ALL THE WORLD’S A STAGE

Shakespeare: *As you like it*
Colophon

J. Walenkamp & J. Beelen (Eds.)
All the world’s a stage
Pilot studies on internationalising higher professional education

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J. Walenkamp & J. Beelen (Eds.)

Research Group International Cooperation
The Hague University of Applied Sciences

The Hague, November 2017
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Preface

Seventeen years ago, Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone* (2000) argued that there was a decline in social capital, especially in “bridging capital” which he defined as the capacity to work across differences. Withdrawal into comfortable enclaves and wariness of others who appear different still persist. Meanwhile, we perceive that public confidence in political and semi-public institutions spirals downward. Civic engagement in our democracy seems to be at stake.

The call to embrace civic learning and democratic engagement – *Bildung* – and to extend that to global issues vis-à-vis *World Citizenship* is an undisputed educational priority for higher education and specially institutions like ours. Professional education is considered as necessary preparation for today’s economy and labour market. But professional education is much more than that.

Take a look at our campuses, physical and virtual, that bring together a wider range of students – across class, gender, religion, nationality and age – than even before in history. As such, THUAS offers an intellectual and public space where it is possible not only to theorise about what education for democratic citizenship might require in a diverse society, but also to rehearse that citizenship daily in the fertile, roiling context of pedagogic inquiry and hands-on experiences.

Problem solving pedagogies are closely aligned with a widespread effort across higher education to involve students more extensively in “real-world” learning, where problem solving can be practiced regularly through such experiences as internships, study abroad, learning labs/living labs, and community-based research and projects. These pedagogies, then, are part of a trend toward better integration of academic and applied learning, and toward giving students many opportunities to expand and demonstrate capacities they will need in civic contexts, at work and in their personal environment.
Internationalisation plays an important role in this pursuit. It can be a means to prepare graduates for life and work in a global market of products, services, and ideas. But besides producing world-conscious graduates and citizenry capable of broad and effective civic engagement, internationalisation can seek to harness institutional research energies for a wide set of purposes including security at home and abroad, and economic, social and cultural development in an increasingly borderless and interdependent world.

By connecting institutions to the global market of ideas, brains, and discovery, internationalisation is not an end but a means to many ends. Like the so-called 21st century skills, internationalisation needs to be embedded in the curriculum: it cannot be taught in splendid isolation! Internationalisation must be integrated into every subject area, so that skills development becomes inseparable from the sharing of knowledge.

Professor Jos Walenkamp and his Research Group International Cooperation have been at the front row of this development. Dr. Walenkamp has made an outstanding contribution to bridging the gap between the theory and practice of internationalisation. The eagerness to better teaching and learning methodologies that scholars and researchers of the Research Group International Cooperation have displayed in the past years is closely related to the idea that teaching should be associated with research in the disciplines, to an evidence-based practice. Critical thinking, inquiry and analysis are important components of the teaching and learning strategies in higher education. Research, practical relevance and internationalisation are the cornerstones of the quality of our education. This book is an excellent example of this educational philosophy and sets the pace to an evidence practice of internationalisation.

Dr. Susana Menéndez
Vice-President for Academic and International Affairs
Executive Board Member
The Hague University of Applied Sciences
INTRODUCTION

All the world’s a stage

JOS WALENKAMP
The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) wants all its students to leave the institution as world citizens, with an active concern for the world, with international competencies and particularly with the 21st century skills that enable them to communicate effectively with people from other cultural backgrounds and enhance their employability.

The Research Group International Cooperation of The Hague University of Applied Sciences aims to contribute to policy development and implementation with regard to the main themes of the institution: Internationalisation and World Citizenship.

Leading this Research Group is the last of the many parts I played in my working life.

**Research on international cooperation at The Hague University of Applied Sciences**

THUAS aims to be the most international university of applied sciences by the year 2020 and to produce graduates who are equipped to live and work in the globalised and multicultural world of the 21st century. In the past we have looked at possible contributions of universities of applied sciences to development cooperation (Gondwe & Walenkamp, 2010; Gondwe, 2010), to the motivation, expertise, experience, language proficiency and international competencies of our lecturers (Walenkamp, 2010) and to the acquisition of international competencies by students going abroad for study or internship (Van den Hoven & Walenkamp, 2013a, b, 2015). We participated in the development of our Internationalisation Policy (THUAS, 2014), which is both goal-oriented with respect to student competencies, and comprehensive, including such items as finances, professionalisation of lecturers, internationalising learning outcomes and curricula, an international campus culture and strategic partnerships.
In the process of internationalising curricula one should keep in mind the wishes and needs of employers and the experience of alumni (Funk et al., 2014a, 2014b; Walenkamp et al., 2015; Wieman, 2015). Foreign knowledge workers are often the fruit of internationalisation of higher education, and they are a boon to our Dutch social and economic development. So we investigated what would entice foreign students to stay here – and what they find less attractive - about The Netherlands, The Hague and our institution (Funk & Walenkamp, 2013; Walenkamp & Funk, 2014).

In 2015 we published a book with our research contributions to the internationalisation of education (Walenkamp (Ed.), 2015). In it there were contributions about students’ experience in Africa by Jantien Belt, English-medium instruction by Joyce den Heijer, a national survey among alumni of universities of applied sciences with regard to internationalisation and employability by Andreas Funk, the wishes and needs of alumni and employers with regard to international competencies by Anneke Wieman, a large survey among some 1,000 young people who went to developing countries for voluntary work or internship by Saskia Rademaker, and the effects of the training in intercultural competencies by Corina Tabacaru.

The traditional internationalisation tool is student mobility, a study period or internship abroad. We have made a study of students who went abroad and what that meant for them acquiring international competencies (Walenkamp & Van den Hoven, 2011; Van den Hoven & Walenkamp 2013a, 2013b, 2015). One of our findings was that students were supposed to do much better in that respect if these learning goals – international competencies - were explicit, if students were adequately prepared, properly guided and were taught how to reflect on experiences and were trained in how to capitalise on the competencies acquired. Although this seems logical and it appears as a statement in various articles (e.g. Deardorff, 2009), not been much research has been done to collect evidence of how students acquire these competencies ‘at home’.

**Developing education: from PREFLEX to TIC-training**

Initially, we developed a training module to prepare students who go abroad, called PREFLEX (Preparing for your Foreign Learning Experience), which includes notes on mentoring and instructions for student self-reflection (Hernández Sanchez & Walenkamp, 2012a,b). This module has been taken up by several departments of THUAS and adapted to their own tastes and students (e.g. I-Start in the department of European Studies). THUAS means to have all students who go abroad in their third year follow this course. This will give opportunities to study the effects of this, and similar, training modules.

Now, the vast majority of our students do not go abroad for study or internship. Internationalisation at home (I@H) is therefore the norm, if we wish to include all students. There are fortunately ten international courses at THUAS, i.e. classes with both international and domestic Dutch students, who are taught in English, and over half of our students have variant non-Dutch cultural backgrounds. The use we can make of those assets is the topic of the bulk of this contribution.
Together with a number of lecturers and in cooperation with the Research Group Citizenship and Diversity we developed, from the PREFLEX module, the Training in Intercultural Competencies (TIC) both for international classrooms and for culturally diverse Dutch groups (Belt et al., 2017).

The TIC-training has been developed to teach students how to make use of encounters with others to acquire intercultural competencies. The aim is to make students aware of this goal, and to give them tools to reach it. They receive theoretical knowledge on cultural differences, different world views and the complexity of the concept ‘culture’. We also practice in handling intercultural incidents, role play, case studies and infographics. Students are made aware of their own cultural background and learn to reflect on their own role in intercultural encounters.

**Researching the effects of the TIC-training**

Since 2013 we have been investigating the effectiveness of those training modules and we have been improving them. The aim is that in the coming years all first year students will receive the TIC-training. In 2015, we published the findings of our research in the academic year 2013-2014 (Belt et al., 2015). In this contribution I shall give a first impression of our findings in the two subsequent academic years, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. The full report will appear later under the authorship of all researchers concerned, including Jantien Belt, Baukje Prins, Corina Tabacaru and Jumi van der Velde.

In the academic year 2014-2015 we studied two first year classes of International Business and Management Studies (IBMS), during the first semester, and two first year multicultural Dutch classes of Marketing and Commerce (*Commerciële Economie*, CE). Each time one international and one multicultural Dutch class received the TIC-training, the test group, and the other not, the control group. Similarly, we looked at two first year international classes during the first semester of the academic year 2015-2016, and two first year multicultural Dutch classes during the second semester. That year the international classes were of International Public Management (IPM) and the Dutch classes were of the faculty Social Work and Education: one class of the course for Social Work and Assistance (MWD) and one of the course for Socio-Pedagogical Aid (SPH). We wanted to investigate to what extent the students developed intercultural competencies by being and working together, and what the added value is of following the TIC-training.
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Table 1: Distribution of test and control groups

**Research methodology**

The assessment of intercultural development of the students was done by a combination of methods: class observations, semi-structured interviews, 360-degrees feedback, critical self-reflection by the students and focus groups. In 2015-2016 we added a quantitative pre- and post-test with 62 statements about intercultural competencies.

Both the test groups and the control groups were asked, at the end of the semester, to return a set of 360-degrees feedback forms, filled out by people who were supposed to be able to judge their progress: family, friends, lecturers and colleagues. The students were also requested to make a portfolio of their experiences and to reflect on their development. As will be explained in the full report, the results of the assessment by means of 360-degrees feedback and critical self-reflection reports were disappointing, both because of practical set-backs and because little could be gleaned from the portfolio’s and reflection reports. So the findings are mainly based on class observations, which gave a flavour of the group dynamics and a choice of students to be interviewed, and on interviews and focus groups.

**Reception of the TIC-training by students**

The training was appreciated most by students of the international classrooms. Many students were able to reproduce several theoretical concepts, such as the definition of intercultural competencies, high- and low-context communication styles, and aspects of non-verbal communication. Students indicated that they enjoyed the games (e.g. ‘Barnga’ during the kick-off, the role-plays, the group discussions about cases) and appreciated acquiring more knowledge about other, especially Asian, cultures. The ‘Cross the Line’ game’ was inserted in the programme of IPM, on the suggestion of one of the students. It made a lasting impression on several students.

A Surinamese-Dutch young man, who did not see racism as a big issue himself, for instance, vividly recalled how the class got divided in responding to the question: “Did you ever experience racism?” ‘All white people’, he remembered, ‘stood on the side of ‘no’, all people of colour on the side of ‘yes’. I was a bit in the middle, but anyway’.
Several students also remarked that TIC helped to improve classroom dynamics, because it helped them getting to know each other better. Several IBMS students for instance found the half-day kick-off a good opportunity to get to know classmates, one of them even added: ‘That’s why we are such a nice group!’ And according to a student from the IPM class ‘You get to know other people better and what they think about certain things, stereotypes and sexuality and such. It was pretty good’.

Moreover, several students said that the TIC-training had helped them to become more open-minded. It had made them more aware of the existence of cultural differences and of the need to deal with them effectively. Some native Dutch students also mentioned that they had become more aware of the particularity of their own - white or western - perspectives. This in spite of the fact that most students considered themselves to be already fairly culturally competent before the start of the training, due to the culturally diverse environment many of them grew up in or came into contact with. The three Chinese students from IBMS especially appreciated the theoretical models that were presented in the course, as these enabled them to explain and interpret intercultural situations consciously.

The results of the pre- and post-tests show that the TIC-training has had a positive effect on the IPM students in the sense that they have less difficulties with coping in an environment with people from different cultures.

Various students mentioned points for improvement and missed opportunities. For instance, the TIC-training was sometimes perceived to be time-consuming, while opportunities to discuss more cases on Asia, South-America and developing countries were often overlooked. A further point for improvement would be to incorporate guest lectures by professionals with international experience, excursions to international companies and presentations given by students.

During the course, some native Dutch students showed signs of irritation or frustration, questioning the use of the course. But the students of the international classes generally found the TIC-training necessary and useful.

**Outcomes in Dutch medium groups**

The test groups of the Dutch classes were less receptive towards the training and less positive about the learning outcomes. They generally thought they had learned little. They considered themselves interculturally competent, because they felt they had already learned to interact with fellows from different cultures during secondary and primary education. The students reacted more negatively to the delivery of the theory, but were at times interested in joint activities. Teaching the TIC-module was at times heavy going in these groups, with disturbances, signs of disinterest and distraction, and even resistance and absenteeism. The delivery of the TIC-training should probably be different for groups of students who are less intellectually oriented: approaching the theory and concepts through practical exercises.
The above mentioned findings have been confirmed by the results of the pre- and post-tests in the 2015-2016 study: after the TIC-training the level of intercultural competence of the MWD-students had not risen at any aspect.

Comparing outcomes across test and control groups

To gauge the added value of the TIC-training in acquiring intercultural competencies, we also looked at the control groups. Interviews were the main source of information.

In the international classroom of IBMS, students indicated that they learned about some aspects of the cultures of their international classmates, and different kinds of behaviour of different nationalities. When addressing differences between cultures, the majority of the interviewees focused on easily discernible differences, such as differences in cuisine, or the specific export products of a particular country. Many students also were inclined to make generalising comments, often on the peculiarity of Chinese students. Thus in one student’s words, Chinese people were fundamentally different, which made it difficult for him to get along with them.

Students from the control group of IPM were also quite positive and articulate about what they had learned from participating in an international classroom. The three non-Muslim students we interviewed all claimed they had become more knowledgeable and more appreciative of Muslims. More in general some students mentioned that they had come to realise that their perspective on the world was not the only one.

Students from the test group IBMS demonstrated a deeper level of learning and reflection than their fellow students in the control group. Whether this difference was due to them having followed the TIC-training or to other factors, cannot be said with certainty. But it was remarkable how most of the interviewees from the IBMS test group expressed an eagerness to understand each other and explain their cultural background to others. Besides striving for mutual understanding, some students also mentioned listening and observing as effective ways of behaving in intercultural encounters. One Turkish-Dutch student for instance said that since he became part of the international classroom he had learned that being enthusiastic and asking a lot of questions was not always a good approach when interacting with classmates from different parts of the world. He now forced himself to listen more and interrupt less.

The six interviewees from the IPM test group were far less outspoken about what they had learned from being part of an international classroom outside the TIC training. Only an international student from the Caribbean St. Maarten, claimed that it had really changed him: “I feel more humble, more able to connect to different cultures, different people”. The results of the pre- and post-tests do not show any growth in intercultural competence either.

In the Dutch classes a more reluctant attitude towards diversity and intercultural learning came to the fore, which, remarkably, seemed more the case with native Dutch students from the test groups, who had participated in the TIC-training, than with students from the control groups. Thus, in the Marketing and Commerce control group there were students who
claimed that their horizon had widened significantly since their participation in a multicultural classroom.

A female student of the control group SPH, considered herself to be already open-minded because of her immigrant background. As she had been used to a multicultural environment before, she did not think her class had changed this. This is confirmed by the pre- and post-tests, which do not show any change in intercultural competence with regard to SPH-students.

Generally, the majority of the interviewees explicitly expressed they had learned from their international or multicultural classroom. Nevertheless, the depth of the learning experiences varied. Students from both IBMS classes and from the IPM control group indicated that they had learned a lot from their international peers. But, whereas students from the IBMS control group did not go beyond noticing the most obvious differences, students from the IBMS test and IPM control group indicated that they had learned to look at more fundamental aspects, such as differences in norms and values, being more aware of the significance of different perspectives, and the impact of stereotypes. In the interviews, these students were more often focused on really understanding the other, and on responding in accordance with that. Students from the IPM test group on the other hand had little to offer when asked about the impact of being part of an international classroom.

By contrast, several native Dutch students, especially from Marketing and Commerce, were either neutral or more negative about what they learned from being in a multicultural classroom. One native Dutch Marketing and Commerce student firmly denied having learned anything, another Marketing and Commerce student reported that when working with students of an immigrant background she had learned to be more assertive. And although a third native Dutch Marketing and Commerce student admitted that she had had to give up some of her preconceived opinions, in general her attitude towards students with an immigrant background had not changed in the past year. One native Dutch MWD student said it was not a conscious or unconscious goal for her to learn from others, but on the other hand: talking to each other had helped her in doing so.

**The effects in Marketing and Commerce groups**

Hence, for the native Dutch students we spoke to, being part of a Dutch multicultural classroom or following the TIC-training had not contributed much to creating more understanding for students from another culture on a deeper level.

Although the filled-out 360-degrees feedback forms indicate improvements in the Marketing and Commerce test group, the interviews did not show such an improvement. The students indicated that their attitude generally had not changed much. “It was already good”. They did learn something about other cultures and their own culture from the TIC classes – called IC there, but there does not appear to be any improvement in behaviour or effectiveness of communication.
The students interviewed did not use the words ‘allochtoon’ (immigrant background) or ‘autochtoon’ (native Dutch background). Rather, they referred to each other as Dutch – or pure Dutch –, Turkish, Moroccan or Surinamese, although they almost all have the Dutch nationality. They did not consider cultural differences at all important. If there are tensions they considered that these are related to personalities or language proficiency. Prejudice was very rare, except for instances where some students had had a bad experience with ‘Moroccans’.

The students interviewed considered the atmosphere in the Marketing and Commerce class very good in the beginning, because all students were new. The rearrangement of the class at the end of the first semester led to the formation of subgroups to the detriment of the general atmosphere. After some weeks in the second semester things got better again. Generally, there are few if any social contacts with classmates outside school hours.

The IC classes were appreciated, but not highly. The effect of team building was viewed positively. The IC classes were not considered a ‘real course’, as there were no tests. The teaching in English was considered useful and not very problematic, mainly because interaction could be done in Dutch. English should – in their opinion - be taught as it is important in the job, but preferably not in the ‘real courses’, because of limited interaction, and difficulties with concentration and with being able to follow the train of thought of the lecturers.

With regard to attitude, some students indicated that they had prejudices against other students not from the same group, but that they had learned that these other groups are not so different from them after all.

English proficiency improved slightly in some students; not at all in others.

**Group dynamics and atmosphere**

We also looked at the group dynamics in the four groups. While the group dynamics in the international IBMS test group was more open, harmonious and inclusive than in the IBMS control group, the opposite was the case for the two IPM classes. Whether the difference between the IBMS classes was -only- due to the fact that the students of the test group had received the TIC-training at the beginning of the semester and the students of the control group had not, cannot be concluded decisively. The more even balance between international (11) and Dutch students (14) in the test group, as compared to the composition of the control group (6 international and 17 Dutch students), may also have been an important factor. On the other hand, several students from the test group emphasised how the kick-off session of the TIC-training had provided the basis for the harmonious and open atmosphere in class. During this four hour meeting, much attention was given to building trust and creating a positive learning atmosphere among students and facilitators. The students indicated that they had gotten the opportunity to know one another better, to become more aware of the cultural diversity in the classroom, and to define their personal learning goals in the area of intercultural competencies (see for a more extensive discussion: Tabacaru, 2015). In both IPM classes, however, Dutch speaking students were in the majority, and the atmosphere
in the IPM control group was significantly better than in the test group. So a more balanced group composition does not always appear to be decisive.

**Group dynamics in Marketing and Commerce classes**

According to most students in both Marketing and Commerce classes the general atmosphere was ‘okay’. It should be noted that the test and control classes had only been formed at the start of the second semester, as a fusion of various classes, caused by a large dropout rate during the first semester. As a consequence, many students were new to each other and those who were interviewed agreed that in their previous class, relationships had been better. They had been closer and more supportive toward each other, while now the class remained split up in various groups that already knew each other from the previous half year. Some native Dutch students in the initial Marketing and Commerce control class even explicitly noted a clear group division between the native Dutch and the ‘foreigners’. Of the six project groups in this class, indeed four were homogenous with respect to gender and ethnicity (three all-male native Dutch, one all-female native Dutch). Of the two mixed groups, one consisted of five students with mixed background: two Surinamese-Dutch boys, a Dutch boy, a Serbian-Dutch girl, and an Armenian-Dutch boy. The other consisted of a native Dutch girl and Surinamese-Dutch boy, who were both perceived by the other students as misfits, ‘acting stupidly’.

Although the overall atmosphere in both Marketing and Commerce classes was experienced as ‘okay’, this harmonious image changed when we got to talk about what happened in the smaller project groups, where students are required to work together on a joint project. Here it appeared to be more difficult to iron out mutual differences. This appeared to be not only the case in the project groups of the Dutch Marketing and Commerce classes, but also in the international project groups of IBMS.

**Hidden tensions**

Thus, in one of the project groups of the IBMS test group, a Chinese student was accused by the other group members of a lack of commitment and of delivering insufficient work. She, however, had the feeling that her fellow students did not like her, and she found their way of communicating with her simply unacceptable. In the IBMS control group, a similar rift came to the fore in a project group where two male students (with an Estonian and a Nigerian-Dutch background) showed themselves to be very satisfied with the way they managed the group work, without being aware that two other members (a Chinese-Dutch and a Bolivian-Aruban woman) were actually very angry and frustrated about the way they behaved, calling them ‘know-it-alls’ and ‘annoying’.

Many students talked about – hidden - tensions and conflicts, but the majority were inclined to deny that cultural differences caused these tensions. They rather blamed them on individual characteristics like personality, attitude, an unwillingness to work hard, attend lectures, or on poor English. The majority of the students from the control class in IBMS reported that they learned from experiences in their project group and that they would not work again with students whom they deemed to be ‘uncooperative’ or ‘incompetent’. They had dealt with it by taking over the tasks of these students or excluding them from further tasks. None of
them had asked the lecturer for help to solve this problem in the cooperation process. None of the interviewed students reflected on what they themselves could have done differently.

Even when explicitly asked whether differences in cultural background might have anything to do with these conflicts and tensions, the majority of students firmly denied that this was the case. They rather blamed such tensions on differences in personality. But sometimes some reflection appeared to be helpful.

**A case from the TIC training**

In one specific case, the TIC-training appeared to have been particularly helpful, as became clear from one of the intercultural biographies written by name, a student born and raised in the Netherlands, with parents from Indonesia, about her contact with Juna, an international student from Indonesia.

> Before I went to IBMS [...] I never thought I would come across intercultural difficulties because I thought I was interculturally competent. But the first day already, I came across an intercultural difficulty with my classmate, Juna [not her real name, JW], who is also Indonesian. Never did I think that we, out of all the students, could have intercultural difficulties.

> We were both looking for the right classroom and we were lost. We searched together for the classroom and sat next to each other. I thought, because of the fact that she is Indonesian, that we probably had the same interests. I began talking, asking questions, talking about myself, about The Netherlands, the differences, trying different subjects. But she looked very uninterested. She kept playing on her phone while I was waiting until she answered me or asked me any questions.
At the end of that class I felt very upset because she wasn’t being social to me and I couldn’t understand why she was so uninterested. For quite a few days, I walked around with the thought that she was so mean and arrogant. I just didn’t understand what I did wrong. I asked my parents and they explained to me that Indonesian people that are a little above middle class in Indonesia are ‘sombong’, which means arrogant in Indonesia. For me it didn’t feel as a good explanation for why she acted like this.

A week later, in class for Intercultural Competence we read a case about a Dutch student on Internship in Jakarta. Ms. Tabacaru asked Alfie and Juna (both international students from Indonesia) what the student had done wrong. They said that they considered the Dutch student arrogant because she talked a lot about herself […]. It finally hit me: my issue with Juna wasn’t her fault, it was mine. I have now learned that ‘I’ in the eyes of Indonesians was too arrogant and I talked and asked too much. I shouldn’t have been so direct and asked all these questions at once. I should have listened more carefully and given her the time to get to know me because she comes from a high-context culture. That day I realised that I was more low-context than I thought. Having this intercultural difficulty with someone from the same country as me, really opened my eyes. We are both Indonesians but we have big intercultural differences. The days after that class I took the time to slowly get to know Juna more. We are now good friends and I’m glad things worked out, with time.

Whatever the reason Juna reacted in a different way than the Indonesian-Dutch student had expected, it is important that she was not satisfied with blaming Juna for her own disappointment. What is more, she found a way, with the help of the TIC-training, to make sense of the situation by becoming more sensitive to differences between her own background and Juna’s. By showing adaptability to Juna’s different communication style and adjusting her own way of communicating accordingly, she showed clear signs of the ‘desired internal and external outcomes’.

Overall, in all classes there were some project groups in which – hidden - tensions occurred. It seems that what many cases have in common is the gap between students who speak their mind, are blunt in their judgments of the work of others, which they have learned is the way to give constructive feedback, and students who feel offended and injured by that, but keep silent about this – and thus the ‘speak your mind’ attitude of their fellow students is not challenged or questioned. This dynamic is enforced further because the teachers too are first and foremost intent on the group getting their work done.

**Group dynamics and Chinese students**

Chinese students stood out as having a particularly difficult time during group work. These problems of and with Chinese students in project groups support our earlier findings in the pilot study (Belt et al., 2015). On the one hand, non-Chinese group members accuse Chinese students of a lack of commitment or insufficient knowledge of English, and consequently give them fewer tasks or exclude them altogether from certain activities. On the other hand,
the Chinese students claim they are committed but that they have difficulties with understanding and speaking English, with adapting to the new learning environment and with the direct communication style of their group members. These problems have been pointed out in other research projects as well (Biemans & Mill, 2008; Severs, 2010).

Nathalie Schwan and Annelies Oudshoorn will go deeper into these problems in their contributions to this volume. Nathalie Schwan on the specific background and problems of Chinese students and Annelies Oudshoorn on differences in conflict resolution styles between Chinese and Dutch students. Their studies stress the importance of a bigger role of lecturers and mentors, particularly in guiding group work.

Besides these challenges, it should be stressed that each year there are also Chinese international students who do well in Dutch higher education. In the IBMS classes that we observed for this project, two Chinese students were for instance quite successful. Both students were fluent in English and at least one of them had already lived abroad. They interacted with non-Chinese students without any hesitation and seemed to perform well in the project groups.

**Group dynamics in the control groups**

Concerning the group dynamics in the control groups - both the international IBMS and Dutch Marketing and Commerce classrooms - the overall atmosphere was less positive than in the IBMS and Marketing and Commerce test groups and more – hidden - tensions were reported. Furthermore, in both control groups a division based on gender was visible. In addition, there was also a dividing line between the Dutch (both native and immigrant background) students on the one hand and the international students on the other in an international classroom. A similar dividing line could be observed between native Dutch and immigrant background students in Dutch classrooms. In the IBMS control group the gender and linguistic lines between Dutch and non-Dutch speakers became more apparent every week. Remarkably, these lines were almost absent in the IBMS test group. It is likely that the TIC-training contributed to that through the constantly changing seating arrangement, since this was facilitated by the trainer.

**Group dynamics between immigrant background and native Dutch and international students**

The position of Dutch immigrant background students is ambiguous. These students were perceived as Dutch by native Dutch students in an international classroom. However, in the Dutch classroom, Dutch immigrant background students were regarded as foreigners or *allochthones*. It seems that these students have a flexibly perceived identity depending on the context.

When it came to project group dynamics, most native Dutch students were unaware of the frustration of their fellow students. They tacitly assumed that their fellow students understood them or were satisfied. Implicitly, they imposed their standards - ‘*get the job done*’ or ‘*less talking*’ - on their fellow students, which they justified by the assumptions that this was the correct way of working together. It is likely, that these students were unaware of the differences in communications styles.
Finally, most of the native Dutch interviewees felt uncomfortable to stress the immigrant or international background of their fellow students. It is likely that students wish to be politically correct, and that it is therefore a taboo to address intercultural differences. If so, opportunities to achieve a deeper understanding and dialogue in an intercultural and international classroom might be missed.

**Overall conclusion**

All in all the TIC-training appears to have a moderately positive effect on intercultural competencies and groups dynamics. This effect is strongest in students who are already positively inclined to international and intercultural cooperation. Extensive attention to the students getting to know one another and active guidance by the lecturers, e.g. in frequently changing seating arrangements in working groups, enhance the class atmosphere and intercultural learning.

**Steps forward**

It is very clear that much more can be achieved in both international and in multicultural Dutch classrooms by a more active role of the lecturers in guiding the working groups, particularly where it concerns the process of working together – rather than the results, the resolution of conflicts, even though they are hidden from superficial observation, enhancing the awareness of different views, communication styles and linguistic difficulties, and in training students to really look and listen, to reflect on what they see and hear and learn from that. In this way working together will improve intercultural competences, which in turn will improve working together, both in an international and in a Dutch classroom.

**Recent studies in international cooperation**

In this volume we present a number of other pilot studies, which point the way to further research supporting the implementation of our internationalisation policy.

As mentioned earlier, Annelies Oudshoorn and Nathalie Schwan investigated the particular challenges of Chinese students, calling for extra attention by lecturers and supporting staff.

In our TIC studies, we found that having students collaborate in working groups is a common practice. We also found that the assignments, the guidance and the assessments are usually not geared to learning how to work as a team. And that working in groups in an international classroom or in a culturally diverse Dutch class was not used to make students acquire intercultural competencies from and with one another.

These findings agreed with those of Miranda de Hei in her PhD dissertation *Collaborative learning in higher education*, albeit not in international classrooms (De Hei, 2016). So we then joined forces, and Miranda and Corina Tabacaru looked at collaborative learning for the acquisition of intercultural competencies in international classrooms under the guidance of lecturers who were especially trained in collaborative learning processes.
From the research in English-medium instruction (Den Heijer, 2015) it transpired that it comes with several problems, such as diminished interaction, more time needed for preparation by both students and lecturers and loss of content. The solution of CLIL, content and language integrated learning, which in The Netherlands has been developed for secondary schools, was adapted for higher education by Rosie Tanner and taught to a number of lecturers by Marloes Ambagts.

Lilian Völker, Serhan Sadikoglu and Jennifer Steers compared classes, in which Dutch lecturers taught Dutch students in English, and international classes where most lecturers and students used English as a second language, both using CLIL, with similar classes where teaching and learning happened in the traditional way. Their report highlights the difficulties this kind of research encounters and how to overcome them.

Each year the Research Centre for Education and Labour Market (ROA), under the auspices of the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (VH), publishes the HBO-Monitor, the results of a survey among alumni of universities of applied sciences. In this monitor, THUAS has a special set of questions on internationalisation. Andreas Funk takes a philosopher’s look at the changes over the years, which will be particularly interesting when our internationalisation policy is fully implemented.

Students with an immigration background, mainly, but certainly not exclusively, with Moroccan and Turkish forebears, have more difficulties on the job market than students with traditional Dutch names. Yet we believe that those students have something extra that can make them especially valuable in this increasingly globalised and multicultural world. The population of The Hague is ‘super-diverse’ (Vertovec, 2007), so all our graduates, whether they studied law, nursing, teaching, social work, engineering, marketing, dietetics or other disciplines, will be working with clients and colleagues of various cultural backgrounds. Being bicultural, i.e. being comfortable with both the Dutch and the home culture, will presumably give graduates experiences, insights and empathy that mono-cultural workers have a harder time to acquire.

Two capable and ambitious students, one a Master student at the University of Utrecht, Jaël Lenders, and one of our own IPM (International Public Management) students, Shyvonne Henry, have looked into the presumed advantages of biculturalism. Are they there, are students and lecturers aware of them, are graduates able to use them in getting a job and making a career, do THUAS lecturers play a role here and how could curricula be adapted to this issue were all part of their pilot study.

Through participatory action research, Jos Beelen looks into the courses that are being developed within THUAS for the lecturers who are to implement the policies on internationalisation and world citizenship, starting with the internationalisation of the learning outcomes and curricula of all disciplines. He also gives further insight in the various contexts, in which internationalisation occurs, and at the blockers and enablers that play a role when trying to internationalise education.
The central role of the lecturers is finally getting the attention it deserves. Internationalisation policies cannot in any way be implemented without lecturers. The four research groups of the universities of applied sciences of Rotterdam, Zuyd, Stenden and The Hague, which deal with internationalisation in higher education, have formed a Centre of Expertise, together with representatives of the universities of applied sciences of Amsterdam and Groningen and the Nuffic. On 19 and 20 September 2017, we hosted an international conference on the role and professionalisation of lecturers: ‘The missing link – Professional development of lecturers’. The proceedings will be published next year.

I hope this book will arouse your interest in research on internationalisation of higher education. The Research Group International Cooperation will cease to exist at THUAS by the end of 2017. The work will continue in the new Research Group Global Learning under the guidance of Jos Beelen, who was also a great help in editing this volume. I wish him and all colleagues at THUAS every success with this valuable and interesting work.

Jos Walenkamp
The Hague, November 2017
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Challenges for international students studying at The Hague University of Applied Sciences:

The case of Chinese students
Context

Significant changes have been taking place in higher education internationally and in The Netherlands. These changes include further internationalisation of the students and staff population and hence, a wider diversity in students’ previous educational background. The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) is no exception, and has both witnessed and aimed for the enrolment of an increasing number of international students in many of its bachelor and master programmes. In the 2014 Institutional Strategic Plan “Global Citizens in a Learning Society”, The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) states the ambition to be the most international institution of its kind in The Netherlands by 2020. The justification for this aim is given in the 2014 Annual Report:

Internationalisation is one of the strategic priority themes that The Hague University of Applied Sciences has adopted. It wants to prepare its students for the international employment market. With this in mind, it is important for students to develop specific knowledge and skills. This can be achieved via exchange programmes and international classrooms, for example.

In the same document, this is further elaborated:

Today, every profession involves collaboration with colleagues from different cultures and activities are carried out in a number of different countries. It is important that students are prepared for this situation. With the above in mind, The Hague University of Applied Sciences ensures that students gain experience, practise intercultural skills and develop international competencies. Students are able to gain these competencies in many different ways. They are, for example, able to choose to undertake (part of) their studies abroad. Another option is to attract foreign students to The Hague University of Applied Sciences, thereby realizing an international classroom. In this way, The Hague University of Applied Sciences enables students to work on their international competencies if they do not wish to go abroad or are unable to do so. (The Hague University of Applied Sciences, Annual Report 2014)
For some years now, Chinese students constitute the largest group of international students at THUAS. The Netherlands have become an attractive option for Chinese students, since studying at a Dutch university is much cheaper than in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia or New Zealand and there is a wide variety of English spoken BA and MA Programs at Dutch universities. At THUAS, international students can now enrol 10 different BA and 3 Master Programmes\(^1\).

Chinese students are faced with a higher language barrier and a wider socio-cultural gap than their fellow international students with a European or otherwise western linguistic and socio-cultural background. For a significant percentage of the Chinese students, these obstacles turn out to be impediments to finish their degree successfully and return home with a diploma and a satisfactory study abroad experience. Rough estimations made by the Prep School tell us that approximately 50 percent of the students that register as a first-year student, do not finish a bachelor’s programme successfully, and leave THUAS without a diploma. Although this is rather a high percentage, it does not diverge significantly from the numbers known for Dutch or other international students. THUAS, on the other hand, benefits from successful and satisfied (international) students: they attract new international students, project the reputation of the university, are effective ambassadors of the institution abroad and represent a core contribution to the dynamic of international classrooms. For that matter, it seems important for both Chinese students at THUAS and THUAS as an institution to gain insight into the nature of these obstacles.

It is the aim of this study to chart which obstacles are encountered and hence have to be taken into account for THUAS to optimise the academic performance and study abroad experience of its international students.

Soon after Chinese students started to enrol at British, American, Australian and New Zealand universities, specialists in educational psychology, language learning and intercultural communication have tried to gain insight in the issues involved with the participation of Chinese students at western universities. Until recently, research centred mainly on the differences in (culturally determined) learning styles and on problems related to second language learning. A relatively new approach advocates a focus on interpersonal, communicative and academic skills as well.

**Learning style**

Ever since research on Chinese students at western universities started, differences in learning style have been a major point of attention. Numerous publications contrast the Chinese students with their western counterparts regarding their learning conceptions and practice,


**Master Programmes:** in International Communication Management, Financial Management and Control and in Business Administration.
giving rise to the construction of the following stereotype of the mainland Chinese student: he (or she) is characterised by a heavy reliance on memorisation, a reluctance to speak up or give his opinion, a lack of critical thinking, an unquestionable respect for the authority of the teacher and he or she has the expectation to be spoon-fed (Durkin, cited in: Wu, 2015; Jian, 2009). Anthropologists Hansen and Thøgersen elaborate on possible consequences of the stereotyping of Chinese students: “...it is significant for Chinese students abroad because they face social environments in which they are often understood primarily in terms of their group membership as Chinese. Prior to the arrival of the individual migrant to his or her foreign destination, the national, cultural and ethnic categories that the migrant is seen to embody have already been imbued with certain characteristics by the inhabitants of the destination country. Accordingly, the Chinese abroad are often treated as representative of China and of ‘Chinese-ness’, so their actions and behaviour are apprehended as ‘typically Chinese’. This symbolic construct can have far reaching consequences for the individual’s behaviour and relations in a group” (Hansen & Thøgersen 2015, p. 7).

These reflections on the workings of stereotypes can be transposed to the Chinese students and the THUAS community. For the purpose of this research, two consequences stand out that justify a critical look at the stereotype. First, the stereotype does not take into account what Biggs coined the ‘paradox of the Chinese learner’. He referred to the fact that, despite their apparently poor learning strategies, Chinese learners tend to achieve considerably higher levels than their western counterparts in, for example, mathematics and science (Biggs, 1992; Watkins & Biggs, 1996; HingWa Sit, 2013; Kee-Kuo Wong, 2004). Biggs sustains that memorisation and reproduction might be less opposed to, or might even be part of the same continuum towards deeper understanding. As he succinctly explains on his website: “The answer to the paradox is complex. Meaningful or deep memorisation, based on reflective repetition, is an important strategy in learning anything complex and this is a strategy used a lot in Asian teaching” (Biggs, n. d.).

Second, the stereotype does not consider the possibility of evolution of the learning style and behaviour of Chinese students as they study at western universities. Recent research (Biggs, 1996; Marginson, 2014; Wu, 2015) highlights the non-static nature of learning styles: quite a number of Chinese students at western universities seem capable to adapt to and to adopt new learning styles in a new academic context: the relationship between students’ learning and their changed learning environment is dynamic.

The topic has also been studied in The Netherlands. Biemans and Van Mil (2008) investigated the differences in learning styles between Dutch and Chinese students enrolled at Wageningen University. They concluded that the Chinese students showed evidence of a reproduction-directed learning style. “Apparently, memorisation is seen as a way to understand the material. This supports the conclusion reached by Watkins and Biggs (1996) that Chinese students use memorisation strategies...as a first step towards understanding. Chinese students do not experience memorising and understanding as opposite poles...but as phenomena that are closely interwoven” (Biemans & Van Mil, 2008, 274). They also found that the Chinese students had a “significantly stronger test-directed orientation ” (Ibid.). However, the learning results of their research population turned out to be poor and
led them to advocate to build in a transition phase to prepare the Chinese students— in The Netherlands— to succeed prior to entering the Dutch programme (Ibid., p. 275). They consider this a plausible solution, because previous research has indicated that “by changing the learning environment... it is possible to change the strategies students use” (Ibid., p. 276), hence subscribing to the non-static nature of learning styles.

**English language proficiency**
The second area of attention when studying the performance of Chinese mainland students at English spoken western universities, is their English proficiency. Fluency in English, the language of instruction and the common language with their peers, greatly helps to do well academically and socially. Many Chinese students arrive in their new country with an insufficient command of English. This limits their learning experiences and may bring about insecurity, not only in academic settings but also in the domain of socialising. In class, it can be (very) hard to follow the lecturer, to ask questions or to answer them or to participate in discussions. Outside of class, it becomes more difficult to make new (non-Chinese) friends. In both senses, the limited language proficiency reduces their social presence (Lam & Tu, cited in: Severs, 2010, p. 15). The lack of communication competence, partly due to outdated teaching methods in China, is noticeable (Han, 2013).

In comparison to their western counterparts, Chinese students start with a disadvantage, both in class and outside of class. They often feel upset for not mastering the language, a feeling that tends to make them fearful of communicating with native speakers, causing in turn feelings of frustration, anxiety and embarrassment (Li, Fox, & Almarza, 2007). The lack of practice and confidence are important obstacles. So is the fact that Chinese students do not have the same amount of exposure to English entertainment (internet, television, movies, music) and/or information. To be surrounded by English speaking people is often a completely new experience. Besides, their western peers tend to adopt elements of the (colloquial) language spoken in this type of entertainment. This language, usually a type of slang, is often considered “cool” and can as such be considered an asset when trying to make new friends in an international environment.

Once starting their studies abroad, Chinese students also often perceive a great distance between their previous knowledge (more formal English) and the more informal English spoken in American (or for this case, at THUAS) life. The problem consists of having learned at home a context-less, “standard” English that could be used anywhere (but is used nowhere). Besides, learning English in an environment that precludes much contact with spoken English can produce an additional challenge in the pronunciation. Not being as good at making word/sound connections in English as native speakers (or more experienced speakers), they often cannot react to the English sounds as promptly as they would do in their own language (Li, Fox, & Almarza, 2007). Another difficulty tends to be the regional accent-varieties of the different lecturers.

Cultural differences can also interfere once papers have to be written and arguments made. Where Anglo-Saxons value beginning their messages with the conclusion (in a more linear, deductive approach to writing), because it is direct and efficient, for some Asian cultures
it can be “rude” to begin their communication by stating what they want and they prefer instead of arriving at their conclusion in a more circular, inductive way (Li et al., 2007). These differences, deeply rooted in culture, have consequences for the way people organise their writing.

Finally, the relationship between students´ IELTS\(^2\) results and their academic performance is examined, given the fact that lecturers – also at THUAS – frequently find students´ language abilities one of the key obstacles in learning and teaching activities. This is also the case with the Chinese students (Yen & Kuzma, 2009).

**Interpersonal academic skills**

More recently, a third perspective came to the fore, focusing on interpersonal academic skills. Rosanne Severs (2010), while researching the factors of success of Chinese students at Dutch universities, argues the importance of the development of intercultural competences in order to strengthen Chinese students´ interpersonal academic skills. She affirms that students are assessed through a set of academic skills: presenting, debating, paper writing, interactive attitude in class, asking and responding to questions, teamwork. In particular, these interpersonal (communicative) academic skills, taken for granted at Dutch universities from their (Dutch) students, turned out to be difficult for Chinese students studying in the Netherlands, due to their educational and closely related cultural background. Severs concluded that Chinese students would benefit considerably from the further development of intercultural competences in order to feel more secure and perform better abroad in these interpersonal academic skills.

Before Severs published her study, Long et al. (2009) had already put emphasis on the importance of intercultural competences when studying abroad successfully. They found that intercultural communication self-efficacy is related to higher academic performance, less experience of difficulties and more satisfaction with life. They further add that the mastery of English helps and that intercultural competences and emotional stability, have a positive impact on their academic performance and wellbeing while studying abroad.

The different approaches represent three disciplinary angles: (1) education psychology, (2) linguistics and language teaching and (3) intercultural communication. This research sets out to discover which are the main obstacles for Chinese students at THUAS, and hence, in which of the three disciplines we should look for solutions in order to increase the number of Chinese students that leave THUAS with a degree. A deeper understanding of these obstacles and the strategies that successful students apply, can provide us with meaningful information for the development of good practices in the internationalisation of higher education, not only for the Chinese students at THUAS, but for the international students and for the international classroom in general.

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\(^2\) IELTS: International English Language Testing System, the widely accepted means of assessing students´ command of English. An average score of 6.0 (for speaking, reading, writing and listening skills) is generally accepted as an entry requirement for higher education.
Methodological remarks and structure of the narrative

Besides desk research, the findings presented here are based on two focus groups, one held at the beginning of the study and the other held at the end to present the draft findings to a group of staff members, and one student. Additionally, 10 semi-structured, in-depth interviews were held with Chinese students at THUAS, from different programmes and different years. For privacy reasons, the students quoted in this research have fictitious names. Their real names are known to me. At the moment of interviewing, two of them were first year students, while the other eight were more advanced students (second, third and fourth year), who for that reason can be considered successful students. This fact may have coloured (more positively) the perception of their experiences. For the purpose of this research, I will refer to Chinese students as those students who had a Chinese prior education on the mainland, as they can be expected to share a common educational, sociocultural and linguistic background. However, the findings of this research may also be applicable, although to varying extent, to all international students at The Hague University. Further, 14 semi structured interviews were held with staff members, most of them lecturers.

My findings are structured as a trajectory: the information yielded by the desk research and the data of the interviews appeared to acquire a significantly deeper meaning when placed in the context of students’ previous educational experiences and their socio-cultural background. Therefore, I opted for tracking the trajectory of the international Chinese students from their Chinese primary school until their bachelor programme at THUAS. I will enrich this approach by incorporating the voice of staff members. The points of view articulated by the students will be the central axis of my analysis. I incorporated the voices of staff members according to their degree of involvement at the different stages of the trajectory. The result aims to be a comprehensive view on the entire roadmap with the different student experiences interacting with the input from staff members, each with distinct functional responsibilities.

The trajectory

The ‘trajectory approach’ below, aims to explore some of the origins and the complexity of the obstacles that Chinese students face at THUAS. This is ultimately intended to enable university policy makers to design a more calibrated and differentiated approach for further optimisation of the academic performance and study abroad experience of Chinese and other international students.

Education in China: the starting point

China’s current education system dates from the end of the seventies, when it was established that the total primary and general secondary education would last twelve years, of which nine years are compulsory. After six years of primary school, pupils continue with three years of junior middle school. After that, students who decide to continue studying have to do an entrance exam, which will determine whether they are allowed to go to senior
middle school or to a three or four-year programme at a vocational senior middle school. If students wish to go to university or college, a senior middle high school diploma is required.

Aspirants to one of the more than 2,200 universities in China, additionally have to pass the *gaokao*, the national entrance examination for higher education. Admission to university depends primarily on candidates’ results in this examination. Especially admission to those universities featuring on the so-called Project-211 list (the 211 best ranked universities) is considered by many a guarantee for a successful professional life. Admission to one of these institutions is, however, extremely competitive.

Once at university, students follow four years’ undergraduate bachelor’s programmes, while master programmes usually take three years. The country still has a highly-centralised education system, run largely (but not exclusively) by public institutions. The official language is Mandarin.

Major differences in terms of teaching and learning with western education systems are: teaching and learning style, number of students in class, relations between teachers and students, their degree of active participation in class and the assessment methods.

The general picture of a Chinese class – unanimously confirmed by my interviewees – is that of teacher-centred, one directional, expository whole-class teaching (40-100 students in one classroom), low levels of active learner participation and much use of teacher-led chanting, rote-learning and mimetic methods. In this virtual monologue, the teacher often even reads out loud a previously prepared text or textbook. He may repeat this reading several times consecutively. There is apparently little or no variety in the activities during the class nor between one lecture and another. The students listen, take notes and keep quiet. The teacher – out of respect – is not to be interrupted during the lesson. Students are hardly ever asked anything. As a consequence, Chinese students usually have little experience in participating in class. Questions are raised on a face to face basis with the teacher after class. All student-interviewees confirmed that they always went with their questions to their teacher’s office after class without appointment, since teachers usually live on campus and are available all day. Teamwork and/or projects, as well as the giving and receiving of peer feedback, rarely form part of the academic training. Presentations (either individual or in a group) are not frequent. A third year student of European Studies (ES) explained that:

*We never had teamwork, in my high school I had 70 classmates, ...so there were normally students sleeping and they just would not learn and the teacher would just give them up...but then you have to finish whatever teachers said, you just do your homework. In high school, we normally have four classes before twelve ... then you have 10-15 minutes’ break and go to the bathroom and then you have lunch, and then you go back to dormitory and rest for two hours, then another three classes, then dinner and after the dinner another two hours break, study in the night, three hours. Six years suffer....*

(Florence, interview)
Teacher-student relations are hierarchical and respectful; the teacher deserves respect because of his knowledge, position and age. MICM student Carol, for example, mentioned she had to bow at the beginning of lectures. ICM graduate Nicholas added that:

*In China, the teacher is like God. We have a saying like ‘The teacher for one day is your father for a lifetime.’ This means that we have to obey and respect a teacher like our father.*

(Nicholas, interview)

A third year ES student added that:

*In China, it is totally different; students do not express their opinion, their feelings in class, we need to get authority from the teacher like we raise hands and then he says yes...*

(Lynn, interview)

The teacher also serves as an example for the students. Kirsty Donald, teacher of English at the Prep School, gave the following example: because of this role, a Chinese teacher will never fold his legs sitting on his desk, he will never sit on his desk at all. Prep School management assistant Saskia Baardman-Wang added that even at a party, a teacher should not smoke in front of the students. Teachers also play an extended-parent role, especially for those students who go to boarding school from senior middle school onward. This ‘good teacher and helpful friend’ pattern in Chinese culture suggests that these relationships consist of responsibility, authority, and morality (Hing Wa Sit, 2013, p. 37). The previously mentioned ample availability of teachers for students is in line with this role of extra or substitute parenthood.

Written exams represent by far the most important form of assessing the learning process. Other learning activities, such as essay writing, projects, teamwork and presentations hardly form part of the course design nor are they assessed. A consequence of this test-taking centred learning is that the exams become an end in itself and education tends to be narrowed down to passing examinations. Exam scores are the decisive factor for admission to the next educational level. As mentioned before, the *gaokao* stands out in this regard:

*Recent reforms have sought to diminish the importance of the exam, but it remains the primary gateway for students seeking admission to higher education institutions – especially top-tier institutions – in China...Students are under enormous pressure to do well on China’s high-stakes college entrance exam, but many fail to earn the scores needed to earn top spots. Getting into a good college, such as the country’s equivalents of Oxbridge, Beijing’s Tsinghua or Peking University, can lead to jobs with western corporations or to elite civil service positions.*

(Gu & Magaziner, 2016)
In the view of an ES student:

You have a final exam, so that is your whole life target for to go to college. So you all do the exam and you get a mark, and you ask, how are your marks...You all study for it after High school if you get a high mark you will go to the good universities, if you get a low mark you will go to the garbage school.

(Florence, interview)

**Preparing to leave**

**Motives**

There are several reasons why Chinese youngsters decide to study abroad. China’s recent economic growth has given rise to a growing number of aspirant higher education students – and parents who can afford an international education –, but despite a boom in university construction in China, there is still a shortage. Parents and future students alike are aware that international education starts to become an asset on the internationalising Chinese labour market: intercultural skills, fluency in English and living abroad experience are increasingly considered valuable assets for a successful professional life and are held to be important in the eyes of prospective employers. “Study abroad...grants access to global academic standards, keeping in mind the highly stratified and intensely competitive nature of Chinese society, it makes good sense that young Chinese should be both ambitious about getting ahead and anxious about falling behind.” Hansen and Thøgersen (2015, p. 6) also mention motives that go beyond academia and the labour market, which can be found in the dimension of perceptions of the self, ways of life and life purposes. Recent research has shown that the notion of “abroad” is a fundamental category in the imagination of young Chinese. Fong found that migratory aspirations were overwhelmingly phrased in a binary language of China versus abroad. ‘Abroad’ was virtually always compared favourably to China, and particularly so for the case of higher education (Fong in Hansen & Thøgersen, 2015, p. 8). Going abroad is also considered (or at least, expected) by students and by their peers and families to be life changing, an experience that contributes greatly to maturation and self-development...Instead of “being an accidental by-product of a rational project of accumulating cultural capital abroad” (Ibid., p. 6), the promise of life change has turned into one of the main reasons that fuel the decision to do so.

The interviewed students repeatedly stressed the importance self-development in their choice to study abroad:

You know, in China some people think that girls should not study that much, their focus should be on home, but my parents thought I am better than some boys and they really focussed on my education, they sent me to summer camps organised by American and by British. So I started to learn English when I was four years old. I did not want to receive the same education for my BA, so that is the most important reason, and my parents encouraged me and my brother to go study abroad.

(Lynn, interview)
Three students explicitly stated they wanted to know “the other cultural perspective” and live in a freer society with an open mind and people who express their personal thoughts and feelings more openly. Reflecting on the expectation of life change, a fourth-year ES student pointed out that:

*The decision to study abroad I made because normally the students who study abroad come back with a more open mind, other cultural perspective I considered benefits, that’s why and also my parents think it’s a good choice.*

(Elaine, interview)

A different viewpoint was expressed by some staff members who agreed that several students at THUAS would not or did not get into a top-ranking university in China and whose families could afford the expenses of studying abroad. Indeed, six interviewees admitted this. Elaine said

*Because of the result of my high school tests, I cannot go to a very good university in China. So I rather went to study abroad. My mathematics are really bad, and affected my average very much and that decides to which college or university you go.*

(Elaine, interview)

**Choice of the foreign country**

Universities in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK are most popular, but too expensive for many. The Netherlands turns out to be a more affordable option. On a global scale, China is the largest sending country of international students. Of the total of 712,175 Chinese students that studied abroad in 2014, more than 80 percent went to the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. In comparison, only 0.65 percent studied in The Netherlands. Thus, although for the Netherlands the Chinese students are the second largest group, The Netherlands is only a minor destination country (Hong et al, 2015, quoting UNESCO).

Eight out of ten interviewees admitted that the combination of lower tuition fees and the broad offer of bachelor programmes in English had been decisive for coming to the Netherlands. Two students explicitly mentioned their homosexuality and the liberal climate. A first year IBMS student explained that:

*I prefer the education system here, here there are two types of universities, one more academic and the other one like here the university of applied sciences...*

(Jeremy, interview)

**Preparing to leave**

Most prospective students first gather information on the internet. Web portals, social media and platforms specialised in study abroad are widely used tools to become acquainted with the enormous diversity on offer. Many students and their parents will also visit the inter-
national higher education fairs organised regularly in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu.

The amount of information is overwhelming. Frequently, a so-called student recruitment agent (or agency) is hired. He is usually Chinese or at least speaks Mandarin fluently and functions as a broker/facilitator between (foreign) universities and parents and students. Agents provide clients not only with information about universities and programmes they have relations with, but also about the country, immigration laws and entrance requirements and help with all the paperwork involved. Agent and parents together play a substantial role in the final choice of country, school and programme. Most parents pay for this study abroad experience themselves and are ready to invest large amounts of money. Only very few students receive a scholarships (Liu 2014, p. 7). Students tend to prefer programmes they expect will provide a high degree of employability and social status upon return of the graduate: most opt for engineering and (financial) management. However, three of the interviewed students stated the choice for study abroad, the country and the programme had been taken jointly with their parents.

Despite the availability of information and the different sources and strategies that are used, in my interviews I found that students were rather ill prepared with regard to the country and the culture they were migrating to. They ‘confessed’ not having done any research about The Netherlands and had limited their preparation to the IELTS course and test. To finalise this section, the comments made by one student are typical:

I came to study here, I came through an agency, a study abroad agency They gave me a brochure, and said that I could choose anything. I didn’t know so clearly at that time. I wanted to go to study abroad, OK, Netherlands, fine, that didn’t really matter Actually, I chose randomly, but I like it know.

(Florence, interview)

English proficiency and the IELTS test
At THUAS, an IELTS average score of 6 is required for admittance to a BA programme. While there is no requirement for IELTS candidates to follow a course before taking the examination, in practice many do so. This has led to a huge increase in demand for schools all over the world to provide preparatory courses.

However, years of experience have demonstrated that an IELTS 6.0 score is no guarantee for a satisfying command of English at a BA programme, as was demonstrated by Yen and Kuzma at the University of Worcester in 2009, nor for full social integration. Prep School lecturers Nicky van Campenhout, Eveline van Hagen and Paul Treanor consider that the elevation of the IELTS norm to, for example, 6.5 would respond more adequately to both students’ needs and teachers’ expectations. Their answer to my question why this had not been done yet was invariably that the 6.0 score is a nation–wide accepted norm for higher education and that THUAS does not want or cannot be an exception.

3 www.educationfair.nl, Country information China (2 December 2016).
THUAS’ Senior Recruiting Officer has a different opinion. He has held many interviews with prospective THUAS students in China. Based on his personal experiences, he comes to the following conclusions:

I have some issues here with what I see as an excessive reliance on IELTS, specific to China, not to IELTS in general. There are a lot of schools that teach students how to get a 6.0 for their IELTS exam, but they’re actually not teaching English... they teach more the technique of getting IELTS instead of teaching them proper English...when I get a chance to interview the students, I regularly come across students who have an IELTS 6.0, whose English is somehow dysfunctional. When I interview them, they are trained in interviews, so they use things like trigger words, they learn about 200 different answers and each word they hear triggers a specific answer...Our system is basically set up as a series of checks, “You’ve got IELTS 6, your high school diploma, you’re in” that sometimes makes people say “well, let’s make IELTS more difficult”. The problem with that is, you then end up doing something that sets a higher standard for Eastern Europe than they actually have to meet. The issue is not so much IELTS, it’s the issue how we got IELTS working in China.

(Joe Morrin, interview)

The Prep School director, also a lecturer of English, agrees that the IELTS test and the 6.0 norm for entrance to a Bachelor’s programme do imply some difficulties:

People study IELTS-skills, not English language, to prepare exclusively for the test. I figure 90 percent of the people who get a 6.0 do not have a clue what the texts mean they have to read for the reading comprehension part. But it is multiple choice and they have learned how to manage to get a 6 on the basis of some key words they recognise, they understand the psychology of the way the questions are phrased and some gambling luck...

(Jan Brouwer, interview)

Learning English

English is one of the main subjects at Chinese schools, but teaching methods are based on traditional didactics focusing on grammar and translation exercises, reading and writing, and chanting when it comes to oral practice. Most teachers pour a great deal of information on the blackboard. Students, on the other hand, sit in rows facing the blackboard and the teacher. Any production of the target language by students is in choral reading or in closely controlled teacher-student interaction (Zhenhui, 2001). In this regard, it is significant to mention Liu and Littlewood’s (1997) finding that Chinese students named ‘listening to teacher’ as their most frequent activity in senior school English classes.

Western language teaching is nowadays based on learner-centred teaching theory. The teacher is a facilitator and helps the student to learn and motivates him to practice self-regulated learning. This implies that the first adopts a more horizontal attitude towards the learners, while the latter are expected to take on a much more active role in class. In language
teaching, this implies much more interactive practicing (with peers), speaking with peers (not chanting) and communicating (written or spoken) about real life situations.

Chinese language teaching experts have actually pointed out that regular English teaching at Chinese high schools needs reforms (Song, 2009; Yang, 2010; Song, Fan & Pan, 2013). The Chinese Ministry of Education (CME) is aware of the shortcomings of traditional teacher-centred learning, especially if it concerns English. It issued in 2007 a reform of College English teaching that prescribed:

The aim of College English...through the reform of teaching concept, content and methods of teachers, through the improvement of the means of teaching, through the perfection of the evaluation system ...to establish a teaching and learning model that focuses on students´ autonomous learning ability.
(Song, Fan, & Pan 2013, p. 47, quoting the Higher Education Department)

These authors conclude by saying that therefore, the cultivation of Chinese English learners´ autonomy becomes a priority and challenge of foreign language teachers.

An English language teacher at THUAS previously worked as an English teacher in China and remembers classes of 50-60 students at Yunnan University. Although free to use the teaching methods she wanted, it turned out a major challenge to use the communicative methods she had been trained in at Cambridge University:

Chinese students are hardly used to interact with each other, they enter the classroom, prepared to sit down and listen to the teacher. Asking questions in class is already a problem, they expect to be ‘fed knowledge’, that was hard for me, being used to make students talk as much as possible, because that was - from what I had learned in my teacher training - what they came for... I think they find it difficult to work together, to communicate, they seem to feel a kind of shame and awkwardness, uneasiness when speaking English to each other, that’s another obstacle to overcome.
(Veerle Ackerstaff, interview)

She had a rather different experience at a private language school. There, students were much more interested, because they needed to improve their English skills either for their job or because they planned to study abroad. At the language school, she also prepared students for the IELTS exam. The nearer the date of their exam, the more they practice the exam itself. And that, she said:

Is so typical of China, China is exam training...from primary school onward, children are mainly trained to do exams, they are not used to remember information on the long term, they study hard for an exam and then it’s done and over.
(Veerle Ackerstaff, interview).
The experiences shared by Veerle Ackerstaff match with the language learning panorama sketched in the literature and in the first paragraphs of this section. The lack of training in speaking skills – while essential in academic and social life once studying abroad – stands out as a problematic consequence of the teacher-centred approach. In addition to the methods that differ widely from those used in the western world, and on which the IELTS test is based, the number of native-speaker teachers of English in China is still limited. This inevitably affects the fluency and ease with which the teacher is able to deliver his classes, as well as the pronunciation.

Seven out of the ten students I interviewed went to Prep School before starting their BA Programme. Of those going to Prep School first, five took the two-semester course, while two of them only went to Prep for one semester. When asked about their preparation at home before coming to the Netherlands, they all answered they took an IELTS course.

The following remarks were recorded from the interviewed students: Peter (third year ES), explained that he was afraid to speak during his first months at THUAS, “...because in China, we learn English, but basically we focus on writing, not on speaking” (Peter, interview), and from a student of MICM who declared that in China she prepared especially to pass the IELTS test, but did not improve her English:

> The institution gave us several articles and you can memorise them and it’s really focused on the test.” ... In China, we only learned grammar and memorised grammar: we learned grammar, and words and then make sentences by yourself...

(Carol, interview)

**Arrival in The Netherlands**

The moment of arrival in The Netherlands is remembered by all interviewed students as one of surprise. The small size of the Dutch cities, the limited number of shopping malls and restricted opening hours of shops and, above all, the unpredictable and often disappointing weather those were the impressions that coloured the experience of the first days. Some of them had the opportunity to improve their communication and language skills outside of school and adapt to their new life by sharing an apartment with other international students:

> The first impressions, in the first week, I only missed home, because The Hague is a bit smaller than Beijing, where there are many more places to go, more people, more shops. Here it is like an old European city, good for biking but I did not get used to it at that time. So I talked to my Spanish housemate and we helped each other a lot, so I was not homesick anymore.

(Peter, interview)
A MICM student also experienced the importance of an international roommate:

So, when I was in China, I can talk freely and when I come here, I just keep silent for a while and sometimes when people had a conversation I wanted to join, and the topic was really familiar to me, only I couldn’t say it, it was full of grammar mistakes and I’m afraid that people will not understand so I will keep silent. I had a Finnish roommate, quite outgoing, we had small talk sometimes, apart from the programme, and that helped me a lot.

(Carol, Interview)

Students enrolled in the Prep School participated first in its introduction week. All BA programmes at THUAS have their introduction week, with many activities for the students aimed at getting to know each other, the programme, the building and the city and so does the Prep School. The interviewed students reacted enthusiastically. Neither students nor staff members pointed at these first days as needing changes or improvement.

**Prep School**

The Prep School was founded in 2006 in order to cater to the needs of international students (many of them Chinese) interested in applying for one of THUAS’ academic programmes, but whose English proficiency was still insufficient. As such, THUAS’ Prep School was the result of a nationwide policy oriented at promoting the internationalisation of the student population and recruiting international students, even if they did not yet fulfil the English language requirements for a Dutch university programme.

At THUAS’ website (www.hhs.nl), the contents and the dynamics of the course are indicated. Prep School students attend lessons focusing on grammar, reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation. Although improving the level of English is a core goal, students also engage in (western) academic skills training: presenting, debating, critical thinking, essay writing, research skills, project based teamwork and so on. Prep School lecturer Kirsty Donald of the argumentation class pointed out that:

Here the students do not only learn how to build an argument, defend it and question the arguments of their opponents, but through the choice of the topics, they are also challenged to formulate their personal opinion and to express it freely.

(Saskia Baardman-Wang/Kirsty Donald, interview)
The drama class provides another good example of how working on different skills can be combined. A Prep School lecturer and initiator of this class stated that:

*The Prep students, produce a Christmas play, all of the students have to perform, but the play is scripted, and it also involves interaction and acting, although some students never get that level, they just repeat their lines, but it’s a fun way of doing, it’s a combination of project work and using the language and also presenting. They find that very scary. Then we have the play, we combine it as a Christmas party, it’s also private, that also encourages and stimulates...*

(Paul Treanor, Interview)

The Prep School director affirmed that:

*In student surveys, they always express themselves very positively about the training in these skills. Let us be honest, all this language learning is rather boring and you have to invest very much in order to see your skills develop. So that is why they enjoy to learn things, they do see their learning curve rise quickly! For example, presenting. We use the video recorder a lot, the students love it and it works.*

(Jan Brouwer, interview)

In addition, students will have a coach whom they will meet once or twice a week to practice their spoken English in small groups. And to discuss their progress and questions related to academic skills, but also personal issues (4-5 students). Coaches are senior international BA students hired from European Studies (ES), International Communication Management (ICM) and International Business and Management Studies (IBMS).

The development of the academic and language skills is carefully planned at the Prep School. As a lecturer explains:

*During the first semester – we normally have 50 students, 40 of those Chinese, 10 non-Chinese – we hope that people start speaking, feel more confident. Writing is a more difficult skill, so we start with pronunciation, with speaking and reading classes, critical thinking and as we move into the 2nd semester, we also find that the level of the students coming in is certainly higher, then we start focusing on really improving writing skills and we also give courses on presentations... we also do group work...and the coaches, they are supervised by a teacher, and inform us who attend the coaching sessions. Each coach has up to 4 coaches, and each coach 4-6 students...Teachers also have term meetings with the students, especially in term 1 and 2 it’s very important to discuss the student’s own progress. In terms of language assessment, and in addition to a final exam, Prep has 3 intermediate exams which aim to provide them with a reliable indication of how much their learning is progressing. The second exam is special as it may result in a negative study advice. Students who have skipped classes and whose learning has not progressed sufficiently, will be asked to leave the course.*

(Paul Treanor, interview)
Another Prep School lecturer adds:

*During the first months, we mostly stress fluency. We encourage them to speak, not to be afraid... The problem with writing is not only a matter of syntax or grammar. Writing, communicating in general in low context languages such as English, has to be very explicit... The entire responsibility is with the writer. In Chinese, much more depends on the context, the responsibility for the understanding of the text is much more equally distributed. So the writing is usually much more flowery, less precise. So we don’t only teach them the language, but almost also a new way of thinking. Chinese writing also tends to use all kind of sayings and common places, which for us easily turn out to be a bit boring and not to the point. And then we also have the pronunciation course, that is a full year course.*

(Eveline van Hagen, Interview)

However, as the Prep School management assistant and a teacher of English explain:

...at Prep we try to cover not just improving their English, but also encouraging social activities, so we have like prep parties at the beginning and ending of each term, a visit to Cologne for the X-mas market, we think this is just as important as the English, for them to socialise and feel happy.

(Saskia Baardman-Wang/Kirsty Donald, Interview)

The overall impression the interviewed students who actually went to Prep School gave about their learning process is positive. They highlighted different aspects of the programme:

*The activities were quite new. I was glad I was in Prep, not only for English improvement, but also now I know how to study in The Netherlands. We have coaching sessions, for Chinese people it’s very good, it’s hard for them to come by themselves., I had a very good coach, I was really close to her, she was very strict. The aim of the sessions was if you have problems with the assignments, with your studies, or to socialise. More a personal helper. Students are afraid to talk to teachers, but a coach is more equal. We also learned how to write an email, in English a totally different format than in China. Also how to apply for things, for example how to write my motivation letter and CV to apply for another university.*

(Carol, Interview)
A first year Safety and Security Management student, who took the full year Prep course pointed out that:

I learned new skills like drama, very interesting class and there is no such class in China. In China, we mainly focus on English test. From drama class I learned how to act, more about speaking, but learn it in other way, more confidence. In China we have not much chance to present, we never do that, so presentation skills are better now, also teamwork. In Prep I learned to adapt to a different education system, actually quite useful for my study now.

(Mark, Interview)

A third year student of Process and Food Technology student underlined the importance of a learning a new way of learning:

New activities in class were presentations. Learning English is different here, also group works and presentation skills and how to study in a group. Also projects in a small group we learn how to organise everything for ourselves. It’s totally new, actually. At the beginning that was difficult because of the English, hard to follow. From the second block, I took the decision to make also foreign friends, not only Chinese. After that, I started to get used to the environment here. In my experience, the whole year programme is better than the half year programme, because of the large population in the second semester. Teachers can be more focused on each student during the first semester. The quality of the course decreases a little bit, I learned less during the second semester.

(Robert, Interview)

Only one student expressed herself critically about Prep School:

Prep School doesn’t help. Seriously, you should better try to find a part-time job, not for the money, but to get involved in the local things, otherwise you are outside of the society. My English improved a bit at Prep, but I think you learn more if you do a part-time job. I know it’s bad to say it...There are too many Chinese. In class we speak English, but the teachers are foreign people and the classmates are all Chinese. So even to do the teamwork, Chinese people study together, that’s people’s nature. The kind of assignments, those really English things such as write a report, presentations and teamwork, can be seen as a preparation for your Bachelor, but you can learn those really English things by yourself. The thing is you cannot learn from each other, you cannot learn the culture thing from each other, with people who all come from the same place...

(Florence, Interview).
Florence was the only student who explicitly complained about the large proportion of Chinese students at Prep School, but others also mentioned how they made special efforts to get out of the Chinese bubble in order to improve their language and communication skills and to make their academic stay a much more intercultural experience. A student observed that:

*If there were 100 students in the Prep School this year, 60 or 70 of them were from China... but I tried to make a lot of friends from different countries and cultures and that’s what I like about Prep School programme, also to talk and to improve my English... one thing I need to mention is that there were actually too many Chinese students here, because Chinese people they like to speak Chinese and are not very confident about their English.*

(Jeremy, Interview)

The Prep School staff acknowledges the importance of avoiding that the Chinese students speak their mother tongue all the time. Nicky van Campenhout indicated that she strictly prohibits the students to speak Chinese during class. Another lecturer explained that:

*They socialise, but with other Chinese students, so they don’t really use English at home and they often end up in the Chinese bubble...so they are not practising what we teach them...They can attend 4,5 hours of class a day and the other 19,5 hours a day speak Chinese. This year (2016, NS) we are fortunate to have 12 students from Bangladesh, and even with that group there is a different dynamic; last year we had 9 students from Thailand. If we were to have a mixed class of 50 percent Chinese, 50 percent other nationalities, they would be forced to speak English. We have very high punishments for students speaking Chinese... But we try to encourage as much as possible instead of punish: if they would become involved with international students, and student activities and lectures, they would be more inclined to use what we’re teaching in class. Prep does create projects, has debating and games evenings (e.g. Trivial Pursuit, Scrabble) and has its own introduction week, twice a year, but that is not enough. An extension of the day from maybe four to six hours, but still there’s 18 hours of Chinese...*

(Paul Treanor, interview).

THUAS’ recruitment officer also stresses the inevitability of this situation:

*You can never really avoid that problem, one of four people in the world are Chinese, they have an enormous desire to study abroad and they don’t speak good English, so they’re dominating the Prep Schools.*

(Joe Morrin, Interview)
Prep School offers a wide range of learning activities, that cover language learning academic skills training and socialising activities. One can imagine that the Prep School represents the transition phase Biemans and van Mil suggested as a necessary measure to support the learning process of the Chinese students. Most students perceive they improve their English and learn useful and new academic skills at Prep. Nevertheless, the presence of so many fellow Chinese on the one hand, and the shyness and inhibition many Chinese students experience when having to speak English and socialise in English remain a challenge. Once in the Bachelors’ Programme, both teachers and students feel that the language and the academic skills still need to improve substantially.

Challenges during the Bachelor Programme
In the last part of this report, we will return to the areas of challenge identified in the literature and compare them with what the interviewed students and lecturers shared about their experiences at the respective Bachelor Programmes at THUAS. The same order as in the introduction will be followed, namely: different aspects of learning style, English proficiency and interpersonal academic skills.

Students unhesitatingly acknowledged the differences in learning style and the fact that they needed time to adapt to the new learning (and teaching) style. Those who had attended Prep School considered useful what they had learned there in this regard as preparation for their Bachelor Programme, but also admitted they still had to learn a lot and adapt themselves in the new and less tutored and protected setting of the Bachelor. The experience of these students supports the argument of the non-static nature of learning styles and the capacity to adapt, particularly when in a new educational context. A significant testimony was given by a student:

In China, I did not have to think, just listen to teacher and follow what to say. Until now, I did not think, we never had time to think. Now I’m still in a self-identification process, it is quite upsetting, I am starting to think! It is very intense! Now things start to move inside my head, it is so intense...but people from Europe, they seem to read something and then they have made it their own and can speak about it...I can’t. May be because of my English. But in China we memorise many things to understand, here they read it and are able to speak about it. For presentations, I am learning not to write down everything and memorise, now I am changing it. For exams, in China, I prepare doing a lot of tests by myself, here I try to understand and explain by my own words.

(Mark, Interview)

A 3rd year PFT student also expressed – with visible relief– that for the exams here

We do not have to memorise so much, we can use pieces of paper to make notes during the exam, I found out that helps me to think during the exam...

(Robert, interview)
Lynn stated that “I really had to get used to the education system that was very different, but complaining did not help.”

To conclude the testimonies, an ICM student brought up the exam oriented nature of the learning process:

> I had to change my way of learning. In China, during my previous Bachelor, the teacher would give us some mock exams and he would tell us what were the key points, that will be in the exam and you can prepare, but there you have to prepare all by yourself, you need to understand and you need to make the connections, that was different in the beginning.

(Nicholas, Interview)

Concerning the English proficiency, the interviewed students made clear that they perceived that as their major challenge. Although they felt they had improved significantly, it remained difficult. They mentioned a variety of aspects and causes. PTF student Robert stated that “The language was the biggest academic challenge. At the beginning of this BA programme because of English, it was hard to follow all the classes.”

A first year IBMS student and a 3rd year ES student were both well aware that having achieved an IELTS score of 6.0 was no guarantee for the BA Programme:

> ... I got enough IELTS scores, but it’s not enough for IBMS. and we the students from China, we’re kind of afraid to talk in front of the students, we’re kind of afraid to raise our hands to ask questions, because of English, not so the culture.

(Jeremy, interview)

> So even though you get a 6 in IELTS, you’re not used to the way that teachers are speaking, people from different nationalities have different accents, you have to get used to it, so practice a lot, only to pass the English exam is not enough...

(Peter, interview)

A MICM student indicated the weight of cultural aspects in language acquisition, particularly in developing speaking skills:

> For Chinese people, biggest problem in language learning is courage, because you have to face the people, look their eyes when you speak...In terms of grammar, pronunciation or vocabulary, I do not think English is a difficult language, but to speak is a matter of courage. According to the history, the western world may be superior to the Chinese, the third world basically; psychologically they have some inferiority, they feel insecure about the language.

~ (Carol, Interview)
For the THUAS students, it is clear that their way of thinking influences the English in their written assignments. Students gave the following examples:

- It is really hard for us to get high grades for English because of our way of thinking. You write English in the Chinese way. I have to adapt to the teacher, even if I think differently, I have to if I want to pass.
  
  (Elaine, Interview)

- But my internship report, my supervisor corrected it a lot of times... he often asked me to explain what I wanted to say. Then I explained to him and he answered: why don’t you write that down in one sentence instead of a large text? That’s also the way of thinking, that’s what I said, the difference between Chinese English and western English, that’s really different.

  (Robert, interview)

All students agreed that their language skills improved substantially through friendships with international peers. Especially those with non-Chinese roommates and those who made conscious efforts to make international friends found that a successful strategy to improve their English. The different challenging aspects referred to by the students are already a concern for the Prep School.

The third dimension of challenges, that of interpersonal academic skills, shows how the interviewed students coped with academic activities that were mostly entirely new to them and that were to be assessed as well. Those who attended Prep School acknowledged the importance of having become familiar with these new skills. Despite their (relative) unfamiliarity and the weight of culture in the development of many of these skills, students considered them useful and evaluated their own learning process positively. All in all, the interviewed students expressed their need for an adaptation period, but also conveyed a considerable learning capacity and flexibility.

Most students had never held presentations before, but the presentation skills classes were of much help and it was not mentioned as a major obstacle. Lynn (ES, 3rd year) even told – breaking with the stereotype of Chinese students – that she does not score high in a written exam, but has a really good result with a presentation, because “I like talking and do not need to prepare so much, I know what I am going to say and stand there and be comfortable.” (Lynn, Interview).

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4 At the end of each interview, I asked the students to fill out a form on which they gave themselves a mark from 1 to 5 for each interpersonal academic skill (5 for very difficult, one for easy) at the beginning of their BA and at the moment of the interview. Almost without exception, the grades decrease from 5 or 4 at the starting point to 2 or 1 at the moment of the interview for each skill. In her excellent MA thesis, Severs used this tool to have her interviewees evaluate their own progress in regards intercultural academic competencies. The form my interviewees filled out was an adaptation I made of Severs’ tool.
Asking questions during the lecture was definitely entirely new. It has much to do with the established relationship between teachers and students. The interviewees contrasted the hierarchical Chinese relationship with the much more horizontal Dutch one and related this to the acceptability of asking questions during the lecture. While in China students do not ask questions out of respect for the teacher and his (or her) work, in the Netherlands teachers often encourage students to (please!) ask questions. A PFT lecturer observed that:

Most of the students ask questions after class... but I think by the end of the programme, I think in the 4th year, students tend to speak up in class. Now we have a group with a few exceptional Chinese students, they are quite outspoken, and actually they are the ones that dominate the class. Most of Chinese students have better foundations in math. For the calculation things, Chinese students may feel more confident, then there’s no problem for them to say something in class.

(Caroline Mok Kai Rine, Interview)
Some quotes reflect their surprise and appraisal:

- Here you can make friends with teachers and it is easy to talk with them about study or life issues” (Jeremy, Interview); Here they are “are more friendly and very helpful” (Elaine, Interview) and “Here you can always raise your hand and you can have a discussion, you can even eat and drink and go to the bathroom (Robert, Interview).

*Debating* and defending their personal opinion was another new academic skill that in some cases was not mastered entirely. Apparently, culturally inspired attitudes weighed heavily. Elaine represents the feelings of two other students by saying that “I still find this difficult, I think there’s nothing like wrong or right, it is a matter of different attitudes. I also have to adjust to the teacher’s opinion. If I use my opinion maybe I cannot pass.”

Somehow related are *peer feedback skills*. This common practice at THUAS often turned out challenging for the interviewees. Coping with the given feedback was one thing, but giving feedback to others caused uneasiness. Florence remarked: “I don’t think I give other people criticism. I’m still bad at being critical... Because you have to look at things from different sides, not only your own side...”

*Paper writing and research skills* are academic skills that depend much on training and practice. Besides the already mentioned difficulties with writing in academic English, the structure turned out problematic. A student stated:

In the beginning, we don’t know the structure of the research report. But we had a few classes and the teacher told us, you have to do like this and like that, it has become more clear, it has a structure, now you follow the structure. (Peter, Interview).

Problems sometimes arose with *referencing and quoting*. While western students are supposedly trained to be original in their thoughts or points of view - and are hence trained to be very accurate in referencing other people’s thoughts and words -, Chinese students tend to copy (-paste) more freely and frequently, considering this an honour to the mentioned sources and are not used to the same rigor of referencing.
The intercultural communication involved in _teamwork_, and collective grades, turned out to be more challenging. In general, Chinese students have little experience with teamwork as an assessed academic activity. The intercultural communication aspect did not always run smoothly, for example in the case of assertive Dutch or western students who with better English distributed roles and tasks in a rather authoritarian way or acted dominantly during meetings or when there are different ambitions and expectations. A PFT lecturer recognises the situation and offers the following advice:

> I personally encourage them to just speak up, that speaking up is part of the grading. I give them tips like ‘You always have to say one or two things at a meeting’ so before you say something, please make a good sentence, think, so that you can say that. I try to give them tips, especially in the first group meeting.
>
> (Caroline Mok Kai Rine, interview)

Learning how to plan meetings and hold discussions, distribute the tasks and meet deadlines collectively was at times challenging and even frustrating. This is, however, generally the case for all students, especially when not all members are on the same page in terms of effort and expectations. Peter and Florence added that teamwork also helped them to improve their English and intercultural communication skills. To avoid crowding of nationalities, lecturers usually decide the composition of the team.

At an advanced stage of their studies, students have to find an _internship mentor_. Although the interviewed students did not speak much about it, a PTF lecturer detailed the challenges encountered by Chinese students as follows:

> Many Chinese students have problems finding internships. Things like writing motivation letters and writing a CV tend to go wrong somewhere. Maybe their English is not perfect and the structure of the motivation letters doesn’t work here. For example, I have seen students who send a motivation letter and they talk about why they want to do an internship at a company and say how great, how good the Company is. I think that doesn’t work here. Maybe it is the difference in mind-set and they don’t seem to know how to put things in a CV or how to promote themselves.
>
> (Caroline Mok Kai Rine, interview)

Cultural differences play a major role in approaching a possible employer and in presenting themselves. Chinese students tend to search for internships at big international companies, because those are the ones they have heard of and they usually lack the social network in The Netherlands to be able to find smaller companies.
Although not an interpersonal academic skill, *time management* is a vital supporting competence for a successful academic performance. Given the particularly strong guidance most Chinese students used to have both at home and at school, the sudden freedom and independence at THUAS – living by themselves, having to do assignments without permanent strict control, testing without previous mock exams or teacher orientation about the questions, and lack of parental control can be hard to combine with adequate time management. A student commented on what she should have done differently:

> Really be aware that the study is your responsibility and don’t expect others to carry out things for you, you need to make a good plan, you need to know what you are dealing with, and really pass everything in the first year, otherwise the second year will be disaster, that was my personal experience: do well at the first opportunity.

(Lynn, interview)

There are two additional factors that are not academic skills or competences, but can definitely influence the academic performance of students. The first one is the *pressure from home* that students may feel and/or receive. The study abroad experience is paid mostly by students’ parents and represents a huge investment and living up to high expectations can be very stressful. A Prep School staff commented that:

> If they fail at Prep School, they cannot go to another Prep School anymore... But some even feel that being at Prep School is a shame, it means that they are not good enough... We have had quite a lot of cases, because every term we send a report to parents, about their attendance and exam results and everything, and there are students who ask us: “please do not send it to my parents, they do not know that I am in Prep school but think that I am in a BA programme”. So the pressure from home is hard to cope with... it is also very competitive. You do not want to admit that you could not get in right away and had to go to a preparation programme, I was very surprised when I heard it, but it has happened several times...

(Saskia Baardman-Wang/Kirsty Donald, Interview)

The interviewees did not speak about this aspect of their lives, possibly (but not necessarily) because their results gave them less reason to feel much pressured.

The last factor that should be mentioned is *socialising* and spare time. The way Chinese youngsters socialise and spend their spare time is rather different from that of western youths. Eveline van Hagen explained that the (cultural) reference framework (artists, actors, music, popstars, but also news and politics) is mostly linked to China. They also like to do different things: at parties, they play (board) games and cards, and love to do karaoke. Dancing and talking they find boring. At the beginning, these different references and interests are, next to a lack of confidence to speak English, often impediments to find topics for conversation with western peers.
Conclusions

Many of the challenges encountered by Chinese students at THUAS are also encountered by other international students, although the extent to which they occur evidently varies depending on the similarity of each student’s educational, linguistic and cultural background to the western background that underlays THUAS’ educational practice.

This case study is to a large extent based on the experiences and perceptions of Chinese students that can be considered academically successful, since all but two interviewees continued beyond the first year of study. The challenges identified by the interviewees may have been coloured in a more positive way as a consequence of their success, but nevertheless still seem very relevant.

A reconstruction of the trajectory that all Chinese students at THUAS roughly followed before coming to The Hague, throws light on the varied origins of the multiple challenges and obstacles they encounter. It offers, as a result, a more comprehensive understanding of the Chinese students THUAS receives. This, in combination with THUAS’ ambition to be the most international institution of its kind in The Netherlands by 2020, hopefully inspires to move the lecturers of international classrooms away from what Biggs and Tang called the ‘deficit’ approach, still prevailing in not all but many classrooms. This approach points to the students as being the problem, and results depend on who the student is rather than on what the teacher does (Biggs & Tang, quoted in Carroll, 2015, p. 19). The starting points of teaching are still – not for all but for many teachers and lecturers – based on an educational, linguistic and cultural background the teacher used to share with his student audience. However, in an international classroom, this is less and less the case and hence, teaching runs the risk of becoming exclusive.

This does not imply that lecturers should be familiar with all the different backgrounds of their students as was done here with the background of the Chinese students, but that lecturers attempt to make their classes accessible to the entire diverse student population they have in their classrooms.

Effective strategies to this end can be found in the field of inclusive teaching. In a general way, inclusive teaching takes into account the needs of students with diverse learning styles, backgrounds, and skills. It comprises the use of a range of teaching strategies, activities, and assignments. This requires training of lecturers and once they implement inclusive teaching strategies, it also calls for a more active role of the lecturer, assuming the task of mediator and facilitator.
**Recommendations**

We have seen that the interviewees in general eventually overcame the challenges related to learning styles and interpersonal academic skills. English was unanimously considered the touchstone. Especially the first year of the BA programme is considered hard, because those who went to Prep School miss its close tutoring and safe environment. Those who did not may have a hard time adapting to the new academic and social environment and coping with loneliness and homesickness. The mediator/facilitator role serves to make students feel they do not have to discover and solve everything by themselves and make the switch less awkward.

Much of this is already being done at Prep School, but it seems recommendable to extend some activities of what is being done there into or during the first year of the BA programmes (e.g. coaching of small groups by advanced international students, promotion of alternative language skills training, such as the Drama class). Lecturers need additional training for this.

Fortunately, THUAS’ The Hague Centre for Teaching and Learning (HCTL) has started to deliver a range of workshops, courses and training courses. One of these is the recently developed Training for International Learning and Teaching (TILT), which “...deals with a number of common challenges lecturers meet in a context in which students come from different national and educational backgrounds. It deals with a number of skills that lecturers can apply to accommodate to the needs of their diverse audience and to purposefully use the group’s diversity to spark intercultural learning opportunities.” (TILT 2017 Module Guide, p. 3).

Last but not least, international, hence also Chinese students hugely benefit from a (more) vibrant international THUAS community. Many things are already going on outside the classrooms, but more effective communication, more bundling of different (international) student initiatives in the field of sports and culture would not only help improve the students’ English and intercultural communication skills, but would also create closer ties with their university.
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Conflicts and conflict resolution styles in an international classroom

ANNELIES OUDSHOORN
Abstract
This exploratory study looked into differences in conflict resolution styles between Dutch and Chinese students in an international classroom at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS). The study confirms what recent Chinese research suggests, namely that the differences in conflict resolution styles are not very apparent, and that Chinese students are adapting to the international classroom. Being in an international classroom makes students very much aware of intercultural components in communication. This awareness in itself makes students more sensitive to differences and therefore more open to accepting these differences.

Conflicts during group work in international classrooms derive mostly from differences in effort put into group work. Several causes were found for the lack of participation of some students. Some of these causes have a cultural component. This is true for language skills and differences in pedagogy.

Regardless of their preferred conflict resolution style, when students experience conflict during a group task, they will make an effort to discuss the conflict issues and try to solve the conflict. They feel they need to do so in order to get a good grade. ‘Avoiding’ as a conflict resolution style is therefore not commonly used, in contradiction to the – assumed - common use of this avoiding style in Chinese culture. Collaboration is the most used conflict resolution style in conflicts in international classrooms. However, the learning outcomes of working together and handling conflicts that arise during group tasks are much better achieved if the process is facilitated and supervised better.
Introduction

Human beings draw close to another by their common nature, but habits and customs keep them apart.

(Confucius)

When people work together, conflicts are common. What can be learned from conflicts and how to resolve conflicts effectively has become an extremely relevant research topic in the fields of organisational behaviour and management. With a very different scope, conflict resolution also has become a highlighted subject within the research field of intercultural communication.

When contemplating differences between East and West for example, researchers often highlight the competitive attitude of the West displayed through actions that result in “looking out for number one” (Morris et al., 1998). Western cultures tend to value independence and self-affirmation, encouraging direct expression, whereas eastern cultures are inclined to value harmonious relationships, preferring to manage conflict through suppression and non-direct circular communication, and emphasising pro-social organisational behaviour (Butler et al., 2007; Tsai et al., 2006). When facing conflict, the Chinese generally emphasise harmony and try to avoid conflict.

Conflicts between students in higher education have not been given ample attention. Group tasks and projects are common methods used in western higher education. What students can learn from these working methods has been researched, but what they learn specifically from the conflicts that almost inevitably derive from these working methods is not yet clear. One would hope that it would be communication skills. Even more, in an international classroom, that it would be intercultural skills.

For students, it is considered more than ever important to be global citizens. Students have to learn that cultural differences in values and behaviours exist, and, eventually, be able to cope in an international environment where they have to deal with these differences effectively. In theory, one could state that international classrooms are a seemingly effortless way for students to acquire international competencies. Letting students from different cultural backgrounds mingle will lead to intercultural interactions, creating intercultural learning and circulation of cross-cultural knowledge. In practice, research shows that this is not the case. International classrooms alone do not, or only very slightly, help this process (Deardorff, 2009). Intervention in the form of training seems to be a necessity for a long-term effect of developing and retaining intercultural competence (Belt et al., 2015).

This research therefore focuses on conflicts and conflict resolution styles between students of different cultural backgrounds, with a focus on Dutch and Chinese students in international classrooms. There are several arguments for this choice.
One is the high number of Chinese students in The Netherlands (EP-Nuffic, 2016). At THUAS, Chinese students constitute the largest entity of foreign students. Both the Dutch government and Chinese students themselves invest a great deal in their education here. Yet it turns out that many of these Chinese students have difficulties in being successful in their studies in The Netherlands, resulting in high dropout numbers, in some cases even 100 percent (Belt et al., 2015).

The second reason is that there are many differences between the Chinese culture and Dutch culture. Is conflict resolution style one of them? In what way is a possibly ineffective conflict resolution a cause of lack of study success of Chinese students?

**Research question**

This leads to the following research question:

What is the influence of differences in conflict resolution styles on conflict management and on acquiring international competencies in an international classroom with Dutch and Chinese students?

**Theoretical background**

**Culture**

Researchers use many different definitions of culture, for example: “Culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organised, learned or created by individuals of a population, including those images or encodings and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves” (Schwartz, White & Lutz, 1992).

Because individuals in societies are distributed across many different social groupings – regional, ethnic, religious, class, occupational- and because each of these groupings is a potential container for culture, any complex society is very likely multicultural (Avruch, 2003). Therefore, culture is not strictly bound by geography or nationality. One might even say that much daily communication is intercultural. In an international classroom, intercultural communication is self-evident and omnipresent.

Members of a culture obviously do not share all aspects of their culture, but in general they share an overall view and an overlap in principles so they can communicate effectively with each other (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992). In order to understand how communication differs across cultures, scholars use more or less comparable dimensions of cultural variability (e.g. Hall, 1959/1980; Hofstede, 1991; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998).

Seeing that the Dutch and the Chinese cultures are hugely different, what is the influence of these differences on conflict resolution styles of students during group work?
Apart from gaining knowledge on the program the students have enrolled in, other competencies such as intercultural competencies, should also be gained. For this research, a widely-recognised definition for intercultural competence is chosen, namely: “The ability to communicate effectively and behave appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural attitudes, knowledge and skills.” (Deardorff, 2006).

**In what way does communication during conflict in an international classroom contribute to gaining intercultural competencies?**

Earley (1989) found that if people from an individualist culture were asked to work in a group setting, their performance was less than when they were working alone. Further, this social loafing effect, the tendency to exert less effort when working on a group task in which individual contributions cannot be measured (Gilovich et al., 2006) decreased with enhanced accountability for performance. Collectivists, however, did not demonstrate any social loafing effect and, in fact, appeared to perform better in a group than working alone.

The above-mentioned study showed furthermore that people from a collectivistic culture feel that the group’s well-being is highly influenced in a positive manner by their individual actions. Therefore, they feel successful when the group is successful. This may be different with people from an individualistic culture. They may feel successful, not because the group was successful, but because their participation in that group was seen as successful.

**Conflict**

In the organisational literature, conflict has been considered one of the most well-known interpersonal processes (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Marks et al., 2001). Conflict can be defined as “a process that begins when an individual or group perceives differences and opposition between itself and another individual or group about interests and resources, beliefs, values, or practices that matter to them” (De Dreu et al., 2008).

Organisational conflict theories presumed that conflict was counterproductive (e.g. Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). In contrast to the above-mentioned studies, it may be argued that conflict may be beneficial under certain circumstances (De Wit et al., 2012). Studies on the effects of conflict on communication, group interaction and diversity in groups show both positive and negative effects (Wagner et al., 1984; Jehn, 1995). When in conflict, people confront issues, learn to take different perspectives and are more creative in finding alternative solutions (Tjosvold, 2008; Pelled et al. 1999).

**Dual Concern Model**

The model most used in conflict resolution is the Dual Concern Model. Monumental work in this field started with Blake and Mouton (1964), with their work on the managerial grid. The model has then been modified and refined by different scholars, such as Thomas (1976) and Rahim (1983). This model outlines two independent dimensions when confronted with a conflict and having to use a general conflict resolution style. These dimensions are concern for self and concern for others, hence the Dual Concern Model.
Concern for Self
Low
High

Concern for Other
Low
High

Competing
Collaborating
Compromising
Avoiding
Accommodating

This model suggests that, when in conflict, one uses mostly a personally preferred style (Ouchi, 1981; Thomas, 1992; Rahim, 1992). It is argued that this preferred style is highly dependent on personality (e.g. Friedman et al., 2000). Giebels and Euwema (2010) suggest that this model reflects both on personality as well as contextual factors, such as, for example, one’s position within a group or organisation. When the situation requires, people can and will use other than the preferred styles (Steinel & De Dreu, 2004).

The Dual Concern Model includes the following components:

- Competing. When an individual has high concern for Self and low concern for Other, he is categorised as using a competing style.
- Collaborating. When an individual has both high concern for Self and for Other, maybe even (almost) equally high, he uses collaborating as a conflict resolution style.
- Accommodating. When an individual has low concern for Self, but high concern for Other, he uses accommodating as a preferred conflict resolution style.
- When an individual has low concern for Self and low concern for Other, he uses avoiding. This obviously does not entail that there is no conflict.
- Compromising. When an individual is willing to forego some of their concern for Self and willing to accept a certain amount of concern for Other, he uses compromising.

**Intercultural conflict resolution**
Some scholars suggest that the above-mentioned model is a portrait of the western conflict resolution styles, and not so much a theory that is globally applicable. With a focus on globalisation and intercultural communication, intercultural conflict communication has gotten its fair share of attention from a wide range of scholars. “Intercultural conflicts revolve
around the diverse cultural approaches people bring with them in expressing their different cultural or ethnic values, identity issues, interaction norms, face-saving orientations, power resource transactions, divergent goal emphasis and contrastive conflict styles in a conflict period or protracted conflict episodes’ (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006).

**The meaning of the term conflict**
The moment people feel they are in a conflict, is similar across cultures (Berry, 1989). A conflict can thus be caused by cultural differences, whilst these cultural differences can complicate communication during the conflict and give rise to escalation of the conflict. Different studies show that when it comes to conflict resolution and conflict resolution styles, culture has a significant impact. Chen and Starosta (1997) categorise these differences in conflict communication and conflict management in three different fields: differences in low and high context cultures, language differences and differences in linear reasoning vs. non-linear thinking patterns.

**Low- and high-context communication**
It was found that people in low-context cultures tend to be more confrontational and direct in conflict situations, while people in high-context cultures tend to be more non-confrontational and indirect (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Ma, 1992; Chung, 1996). Research shows that high-context cultures prefer the avoiding and obliging conflict styles more than low-context nations (Croucher et al., 2012).

**Language differences.**
A connection between cultural differences in communication styles and conflict resolution styles can also be found (e.g. Gudykunst et al., 1996). These differences are not always translated into differences in conflict resolution styles. If one is being – deliberately – evasive, one does not necessarily have an avoiding conflict resolution style.

**Differences in thinking patterns.**
The third cultural aspect is that of thinking patterns. Researchers have consistently found different patterns of thinking and perception in different societies, with some cultures demonstrating a more analytic pattern and others a more holistic pattern (Peng & Nisbett, 1999; Hamamura et al., 2008). In western cultures people use a linear thinking process to discover external and objective facts and therefore truth.

In eastern cultures a non-linear thinking pattern is used, recognising contradiction and the need for multiple perspectives, searching for the ‘Middle Way’ between opposing propositions.

**Chinese conflict resolution**
Scholars distinguish different values in an attempt to capture the Chinese conflict behaviours (e.g. Oetzel & Ting-Toomey 2006). Harmony, interrelation/relationship (guanxi) and fateful coincidence (yuan or yuanfen) are at the heart of all these different values.
Harmony
Chen and Starosta (1997) claim that harmony is the cardinal value of Chinese culture. To the Chinese, establishing a harmonious relationship is the goal of human communication, and conflict is treated as a detractor from harmony. Therefore, conflict itself should be avoided (Ma, 1992; Chung, 1996; Chen, 2002; Holt & Devore, 2005) because it may be more respectful not to argue. It does not mean, however, that, when in conflict, avoiding is always the preferred conflict resolution style. It differs, according to some scholars, who the conflict parties are. When a conflict occurs within the so-called in-groups, huibi (avoiding) is usually the preferred approach in managing conflict. However, the connotation of Chinese huibi is different from the western conceptualisations of the avoiding style, because huibi from the Chinese perspective is high in Self and Other concern, which also lends support to the assertion that the avoiding style is understood differently across cultures (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006).

Guanxi
Guanxi is also translated as “personal contacts” or “personal connections” (Ulijn et al., 2005). To achieve success, people must rely on good interpersonal relationships, since this way negotiating partners might avoid loss of face, of self and other, and pay respect to the emotions of the other party. Therefore guanxi is an important factor in the way Chinese culture has effect on personal conflict resolution styles.

Yuan or Yuanfen
‘Yuan’ or ‘yuanfen’ is a condition that can be loosely translated as ‘fateful coincidence’. According to Chang (2002): ‘It provides Chinese a needed framework to account for relationships and their inevitable conflicts in this and other worlds.’

All the above mentioned concepts seem to light the way into concluding that in China the preferred conflict resolution style is avoiding or accommodating.

Recent studies
Nguyen & Yang (2012) found that Chinese leaders tend to be direct and assertive with subordinates. Indirectness and preserving harmony are effective with seniors and leaders. Guo & Cionea (2017) discovered in their study that Chinese employees agreed that “open communication” was the ideal and appropriate way of dealing with workplace conflicts. Participants identified confronting conflicts directly as a strategy, which took on multiple characteristics, such as exchanging information fully and frankly beforehand (preferably in private settings) and silence at the right moment (i.e. strategic silence). It was stressed, however, that open communication should be applied keeping in mind the culturally appropriate manner, mainly with attention to saving Self and Others’ faces.
This could mean that a more direct way of communicating is becoming more acceptable in China and is being perceived as effective. It also is an indication that being silent should not be interpreted as avoiding conflict in certain situations, but as strategy to help one’s own interests in the conflict and as a strategy to keep the situation from escalating.

Moreover, Guo and Cionea found that group harmony is not important when participants hold goals that are incompatible with the shared goal; harmony becomes essential only when a shared understanding of collective goals is recognised.

**Methodology**

**General**
This is an exploratory study in which qualitative research methods were used. All participants of this study were informed beforehand of the topic and purpose of the research and were reassured about the anonymity of their participation. They all approved to the usage of the collected data.

**Survey**
To determine a personally preferred conflict resolution style, the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory was chosen, since it has a distinct focus on conflicts with peers (Rahim, 1983). One might be naturally inclined to have different preferred conflict resolution styles in conflicts with parents or subordinates. Therefore, choosing a test that focuses on peers will give a clearer view. All 315 registered Chinese students at THUAS have been asked to take the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory in order to determine if a dominant conflict resolution style could be identified among them. After several reminders, 45 Chinese students eventually filled out the survey. This response rate of 14.3 per cent, cannot be considered representative for the whole Chinese student population. All 60 students of different nationalities, including Dutch, in international first year classrooms of different programs who were approached in class also filled out the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory anonymously, stating only their nationality. This survey was conducted to determine whether a common conflict resolution style could be established amongst first year students in an international classroom and whether a difference between eastern and western cultures could be established.

**Observations**
Observations in four selected international classrooms in which both Chinese and Dutch students participated were executed. These four classrooms were in the International Law programme and International Business and Management Studies (IBMS), all first-year classrooms. Classes consisted of one or two Chinese students and between six to eleven students with Dutch nationality. Of these Dutch students, some also have passports from other countries, like the Philippines, Colombia, Afghanistan or Surinam. Not every student has their other passport registered, therefore the exact number of students with double nationalities
could not be established. The communication via a private Facebook group of one of the the groups from the Law programme was followed.

**Interviews**

The 18 students who were interviewed were contacted in person after having observed their classes, either through an introduction by their mentor or by other students that were interviewed, or through the contact information they gave after they filled out the survey.

In total 15 Chinese students, two Dutch students and one Danish student were interviewed. They are enrolled in five different programs. Six lecturers were interviewed, from three different programs. Four have the Dutch nationality, one has the Irish nationality, one the Spanish nationality. During the interviews a semi-structured format was used, consisting of a set of 15 questions. The questions touched upon the following issues: what constitutes a conflict? What conflicts have they encountered during their time in an international classroom? How were conflicts resolved? What did they consider the impact of cultural differences on the conflicts and the resolution thereof? The names given in this article are pseudonyms, used to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees. Recordings of interviews were transcribed and analysed.

**Focus group**

A focus group of ten lecturers, policy makers, exchange coordinators of Dutch, English, Irish and Chinese students, and one Chinese student of THUAS was formed. The attendees were linked to several international programs of different faculties, namely Law, European Studies and the prep-school. The attendees were asked to remark on six positions and views on learning and conflicts in an international classroom, with a special focus on Chinese students. The meeting was recorded and the recording was transcribed and analysed.

**Findings**

**Findings from the survey**

The conflict resolution style tests showed that 50 percent of the Chinese students prefer collaborating as a conflict resolution style, 15 percent prefer accommodating, 14 percent competing, 8 percent avoiding and 13 percent compromising. This is to some extent in accordance with the above described research. Seeing the quest for harmony and the high-context communication style within Chinese culture, collaborating would be the preferred conflict resolution style (Croucher et al., 2012; Peng, He & Zhou, 2000). Therefore, it was not expected that the percentage for competing would be this high. There can be numerous explanations for these results. This may be explained by the notion that for some students, when stakes are high (e.g. grades), they can be forceful in pushing their own ideas. It is also possible that the students that come to THUAS are more outgoing and more competing than their peers that do not apply for a foreign university. Therefore, the students are not representative of the whole Chinese student population.
Because of the low response rate, these numbers are possibly not representative for the whole Chinese student body of THUAS. Of the students of other nationalities in international classrooms 63 percent preferred collaborating, 2 percent accommodating, 9 percent competing, 8 percent avoiding and 18 percent compromising. When comparing the scores of the two groups, the difference between their mean scores relative to the spread or variability of their scores were examined. When using an independent t-test, it shows that $p \geq .05$, which means that no significant results can be seen for differences between a specifically preferred conflict resolution style. Judging from this survey, it seems that in this age group, for conflicts with peers, most students, regardless of their cultural background prefer collaboration as an effective conflict resolution style. Seemingly, for all parties, keeping a good relationship is very important. Collaborating can be very beneficial and effective for both the end results and for keeping a strong relationship with one’s peers, which may explain why the Conflict Inventory Test did not show significant differences between Chinese and other students. This may be attributed to the low response rates and the mixed composition of the control group.

**Findings from the interviews**

**How conflicts arise in an international classroom**
Research shows that context can influence the conflict resolution style (Giebels & Euwema, 2010). Therefore, when discussing the resolution of conflicts, the origin of conflicts must be paid attention to.

**Some contributing more than others**
During the interviews, one main cause of conflict was reported by all the interviewees. All students and lecturers addressed the problem of ‘some students doing too much and others doing too little’. This of course leads to problems, because the students who do perform feel that the quality of the work is in jeopardy. They depend on the group work for their good grades. Besides that, students feel a great sense of injustice that the students who do not put in the same amount of effort get exactly the same grade as the students that work very hard. The pressure of the grade and the emotions then lead to conflicts. These feelings of injustice do not seem to have a cultural component, for students of different cultural backgrounds and of different programs mentioned this.

Underlying all this are the reasons why these non-performing students do not contribute to this process. This can be especially remarkable for Chinese students, who are generally known for their work ethic and their studious attitude. In the interviews, Chinese students themselves accentuate the efforts they made in order to graduate from high school. Different causes for not participating came up during the interviews.
First, the respondents note insufficient English language proficiency. This then causes different issues. Students who are not skilled enough, cannot participate to their own satisfaction during group meetings:

*Other students are more fluent. They speak so fast, and it’s the time limit, I think, please speak slow. But I don’t want to drag the meeting.*

(Irene)

Students also report that they feel awkward about being in an international classroom. One student says:

*I think [feeling awkward] is a common circumstance. ... like when you don’t have the exact right answer you don’t dare to speak up. Yeah, that happens to me too.*

(Paula)

This student therefore treats these feelings as something quite common and recognises it from other students in class. It can be regarded as a face-keeping strategy, but for analysing this as clear culturally driven behaviour it needs more arguments. Students also report that the required English test they have to take (IELTS) does not represent the needed language skills once they are in a programme.

The language deficiency also results in inefficient group work when the Chinese students are assigned tasks that they are not good at.

*The Chinese student in our group is very nice, but her contribution to the group work is not good. References to Chinese websites, we cannot read that, documents that are not quite useful. She means well, but we cannot use it. Some of the other students in the group, from Aruba, Romania, make comments about that behind her back. I think that she and the other students who don’t perform well, notice that. I don’t know what to do about that.*

(Joyce)

Students report that because of this language issue, it takes time for them to process the information during group meetings.

The language deficiency therefore creates withdrawal of participation caused by feelings of awkwardness and self-consciousness, by having to take time to process and by feeling inadequate to take on tasks.

Secondly, the educational system in China is very different. Chinese students are not used to working in groups. In the interviews the students specify that in high school they mostly get individual assignments, in university group work is very rare. Chinese interviewees report that they have to get used to working together. This lack of experience in collaboration creates problems when tasks have to be divided. Since it is their debut in group work, Chinese students do not know which tasks they are good at, whether it is for example doing research
or finalising the report. This can create problems with the rest of the group, for this makes the group work less efficient. One Chinese student reported that the other people were so fast in picking up a task and putting themselves forward, that she was too late and there were no more tasks left. The student did not feel like that there was a conflict, because she feels that the other group members were justified in telling her that she had to be faster in responding. Because of this, her name was not on the final report. She then failed the project and had to do a resit. She did not feel like there was a conflict, but she did learn to react faster when signing up for tasks.

One lecturer remarks on the difference in pedagogies:

> It just takes time, because we are asking them to let go of everything they have learned about how do you learn and start again and I think that takes time.
> (Catherine)

The third reason interviewees give for not performing is also in some way due to the educational system, but with extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as viewpoint. Getting a Chinese high school diploma is very hard work. Students put many hours each day and the pressure for performing is enormous. They experience this when they are home, being an only child from both parents and all four grandparents who have just the one child to focus on. It is very important to get into the right university to get good results for the exams. This means that after these exams, they all feel they lack the pressure and guidance when studying in the Netherlands. As one student puts it:

> Social life stops the day of the high school exams. Everybody is busy with all the kids taking the exams. It’s a big pressure. After that, you let go.
> (Amanda)

Coming here, alone, without the clear supervision of parents and grandparents and the whole world watching, the need to study just fails them, regardless of their previously mentioned reputation for working hard. Coming from a pedagogy where there is less room for expressing thoughts and ideas, and where the system appeals to the extrinsic motivation, the differences in educational styles can sometimes just be too big to overcome.

Fourth, some students also report that not performing in individual tasks can also be due to the fact that some students are simply not able to get to the required level. Some students say that the programmes at universities in China are not that challenging, some say that they can be too much for some of the students.
Not meeting the deadline
Not contributing much or not contributing at all is not the same as taking up a task and then not meeting the deadline. One Chinese student feels Dutch students have different explanations as to why they cannot meet the deadline. She reports that in her opinion it is a Dutch cultural thing that:

People say they will do it, and then not do it. I don’t get that. If I will say I will do it, I will do it. No matter what, you have to deliver in time and on time.

(Nina)

Two of the international students and one Chinese student see this as a more age-related issue than a cultural issue.

Arguments, conflicts and opinions
Differences in opinions are not really conflicts, because according to one student: “you can talk about it and share views”. Three students explicitly said that they learned from arguments referring to the content of the task. All students also reported being shy about sharing thoughts, or having experience with other Chinese students who dare not speak up. They did not necessarily consider this a conflict if others are shy; they do see cultural differences here. It may sometimes just not be polite to speak up. It is difficult to assess whether silence is to be interpreted as an avoiding and therefore not always helpful conflict resolution style, or whether it is strategic conflict management that helps sustain the relationship and therefore effective group work in the end.

Personalities
Conflicts can also be caused by personality clashes. It is hard to say whether students can differentiate between conflicts caused by personalities or by culture.

So, I feel it’s like, if people really don’t like each other, if you group them, it gets worse. And then you will get conflict.

(Alexis)

One lecturer says:

We should be putting them really in a more international setting, and not having a Dutch versus Chinese setting, that is what often happens. We have to be more selective about who goes into what class. Also, age group, I think if you have a group of only 17 year olds, I think it is very damaging for the atmosphere in the class.

(Ed)
Conflict communication

When students experience a conflict, all of them report that the issues of the conflict are discussed. All Chinese students report in the interviews that Chinese are not used to saying directly what they want you to do, they will be more indirect and want to be polite, but they will speak up if need be, because they want to be successful.

*I feel it is better to communicate. Maybe sometime it hurts.... But you need to communicate, but, Asian culture, it’s hard for us to talk.*

(Alexis)

Many Chinese students will not dare speak up in a large classroom, especially if their language proficiency is not good enough. All respondents remark that, to some extent, they will try to talk to their fellow students. They all consider it to be polite to use a more or less diplomatic way. “Come on guys, let’s do some work.” They claim they will do their best to find tasks that suit the individual members best, so everybody does the work most efficiently. One of the students says that they assign tasks randomly. Here we see some differences in views. Lecturers report students being shy and uncertain about what they want to do and what they are good at; students saying that they put in an effort to assign tasks effectively. Supervision by a lecturer would be beneficial in this case, where students may think they work efficiently, when in some cases they are not.

Three students explicitly do not feel there are any cultural differences in this, it just depends on personality. One student says:

*I really don’t care about cultures.*

(Sophia)

As mentioned above, at some point it is hard to see what is a cultural aspect and what is not. Knowledge on cultural differences and supervision during group work can help students understand where certain behaviour comes from.

Students report cultural differences in communication when the conflict has arisen. Ten of the Chinese students say that when there is a conflict, they will somehow address the other party, some take a little time to address someone, others do not hesitate and try to talk to the other about the issue. But all of them are more or less indirect in their communication.

One student says:

*We Chinese don’t say it directly, we talk like in a circle. [To the parties not belonging to the in-group, it may not always be clear what exactly is being communicated], but if we come from the same background, we understand exactly what the other is saying.*

(Julia)
In the end, the Chinese students realise that they need to be more direct, to be effective here:

_When I am here, I speak more directly. When I am in China, I speak more indirectly. I want to be more direct, because then everybody will understand._

(Anna)

They cannot necessarily pinpoint to learning about this apparent difference in communication during group work and more so during conflict caused by group work. Although they found conflicts, at best, inconvenient, conflict is universal. Students also have conflicts with their parents and friends, so the intercultural addition is a minor detail to them.

**Conflict resolution styles**

The outcome of the survey, that most students use a collaborating conflict resolution style when in contact with peers, was also arrived at on the basis of the interviews. Twelve students tell that they were willing and able to confront other students if tasks are not equally divided or when deadlines are not met. This means that they would not avoid conflict or be accommodating. Therefore, most of them would use a compromising or collaborating style. Two Chinese students remarked that they would use a competing style. They would be the group leader and decide, sometimes after consultation of the other students, who gets to do which group task. One Dutch student remarks:

_I’m not the confronting type. If there is a conflict I would rather walk away._

(Helen)

This student uses an avoiding style. When asked, three students considered the conflict resolution style more as a personality trait and not so much a cultural-bound.

One student’s remarks on the notion that Chinese in general have a more avoiding conflict resolution style:

_They say [to themselves] okay, I feel, I feel hurt. I don’t want to tell you we are no friends anymore._

(Margret)

As mentioned above, when Chinese people are in conflict with each other and they use a more indirect way of communication, both parties understand what is being said. It is therefore not apparent that by communicating indirectly, a conflict situation is avoided. Even if Chinese students would feel more comfortable using an avoiding conflict resolution style in general, the need for a good end result of group work will help students to overcome their initial hesitation and address a student who is not performing (properly). Referring to ‘harmony’ as a ground for an avoiding conflict resolution style, one student says that harmony is already disrupted by other students when they are not performing, so in a way addressing that student is a way of restoring harmony. This notion of harmony is, as mentioned before, an important part of Chinese culture. Thus, it can also be used as a way of addressing some-
one in a conflict, in order to regain harmony. Avoiding is in such a case most notably not restoring harmony.

**Cultural differences between Dutch and Chinese students**

Participants differ in their opinions about cultural differences. Some remarks by several students on cultural differences:

- I do see that students with the same cultural background bonding. I see them forming groups and wanting to cooperate in subgroups.
  
  (Elisabeth)

- Culture is not a big deal, because every people in this project, in this program, they knew it is an international environment. They are more willing to accept different cultures.
  
  (Sophia)

- I don’t see any cultural differences in group work, but other times in class when we had a debate, people would just get all heated up, yelling, and I think to myself, that is not the way I handle a debate at all.
  
  (Helen)

- So, some people, all the Ukraine, or the Russian, they might hurt the Asians. They make the Asians feel like: Oh, I’m so stupid or whatever.
  
  (Margret)

- It doesn’t always have to be because they are from different countries, it can be someone from somewhere very close to you, who has lived a very different life than you.
  
  (Sophia)

One lecturer says:

- Language is the first thing that we observe as a problem with Chinese students, but we need to realise that there is a lot more behind that. That we need to explore. The acculturation system needs improving. A buddy system used to work.
  
  (Jane)

All students report that they are aware of existing cultural and communicational differences between the Dutch and Chinese, in the sense that the Dutch are more direct in their communication and the Chinese (or Asians) communicate more indirectly.

- “Not only Chinese, all Asia, they are kind of high-contact (sic!), when they want to tell you something, they will tell you a story and let you understand by yourself. But Dutch people they do, yeah they are direct.”
  
  (Margret)
The students do not necessarily report this as being a direct ground for conflict. Because of the awareness of the students, noticing that the directness does not mean students are being intentionally rude, makes it more acceptable.

_We come from a different culture background. I come from the indirect culture so maybe I don’t want to talk directly too. Like when I think the work you have done is not so good, I will say, maybe in the part we can improve in some ways, but when some students say: ‘No, it is not that way to work’, I will feel like, you have not shown enough respect to me. But that is not the case, they have just said it directly. That is good, that you don’t feel disrespected that you feel you know where it comes from. They are not rude, they are just born like that._

(Amanda)

It may not be considered to be a direct ground for conflict, but it can stir up emotions all the same.

_Maybe I know Dutch people are direct, I know that, but sometimes, they will, they can hurt me. Even I know, yeah, you are direct, but I’m hurt by your direct._

(Alexis)
So even though it is not a clear-cut ground for conflict, it is smouldering and can give rise to uneasy feelings of the Chinese students.

One of the lecturers suggests that:

> Perhaps the notion of students that they are doing a lot of the work, can come from a cultural misunderstanding. There could be more behind that. It may be that there are students that are more task-oriented and those that are more relationship-oriented. The relationship-oriented wants to talk a lot about: “what did you do on the weekend” etcetera and they immediately get the label of not being hard working, so they don’t get a lot to do.

(Jane)

These types of conversations don’t normally lead to conflicts, none of the interviewees have reported conflicts coming directly from these differences in orientation.

When there are too many Dutch students in the class, another lecturer suggests that:

> The conflicts aren’t resolved, are they? Its more, take it or leave it. But then what is the choice? I can take it and cope with it, or I’m dropping out and I am leaving, I just don’t understand this method. It is the Dutch way or the highway. So, the fact that I don’t see conflict, conflict is avoided or if people talk about it they are shouted down, they are told: why would that be a problem, because they are not looking at it from a Chinese perspective. Which means: listing out the series of tasks that need to be done, and then more or less delegating it and often Dutch students when they are given tasks, they normally start talking about what they don’t want to do, which means the less enjoyable tasks.

(Ed)

This lecturer’s analysis is that conflicts are not resolved at all. Other students than the Dutch just take the left-over tasks, which they are not necessarily good at, and which are the less preferred, maybe difficult or boring tasks. In his view, Dutch students take good care of themselves, setting the others more or less up for failure.

Dutch students seem less ambitious than Chinese students.

> To be honest, I see a lot of Dutch students that quit, more than Chinese in my programme. In this situation, I think it is because they have more choice, and they paid less money than us... But they are paid by their parents ... and they don’t need to pay the accommodation and they always have more options than us, so they just quit.

(Anna)
For this student, this presents a problem, because she has to do the group work all by herself. And because the Dutch students quit, she had no one to vent her anger and frustration at.

One of the lecturers says:

> There are two types of degrees, a first-class degree and a pass degree and the Dutch don’t even try for the first-class degree. The Chinese are more competitive.  

(Ed)

**Intercultural competencies**

All students say that they have learned about their intercultural competencies most from informal contacts with other students, for example at parties.

> So, I feel it is from the life, the adoption of the culture is from the life. It’s not from studies.  

(Margret)

Here they get asked questions such as: “What does the Chinese New Year celebration look like?” From there, the students (the Chinese and their conversation partners) get to talk about differences in cultures and their consequences in behaviour and norms and values. Because it is in a more relaxed environment, and not in a stressful situation like in a conflict situation, students will talk more openly and listen more carefully and are more willing to accept and respect the other and their differences.

> I saw students talking to the teacher after class and asking questions. So I think, if they can do that, I can do that. In China, we don’t do that.  

(Julia)

Both Dutch and Chinese students would prefer it if some attention is given to intercultural communication in class.

> I think if you give a lecture to the new arrived student its better than if you let them realise themselves. Because some students can’t wait for the time to realise themselves because they already feel sad.  

(Anna)

> Now we don’t have any clue on cultural differences. We just talk about international law in class. If we have a group assignment, we don’t know anything about each other and about cultural differences. This may have been a part of our problems.  

(Paula)

The students that have had some lectures on intercultural communication and competencies are a little ambiguous about the effect in the short term.
One of the lecturers remarks:

> It just takes longer for someone to realise [they learned from conflict and intercultural theory] because initially you are angry and you blame the other person and the actual realisation comes later, maybe years later, ah now I understand why I have this conflict because now I know this theory.

(Catherine)

This implies that the students that do not have any theory on the subject of intercultural communication really miss it, the ones that have had some lectures, cannot clearly describe the benefits just yet.

Chinese students say they realise they are guests here, and that they should adapt their behaviour if need be, and not the other students adapt to them. This shows a cultural sensitivity already being there, with students realising that in The Netherlands things could be different than at home. Students report that their choice for coming to The Netherlands is more for practical reasons, such as an exchange program with their Chinese university, other universities being far more expensive, the proficiency of the English language by most of the Dutch citizens. They mention the Dutch culture last on their list of arguments for choosing THUAS. This could mean that obtaining intercultural competencies is not a high priority.

**Collaborative learning or learning to collaborate**

When a programme decides to incorporate group tasks as part of its curriculum, lecturers should first decide whether they want students to learn to collaborate, or that they want them to gain knowledge via collaborative learning. When students work together, they soon discover that the best way to get the highest grade is to let everybody do what they do best individually. Someone might be good at research; someone might be good at writing. Therefore, it is most effective for all group tasks to let students do the individual task they have been doing, since it pays off. This means that to get the best grade on collaboration (how to put together the most effective team) does not secure the best learning curve of individual students.

For a more pleasant work environment and thus for more effective group work, students would like more supervision by a lecturer:

> Give them someone to talk to, the teacher doesn’t want to hear it. He says, ‘I don’t want the drama.’ Not for solving the conflict, but just to listen and to calm them down.

(Margret)
This corresponds to the latest research and with one of the preferred conflict management styles by Chinese, a trusted third party.

**Influence of lecturers**

One student talks about how lecturers, in their efforts to coach students to contribute more in class unknowingly and unwillingly worsen the uneasy feelings of students.

> *Because in the first year, my coach and my mentor, he always say: ‘Why are you so quiet. we want to hear the voice from you’, I feel a little bit like sad in the sense that I made a mistake.*

*(Amanda)*

Even though, as a lecturer, you may never know the impact of your remarks, it seems that in an international classroom lecturers should be more sensitive to students’ feelings, however well intended. All interviewed lecturers also stress the importance of supervision during group work:

> *Supervision literally means that you’re on top of it. And vision is looking at what is happening and not happening. And the Dutch model means you can look but you can’t touch. Maybe we need to do a little bit more. Asking more questions, not so much hands on, but asking, what is happening, what is not happening, why is it happening or not happening. What can be done to make it happen more. The Socratic method, always questioning.*

*(Ed)*

This is consistent with the recommendations of Leask (2010).

**Findings from class observations.**

During the class observations, all Chinese students were silent when the lecturer gave instructions, particularly at the beginning of the academic year. None of them asked questions. Two Dutch students were very active (and sometimes even loud) in class. Two lecturers noticed the more withdrawn posture of the Chinese students and tried to get these students to speak more freely in class and participate more. After five weeks, one Chinese student even volunteered to give a non-obligatory (not even bonus credits were given) five-minute lecture in class on a controversial subject. She was highly praised by the lecturer and classmates for the courage, effort and substance of the lecture. One Chinese student was absent during all classes. During group work, two Chinese students were not very active. One was listening and participating a little. One had headphones in during all the group sessions and was working on his device. During observations, he did not contribute orally. Most students (of all nationalities) are modest in their group behaviour, the students that take leadership have different nationalities, not necessarily Dutch.
In the Facebook group, students rotate formal roles, like chair or secretary. The Chinese student participates when she has a formal role. Some of the other students voluntarily place documents, like suggested reading material. All communicating is business-like, mentioning deadlines and mildly encouraging each other. For example:

“So here it is, our final version, after great effort from Grace & Frank:) Please look over it tonight, and if you do have comments, please write me about it. Otherwise, unless lots of comments tick in, I will upload it in the morning when I wake up”

(Kelly, Facebook post)

“Looks good!”

(George, Facebook post)

Only one subtle hint to any form of conflict was seen in the following post on Facebook:

“Good morning! =) This is our final version for HRL. If no one has anything to add, I’ll send it to Mr. Johnson at 10 am. My suggestion: One or two of the people who didn’t contribute to the document will present / read the paper today to Mr. Taylor.”

(Lisa, Facebook post)

Two students ‘liked’ the post, and the conflict was not referred to thereafter. So it is clear that if students do not participate, they will be addressed by members of the group in some way. Conflicts are therefore not avoided.

Findings from the focus group
In the focus group session, all participants agreed that conflicts during group work could not be attributed to cultural differences. One of the Chinese lecturers wonders whether conflict resolution styles are not more a personality trait. She does not see cultural similarities in Chinese students or Dutch students when they resolve conflicts. The overall conclusion of the focus group was that students and lecturers lack intercultural competencies, but this does not give rise to conflicts, nor do conflicts enhance intercultural competencies. The link between conflicts and the acquisition of intercultural competencies is not apparent according to the participants of the focus group. The shared opinion and experience of the participants is that conflicts arise from situations in which some members contribute less to group work than others. This may come from the fact that some foreign students, like the Chinese, are not familiar with group work and therefore do not know what is expected of them. Participants of the focus group agree that supervision during group work is therefore a solution for those students who would like to be more actively involved, but do not know how to.
Discussion

No apparent differences in conflict resolution styles were discovered. The Dutch students did not seem to be more clearly competing in resolving conflicts, nor were Chinese students more avoiding or accommodating during conflict. Although some research suggest that Chinese have a more avoiding conflict resolution style (Ma, 1992; Chung, 1996; Chen, 2002; Holt & Devore, 2005), this is in accordance with the outcome of the survey and the latest research stating that Chinese culture is changing in this respect, and that conflict behaviour that may seem avoiding, may very well be a well thought through strategy (Guo & Cionea, 2017).

It seems that not conflict issues per se, but feelings of uneasiness, mostly during group work and group meetings, all add up to a decision to drop out. These feelings have a multitude of causes. The most evident cultural difference between the Dutch and Chinese students are the direct and indirect ways of communicating (Hofstede, 1991; Holliday, 2011). This can be one of the underlying causes for a conflict between the students. Students who have a more indirect way of communicating do not always speak up for themselves, so they may not get the tasks in which they can excel. This then can lead to non-attendance and non-performance, which leads to conflicts. These differences in communicating during group work can also lead to misunderstandings, which add to the feeling of uneasiness that Chinese students report to have. These feelings combined make some of them drop-out.

Language issues also make the Chinese students feeling left out and lonely. Their language deficiency can create problems for them during group work, for they cannot deliver quality. This will, if it is directly leading to conflict, make other students not take the Chinese students seriously, which will create an even bigger distance between the students.

Students and lecturers both would prefer if group work were to be supervised. Not so much to prevent conflicts from occurring, but either for explaining and being in some sort of mediator role, or for teaching through a Socratic manner. Students can be more encouraged to speak up. This will also help students develop their language skills.

The learning purpose of the group work should be more apparent, so lecturers can grade more individually. During supervision students can show better what their input to the project has been. Supervision is also a good tool, for students who are used to, or thrive more with, extrinsic motivation. On top of that, for Chinese students, coming from a high-pressure environment, the Dutch educational system with high regard for taking responsibility for students own academic career, it is a very large cultural gap. Coupled with the complete lack of experience Chinese students have with group work, it is difficult for Chinese students to participate effectively. For other Chinese students however, this difference is more or less easy to overcome, if they tap into their ambition and intrinsic motivation. With this ambition, they can help Dutch students become more ambitious too. With more hands-on guidance Chinese students will benefit exponentially more from their education here, just as their fellow students.
Conclusion

No evidence was found for significant differences in conflict resolution styles or conflict management in an international classroom with Dutch and Chinese students. Conflicts do not seem to be opportunities for students to acquire international competencies.

Limitations

A key limitation of this research is its small scale. The low response rate of the survey makes the numbers possibly not representative for the whole student body of THUAS and of Chinese students in The Netherlands. Another limitation is that of the interviewed students, 17 were female and one was male. Seeing that some research suggests that gender may have an effect on conflict resolution styles (e.g. Holt & DeVore, 2005) it may have influenced the outcomes regarding the students conflict resolution styles. Considering the small scale of this research, a control group has not been used.

Further research

Seeing the limitations of this research, it may be advisable to do more research on the differences in conflict resolution styles on a larger scale with a more gender diverse group and in a business environment. It may also be advisable to do research on the effects of supervision on acquiring intercultural competencies.
**Recommendations**

What then do we want our students to learn from group work in an international classroom? The purpose of an international classroom should be that they learn with, through and from each other international competencies. Particularly for Chinese students who would like to work for a company or organisation that deals with European counterparts, it is useful to learn how to deal effectively with Europeans. Likewise, for Dutch students who expect to work with Asians. Lecturers should monitor what students learn exactly, whether students participate in equal manner. Lecturers can also intervene and discuss with students and have them reflect on their competencies and their progress. This means that in some way, students should have more supervision, preferably by a lecturer, who is well trained and instructed for this specific task. It could also be, as suggested by one of the interviewees, a fellow student who will listen and try to take the edges of a conflict.

Learning outcomes should include international/intercultural dimensions. Students and lecturers should be aware of these internationalised learning outcomes and group work should be assessed not only on the basis of the end product, but also on the process, the collaboration and the intercultural competencies acquired. See also in this volume the contribution of and Corina Tabacaru and Miranda de Hei.

To help students gain intercultural skills and make the group work more efficient, programmes should invest in a curriculum where intercultural interaction is more facilitated in an informal fashion. Facilitation seems best by starting to getting to know each other in mentoring groups of about four students and letting them talk about informal issues, subjects that initially are not so much related to the programme, but have more of an intercultural component.

As a last recommendation, the lecturers should be offered the chance to gain more intercultural competencies too. Make lecturers more aware that differences due to cultural backgrounds can exist and make them qualified to deal with these differences in the international classroom.
REFERENCES


Developing intercultural competence through Collaborative Learning

CORINA TABACARU
MIRANDA DE HEI
Context of this study

The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) has been rising to the challenge of internationalising its curricula to prepare students for participation in an increasingly global society. THUAS’ international business programmes such as International Business and Management Studies (IBMS), offer students a culturally diverse academic environment that can foster competences needed for today’s labour market. One of the most important international competencies is intercultural. Intercultural competence refers to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable students to communicate and behave “effectively and appropriately” when interacting with people of different cultures (Deardorff, 2006).

The international classroom

The international classrooms of IBMS with their student and staff cultural diversity can provide many opportunities for intercultural learning. However, participation in the international classroom is not enough to guarantee the development of intercultural competence. The mere presence of international students learning alongside local students does not ensure meaningful interactions (Leask, 2009). Although students in higher education recognise the value of becoming more culturally competent, they show a preference to work with peers of a similar cultural background (Volet & Ang, 2012). This is perceived as less challenging than working together in a culturally diverse learning environment, especially when the stakes are high.

One challenge is the risk of misunderstandings due to lower proficiency in English. For instance, for an overwhelming majority of IBMS students, English is not their first language. This means that students’ levels of English can vary significantly. Especially for the less proficient students, sustaining communication in English comes with a higher cognitive effort. For those students as well as the linguistically well represented Dutch students, the temptation to use their mother tongue can be very high. Misunderstandings can also arise from different patterns of communication. To give one example, students with an Asian background usually prefer a more indirect verbal style, while Dutch students tend to be more direct in their communication (Hofstede, 2010). For these students who use their own communica-
tion style as a frame of reference, collaboration can be difficult (Taras & Rowney, 2007). In view of all the potential challenges, it is of the utmost importance that teaching staff help facilitate a collaborative learning environment by valuing diversity, creating well-designed assignments and assisting students in managing possible conflicts.

As mentioned before, the cultural diversity present in the international business classroom alone cannot guarantee the acquisition of intercultural competences (Teekens, 2000). We believe that one way to develop intercultural competence can be achieved through careful course design that stimulates and guides collaborative learning. This paper will focus on a case study of a group learning assignment with IBMS first-year students at THUAS. In this collaborative assignment called Integrated Project 1 (IP1), students are requested to integrate knowledge of several subjects into one marketing project and work together in culturally-mixed groups while doing so. To ensure that group learning activities such as IP1 reach their desired learning goals, careful thinking should be put into the design and implementation of all its components. In the next section, we explain a general framework that can be used in the design of such collaborative assignments.

The Group Learning Activities Instructional Design (GLAID) framework

The use of Group Learning Activities (GLAs) in which students work and learn together on a collaborative assignment, is a widespread instructional method in higher education. GLAs can contribute to learning and development of students, such as deep-level understanding, motivation, shared knowledge construction, higher order thinking and metacognitive skills, and pro-social behaviour (De Hei, 2016). As GLAs may contribute to several and different kinds of learning outcomes, we assume that GLAs may also contribute to the development of intercultural competence when carefully designed and used in culturally diverse educational settings.

Effective GLAs, leading to the desired learning outcomes, need to be thoroughly designed and implemented. The GLAID-framework provides for such a comprehensive design (De Hei, Strijbos, Sjoer, & Admiraal, 2016). In this framework eight components are described: 1) interaction, 2) learning objectives and outcomes, 3) assessment, 4) task characteristics, 5) structuring the collaboration, 6) guidance, 7) group constellation, and 8) facilities. The first component, interaction, refers to the manner and content of student interaction. For example, students in IP1 might need to discuss what they know about marketing to reach consensus about the steps they want to take to design a marketing plan. To set the necessary learning goals and outcomes, which is the second framework component, teachers need to establish which procedural or content knowledge students should acquire. In addition, when establishing goals and outcomes, teachers need to decide whether they also want to involve students in defining this component. Goals set by students themselves may lead to higher engagement (Kollar, Fischer, & Hesse, 2006). The third component in the GLAID framework, assessment, refers to the methods suitable to assess whether the learning goals are achieved, and to the assessment criteria used. In the fourth component, task characteristics, instructors design the kind of task(s) students need to perform, the sequence of these tasks and the extent of students’ autonomy in deciding how to perform the task. For instance, in IP1, students first need to find a foreign product of their own choice, then conduct primary
and secondary research to design a marketing plan that they will defend in a group presentation and a group report. To ensure that every student will contribute to the collaboration, the teacher decides whether and how the collaboration should be structured, for example by using team roles, or by dividing the resources or by using group grades.

The sixth design component is guidance. The teacher determines what guidance is needed, who should perform this guidance, what communication means will be used in guiding the students during the GLA, and the frequency of the guidance. Furthermore, in the seventh component, group constellation, the teacher specifies the number of groups per class, the group size and composition, that is, whether the groups will be homogeneous or heterogeneous, and what the selection criteria for group composition will be. The last design component, facilities, refers to what learning resources students need to perform the task and what technological support, such as chatrooms, discussion boards, or wiki-sites, is needed for students to complete the assignment. Finally, in the facilities component it is important to consider the amount of time students will be required to work on the project and which (class)rooms should be available during the project.

Determining these components is important when designing a GLA. What is equally important is that all these components are aligned with one another (Dennen & Hoadley, 2013). Alignment implies that decisions taken in each of the eight design components relate to and fit with the design of the other components. For example, if the teacher plans to use peer assessment in the interaction component, giving and receiving feedback in a constructive manner should also be included in the learning goals; furthermore, in the group constellation, the instructor expects group members to be able to give useful feedback based on their expertise or experience, in the facilities component the teacher determines if a feedback format should be made available, and in the guidance component the design could focus on teacher’s modelling an effective way of providing feedback.

Finally, the GLAID framework is a valuable tool to assess and re-design GLAs such as IP1 with a view to enhancing their learning value.

**IP1 collaborative learning environment**

IP1 is semester-long project in IBMS’ first-year, first-semester curriculum. IP1 requires working in groups of four or five students towards the common goal of finding a foreign product to introduce successfully into the Dutch market. To achieve this goal, students integrate knowledge gained in other courses, conduct primary and secondary marketing research to ascertain how well this product will sell in Dutch supermarket chains and subsequently, design a strategy on how to best launch this product. As this project is worth 4 credits, the stakes are high and so is the workload. Due to this heavy workload, students need their group mates to complete the assignment successfully.

In IP1, each student gets assigned a project group made by the IBMS course tutor. With the students’ and their parents’ country of origin in mind, the tutor aims to compose groups that are as culturally diverse as possible. Students do not know their group mates beforehand and they do not have a say in which group they will work for the rest of the semester. This culturally diverse and fast-paced learning environment aims to prepare students for today’s global labour market in which the ability to work effectively and efficiently with people of different
cultural backgrounds is extremely important. In other words, IP1 creates learning opportunities in which students do not only acquire course-specific competences such as conducting research or designing a marketing plan, but also develop their intercultural skills by taking part in collaborative learning. Nevertheless, intercultural and collaborative competences are not easy to acquire. For a number of first-year IBMS students, acquiring these skills might make the difference between academic failure and success. That is why, solid course design accompanied by adequate guidance of the student collaboration is key.

Research questions
In this study, we aim to explore whether a carefully designed collaborative assignment such as IP1 may contribute to the development of intercultural competence. Therefore, we formulated two exploratory research questions:

How can the GLAID framework be used for IP1 design to enhance collaborative learning?
In what way do IP1 students in the international classroom of IBMS develop their intercultural competence through collaborative learning?

Method

Through meaningful collaboration in the international classroom, we assume that students can train and develop their intercultural competence. Meaningful collaboration can be ensured by participating in carefully and effectively designed GLAs. Therefore, our first step is to assess and if necessary, optimise the course design of IP1 with a view to stimulating the collaboration among students. Next, in this case study we aim to explore how students in the international classroom working together in IP1 train their intercultural competence.

Firstly, to improve the collaborative aspects of the IP1 course design, the IP1 coordinator asked the researchers for input at the end of the academic year 2015-2016. To this purpose, two focus group sessions with IP1 tutors were organised to assess the current design using the GLAID framework and, respectively, to devise the necessary changes to the course. One important change in the IP1 course design consisted of coaching sessions with the student groups. The mentor coaching sessions were in turn evaluated quantitatively via the satisfaction surveys filled in by 288 students at the end of semester 1 and, qualitatively via a peer-review session organised by one of the researchers. Secondly, to explore student collaboration and intercultural learning, three focus group interviews were organised. These interviews of approximately one hour each took place on the 4th, the 8th and respectively, the 9th of November and were scheduled a couple of weeks after students’ first major deadline for IP1 and their first exam period. The interviews were conducted with 6, 5 and respectively 4 students from 3 different classes and different teams; in two focus groups, it occurred that two members of the same teams were present. The students volunteered to take part in the interview after the class mentor invited all students of that class. The participants had a variety of cultural backgrounds ranging from local Dutch, to Dutch-Aruban, Dutch-Surinamese, Dutch-Antillean, Dutch-Turkish, Ukrainian, German and Chinese.
The interviews were semi-structured and based on a set of questions on the following themes: interaction, engagement, relationship, autonomy, competence, knowledge transfer, ‘intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication and managing uncertainty’. The last three themes were taken from Brinkmann and Van Weerdenburg approach to intercultural effectiveness as four ‘interlocking’ skills (2014, p. 12). In their approach, the first element, ‘intercultural sensitivity’ captures awareness of own cultural background, interest in the culture of others as well as attention to communication cues that provide information about how people think and feel. The second element, ‘intercultural communication’ means being mindful of someone’s communication style through active listening and adapting one’s own style to the needs of the other. The third element, managing uncertainty suggests taking the risk of engaging with people of different backgrounds and dealing with the confusion that the encounter might trigger. The theme of relationship overlaps significantly with Brinkmann and Van Weerdenburg’s fourth element, ‘building commitment’, which is also defined by investing in relationship with others.

Finally, to get more insight into the perceived quality of the collaboration in intercultural groups, 10 mid-semester and 10 end-semester reflections were quasi randomly chosen for analysis from the IP1 Dropboxes on the digital learning environment. The aim was to obtain a stratified sample of 10 students from 10 different classes, half male, half female with cultural backgrounds as diverse as possible. When judging cultural diversity, we were restricted to the information available, that is, the nationality of the students and that of the parents. Indeed, nationality can sometimes reveal limited information on a person’s multi-layered cultural background; however, taking into account the nationality of both parents can give some additional input. The nationalities of the students whose reflection was chosen for analysis were as follows: Dutch, Dutch-Turkish, Dutch-Antillean, Dutch-Aruban, Dutch-Iraqi, Romanian, Hungarian, Chinese and German.

The analysis of the written reports was an iterative process of reading, discussing and agreeing on the main themes. The following three themes were identified: intercultural communication, content related interaction and structuring of the collaboration.

**Findings**

This section consists of four parts. In the first part, we will present the findings resulting from the two focus group interviews with IP1 tutors. The second part will consist of an evaluation of the mentor coaching sessions. The third and fourth part focus on the analysis of student focus groups and, respectively, on the analysis of students’ written reflections.

**The IP1 redesign using the GLAID-framework**

One problem area that IP1 tutors identified in the first focus group interview centred around collaborative and intercultural skills. Although clearly stated in the IBMS study guide, these competences were not captured in the learning goals and outcomes of the IP1 syllabus 2015-2016. Admittedly, the syllabus provided detailed guidelines to help students draw up fair rules and agreements (IP1 Syllabus 2015-2016, Appendix 1), but, the tutors felt that there
was not enough guidance on how students can implement these rules and monitor group processes. For instance, a general guideline such as ‘raise a problem for discussion as soon as possible’ is easier said than done (IP1 Syllabus 2015-2016, Appendix 1, p. 12). Even if IP1 tutors agreed on the need for more guidance on team collaboration, a few saw their role more as a content instructor and less as a coach. Furthermore, tutors stated that IP1 lacked a pedagogical plan on how to facilitate collaboration among students; this meant that each of them intuitively used their own experience and expertise to guide students in working better in groups. Another problem some tutors raised, concerned the task characteristics; they felt that the workload and content knowledge of IP1 was too heavy to allow for more procedural knowledge, such as developing collaborative skills. Finally, IP1 instructors identified a major problem in the assessment of the individual contribution to the collaboration. Even though it constituted as much as 40% of the final IP1 grade, the assessment was deemed purely arbitrary. Tutors found this part of the assessment time-consuming and lacked clear assessment criteria.

In the second focus group session, tutors agreed on several adjustments regarding the collaboration in student groups. Regarding the interaction component, tutors wanted students to collaborate more instead of distributing tasks and then compiling individual parts. In addition, they wanted students to be able to reflect on their own and team’s contribution to the collaboration. This adjustment was further aligned with five other course design components. In the IP1 Syllabus 2016-2017, the learning goals and outcomes were adjusted to include contribution to a supportive collaborative environment in a culturally diverse group as well as reflecting on this contribution (p. 5). In the component task characteristics, a team agreement was introduced in which students established the rules and consequences of working together and, subsequently, each of them signed it. Another new task was a mid-term and final individual reflection paper on own and team contribution and learning outcomes. Yet another task consisted of writing weekly meeting minutes in which students would provide a short summary of the discussion points, and then briefly evaluate the session. The task of making a portfolio, present in the previous academic year’s syllabus, requiring students to state their own contribution to the final product was taken out, as some tutors felt it contradicted the whole objective of collaboration; students need to work together to produce a final cohesive product that is ideally higher in quality than what each individual student can produce. Encouraging students to claim credit for individual parts contradicted this aim. In the component guidance, mentor coaching sessions were introduced; these class mentor sessions of 15 minutes each, were planned with each team four times throughout the semester to facilitate collaboration within the team, help students resolve conflicts and monitor progress.

Although in close communication with IP1 tutors, the role would be purely facilitatory; giving mentors an assessing role was believed to hinder an atmosphere of open communication as students would be afraid that discussing problems would impact their grades (see 3.2). In the component facilities three aspects of the course were adjusted: 1) a format was added for the meeting minutes that required students to alternate roles and evaluate the session at the end, 2) classrooms were reserved for the mentor meetings, and 3) on the digital learning environment extra Dropboxes were made for submitting the meeting minutes as well as for the written reflections.
Coaching sessions provided by class mentors

Firstly, the quantitative evaluation of mentor coaching sessions via student satisfaction surveys yielded the following results; to the statement ‘The team coaching provided by my mentor was useful’ as follows: 16% of students strongly agreed, 39% agreed, 32.3% were indifferent, 9% disagreed and 2.8% highly disagreed. This is an overall result and does not give further insight into the individual evaluation of each mentor of the 14 first-year IBMS classes. Although not negative, the outcome of the student evaluation does not give conclusive results about the effectiveness of this intervention. The 55% of students who considered the coaching session useful might have been influenced by a halo effect; in other words, the relationship with their mentor created through the mentoring and other courses taught by the mentor might have had an impact on their rating. However, the survey item on team coaching was placed in the IP1 section on the survey, thus causing students to be more inclined to see it as part of the IP1 course and rather than the mentoring trajectory. This could have indeed diminished the halo effect. Finally, due to the fact that students were not explicitly asked about the team coaching sessions during the focus group interviews, their perceptions of this interventions remain inconclusive.

To get some input about how mentors have experienced this pilot intervention, a peer review session with five mentors (including one of the researchers who mentored one first-year class) was organised on 21 March 2017. Most of the discussion focused on the role that the mentor should have during these coaching sessions. For instance, participants mentioned that the mentor should create an atmosphere of psychological safety and mutual trust during the sessions; they should help students discover their preferred role and encourage them to try other leading roles as well, help with group processes such as monitoring progress or agreeing on a course of action; finally, facilitating collaboration should prevent the good students from quitting the programme because of unequal and unfair work distribution within the team. In addition, participants suggested to include some trainings for the students on group roles and feedback in the mentoring course. Finally, a participant emphasised the importance of being in close communication with the IP1 tutor; another remarked that mentors should be interculturally competent themselves to be able to navigate through the cultural differences that can arise in a culturally-diverse collaborative setting. In addition to the peer review session, a survey on the IP1 coaching sessions was sent to all fourteen mentors and filled in by a total of ten. Six out of ten mentors were positive about the coaching sessions while three were negative; one mentor responded with ‘other’ due to their dual role as both IP1 tutor and mentor. All mentors agreed that they need more time allocated for this coaching role as well as tools and materials that they can easily use in their sessions.

Student focus group interviews

The three focus group interviews of approximately one hour each took place on the 4th, the 8th and respectively, the 9th November. The interviews were scheduled a couple of weeks after students’ first major deadline for IP1 and their first exam period. The interviews were conducted with 6, 5 and respectively 4 students from 3 different classes and different teams; in two focus groups, it occurred that two members of the same teams were present. The students volunteered to take part in the interview after the class mentor invited all students of that class (See ‘Method’ above).
Overall, IP1 was experienced by all participants as challenging and stressful, especially in the week before the exam period due to the approaching deadlines and exams and to the unequal contribution from team members. Time-management and planning was a frequently named problem. As far as interaction is concerned, many students admitted that they spent the group work sessions dividing tasks to be completed at home and then went on to socialise instead of using the group-work sessions more efficiently by helping each other with the assignment and discussing each other’s individual work. When realising that they were not on schedule, one or two students stepped up and took a leadership role to coordinate the work and get the work done within the given deadline. Interestingly, the role of leadership was frequently mentioned in all three interviews. This can be explained by the fact that these students volunteered to participate in the interviews showing a level of engagement and a willingness to commit which they might have also displayed during IP1. These traits can be related to some extent to the student leader profile.

Some factors that increased students’ engagement in the project were the approaching deadlines, the feeling that one is making progress and gaining knowledge, the teacher and the content area of marketing. However, students focused more on the factors that negatively affected their motivation. By far the most frequently mentioned aspect of the collaboration was the frustration experienced with team members contributing less or submitting lower-quality work. Another important factor was the confusion students felt about the assignment, the criteria or lack of guidance from the teacher. Finally, the grade that students received after the first six weeks of the semester can influence motivation in a positive or negative way. For instance, some participants felt that a high grade motivated them to work even harder, while others felt that a high grade made them passive and less inclined to fully commit. In like manner, a low grade made some participants feel discouraged; for others, a low grade was a wake-up call to put in more effort.

The other themes relevant for the quality of the collaboration discussed in the interviews were relationship, competence and autonomy. Firstly, the relationship with other team mates was heavily influenced by unequal contribution from team mates and hence unequal workload, a phenomenon that all participants but one raised in the focus groups. Some participants said that they got along well in the beginning but as pressure increased, relationships grew sour. This was due mostly to time pressure as well as differing standards of good-quality work within the team. Some participants felt that sitting together with your team mates in class or meeting informally outside class can improve the relationship. Secondly, students experienced some form of autonomy since they could choose their own product and how to work on the tasks; this feeling of autonomy diminished, however, due to unclear assessment criteria. Finally, students felt competent when understanding the assignment and how to work on it and if they had prior experience with group work.

The major part of the discussion on intercultural competence focused on intercultural communication. Many students mentioned the different levels of English proficiency in their team. As expected, a lower level of English can hinder communication. In addition, some students mentioned the indirect communication style of some, especially Asian, group members. This indirect style might cause friction when faced with the direct communication style
of Dutch students. This indirect style is characterised by not saying directly what one means or not asking for help or clarification. Nevertheless, a student mentioned that his Chinese team member got more confident and outspoken when another Chinese student joined their team. Another student mentioned the team coaching they received from their mentor, which helped them create psychological safety by giving their Chinese team member more opportunity to give her input. Finally, a Chinese student claimed to have a direct, atypical communication style. Besides differing levels of English proficiency, some non-Dutch speaking students experienced team members speaking Dutch, instead of English, as disrespectful.

Interestingly, most students attributed conflicts or puzzling behaviour to character or personality rather than differences in cultural background. Nevertheless, for some respondents these differences considerably hinder building a good relationship. What is more, some interviewees confess not being interested in meeting team members outside class that they do not already like and/or are not friends with. Some students claim that, when discussing conflicts in their team, they are able to separate the issue from the person; they believe that their feedback is not personal, it is about the work their team members deliver. However, this feedback is often perceived as criticism and taken personally. Additionally, when discussing a sensitive issue, some students claim that it is best to address the issue by directly asking; another student mentions the need to adapt one’s communication style to the needs of the other. Furthermore, a student confesses her reluctance to confront two domineering group members in the interest of group harmony.

When asked about what they have learned in IP1 that they can use in other collaborative assignments, many students’ answers relate to effective communication. By communicating effectively in their future collaboration, some students feel they can positively influence their team members’ work. Elements of effective communication include: addressing problems earlier when the collaboration does not go well, persistently reminding other team members of agreed standards, insisting on politeness, adapting one’s communication style to the other person’s need, and investing in the relationship by talking more with group members.

**Students’ written reflections**

As mentioned above, one intervention in the IP1 course redesign was to have students write an individual mid- and end-semester reflection (see reflection assignment in Appendix 1). To get more insight into the perceived quality of the collaboration in intercultural groups, 10 mid-semester and 10 end-semester reflections were quasi randomly chosen for analysis from the IP1 Dropboxes on the digital learning environment. The aim was to obtain a stratified sample of 10 students from 10 different classes, half male, half female with cultural backgrounds as diverse as possible. When judging cultural diversity, we were restricted to the information available, that is, the nationality of the students and that of the parents. Indeed, nationality can sometimes reveal limited information on a person’s multi-layered cultural background; however, taking into account the nationality of both parents can give some additional input. The nationalities of the students whose reflection was chosen for analysis were as follows: Dutch, Dutch-Turkish, Dutch-Antillean, Dutch-Aruban, Dutch-Iraqi, Romanian, Hungarian, Chinese and German.
In our analyses we focused on intercultural communication, content related interaction and structuring of the collaboration.

**Intercultural communication**

This assignment required students only to reflect on the quality of their collaboration. No question in the assignment alluded to the experience of working in an intercultural group. However, three out of ten students explicitly mentioned this experience; for two other students, this experience was more implicitly reflected on. Dutch-Aruban Hester wrote that she “really enjoy[ed] working in a team of people of different cultures [as] this helps [her] every time to improve [her] communication skills.” Clearly, for Hester an intercultural group entails the opportunity to speak and thus practice her English.

Regarding communication skills, Chinese Billy implicitly stated a challenge in intercultural communication which is using a language other than one’s mother tongue. Billy confessed being “afraid of teamwork”, because his “classmates speak much better English than [he does].” He also admitted having ideas, but not being able to clearly put them across during meetings because of his lower English proficiency. At this point the situation improved during the course: “But it has changed a lot since my group notices my problem and they started to help me with that.”

Further, Romanian Dana implicitly referred to cultural diversity in her reflection by mentioning the heterogeneity of her group, “a team with strangers [with] different ideas and mentalities.” For her working in such a team was an interesting experience; in her opinion, she contributed to an atmosphere of mutual respect, where “no judgment or discrimination was allowed.” She further added: “Every time there was a misunderstanding inside our group, I tried to encourage my team mates to openly talk about it until we all reach common ground.” Although Dana’s actions can suggest good interpersonal skills, these interpersonal skills are also essential when behaving in an interculturally competent way.

Another student reflecting on the intercultural diversity in this group assignment was Daniel from Germany. He stated being aware that “cultural differences might cause some misunderstandings”, but that he initially welcomed the prospect of dealing with them because he sees himself “as a good intercessor when it comes to conflicts.” Very soon however, he was forced to amend his enthusiasm when he saw that his teammates had lower quality standards than himself. It’s important to mention that he did not attribute this difference of quality standards to cultural background.

Finally, Dutch-Iraqi Tudor wrote that, thanks to this project, he “learned how to work together with an international group and was able to understand other work cultures.” One of his learning goals was to be “more open-minded” by accepting that people have “their own perception[s] and opinion[s]” and to keep reminding himself to make concessions as things cannot always go his way. Furthermore, he learned not to judge others too quickly. In the beginning, he didn’t like his teammates and wished he was in a different group; however, working together made him totally change his attitude and he ended up becoming friends.
with his teammates. All in all, these student reflections may show that intercultural group-work creates at least an opportune context for training intercultural competence.

**Structuring the collaboration: leadership issues**

Perhaps it is not surprising that students’ reflections on the quality of the collaboration contain many of the issues discussed in the focus group interview. For instance, a frequently mentioned topic is the necessary role of the leader in the group.

Based on the student reflections as well as the focus group interviews, we can identify three types of leaders mentioned by the students.

The first is the pseudo-leader, who is sometimes a dominant type, very often self-appointed, who tells the other members what to do before winning the group’s trust or credibility. For instance, Cathy reveals that, because of her anxiety about group work due to bad previous experience, she assigned tasks and ‘tried not to be as bossy or aggressive’. In the second part of the project, she admitted that she had a ‘more laid back attitude’ due to ‘personal issues’. Nowhere in the reflection is there mention of how team members reacted to her behaviour in the first part of the project; however, the label ‘bossy’ and ‘aggressive’ that Cathy herself uses do not sound like effective behaviour.

Another type is the confident leader, very often appointed by the team due to his/her qualities, previous experience and expertise. The team entrusts this person or persons with overseeing the project and final quality control. To illustrate, Dana confesses that she felt ‘honoured when her teammates chose [her] as the team leader’. Another such leader is Daniel who was ‘elected’ by his group due to his work experience in a marketing department.

Finally, a frequent type of leader, as it emerges from the reflections, is the reluctant leader, a student who is forced to step up and take initiative because of the other members’ lack of involvement. For example, Klaus admitted that the project “would have gone drastically wrong if Andriy had not taken leadership. We were missing someone to tell us what to do and chase us to get our work done. Andriy became that person.” Another self-confessed reluctant leader, forced to “coordinate [his] team members” was Peter. Because all his team members lacked a proactive attitude and “were always awaiting instructions” from him, he saw himself taking over a “disproportionate amount of work.” This led to him experiencing the week before the deadline as “the most horrible week that I have ever had in my life. Emotional waves of anger, depression and the urge to get the report done were passing through me hour after hour.” Because of this tremendous experience, Peter learned that a “friendlier atmosphere” and being “constructive in addressing team members about what they should improve” can be more effective than his “too serious approach.” Finally, it is important to mention that the leader role can shift sometimes throughout the semester or that a group can have more than one leading figure.

The role of a leader can be performed by one person in a group, however, in some collaborating groups, the leading role is performed by all of the participants. Hereby, they all feel individually responsible for the group work. In the reflection report of the Dutch-Turkish Merve was written: “This is something we did as a team to make sure that everyone does their part.”
Interaction

Another aspect of the collaboration is the interaction during group work sessions. Many students confess dividing tasks and then completing the work at home. Although some students are aware of the importance of discussing, evaluating and turning all individual parts into one coherent whole, many students confess experiencing time pressure, poor time-management and lack of planning which can certainly affect the quality of the final report. Below an excerpt from Billy’s reflection describing a successful and efficient manner of interaction:

Once we get a task, everyone normally chooses the parts he or she prefer, if there are problems such as if I do not feel really confident with the parts I got, my team members will take it and give me another one which I can handle it. And then we go home and get it started. Usually we have a week or at least a weekend to finish it, N. always finish his own part quickly so if anyone has problem, he can help. If we go wrong W. or L. informs us. Once we finish all, we add them up then we can see the whole picture, also check if there is any part not really good we tell the writer to rewrite them. We have our own Dropbox that we can upload anything relates to our task. It makes an efficient way that we can check our work anytime, and if we get confused with anything we can talk about it in group chat. Our way to make sure all works are done with good quality is we check them and if anything not matched we will do it again.
Overall, dividing tasks in an initial stage of the group work session seems to be very common among IP1 students. However, in some of the groups the interaction was also content related, such as what Safira wrote: “We have 4 group members so voting sometimes did not work; we would have discussion. The 2 persons with the best arguments would win.” Another example of interaction content related instead of only related to task division: “So actually I don’t think that I did as much as others, but sometimes I can solve problems in another way and give some different ideas to our group.” Two final examples of content related interaction leading to good collaboration: “N. and W. are always there to assist me to finish my part, and they also give me hints about how to find the solutions. L., A. and M. like to share what they did, which can inspire us sometimes”, and “each team member would tell the rest what they had done so far and give feedback to the work that was delivered so we can improve and learn from our mistakes.”

Some students stress the importance of face-to-face meetings for good interaction and collaboration:

> The collaboration improved because the communication was in person rather than via Whatsapp so that created less issues and everyone understood each other; there were barely any conflicts, everyone agreed with any idea that any team mate had’ and as another student wrote: ‘Besides the strategic part of managing the project, our team was really close and we worked together with no problems. Everyone came to the meetings we had, both in school and outside the programme, brought their part in the project and was active during the meetings.

Yet another student stated: “We had our ideas and could brainstorm together and come up with better ideas and solutions for all of our task” and “make more group work in a way that we don’t work on our own but actually sit together when we are doing our parts. I think this way we can always help each other better and everyone can come up with more ideas and make it even better.”

Former experience and age can contribute to good collaboration as well according to one student: “As the oldest of the group I was not afraid to give feedback to ensure the collaboration quality. I gave feedback to my group members and asked for feedback in return.”

To ensure good and effective interaction, students refer to a condition of mutual trust and a good atmosphere, for example: “After 3 weeks we got used to each other and knew how to collaborate. We were comfortable enough with each other to give and take feedback”, “a matey atmosphere promotes a better collaboration. So I am confident in our group and even challenges come again and again, we can solve them together”, and “finally, in my next team project I would like to develop a friendlier atmosphere in the team.”
Part of the interaction also referred to the development of shared mental models of the collaboration, the task and the product: “What I did was, I always tried to find different ways to make sure everyone is content with the new idea that we came up with”, “made sure to get everyone’s approval to make sure no conflicts would happen. I learned a lot more as well”, “each team member did their part and everyone was more interactive with each other and we really worked as a team we did the whole project together that everyone knew every part to the project no one was confused and everybody was the same page”, and “every time there was a misunderstanding inside our group, I tried to encourage my team mates to openly talk about it until we all reach common ground.” Sometimes students refer to the lack of shared mental models and express the intention to pay attention to this when participating in a new project: “Next time I will discuss our expectations in the beginning. By doing that, we can compare our expectations and bring them all to one level, as we should aim at the highest expectation possible”, “what I learned is that it is not easy working together with different people. Everybody has their own perception and opinion. You have to make concessions and it cannot go always your way”, and “another thing that was commonly present in our team was that we knew that there were problems, however we have never really been able to address them or to come up with working solutions to these problems.”

A new element only present in the reflections is giving credit to and expressing admiration for one’s’ team members for their qualities, strengths and work, as illustrated in the following excerpt: “Something I would really like to be able to perform is writing as good as D., being able to come up with very good research results like X. and always be ready to make assignments and have my stuff with me like M.”
4. Conclusion

For this explorative case study on optimising the learning outcomes regarding the development of collaborative and intercultural competences, the IP 1 project of the department IBMS was redesigned using the GLAID framework. The implementation of the redesigned course was monitored using student focus group interviews and students’ written reflections.

The redesign of IP1 included the adaptation and alignment of the four components: 1) learning goals, 2) structuring, 3) assessment, and 4) guidance. The learning goals were reformulated to include the acquisition of collaborative skills in diverse teams. The structuring of the collaboration was supported by having students write a team agreement related to the desired collaboration, by creating weekly minutes about the content and process of their group meetings and by writing individual mid- and end-term reflections evaluating their own and peers’ contribution. The assessment of a student’s individual contribution was based on the meeting minutes and the reflections. Finally, the guidance in IP1 was improved by introducing mentor coaching sessions meant to support the collaboration in group work.

The focus group interviews and the individual student reflections revealed that group work sessions often still led to dividing the work, although some examples of deeper interaction were described in groups with high quality collaboration. Leadership appeared to be an important issue in the manner of interaction. Some leaders stimulated the group members to hand in their work on time, and others also mediated when problems arose, or stimulated their group to discuss the contents of their work. All in all, students emphasised the importance of a leader, self-appointed or chosen by group members, who should steer the interaction among group members to be able to work effectively.

Students stated that participation in IP 1 contributed to their communication skills and that effective communication positively influenced their team members’ work. Effective communication is described by students as addressing problems earlier when the collaboration does not go well, persistently reminding other team members of agreed standards, insisting on politeness, adapting one’s communication style to the other person’s need, and investing in the relationship by talking more with group members. Students also mentioned negative experiences related to poor interaction as a result of using Dutch instead of English in the company of non-Dutch speaking students. Others report an insufficient level of English proficiency resulting in a low quality of handed-in work. Interestingly, students hardly attribute problems in the collaboration to cultural differences but to other factors such as ineffective communication or differences in quality standards and work ethic.

The coaching sessions with the IP1 student groups were evaluated positively by class mentors. A slight majority of mentors believed in the benefits of such an intervention and all agreed that they needed more resources such as time and material on how to conduct these sessions. Our data suggests that students see these sessions as useful. Although more research is needed, these sessions seem to have helped some students in managing conflicts and communicating more clearly with their group members.
Both the student interviews and reflections reveal a low emphasis on intercultural learn-ings. The acquisition of intercultural competence tends to be less explicitly mentioned by students. Developing intercultural competence is, however, implicitly stated in students’ statements on the collaboration and communication in team work. A possible explanation for students’ lower emphasis on intercultural competence can be due to students’ inability to distinguish between intercultural and collaborative skills. Also in literature we find similarities between these two sets of skills. To illustrate these similarities we shortly compare three of four of Brinkmann and Van Weerdenb”’s intercultural skills (2014), with aspects of collaborative learning described by Johnson and Johnson (2009). The concept of intercultural sensitivity relates to what Johnson and Johnson (2009) describe as exploring different views, understanding the perspective of others and active listening (part of promotive interaction). Intercultural communication seems to overlap with Johnson and Johnsons’ description of appropriate use of social skills: communicate accurately and unambiguously, accept and support each other, and resolve conflicts constructively. Building commitment is also described by Johnson and Johnsons’ as promotive interaction and social skills: get to know and trust each other, acting in trusting and trustworthy ways, providing efficient and effective help and assistance to group mates.

This insight that intercultural competence and collaborative skills consist of partly overlapping characteristics leads us to a new research question with which we would like to end this report on our explorative study: “What specific skills distinguish intercultural competence from collaborative skills and how can we guide students in the development of these specific skills?”

“I believe it [IP 1] has contributed a lot to the development of my communicative skills and also my teamwork skills”

“I really enjoy working in a team of people of different cultures [as] this helps every time to improve communication skills.”
REFERENCES


DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING
The implications of CLIL training
on English-medium instruction in Marketing and Commerce (CE) and International Financial Management and Control (IFMC)

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Context of this study

As a response to globalisation and internationalisation there is a rising demand for English speaking professionals. Because of this, more and more institutions of tertiary education have started to use English-medium instruction (Hu & Lei, 2014; Costa, 2013). Within The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) internationalisation is one of the main policy themes. Within the Faculty of Business, Finance and Marketing (BFM) three out of four programmes have chosen to shape this theme in the form of English-medium instruction (EMI) classes. EMI classes are classes in which English is used as the language of instruction for an academic subject in a country where the first language of the population is not English (Dearden, 2015). Two of the four programmes on offer at the faculty BFM are, and have been for the last 6 years at least, taught completely in English (HHS, 2017).

With the rise in numbers of these EMI classes, negative aspects have been found. Difficulties with lecture comprehension, understanding terms and concepts, reduced interaction during the classes - both between lecturer and students and between students - and an increased workload for both lecturers and students are the main drawbacks. More specifically, feedback on academic content from lecturer to student is thought to be lacking in courses due to the non-native English speaking lecturers feeling they do not have the English skills to offer this support (Den Heijer, 2015).

The reduced interaction between students and lecturers also manifests itself in the lower number of questions that students asked in EMI classes compared to native language classes. The number of questions has been found to drop so low that the class can be effectively reduced to a monologue in some cases (Airey, 2006). One of the factors contributing to students asking fewer questions in an EMI class could also be the cultural background of the student. For example, in Asian countries asking questions is considered a waste of time as the lecturer is considered to be the expert on the subject and any time taken away from the expert speaking is considered of less value (Zhong, 2013).
Linguistic limitations of lecturers were mentioned as the main source of reduced performance in explaining academic context (Vinke, Snippe, & Jochems, 1998). The lecturers’ grammatical accuracy as well as their spoken fluency were not at the level required for effective EMI (Huibregtse, 2001). Besides these challenges in relation to their language proficiency, lecturers in The Netherlands can be in need of further didactical skills in order to be fully capable of dealing with international students (Mellion, 2008).

The rise of EMI courses in The Netherlands has led to serious questions about the quality of tertiary education. Beter Onderwijs Nederland [Better Education Netherlands] is preparing a lawsuit against the State in order to enforce article 7.2 of the Law regarding Higher Education in The Netherlands, which states that the primary language of instruction should be Dutch, unless the subject of the course is a foreign language or if the subject of the course or the students require a different language (Beter Onderwijs Nederland, 2017).

**CLIL methodology**

In order to improve the results of EMI courses a CLIL-based (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach has been suggested (Den Heijer, 2015). The most suitable definition of CLIL for this research is “Content and Language Integrated Learning is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language” (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010, p. 1). CLIL refers to ‘educational approaches that allow for improved foreign language learning in combination with content learning in a variety of (non-language) subjects’ (CLIL Research Network, 2017). In this teaching approach, the curricular content is taught through the medium of a foreign language which is mostly part of mainstream education at the primary, secondary, or tertiary level. CLIL shares many characteristics with other types of bilingual education, such as content-based instruction (CBI) and immersion education (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Dalton-Puffer (2011) notes that whether a particular teaching approach is defined as immersion or CLIL “often depends as much on its cultural and political frame of reference as on the actual characteristics of the program” (Dalton-Puffer, 2011, p. 183). Dalton-Puffer sums up some points which exemplify characteristics of what appears to be typical CLIL teaching approaches in Europe, South America, and parts of Asia.
CLIL is about using a foreign language or a lingua franca, not a second language (L2). That is, the language of instruction is one that students will mainly encounter in the classroom, given that it is not regularly used in the wider society they live in. The dominant CLIL language is English, reflecting the fact that a command of English as an additional language is increasingly regarded as a key literacy feature worldwide.

CLIL also implies that teachers will normally be non-native speakers of the target language. They are not, in most cases, foreign language experts, but instead content experts, because “classroom content is not so much taken from everyday life or the general content of the target language culture but rather from content subjects, from academic/ scientific disciplines or from the professions” (Wolff, 2007, in Dalton-Puffer, 2011).

This means that CLIL lessons are usually timetabled as content lessons (e.g., biology, music, geography, mechanical engineering), while the target language normally continues as a subject in its own right in the shape of foreign language lessons taught by language specialists.

In CLIL programs typically less than 50% of the curriculum is taught in the target language.

Furthermore, CLIL is usually implemented once learners have already acquired literacy skills in their first language (L1), which is more often at the secondary than the primary level.

Table 1: Characteristics of CLIL

Dalton-Puffer (2011, 184) states that “CLIL could be interpreted as a foreign language enrichment measure packaged into content teaching.” However, it should be noted that the term ‘CLIL’ is often used to describe a teaching approach, which does not include support for the development of language skills in the target language. The terms CLIL and immersion are used interchangeably in English language teaching (ELT) literature or used to describe any teaching context in which an L2 is used to teach content (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009). However, there are clearly some important differences between these two approaches. The most prominent difference is the support for the development of the target language skills in CLIL approaches, which is absent or of less importance in immersion approaches (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009).

In other situations, the term ‘CLIL’ is used with a broader meaning of the concept of language. In these cases, the main aim of the teaching approach is not the additional target language but correct substantive/content education due to the focus on language and communication in general. This interpretation of CLIL is used by De Graaff (2014). De Graaff (2013) slightly changed the above mentioned definition of CLIL to make the term more applicable for every language in which is being taught, L1 or L2: “CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach with an additional focus on language for the learning and teaching of content, which also supports language learning” (De Graaff, 2013, p. 32). Despite the fact that the ‘L’ in CLIL actually stands for any target language, in most cases it stands for English (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009).
Classroom interaction and CLIL
According to Dalton-Puffer (2011), there tends to be less active participation of students during CLIL lessons. In a later article, however, the same author reported that “[...] the frequently observed positive affective effects of CLIL: after a certain amount of time spent in CLIL lessons the learners seem to lose their inhibitions to use the foreign language spontaneously for face-to-face interaction” (Dalton-Puffer, in print).

Research by Maillat (cited in Dalton-Puffer, 2011) shows that CLIL-students have richer interactions in L2 than in L1 during role plays in the classroom. According to Maillat, this allegedly is due to the mask effect in L2 which makes a clear distinction between the speaker and learner identities possible. The epistemic commitment of the speaker concerning the validity of his expression decreases, because the personal convictions and beliefs of the learner are not involved. This mask effect is not available in the traditional language class since L2 is the main learning target.

Gassner & Maillat (2006) studied biology classrooms in Switzerland where 17 to 18-year-old French native speakers were being taught either in their L1 or through the medium of English. In short, the CLIL students spoke more elaborately and seemed to get more deeply involved in their roles as different stakeholders in an environmental conflict. The interpretation Gassner & Maillat offer is based on the symbolic function the L2 appears to have in this situation: it serves as a ‘mask’ for the students, which allows them to safely assume the part of some ‘other’ who may be representing positions that they do not share and/or would not like to be seen to share by their peer-group. Acting out the part in the L2 may make them feel more secure in that what they say will not be mistaken as their personal voice (Dalton-Puffer, in print).

CLIL students were found to be more adept at dealing with the requirements of spontaneous conversational interaction between students and between student and lecturer. Implementing macro-level structuring devices and micro-level features like maintaining tense consistency in narratives was shown to be at a higher level for CLIL students. However, regarding phonetic components, the effects of CLIL-classes seems to be less pronounced (Admiraal, Westhoff, & de Bot, 2006; Gallardo del Puerto, Garcia Lecumberri, & Gomez Lacabex, 2009).

One reason for this increase in adeptness to deal with the requirements of spontaneous conversational interaction can be found in a study by Nikula (cited in: Dalton-Puffer, in print) where a comparison is made between CLIL and regular EFL classes. In the EFL classes a concise response in a particular linguistic form is expected while in CLIL classes students are more involved in explaining topics in their own words.

Motivation and CLIL classes
It has been noted that one of the most powerful effects of CLIL comes from an increased motivation in both students and teachers (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2014). However, in a setting where there is a choice between a regular class in L1 and a CLIL class in L2 it is arguable that the students who choose to study in L2 are intrinsically more motivated and would like to challenge themselves (Brown, 2015). Among the reasons mentioned for choosing...
CLIL classes are: a sense of esteem and prestige, and being part of something special. Other reasons mentioned were appreciation of the challenge a CLIL class provides, improvement of the level of L2 knowledge and an interest in the content being taught. Finally, improving one’s chances of studying abroad and access to a wider academic world than they would normally be able to participate in are mentioned (Bozdogan & Karlidag, 2013).

If teachers have the choice of implementing CLIL in their curricula, their motivation could be considered higher as well. The reasons for choosing to implement CLIL in one’s classes as a teacher have been looked at by Pinner (2013). He found that language teachers choose to implement CLIL because it gives the lessons ‘an authenticity of purpose often missing from more traditional language courses’. CLIL lessons offer meaningful input and authentically communicative output. Additionally, CLIL is sometimes seen as a chance to develop oneself professionally and to provide teachers with a new challenge, to increase language proficiency and to get access to teaching materials and smaller class sizes (Brown, 2015).

A warning is given about forcing teachers to adopt CLIL methods in their classes with a top down approach. The teachers may feel threatened in their own competence to teach in a L2, which in turn may lead to a tension between the current way of doing things and the desired (in this case CLIL) way of doing things (Mehisto, 2008). There may also be concerns about domain loss for the L1 of the university community implementing CLIL classes (Brown, 2015).

**Purpose and objectives of this study**
The present study is a pilot study to determine the effects of the CLIL training on achieving learning outcomes in EMI classes and to determine the change in workload for both students and lecturers with the adaptation of the CLIL methodology. The EMI modules have so far been implemented without consideration of the implications of using a foreign language as language of instruction. The implementation of CLIL is a first step towards taking the opinions of students and lecturers into account and towards improving the quality of the EMI courses taught at THUAS at this time.

The CLIL methodology has been turned into a training course specifically for the lecturers of the BFM faculty of THUAS and at present four lecturers have been instructed in this methodology. The outcomes of the study will be used to offer suggestions to improve the CLIL training or to suggest other methods to improve the results of EMI classes. The main question this pilot sets out to answer is:

What are the implications of adapting the CLIL methodology in English-medium Instruction classes for the lecturers and students at THUAS?

This central research question is divided into these sub-questions:

1. What differences can be observed between CLIL and non-CLIL classes?
2. What differences do lecturers experience between CLIL and non-CLIL classes?
3. What differences do students experience between CLIL and non-CLIL classes?
4. What differences can be found between achievement of learning outcomes in CLIL and non-CLIL classes?
Methodology

In this section, the qualitative and quantitative methodology used in this study will be described. The organisation of the intervention and control groups and the rationale behind the choice of control groups will be explained.

Respondents

In this study, the teachers chose to be CLIL trained and to implement their training into their classes out of their own free will. It is assumed that these teachers are highly motivated teachers because they chose to follow the CLIL training.

The students had no choice between classes in L1 or L2 as this particular subject is only taught in L2 (English). In the situation of the Bachelor Marketing and Commerce [in Dutch: Commerciële Economie, CE] of the Business, Finance and Marketing faculty, the CLIL class is taught in a Dutch language (L1) curriculum to encourage internationalisation of a group of primarily Dutch nationals. All students in this class speak Dutch and so does the lecturer. As the subject was taught by only two lecturers, the control group was a randomly selected group taught by the other (non-CLIL trained) lecturer teaching this class.

In the other situation of the Bachelor International Financial Management and Control (IFMC) of the Business, Finance and Marketing faculty, the class consists of international and Dutch students. The language of instruction in the entire programme is English and that is the language all students and lecturers have in common as L2. The course taught is a research subject, which is a supporting course for the main topic of the degree. Because the lecturer teaching this course is the only lecturer who teaches this subject in IFMC, we did not have a control group within the same programme. For the qualitative part of the research, a group from the Bachelor programme International Business and Management Studies (IBMS) of the Business, Finance and Marketing faculty, was randomly selected. The rationale for choosing a group from IBMS was that IBMS is, just like IFMC, an international degree programme with both Dutch and international students who share English as their common L2 language so the group composition and language of instruction is as similar as possible. As a control course at IBMS, the research course closest in topic and year of instruction to IFMC was chosen. At IBMS research methodology is also a supporting subject for the main topic of the degree programme.

The lecturers instructed in the CLIL-methodology taught their first CLIL adapted classes in the second semester of the 2016-2017 academic year. In these classes, they were expected to apply the CLIL-methodology to the materials used in class and to their teaching practice. The students had not had experience with CLIL classes before this subject. The students of Marketing and Commerce had not had EMI before this class, the students of IFMC had had EMI for 18 months before this class.
Qualitative research methods

Workshop observations
In total four workshops were observed, two in Marketing and Commerce (CE), one in IFMC and one in IBMS. A direct observation method was used, in which the observant did not participate at all in the workshop activities. Each class was observed one time by one of the researchers using an observation formula developed by Den Heijer based on the 30 observable skills of CLIL teachers (Dale & Tanner, 2010) and translated into English by Lilian Völker. The two CE classes were observed during the first week of the semester. The IFMC and IBMS classes were observed during the fourth week of the semester. Each class was observed for between 45 and 90 minutes of the lesson. All the classes were workshops.

The observation formula focused on, among other things, how often participants in the workshops interacted with each other and with the lecturer, how much time the lecturer was speaking and how much time was spent on interaction. Other things observed included the number and types of activities used in class, which language was used for the different interactions and English proficiency of both students and lecturer. Notes were also taken on the didactical methods used by the lecturers such as explaining in different words, correcting language mistakes, suggesting English words when Dutch was used by the students and the use of the PowerPoints for clarification of language issues.

Lecturer Interviews
Four lecturers were interviewed, two from CE, one from IFMC and one from IBMS, see below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>CLIL?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1.1 Frank</td>
<td>Marketing and Commerce</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1.2 Anna</td>
<td>Marketing and Commerce</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2.1 Elsa</td>
<td>IFMC</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2.2 Hans</td>
<td>IBMS</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Lecturer respondents

Each lecturer was interviewed for 20-45 minutes. The format was semi-structured, using a list of questions developed by Joyce den Heijer and translated into English by Lilian Völker. The interview with Elsa was recorded in March. The interview with Anna took place in May. The interviews with Frank and Hans took place in late June. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Two of the lecturers are male, two are female. Three have a native Dutch background, one has a Dutch national, Chinese-Caribbean blended professional background. Three have nine or more years teaching experience, one has been teaching for three years. The names used here are not the real names for reasons of anonymity.
**Student interviews**  
For details regarding the student respondents we refer to below. Again, the names are not the real names of the students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1.1 Arya</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>IBMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1.2 Sansa</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>IBMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1.3 Catelynn</td>
<td>Sint Maarten</td>
<td>IBMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1.4 Cersei</td>
<td>Sint Maarten</td>
<td>IBMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2.1 Rob</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>IFMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2.2 Bran</td>
<td>Luxembourgish</td>
<td>IFMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2.3 Rickon</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>IFMC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Student respondents**

Arya, Catelynn and Cersei were interviewed together for one hour in April. The interview was supposed to be recorded on video, but it was not, due to equipment failure. Extensive notes were written the same day. Sansa was interviewed for approximately 25 minutes in May. The interview was recorded and transcribed. Rob was interviewed for approximately 25 minutes in March. The interview was recorded, but later lost, due to equipment failure.

It was quite difficult to find students who would volunteer to sit for an interview from the IFMC class, and therefore Bran and Rickon were paid with a € 10 voucher each to sit for an interview of approximately 20 minutes in June. Those interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The interviews were semi-structured around the list of questions developed by Den Heijer (2015), which were translated into English by Lilian Völker.

Initially, the intent was to also interview the students from CE. However, in the second week of the semester, Anna fell ill and did not return to teaching. Therefore, it was decided that the effect of the CLIL training on the students could not be measured.

**Quantitative research methods**  
In this section, we describe our dataset and explain our statistical methodology. First of all, we intend to examine the differences in academic performance, measured by course grades, between groups of students who were taught a second-year course at IFMC by a CLIL-methodology trained lecturer and of students who were taught the same course by a non CLIL-methodology trained lecturer in the same academic year. As we already mentioned, we had only one lecturer with CLIL-methodology training who taught in 2016-2017 academic year. We did not have a proper control group in the 2016-2017 academic year, hence we collected the grades of the students who were taught by the same CLIL-methodology trained lecturer in academic year 2015-2016, when she had not yet received CLIL-methodology
Ideally, treatment and control groups are randomly assigned and a simple with-and-without comparison would yield the average treatment effect establishing a causal relationship between the treatment and the outcome. Obviously, in our case we cannot claim such a causal relationship. The reasons are twofold. First is that there might have been a time effect because the CLIL-methodology trained lecturer might have changed her teaching methods in addition to the CLIL methodology. Further, there might be inherent differences between the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 cohorts. Hence, in this section we only quantify the differences in course grades of 2015-2016 cohort and 2016-2017 cohort.

Our dataset includes the second-year course grade, the average grade in the propaedeutic phase, age and nationality of each student. From the 2015-2016 cohort, we have data on 30 students from IFMC, whereas 36 students from IFMC constitute our sample from the 2016-2017 cohort. All data were retrieved from Osiris on 7/7/2017. For that particular second year course, exam and resit grades had already been confirmed. Several remarks on our dataset should be made at this point. First of all, the exam grades for 4 students from 2015-16 cohort and 5 students from the 2016-2017 cohort were not available. Secondly, the average grade in the propaedeutic phase of 3 students from the 2015-2016 cohort and 1 student from the 2016-2017 cohort were missing. Hence, we excluded them from the dataset in the relevant statistical analyses. Additionally, course grades are calculated as a weighted average of the two assessments of the course. Finally, age was defined as the age of student when the course was started.

In terms of statistical methodology, we executed a two-sample t-test for population means to explore whether there is a difference in course grades between the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 cohorts. However, we further conducted a multiple linear regression analysis to investigate whether the difference in course grades are driven by CLIL-methodology training or not. Needless to say, regression analysis is not sufficient to claim a causal relationship due to possible omitted variable bias.

**Methodological challenges and issues**

Several challenges and issues occurred during the execution of this pilot study. These challenges will be addressed below.

**Challenges regarding the treatment and control groups**

The initial design of the research was to have four treatment groups and four control groups. This number of groups followed naturally from the number of participants in the CLIL training in the preceding semester. However, of the four participants in the training, one lecturer took a different position within his department and did not teach any subjects in English. Another lecturer did not teach English medium subjects in the relevant semester for other reasons. A third lecturer fell ill after week two of the semester and could therefore no longer be included in observations. As her class was taken over by a non-CLIL trained lecturer, that class could no longer serve as a treatment group after the first observation. The final lecturer
participating in the CLIL training preceding the semester chosen for this research was the only lecturer for this particular subject, which made it too difficult to find a control group. This lack of a control group was resolved in different ways for the qualitative and quantitative parts of this research as described in the methodology section.

**Challenges regarding student participants for interviews**
Finding students willing to participate in an interview was challenging. From the IBMS class observed, four students volunteered to be interviewed. From the IFMC class it was very hard to get participants for the interviews. In order to get an idea of the experiences with teaching incorporating the CLIL methodology, we offered this group € 10 voucher for a 20 minute interview. Ultimately, all the respondents were male.

The results of this research should be seen as a pilot with the objective to continue the study with a four treatment-four control group follow up.

**Findings**

The findings of this research will be presented in this section in order to find the answers to the research sub questions:

1. What differences can be observed between CLIL and non-CLIL classes?
2. What differences do lecturers experience between CLIL and non-CLIL classes?
3. What differences do students experience between CLIL and non-CLIL classes?
4. What differences can be found between achievement of learning outcomes in CLIL and non-CLIL classes?

**Findings from observations**
Of the four classes that were observed, two at CE, one at IFMC and one at IBMS the following observations can be reported.

**Observations from Marketing**

**Classroom organisation**
Both classes occurred in regular classrooms and students could sit where they liked. In the class taught by Frank, most of the students chose to sit as far in the back of the room as they could. In the class taught by Anna, some desks were in a U-form and there were two rows in the back. The classroom was small and therefore all the seats were taken.

Students were allowed to enter the room at any time during Frank’s class, and several students arrived late. The students were all on time for Anna’s class.

Both Anna and Frank used PowerPoint slideshows for their lectures. Anna informed the observer that this was her second lesson of the week, but she had not been satisfied with the interaction in her first class, and therefore had created a handout. This was a quiz called
'How international are you?' which she used throughout her lesson. Frank gave an assignment on a PowerPoint slide at the end of class.

**Delivery methods**

Anna started her lesson by explaining, in Dutch, the structure and assessments for the course. Two students asked clarification questions in Dutch about the assessments and were answered in Dutch. She also explained that with the exception of that part of the lecture, the rest of the course would be taught in English. She encouraged students to speak in English as much as possible, but told them that if they could not remember a word they could use Dutch.

Anna then switched to English. She first asked the students to fill out the quiz, which asked about their international experiences and scored each one. For example, following a study abroad programme was 10 points, whereas visiting another country was 3 points. When the students were finished, she asked them how many points they had scored and to tell the rest of the class how they had obtained their points.

Anna then started on her PowerPoint. At the beginning of each section, she asked the students about the material on the slide. For example, one slide had a picture of Donald Trump next to a picture of Barack Obama. Anna asked the students which man had more intercultural competencies and why they thought so. After each discussion, Anna spent a few minutes explaining the topic, in this instance, what intercultural competencies are and why they are needed in today’s business world.

Frank taught his lesson in English from the beginning. His lesson consisted of 40 minutes frontal teaching, 5 minutes for the assignment, and 7 minutes on questions and answers.

**Classroom Management**

Anna sometimes asked students randomly to contribute to the discussion, but mostly relied on the students to volunteer answers. Two students answered 50 percent of the questions. One was an ex-IBMS student who had spent much of his youth abroad. The other was from Suriname and had spent a significant amount of time visiting family in the United States. Five other students contributed one or two answers each in English. Another student answered two questions, but mostly in Dutch. Anna encouraged the students to answer in English and translated words or answers in Dutch.

Five students sat quietly throughout the lesson unless Anna asked them a question. Another five students in two groups sat in the back of the classroom and had apparently unrelated conversations in Dutch for most of the lesson. Anna did not ask them to stop.

Frank also asked a number of questions or provided statements to encourage discussion during his lecture. He did not ask students randomly to answer questions. Most of his questions were answered briefly in English, with no elaboration. Two were answered in Dutch without translation. Two questions were answered using gestures only. Some questions were not answered and Frank did not elicit responses.
15 of the 21 students who were present for Frank's class carried on unrelated conversations in Dutch throughout the lecture. Frank did not ask them to stop.

**Questions by lecturers**

Anna asked questions about the content of the lecture throughout. If students did not answer voluntarily, she would call on them randomly to answer. All of the questions were asked in English. Some students could not think of particular words in English and said them in Dutch. Only one student answered completely in Dutch. Anna translated all Dutch words into English. She encouraged students to elaborate on short answers with follow-up questions.

Frank asked a total of 13 questions and provided 5 discussion statements in English. 9 of his questions were answered in English, 2 in Dutch and 2 using gestures. Answers were all brief and were not followed up on. One student reacted to one of his statements. The other statements were not discussed.

**Questions asked to lecturers**

Two students asked Anna clarification questions during the introduction to the course. The questions were in Dutch and were answered in Dutch.

Frank allowed the students 7 minutes during his lecture to ask questions. One student asked a question about the language used. Frank answered using the same vocabulary to summarise the previous explanation. Another question was asked in English about the content of the class. The response was also in English.

**Level of English of lecturers**

Both CE lecturers are reasonably fluent in English, have relatively good grammatical control, and are able to use a wide variety of vocabulary in their lessons. They also both have noticeable Dutch accents, which may be a drawback (Den Heijer, 2015, p. 186).

**Level of English of students**

One student in Anna’s class appeared to have a quite high level of English. This student stated that he had received much of his previous education at international schools. Another student in the class also appeared to speak English reasonably well. This student had spent time in the United States visiting family. Most of the other students did not speak very much in class. Five were able to answer questions mostly in English. One student answered a question mostly in Dutch. Approximately half of the class did not contribute to the discussion and approximately a quarter of the students only spoke in Dutch.

It is difficult to assess the level of English in Frank’s class as most of the answers were brief and were not elaborated on. One question was asked in English, but Frank did not follow up to see how well the student had understood the answer.
Observations from IFMC and IBMS

Classroom organisation
In both classes, students arrived within 10 minutes of the start time and were allowed to sit where they wanted. The IBMS class was the largest observed, with 29 students. The IFMC class had 15 students. Both classes had a mandatory 2/3 attendance rule. The IBMS class was 90 minutes and the IFMC class 75 minutes.

Both lecturers used PowerPoints. These contained quizzes that were used at various points during the lessons. Elsa also had red and green cards that she distributed to each student. Her first quiz was a recap of the previous lesson. Students could hold up a green card to indicate that they understood the materials, and a red card to show they did not understand. No students used a red card during the observation.

At the end of Elsa’s class, each group was asked to do a presentation on one of the assignments. Two of the groups did not appear to have done much work and their presentations were unstructured and did not answer the questions assigned. One presentation was difficult to follow due to the student’s strong accent. The other two presentations followed the guidelines Elsa had set.

Delivery methods
Both classes were workshops that were designed to be as interactive as possible. Elsa divided her class into groups to each work on a series of assignments. In between, she explained the purpose and goals. Students were again allowed to hold up the cards to indicate their understanding. No student held up a red card. Elsa also asked questions and gave examples to illustrate her points. In total Elsa spoke for 30 of the 75 minutes of the workshop.

Hans spoke for a total of 30 minutes of his lecture. 55 minutes consisted of whole-group activities and 35 minutes were for individual project teams to work together.

Classroom management
Once each class was divided into small groups, about 60 percent of the students were clearly taking the assignment seriously and most of their discussion was about the topic at hand. However, approximately 40 percent of the groups were carrying on unrelated conversations. In one case the conversation was in a language other than English. They stopped when the teacher looked at them and continued in English. In both cases, the lecturers allowed those groups to continue for a few minutes, then went and asked them how they were progressing. At that point, the groups mostly started to focus on the tasks.

In Elsa’s class, all students but one actively participated in the class by holding up their cards or asking questions. Elsa gave all the students a chance to answer questions voluntarily, but if no one spoke up, she would call on random students to answer questions. She was keeping track of who had already spoken and asked a different person each time.
Hans asked questions throughout his class and did not allow students to volunteer to ask questions. Instead, he asked his first question to a random student, then asked that student to nominate the next person to answer a question until everyone had answered.

**Questions asked by lecturers**
All questions asked in class by Elsa and Hans were content-related. Approximately half of the questions in both classes were meant to check if the students had understood the material. All of the questions were answered either by volunteers or by students called on randomly to answer. All questions and answers were in English.

**Questions asked by students**
In Elsa’s class, 10 students asked questions about the content of the lecture. None of the questions were about language. All questions and answers were in English.

In Hans’ class, three students asked questions about the content or procedures. All of the questions were in English, as were all of the answers.

**Level of English of lecturers**
Elsa’s level of spoken English is around B2, with a slight foreign accent. Her lecture was fluent and used a variety of vocabulary, though there were some grammatical errors. She did not appear to pause to search for words. The sentence structure used in class seemed to be simplified to accommodate the level of the students, as she used more complex structures in conversations with the researcher.

Hans’ level of spoken English is C2. He is not noticeably distinguishable from a native speaker in terms of grammar, vocabulary or fluency. He does not pause to remember words and does not have difficulty explaining things using alternative terms if clarification is needed.

**Level of English of students**
The level of English of IBMS and IFMC students is comparable. There is wide variation in the levels in both classes, from students who make regular errors and have very strong accents, to native or near-native speakers. None of the students in either class was hesitant to speak English and none of them spoke to the lecturer in a language other than English.

**Comparison of Marketing and Commerce (CE) classrooms and international classrooms**
A number of differences could be observed between the classroom behaviour in the two types of study programmes. The first difference was in classroom management. In the CE classes, students carried on unrelated conversations in Dutch throughout both lessons and were not asked to stop by the lecturers. In the international programmes, the students did not talk while the lecturers were speaking and unrelated conversations were terminated by lecturers. Only one conversation in a language other than English was observed and the students switched back to English when the lecturer looked at them.
Some of this difference may be due to cultural differences between international and Dutch language programmes, and the students and lecturers may find it acceptable that some students do not appear to be paying attention and do not find it disruptive in CE. It is also possible that the differences occurred because of the expectations of lecturers, i.e. that Frank and Anna do not find it disruptive if students are not paying attention, whereas Hans and Elsa have communicated that they do find it unacceptable.

Another difference was in terms of participation. Many CE students did not actively participate at all, neither answering or asking questions. In one class, two students answered half of the questions, and other questions were answered by approximately half of the students. In the other CE class, few students answered questions. The answers in that case were short and sometimes non-verbal. Several of the answers to questions were in Dutch or in a mix of English and Dutch.

By contrast, all but one of the students in the international classes participated, either by asking or answering questions, either voluntarily or involuntarily. All of the answers were in English.

Some of the difference in the level of participation may be due to the students’ level of English. Only a few of the CE students appeared to be comfortable speaking English and answered fully in English. Although the language proficiency levels of the students in the international programmes varied greatly, none of them were hesitant to speak English when called on to answer a question.

Another possible reason for the differing level of participation may be the delivery methods used. Although Anna and Frank both had materials designed to encourage conversation, their lessons were mostly lecture-style, whereas Elsa and Hans facilitated workshops in which the students mostly worked in small groups.

**Differences between CLIL and non-CLIL trained lecturers**

A difference manifested itself between Anna and Frank when it comes to delivery their courses. Anna reported that she had not been satisfied with how the first lecture in her course had gone, and had therefore developed new materials to make the class more interactive for the next group of students that would take the course. This may explain why Anna’s students participated more than Frank’s students and gave more extensive answers, though not everyone participated and not all of the questions and answers were in English.

There were not many observable differences between Hans and Elsa’s teaching. Both had very interactive workshops that encouraged student participation. Both checked frequently to ensure that students were following the material and understood it. Neither had difficulty communicating in English, nor did the students ask any questions about the English used in the lectures. Both are considered excellent lecturers by their students, both in student evaluations and in the focus groups and interviews within the framework of this study.
Perceptions of lecturers
In this section, we will cover both the perceptions of lecturers in the international programmes IBMS and IFMC and the perceptions of lecturers in the Dutch programme in Marketing.

Perceptions of lecturers at international programmes

Active participation and keeping the students’ attention
The two lecturers interviewed in the international programmes both noted that they do not perceive challenges in getting the students to participate in class. L2.1 (Elsa) did note that it was easier to keep students’ attention during a 90-minute class if she used one or more interactive exercises as suggested during the CLIL training. She also reported that she had changed her PowerPoint slides to incorporate more language focused material like explaining jargon. L2.2 (Hans) indicated that he would go into theory for about 10 minutes and then get the class to participate actively by doing exercises in class with the whole group where students would be called on by the lecturer to answer. His perception was that otherwise it was hard to keep the attention of the students for 90 minutes.

Preparation time
Since the subjects L2.1 (Elsa) and L2.2 (Hans) teach are not the same we cannot compare their preparation times. However, L2.1 (Elsa) did report that her preparation time did increase with the integration of the CLIL methods. She perceived the extra preparation time to be worth it considering the increased attention span of the students in class.

Added value of CLIL as perceived by the lecturer
L2.1 (Elsa) did not feel that she had completely integrated all levels of the CLIL method in her classes yet. She felt that she could do more with CLIL to adjust the classes to the varying levels of English language proficiency of her students. The first level of added value was to keep the students’ attention longer and to keep them more active during class. She felt that this had added value to her classes. L2.2 (Hans) did not notice differences in the level of English of his students. In his perception, the level of English of all his students was good enough to complete the course.

Perceptions of lecturers at the Dutch programme

Active participation and keeping the students’ attention
L1.1 (Frank) reported that keeping the students’ attention was not a challenge for him. He perceived the students paying attention for the entire 50-minute class and felt the exercise he used in class was successful. L1.2 (Anna), who participated in the CLIL training, reported changing her lecture from frontal teaching to a more active workshop style. She started off the first week teaching frontally, but did not think this worked very well and therefore changed her approach to incorporate CLIL methods. She made a quiz for students to fill out during class as a tool to keep them active. She perceived this was effective to keep the students engaged and focused on the workshop.
Preparation time
L1.2 (Anna) did perceive an increase in preparation when adding CLIL exercises to the classes but she reported it felt worth the extra time with the increase in participation and attention of students. L1.1 (Frank) reported he had been teaching this module for a while and that most of his preparation time was spent on finding guest lecturers. He does have one exercise which he uses every year and which does not increase his preparation time since he does not make significant changes.

Both lecturers reported that their preparation time increased when they changed from Dutch medium to English medium subjects.

Added value of CLIL as perceived by the lecturer
L1.2 (Anna) perceived the added value of CLIL as significant. She did note that the interactive exercises as suggested by CLIL were much like the activating exercises she was taught when she studied Pedagogy. She also noted that “here, at the University of Applied Sciences we have the tendency to send a lot”. In her opinion, this was not the best way to teach a subject.

Perceptions of students in international programmes
A total of 7 students from the international programmes were interviewed: 3 from the IFMC class and 4 from IBMS (see Table 3). Interviews were mostly recorded and transcribed, though some were lost due to equipment failure. The interviews were about students’ perceptions of their own language abilities, how they prepared for their research methods classes, and what they thought of their courses.

Language ability
All students felt that their English language ability was sufficient to follow English-medium educational programmes. Most of them had studied English at school for several years before coming to the Netherlands. Catelynn, Cersei and Sansa attended English-medium secondary schools. All three were confident with their receptive language skills. The non-native English speakers remarked that they encountered some difficulties in the beginning, but also that their English had improved during the past year and a half.

The Chinese students all felt that they have difficulty with finding the correct grammar and vocabulary and that their accents sometimes caused communication difficulties with their classmates. Catelynn and Cersei are both native English speakers, although their Sint Maarten [Saint Martin] dialect and accent may cause some difficulty. They also said they had to simplify their vocabulary and sometimes slow down their speech to make themselves understood.

Preparation for Research Methods Courses
None of the students did any preparation for their research methods courses. Rather, they went to class and followed the lectures, noting down any questions that they might have. Rob mentioned that Elsa gave the students green and red cards at the beginning of each lesson and they were invited to hold up a card depending on whether they understood the material.
The IBMS students would note down any questions they had about the lecture and asked them during the group work sections of their lessons.

All of the students said they did ‘some’ homework after their research methods classes. The amount varied depending on how much other homework there was that week and how close they were to exam periods. The IFMC students commented that Elsa was quite accessible to answer questions outside class hours and responded quickly to emails.

**Perceptions of the research methods courses and lecturers**

The students were all very positive about the research methods courses and about Elsa and Hans. They thought the courses were easy to follow and interactive. Bran and Rickon thought that their class was relatively silent and reluctant to participate, but that Elsa had made considerable efforts to increase interaction.

All students were positive about their lecturers’ teaching styles, saying that they used many examples to illustrate their points and relate their teaching to other courses or to real-life business situations. They all thought that they received a lot of support from their lecturers, for example giving feedback on their central research questions. They felt that their workshops were a good combination of lectures and time to work on assignments.

**Advantages of English-medium instruction**

All students felt that they benefitted from their English-medium instruction study programmes. The non-native English speakers felt that their English had been improved by using it every day with lecturers and classmates.

**Differences in achievement of learning outcomes**

In this section, we present our findings from our statistical analysis based on the dataset described in the “Quantitative research methods” section. We first provide descriptive statistics and proceed with the results of two sample t-test for population means and multiple linear regression analysis.

To begin with, Table 4 displays descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 cohorts. We report the sample means and standard deviations of second year course grades, average grades in the propaedeutic phase (denoted by P-grade), age and the sample proportion of international students (denoted by international).
Table 4: Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>2015-2016</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>2016-2017</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course grade</td>
<td>7.88</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>7.57</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-grade</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>21.30</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>22.48</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Sample statistics are calculated over 26 observations and 31 observations for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 cohorts, respectively.

Next, we present our findings from the two-sample t-test about the population means. For that purpose, we need some notation. Let $\mu_1$ and $\bar{x}_1$ denote the population mean grade of a second year course taught by a CLIL-trained lecturer at an international business programme of a university of applied sciences, where the medium of instruction is English. Similarly, $\mu_2$ and $\bar{x}_2$ represent the population and sample mean grade of a second-year course taught by a non CLIL-methodology trained lecturer at an international business programme of a university of applied sciences.

Our set of null and alternative hypotheses are formulated as

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$$
$$H_1: \mu_1 > \mu_2.$$

Since $\bar{x}_1 = 7.57 < \bar{x}_2 = 7.88$, two-sample t-test results in the conclusion that we cannot reject $H_0$. For the sake of completeness, we report that the p-value of the test is 0.96. Therefore, there is no statistical evidence that the academic performance of the students in the target population improves when they are taught by a CLIL-methodology trained lecturer.

As a final analysis, we carried out a linear regression analysis to find out whether the two-sample t-test result is driven by some observed characteristics of the students. For that purpose, we need to introduce some notation. Let $Y$ be the dependent variable, $X$ be a k-dimensional vector of regressors and $\beta$ be the k-dimensional parameter vector. Then, the linear regression model is defined as

$$Y = X^T \beta + \epsilon,$$
where $\varepsilon$ is the error term with zero expectation conditional on the independent variables. To estimate the parameter vector of the model $\beta$, we use the ordinary least squares (OLS) estimator. In particular, we are interested in two models:

**Model 1**:  
Course grade $= \beta_0 + \beta_1 CLIL + \varepsilon,$

**Model 2**:  
Course grade $= \beta_0 + \beta_1 CLIL + \beta_2 Pgrade + \beta_3 Age + \beta_4 International + \varepsilon,$

where “CLIL” takes value 1 if the student is taught by a CLIL-methodology trained lecturer and 0 otherwise, “International” takes value 1 if the student is an international student and 0 if the student is Dutch. Model 1 is our benchmark regression model, which would give us the effect of CLIL-methodology training under the random assignment assumption, while in Model 2 we control for observable characteristics that might affect students’ academic performance. As Table 5: Regression Analysis displays, “CLIL” has a significantly negative relationship with academic performance despite the low explanatory power of Model 1 with a low adjusted R square. However, this counterintuitive claim can be questioned when we control for observed characteristics. In particular, the coefficient estimate of “CLIL” becomes negligible, whereas “Pgrade” is significant with the expected positive sign at the 1 percent significance level. Further, the adjusted R square increases significantly when we extend Model 1 to Model 2. Last but not least, “Age” and “International” do not have any significant relationship with course grades. Consequently, the difference in course grades between the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 cohorts can be explained by their differences in academic performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regressor</th>
<th>Model 1 Estimate</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Model 2 Estimate</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLIL</td>
<td>-0.301*</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.740***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>0.146</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-squared</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.368</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5: Regression analysis*

*Note: *, ** and *** indicate significance of the regressor at the 10%, 5% and 1% significance level, respectively.*
Conclusions and discussion

In this section, we will present our conclusions and discussion. The conclusions are based on fewer observations and interviews than we originally planned due to the methodological issues mentioned. The conclusions should be seen in the light of these limitations.

Qualitative conclusions

Conclusions from observations

There appeared to be a difference between the classroom environments in the four lessons that were observed. In Frank’s and Anna’s lessons, there was less interaction than observed in Elsa and Hans’ classes.

Frank’s class was not very interactive, and when he did attempt to have a discussion, students did not respond or answered in few words. Anna reported that she was trying to increase the amount of participation after her first lesson that week due to what she had learned in the CLIL training, and had created a handout to encourage students to speak more. However, the classroom discussion was still dominated by a few students and some students did not answer questions at all.

Elsa and Hans’ classes had more participation, though both lecturers seemed to be monitoring who was contributing to the discussion and would call on students who had not said anything yet.

The language of discussion was also different in the four lessons observed. In Anna’s class, when students could not remember the word they wanted to use in English, Anna first encouraged them to try to ‘talk around’ the expression they wanted, then allowed them to say it in Dutch, after which she would translate what they had said. Several students in both Frank’s and Anna’s classes did not contribute to the plenary discussion at all and carried on what appeared to be unrelated conversations in Dutch throughout the lesson.

No student in Hans or Elsa’s group said anything in a language other than English during the class discussion parts of the lessons. Some students did have conversations in other languages when they were split into groups. Elsa stopped those conversations non-verbally.

Some of these differences may be attributed to a pre-existing difference in the English levels and comfort with the language of CE students versus students in the international programmes. As Den Heijer (2015) observed, students in CE feel that their receptive language abilities are quite high, but admit that they do not use productive skills as frequently. Students in international programmes use English throughout the day, and even if a particular lecture or workshop does not require them to speak very much, their interactions with other students and lecturers is nearly always in English and all of their written communication and assignments must be in English.
Another difference may be in the expectations of classroom behaviour communicated by lecturers. In previous case studies of IBMS classes, students have reported being surprised if a classmate responds to a question using even a few words in another language, and the practice appears to be discouraged due to the fact that the only common language is English (unpublished research results). It therefore seems likely that Elsa and Hans follow the same rules in their classes, that everyone should speak in English at all times. Since the CE students all speak Dutch and English, it is perhaps not perceived as a violation of class rules to speak in either language.

In the same case studies, lecturers have frequently been observed reprimanding students who were carrying on unrelated conversations during the lecture. It was not always successful, but may demonstrate that lecturers communicate to students that they do not find it acceptable to interrupt their lessons in that way (unpublished research results).
Conclusions from lecturer interviews
All four lecturers thought their classes went well and that there was at least sufficient interaction. One of the CLIL trained lecturers was not satisfied after the first class of the week and implemented CLIL in the second class of that week. Both CLIL trained lecturers thought the CLIL training and methodology improved the quality of their lessons and was worth the extra preparation time. It is noteworthy that both CLIL trained lecturers were of the opinion that part of the CLIL methodology was “just good teaching”. It needs to be said that neither applied the full CLIL methodology with regards to compensating for the different levels of English in the class.

The finding that all lecturers were happy with the level of interaction in their lessons combined with the difference in interaction observed between Dutch and international classes seems to support the idea that part of that difference is due to cultural factors and lecturer expectations.

Conclusions at student interviews from IFMC and IBMS
The students were all very positive about their research courses and about their lecturers. None of them felt they had difficulty following the materials or in understanding the lectures, though they all said that they did not do any preparation for the courses and did a ‘varying’ amount of homework, which increases mainly when an assignment is due or just before the exam periods. All the students felt that their lecturers improved their understanding of the subject matter by using examples and relating them to the course. They all also felt that their lecturers encouraged participation, though the students in IFMC felt that their class was somewhat reluctant to participate. Nonetheless, they felt that Elsa had done her best to get them to contribute to the discussions, particularly through her use of cards. Finally, all of the students felt that their level of English was sufficient to follow the lessons and contribute to the discussions.

The reason for the lack of difference in students’ perceptions of the lecturers and their research classes may be explained by the fact that both Elsa and Hans were considered to be very capable teachers by their students even before Elsa did the CLIL training. Both receive very high ratings on their student evaluations and Hans was recently voted IBMS lecturer of the year. However, Hans’ student feedback might have been even higher with the CLIL training.
Quantitative conclusion
In this pilot study, we were not able to determine the efficacy of CLIL-methodology on the academic performance of students with quantitative methods due to lack of random assignment to treatment and control groups. The results of the regression analyses have confirmed that there are differences even in observed characteristics between the treatment and control groups which lead to selection bias. Future research could conduct a similar study based on random assignment in the BFM faculty in order to investigate the effect of CLIL-methodology on the academic performance of students.

Overall conclusions
This was a pilot study, which suffered many set-backs in the application of the methodology. That makes the results and conclusions weak. It does, however, give indications for improvements in future research. Some preliminary conclusions may perhaps be drawn.

The CLIL training and methodology seem to have improved the classes which were observed. Interaction in the Dutch course was improved with introduction of a ‘CLIL assignment’ in class and both CLIL trained lecturers believe that the CLIL training has had value for their classes. As both lecturers reported having only applied part of what they learned in the CLIL training, there seems to be potential for the introduction of other elements into the lessons of trained lecturers. The number of classes observed and the number of treatment and control groups, however, is too small to make this more than a preliminary conclusion.

Quantitative methods were not able to support a conclusion either way but did indicate that controlling for factors in the composition of the groups is crucial.

An unexpected conclusion from this research is the difference observed between classes of international and Dutch programmes. This difference has implications for further research.

Further research
The setbacks that plagued this research are the main reason to quickly follow it up in a more extensive format. So far, four lecturers from IBMS have been trained, and more from other programmes, both international and Dutch. The distinction between international groups, which are part of an international programme taught entirely in English on the one hand and a Dutch programme with most courses taught in Dutch and only a few in English on the other hand is one that should be investigated further. Within the international programmes, it is interesting to see how classroom participation varies when students have had more time in English classrooms.
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LILIAN VÖLKER, JENNIFER STEERS, SERHAN SADIKOGLU

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CLIL TRAINING

education

GRAMMAR

the education
Internationalisation
as a ‘must’ and as a ‘means’:
lessons from the UAS Monitor

ANDREAS FUNK
Abstract
Recently, scholars have raised “that there is often much rhetoric around Internationalisation of Higher Education (IoHE), but that it does not always match reality on the ground” (Hunter, 2015) and that “we should invest a lot more time into questions of rationales and outcomes” (De Wit, 2016, p. 15). To tackle these concerns, this paper suggests to revive and take literally two mantras of internationalisation of higher education: if internationalisation is seen as a ‘must’ for all students, and if internationalisation is perceived as a ‘means’ to acquire international competencies, we should make sure that the efforts go beyond mere rhetoric and rather translate into action. The argument is supported by analysis of recent data from the Dutch UAS Monitor on internationalisation activities and outcomes.

Context
In the world of internationalisation of higher education (IoHE) some theses are omnipresent. That “internationalisation is a must” and that “internationalisation is a means rather than an end” are two such theses that have been repeated in a prolonged manner – one could name them the mantras of IoHE.

To be sure, that social and professional worlds have their mantras is not unusual. Consider other examples, like the feminist doctrine that the political is personal, or primum non nocere in the professional world of healthcare. Also, there is good reason for having such mantras: simply speaking they help us express aspirations that matter. The risk, however, with such mantras is, that repetition may blur this important aspiration rather than hammering it out.

For example: when people entertain repeatedly the Om, to name the most famous mantra, they certainly disregard more and more its real meaning and underlying aspiration. In the same manner, the important aspiration of the aforementioned mantras of feminism and healthcare got blurred, despite or because of the prolonged repetitions. And also in the same manner, for IoHE, I feel, we face a similar issue: we need to make sure that the important aspiration implicit in our mantras remains apparent and does not get blurred or lost.
Some evidence that the issue is real: recently Hunter (2015) diagnosed “that there is often much rhetoric around IoHE, but that it does not always match reality on the ground”, that aspirations have “not always led to a translation into actions”. And true: when we say or read ‘internationalisation is a must’ and ‘internationalisation is a means’, do we really, beyond mere rhetoric, recognise the underlying aspirations and actions these *mantras* imply? Sharing Hunter’s concern, it is the ambition of this paper to contribute to a good understanding of the two *mantras* of IoHE. To correctly understand internationalisation as a ‘must’ and as a ‘means’ has implications that are key for internationalisation performance.

Accordingly, the two *mantras* of IoHE will be reviewed in the following in order to remind us about their meaning. For each *mantra*, several propositions will be made concerning their meaning and implications for internationalisation in action. To support these propositions, we will look into seminal scholarly works as well as institutional policies, but also into results from an analysis of the UAS Monitor, an annual survey conducted among graduates of Dutch universities of applied sciences. Our research group has added a set of questions on internationalisation to the UAS Monitor that is distributed among the graduates of The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS).

### The first mantra of IoHE: Internationalisation is a ‘must’

Whatever one’s position and occupation in the professional world of IoHE – scholar or practitioner, lecturer or international office staff – all have, I assume, come across the notion that ‘internationalisation is a must’. This categorical ‘yes’ to internationalisation appears in numerous publications, often in their introductions, in academic literature and institutional (here university) policies alike. To make the point and recognising the risk of repetition, some examples: as early as 2004, Knight pointed out that “the international dimension of higher education is becoming increasingly important [...]” (p. 5). Also, de Wit (2010, p. 6) wrote about the “growing importance of internationalisation in higher education”, and – very recently – the professional world of IoHE was again reminded that “our role in international education becomes [...] more important” (Weimer, 2016). A prominent variant of the *mantra* is Hudzik’s notion on internationalisation being an “institutional imperative” (in Jones and Killick, 2013, p. 166). In short, internationalisation is growing in its importance so that it becomes a ‘must’. But what is really meant by postulating ‘internationalisation is a must’?

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1 The UAS Monitor (in Dutch: HBO Monitor) is a large-scale annual survey amongst graduates of Dutch universities of applied sciences. For this paper, we analysed the most recent data available, collected in 2016. Some 21,977 alumni from different regions and universities have participated, which displays a representative sample of the overall Dutch population of applied sciences graduates and allows for valid conclusions. Additionally, our Research Group International Cooperation at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) led by Dr. J. H. C. Walenkamp, has added specific questions on internationalisation. Graduates of THUAS who participated in the UAS Monitor have therefore also filled out these questions and thus provide important insights in the outcomes of internationalisation at THUAS. Here, we speak again of a significant number of 938 respondents.
A ‘must’ to have an internationalisation strategy

The most obvious meaning or aspiration when stating that ‘internationalisation is a must’ concerns the internationalisation of university policies. The rationale is clear: Globalisation creates a world that is more and more connected and thereby social and professional environments that are diverse; students need to be prepared, via an internationalised university education, to live and work in such environments (see Green & Whitsed, 2015). Beyond globalisation, recent phenomena such as the rise of nationalism and nativism seem to support the rationale for internationalisation (see for example Weimer, 2016). All this brings out a responsibility for universities to internationalise to prepare students for a globalised world.

And indeed, many universities have incorporated this mantra. Studies show how internationalisation appears prominently in strategies and policies of universities. Several scholars have observed that “internationalisation is high on the agenda for institutions of higher education around the world” (Jones, 2013, p. 1; see also Funk et al., 2014, p. 5; Hunter, 2015; Jones et al., 2016). More concretely, the IAU’s 4th Global Survey – conducted amongst higher education institutions – “confirms the importance of internationalisation [...]”: some 69 percent of the survey respondents stated that internationalisation is of high importance, some 30 percent in fact even think of an increased importance in the previous years (Egron-Polak, 2014, 7). Jones et al. (2016, p. 1) state that “there is little doubt that [...] internationalisation is receiving ever-increasing attention from institutions around the world” and Hunter et al. (2015) find confirmation in a study commissioned by the European Parliament: “One thing became clearly apparent: internationalisation is getting bigger just about everywhere [...]

Internationalisation is a ‘must’, in that sense, means that it is a must for all universities to have corresponding strategies or policies.

In line with this global trend, The Netherlands fully accommodate the imperative to internationalise strategies. One example: “Internationalisation of higher education is a key priority for the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.” (Van Gaalen & Gielesen 2016, p. 149). Following the ministry, Dutch universities jump on the bandwagon. In a 2014 policy document for the Dutch sector of higher education, internationalisation is described as “an essential step if the Netherlands is to continue to develop as a knowledge economy and boost its innovative strength and competitiveness” (Vereniging Hogescholen & Vereniging van Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten, 2014, p. 4). And in practice, as Van Gaalen and Gielesen (2016) point out, “no less than 91 percent of Dutch institutions participating in [their] study have an internationalisation policy at the central level.” (p. 149); an impressive percentage and significantly more than the reported European average of 61 percent (see Egron-Polak, 2014, 8). Hence, if ‘internationalisation is a must’ means that an internationalisation strategy is imperative for all universities, we see that the mantra has been understood and adopted broadly – and in a particularly committed way in The Netherlands. In addition to this, say, conventional reading of ‘internationalisation is a must’, I would like to propose two additional important meanings and implications that the mantra brings out.
'Internationalisation is must' as: ‘access to international opportunities is a must’
Complementing the conventional interpretation, my proposition is to read ‘internationalisation as a must’ also as ‘access to international opportunities is a must’. By this, I intend to shift the focus to the level of activities rather than strategies. This, I think, reminds us of the fact that, whilst most universities have incorporated the imperative to internationalise their strategies, the operationalisation lags behind. True, we see how universities put into practice their strategic internationalisation ambitions by several activities, first and foremost outgoing student mobility (see Hunter, 2015). “Outgoing mobility can be given a major boost by institutions deciding to incorporate it as part of their study programmes […]. The ideal way to do this is in the form of mobility window, a specific period giving students an opportunity to acquire learning experiences abroad as part of the curriculum” (Vereniging Hogescholen & Vereniging van Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten, 2014, p. 17). But, in practice, how successful are Dutch universities here?

In 2010, 21.4 percent of graduates of universities of applied sciences have gained experience abroad during their study programme (Ibid., p. 16). This number covers Erasmus mobility, but also stays abroad with a very short duration. The percentage from 2010 is representative of the bigger picture as reported by Nuffic: “between 2003 and 2013 a stable average of 22.6 percent of Dutch graduates have been internationally mobile within their study programme” (Van Gaalen & Gielesen, 2016, p. 150). Given the widespread recognition and adoption of internationalisation strategies in the past years, one could expect an increase in terms of outgoing mobility. Have these numbers increased meanwhile?

Is there a trend in outgoing mobility?

Figure 1 displays findings from the UAS Monitor conducted amongst graduates of universities of applied sciences, including the most recent edition of 2016. Two aspects are apparent. First, in 2016 the number of graduates that have gained experience abroad is still almost identical to the reported numbers of 2003 and 2010. Concretely, 22.8 percent indicate they went abroad; 18.4 percent for either study or internship abroad, whilst 4.4 percent engaged
in both sorts of international experience. Second, we see that outgoing mobility has remained stable over the last years.

Interpretation of these results is of course a matter of perspective. On the one hand, one could argue that with one out of five students internationally mobile, Dutch universities of applied sciences are doing well. On the other hand, one could criticise the stagnating numbers and refer to the fact that the aforementioned strategic ambitions have so far shown little impact on outgoing mobility. As many studies have shown, the positive aspects of international experience (see Van den Hoven & Walenkamp, 2015), give us reason to aim for an increase in outgoing mobility based on the notion that ‘internationalisation is a must’ entails ‘access to international opportunities is a must’. This will remind us to translate strategic papers into action in internationalisation in higher education.

‘Internationalisation is must’ as: ‘international opportunities for all is a must’

My second proposition is to read this mantra as follows: ‘internationalisation is a must’ implies ‘international opportunities for all is a must’. This is supposed to remind us of the issue of access to education and opportunities. Globally, access is a core challenge in the world of education and we still see “issues with completion rates, gender and class disparity”, and internationalisation should be rather at the forefront tackling these issues than lagging behind (Weimer, 2016). The concern, however, that “access to international opportunities could be or become available only to the privileged few” is common and plausible. We can speak of an “almost global consensus that the most important institutional risk of internationalization for higher education institutions is that not all students will benefit from the opportunities” (Egron-Polak, 2014, 7).

We have looked into data from the UAS Monitor to find out whether access to international opportunities is a concern in The Netherlands. To what extent do we see that disparities or other determinants influence whether students have access to international opportunities? Figure 2 below presents some of the information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are there any disparities in terms of access to international opportunities?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All alumni (in %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni from G6 hogescholen (in %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni from uas other than G6 (in %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male alumni (in %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female alumni (in %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni with ‘autochtoon’ background (in %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni with ‘non-western allochtoon’ background (in %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni with ‘western allochtoon’ background (in %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I did both, internship abroad and study abroad
I did either internship abroad or study abroad
I did no internationalisation abroad

Figure 2: Potential disparities in access to international opportunities
We can see that female graduates went abroad slightly more often during their studies than male graduates. A possibly surprising finding: first, we see *G6 hogescholen* (the universities of applied sciences in the six major Dutch cities) scoring lower on study or internships abroad than other universities of applied sciences. Second, the ethnic background correlates with the participation in international opportunities insofar as graduates that are ‘*autochtoon*’ (Dutch background) went less often abroad than those who are ‘*westers allochtoon*’ (immigrant background from a western country). Interpretation as to why this difference occurs, cannot be made on the basis of the data available. But we can certainly ascertain that there is no evidence for strong disparities or bias in terms of access to an international experience. In short and bluntly: the concern that a privileged upper-class student at an urban university has more access cannot be supported by the data. Undoubtedly, the problem of access to international opportunities and its correlation with privilege is severe, but possibly more obvious and relevant at universities outside Europe (see also Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014, 9).

When we talk about access to international opportunities, we may also talk about the concern that international opportunities are mainly available and used by students with good grades and remarkable study success. Here, the UAS Monitor data confirms this concern:

*During your HBO studies, have you experienced internationalisation abroad? (in %)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average mark</th>
<th>Participated in both</th>
<th>Participated in one or the other</th>
<th>Participated in neither</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3: Relation between average mark and participation in internationalisation abroad*

Graduates with high grades, as Figure 3 reveals, went abroad more often. The correlation here is moderate, but still significant. This correlation suggests to think about ways to ensure students with study delay or less good results are in a position to experience a study abroad or internship abroad too. Admittedly, as Hunter (2015) states, “mobility programmes, by their very nature, remain accessible only to the few.” Nonetheless, I think, the aforementioned numbers – especially the fact that there is a slight bias towards female students and towards students with high grades – supports the proposition that when ‘internationalisation is a must’, it also requires us to make sure international opportunities are available for all.
‘Internationalisation is must’ as: ‘Internationalisation at home is a must’

Turning to the third proposition regarding ‘internationalisation is a must’: Clearly, international opportunities are taken by a minority of students at Dutch universities of applied sciences. Moreover, the previous section showed how certain aspects such as study performance unfortunately limit students’ access to international opportunities. These insights alone are enough to advocate the intensification of Internationalisation at home efforts. As opposed to internationalisation abroad, IaH “is aimed at all students”, and therefore ought to be “part of the compulsory programme” (Beelen, 2012, p. 10). The following numbers give additional support to the proposition: ‘internationalisation is a must’ also means ‘internationalisation at home is a must’.

The UAS Monitor also asks graduates to what extent they are satisfied with the international orientation of their study programme, which enables us to evaluate the overall level of internationalisation graduates have perceived during their studies. One can imagine that graduates think about international study experience here (mobility windows), but also about aspects of internationalisation at home, such as having access to an international classroom. Slightly more than one-third of graduates in 2016 were satisfied or very satisfied with the international orientation of their programme, as Figure 4 below shows. The remaining two-thirds are split between being neutral and (very) unsatisfied. The trend, whilst not illustrated here, has been analysed and this has shown that the numbers have been stagnating over the past four years. Again, interpretations on whether this perception of international orientation is satisfying can differ – recalling the strategic ambitions of Dutch universities in the field of internationalisation, a steady increase in graduates’ satisfaction would be reasonable to expect.

Is there a correlation between satisfaction with the international orientation and internationalisation abroad activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All alumni (in %)</th>
<th>10.2</th>
<th>25.5</th>
<th>33.3</th>
<th>24.6</th>
<th>6.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alumni who did internship abroad and study abroad (in %)</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni who did internship abroad or study abroad (in %)</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni who did no internationalisation abroad (in %)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I was very satisfied with the international orientation of my HBO programme
I was satisfied with the international orientation of my HBO programme
Neutral opinion about the international orientation of my HBO programme
I was unsatisfied with the international orientation with my HBO programme
I was very unsatisfied with the international orientation of my HBO programme

Figure 4: Satisfaction with international orientation of study programme in relation to participation in internationalisation abroad
A more nuanced and, for our discussion, important aspect is the second one covered in Figure 4. To what degree does the graduates’ perception of their programme’s international orientation correlate with their own international experience? The finding is unambiguous: we can confirm a very strong correlation, meaning that those who went abroad are much more satisfied about the international character of their studies than those who did not. Or to put it differently: Whether a graduate is satisfied with the international orientation of their programme is heavily related to whether this graduate went abroad during the studies or not. Amongst those graduates that did neither a study abroad nor an internship abroad, only 27.9 percent are (very) satisfied with the international orientation. Here, our analysis is in line with another study showing “66 percent of respondents indicate that they consider outgoing student mobility the main contribution that internationalisation makes to the quality of learning and teaching at the home institution” (see Beelen, 2016, p. 58). Now, reading this supports the importance and lasting impact of internationalisation abroad, fair enough. At the same time – and this relates to my third proposition – this can be read as an urgent call for action for more efforts regarding internationalisation at home. That only about one out of four graduates who stayed at home during their studies is (very) satisfied about the international orientation or their programme illustrates that internationalisation has focused “very much on mobility so far and less so on the ‘at home’ side and internationalisation of the curriculum” (Hunter, 2015). But if ‘internationalisation is a must’, this is not acceptable. Consequently, as I propose, we must read the mantra also as ‘internationalisation at home is a must’, to help all students experience internationalisation. At this point, our findings suggest, Beelen (2016, p. 63) is right stating that universities may have acknowledged this shift, but “not really acted upon it.”

To conclude this section, I have presented three proposition related to the mantra that ‘internationalisation is a must’, including data to support these. According to these propositions, a genuine interpretation of saying ‘internationalisation is a must’ goes beyond the ambition of all universities having internationalisation strategies. Concretely, ‘internationalisation is a must’ should imply (1) that broad access to international opportunities is a must, (2) that internationalisation for all students is a must regardless of privileges and study success, and (3) that internationalisation at home is a must. After all, the aim is that “all students in the Netherlands will have obtained international and intercultural competences upon graduation” (Van Gaalen & Gielesen, 2016, p. 149).

The is reason to believe that such propositions can resonate. As Beelen (2016, p. 57) stresses, universities are becoming aware as “31 percent of universities include ‘strengthening the international/intercultural content of the curriculum’ among their top three priority actions for internationalisation.” Also, there are benchmarks that show the potential when ‘international as a must’ is taken serious. To end this section with an encouraging note, the UAS Monitor also reveals outstanding results, for example a remarkable high score on satisfaction with international orientation of the programme European Studies at THUAS. (see Figure 5).
How do alumni perceive the international orientation of their programme? (ES programme only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 ES GRADUATES (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied with international orientation 64,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied with the international orientation 28,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral 5,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfied with the international orientation 1,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unsatisfied with the international orientation 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Perceived international orientation of the European Studies programme

The high score achieved by the European Studies programme might be partly influenced by the particularly international character of its content and student population. But also, European Studies incorporates the three propositions listed above. It features a mandatory mobility window for most students. Further, European Studies is one programme of “only 18 percent [that] have implemented internationalized learning outcomes” (see Beelen, 2016, p. 59).

The second mantra of IoHE: Internationalisation is a ‘means’

I wish to turn our attention to another mantra introduced at the beginning. This one comes most often in the form: ‘internationalisation is a means to an end’. As an example, De Wit (2016, p. 15) pointed to the importance of grasping internationalisation activities in “their pure meanings”, or more concretely “not as goals in themselves but rather as means to an end.” Phrasings do evidently differ, but we can find some variant of De Wit’s statement in numerous papers on IoHE, for instance O’Malley (2015), reinforcing that “internationalisation is not a goal in itself”, or Hudzik (2015, p. 11), issuing the common concern of “viewing higher education internationalisation as an end instead of as a means [...].”

Identical with our review of the first mantra, we see how institutional policies and strategies have adopted the notion from academic publications almost verbatim. In their strategic document from 2014, the associations of Dutch universities and universities of applied sciences put it as follows: “Internationalisation is not an isolated activity or an end in itself. [...]” (Vereniging Hogescholen & Vereniging van Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten, 2014). Also, similar to the first mantra, frequent repetition does not guarantee that the meaning is properly understood. So, what does it actually mean, to say that ‘internationalisation is a means rather than an end’? And why is this essential? Again, I would like to proceed with propositions concerning our reading of the mantra ‘internationalisation is a means’; the first
proposition as a reminder that internationalisation, being a means, has an end, and the second proposition as a reminder of what this end of internationalisation actually consists of.

‘Internationalisation is a means’ as ‘internationalisation has an end’

My first suggestion regarding ‘internationalisation is a means’ thus concerns the idea that we should read it as: internationalisation has an end, and it is the end that matters. To put it boldly: saying that ‘internationalisation is a means’ in fact tells us that internationalisation is not an end itself. What follows is that internationalisation has no value in itself, but that it is done for the sake of achieving an end. It is this end that bears and brings out value. I think we need to remind ourselves to incorporate this notion when we say ‘internationalisation is a means’, because, as De Wit (2016, p. 17) detected, ‘why’ we do internationalisation, the end we pursue when doing it, is too often neglected. This is far more than a concern of merely theoretical relevance. Rather, to hammer out that internationalisation is a means to an end, helps us tackle issues that we see in the practice of IoHE.

Concretely, focusing on the end of internationalisation helps us to tackle the following phenomenon. Academics observe more and more “bold statements in [...] strategic plans about the value and place of internationalisation”, but when looking at the operationalisation of internationalisation at the teaching learning interface see “a hollow shell behind the rhetoric” (Green & Whitsed, 2015, p. 3). This, I suppose, happens when institutions put internationalisation on their agenda and consider to merely have an internationalisation strategy is already an end in itself. In that unfortunate case, internationalisation becomes somewhat “synonymous with a specific programmatic or organization strategy [...]” (De Wit, 2016, p. 15). Basically, internationalisation is then done for the sake of doing it and it comes as no surprise that we see nothing but ‘rhetoric’ at the level of teaching and learning.

To emphasise that internationalisation is done to achieve an end can tackle this trend. It reminds us that internationalisation – the agreements, flows and other policies – are done in order to achieve certain an end and that we must target more the outcomes of internationalisation, the things that happen at the teaching learning interface and not in strategic papers (Hudzik, 2015, p. 11; also, Weimer, 2016). This proposition can be implemented and made explicit, for instance, by having strategies that contain internationalisation goals (see Figure 6). Such goals ensure that we keep an eye on the supposed outcome or end of internationalisation and whether we achieve it.
Studies show "that 75 percent of the higher education institutions [...] already have or are preparing an internationalization strategy [...] while an additional 16 percent report embedding internationalization goals in the overall institutional strategy" (Egron-Polak, 2014, p. 8).

THUAS has made a strategic decision to "further developing our international profile" (THUAS, n.d., p. 6), but also the concrete internationalisation goal to "to equip all students with knowledge and international skills that are relevant and widely applicable, not only for their degree programme, but also for their chosen profession" (THUAS, n.d., p. 8).

Figure 6: Trends in international higher education contrasted with policies at THUAS

There is a second practical implication of highlighting that internationalisation has an end. This concerns the assessment or evaluation of internationalisation. True, global education seems to develop more and more into a market, in which rankings are essential and managerialism dominates; a symptom of this development is that "internationalisation performance" matters (Weimer, 2016), and that internationalisation performance is too often defined and evaluated regardless of the outcomes of internationalisation. Then, internationalisation performance acquires meaning through "quantitative outputs: how any students, agreements, flows, how many places gained in the rankings and so on" (Hunter, 2015). But this is not what good performance in internationalisation should entail. Beelen (2016, 62) supports this, stating that it is for instance a misconception to believe that "more international students mean more internationalisation." To recall that internationalisation serves to achieve an end shows us: good internationalisation is not about the numbers in policies, agreements, flows and so on, but good internationalisation achieves its intended end or outcomes and it needs to be evaluated and improved accordingly. The following section shows that, when keeping an eye on the end of internationalisation, for example in surveys, we can get meaningful information on how to improve internationalisation.

‘Internationalisation is a means’...to acquire international competencies

The previous proposition was to carefully remember that internationalisation is a means and as such has an end. The following second proposition is to keep in mind what this end of internationalisation consists of, namely that students acquire international competencies. True, that we can identify several rationales for doing internationalisation is broadly agreed. Authors have listed four categories of rationales, namely political rationales (towards mutual understanding and security), economic rationales (including growth and competitiveness, labour market demands), social and cultural rationales (intercultural and international com-
petency), and academic rationales (e.g. about international rankings etc.) (see De Wit, 2010, p. 9; Knight, 2007, p. 215). In the last years, we seem to see a “shift away from the social and cultural rationales toward the economic and commercial interests of internationalisation” (Knight, 2004, p. 29). Further, Hunter (2015) warns us that social and cultural rationales “might lose ground or come into conflict with economic priorities” in IoHE.

To see ‘internationalisation as a means’ to acquire international competencies, predominantly at least, is done to tackle this shift towards economic and commercial rationales. First and foremost, the end of internationalisation should be “the quality of education, as well as the international and social profile of a university” (Van den Hoven & Walenkamp 2015, p. 5). In short, internationalisation is first and foremost a means “to enhance quality” (O’Malley, 2015; Hunter, 2015) and this presupposed that students acquire competencies. Therefore, to promote perceiving internationalisation as a means to acquire international competencies means to put the learner at the centre of internationalisation policies (Coelen, in Jones et al., 2016).

To potential is that looking at the end, or outcomes, of internationalisation allows us more insights on whether internationalisation works and how it works best. Whilst many surveys and studies neglect international competencies, the research group has placed a question bloc targeting these outcomes in the UAS Monitor. For instance, THUAS graduates have been asked whether they have acquired international competencies during their studies (see Figure 7).

**Acquiring international competencies - The study experience at THUAS...**

...helped me learn foreign languages.
![Percentage](10,8 40,5 57,9 84,2)

...made me look at my field of expertise from a global and international perspective.
![Percentage](41 54,9 73,7 89,4)

...contributed to my knowledge and interest in global matters.
![Percentage](40,2 56,7 73,6)

...helped to equip me with the attitude, skills and knowledge that is necessary to deal effectively with others in an intercultural and international environment.
![Percentage](65,7 73,6)

...helped me to develop respect for norms, values and potential of people with diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds.
![Percentage](73,6 84,2)

**Figure 7: Contribution of studying at THUAS to the acquisition of international competencies**

We can see that roughly half of the respondents indicate that they have acquired international competencies during their studies. More precisely, we see improvements in terms of skills (such as foreign languages), but also competencies regarding knowledge (about global...
affairs) and attitudes (intercultural competency to respect different norms and values and deal with diversity). Thus, we have reason to believe that some intended outcomes of internationalisation have been achieved here. In addition, a deeper analysis shows, the impact of a stay abroad. Previous studies demonstrate a great deal of learning in the perception of students when they go abroad (Van den Hoven & Walenkamp, 2015, p.98; see also Jones, 2013). Our study fully confirms this as the acquisition of international competencies was significantly higher for graduates that had an experience abroad than others. So, to focus on the end, the outcomes of internationalisation allows us to learn and improve. Here: whilst there seems to be a good amount of learning in general, internationalisation abroad is apparently a particularly good means to acquire international competences. In a similar fashion, the next Figure highlights the potential of targeting the end of internationalisation in research and practice.

THUAS graduates 2016: My acquisition of international competencies was supported by...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...an internationalized body of staff (lecturers and other staff members that have language and intercultural competence).</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...a high level of student diversity (with a vibrant diverse international and multicultural student community).</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...an international campus culture (union clubs, societies, informal gatherings and events that bring together an international, multicultural student group).</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...an international learning experience via an multicultural classroom.</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...an international learning experience via an international classroom.</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...mobility opportunities (such as study abroad, placement abroad, international study tours).</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...an internationalized formal curriculum (meaning course content, pedagogy and assessment incorporate an international perspective).</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8: Contribution of components of internationalisation to the acquisition of international competences**

Figure 8 shows scores from the UAS Monitor on the question about what sort of internationalisation policies or activities have been perceived as supportive for acquiring international competence. Again, we see that mobility opportunities seem to be prominent drivers there – more than 42 percent means the highest score of all activities or policies. At the same time, we see relatively low scores on the effectiveness of the international classroom and the international campus culture – for both aspects the score is only slightly higher than 20 percent. Again, this points to room for improvement concerning, broadly speaking, internationalisation at home. More generally, such a focus provides good insights for concrete improvements to make the means of internationalisation more effective in order to achieve its end.
Summing up this section: the point was to recall two particular implications of the mantra that ‘internationalisation is a means’. To make sure that internationalisation translates from the level of strategies and policies to the level of teaching and learning, we need to hammer out that internationalisation is not an end in itself, but done for the sake of the quality of education. To help us evaluate and improve internationalisation efforts, we need to remind ourselves that we do it in order to help students acquire international competencies. Our rationales and studies should target this outcome mainly in order to see which activities work best. Internationalisation too often is “conceptualized in terms of inputs and processes, such as specific policy initiatives, systematic efforts, or institutional level structural adjustments” instead of targeting the “impact these activities have on those who engage in them” (Green & Whitsed, 2015). Whether we target the outcomes, or the policy as such, makes a great difference. Again, a quick glance at the benchmark of the previously mentioned programme European Studies shows this (see Figure 9).

**European Studies graduates 2016: My acquisition of international competencies was supported by...**

- ...an internationalised body of staff (lecturers and other staff members that have language and intercultural competence).
- ...a high level of student diversity (with a vibrant diverse international and multicultural student community).
- ...an international campus culture (union clubs, societies, informal gatherings and events that bring together an international, multicultural student group).
- ...an international learning experience via an multicultural classroom.
- ...an international learning experience via an international classroom.
- ...mobility opportunities (such as study abroad, placement abroad, international study tours).
- ...an internationalized formal curriculum (meaning course content, pedagogy and assessment incorporate an international perspective).

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European campus</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European campus</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European campus</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European campus</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European campus</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European campus</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European campus</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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**Figure 9: Acquisition of international competencies according to European Studies graduates 2016**

Comparing the scores of the programme to the previously displayed scores across THUAS shows a stunning difference. Even though European Studies is subject to the overall institutional internationalisation strategy at THUAS, the programme achieves again significantly higher scores. I see this as a result of translating internationalisation into action, targeting outcomes and therefore as support for this article’s propositions. In any case, this example is an encouraging one as it shows the potential that we have to improve and develop internationalisation.
**Conclusions**

De Wit flagged that “we should invest a lot more time into questions of rationales and outcomes” (2016, p. 15) of internationalisation. Possibly, this best describes the spirit and ambition of this paper. I have used the analogy of a *mantra*, to describe how essential statements can be repeated to an extent that their meaning and importance gets rather blurred than clearer. I consider ‘internationalisation is a must’ and ‘internationalisation is a means’ two statements of that sort. They are important, because they – properly understood – do precisely what de Wit suggests: they remind us about the rationale of internationalisation and its outcomes.

The data presented in this piece, based on the UAS Monitor, confirms both, the potential of these *mantras* but also that they are not always properly translated into practice. ‘Internationalisation is a must’ implies more than adopting university strategies. It also means to have internationalisation with access for all – the data shows that we have not yet achieved this but also provides encouraging insights and best practice. ‘Internationalisation is a means’ makes us target the end, the intended outcomes of internationalisation and how students perceive them. Again, survey data and literature presented in this paper suggest that we tend to lose track of these important meanings, but also demonstrate the potential of focusing on competencies as internationalisation outcomes.

In short, the *mantras* of IoHE help us address the aforementioned issue that there is much rhetoric but little action on the teaching and learning ground (see Hunter, 2015). These *mantras*, understood as I proposed in this paper, make us hold on to an internationalisation that is done based on the right rationale and for the right outcomes – an internationalisation in action, beyond strategies and commercial interest- that reaches all students to help them work and live in this world.
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Biculturalism and employability

SHYVONNE HENRY AND JAËL LENDERS
Abstract

Existing research provides an extensive overview of the benefits of biculturalism and how its use can be advantageous for professional success. This study sets out to build upon this knowledge by examining the possibilities to incorporate it into the curricula of The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) so that bicultural students can improve their employability, thereby maximising their professional opportunities. This study focused on the HBO-Rechten - Dutch Law – Programme offered by THUAS. Based on the outcomes, we formulated recommendations for THUAS to support bicultural students in increasing their employability. A survey was conducted among current students and alumni of the HBO-Rechten programme in addition to in-depth interviews with both employers and lecturers. For the students and alumni, the survey focused on their knowledge and awareness of multicultural competencies in relation to their employability. The interviews with lecturers and employers focused on their perspectives regarding the benefits of biculturalism and recommendations for overcoming the structural labour market disadvantages often faced by ethnic minorities. In addition, we spoke about the important competencies that students need for a job in the legal labour market.

Both employers and lecturers reported that multilingualism was the biggest benefit of being bicultural. Adaptability and the ability to show empathy were also frequently mentioned as benefits. Moreover, employers and lecturers emphasised the importance of having professional level written and oral Dutch language skills because that is extremely important in the legal profession. Furthermore, they suggest that bicultural students should work more on personal branding. They tend to neglect their biculturalism in job interviews and motivation letters while they could actually be capitalising on these benefits. This was supported by the survey results, which suggests that both students and alumni lack awareness of the benefits of biculturalism. They have limited understanding of international competencies and the extent to which these can increase their employability. Linking the benefits of bicultural competencies to job qualifications is a very important thing according to both lecturers and employers. Bicultural students already have desired competencies for jobs in the legal professional field. This can be enhanced by students involving themselves in extracurricular activities. Those kinds of activities can aid them in the discovery of their own strong points. In addition, it can help them capitalise on their benefits of being bicultural in relation to employability.
**Background to the study**

Driven by a high degree of international economic integration, advanced technological diffusion, international migration and the free exchange of knowledge, The Netherlands is one of the richest and most globalised countries in the world. The Dutch economy has made a full recovery since the 2008 crisis, the unemployment rates continue to drop annually and the economy is expected to continue to grow (European Commission, 2017). Not everyone living in The Netherlands, however, has equal access to the Dutch labour market. The Netherlands has a sizeable population of approximately 2 million non-natives and the labour market position of people with an immigrant background leaves much to be desired. Although the labour market position of ethnic minorities has improved in recent decades due to the improved overall economic performance of The Netherlands, it has been shown that they still are at a disadvantage.

The Netherlands has gone through several waves of migration since the end of the Second World War. Residents with a non-Dutch background now make up approximately 22 per cent of the population of The Netherlands, of which almost ten percent belong to ethnic or cultural minorities (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014). Their labour market participation, however, has not increased at the same rate as their population has. At least half of the ethnic minorities living in the Netherlands are employed, earn above average salaries and have permanent contracts. These figures still fall short when compared to Dutch natives, who consistently report higher levels of permanent employment, earn higher wages and remain employed longer than ethnic minorities (Houtzager & Rodrigues, 2002; De Koning, Gravesteijn-Ligthelm, & Tanis, 2008). Among ethnic minorities in the Netherlands, we observed overrepresentation in flexible, low-paying jobs, lower labour market participation rates and higher rates of unemployment compared to their native Dutch counterparts (Engelen, 2001).

Research has shown that there is a clear preference for native Dutch employees over ethnic minorities, when all other factors, such as educational background and work experience, are equal (Coenders, Boog, & Dinsbach, 2010). The labour market prospects for ethnic minorities in the Netherlands is therefore not merely a function of being a qualified applicant but also discrimination, which is often unintentional and takes place indirectly and subconsciously (Houtzager & Rodrigues, 2002).

In addition to discrimination, ethnic minorities also face some practical and conditional barriers when entering the Dutch labour market. Research shows that migrants who have higher levels of social, cultural and personal human capital such as education, language skills and working experience and a broad local network, tend to have more success in the labour market. However, ethnic minorities in the Netherlands tend to have underdeveloped professional skills, poor language skills and insufficient social capital, making it more difficult to become employed (de Koning, Gravesteijn-Ligthelm, & Tanis, 2008). Moreover, the supply of professional skills that ethnic minorities do have, tend to be mismatched with the demands of Dutch employers for highly educated candidates (Zorlu & Hartog, 2012).
Recent graduates from The Hague University of Applied Sciences also faced such problems while entering the labour market. Yet in our view, graduates of immigrant backgrounds bring something extra to this ever more international and multicultural labour market. For this reason, this study was initiated by the THUAS Research Group International Cooperation. The aim of this study is to explore the benefits of biculturalism as well as how those benefits can be brought to the forefront and be used to overcome the structural disadvantages that some graduates face when entering the labour market. Based on the outcomes of this study, The Hague University of Applied Sciences can make strategic changes to their curricula to improve the employability of its graduates.

This study will not only be beneficial for students of The Hague University of Applied Sciences, but can benefit students from all universities, making them aware of the benefits of biculturalism to improve their overall employability.

**Context**

**The Hague University of Applied Sciences**
The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) is a university of applied sciences with its campus located in and around The Hague. With almost 26,000 students from more than 140 different countries (THUAS website, 2017) the campus has a very international character. THUAS has the ambition to be the most international university of applied sciences in The Netherlands by 2020 and to help students becoming global citizens.

**Research Group International Cooperation**
Within the university there are research groups working on different themes. By carrying out practice-oriented research, they establish a connection between education and professional practice. One of the research groups is focusing on international cooperation, covering different themes like development cooperation with Africa, intercultural competencies and employability of THUAS graduates. This research about the benefits of biculturalism is part of this research group.

**HBO-Rechten (Dutch Law Programme)**
This research is conducted within the curriculum of HBO-Rechten (Law). The focus was on this programme because there are many bicultural students within the programme with for example Moroccan and Turkish roots. HBO-Rechten is a programme that offers two years of fulltime studies followed by two years of work placement in combination with study one day a week. This work placement is called a Leer-ArbeidsPlaats [Learning and Working Placement, LAP].
Theoretical background

Biculturalism
In the background to this study, we discussed the structural disadvantages that ethnic minorities in The Netherlands face in the labour market. The evident lack of employment prospects for ethnic minorities may cause them to feel hopeless about their own chances of professional success and may even be a deterrent from the vigour in which they would pursue their professional aspirations. It may, however, be possible to overcome structural disadvantages with the advantage of being bicultural. Ethnic minorities in the Netherlands are primarily migrants or descendants of migrants, that have been born and raised in the Netherlands and often have on a bicultural identity. According to Schwartz and Unger's (2010) definition “biculturalism represents comfort and proficiency with both one’s heritage and the culture of the country or region in which one has settled”. Biculturalism, however, is not limited to ethnic minorities, it may apply to any individual who has for some reason internalised a second (or more) cultural scheme. Several studies show that ethnic minorities who identify themselves as being bicultural tend to do better than those who separate themselves from their home culture (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). Bicultural people have not only had exposure to another culture, but they have had meaningful experiences within that culture, which has contributed to their character and abilities. It is these very contributions that some researchers claim can be very advantageous to their professional success (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). Dutch employers are missing out on a valuable pool of resources and organisational benefits.

Benefits of biculturalism
In the past, exposure to different cultures was perceived by scholars to be a possible detriment to individuals (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1973) with a negative impact on social interactions (Pye, 1963; Geertz, 1963). Current research, however, shows that biculturalism may actually be a valuable asset in local as well as international business environments. Friedman and Liu (2009) assert that biculturalism is accompanied by certain “core effects” that “provide them with a kind of cognitive, emotional and behavioural flexibility” and that these effects are beneficial for organisations. Biculturals exhibit a higher level of adaptability in that they are able to modify their actions based on the specific needs of certain cultural groups. They are also ‘boundary spanners’ because of their ability to bridge cultural gaps. They thus have the ability to facilitate higher levels of connectivity between groups and employees. They further maintain that these effects are beneficial for managers in the workplace because of its potential to improve the ways in which teams work together. Biculturals are good leaders because they are less vulnerable to bias and are thus better at dispute resolution, understanding and empathising with others. This can improve the quality of interactions with their subordinates and other members of the organisation (Friedman & Liu, 2009).

Unlike bicultural people, mono cultural people tend to operate within “narrowly circumscribed contexts”[...] their narrowness of focus limits the kind of dealings we have with one another and, hence, limits our chances of ever discovering the range of cultural differences among us outside of these contexts” (Goodenough, 2014, p. 16). However, in today’s globalised world, multiculturalism is ubiquitous in most developed nations and it is impossible to ignore intercultural considerations. Organisations and institutions are increasingly con-
fronting the need to empathise with ethnic minorities either as civilians, employees, consultants, clients, affiliates and partners. Businesses can therefore benefit from hiring bicultural professionals because of their ability to have better contact and understanding with people of different cultural origins (Goodenough, 2014). This benefit may be very valuable to certain professions such as nursing, legal and educational professions, where intercultural contact is common.

Hong further expands on this point by developing the concept of bicultural competence and the ways in which it impacts the effectiveness of multicultural groups. Hong (2010, p. 96) defines bicultural competence as “the ability to draw upon cultural knowledge and cross-cultural abilities (such as adapting one’s behaviour and communicating across cultures) to effectively switch cultural frames and apply cultural metacognition to disparate cultural contexts in order to work successfully with people from different cultural backgrounds toward a desired organisational outcome”. Hong is in agreement with Friedman and Liu that biculturalism leads to better conflict mediation skills and boundary spanning ability. He, however, builds upon these observations to highlight their potential to be a valuable addition to multicultural teams through their ability to facilitate effective group integration which leads to improved group performance. Hong’s findings are illustrated in the flowchart below.

Figure 1: Bicultural competence and its impact on team effectiveness

*Source: Hong, 2010, p. 97*

A study by Leung, Maddux, Galinsky and Chiu (2008), was the first to use empirical evidence to demonstrate that creative capacity can be enhanced as a result of exposure to multiple cultures. Their research established a positive correlation between the extent of one’s multicultural experiences and creative performance as well as the cognitive processes that support creativity. These processes involve the ability to make definitive cognitive and behavioural adjustments or to have a mind-set that is open and welcoming to new experiences Leung and Chiu (2010, p. 730) found that “cognitive juxtaposition of seemingly non-overlapping ideas from two cultures activates a creative mind-set and produces creative
outcomes [...] individuals under the influence of this mind-set tend to think more unconventionally and be more receptive to ideas from foreign cultures”. They also found that the more exposure one has to multicultural experiences, the greater their creative capacity. Maddux, Adam and Galinsky (2010) also found that certain types of multicultural experiences, particularly those with enhanced cognitive flexibility and complexity were consistent with higher creative capacity.

**Biculturals who benefit most**

The degree to which one can enjoy the benefits of biculturalism is dependent upon ‘situational constraint’ such as maintaining an attachment to your own culture or the requirement for concrete answers or existential disturbances. Existential anxiety is found to weaken the benefits. Research by Verkuyten and Pouliai (2006) found that bicultural persons of Greek heritage living in The Netherlands, who primarily activated their Greek culture instead of their Dutch culture, had less positive personal evaluations. They assert that reaping the most benefits from biculturalism is about striking a balance between both cultures. Many bicultural individuals struggle with their cultural identity as they confront norms and values not consistent with those of their original heritage. A study by Tadmor, Galinsky and Maddux (2012, p. 2) found that “mere exposure to a new culture is insufficient to bring about creative benefits; rather, it is the simultaneous exposure to and juxtaposition of new and old cultures, which appear to be the main catalyst to enhanced creativity”. Therefore, not all individuals exposed to other cultures will have the ability to benefit equally from these experiences. The benefits are most visible in bicultural individuals who are able to maintain healthy psychological links with both their host and home culture. This is referred to as ‘acculturation strategies’, which are the ability of a person to integrate into a new culture in a complex way. Because of strategic acculturation, bicultural professionals had more positive reputations and received more promotions. Integrative complexity (information processing capacity that involves considering and combining multiple perspectives) therefore serves as a mediator for identification between two cultures and professional performance.

**Actions to overcome disadvantages**

In consideration of the known disadvantages that ethnic minorities in The Netherlands have, several legal instruments have been established with the intention of mitigating the disparity in the labour market. Such legal instruments include, but are not limited to, The SAMEN Act, The Newcomers Integration Act, The Equal Treatment Act and labour market policy with the aim of promoting ethnic minority participation in the workforce. Unfortunately, these instruments have only had a limited effect. Many of these acts have shown to be ‘observed in letter and not in spirit’ by way of their poor execution and lack of effective enforcement (Houtzager & Rodrigues, 2002).

In addition to legal instruments, most academic institutions of higher learning incorporate employability skills development into their curricula. Employability is often described as the ability to find a desired job (Berntson, Näswall & Sverke, 2008; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007) or to remain employed (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Even though academic institutions incorporate these skills into their curricula, employers are consistently reporting a lack of the basic skills necessary for employment success in graduates who are, according to employers,
insufficiently prepared for the working world (Tymon, 2013). Research has shown that there is a lack of engagement between students and development related to employability. This comes as a result of the misalignment of views between stakeholders such as employers, higher learning institutions and students (Tymon, 2013). Engaged and informed learning is therefore necessary to facilitate the development of graduate employability.

**Biculturalism in relation to employability**

There are several paths that can be taken to improve the employability of ethnic minorities in The Netherlands. One such approach would be to tackle the social structural disadvantages through law and policy. As indicated earlier, this strategy is already in place and has had a limited positive effect. It is therefore wise to take a proactive approach to tackle the practical constraints, primarily the lack of professional skills, language skills and social capital. These limitations can be directly addressed from an academic standpoint especially in international institutions and institutions with a high population of international students. Successful immigrants who have been educated in The Netherlands reported that their academic institution did not play a significant role in their success in the labour market as their personal skills were often underestimated and therefore not developed (De Koning, Gravesteijn-Ligthelm, & Tanis, 2008). An opportunity therefore exists to fill this gap with a comprehensive programme aimed at positioning bicultural students for a greater chance of success in the labour market. Academic institutions can not only help students achieve the required level of education, language skills and social capital, they can also directly contribute to enhancing and developing skills associated with being bicultural to ultimately produce an above average candidate with the ability to overcome socio-cultural disadvantages.

**Methodology**

This section highlights the research design that has been used in this research project. This will include the research question, the choice and justification of the research method, the participants, data collection, and data analysis methods. In this study, the focus is on the HBO-Rechten curriculum of THUAS because this curriculum has many bicultural students.

**Research question**

The existing literature provides an extensive overview on the benefits of being bicultural and how its exploitation can be beneficial for professional success. This study sets out to build upon this knowledge by examining the possibilities to incorporate it into the curricula of The Hague University of Applied Sciences so that bicultural students can improve their employability, thereby maximising their professional opportunities.

To do so, students need to become aware of the benefits of being bicultural. In addition, these advantages need to be brought to the forefront so that there is a possibility to develop them further in a targeted and strategic manner. Finally, students need to learn how to capitalise on these advantages so that they can improve their employability.
Research question
The main research question is:

How can The Hague University of Applied Sciences support students in benefitting from biculturalism in order to improve their employability?

Specific questions for employers and lecturers are:
1. What are the benefits of being bicultural according to lecturers and employers?
2. How can bicultural students overcome structural disadvantages according to lecturers and employers?
3. What competencies are beneficial for the labour market according to lecturers and employers?

Specific questions for students and alumni are:
1. How do students and alumni identify themselves?
2. What are their perceptions on intercultural competences and being bicultural?
3. How well does THUAS prepare students and alumni for the international work environment?
4. To what extent do students and alumni value benefits of biculturalism in relation to employability?

Research design
In this research, a mixed methods research design has been used, including both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Earlier research shows that a mixed method design forms the best way to acquire reliable results. Firstly, extensive desk research was carried out to investigate existing studies regarding the benefits of biculturalism. After this period of desk research, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were chosen for this study. Quantitative research was carried out by an online survey through Questback. The survey was sent out to both students and alumni. This method was chosen because we wanted to incorporate the multicultural personality questions (MPQ) by Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000) into the survey to see how students and alumni both score on these questions and to what extent they possess intercultural competences. Besides the survey, a couple of semi-structured interviews with students were planned as well. However, it appeared very hard to find students willing to participate in the interviews. Therefore, interviews with students were not incorporated into this pilot study, due to a lack of time to find students willing to participate. Qualitative research was conducted through semi-structured interviews with employers and lecturers.

Participants and sampling
Finding respondents was done with external assistance due to restrictions for approaching respondents directly. A team coordinator of HBO-Rechten assisted in finding lecturers who were willing to cooperate. The LAP-coordinator of THUAS assisted with finding employers and students who were willing to participate. The alumni coordinator for the HBO-Rechten programme assisted in finding alumni to participate in the survey.
The semi-structured interviews were conducted in May and June 2017. An email message with information was set up to send to all lecturers of HBO-Rechten, all employers that offer LAP-placements, all students and all accessible alumni. Eventually 7 employers, 7 lecturers and one LAP-placement office worker were willing to be interviewed. For the survey, we received 21 responses from students and 7 responses from alumni. Employers (table 1), lecturers (table 2), LAP-coordinator (is also interviewed as a lecturer, so also table 2), students and alumni were used for this research to increase validity of the outcomes. Those five stakeholders were chosen because they may provide various perspectives regarding biculturalism and how it relates to employability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Years of work experience</th>
<th>Profession</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Legal assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Legal assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Legal assistant</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Overview of respondents, employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Time at THUAS</th>
<th>Prior experience in field</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Teaching for 2 years</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teaching for 10 years</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teaching for 5 years</td>
<td>Policy advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Teaching for 3 years</td>
<td>Policy advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teaching for 15 years LAP-coordinator 2 years</td>
<td>Administrative worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Teaching for 5 years</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Overview of respondents, lecturers

**Instruments**

**Interviews**

As noted above, semi-structured in-depth interviews with employers and lecturers were used as research method. Interviewing is an effective way to assess opinions and experiences and as the aim of this study was to investigate perceptions on biculturalism, interviewing was an appropriate way to do so. The interviews took about 30-40 minutes each and were conducted face-to-face. Specific questions were asked about their interpretations of the benefits of
biculturalism, the importance of multicultural competencies in the labour market and recommendations were asked to improve the employability of bicultural students (see appendix A). The interviews with lecturers took place at THUAS in quiet places were the lecturers could speak freely. The interviews with employers took place at their offices in quiet places as well. All interviews are presented anonymously.

Survey
Besides the interviews, data were collected by sending out surveys. Two online surveys were developed, one for students and one for alumni. As mentioned before, the surveys contained some closed and some open-ended questions. The first section focused on general questions, such as age, gender, nationality, where they grew up and whether they have lived in another country. The next section mainly focused on their education, employability, intercultural competences and the benefits of being bicultural. Also, the five dimensions of the MPQ: cultural empathy, open mindedness, emotional stability, social initiative and flexibility, were incorporated into the last part of survey. For this last section, a modified questionnaire was used, based on those five dimensions. Those modified MPQ questions were asked and the answers were put on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, for example 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) and in the middle ‘neutral’ (3). Some of those questions were mirrored to improve the quality of the given answers.

Data analysis

Analysis of qualitative data
The interviews were recorded with an audio recording device and subsequently transcribed, so nothing could be left out. Data were analysed through the phases of content analysis. Firstly, codes were produced by open coding that represent the concepts in the data. Secondly, axial coding was used to categorise the open codes and finally focused coding was used to extract patterns from the data (Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009). In order to interpret these emerging patterns, the theoretical background of the studied concepts was used as well as knowledge about the context.

Analysis of quantitative data
Open-ended questions were analysed with the same method that is used for qualitative data. Codes were again produced by open coding that represent concepts in the data. Afterwards, axial coding was used to categorize the codes and find patterns in the data. Answers on questions at the Likert scale, which have five multiple-choice answers on a scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) were converted into numerical form. Outcomes of the mirrored questions were mirrored. Thence, the average for the entire group could be calculated and compared. Graphs were made to make the results more visual.

Ethical considerations
All participants were aware of the research they were participating in. Before the interviews, every participant was informed about the aim of this research and the context. All recordings were treated confidentially and participants knew that everything was anonymous. All participants participated voluntarily and responded to the invitation for the interview them-
selves. Therefore, it might be expected that only the participants who had an affinity with the subject responded and this might have influenced the outcomes of this research.

Findings

This section describes the research findings using quotes from the interviews and survey data. Some of the quotes used in this chapter have been translated from Dutch to English. The sub questions are used to structure this chapter. Sub questions were divided based on the results from the various stakeholders.

What are benefits of being bicultural according to lecturers and employers?

The interviews were conducted to investigate the perspective of employers and lecturers on bicultural students and to get recommendations on how biculturals can profile themselves to overcome structural disadvantages. However, there were some employers who could not come up with either benefits or weaknesses because they did not see differences between biculturals and their monocultural counterparts. Most of them could come up with some benefits while the interview continued and they could also find themselves in former research on biculturalism.

Employers

Multilingualism

Interviews with employers showed that according to them there are benefits to being bicultural. Multilingualism was mentioned as the main benefit. Almost all employers thought this is a great benefit when assisting clients from another background and a different language. One employer mentioned she knew companies that specifically hired Moroccan students to assist their Moroccan clients.

And he has some bicultural students, one of them from Morocco. And I know that he makes use of their language skills to enter the Moroccan market. And those students seem to really enjoy using their language skills!

(respondent 1)

Another employer explained that due to the sensitive nature of some cases it is important to have an employee with a bicultural background to assist those clients and make them feel heard and helped.

The company is located in Rotterdam as well as in Amsterdam. In these big cities, there are a lot of people who do not speak the language, such as Moroccan and Turkish people. Also, due to the sensitive nature of the company’s activities a lot of people do not want to communicate with them because they do not want to pay their debt. This problem is even more exacerbated with people who do not speak the native language.

(respondent 3)
Another employer also mentioned the second language as being the biggest benefit. The particular student could help the client very easily with all the difficulties they faced. Because the intern spoke the language of the client, an interpreter or translator was not necessary to help them out.

That they speak more than just one language was one of the biggest benefits in my opinion.

(respondent 4)

Also, some other employers mentioned that they knew companies that specifically hired bicultural students because of their language skills. However, the next quote shows that the level of the second language is not always sufficient, especially the written part:

They can speak the other language fluently, but unfortunately you see that they lack writing skills in the particular language. And then, it’s not a benefit anymore because writing is very important.

(respondent 3)

So, according to some employers the focus should not only be on speaking another language, but also on the writing skills. Only when bicultural students possess both writing and oral skills, multilingualism will be seen as a benefit.

**Strong adaptability and empathy**

Another benefit according to employers is a strong adaptability and great empathy. Employers mentioned that bicultural individuals have the ability to identify themselves with more cultures. They grew up between cultures so they can connect and understand problems of different people very well. This is in line with a research by Goodenough (2014) where he mentioned that organisations benefit from hiring bicultural professionals because of their ability to have better contact and understanding of people from another cultural background. This is also what employers mentioned. Bicultural individuals tend to be very adaptable to different situations:

Bicultural individuals can adapt to different situations. Also, they think more out of the box and not in a certain frame. That is very important for the job I guess.

(respondent 4)

This quote came from an employer who also mentioned the importance of not judging clients. Openness is very important and trying to understand the situation of the client. According to employers, bicultural students could relate to different situations very easily. However, some of the employers also mentioned that this really depends on the person.

**Creativity**

Some employers also mentioned that bicultural individuals think more outside the box and are more creative. Some of them come up with innovative ideas and are not like a lot of monocultural people who tend to be closed-minded. They tend to come up with other ideas
or solving problems in a way that is not standard. They are not following a standard script or solution to a problem:

I do have a few Moroccan people that I work closely with and I have noticed that they are more likely to think outside of the box.

(respondent 3)

**Lecturers**

During the interviews, lecturers were also asked about benefits of biculturalism. Some lecturers mentioned they did not want to generalise, and of course this is not the aim of the research. The aim of the research is to try to find benefits of being bicultural to overcome disadvantages that biculturals face.

**Ability to see the world through different perspectives**

Almost every lecturer saw benefits for biculturals, or at least a lot of competencies. One of them was the ability to change perspectives and approach situations from another point of view:

Yes, I actually do think there are benefits. A lot of bicultural students have seen so much more of this world. They can see things from different perspectives and that’s a huge benefit.

(respondent 5)

Another lecturer said that he actually learned a lot from his bicultural students as well:

I have learned that I can look at things from a different point of view. For example, I learned from my students that they are very well capable to live in two different worlds. They have one leg in the Netherlands and the other leg is in another culture and it is amazing that you can do that. It is fantastic. So, I have learned that it is possible to adapt and think from other cultures and that it is possible to learn and benefit from both cultures.

(respondent 6)

**Adaptability**

Also, lecturers mentioned adaptability as a benefit to being bicultural. Mainly because they think bicultural students grew up between different cultures and are able to see things through a different perspective.

Out of the box and flexibility, I don’t know. This really depends on the person. But I think adaptability can be a big benefit. Especially because biculturals have knowledge of different cultures and can therefore adapt to different circumstances very easily.

(respondent 8)
**Hard working**

Hard working was a benefit that was mentioned by both lecturers and employers. Lecturers mainly explained this hard-working attitude because those students probably want to prove themselves:

> I think bicultural students tend to be more active in the classrooms. They put effort in discussions. Also, the majority of them wants to get involved.

(respondent 7)

Also, some employers mentioned bicultural students, and especially girls, as hardworking:

> Especially the girls with roots in Iran and Afghanistan have an enormous drive to work hard. Dutch girls can really learn from them!!

(respondent 1)

**How can bicultural students overcome structural disadvantages and profile themselves best according to lecturers and employers?**

The interviews were also focused on getting recommendations from both employers and lecturers to help bicultural students overcome structural disadvantages. Both lecturers and employers came up with some helpful ideas that will be presented in the following paragraphs.

**Employers**

**Improve their language skills**

Almost all employers agreed on the fact that bicultural students lack Dutch language proficiency. They especially mentioned a lack of professional Dutch writing skills. Dutch language is very important for the legal labour market according to employers. Especially, to write good and clear papers and letters for clients in a way that is understandable. They also mentioned that it is not only the Dutch language that should be perfect; also, writing skills in the other languages that they speak should be excellent. As mentioned before, bicultural students tend to speak more than one language, but most of the time their writing skills are not sufficient. The next quote shows that THUAS can support bicultural students in learning to write in another language as well to make it a benefit:

> I really think it’s a pity that there are no courses at their university to equip them with writing skills in their own and a second language. This will really give them the power to come further and to distinguish themselves from their monocultural counterparts.

(respondent 1)
Focus on writing a good motivation letter/CV

Interviews with employers showed that students, either monocultural or bicultural, do not put a lot of effort into their motivation letter and CV. Employers mentioned this as being the main reason to not hire a student. Employers mentioned the importance of a good motivation letter, because there is a lot of competition around. Some employers mentioned that they receive so many bad letters, that they think THUAS should really do something about it. The next quote shows that it is not an exception:

I will receive around 30-40 motivation letters per round. So, that shows that I’m not talking about a single letter.

(respondent 2)

This employer thinks that THUAS should really help them more with setting up a good motivation letter. This is especially because bicultural students are not receiving a lot of assistance from their parents because most of the time, they lack Dutch language skills as well.

So, I see a lot of differences between letters from bicultural students and monocultural students. Monocultural, Dutch, students get a lot of help from parents, they can correct their letter and so on. With bicultural students, this is a lot different.

(respondent 2)

Personal branding, mention their biculturalism

According to employers, bicultural individuals should bring their skills more to the forefront and show an employer why their skills can be a benefit for the company. Several employers mentioned that being bicultural is a benefit in the multicultural world that we live in. This is demonstrated in the following quote:

It is better to sell yourself as being bicultural, yes! We get in contact with people from all different nationalities, everywhere and every day. But none of the students I know used those bicultural competencies in their job interviews, that’s a pity.

(respondent 4)

Several other employers mentioned the same. According to former research this might be a result of the structural disadvantages that biculturals face. Those disadvantages can make them insecure about their competencies or they do not know how to link those competences to job related skills:

I really do think bicultural students can distinguish themselves by mentioning their bicultural competences as a benefit. It shows courage when they name those competences in their motivation letter.

(respondent 3)
Lecturers

**Working on language deficiencies**
Bicultural students may overcome disadvantages when their Dutch is very strong. This is a very important point according to lecturers:

> I see a big problem with the Dutch language. I see this more clearly with students from another cultural background. And the Dutch language is really, really important in this field of work!

(respondent 6)

Another lecturer mentioned that the focus can be more on language in the curriculum. The focus is more on the legal aspects than on language:

> According to me, the emphasis should be more on professional Dutch writing skills. I think there are just four lecturers here in the programme who teach Dutch, while students lack those skills. But those language skills are so important for lawyers.

(respondent 7)

**Extracurricular activities**
Lecturers mentioned that it is very hard to find a job nowadays because there is a lot of competition. Therefore, it is important to expand your knowledge in different ways. All lecturers were really happy about the LAP-programme and they thought this is a big benefit for students to get some feeling for the labour market and get to understand what kind of competencies you need:

> Especially nowadays, there are a lot of recent graduates looking for a job. You really need to distinguish yourself from others to find a good job.

(respondent 7)

Also, he mentioned that students can distinguish themselves better from others by doing some extracurricular activities.

**Personal branding**
There were some lecturers who also mentioned the importance of personal branding. They thought bicultural students could not verbalise their benefit and make it an employability skill like the next quote shows:

> No, I think bicultural students have under-developed skills when it comes to explaining what they want and what they need.

(respondent 6)
Also, some lecturers mentioned that they are not sure whether employers will link biculturalism to employability skills. This is the main reason why bicultural students should explain those competencies and link them to the job they apply for:

> It really depends on the HR-person who is hiring people. I don’t know whether they link biculturalism to benefits.

(respondent 8)

**What competencies are required for a job in the legal area?**

**Employers**

All employers that participated in the interviews were lawyers or legal assistants. This can explain why all required competencies that are mentioned have something to do with helping people. Many competencies were addressed by employers. However, some of them were mentioned more than once, such as empathy, social skills and clear communication skills. Empathy is, according to employers, a very important competency to have as a legal worker. Empathy is understood as showing a certain interest in the clients so that they feel heard and helped. According to employers, it is very important that you have the ability to shift from your own perspective to the one of your clients. When you have that ability, you will become very good in your job:

> Being social to your clients of course, but most important, showing empathy. Then it won’t be that difficult. Just listen carefully and empathise.

(respondent 4)

Another employer agrees and believes that it’s all about trust, as the following quote shows:

> You have to show empathy to let the client trust you. You can only help people when they trust you and tell their whole story.

(respondent 2)

Besides showing empathy, employers agreed on another very important competence, namely great communication skills. Those skills are necessary because you have to listen very carefully to clients, but also because you have to explain everything very carefully and in a respectful way with a focus on the client:

> You should be clear and to the point in the way you write a letter. Always ask yourself how you would interpret the message if you were the client.

(respondent 3)
Another employer agreed and added that communication is so important to explain the Dutch law to people who are not familiar with this:

Dutch law is very clear but also very difficult and when you do not speak the language, you do not understand the law so that is why it is important for the company’s employees have intercultural competencies so that they are better able to break cultural and language barriers and get through to these people.

(respondent 2)

Lecturers

All the lecturers who were interviewed had some working experience in the field as well. Almost all of them worked as a legal worker or lawyer before they became a lecturer at THUAS. Therefore, they may have a clearer idea of competences that are necessary for these types of jobs. Empathy and cultural sensitivity were main factors that came across:

Somebody who recognises, hey this might be a cultural difference and knows how to deal with this. You need some cultural sensitivity I guess to adapt to different situations.

(respondent 7)

I do however think that people with cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication skills would be more successful in the workplace because the can more easily adapt and be effective in the workplace.

(respondent 8)

But besides empathy and cultural sensitivity, lecturers also mentioned the importance of a certain level of Dutch language skills. Almost all lecturers saw this as a very important competence for students to adjust:

I think the quality of Dutch language is really, really important. In the area of legal work, you really need to be sufficiently equipped with professional Dutch writing skills. Without this, you’re nowhere.

(respondent 6)
Students and alumni

Intercultural competency

Van der Zee and van Oudenhoven developed the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) as multidimensional instrument for measuring multicultural effectiveness (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2000). To measure the intercultural competencies of the respondents, a modified version of MPQ was administered to both students and alumni as part of the survey. The modified version of MPQ has the following 5 dimensions:

a. Cultural empathy
b. Open-mindedness
c. Social initiative
d. Flexibility
e. Cultural consciousness
f. Tolerance for ambiguity

These competencies were measured with the use of several statements (4 to 8 statements per dimension). Respondents were asked to rate the statements on a scale from 1 to 5 ranging from completely agree to neutral to completely disagree. The results of the MPQ for students and alumni are shown in the below tables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural empathy</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open mindedness</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social initiative</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural consciousness</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance for ambiguity</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compiled average score</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Rating of competencies by students (n=21)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural empathy</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open mindedness</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social initiative</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural consciousness</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance for ambiguity</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compiled average score</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Rating of competencies by alumni (n=7)
Students and alumni had very similar scores for the dimensions of cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative and cultural consciousness. Alumni scored somewhat lower than students when it came to tolerance for ambiguity and higher than students when it came to flexibility. This could possibly be attributed to the fact that they have been in the workforce longer than students. The compiled average of scores for students and alumni are 3.7 and 3.6 respectively. From this, it can be concluded that students and alumni have very similar levels of intercultural competencies, which are neither high or low. There is certainly room for improvement in this regard.

**How they identified themselves**

In the survey, students were asked to identify themselves. It was observed that students with a native Dutch background identified themselves primarily based on their personality traits such as being hardworking, organised, ambitious and trustworthy:

- *I’m a social student, who likes to learn.* (monocultural Dutch student)
- *Hard working, selfless, group-oriented.* (monocultural Dutch student)
- *I am a hard worker and I try my best in school.* (monocultural Dutch student)

Bicultural students tended to identify themselves based on their cultural background:

- *As a Dutch national with a Moroccan heritage and special connection to my hometown, Rotterdam.* (bicultural student)
- *I see myself as someone who grew up in The Netherlands, who is of mixed race, but is considered black here in Holland because I don’t have a white skin colour.*
Therefore, I consider myself to be black and not half black and half white [...] I think I am open-minded, I am interested in different cultures and their ways of doing things.

(bicultural student)

The same trend was observed when asked to describe their background. Bicultural students described their background by way of their cultural heritage while monocultural students tended to describe their backgrounds with their personal, educational and family circumstances, with less emphasis on ethnicity:

- I still live with my parents and I really enjoy that. (monocultural Dutch student)
- I live with my mom and sisters. (monocultural Dutch student)
- I got engaged last Saturday with the love of my life. I met him at school. (monocultural Dutch student)
- I come from India; My father and mother are both Turkish, they were also born there. I was born in the Netherlands. (bicultural student)

Alumni identified themselves mostly based on their personality traits and some of them associated being ‘Dutch’ as having certain personality traits. For example, on respondent said that they are “real Dutch, getting things done mentally, strong in conversation, convincing and inspirational”.

Like the students, alumni described their background primarily by way of their personal, family and educational circumstances. Only one bicultural alumnus emphasised his ethnic background.
Perceptions of intercultural competencies and biculturalism

Students and alumni of the HBO-Rechten programme, both mono- and bicultural, appear to have a limited understanding of what intercultural competencies are. They typically associated intercultural competencies with the ability to understand different cultures and speak multiple languages. While this is true, intercultural competencies include a lot more such as meta-communication, empathy, adaptability, goal orientation and tolerance for ambiguity (Connerley, 2005).

How well does THUAS prepare HBO-Rechten students for a career in an international work environment?

Figure 6 below shows that both students and alumni agree that they have the knowledge and skills to function effectively in their profession. Both groups, however, are neutral when it comes to whether THUAS prepares the students of the HBO-Rechten programme for an international career. This leads to the conclusion that the HBO-Rechten programme is more suited for a nationally oriented career rather than an internationally oriented career.

My education is mostly meant for Dutch companies. I do have European and international law, but it is all in Dutch and with Dutch students.

(student).

This is consistent with the lecturers’ claims that the HBO-Rechten programme is very much nationally oriented. It is also an indicator that the limitations of the HBO-Rechten curriculum can have a direct impact on how students perceive their international competency level.

This was also reflected in the open answer section of the survey where the majority of the students said that they believe that THUAS is sufficiently preparing them for the labour market. However, when asked what can be changed in their curriculum to improve their employ-
ability many of the students indicated that their curriculum lacks sufficient language training and internationally oriented subjects:

- More international oriented courses. We only get Dutch law and EU law. No international law.
  (student)

- In my opinion, there is little focus on (teaching) correct and compelling use of the Dutch language (and, in light of this survey, the English language). This affects employability greatly.
  (student)

The main recommendations were that there needs to be more emphasis placed on the development of their professional language skills in both English and Dutch because it is very important for their legal career. In addition, students mentioned that they would like to receive more internationally oriented courses.

To what extent do students and alumni value the benefits of biculturalism in relation to employability?

At the beginning of the survey, both students and alumni were asked to rank their agreement with the statement that having an international character would increase their chances of obtaining employment. The responses showed that overall, both students and alumni were neutral. Students scored an average of 3.10 (n=21) and alumni scored an average of 3.0 (n=7) on a scale from 1 to 5.

By the end of the survey, after students and alumni were given a definition of biculturalism, most of the students and about half of the alumni agreed that biculturalism can be an added benefit for their employability. Both students and alumni identified such benefits mainly in terms of being able to communicate and relate with clients who come from a different cultural background:

- Yes, Turkish legal offices primarily seek Turkish workers. It is always a benefit for bicultural people to speak many languages.
  (student)

- I think so because being bicultural gives more perspective sometimes when it comes to conflict.
  (student)

- Yes, you adapt to different settings well and can understand different cultures.
  (alumnus)

The above results suggest that students do not necessarily relate the benefits of having an international character with the benefits of biculturalism when in fact they go hand in hand. This could be due to the lack of the awareness of the ways in which multicultural contact can
affect one’s character. Nonetheless, once students were given a definition of biculturalism, they were able to think of ways that it could benefit them in the workplace and increase their employability. Only about half of the alumni agreed that biculturalism could be an advantage for their employability. This may be attributed to the fact that they are already active in the labour market and never considered the advantages of biculturalism.

Discussion

Globally, labour markets are becoming increasingly internationalised and populations are becoming more ethnically diverse. It has become almost impossible for most organisations and professional fields to avoid intercultural contact. Whether you are dealing with a multinational organisation or a profession that involves contact with individuals from various cultural backgrounds, these organisations benefit from hiring bicultural employees. In fact, the population of bicultural individuals in organisations has been increasing (Brannen & Thomas, 2010). Therefore, the opportunity exists for bicultural individuals to capitalise on the benefits of biculturalism and improve their employability. One of the primary aims of this research was to figure out ways for ethnic minorities to overcome some of the structural disadvantages that they can face when entering the Dutch labour market.

Existing research shows that ethnic minorities who may be identified as being bicultural tend to do better in the workplace (Brannen & Thomas, 2010) and that biculturalism is a benefit in both national and international markets (Goodenough, 2014). The results of this research reinforced some of the known benefits of biculturalism such as adaptability, empathy, flexibility, open mindedness and creativity (Friedman & Liu, 2009). Both lecturers and employers said that they observed these traits among their bicultural students and employees. They also identified multilingualism as another valuable benefit. Lecturers and employers, however, also agree that not enough is being done to purposefully bring these advantages to the forefront. Both students and graduates appear to be largely unaware of the benefits of biculturalism in relation to employability and some of the skills that they already have (such as multilingualism) are often underdeveloped. This is consistent with a study by Tymon (2013), which showed that graduates are insufficiently prepared for the working world because of a misalignment of views between students, employers and institutions of higher education.

The findings with the students and alumni further confirmed what was said by the lecturers and employers: they showed a limited understanding of what intercultural competencies are, how they relate to biculturalism and how they can improve their employability. In addition, the results showed that the HBO-Rechten programme lacks an international orientation since students and alumni feel more prepared to work in a nationally oriented work environment than an internationally oriented one. This demonstrates a disconnection between actual conditions and skills requirements of the labour market and what graduates of the HBO-Rechten programme feel they are prepared to offer. Even though the HBO-Rechten programme trains its students in Dutch law and to work for Dutch companies, multicultural considerations are still an integral part of the legal business. Graduates therefore need to be able to function effectively in both national and international contexts.
Conclusion

This qualitative and quantitative research aimed to investigate how bicultural students can overcome the disadvantages of having an immigrant background by using their biculturalism, and how THUAS can support those students to increase their employability. Our research showed that there were some important factors mentioned by employers and lecturers. First of all, according to them multilingualism was the biggest benefit of being bicultural. Other frequently mentioned benefits were a great adaptability and the ability to show empathy. This is in line with previous research by Friedman & Liu (2009). The second sub question was about the ways to overcome structural disadvantages. Both lecturers and employers mentioned the importance of great skills in the Dutch language. Especially professional Dutch writing skills appear to be very important for a job in the legal area. Furthermore, bicultural students should work more on personal branding. They tend to neglect their biculturalism in job interviews and motivation letters. Linking the benefits of bicultural competencies to job qualifications is very important according to both lecturers and employers. Desired competencies for jobs in the legal area seem to be competencies bicultural students already have, but maybe need to expand. This can be done by involving themselves in extracurricular activities. Those kinds of activities can help them in finding their own strong points. Also, it can help them relate their bicultural competencies to employability skills.

Limitations of this study

The results and conclusions of this research cannot be generalised due to the relatively low response rate in the survey from students and alumni. Nevertheless, it was possible to identify key patterns in the responses provided, and link them to the existing literature. This was a pilot study, so for future research in this area it is recommended that steps are taken to ensure that the participation rate is higher among all stakeholders.

Recommendations

Within this research, we tried to find an answer to the question how THUAS can support bicultural students make use of their immigrant background to increase their employability. From our pilot study we can derive some tentative recommendations.

Employability training

This research showed a lack of employability training offered at the HBO-Rechten programme to prepare students sufficiently for both their LAP-programme and their further employment. According to employers, biculturals are not using their biculturalism as a benefit. Certain advantages are not being brought to the forefront. This is either because they have a fear of rejection or because they are not aware of the advantages they can bring to the company. THUAS should help bicultural students with capitalising on those bicultural competencies. Employability training is not yet obligatory at the HBO-Rechten programme. Some students voluntarily apply for the available employability training; however, not many of them actual-
ly show up for the training. Therefore, a recommendation for THUAS can be to add an obligatory employability course to the curriculum. This training would be especially helpful for student in year 3 and 4 since they are required to arrange a work placement themselves. It is important for students to link their bicultural competencies to the job requirements and capitalise on their advantages. It is also very important to put emphasis on writing a professional motivation letter and CV. Students should get help with this from THUAS and the best way to make sure all students get this advantage is to integrate a course like this in the curricula.

**Improve professional Dutch writing skills**

Another point that was mentioned by both lecturers and employers was the lack of Dutch writing skills. This was not only problem that was observed in bicultural students. According to employers this was a major disadvantage in the labour market, especially in the legal profession. According to lecturers there is not enough emphasis on using professional Dutch writing skills. So, another recommendation for THUAS is to integrate this as an obligatory course into the curricula. It is also recommended that THUAS test all students’ language skills and offer tutoring sessions for those who have major problems with the Dutch language.

**Offer students language training in their second language**

Both lecturers and employers mentioned multilingualism as a huge benefit of being bicultural. Many bicultural students do speak another language; however, their writing skills are insufficient. Speaking another language would be a huge benefit when students are sufficiently equipped with both writing and speaking skills. THUAS could offer training in writing of the home language of bicultural students, such as Arabic.

**Support extracurricular activities for students**

Another recommendation to overcome the disadvantages of having an immigrant background is supporting students to become more involve in extracurricular activities. Nowadays, employers place a lot of emphasis on work experience. Therefore, the LAP-programme that is offered at HBO-Rechten is actually a great start for students to get an idea of the labour market. Also, employers mentioned the importance of a sense of responsibility to function well in the labour market. To increase their employability, THUAS can support their students with doing extracurricular activities to make them aware of their benefits and let them learn how to capitalise on their advantages.

**Increase awareness of the importance of international skills**

According to this research, both students and alumni showed a lack of awareness of the importance of international skills. Although most of them tend to say international skills were not necessary in the Dutch labour market, many alumni thought that THUAS prepares students for the Dutch labour market and tends to neglect the international market. Making students aware of the importance of internationalisation, especially in the Dutch labour market, is an important task for the HBO-Rechten programme. Lecturers can incorporate benefits of internationalisation into their classes. For example, they can use international examples and also focus more on the multicultural environment in The Netherlands. In general, the curriculum of the HBO-Rechten programme can focus more on the importance of intercultural skills in the Dutch labour market.
REFERENCES


Internationalising learning outcomes at The Hague University of Applied Sciences

JOS BEELEN
Abstract
This study aims to identify factors that impact on the internationalisation of learning outcomes of programmes at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS). The process of the articulation of learning outcomes has been studied at institutional, faculty and programme levels. Both document analysis and action research with trainers, managers and lecturers provided data for this study.

The study describes the broader issue and the layers of contexts in which THUAS operates: the global, European, national, local and institutional. Within the latter two, several strategies are distinguished, i.e. research on employability skills of students and THUAS’ Educational vision. The strategies for internationalisation of learning outcomes at THUAS are then placed in an international perspective.

The next section zooms in on current practice on the basis of self-assessment and management reports of THUAS faculties. The analysis of these reports is followed by more detailed observations from individual programmes.

Analysis and observations are then connected to professional development for internationalisation of teaching and learning. Three elements of THUAS’ extensive programme for professional development are discussed in more detail. The study ends with the identification of priorities to internationalise learning outcomes across THUAS.

Methodology
The data collection methods for this study consisted of document analysis, interviews with stakeholders in the internationalisation process and participatory action research with facilitators of professional development for internationalisation, managers and lecturers.

Since several of the interventions and processes researched in this study took place simultaneously and are currently continuing, in interaction with the adoption of various documents,
their time frame can be considered relevant. Therefore, information on when interventions took place and when documents were adopted has been included in this study.

This research builds on participatory action research in disciplinary spaces, that developed in parallel in Australia and in The Netherlands (see Leask, 2012, 2015; Green & Whitsed, 2013, 2015; De Wit & Beelen, 2012). Rather than only collecting data from action research with lecturers, data have been collected from other stakeholders, such as trainers, managers and international officers. Researching all relevant stakeholders follows the systemic approach advocated by Mestenhauser (2006), which stresses that internationalisation is not an isolated phenomenon in a university, but needs to be integrated into the key systems. Including more stakeholders than just lecturers builds on my study into business programmes at the Amsterdam University of Applied Science and HAN University of Applied Sciences (Beelen, 2017).

The broader issue

Since shortly before 2000, the realisation has been developing that traditional international student mobility had a limited impact and reached only a small minority of students. This contributed towards the emergence of the concept of internationalisation at home, which aims to reach all students. Internationalisation at home brought the home curriculum into the picture as the main vehicle for internationalisation for all students, without abandoning mobility as an extra opportunity for a minority of students.

As a consequence of this shift from mobility to curriculum, the key stakeholders in the internationalisation process also changed. In addition to the international offices, that continued to arrange mobility, academics came into the picture as the main ‘owners’ of teaching and learning.

This, in turn, led to the realisation that universities may have changed, but that academics have largely been forgotten in the process (Sanderson, 2008). Their skills for internationalisation were not developed, which, together with a lack of involvement, constitutes key obstacles to internationalisation world-wide, as the Global Surveys of the International Association of Universities (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2010, 2014) demonstrated.

A new phase in the shift from mobility to curriculum started around 2012, when learning outcomes for internationalisation entered the discourse. The 4th Global Survey (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014) considered the internationalisation of learning outcomes ‘booming’. Internationalisation of intended learning outcomes is considered a characteristic of quality of internationalisation, as is witnessed by the introduction of the Certificate for Quality in internationalisation (Aerden, 2015).

Another relevant component of the discourse on internationalisation, particularly for universities of applied sciences, is the development of employability or transversal skills by students. The Erasmus Impact Study (European Union, 2014) confirmed that students acquire
these skills, much valued by employers, by mobility. However, this raises the question how
the non-mobile majority of students can develop these skills ‘at home’. This is also one of the
main questions that faces the internationalisation of THUAS at present.

**Contexts that impact on the internationalisation of learning outcomes at THUAS**

THUAS operates in range of contexts, which all have an impact on the institution, its staff
departments and the programmes of study that it delivers. These contexts conform to those
distinguished by Leask in her *Framework for internationalisation of the curriculum* (2012,
2015).

**Global context**

In the global context, a number of trends can be observed that have an impact on regions,
countries and, ultimately, on universities. Since circa 2010, a discussion has taken place
around the world in which the values of internationalisation have been re-examined. Some
perceived that internationalisation had lost its moral ground and had become too much
focused on revenue generation, engaging itself more with means and tools than with aims
(Brandenburg & De Wit, 2010). This caused the International Association of Universities
26) advocated ‘transnational deliberation’ to overcome the global issues that all universities
face.

Under the influence of these reminders of the values of international higher education, the
common declaration that was issued after the Global Dialogue in Port Elizabeth, in January
2014, focused on three integrated areas of development. One of these was “increasing the
focus on the internationalisation of the curriculum and of related learning outcomes” (De
Wit & Jooste, 2014).

The global discussion on values in internationalisation is relevant to THUAS since it embrac-
eses global citizenship as a key policy focus and therefore aims to equip all its students with
global citizenship skills (see Belt, Ham, Kaulingfreks, Prins, & Walenkamp, 2015, pp. 9-10).
Van der Wende (2017, 11) notes that universities should have “broadened their mission for
internationalisation” which would mean enhancing local access and “embrace diversity as
the key to success in a global knowledge society; and to become truly international and
intercultural learning communities where young people can effectively develop into global
citizens.” THUAS as an accessible university in a diverse city seems to have the potential to
be just such a learning community.

**The European context of THUAS**

The *European Parliament Study* (De Wit et al., 2015, p. 27) identified internationalisation of
the curriculum as an emerging focus in Europe and the rest of the world and recommend-
ed paying more attention to internationalisation at home’s significance for all students (p.
30). It called for the integration of international and intercultural learning outcomes into the
curriculum. The *European Parliament Study* also introduced a new definition of internationalisation, stressing its intentional character, the relevance of reaching all students and its societal impact.

The European Union commissioned studies into the employability of graduates (Humburg, Van der Velden, & Verhagen, 2013), stressing the importance of students acquiring transversal skills. The *Erasmus Impact Study* (European Union, 2014) confirmed that students acquire these skills through international mobility, but also led to the question how the non-mobile majority of students acquires these skills.

In acknowledgement of this non-mobile majority of students, the European Commission developed educational policies to bring internationalisation to all students, also through its communication *European Higher Education in the World* (European Commission, 2013). European educational policies are directly relevant in the internationalisation process because lecturers were found to consider them an enabler, even when they were not familiar with their content (Beelen, 2017, p. 204). The focus on internationalisation at home was confirmed by the European Commission (2017) in its agenda on higher education. This agenda further includes the accessibility of higher education, which, again, is relevant for THUAS as a university of applied sciences in the highly diverse setting of The Hague. Many of its students represent the first generation to enter higher education in their families.

**The Dutch national context**
Policies by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MINOCW) now include policies for internationalisation at home, which consider participation in international classroom ‘at home’ an alternative to traditional mobility. The Ministry’s vision is largely based on an approach to internationalisation at home that was developed by Vereniging Hogescholen and Vereniging van Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten (2014).

At national level, studies at employability of graduates have been conducted for a range of disciplines in the economic domain (see Vereniging Hogescholen, 2014).

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MINOCW) commissioned several studies into institutional policies and practices for internationalisation at home. The first of these was conducted by Nuffic (Van Gaalen et al., 2014) and is relevant to THUAS since it deals with institutional policies. The Nuffic researchers found that 76 percent of universities in the Netherlands include internationalisation of the home curriculum in their policies. However, they also found that activities lag behind institutional ambitions (p. 7), while at the same time, activities are taking place that are not connected to institutional policies.

In a later article, Van Gaalen and Gielesen (2016, p. 154) therefore conclude that Dutch institutions pay attention to internationalisation at home in their policies but do not generally have established implementation strategies. Nor do they use monitoring tools to determine the extent to which policies are being implemented.
THUAS seems to stand out in this respect in The Netherlands, because of its ambitious policies for internationalisation but also because it strives to follow this up with strategies, particularly for professional development of its lecturers.

**The local context**

THUAS is situated in a city that is home to many organisations and companies that operate across Europe or the globe. In addition, THUAS has a highly diverse student population. The importance of diversity for THUAS is reflected among other in the research group Citizenship and Diversity.

That this local diversity is not without its issues was demonstrated in a study by Kleijwegt (2016), which included several cases from THUAS. The study identified issues around polarisation in diverse classrooms but also revealed that many lecturers and teachers were unprepared for dealing with these issues.

Van der Wende (2017, 11) stresses the local function that universities have and which she considers to be threatened by the global role that many universities give priority to. THUAS however, has developed a wide range of strategies for engagement with the city and considers this one of its core tasks. THUAS is therefore well aware of its local role and seems to act upon it.

**THUAS’ institutional context**

THUAS has stated its ambition to be the most international university of applied sciences by 2020, but has only recently begun to define what the indicators for this ambition could be. The institution has operationalised its policies in three *compasses*: Wereldburgerschap [global citizenship], Internationalisation, and Networking. Together, these constitute the so-called ‘WIN-themes’.

The *THUAS Compass: Critical elements of Internationalisation* (January 2015) contains ten elements. Element 3. ‘Internationalisation of the formal curriculum for all students’ explicitly mentions internationalised curricula and learning outcomes. Element 7. refers to staff development and mentions wide ranging staff development to support internationalisation, explicitly mentioning [foreign] language and intercultural competence development.

THUAS already has a range of international programmes. Among these, European Studies achieved the Distinguished Quality Feature for Internationalisation of the Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders in 2016. On the basis of this, it was awarded the Certificate of Quality in Internationalisation in 2017. The Academy for Public Management, Safety & Law has had a UNESCO profile since 2009, which is relevant for THUAS’ ambition to achieve UNESCO status for the entire institution.

**Research on employability**

The Research Group International Cooperation at THUAS contributes to the institutional development of internationalisation. It has generated a considerable body of literature on international competencies and employability, both through study or internship abroad (see
Van den Hoven & Walenkamp, 2015; Walenkamp, Funk & Den Heijer, 2015); Funk, 2015; Wieman, 2015) and on curriculum development (Funk, Den Heijer, Schuurmans-Brouwer, & Walenkamp, 2014). Alumni of IBMS at THUAS participated, together with alumni of five other IBMS programmes, in a survey on employability of graduates (Kostelijk, Coelen, & De Wit, 2015).

The Research Group International Cooperation is not the only entity within THUAS to focus on the development of employability skills of students. A working group of managers, lecturers and researchers produced a guide on the relevance of 21st century skills for the graduate profiles of police officers, accountants, nurses, financial advisors and airline pilots (Biemans et al., 2017).

**Educational vision**

THUAS’ *Educational vision* can be considered a key institutional driver for its internationalisation. The revised *Educational vision* (Haagse Hogeschool, 2017) was finalised in March 2017, after a series of ‘pressure cooker’ sessions in which THUAS staff provided input. Some of the sessions were labelled ‘internationalisation’ while in other sessions, internationalisation was one of the components. This enabled specialists and practitioners of internationalisation to give their views while those less focused on internationalisation would still address the topic in the more general sessions.

The *Educational vision* contains explicit mention to the internationalisation of learning outcomes within individual programmes. Its section on global citizenship education includes the definition of that concept by UNESCO, which is connected to the ambition of achieving a UNESCO profile for the entire institution (p. 9).
THUAS institutional strategies in perspective

Few universities have developed explicit strategies to internationalise learning outcomes across the institution. Leeds Beckett University took the initiative to introduce graduate attributes in all formal curricula of its programmes. One of these attributes was a “global outlook”. In their 2013 publication, Jones and Killick cited Barrie (Jones & Killick, 2013, 170), who worked in Australian context and suggested that graduate attributes could be embedded in student learning through the formal curriculum (“engagement model”) or through the informal curriculum (“participatory model”). Jones and Killick chose the formal curriculum.

Leeds Beckett University’s approach consisted of a cross-faculty working group comprised of “those with a particular interest in internationalisation. It was felt that their experience would contribute to deliberations [...]”. The focus was on creating a guidance document and resources for course teams (171). The expectation was that the suggested reformulation of learning outcomes would cause academics to adapt their pedagogy and assessments so that students could demonstrate achievement of those outcomes. Jones and Killick (2013, 172) stated that, “support and development of staff will be crucial in achieving effective IOC [internationalisation of the curriculum].” Jones and Killick selected a cross-faculty working group made up of subject specialists interested in internationalisation, which led to some “highly productive professional conversations in the working group” (174).

Leeds Beckett University had already undertaken initiatives to stimulate academics to adopt learning outcomes. For instance, it had published a guide to writing learning outcomes (not specifically aimed at internationalisation). In that guide, Baume (2009, p. 35) pointed to the fact that some academics “hated” learning outcomes. In some cases, academics perceived learning outcomes as forms of control or surveillance, or as means of restricting learning and discovery. This aversion may also be related to the use of learning outcomes as an auditing or accreditation tool (Hussey & Smith, 2008).

VUB Brussels also implemented an institution wide approach to internationalising learning outcomes across the institution. To achieve this, the international office selected a number of pilot programmes and collaborated with Internationalisation coordinators within departments and programmes. They also involved educational developers from the university’s teaching and learning centre, who previously did not have expertise in the internationalisation of teaching and learning.

THUAS stands out in the Dutch context in the sense that it actively develops strategies for the internationalisation of learning outcomes as a follow up to institutional policies. On the other hand, the case of THUAS conforms to that of other Dutch HEIs in that the teaching and learning centre does not have an active role in the internationalisation of curricula. This corresponds to the situation at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and HAN University of Applied Sciences (see Beelen, 2017).

This situation differs from that at many universities in English speaking countries. There, teaching and learning centres have a more central role in the internationalisation of education. An explanation for this is that HEIs in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United
States considered it necessary to adapt their teaching and learning to the needs of the international students that they recruited. With the growing numbers of international students in The Netherlands, this may become an important motivation for Dutch HEIs as well.

However, even with an active teaching and learning centre in place, successful implementation is not assured. When writing about the Faculty of Business at Leeds Beckett University, Blackburn and Finnigan (2015) mentioned that interactions with the university’s teaching and learning unit were sometimes frustrating. This was especially the case when it came to translating institution-wide graduate attributes into learning outcomes and assessments at module level. This finding is in alignment with an obstacle identified by Carroll (2015, p. 103): the lack of support for curriculum design at the module level. However, in the case of Leeds Beckett, such support was available, and the teaching and learning unit provided feedback, but the academics still struggled to contextualise and describe learning outcomes for their modules.

Some of the insights on intercultural competence development of students and staff at European HEIs apply to THUAS. Gregersen-Hermans (2014) identified constraints in organisational capability as a decisive factor at three levels: the institutional, the disciplinary (i.e. the faculty) and the level of the individual lecturer. At THUAS, the strategies for professional development, such as currently under development, may hit such constraints if lecturers will participate in them on a large scale. However, this would depend on faculties and programmes facilitating lecturers to participate in professional development. Relevant to THUAS is also Gregersen-Herman’s observation that rationales such as “internationalization is also about relating to diversity of cultures” or “celebrating cultural difference” [...] “offer little clarity on how higher education institutions who aspire to enhance intercultural learning and competence development have progressed in this regard” (p. 9). THUAS indeed displays a wide range of understandings of intercultural awareness or competences but does not pursue the purposeful development of intercultural skills in all its staff.

Policies and practices at faculty level: self-assessment and management reports

The seven faculties of THUAS and the Academy of Masters & Professional Courses wrote their self-assessment reports ('Midterm reviews') and management reports ('MARAPs') in March and April 2017. At that time, the final text of the Framework, including the explicit statement on the internationalisation of learning outcomes, was not yet available. Yet the THUAS Compass: Critical elements of Internationalisation already included the internationalisation of learning outcomes explicitly in 2015. The analysis of faculty reports that follows here sheds light on how internationalisation of learning outcomes is understood beyond policies and which activities faculties and programmes really undertake to generate internationalised learning outcomes.
Analysis of self-assessment and management reports
The explicit institutional focus on internationalising learning outcomes in the THUAS Compass: Critical elements of Internationalisation (2015) and in the Educational Framework, is less apparent in the self-assessment and management reports of the faculties. However, there is enough evidence to suggest that development of internationalised curricula is on the agendas of the faculties, but this is mainly mentioned in general terms. Several faculties show awareness that the internationalisation of learning outcomes needs to be addressed or should already have been addressed. Yet, the reports contain few concrete strategies to achieve this. Remarkable is that the role of curriculum committees in the development of internationalised curricula is hardly mentioned.

Few differences on the basis of discipline (see Leask, 2015, p. 108) could be observed in the ways faculties reported on the internationalisation of learning outcomes. The Faculty of Social Work and Education shows awareness that internationalisation of its competences is relevant and even mentions that this should already have been completed by 2015, but also concludes that it is a future priority.

The terminology used to describe learning outcomes is not uniform and several terms, such as competences, learning goals and learning aims are used simultaneously, denoting a lack of shared terminology, or possibly shared understanding. Mostly, the term ‘international’ is used in relation to learning outcomes, rather than ‘internationalised’, which may indicate a lack of awareness that internationalisation should be embedded within existing learning outcomes, although there is general awareness that internationalisation should be included in the curriculum. It may be concluded that the THUAS Compass: Critical elements of Internationalisation (2015) did not provide a strong enough driver for faculties to develop an explicit strategy for internationalising learning outcomes.

The faculty reports show few references to professional development of lecturers in relation to internationalisation. One faculty mentions the importance of professional development, but only names English language proficiency training as a concrete example.

Collaborative On Line International Learning (COIL) is not included in the reports as a tool for internationalisation of teaching and learning, although THUAS has considerable experience in this field and hosted the first European COIL conference on 1-2 December 2016.

The lack of support by educational specialists in curriculum development is mentioned by two faculties. The Faculty of Business, Finance and Management explicitly considers it an obstacle to achieving additional accreditation for one of its international programmes as well as for contextualising its new national profile (Sijben et al., 2017). In this respect, limited capacity is also mentioned. This corresponds with observations by other staff members at THUAS on the large distance between educational specialists and individual programmes as well as the lack of involvement of educational specialists in curriculum committees. At the same time, there is no evidence that these educational specialists have been involved in internationalisation or that they have specific expertise in that field.
A final consideration is the question how appropriate current THUAS monitoring tools for internationalisation of learning outcomes are, considering the wide divergence in internationalisation practices between programmes within the same faculty.

The reports of the faculties show that global citizenship and internationalisation are widely considered overlapping concepts and this view is also found with practitioners of internationalisation, policy advisors and researchers on internationalisation. Some stress that internationalisation is a tool to achieve global citizenship. Many staff members at THUAS therefore experience a separate operationalisation of the two concepts (e.g. through two separate compasses) as artificial. Lecturers are less explicit about this issue, but generally have a more developed understanding of internationalisation than of global citizenship. One faculty report attributes this to the lack of a definition in the original policy document for global citizenship.
Internationalising learning outcomes of individual programmes

Key observations on the internationalisation of learning outcomes of individual programmes add insights to the faculty reports. These observations from individual programmes are listed below. They have been collected through the action research with lecturers in training sessions, in focus group sessions with lecturers of Marketing and Commerce (CE) and through consultations with managers and trainers.

- Internationalisation at home, including its instruments, such Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) are frequently considered an aspect for (elective) minors rather than an aspect of the (compulsory) major.
- Lecturers report that students in domestic programmes have difficulties with English medium literature.
- High student numbers form an obstacle to developing and executing internationalisation activities for all students, e.g. through COIL.
- Lecturers in domestic programmes observe that students lack interest in broader issues, such as sustainability, but also raise the question if this would be a reason to omit these issues from the curriculum.
- Lecturers experience a lack of institutional support for internationalisation within their programme while at the same time they feel top down pressure for internationalisation.
- Knowledge or methods from another country (e.g. Harvard cases) are frequently considered equal to internationalisation and not explicitly discussed in comparison to the Dutch or local contexts.
- The majority of staff members are familiar with THUAS’ ambition to be the most international university of applied sciences.
- Among the three ‘WIN-themes’, internationalisation is considered the most concrete, although lecturers do not find it easy to contextualise internationalisation to their programme.
- Some lecturers in domestic programmes do not consider it relevant for their students to compare their own (future) professional practice of with that of fellow practitioners in other countries. They expect that practice will be identical with only some legal aspects being different.
- Research on markets or practices abroad often consists of desk research and does not involve contacts with students abroad (e.g. through COIL) or external specialists such as local or international guest lecturers.
- Internationalisation is perceived mainly as student activities and not as an area that lecturers should actively engage in.
- The majority of lecturers are not familiar with the discourse on employability skills or transversal skills although they are aware of terms such as ‘soft skills’ or ‘21st century skills’. They tend to associate these skills mainly with intercultural communication skills.
- In many cases, programme learning outcomes or competence descriptions at graduation levels do not include international and intercultural dimensions. In a number of cases, this can be attributed to the fact these competence descriptions have been generated by the national platforms of programmes and that internationalisation was not included in them.
• Learning outcomes at module level equally lack reference to international and intercultural dimensions, which implies that these dimensions are not explicitly taught, learned or assessed.
• Learning outcomes at module level are often broad and similar to programme learning outcomes. This makes it difficult to assess the level at which a programme learning outcome is achieved within modules. However, in nearly all cases, the level at which a competence should be mastered has been indicated.
• Learning outcomes do not explicitly refer to transversal skills that are considered important by employers.
• Lecturers have not always been involved in the articulation of learning outcomes of the modules that they teach. They also find it difficult to identify who is involved in formulating learning outcomes.
• Lecturers struggle with the formulation of learning outcomes and indicate that they have little expertise in this, although some are familiar with standard educational approaches, such as Bloom’s taxonomy.
• There is little evidence of direct involvement of teaching and learning specialists in the formulation of learning outcomes.
• There is no indication that programmes benchmark learning outcomes with their international partners.
• lecturers report that they are confused with regard to terminology and the meaning of terms, particularly around the similarities and differences between ‘competences’, ‘learning outcomes’ and ‘learning goals’. There is no institutional framework for these terms and their meanings.
• Lecturers observed that a discussion on employability skills helped them to clarify the international and intercultural dimensions of learning outcomes both at the level of learning outcomes at programme level (PLOs) and learning outcomes at module level (MLOs).
• Lecturers commented that they found it meaningful to use the Program Logic Model to formulate learning outcomes and align these with lecturer input, student activities and assessment.
Professional development for internationalisation

Parallel to the development of the Educational vision, the Unit External and International Affairs engaged two THUAS managers/lecturers to make an inventory of existing professional development options in the fields of internationalisation and of global citizenship, to identify gaps and to develop new options. These are to be offered though the existing infrastructure and channels of The Hague Center for Teaching and Learning (HCTL). This unit was established in 2014 to structure professional development. One of its main tasks is the development and delivery of the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme.

The overview of existing and new professional development options was finished in April 2017 and contained 35 items, mostly aimed at lecturers. The professional development options for other staff, such as internship coordinators and international coordinators, were mostly mobility related. This was also true for the only professional development option for programme managers, which focused on maximising the benefits of staff mobility. To address this, a new option for managers consists of the development of a programme’s vision on internationalisation.

An external researcher developed a survey to determine the attitudes of leaders, managers and lecturers towards implementing global citizenship education. Sending this survey to all staff, although approved by the leadership, ultimately did not take place since the implementation models suggested were not considered compatible with THUAS’ institutional leadership and management practices.

Among the existing professional development options were several that address aspects of teaching international classrooms such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), see elsewhere in this volume. Three options address global citizenship education, diversity and intercultural dimensions of curricula.

The action research took place during the making of the inventory of existing options and the outcomes of the action research formed the basis for the development of new options. One of these options resulted in a pilot, Training for International Learning and Teaching (TILT), in which again action research took place, with both the facilitator and the participants. Below, three key elements of the professional development offer at THUAS are discussed.

Internationalisation of the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme

The Basic Teaching Qualification Programme constitutes the only compulsory professional development for lecturers. It was found not to contain explicit attention for international or intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning.

It therefore does not address specific skills that enable lecturers to deal with the international dimension of education or with specific issues in diverse or multicultural classrooms. This is at odds with THUAS’ focus on diversity as well as with the strongly diverse composition of its student body.
The lack of internationalisation and intercultural education in the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme of THUAS is not an isolated phenomenon. It was also found at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and at HAN University of Applied Sciences (Beelen, 2017). Nuffic noted it across Dutch HEIs and recommended the internationalisation of the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme (Van Gaalen et al., 2014).

I worked on the internationalisation of the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme with a THUAS trainer and with staff at Hanze University of Applied Sciences. The latter institution has relevant knowledge on the topic through the development of a professional development track for internationalisation, the Senior Qualification for Internationalisation. This Qualification is based a matrix for skills for internationalisation by Van der Werf (2012) and on research by Troia (2013). However, the Senior Qualification mainly addresses the needs of lecturers that also have coordination tasks for internationalisation and who teach in international classrooms. Participation in this track is optional, which sets it apart from the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme proper. Like THUAS, Hanze University of Applied Sciences is exploring the internationalisation of its Basic Teaching Qualification Programme. The intercultural dimension is an explicit area of attention at Hanze UAS, since some of the developers of the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme are researchers involved in a learning lab for intercultural communication. Experiences with the delivery of the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme at Rijksuniversiteit Groningen are also included in the redevelopment of the Programme at THUAS.

The action research resulted in the development of five topics that can be considered basic knowledge in internationalisation and which are aimed to be integrated in the existing Basic Teaching Qualification Programme. An obstacle here is that the facilitators of the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme are not engaged in the internationalisation discourse seem to have little working knowledge of internationalisation. To overcome this, a training for these facilitators was developed. An alternative mode of delivery, which would not require the facilitators to develop their knowledge on internationalisation, is to deliver the internationalisation component of the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme as on line modules.

The case of the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme illustrates that, until now, training for internationalisation, global citizenship education and the intercultural dimension on the one hand, have been disconnected from training for teaching and learning on the other.

**Training for International Learning and Teaching (TILT)**

The action research revealed a lack of structured training for teaching in the international classroom. THUAS considers the didactic skills of lecturers in international classrooms a key element. The importance of this was confirmed by a foresight study on the use of Dutch and English in Dutch higher education (Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2017, summary, p. 11).

The focus on didactic skills led to the development of a professional development track with the title ‘Training for International Learning and Teaching (TILT)’. The first pilot was offered
early in 2017 to both lecturers who were already teaching in international classrooms, those who were preparing to do so and lecturers interested in teaching in English, in some cases mostly, or exclusively, to Dutch students. Participation in the training was optional. The training involved educational design and the internationalisation of learning outcomes and a publication by Carroll (2015) was used as a basis.

The pilot attempted to reach a middle ground between taking the situation of the lecturers as a starting point and an input based approach. It was experienced differently by those already teaching in English or preparing to do so on the one hand and those that were interested in the topic on the other. Therefore, it was decided to separate these categories in a next delivery of the training.

The participating lecturers could for the most part not indicate where the existing learning outcomes of the modules that they taught, originated or who had been involved in their development, and did not know to what extent educational developers had been involved in the process. They had not previously thought about specific transversal skills as components of the graduate profile. Lecturers responded positively to the use of the Program Logic Model (see Deardorff, 2015, p. 121) as a way to align learning outcomes with teaching, learning, and assessment and commented that the Program Logic Model led them to rethink the rationale and purposefulness of their plans but also to reflect on the impact on students.
The internationalisation pop up clinic

The action research has further led to the development of the pop up clinic for internationalisation and global citizenship. In this approach, specialists from the Unit External and International Affairs and others will analyse the situation of individual programmes in relation to the Educational Framework. They will do so through document analysis and semi-structured interviews with the programme manager, internationalisation coordinator, the members of the curriculum committee and the educational specialist supporting curriculum development. The Clinic will lead to recommendations to the programme manager, which include suggestions for professional development for lecturers and other staff. The pop up clinic will also serve to stress the importance of developing a vision on internationalisation for individual programmes, since programme have been observed to struggle with this aspect.

The Executive Board of THUAS adopted the proposal for the pop up clinic but indicated that they would like the Networked curriculum to be included in the Clinic, so that this would address all three ‘WIN-themes’.

Conclusions on professional development

The action research has contributed to identification of gaps in the existing offer of professional development and to the development of new options. The existing professional development for Internationalisation was mostly related to mobility and was not explicitly connected to teaching and learning, except in the global citizenship education training, which includes didactic techniques.

Professional development facilitators observe that lecturers are convinced of the value of employability skills but are not consistently thinking of these in relation to the graduate profile. Lecturers do not have a clear picture of what employers, alumni, students on placement and others find important. The graduate profile has not yet been sufficiently ‘unpacked’ to start the discussion on specific employability skills and how to translate these into learning outcomes.
Priorities

The action research resulted in the identification of the following priorities for the internationalisation of learning outcomes across THUAS.

1. Training of the facilitators of the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme in internationalisation and assisting them to internationalise the five components of that Programme.
2. Making methodologies for teaching diverse groups of students an explicit element of the Basic Teaching Qualification Programme.
3. Training educational specialists in internationalisation of learning outcomes, using employability skills as the starting point for clarification of the international and intercultural dimensions of the graduate profile, and the Program Logic Model as a tool.
4. Stimulating the view that internationalisation can serve as a tool for the development of global citizenship.
5. Including both educational specialists and internationalisation coordinators as members of curriculum committees.
6. Delivering professional development for internationalisation to teams of lecturers within individual programmes rather than at central level for lecturers from a range of different programmes.
7. Assisting programmes in benchmarking learning outcomes with their international partners.
8. Developing a glossary for terminology related to learning outcomes in order to facilitate a common understanding of these terms across THUAS.
9. Reporting on the development of internationalisation at the level of individual programmes rather than at faculty level.
REFERENCES


We know what we are, but know not what we may be.
(Shakespeare: Hamlet)