Higher Education providers face enormous challenges in an increasingly competitive and globalised environment. It is perhaps obvious to those engaged in teaching and research that academia is both a competitive and a collaborative endeavour. Many national systems now assume, in their legal or governance frameworks, competitive rather than co-operative behaviour and increasingly regulate based on that assumption. Institutional leaders and educators wrestle with the issues around the commoditisation of learning and the pressure to treat students as customers. In tandem, students themselves are experiencing cuts in public financing and a transfer of the cost burden to them as the perceived private beneficiaries of a product.

This book asks whether there is an alternative approach to this now transnational competitive logic. Can collaboration and partnership (re-)emerge as an antidote to the consumerist and competitive approaches taken by governments toward regulating their higher education systems? The question of competition, collaboration and community is addressed here at three levels of analysis. The macro-level or the international system level, observes competition and collaboration between countries and between institutions. The meso-level, includes competition and collaboration between academics and students, and at inter- and intra-disciplinary levels across organisational boundaries. Finally, competition and collaboration at the micro-level considers the interface between individual academics, and between academics and students as learners.
Collaboration, Communities and Competition
Collaboration, Communities and Competition

*International Perspectives from the Academy*

*Edited by*

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BJØRN STENSAKER

FOREWORD

One of the most profound changes in European higher education during the latter decades is the opening up of the sector to the surrounding society. This is not to say that the society – higher education relationship was poor or that higher education tried to shield itself from the environment in the past, but rather an acknowledgement of how society has stepped up its expectations related to the potential contributions of higher education to societal development – economically, socially and culturally. For those following higher education – via research, policy, and practice – it is easy to see that these expectations have had an impact on the sector, although we have not yet fully understood the many implications that follow from a higher education sector that is more open and transparent with respect to its surroundings.

The current book addresses this issue in a comprehensive way, not only emphasising the perhaps most noted development in the sector, the increased competition between higher education institutions, but also drawing attention to the many ways in which the opening up of the sector has stimulated new forms of collaboration and the establishment of new arenas, new dialogues and new communities of practice. The latter outcomes often tend to blur the traditional organisational boundaries of higher education institutions, opening up new and dynamic collaborative initiatives with business, industry and the public and civic sector.

These new forms of collaboration and the new communities developed can still be quite challenging for a sector with long traditions of self-governance and autonomy. They can challenge the ways decision-making takes place, what values and norms that are taken into account when new collaborative projects and partnerships are designed, and even challenge what is seen as valid and relevant knowledge. Through a range of contributions from different countries and settings looking into these issues at macro-, meso-, and micro-level, the current book makes an important contribution and offers new insights into how more transparently and openly universities and colleges are responding to the societal expectations and what implications this development has both inside and outside of higher education.

On behalf of EAIR (European Association for Institutional Research) – the European Higher Education Society – I congratulate the editors Samuel Dent, Laura Lane and Tony Strike for putting together a volume that will surely have interest, not only to the European higher education landscape, but also to the world beyond.

Bjørn Stensaker
President, EAIR
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book represents the outcome of many people’s time, energy and efforts. The Editors would like to thank all the authors for their excellent contributions, patience and the stimulating debates which their chapters have informed.

We would like to extend our thanks to the friends and colleagues who have supported the Editors with different aspects of this book’s production, specifically, Amerjit Basi, Angela Davison, and Hugh Mather.

Our thanks also go to the European Association for Institutional Research (EAIR), for their stimulating Forum in 2016, which has led to this book and, in particular, Bjørn Stensaker (EAIR President) and Gerlof Groenewoud.

This book also represents the latest volume, in a series of books, produced from the stimulating discussions and academic work captured by the annual EAIR Forum. The Editors are grateful for the opportunity to produce this edition and for the support of previous members of the editorial team, including Rosalind Pritchard, Sonia Whitely, James Williams, and Michel Lokhorst at Sense Publishers.
PART 1
MACRO (SYSTEM-LEVEL COLLABORATION)
INTRODUCTION

European academics who research higher education (HE) met together in 2016 in Birmingham, UK, and they considered the theme of collaboration and competition. HE faces enormous challenges in an increasingly competitive and globalised environment. Institutional leaders across Europe wrestle with the issues around the ‘student as customer’, as do students themselves in a context of cuts in public financing and a transfer of the cost burden to them as the perceived consumers and private beneficiaries. The questions addressed by the conference of the European Association of Institutional Research (EAIR) was ‘is there an alternative approach’ to this now transnational competitive logic? Can collaboration and partnership (re-)emerge as an antidote to the consumerist and competitive approaches taken by governments towards their HE systems? Is HE a public or private good, and could alternative systems of regulation be more effective in delivering for students, funders and regulators?

The debates in the United Kingdom (UK) Parliament leading up to the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 asked similar fundamental questions about the purposes of HE which have international resonance. The new Act contains a model for governing, regulating and assessing the UK HE sector which encourages inter-institutional competition, introduces facility for new and alternative education providers, sees HE institutions as providers and students as consumers who need protecting by a market regulator. A new Teaching Excellence Framework promises to change the price mechanism and stimulate price competition in a market where education is a product for sale and students are its consumers. National legislators and those who study HE more broadly might pause to consider whether they want the competitive, consumerist and privatised HE system this ideology delivers. The case needs to be made for competition and for collaboration and the arguments for and against each need to be contested.

The EAIR Forum theme for 2016 on the website opened proceedings as follows:

Collaboration has for some years been recognised as a way of maximising limited resources. However, there is arguably a more important benefit: by engaging the sector’s wide range of stakeholders, including students, staff, local civil society organisations and industry, in informing policy and practice, those stakeholders are able to take ownership of the processes of change. In this alternative environment, stakeholders in HE learn from and
engage with others. By being more engaged with the communities around them, universities can provide a hub for local society. Partnership working provides opportunities for more effective knowledge generation and transfer across society and thereby ensuring that universities have clear impact on the world around them. (EAIR, 2016)

So the stage is set for a debate. This book, which comes from the EAIR Forum, examines the questions of competition and collaboration at three levels of analysis. At the macro-level or the international system level, observing competition and collaboration between countries and between institutions. At a meso-level, including competition and collaboration between academics and students between different disciplines and within disciplines across organisational boundaries. Finally, examining competition and collaboration at the micro-level, or at the interface between individual academics and between academics and students as learners.

Macro-Level Competition and Collaboration

This opening chapter introduces the first macro-level of analysis in our theme of competition, collaboration and community. It acts as a preface to the four following chapters in this first section, which examine competition and collaboration between universities, between universities and businesses and between universities and regulators. Carm and Horntvedt in Chapter 2 explore the key challenges and impacts of an inter-institutional collaboration to pursue the internationalisation of HE between universities in very different national contexts. Ilieva-Trichkova in Chapter 3 looks for the evidence that establishing strong relationships between universities and industry can become an important key to a nation’s economic success. De la Torre and Perez-Esparrells in Chapter 4 examine the impact of institutional rankings on the strategic positioning and reputation of identified groups of universities within and between nation states. Finally, in this section of the book, Moulton, McNicoll and Luff in Chapter 5 examine the impact of regulation on how an institution responds when a regulator intervenes as a partner or for compliance.

Assuming Collaborative or Competitive System Behaviours

It is perhaps obvious that academia is both a competitive and a collaborative endeavour. Many national systems (for example in the US and UK) assume in their legal or governance frameworks competitive not co-operative behaviour and increasingly regulate based on that assumption. Erkkilä and Piironen (2013) show how this concern for European competitiveness increased the trend towards competitiveness in the HE systems in Europe. We might conclude the governing model is suspect in emphasising competition, not because it is morally suspect but because it does not fit with the participants shared real world experience.
It is equally possible to find competitive behaviour between institutions, between academics and students to win research grants, between departments wanting to attract the best students and between students wanting to get the highest results. Resources are not evenly distributed. For example, in 2014 68 per cent of the UK’s world-leading research took place in the Russell Group universities (Russell Group, 2017). Competition and self-interest amongst universities, academics and students is arguably also a sound behavioural assumption.

The choice of governing assumption should be in sympathy with the activity it seeks to oversee or if it is misaligned then it should be based on an objective to change its norms rather than because the system has been misunderstood. For example, legislating to insist drivers wear seatbelts changed a normative behaviour in the UK. To insist it would be safer if drivers sat in the rear seats is to misunderstand the system. Moulton, McNicoll and Luff in Chapter 5 show how one institution responded to a HE regulator’s expectation of sound systems for oversight of quality, academic standards and policy and the consequences internally of this being (mis)understood by external agents.

In another example, the UK Government in 2016 wanted to impose price competition between HE providers in the belief this would benefit students (BIS, 2016). The students themselves seemed to disagree and in 2017 the National Union of Students ran a boycott of the National Student Survey because the results were to be used as one input by the Government to introduce variable fees by provider. HE policy would be quite different if governments and regulators sought perfect co-operators rather than perfect competitors.

This choice, if it is a choice, between competition and collaboration is not approached as an ideological or political question in the chapters that follow. This is not a debate between socialism and capitalism or between central planning and free markets. HE is a system, a process or a service good and it has characteristics which should inform the types of oversight. As the truism goes ‘form should follow function’.

A paradox presents itself, however, that competing under shared rules is a cooperative endeavour. All markets operate in a regulatory framework. Runners in a race run from understood start and finish lines, begin together, agree not to impede each other and to award the prize to the fastest. The best European example is of course the Bologna Declaration, which defined co-operation between universities. Each member State committed to reform their higher education system and recognise the qualifications of others, alongside free movement, in order to become competitive. In the UK, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) are regulated competitions, not market mechanisms, and they require the co-operation of the participants. National and international third-party league tables publish with or without the consent of the participants and impose measures, which may or may not fit the mission and identity of the institutions listed but in doing so impose a perception of competition by rank with consequences addressed by de la Torre and Perez-Esparrells in Chapter 4.
To decide on a governing principle it is necessary to look at the objectives of HE. It is not (or should not be) the core objective of a HE institution to be more highly ranked than its peers, nor is it a primary goal to maximise revenues. The purpose of a (public) HE institution is to achieve the charitable or founding goals for which it was established; which often includes, for example, discovery of new knowledge, providing the education and skills society needs, supporting industry with innovation, creating economic and cultural benefits to the city, region and country in which it is located.

Are these goals best served by competition? Can HE operate as a quasi-market or is it essentially a societal, charitable and collaborative endeavour? If HE providers sell teaching and research as products and the price is a variable, which informs consumer choice, then what is the price? If a university is a public institution or a charity which acts for the public good (and so is not-for-profit) then the price should be just; that is sufficient to cover the long-run costs of delivery. In this way, the university continues to exist and to provide its benefits to future generations but does not seek to exclude those who might benefit from its teaching and research on grounds of individual or public (un-)affordability. If a university is to behave as a market provider and adopt mercantilist assumptions then the real price of education and research is the perceived value to those who want to purchase it given the benefit to them.

The case has to be made for collaboration and then for competition (including for price competition) as governing principles so they can each be tested.

The Case for Collaboration as a Governing Principle

Universities rely on academics working in teams both within and beyond their institutional and national boundaries in order to achieve their goals.

Strategic business partners or research funders sustain long-term relationships to make investments and pursue innovations in a cooperative manner. If academics or universities were only competitors, then gains for one should mean corresponding losses for the other. But this is not the case. If the global, national or regional HE system suffers, all within it suffer as is apparent through current shocks such as national immigration controls or Brexit. Universities co-operate to respond globally to assert the importance of international openness, freedom of movement and for education without borders. Each institution may then compete for international research awards or for overseas students.

When it comes to funding, again this is not a win-lose system. If one country's universities are well funded (as in the US or Germany) then other universities in other countries may seek to co-operate with that country or its universities and academics; offering their skills and insights, to help achieve the educational and research goals being pursued. A scientific or social policy breakthrough helps the system of HE, the reputation of universities in general and the careers of all involved. So-called competitors innovate together in ways that open up new opportunities so all involved can benefit.
The problem with league tables is that they promote a view that universities achieve results based on institutional measures of their inputs or outputs and on their performance relative to each other. At a system level this is wrong. Universities meet research and educational outcomes that have little to do with their institutional performance. The academics each institution employs spend time working with academics from other universities, in their own and related disciplines, discovering new knowledge and solving social, economic or business problems in ways which have only indirect institutional reputational benefits. The academic discipline has primacy over the employing university in most academics’ minds.

For example, sixteen nations partnered to build and operate the International Space Station. The Human Genome Project was an international scientific collaboration to map all of the genes of the human chromosomes. CERN – the European Organisation for Nuclear Research – is a leader in particle physics, collaboratively building the world's biggest particle accelerator. No university or country operating for itself could achieve these goals first or alone by competing with its neighbours.

Even if league tables were accepted as a new permanent and pervasive feature of HE the way to increase rank, if that were a legitimate goal, would likely be to increase collaboration; given the impact on the number of citations, the reputation of the university in peer surveys and the increased ability to attract international talent and industry income.

International collaboration between colleagues and teams from different disciplines is increasingly the norm for leading or participating in large-scale research. International co-authorship is expanding and discoveries are being shared through co-operative research rather than being made by individuals who then subject themselves to peer review. When UK academics publish with international co-authorship they produce a 60 per cent greater field-weighted citation impact compared with UK based co-authorship (Elsevier, 2013). In 2012, over 45 per cent of publications were internationally co-authored. The participants seek win-win not win-lose outcomes by working together and not against each other. The underlying primary motivation is to answer the research question, not to see the employing institutions ranked more highly.

This is not only true for research. Students work in inter-disciplinary teams to solve problems, where they can draw on expertise beyond their own subject norms and knowledge boundaries. International experience and a global perspective are increasingly necessary because graduates join teams of people from different international backgrounds. Carm and Horntvedt in Chapter 2 put the case that an effective way to enhance intercultural competence among students is through international practical placements with a collaborating partner institution in another country, and that through those international partnerships student and staff mobilisation for educational and research collaboration can also follow. It is interesting that while Carm and Horntvedt find administrative, structural, procedural and process impediments to successful collaboration at no point do they...
describe competition or institutional self-interest as barriers to the participant institutions pursuit of their internationalisation goals.

Vocational and academic learners can co-operate together on problem-solving projects and gain valuable insights from each other's theories and practice. Individual institutions can best achieve these outcomes for their students by collaborating, for example through the EU Erasmus programme.

When it comes to students and their education, the UK Government did control fees and student numbers, in a planned economy, which meant the competition between universities, was over student intake quality. The price was capped, but the student number control was then removed so universities competed for student numbers and student intake quality within a price control (Hillman, 2014). Applicants for university places are now in danger of being fought over; rather than advised on the best match for them given the educational and student experience which they seek. Students are also in danger of being deprived of the educational breadth that collaborative approaches to learning between institutions and countries can bring as universities seek to attract and retain students and the wealth they bring.

*The Case for Choice and Competition as a Governing Principle*

Universities are selective and entry to them is competitive. In the UK between 2012 and 2016, the number of applicants holding five university offers for places increased, giving more applicants more choice. Those with higher entry level qualifications had a wider choice and could enter an (arguably) better university. The same is true for academic staff; who may aspire to work in the best departments, with the best facilities, alongside those colleagues they respect and where the brightest and best students choose to study. For all the talk of different missions, there is a persistent perception of a hierarchy of universities, in and between countries, whether accurately expressed by third-party league tables or not. Those universities which can attract high-quality students from around the globe, recruit the most highly cited researchers, win research grants and attract partners, will be the ones which are more likely to succeed in their charitable, economic and social objectives over others and perhaps at the cost of those others. This market does require research funders, student applicants and others to have access to a wide range of objective information to avoid an undefinable ‘reputation’ leading to a self-perpetuation of the status-quo based on historical understandings of excellence.

Selectivity and competition may have considerable weight as defining characteristics of the nature and purpose of HE. In Chapter 4 de la Torre and Perez-Esparrells aim to show how countries and institutional leaders are changing their strategies in relation to the measures and weights in global league tables, which either reinforce the original vision of their universities or soften the university’s mission and orientation, focusing instead on improving the university’s rankings for reputation and prestige. While de la Torre and Perez-Esparrells’ findings may
not be altogether welcome, the greater heterogeneity they observe being valued and sought is evidence of the power of these new global competitive forces.

If private individuals invest in their education for private gain they can acquire a better job and improve their lifetime earnings. Education is an investment, and individuals can reasonably expect a return in social capital and future earnings. An undergraduate or postgraduate degree is in that sense an investment product to be researched, selected and bought with the purpose of increasing lifetime earnings and so generating a profit greater than the investment being made. For example, as Ilieva-Trichkova asks in Chapter 3, are graduate employment rates (the number and quality of jobs available to graduates) best improved through creating a pseudo-market designed to effect change through competition or by encouraging university-business collaborations? At least in the Bulgarian context, Ilieva-Trichkova establishes that sustainable institutional bridges between universities and businesses positively affects graduate employment and earnings.

At the discipline level, an oversupply of graduates leads to a fall in the labour market value of the degree awarded and a fall in applicant interest. With an expansion of HE, graduates are either competing among themselves or they can be unemployed or they can accept non-graduate jobs (Fengliang et al., 2008). In a globalised world skilled jobs can move countries and graduates can follow those jobs, so any nation that does not compete for business and talent will lose both. Universities which offer the wrong programmes will not see applicant demand. These are tell-tale characteristics of a market (Brown, 2011).

Privatisation and competition are not synonymous in the delivery of public goods. No profit motive is needed to have a competitive system. Nor are fees for education required as competition does not need to mean price competition. Education is a prestige good (but it isn't a physical thing like say a Gold medal), it has a perceived value and as the price is often an indicator of quality or reputation any price competition would be over who could charge the most (Brown & Carasso, 2013). When the UK Government introduced a £9,000 fees cap for undergraduates, nearly all universities immediately announced they would charge £9,000, to the Government’s discouragement and dismay.

**Merit or Money as the Exchange Value**

The system of HE has competitive characteristics and the governance system should align with and be empathetic with the actual market behaviours of the participants. For example, while it is easy to observe competition in HE the competition observed is not or rarely price competition.

When universities put out a prospectus they make an offer. If you like, a sale price. Unlike any other catalogue of goods and services that the potential student may look through – say to buy a pair of shoes – the offer is expressed not as a monetary price; instead alongside the product description is an offer tariff. The purchaser will have predicted grades or qualifications and will look for the programme of study they want to pursue, which fits their learning objectives, and
which maximises the value of the qualifications they hold by getting to the best university they can.

Different universities have different offer tariffs and different numbers of applications per place, and here is where the true market operates. Only one in four applicants get into Oxford with a high average entry tariff. Some institutions make offers to nine out of ten applicants with low average entry tariffs. A university which overprices (with too high a tariff that the market will not bear) will not receive applications and the market adjusts. If the applicant gets an offer based on their application (bid price) their pride is for their achievement at getting to the place of their choice based on their effort, not on their economic investment. Do we as a society want future students saying ‘I earned my place here through merit’ or ‘I paid good money to get here?’ Both are a price. As Adam Smith said ‘The real price of everything, what everything really costs to the man [sic] who wants to acquire it, is the toil and trouble of acquiring it’ (Smith, 1776).

A-Level students or school leavers do not sit with the family debit card and an amount of money to spend (or their Student Loan Company application open) and shop on-line for a university using price as their guide. This would be a poorer system as money would replace merit as the currency in HE. That would arguably be the end of social mobility, widening access and any sense of a meritocracy. Privilege would be reinforced through affordability. To believe in the power of education as a force for social mobility based on merit is to believe in competition but not price competition. If access to HE is unequal by income, and income differentials are education related, then social mobility becomes a myth (Strike, 2015). But choice by merit is still competition, involving selectivity and exchange by universities and applicants.

With price uniformity, the differentiation between universities is found in the quality and diversity of the offering to students, which is in the student interest. A price mechanism would encourage homogeneity of offer and price stratification by institution.

**Funding Education where Price is not a Quasi-Market Variable**

Back in the post-war period, the UK had an elite HE system and participants who achieved the required grades were entitled to grants and free tuition. High quality HE was expensive then (and it is now) and the taxpayer picked up the bill (Shattock, 2012). In the present mass system of HE the objection to the taxpayer funding HE – as they do pre-school, primary, secondary and further education – is often put as a question. Why should the majority pay for the privileged education of a growing elite (Trow, 2007)? One answer to this question could be a progressive tax system, where the graduate who earns more pays more through their lifetime, without making price a variable in their initial educational choices.

The answer to this question in the UK has instead been to seemingly remove public funding and introduce higher capped student fees and a government-backed loan scheme to allow individuals to pay those fees. The difference being the future tax burden is pre-defined and expressed as a debt. HE is seen as a choice and not
an entitlement. The beneficiary is seen as the individual and not society. Although the high numbers of projected shortfalls in student loan repayments mean in reality the public will still fund HE. Home and EU fees increased nearly threefold in 2012 from a base of £3,375, funded by an upfront loan and a lifetime of income contingent repayments to pay down the debt.

It is true that education is a private investment and an investment in which the individuals who make it can reasonably expect a return in social capital, future earnings and quality of life. At the same time, societies need people who are educated each to their full potential so the common good is served; and all benefit from the engineers, scientists, lawyers, teachers, social workers, doctors, artists and architects who serve the societies in which they live and work. All benefit from having these skills in sufficient numbers in a well-functioning society.

The current question is if students are consumers and universities are providers of a purchasable product called education then could price competition be a means of driving system efficiency? The impacts of this policy are likely to be poor. If market participants were motivated by getting the cheapest deal then the risk would be that providers would undercut each other, reducing quality and destroying the value of the service provided. We have already observed that the applicants, or purchasers, do not behave in this way. Simply removing the fee cap causes fees to rise in line with applicant demand, institutional reputation and cost of provision. This creates the possibility of unjust pricing and exclusion of those who cannot afford to pay.

The UK Government proposal to link an imposed measure of quality (TEF) to differential fee caps recognises price competition will cause fees to rise and imposes a centrally determined proxy measure of quality, which some students will have to pay more to access. This is not a free market mechanism but would instead arguably distort the market with a bias introduced by the designers. The TEF will not inform market participants but provide institutions that do well under its particular and narrow measures the ability to charge higher fees.

The cost of provision of HE does vary by subject and by its true quality. Without cross-subsidy between types of students or programmes, some differential pricing (a just long-run price) and funding would be required to achieve sustainability. The question now is how to solve this conundrum?

A balance of contribution is perhaps needed from the individual, who will benefit, and from the public who will also benefit from their investment in society and skills. The fee to the individual student should be common and fixed, by institution and by subject, so their merit (or toil) is the exchange value in our HE systems. The public contribution should deal with variability in costs related to the discipline and quality. At present in England, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), soon to be the Office for Students, top-up the student fee for high-cost subjects, those which are recognisably more expensive to teach, so that the price difference is not passed on to students in higher fees. The top-up is insufficient on its own and institutions cross-subsidise to sustain their high-cost science, technology, engineering and medical education programmes.
within the fixed-fee mechanism, not least from the fees paid by international students.

A well-constructed teaching excellence assessment system could be linked to high-cost subject funding and vary the top-up paid to public institutions, introducing a quality premium as a variable alongside cost. Student applicants themselves would then be free to choose where to study based on their entry qualifications. Institutions would compete for those students based on the quality of their offer and not on their fee. A system where the market clears when the ablest students, regardless of their debt tolerance or access to money, competitively achieve their aspirations is one that would ensure the merit of hard work and protect a sense of students as co-producers of their own educational experience.

It is argued here, therefore, that a regulated market, where providers and students collaborate to compete under shared rules, can work in HE and that:
- HE is at the macro-level both collaborative and competitive;
- competition between institutions should exist for quality students (by entry tariff as a price) and between providers (by entry tariff offer), but not by fee;
- any fee differentiation could be by subject, but not by provider;
- subject-based price differentiation should not be passed on to the fee-paying student;
- the public should have an interest in part-funding HE to ensure access to higher quality remains determined by merit and not by access to money or debt tolerance;
- teaching excellence assessments which aim to achieve fee differentiation by institution are at best unnecessary and at worst distort the meritocratic mechanism at work in HE;
- a well-constructed teaching excellence assessment could be linked to monies paid by public funders to providers, by subject, which could become variable by quality as well as by cost.

With different governing systems now running in different national jurisdictions, we have the perfect laboratory in which to test the theories of competition, collaboration and community in HE. The chapters which follow are field studies which explore these issues and bring back the first results.

REFERENCES


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2. INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: ON WHOSE TERMS?

INTRODUCTION
This chapter explores key challenges and impacts of an inter-institutional collaboration to pursue the internationalisation of higher education (HE) through a student exchange programme at a university college in Norway, focusing on its implementation at the Department of Vocational Teacher Education (DVTE), at the Norwegian Higher Education institution (HEI) scrutinised in the research. By reviewing the concept of the internationalisation of HE from a global perspective and narrowing it down to the actual case study examined, the point of departure becomes the internationalisation of HE as it appears in the Norwegian institution’s objectives and their implementation through a collaboration with partners. Through a qualitative case study approach, this chapter analyses the voices of the various actors involved from two partner institutions, the Norwegian institution and a Ugandan university (UU). The findings reveal that the objectives of the student exchange programme were perceived differently among administrative and academic staff at both collaborating institutions. The Ugandans involved felt they had no direct impact on the programme, nor did they get any feedback or information regarding the outcome of the internship period. The academic staff at the Norwegian institution were not involved in the selection of countries or institutions for the student exchange programme, nor did they know details about the course content and activities offered to the students during the internship abroad. The outcomes from the students’ perspectives differed depending upon how individual students were able to utilise and explore the opportunities available at the institutions visited. The outcomes from the students’ perspectives differed depending upon their individual initiatives. As a result, the internship abroad ended up being a ‘stand-alone’ experience for the participant students, with no direct integration into their Norwegian bachelor programmes. It was found that a clearer shared partnership objective among the various actors involved, including the administrative and academic staff members, would have helped the success of the collaboration. Ensuring broad-based participation through open and transparent processes and information sharing between and within actors at both institutions involved would have been likely to contribute to a greater shared and common vision and understanding of how to ensure the quality of the strategies being pursued. This requires clear administrative structures and well defined roles and responsibilities among the different participant actors, e.g. the aims, implementation strategies and evaluation procedures. Clearly defined goals based
upon expectations and experiences, which were shared and negotiated between the various partners involved would have produced a more successful collaboration.

CONTEXT

The internationalisation of HE has historically, at certain moments, given different answers to the rationales (why), the meanings and approaches (what), and the strategies and organisational models (how) of the phenomenon (de Wit, 2002). The overall objective for all HE institutions in Norway over the past two decades has focused on internationalisation as a means for student mobility that is considered important and necessary to enhance intercultural competence for inclusion in the educated student’s portfolio. Most often, this has been measured based upon the number of students’ internships abroad, which is also reflected in the goal of the HE institution scrutinised in this study: 20 per cent of the student population participated in studies abroad at another partner HEI in another country. A major proportion of these students were intended to spend from three to six months in countries in the Global South. Despite intensive efforts, however, it had proven difficult to attract students to these internships at the Department of Vocational Teacher Education (DVTE), and the number of participating students at that department was alarmingly low.

This study focuses on two cohorts of students from the DVTE, each attending the three-month internship at a Ugandan university (UU). This paper discusses the challenges of the exchange programme from the Norwegian university’s perspectives and explores these challenges in relation to its implementation. First, it gives a brief overview of the main discourses on the internationalisation of HE and explains the research methodology. The paper further highlights the policies on internationalisation as expressed in the Norwegian institution’s aims and objectives. It is structured according to an educational rationale stipulating a logical relation between educational purpose, content, method and forms of assessment (Tjeldvold, 1999). As Tjeldvold argued, this rationale is ‘found more or less explicitly expressed in educational legal acts … as a legal precondition for the implementation of education’ (1999, p. 73). Each educational organisation applies this rationale through its formal, physical and social structures, as well as the process of goal-setting, decision-making, leadership, implementation and outcome, which are the core issues addressed in this case study. The paper examines and highlights gaps or inconsistencies between overall institutional goals and the experienced realities of the administrators, academic staff and students involved in delivering internationalisation for students through a successful collaboration.

Internationalisation of Higher Education

From the late 1970s to the mid 1980s, activities that would today be described as internationalisation ‘were usually neither named that way, nor carried high prestige, and were rather isolated and unrelated’ (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011, p. 1). Nowadays, universities must reach beyond their institutional and national
boundaries to disseminate knowledge and ideas in a globalised world. Intensifying
competition between institutions and countries and the need to offer an
international education for students and to meet the demands caused by
institutional rankings and stakeholders’ demands is changing education (Jones,
2013). This pressure has progressed and become more powerful, and the concept of
the internationalisation of HE has moved from the ‘fringe of institutional interest’
(de Wit, 2011a, p.5) to the very core of what now seems to be a mainstreaming of
internationalisation, which today is often an institutional imperative. De Wit
defined internationalisation as ‘a process to introduce intercultural, international,
and global dimensions in HE; to improve the goals, functions, and delivery of HE;
and thus to upgrade the quality of education and research’ (de Wit, 2011, p. 6). In
other words, the aim is not purely to promote intercultural competence among
students, but also requires a range of integrated activities to foster a wider global
dimension within HE. This goes along with increasing competition by students for
jobs within the working market, which has led to an increased demand for
intercultural competence in graduates’ portfolios to make them more distinctive
and employable (Daly & Baker, 2005).

In other instances, internationalisation is regarded as synonymous with a
specific organisational strategy, e.g. to promote internationalisation through student
exchange programmes, as de Wit argued (2011b). This strategy focuses on the role
played by internationalisation in achieving intercultural competence in HE and
among students.

In its broadest sense, intercultural competence can be understood as ‘a complex
of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately, when interacting with
others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself’ (Fantini &
(2004), and Barker et al. (2010) have demonstrated that the most effective way to
enhance intercultural competence among students is through international practical
placements. Some, such as Daly & Baker (2005), have argued that studying abroad
and student exchange programmes are effective means by which students may
gain such international knowledge and skills. But according to Jane Knight (cited
in de Wit, 2011a), this is but one of several myths and misconceptions about
internationalisation. Just offering internship opportunities abroad does not ensure
that students will gain intercultural competence and awareness. As de Wit (2011b)
argued,

… reality is more complicated. It is not guaranteed from the outset that these
activities will actually lead to that result. After all, students can completely
seclude themselves from sharing experiences with other students and other
sections of the population in the countries they visit. (p. 5)

A mainstreaming of internationalisation through an institutionalised and
comprehensive approach, de Wit (2011b) continued, requires and assumes a more
integral process based approach aimed at a better quality of both HE provision and
the competence of staff and students. This is also supported by Jones (2013, p.
162), who added that the impacts of internationalisation practices, based upon the
in institutional mission, are also required in order for the real benefit of such engagement to be understood and valued in its own right. One may ask, therefore, whether the imbalanced and oversimplified approaches to student mobility match the overall definition of internationalisation. Mobility is merely an instrument for promoting internationalisation and should not be a goal in itself (de Wit, 2011b). But even where internationalisation is regarded as a specific educational goal, it still seems to be treated as ad hoc and marginal by various institutions (de Wit, 2011b). It is therefore time for a ‘critical reflection on the changing concept of internationalisation’ (de Wit, 2011b, p. 1). Internationalisation in itself has become the main objective, interpreted as more exchange, more degree mobility and more recruitment. Even the alternative movement of ‘internationalisation at home’ of the late 1990s has shifted rapidly into this instrumental mode (de Wit, 2011b, p. 2).

Brandenburg and de Wit (2010) called for ‘the post-internationalisation age’, which would be characterised by a move away from viewing dogmatic and idealist concepts of internationalisation and globalisation as goals in themselves and towards viewing them as a means to an end. There is a need to ask why we do certain things and ‘… what do they help in achieving the goal of quality of education and research in a globalised knowledge society? We also have to regard mobility and other activities as what they really are: activities or instruments’ (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011, p. 4). They recommend that one reconsider the preoccupation with instruments and means and instead invest more time in questions of rationales and outcomes: the ‘whys and wherefores’, e.g. the added value of internships abroad.

The internationalisation of education incorporates different competencies needed in a globalised world and captures aspects like intercultural and global dimensions to widen the goals and improve the quality and delivery of HE. Integrating internationalisation therefore means developing a culture, including attitudes and practices that enable cross-cultural perspectives, to permeate all aspects of university life (Jones, 2013, p. 162). In order to accept such a comprehensive understanding of internationalisation, according to Hudzik (2011, p. 6, cited in Jones, 2013, p. 165), ‘the key to success lies with the individuals delivering the strategy, i.e. the academic and the support staff’. An internationalisation strategy that does not give attention to involvement and the development of participant staff is unlikely to achieve its aims (Jones, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study approach was taken, as it provides the potential to understand the complexities of contemporary initiatives and events that require an in-depth analysis to investigate them in their real life contexts (Yin, 2009). A case study is a descriptive, exploratory or explanatory analysis of a person, group or event, i.e. the implementation of the student exchange programme, and it relies on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009).

This study applied documentary and literature reviews to describe and understand the policies, strategies and ongoing discourses on the internationali-
The two institutions and DVTE were purposefully selected as they had been partner institutions over the last decade. Several African students had been admitted for masters and PhD programmes at the department, but in spite of that, the number of Norwegian students doing their internship at UU still remained dramatically low. Then semi-structured interviews were used to grasp and address the experiences and views of the various actors involved at the two HE institutions: leaders of the international programme at each department involved, administrators, academic and support staff, and students. The interviewees were purposefully selected, as they were all key actors involved in the student exchange programme from the two partner institutions. The following matrix (Table 1) identifies number and type of informants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DVTE</th>
<th>UU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International co-ordinators</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department administrators</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 (peers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Their real world views helped the researchers understand the actual implementation of the internship programme. The findings from each category of respondents were used to triangulate the findings with other groups, enhancing the validity and credibility of the research results.

Interviews were conducted in Norway as well as in Uganda for the two cohorts of exchange students who participated in the three-month internship in the Fall of 2013-2014 and 2015-16. The researchers interviewed the Norwegian staff and the students before and after the internship period. In addition, the students were interviewed during their internship period in Uganda. During those visits the Ugandan partners were also interviewed. The first cohort (c1) involved three Norwegian students from different bachelor programmes; but in the second cohort (c2), only one student joined the internship programme abroad.

The data analysis was based upon interview transcripts and was categorised according to the key elements addressed by Tjeldvold (1999), e.g. the process of goal setting, decision-making, leadership, implementation and outcome. Data were organised based upon inputs from each group of informants; and, in addition to the abovementioned categories, co-ordination, quality issues, challenges and suggestions for improvement were highlighted by the interviewees.

RESULTS FROM DOCUMENT REVIEW

Presentation of the Institutions Involved

The Norwegian institution offers a wide range of professional programmes at both bachelor, master and PhD levels to qualify students for different professions,
including the teacher training programme scrutinised in this study targeting vocational teaching skills; whereas the Ugandan university focuses on universal as well as vocational skills training, specifically emphasising science, technology and education.

In the following, a short overview of the actual number of exchange students, as well as the specific faculty and departments involved in student exchange, at the Norwegian institution will be provided to indicate the challenges faced by the institution. This will be followed by a brief summary of existing policies on the internationalisation of education and its application to bachelor programme syllabi and plans at the DVTE within the relevant study areas.

Policy and Strategy on Internationalisation of Higher Education

Out of the total number of students at the Norwegian HE institution (about 17,000), only 113 went abroad to countries in the Global South in 2013. At the Faculty of Education, with approximately 5,000 students, the number of students who took a three-month internship to countries in the Global South in 2013-2014 was 40, including the three students from the DVTE, the first cohort involved in this research. According to White Paper 14 on the Internationalisation of Higher Education (MOE, 2012), it is expected that while working towards a higher educational degree, the majority of students will spend parts of their educational period outside of Norway. For each student taking part in a minimum of three months’ internship abroad, the HE institution receives monetary incentives, and it is therefore highly emphasised by the leadership.

The institution’s overall policies on internationalisation are based upon the White Paper. At the Faculty of Education, the overall policies and strategies underscore the importance of international co-operation and internationalisation at all levels of the institution. In brief, internationalisation focuses on three major issues: international partnership, student and staff mobilisation, and educational and research collaboration and development (Strategy Paper, 2013). The strategy further states that within education, internationalisation is to be understood as the process of integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension in the objectives, organisation and actions (Strategy Paper, 2013). It underlines the mobility of teachers and students as a powerful engine in the work of the internationalisation of education, as we can read from the following quote:

Mobility is a powerful engine in the work of International Education. Quality assurance of mobility applies not only to find the right professional communities to work with, but also to enable students’ knowledge and experiences in a wider scientific context. … A key area in terms of quality assurance, language training and intercultural competencies for students and staff.2 (Strategy Paper, 2013, p. 6)

The institution’s argument for student as well as staff mobility is to ensure increased intercultural competence among students and employees, in a wider scientific context, characterised as key quality assurance criteria. The overall
strategy goes beyond the enhancement of intercultural competence in students, although that aspect is underscored as ‘a major challenge in the years to come’ (Strategy Paper, 2013, p. 6) if the institution is going to reach its overall objectives, e.g. quantitative measures for student mobility.

Although the importance of internationalisation is highlighted in plans and documents, the strategy does not indicate how to reach these objectives nor by whom. According to an expected rational consistency between policy and implementation, one would expect that the study plans and syllabi from the bachelor programmes at the faculty and department level would identify the ‘how’ and ‘why’ in more detail.

The three syllabi reviewed at DVTE all had a paragraph on the optional internship programme available. It was stated that the internship programme would give additional and valuable competence in a multicultural society, its importance in a global and mobile society, as it would enhance multicultural and language skills, enhancing cultural knowledge. They all, more or less, rephrased the institutional strategy on internationalisation. In the syllabus of the full time bachelor programme examined, a broadly formulated statement on an integrated approach to internationalisation could be identified, where it was stated that; ‘it is of great importance to sensitize students with regards to the cultural dimension of the content’ (Syllabus, 2013, p. 9), linking internationalisation to the overall course programme. It also underscored that ‘internationalisation has to be a part of an individual study plan’ (ibid.), highlighting that ‘visual communication, trends and societal development in a national and international perspective’ (ibid., p. 13) were required. Furthermore, the syllabus stated that one of the outcomes was to ‘analyse the themes and documentation in a historical and cultural perspective, nationally and internationally’ (ibid., p. 24). In the two remaining syllabi, there were no topics under the umbrella ‘internationalisation’ to indicate how and where internationalisation would be addressed during the coursework, including activities in Norway. Based upon the vague hints related to internationalisation the individual lecturers were responsible for ensuring an integrated approach to internationalisation of HE in their teaching practice.

Except for information about the possibility of attending an internship abroad, the vague statements regarding internationalisation in the syllabi reflected as argued by de Wit (2011), that the rhetorical power of internationalisation seemed to have a stronger symbolic impact on the syllabi content than the actual strategic issues of how. The review confirmed the symbolic value of including a global and international perspective in the temporary strategy with no strategic implementation details. The internship seemed to be a separate, stand-alone opportunity with no integration or link to the topics described in the course programme.

In spite of an overall policy focusing on an international, intercultural and global dimension in the objectives of the organisation, specified as actions at all levels of the institution, and emphasising a comprehensive and integrated approach to internationalisation by staff and students, the most important aspect mentioned in the syllabi was students’ overall opportunity for mobility. The main activity needed
to reach internationalisation was for the students to travel to a foreign context and interact with people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, e.g. from backgrounds different from their own (de Wit, 2011). Student mobility was a means to enhance multicultural understanding on its own. The policies and syllabi reviewed revealed that internationalisation of HE at the Norwegian institution seemed to be restricted to student mobility as an instrument in its own right, mainly focusing on the quantitative measure: the number of students taking an internship abroad for a minimum of three months.

Characteristics of the Bachelor Programmes and Students Participating in the Study

The bachelor programmes at the DVTE were all aimed at preparing professionals to become teachers at the upper secondary level in their respective vocational fields. The students were mainly adults who are already well into their careers. Some of the bachelor programmes were organised as part-time studies, where about two thirds of the students also had work obligations, and the courses were based upon a number of weekly seminars over a duration of three years. The students often had family responsibilities, and the average age among students for 2015-16 was 36 years. The abovementioned characteristics of the study and students attending the vocational teacher programmes created challenges in the recruitment of students for the exchange programme.

This is reflected in the findings from this study. About 10 students were eager to take the three-month internship abroad in 2013-2014, out of which three were successful in travelling. In 2015-16, three students showed genuine interest in participating, but only one accepted the offer. Some withdrew due to family commitments, while others faced work-related obligations that did not allow them to take time off; a couple of students had health issues that prevented them from going abroad. In the following, the findings from the interviews will be presented.

RESULTS FROM PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

The Exchange Programme, Planning, Roles and Responsibilities

The lecturers at the Norwegian institution all agreed that the recruitment of students and preparatory arrangements should be done at an earlier stage in their study programme, in order for them to integrate it in their individual plans for the students. They also felt that the information they received in advance regarding contextual and cultural issues in Uganda was insufficient, which also had a negative impact on the quality of the preparatory phase.

They further wanted the institution to be more exact about why they emphasised sending students to Uganda. One lecturer (Nc2) asked, ‘What is the added value of the internship for our students?’ The overall objective of the internship period seemed unclear from the perspectives of the Norwegian lecturers involved. There was also ‘insufficient information about available courses and programmes at the Ugandan institution’ (Nc1). Knowing more about courses and content would help
the Norwegian lecturers to both recommend and prepare the students from a vocational and professional perspective, they argued. The lecturer responsible for the student cohort 2 had recommended different reading materials for the students to study while abroad, as he was afraid the students might fail their final exam in Norway.

The Norwegian students also felt that the information about the exchange was piecemeal and unstructured before leaving Norway. One student stated, ‘The information about the exchange came too late, there were too many uncertainties, and the rules were unclear’, furthermore, she added, ‘there was a limited number of institutions to select from’ (c1). The students claimed that they had to find out things by themselves and did not know where to find information or who to contact, even in Norway. What finally made them take the opportunity can be reflected in the following comment from one of them (c1): ‘I go because it is possible and it gives me broader perspectives’, and ‘I think about this as a resource I can use in the future’.

One Norwegian lecturer also addressed the need to visit the institution in Uganda – in other words, more involvement from the Norwegian academic staff – as ‘this gives knowledge and confidence in the work with recruiting new students for exchange’ (c1). Another aspect raised by the academic staff was the added workload the internship entailed. International work was not eligible for inclusion in the annual timesheet, and was, according to the Norwegian lecturers, seemingly regarded by the institution as an activity based upon the personal interests of the academic staff. Two lecturers specifically raised this issue as one of the reasons for them not emphasising the exchange programme among the students. As one student argued (c1), ‘More students would have applied if the lecturers had been more interested’.

From the Ugandan end, the lecturers did not know the objectives or expectations of them when having the Norwegian students in their classes, and they found it difficult to plan properly for the internship period. As one lecturer explained, ‘I had a meeting with a contact person here and asked about the situation. I was told it was for the student to present to the lecturers, also to learn from them. [This was] not being done. It would be important for the lecturers to know the plan, be easier to interact, to mentor and guide. I was acting blindly. I did not know why she came’ (Uc1). She continued, ‘I [now] think she came here for skills and not as I expected to learn about teaching methods’. The lack of clarity and involvement of the academic staff in the planning and development of the exchange programme thus also seemed to be a great barrier for ensuring a comprehensive programme for students in Uganda.

**Co-ordination and Implementation**

The Norwegian students came from different bachelor programmes and had their exchange period at different semesters during their study. This broad diversity required thorough planning for each individual student by the academic staff as well as the international co-ordinator. There were no written or standard
procedures to follow. The students (c1) stated the same, based upon their experience, ‘There were no team co-ordinators to contact when we arrived’. Another student (c1) said, ‘There was no structure in place when it came to who was to inform us, and who had the responsibility’. One student (c1) further claimed that ‘Few, if any, places were ready to receive me for practical training’.

The Norwegian students also felt left to themselves to get in closer contact with peers and the broader university social environment. There were no arrangements in place to help the exchange students integrate into the broader social network. This coincides with the unstructured teaching schedules the student from cohort 2 had explained, as she had frequently tried to find out if and where the classes were being conducted. In spite of having a social programme prepared for the second cohort, strikes and uncertainties in the beginning of the semester, we were told, made them leave those activities out.

Despite the challenges the internship programme was facing, one Dean (c2) at the Ugandan university endorsed the exchange programme. He did not know details about it, however, as that responsibility was delegated to the department co-ordinator. He taught in one course attended by the Norwegian student (c2) and had assigned his assistant to be the contact person for the student. Even the international co-ordinator in Uganda expressed insecurity about the internship and its tasks and objectives when he was told that the Norwegian students were in a bachelor programme to become teachers in vocational skills. This was despite the fact that the co-ordinator had visited the Norwegian institution several times and had a stake in the exchange programme from its inception.

A Ugandan lecturer (c1) raised the same issue: ‘Written agreements are necessary in the future, the same document for both parts’. During a visit in 2016, another lecturer who taught a course selected by one of the exchange students complained about ‘the lack of horizontal collaboration’, as he expressed it, where ‘Norwegian and Ugandan academic staff worked together to develop an appropriate plan for each student’ (Uc2). He also raised the need for collaboration and co-ordination within each institution. The lecturers in Norway also underscored the need for a detailed contract signed by both institutions that enabled those involved to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings and unanswered questions. They related this to the lack of administrative structures, responsibilities, and academic and logistic co-ordination. Despite several visits to Uganda by the administrative staff of the Norwegian institution and the existence of coordinators at both ends, this was still an unresolved issue in 2015–16.

The Ugandan staff members did not know the background and skills of the Norwegian students, which made it difficult for them to utilise their knowledge, inform their own studies, interact professionally at different levels, and develop a three-month academic and practical course adapted to the needs of the students. Knowing their background would have enabled the lecturers to utilise the competencies of the students. One lecturer (Uc1) suggested: ‘They could contribute by sharing and explaining how nutrition is dealt with in Norway, i.e. in hospitals, elderly homes and/or kindergartens. Our students would have liked that’. Another lecturer (Uc1) addressed the same issue, stating, ‘We did not know his background
and skills. We would have liked to share. This is a challenge here: little interaction between the students and the lecturers, we could have started something’.

Largely, staff at the Ugandan institution found it interesting and challenging to have exchange students, but argued that increased and more regular interaction with the Norwegian staff and students would make the exchange programme better. One (Uc1) stated it clearly, saying, ‘Wonderful to have exchange students, but should increase the interaction with students better. It should be a co-ordinator who presented the plan, negotiated with the department … to assign a responsible person to follow up … support students in gaining knowledge … an academic co-ordinator for teaching practice who is prepared work’.

The Norwegian lecturers explained that they did not feel competent to further integrate the international experience of the Norwegian students, utilise their competence, and build upon and integrate it into teaching after the internship. The students’ experiences therefore remained as their own personal experiences and were seldom transferred into a broader context related to the internationalisation of HE at their home institution.

North–South Collaboration, on Whose Terms?

As long as the overall objectives of the exchange programme seemed unclear for most of the actors involved, one might ask what, then, was the driving force, and on whose terms? The Ugandan actors were certainly positive about the partnership, but they also expressed different objectives for the Norwegian students’ stay than those expressed by the administrative staff in Norway.

One Dean (Uc1) stated that he would be more interested in how the Norwegian students could contribute: ‘We have realised we could learn a lot from the students, specifically related to the delivery mode’, going on to explain, ‘Here it is a challenge towards vocational education in general; there is a negative attitude towards vocational training. White-collar jobs are good, not these [vocational] kind of jobs’. Statements from a lecturer at another department matched the Dean’s perspective: ‘We need more clearly defined goals for the students’ stay, we do not have any capacity for hairdressing. … After interacting with the student, we clearly realised we could get help from her. … Thinking about structures, curriculum, and issues related to hairdressing that she now can share with our teachers, even at certificate courses’ (Uc1). The Dean expressed ideas and areas to further explore or develop related to how the Norwegian students could be monitored while doing their internship abroad, contribute to enhancing vocational programmes on their campus, and respond to specific needs at specific departments.

The Dean (Uc1) also highlighted another issue, saying, ‘Your student did not interest himself in our courses, he was more interested in looking outside, externally. It may not be intentional, but there was not much time for us to have him here. He went to another technical institution and arranged his stay there, one of the best institutes on vocational training in the country’. The proactive role and impact on the student’s stay indicate its fairly random preparatory arrangements, as well as unclear goals and processes established between the institutions. One may
question what kinds of measures and indicators the Norwegian institution used to ensure the quality of the student’s programme. These inputs from partners in Uganda clearly illustrate the need for in-depth discussions about the institutional partnership in order for the administrative and academic staff at both institutions to reach a common agreement and a shared objective for the internship, one that responds to the needs and interests of both institutions.

Outcomes of the Programme

During and after the internship period, the Norwegian lecturers felt uncertain about the actual outcome of their students’ stay abroad, i.e. its added value. Except for a blog written by one student (Nc1), there had been little or no contact or interaction between the students and their academic staff during the internship period, although Facebook had frequently been used to communicate with friends and family, according to one lecturer (Nc2). Another lecturer (Nc1) who visited her student in Uganda found both her and her student’s experiences to be relevant, arguing that the Ugandan experience would be useful in her future profession as a vocational teacher in the multicultural society of Norway. This indicates the importance of involving academic staff.

For the second cohort, the department had developed a student evaluation form grading various aspects of the internship from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), but no qualitative inputs from the students were required. Regarding the quality of academic elements, i.e. teaching, course materials and relevance, this student gave the programme a score of 1 and 2. For the general academic and professional outcome of the programme, its reception, and its accommodation, the rating was 3 (good). Safety and food received a score of 4 and outdoor life was graded a 5. It should be mentioned here that she spent most of her time with other expatriates residing in the same house at the compound. All of the students (c1 and c2) said they experienced personal growth, learned a lot about themselves in new cultural contexts and surroundings, and improved their ability to handle different cultural contexts; but as one lecturer (Nc2) argued, ‘Do they actually have to use three months of their bachelor programme for personal growth?’.

The courses and exams taken in Uganda were not compatible with the requirements of the Norwegian syllabi, but the students were nonetheless expected to integrate their experiences in their bachelor theses. Individual studies meant to be conducted by the students during the internship period were limited due to the lack of appropriate infrastructure in Uganda, and two students had to retake credits in Norway due to lack of credentials from Uganda.

The Ugandan lecturers also expressed their insecurity about the actual learning outcome, asking, ‘How will the assessment structure look? A lack of that hinders the quality aspect’ (Uc1). This supported the views of his colleague (Uc2): ‘Need reports from the students about their stay, the impacts, etc. We, here, should get a report back, to hear from them to us – What did they say?’ The Dean (Uc1) further strengthened this request highlighting the same: ‘If he [the student] could write a report, feedback, then information will come both ways. We would like to have a
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report back, know how to support and relate to the objectives of the stay and experiences’.

REFLECTIONS ON THE FINDINGS

First, the findings reveal that while the primary and strategic goals were shared and the two institutions had agreed to collaborate for mutual benefit the perceptions about the programme’s objectives varied among the administrative as well as the academic staff at both institutions. Second, the academic staff at the Norwegian institution had little or no influence with regard to the site, country or institution selected for the student exchange programme, as was also the case with the curricular content and activities during the internship: a precondition for a successful and qualitative internship, according to Hudzik (2011) in Jones (2013). The lack of a shared objective for the internship programme between the two partner institutions and staff also indicates an uneven power dimension, where the interests of the Northern partner seemed to be dominant.

The aforementioned issues lead to the following questions: Internationalisation – on whose terms? Which institution, if any, should be in the driving seat? How are the various stakeholders involved, it being administrators, academic staff or students? Staff from Norway, including an NGO representative (c2) employed to support and co-ordinate the students during their internship abroad, indicated that the Norwegian administrative staff seemed to enforce the partnership and internship through a top-down approach.

The outcomes from the student perspectives differed heavily due to the lack of clarity about objectives, structures and responsibilities. Outcomes were also dependent upon how the individual student was able to utilise and explore the opportunities available at the institution visited. The internship ended up being a ‘stand-alone’ experience, with no direct integration into their Norwegian bachelor programmes. One student (Nc1) stated, ‘More students would have been recruited if the lecturers were following up’.

The findings from this study coincide with the findings from similar studies globally: The assumption that students automatically acquire intercultural competence if they serve their internship abroad is a myth (de Wit, 2011). A precondition for this to happen is that the interaction between exchange students, peers and relevant partners at institutions in the Global South must have a specific focus on the necessary qualities, the ‘how’ and ‘why’, for developing intercultural competence (Jones, 2013).

On the other hand, following de Wit’s (2011) comprehensive approach to internationalisation, as also specified in the strategies of the Norwegian institution, the internationalisation of HE should incorporate a variety of competencies needed in a globalised world. In other words, in addition to aspects like the intercultural and global dimensions, all levels of the institution should be included, not just those focused on students.

Going beyond the findings from this case study, there may be lessons to learn for other HE institutions striving for increased and improved internationalisation of
their educational strategies through international and inter-institutional collaboration. Relevant strategies should capture the intended quality standards, assurances and delivery modes through clear policies, and measurable strategies. Integrating internationalisation therefore means developing a culture, including attitudes and practices that enable cross-cultural perspectives, to permeate all aspects of university life.

This requires clear and shared partnership objectives between the institutions and among the various institutional actors involved. Ensuring broad based participation through open and transparent processes and information sharing between and within actors at both institutions involved would, the research clearly illustrates, contribute to a shared and common vision and understanding of how to ensure the quality of the strategies contributing to the internationalisation of HE. This requires clear administrative structures and well-defined roles and responsibilities among the different actors, e.g. the aims, implementation strategies and evaluation procedures. Clearly defined goals based upon expectations and experiences, shared and negotiated between the various partners involved and recognised between and within the institutions at different levels, would be the first step towards ensuring a comprehensive and sustained approach to the internationalisation of HE based upon diverse needs and expectations.

NOTES

1 Italics added by author.
2 Authors’ translation.

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