



ECEC Program Evaluation

Report

2025

Evaluation Team

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Table of Contents

Introduction	01
Background of the PDG in ECD	01
Purpose of the Evaluation	01
Scope of the Report	01
Methodology	02
Data Collection Methods	02
Data Analysis Approach	02
Findings	03
MoU	03
Self-Assessment Report	04
Faculty Perspectives	07
Students' Perspectives	09
Alumna-cum-Employer's Perspectives	11
ECEC Management Response	13
Conclusion	15

Introduction

Background of the PDG in ECD

The Post Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Development (PGDE-ECD) is a collaborative initiative launched in 2009, following a 2008 MoU between Kathmandu University (KU), Early Childhood Education Centre Pvt. Ltd. (ECEC), Nepal, and NLA Teacher Training College (Norway). The program's objective is to offer high-quality, contextually relevant pre-school teacher training, blending theory and practice to address Nepal's growing ECD needs.



Role of Partners

- **ECEC:** Lead implementer, manages operations, coordinates stakeholder communication, supports curriculum, and ensures sustainability of the program.
- **KU:** Ensures academic rigor, leads curriculum development/revision, evaluates quality, and conducts field visits.
- **NLA:** Provides international input, supports curriculum design, and facilitates exchange programs.

Purpose of the Evaluation

This evaluation was conducted to:

- Assess the relevance and effectiveness of the PGDE-ECD program.
- Review the partnership model and its outcomes.
- Inform future directions for collaboration and program improvement.

Scope of the Report

The evaluation covers multiple dimensions: the relevance and quality of the curriculum, the effectiveness of teaching and mentorship, student and alumni outcomes, and the dynamics of the partnership itself. While the findings are based on extensive data collection and stakeholder feedback, it is important to note that some limitations exist, including the scope of data and the reliance on self-reported information.

Methodology

Evaluation Framework

To capture a holistic picture of the PGDE-ECD program's performance, the evaluation team adopted a **mixed-methods approach**, combining quantitative data with rich qualitative insights. This approach allowed us to triangulate findings and deepen our understanding of both measurable outcomes and lived experiences.

Data Collection Methods

We began by reviewing key documents, including the original MoU, program curricula, and the detailed self-assessment report prepared by ECEC. To capture the voices of those directly involved, we conducted an online survey with current students, all of whom are female, reflecting the gender composition of the program cohort. The survey explored their satisfaction with various aspects of the program, from curriculum content to faculty support and facilities.

- MoU and document review
- ECEC self-assessment report
- Online student satisfaction survey (n=12)
- Participatory consultation with faculty, students, alumni, employers, ECEC management team, and KUSOED team

In addition, we organized focus group discussions with faculty members, students, alumni, and employers. These conversations provided nuanced perspectives on the program's strengths, challenges, and real-world impact. We also consulted with KUSOED officials and ECEC management to understand the partnership dynamics and institutional support mechanisms.

Data Analysis Approach

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics for the survey responses and thematic analysis for qualitative inputs. This comprehensive methodology ensured that the evaluation was both rigorous and reflective of stakeholder experiences.

Findings

MOU

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on May 26, 2008, between Kathmandu University School of Education (KUSOED), Early Childhood Education Centre Pvt. Ltd. (ECEC), Nepal, and NLA Teacher Training College, Norway, reveals a well-structured partnership aimed at delivering a high-quality, one-year pre-school (Early Childhood Development) teacher training program in Nepal. The MoU establishes a collaborative framework that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical training, ensuring both local relevance and international standards.

Key Observations

Partnership Structure

The MoU clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each partner, fostering a balanced division of labor that leverages the strengths of all three institutions.

ECEC's Leadership Role

ECEC is designated as the lead institution responsible for the operational management of the training program. This includes organizing the course setup, coordinating communication among stakeholders, spearheading curriculum development, and providing the necessary financial resources to sustain the program.

Kathmandu University's Academic Contribution

KU plays a critical academic role by supporting curriculum development and delivery, monitoring and evaluating the quality of the training, and conducting field visits to ensure academic rigor and continuous improvement.

NLA's International Expertise

NLA Teacher Training College contributes global perspectives by collaborating on curriculum design aligned with its standards, sending faculty members to Nepal to support and assure quality (with funding from NLA), and facilitating exchange programs for trainers and students between Norway and Nepal.

The review team's overall observation is that the MoU sets a strong foundation for a contextually relevant and globally informed ECD teacher training model in Nepal. It effectively combines local leadership and contextual understanding (through ECEC and KU) with international expertise and quality assurance (through NLA). This tripartite collaboration enhances the program's credibility, quality, and sustainability, aligning with best practices in early childhood education teacher training. However, clear indicator of financial liability and royalty (to KU) needs to be laid out in future MoU.

Self-Assessment Report

The team prepared and sent a self-assessment report (SSR) form to be filled in by the ECEC authority. The team received the form duly filled in by the ECEC authority and found the following key insights:

Analysis of ECEC Self-Assessment Report

Partnership History and Program Continuity

ECEC's self-assessment confirms a longstanding and stable partnership with Kathmandu University (KU) and other stakeholders, dating back to the MoU signed in 2008 and program launch in 2009. The partnership has been continuously renewed, indicating sustained commitment and collaboration over more than a decade. This longevity reflects mutual trust and shared goals in delivering quality early childhood education (ECD) teacher training.

Student Enrollment Trends

The enrollment data from 2009 to 2024 show a consistent increase in student intake, particularly female students, who constitute the vast majority of cohorts each year. Male participation remains minimal but shows a slight upward trend in recent years. The steady growth in enrollment—from 11 students in 2009 to 77-82 students in recent cohorts—demonstrates the program's growing popularity and market relevance.

Program Governance and Staffing

The governance structure is well-defined, with a clear hierarchy involving a course coordinator, assistant coordinator, practical in-charge, and teacher educators. This organizational clarity supports effective program management.

Staff qualifications are a notable strength: among 19 full-time teaching staff, 4 are pursuing PhDs, 3 have completed MPhil coursework, and the remainder hold master's degrees. This highly qualified faculty base enhances academic rigor and capacity for research-led teaching.

Student Demographics in the Program			
Cohort	Female	Male	Total
2009 Feb	11		11
2010 Feb	14		14
2011 Feb	16	1	17
2012 Feb	13		13
2013 Feb	25		25
2014 Feb	36	1	37
2015 Feb	35	1	36
2016 Feb	46	1	47
2017 Feb	51	1	52
2018 Feb	57	1	58
2019 Feb	55	3	58
2020 Feb	56		56
2021 Feb	78	3	81
2022 Feb	69	1	70
2023 Feb	82	5	87
2024 Feb	77		77

Support Services and Infrastructure

ECEC provides several essential support services:

- A well-stocked library with ECD-related resources.
- A computer lab integrated with the library.
- A large seminar hall for training and multipurpose use.
- Guidance and counselling through a mentoring system (one mentor per 8-10 students).
- Grievance redressal managed by the Human Resource Department.
- Writing and research support units actively assisting students.
- A student welfare unit extending services beyond staff.

However, some infrastructural gaps exist:

- No e-library (currently under development).
- No playground, hostel, or canteen facilities (though tea and snacks are provided).

These limitations could affect student experience and program attractiveness, especially for those requiring residential or recreational amenities.

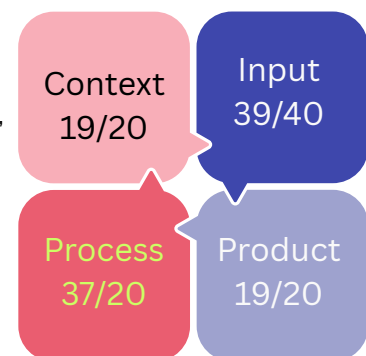
Collaboration and Networking

ECEC maintains robust collaborations nationally—with KU, Nepal Open University, municipalities, and private schools—and internationally—with NLA University College (Norway), Driestar Christian University (Netherlands), and SEED Institute (Singapore). These partnerships facilitate capacity building, exposure visits, and exchange programs, enriching faculty expertise and program quality.

Program Benchmarks (CIPP Framework)

ECEC self-assessed its program using the widely respected CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) evaluation framework, scoring highly across all dimensions:

These near-excellent scores reflect confidence in the program's relevance, resource adequacy, implementation quality, and outcomes. The slight dip in Process (37/40) may indicate areas for procedural improvements.



Challenges and Areas for Improvement

- Lack of local mentors and teacher education centers, which places additional mentoring responsibilities on ECEC trainers.
- High staff turnover in partner schools, affecting continuity in mentoring and practical training support.
- Limited availability of suitable educational institutions for student practice teaching.

These issues highlight the need for stronger local partnerships and capacity building at the school level to support practical components of the program.

Strategic Way Forward

ECEC proposes several strategies to address challenges and sustain the program:

- Collaborate with local partners and schools to establish mentoring and practice centers.
- Increase the number of trained mentors in partner schools.
- Expand partnerships with schools for internships and practical learning opportunities.

These steps aim to decentralize mentoring responsibilities, enhance practical training quality, and broaden student exposure.

Sustainability Measures

ECEC emphasizes multiple sustainability factors:

- Maintaining sufficient student enrollment.
- Conducting market studies to ensure program relevance.
- Upholding course quality.
- Strengthening collaboration with job placement institutions.
- Seeking scholarships to support students.
- Partnering with like-minded organizations for innovation (e.g., Three Star Teacher Training Centre).
- Continuing national and international collaborations.

This comprehensive approach addresses both demand and quality dimensions, positioning the program for long-term viability.

Future Partnership with Kathmandu University

ECEC expresses strong interest in continuing and deepening its partnership with KU, supported by several arguments:

- ECEC students' willingness to pursue advanced degrees at KU.
- The collaboration's role in producing quality teachers aligned with societal and school needs.
- Readiness to comply with KU's royalty and collaboration policies.
- Recognition of KU's contribution to course quality and student motivation.
- Potential involvement of national and international faculty in teaching.
- The partnership's potential to enhance reputation for quality and innovation in education.

This forward-looking stance underscores ECEC's commitment to mutual benefit and program excellence.

Evaluation Team's Remarks on the SSR

The self-assessment report reflects a mature, well-managed, and academically strong ECD teacher training program underpinned by a solid partnership framework. While infrastructural and mentoring challenges remain, ECEC demonstrates clear awareness and proactive strategies to address them. The institution's focus on quality, collaboration, and sustainability bodes well for the program's future success and continued partnership with Kathmandu University.

Faculty Perspectives

A focus group discussion was conducted by Sarita Khadka and Parbati Dhungana with 6 faculty members from the Early Childhood Education Centre (ECEC) to explore their perspectives on teaching and learning within the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) program. The discussion provided rich qualitative insights into curriculum development, instructional resources, pedagogical practices, and inter-institutional collaboration.

Curriculum Development and Relevance

Faculty members acknowledged that the PGDE curriculum framework is primarily developed by KU. However, they emphasized their active role in contextualizing and adapting the curriculum to Nepal's unique early childhood education landscape. Through regular internal consultations and engagement with key stakeholders—including students, employers, and subject matter experts—the faculty have strived to ensure the curriculum remains relevant and responsive to local needs. ECEC faculty's involvement in both local and international curriculum co-construction initiatives reflects a commitment to maintaining a dynamic curriculum that aligns with global standards while addressing local realities.

Teaching and Learning Resources

The faculty demonstrated a strong commitment to maximizing the use of low-cost, locally sourced teaching-learning materials (TLMs) to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Some materials are developed in-house to align closely with pedagogical goals, while others are procured externally to supplement learning.

Importantly, faculty pay particular attention to designing resources that accommodate diverse learner needs and promote essential competencies. Beyond physical materials, the institution enriches the learning environment by inviting field experts for guest lectures and organizing exposure visits, thereby broadening both faculty and student perspectives. Moreover, faculty also reflected that digital resources, including academic articles and handbooks, are regularly shared through online platforms, supporting continuous learning and access to up-to-date knowledge.

Challenges and Opportunities for Collaboration

A significant challenge identified by the faculty is the experience of working in relative isolation, particularly regarding program continuity and integration between ECEC and KUSOED. Faculty members expressed the need for stronger, more seamless collaboration to ensure academic coherence and shared ownership of program quality.

To address this, faculty proposed several collaborative strategies:

- Regular faculty exchanges between ECEC and KUSOED.
- Joint mentoring sessions for students.
- Collaborative curriculum development processes.
- Shared feedback and evaluation mechanisms.

Despite these challenges, faculty appreciated the academic support currently provided by KU and showed strong enthusiasm for deepening collaboration. They recommended appointing a dedicated focal person responsible for facilitating ongoing communication, organizing joint meetings, and managing shared platforms to sustain collaboration.

Evaluation Team's Remarks

The discussion reaffirmed ECEC faculty's dedication to delivering a contextually relevant and high-quality early childhood education program through innovative teaching practices and stakeholder engagement. Their openness to enhanced collaboration with KU presents a strategic opportunity to strengthen program delivery and academic integration.

To capitalize on these opportunities, both institutions can formalize collaborative structures, including:

- Establishing regular joint faculty forums.
- Creating shared digital platforms for resource and feedback exchange.
- Designating liaison personnel to coordinate ongoing communication.

The evaluation team realised that such institutionalized collaboration will not only enrich teaching and learning experiences but also contribute to the sustained success and reputation of the PGDE program.

Students' Perspectives

Quantitative Findings: Online Survey Results

To assess students' satisfaction and perceptions regarding the KU-ECEC PGD in ECD program, an online survey was administered to all 12 current female students. The results demonstrate a high level of satisfaction across multiple dimensions:

- **Curriculum Satisfaction:** 11 out of 12 students reported satisfaction (50% satisfied, 42% extremely satisfied), with only 8% neutral response.
- **Teaching Faculty Quality:** 11 students expressed satisfaction (25% satisfied, 67% extremely satisfied), and 8% was neutral.
- **Curriculum Relevance to Career Goals:** 11 students were satisfied (34% satisfied, 58% extremely satisfied), and 8% neutral.
- **Facilities and Resources:** 11 students were satisfied (17% satisfied, 75% extremely satisfied), and 8% neutral.
- **Opportunities (Internships, Networking):** All 12 students were satisfied (42% satisfied, 58% extremely satisfied).
- **Extracurricular Activities:** 11 students were satisfied (34% satisfied, 58% extremely satisfied), and 8% neutral.
- **Communication and Support from Administration:** All 12 students were satisfied (25% satisfied, 75% extremely satisfied).
- **Campus Environment (Safety & Inclusivity):** 58% rated 5 stars, 25% rated 4 stars, 17% rated 3 stars; none rated below 3 stars.
- **Likelihood to Recommend Program:** 75% rated 5 stars, 17% rated 4 stars, 8% rated 3 stars.
- **Future Engagement with KU:** 75% rated 5 stars, 17% rated 4 stars, 8% rated 3 stars.
- **Program Preparation for Career/Studies:** 67% rated 5 stars, 25% rated 4 stars, 8% rated 3 stars.
- **Overall Satisfaction:** 75% rated 5 stars, 17% rated 4 stars, 8% rated 3 stars.

These results indicate that the vast majority of students are highly satisfied with the program's curriculum, teaching quality, relevance to career goals, resources, and overall experience.

Qualitative Insights: Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with 7 current students, led by Ms. Narayani Thakuri. The discussion revealed several key themes:

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- **Practical and Hands-On Learning:** Students expressed strong enthusiasm for the program's practical components, highlighting the value of hands-on activities and the curriculum's alignment with current market needs.
- **Relevance and Currency:** Participants appreciated the program's up-to-date content and its applicability to real-world contexts in early childhood education.
- **Areas for Improvement:** A recurring concern was the limited support for academic writing and research skills. Students felt that additional guidance in these areas, possibly through more structured support from KU, would enhance their academic experience.

Students also provided open-ended feedback, which included both appreciation and constructive suggestions:

- Requests for timely information about field-related events.
- Suggestions for more detailed instruction in specific areas, such as phonics.
- Aspirations for more platforms to share their learning and contribute as trainers or presenters in the broader educational community.

Overall, both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest that students perceive the KU-ECEC PGD in ECD program as highly effective, particularly in terms of curriculum relevance, faculty quality, and opportunities for professional growth. While satisfaction is high, students identify academic writing and research support as areas for further enhancement. Their suggestions and positive feedback underscore the program's impact on their development and its alignment with their career aspirations.

I have felt a growth in me which I never knew existed. I got various chances to explore and learn as a trainer too... I wish and I hope to get many more platforms in days to come. Always grateful to ECEC and KU.

- PDG in ECEC (Current student)

An anecdotal remark from a current student

Alumna-cum-Employer's Perspectives

This analysis synthesizes qualitative insights gathered from an evaluative conversation between Rebat Dhakal (KU faculty and program evaluator) and Ms. Pooja Gautam—an ECEC alumna, employer, and prominent leader in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector. The objective was to assess the effectiveness, market relevance, and industry alignment of the Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) in ECD program offered by ECEC in partnership with Kathmandu University.

Ms. Gautam brings a wealth of experience and authority to the evaluation, combining her roles as:

- A graduate of the KU-ECEC PGD in ECD program.
- Founder Principal of Sanskar Shikshalaya, Bafal.
- Vice President of the Preschool Committee Nepal.
- National Trainer in Parenting Education.
- Author of the "Smart Kids" book series.
- Over 20 years of professional experience in ECD practice.

Her dual perspective as both an alumna and employer provides a comprehensive understanding of the program's strengths and areas for improvement.

Key Findings

Familiarity with the Program

Ms. Gautam's intimate knowledge of the program—both as a former student and as an employer of its graduates—lends credibility to her insights. Her experience allows her to evaluate the program's real-world impact effectively.

Graduate Skills, Knowledge, and Employability

Market Readiness: ECEC graduates are highly employable and sought after in the ECD job market. Employers demonstrate strong confidence in their capabilities, often offering competitive or higher salaries compared to graduates from other institutions.

Distinctive Pedagogical Approach: The program's emphasis on practical, hands-on, and play-based learning equips graduates with unique competencies that distinguish them in professional settings.

Brand Reputation: The "ECEC" name itself carries significant weight, signaling quality and reliability to employers and enhancing graduates' market value.

Comparison with Other Institutions

ECEC graduates consistently outperform peers from similar programs across various performance indicators. The program's reputation alone serves as a strong assurance of graduate quality, facilitating easier employment pathways.

Areas for Improvement

Research Skills: Ms. Gautam identified a gap in graduates' ability to conduct and apply practical action research, suggesting the need for enhanced training in this area.

Reflective Practice and Communication: Graduates would benefit from improved support in articulating, documenting, and publishing their reflective practices, which are critical for professional growth and academic contribution.

Alignment with Industry Needs

The program is praised for its flexibility and responsiveness to evolving market demands. However, Ms. Gautam recommends that this adaptability be explicitly communicated during student and faculty orientation to ensure awareness and alignment.

Willingness for Further Collaboration

Ms. Gautam expressed a strong commitment to ongoing engagement with the program. She is willing to contribute as a visiting faculty member, advisory panelist, or subject committee member. Her active advocacy within the ECD community further strengthens the program's industry connections.

Evaluator's Remarks

The PGD in ECD program has been producing highly competent, market-ready graduates with a distinctive, practical and play-based pedagogy. Its strong brand reputation has enhanced employability and industry trust. However, focused curriculum enhancements in research methodology and reflective practice will further elevate graduate capabilities. It is also important to actively involve alumni and employers in curriculum development/revision, guest lectures, mentorship, and advisory roles to enrich program relevance and quality. Overall, the evaluator has realised the program's strong market positioning and ECEC's growing impact in the ECD sector.

KUSOED Experience

During the KUSOED meeting led by Parbati Dhungana, individual interactions with key personnel revealed smooth coordination with ECEC. The Accounts Section confirmed that the PGDE one-year program involves a registration fee of Rs. 25,000 paid upfront by an ECEC representative on behalf of students, followed by Rs. 33,000 paid by students during their four-month study period, with no financial issues reported. The Exam Section noted that all required documents are submitted by an ECEC representative without any exam-related difficulties. The program focal person also reported effective communication and coordination but suggested that curriculum updates could be considered to enhance the program.

ECEC Management Response

A dedicated meeting was held between the Kathmandu University (KU) Associate Dean, Mr. Hemraj Kafle, and the management team of the Early Childhood Education Centre (ECEC). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the current status, challenges, and future directions of the KU-ECEC partnership and the Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) in Early Childhood Development (ECD) program. The discussion also explored possibilities for program redesign and expansion to meet evolving market demands.

Key Findings

Partnership and Program Overview

The ECEC program operates in close partnership with Kathmandu University, aiming to deliver quality education through an autonomous and flexible academic framework.

The program is designed to sustain teacher training initiatives that are responsive to both current and future needs in the ECD sector.

Strengths Highlighted

Strong Partnership with KU: The management team expressed deep appreciation for KU's flexibility, commitment to quality assurance, and respect for academic autonomy, which have been critical to program success.

Blended Learning Model: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program adopted a hybrid teaching model combining online and in-person instruction. This approach has broadened faculty reach and improved accessibility for students.

Decentralization and Outreach: The program has expanded beyond Kathmandu to regional centers including Surkhet, Itahari, Pokhara, and Bhutwal, enhancing educational access across Nepal.

Sustainability: Despite financial constraints, the program remains stable, supported by affordable tuition fees (ranging from NPR 5,500 to 10,000) and a motivated faculty committed to the program's mission.

Financial and Logistical Aspects

- The program sustains ECEC staff by providing at least a second-class government-level salary, contributing to staff stability.
- Discussions around royalty payments and financial transparency highlighted the need for a clear, updated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formalize financial arrangements.
- A significant concern is the low salary levels for ECD teachers in the field (as low as NPR 8,000–9,000 per month), underscoring the urgent need for scholarships and financial aid to support students. They come here with a hope that after graduating, they will get higher salary.

Challenges Identified

Faculty Retention in Remote Centers: Attracting and retaining qualified educators in regional centers (e.g. Butwal) remains difficult, as many prefer to work in Kathmandu.

Financial Sustainability: The current low admission fees do not fully cover operational costs, posing sustainability challenges.

Language Barriers: Many students face difficulties with English-language materials, prompting consideration of bilingual instruction (Nepali and English) to improve comprehension and learning outcomes.

Trust and Communication Gaps: Past lapses in university visits and communication have strained relationships, highlighting the need for improved transparency and regular engagement.

Future Needs and Recommendations

Enhanced Faculty Exposure and Collaboration: Strengthening connections between ECEC local faculty and KU through regular exchanges, joint workshops, and visits is vital for academic quality and cohesion.

Expansion of Scholarships: Increasing need-based scholarships will improve access and support for students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Outreach to Government Schools: Currently, the program primarily serves private schools. Expanding partnerships with government schools is recommended to broaden impact and inclusivity.

Accreditation and Global Recognition: Efforts are underway to secure international recognition for the courses, especially at the +2 level, to enhance graduate mobility and program credibility.

Faculty Capacity Building: Investing in continuous professional development for ECEC faculty, leveraging KU's expertise, will strengthen teaching quality and program outcomes.

Prospects for Program Expansion

The management team expressed interest in exploring the feasibility of extending the current one-year PGD program into a full four-year undergraduate Bachelor of ECD degree, integrating both pedagogy and management components. A comprehensive feasibility study is required to assess infrastructure, faculty capacity, and resource needs before launching the bachelor's program.

Conclusion

The evaluation confirms that the KU-ECEC partnership has successfully delivered a high-quality, market-relevant PGD in ECD program, producing competent graduates valued by employers. ECEC's commitment to continuous improvement and program expansion, including decentralization and blended learning, is commendable.

The evaluation team has some key recommendations to KUSOED:

- **Continue and strengthen the KU-ECEC partnership**, recognizing it as essential for program quality and growth.
- **Scale up the ECD program** by exploring the development of a Bachelor of ECD degree that integrates pedagogy and management/leadership. To proceed, initiate a comprehensive feasibility study assessing infrastructure, faculty capacity, and resources.
- Institutionalize **KU's annual visits** to ECEC for ongoing quality assurance and joint academic engagement.
- **Enhance curriculum components** focusing on pedagogy stream (those who are going to be teachers), leadership stream (those who are leading ECD), and counselling (those opting counselling). Also, streamline **credit transfer** system.
- Expand **faculty exchanges** and capacity building, especially to support remote centers in the future.
- Improve **financial clarity and support**, including formalizing royalty arrangements and increasing scholarships.
- Integrate partnership programs on the KUSOED **website**.

