) and understand the job markets in Denmark.

In summer, the participants' experiences involve learning through both formal (courses and events) and informal (voluntary activities) channels, highlighting the multifaceted nature of their efforts. Tools (e.g., educational involvement and sharing the transformative impact of voluntary engagement) and Operations within these tools (e.g the expressions of willingness, the sharing of personal experiences, and the immersive engagement in Danish culture) illustrate how participants' attitudes, expressions, and personal experiences contribute to the overall goal of cultural integration for international students seeking employment in Denmark.

5.4 Stringent Immigration Policy

The journey for international students seeking employment in Denmark is also significantly shaped by stringent immigration requirements. As participants shared their experiences, the below two sub-themes emerged, shedding light on the hurdles created by Danish immigration policies.

5.4.1 Navigating High Salary Thresholds and Work-Permit Requirements

Participants voiced concerns about the impact of strict immigration requirements, particularly the high salary thresholds set by SIRI. As participant 2 reflected:

For us internationals, we have to work hard to get an entry-level job. We have to try hard to find a job that is relevant to our studies due to such hard work, most of the time internationals get stuck with low-qualification jobs like food delivery service, waitressing, etc.

This sentiment reveals a systemic challenge where the stringent requirements, including high salary thresholds, may discourage employers from hiring non-EU individuals, especially for entry-level positions. The policy inadvertently contributes to limiting job opportunities for international students, creating hurdles in aligning their employment with their educational qualifications.

Adding to the challenges, participants uncovered additional layers of complexity embedded within job advertisements. Job advertisements often include disclaimers such as obtaining a work permit is the responsibility of the employers and participants who have a valid permit will be prioritized due the urgent needs. Participant 6 said—

Seeing that the responsibility for the work permit falls on us...It feels like you're already at a disadvantage if you don't have a permit. Employers might prefer someone with a valid permit to meet their urgent needs, leaving us in a tough spot.

The participants' concerns about strict immigration requirements (e.g, high salary thresholds) resonate with the challenges posed by the rules governing the Danish job market. The stringent requirements create a systemic challenge where international students may find it challenging to secure entry-level jobs relevant to their studies. The division of labor is evident as they often end up with low-qualification jobs due to these hurdles. This challenge is not merely an individual-level issue; rather, it points to a larger system that inadvertently limits job opportunities for international students which hinders their alignment with educational qualifications.

The data also reveals how job advertisements become tools that influence the division of labor. Disclaimers in job advertisements place the responsibility of obtaining a work permit on the applicants, which puts those without a permit like non-EU international students in a disadvantaged position. This dynamic reflects the complex interplay between the tools

employed by international students in job searching, the rules set by employers, and the larger community dynamics shaping the job market.

5.4.2 Fulfilling Student Work Permit and Internship Visa Requirements

Another crucial factor highlighted by participants was the limitation on student work permits to 80 hours while in education. This constraint, as expressed by Participant 5, impacts the flexibility employers can offer to international students:

The 80-hour work limit during studies is challenging. Employers sometimes hesitate to hire international students because they need more flexibility. It's a hindrance.

Other legal barriers significantly impact students' move toward job markets. For instance, Participant 10 highlighted a specific instance where the need for a separate internship visa acted as a deterrent:

I had this amazing internship opportunity, but the employer needed someone to start quickly. The requirement for a separate internship visa created complications, and I lost the opportunity. It was very depressing...

In another instance, Participant 10 described how he had to decide to give up an internship opportunity as transitioning to an internship visa would forfeit the standard 80-hour paid work allowance typically granted to students during their education.

While opportunities like internships are crucial for enhancing students' skills and preparing them for the job market, the above instances underscore the complexity international students face when navigating immigration policies and engaging in professional experiences. The lack of flexibility in these policies creates hurdles for international students, impacting their ability to secure jobs in line with their qualifications. The ability to seamlessly transition from academic endeavors to practical experiences is crucial in a competitive job market. Legal barriers, in this context, disrupt the fluidity of this transition, leaving both employers and students grappling with bureaucratic challenges. Therefore, both employers and students may need to demonstrate perseverance to navigate these complexities and ensure meaningful professional experiences for international students.

Legal constraints, represented by tools and rules, influence the division of labour and shape the community dynamics. The 80-hour work limit and separate internship visa requirements emerge as significant factors impacting not only the choices available to international students but also the overall narrative of their integration into the Danish job market. Addressing these legal barriers becomes essential for creating a more inclusive and accommodating environment for international students seeking employment in Denmark.

Chapter 6 Discussion, Implications, Future Research and Conclusion

This final chapter begins by summing up and discussing the important findings in light of the existing literature where relevant. Then, the section will reflect upon the limitations and recommend future research leading to the conclusions.

6.1 Discussion

This study aims to comprehensively explore and understand the diverse challenges encountered by international students seeking integration into the Danish job market. This study employs qualitative research methods, specifically utilising in-depth interviews with 10 participants. Using thematic analysis, four major themes appear Language Proficiency, Job Market Dynamics and Networking, Workplace Integration, and Stringent Immigration Policy. The four themes are discussed below using relevant literature and theories.

6.1.1 Language Proficiency

The very first theme of this study represents how language has been a key barrier to the job market integration of international students in Denmark. Different aspects of this barrier have been well-documented in studies like Klingler & Marckmann (2016) (conducted in Germany), Jirovsky, Hoffmann, Maier, & Kutalek (2015) (conducted in Austria), Kuusio et al., (2014) (Conducted in Canada) and McGrath, Henderson, Holewa (2013) (conducted in Australia). As this barrier persists, participants in this study called for flexibility in language requirements. Participants' suggestions for flexibility in language learning opportunities align with work adjustment theory, providing insights into the dynamics of individuals adapting linguistically to new work environments.

Participants' proposals like the provision for sponsored language teaching during working hours reflect an innovative approach to integrating language learning into international students' daily lives in ways that promote work-life balance (Grzywacz et al., 2007). Flexible and innovative approaches are already in place in Denmark and worldwide. One recent example is the Agency for Patient Safety in Denmark which has eliminated the Danish language test requirement for international nurses outside the EU/EEA seeking authorization to work in the healthcare system. While knowledge of Danish remains essential for authorization, this change would help integrate more healthcare professionals into the Danish system. While such innovative approaches are now becoming more common, the use of English has been gaining popularity, particularly in corporate contexts. Adopting this trend in Denmark is obvious as most Danish people speak English, and English is added to the academic curriculum from a very early age. The use of English as a corporate language contributes to enhancing inclusion at both macro and micro levels.

However, this study also found that the preference for using Danish among colleagues may contribute to excluding those who do not speak Danish. This is apparent even in situations where English is designated as the corporate language. Lønsmann (2011) argued that when a majority of employees have Danish as their mother tongue, there is a tendency to switch to

Danish as soon as possible. Such a tendency to move to Danish and the use of the Danish language for informal communication and networking undermines the status of the corporate language and marginalises colleagues who do not speak Danish (Charles and Marschan-Piekkari, 2002). In Nordic regions, the inclination to exclude international employees by using local or mother languages has been observed in historical studies conducted in Finland (e.g., Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999) and recent studies (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005) in Sweden.

Tange and Lauring (2009) further propose that the regular use of Danish in informal interactions deepens the divide between individuals with access to this language and those without. While a more in-depth examination of these disparities in various organizational contexts or a discussion of potential solutions lies outside the purview of this study, the findings concerning workplace exclusion stemming from language barriers illuminate the persistent roles of language from securing employment to integrating into work environments. One pertinent implication is that the communication among Danish-speaking colleagues within their community poses a challenge to cross-cultural communication, and this issue is not necessarily alleviated through the adoption of English as a corporate language.

Most participants embraced the new reality and reflected on improving their Danish language skills to better integrate into the job markets. In this line, Klingler and Marckmann (2016) demonstrated that there is a much broader need for support than just offering short or long-term language courses. A focus on social networks, informal communication and knowledge exchange, and colleagues' openness to foreign languages may present opportunities for fostering an inclusive workplace, thereby facilitating the improved integration of international students into the Danish job market (Keating and Egbert, 2004; Tange and Lauring, 2009).

6.1.2 Job Market Dynamics and Networking

The findings of this study comprehend the intricacies of the Danish job market, emphasising challenges related to limited exposure to networking opportunities and unfamiliarity with job market dynamics. Recognizing job market nuances such as the role of soft skills, unwritten rules, and the emphasis on interpersonal relationships and adapting to the Danish work culture were deemed crucial for successful job integration. A similar finding is also reported by Kulova and Luca (2016) that connections and personal recommendations are great assets in Danish job markets. Building such social capital, however, is considered time-consuming and burdensome for many international graduates (Bourdieu, 1986). These specific findings, thus, contribute to the growing body of literature critiquing the tendency to oversimplify and homogenise employability for immigrants (Mosneaga & Winther, 2012; Favell et al., 2006; Kulova and Luca, 2016).

Participants highlighted the role of career events and workshops in introducing them to potential employers and job markets. While acknowledging the value of such events, participants expressed a shortage of opportunities and a lack of comprehensive guidance from university career advisors. They emphasised the need for more dedicated career events, workshops, and university support to improve job search skills, understand Danish work culture, and build professional networks. The desire for more proactive involvement from

universities in offering insights into Danish work culture and job application strategies resonates with discussions on the role of higher education in enhancing employability (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2020; Green et al. 2019).

Examining global trends, universities in the UK and Finland have undergone a significant paradigm shift, placing heightened policy emphasis on fostering graduates' employability (Komulainen and Korhonen, 2009; Boden and Nedeva, 2010). While certain studies indicate a positive relationship between co-curricular activities and employability (Jackson and Collings, 2018; McCarthy and Swain, 2019; Silva et al., 2018), findings from this study underscore the necessity for comprehensive support services from universities to augment international students employability and navigate the intricacies of the job market more effectively.

While employment-related activities for international students at Danish universities aim to provide inclusive spaces and skill development opportunities, challenges related to academic pressure and part-time workloads, cultural relevance and language barriers exist. Addressing these challenges requires offering holistic and targeted support services that recognize the unique challenges faced by international students is essential. Such support services ensure that employment-related activities incorporate elements of cultural exchange, social integration, and mental health, thereby contributing not only to skill development but also to the overall well-being of international students.

6.1.3 Workplace Integration

Participants expressed concerns about potential biases favouring local candidates in Danish job markets, emphasising a perceived preference for cultural fit over skills. Additionally, the impact of religious practices, such as wearing a hijab, becomes evident, with participants sharing experiences of hesitation from employers and challenges in participating in workplace traditions. The findings reflect broader issues of diversity and inclusion in the Danish professional landscape, contributing to the discussion on including social identity and power in international students' job market integration instead of just focusing on their language skills (Dauncey-Elwood, 2019; Jenkins, 2000; Bourdieu, 1991).

The intersectionality of international students in terms of religious background and culture emphasises that there is no one specific way to integrate them into the job market, and policies cannot be blind to these differences. The overall theoretical framework of this study, combining work adjustment theory and activity theory, sheds light on the complexity, suggesting the centrality of participants' roles in analysing their integration should not be understood in a vacuum. Understanding the role of actors within institutions bears importance where the actors are not a static collection of biases and power. Instead, by being dynamic within their individual, collective, and corporate spheres, actors can shape the institutions' roles and responses to the unique needs of international students in getting jobs and feeling included in their workplaces.

Participants reported cultural integration as paramount to enhancing employability and advocated for active university involvement through courses and events, and volunteering initiatives to network with locals and understand Danish work and culture. This finding

contributes to the ongoing discussion of host-country integration of international students, which often emphasises the nature of broader society-wide opportunities and challenges. This is considered a common global challenge without a straightforward solution (Slethaug and Manjula, 2013). Studies from Malaysia (Slethaug and Manjula, 2013), Canada (Vinther & Slethaug, 2015), and America (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007) have shown that international students find it challenging to establish friendships beyond the classroom setting.

For Danes who are considered “coconut shells because of their diffidence to strangers” (Vinther & Slethaug, 2015, p. 101), the integration challenges are more or less obvious. Vinther & Slethaug (2015) further added the views of Danish and Canadian universities' roles in facilitating cultural integration, where this is considered a social rather than academic problem, and therefore see socialisation as beyond the scope of responsibility. Furthermore, the dichotomization between the international student group and the host country population or student group subscribes to the ethnocentric worldview (Patel & Lynch, 2013, Slethaug, 2007). This identifies international students as more likely to learn from the learning environment or host country and less able to contribute to the learning environment or host country (Patel & Lynch, 2013; Vinther & Slethaug, 2015, Slethaug, 2007).

6.1.4 Stringent Immigration Policy

Finally, two subthemes, "navigating high salary thresholds and work-permit requirements" and "fulfilling student work permit and internship visa requirements," highlight the complex immigration hurdles that may shape the job integration of international students in Denmark. While no studies are available on the post-study return of graduates to their home countries or their job market integration in Denmark, the US, and the UK see high proportions of international students leaving the countries after graduation (Amy, 2017; Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). The scenarios, therefore, add evidence to the common notion that immigration-related policy hurdles and bureaucratic requirements have been contributing to making it harder and harder for international students who want to pursue a career in the host country (Tran et al., 2020).

This study found that complexities embedded within immigration policies (particularly in navigating high salary thresholds, work-permit requirements, and student work permit limitations) and job advertisements (i.e Disclaimers that prioritise applicants with valid permits) create a reactive environment where participants feel disadvantaged in the job application process. Similar constraints like employers hesitating to employ international student graduates over concerns about visa-related complexities are evident in Australia (Gribble and Blackmore, 2012). Similar biases against international student graduates are observed in Canada and the US, as noted by Arthur and Flynn (2013) and Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, and Cavazos Jr (2011), emphasising the difficulties arising from the non-permanent nature and complexities of the work-permit schemes in securing post-study employment.

As understood from this theme, the Danish immigration policies place a strong emphasis on individual responsibility for securing employment. To attribute employability outcomes more

to individual actions and choices downplays the role of structural factors in the employment process. The emphasis on individual responsibility in Danish immigration policies, akin to neo-liberal approaches, neglects the influence of structural factors on employment outcomes (Boden & Nedeva, 2010). In addressing the structural challenges, the findings in this study, therefore, are more inclined to suggest that the Danish government could consider adopting a “shared responsibility” perspective (Monteiro, Almeida & Garcia-Aracil, 2020; p 178).

Such a “shared responsibility” perspective aligns with critical perspectives (as opposed to neoliberal policies) in employability literature, emphasising the importance of considering economic conditions, labour market trends, and institutional practices (Boden & Nedeva, 2010; Monteiro, Almeida & Garcia-Aracil, 2020; p 178). By acknowledging the impact of structural factors, the government can create policies that better support the successful integration of international students into the Danish job market. At the same time, while national governments frame more favourable policies for international students, these require public acceptance. As seen in the UK and South Korean contexts, public acceptance significantly contributes to reforming immigration policies around international students (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019; Shin & Moon, 2015). Therefore, this study argues for a multifaceted approach that does not necessarily adopt a simplistic view of responding to immigration policies but combines awareness-building, stakeholder engagement, cultural promotion, and inclusive policy making (Monteiro, Almeida & Garcia-Aracil, 2020; Mosneaga & Winther, 2012). By actively involving the public in the discourse and addressing concerns, governments can cultivate a conducive environment that holistically supports the job market integration of international students.

6.2 Study Limitations and Future Research Areas

6.2.1 Study Limitations

There are a few research limitations, such as conducting limited semi-structured interviews; if more interviews of international students who are Asian were conducted, the outcome would have been strong and effective. The research process focused on the users mostly, and interviews with the users could have been insightful. Due to time and location restraints, the paper managed to conduct semi-structured interviews in online platforms such as Microsoft Teams. Interviews with the international graduates were instrumental; if more interviews had been conducted, the paper could have gotten more views on the challenges that international graduates experience in their integration process to the Danish job market.. Recommendation on future research is suggested as it may help by providing helpful information for analysing purposes and can be used in the following research paper.

This study was limited to the international students, graduates, universities and employers of Danish companies. The study chose to collect experts' opinions as much as it could, experts are the international graduates who are currently working in a Danish company. For future purposes, the study can focus on the universities and employers to also get an understanding about their thoughts and inputs in the integration process of the international graduates in the Danish job market. Language could have been misinterpreted, but the study tried to be transparent.

6.2.2 Future Research

The topic for this research paper is widely acknowledged and has a wide scope for more research to be done on this topic. To generalize the findings of this paper, a much bigger sample should be considered to conduct the same research again. To consider a bigger sample for conducting the research, quantitative research should be conducted in Denmark for a deeper understanding of challenges that are experienced by international students or non-EU students. The research should be conducted in every city in Denmark to observe any kind of differences in the challenges that are experienced by international students. If the paper plans to collect more information on the international integration process, then the future research process selects a specific target group that consists of international students who are currently working in different countries of the European continent. As mentioned earlier several scopes of future research can be done.

6.3 Conclusion

Overall, this study tries to cover a detailed analysis of the challenges and opportunities that are available and experienced by the Non-EU students from Bangladesh in Danish educational institutions and companies that they are working or worked before. Making specific insights and claims are subject to critical reflection on the limited sample sizes. The study also does not offer any definitive claims on which international students might have any easier ways to integrate into the Danish job market. Instead, this study shows multifaceted challenges and nuances surrounding international students' particularly students from Bangladesh and their integration process into the Danish job market. The persistent language barrier emerged as an important theme, prompting calls for flexible language requirements and innovative approaches, such as sponsored language teaching during working hours. There is also a preference for speaking Danish among Danish-speaking colleagues presents exclusionary challenges, even where English is designated as the official language.

The findings also shed light on the complexities of navigating the Danish job market, emphasizing the importance of soft skills, unwritten rules, and interpersonal relationships. Participants voiced the need for enhanced support services from universities, including dedicated career events, workshops, and guidance on Danish work culture. The study also reveals the significance of cultural and religious factors in job integration.

Additionally, stringent immigration policies pose significant hurdles, particularly in fulfilling salary thresholds and work permit requirements. The study advocates for a "shared responsibility" perspective in policy making, acknowledging the impact of structural factors and emphasizing public engagement to foster a conducive environment for international students' job market integration.

In essence, this research contributes valuable insights to the ongoing academic discourse on the challenges faced by international students in Denmark and to policy discussions on addressing these challenges, emphasising the need for nuanced policies, increased awareness, and active public involvement.

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Appendix I

Interview Shedule

- Can you briefly share your experiences regarding the process of integrating into the labor market as an international student in Denmark?
- What challenges have you faced during your efforts to integrate into the Danish labor market? Could you provide specific examples?
- Have you experienced any unique challenges specific to being an international student from Bangladesh in the Danish context when entering the labor market?
- From your perspective, what changes or improvements could be made to the existing policies, support systems, or practices to facilitate the integration of international students from Bangladesh into the Danish labor market?
- Are there specific areas where you feel there is a need for more targeted assistance or resources to enhance the overall integration experience for international students in Denmark?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience or any additional insights you believe are crucial for understanding the integration process into the Danish labor market for international students from Bangladesh?