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MASTER THESIS

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES, WHICH BSTU
VOENMEKH FACED WITH IN THE CONTEXT OF
INTERUNIVERSITY CO-OPERATION WITH
UNIVERSITY OF NORDLAND

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this master thesis is to identify the challenges and opportunities, which BSTU Voenmekh faced with in the cooperation with University of Nordland.

First, the problems and difficulties, which appear in international interuniversity co-operations, are determined (using the factors derived from the literature review). Then the theoretical framework is applied for the cooperation between BSTU Voenmekh and University of Nordland case. Existing problems and opportunities for BSTU Voenmekh are detected and discussed.

The authors suppose that this particular topic is actual, relevant and has a lot of opportunities for further research.

SUMMARY

Perhaps the biggest change over the past 30 years is the sheer size of the higher education sector. In 2000, around 99.4 million students around the globe were enrolled in higher education. By 2030, some 414.2 million students are forecasted to be enrolled. These huge increases in access to higher education are justified by government policies, which call for greater investment in advanced knowledge and skills in order to create competitive knowledge-based economies¹

A lot of studies are dedicated to international interuniversity co-operation. There is written a lot about reasons and motives to cooperate. Also one of the key elements of discussions are problems and challenges appeared in the co-operation process between universities.

Russian education system is very traditional and gradually undergoes harmonization process. However, because of the development of international programs, Russian education systems resist changes.

BSTU Voenmekh and University of Nordland are participants of the global knowledge-based economy. Accordingly the purpose of this thesis is to identify what problems and opportunities BSTU deals with in the co-operation with University of Nordland. In order to do this the research question “*Which challenges and opportunities BSTU Voenmekh faced with in the co-operation with University of Nordland?*” was addressed.

In order to identify difficulties and possibilities for BSTU Voenmekh the theoretical framework was created after literature reviewing. During several months interviews with the professors, participants of the co-operation, and students were conducted to apply this theoretical framework on practice and explore BSTU Voenmekh’ challenges and opportunities in the context of co-operation with UiN. Possible problems were divided in two groups in the theoretical part: difficulties connected with differences in education systems and socio-cultural problems.

Among difficulties connected with differences in education system respondents distinguished: adaptation to different values and habits of students from different countries; adaptation to Norwegian education system and study process; adaptation to close Norwegian society; adaptation to pure cultural life and lack of entertainments; difficulties with Norwegian language; communication in multinational companies

¹ <https://class.coursera.org/globalhighered-001/wiki/week3>

And the most actual socio-cultural problems in respondents' opinion were: adaptation to different values and habits of students from different countries; adaptation to Norwegian education system and study process; adaptation to close Norwegian society; adaptation to pure cultural life and lack of entertainments; difficulties with Norwegian language; communication in multinational companies.

After the interviews analysis possible ways for problem solving were suggested and opportunities for BSTU discovered. These include: opportunity to expand the contingent of students; harmonization process implantation; develop new international co-operations.

This work has some practical implementations and advises that could be useful for the BSTU Voennekh to solve existing problems and prevent them in future.

The author supposes that this master thesis could be useful in further researches in studying of education systems' problems, socio-cultural and adaptation difficulties. Also it could be a basis for the University of Nordland's challenges and opportunities studying.

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I. Introduction

1.1 Actualization and background

Globalization is now widely recognized as the main driving force behind the internationalization of higher education (HE) in many countries around the world (Altbach, Knight, 2007; Huang, 2007; Stiasny, Gore, 2012). The increasing spread, significance, and role of international HE “as a new powerhouse and engine” of economies wishing to stay competitive in the global economy is fueled by the large numbers of students—domestic as well as those willing to travel across international borders—to expand their horizons and opportunities beyond the local context (Stiasny & Gore, 2012, p. xv cited in Daquila, Huang, 2013). Numerous studies on the relationship between higher education and industry have examined the economic value of university activity, the contribution of staff and students to the economy, university spin-offs, the spillover effects of knowledge, and the development of entrepreneurship education (Potter, 2008). Companies have looked increasingly to cooperate with each other due to the limitations of coping successfully on their own with a world where markets are becoming global in scope, technologies are changing rapidly, huge investment funds are regularly demanded to develop new products with ever-shortening life cycles, and the economic scene is becoming characterized by high uncertainty and turbulence (Child et al., 2005). Science and Technology (S&T) is a field where international cooperation has always been very strong and increasingly so. There are robust incentives and mutual advantages to share knowledge across countries, to undertake joint research programmes and to learn from each other (ERA Expert Group, 2008).

International cooperation in higher education is not a new phenomenon. As Knight and de Wit (1995) pointed out, there were arguments for “the use of a common language, and of a uniform programme of study and system of examination” (pp. 6-7) to facilitate mobility of students and scholars and exchange of ideas in the Middle Ages and up to the end of the 17th century. Since then, universities have cooperated across national borders in one way or another and for all sorts of reasons—economic, political, as well as intellectual (Knight & de Wit, 1995 cited in Chan, 2004).

Strategic alliances and other forms of interfirm cooperation have grown remarkably since the mid-1980s. They are one of the more important new organizational forms (Child et al., 2005). The core of collaborations occurs among similar institutional subjects. Public players such as universities and other publicly funded research centres are more likely to engage in

collaborations with similar entities (ERA Expert Group, 2008). As organizations in society, universities provide a structure for human interaction with the wider environment. In this attempt to generate higher levels of human interaction and act as agents of change, universities adopt particular governance structures, sets of skills and strategies (Potter, 2008). The importance of inter-university cooperation lies not just in the free movement of staff and students, but in the creation and development of a wide range of strategic alliances that, amongst other options, facilitate the exploitation of scarce capital resources amongst partner institutions; . . . provide essential ways of introducing new voices into the thinking of the university, of initiating new conversations that cross the traditional faculty or administrative boundaries, of bringing new perspectives to bear . . . [and] confer competitive advantage on the partners (Layton, 1997 cited in Chan, 2004).

Considering all the above-stated, it can be concluded that the subject of international education co-operations is very relevant.

1.2 Personal motivation

The incentive to write this project work came from the desire to study in depth the relationships between University of Nordland and Baltic State Technical University (BSTU) Voennmekh. To do this, it is necessary first to set a theoretical framework of the subject and determine particular matters to be considered and analyzed. This master thesis is devoted to the cooperation between University of Nourdland and BSTU Voennmekh.

1.3 Research question and contribution

As the dynamic global business environment continues to force organizations to be agile and adaptive, international business (IB) education pedagogy is transforming. Study abroad and cultural immersion programs have attracted particular interest because of their relatively high costs and the aggressive expansion of these programs over the last 20 years (Lincoln Commission, 2005; Rexeisen & Al-Khatib, 2009). As IB education continues to adapt to a dynamic global business environment, we recognized gaps in the literature in IB pedagogy, as well as unaddressed stakeholder needs (Martin et al., 2011).

While multicultural education in general has become a prevalent field of scholarly investigation, on the other hand, there is a paucity of literature on how international education is conceptualized and translated in the teaching and learning process (Sheets and Fong, 2003). Scholars do share a summative view that international education is still in the process of exploring and discovering its meaning through multiple frames of dialogue (Wylie, 2008; James, 2005; Hayden and Thomson, 1995). Crossley (2000) suggests that the study of international

education requires an amalgamation of different fields of scholarship, which inevitably will be influenced by diverse socio-political contexts (Bernardo, Malakolunthu, 2013).

Having reviewed and analyzed the literature related to our subject, we found out that there were quite much information devoted to different practices of international co-operations in education and advantages they possess, but at the same time there was a lack of information about challenges that can occur during such co-operations.

The basic aim of research is to confirm the reliability of existing knowledge and contribute new knowledge in the existing one. The purpose of this master thesis is to illuminate the problems occurring in interuniversity co-operations on the international level and to fill some of existing gaps in the literature, thus the research question is: “*Which challenges and opportunities BSTU Voennmekh faced with in the co-operation with University of Nordland?*”.

To answer the research question, it is needed to clarify the next points: (1) to examine the concepts of cooperation and cooperative alliances, (2) to have a closer look into the interuniversity agreements and the existing practices, (3) to find out which difficulties and possibilities can appear in international education co-operations, (4) to find out which difficulties and opportunities appeared on the particular example of BSTU and UiN co-operation.

1.4. Limitations and Structure of the work

Under the heading of cooperative agreements, the economic and business literature regroups a whole array of governance mechanisms: licensing, franchising, subcontracting, consortia sponsored by government agencies, trade agreements, joint ventures, equity and non-equity coalitions and strategic alliances (Mytelka, 1991). Thereby, the studying of the whole cooperation process requires enormous research and analysis, so this work presents a narrower subject to be analyzed. We only engage the question of interuniversity alliances. Moreover, our basic concern is to explore the subject only on the international level. Another point is that we focus on the challenges and disadvantages but not the positive outcomes occurring in the international education co-operations.

There are five main parts in the work: Introduction, Theoretical framework, Methodology, Analysis and discussion, and Conclusion. Chapter one, the Introduction, focuses on the background and the importance of the subject, and sets objectives needed to answer the research question. It also describes my personal motivation and contribution in the existing literature.

Chapter two consists of two parts: International cooperation within higher education and Differences and challenges for international co-operations. The first part illuminates the concept of international cooperation in education, its background and significance for the modern world.

The second part is probably the main one in the theoretical chapter. It describes challenges that can occur in the international cooperation of universities, starting from the technical aspects related to differences in education systems (different length of courses, different accreditation systems etc.) and ending with the socio-cultural differences (describing the challenges of adaptation of the participants in the interuniversity alliances).

Methodology part describes the chosen method, the reasons and motives for its implementation, and presentation of the respondent for particular research.

The Analysis part implements all the theoretical findings on practice. It explores reasons and motives for the co-operation between BSTU Voenmekh and University of Nordland and also answers the main research question. This chapter is divided into 4 parts

- Historical analysis, which helps to understand deeper the motives and essence of the cooperation. It is also useful for the interviews' interpretations
- Analysis of difficulties connected with the difference of education systems of two universities, which as a result discovers and explains these difficulties
- Analysis of the socio-cultural problems. It becomes clear what problems BSTU students face with after the analysis
- Opportunities and implementation. This part describes which possibilities appear for the BSTU as a result of the cooperation

The last part consists of conclusions and discusses possible issues for further research to consider. Another important thing in this work are Appendixes, which consist of the information that is not so significant to put it in the main part of the work; nevertheless, it is still very relevant because it helps to better understand the considered subject.

II. Theoretical framework

2.1 International cooperation within higher education

Transnational education programs

The global demand for education, training and research propels the unprecedented worldwide mobility of peoples for variety of reasons including migration, political and economic security, trade and business, employment, tourism, study and research (Alam et al., 2013).

Transnational education is an arrangement in which courses or programs offered by an educational institution based in one country are delivered to students located in another country. More elaborate definition of the transnational education is given by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which states ‘all types of higher education study programs, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based’ (Alam et al., 2013).

The concept of international education may be defined as the process by which education becomes more available as broadly applicable to students from different countries and cultural backgrounds (Ebuchi, 1989) which, thus, requires the integration of special culturally attuned pedagogical dimensions with the general educational practices and activities (Knight, 2004 cited in Bernardo & Malakolunthu, 2013). Nation states, nowadays, have to integrate with the world due to impositions and propositions of globalization to every aspects of life. Education systems, one of the domains of globalization, have experienced this obligation deeply. Therefore, states and governments have prepared their education systems with a national point of view in order to meet this demand of the era. On the other hand, at both national and international level, it is expected that standards in higher education should be determined, systems should be complied with these standards and integrate themselves (Yergebekov & Temirbekova, 2012). The transnational education in the context of globalization has become a market driven activity to promote multicultural, diverse and internationalized outlooks among students. Thus, transnational education is considered to be borderless non official higher education which offers all forms of higher education activities operating in parallel to and outside the official higher education system of the host country (Alam et al., 2013).

The overall basis for EU-wide co-operation in education and training is set out in the "ET 2020" strategic framework adopted in May 2009. With actions at all levels of education and

training, there are four objectives to ET 2020: making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; and enhancing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Activities also contribute to the Bologna intergovernmental process in the field of higher education¹.

Bologna Process

The higher education reform, known as the “Bologna process” aimed to create convergence in higher education among a number of European countries and enhance opportunities for mobility, employment and collaborative research (Hermansson & Mårtensson, 2012). By adhesion to the Bologna Process, the countries that signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999, have taken on the implementation of the objectives set by this reform in the higher European education system, within their own universities (Todorescu et al., 2012). The main changes envisaged by the process involve harmonisation of the structure of University programmes, as well as the introduction of a credit system to facilitate mutual recognition of degrees (Cappellari & Lucifora, 2009).

The Bologna Process (BP) approach is distinguished by its emphasis on outcomes, moving the criteria for quality from input (what faculty teaches) to learning outcomes (what students will be able to do). Interest in Europeanization has grown mainly due to the Bologna Process (BP), with policies aimed at creating an integrated European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The BP approach is characterized by the internationalization of generally nationally-based procedures (Knight, 2003 cited in Pérez-Montoro & Tammaro, 2012). The main studies conducted in order to monitor each higher educational system’s progress in the ten action guidelines set by the Bologna Process consists of several important aspects regarding student and the teaching staff mobility, as a major objective of the European higher education system (Todorescu et al., 2012).

The central issue of the BP approach is how to develop “zones of mutual trust”, enabling European higher education staff and students to be more internationally knowledgeable and inter-culturally skilled. The activities of the BP to achieve transparency include tools such as the European Qualification Framework and other European standarts (such as ECTS, Diploma Supplement, Europass, Dublin Descriptors, the three-tier course structure) (Pérez-Montoro & Tammaro, 2012).

¹ <http://www.mbaskool.com/business-concepts/marketing-and-strategy-terms/7643-international-cooperative-strategies.html>

Higher Education Programmes

Internationalization is a key element of the strategic vision of many universities throughout the world. Aspirations typically focus on the development of “global graduates,” with an emphasis on the internationalization of the curriculum and on student mobility (Spencer-Oatey, 2012).

The European Commission supports a range of international education and training activities. These activities are an essential part of the EU's international policies and are becoming increasingly important. Activities are focused in particular on higher education because of its importance in the development of modern societies and its key role in social, cultural and economic development.

The European Commission's international co-operation programmes in higher education and training include¹:

- Erasmus Mundus: enhancing quality in higher education through scholarships and academic co-operation worldwide;
- Co-operation with industrialised countries: enhancing the quality of higher education and vocational education and training, mainly through joint study programmes;
- Jean Monnet: promoting teaching and research on European integration;
- Tempus: building co-operation between the EU and neighbouring regions;
- Edulink: capacity-building and regional integration in higher education in ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) states and regions;
- Alfa: supporting co-operation between higher education institutions in the EU and Latin America.

In 2010, DG Education and Culture completed a mapping study of external education policies, instruments and tools in EU/EEA countries – with a particular focus on policies for:

- EU candidate countries
- European neighbourhood countries
- Emerging countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Mexico and Argentina)
- High-income countries (Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Switzerland and USA)

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/overview_en.htm International co-operation in education and training

New digital technologies will most likely fundamentally change the global space of higher education in various ways (Edwards, 2012). In addition, higher education provided through distance learning using the Internet is a considerable and growing sector in international higher education (Naidoo, 2006; Marginson, 2008; Rovai & Downey, 2010). Moreover, the recent growth of the open course-ware (OCW) movement, including the expansion of massive online open courses (MOOCs), has created a new reality in online higher education (Rhoads et al., 2013). Finally, a number of prominent social theorists claim that new digital communication technology has great explanatory power regarding the geographical inequalities between countries and regions (Castells, 2001; Harvey, 1996; Giddens, 2000; Urry, 2003, 2007 cited in Rye, 2013).

Different Interuniversity cooperation categories and possible reasons and motives for interuniversity cooperation are represented in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 accordingly.

2.2 Differences and challenges for international co-operations

2.2.1 Differences in education systems

International cooperation is always challenged by differences in education systems between countries. The formal differences between the educational systems in the two countries in addition to the cultural values stemming from different educational traditions, makes cooperation challenging (Bourmistrov et al., 2011).

These differences can be caused by several reasons. Muller and Karle (1993) suggested that differences in education systems are the consequences of the different industrialization level of countries and the system is forming on the basis of historical background, and they claimed in their article: “Societies have developed different early solutions to career preparation, and the early solutions have influenced later adaptations. If one traces the historical development of educational systems in Europe, for instance, two aspects are amazing: first, how different the educational systems are that have slowly evolved since the last century in various European countries, and second, the great extent to which the present educational systems still mirror their beginnings, although each of these systems has seen extensive reforms and adaptations (Ringer, 1979; Archer, 1979; 1989; Konig et al., 1988; Muller 1990)”.

Another one factor that explains the difference of education systems among countries is that educational systems can be distinguished along the criteria of 'standardization' of educational standards and 'stratification' (Allmendinger, 1989).

Standardization is the degree to which the quality of education meets the same standards nationwide. It could be such variables as teachers' training, school budgets, curricula, and the uniformity of school-leaving examinations (Allmendinger, 1989). Educational systems differ considerably with respect to the extent to which they allow a cohort of students to survive. One system may sort out large proportions of students early on and let only a small minority continue beyond a minimum level (Muller & Karle, 1993). Standards, among other things, are powerful instruments: they reduce transaction costs and information asymmetries, constitute structural/systemic interrelations – e.g. in the way they shape and/or constitute markets – and serve the public interest (Hesser & Vries, 2011). For instance, Allmendinger (1989) have founded out that in the USA differences among universities according to ownership, size and quality of faculty produce students with very heterogeneous knowledge and abilities. And the opposite situation is in West German and Norwegian universities which are state institutions and as such, they are supposed to adhere to the same standards throughout the nation. The fast growing young population in the emerging economies of Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, etc.), South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan), North Asia (China, Philippines) South America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Columbia, Venezuela, etc.), Middle East (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirate, Iran, Yemen) North Africa (Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Ethiopia), South & Central Africa (South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, etc) is putting pressure on domestic education systems. The countries concerned are increasingly unable to satisfy local demand for higher education as many of these developing countries cannot expand the existing capacity of their higher education in the face of increasing demand (Aydarova, 2012). And that is the reason why Asian countries such as Korea, Japan, China, Thailand and Indonesia are presently at the forefront of standardisation education. Most of the Asian countries have a national standardisation education strategy. Governments, universities and standardisation organisations work hand in hand (Hesser & Vries, 2011).

Stratification is the proportion of a cohort that attains the maximum number of school years provided by the educational system, coupled with the degree of differentiation within given educational levels (Allmendinger, 1989). Vertical stratification refers to distinct course levels or cycles, which are arranged in a sequence; each cycle gives access to a higher degree and more years of education compared to the previous one. Horizontal stratification includes at least two kinds of differentiation. The first one refers to different types of institutions or educational sectors that can be hierarchically classified on the basis of degree of selectivity, and quality of instruction and academic prestige. The second one refers to academic disciplines, fields of study or majors, which vary in their organization, type of knowledge, selectivity, academic and

economic prestige, retention rates, and economic payoffs (Clark 1983; Bourdieu 1996; van de Werfhorst & Kraaykamp 2001; Reimer et al. 2008, cited in Triventi, 2011).

Muller and Karle (1993) discuss stratification in the context of its influences on social classes and claim: "education is distributed in different ways and with differential results for the social classes. For the cohorts studied, the considerable differences between nations in the unequal distribution of education to the offspring of the various social classes is mainly due to the cross-national differences in the general opportunities of attaining the various levels of education, and to the channelling of the student population through the educational institutions and transition". And modern researches in this area between some European countries shows such results: The stronger degree of stratification is found in Norway, where on average the best educational options are considered 64% more prestigious than the others. It is followed by Spain with a medium-high level (34%) and Germany with a medium-low level of institutional stratification (22%), while Italy is in the last position (11%) (Triventi, 2011).

On the basis of what has been written above on standardisation and stratification degrees of countries, it is possible to distinguish the main educational system differences of various countries, which could be challenging for international cooperation between universities (Bourmistrov et al., 2011):

➤ *Differences in a course length*

Cooperation within higher education and research do meet several obstacles as a result of different educational systems, different lengths of study programmes (Bourmistrov et al., 2011). Higher education programmes varied between countries as far as the types of programmes and institutions, the length of study programmes and the levels of degrees (Teichler, 2004). Amongst cooperative education programmes there is great diversity in placement length and structure. These parameters appear to be driven as much by timetabling and regulation demands as pedagogical reasons (Fleming, 2005).

Each study programme has an additional document that regulates the organisation of the placements within the respective study programme, stating the aims, objectives, duration and place as well as the guidance, responsibilities of persons involved and reporting of the placement (European commission, 2009).

The first variable accounting for institutional stratification is course length, which indicates whether the graduate received her degree from a long or a short programme. The first type of courses allows access to a doctoral programme while the second type does not allow it; the formal duration of the first type of course ranges from 4 to 6 years, whereas the duration of the second ones ranges from 3 to 4 years. The length of programme implies a 'vertical choice' in

those systems in which short and long programmes are arranged in a sequence (Norway and Spain), while it corresponds to an 'horizontal choice' in those countries where short and long programmes are parallel courses (Germany and Italy) (Triventi, 2011).

The Declaration of 1999 more or less Bologna suggest standardizing the of; length study programmes Europe (see Reicherat and Waichter Kampf 2002; 2000, cited in Teichler, 2004).

As already pointed out, many European governments and institutions of higher education reacted in the so called "Bologna process" to what they perceived as globalisation pressures by standardizing the lengths of study programmes and types of degree (Hauget al. 1999; HaugandTauch2001;Teichler2001, cited in Teichler, 2004).

➤ *Differences in quality of study*

The structural differences between the Western and Eastern education system create many difficulties with respect to being able to translate degrees and the quality of the work carried out in the two systems (Bourmistrov et al., 2011).

Many stakeholders in higher education would find it difficult to define quality precisely. In reality, it is a relative concept that means different things to different people. Any definition of quality must be defined in terms of the context in which it is used (International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO), 2011).

The understanding of quality concept in different contexts is very important issue for international cooperation because of the institutions' increased autonomy, international guidelines, the sharp rise in the number of students, new teaching methods, a changing environment for study and stricter general requirements imposed by society with regard to transparency and documentation (NOKUT, 2003). In the case of higher education institution, we should bear in mind that an institution may be of high quality in relation to one factor or in the perspective of a category of stakeholders, but of low quality in relation to another (International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO), 2011).

Evaluations and other surveys have shown that institutions work in a targeted way on quality issues, but also that work on quality is often somewhat lacking in system and coherence, documentation, follow-up of decisions and administrative foundation (NOKUT, 2003). The frequently chosen option in areas of high-level expertise to leave the rating of quality to the experts themselves (the scholars, the representatives of the higher education system, the professions, etc.) often leads to disinformation and a distortion in order to serve one's own interest of reputation and exclusiveness. Therefore, a need seems to exist for at least a counter-checking neutral player (Teichler, 2004).

To deal with the problem of fairness there is a variety of accreditation practices all over the world. For instance, in the USA, external quality monitoring is done by regional, national and specialized agencies. These agencies in turn are accredited by CHEA and/or the USDE. In the UK, the QAA for higher education does institutional accreditation and subject reviews. The Indian system (NAAC's process) of accreditation is similar to the UK though the details of the criteria are different. As for the stages of accreditation, the NAAC process has similarity with the USA. In Australia, the practice of quality assurance is also EQM. However, it is different from the practices of India, UK and the USA. The AUQA undertakes institutional audit for which there is no specified criteria. But, the process is somewhat similar to the ISO model, and thus, the AUQA reviews the institutional promise and delivery of quality (Mishra, 2006).

These agencies increased transparency, security and information about higher education for students and society more generally. They equally offer higher education institutions recognition and credibility and opportunities to demonstrate their dedication to high quality in an increasingly competitive and sceptical environment. For the quality assurance agencies the proposals enhance their own quality and credibility and connect them more productively to their wider European professional fraternity (ENQA report on Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2009).

Also for solving such problems internationally in April 2005, the INQAAHE general assembly in Wellington, New Zealand agreed on the "INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice" which is the result of discussion and consultations involving representatives from over 65 countries. While recognizing the cultural and historical context of external quality assuring agencies in different countries, the Guidelines of Good Practice is a document intended to ensure the quality of the agencies (INQAAHE, 2005), and thus, can be considered as meta-accreditation guidelines (Mishra, 2006).

➤ *Differences in a curricula*

Diversity of expectations, commitment, acceptance of differences practiced in this collaboration revealed the importance of academic dialogue among developed and developing countries and suggested possible standards for future international curriculum development (Kushnarenko, 2010). International students' diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles may not be met by the traditional, Euro-centric curriculum and pedagogy inherent in most Western post-secondary institutions (Victoria, 2008)

Global academic linkages are becoming more visible in an increasing number of collaborative initiatives, such as transnational educational brands/branch campuses, international consortia, offshore independent academic institutions, trans- regional institutional departments,

study centers, virtual universities, cross-border degree recognition initiatives, and university curriculum development partnerships (Knight, 2001, cited in Kushnarenko, 2010). International students often perceive the content of the curriculum as exclusionary and cite concerns that instructors show a lack of interest in their prior knowledge (Arthur, 2004; Chen, 1996; Grey, 2002; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). Part of the difficulties these students encounter may be due to the traditional teaching and learning environment within Western higher educational institutions that may not reflect the cultural backgrounds and diverse learning needs of the international student population (Adams, 1992; Guo & Jamal, 2007; Hayle, 2008; Joseph, 2008; Samuel & Burney, 2003; Schapper & Mayson, 2004; Schuerholz-Lehr & van Gyn, 2006, cited in Victoria, 2008).

Curricula with an international orientation in content, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context and designed for domestic students as well as foreign students (Hall, 2007).

The Ministry's International Agreements on Cooperation in International Education signed in 1992 with the governments of the USA, Korea, India, Belarus, Bulgaria, Rumania, Azerbaijan and in 2001 with the governments of France, Sweden, Armenia, Israel, Moldova, Poland, Turkmenistan (International Accords on Cooperation in the Fields of Education and Science, 2007) currently steer collaborative academic activities. The key points of these documents is the implementation of cooperative agreements in education on curriculum development, education administration innovations, projects in area studies, student and staff exchange initiatives, joint publications, etc. (Kushnarenko, 2010).

Internationalization of the curriculum can refer to such varied internationalization activities as study abroad programs, foreign language courses, interdisciplinary or area programs, or the provision of programs or courses with an international, intercultural, or comparative focus (Bremer & van der Wende, 1995, cited in Victoria, 2008).

➤ *Differences in credit systems*

The introduction of unitary degree and qualification structures clearly imply standardization and hierarchization based on standards determined by the universities. This in turn means that it is the academic ideals with their theoretical and methodological requirements that form the basis of valuation and positions within the system (Bleiklie, 2005).

There are some conceptual issues around the theme of credit systems (Ulicna et al., 2011):

- Establishing trust between HEI faculty members on the quality of courses at the exchange partner, especially when credits will fulfill required programme component. Key differences make the development of mutual trust a greater challenge than when

exchanging students between very similar systems

- Differences between systems in the way the degree and programme components relate to each other and the related lack of understanding of course choices available to students
- Difference in how learning is levelled and structured between different systems. For instance, in the EU Bachelor degree consists of a first cycle of 3 or 4 years, followed by a second cycle of 1 or 2 years at the Masters level, and a third cycle of at least 3 years at the Doctoral level. In the US the Bachelor degree consists of 4 years divided into 2 years of lower-division general education requirements, and 2 years of upper-division major/minor programmes, followed by 1-2 years for the Masters level, and 3 years for the Doctoral level
- Difference in the amount/volume of learning as expressed through a numeric value (credit points). For instance In the main EU credit system (ECTS) the amount/volume of learning measured by credit points includes all study time (workload) both in an out of a classroom or laboratory setting that is typically needed to reach the required learning outcomes. And In the US the amount/volume of learning measured covers only contact time in a classroom or laboratory.

In 2003 the Quality Reform was implemented, including the implementation of the 3 cycle system, the ECTS credits and grades, and the focus on student and staff mobility (Bourmistrov et al., 2011).

In Europe student mobility has been strengthened by such things as the introduction of a standardized system for credits (ECTS), thus facilitating (in principle at least) student mobility at the European level as well as nationally. Modularization implies a break with traditional rather idiosyncratic study programmes that have been common in a number of countries by breaking the programs down into what is intended to be formally comparable units in a way that greatly facilitates student mobility across institutional and national borders (Bleiklie, 2005).

The recognition of studies and diplomas is a prerequisite for the creation of an Open European area of education and training where students and teachers can move without obstacles. This is why the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was developed as a means of improving academic recognition for study abroad (Bourmistrov et al., 2011).

ECTS is based on learning outcomes that define what a student is expected to know, understand and be able to do for each programme component combined with the expected student workload to achieve these learning outcomes. Workload covers all learning activities (contact hours, projects, practical work, autonomous study, etc.) (Ulicna et al., 2011).

ECTS provides an instrument to create transparency, to build bridges between institutions and to widen the choices available to students. The system makes it easier for institutions to recognise the learning achievements of students through the use of commonly understood measurements - credits and grades - and it also provides a means to interpret national systems of higher education. ECTS is based on three core elements: information (on study programmes and student achievement), mutual agreement (between the partner institutions and the student) and the use of ECTS credits (to indicate student work- load) (Bourmistrov et al., 2011).

➤ *Differences in higher education governance*

In recent decades, higher education systems in Europe have been undergoing a major transformation influenced by national and international developments such as the rapid expansion of student enrolment, a relative decrease in public funding along with a shortage of private funding, the increasing importance of research and innovation in the global and knowledge-based economy, and wider competition between higher education institutions. More recently, the impact of the Bologna Process on curricular reform, quality assurance, and mobility has become one of the key propellers of change (European commission, 2008).

“Higher education governance is a key policy issue of the 21st century”, (Kennedy, 2003). While autonomy opens up areas for improvement and competition, it is restricted by the influence (some argue, interference) of state-driven higher education policy and the constantly increasing intervention of external quality assurance. Lately, the financial crisis has brought new governance challenges to the higher education sector (Hénard & Mitterle, 2009).

In view of convergence-promoting processes such as the Bologna Process and the spread of New Public Management, domestic higher education institutions are increasingly subject to competing visions of how university systems and institutions of higher education should be governed (see Vaira 2004; Olsen 2007; Krućken et al. 2007). At the same time, individual national higher education systems are still also anchored in country-specific regulatory and coordinative regimes, which to a great extent reflect national historical and institutional developments (see Neave 2003, cited in Dobbins et al., 2011).

In Europe and beyond, the Bologna Process has also played a key role in stoking national reforms of higher education and there are strong reasons to believe that Bologna is likely to foster changes in national governance structures...As a result of transnational pressures and domestic exigencies, national systems of higher education governance are—to a greater or lesser degree—being reshaped, transformed, modernized and in many cases “marketized”. These

changes have reshaped the role of the state, heralded new paradigms for university management, and contributed to new forms of university-industrial relations (Dobbins et al., 2011).

The need for longer-term planning and development of strategies for higher education is widely recognised across Europe. The majority of countries involved in this study are implementing or are in the process of introducing specific policy documents that outline national strategic priorities for ensuring the financial sustainability of the higher education sector. Although concrete policy solutions vary from country to country, some common medium term objectives are apparent. These include (European commission, 2008):

- Increasing public funding for higher education;
- Granting more autonomy to institutions for managing financial resources;
- Establishing direct links between results and the amount of public funding allocated;
- Encouraging the diversification of funding sources as well as the creation of partnerships with research institutes, businesses, and regional authorities.

2.2.2 Socio-cultural differences

In the 1970s, as the protective boundaries between industrial sectors and among national economies broke down under the pressure of rapid technological change and increased internationalization of capital, production and knowledge, the world economy entered a period of turbulence and change. Firms cope with uncertainties via the formation of strategic partnership (Mytelka, 1991).

In most general terms cooperation can be defined as the joint performance of an activity by at least two actors in a way that the actions undertaken by one partner intendedly facilitate the actions undertaken the other partner/s (Albers, 2005). Another one definition for cooperation/alliance, which supplements the previous one, is a voluntary, long-term, contractual relationship between two firms to achieve mutual and individual objectives through the sharing of resources (Tjemkes, 2008). Having reviewed the literature related to our subject, we recognized the great amount of definitions of the cooperation and strategic alliances, but this work focuses only on the agreements in higher education. Moreover, we deal only with those on the international level. Anyway we had to clarify the notions of “cooperation” and “cooperative alliances” and put the information about them in the Appendix 2.

International university cooperation is no longer a choice but a developmental key in today’s global market. Graduates most likely will work across national boundaries and deal with people from different cultural background. Hence, academic alliances that enable students to

gain international exposure and credentials will give their members an edge in student recruitment (Chan, 2004).

Worldwide demand for higher education is growing at an exponential rate, driven by economic progress of developing nations, demographic trends and increased globalization of economies and societies. Students' participation in higher education rose by 128% from 1990 to 2007 (66.9 to 152.5 million students). The global mobility of students has also increased, quadrupling over the past three decades to 3.3 million in 2008 compared to 2.8 million international students' global mobility in 2007. Based on current trends, the number of international students will continue to be around 6.7 million by the year 2020 (Alam et al., 2013).

Talking about international university cooperations, we deal with both the question of changes in education systems and the question of their participants' adaptation to such modifications. The three main partners in every co-operative education program are employers, students, and the university. All three have important roles to play for the co-op program to be successful, and all three parties derive substantial benefits from the program (Memorial University, 2009). As various authors (Black, 2004; De Wit & Beelen, 2013; Leask, 2007; Lunn, 2008; Stohl, 2007) argue, academic staff are crucial elements in the success of the process, and fortunately the importance of faculty in internationalization initiatives is increasingly being recognized (Brookes & Becket, 2011, p. 378 cited in Spencer-Oatey).

Challenges in Students' Adaptation

The concept of international education may be defined as the process by which education becomes more available as broadly applicable to students from different countries and cultural backgrounds (Ebuchi, 1989) which, thus, requires the integration of special culturally attuned pedagogical dimensions with the general educational practices and activities (Knight, 2004 cited in Bernardo & Malakolunthu, 2013). Studying in a multicultural environment has become overwhelmingly popular all over the world. While international students made great contributions to overseas academic communities (i.e. enriching culture diversity and bringing financial income), they often encountered challenges in adaptation to new learning contexts, with many facing daunting linguistic and academic challenges (Devos, 2003; Leder & Forgasz, 2004; Skyrme, 2007 cited in Yu & Shen, 2012).

Ward's defined socio-cultural adaptation as an individual's ability to fit in or negotiate interactive aspects of the new cultural environment (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999 cited in Yu & Shen, 2012). Masgoret and Ward (2006) established an interactive model of the relationships

between target language proficiency, communication competence, effective intercultural interaction and socio-cultural adaptation (Yu & Shen, 2012).

Among obstacles that were identified as limiting the possibilities of adaptation there were such points as value differences, the lack of common lived experience, different habits and priorities, differences in background, different cultural, social and economic experiences. Lack of commonalities meant teachers were also unable to relate to their students. Several acknowledged that they did not deal with differences because of their own discomfort and fear about being insensitive towards religion. In identifying language as a barrier, teachers spoke about the challenge of representing concepts in ways that reached students. Inadvertently, teachers might promote implicit culturally-constructed environmental messages that might be contrary to the student's prior experience of the environment, potentially creating a conflict for the student (Blanchet-Cohen & Reilly, 2013).

Recent studies showed that international students encountered problems pertaining not only to socio-cultural adaptation, such as adjustment to social customs and norms (Schwarzer et al.1994), and psychological adaptation, such as feeling depressed, anxious, and lonely due to the loss of their social support networks (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Yang & Clum, 1995), but also academic adaptation such as worrying about their second language (L2) proficiency and academic performance (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Kagan & Cohen, 1990; Ying & Liese, 1994 cited in Yu & Shen, 2012).

Authors in many different fields such as business, psychology, foreign languages, and education have drawn attention to the complexities of intercultural interaction. Dunn and Wallace (2008, p. 249) maintain that in transnational education there are four main challenges:

- Arriving at common goals and expectations and negotiating relationships;
- Achieving effective communications among institutions, educators, staff, and students;
- Designing and delivering curriculum and assessment for “localized (yet) international” content and teaching approaches;
- Supporting transnational students (Spencer-Oatey, 2012).

In the West, researchers in cross-cultural psychology have conducted a considerable amount of research on the acculturation of international students focusing on culture shock, socio-cultural adaptation and psychological adaptation but little attention in this area has been directed to investigating students’ academic adaptation. The primary goal of most international students was to obtain good academic results in the foreign institutions. Academic issues were at the forefront of both these students’ and their institutions’ concerns. Research showed that academic success would impact significantly on students’ socio-cultural adaptation and psychological well-being and vice versa (Li & Kaye,1998 cited in Yu &Shen, 2012).

In addition to all these aspects during the international interuniversity cooperation, there might be considerable differences between traditions in the field of business administration. The development of the research tradition in business administration do not occur quickly. So, the differences in the research traditions can create difficulties in the education and research cooperation (Bourmistrov et al., 2011).

The importance of teachers in socio-cultural adaptation

International collaborations are frequently mentioned in university strategies as a way of promoting internationalization, often in relation to achieving greater connectivity among staff from different backgrounds. Much less explicit attention is paid to the underlying rationale for facilitating such connectivity, or the challenges academic staff may face in participating in such collaborations (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Teachers and pre-school teachers' education appears as a vital strategic issue to operate different kind of changes in education and, consequently, on concepts about the profession and teachers' professionalism. The importance of teachers and pre-school teachers' education in so called industrialized countries is shown by the fact that professionals' early education takes place at a higher education level, in universities or similar institutions (Pereira, 2011). Teaching is essentially a behavioral output (Paisey et al., 2007; Hyatt & Filler, 2007), which has been credited to producing desirable levels of student achievement (Tosolt, 2009; Suldo et al., 2009; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007) by affecting favorably their physical and mental health (Larusso et al., 2008) and creating a positive and supportive learning environment (Reinke et al., 2008). Specific teacher behaviors that are believed to have positive effects are those in which students perceive their teachers to be supportive and helpful, deploying diverse teaching practices that are appealing, affirming the students' academic successes, demonstrating fairness and fostering classroom environment that allows curiosity and freedom of inquiry (Suldo et al., 2009 cited in Bernardo, Malakolunthu, 2013).

Nowadays educators are teaching an ever-growing number of children from families of differing ethnic and racial backgrounds. Today's class-room has become a point of confluence where diverse cultural experiences represent the norm. No teacher or student teacher can afford to neglect the rapidly increasing cultural pluralism of our society, composed as it is of myriad religious, linguistic, racial, and ethnic elements (McFadden et al., 1997). In the words of Tosolt (2009) they are prescribed as caring behaviors. Tosolt also posits that the caring behaviors may bear but implicit perceptual-translations that resonate variedly with different cultural contexts which the teachers must be conscious and sensitive about in order to be culturally-congruent with the students' ethnicity and nativity (Bernardo & Malakolunthu, 2013).

The multicultural approach requires a certain degree of cultural transcendence on the part of the teacher who must be able to rise above the idiosyncrasies of her or his own cultural group. This instructional posture becomes "transcultural" inasmuch as teachers, administrators, and counselors transcend their own cultural backgrounds in an effort to empower students as individuals and as members of a multicultural community (McFadden et al., 1997).

Bernardo & Malakolunthu (2013) speak of the Diversity Pedagogy Theory (DPT) (Sheets, 2005) which advances a set of principles that intertwine the connection between culture and cognition. It's mentioned there that (Sheets, 2005, p. 1): “. . .to be effective as a teacher, he/she must understand and acknowledge the critical role culture plays in the teaching-learning process. DPT maintains that culturally inclusive teachers (a) observe children's cultural behavioral patterns to identify individual and group cultural competencies and skills; and (b) use this knowledge to guide their teaching decisions. The DPT propagates eight dimensions that have to be pedagogically weighed in for effective teaching in a multicultural classroom, namely: diversity, identity, social interactions, culturally-safe classroom context, language, culturally-inclusive content, instruction, and assessment. These dimensions have to be corroborated duly through appropriate teacher preparation, instructional activities, behaviors and actions to set the tone and environment right for the involvement, engagement and learning of the students regardless of their nativity and cultural background.

Equality in education means not only a teaching environment free of prejudice but a pedagogy that respects and addresses the different styles of learning and diverse cultural experiences of the students in the classroom (Banks & Banks, 1995; Ladson-Billings,1994). Teachers must consider their students' psycho-social development, cultural background, current skill level, and available instructional resources (McFadden et al., 1997).

Moreover Wen and Cle'ment (2003) suggested that the teacher's involvement, attitude, immediacy and teaching style exerts a significant and determining sociocultural influence on student engagement and WTC (Cao, 2011).

Language difficulties

Since global firms desire managers that are able to succeed across national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries (Vielba & Edelshain, 1995), it seems only appropriate that IB programs intentionally integrate foreign language and IB courses. Moreover, one of the main business school accrediting organizations—The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)—requires that candidate programs prepare their graduates to “interact with persons from other cultures” (AACSB, 2010, p. 69; Walker, 2009cited in Martin et al., 2011).

Language has always been an integral part of the business situation. Yet, language and the management thereof (such as translation and interpretation) have never been given their rightful prominence and importance in business sectors. Moreover, of all the symbolic systems, language is the most complex, most socially and culturally affected, and the richest (in part because of its reliance on convention). Through it, we learn almost all of the other systems. With it, we can achieve very special effects (Ulvydiene, 2013). We all know that language can be a problem. Lack of a common language impedes communication and makes everything go slower (Broch, 2006).

The core components of an international student's socio-cultural adaptation were language proficiency and communication competence, supplemented by effective intercultural interaction, which in turn constituted a part of the broader construct of socio-cultural adaptation. Good proficiency in the target language was the basis of successful communication among members of different ethnolinguistic communities (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005). In a study abroad context, better language fluency was seen to be directly related to more interaction with members of the host culture and as such led to fewer socio-cultural adjustment problems (Ward & Kennedy, 1993 cited in Yu & Shen, 2012).

Sawir (2005) identified a number of problems (e.g. linguistic confidence, English proficiency and motivation) international students had in coping with second language (L2) and highlighted that the lack of confidence in speaking L2 was one of the more serious learning difficulties facing international students. Difficulties with L2 affect both academic and social-cultural adaptation (cf. Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000 cited in Yu & Shen, 2012). English is the most important language in the world today. It is recognized as an international language and the official language for the sciences, and other professions. However, in many parts of the world, English is a second or a foreign language (Hassani & Rajab, 2012). When students have not enough knowledge of Business English, this can contribute to difficulties in communication with teachers, writing papers and exams, etc. (Bourmistrov et al., 2011). Not only the relatively low proficiency of the foreign students both to speak and write in the language becomes a huge obstacle in the teaching–learning process especially when it is the medium of instruction, it creates many ambiguous situations and unwarranted tensions in the social front as well. In the absence of an intermediate language for interpersonal communication, the interactivity and socialization between the foreign and local students are also constrained. Consequently, there is polarization of the individual national groups which at times leads to misunderstanding (Bernardo & Malakolunthu, 2013). Nevertheless, there are ways to deal with this problem. Some studies suggested that greater interaction with the host community would contribute to better competence in the host language (Clément et al., 2001). According to Ward

(2004) target language skills helped establish social support and interpersonal relationships, which in turn facilitated adaptation (Yu & Shen, 2012).

Communication problem can occur not only among students, but also among partners of interuniversity cooperation. Before starting international communication we have to be sure that the partners understand each other correctly (Nevzorova et. al., 2001). The question of understanding was getting more and more crucial, because before becoming a means of international communication, the English language gave birth to some terminology in different European languages the meaning of which conflicts with the original understanding of the word (Ter-Minasova, 19969 cited in Bourmistrov et al., 2011).

Two next notions following from the subject of language difficulties are communication anxiety and linguistic confidence. Communication anxiety was first introduced by McCroskey (1977), referring to the level of fear associated with actual or anticipated communication (Yu & Shen, 2012). Hassani & Rajab (2012) define an anxiety as individual emotion of apprehension which is related to a simulation of being anxious. Based on several studies, when learners experience moderate anxiety, they may not attend classes, never volunteer, avoid doing their homework and speaking in classes, or sit at the back of the classroom to decrease the embarrassment of being called to speak. Furthermore, when learners have intense anxiety, they may be terrified of taking a language course, have low performance and achievement, and as a result dislike learning the language and will not choose to study at all (Hassani & Rajab, 2012).

As opposed to the anxiety linguistic confidence is an important predictor of foreign language proficiency (Clément et al., 1994). This referred to one's confidence in being able to communicate in an adaptive and efficient way when using the L2 (Clément & Bourhis, 1996). Due to the close interactive relationship between foreign language proficiency and socio-cultural adaptation (Masgoret & Ward, 2006), and the direct effect of L2 confidence on willingness to communicate (WTC). (MacIntyre et al., 1998), it was inferred that linguistic confidence would exert a critical effect on the degree of socio-cultural adaptation (Yu & Shen, 2012). Indeed, some researchers such as MacIntyre and his associates (1998) argue for the importance of promoting learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) in L2 education. WTC in L2 was defined as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547 cited in Cao, 2011).

Tolerance problem

The world today is characterized by an ever growing number of contacts resulting in communication between people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This communication takes place because of contacts within the areas of business, military

cooperation, science, education, mass media, entertainment, tourism but also because of immigration brought about by labor shortage or political conflicts (Ulvydiene, 2013). In our case, we talk about international education and pedagogy. An important dimension of international education has to do with the aspect of multiculturalism which in practical sense means making students realize and recognize the reality of cultural diversity and the truth of one culture being as good as another (Bernardo & Malakolunthu, 2013). The principal aims of multicultural pedagogy are the promotion of individual student achievement together with mutual respect and tolerance for one another such that students develop a realistic understanding of the world they live in and are empowered to live effective, productive lives (Council for Basic Education, 1993). Providing equity and eliminating discrimination in teaching and learning also are important functions of multicultural education (McFadden et al., 1997).

Because of such multiculturalism workplace diversity has increasingly been a norm rather than an exception in business communities worldwide. Business schools have strived to adequately prepare students to function and succeed in a diversified work environment (Divinagracia & Divinagracia, 2012). The term "multicultural" refers to the convergence of cultures in our emerging global community. Multicultural education responds to the instructional needs and differing socio-historical realities of students from various socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, and immigrant groups that form the culturally diverse student population of this society (McFadden et al., 1997).

In a study conducted by Zhai and Scheer (2004), findings showed that students with a higher level of global perspective tended to have a more positive attitude towards diversity, or more specifically, cultural diversity. Although cultural diversity tended to focus more on ethnicity, the authors claimed that a favorable attitude towards cultural diversity is critical in preparing students to participate in global workplace communities. A positive attitude towards cultural diversity may thus be considered as an antecedent towards expressed support for workplace diversity (Divinagracia & Divinagracia, 2012).

Education that is culturally-responsive to student diversity in the classroom can thereby become more effective overall, since learning is greater when teachers and learners engage in a dynamic process where curriculum is co-authored (Entwistle & Smith, 2002) integrating multicultural knowledge and perspectives. Teaching develops best through processes of co-participation and social engagement in authentic contexts and as a function of connections with others in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). The challenge for international business educators is for them to identify ways of improving the diversity attitudes of students using innovative learning types and tools (Divinagracia & Divinagracia, 2012).

Cross-cultural understanding, open-mindedness, anticipation of complexity, resistance to stereo-typing or derision of cultural difference, and perspectives consciousness recognition, knowledge, and appreciation of other peoples' points of view are essential in the development of a global perspective (Case, 1993; Hanvey, 1975; Kniep, 1986 cited in McFadden et al., 1997). Cultural traditions, rules, morality are not determined by our genes but are learned from and through the people around us. But many of us tend to believe that they are inbuilt in our nature and that is why we unconsciously expect people from other cultures to behave the same way as we are and we expect them to share the same values. Understanding of cultural diversity comes only when we meet people from other cultures (Kukarenko, 2006).

In countries of multi-ethnicity population, political influences in education have always foreshadowed decisions made in attempts to include and sustain each ethnic value in the curriculum. Teachers must use their creative thinking skills in planning their lessons which also could foster tolerance among students especially in this matter, multi-ethnic tolerance (Maaruf et al., 2012).

Multicultural education strives to value and respect the uniqueness of persons within a common human community. It expresses the democratic ideals of equality, of unity within diversity, and of justice for all, free of any racial, gender, or social class discrimination (McFadden et al., 1997). Productive international cooperation thus depends heavily on our will to listen, to be open-minded, ready for cooperation and interaction, having respect for diversity, having a trust and to be honest. Respect for cultural diversity implies not only learning but also coming over cultural stereotypes (Kukarenko, 2006).

Different objectives, mutual agreement and trust

Canney Davison and Ward (1999), who have conducted extensive research into various kinds of international teams, recommend that an important first step when a new team is established is for members to identify, prioritize, and agree on their goals and objectives. Yet as Dunn and Wallace imply, this is often not a straightforward process. Referring to McNicoll et al.'s (McNicoll et al., 2005) study, they explain that “Educational and commercial goals may not be fully teased out in initial negotiations, thus leading to ‘conflicting interests and a mismatch of expectations’” between the institutions (Dunn & Wallace, 2008, p. 252). This in turn can lead to relationship problems if not handled carefully (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Corporate strategic objectives are multidimensional and often contradictory. Actions dictated by one strategic objective frequently impede another, equally important objective, requiring managers to prioritize, often with limited success. Managers need a framework to help them sort out the advice for managing global strategic alliances. (Yoshino & Rangan, 1995).

Achieving mutual understanding can be difficult because only a proportion of meaning can ever be conveyed explicitly. Much has to be left for the participants to work out, and in intercultural interaction, this can be particularly problematic because people may focus on different clues when inferring meaning and/or they may arrive at different meanings from the same clues (Spencer-Oatey, Işık-Güler, & Stadler, 2011 cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2012).

But how to guarantee that partner institutions, teachers and students in the cooperative programs display long-term commitment to the cooperative education programs? How to guarantee that the cooperative program development will be a managerial priority at institutions? (Bourmistrov et al., 2011) How to guarantee that interuniversity cooperations act to achieve the same objectives?

Everyone needs a certain amount of confidence that others in the same setting share this knowledge to a certain extent and will, accordingly, behave reasonably. This is pre-contractual trust; a trust in others to keep to the social script. In cross cultural cooperation the cultural scripts and precontractual basis for trust cannot be taken for granted but have to be negotiated and re-established. Knowledge about cultural scripts and stereotypes are necessary in this process (Lotherington, 2006). Team members need to explore their respective beliefs and positions with openness, taking what Wang (2008) calls an “intercultural dialogue” approach, which she explains as follows: “Intercultural dialogue understands that interactions between individuals from different cultures entail inherited frameworks infused with differing perceptions and values. However, dialogue offers possibilities for building emergent understandings and new frameworks rather than submission to imported wisdom. . . .The result is a group of educated practitioners with more sophisticated repertoires than agents from both the indigenous and foreign cultures. (pp. 59, 65)” (Spencer-Oatey, 2012).

The formal differences between the educational systems in the two countries as well as the cultural values stemming from different research traditions can represent important challenges, if not to say obstacles for the practical realization of the international programs (Bourmistrov et al., 2011). That is why trust is a fundamental condition for cooperation and development; it provides space for action and offers a basis for establishing long-term relationships. When cooperation across cultures fails, lack or damage of trust might be one explanation. Knowledge and understanding of conditions for building trust within a wide spectrum of societal and institutional contexts is thus absolutely crucial in establishing cooperative relations and development processes (Lotherington, 2006).

Project goals need to be regularly revisited and updated; staff needs to continually reflect, both individually and as a team, on their relative openness to new thinking; and they need to actively keep considering their use of language, communication strategies, and communicative

styles, checking how effective and/or acceptable they are to their partners (Spencer-Oatey, 2012).

To conclude, it possible to say that not only universities themselves face with different challenges and obstacles in cooperation context. Also other participants are governments, students, academic staff, researchers, labor market etc. And to cooperate successfully it is necessary to consider possible problems connected with all groups of stakeholders.

We recognised these groups in our work and found out what could be done to make cooperation more successful, we also wrote about different opportunities, which are helpful for dealing with such challenges.

III. Methodology

The purpose of this master thesis is to find out what difficulties and challenges University of Nordland and BSTU “Voenmekh” faced during their cooperation. On the basis of this purpose the methodology used for the research is defined and represented in this chapter. Theoretical aspects of the problem were discussed in previous part of the work and methodology chapter is needed to connect theoretical part of the master thesis with empirical findings and conclusions.

Research is a common parlance refers to a search of knowledge. One can also define research as a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic (Kothari, 2006). Research is a process of intellectual discovery, which has the potential to transform our knowledge and understanding of the world around us (Ryan et al., 2002). According to Clifford Woody research comprises defining and redefining problems, formulating hypothesis or suggested solutions; collecting, organizing and evaluating data; making deductions and research conclusions; and at last carefully tasting whether they fit formulated hypothesis (Kothari, 2006).

To address issues in an integrated and systematic way a research methodology is needed (Blessing et al., 1998). Methodology is defined by Easterby- Smith et al. (2012) as the way research techniques and methods are grouped together to provide a coherent picture.

This methodological part of the work represents several sections: choice of philosophical position, research design, research strategy, and methods of data collection, data analysis discussion, validity, reliability and triangulation.

3.1 Philosophical position

Easterby-Smith et.al. (2012) pays attention to three possible reasons why understanding of philosophical issues is very useful:

- Helps to clarify research design. Involves considering what kind of evidence is required and how it is to be gather and interpreted and also how it will provide answers to the basic questions being investigated in the research
- Helps a researcher to recognize which design will work and which will not
- Helps a researcher identify and even create designs outside his or her past experience

Different philosophical positions are represented in the Appendix 6 and the most suitable for the goal of the work is chosen in this part of chapter.

The research question of the thesis is “*Which challenges and opportunities BSTU Voennmekh faced with in the co-operation with University of Nordland?*”. After considering all possible philosophical paradigms, which represented in Appendix 6 a social constructionism approach was chosen as the most appropriate paradigm for answering this research question because it implies subjective reality; pays attention the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experience (Easterby-Smith, 2012), but not external factors. This paradigm can help understand participants’ of co-operation motives and reasons of their decisions. The implications of social constructionism are represented in the Table 1.

Social Constructionism	
The observer	Is a part of what is being observed
Human Interests	Are the main drivers of science
Explanations	Aim to increase general understanding of the situation
Research progress through	Gathering rich data from which ideas are induced
Concepts	Should incorporate stakeholders perspectives
Units of analysis	May include the complexity of ‘whole’ situation
Generalization through	Theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	Small numbers of cases chosen for specific reasons

Table 1. Implications of social constructionism

Source: Easterby-Smith, 2012

The researcher’s theoretical lens is also suggested as playing an important role in the choice of methods because the underlying belief system of the researcher (ontological assumptions) largely defines the choice of method (methodology) (Krauss, 2005). The procedures of qualitative research, or its methodology, are characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analysing the data (Creswell, 2013).

Theoretical paradigm about the nature of reality are crucial to understanding the overall perspective from which the study is designed and carried out. A theoretical paradigm is thus the identification of the underlying basis that is used to construct a scientific investigation (Krauss, 2005). Also Krauss (2005) claims that: “In general, qualitative research is based on a relativistic, constructivist ontology that posits that there is no objective reality”.

Strengths of the social constructivism paradigm is the ability to look at change process over time, to understand people’s meanings, to adjust to new issues and ideas as they emerge, and to contribute to the evolution of new theories. They also provide a way of gathering data, which is seen as natural rather than artificial (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

Chosen relativistic and constructivist paradigm demands from me deeper understanding of research question through people's experiences and considering the variety and subjectivity of views. And main constructed claims are (Creswell, 2003):

- Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work
- They develop subjective meanings of their experiences- meanings directed toward certain objects or things.
- These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas
- The goal of research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied
- The questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation
- The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life setting

The chosen relativistic and constructivist paradigm helps me to clarify research design, to understand which design is the most appropriate on for the particular research.

3.2 Research design

The philosophical position for this particular study was determined as relativistic and constructivist in the previous part of the chapter. In connection with this the next step is to determine research design with respect to the constructed claims. Research design is the way of organizing research activity, including the collection of data, in ways that are most likely to achieve the research aims. It is about making choices about what will be observed, and how (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

The function of the research design is represented in Appendix 7.

Survey research can be subdivided for exploratory, description, or explanatory research according to the purpose of the research.

The purpose of *exploratory survey* is to become more familiar with a topic and to try out preliminary concepts about it. A survey in this context is used to discover the range of responses likely to occur in some population of interest and to refine the measurement of concepts. The exploratory survey focuses on determining what concepts to measure and how to measure them best. The exploratory survey also is used to discover and raise new possibilities and dimensions

of the population of interest (Pinsonneault & Kraemer, 1993). They are similar to cross-sectional surveys, but tend to focus on identifying patterns within the data through the use of factor analysis or principal components analysis (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

The purpose of survey research in *description* is to find out what situations, events, attitudes or opinions are occurring in a population. Survey research aimed at description asks simply about the distribution of some phenomena in a population or among subgroups of a population. The researcher's concern is simply to describe a distribution or to make comparisons between distributions (Pinsonneault & Kraemer, 1993). Sandelowski (2000) sees qualitative descriptive studies as less interpretive and they do not require researchers to move as far from or into their data, in her opinion. Also they do not require a conceptual or otherwise highly abstract rendering of data.

The purpose of survey research in *explanation* is to test theory and causal relations. Survey research aimed at explanation asks about the relationships between variables. It does so from theoretically grounded expectations about how and why the variables ought to be related. The theory includes an element of cause and effect in that it not only assumes that relations exist between the variables, but assumes directionality (Pinsonneault & Kraemer, 1993).

Minimum dimensions of study survey are represented in Appendix 8.

In this case the research has an exploratory purpose, primary concepts were determined in the theoretical part of the thesis and the goal of practical part is to discover the range of responses likely to occur in the chosen population of respondents. Both organizers of this cooperation and teachers and students were interviewed for determining challenges and opportunities that occur in cooperation connected with differences in education system and socio-cultural differences, which were represented in the theoretical part of the master thesis.

3.3 Research strategy

In this part of the chapter I decide which methodology fits the best for my research. Such methodologies as ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research and narrative research are detailed described in the Appendix 9. Also all of these methodologies are qualitative approaches.

Considering all aspects and methodologies mentioned in the Appendix 9 and the goals of the particular research I decided that the most appropriate research strategy and methodology for this particular study is case method.

Case studies in which the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995 cited in Creswell, 2003). Essentially the case study looks in depth at one, or a small number of, organisations, events or individuals, generally over time (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

For this research case method have advantage because (Yin, 2009):

- There is a contemporary set of events (co-operation between universities)
- The investigator have a little or no control

3.4. Methods of data collection

There are two primary methods for data collecting: quantitative and qualitative. For answering the research question in this study I suggest that qualitative methods of data gathering are the most appropriate because of qualitative character of the study.

One of the most important features distinguishing what is commonly referred to as qualitative from quantitative inquiry is the kind of sampling used. While qualitative research typically involves purposeful sampling to enhance understanding of the information-rich case (Patton, 1990), quantitative research ideally involves probability sampling to permit statistical inferences to be made (Sandelowski, 2000).

The purpose of the thesis is to understand as deeply as possible challenges and opportunities which universities faced and to understand how they overcome these. Thus qualitative approach fits the best.

Qualitative research is inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people's lives. Researchers using qualitative methods gather data that serve as evidence for their distilled descriptions.

Possible data sources are interviews with participants, observations, documents, and artefacts. In the case of this work interviews and internal documents are used to describe events and explore difficulties and opportunities, which appeared in the co-operation between universities. The data gathered from respondents was transformed and represented in this thesis as written text. This was done for easier analysis process.

Qualitative researchers typically rely on four methods for gathering information: (a) participating in the settings, (b) observing directly, (c) interviewing in depth, and (d) analysing documents and material culture (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

To answer research question I have choose interviewing respondents in-depth. This method helps me understand better and deeper all challenges and opportunities, which BSTU faced with through my respondents' lenses. As Kvale (1996) notes, the aim of qualitative interviewing should be to collect information that captures the meaning and interpretation of phenomenon in relation to the interviewee's worldview (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

Easterby-Smith (2012) divides approaches into three groups: through language (the main method is in-depth interviewing), through observations (ethnographic approaches), and through interaction (photographs or other visual metaphors).

Considering all the aims and objectives of the study the in-depth interviewing is chosen as the most appropriate and available method of primary data collecting. Also Interviews have particular strengths. An interview yields data in quantity quickly. When more than one person participates (e.g., focus group interviews, discussed later), the process takes in a wider variety of information than if there were fewer participants—the familiar trade-off between breadth and depth. Immediate follow-up and clarification are possible. Combined with observation, interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). And all these aspects beneficially satisfy the conditions and circumstances of the particular research conducting.

The in-depth interview is often described as a form of conversation (Burgess, 1982a, 1984; Lofland and Lofland, 1995 cited in Legard et al., 2003). Qualitative, in-depth interviews typically are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

As it written above I conducted all my interviews in a form of conversation. This was needed to explore some aspects that were beyond my questionnaire. I asked a lot of addition questions to my respondents, which appeared only during the conversations. And these additional questions helped me to discover a lot of necessary information for further analysis.

A degree of systematization in questioning may be necessary in, for example, a multisite case study or when many participants are interviewed, or at the analysis and interpretation stage when the researcher is testing findings in more focused and structured questioning (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

In the theoretical part of the thesis two groups of challenges were determined: the first one is about challenges connected with differences in education system; and the second group of challenges connected with socio-cultural differences. And to understand these two groups of

challenges better I decided to conduct interviews with Russian organisers of the international cooperation between University of Nordland and BSTU “Voenmekh” for deeply understanding of challenges concerned with educational system differences; and to conduct interviews with Russian BSTU students participating in this educational program for better understanding of socio-cultural differences. All my respondents are represented in the further part of the methodology

Secondary data sources can consist of company or government reports, archival data, advertisements, newspaper articles and books. Secondary data sources are sometimes used as a complement to primary data sources (such as interviews) (Easterby-Smith, 2012). I used internal reports and documents as secondary data for the historical analysis of the cooperation.

After the determining of the research question, different literature related to the particular topic was reviewed. The main problem was to understand what literature is an appropriate for the research. To tackle with this, such terms as “globalisation”, “internalisation” and “cooperation in higher education” were determined. Then the literature related to the challenges and opportunities occurring in higher education cooperation was reviewed. Academic articles and journals, books, and web sites were used for this purpose. Also some articles and reports connected directly with University of Nordland and BSTU “Voenmekh” cooperation are used for the case describing in the practical part of the work.

3.5 Data analysis

The mass of words generated by interviews or observational data needs to be described and summarized (Lacey & Luff, 2009). One of the most common issues that qualitative research face with is how to condense highly complex and context- bound information into format which tells a story in a way that is fully convincing to others (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

There are no ‘quick fix’ techniques in qualitative analysis (Lacey & Luff, 2009). In many ways the issue about the analysis of qualitative data are closely linked to the different research philosophies (Easterby-Smith, 2012) discussed earlier.

The sages of qualitative analysis are represented in Appendix 10.

In my research I started with historical analysis of the cooperation between universities. I used internal documents of HNB and BSTU, web page of BSTU to describe historical events and distinguish stages of cooperation. This was necessary for better understanding and interpretation of my respondents’ answers.

The next step was to analyze professor’s and participants’ answers to explore which challenges BSTU faced with and which opportunities appeared as a result of the cooperation for

BSTU. For this purpose I combined their answers in several groups, which have similar subjects of discussion. Conclusions and outputs are represented after these groups analysis.

I used the same principle with students' answers.

3.6 Presentation of the respondents

Russian professors and participants of cooperation

The interviews with professors and organizers of cooperation between University of Nordland and BSTU Voenmekh were conducted for the purpose to explore challenges connected with differences of Russian education systems from Norwegian one, which were described in theoretical part of the research amply. People who participate in organization and working process of the cooperation know about this difference of Russian education system like no other. Summarized description of interviewees is represented below:

There are three interviewees, who agreed to answer the questions. All respondents are from Russia.

Marina Volkova

The first respondent is Marina Volkova, who is the leader of the international programs department of BSTU Voenmekh in St. Petersburg since 2005 and leader of the MBA program in BSTU since 2006. She was one of the organizers of cooperation between UiN and BSTU Voenmekh and participates in this cooperation from the very beginning. Also she is a teacher of international marketing on the MBAE program. An interview with such person is very important for the research, because she knows all the things about challenges and opportunities connected with difference of Russian education system, which Russian side have during the cooperation exists.

Nadezda Nazarova

Next respondent is Nadezda Nazarova, who was in 2000-2004 – BSTU, specialist degree; 2004-2006 – Bodø, Master of Science in Business; 2006-2007 – BSTU, specialist (end); 2009-2013 – PhD, Bodø; And from 2013 till present days– Bodø, working as an advisor at the Business School, High North Center for Business and Governance. She knows a lot of information about the cooperation and gently agreed to answer a few questions that could be a source of some additional information.

Professor Anatoli Bourmistrov

And another one very important respondent is Anatoli Bourmistrov ,who in 1988 – 1994 was MSc in Space Technology BSTU Voenmekh; in 1994 – 1997 was MSc in Business Administration - Bod Graduate School of Business at Hgskolen i Bodo; in 1997 – 2001 was PhD in Management and accounting - Norges Handelshyskole; 1997 Stipendiat - Bod University College; from 1997 till present - Associate Professor, Ph.D. - Bodoe Graduate School of Business (teaching and research in the fields of strategic management, accounting and management control in the private and public sector organizations, energy enterprises); 2007 till present Project manager - High North Center for Business and Governance at Bod Graduate School of Business (managing cooperative education and research projects with focus on Russiad and CIS countries in the feilds of energy managment, sustainable management, bank management, retraining and competence programs (e.g. MBA programs) for Norwegian and Russian companies, etc.).

Russian students from BSTU Voenmekh, who was studied in University of Nordland

The interviews with BSTU students who were studying in UiN were conducted for the purpose to explore challenges connected with socio- cultural differences, which were described in theoretical part of the research amply.

There are several students, who finished MBAE program in BSTU Voenmekh and after travelled to Norway to continue their education in UiN. They are 22-23 years old. All respondents are finishing master program now in UiN or have finished it before. Most of them have different specializations. No one could talk Norwegian before arriving in Bodo. But level of their English was good enough for studying. In the interviews they told about difficulties and problems, which they faced with during their studying process and living in Norway. All students had an adaptation period, language difficulties, and tolerance problems.

3.7 Validity, reliability, and triangulation

Guba and Lincoln (1981) stated that while all research must have "truth value", "applicability", "consistency", and "neutrality" in order to be considered worthwhile, the nature of knowledge within the rationalistic (or quantitative) paradigm is different from the knowledge in naturalistic (qualitative) paradigm (Morse, 2002). Being objective is an essential aspect of competent inquiry, and for this reason researchers must examine methods and conclusions for bias (Creswell, 2013).

The criteria in the qualitative paradigm to ensure "trustworthiness" are credibility, fittingness, auditability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). These criteria were quickly refined to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 cited in J.M. Morse, 2002). Reliability and validity are important issues in all research including qualitative research. Demonstrating that your qualitative data analysis is rigorous is especially important given a common criticism (from those less favourable to qualitative research) that qualitative results are anecdotal (Lacey & Luff, 2009).

Verification is the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain. In qualitative research, verification refers to the mechanisms used during the process of research to incrementally contribute to ensuring reliability and validity and, thus, the rigor of a study. These mechanisms are woven into every step of the inquiry to construct a solid product (Creswell, 1997; Kvale, 1989) by identifying and correcting errors before they are built in to the developing model and before they subvert the analysis (Morse, 2002).

In demonstrating the reliability of your analysis you would need to consider the following (Lacey & Luff, 2009):

- Describing the approach to and procedures for data analysis
- Justifying why these are appropriate within the context of your study
- Clearly documenting the process of generating themes, concepts or theories from the data audit trail
- Referring to external evidence, including previous qualitative and quantitative studies, to test the conclusions from your analysis as appropriate

All the requirements according to Lacey & Luff (2009) was done in this master thesis. The approach and procedures for the data analysis are described in the methodology part. It was explained why these are appropriate in the context of my study. Themes for the interviews and analysis are generated on the basis of the theoretical framework. A lot of external sources and literature were used during this particular study. And it is possible to claim that this research is reliable enough.

If the principles of qualitative inquiry are followed, the analysis is self-correcting. In other words, qualitative research is iterative rather than linear, so that a good qualitative researcher moves back and forth between design and implementation to ensure congruence among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and analysis (Morse, 2002).

The validity of the interpretation is the ability of the findings to represent the 'truth' may not be appropriate if we accept the existence and importance of multiple 'truths'. Rather, validity will be judged by the extent to which an account seems to fairly and accurately represent the data

collected (Lacey & Luff, 2009). All the data is valid, it represented in the same way as it was written in documents or told by the respondents.

In this methodological part of the work I described and explained every step and choice needed for accurate, reliable and valid result. Also I explain the choice of my respondent and give arguments for it.

Evidence that the qualitative researcher has undertaken 'triangulation' is frequently seen as demonstrating rigour. Triangulation means gathering and analysing data from more than one source to gain a fuller perspective on the situation you are investigating (Lacey & Luff, 2009).

In this research I used different kinds of data sources such as interviews with several respondents (source of primary data) and literature review of different books, articles and documents (source of secondary data). This ways of data collection ensures triangulation.

IV. Analysis and discussion

This part of the master thesis represents the analysis of data collected and the empirical findings, which could be concluded from the data analysis. The chapter is divided into 4 parts: the historical analysis; analysis of difficulties connected with different education systems; analysis of socio- cultural problems of students; opportunities and implementations.

4.1 The historical analysis of cooperation between University of Nordland and BSTU Voenmekh

This historical overview helps to analyze and understand the research problem deeper on every stage of cooperation. This information is necessary for more detailed view on the cooperation. It clarifies some motives and reasons for cooperation and explains how international programs were organized and how work was established. This can also be very important for interviews interpretation and analysis.

For this purpose I asked my respondents to tell a few words about the history, reasons and motives of cooperation. Marina Volkova remembers about the history of cooperation following:

The cooperation was started 23 year ago and it was time for changes in Russia. That was the time of Perestroyka. The slant for education and economics knowledge was changed. The new capitalistic economic model was embedded in Russia and all needed information and knowledge were represented in foreign literature and we didn't have such sources of knowledge here in Russia. Moreover me and my Norwegian partner Tor Korneliussen were conducting a research and I was gathering information in Russian libraries if there was any literature on economics and economical education from foreign countries and I discovered that there was no literature at all: no journals or papers and no books.

Gradually some translated books and articles appeared but the translation was not good enough, because translators were not specialists in the market economics.

So considering all that was said above the cooperation was need for Russian side as "Window to Europe" for understanding of how market economy is studies there, because they live in such economics for longer time. And Norwegian partner offered us to build this MBAE program. Together with Norwegian partners we made a list of subjects for MBAE courses. Several years in the beginning Norwegian partners came to BSTU and conduct some classes, other subjects were hold by Russian professors.

Anatoli Bourmistrov can distinguish one more motive for BSTU to cooperate:

There was a lack of knowledge and competence in economic and business administration subjects. There were a lot of engineers in 1990's but no economists, specialists in finance, audit and marketing, for instance. And the cooperation with University of Nordland became a great opportunity for BSTU to create basis for teaching such specialists.

Nadeda supposes similar reasons for the cooperation:

As I know it started in 1991. The main driver for this cooperation was the need for development of business and management education programs by Russian universities which had to shift to self-financing and in order to respond to urgently appeared market needs (e.g. market economy).

Summarizing all that was said above it is possible distinguish following reasons for the cooperation: the lack of knowledge in new economical model and the necessity of well educated specialists in economic sphere. These reasons were a result of the new economical model in Russia. This model was accepted as consequence of the Perestroyka, which started in the beginning of 1990's.

To find out more information about the history of cooperation and joint programs between UiN and BSTU Voennmekh internal documents of UiN and web pages of the joint programs were used.

Reviewing the internal documents of HHB it is possible to distinguish several stages of cooperation, which have their own events and features. Also time periods for this stages can be clearly determined. These stages are following:

Establishing the cooperation between Bodø Graduate School of Business and Baltic State Technical University (1991-1997)

It has been 23 years since Bodø Graduate School of Business (HHB) at University of Nordland started cooperation with the International Business and Communication Institute at Baltic State Technical University (BSTU)"VOENMEKH" (Internal document, HHB1). *Following up of the cooperation between Leningrad oblast and Nordland county*

In 1987 Leningrad Oblast and Nordland County (Norway) signed a cooperation agreement in the areas of education, culture, business, and people-to-people friendship. One of the main

topics discussed was to develop cooperation in higher education with focus on business administration and economics. In this regard, representatives of Bodø Graduate School of Business (HHB) visited St. Petersburg and, in 1991, signed a cooperation agreement with Baltic State Technical University (Internal document, HHB2). The High North Center for Business and Governance at Bodø Graduate School of Business is coordinating all the activities from the Norwegian side. The first outcome was establishment of short-term courses in subjects of business administration for engineers at Baltic State Technical University in 1991 – 1997. Many hundred students at BSTU have taken these courses (Internal document, HHB1).

Short-term business administration courses

From being a 100% engineering and military oriented university BSTU was very motivated for adapting to the new situation in society expanding education and research activities into business administration. The cooperation with HHB became one of the tools for developing business administration competence.

By 1993, HHB and BSTU developed intensive courses in business administration of about 1-2 weeks duration. BSTU was responsible for practical organization of the courses, whilst HHB for the academic content, teaching and evaluation of student achievements. Norwegian professors educated Russian students in the following topics: Business English, Accounting, Corporate Finance, Economics, Entrepreneurship, Management Control, and Marketing (internal document, HHB2).

Many hundred students at BSTU have taken these courses. From 1994 till today annually about 6-8 Russian students from these courses have been given the opportunity to take the 2 years Master of Science in Business Administration Program (siviløkonom studiet) at HHB, and up till today about 120 students from BSTU have graduated from this program. The program has been financed from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research through the quota program (Internal document, HHB1).

In the period from November 1993 to November 1996 about 500 Russian students participated in these courses and received diplomas. About 15 students continued their education at Master of Science in Business program in Bodø (Internal document, HHB2).

Starting up Master of Business Administration and Engineering (1997-2001)

As the Russian economy was developing, a huge demand for managers for the industrial enterprises was expected. These specialists for production enterprises would be better off if they possessed both business administration and engineering/technological competence. BSTU and HHB decided to focus on graduating specialists for industrial enterprises and, in 1997, extended

the cooperation by starting up a Master program in Business Administration and Engineering (MBAE) (internal document, HHB2). Graduates get a joint degree. Study process is organised in Russia. Study books and project works are in English. Best students have an opportunity to continue studying in Norway for the Norwegian government money¹.

A Joint Master of Business Administration and Engineering Program (the MBAE Program) was launched in 1997, and since then more than 450 students have graduated from this program (Internal document, HHB1).

In this program, both institutions were responsible for the development and operational parts, i.e. BSTU – for ordinary subjects in engineering, and HHB together with BSTU – for the development of business administration competence at BSTU. The agreement also dedicated direct responsibility for the program development to International Business and Communication Institute – a faculty which was developed as a Business School at BSTU. The idea was that students at BSTU could study engineering and technology the first years, and in years 4 and 5 they could also include business subjects as their major (Internal document, HHB2).

On the first stage of realization of this program about 30 students are selected from the amount of applied students. They visit lectures led by Russian teachers who were prepared for that in Norway. The Norwegian side coordinates project works writing. After 2 years of intensive studying and joint exams best students have an opportunity to apply for master program in University of Nordland and get an international master degree. Their studying, living and trip are paid by Norwegian government².

Close cooperation between Russian and Norwegian professors was indispensable for the development and implementation of each course. In the beginning (1997-2001), the Norwegian professors functioned as tutors and course supervisors, i.e. they were responsible for selecting the course literature and the course content. As the courses were taught by both Norwegian and Russian teachers, both Russian and English languages were used for teaching.

In September 1997 the first class of students was enrolled on the MBAE program. They graduated from the MBAE program in 1999 and received the joint BSTU–HHB diplomas and transcripts issued in both Russian and English (Internal document, HHB2).

Nowadays more than 400 students graduated this program. All of them made a brilliant career in business sphere both in Russia and Norway.

This program got a great assessment of the Science Committee of St. Petersburg and High School of Administration of St. Petersburg. It is said: “Continuing of successful

¹ <http://sib-bstu.ru>

² http://sib-bstu.ru/index.php?page=ru_main

cooperation between universities is the pledge of better understanding and trust between Russia and Norway” in the letter of chairman of the Committee to Norwegian minister¹.

The University Alliance, Executive MBA, and International PhD program in Business studies (2001- 2005)

In 2002 Bodø Graduate School of Business and Baltic State Technical University extended their cooperation and launched an Executive MBA program for managers working in Russian enterprises. Since then 212 students have graduated from this program (Internal document, HHB1).

Extending cooperation

In late 1990s and in the beginning of 2000s HHB and BSTU extended their cooperation by involving more Russian universities. In cooperation with Arkhangelsk State Technical University (ASTU) the partners launched an Executive MBA (EMBA) program for managers working in Russian enterprises. The first class of EMBA students at ASTU was enrolled in 2001 and graduated from the program in 2003. The students have defended their qualification works at BSTU. Since 2003 BSTU has its own EMBA program. In 1999 the Norwegian Ministry of Defence initiated a retraining project for Russian military officers in the Northern fleet. HHB was chosen as project coordinator, and Murmansk State Technical University became a Russian partner for the project. In the period 2001 – 2005 HHB, BSTU, ASTU, and MSTU organized these and other projects in the Russian-Norwegian University Alliance.

international phd program in business studies As more cooperation experience in the field of business administration accumulated, HHB, BSTU and other partners in the university alliance started discussing establishing a joint international PhD program.

The agreement was reached that the duration of the International PhD program was 1 + 3 years. Because of the differences between Russian and international PhD regulations and research traditions in business studies, the program requires students to follow an extra academic year consisting of a number of specific courses in Bodø. The program presupposes that each student will stay for at least two month each year in Bodø in order to work in the library, have contacts to main supervisors from Bodø, write the thesis and take PhD courses. The research work provides the basis for a doctoral thesis to be submitted and defended for the international Ph.D. degree given in Bodø.

¹ http://sib-bstu.ru/index.php?page=ru_main

In September 2003 the first students have been enrolled in the International PhD program (Internal document, HHB2).

Joint Degrees (2005- 2011)

From 2005 Bodø graduate School of Business and the Russian partner universities have been actively involved in developing of joint master degrees in Energy Management and Sustainability Management.

The Master of Science in Energy Management, developed between Bodø Graduate School of Business and MGIMO University (Moscow), presents a new and specialized educational opportunity with an emphasis on energy, and especially the oil and gas sector. The target group is students who possess a bachelor degree in Business Administration/Management and want to specialize in management in the Energy.

The Master of Science in Sustainable management program was developed by Bodø Graduate School of Business and BSTU, together with four other universities in Russia – Murmansk State Technical University, Northern Arctic Federal University (Arkhangelsk), Tyumen State University, and Ukhta State Technical University (Internal document, HHB2).

A joint program Master of Science in Sustainable Management was started in 2008¹.

In 2008 Bodø Graduate School of Business and Baltic State technical University have received funding from SIU's Russia program to further develop Norwegian-Russian education and research cooperation in the field of business administration with focus on sustainability issues related to business cooperation in the High North (Internal document, HHB1).

The main goal of this program is to strengthen the Norwegian-Russian education and research cooperation in the field of business administration by focusing on sustainability issues in business cooperation in the High North (Internal document, HHB2). The purpose of this program is preparing high-class specialists, who have knowledge and practical skills in sustainable development².

As a result, the Master of Science in Sustainable Management Program was developed, also in partnership with Arkhangelsk State Technical University, Murmansk State Technical University, Universities in Ukhta and Tyumen. Students enrolled in this program have been enjoying life and study experiences both in Bodø and in Saint-Petersburg. More than 50 students have graduated from this program (Internal document, HHB1).

¹ <http://sib-bstu.ru/index.php?page=o-programme-2>

² <http://sib-bstu.ru/index.php?page=o-programme-2>

Both programs were developed in accordance with the principles of the Bologna declaration. Student exchange is an indispensable part. During the first semester, students enrolled in the program follow mandatory courses at their “home” institution. During the second semester Russian students together with Norwegian students take courses in Bodø. In the third semester both Norwegian and Russian students are located at MGIMO in Moscow (Energy management), and at BSTU in Saint- Petersburg (Sustainable management). During the fourth and final semester, the students stay at their “home” institutions, working on their master thesis (Internal document, HHB2).

The concept of the program suppose preparing Russian and Norwegian students both in Russia and in Norway: 1st semester studying in home country, 2nd joint studying in Norway, 3rd joint studying in Russia, 4th writing master thesis in home country. Studying in Norway is partly financed by Norway¹.

The first students were enrolled to the MSc in Energy Management in 2006. The MSc in Sustainable Management was launched in 2008 (Internal document, HHB2).

The two universities continued their cooperation and established also with other partners a joint international PhD program. 9 students were enrolled on this program and by now 4 of them have defended their dissertations and received Philosophy Doctor Degree (Internal document, HHB1).

Extended business cooperation: Synergies Education, Research and Industry (2011-till now)

At present, High North Center at University of Nordland and Baltic State Technical University are involved at several projects in cooperation with large business enterprises. Two of the projects are:

➤ *Logistics and transportation in the high north*

The aim of this Education, Research and Business development project is to create a common competence arena in the sphere of logistics and transport in the High North. The partners participating are BSTU, Northern Arctic Federal University (NArFU) in Arkhangelsk, and Murmansk State Technical University (MSTU). The project is financed by the Norwegian

¹ <http://sib-bstu.ru/index.php?page=o-programme-2>

oil and gas company Statoil, and coordinated by the High North Center at Bodø Graduate School of Business. The project is connected to the Centre for High North Logistics.

As part of the project BSTU has launched a bachelor-level integrated course in logistics (for graduate students in the 4th year) with particular focus on use of space information in logistics. About 80 students attended this course in its first academic year.

The research part of the project includes tasks within sea transportation of energy carriers between Russia, Western Europe or North America. The BSTU researchers especially work with topics related to use of satellite information within oil and gas logistics. Results of the work have been presented at several conferences and in academic journals.

➤ *The Norwegian and Russian research and education consortium For international business development in the energy sector (NAREC) (Internal document, HHB2)*

It was executed in 2010-2012. The NAREC was partly financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and aimed on development of new joint educational programs, students' and faculty exchange, student internships in Russian and Norwegian enterprises and strengthening of common Russian-Norwegian Business development cooperation in the field of energy (Internal document, HHB1).

The aim of the consortium is to unite leading academic institutions in the energy sector in Norway and Russia, to strengthen cooperation between the institutions and industry enterprises, and to stimulate energy business cooperation between and within both countries. NAREC is financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as from projects with Norwegian and Russian companies.

The academic partners are today (Internal document, HHB2):

- Akvaplan- Niva
- Baltic State Technical University
- Econ Pöyry
- Gubkin Russian State University of Oil and Gas
- Narvik University College
- Moscow State Institute of International Relations
- Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
- Murmansk State Technical University
- University of Nordland
- Northern Arctic Federal University
- University of Stavanger
- Tyumen State University
- University of Tromsø

- Ukhta State Technical University

NAREC's activities include development of new joint education programs, organizing students' and faculty exchange, and organizing student internships in Russian and Norwegian enterprises.

NAREC is also working to strengthen common Russian-Norwegian Business development projects, and with match-making and industrial project development between enterprises.

NAREC's Advisory Board governs the Consortium and secure relevance of projects developed by NAREC for authorities and industries. The members of the Advisory Board are leading experts from Norway and Russia (Internal document, HHB2).

Joint studies and research projects are closely coordinated by professors from Bodø Graduate School of Business and Baltic State Technical University. These professors are also involved common research projects. Graduates have got a successful career start both in Russia and in Norway. Cooperation experience in the field of business administration accumulates steadily each year.

The year 2013 20 students are graduating from the MBAE program, 11 students from Master of Science in Sustainable Management and 57 persons are getting MBA diplomas.

This date means not only graduation for those students but also a start for many new ones. 21 students are enrolled to the Master of Business Administration and Engineering this year, 8 students are enrolled to the Master of Science in Sustainable Management and 20 – to the joint MBA program (Internal document, HHB1).

After this historical analysis of cooperation between University of Nordland and BSTU Voenmekh it is possible to say that cooperation successfully works for many years. Every stage of cooperation has its own goals and purposes, which were achieved. This historical overview describes in details when these international programs were founded, why they were founded, what are their goals and results. Relying on this information the interpretation and interviews results become more clear, trustworthy and unbiased.

4.2 Analysis of the problems connected with differences in educational systems of BSTU Voennmekh and UiN

➤ *Differences in a course length*

In this part key problems connected with differences in educational systems discussed in theoretical part are considered.

Cooperation within higher education and research do meet several obstacles as a result of different educational system, different length of study programs (Bourmistrov et al., 2011).

According to results of interviews with professors and participants of cooperation between universities, it becomes clear, that BSTU Voennmekh faced with this problem. First of all, I asked my respondents to tell briefly about the educational system, which existed in Russia when the cooperation was started. On this question all respondents described almost the same picture. On this question Marina Volkova answers following:

Here in Russia we have 9 years of obligatory school education. After 9 years of school pupils can choose continue education in school (2 more years) or leave school and get professional education. Only after 11 years of school pupils can get higher education in universities of our country. Now we accepted Bologna system (like Norwegians did) and have 4 years for bachelor degree and then students can chose continue education and study for 2 more years for master degree. After getting master degree they can apply for PhD program.

Before accepting Bologna system we had 5 year of higher education to get specialist degree. And now it is the last year when our students can get this degree and we stop a selection for this kind of program and will not educate for specialist degree any more starting from next year.

The answer of Professor Anatoli Bourmistrov is quite similar to the Marina's answer. He says:

It was a very simple, "soviet" system. When we talk about specialist it is 5 or 5,5 year of studying. Bachelor and Master programs were accepted much more lately, 10 or 15 years ago. The Bologna process came to Russia at the same time as it came in Norway. After getting specialist degree it was able to apply for PhD in BSTU.

Also to understand if there were any differences between educational systems I asked Anatoli to describe shortly Norwegian educational system. And the description given by Professor Bourmistrov is represented below:

The education for economics supposed 2+2+2+3 scheme. When the Bologna process came it became 3 years for bachelor degree, 2 years for master degree, and then 3 years of PhD.

As we can see from the answers there is a clear difference in courses length of BSTU Voennmekh and UiN. This difference could be an obstacle for the cooperation according to theoretical chapter. Professor Bourmistrov comments this statement:

Of course it was a very big problem for BSTU. This become challenging in a point of view different level of education. Also there appeared a question how should we prepare engineer student for economical subjects.

Professor Bourmistrov clarifies how this problem was solved on the moment when the cooperation begun:

We had some economical subjects on technical and engineering specializations and at the same time we were studying in Baltic Academy of Technology, Economics and Culture (BATEC). This was a private organization, which became afterward a faculty of International Business and Communication (IBC) in BSTU. Also Norwegian professors came to BSTU and held several lectures for us (economics and financial accounting). There were no such MBAE programs then. They were week courses.

So we had some economical knowledge. But still it was quite difficult to start education in Uin from the 3rd year.

Mirina Volkova tells how this problem was tackled after:

After some time had passed since we started cooperation between UiN and BSTU Voennmekh we arranged with our Norwegian partners that we have an embedded international program and one of the main conditions for this was that we take 2 first years of BSTU education, then students enter a special 2 years MBAE program (Master of Business Administration and Engineering). As a result we have embedded education and this 2+2 years are equivalent to 4 years of bachelor. And after finishing MBAE program students can apply for master program in UiN in Norway.

Anatoli Bourmistrov tells one more very important addition in his interview:

Because of difference in school years students in Russia are one year younger than Norwegian students when they finish bachelor degree. Because of that fact the problem connected with age criteria selection of Russian students for the master program in UiN appeared. But if student has sufficient

qualification and has sufficient credits, UiN accepts those Russian students. MBAE program is aimed to give Russian students these credits.

Analyzing the answers of respondents it is definitely possible to say that the problem of different courses' length of these two universities existed. But BSTU found the way to solve it in the beginning of the cooperation and then the opportunity to develop the cooperation further appeared and IBC faculty and MBAE program were founded to make this difference in courses length less challenging for the cooperation. As we can see from the historical description represented above this model works well and students from BSTU travel to Norway for studying every year.

➤ *Differences in quality of study*

The structural differences between the Western and Eastern education systems create many difficulties with respect to being able to translate degrees and the quality of the work carried out in the two systems (Bourmistrov et al., 2011). To explore whether there were any difficulties caused by differences in quality of study I asked my respondents to discuss on particular topic.

Marina Volkova tells about the problem appeared because of differences in assessment of students:

Our university had a very different system of marks from European one. Here we have marks from 2 to 5, where 2 means "not pass" and 5 is the best grade. And it was a very big challenge and problem for us, because Norwegian system has very different criteria of assessment and the variance of grades so differs. Frode Mellemvik was laughing that here in Russia we have only 4 and 5. And if students get 4 they are very upset about this and sometimes even crying.

Norwegian partners taught us that there should be a normal distribution among grades and we mark our students according this distribution. And the main problem here connected with Russian students mentality. We choose the best students for our program and they get used to get only best marks. And it is difficult to explain them that they are not bad at all, but the reason is in comparison with other students. When we grade students we compare their work and answers with each other and choose the best and the worth and according to these we mark others.

Marina Volkova also narrates how BSTU deals with this problem:

We have changed our "2 – 5" mark system on sustainable management to western system from F to A. But on MBAE program we continue "2 – 5" marking system.

We are trying step by step to implement western system but still we have some national features. Norwegian partners treated with deep understanding this “marking” problem and accept our system.

And when Norwegian partners chose students for the international master program in UiN, they come to BSTU and we hold exams together. Norwegian partner knows my criteria for assessment and I know his criteria. And after a conversation we make common decision on marks. It helps to our Norwegian partners to understand students’ level of education. And these measures make Norwegian professors be confident in the quality of study in BSTU on MBAE program.

Nadezda Nazarova says about quality of study following:

Quality is one of the main issues in terms of harmonization. What is more, this concept has been also changing in Russia with regard to all new laws and strategies undertaken by Russian government. The standard setting bodies are different.

Marina Volkova shares her experience in examination on MBAE program and tells how problem with students’ assessment is solved on practice:

We always hold an examination of students on MBAE program together with Norwegian partners. It was quite challenging to find compromise in the way examination should be conducted. Here in Russia we have oral exams, but in Norway they have writing exams. And it was necessary to decide what kind to chose. It was difficult for Norwegian partners to understand what oral exam means, because they think that oral kind of exam is not objective, and student can impact on result with his\her charisma and some kind of charm or opposite. And professors cannot assess students objectively. But Russian side insisted on oral examination. And as a compromise we decided that there should be both oral and writing exam. But both oral and writing exams were conducted both Russian and Norwegians partners for more objectivity in marks. I knew criteria for assessment of my Norwegian partner, and he knew my criteria.

Also there were some differences between Russian and Norwegian rules about project and course works. But considering the fact that students on MBAE program are Russians, and they have their own experience about how these works should be done, we cannot completely abandon these Russian rules. And as a result we have such mix of Norwegian and Russian rules for project and course works. It also was very useful for teachers to understand partner’s system and try to follow it, not throwing all own traditions at the same time.

Talking about the quality of study it is very important to consider standardization degree of university. Professor Anatoli Bourmistrov comments standardization degree in BSTU:

Russian standardization system was very specific because standards were set by the Ministry of Education. This system still exists in Russia but it starts changing gradually. The guarantor of quality is the Ministry of education. The regulations of courses were “hard”; there were no flexibility with respect to creating new courses. This was completely different from Norway. Norwegian regulation system was “soft”; it means that the Ministry doesn’t have this regulatory function of courses standardization. This became challenging for BSTU in 1997 when MBAE program was started. The problem was about how free professors are to interpret the content of subjects, literature. Also the difference in standards leads to another problem with differences in credit systems. Unfortunately this obstacle of standardization can not be overcome because Russian system is very traditional.

Also Nadezda Nazarova can add:

The standard setting bodies are different. The main difference is that in Norway it is the university, which is responsible for quality assessment through internal and external mechanisms. So that it is an issue of reputation. In Russia it is external control.

After analyzing the answers of respondents it is possible to say that BSTU faced with problems of different qualities of study. Some of these problems were easily solved (problem with assessment), but some problems have more deep roots and cannot be overcome so simple. It is necessary to change and reconstruct whole system, which is strongly connected with historical and traditional aspects of Russian education.

The question of education quality determining becomes a very interesting since different assessment agencies can help to make an educational system more transparent. To explore whether BSTU needs such agencies services to increase transparency and avoid information asymmetries I asked Marina Volkova to discourse:

I cannot remember any information asymmetries, but I’m sure there must be something. The assessment is necessary for BSTU. We have government accreditation, then we get a licensees on the basis of this accreditation. The accreditation is very difficult and requirements are very stringent. We didn’t care about what assessment had UiN, but may be this could be quite interesting for us. The main key point in our cooperation is deep trust, we can rely on our partners and they can rely on us. This trust was built for many years. But I think now we would look at assessment of our potential new partners, this would be important for us.

BSTU and UiN’s relations are built on trust and long-term projects and work. And BSTU Voennmekh didn’t faced with problem of trust in the context of quality and standards.

➤ Differences in curricula

Curricula with an international orientation in content aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context and designed for domestic students as well as foreign students (Hall, 2007).

Marina Volkova explains that there are not any problems with curricula in BSTU:

Norwegian students arrive in Russia to study one semester on sustainable management master program in BSTU one month earlier than courses begin. This month is necessary for Russian language and culture studying. They have Russian language lessons; visit different museums, exhibitions, and theaters. They have a great opportunity to plunge in Russian culture and society. They always can discuss their problems with teachers and other Russian students.

We agreed on these aspects with Norwegian partners and tried to make adaptation period for Norwegian students softer.

Also to avoid a problem of Russian students adaptation the Norwegian language courses and different trips and entertainments are organized for international students in Norway by UiN. But I think the best way to get more information about these adaptation problems is to talk with international students.

There were no problems with curricula with respect to cooperation process between our universities.

As it could be seen from Marina Volkova's answer BSTU prepare Norwegian students for the socio-cultural life, and give necessary Russian language skills before the studying program starts. The studying program is common both for Russian students and those, who came from Norway. These measures help to avoid the problem of difference in curricula. Also necessary conditions are created for Russian students adaptation in UiN. So it possible to conclude that the problem of differences in curricula is successfully overcome by these two universities.

➤ Differences in credit systems

In theoretical chapter I distinguish several main issues around the theme of credit systems. After interviews conducting I explored, that basically the main obstacle BSTU face with was the problem with understanding of how the amount/volume of learning is expressed through a numeric value (credit points). Professor Anatoli bourmistrov tells a lot of important information on particular issue:

For the moment when the cooperation was started all courses in Norway were measured in credits, meanwhile in Russia courses were measured in hours. They are two completely different methods of measuring. In Russia students visit lectures, listen what a teacher is saying, make abstracts, and then abstract is a main subject of discussion on exam. This approach is opposite to Norwegian one. Students spend a lot of time for self- preparing and literature reviewing. There is a course description and description of things that students must know after a course and what literature a student should use. These were two completely different approaches, which were expressed in different measurement systems of what students must do. Credits, by the way, are student's workload.

Nadezda Nazarova adds about Russian system:

As in case of Russia, it is not so much about workload, as it is about changing of the mindset. It takes time to understand the values and strong sides of the other totally different system. That is why the development of long-term programs with longer stay abroad should be a priority for cooperation.

Professor Anatoli Bourmistrov also tells that the problem of different approaches to study process led to misunderstanding of Russian teachers and professors and names some reasons for that:

In Russia nobody knew what credits are and they were interpreted as auditorium hours (a student must work in the class). Russian teachers didn't understand that credits are volume of work and this work can have very different types: cases, classes, lectures, practices, even games, etc. Russian approach was very limited.

Unfortunately this is still actual issue, traditions in Russia are very strong. There are objective reasons for this: teachers' salary is paid with respect to quantity of lecture hours she\he holds. And often lecturers read the same material in different universities, it is hard for them to think about alternative forms of education process; students suppose that it is enough to visit lectures only for passing exams.

Also because of lack of time or research skills Russian professors have a little research activity or have no at all. It becomes impossible for teachers to include their own research and experiments results in lectures to make lectures more authored.

So it was very important for cooperation to explain to Russian teachers the main points of ECTS and the ECTS report was used to explain to Russian teachers and professors what credits are and how they are calculated.

Nowadays BSTU and University of Nordland have a quite good mutual understanding.

Marina Volkova also makes accent on the fact that:

The individualistic type of culture is typical for Norway, but collectivistic one for Russia. Because of that the way teaching is conducted is quite different in our countries. In Russia it is considered that teacher must know everything and he\she is ready to answer the questions of students. This is not necessary might be in Norway and the biggest part of the work is needed to be done exactly by students. I think it is cultural feature

Nadezda Nazarova:

Of course, the ECTS system makes it easier to “surf” between countries and universities. However, the workload still differs significantly. 5 days intensive course in Norway may give 10 ECTS.

There were a lot of problems in the beginning of the cooperation connected with the differences in credit systems. These problems appeared because of misunderstanding by Russian teachers of the European credit system. The problem of misunderstanding appeared because of difference in education systems, but it was successfully solved through using ECTS system for BSTU international programs. This took some time to explain Russian teachers how to calculate these credits. It may be a result of different education traditions, which are very strong in Russia, and ways of conducting classes and exams.

But on this stage of cooperation BSTU and UiN understand each other on particular question quite well and have achieved mutual understanding in this question.

➤ *Differences in higher education governance*

Marina Volkova tells about governance system in BSTU and explains why it was challenging:

There is a very big difference in the higher education governance. In Russia educational system is built on the example of German because our financial system came from Germany (by the way it was also extremely hard for Germany to accept this Bologna process). By the governance I mean building of educational plans. It is typical for Russia that standards for education are set by ministry of education. Regarding economical subjects there is obligatory part of what must be in subject list for education process and there are some subjects that we can choose.

As I saw in Norway the education is adjusted for bright persons. For example it could be a professor who is very good in specific area and he\she can made own course based on his\her specific knowledge. The orienteer for Norwegian partners is personality and professionalism of a teacher. Often

courses are authored, a teacher can hold this course very bright and interesting and nobody cannot say what must be done or changed in this course. In Russia we have typed obligatory courses with determined hours numbers and content of the course program. In the end student must know certain things called competences.

And it was challenging for Norwegian partners to invent how to combine their credit system with Russian very hard regulation of study programs. MBAE program is some kind of compromise. It is certified by government and at the same time gives necessary credit points to Russian students for applying master program in UiN.

Professor Anatili Bourmistrov in his interview describes this problem very close to Marina's answer. He thinks that the problem arises as result of lack of Russian credit system flexibility, which is hardly regulated by BSTU governance, Ministry of education and government.

Marina Volkova continues to discuss this topic:

Also in Norway students are free which subjects to choose. In Russia when we had specialists program all subjects were set by the government. Now with Bologna process starting, Russian students are free to choose just a little part of subjects.

As to start-up stage Marina Volkova assures that there were no any problems with BSTU governance for establishing the MBAE and other international programs together with UiN:

In Russia a lot of things are dependent from the leader of the university, the leader of faculty etc. In Norway teachers and professors are free to decide a lot of things. Directors can forbid or disapprove this kind of programs. But when Frode Mellempvik came to Russia, they could arrange with BSTU. And the directors gave a positive answer and permitted to build this international program in our university.

It is possible to claim that inflexibility of governance system became challenging for the cooperation because of impossibility to adapt Western credit system in Russian hard regulated by the government education process.

After the Analysis of the problems connected with differences in educational systems of BSTU Voenmekh and UiN it becomes clear that BSTU have some obstacles. The most challenging for BSTU became:

- Problem connected with difference in the courses length and number of school years
- Problem of students' assessment and examination

- Problem of interpretation of subjects content and foreign literature
- Problem of how students' workload must be measured (credits)
- The lack of experience and research skills of teachers and professors
- The lack of flexibility of Russian governance system

Some of these problems are successfully overcome, some are in process of regulation, but some cannot be eliminated due to strong Russian traditions and mentality. But still two universities have found common language and achieved a high level of mutual understanding.

4.3 Analysis of socio- cultural problems

In the theoretical chapter I distinguish: challenges in students' adaptation; the importance of teachers in students' adaptation; language difficulties; tolerance problem. To understand what was challenging for BSTU students during their studying in UiN, I've asked them to answer a several questions on particular topic. The results and analysis of their interviews is represented in this part of the chapter.

Before starting with students' interviews Anatoli Boutmistrov as a teacher of UiN gives some comments about Russian students behavior and shares his experience:

BSTU paid a lot of attention for foreign languages studying in 1990's. American teachers were invited in BSTU as native speakers for this purpose. And BSTU students' level of English language is much more higher than other Russian students' level. This fact makes studying on international master program easier for BSTU students.

This is surprise for Russian students that there is no many lectures and education process is aimed on self- education, students need to work alone or in teams a lot, they need to do exercises and read literature by their own. It differs from Russian education process, where all necessary for an exam information is given by teacher on lectures. And Russian students think that travel in Norway is some kind of vocation for them. On the exam students realize that they had to read something and it is shock for them.

According to Professor Anatoli Bourmistrov students shouldn't have problems with language. The obstacle is different perception of study process because of different traditions of education in two countries.

➤ Challenges in students' adaptation

I asked students from BSTU, who was studying in Norway to tell about their adaptation period, to share their experiences, and problems that they faced with. Their answers were very dispersed because of their different background, the most representative and bright answers are:

Student A: *...As for me, moving to Norway was not a big deal as before I had a lot of experience living abroad and away from family. However, dormitory was not a part of this experience, so I was confused a little. My neighbours were international students from different countries and sometimes our values and habits differed and we had some conflicts. Sometimes this destructed me from studying process...*

Student B: *... I remember my first impression when I arrived- it was dark, cold and wet. It was raining. I hate such weather. I usually feel sad. But then the weather changed and my impressions.*

First months some things really annoyed me. For, example during the lecture Norwegian student could get his/her lunch out of the bag and start eating. I was shocked! It is unacceptable in my country. Another example, in the bus. Someone put his/her feet on the seat next to him and will not react even if the bus is full of people and there is no place to seat. It is indecent.

Another annoying thing is Snooth, a teacher could put this little incomprehensible thing under his lip in the middle of his speech and then continue. What is that?!

I shared common areas with 3 guys. Constant dirt and mess in the kitchen! I am not sure it has something common with the research topic, but it was a problem. Ahaha. I can call it different habits...

Student C: *...In my case it was the first experience of living independently, moreover living independently in the foreign country. The high uncertainty about the future in this country, adaptation to Norwegian education system and Norwegian live style were puzzled me at first year of the Master Program. So I needed to use to live and study at the new place, that takes time.*

Some problems appeared in the second and third terms. The decision-making about the useful subjects that could suit to my first specialization in Russia was quite challenging. The raw of such courses were in Norwegian. Certainly alter the one semester in Norway I was not able to understand Valuation & Profitability analysis and Microeconomics reading Norwegian text books. However the manuals were in English. All in all for me it was only self-education.

Another challenge I've faced was that my background and background of my Norwegian group mates in the Finance specialization. How it appeared so? Well, the program was indeed for Norwegian students only, because the course was presented by just small complicacy of topics that Norwegians have already known from their Bachelor. So there was not any detailed explanation of calculations and

presenting of the algorithm for each case. This fact made studying harder, but anyway if you have chosen such way, you should not have complained, just finish the course

Student D: ... I had already such experience, so the process passed easily. Of course I faced some issues like value differences and different habits, but, as I said, that was not a problem for me...

Student E: ... That was quite difficult to adapt to the new education system where self-education was of great importance...

Student F: ... The major problem I faced, during adaptation process was the completely different living habits in Norway. It started from different preferences of cuisine, food, time of lunch and other eating habits.

The lack of cultural life and the lack of choice how to spend the evening sometimes lead to a pretty melancholic feeling (of course it's not the deep depression). It's mainly "Nature" entertainment, which is popular and available in Norway.

Another issue is that Norwegians, while being tolerant, patient and polite, don't easily get to know the foreigners and hang out with them. Though majorly they speak perfect English!

Student G: ...I lived in dormitory near the university, which is quite far from the center. It was very boring there. Busses came quite seldom. All the other Russian students lived in another dormitory. I lived with Norwegians, they are very closed, and sometime that made me feel lonely...

Some students described their adaptation process very bright with a lot of details and examples. Generally all of them passed the adaptation successfully. In some cases problems appeared during adaptation process disturbed students from studying and this had consequences on their exam results. Some students told that after time was passed it was getting easier for them to study. Summarizing all that was said by students, the main challenges during adaptation period were following:

- Adaptation to different values and habits of students from different countries
- Adaptation to Norwegian education system and study process
- Adaptation to close Norwegian society
- Adaptation to pure cultural life and lack of entertainments

➤ *The role of teachers in socio cultural adaptation*

Teachers play a giant role in student adaptation and educational process. In this part of the study students tell about their teachers and teachers' role in the adaptation. Most of the respondents are from different specializations and have different teachers. The students' opinion about the role of teachers of UiN in adaptation is following:

Student A: ... *I would like to express regards to my teacher prof. K., who had motivated me to study hard from the start and helped to feel comfortable in the new society. Other teachers tend to be friendly and helpful, but as they were Norwegians and some cultural barriers had been felt...*

Student B: ...*I don't think so... they just came to a lesson and teach us, lectured for all. But there were some people, I am not sure if they were teachers, but they definitely were the university employees. So, if you had any questions or needed help, they were ready to react. I mean people from the international office or nice ladies from the information desk and housing office...*

Student C: ... *I almost did not communicate with teachers, because as I tried to study by my own. Hence they could not play some significant role in my adaptation process...*

Student D: ...*The only guy from UiN who played a role in adaption was Svein. He always nice with international students, always is ready to help, very communicative and organizes a lot of different very interesting activities, trips, entertainments. I wish there were more such people in UiN...*

Student E: ... *One of our teachers invited us home to dinner to get to know each other better. That improved our team work...*

Student F: ... *The teacher didn't play a big role. And I believe, he shouldn't. His work is to teach us, and the teachers in Norway normally do their job pretty well. When goes to out-of studying time, that's mainly the university Chaplain who helped us with socializing and spending time in an interesting way...*

Student G: ...*Our teachers didn't participate in our social and cultural life. Maybe because in the first semester we were a group of about 100 people in the class and it seemed impossible to start to communicate with each student for teachers. But this is about me and my group. I didn't really was attracted in such cooperation at that moment. But I know many examples of good collaboration and friendship between students and teachers. But for this you have to meet teacher outside the auditorium. A lot of activities were organized special for this cooperation, for example hiking, fishing trip, where you could meet teachers and communicate. If you participated on language class, teaches there also made a lot of activities, as national dinners and so on. Other way to meet teacher and let him affect on your*

social life is to go to the gym or play football. It was also possible and available in Norway. So summary is that people and teachers are very friendly and opened there, with a great pleasure they can help you and participate in your life...

It becomes clear from the interviews that most of teachers in University of Nordland are open for communication and always can help students and answer their questions. Different events, actions and trips are organized by the UiN members to help students adapt in a new society and give them an opportunity to communicate with teachers, professors and other international students.

➤ Language difficulties

Language is very important part of socio-cultural life. When students arrive in Norway, they have to speak English or learn Norwegian. All classes are in foreign language. Since MBAE program BSTU students are prepared for studying in English. But still some problems connected with this aspect could appear. Students comment these language difficulties:

Student A: ...Communication in English on non-business specific topics is still a bit complicated to me. This affects in some extent on my socio life. Also sometimes it is difficult for me to express my thoughts on exams and my grades as a result are quite worse than they could be if I do it in my native language...

Student B: ...I think there were no difficulties with language. Everyone in Norway speak English. I mean not only teachers and students in the University, but almost everyone! Even old people and little children!

Of course, there were students all over the world and everyone speak with different accent, but there was no language barrier between us. We always understand each other, if we wanted. Maybe my little problem was the level of English language, when I first came to Norway. It was not advanced, unfortunately. But nobody laugh at me, nobody reproached me. I was embarrassed at first, but then get used to it. And everything now is OK!

Another issue, which came to my mind just now is some situations, when I was in the company of Norwegians, and they switch from English to Norwegian. It was awkward situation because I just started to learn Norwegian and understand almost nothing. Then I felt uncomfortable. But I noticed the same tendency among Russian students. If there is at least one non-Russian speaking person in the room they speak English, but only for a short time, then they switch to Russian usually. So, it is a normal situation. You just need to remind of yourself saying: " Hey guys! I'm still here! I do not understand you!" And everything will be Ok...

Student C: *...Finance courses were on Norwegian, though at that moment I had been in Norway one year, I cannot say that I understood each word in the lecture, however there were printed materials that I was able to translate. Eventually I used to listen the lecture on Norwegian, so this stopped being the problem...*

Student D: *...My English skills could be better; native people prefer speak Norwegian even in common places like cantina...*

Student E: *...There were not any difficulties with English ...*

Student F: *... I faced the difficulties concerning local language. Of course, Norwegians use it to speak to each other, and it's a strange feeling when you can't understand what they say. When I learned some Norwegian and tried to speak it myself, I only made other people laugh! I'm not a very shy person, but learning Norwegian in Norway is a problem, because you always have a temptation to switch to English...*

Student G: *...Before going to Norway my English level was not so good. It was because of lack of practice. From the very beginning in Norway I was forced to increase my speaking ability, because English was the communication language there. I was nicely surprise to find that everybody in Norway speaks English from bus driver to the old lady in the supermarket. I don't mention students; there English language at the same level as native speaker has. It means we didn't faced with any communication there...*

Analyzing answers students' answers it is obvious, that most of the BSTU students have quite good English language level for studying in Norway. Almost all citizens in Bodo speak English fluently and there was no problem with communication.

The main difficulties are connected with Norwegian learning. Starting from the second semester some of the classes are conducted in Norwegian. And BSTU students had no sufficient level of Norwegian for these classes. Hopefully teachers treated this problem with understanding and provide necessary literature in English.

Also communicating in big multinational companies became challenging because everyone switch to their native language.

In some cases the lack of sufficient English level of students had consequences on exams results.

➤ Tolerance problem

There are a lot of international student in UiN. To understand the attitude of Norwegians to foreigners I asked BSTU students to discuss whether they think Norwegians society is tolerant enough, and the answers were following:

Student A: *...Unfortunately, I found that sometimes it is difficult for me to tolerate with some particular cultural differences, e.g. Chinese desire to cover everything with rubbish...*

Student B: *...Norwegians are very tolerant of newcomers and people of other nationalities. Actually you can see it on the streets; there are a lot of foreigners or sometimes even refugees. All these people have different nationalities and religion, but nobody is discriminated. Everyone is equal. From my personal point of view we, Russians, are not so tolerant. May be it is better for us. It seems that there are more immigrants in Norway than Norwegians...*

Student C: *...Well, that's a tricky question. One can understand that if the course is on Norwegian, so there were reasons for it. Any way no one from Norwegian students and teachers had expected me to take this course...*

Student D: *...No problems at all, but Norwegian beauties prefer Afro-American guys speaking Norwegian to me speaking Russian, unfortunately (laughing)...*

Student E: *...I didn't notice any problems with tolerance...*

Student F: *...In general, Norwegian society seems to be very liberal and tolerant, so it doesn't seem like you will have some stress or pressure, or other problems when adapting to life there. And it doesn't matter, if you're a weirdo, if you're Afro- American, Asian, Pan Asian, Russian, woman, gay, disabled or whatever. Norway is very comfortable for everybody...*

Student G: *...I didn't notice any problems concerning tolerance in Norway. This small European country with the high level of living conditions is very opened for people any nationalities. In our university there were people from all over the world, from different continents even: America, Australia, Asia, Africa. It means government of the country made everything possible to attract people and this program is very successful. Tolerance in my opinion is the main instrument, which allows invite in the country different nationalities and live in peace. But also I know that population of Norway is around 5 mln people. And compare to this not so big number a part of immigrant is very considerable there...*

It seems that almost all BSTU students have a common opinion that Norway is high tolerant society. No one had problems with cross- cultural understanding and open-mindedness. Also Norway is very hospitable country for foreigners.

➤ *Different objectives, mutual agreement and trust*

During the education process in University of Nordland there were a lot of teamwork for students. Sometimes it happened that a lot of international students were in the same team. With respect to this different objectives can be set, and problem with mutual agreement and trust arises. I asked BSTU students to share their experience of teamwork and tell how they solved the problem:

Student A: *...There were a lot of exercises and projects, which should be done in a team. But it was very exciting to work with students from different countries. I noticed, for instance, that Russians are good in math and Norwegians in making conclusions. So we used this advantages and the work was done excellent...*

Student D: *...It was quite complicated in some cases, because some international students are not so responsible as I am. And sometimes they just disappeared at all for the whole semester and started doing work only when deadline was close. I feel uncomfortable in such situations...*

Student E: *...It was great to work with students of different nationalities. Russian students have certain background; their background is completely different. And to combine our skills and knowledge was a good experience...*

Student F: *... There were no such problems. I think the biggest obstacle was not to switch language during conversations...*

Student G: *... Norwegians seem to be very smart and responsible. It was pleasure for me to work with them in one team...*

It can be concluded that teamwork with international students from different countries was a good experience for BSTU students and there was no a lot of difficulties with mutual agreement and trust. In some cases different backgrounds of students played a good role in results.

After the Analysis of socio-cultural it becomes obvious that BSTU students faced with some during their studying in UiN. The most challenging for students was:

- Adaptation to different values and habits of students from different countries
- Adaptation to Norwegian education system and study process
- Adaptation to close Norwegian society
- Adaptation to pure cultural life and lack of entertainments
- Difficulties with Norwegian language
- Communication in multinational companies

4.4 Opportunities and implementations

Marina Volkova and Nadezda Nazarova determine the stage of the cooperation between BSTU Voenmekh and University of Nordland as maintenance stage. Marina tells:

... I think it is maintenance stage. This is period when all programs are working well...

Nadezda Nazarova also comments:

...In my opinion, we are now at the maintenance stage with growing opportunities, as we have several well-established cooperation programs and try to keep stably high amount of students. We constantly searching for new projects and new opportunities for cooperation.

At the maintenance, the programs are well-established, the amount of students is kept relatively the same (e.g. we know how many applications to expect for each program, demand and supply are relatively balanced)...

Nadezda Nazarova mentioned that there are a lot of opportunities for BSTU connected with starting a new international programs and new projects. The same idea was told by Professor Anatoli Bourmistrov:

BSTU Voenmekh should capitalize on its own knowledge. Its international problems are good enough to attract not only Norwegian students, but also students from many other countries. It have a program in English, English speaking teachers and literature in English. BSTU Voenmekh has all necessary features and qualities to become more international.

BSTU has German and France partners. It could attract these international students for the sustainable management program. I think the main reason why BSTU doesn't do that is its engineering and technical researcher and developments and may be this is difficult to attract funding for such international programs.

It is definitely possible to develop new international cooperations for the BSTU. It has necessary basis for this. The main problem connected with attracting new funding. Voenmekh should search for new sources of financing to become more international. There are English-speaking teachers, who could hold classes on high level and quality of studying answers international standards.

Also during my research I found out problems connected with structural and socio-cultural differences. Some of them are not solved. And BSTU should work on these problems solutions. One possible solution could be harmonization process and transparence increasing.

Professor Anatoli Bourmistrov discusses:

Harmonization is a process, which recognizes that there are some nuances in educational systems of two countries. This process considers that something could be similar, but some features could vary across countries.

Harmonization is about transparence. Relation between universities must be very transparent for both sides of cooperation. This means that if educational systems of two countries differ with some parameters, this must be clear and described. Russian and Norwegian educational systems differ despite Bologna process.

Russian teachers will continue to stick out for necessary visiting of their lectures, obligatory tests during a semester, absence of foreign literature and so on. These principles will exist because of strong Russian traditions and mentality.

Also one of the harmonization purposes is to prepare a student for the foreign educational system to make his/her adaptation period easier.

There is a joint degree supplement, where both Russian and Norwegian education systems are carefully described for the transparence increasing.

So harmonization process could be one of the possible solutions for the existing BSTU's problems solving. Also Marina Volkova in her interview tells about changing students contingent:

...The contingent of students studying MBAE program is changing now. This is connected with the fact that there become fewer free places for students choosing economics specializations. Our government supposes that there are enough specialists in economics area and the government prefer to increase a number of free places in universities for students choosing technical specializations. This becomes a little problem for selection on our program. But we always glad to see students from technical faculties if they have sufficient level of knowledge...

BSTU Voenmekh has an opportunity to expand the contingent of students. Also I think this could be possible to attract students not only from other BSTU's specializations, but also attract more students from other universities of St. Petersburg. This could be achieved by increasing advertising and marketing activity.

Also my respondents suppose that graduates of BSTU international programs achievements are the best index for the programs success assessment. All graduates after finishing these programs have very good chances to find a respectable job.

To conclude I can say that BSTU Voenmekh is a modern university, which answers all requirements and has a great opportunity to become more global and international.

V. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusions and discussion

The behaviour of universities across national and organisational boundaries is fascinating as universities can be considered organisations that are strongly embedded in their national and organisational contexts (Beerens, 2004). Answering the main research question, I analyzed the cooperation between BSTU Voenmekh and University of Nordland in the context of challenges and opportunities tha BSTU Voenmekh faced with.

The concept of international education generally was defined as the process by which education becomes more available as broadly applicable to students from different countries and cultural backgrounds (Ebuchi, 1989) which, thus, requires the integration of special culturally attuned pedagogical dimensions with the general educational practices and activities (Knight, 2004 cited in Bernardo & Malakolunthu, 2013).

To make the research more structured I divided difficulties into two groups. The first group joins up difficulties ensuring from differences in education systems of countries. The second group combine challenges appeared because of socio-cultural differences. We decided that such structure is the most appropriate for our work.

Summing up the results of the theoretical chapter the main challenges arising from different education systems of countries are connected with:

- Differences in course length
- Differences in quality of study
- Differences in curriculum
- Differences in credit systems
- Differences in higher education governance

And the most important socio-cultural difficulties for higher education cooperation are:

- Challenges in student adaptation
- The role of teachers in socio-cultural adaptation
- Language difficulties
- Tolerance problem
- Differences in objectives
- The problem of mutual agreements and trust

I have found out, that stakeholders of international interuniversity cooperation can face with the problems in adaptation both to different education systems and to such points as value differences, the lack of common lived experience, different habits and priorities, differences in

background, different cultural, social and economic experiences (Blanchet-Cohen & Reilly, 2013).

In the practical part of the research I analysed directly the cooperation between BSTU Voenmekh and University of Nordland. And answered the research question “*Which challenges and opportunities BSTU Voenmekh faced with in the co-operation with University of Nordland?*”. All the findings confirmed the model described in the theoretical framework and supplement it.

I explored that with respect to educational systems differences the most challenging for BSTU were:

- Problem connected with difference in the courses length and number of school years
- Problem of students’ assessment and examination
- Problem of interpretation of subjects content and foreign literature
- Problem of how students’ workload must be measured (credits)
- The lack of experience and research skills of teachers and professors
- The lack of flexibility of Russian governance system

These results are accurately joined to the concepts that were described in the theoretical framework.

During the analysis of socio-cultural problems I discovered that problems that BSTU students deal with are:

- Adaptation to different values and habits of students from different countries
- Adaptation to Norwegian education system and study process
- Adaptation to close Norwegian society
- Adaptation to pure cultural life and lack of entertainments
- Difficulties with Norwegian language
- Communication in multinational companies

These results also confirm the theoretical framework.

Some opportunities and possibilities for BSTU Voenmekh were found as a result of the research:

- Opportunity to expand the contingent of students
- Harmonization process as a solutions for the existing problems solving
- Developing new international cooperations

5.2 Opportunities and further research

These challenges, difficulties and problems are considered in the research from the point of view of different stakeholders such as universities and students.

Also possible ways for solving these challenges and opportunities, which BSTU deals with are described in this master thesis. As already pointed out, many European universities and higher education institutions are involved in "Bologna process" and that could be the way for standardizing the lengths of study programmes and types of degree and partly solves the problem of different course length in interuniversity cooperation (Hauget al. 1999; Haugand & Tauch 2001; Teichler 2001, cited in Teichler, 2004). As Professor Anatoli Bourmistrov noticed in his interview : "Harmonization process could be one of the possible ways to solve these system problems".

To deal with the problem of fairness of quality accreditation there is a variety of practices all over the world such agencies which increase transparency, security and information about higher education for students and society more generally (ENQA report on Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2009), and these practices are described more widely in part 2.2.1.

For dealing with different credit systems ECTS could be used. It provides an instrument to create transparency, to build bridges between institutions and to widen the choices available to students. The system makes it easier for institutions to recognise the learning achievements of students through the use of commonly understood measurements (Bourmistrov et.al., 2011).

Ways for solving socio-cultural problems also are described in our work in part 2.2.2. Opportunities in this section could be, for instance, focusing on students' culture shock more precisely, help with socio-cultural adaptation, psychological adaptation, and academic for students.

There are ways to deal with language problem. Some studies suggested that greater interaction with the host community would contribute to better competence in the host language (Clément et al., 2001). According to Ward (2004) target language skills helped to establish social support and interpersonal relationships, which in turn facilitated adaptation (Yu & Shen, 2012). This work opens a wide field for further research. This work could be useful for further research of UiN's problems and challenges in the cooperation with BSTU Voenmekh. Moreover these practical findings are one more important contribution in the studying of international co-operatons between universities and can be used for further research in this sphere.

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Appendix 1

Key definitions

In the 1970s, as the protective boundaries between industrial sectors and among national economies broke down under the pressure of rapid technological change and increased internationalization of capital, production and knowledge, the world economy entered a period of turbulence and change. Firms cope with uncertainties via the formation of strategic partnership (Mytelka, 1991).

In most general terms cooperation can be defined as the joint performance of an activity by at least two actors in a way that the actions undertaken by one partner intendedly facilitate the actions undertaken the other partner/s (Sascha Albers, 2005). Another one definition for cooperation/alliance, which supplements the previous one, is a voluntary, long-term, contractual relationship between two firms to achieve mutual and individual objectives through the sharing of resources (Brian V. Tjemkes, 2008).

Cooperative strategy

Cooperative strategy is the attempt by organizations to realize their objectives through cooperation with other organizations rather than in competition with them. It focuses on the benefits that can be gained through cooperation and how to manage the cooperation so as to realize them (Child et al., 2005). Under the heading of cooperative agreements, the economic and business literature regroups a whole array of governance mechanisms: licensing, franchising, subcontracting, consortia sponsored by government agencies, trade agreements, joint ventures, equity and non-equity coalitions and strategic alliances (Mytelka, 1991). A cooperative strategy can offer significant advantages for companies that are lacking in particular competencies or resources to secure these through links with others possessing complementary skills or assets; it may also offer easier access to new markets, and opportunities for mutual synergy and learning (Child et al., 2005).

According to Michael A.Hitt (2007) cooperative strategy is a strategy in which firms work together to achieve a shared objective. Cooperative strategy is therefore not an alternative to either competitive or corporate strategy. It amounts to a further domain of policy options whose purpose is to enable firms to compete more effectively. Questions about the configurations and constitution of actual and potential alliances are important items on the agenda of corporate strategy (Child et al., 2005).

Strategic alliances

The international business literature has already acknowledged a number of positive outcomes for companies actively engaged in strategic alliances, such as higher return on equity, better return on investment, and higher success rates, compared with integration through mergers and acquisitions, or companies in the Fortune 500 list that avoid building inter-corporate relationships (Booz-Allen & Hamilton, 1999 cited in Todeva, Knoke, 2005).

But what exactly are strategic partnerships? There is no single definition for strategic alliances or “interfirm technology cooperation agreements” as they have also been called (Mytelka, 1991). In this project work among numerous definitions some of them were chosen and presented below.

Alliances – Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, tenth edition, defines them as “association(s) to further the common interests of the members” – or incorporate agreements cover a wide gamut of functions, ranging from component sourcing through research and development to production and marketing. (Yoshino, Rangan, 1995)

According to David C. Mowery (1996) “strategic alliance is a relationship between two or more parties to pursue a set of agreed upon goals or to meet a critical business need while remaining independent organizations, partners may provide the strategic alliance with resources such as products, distribution channels, manufacturing capability, project funding, capital equipment, knowledge, expertise, or intellectual property”.

Fred Weston (2001) defines strategic alliances as “informal or formal decisions or agreements to cooperate in some form of relationship between two or more firms”.

The alliance is cooperation or collaboration which aims for a synergy where each partner hopes that the benefits from the alliance will be greater than those from individual efforts. The alliance often involves technology transfer (access to knowledge and expertise), economic specialization, shared expenses and shared risk (Mowery et al., 1996).

A strategic alliance links specific facets of the businesses of two or more firms. At its core, this link is a trading partnership that enhances the effectiveness of the competitive strategies of the participating firms by providing for the mutually beneficial trade of technologies, skills, or products based upon them. An alliance can take a variety of forms, ranging from an arm’s-length contract to a joint venture (Yoshino, Rangan, 1995).

Alliance implementation issues include the choice of governance mechanisms, enhancing trust and reciprocity between partners, managing the integration of project staffs from different organizational cultures, and resolving conflicts that arise among partners with divergent expectations about and contributions to their collaboration (Todeva, Knoke, 2005).

There are many types of strategic alliances. Three major types are joint venture, equity strategic alliance and non-equity strategic alliance (Hitt et al., 2007).

1. *A joint venture* is a separate business entity from that of participating firms (Weston et al., 2001). In other words “joint venture is a strategic alliance in which two or more firms create a legally independent company to share some of their resources and capabilities to develop a competitive advantage” (Hitt et al., 2007). Joint ventures generally involve only two firms and may be organized as partnership, corporation, or any other form of business organization (Weston et al., 2001).

2. *Equity strategic alliance* is an alliance in which two or more firms own different percentages of the company they have formed by combining some of their resources and capabilities to create a competitive advantage.

3. *Non-equity strategic alliance* is an alliance in which two or more firms develop a contractual-relationship to share some of their unique resources and capabilities to create a competitive advantage (Hitt et al., 2007).

Business- and corporate-level cooperative strategies

Strategy is generally viewed as a pattern of important decisions that (1) guides the organization in its relationships with its environment, (2) affects the internal structure and processes of the organization, and (3) centrally affects the organization's performance (Donald C. Hambrick, 1980).

Theoretical literature in the business policy area has increasingly emphasized distinctions between two levels of organizational strategy: corporate-level strategy, concerned with questions about what businesses to compete in, and business-level strategy, concerned with questions of how to compete within a particular business (Donald W. Beard, Gregory G. Dess, 1981).

A firm forms *a business-level cooperative strategies* when it believes that combining its resources and capabilities with those of one or more partners will create competitive advantages that it can't create by itself and that will lead to success in a specific product market (Michael A. Hitt, 2009). According to Johnson et al., 2011 business-level strategies include (1) generic competitive strategy, which are cost leadership, differentiation and focus, and (2) interactive strategies building on the notion of generic strategies to consider interaction with competitors, especially in hypercompetitive environments, and including both cooperative strategies and game theory. The purpose of cost leadership strategy is the company's low-cost products offers in an industry. Cost leadership strategy takes place through experience, investment in production facilities, conservation and careful monitoring on the total operating costs (Hashem Valipour et al. 2012). Product differentiation - a product offering is perceived by the consumer to differ

from its competition on any physical or nonphysical product characteristic including price. Thus product differentiation strategy is an alteration of perceptions so as to result in a state of product differentiation (Peter R. Dickson, James L. Ginter, 1987). A focus strategy targets a narrow segment of domain of activity and tailors its products or services to the needs of that specific segment to the exclusion of others (Gerry Johnson et al., 2011). Cooperative strategy is the attempt by organizations to realize their objectives through cooperation with other organizations rather than in competition with them (John Child et al., 2005). Game theory encourages an organization to consider competitor's likely moves and the implications of those moves for its own strategy (Gerry Johnson et al., 2011).

Corporate level strategy is the selection and development of the markets (or industries) in which a firm competes. Therefore, corporate strategy deals with what industries (or markets) a firm seeks to compete in. There are two basic descriptive dimensions of corporate strategy, how diversified and how vertically integrated an organization is (Scott Gallagher, 2003). Diversification involves increasing the range of products or markets served by an organization. Vertical integration describes entering activities where the organization is its own supplier or customer. The vertical integration is like diversification in increasing corporate scope. The difference is that it brings together activities up and down the same value network, while diversification typically involves more or less different value networks (Gerry Johnson et al., 2011).

Network cooperative strategy

Network Cooperative Strategy is a cooperative strategy wherein several firms agree to form multiple partnerships to achieve shared objectives (Hitt et al., 2007). The formation of network relationships is intimately related to the creation of social capital. However, networks and social capital are closely related, but not identical, concepts (Todeva, Knoke, 2005). Network firms result from a strategy of "externalization". Firms chose this strategy, in large part, because of the growing costs of their internalized structures. The external entities in the network firm are partners and not mere sub-contractors (Mytelka, 1991).

International cooperative strategies

An international strategy is a strategy through which the firm sells its good outside the domestic market. One of the primary reasons for implementing international strategy is that international markets yield potential new opportunities (Hitt et al., 2007). Interfirm linkages between firms and their domestic suppliers and distributors are increasingly giving way to relationships that often cross national boundaries. Not only rival firms and firms in different countries, but firms in industries thought to be entirely unrelated, are joined by the new alliances. (Yoshino, Rangan, 1995). Strategic partnering activity proliferated both nationally and

internationally in the 1980s and proved particularly useful in reducing the costs, risks and uncertainties of knowledge production (Mytelka, 1991).

- *Global Strategic Alliances* are working partnerships between companies (often more than two) across national boundaries and increasingly across industries. Sometimes they are formed between company and a foreign government, or among companies and governments (Hitt et al., 2007).
- *International Co-operative strategies* are the strategies where a firm or a nation or an entity works with other entities across nations with a common shared objective. This process ensures that synergy is created, a good value is created for the end customer rather than working alone, exceeding the cost of creating consumer value, creating a favorable spot relative or in comparison to the competitors in the industry¹.
- *Cross-Border Strategic Alliance* is an international cooperative strategy in which firms with headquarters in different nations combine some of their resources and capabilities to create a competitive advantage (Hitt et al., 2007).

Other possible types of interfirms' relations are presented in Appendix 2 "Pyramid of alliances" (Hitt et al., 2007), Appendix 3 "Varieties of Inter-organizational Relations" (Todeva & Knoke, 2005) and Appendix 4 "Range of interfirm links" (Yoshino & Rangan, 1995).

This project work will further focus on international partnership, namely the international cooperative strategy in higher education will be considered.

Appendix 2

Interuniversity cooperation categories

Hans deWit (1998), on the other hand, categorised interuniversity cooperation in terms of “academic association,” “academic consortia,” and “institutional networks”:

An academic association is an organisation of academic or administrators and/or their organisational units (departments, centres, schools, institutions), who are united for a common purpose that is related to their professional development.

An academic consortium is a group of academic units (departments, centres, schools, institutions) who are united for the single purpose to fulfil a contract, based on bringing together a number of different areas of specialised knowledge.

Consortia, which simply serve as “a shell within which participating institutions develop a common identity” and “within which participating staff have an opportunity to articulate shared values” (Bridges&Husbands, 1996, p. 4) for which the consortia stand. (Chan, 2004)

An institutional network is a group of academic units (departments, centres, schools, and institutions) united for, in general, multi-purposes, academic and/or administrative. They are usually indefinite of character and leadership driven. (deWit, 1998, p. 122-123) (Wendy W. Y. Chan, 2004) individual institutions are well advised to pursue a number of organizational strategies to support their institutional networks.

As van Ginkel (1998) pointed out, the “coordinating capacity” of the institution to “link the outside network with the inside matrix, the environment with the invironment” (p. 40) is a determining factor for the success of a university relationship (Chan, 2004).

Appendix 3

Reasons for interuniversity co-operations

Currently three English speaking countries: USA, UK and Australia attract nearly half of the world total foreign students. For example, over 40% of students studying outside their home country in 2007 were in the USA, UK and Australia. Over half of the world's international student population was from the Asian region led by China, India and South Korea. China and India showed the strongest growth in outwardly mobile students between 1999 and 2007 (UNESCO, 2009). Consequently, the existing resources are spread over increasingly larger student populations. Therefore, the excess demand for higher education in most developing countries can only be met by transnational education from developed nations. By 2020, around 3 million students from the developing nations will seek their higher education outside of their own countries to major English speaking countries of UK, Australia, Canada, USA & New Zealand (Aydarova, 2012).

The question whether universities have always been international in nature or not, has been addressed by several scholars in higher education policy studies (e.g. Scott, 1998; Van der Wende, 2002, cited in Beerkens, 2004). Demands for market liberalization, the impact of interdependence, advanced communication and technological services, and increased international labor mobility are inescapable and play a part in explaining why a country should change so as to become more international (Knight, 2004, Ogata, 1992, cited in Lavankura, 2013). Globalisation, rising costs of public services in general and the evolution of the knowledge-based economy have caused dramatic changes to the character and functions of higher education in many countries around the world (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Mok & Welch, 2003), although the local dimension also remains important (Deem, 2001; Marginson & Sawir, 2005, cited in Deem et al., 2008).

There are, however, several terms that are closely linked to international cooperation in higher education, and they are *globalisation*, *internationalization*, *massification*, and *marketisation* of higher education. Today, universities form linkages with each other for one reason or another, but most important and often, they strike alliances to *be able to compete* (Chan, 2004).

Globalisation and internalisation

Globalisation is not a new phenomenon. The concept of globalisation is significantly massive and could be threaten differently in the context of various scientific approaches, theories

or backgrounds. The most general definition for globalisation is a worldwide integration of economic, technological, political, cultural and social aspects between countries (Hamilton, 2009). In the context of this work the term “globalisation” is used to refer to the impact of global changes that cannot be easily fended off by national governments. In this sense, globalisation breaks down national borders, reduces national power, disrupts national structures, and blurs the differences between societies (Chan, 2004). Universities are institutions that, in all societies, have performed basic functions, which result from the particular combination of cultural and ideological, social and economic, educational and scientific roles that have been assigned to them. They are multi-purpose or multi-product institutions, which contribute to the generation and transmission of ideology, the selection and formation of elites, the social development and educational upgrading of societies, the production and application of knowledge and the training of the highly skilled labour force. This range of functions constitutes the key tasks of higher education systems, albeit with different emphases depending on the national context, the historical period, the specific sector and indeed the institution concerned (Enders, 2004). In other words university institution as a main provider of knowledge, culture, ideology, and development in society should fit the changing external conditions, and prepare individuals for fast growing globalized world and one possible way of dealing with this issue is cooperation between universities. For university institution globalisation means really a lot. Globalisation of the market has also led to more and more strategic alliances among multiple partners across national borders (Chan, 2004). Globalisation sometimes seems a catch-all phrase or a non-concept, a catalogue of more or less everything that seems different since the 1970s: advances in information technology, greater capital flow across borders, international mobility of labour or of students, new public management and the weakening power of nation states, credit transferring higher education and international recognition of degrees (Enders, 2004). The elements of globalisation in higher education are widespread and multifaceted: it has been estimated that more than 1.6 million students study outside of their home countries (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006).

The discussion of the various conceptualisations of globalisation and their applications in higher education research illustrates the broad field. Universities are objects as well as subjects, they influence and at the same time are affected by the process of globalisation (Beerrens, 2004).

Globalisation is now widely recognized as the main driving force behind the internationalization of higher education in many countries around the world (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Huang, 2007; Stiasny & Gore, 2012, cited in Daquila & Huang, 2013). The concepts of globalisation and internalisation are mutually connected and have deep interdependences, so it

could be difficult to distinguish between them. The term “internalisation” is used not so much as an external process, but more as a strategy or an intended activity of higher education institutions. This becomes apparent if we look at the definition of internationalisation in higher education of Knight and De Wit (1995: 17), a definition that has become widely accepted in the domain of international education: “Internationalisation of higher education is the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of a higher education institution.” (Beerkens, 2004). Also in the context of higher education, Jane Knight (2008) defined internationalization at the national/ sector/institutional level as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels (Daquila & Huang, 2013).

Under globalisation, the internationalisation of higher education also encompasses “activities such as internationalisation of curricula, . . . [as well as] the establishment of international organizations, and consortia of universities at both regional and global levels” (Huang, 2007, cited in Daquila & Huang, 2013). Internationalisation, to a certain extent, is a response to the impacts of globalisation. Internationalisation recognises national boundaries and the uniqueness of individual societies and cultures and in the face of the forces of globalisation, urges international understanding and cooperation (Chan, 2004). Internationalisation means setting up flows (connections) between two or more *countries*, while globalisation refers to a process where social arrangements that shape these connections become integrated on a world-wide scale (Beerkens, 2004).

The nature and scope of internationalisation in higher education however, has gone through several changes in the past decades. Van der Wende (2002: 34) mentions the significant increase in the mobility of students and scholars, the broadening range of activities associated with internationalisation and the shift from internationalisation as a marginal concern towards a central institutional issue with strategic importance (Beerkens, 2004). Internationalizing the higher education sector has contributed in no small way to the development of the knowledge economy in many cities’ evolution from a focus on “FIRE” (finance, insurance, and real estate) to what Sexton (2012, p. 7) has labeled “ICE” (intellectual, cultural, and educational) activities (Daquila, Huang, 2013). The primary rationales for internationalization have been grouped into four main types: social/cultural, political, academic, and economic (De Wit, 2000; Knight, 1999; Knight & De Wit, 1997, p. 174). Later, new rationales emerged, which are both cross-cutting and yet clearly separable at both national and institutional levels. Examples of these emerging rationales at the national level are human resources development, commercial trade, and social/cultural development. The rationales at the institutional level involve international

branding and profile, income generation, and knowledge production (Knight, 2004, cited in Lavankura, 2013).

Massification and marketisation

The massification of higher education beginning in the 1960s and increasing marketisation of education have quickened the pace and, in some cases, changed the nature of international university cooperation (Chan, 2004). The most important societal challenge universities all over the world had to face in the last decades, namely the transformation towards a mass higher education system, took place within a national environment. The massification of higher education sometimes even is put in the perspective of national strength and competitiveness in the context of the emergence of a global knowledge economy (Damme, 2001).

The expansion of the higher education system in Western Europe and other OECD nations during the last fifteen years has been viewed by some as the most significant higher education development of this century. Through out most of Western Europe, the term "massification" is traditionally employed to note the rapid enrollment growth in higher education. According to The Economist (1997), massification is "the biggest single change in higher education over the past two decades (Alexander, 2000). As Scott (1998) pointed out, "Rightly or wrongly politicians believe investment in [higher education] can be translated into comparative economic advantage, a belief encouraged by theories of post-industrial society which suggest that 'knowledge' has become the primary resource in advanced economies" (Chan, 2004).

Following in the path of massification is the marketisation of higher education. Traditional universities are no longer the exclusive or even dominant educational providers. New types of institutions have emerged to cater to the values and needs of the "new" students (Chan, 2004). In recent years, there has been a paradigm shift in the governance of the higher education system throughout the world and marketisation policies and market-type mechanisms have been introduced in countries previously characterised by a high degree of government control (Jongbloed, 2003, cited in Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006).

Over the last decade however, universities have been transformed increasingly into powerful consumer-oriented corporate networks, whose public interest values have been seriously challenged (Rutherford, 2005, cited in Lynch, 2006).

Education has changed from being "a public service driven by professionals towards a market-driven service, fueled by purchasers and customers" (Murgatroyd & Morgan, 1993, as cited in Coleman, 1994, p. 362), and universities have found themselves more and more

dependent on market forces and tuition income to survive (Chan, 2004). Making the universities strongly market-oriented, can and will over time lead also to a concentration of resources in Universities outside of public control (Lynch, 2006). According to Ben Jongbloed, 2003 marketisation policies in higher education are aimed at strengthening student choice and liberalising markets in order to improve the quality and variety of the services offered by the providers of higher education and as such, marketisation is aimed at encouraging providers to pay more attention to their students and to innovation in teaching and research (Lynch, 2006). The attempts by governments to enhance the quality of higher education through the encouragement of market forces is based on an assumption that students are, or will become, informed consumers making rational choices of HE courses and institutions (Baldwin and James, 2000, cited in Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Public universities were established to promote independence of intellectual thought, to enable scholars to work outside the control of powerful vested interest groups (Lynch, 2006). An important argument in favour of markets is their capacity for generating social benefits through innovation, the development of new services and new forms of programme delivery (Dill & Teixeira, 2000). At the same time, by emphasising competition and introducing performance-related reward schemes, marketisation policies are aimed at increasing efficiency in the sector, making institutions and students more aware of the consequences of their decisions in terms of costs (Jongbloed, 2003).

Stay able to compete

Massification and marketisation of higher education have led to severe competition, and globalisation has also led to more and more strategic alliances among multiple partners across national borders (Chan, 2004). The internationalization envisioned in the seventh (1992-1996) higher education development plan also reflected the importance of higher education in economic terms and suggested that internationalization would help to upgrade academic standards to meet international-level competence (Tong-In et al., 1995, cited in Lavankura, 2013).

At the institutional level, universities have not generally been perceived in the past as highly competitive: over the last half-century, the huge state-funded growth of higher education has damped down any need for competition. In any case, most institutions' capacity to compete was limited in practical terms, even if they might have wished to extend their territory (Dill & Sporn ,1995, cited in Enders, 2004). But based on disciplinary, geographical, historical and institutional ties and similarities, universities have grouped together under the presumption that 'they can't go at it alone' in the contemporary international and competitive environment

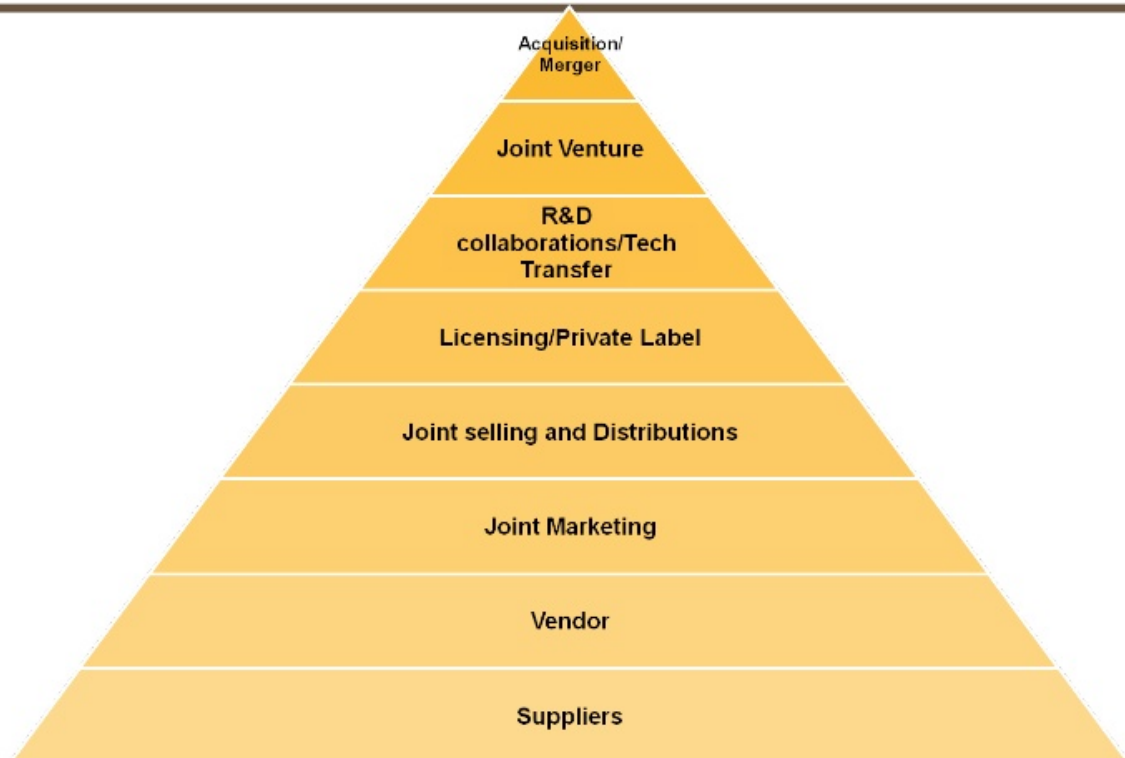
(Beerkens, 2004). 6. Higher education systems in both Europe and Asia have recently been going through significant restructuring processes to enhance their competitiveness and hierarchical positioning within their own countries and in the global market place (Deem et al., 2008).

The move from export education to franchising (and latterly joint and sole ventures off-shore) undoubtedly lowers production costs, in so far as both the capital investments and direct labour costs in off-shore facilities are typically much lower than in the home country, the primary motivation is to reach new markets abroad, or at least to defending existing shares of foreign markets (Healey, 2007).

Appendix 4

Pyramid of Alliances

Pyramid Of Alliances



(Hitt et al., 2007),

Appendix 5

Varieties of Inter-organizational Relations

HIERARCHICAL RELATIONS - through acquisition or merger, one firm takes full control of another's assets and coordinates actions by the ownership rights mechanism

JOINT VENTURES - two or more firms create a jointly owned legal organization that serves a limited purpose for its parents, such as R&D or marketing

EQUITY INVESTMENTS - a majority or minority equity holding by one firm through a direct stock purchase of shares in another firm

COOPERATIVES - a coalition of small enterprises that combine, coordinate, and manage their collective resources

R&D CONSORTIA - inter-firm agreements for research and development collaboration, typically formed in fast-changing technological fields

STRATEGIC COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS - contractual business networks based on joint multi-party strategic control, with the partners collaborating over key strategic decisions and sharing responsibilities for performance outcomes

CARTELS - large corporations collude to constrain competition by cooperatively controlling production and/or prices within a specific industry

FRANCHISING - a franchiser grants a franchisee the use of a brand-name identity within a geographic area, but retains control over pricing, marketing, and standardized service norms

LICENSING - one company grants another the right to use patented technologies or production processes in return for royalties and fees

SUBCONTRACTOR NETWORKS - inter-linked firms where a subcontractor negotiates its suppliers' long-term prices, production runs, and delivery schedules

INDUSTRY STANDARDS GROUPS - committees that seek the member organizations' agreements on the adoption of technical standards for manufacturing and trade

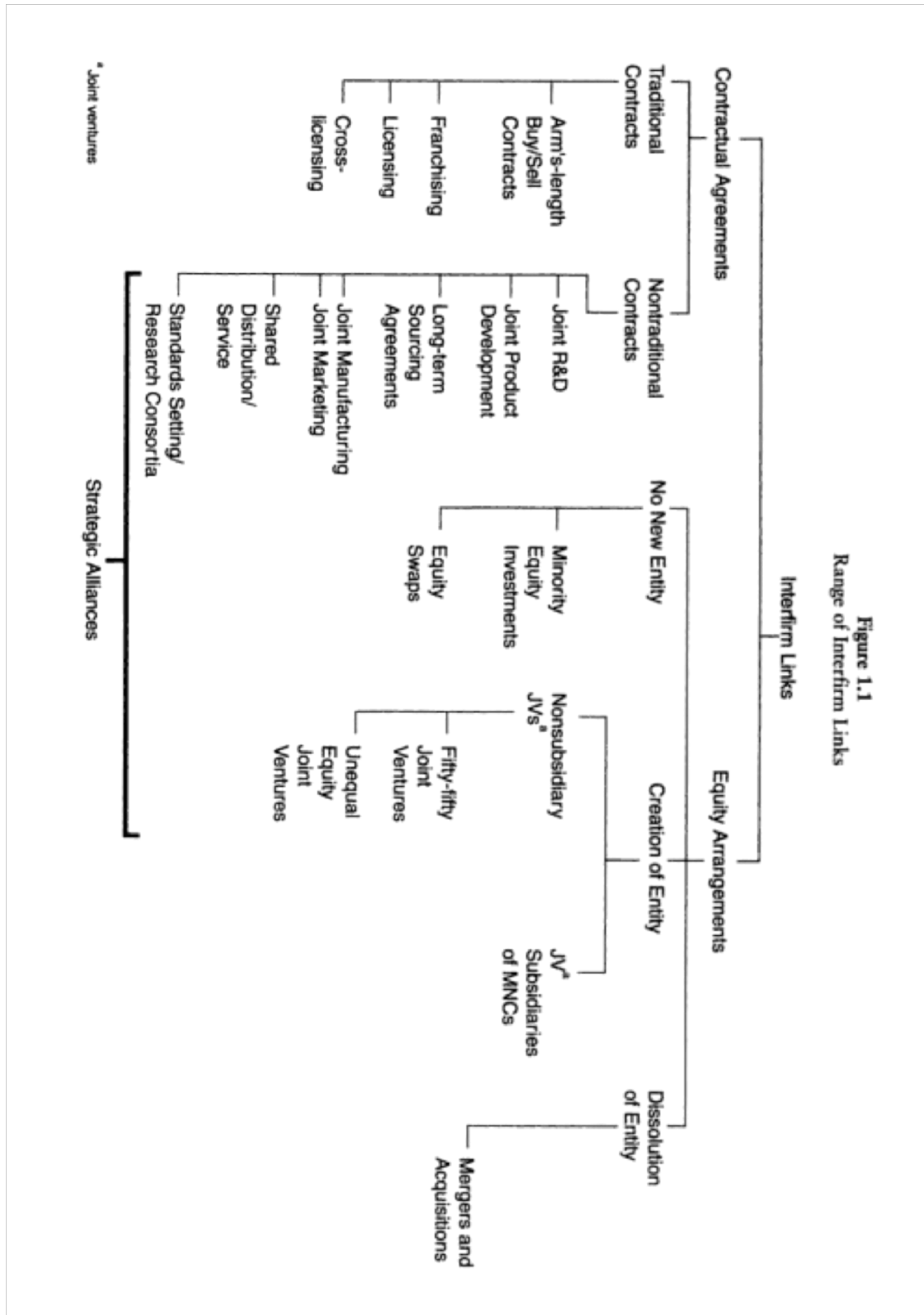
ACTION SETS - short-lived organizational coalitions whose members coordinate their lobbying efforts to influence public policy making

MARKET RELATIONS - arm's-length transactions between organizations coordinated only through the price mechanism

(Todeva & Knoke, 2005)

Appendix 6

Range of interfirm links



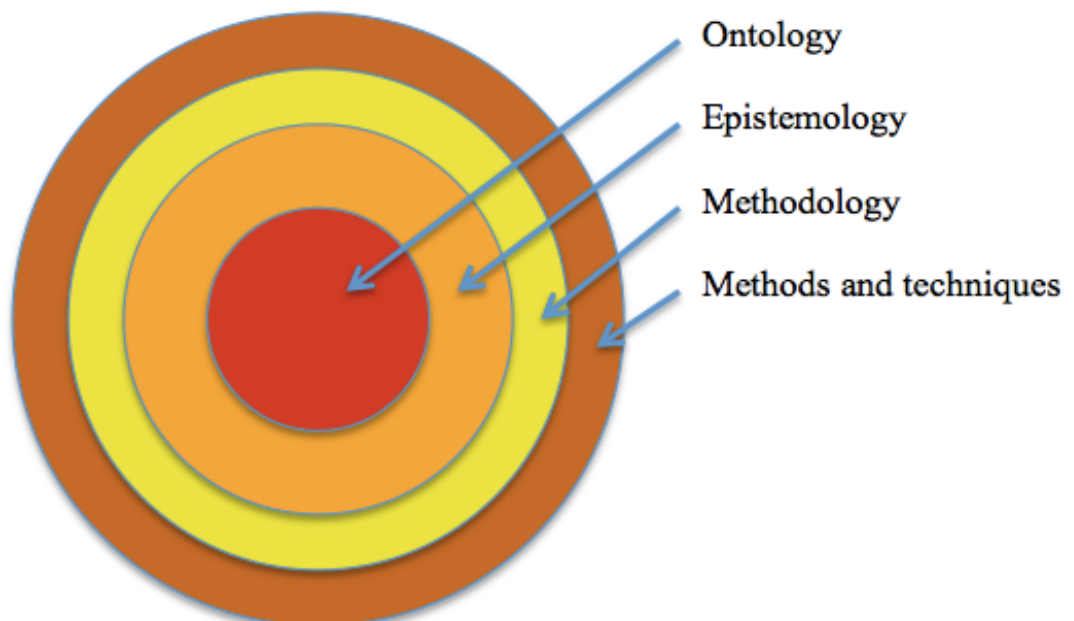
(Yoshino & Rangan, 1995)

Appendix 7

Philosophical positions and paradigms

If a methodology consists of techniques for making observations about causal relations, an ontology consists of premises about the deep causal structures of the world from which analysis begins and without which theories about world would not make sense (Mahoney, 2003). According to Easterby-Smith et.al. (2012) there are 4 main features of a research design. They are shown schematically on the figure below. Ontology is the inner ring and is defined as basic assumptions made by the researcher about the nature of reality.

Ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods and techniques Source: M. Easterby-Smith, R. Thorpe & P. Jackson, 2012



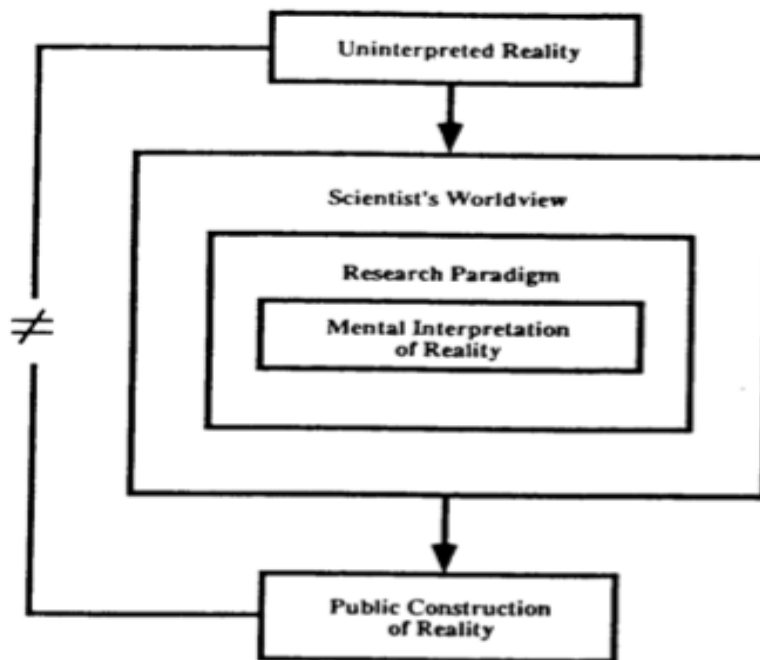
Theoretical paradigm is about the nature of reality are crucial to understanding the overall perspective from which the study is designed and carried out (S. E Krauss, 2005).

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggested that ontological assumptions (assumptions about the nature of reality and nature of things) give rise to epistemological assumptions (ways of researching and enquiring into the nature of reality and the nature of things); these, in turn, give rise to methodological considerations; and these, in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentations and data collection (methods) (Cohen et al., 2011).

The *ontological issue* relates to the nature of reality and its characteristics. When researchers conduct qualitative research, they are embracing the idea of multiple realities. Different researchers embrace different realities, as do the individuals being studied and the readers of qualitative study (J. W. Creswell, 2013). Philosophical positions are fundamental for research practices, implying specific methodological strategies. At the most abstract and general level, examples of such paradigm are philosophical positions such as positivism, constructivism, realism, pragmatism, and postmodernism, each embodying very different ideas about reality (ontology) and how we can gain a knowledge of it (epistemology) (J.A. Maxwell, 2013). Easterby-Smith (2012) suggested that there are several varieties of realism. A *traditional realism* position emphasizes that the world is concrete and external, and science can only progress through observations that have a direct correspondence to the phenomena being investigated. The world is made up of objects and structures that have identifiable cause and effect relationships (N. King & C. Horrocs, 2010). Realism recognizes that perceptions have a certain plasticity (Churchland, 1979) and that there are differences between reality and people's perceptions of reality (Bisman, 2002 cited in S.E. Krauss, 2005).

The second variety is *internal realism*. This assumes that there is a single reality, but asserts that it is never possible for scientists to access that reality directly, and it is only possible to gather indirect evidence of what is going on in fundamental physical process (Putnam, 1987 cited in Easterby-Smith, 2012).

Unlike scientific realism's interpretation of relativism, the *relativistic view* has no problem with the possibility of an external world that is independent of the scientist. However, the difference in the relativistic perspective is that no interpretation of that world can be made independently of human sensations, perceptions, information processing, feelings, and actions (J.P. Peter, 1992). The relativistic position is shown on Figure below.



Relativistic/Constructionist

View of Reality Source: J.P. Peter, 1992

The position of relativism goes a stage further in suggesting that scientific laws are not simply out there to be discovered, but that they are created by people (Easterby-Smith, 2012). The major difference between scientific realism and the relativistic/constructionist view is in the nature of scientific reality. Realism views science as being capable of knowing reality, though not with certainty. The relativistic perspective views science as constructing various views of reality (J.P. Peter, 1992).

The *epistemological assumption*, conducting a qualitative study means that researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied. Therefore, subjective evidence is assembled based on individuals views. This is how knowledge is known – through the subjective experiences of people. It becomes important, then, to conduct studies in the “field”, where participants live and work- these are important contexts for understanding what participants are saying (J. W. Creswell, 2013). Epistemology is intimately related to ontology and methodology; as ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality while methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it (S.E. Krauss, 2005). It has formed a ground for a sustained debate among social scientists, which has focused around the respective merits of two contrasting views of how social science research should be conducted: positivism and social constructionism (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

The positivistic point of view, on the one hand, states that the purpose of science is simply to stick to what we can observe and measure. Knowledge of anything beyond that, a

positivist would hold, is impossible (Trochim, 2000). As such, positivists separate themselves from the world they study, while researchers within other paradigms acknowledge that they have to participate in real- world life to some extent so as to better understand and express its emergent properties and features (Healy & Perry, 2000 cited in S.E. Krauss, 2005). A research may be based on the belief that there is one reality that can be observed, and this reality is knowable through the process of research, albeit sometimes imperfectly. This perspective is typically associated with a positivist paradigm that underlies quantitative research (D. J. Cohen & B. F. Crabtree, 2008). The key idea of positivism is that the social world exists externally, and that its properties should be measured through objective methods, rather than being inferred subjectively through sensation, reflection or intuition (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

There is *Social constructionism* on the other hand, which denies that our knowledge is a direct perception of reality. In fact it might be said that as a culture or society we construct our own version of reality between us. There can be no such thing as an objective fact (V. Burr, 2003). The main principal of Edmund Husserl's (1975) and Alfred Schutz's (1962-6) thesis was that individuals in interaction create social worlds through their linguistic, symbolic activity for the purpose of providing coherence and purpose to an essentially open-ended unformed human existence (N. Parton, 2003). The reality is determined by people rather than by objective and external factors. The focus should be on what people, individually or collectively, are thinking and feeling, and attention should be paid to the way they communicate with each other, whether verbally or non- verbally (Easterby-Smith, 2012). What such an approach clearly does is to emphasise the processes through which people define themselves (their identities) and their environments. People do so by participating in their social worlds, interacting with others and assigning meaning to aspects of their experience (N. Parton, 2003).

At a somewhat more specific level, paradigms that are relevant to qualitative research include interpretivism, critical theory, feminism, queer theory, and phenomenology (J.A. Maxwell, 2013).

The connection between ontology, epistemology and methodology is represented in the Table below.

Ontology	Relativism
Epistemology	Constructionism
Methodology	
Aims	Convergence
Starting points	Questions
Design	Cases and surveys
Data types	Words and numbers
Analysis/ interpretation	Triangulation and comparison
Outcomes	Theory generation

Methodological implication of epistemology Source: Easterby-Smith, 2012

Appendix 8

The function of the research design

The function of the research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enable us to answer initial question as unambiguous as possible. Obtaining relevant evidence entails specifying the type of evidence needed to answer the research question, to test a theory to evaluate a program or to accurately describe some phenomenon (D. A. de Vaus, 2001). A research design is statement written, often before any data is collected, which explains what data is to be gathered, how and where from (Easterby-Smith, 2012). In this particular master thesis the empirical research fits for answering main research question and my own data is collected fir this purpose. I choose in-depth interviews as the most appropriate way for data gathering, which satisfies all the claims of chosen philosophical position, which was determined in previous part of the chapter. Survey research can be subdivided for exploratory, description, or explanatory research according to the purpose of the research.

Appendix 9

Minimum dimensions of study survey

Element/Dimension	Exploration	Description	Explanation
Research Design			
Survey type	Cross-sectional	Cross-sectional	Cross-sectional and longitudinal
Mix of research methods	Multiple methods	Not necessary	Multiple methods
Unit(s) of analysis	Clearly defined	Clearly defined & appropriate for the questions/hypotheses	Clearly defined & appropriate for the research hypotheses
Respondents	Representative of the unit of analysis	Representative of the unit of analysis	Representative of the unit of analysis
Research hypotheses	Not necessary	Questions or hypotheses clearly stated	Hypotheses clearly stated
Design for data analysis	Not necessary	Inclusion of antecedent variables and time order of data	Inclusion of antecedent variables and time order of data
Sampling Procedures			
Representativeness of sample frame	Approximation	Explicit, logical argument; reasonable choice among alternatives	Explicit, logical argument; reasonable choice among alternatives
Representativeness of the sample	Not a criterion	Systematic, purposive, random selection	Systematic, purposive, random selection
Sample size	Sufficient to include the range of the phenomena of interest	Sufficient to represent the population of interest & perform statistical tests	Sufficient to test categories in theoretical framework with statistical power
Data Collection			
Pretest of questionnaires	With subsample of sample	With subsample of sample	With subsample of sample
Response rate	No minimum	60-70% of targeted population*	60-70% of targeted population*
Mix of data collection methods	Multiple methods	Not necessary	Multiple methods

* Babbie [8], Dillman [41]

Dimensions of study survey Source: A. Pinsonneault & K. L. Kraemer, 1993

Appendix 10

Methodologies

The key principle of *ethnography* is that the researcher should “immerse” him or herself in a setting, and become part of the group under study in order to understand the meanings and significances that people give to their behavior and that of others (Easterby-Smith, 2012). An ethnography focuses on an entire culture-sharing group (J. W. Creswell, 2013). The research process is flexible and typically evolves contextually in response to the lived realities encountered in the field setting (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999 cited in J. W. Creswell, 2003).

Also J. W. Creswell, 2013 list in his book such kinds of ethnography as confessional ethnography, life history, autoethnography, feminist ethnography, ethnographic novels and visual ethnography (photo and video).

Another group of constructionist research design is *narrative methods*, where the researcher can become part of process of constructing and transmitting stories, or they may be collected through interviews by asking people for the stories that they heard about particular events (Easterby-Smith, 2012). Narrative approaches to the study of lives reveal the extent to which these problems have been conditioned by empirical rather than narrative or biographical standards of truth and by a preoccupation with obtaining information at the expense of understanding expression (M. Sandelowski, 1991).

Case studies in which the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995 cited in J. W. Creswell, 2003). Essentially the case study looks in depth at one, or a small number of, organisations, events or individuals, generally over time (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

Grounded theory, in which the researcher attempts to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study. This process involves using multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information (Strauss & Corbin, 1990,1998 cited in J. W. Creswell, 2003). The key task for the researcher is to develop theory through a comparative method, which means looking at the same event or process in different settings or situations (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

Phenomenological research, in which the researcher identifies the "essence" of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study. Understanding the "lived experiences" marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). In this process, the researcher "brackets" his or her own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study (Nieswiadomy, 1993 cited in J. W. Creswell, 2003). Snowballing is a method of expanding the sample by asking one informant or participant to recommend others for interviewing (Babbie, 1995; Crabtree & Miller, 1992 cited in T. Groenewald, 2004).