

**Dealing with difference: developing an  
understanding of international postgraduate joint  
degree programmes in business in London and  
France**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the student experience of international higher education through a case study of joint Masters degrees in business taught in two countries. The thesis explored how the 'joint degree' experience impacts on the way students undertake their learning and intercultural 'negotiations'. The focus on cultural interaction, international mobility, relationality between students and the *way* students experience the learning environment as dimensions of their experience furthers an understanding of international higher education.

The exploration of the individual students' 'lived reality' demonstrates the complexity and limitations of such programmes of study as well as the importance of culture, being the fabric of meaning for individuals (Geertz, 1973) in relation to and as part of the educational experience of a joint degree. This overarching dimension of culture is given prominence in this work, not only in terms of the culture of the institutions that the students study in, but also in terms of the different national education systems, of which those institutions are part and more generally in terms of the different cultures that students have to negotiate as part of their experience.

The research approach was through a case study method, relying on the use of mixed methods for data collection to provide a 'thick' description of the experiences of joint degrees and a triangulation of the findings for each data set. The thematic analysis of the data focussed on individuals' construction of their reality in order to gain an understanding of that reality. The concept of 'relationality' is introduced to refer to the learning that occurs as a result of the recognition of the 'other'. It denotes a learning environment where students learn with and from other students and as a result of their country mobility. As a consequence they develop their intercultural awareness. This relationality is seen as a cornerstone of the experience of joint degrees and is significant to the achievement of inter-cultural learning.

## *Declaration of Authorship*

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own. Aspects of this thesis were reproduced in the following papers:

Bamford,J., (2008), ‘The value of the international classroom as a ‘window of the world’: student presumptions and contradictions,’ *SRHE Conference Annual Conference*, Liverpool

Bamford,J., (2009),Developing Global Citizens Through the Experience of Transnational Education: an achievable aim or limited concept? *Education for Sustainable Development: Graduates as Global Citizens Conference*, Bournemouth

Bamford,J., (2010) ‘Transnational higher education and global citizenship: developing students as ‘global citizens’ through the experience of studying in two countries on one postgraduate programme.’*2nd Paris International Conference on Education, Economy & Society, Paris*

Bamford, J., (2011), Students cultural interactions on transnational programmes of study: a case study analysis of internationalisation, *Higher Education Academy Annual Conference*, Nottingham University

Bamford,J., (2012), The changing nature of international institutional activity: international joint and degree programmes and the EHEA policy discourse, *The HEA Annual Conference, July 2012*

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Send out your light and truth that they may shine through the earth,  
because I am earth without form and void until you enlighten me. Pour  
out from above your grace; flood my heart with the dew of  
heaven...(Thomas á Kempis, 1979:126).

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## **TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AACSB</b>	<b>The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business</b>
<b>ECTS</b>	<b>European Credit Transfer System</b>
<b>EHEA</b>	<b>European Higher Education Area – established by the Bologna Process</b>
<b>EQUIS</b>	<b>European Quality Improvement System run by the European Foundation for Management Development – accreditation of higher education institutions</b>
<b>EUA</b>	<b>European Universities Association</b>
<b>GE</b>	<i>Grandes Écoles</i>
<b>HEPI</b>	<b>Higher Education Policy Institute</b>
<b>IIE</b>	<b>Institute of International Education</b>
<b>JDD</b>	<b>Joint Double Degrees</b>
<b>QAA</b>	<b>Quality Assurance Agency</b>
<b>TNE</b>	<b>Transnational Education</b>
<i>Modus Docendi</i>	<b>Mode of teaching</b>
<i>Modus Discendi</i>	<b>Mode of learning</b>
<i>Philomathic</i>	<b>Love of learning</b>

# CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

## *1. Introduction*

This thesis examines the student experience<sup>1</sup> of international higher education through a case study of joint degrees. I seek to explore how the ‘joint degree’ experience impacts on the way students undertake their learning and intercultural ‘negotiations’ in order to highlight areas that need to be re-addressed. I focus on cultural interaction, international mobility, relationality between students and the *way* students experience the learning environment as dimensions of their experience in order to further understanding of international higher education.

The exploration of the individual students’ experience demonstrates the complexity and limitations of such programmes of study as well as the importance of culture<sup>2</sup> in relation to and as part of the educational experience of a joint degree. This overarching dimension of culture is given prominence in this work, not only in terms of the culture of the institutions that the students study in, but also in terms of the different national education systems, of which those institutions are part and more generally in terms of the different cultures that students have to negotiate as part of their experience.

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<sup>1</sup> This word is used in the thesis in a general sense to denote the link between culture and education and the interactions of students on these degrees. Its inadequacy is acknowledged in terms of the precision of meaning as well as the fact that it is not used to encompass the possible psychological connotations that may arise from the use of the word.

<sup>2</sup> Geertz’ (1973) approach to culture is adopted in this thesis as being, the fabric of meaning for individuals that is defined by control mechanisms that govern rules of behaviour.

There has been a plethora of studies published on the effects of international student mobility (for example: Furnham,1997; Papatsiba, 2005; Pederson, 2010), international student experience and pedagogic methods (McNamara and Harris, 1997; Hyland *et al.*,2008; Montgomery, 2010; Trahar,2009, 2010) and the international student voice (Jones *et al.*, 2011). However, fundamental aspects of the student experience and the teaching and learning methods in relation to international higher education and ‘dealing with difference’ remain under-researched, particularly in relation to joint double degree programmes, the development of a Europe of Knowledge (Dale, 2010) and changing academic identities in higher education ( Barnett and Di Napoli, 2008). Linking previous work in the field under the umbrella of the joint degree offers a new perspective to the present academic debate.

The existing field of research into what is broadly seen as the internationalisation of higher education (Knight, 2004) leads us to pose some questions, such as: do such joint degree courses present an additional international learning opportunity to those that are already operating in an internationally mobile framework, for example, international students<sup>3</sup>, through their intercultural learning? Does the experience of a joint degree live up to the claims of the internationalists, by raising international awareness and what does it add if anything to the higher education process? Kehm and Teichler (2007) ask whether international higher education can be considered as being distinguishable in the present globally mobile environment. We may ask

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<sup>3</sup>The term ‘international students’ is used in this thesis to mean all students who travel overseas, both EU and non-EU students, in order to undertake a programme of study. All the students on the joint degree will therefore fall within this definition at some point so the term is appropriate as it is a defining aspect of the student body

whether joint degrees add anything to intercultural learning beyond what would be available to any international student?

In order to explore individuals' 'experience' of international higher education the research design was developed through a case study approach, relying on the use of mixed methods for data collection to provide a 'thick' description of the experiences of joint degrees and a triangulation of the findings for each data set. The interpretive analysis was facilitated through a constructivist framework, meaning that, there is a focus on individuals' construction of their reality in order to gain an understanding of that reality. It is acknowledged that the case study approach restricts the ability to generalise into a meta narrative but some generalisations can be drawn from the insights offered by a personal lens, highlighting the 'reality' of the experience of international higher education.

***My rationale for undertaking the research and the development of the research questions***

My intention in this section is to offer a personal context to this research, outlining how and why I undertook the research and how I identified the research questions. For the past ten years I have had some involvement with international students as a practitioner in higher education, most specifically as someone who has tried to introduce strategies in my own institution in order to improve their learning experiences. In order to understand and give their experiences a 'voice', I have been engaged with applied research in the field of the international student experience. I make reference to some of my previous publications (Bamford *et al*, 2006 and Bamford, 2010) in this work. This research builds on this previous work. As I

became involved in more international projects, specifically the development of Erasmus links as well as looking after Erasmus students, I sought to understand and explore the mobility dimension of higher education – that is how mobility in higher education forms part of the education process and how students experience their education within the context of that mobility. Again I was aware of European policy with regard to the encouragement and promotion of mobility in higher education, most specifically in the context of joint degrees. This coincided with an opportunity for the institution in which I worked to develop a suite of joint and dual degree programmes with which I became involved as a coordinator for international students. I did not teach the students but had access to all the students through my role as International Coordinator. This presented me with a good opportunity to research the experience of this type of international education. I recognise that this closeness to the students may be regarded as presenting some limitations in terms of the findings. These limitations are discussed in more detail in Chapter Three and Chapter Seven.

Through a number of early conversations with students undertaking the first of what turned out to be the largest joint double Masters in International Marketing Communications, I undertook a number of pilot interviews – fourteen in total. These pilot interviews were with the first cohort of joint Masters students in the UK, following their completion of the taught programme and were undertaken in order to explore and understand something of their experience. The analysis of those interviews revealed the importance of: the role of differences in national culture; the possible cultural dissonance that arises from studying in another country; and the opportunities for engagement between the students and the institutions. The gap in the literature with regard to understanding the experience of this type of higher education

was evident. Furthermore, authors such as Teichler (2004) have called for further exploration of the impact of the EU ‘mobility’ policies. The research questions were drawn from the analysis of those pilot interviews.

There are three aspects of the joint degree experience which the thesis explores: one is the experience of students who study on joint Masters programmes in two countries (UK and France), lending the thesis a comparative perspective. The second is the possibility for students to develop cultural awareness. Finally, it also permitted me to explore the agendas of policy makers who wish encourage mobility between different education systems from the perspective of the experience of joint degrees. Hence, the questions are framed in order to explore the comparative experience and intercultural perspective which is made possible by the international context of the research.

The questions the research sought to address are:

- a) How does education on joint degrees contribute to intercultural learning?
- b) What are the different approaches to teaching and learning in each institution?
- c) How does classroom interaction permit or further the intercultural understanding or awareness of students participating in joint degrees?

Further sub-questions that have also been investigated are:

- (i) What, if anything, does studying in two countries add to the educational process?

(ii) Do postgraduate joint degrees address the internationalisation ethos advocated by supranational policy making bodies?

Both these sub-questions attempted to link the student experience to the broader policy debates referred to above.

In order to address the questions in a systematic way the thesis is divided into three distinct areas:

- that of the joint degree, considered from an institutional perspective;
- the issues around the differing pedagogical approaches on a joint degree as part of the joint degree experience;
- questions around the development of intercultural understanding or awareness on joint degrees.

***The importance and use of the terms ‘relationality and ‘mutuality in the thesis***

The concept of ‘relationality’ is used in the thesis in order to describe the learning environment on the joint degree. It is used to denote a context in which students learn with and from each other and where their learning is dependent on each other, particularly with regard to the development of cultural awareness. The signification of the ‘other’ (Levinas, 2006), which is discussed in Chapter Three, is achieved through this relationality. Thus, the *way* students’ learn on joint degrees is discussed through the use of this concept which is threaded throughout the thesis.

The concept ‘mutuality’ is used to denote a context of a partnership between the institutions and the students. Jamsvi (2012) makes reference to the term in her analysis of European Union (EU) policy documentation, recognising that mobility within the European Union is steeped in a discourse of mutuality.

In further support of this context of mutuality a report by Sweeney (2010) for the Higher Education Academy acknowledges and lists the benefits to staff and students of a European dimension to higher education, which is one of the aims of the Bologna process. Sweeney recognises that mobility arrangements in institutions have potential benefits for staff and students in terms of encouraging that European dimension. The education on a joint degree is framed in a context of a partnership between the institutions and the students – in a framework of mutuality between the two. Mobility can provide cultural enrichment for both. It can enhance the attractiveness of institutions and provide enrichment for individuals, although this is not always the case.

### ***The importance of considering joint degree programmes and the policy context***

Dale (2010) offers us some insight into the development of a Europe of Knowledge which joint degrees represent<sup>4</sup> and the call by the European Union (EU) for higher education (HE) institutions in Europe to create opportunities for students’ mobility. This mobility drive is evidenced in policy documents such as the Prague and Berlin

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<sup>4</sup>Erasmus Mundus – an EU initiative launched in July 2001 - has certainly been an influence in joint degree development.

Communiqués, 2000 and 2003 respectively, as well as through EU initiatives such as Erasmus Mundus which have influenced higher education institutions' international activities. The continuing importance of the policy agenda and institutional involvement with this agenda within the European Higher Education Area is further evidenced in the Leuven Communiqué (2009). Leuven set a target of mobility within Europe of 20% of graduates by 2020 (the 20/2020 target). It required that institutions establish partners in another country within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in order to facilitate the mobility of higher education students. One way to achieve this is through the establishment of joint degrees with a partner institution.

The implementation and discussion of this policy is evidenced by the Trends reports. Crosier *et al* (2007) in Trends V indicated that many institutions in Europe have experimented with the development of joint programmes or that they are intending to do so. They found that the majority of joint programmes are in the second cycle (i.e. Masters level). Their report underlines the importance of joint degrees for the Bologna Process<sup>5</sup> and the need for the analysis of the joint degree experience at Masters level. Crosier *et al* state that:

At this stage, it would seem reasonable to suggest that joint programmes are playing a significant role in constructing the European Higher Education Area, by giving institutions opportunities to work together and learn from each other. (Crosier *et al*, 2007:31)

Recent reports produced by the Institute for International Education (2011) on joint double degree programmes and The Association for the Advancement of Collegiate

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<sup>5</sup>47 countries are signatories to the Bologna Process therefore extending the influence of the EHEA beyond the EU states.

Schools of Business, (AACSB, 2011) on internationalisation highlight the importance of such programmes as a focus for future institutional international approaches to student education.

Sweeney (2010:11) refers to the need to develop a “culture of mobility”, which arises as a consequence of the Bologna Process. He states that this mobility culture should encompass the setting up of joint degrees with partner institutions outside the UK. Further, the need for the development of such opportunities for mobility require a flexible and innovative approach to the curriculum.

### ***The necessity of understanding the student experience of joint degree programmes***

Seeing joint degrees in a context of cultural enrichment for both staff and students and institutions aids us in exploring the putative context of mutuality between the student experience of joint programmes of study and institutions’ development of such programmes and the internationalisation of the curriculum. Presenting the experience in a framework that questions the presumption of the benefits of academic mobility as this thesis does, differs from the discourse in policy documents where the tone is one of presumption with regard to both the importance and benefits of such programmes.

The call in the Leuven Communiqué (2009) is for higher education institutions to provide backing and support for mobility in the EHEA. This surely implies a need to develop innovative curricula to facilitate those calls for mobility – Leuven calls for a rise in mobility within the EU of 20% by 2020. Some reflection on the context for that curriculum development may be seen as timely. A notion of mutuality permits us to explore in greater depth what international higher education is and the implications

of the promotion of a ‘culture of mobility’, through initiatives such as joint degrees. It provides a link between the particularity of the experience and the universalism displayed in the policy context as well as underlining the importance of the consideration of the individual. This link is achieved through the vehicle of culture. The importance of culture in contemporary society is seen in theorists such as Benhabib (2002) and his work on culture in the global era. Further, due to the interconnectedness that the international classroom represents, we need to “distil coherence out of the multiplicity of conflicting narratives and practices” where we can be “attentive to the positioning and repositioning of the other and the self, of “us” and “them” in this complex dialogue.” (Benhabib, 2002:41). This leads us to notions of an experiential approach as an aspect of the learning in higher education. As a consequence there is a need to consider the students’ *being* in higher education, as argued by Barnett and Coate (2005) and Barnett and Di Napoli (2008), as part of a more contemporary approach to higher education and curriculum development and identity in higher education. The arguments in this thesis give an emphasis to *being* in higher education because of the emphasis on the students’ relationship with each other as being at the heart of the learning process in international higher education. To reinforce the importance of this Barnett and Coate (2005) comment:

...as we have seen and as employers are increasingly noting, a changing world calls for certain kinds of human capacity and dispositions and for self-awareness and self-confidence. The self is implicated in a changing world. No longer can the wider norms and practices be endorsed: individuals have to work things out for themselves in their own situations. Individuals have to become selves, strong, open, resilient and critical selves. (Barnett and Coate, 2005:48)

The international mobility required as part of the joint degree curriculum places an emphasis on students’ ‘being’ in higher education, a discussion that is further explored in Chapter Three and facilitates a ‘common ground’(Arkoudis *et al*, 2013) for

students' cultural interactions and signification of the 'other' (Levinas, 2006). The emphasis on the development of self-awareness and self-confidence, highlighted by Barnett and Coate above, is an aspect of being in higher education. It is particularly important with regard to the development of intercultural awareness.

### ***Defining a joint degree programme and the need for additional skills***

It is important to define what a joint degree is. There is much interchangeability in the use of the terms such as double diploma, joint degree, and dual degree: the terms can have different connotations in different national environments. My interpretation for the purposes of the discussion herein is that the words 'joint degree' denote a course or programme of study where two degree titles are achieved for a course that is jointly delivered by two partner institutions in different countries. Within the literature, and in practice, within the higher education environment there are variations to the use of the terms joint degree, joint double degrees, and international double degrees. A full discussion of the usage and meanings of these terms is provided in Chapter Four of this work.

The Council of Ministers of Europe in the ministerial summit in Berlin (Berlin Communiqué, 2003) confirmed the key features of a joint degree outlined from the Stockholm seminar (2002) as being:

Two or more institutions in two or more countries are participating.  
The duration of study outside the institution should be substantial and continuous e.g. 1 year at bachelor level.  
Joint degree programmes should require a joint study programme settled on by cooperation, confirmed in a written agreement between institutions.

Joint degrees should be based on bilateral or multilateral agreements on jointly arranged and approved programmes with no restrictions concerning study fields or subjects.

Full use should be made of the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS in order to ensure comparability of qualifications.

A joint degree should preferably be documented in a single document issued by the participating institutions in accordance with national regulations.

Joint degrees and study programmes should require student and staff/teacher mobility.

Linguistic diversity in a European perspective should be ensured.

Joint study programmes should have a European dimensions [sic] whether physical mobility or intercultural competence in the curriculum. (2002:2-3)

These key features of a joint degree, present challenges for students and for the institutions concerned. One might regard joint degrees as so challenging that only the very capable individual would undertake such a programme of study. Differing levels of ability will always be a consideration anywhere on any Masters course but they are particularly important on a joint Masters course where the pressures of international mobility within a small timeframe, as well as adaption to different cultures, teaching and learning expectations, arguably require additional skills of those who participate. The higher education process is designed to challenge and push boundaries, thus encouraging students to achieve excellence within their chosen field. There is a tension between the maintenance of this challenging environment which joint degrees represent and the facilitation of mass education. The following line from Homer's Iliad, which is also the motto for St Andrews University (2006), illustrates that challenge and intellectual achievement are important for higher education institutions and their students.

*“Αἶεν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων”*  
*Ever to excel and be the best above all others (The Iliad, Book 6:208)*

The motto represents the cultural influence of aspirations to excellence in societies such as the UK where individual achievement is aspired to but which is also an important feature of the education system. The implications of such aspirations will be explored in this thesis.

We can surmise that higher education institutions might therefore seek to present the graduate of such programmes as having aspired to excellence to meet with the demands of the ‘changing world’ where international employment opportunities are desired by many. The award of two Masters diplomas for one programme of study suggests that something extra or additional has been achieved over and above that which is achieved by a student who receives only one award for their programme of study. The thesis seeks to examine whether the demands of joint degree education justify this but also to explore this concept within the educational framework that has been conceived by the Bologna Process. Is the award of two Masters diplomas justified given the demands of such programmes of study or is it merely double counting and ‘fudging’ of two national education systems to placate policy makers? Is it merely giving ‘two for the price of one’? In order to explore notions of ‘excellence’, the dimensions of international education have been explored with the research focusing on the experience of teaching and learning, and of the cultural interactions of those participating in such programmes.

### ***Giving joint degrees meaning within the field of international higher education***

Joint degrees have become an important aspect of internationalisation for higher education institutions. Mobility is a requirement of the degree. As we have seen the

Bologna Process calls for increased mobility in higher education but does mobility make joint degrees distinguishable from the everyday global influences on individuals' lives (Kehm and Teichler 2007)? Do global media networks and information technology now provide a substitute for physical mobility so that the need to be physically mobile as part of a degree does not provide something exceptional? Is mobility as part of a joint degree different to other types of mobility within international higher education? In addition, another question is whether universities are inventing reasons for mobility where there are none. This is particularly true given that more and more European institutions are offering their courses in English rather than the native language of their country, so the possibility for exposure to learning in a language other than English in the higher education classroom is being reduced, despite the demands of Bologna. The case explored in this thesis offers an example of this, where the language of instruction in both institutions is English. One might observe that students are obtaining a French masters award and that this does not reflect any ability to speak French in this case.

This critical stance is given further impetus by that fact that financial incentives have been seen to be the singly most important determinant for the encouragement of joint degree initiatives by higher education institutions (Knight, 2006, Davies 2009). This discussion is elaborated on in Chapter Four.

All the titles of the programmes examined in this research have ‘international’ as part of their title. The students are all international<sup>6</sup> as they all have to study overseas either in London or France or both. These are both examples of international activity, so how is the joint degree experience distinguished as a particularly international experience? At the time of writing, HESA figures (2008/9) indicated that international student recruitment to the UK was at an all-time high, with some 415,585 international students enrolled in UK higher education in that year. An ‘international classroom’ is not an unusual phenomenon. Does an international title and the recruitment of a diverse student body who are required to be mobile to accomplish their international education differentiate joint degrees? Mobility alone does not offer an answer. What differentiates the joint degree in terms of the educational experience it offers, is the student experience of studying in two different national contexts. In addition, the dimensions of international higher education referred to above: cultural interactions, international mobility, the relationality between students, and the *way* students experience the learning environment, allow the exploration of that experiential aspect of the education process. These dimensions are holistically linked in the joint degree in the concrete reality of classroom life.

## ***2. The Scope of the Project***

The research for this thesis investigated the experience of joint degree programmes with an emphasis on student experience as a way of understanding what international

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<sup>6</sup>Footnote 2 provides a definition of international student whilst noting that half of the students recruited for the courses examined here are French and this still defines them as ‘international’ when they come to the UK.

education means for those involved and, in particular, whether the institutions are facilitating an international learning experience for the students and whether this includes intercultural learning<sup>7</sup>.

Understanding how students experience international and intercultural learning requires that we look at both the learning environment and also at the cultural aspects of joint degree study which are closely interlinked. The dimensions of international higher education are addressed as aspects of the international education experience that joint degrees offer. Particular emphasis has been placed on cultural interactions because of the focus given to them in the policy discourse. It is also addressed in most of the discourse on the definition of internationalisation which is referred to later in the chapter.

The importance of national culture to education was established by Green's (1997) seminal work. Alexander's (2000) work on culture and pedagogy established how interlinked the cultural context is to the educational process. Further, Cortazzi and Jin's (1997) notions of 'cultures of learning' and Welikala and Watkins' (2008) 'cultural scripts' demonstrate the importance of culture with regard to international students' learning. Alexander (2000) states that the practice of teaching and learning relate to the context of culture, structure and policy in which the pedagogy is embedded:

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<sup>7</sup>Intercultural learning is incorporated into Knight's (2004) definition of the internationalisation of education referred to later in the chapter. The Bologna Process also reinforces notions of a cultural dimension to higher education by encouraging mobility

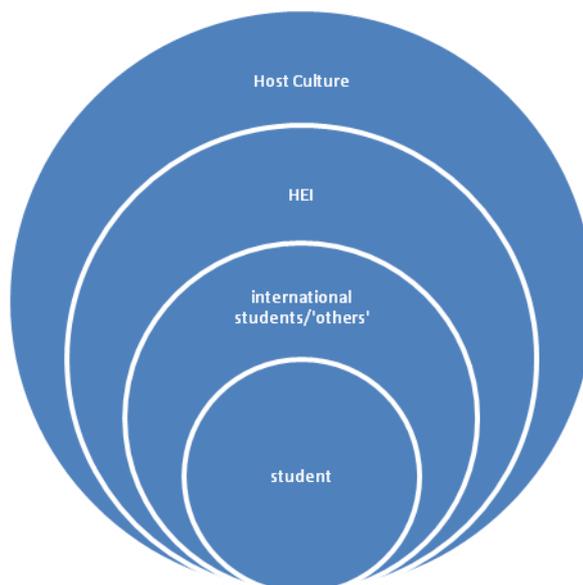
...pedagogy manifests the values and demands of a nation, community and school as well as a classroom (Alexander, 2000:564)

This work links these two aspects of culture and pedagogy, that is, national cultures and pedagogy and culture in the international classroom within the context of joint degree study. In addition, joint degrees add the dimensions of international mobility and different learning environments to the experience of students' relationality with each other and the *way* they learn. Therefore, cultures of learning, the international classroom and student mobility have been addressed and they are brought into focus here in the context of international mobility in relation to that learning.

The thesis builds on Alexander's work in the field of international and comparative education by looking at the interplay between culture and learning for an individual in higher education through an idea of the students' being there in relation to other students, the classroom and the institution. The international mobility in a joint degree places additional demands on this relationality as does the different cultural context for the teaching and learning, and the *way* the students receive that education. This relationality also exists between the students, the host institution and host culture.

Figure 1 below demonstrates this relationality and the aspects of culture and pedagogy that will influence the student's educational experience, thereby illustrating the arguments presented in this thesis.

**Figure 1: Students' interactions within the international higher education environment**



This diagram illustrates how each of the circles adds an additional layer of the students' experience of *being* in the higher education environment in relation to others. The joint degree and international mobility can be seen as the full circle with the layers of experience contained within it. The thesis addresses each aspect of these layers.

This model is designed to represent the 'negotiations' of international students in the 'transnational social spaces' that Gargano (2009:342) refers to and clarifies the educational context of such negotiations. Gargano's (2009) view is that the existing field of work has promoted the homogenisation of the international student experience whereas the reality is that there are dimensions of difference amongst students, such as their country of origin, which are addressed in the context of the students'

international mobility, their negotiations with each other, their learning, their host cultures and host institutions.

It is important to note however that this research is not intended to be a curriculum evaluation in terms of the student experience of international higher education, nor does it present the traditional discourse surrounding international student experience which problematises the international learner in a deficit paradigm (Gargano, 2009).

It is located within the broader context of a consideration of the meaning of international higher education for students where the engagement with different cultures by the students can be seen to be fundamental to the mode of learning (*modus discendi*). It thus offers a reinterpretation of the definition of international higher education as being focused and generated at the individual level through the student experience.

The argument presented in the thesis is that these dual awards epitomise international higher education in the sense that students engage with internationality on a number of levels in an experiential context: they demand students to be mobile across borders, allowing for the possibility of increased cultural knowledge and or language skills and provide the completing students with what they may consider to be transferable and multiple skills important in the global job market. In addition, the students receive two Masters awards which provide evidence of qualifications in more than one country's higher education system. This appears to be an influential factor for students choosing the joint Masters award programmes.

### *The focus on individual experience*

Gaining insight through this glimpse into the joint degree experience requires us to acknowledge that the experience of the different cultures of the countries involved, the different institutions, staff and other students, informs our knowledge of international higher education at an individual level. The focus for the thesis is the student experience but this individual level of analysis is also seen at the staff and institutional level.

Papatsiba (2005) provides support on the need for the focus at the individual level of analysis:

Beyond the widespread acceptance of further promotion of student mobility (van der Wende, 2001) it is important to investigate the extent to which mobility outcomes at the individual level of mobile students reflect the perceptions and fulfil the expectations of political actors. It is also legitimate to tackle the underlying 'legitimizing ideas' or 'rationales' that accompanied the institutionalisation of student mobility by political actors since they are likely to mark future promotion of mobility. (Papatsiba, 2005:173)

The need for the analysis of the broad policy arrangements at the individual level, as alluded to by Papatsiba, is specifically addressed in Chapter Four where the issues of institutional implementation of the policies of the political actors are considered.

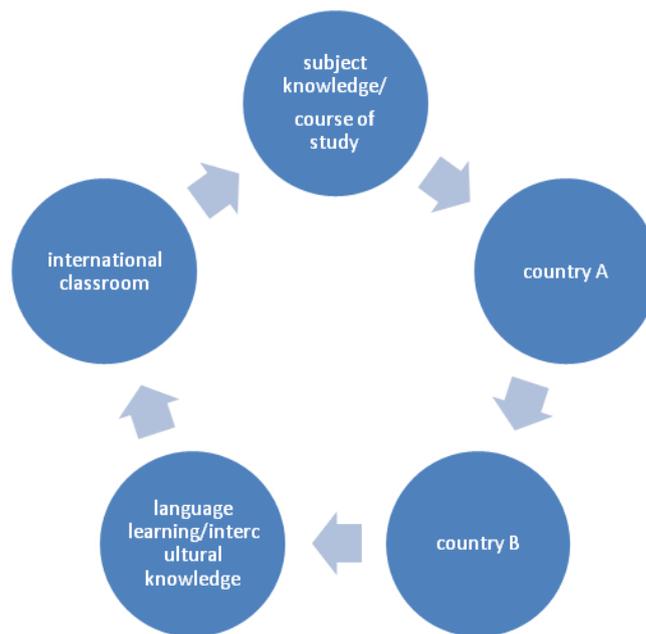
This individual level of analysis offers an interpretation of the policy advocated by the political actors referred to by Papatsiba (2005). This reinforces the broader context and the positioning of this work, including notions of the importance of an in-depth examination of the effects of this approach to international higher education from the

student perspective, undertaken through the analysis of the different pedagogic and cultural aspects to the students' experience as a consequence of studying in two countries.

***The dimensions of international higher education on joint degrees***

The following model demonstrates the process of international higher education on the joint degree. The dimensions of international higher education are represented as elements of the educational experience on joint degrees:

***Figure 2: The learning process in a joint degree***



This visualisation of the student experience of international higher education illustrates the aspects of the engagement as a systematic learning process. The thesis

will demonstrate that the internationalisation of higher education has to be seen as a systematic learning process that is dependent on the student's engagement with that learning process, their mode of learning (*modus discendi*) in which the host culture, the other students, their higher education institution and language play a role.

### ***3. The Internationalisation of Higher Education***

As the research is examining the experience of education in more than one country, involving student mobility, with students being regarded as overseas students for at least a part of or all of their course,<sup>8</sup> some acknowledgement is given here to the broader internationalisation debate in order to understand how this thesis might be seen as a representation of that debate at institutional and individual level. Whilst the relevant literature on the dimensions of international higher education is discussed in Chapter Two I have attempted here to consider the conceptual discussion with regard to the internationalisation of higher education.

A useful starting point for a discussion of internationalisation is the Oxford English Dictionary definition of "international" as, "existing, constituted or carried on between different nations, pertaining to the relations between nations". How might we apply this to this thesis? The literature evidences both the broader conceptual discussions with authors such as Knight (2004), De Wit (2002), Altbach and Teichler (2001), to name a few, providing a detailed discussion of the nuances of the debate in relation to higher education and how international activity takes place at the individual level. An

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<sup>8</sup>The French students naturally can no longer be considered as international students when they return to France whilst we need to note this is not the same for students recruited to the UK institution as very few are British.

example of internationalisation for many UK institutions is the recruitment of international students which Knight (2004) refers to as internationalisation at home. The students, who are the focus for much of the data collection in this thesis, reflect this latter category of international activity. However, as the subject of the thesis is joint degrees, the broader internationalisation discourse is also relevant. The joint degree can be seen as reflecting a more ambitious attempt by the institutions involved to engage with internationalisation through the internationalisation of the curriculum, by requiring all students on the programmes to undertake international mobility.

International activity by higher education institutions can be seen to be multi-faceted and the variant definitions of the process in the literature reflect this many-sidedness of the process. Thus, although the definitions offered in the relevant literature have some broad basis of agreement, more than one author comments on the fact there is no one single definition. Yang (2002) offers the following observation:

At the heart of any serious discussion of internationalisation lies a conundrum. Despite many attempts to formulate a “tight” definition the core idea remains conceptually elusive (Callan 1998). There is no simple, unique or all encompassing definition of internationalisation...While universities world-wide are promoting internationalisation, achieving a common definition has not proved simple. (2002:81)

Although this observation was made in 2002, little has changed and the lack of an all-encompassing conceptual definition is just as relevant an observation today. In addition the frequent usage of terms such as ‘transnational’, ‘cross-border’ and ‘global’ create added difficulties in identifying a definitive position.

The table below provides a brief overview of some authors' contemporary conceptualisations of globalisation and internationalisation and the latter's relationship to higher education. Whilst this typology may be a simplification of the debates, the intention is to identify the levels of operation to which the terms may apply to add clarity to the debate. The table below therefore also attempts to provide a view of the usage of the terms in relation to their application at international, institutional and individual levels. It is recognised that this breakdown of terms is by no means definitive but it is intended to provide an indication only of the positioning of the thesis in relation to the use of these terms:

**Table 1: - The differences between globalisation, internationalisation, international higher education and cosmopolitanism viewed from the perspective of their application**

Term in literature	Some of the leading authors	Usage and Definition	Level of application
<b>Globalisation</b>	Altbach & Teichler (2001) De Wit (2002) Scott(1998) Green (2002,2007) Knight (2004) Teichler (2004) Naidoo (2008) Beerkens (2004) Robertson (2010) Enders and Fulton (2002) Nb. this list is illustrative only and many more could be included)	Global flows in economies, people, values, knowledge and ideas  - the convergence of markets	Supranational/Global
<b>Internationalisation</b>	Knight (2004,2006) Kreber (2009)	“the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2004:11)	National, sector and institutional – it is a process and is differentiated from globalisation as the ethos does not centre around competition (Kreber 2009)
<b>Internationalisation at home</b>	Knight (2004) Turner (2006)	The international classroom Recruitment of international students	Institutional level – the recruitment of international students
<b>International Higher Education (IHE)</b>	De Wit (2002) Dixon (2006)	Historical basis The international classroom When students cross national borders	Institutional and individual level



consequence of those flows (Bolsmann and Miller, 2008). This has been reflected in the increased recruitment of international students over the past twenty years. However, as Knight (2004) argues, the word 'global' is contested and does not lend itself well to certain concepts that do not have linear homogenising perspectives, despite the broad policy debates which attempt to place them as such. Despite the internationalisation higher education, much of the policy-making remains nationally-based. As Green (2002) points out globalisation has not provided, as yet, any sufficiently democratic or transnational bodies that have reduced the need for societies to be organised around nation states. This applies also to higher education where policy-making remains partly national, and not entirely convergent. This perspective is important for this thesis and it is why the discussion of internationalisation at individual and institutional level is most appropriate. The students and staff involved in the joint degrees have to negotiate national boundaries and nationally determined differences in education systems, as well as nationally determined differences in culture.

Globalisation can be seen as a much broader process than internationalisation - involving, economic social and political transformation, The words 'global' and 'globalisation' have therefore been avoided as descriptors in this thesis in order to focus on the institutional and individual levels of activity within the context of the research questions. The thesis is thus attempting to fill a gap, so that we can understand more about the impact of internationalisation on individuals.

Thus, although the context of international policy is considered as part of the context, the focus of this research is on individuals' crossing of national boundaries and is thus a discourse of individuals' relationships within an internationalisation context.

Little of the existing work on the internationalisation of higher education explores the student experience from the perspective of the international mobility that is required as part of an internationalised course or an internationalised curriculum – that is the 'lived reality' (Gargano 2009) of that activity which is the aim of the present work. The activity of crossing a border together reflects De Wit's (2002) conceptualisation of international higher education. This is echoed in Ridder-Symoens (1992) notions of the wandering scholar, *peregrinatio academica*, on which the Erasmus programme is based. This level of international activity is witnessed at individual and institutional level.

At an individual level we can see the internationalisation discourse reflected by writers like Sanderson (2008), who argues that, for the individual, being able to critically reflect on one's own values and become cosmopolitan is "underpinned by openness, interconnectivity, interdependence, reciprocity and plurality" (2008:288). He states that cosmopolitanism is a choice and that intercultural contact does not necessarily result in learning and creating a mutual understanding between parties. This theme is threaded throughout the thesis, both in terms of the banal cosmopolitanism that equates to Matthew's (2000) global supermarket thesis, and with regard to the ability to understand and accept the 'other' which Sanderson argues is true cosmopolitanism. The need to find a common ground for these intercultural interactions is reflected in the work of Arkoudis *et al*, (2013). The relationship

between the development of intercultural awareness, or cosmopolitanism as it is referred to by Sanderson, and the experience of an internationally designed curriculum, or the joint degree, is also a theme of the thesis.

### *The comparative perspective in the thesis*

As the research sites for the data collection were institutions in the UK and France the thesis has a broadly comparative dimension in the cross-cultural sense. However, it would not have been possible to design the research as a cross-national comparative study since the focus is on joint degrees which are, by definition, cross-national in nature. We cannot compare joint degrees in one country with joint degrees in another country since all joint degree are constituted by several countries. However, there was a comparative element and comparisons were made where possible and logical.

Comparisons are made with regard to students' experiences of studying in different countries and in different types of institutions in these countries, with their variant pedagogies. Comparisons are also made between the experiences of students belonging to different cultural groups, these having language profiles which position them differentially with regard to the language of instruction of the course, and the dominant languages of the out-of-class context. The thesis, therefore, foregrounds cross-cultural differences where these are salient to the topic. However, beyond this, it was not possible to employ a systematic cross-country comparative design for the research.

**Table 2 – Levels of comparison**

Comparison Level	Teaching and Learning	National approaches to Education	Cultural grouping
Systematic comparison	A comparison is made of the teaching and learning items on the survey at each institution in Chapter Five	A general comparison is made of the differences in higher education approach in the UK and France. There is a comparison of national i.e. the French and UK approaches to education as discussed in the literature, made in Chapter Two, and a comparison of the data responses in Chapter Five	A comparison was made, both in the survey and in the interview data. In terms of the responses from three main cultural groups: 1. French students 2. Native English Speakers 3. Non-native English speakers

This table illustrates the main comparative threads that run throughout the thesis and how the comparisons have been made in terms of the structure of the thesis.

#### ***4. The Context for the Case Study***

The research is centred around a case study of joint degrees offered by a French higher education institution and a British higher education institution. The Masters programmes are jointly delivered by both institutions. The joint degrees were a Masters in International Marketing Communications, an MA International Sustainable Tourism and an MSc in International Financial Strategy. However, both institutions have a number of collaborative partnerships other than the ones used for this case study. The collaboration between the institutions began in September 2005 with one course, MA International Marketing Communications, which initially recruited a

cohort of 32 students. These set of joint degrees were selected as the nature of the collaboration, that is, the student numbers, subjects and countries involved, represent a typical case of joint and double degrees. The findings of an international survey of joint and double degree programmes carried out by the Institute of International Education (2011), where 245 higher education institutions were surveyed, illustrate the typicality of this case.

The respective institutions each recruit a cohort of students to the courses, resulting in a French registered cohort and a UK registered cohort, although all students become members of both institutions. This collaboration began with a fixed reciprocal number for exchange and recruitment, which would restrict either partner from exceeding the others' resource limitations. More recently they developed this to permit an unlimited recruitment of any number of students by either institution which amounts to a total number of no more than 100. The cohorts researched fall within this development, with 54 for the MA International Marketing Communications, 18 for the MSc International Financial Strategy and 8 students for the MA International Sustainable Tourism. The last cohort researched on the MA International Marketing Communications consisted of 70 students with 30 coming from France. Although data was collected from the MSc International Financial Strategy the cohorts of students consisted of mostly French students who took modules in common with other international students at the London institution. It is not the intention here to do an analysis of the popularity of the different subject fields but it is worth observing that the marketing course, which was the most commercially focused, is the most successful in terms of the numbers of students recruited. There has been no analysis done of the reasons for this and this is an observation only. The approach of the

institutions to policy development is important with regard to the student experience, and the growth in numbers saw changes to delivery on the marketing course in the year after this research was carried out. It should be noted that the pilot interviews were conducted when the course was in the first year of operation.

All the students started the courses at the London institution and then, with the exception of the Tourism course moved to the French institution for the second semester. The students are then required to complete a 4 month placement period and a dissertation in order to qualify for the UK Masters award and for the French Masters award. In other words, completion of all aspects of the course led to the students obtaining two Masters awards for all three jointly delivered courses for those students directly recruited to the course.<sup>9</sup> The requirement for the UK Masters award was two taught semesters and the completion and passing of a dissertation. The requirement for the French award was the two taught semesters and the completion of an internship. The ESC<sup>10</sup> students who are recruited by the French institution were required to complete a dissertation marked by the French institution. To award the French Masters to the London institution's students, the French institution credits the dissertation done for the London institution. The ESC<sup>11</sup> French recruited students therefore undertake only one third of their UK Masters course in the UK, this being the taught semester and received credit for their French semester and the dissertation they completed at the French institution. Similarly, the international students recruited by the London institution, completed only one semester of teaching in France and

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<sup>9</sup>This refers to the fact that the French institution recruits students to the Masters directly but the programme also operates as a pathway for the ESC programme on the final year of that programme thus offering a different educational experience for those students although the context of student mobility is the basis for the analysis and the gaining of a UK Masters.

<sup>10</sup>*École Supérieure de Commerce, (ESC) or Grande École programme of study*

<sup>11</sup> Most of the French students recruited by French institution were on the ESC programme

could gain exemption from their internship or they were entitled to carry out the internship anywhere in the world. This structure is made reference to here for the purpose of understanding and contextualisation, but also because it will have relevance to the discussion of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) position with regard to joint Masters programmes which will be elaborated on in Chapter Four.

The two institutions are very different in terms of size, location, teaching and learning methods as well as the amount of class time and subjects that students are required to study. This difference also extends to the recognition of the status of each institution, with the French institution operating as a privately funded elite *Grande École* for students of business, whereas the UK institution is a state funded institution that does not have any of the external internationally recognised accreditations that the French institution has, for example, AACSB and EQUIS<sup>12</sup> accreditation. The UK institution was not listed in the League Tables for the UK at the time the research was carried out whereas the French institution was regarded as being in the ‘top ten’ *Grandes Écoles* in France. This issue of ‘branding’ will be returned to at a later stage when considering the different experiences of the students in each institution. It is clear however that as international higher education becomes more marketised, the status of the institution has started to play a larger role and international accreditation is paramount. For the *Grande École*, promotion of their international accreditations is effected externally and reinforced internally amongst the student body. Student perception of each institution would therefore be affected by issues of status.

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<sup>12</sup>These are internationally recognised accrediting bodies

The French cohort<sup>13</sup> were a more or less homogeneous group from the perspective of nationality and social economic status, with all but one student having French citizenship and having already formed an identity with their institution in France. Due to the different nature of the French education system most of the French students were in the second or third year of their postgraduate study (depending on whether they completed a *Licence* or the *Classes Préparatoires*). The UK registered students are a heterogeneous group, in the sense that they have been recruited from all over the world and most arrive in the UK prior to the start of their course: they are therefore regarded as international students for the purposes of this research. This definition of international students in this case includes European students in the sense that most are non-native speakers of English and they arrive in the UK prior to the start of their course of study (Montgomery 2010). For the UK semester this definition therefore includes the French students who are international when they come to the UK.

## ***5. The Structure of the Thesis***

The present chapter, offers an introduction to the work as well as a description of the case study on which the research is based and a contextualisation of that case. Chapter Two considers the place of the research and its contribution to the field of knowledge in more depth by considering the existing work. Chapter Three outlines the methodology, presenting a justification for the use of the case study approach, a discussion of the conceptual influences and the approach to the analysis of the data. Chapter Four provides a contextualisation of joint degrees, exploring the definition of

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<sup>13</sup> This refers specifically to those students from the ESC programme from the *Grande École*

joint degrees and the ethical considerations in more detail as well as the case example from the institutional perspective.

Chapter Five considers in detail the differences in the teaching and learning approaches of the institutions, together with the engagement and experiences of the students with those approaches. This chapter in addition to some aspects of the institutional discussion in Chapter Four offers a comparative perspective to the thesis. Data was drawn from the questionnaires and from the interviews with both staff and students, and an interesting and mixed picture is presented. This poses some questions with regard to the systemisation of teaching and learning on such international courses. The discussion also offers an examination of the impact of group work assessment on Masters level study which further highlights the importance of the link between culture, pedagogy and students' relationality. The issue of group work became a major theme of the second semester interview responses and it was felt that the issue deserved a substantial discussion. The interplay between different cultural backgrounds of the students and their cultural interactions is the focus for Chapter Six, which presents an analysis of the data collected from interviews and observations of the international marketing course. Chapter Six also offers a detailed consideration of the student questionnaire responses with regard to the acquisition of cultural skills and compares some of the responses elicited during interviews. This second round of interviews at the end of the course offered some important insights into the students' engagement with cultural difference and their personal development as a consequence of completing their programme of study. Chapter Seven presents a discussion of the conclusions of the thesis and some suggestions for the future.



## **CHAPTER TWO – JOINT DEGREES AND SOME OF THE BROADER DEBATES, INFLUENCES AND TENSIONS IN INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION**

### ***1. Introduction***

This chapter will explore some of the existing work in the field of international higher education. The research questions form the basis for this review of literature on the dimensions of international higher education: student mobility, cultural interactions, the relationality of students and the *way* students learn. The discussion below is structured with specific focus on:

- the broad debates, specifically globalisation in relation to student mobility, the commercialisation of higher education and national frameworks for delivery of higher education;
- international mobility in higher education and the student sojourner experience;
- cultural interactions, specifically, studies on intercultural communications in the higher education environment;
- the relationality between students through looking at the existing work on international students in UK higher education and the international classroom with a particular focus on studies examining aspects of group work in higher education;
- finally, the chapter will examine the teaching and learning approaches in the UK and France and the differences between the two in order to address notions of the *way* students learn in the international higher education environment in different countries.

## ***2. The Broad Debates on International Higher Education***

The broad perspectives in international higher education are considered below through, firstly, exploring the link between globalisation and mobility and the reasoning for higher education to have an international perspective; secondly, the policy initiatives which encourage international mobility; the link between the commercialisation of higher education and international activity; and finally, the importance of national frameworks for education within an international higher education environment. From the literature it can be observed that a tension exists in higher education between nation state frameworks for the delivery of higher education and the demands of internationalisation in the form of student mobility and the commercialisation of higher education. This context is so important in understanding the experience of international higher education that it is given some attention later in this chapter and is an argument threaded throughout the thesis.

Authors such as Castells (2000) have been influential in arguing that trans-border information flows have extended the far reaching influences of globalisation and have brought, for example, expectations of access to products and cultures from around the world. Matthews' (2000) "cultural supermarket" thesis illustrates this point more directly by arguing that globalisation has influenced individuals' lifestyle choices and layered their identities. These global influences have filtered through to the higher education environment and are acknowledged as being important in terms of the context in which the joint degree is situated. That is, the global economic forces in

contemporary society have had an influencing and possibly even driving effect on international higher education policy and on student behaviours.

Granell's (2000) observation that globalisation has created a pressure for change that is worldwide can be seen to be reflected in the education systems of the world's largest economies in terms of the growing demand for mobility of their student populations. Knight's (2006) research suggests that Western institutions are more engaged in internationalisation activity, such as the recruitment of international students to their universities. Knight makes this debatable observation, (given the amount of international recruitment that is taking place in Hong Kong as an example), based on the higher response rate from developed countries, in her survey on internationalisation. Research such as Knight's, points to international student mobility as having a directional context. For Western English speaking countries this seems to be *inwards* mobility and for other countries it would appear to be *outward* mobility; for example, Chinese students coming to the UK is an exemplar of *inwards* mobility. There is scant evidence of UK students' mobility to China, although countries such as Singapore, Japan and China are attracting increasing numbers of foreign students. This inward and outward positioning is a useful reminder of different perspectives in terms of underlining that the word 'international' drives different behaviours in each higher education institution, let alone different national behaviours as well as different behaviours in regions in the world and amongst individual students. Altbach and Teichler, (2001) echo this in writing that the growth in inward mobility is principally amongst industrialised nations. It is worth noting then that Western perspectives dominate the literature. The following discussion

attempts to contextualise the relationship of globalisation and internationalisation with students' mobility across borders.

### *Globalisation in relation to student mobility and joint degrees*

The globalisation<sup>14</sup> discourse and its impact on higher education is necessarily raised when the crossing of borders is involved as part of the educational process and it is raised here in the context of internationally mobile students. Increased international mobility can be seen as an inevitable side effect of increased trans-border information flows (Castells 2000) that result from global communication networks. The plethora of literature on internationalisation evidences that the contemporary higher education environment has become more international and the mobility of students across borders is key in facilitating this internationality.

There are however different types of student mobility. The mobility of students across borders can be separated into two broad categories: those students who are mobile across borders as individuals and as a consequence of their own motivations for studying abroad and those students who are required to do so as part of their course or who are taking advantage of their institutions' partnership arrangements. This study encompasses both types of student mobility.

The influence of the EU and Bologna Process (BP) in creating a climate for furthering internationalisation in higher education, with a particular emphasis on mobility,

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<sup>14</sup>The debates on the globalisation and internationalisation were highlighted in Chapter One and are not pursued here due to their circulatory nature but globalisation is acknowledged as having an economic character which has influenced higher education

cannot be underestimated. It links the two natures for student mobility outlined above and is the driver for both. In highlighting the post-Bologna situation of the EHEA, Dale (2010) reinforces the EU contribution to the harmonisation of higher education with its outward looking positioning in educational terms under the auspices of Bologna, in promoting a Europe of Knowledge to the rest of the world. Having witnessed the success of Bologna at policy level, countries outside the EHEA, for example, the USA (Dale, 2010, Gutterplan, 2011) have expressed an interest in Bologna. The fact that countries outside the EU also wish to engage in harmonising higher education underlines that Bologna implies more than regionalisation. Joint degree collaborations and student mobility are central to this. A recent press report in the New York Times (Gutterplan, March 28, 2011) illustrates that mainstream USA is now taking an interest in dual and joint degree programmes. For the EU the development of cultural fluencies are important in developing future graduates' skills for employment in a global job market and offer a motivating factor for students to engage in cross border mobility.

Papatsiba (2006) echoes this view of the Bologna Process as furthering internationalisation. She argues that it represents a paradigmatic shift of internationalisation policies in higher education and a response by higher education to the requirements and challenges of "the globalisation of societies, economies and labour markets" (2006:96, citing Kalvemark and van der Wende). Altbach and Teichler (2001:10) reinforce this perspective commenting that, "higher education is increasingly seen as a central element in the economic future." The Lisbon Agenda's call for a Europe of Knowledge, (Dale, 2010) and the promotion in Bologna has

inexorably linked economic concepts to the higher education environment in all member states.

*The importance of mobility and policy initiatives in international higher education*

As we have seen from the discussion of the policy context in Chapter One, the European Council of Ministers has promoted student mobility as part of the Bologna Process, with the Leuven Communiqué (2009) representing the entrenchment of facilitators for that mobility at institutional level. Altbach and Teichler (2001)

comment:

It is more and more difficult to coordinate policy and programs in a context of expanding initiatives from an increasing number of institutions. Yet, there has never been a time when coordination and research relating to exchange and internationalization are more important precisely because of their importance and centrality to the higher education enterprise worldwide (2001:8).

Their call for research into mobility and exchanges is therefore entirely in keeping with this research project and provides a rationale for the project being carried out. The need for a focus on the experience of joint degrees is further supported by Knight's (2006) findings. Knight's (2006) survey for UNESCO provides a statistical perspective of the internationalisation activities of higher education institutions around the world. The results from the survey showed that 82% of the respondent institutions have an internationalisation policy in place which is a 19% increase from the 2003 survey. The findings identified that the top three common forms of institutional policy were: outgoing mobility opportunities for students, international institutional agreements, and international research collaborations. The outgoing mobility

opportunities were ranked as the number one growth area for European higher education institutions (HEIs). Again this is relevant to the present research. Knight (2006) comments:

It is interesting to see that double degree programs seem to be the most promising new form of collaboration and are even ranked higher than visiting scholars and recruitment of non-fee paying international students (2006:126).

The perception is that student mobility is currently the most popular and well supported internationalisation activity for higher education institutions.

Davies (2009), in a comprehensive survey on Masters programmes in the European Higher Education Area, argues that institutions are most likely to target the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle (of Masters level courses) for joint degree collaborations. Again this underlines the importance of this research in its examination of the student experience of joint degree programmes.

### ***The success of student mobility under Bologna***

Despite its regional reach the European LLP<sup>15</sup> and the EHEA are aimed at the encouragement of a globally mobile workforce or, at least, a mobile workforce. The Trends V (Crosier, Purser and Smidt, 2007) report provides some useful statistical analysis of the success of mobility initiatives as well as recommendations for future action within the EU. This includes the development of more joint postgraduate programmes that will encourage student mobility. The Trends discussion also

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<sup>15</sup> The LLP is the EU Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus mobility falls within this programme

underlines the rationale for research on the experience of such programmes. Sursock and Smidt's (2010) report presents a picture of the achievement of the Bologna action lines and the harmonisation activities within the EHEA. However, one might observe that the language and claims of the Trends reports, couched as they are in the successes and achievements of Bologna, require further consideration, particularly at the experience level. The growth in joint degrees can be viewed as inextricably linked to Bologna, as they would be difficult to manage without the alignment of credits for which BP is responsible.

In contrast to this positive view, Papatsiba (2006) writes that although the BP policy discourse suggests a convergence, this does not appear in practice. Recent research points towards transparency as opposed to the harmonisation of educational structures. Certainly, transparency is important for the experience of joint degrees. We can observe that a comparison of education systems reveals differences between those education systems. Although Bologna has attempted to harmonise those systems there has been no real convergence (Papatsiba, 2006) across national boundaries. This is particularly true in the case of the UK which has maintained a three plus one structure compared to a three plus two structure for Bachelors and Masters. There are also differences in France, and Germany with the three plus two model and in Holland there is a model of 240 ECTS for a Bachelors and only 60 ECTS for a Masters demonstrating yet another variation.

One must also not forget that the difficulties are more far reaching than simply norms of behaviour and cultural practice. For example, another issue is the place of higher education in the legal framework of the EU, as Dale (2010) highlights. The field of

education is subject to the principle of subsidiarity, and deference has to be made to national frameworks of operation. The British legal framework is very different to that of continental Europe as is the UK interpretation of Bologna which adds a layer of complexity to the harmonisation process.

We witness the need for more transparency being echoed by Altbach and Teichler (2001) in their call for the ethical dimensions of international education to be considered. This is discussed in Chapter Four. This research is aimed at providing further transparency through gaining an understanding of the experience of different education systems.

### ***The experience of mobility in international higher education***

The issue of mobility is at the heart of the European agenda (as discussed in Chapter One) and in terms of the experience of international higher education. Whatever the nature of the mobility, the engagement in the activity means all students participating are international students. The discourse on student mobility can be divided into two broad categories: firstly, mobility relating to notions of internationalisation in terms of international students coming to the UK for their higher education; and secondly, mobility relating to study abroad sojourns taken within the context of the home institution programme of study. It is not necessarily the case, however, that these categories present different issues for student experience: an analysis of the literature demonstrates that international mobility raises broadly the same issues regardless of the cause for that mobility. A more pertinent question is perhaps the student's length of stay as that has implications for transition and adjustment. A shorter stay will leave

less time for an acculturation process (Berry and Sam, 1997) to take place. The importance of acculturation is made reference to by Borg, Maunder, Jiang, Walsh, Fry and Di Napoli (2010) in relation to international PhD students.

O'Neill and Cullingford, (2005) argue that the experience of overseas study promotes introspection. Time spent abroad becomes a rite of passage so a personal reappraisal becomes central: the personal stress of such an experience can lead to positive outcomes such as greater self-knowledge. They state that, "the crucial experience of being overseas is not cultural accretion but cultural self-knowledge"(2005:122). This link between mobility and reflection and self-knowledge is explored in the data for this thesis. The focus on reflection and self-knowledge can be seen as fundamental to the higher education process and is echoed in Barnett and Coate's (2005) work in their analysis of the key elements of the higher education curriculum. This reflection and self-knowledge is linked with cultural awareness and identity and the ability to develop intercultural awareness as a consequence of the learning process in international higher education, thus giving the learning an experiential aspect. The change of emphasis to education being seen as learning awareness and communication with others can be seen as the sort of shift in knowledge production in higher education that Barnett and Di Napoli (2008) make reference to. It incorporates a change in identity as part of the learning process.

An example of the experiential importance of mobility is offered by Jones' (2005) discussion on learning from mobility. Her findings, particularly the comments made by her British students on overseas mobility with regard to 'broadening of horizons', are particularly important as they offer a frame for the analysis of the learning that

takes place from an experiential perspective. Jones argues strongly in favour of the benefits of experiential learning that students acquire from overseas mobility, such as the “development of an awareness of difference and the encounter with /experience of being the ‘other’.” (Jones, 2005:72). These acknowledged benefits of mobility offer a different perspective to those who argue that the financial imperatives are at the root of internationalisation activity.

### ***The commercialisation of higher education and international activity***

For some, the debate with regard to the international activity of higher education institutions is linked to the need for higher education institutions to find additional sources of funding. This is particularly the case in the UK. There is, however, a tension between the commercialisation activities of higher education institutions and maintaining the expectation of a quality experience for students on a number of levels; the need for international travel and maintaining the quality processes of UK institutions in partner institutions overseas are examples. However, Bruch and Barty (1998) comment that institutions which ignore the international dimension to higher education do so at their peril and that institutions that want to be successful in attracting international students need to ensure that they take the quality of their academic and welfare provision seriously. They argue that:

In recent years the rapid expansion of HE together with funding problems has led to an anxiety that quality may be undermined. The recruitment of international students has become a priority for institutions as they have sought to increase income from other sources than central government. How far is current interest in internationalisation commercially driven and how far does it represent a commitment to an ethos that is not primarily connected with income generation? How far are the arrangements for

international students part of a planned strategy to internationalise the institution and how far are they simply add-on facilities to boost recruitment? (1998:25)

These comments pose some focal realities for institutional policy with regard to international higher education and for the experience of international students, particularly in institutions with large numbers of international students. Are the arrangements made by higher education institutions for international students part of a planned strategy to internationalise their institutions or are they stop-gap solutions to deal with growing numbers of international students? The points that Bruch and Barty (1998) make are enhanced when international students move between two institutions, as is the case in the present research. What is interesting to note is that these comments were made in 1998 and are still as relevant today in terms of whether the issues are being addressed by higher education institutions. They also raise a context of the ethical dimension of internationalisation, that is, questions relating to the quality of provision of the education on programmes where the crossing of borders is involved and where more than one institution and national education system are involved. Does the harmonisation of cycles of education, as they are referred to in Bologna and the award of credits amount to equivalences and the matching of teaching and learning approaches between institutions? This discussion is explored further in Chapter Four and Chapter Five and is addressed in the research questions above.

Bruch and Barty (1998) comment further on the issue of quality concerns. They state that these concerns have to be at the forefront of the provision of higher education in whatever format internationalisation takes place, as the “signs indicate that internationalisation is the future” (1998:30). Little has changed. These quality

concerns are often reflected and expressed in terms of a discussion of the teaching and learning approaches and engagement of international students in UK higher education (for example, Carroll and Ryan, 2006; Atfield and Kemp, 2008; Hyland *et al*, 2009; Montgomery, 2010; Jones, 2010; Trahar and Hyland, 2011; Trahar, 2011).

More generally, authors such Burbules and Torres (2000) provide further support for the need to recognise the impact of the commercialisation process in higher education on those that experience it. This global knowledge economy perspective to the internationalisation literature has been strengthened more recently with clear links being made between student trans-border mobility, international employment and the internationalisation of higher education, with examples given in Rodrigues, (2002); Castells (2002); Martinez (2009), and Shattock (2009). The links between financial imperatives, institutional activity and joint degrees are returned to in Chapter Four.

### ***National frameworks and international higher education***

The frameworks within which higher education institutions operate are very much national ones and Beerkens, (2004, 2006) acknowledges that higher education institutions are national actors operating on an international stage. He also acknowledges that there is little evidence of integrated systems of education as opposed to interconnected systems. To add further impetus to this acknowledgement of the continuing importance of nation state frameworks for education, (as highlighted by Green, 1997) Green (2002) points out that globalisation has not provided, as yet, any sufficiently democratic or transnational bodies that have reduced the need for societies to be organised around the nation state. As Green argues, despite the

enthusiasm of globalists such as Scott (1998), there is no convergence of national education systems into a single model. Even if one were to cite the Bologna Process, the alignment of degree lengths has not resulted in one model of delivery throughout Europe. Further, Davies' (2008) findings demonstrate that some creative practices are necessary to overcome difference when partner institutions collaborate with each other across borders.

Notions of mobility as part of university education are not new and de Wit (2002) writes about the historical context to European mobility. He comments that the 'wandering scholar', *peregrinatio academica* (de Ridder-Symoens, 1992, de Wit, 2002) was the norm for medieval European universities. In fact the Erasmus programme is named after Erasmus, the medieval wandering scholar. Scott (1998) criticises attaching too much importance to these notions as the nation state did not exist in medieval Europe and so viewing international education as having this context is spurious. Despite this, notions of mobility being part of the higher education process remain an aspirational aspect of the education process. The tone of the EU communications reflects these ideals and the difficulties of implementing the conceptual within the nation state framework are rarely acknowledged.

Taking this point further then, the questions posed by this study (see above) as to whether the postgraduate courses and institutions involved in this research are 'internationalising' from the students' perspective - through the delivery of the curriculum; through the experience of studying in two countries; through the necessity of engaging with 'others' from different cultures; and through living in two countries in such a short period of time - are timely and important. Burbules and Torres (2000)

present a challenging view of the impact of globalisation on higher education and question whether the process is good or harmful, and whether the cosmopolitan spirit of tolerance and understanding is in fact only an illusion, “a bland consumerist appreciation as in a Disney theme park”, (2000:14). What might be considered important for this research, however, is the underlying context to their discussion which is the need for an ethical dimension to the international higher education discourse. An example is the matching of national frameworks to the international dimension which creates a tension and a set of circumstances that require an ethical perspective. This is examined in Chapter Four with regard to the institutional position and in Chapter Five with regard to the students’ experience of different national frameworks for higher education.

### ***3. Placing the present work in the wider field***

De Wit (2002) presents the internationalisation of higher education as being actioned through three main streams of activity: institutional policy and collaboration, international curriculum development and through international student recruitment. This work addresses all three of these internationalisation activities.

The recruitment of international students to the UK has been the focus for much of the existing work on the international student experience of higher education. This thesis builds on previous work with regard to the implications of the recruitment of growing numbers of international students to UK higher education classrooms. It offers a contribution to the existing field of knowledge through the consideration of the

cultural interactions of international students with the host culture, the institutional cultures and the other students' cultures. In terms of the implications for UK institutions, the existing field of knowledge is evidenced in the work of Trahar (2008, 2011); Harrison & Peacock (2010); Hyland et al (2009), and Montgomery (2010), to name a few. This category of international activity, that is the recruitment of international students to UK universities, is referred to by Turner and Robson (2007) as 'symbolic internationalisation' because it does not involve any real engagement with internationalisation on the part of an institution. Knight (2004) refers to the recruitment of international students as internationalisation at home. This case study offers a different perspective to this international student experience discourse as the international experience is not just through the classroom experience but also involves the mobility of the students and the experience of studying in two countries.

### *Similar studies*

In terms of similar studies, parallels can be drawn with Papatsiba's (2005) analysis of French students undertaking Erasmus mobility where she underlines the importance of investigating mobility at an individual level.

In relation to the literature on joint degrees, specific mention is made here of three similar studies to the research project. Two studies involve an analysis of the joint degree experience, one where students study in France and the UK and the other, in the UK and the Netherlands. The former, by Curtis and Klapper, (2006) is of relevance in terms of the similarity of the subject, in as much as it is a project that looks at the comparative experience of students studying in a British urban higher

education institution and at a *Grande École* in France but the focus for their study is that of financial support systems rather than the academic or cultural experience of the students who were undergraduate rather than postgraduate. Their research, although focused on the financial aspects of such study programmes, raises some interesting points with regard to the students' socio-economic status. They comment:

There is little doubt, however, that diplomas awarded by the *Grandes Écoles* function as an “*ascenseur social*” – a social elevator that catapults students to highly demanded senior management positions in French society (2006:122).

In addition, Curtis and Klapper (2006) highlight the differences in class contact time between the two institutions, with French institutions delivering an average of 25 hours per week of very directed learning and the UK institution delivering an average of 12 hours per week. However, the concept that English students are treated as more ‘independent learners than French’ is not explored nor are the differences in pedagogical approach that are explored by this thesis.

The latter study by Bartram (2007) has a similar approach to this thesis study, where a qualitative case study approach was used for data collection to examine the socio-cultural needs of students on an international joint undergraduate degree. Staff views were integrated for the purposes of triangulation. There is considerable emphasis on the discussion of the staff view in Bartram's paper which is relevant to notions of difficulties in transition for the students. There are some fundamental differences in Bartram's study, however, in that the joint degree examined is undergraduate and is therefore a three year rather than a one year programme, meaning that the time spend

abroad is repeated over the three years rather than being a semester only experience.

The cooperation is with a Dutch rather than a French institution, and the two institutions examined in Bartram's study are broadly similar to each other compared to the institutions in my study, where the institutions are substantially different in terms of student numbers and funding arrangements, and also resourcing of administrative facilities. It is interesting to note that dealing with difference is also a prominent feature of the students' experience although the cohort of students in Bartram's study (2007) consists mainly of the respective country nationals.

Bartram's study focuses on a taxonomy of the socio-cultural issues rather than exploring the nature of the cultural interactions of the students and the experience of difference in relation to their learning, thus presenting a gap that needs to be explored further. He comments that the social isolation amongst the students is an issue due to the distancing from family and friends and emphasises the need for more social integration on international programmes. This is a cultural effect of international higher education. It can be seen as a distancing effect from ingroup<sup>16</sup> familiarity (Triandis and Berman, 1990). This distancing from the rules and norms of a particular group, results in a disruption of meanings and difficulties in transition to the new educational environment. The need for further exploration of the cultural interactions of students is again underlined.

Gargano (2009) recognises there is little work done or published on the perspective of the students participating in transnational higher education and how this participation

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<sup>16</sup>“a membership group whose norms, goals and values shape the behaviour of the members” (cited in Neuliep, J., (2009:208)

links to the acquisition of the cultural skills that are relevant to the knowledge economy. Further, there seems to be little on the perspective of Masters students or second cycle students in international higher education. The shorter length of the Masters programme is a reason to differentiate the experience of undergraduate students where the full length of the programme is at least three times longer. For Masters students, adjustment, transition and engagement has to take place in a much shorter period of time.

The third study from Culver *et al.*, (2012) is broadly similar to the present study in terms of its focus on the value added for students undertaking collaborative dual-degree programmes at postgraduate level. However, their focus is on engineering students. The study was survey-based and addressed four different stakeholder groups: alumni, faculty, current students of which there were only 14, and employers. The exact nature of the collaborative programme is unclear from the paper although from the findings it can be established that Milan and the US were locations for the study. Culver *et al* write that the lack of an all-encompassing definition for these types of programmes is problematic in terms of giving value to them. This is a useful perspective. They also found from a follow-up focus group with six students based in Milan that the students' view of Erasmus mobility was that it was an 'excuse to party'. Romantic encounters also featured as part of the experience. Increases in self-confidence as a consequence of navigating educational and language hurdles in another country were an important part of the experience but the need to spend extra time and money were also an aspect of the experience. The difference with the present study and that of Culver *et al's* (2012) research is that their focus was in determining the 'value' of such programmes both to the students and to future

employers. Their findings outlined that despite personal growth there had been no real increase in students' marketability. They deduce that the value of dual degrees is the learning in two cultures which, they comment, echoes the transformative learning findings of Erichsen, (2012) and Hamza, (2010). This further supports the exploration of the cultural learning on these types of programmes. This case study builds on these studies by examining the students' experience in more depth, and particularly the importance of students' cultural interactions to their educational experience. Further, it builds on these studies by demonstrating how this form of education, that is the joint degree, should be seen in a context of mutuality, where the relationship between the institution and the students is seen as a two way process and the students are partners in their learning. Jamsvi's (2012) findings indicate that the concept of mutuality is embedded in the policy agenda for international higher education thus underlining the importance of the mutuality context for joint degrees.

#### ***4. Cultural Interactions: International students and the Impact of Study Abroad***

Following the discussion of mobility this section examines in more detail the link between international student mobility and cultural learning. McNamnee and Faulkner (2001) establish the link between cultural learning and the curriculum, providing a theoretical underpinning for the exchange experience in cultural terms. They argue that the meanings that individuals draw on to make sense of events in their lives fall under three broad headings: social relationships, activities relating to work and leisure, and convictions to idea systems which include political and religious beliefs. Their paper is useful, firstly, in providing a clear framework for the way in which peoples' interaction is an educational experience but, secondly, with regard to

the meanings that these interactions generate within the context of a sojourner<sup>17</sup> experience. This of course is directly relevant to this research. Although the sojourner experience in their paper centres around the discussion of academics' mobility rather than students, the issues discussed by McNamnee and Faulkner can be correlated to postgraduate students who are required to undertake a period of study abroad as part of their course. The extended quote below highlights the issue of 'culture shock' and the way in which a person experiences a disruption to the meanings of the three categories highlighted earlier in this paragraph. This is enhanced when the period abroad requires involvement with the new culture that is more in depth than, for example, short periods of foreign travel:

The culture of the group – norms, roles, values, beliefs, rituals, traditions – represents the boundary between members and non-members. Culture provides what one needs to know to function as a member in good standing within various groups to which the person belongs. Culture gives one both a way to make sense of the world and an orientation to it. It represents a set of assumptions about how the world works and how people within the group are expected to relate to one another. Culture includes guidelines for acceptable behaviour, including appropriate gestures, words, tones and demeanour expected in rituals of greeting, eating and meeting and so on. Culture shock occurs when a person is removed from a familial cultural setting and is placed in new and unfamiliar one. It represents a loss of cues and symbols of interaction that otherwise help to provide coherence, consistency and predictability in the conduct of social life (Weaver, 1993). The resulting disorientation creates tension, stress and confusion that is almost always unsettling and often traumatic (McNamee and Faulkner, 2001:67).

The definition of culture and culture shock provides an important framework for the academic and social experiences of the postgraduate students who are the focus for this research. Further, it supports the development of the model of interaction for students presented in Chapter One.

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<sup>17</sup>Sojourner is taken to mean someone who embarks on a considerable period of stay in another country

Ward, Bochner and Furnham's (2001) comprehensive discussion of the psychological issues relating to culture shock that are experienced by immigrants and sojourners adds further support for consideration of this as part of the learning process. Of particular relevance to this thesis is their discussion of issues focusing on identity, acculturation and intercultural contact of sojourners. They argue that social identification theories highlight the complexity of the basis around which individuals form their identity and which are constantly redefined as "identity changes in response to temporal, cultural and situational contexts"(2001:106). The temporal, cultural and situational context of joint degrees creates an environment where changing identities in higher education (Barnett and Di Napoli, 2008) are witnessed in the education experienced by the students.

Further, they outline relevant models of acculturation such as Bochner's functional model (cited in Ward et al, 2001) of friendship networks, underlining the situational potential for acculturation for international students. Students are identified as having academic objectives which distinguish them from other types of sojourners such as business people and it is these distinguishing academic objectives that require exploration in order to understand the importance of mobility as part of the international higher education process. The academic objectives of the sojourners are therefore an important contextualisation of their experiences and interactions.

Furnham (1997) expands on the issue of adjustment and the difficulties of culture shock when academic study involves mobility that is either prior to the start of the course or during the course. Most sojourner studies look at some of the psychological aspects of mobility and the processes involved with being an overseas student in terms

of the issues for sojourners. Furnham calls for further empirical work on the possible positive effects of culture shock. In other words, the transitional experience of educational mobility may not be negative for those who are already from a diverse background and who may adapt more easily. Different backgrounds might bring different levels of response in relation to the engagement with a new culture and a new environment which have not as yet been given full consideration.

In the study presented here, students arrive in the UK from their home country and experience a semester of study in London and then a semester of study in France before undertaking a work placement which could be anywhere in the world. The students registered to the French institution will come to London for a semester and then return to France for a semester. The evidence has demonstrated that some students form close bonds with the other 'international' students on the course and that this bonding has eased the difficulties that a person might face in terms of transitioning from different cultural environments.

The definition of culture offered by McNamee and Faulkner is therefore important for the context of this study. Their discussion of the relevant literature identifies the volume of relevant research in this area (Altbach and Teichler, 2001; Cullingford and Gunn, 2005, for example) but also that themes for research into these experiences are adjustment problems and networks of friendships as identified by, for example, Bamford *et al.*, (2002); Bamford, (2006); Hyland *et al.*, (2008); Valiente, (2008); Trahar, (2009); Turner, (2009); Montgomery, (2010); Trahar (2011), as well as cultural frames of learning.

Presenting this argument as a metaphor, cultural experience can be seen as the filling that glues the layers of the educational cake together: that is, the experiences of foreign travel and the adjustments to other rules and norms of behaviour and the development of cultural awareness.

### ***Study abroad and intercultural skills development?***

Taking this idea of the experience of different cultures further, Pedersen's (2010) analysis of US study abroad students and their development of intercultural skills, raises the need to consider the link between the development of those skills and the study abroad environment in higher education. Through the use of the Intercultural Development Inventory developed by Bennett (1993), Pedersen was able to compare the responses of different groups participating in study abroad, both in relation to intercultural learning and also the impact that study abroad has on that intercultural learning. Her findings demonstrate that, contrary to previous studies, study abroad alone will not in itself develop intercultural learning and that in order to achieve this in study abroad programmes, the curriculum must include a forum for intercultural learning or training. The difficulty with Pederson's study in comparison to the present case is that the group surveyed by Pederson lived and travelled together and were homogeneous in terms of national background; the method used did not allow any exploration of the source of the intercultural learning and whether it could have been as effectively achieved by staying in the country of origin (which was the US in that case). What is important, however, about Pederson's research is the link with cultural learning and the curriculum, both in terms of the classroom subjects but also the question that is raised as to whether travel and study in another country automatically

produce an additional skill set to that envisaged by subject specialists. The complexity of this field and the link between education and cultural competence is reflected on by McAllister *et al.*, (2006). Their reflective approach to the analysis of cultural meanings and search for ‘thick description’ of the cultural experience has more in common with the present work in terms of the need to understand the experience from the recipient perspective than Pederson’s work which does not focus on the developmental activity of international higher education.

### ***‘Cultural scripts’ and students’ relationality***

We can see through the work of Trahar, (2011), Montgomery (2010) and Welikala and Watkins (2008) how culture plays an important role with regard to teaching and learning for international students in the UK. The students’ learning depends on the communication between the tutors and the students, and also between the students themselves. This study builds on their work, illustrating the importance of culture and students’ relationality through the exploration of travel to two countries as part of the learning experience. The relationality students have with each other becomes an important aspect of their learning. Using the model presented in Chapter One, we can see how this research builds on previous work and goes further, emphasising the importance of culture in the learning environment, as students’ relationality is dependent on the recognition of students’ differing ‘cultural scripts’. Since culture is at the heart of how students engage with each other and their host country, students’ relationality to each other is dependent on their cultural background. Hofstede’s (2003) work on the way in which individuals from different cultures communicate with each other in organisations is useful in guiding a discussion of cultural

interaction. Hofstede views the interactions between peoples as definable through their ‘cultural programming’: the cultural background of individuals ‘programmes’ those individuals with regard to the way they communicate with each other. Whilst Hofstede’s work has seen a number of critiques in terms of its over generalisation with regard to nationalities, it is useful to draw on some of his discussion to frame an analysis of the ways that people from different cultures relate to each other and the ways they may approach any given situation. Hofstede’s (2003) power distance analysis<sup>18</sup> is a useful framework of reference for the behaviour of those who are from France compared to those who come from Sweden, for example. Hofstede found that the Swedish and French scored very differently on his power distance scale and he observes that they react differently to inequalities in their society as there is a low power distance ratio in Sweden. The UK was also found to have a small power distance ratio as well as being individualistic, whilst France, although individualistic, has a high power distance ratio. This is because French society is regarded as highly stratified and authoritarian whilst being individualistic at the same time. Hofstede’s categorisation of individualist and collectivist societies (2003:50) also provides a useful framework of reference when looking at cultural interactions due to its categorisation of norms of behaviour. Hence, it is frequently referenced in the literature. Using Hofstede’s analysis of power distance, Barker, (1997) highlights this issue of cultural expectations and norms of behaviour within an educational context, making it clear that mismatches of norms of behaviour and understanding can create a cultural schism. He comments on the mismatch of the expectations of the students and the reality of their experience of UK higher education; that is, the UK has an

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<sup>18</sup>Hofstede (2003:28)...”the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.”

emphasis on self-directed learning which is, for example, evidenced by the phrase ‘reading for a degree’ whereas many overseas students expect far more in the way of contact time with their tutors than they receive in the UK:

The mismatch then continues from different understandings of the purposes of university education, to the roles of lecturers and tutors and to the responsibilities of the students themselves. It is compounded by the ever-worsening staff-student ratio, the reward system for staff in higher education and, potentially by any over-enthusiastic selling of British higher education abroad and inadequate orientation and preparation of overseas students for study in Britain (1997:120).

Both Barker (1997) and Twigg (2005) use Hofstede’s analysis of national cultures with reference to the educational environment. Whilst there is a different emphasis, in Twigg’s work it is clear that the issue of rules and norms of behaviour are defined from cultural codes. These codes may be also be tacit (Matthews, 2000) which can create another layer for the possibility for miscommunication between students. These tacit rules of behaviour require consideration as an important element of the learning process in the sense of a ‘culture of learning’ (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997). These cultures of learning are part of the contemporary higher education classroom which incorporates the different cultural backgrounds of the students, the culture of the host institution and the host culture. Welikala and Watkins (2008) provide further explanation in referring to ‘cultural scripts’ which will govern interaction with lecturers, other students and communication in the classroom; there are different modes of accepted communication practices in different cultures which stem from the norms of behaviour of a particular culture.

The potential for miscommunication can be seen from Barker's (1997) explanation that the UK's power distance rating, when compared to the power distance rating of other countries, which could result in an experience that is distancing for students; for example, the British practice of lecturers asking students to refer to them by their first name indicates a low power distance interaction which is difficult for students from a country with a high power distance rating. It is unlikely that students and staff can be expected to change their attitudes and values. A question then arises as to how to bridge the gulf between the above and the academic standards employed through national frameworks of operation. This is an ethical question, to which Barker offers the solution of raising awareness of the expectations of UK higher education.

### ***Intercultural awareness and students' relationality***

The cultural interactions between students fall broadly under the heading of intercultural communications. In this thesis this is framed as students' relationality with each other. Stone (2006) identifies the internationalisation of student learning as being the two constructs of "international knowledgeability" and "intercultural competence" which underlines that there are different levels of engagement with international higher education. Simply put, it can be viewed that there are two levels of engagement with different cultures in education, with intercultural learning, rather than international knowledgeability, being the more engaged. So the ability to interact with those from other cultures, rather than demonstrating mere knowledge of other cultures, is an important distinction for the analysis of students' cultural awareness.

An example of the importance of intercultural communication and the classroom is offered by McAllister *et al* (2006). They identify a gap in the literature with regard to establishing the *way* or how the acquisition of intercultural learning or awareness takes place. This is something that is explored in this thesis in a constructivist approach to students' realities and negotiations. McAllister *et al* analyse the international experiences and intercultural learning of students through a critical incident approach, stating that intercultural competences are a requisite of professional knowledge and part of businesses' core activities but that:

Currently however, a gap in the knowledge base exists as to the learning processes that underpin the acquisition of such intercultural understandings, knowledge and competence. Such a gap is or should be of concern to all educators in entry level professional programs...Establishing intercultural competence among professionals is about more than developing an awareness that culture is an issue in everyday practice. It is about developing the ability to identify and challenge one's cultural assumptions, one's values and beliefs and developing empathy and connected knowledge (2006:367).

This ability to develop empathy and to challenge cultural assumptions is an important frame for the discussion of what is meant in the thesis by intercultural awareness. It provides an accessible and working definition for the assessment of the intercultural perspective of international higher education.

As seen above Pederson (2010), presents us with some counter intuitive findings on national frameworks or structures on students' learning as study abroad does not automatically result in cultural learning. She argues for the need for intercultural teaching or training as part of the international higher education process. The issue of intercultural communication is strongly linked to the internationalisation debate in the

pedagogy literature as the development of students with global competences or skills, or a cosmopolitan view of the world, seems to have become the dominant discourse (Haigh, 2009; Spencer-Oatey and Stadler, 2009). In a challenge to this discourse some may question when cultural awareness becomes intercultural learning or intercultural competence, and what does intercultural learning actually mean?

A discussion of this issue is offered by David Coulby (2006) who examines the theoretical underpinning of intercultural education. This theoretical perspective is central to the question of students' acquisition of intercultural skills which result from their studies. Coulby states:

Interculturalism is a theme, probably the major theme, which needs to inform the teaching and learning of all subjects. It is just as important in medicine as in civics, in mathematics as in language teaching. Similarly, it is just as vital at university, as it is in the kindergarten. If education is not intercultural, it is probably not education but rather the inculcation of nationalist or religious fundamentalism (2006:246).

This clearly portrays Coulby's critical stance with regard to the present intercultural theorising. He argues that the last few years have seen interculturalism become part of the mainstream discourse in education with the term replacing multiculturalism in much of this discourse. The distinction between intercultural competence and cultural awareness is an important theme that requires further exploration. The literature demonstrates that culture informs all the aspects of the experience in the context of an international higher education, but a question remains as to whether it can be considered to be a meaningful activity in terms of the educational experience. The question is whether the international learning is a result of cultural interactions and

what the nature of that learning is in order to define international higher education as a meaningful activity.

The difficulties with using the existing pedagogical practices of UK higher education, even within the context of a module that is delivering a cross cultural syllabus, are highlighted by Turner (2009). She admits in her study of postgraduate students that, whilst students learnt something of other cultures in groups, her attempts to enhance social integration through the use of groups was not successful and that explicit teaching content failed to overcome attitudinal and interactive difficulties. The issue of contact with students from other cultures and cultural interaction has to be viewed as a focal point for meaningful interaction and activity in transnational social spaces. Can attitudinal and interactive difficulties be overcome through the international mobility of a joint degree and through the development of ingroup identity? The experience of group work for students is returned to later in the chapter.

What is clear is that cultural engagement happens at a number of levels and it has to be seen as something more than the ontological discomfort that arises as a consequence of the learning process (Barnett, 1990) in order to claim it as part of the validity of international education. This raises questions both with regard to the issues of differences in pedagogy in a course that involves study in two countries but also to the cultural interactions that take place between the host institutions, the host cultures and between the students from different cultures.

### ***Issues with the definitions of intercultural competence and or the development of cosmopolitanism***

As we have already seen from McAlister et al (2006), there is a question as to whether students are developing some sort cultural awareness or whether international higher education is developing intercultural competence. The importance of developing the latter is reflected in it being an aspect of Knight's (2004) definition of internationalisation. This section examines the meaning of intercultural competence or awareness and considers how it might be relevant. Nieto and Booth(2010) talk of the need to 'truly understand' each other as the world becomes a smaller place (2010:406) and that 'intercultural sensitivity' is central to the role of education. Their study is important as they investigate the influence of individuals' cultural competence on university teachers and students. However, intercultural competence is a term that is frequently used, as Deardorff (2006) recognised, but is not very often defined. The expectation is that the term should be somehow intuitively grasped.

Having said this, there are a number of studies relating to the development of intercultural competences within an educational context, Deardorff (2006); Stone (2006); Haigh (2008); Nieto and Booth (2010) to name just a few. Stone (2006) frames his work with the use of the term 'intercultural effectiveness' and provides a definition of this as being "the ability to interact with people from different cultures so as to optimise the probability of mutually successful outcomes" (2006:338). He provides a workable reference point for the analysis of the cultural interactions that students are having rather than the less useful term 'intercultural competence'.

Stone outlines the reasons for his use of specific terms: for example, he chooses the word 'effectiveness' over 'competence', clearly stating that his use of the word effectiveness is as a result of the need to avoid some of the stigma attached to the word 'competence'. The word 'competence' implies lower order skills training or it seems to be used by various stakeholders to suit their particular needs. Stone's objection to using the word 'competence' does not seem to have been followed through in much of the literature but the point is taken here and the word will not be used with regard to the findings. There was no expressed aim on the part of the institutions to engage in joint degrees programmes for the purposes of the development of intercultural competences. The focus will be the development of intercultural awareness as a meaningful activity rather than effectiveness which implies an ability to measure the way students interact in cultural terms.

Hunter, White and Godbey, (2006) suggest in a highly polemical piece that global competences are a contested concept and that their definition is relative. They suggest that a key aspect of understanding others is understanding yourself, noting that the emphasis in educational terms should be placed on study at home rather than study abroad, with language learning being a necessary facet for understanding others.

Another view is offered by Sanderson (2008) who, in a criticism of Knight, states that the real process of internationalisation is taking place within institutions. Although his work is focused on the mode of teaching, (*modus docendi*), he presents an idea of the development of the academic self through a process of critical self-reflection and through the development of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is referenced by others, for example Haigh (2008) who couches the term within his broader ideas of

planetary citizenship. Again it is hard not to agree with Hunter *et al* (2006) that such terms are relativistic and difficult in the sense of being able to offer a clear position to defend. The development of self-awareness and the understanding of others have an important role within the international higher education environment, particularly in the context of group work activity.

### ***5. The Learning Environment in International Higher Education: Approaches to Teaching and Learning***

For many of the students who were the subject of this study, the UK approach to teaching and learning was new. Due to the crossing of borders and an encounter with another pedagogical approach which for at least half of the students was an encounter with two new pedagogical approaches, there is a need to identify whether difference in the educational environment is an issue for international higher education. The research questions were designed to address this issue of difference and the *way* students learn in new cultural environments and across countries. Students on joint degrees learn in more than one cultural context and it was necessary to explore if the teaching and learning approaches were different in each country and if this had any effect on the students' learning.

The issue of teaching and learning for international students can be divided into three broad categories: firstly, that of the teacher experience, centred around the mode of teaching (*modus docendi*<sup>19</sup>); secondly, that of the general experience of international students of UK higher education with teaching and learning as an aspect of that, in

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<sup>19</sup> The Latin is used here not just to evoke notions of the wandering scholar, *peregrinatio academica* (Ridder-Symeons, 1992) on which the Erasmus programme is based but also the first European university teaching qualification was referred to as *licentia ubique docendi* ( Reugg 1992)

other words their mode of learning (*modus discendi*); and thirdly, that of the cultural and social engagement of international students with the host culture in the context of education, which encompasses both of the first two categories and also constitutes the experience of international higher education. This underlines the relevance in developing an understanding of the students' mode of learning (*modus discendi*) in international higher education. A focus on the existing work on the different approaches to teaching and learning, both of the UK and France, allows us to explore further, under the umbrella of the joint degree experience, another aspect of the way a contribution is being made to the field by this work.

### ***The modus docendi in the UK***

It is often presented that Western institutions engage with student learning in broadly the same manner. For example, the discourse with regard to pedagogy is framed in terms of the development of critical thinking skills which, according to Barnett (1997), is a defining concept for Western universities. This work questions the presumption that all Western institutions teach in the same way. Barnett states that the “overwhelming message of the sociology of knowledge is that the academic identity is maintained within definite cognitive frameworks with their own norms, values and territorial defences” (1997: 15). However, the framework for the delivery of that knowledge is very much within national frameworks that have a cultural basis for the format of delivery (Alexander 2000). This is distinguished from the *habitus* of those engaging in the academic life, as described by Bourdieu (1984), which can also be categorised as a cultural grouping. The implication therefore is that there is a national and institutional identifiable academic culture, the norms and values of which

represent the society and institution in which it is located. This cognitive framework is therefore reflected in the mode of teaching, the *modus docendi*. It is argued that the mode of teaching is essentially a culturally steeped activity that can be differentiated in terms of an emphasis on a national framework of delivery which reflects the national and institutional culture. Simply put, national culture is an influencing factor on the institutional pedagogical framework which then influences the teaching and learning environment.

Further, it is argued that, despite institutional differences, there is a common and identifiable *modus docendi* for higher education in the UK. The literature focusing on the French higher education system also displays a common framework, particularly in relation to the *Grandes Écoles*. However, the British and French frameworks are different. Some authority for the differences in national approach between the English and the French is provided by Deer's (2002) work, who presents a detailed analysis of the differences between the two education systems from a policy perspective (including higher education). Deer's work does not, however, look at the student experience or, indeed, present a cross-country comparison of the experience for students. The issue of the different student experiences in different national systems is dealt with later in this chapter, but it is clear from Deer's work that the two national systems operate with different drivers.

What may also be deduced from the literature is that, despite a common cultural background, there is variety and flexibility of delivery with regard to teaching and learning in UK higher education institutions, particularly in Business Schools. A common feature seems to be the use of group work (Nordberg, 2008; Pokorny and

Griffiths, 2010). This will be returned to and discussed in more depth later in this chapter. There appears to be a general claim that the pedagogic approach in the UK is characterised by its encouragement of independent learning, although this term can be seen as somewhat vague. Evans and Morgan (1998) provide us with some sense of what this phrase means in their acknowledgement that independent learning means:

all sorts of things, people use it with very different meanings and assumptions about the nature of learning and the purposes of post-compulsory education...With these contrasting meanings of independent learning, ranging from a teacher-centred curriculum followed by a student in isolation, to a student-centred curriculum and lifelong learning, the term needs to be used with care if it is to be of any value for critical reflection on our practice (1998:69-70).

From this description we can see that a student studying in isolation can be seen to be an element of the definition. If one returns to Hofstede's (2001; 2003) analysis of cultures this notion is not surprising as the UK has an individualistic culture and the encouragement of individuals' independence is a core cultural value. The education of individuals would therefore encourage skills that develop independence.

The most famous example of this independent learning can be seen in the UK's elite institutions, which arguably offer us some of the most visual emblems of English culture. The Oxford Tutorial System (Palfreyman, 2008a; Palfreyman, 2008b) offers a cultural example. He underlines that the basis for the acquisition of knowledge at Oxford is through the Socratic method, which can be defined as challenging students through a process of questioning them about their beliefs and views and requiring them to arrive at answers through a process of critical reflection. Palfreyman concludes that Oxford offers a liberal education by "adequately engaging the higher

education student in a continuous academic discourse so as to maximise critical thinking” (2008:39). He goes further and states that “*Higher* education only matters if it is a liberal education that teaches people to think critically and reflectively” (2008:12). He uses italics for *higher* in order to underline that the *higher* education offered is not merely tertiary education which is preparation for the work place. This perhaps demonstrates a difference in ethos between the pre-92 institutions and the post-92 institutions, although it might be remembered that encouragement of independence and individuality is a pervading value of English education and still filters down to the post-92 institutions even if it is a watered-down version. In other words the national cultural framework overrides institutions’ own cultural frameworks. The emphasis on the independent development of higher order critical thinking skills are viewed as an essential aspect of all university education in the UK. As we shall see later in the chapter there is a different emphasis in the privately funded French *Grandes Écoles*.

Although Oxford does not offer what might be seen as the normal mode of delivery witnessed at other UK institutions, the contact time with tutors is broadly similar in UK institutions. A survey on the “Academic Experience of Students in English Universities” by HEPI (2007) states that the average amount of time spent in class is 14.2 hours per week, with an equal amount of time expected in independent study. The incorporation of the example of the Oxford tutorial system is made for two reasons: firstly, Oxford and Cambridge are the ‘gold standard’ for UK higher education topping international league tables and so raising the profile of UK education generally overseas; secondly, in order to emphasise the commonality of the independent study approach in UK institutions. There is a need to underline that

league table positioning does not alter the general cognitive framework in the UK with regard to the emphasis on the development of critical thinking skills. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) benchmark statements also illustrate this point. Further, although there are institutional differences in the *modus docendi*, these differences could be viewed as a sliding scale of delivery, with institutions such as Oxford at one end of that scale and urban post-92s at the other, with the independent approach being encouraged through the Socratic method in the former.

The HEPI (Sastry and Bekhradnia, 2007) report underlines that contact time also depends on subjects as well as institutions, with philosophy, for example, attracting an average of only 9 hours per week across English institutions. In terms of a market view for the UK, however, this approach may have to be reconsidered as the HEPI no 36 report (Cemmel and Bekhradnia, 2008) highlights that UK higher education degree courses risk being considered ‘study light’ in terms of too little contact time. This is an important issue for UK institutions in terms of international comparisons of higher education. In addition, the HEPI report (2007) highlights that there is little real difference in terms of contact time between the post-92 and the pre-92 institutions.

Further, to underline and emphasise this point, texts which offer guidance to students on studying in the UK often describe the UK pedagogical approach as being focused on independent study. Lowes, Peters and Turner (2004) and Cotterell, (2008) are just two examples. The expression ‘independent learning’ also haunts much of the literature in relation to the experiences of international students learning.

Barnett (1990) informs us that students, through higher education, can be changed as persons through the critical approach to learning in higher education institutions. This again puts an implicit emphasis on the *modus docendi* (rather than the *modus discendi* of the students) as the implication is that it is the institution and tutors who imbibe this critical approach to the students. The present thesis will challenge this epistemological framework in arguing that the *modus discendi* is key to the acquisition of knowledge in an international higher education environment. Whilst Barnett does speak of knowledge acquisition on a personal level, with the realisation of knowledge being a transformative process, he leaves this observation at the general level. There will however, be variation of the engagement of this process according to the *modus discendi* of an individual student. The realisation of knowledge, or rather the depth of the realisation of that knowledge, is therefore dependant to a large extent on the individual student and the mode in which they are operating at the time of their education. This is argued to be culturally steeped. For example, it is difficult to see how tutors or institutions can force students to become more culturally aware or to acquire intercultural skills if they have no wish to do so.

As with the field of internationalisation generally, there has been a proliferation of literature with regard to the experiences of international students in a learning context, and the perceived issues facing higher education institutions as a consequence of recruiting large numbers of international students. Some further consideration needs to be given to the context of this realisation of knowledge for international students in terms of the influencing factors on their *modus discendi*. How do international students, from different cultural backgrounds, different education systems, who have different learning experiences as well as different levels of competence in English or

who have different strengths in the sub-skills of English, for example, different oral or written levels of English, fare in a system that encourages independent learning? This is addressed to some extent by Welikala and Watkins (2008), in their analysis of the differing cultural scripts that international students have, and also in Trahar's (2011) recent work. The intention of this work is not to address all these variables in terms of their link with the realisation of knowledge (as there are too many) but to raise and highlight the importance of the cultural aspect of international higher education under the auspices of the joint degree.

***The modus discendi of international students in international higher education: the cultural context***

In order to frame the enquiry in this section of the chapter, 'culture' is the focus for the discussion in relation to students' experience of international higher education. 'Culture' frames the students' experience as their *modus discendi* has a correlation with their cultural background. The discourse on 'culture' relates to that on globalisation, to which reference was made at the start of this chapter. As Matthews (2000) argues, contemporary cultural identities and the growth of people's mobility in globalised economies create a cultural supermarket with regard to cultural identity. Educational mobility has to be seen as a facet of that.

Benhabib's (2002) broad discussion on the claims of culture in the global era explores some of the contemporary debates. He contextualises the nation state debate within the parameters of multiple cultural identities and the complexities of citizenship. This macro view contextualises global drivers' effect on cultural identity and cultural pluralism which, he argues, is viewed on false epistemological assumptions. The

debate on the fragmenting of national cultures and pluralism is key to the pressures placed on educationalists with regard to raising cultural awareness and or cultural skills. Benhabib's critique is useful for the ethical position that is argued in this thesis.

He states:

Understanding the other is not just a cognitive act; it is a moral and political deed. Theories of strong incommensurability distract us from the many subtle epistemic and moral negotiations that take place across cultures, among individuals, and even within individuals themselves in dealing with discrepancy, ambiguity and conflict (2002:31).

He made this comment when presenting an argument that the lines between universalism and relativism have been too polarised that, in fact, universalism can have some value seen in a discourse context. He argues that universalism can have a moral element which is useful; that human beings are to be considered as moral equals regardless of race, gender, cultural and religious background. The issue here is matching this premise to the way interaction takes place between human beings in the educational environment with the responsibility of institutions involved in facilitating cultural interaction in an international environment. Trahar (2011) echoes the need to move away from dualistic notions with regard to cultural engagement in the international higher education environment.

Culture is argued by Stoer and Cortesao, (2000) to be at the heart of identity. Identity and its reaffirmation or confirmation is crucial to contemporary European society's fragmented and complicated cultural structures. If education is a transformative process (Barnett 1997; Twigg, 2005), this transformation and cultural engagement goes to the heart of who we are as human beings. Within this conceptual context, we

can see the need to consider the link with the research on culture and the higher education environment as evidencing a position that recognises culture as part of the learning process. This has traditionally not been part of the pedagogical design of programmes of study but comes into view on researching the joint degree experience, thus underlining the importance and relevance for research into joint degrees.

### ***International students studying in UK higher education classrooms***

Much of the discussion with regard to the international student experience largely developed in the latter part of the nineties exemplified in works such as McNamara and Harris' (1997) edited book which proved to be a seminal work. The text is useful in the contextualisation of some of the perceived issues relating to the teaching and learning of overseas students. An example is offered by Furnham (1997) which is relevant to this research as the focus is study abroad. Furnham's research focuses on the experience of being an international or overseas student and the effects of culture shock. What McNamara's and Harris' edited text provides, therefore, is a basis for further exploration of the issues relating to the teaching and learning of international students in UK institutions. It could be argued that much of the existing work problematises international students in UK higher education, seeing them as a challenge. Given the *modus docendi* discourse explored above, we can see that a cultural mismatch can lead to dissonance and a possibly negative approach in addressing the challenges posed. The miscommunication of expectations between tutors and culturally heterogeneous students can be cause for concern. Trahar (2011) highlights the potential difficulties and the complexity of the issues involved. It is evidenced in the categorisation of regional or national characteristics in the learning

environment, for example Turner (2006) who refers to Chinese and British learners characteristics. Since 2000 we have seen some important and frequently cited works which I shall review in the following paragraphs in some depth due to the relevance that they bear to this work.

Biggs (2003) focuses on the quality of teaching and learning in higher education and on the teacher approach to international students. Whilst his model of teaching international students is useful for reference in terms of a recognition of the university approach to learning, the identification of difficulty and difference is problematic in terms of the question of the transition of international students to their new environment. Biggs does make it clear that it is not in his view that international students suffer different transitional problems from host country students transferring from high school to higher education by stressing that the issue is the extent to which international students are affected. He presents a useful model for analysis of the international student experience through a threefold model of that experience, with problems arising from socio-cultural adjustments and language factors and learning and teaching problems due to 'culture', all of which are themes addressed by various writers. The difficulties with different discourse styles and transition to the UK, as well as factors that arise as a result of cultural differences are highlighted by researchers such as De Vita (2004) and Katsara and Gil (1999). In addition, Biggs (2003) provides some useful discussion of the misconceptions commonly held about teaching international students. He cites some familiar and frequently repeated statements with regard to international students, such as misconceptions relating to plagiarism or rote learning which support those generalisations. What is important is that, in his second level of teaching approach to international students, Biggs

acknowledges the need for a teaching approach that accommodates a cultural context. He comments that he recognises that such an approach is still a deficit one and that, in fact, ethnicity is irrelevant to good teaching practice. However, this message is somewhat lost as the references he makes concerning international students are in conjunction with the delivery of problem based learning in Hong Kong and relate to a homogeneous group of students. If we consider that in many cases an international or heterogeneous classroom is one where heterogeneity of students and teacher is understood to mean more than mono-cultural or dual cultural, then the basis for his analysis, despite the possible validity of his statements loses its strength. He does attempt to address this point by stating that the principles apply to all cultures although his framework of reference is students from Far East Asian countries. In addition, one must bear in mind that much of the problem based learning (PBL) that he makes reference to is generally team based. As we will see in Chapter Five, there are considerable issues regarding heterogeneous groups and assessments that have a group focus. However, he does generally advocate Volet and Ang's (1998) contextual approach to teaching which is in line with the arguments presented in this thesis. If we apply Biggs discussion in relation to international students' experience of pedagogy in the UK, the cultural context is an important theme.

One approach to dealing with students from different backgrounds in the classroom is to review some of the literature on multicultural classrooms much of which emanates from the USA. Authors such as Swisher and Schoorman (2001) look into cultural differences with regard to learning styles. Their view is that cultural values influence socialisation practices, which affects the way people prefer to learn. They found that students differ in their approaches to learning and that students demonstrate

differences in communication patterns. These differences are evident in those students from different cultural backgrounds. Swisher and Schoorman (2001) provide examples of the characteristics of different cultural groups in terms of their learning styles and they underline the importance of avoiding stereotypical assumptions. The link with learning to the socialisation of the learners is relevant here as the link between cultures and approaches to learning is an important element of the international classroom. Hence it is the focus for one of the research questions. However, as the focus for the research questions is not on a difference in learning styles, this learning styles approach is not explored further. Whilst we can see that some commonalities arise as a consequence of different cultures in the classroom (for example, we can see a discussion of this in Welikala and Watkin's (2008) work on cultural scripts for learning), a true analysis of the importance of learning styles requires a different emphasis and analysis.

In pursuing the discussion of difference, however, the importance of the link between the classroom environment and difference is an aspect that needs further exploration. De Vita and Case (2003) echo this emphasis on culture when they ask whether the approach to teaching in UK universities considers the learning needs of both home and international students as barriers arising from diversity in the classroom which need to be overcome. This underlines the importance of the social and cultural dimension to the classroom. The student engagement with this aspect of the classroom experience has been a key part of this research in terms of students' relationality, that is, their learning in relation to 'others'. The signification of others is given prominence in the work of Levinas (2006). Coate (2007) highlights the importance of such an approach in culturally diverse classrooms.

Further discussion dealing with different students' cultural backgrounds, in terms of a diversity narrative, is offered by those such as Tomlinson and Egan (2002) and Maxwell *et al* (2000). The diversity narrative focuses on the impact of diversity in the classroom and difficulties encountered by students as a result of engaging with diversity. Some of this discourse is presented in a negative context of experience, such as Maxwell *et al* (2000) who, when looking at the learning adjustments of South East Asian students, present the difficulties in much of the existing literature on students studying in the UK when coming from different countries. These discussions offer an important dimension in relation to notions of cultural difference in terms of the diversity discourse. It is interesting to note that even if the subject taught is cross-cultural management, the divisions caused by the cultural diversity in the classroom are difficult to overcome.

Van Gyn *et al*(2009) highlight another broad consideration that colours the discussion in relation to international education, international students and pedagogy:

...the dominant Western paradigm for teaching and learning remains intact, and, consequently, internationalization efforts frequently do not go beyond additions, which are not well integrated with the rest of the curriculum...For higher education curricula to be inclusive of international students and prepare all students with intercultural knowledge and competence, a fundamental change in perspective on teaching and learning on the part of those responsible for curriculum development, and equally important an expanded view of internationalisation is required (2009:26)

According to Van Gyn *et al*, there is a view that Western curricula promulgate a Western and, for some, an imperialist approach to the international higher education environment and that the curricula used in much of the UK has not been altered to take account of the increased amount of international students in the classroom.

The use of the word 'international' suggests a broader educational experience and courses that use this word should go beyond a mere addition to standard UK curricula. This issue is one which this research seeks to explore. Perhaps one aspect of the curricula that can be considered as 'international' is the use of group work both for classroom activity and for assessment. The groups are culturally diverse and require 'international' negotiations from those students engaging in this type of activity. The next section explores the issue of group work in more detail.

### ***International students and group work***

Within the literature on higher education pedagogy in the UK there is an identifiable separate body of work on the issue of group work, both in terms of it as a pedagogical approach and in terms of its use as an assessment tool. Bamford and Pokorny (2010) raised the question of ethics with regard to the use of group work in UK Business Schools, including the need for an ethical backdrop to the use of group work. It is an area that requires further work as it is not addressed in most of the literature on group work. Nordberg (2008) comments on the extensive use of group work in business education, illustrating that this form of pedagogy and assessment is common.

Jaques (1992, 2000) provides us with a comprehensive guide to the use of group work with a clear analysis of the functioning of groups and the ways in which group work can be successful. In an educational context this is presumably the achievement of the learning outcomes, for example, the achievement of critical thinking skills (Cathcart, Dixon-Dawson and Hall, 2006) for any particular course of study. Again this is the focus for much of the UK literature on group work. Jaques presents a typology of previous work into group behaviour, with Tuckman's (1965), forming, storming, norming and performing 'model' listed as part of this typology. What is clear from the typology is that the analysis of group behaviour into a segmented and developmental process, as typified by Tuckman, is common and much of the literature makes reference to his analysis of group phases, although the 'storming' phase is often the focus for obvious reasons. Jaques' (1991) thesis for learning in groups is based on a discussion and analysis of existing research into learning where, whilst hypothesising with regard to applying the research, he identifies that most students recognise differences in teaching styles which make them reflect on their own knowledge. In order to encourage 'deep' learning, students prefer the openness of small group discussion as opposed to the distant relationship of highly structured lectures. This hypothesis justifies the use of groups as a teaching method but does not take into consideration ethical questions with regard to the use of group work as an assessment tool in terms of the social and political dynamics between those students who are working in groups.

However, Jaques' discussion of the importance of communication in groups is clearly stated:

No amount of understanding of group behaviour is sufficient for successful participation in groups unless each person in the group has the capacity to communicate effectively. It is through communication that people achieve an understanding of one another and are thus able to influence, and be influenced by others. Only if there is a predisposition to accept and accommodate others will honest communication take place – and this implies a degree of trust and openness between participants. Without these, mutual understanding and influences are liable to distortion: co-operation is unlikely (1991:51).

This underlines that the use of group work is a meaningful activity of both the *modus docendi* and the *modus discendi*. It can be seen to be a communication tool that, due to the small environment of a group, facilitates communication where the differing cultural norms of both lecturer to student and student to student can be overcome. The cultural dimension to the group work communication is something that needs further consideration. The need for trust, openness, recognition, and dependence on others is clear as is the requirement for effective communication.

The importance of the assessment of the group process is highlighted by Reynolds and Trehan (2000) in their work on a critical perspective of assessment. Whilst their research is focused on participative assessment in groups, they raise the importance of considering the political and social dynamics of group relations and the effect that these dynamics may have on the assessment process:

More than any other aspect of education, assessment embodies power relations between the institutions and its students, with tutors as custodians of the institution's rules and practices. The effects of judgements made on individuals' careers, as well as the evaluation of their worth by themselves or by others, ensures that assessment is experienced by students as being of considerable significance (2000:268).

Turner (2009) echoes this emphasis on individuals' cultural norms within groups and the need to explore the participative inequalities. This issue of the cultural background of the participants and negative group work experience has been the subject of a number of studies (Leki, 2001; Strauss and U, 2007; Li and Campbell, 2008; Montgomery, 2009; Turner 2009; Osmond and Roed, 2010), although much of the literature discusses the socio-educational and experiential aspects of group work in favourable terms (Jaques 2000; Livingstone and Lynch, 2000; Nordberg, 2009). One of the key issues arising from the literature on culture and group work is that of language, as is pointed out by Leki (2001). There are possible negative effects on the group process if there is a native English speaker in the group which may result in the negative power dimensions referred to by Turner (2009). An example of those negative power dimensions is offered by Ping (2010) who talks of students from other cultures being silenced in the classroom. The importance of silence for some cultures is underlined by Trahar (2011).

In terms of the use of group work as an assessment tool, an interesting aspect to the political dimensions of the group is the issue of the tension between the focus on the individual in the higher education system and the group in this type of assessment. This has been observed by several writers (Nordberg, 2008; Turner 2009; Bamford and Pokorny, 2010). The *modus docendi* of UK higher education which incorporates the approach to the assessment of learning, is focused on an individual process of learning and achievement. This tension is evidenced if the group work is allocated a group grade for a piece of assessed work and an individual grade for the degree award. There is, therefore, an ethical dimension with regard to use of group work and the possible effect on achievement. Nordberg (2008) acknowledges that there are

detrimental effects but that the benefits outweigh the deficits. Bamford and Pokorny (2010) argued that further consideration needs to be given to the use of group work in ethical terms because of this tension. Livingston and Lynch refer to some of the common negative effects such as ‘free loading’ as being ‘myths’ and that the reality is that students’ performance is not affected. In contrast, Pokorny and Griffiths (2011) argue that these myths are realities. What is clear is that the use of group work for assessment and for pedagogical purposes is widespread within Business Schools and that there are ethical dimensions with regard to its use and effects which require further exploration. As Turner (2009) comments:

...the idea that lecturers might seek to manipulate social interactions between students on anything other than strictly academic grounds strikes a somewhat discordant note. Furthermore, the use of one group of students as an internationalising source for another is doubtful unless the benefits to all concerned are reciprocal and unequivocal. ..both educational and ethical aspects of the debate demand absolute clarity about the terms of engagement and academic outcomes, and they require fine judgement about the practicability of their achievement (2009:243).

This issue of a discordant note and the implications for student interactions are addressed in the research question on the classroom interactions of students as well as the question of what issues arise from teaching and learning in each institution. The importance of exploring the academic outcomes of this aspect of the educational experience is clear, particularly in terms of the cultural engagement.

### ***The modus docendi in France***

In seeking to understand the context of the pedagogy of the French institution some consideration of its representation of the French system and approach is necessary.

This section addresses some of the relevant literature on French business schools. Deer (2002) is extremely helpful in providing a general comparison between the two educational systems of France and the UK, together with the differing national approaches that have governed their development. Whilst Deer's text is aimed at a discussion of the education systems generally, some attention is paid to the historical development of the two tier higher education system in France which is quite different to the UK. Some background to the history of this development is offered by Zeldin, (1980) in outlining how the emphasis on *les valeurs Françaises*, such as *liberté, fraternité, égalité*, influenced the organisation of the national frameworks, such as, education for the promotion of French national identity:

Civilisation implied a whole social, economic and political programme to be carried out in cooperation with like-minded citizens and, inevitably, against those whom one would label as obscurantist and reactionary. It was egalitarian but also elitist. It was universal but also nationalist (1977:8).

This contradictory perspective of the French state towards egalitarianism and elitism is an important feature of the French higher education system, the implications of which require further exploration within the context of the *modus docendi* in international higher education. Zeldin provides us with the history of the development of higher education in France, demonstrating how the focus for the professional approach of the *Grandes Écoles* was promoted. When read in conjunction with Deer (2002), it becomes clear that different levels of understanding need to be applied to the French national system of education, with the *Grandes Écoles* being subject to a different frame of operation to the universities. What is also clear is that the mode of teaching

in France reflects *les valeurs Françaises* and students need to negotiate this when engaging with the culture of the host country.

Calmand *et al* (2009), in their analysis of the *Grandes Écoles (GE)* system, underline the different approach of the French national system in terms of higher education and illustrate the specialist approach of the French institutions that offer business education. They state that *Grandes Écoles* provide better general knowledge, transferable competences, attitudes and personal skills more valued by employers for the highly skilled professions than the universities in France. They have small student staff ratios and have a far more homogenous student body (Bourdieu 1989; Brezis & Crouzet, 2006).

In terms of the *Grandes Écoles*' engagement with international higher education, Blanchard's (2008) discussion on their development and their approach to internationalisation offers some insight. There has been a change of focus for their activity from business schools to management schools in order to be more competitive internationally, but there is little evidence that this has changed their teaching approach. Darricotte and McColl (2008) argue that the ESC Rennes has changed its approach and has differentiated itself from other *Grandes Écoles* by taking an international approach to pedagogy. This view is problematic as the nature of the difference with pedagogy in French schools is broader than issues of cultural diversity in the student body as they suggest. For example, they admit that their School has French management and administration, and that the student staff ratio is small (as typical of *Grandes Écoles*), as well as class time being typical of *Grandes Écoles* with three hour blocks given to each session. The fundamental difference of an elitist

approach to the recruitment of the students is key to both the delivery of the teaching and to the attitude of the student body even if the *Grande École* is not a top tier school such as HEC. They make an interesting observation; that within their international environment and pedagogical approach, students' complaints typically refer to difficulties with others, which they presume is a result of personality rather than cultural difference. This important observation is critical to the discussion of the data in the present case where the findings demonstrate that the opposite is true of the students' presumptions of others. They also comment that success in their international environment is dependent on the personality of the individuals concerned but, again, offer little evidence for this observation. If we reflect on Hofstede's (2003) dimensions of culture, where France would be considered as an individualistic culture, the emphasis on individual personality is not surprising, nor is the link with success and achievement. Their presentation of a tabled overview of the differences between UK and French education is reproduced below:

**Table 3: Differences in approaches to teaching and learning, adapted from Darricotte and McColl (2008:50)**

	Classical French	Pure Case Method e.g.: Harvard	Classical UK system
System	Competitive examination Elitist Cartesian Low failure rates	High failure rates in programme Competitive culture within school	Relatively competitive entrance based on A levels
Teacher	A 'font' of knowledge Lectures No course book Distributes handouts	Encourages participation Animator pushes students to do analysis and find alternative	Teacher is an expert Lecture about points which interest him/or key elements Discussions in tutorials/small

	Provides a 'correction Teacher takes responsibility	solutions Uses a course book as a base Uses inductive method of learning Forces students to defend solutions	groups Expects students to learn outside of classroom
Student	Takes notes Learns after lecture Does exercise after class Student follows teacher Student is passive Student expects right answer	Student read theory and reads case and analyses case (including in a group before class) Student takes responsibility for the process	Student responsible for own learning Student expected to read around topic Student expected to be knowledgeable Student expected to synthesise theory

Whilst the representation of difference portrayed above is a useful guide, it must be remembered that it is not evidence based but rather it is offered, Darricotte and McColl state, as a guide for students and is based on their own experiences and observations (2008). They also make some additional supportive comments such as the typical approach of a French student to interactive sessions. This would be that they have not had their money's worth, and that the tutor does not know their subject. In addition, they comment on other cultural challenges such as the difficulties that French students have with being silent in class. These comments may be viewed as generalisations and there is limited literature on approaches to pedagogy in the *GEs* which illustrates a gap for further exploration in the context of the joint degree experience. Chapter Four and more specifically Chapter Five will explore these differences in teaching and learning approach in more detail as there are implications for joint degrees and the students' experience of such programmes.

## ***6. Concluding Comments***

This chapter has attempted to categorise the existing work in terms of the dimensions of international education as themes that will form the framework for the discussion of the findings. These themes are; international student mobility; students' cultural interactions and issues around intercultural communication; issues relating to country mobility and identity; issues relating to students' relationality; and students' *way* of learning within the pedagogical approaches of the UK and France. Whilst it is recognised that these themes present a challenge in terms of the extremely broad framework of analysis which the thesis needs to address, the justification is that the nature of the research questions requires contextualisation through these themes and on which it will draw.

A review of existing work in the field has identified that there is a need to consider the link with these dimensions and the student experience of international higher education under the auspices of the joint degree: that is, students' experience of mobility; cultural interactions; students' relationality and the *way* students learn. In addition there is need for the broadness of the discussion in order to address the conceptuality of the research in that it seeks to address ethical questions with regard to the students' experience of international higher education within the context of it being a meaningful educational activity.

The existing work in the field highlights this need for an ethical dimension in international higher education as well as the need for transparency. Davies (2009) highlighted that second cycle programmes are the most likely focus for international

activity, thus again underlining the place for this research on the experience of second cycle programmes within the EHEA. The chapter also identified the need for further analysis of international mobility at the individual level in order, as Gargano (2009) states, to bring the students' negotiations into view and to explore the "lived reality" of international higher education or "transnational social spaces", as Gargano refers to them.

This work goes further in structuring and theming the existing work on internationality and the experiences of international students as it offers an analysis of the experience in more than one context and more than one country. It enhances the existing experience discourse because of the two different international contexts. It also takes the existing work further by considering the relationship of mobility with the policy context outlined by the EU policy makers, which Jamsvi (2012) has analysed as having a mutuality context to the discourse. The existing discussions of mobility do not offer such an insight into the reality of individuals' experience of the policy agendas, which drive the engagement with international activity on the part of higher education institutions. In addition, from the discussion in this chapter we can see the importance of developing an understanding and recognition of the learner experience and mode of learning, *modus discendi*, as different from the teaching process, the *modus docendi*, which was identified from the literature as having the potential for difference in different national contexts. Whilst there have been other studies carried out on joint degrees, these have either been limited to the institutions involved: they have not explored the wider context or are focussed on the international context in which joint degrees are offered. Similarly, work such as Trahar's (2011), whilst important because of the recognition of the centrality of students' cultural

backgrounds to the learning experience, does not consider this in the context of education in two countries where the learning process is taking place in more than one culture. The existing literature confirms the need for this further exploration of experience of international higher education in order to understand the complexities of that experience.



## **CHAPTER THREE- THE CASE STUDY APPROACH, THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### ***1. Introduction***

The aim of this chapter is to explore in further depth the rationale for the research and link the aims and research questions to the research approach, design and theoretical framework. The research approach is through the use of case study method. This approach involves the in-depth exploration of the experience of jointly delivered international programmes of study which contributes to the existing field of knowledge on international higher education, or, as Gargano (2009) expresses it, the “lived reality of transnational social spaces”. The value of this research lies in the fact that it offers a case example through a constructivist interpretation of the experience of joint degrees. The research seeks to explore how the experience of studying in two countries develops students’ intercultural understanding and awareness, and whether the experience of different approaches to teaching and learning in different countries adds anything to the educational process. The rationale for the research is the need to explore and develop an in-depth understanding of the experience of international higher education, particularly second cycle or Masters programmes of study, thus addressing the gaps identified in the existing work, as highlighted in Chapter Two. Gargano (2009) talks of the need to bring the student negotiations in international education into view and this is an important aspect of this work. Further, developing an understanding of the experience of such international programmes, aids in assessing some of the ambitious claims made about the internationalisation of higher education, as well as the claims made by proponents of the knowledge economy.

Although the research project is centred around a case study of a set of joint Masters programmes, the particular focus for much of the data collection was a Masters programme in International Marketing Communications that has been operating for the past five years. Through a case approach therefore, this research attempts to understand the issues from the student's perspective and thus dimensions of international higher education. It offers an original contribution to the field, building on the existing frameworks for the discussion of international higher education offered by, amongst others, Altbach and Teichler (2001); Altbach and Knight (2007); de Wit(2002); Teichler(2004). The case, whilst bounded to the two institutions involved, does permit insights into the experience of joint degrees from which generalisations about international higher education may be made.

## ***2. Aim of the Case Study and Research Questions***

The aim of this research is to consider the dimensions of international higher education under the umbrella of a joint degree that is delivered in two countries, the UK and France. The case study provides a rich portrayal of the educational and cultural experiences of postgraduate students on joint degrees which will inform practice and add to the knowledge in the existing field. Further, the research will explore the experience of undertaking a postgraduate course involving European student mobility and will bring into view the implications of students' mobility as postgraduate students for contextualising their personal development in educational and cultural terms. The research will consider whether there is a development of students' understanding of other cultures as a result of their interactions with each

other in a cultural context, such as the need to negotiate with each other as a result of living in two countries and learning in two different education systems. A further aim is to consider students' relationality with each other and the *way* they learn so that their negotiations and their consequences are given a voice. The research also compares the experience of teaching and learning in the English institution and in the French institution.

In order to address these aims the following questions were posed:

- a) How does the experience of education on joint degrees contribute to intercultural learning?
- b) What are the different approaches to teaching and learning in each institution?
- c) How does classroom interaction permit or further the intercultural understanding or awareness of students participating in joint degrees?

Further sub-questions that have also been investigated are:

- (i) What if anything does the experience of studying in two countries add to the educational process?
- (ii) Do postgraduate dual and joint degrees address the internationalisation ethos advocated by supranational policy making bodies?

These questions pose some important focal points for exploring both students' negotiations and the dimensions of international higher education under the umbrella of the joint degree experience.

### ***3. The Research Design***

This section provides a justification for the case study approach and the research design used for the exploration of these issues. It was decided that the approach to the collection of data was suitable to be framed as a case study. This is quite a common research approach in the field of higher education (Simons, 2009). The features of case studies have been explored in-depth by authors such as Cresswell (1998); Ragin(1992); Simons (2009); Stake (1995) and Yin (1994, 2009): they are therefore not expanded on here. However, the common features highlighted by these authors can be seen in this research, such as the need to explore multiple perspectives in order to establish a picture of a particular case. Simons' defines a case study as being:

...an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life' context. It is research based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led. The purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic (as in a thesis), programme, policy, institution or system to generate knowledge and/or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action (Simons 2009:21).

This definition of a case study illustrates the appropriateness of the research approach used because of the need to focus on an exploration of the 'lived reality' of the experience of joint degrees, thus fitting the 'real life context' referred to above by Simons. In addition it is worth noting that Simons presents a strong argument that

case studies can still generate knowledge through the understanding of a specific case. This is an important consideration in terms of the findings of this case and the contribution to the field of knowledge that it offers.

In terms of other aspects that led to the case study approach being appropriate it was evident that the need to explore the 'lived reality' requires an in-depth exploration of the experience of international higher education. A 'case' of joint degrees was identified that offered ease of access and was bounded to the example of two higher education institutions. It was an example of postgraduate course collaboration that involves study in two countries as well as students' mobility. The international component of the student body at the selected London institution, having the highest number of international students of any post-92 institution (6385 overseas students, HESA 2008/9) and the most international students in a Business School in the UK, also made the examination of this case an appropriate one. It was therefore a 'bounded system' by time, place and participants. In other words, it is the most appropriate approach to address the research questions posed as it enabled the 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) needed to explore the experience of joint degrees.

For the research design it was decided to use more than one method for collection of the data in order to provide the "in-depth case picture". (Cresswell, 1998:64) The use of a mixed method research design was chosen in order to address some of the limitations of the case study approach to research, particularly the validity of the data and the issue of subjectivity on the part of the researcher (Simons, 2009), as well as the necessity of providing a "rich portrayal of a single setting to inform practice, establish the value of the case and/or to add to knowledge of a specific topic"

(2009:24). In addition the use of multiple sources of data can be seen as a strength of the research design as it enables triangulation of the data which is particularly important in order to develop a ‘thick description’ of the experience of joint degrees.

The context of the case is described in detail in Chapter One. The sources of data were: 52 semi-structured interviews with students and staff; observation of the students, both inside the classroom during their time at the UK institution<sup>20</sup> as well as outside the classroom but still within the institutional environment; a questionnaire (n=81) which focused on students’ cultural awareness and the different teaching and learning approaches of each institution (n=64 for the teaching and learning questions); and, finally, policy documents on institutional collaborative provision audits from the QAA and historical texts on French culture.

When considering the research aim and research questions, it was clear that the research paradigm would involve a constructivist interpretative approach so there was a need for a qualitative aspect to the research design in order to add to the richness of the description of the case. This required the use of interviews, both individual and group, in order to provide the depth of understanding needed in the exploration of the student experience. The observation of students in their learning environment was also considered important in order to provide a more complete understanding of the case. In addition, in order to deepen that understanding, the questionnaire aided in providing some descriptive statistics and the opportunity to address the validity of the findings, which was particularly important given the qualitative aspect to the cultural context referred to below.

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<sup>20</sup>Only a few observations took place in France due to difficulties in access

*The timetable for the data collection.*

**Table 4 – Timetable of data collection points**

	<b>UK</b>	<b>Data collected in UK</b>	<b>Data collected in France</b>
<b>2006</b>	Pilot interviews	Yes	No
<b>2007</b>	Questionnaire piloted	Yes	No
<b>During 2008</b>		Student and Staff Interviews	Student and Staff Interviews
<b>During 2008</b>		Participant Observation of classes every two weeks for a semester and informal observations of interactions	Participant Observation on four separate occasions of classrooms and social events
<b>2008 and 2009</b>		Staff Interviews	Questionnaires distributed

The first phase of the research consisted of: pilot individual interviews with the first cohort of students on the International Marketing Communications course, group interviews with the second cohort of marketing students in the UK, pilot questionnaires issued towards the end of the second cohort's period in the UK with a small group from the Marketing and the Tourism courses, as well as an analysis of the students' biographical data.

The second phase of the research began with the third cohort of students for International Marketing Communications. Students were observed in classes in London once every one or two weeks during a three hour research methods class for the whole semester. Four observation periods of a full day were also undertaken at the French institution. Field notes were also kept on staff interactions with the students and observations of their interactions with each other, as well as some of the critical

incidents. The observations, carried out at both the institutions, as the research sites, included observations of the locations, teaching facilities, libraries and administrative procedures as well as classroom observations.

Additional data was collected at the beginning of the Autumn 2008 term in the UK from 14 semi-structured interviews conducted in the UK institution with the sample selected from all the marketing students. Individual interviews were also carried out in France with those students from the Tourism and Marketing courses who were available to be interviewed. This did not include all the students as some had already travelled to their home country from the French institution. Some students were also interviewed during the summer when they returned to the UK for their dissertation supervision. The finance students were interviewed as a group and as a consequence of their unwillingness to be interviewed individually, during their semester in the UK – they did not attend individually arranged sessions. The questionnaire was issued towards the end of term in France in 2008 and 2009.

Institutional data was collected through individual interviews, conducted in France and England, with the course leaders, lecturers and administrators from both the English and French institutions, variously in France and England. Interviewing staff in these different roles, as well as students, allowed for triangulation of the accounts of similar issues and incidents.

### ***Piloting, testing and sampling***

The first step in this research process was to hold 14 pilot semi-structured interviews. Following an analysis of the transcripts from these interviews, the main focus for the

research, and its various themes, was identified. This informed the development of the questionnaire and interview topic guide. As discussed below, the questionnaire was further developed using both Deardorff's intercultural competence inventory model (2006), as the basis for the questions on cultural awareness, and a questionnaire developed by myself previously for research on the international student experience of teaching and learning in the UK (Bamford *et al*, 2003, 2006). Two iterations were piloted with students from the Tourism and Marketing joint degrees during their semester in the UK in order to refine the questions. In terms of the approach to sampling for the questionnaire, all students on the Marketing course were issued with the questionnaire, representing a population sample over two years.

With regard to the interviews, all the students on the Tourism course were interviewed individually. For the Finance course, all the students were invited to join a focus group although only eight (out of 17) attended. For the interviews for the Marketing course, convenience sampling was used (Bryman and Bell, 2007). This was largely due to the availability of the students as many did not return to the UK after their semester in France, and in France the students, who were a mixture of French and international students, left the institution as soon as they finished their exams. There were considerable barriers to access in France and whilst there were interviews carried out in France, they were on the whole much shorter with student interviewees being less forthcoming in the French environment with their responses. This could have been due to a matter of timing with students being eager to leave the institution after their studies. The staff interviews in France were similar in format and timing to the staff interviews in the UK. All the interviews were carried out in English as the lingua franca of the course and in order to minimise linguistic bias. Given the large number

of first languages represented by the students, interviewing all students in their native language would clearly have been impossible. The most commonly shared language was English and therefore interviewing everyone in English was the only practicable way to limit linguistic bias in terms of the competence of different linguistic groups to articulate their thoughts in the interview. However, this inevitably meant that the interviewees whose first language was English had an advantage over the others in terms of getting their thoughts across.

### *The questionnaire*

As stated above a questionnaire was issued in France towards the end of the semester, for two consecutive years. The questionnaire permitted students to respond in an anonymous way, thus strengthening the interview data findings. The questionnaire items on intercultural awareness were taken from the list of intercultural competences as identified by Deardorff (2006) in her research on how intercultural competences can be defined as stated above. The teaching and learning items were based on a previously used research instrument. The questionnaire for this study did not repeat every item listed by Deardorff, which might be seen as a weakness in terms of the findings, but focused on items identifying the students' views of their intercultural awareness. In addition, it was decided that the research instrument should not be overly long in order to make sure of an adequate response rate. The questionnaire is included in Appendix 2.

The analysis of the findings from the questionnaire is presented in Chapters Five and Six of the thesis. Much of the data generated from the questionnaire provided

descriptive statistics. The rating statistics demonstrate student preferences, whereas the findings from the open ended questions, interviews and observations address many of the issues raised by the research questions which required a dialogical and hermeneutic approach. The questionnaire provided a statistical picture of the case, for example, it facilitated the building of a picture of the differences in teaching and learning in each institution, as well as students' reflection on their intercultural awareness. In addition the teaching and learning questions were important in providing a detailed comparison of the experience of the differences between the UK and the French higher education institution. The findings of this aspect of the questionnaire and the interviews are discussed in Chapter Five.

### ***Participant observer***

As part of the mixed methods approach to data collection the researcher acted as a participant observer and gained the informed consent of the students to participate in their classroom activities and observe and note their interactions, both in their social groups and as students in both the institutions on the Marketing course. Drawings of the classroom environments were made and field notes were taken during class every two weeks in the UK and after critical incidents and conversations with students about their experiences. There were four days of observation of classes and some social activities during the Marketing students' sojourn in France. This observational data aided the interpretations of the interview data. .

It is argued that observation provides an important and additional data source when trying to provide a rich description of experience. It is certainly true that sole reliance

(and this is supported by Alvesson, (2003)) on interview-generated data that is framed in an artificial environment and possibly an environment of distance may not reflect a true engagement with the interviewee and therefore of their experience. This may be the case where there may be cultural and behavioural protocols which restrict responses. Observations therefore offer an additional dimension to the data. In this case however, due to issues with regard to access in the French education institution (and difficulties in spending a semester overseas), more observations took place in the UK.

However, the evidence from observations is cited relatively rarely as direct evidence in the text of the thesis - as the interpretation drawn from interviews told the story just as well. Examples of the stories and some of the critical incidents are provided in the vignettes (see Appendix 1) which were constructed from field notes. The vignettes illustrate some of the critical incidents drawn from this observational data. The observations aided in garnering a richer picture of the case: the deep and personal relationships and friendships that developed were witnessed in France, the group conflicts and critical incidents were observed, as well the difficulties in negotiating the practical and administrative dimensions of border crossing, such as visa applications for France, were also witnessed.

As the focus for the research is on developing an understanding of joint degrees from the individuals' perspective, the observational data aided the researcher presenting an informed position and aided in triangulation of the data. It enhanced the empirical account in providing an objective narrative of the students' experiences in the first semester and, to a lesser extent, the second semester, by attempting to provide a more complete picture of the students' interactions with each other and the institutions.

It is also recognised that closeness to the subjects and the engagement in participant observational data could lead to bias in the findings. However, an acknowledgement is made of this observation and that data collection and analysis may be subject to bias in varying degrees. There needs to be a reflective approach to both the collecting and analysis of such data but the richness of the understanding of the case was enhanced by the observational data.

### *The interviews*

The use of interviews is perhaps the most obvious data collection method where the research is framed in a constructivist paradigm because of the need to explore and understand the individual's experience. This underlined by Schwandt's (1994) emphasis that constructivism is the need to understand the actor's definition of the situation. Although the research design is not an ethnography, there is some reliance on Geertz' (1973) approach to understanding culture, which is so central to the experience of international higher education. This interpretive method is elaborated on by Schwandt:

Conceiving of an activity of interpretation in terms of an ontological condition (i.e., as a fundamental grounds of our being-in-the-world) rather than as methodological device is what puts the inquirer on the same plane of understanding, so to speak, as those he or she inquires into. To understand through interpretation is to accept a particular model or way of being or way of life (1994:122).

The interview method is fundamental in seeking to understand whether there is a transformative process in international higher education, and to understanding the 'lived' experience'. There is a need to focus on understanding the individuals'

experience not only from the interviewer perspective but also from that of the interviewee. This methodology provides an analysis on two levels: for assessing whether the students develop an understanding of each other, and for the researcher to develop an understanding through dialogue with students and with those involved in the institution. We construct our knowledge against “a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language, and so forth” (Schwandt, 2003:307).

In establishing the importance of the use of interviews in case study research, Simons (2009) presents an argument for the increasing need to focus on the qualitative approach to research design in case studies. In addition, the importance of a qualitative approach in cross-cultural research is underlined by Shah (2004). The need to provide a rich description of the case is justified through both these considerations. However the difficulties in the use of interviews alone are addressed in Shah’s (2004) work. This is particularly true where there is a focus on culture as an aspect of the research:

The research approach is changing from ‘researching *upon* the other- *the insignificant deviant*’, to ‘researching *with* the *significant different*’, to add to existing knowledge. This has epistemological implications, and demands a reconsideration of the participants’ (the researcher and the researched) subjectivities, and the subsequent interplay with data collection and making meaning, especially in face-to-face interaction (2004:549-550).

This statement underlines the need for a dialogical approach to the analysis of data. In other words, an understanding of international higher education is gained through an interpretative exploration of the data on the experience; the reader engages with it so that an understanding of the experience may be achieved, an understanding of the ‘lived reality’ of the students in this educational space.

The use of semi-structured and open interviewing and observations are common data collection methods in education (Alvesson, 2003; Silverman, 2006; Tinker and Amstrong, 2008; Wengraf, 2001). As the underlying purpose to the interviews was to establish the 'lived experience', (Silverman 2006:122), they were carried out with students at the beginning and end of their course, and interviews were carried out with relevant staff at various points during the academic year. For most of the students the end of course interviews meant that they were interviewed immediately after the end of the term in France (as many travelled to their countries of origin over the summer) or when they submitted their dissertation which was 12 months from the start of their course.

### *A cross-cultural approach*

In considering the approach to the interviews, it was noted that the cultural context is an important consideration as they involved a cross-cultural communication. Shah (2004) highlights that "cross-cultural research is needed for enhanced understanding of multi-ethnic and cross-cultural educational sites in national and international contexts" (2004:551). The issue of culture is important, not just to the subject of the research but also to the situational aspects of the data collection itself, for example, the difference in culture between the interviewer and interviewee. Cultural difference in terms of rules and norms of behaviour also needs to be factored in when considering the analysis of the interview responses. If we apply Hofstede's (2003) power distance rating, we could observe that high power distance cultures may display a reserved behaviour in the interview situation. In the situational context for this case, this was an important consideration for the interviewer in terms of the power relations between

the interviewer and the interviewee, as the researcher worked for one of the institutions. Due to the need for a rich description with regard to exploring questions of culture, it was decided that whilst the interview style was semi-structured, it should also have a dialogical approach to the interview format whenever possible in order to address any issues of hierarchy which could restrict the ability to establish the 'lived reality' of the experience. Some authority for this is given in Trahar's (2011) narrative approach to data collection in the international higher education environment where each side shares their stories. Whilst a narrative approach was not taken, a dialogical approach<sup>21</sup> was used in interviews in order to encourage students' responses and to avoid, as much as possible, the insider/outsider positioning referred to by Shah (2004).

***Limitations: The closeness of the researcher and the need for reflexivity***

The benefits of having a close relationship with those who are researched are well documented. An example of such methods in the field of higher education is offered by Turner (2006), who was able to offer an in-depth understanding of her Chinese students' experience that simply would not have been possible if she had not had a close involvement with the participants.

The view was taken here that the data collection was informed and enriched by the 'closeness' (Alvesson 2003) of the researcher to the case. This 'closeness', due to the

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<sup>21</sup>By this it is meant that whilst there were guiding questions and topics raised, the interviewer tried to engage the interviewee in a more conversational style in order to avoid or limit the possible power/distance relationship dynamic.

researcher's familiarity with the context and the students, allowed a more in-depth and rich perspective of the experiences of study on joint masters programmes. It was acknowledged in Chapter One this may have created a bias in the research and may therefore also be regarded as limiting for the findings of this research as the researcher was known to the subjects on both research sites.

The 'closeness' was due to the fact that the researcher was involved with the students as coordinator for international students in the department in which the courses were located in the London institution and was also the institutional coordinator for the link with the French institution. The involvement of the researcher in both institutions provided ease of access and the opportunity to develop a rich understanding of the institutional perspective in the case as well as of the course experience. It facilitated an in-depth picture of the case at individual and institutional level that would not have been possible as an 'outsider': it allowed the researcher to witness the effects of an internationalisation policy being implemented. However, although it is acknowledged that there may have been a possible effect on the collection and analysis of the data due to the researcher's 'closeness' to the subjects, the benefits of that 'closeness' far outweighed the possible negative effects. This 'closeness' could be considered as the researcher drawing on 'quasi-ethnographic methods' (Bamford, 2008) as a valid data-capturing aspect of this case study. Although, the research methodology may be regarded as limiting due to that closeness, the literature on international students' experience in the UK demonstrates that the approach taken is not unusual, as is particularly evident in the work of Turner (2009); Montgomery (2010) and Trahar (2011).

Despite this reference to ethnography, a distinction is made between a case study approach and an ethnography based on the position taken by Cresswell (1998) on the differences between the two. Cresswell (1998) clearly argues that there are fundamental differences between a case study and an ethnography, although confusion can arise because of the apparent overlap. Despite the apparent overlap in research approaches, Simons (2009) talks of an ethnography being a method for data collection in a case study, Cresswell's (1998) position is followed here and a distinction is drawn on the basis that an ethnography is the examination of a cultural system whereas, in a case study, a bounded system is examined, although quasi-ethnographic methods were drawn on such as observations in order to enhance the understanding of the experience. The literature reflects the growing popularity and use of ethnographic techniques to explore questions of culture and language in education (Alvesson, 2003; Heath and Street, 2008) but the preference here is to take the position that a case study may draw on quasi-ethnographic methods, such as acting as a participant observer, as an aspect of the data collection methods.

### ***The case study as applied research***

In considering a justification for the research design, attention was also given to the role of research in higher education. The methodology used in this case study centres around an applied research approach which takes on board the nature of education in the cross-cultural context and the meaning of education for persons and personal development which results from it. As Pring (2004) states, it is:

an attempt to make sense of the activities, policies and institutions which, through the organization of learning, help to transform the capacities of people to live a fuller and more distinctly human life (2004:17).

Pring goes further in providing a focus for some key concepts in education in relation to the person and personal development which is the basis for one of the research questions that the thesis seeks to address: namely, whether the process of studying in two countries adds to the educational process of a postgraduate degree. Pring provides a clear and succinct description of the educational process:

Education nurtures the distinctly human qualities and capacities, particularly those concerned with knowledge and understanding ...the concept of person presupposes a form of consciousness, a capacity to experience the world, not merely to interact physically with it. That consciousness is shaped by different forms of understanding. These can be ever more refined through learning. Indeed, education aims to introduce the growing mind to forms of understanding which transform and make more intelligible one's view of the world...one aspect of that understanding of the world is the recognition of other people as persons - that is as centres of consciousness in their own right with the capacity to think, to feel and to experience in the light of those thoughts...Third, a person with such understandings has the capacity to relate to other persons in a distinctive way – not only as one physical object to another but as one centre of consciousness to another. Persons share a world of meanings, not just a physical world of space and time (2004:18).

This quotation underlines the importance of understanding human action in the world as part of the educational process, which is relevant to the international higher education process in this case.

Whilst this research is not policy directed, it is intended to provide a glimpse of the experience of a joint degree through a case study example of an area of EU educational policy, namely the encouragement of across-country higher educational collaborations and student mobility within the European Higher Education Area and

wider. Much of the inspiration for the design of the qualitative aspects to this project can be attributed to the research that Alexander (2000) carried out into culture and pedagogy. Through this case study we are given a glimpse into the experience of international higher education for the individuals involved. It raises issues with regard to higher education institutional policy initiatives which involve collaboration in more than one country or, in other words, the impact of crossing borders. This aspect is also addressed in the research questions.

### *The data collected for the case*

A total of 52 semi-structured interviews were carried out across all courses: this included a focus group interview with the students on the Finance course and interviews with 10 practitioners. In addition, 81 responses were received from a total of 178 questionnaires (45.5%) that were issued at the same time for three consecutive years to students on the largest Masters course, that of the International Marketing Communications. However, the questionnaire analysis has only focused on the 64 responses from the academic years 2007/8 (year 1 of the data cycle) and 2008/9 (year 2 of the data cycle) where n=64 from a possible 108. Chapter Five explores differences in teaching and learning, and presents an analysis of those 64 responses in connection with these issues. It was decided not to include the third year of the responses (n=17), as there were insufficient responses to be meaningful from that group of students and due to the changes that were made to the Marketing course with regard to the pedagogical approach – a residential was introduced at the start of term in the UK in order to encourage the students' intercultural awareness and provide a space for reflection. In addition free French classes were offered in the UK, although

most students dropped out after six weeks. These additional aspects to the curriculum were considered as creating an intervention where the data on teaching and learning could not be considered to have been carried out under the same conditions as years 1 and 2 of the data collection cycle. The analysis of the quantitative data was done using Excel, not only because it was the most straightforward software tool for the mainly frequency data, but also because Survey Monkey was used for collecting the responses in year two of the data cycle. The approach to the analysis of the interview data is discussed in the following section.

### *A thematic analysis of the qualitative data*

The approach to qualitative data analysis was carried out through a thematic analysis of the data. A thematic analysis of data requires a familiarisation with the data which generates codes and themes from which the dataset can be reviewed and a complex picture of the case can be built, (Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor, 2003; Rapley, 2011). This approach was found to be the most appropriate method for establishing a rich description and developing an understanding of the students' experiences on the joint degree. In terms of the data in this case, there were two initial strands for the analysis, that of culture and of pedagogy around which the research questions were based. These two strands form the focus for the analysis and stem from Alexander's (2000) work on these two issues. Alexander's work provides a justification for looking at these two aspects within one case as this is the way that international higher education touches those that experience it. These strands generated further focused themes for analysis which were broken down into sub-themes, for example, stereotypical references which were analysed under the theme of culture.

These themes were applied within a framework of a thematic analysis of the transcripts of the interviews and the observational field notes. The interview transcripts were systematically analysed by reading and re-reading up to four times in order to draw out themes and establish a narrative for the case (Simons 2009). The transcripts were then analysed through using the themes and a matrix was drawn up so that the interview responses could be categorised within matrix for ease of access and to enable a picture of the responses to be created. The full matrix for the analysis of the end of teaching interviews is included in Appendix 4 but the matrix below represents an example of how the initial themes were constructed:

Themes	Nationality	Intercultural Awareness	Cultural Encounter	Culture Shock	Stereotypical Reference	Cultural category	Personal Development	Teaching and Learning	Reference to UK Reference to France
Case A									
Case B									
Case C									

The data from the interviews for the second semester were coded using these themes, which, it should be noted, were also reflected in the quantitative data. The themes arose from the pilot interviews, the questionnaire data, repetition, the literature and relevant theory.

#### ***4. The Theoretical Framework***

The thesis has two main threads in terms of its exploration of the issues. One explores aspects of the teaching and learning in the UK and France; the other seeks to explore individuals' cultural interactions in the context of joint degrees. As institutions seek to offer 'relevant' higher education experiences for students, arguments justifying the

need for contemporary and engaging perspectives to the design of the curriculum in higher education have been developed by Barnett and Coate (2005), who outline that responsibilities fall on tutors and students, where those who design curricula are considering the student experience, as “curriculum is in part a *curriculum-in-action* and therefore a curriculum design is itself *design-in-action*.” (2005:45). Whilst the focus for this research is not on the curriculum design the point made with regard to the student experience enriching and informing the curriculum is fundamental. I argue that the learning on joint degrees is informed by the experience of it and the relationality between the students in conjunction with their mobility across national boundaries and institutions is the basis for their cultural learning.

The student experience is an important aspect of the development of a ‘culture of mobility’ and more particularly of the joint degree itself, particularly given the emphasis on graduate employability and skills development. Barnett and Coat (2005) outline three aspects for consideration for higher education curricula in a changing world. They conceptualise relevant curricula in contemporary higher education as students engaging with curricula through, *knowing, acting and being*. All three concepts focus on the student engagement with the curricula, which informs that curricula. The first of these is *student knowing*, meaning students’ personal engagement with knowledge; the second is the *students’ acting*, where it is the students’ own actions that are important. This in turn points to a more employability-orientated curriculum: this is represented here as international mobility which is an important dimension to the internationality of the programmes, allowing for the development of cultural fluencies. Finally, there is a need to consider the students’ *being* in higher education where the development of self-awareness and self-

confidence are key aspects of developing students as “resilient and critical selves”, (2005:48). They comment that there is an emphasis on the ‘self’ in a changing world. The joint degrees experience places this emphasis on the self.

Montgomery (2010) alludes to notions of students’ *being* in higher education in her discourse on understanding the international student experience of UK higher education. The use of a constructivist approach to students’ realities and negotiations permitted this exploration and the development of an understanding of the importance of cultural background and cultural awareness within the international curriculum.

The issue of *being* in international higher education is addressed here briefly in order to establish and link the theoretical basis for such considerations. Barnett and Coate (2005) emphasise the importance of the consideration of students’ *being* as an aspect of the curriculum development in higher education but the issue of *being* is given further attention here as a consequence of the need to consider the context of the students’ relationality with each other in international higher education. Students’ relationality is part of their mode of learning, (*modus discendi*). This relationality in international higher education can be defined as the students *being* in relation to each other in the classroom, their dependence on each other, their interactions with the institutions and the culture in which they are studying, which determines their *modus discendi*.

Further, as Barnett (2007) suggests, if genuine higher education is a matter of self-travel and not just intellectual travel, and he talks of educational voyages which cause ontological discomfort, then students’ relationality is an integral part of the

international higher education process. A students' higher education voyage incorporates their *being* in higher education as part of the educational process, and this requires the signification of 'others' (Levinas, 2006). This is particularly demonstrated in the use of group work. When considering ethical questions with regard to the data it is important not to confuse those ethical concerns with the ontological discomfort that is frequently involved as a result of a sojourn in another country and interacting with others from different cultural backgrounds. If the students' *modus discendi* is dependent on *being* in relation to others, ontological discomfort is a likely result. In addition, the *modus discendi* of those experiencing international higher education informs the *modus docendi* of those with responsibility for the delivery of that education.

This perspective was initially developed through an analysis of existing work in the field and through framing the international education experience within an idea of differentiating the *modus docendi* and *modus discendi* in international education. This terminology was used to permit an analysis of the students' teaching and learning experiences as well as framing their experience with ideas of a personal engagement with the curriculum, through *knowing, acting and being* as promulgated by Barnett and Coate (2005:60). In other words, the students' *way* of learning and students' relationality with 'the other' (Levinas, 2006) centres around ideas of 'becoming a student', adapted from Nicholas Bamford's (2010) notions of becoming a person. This engagement with 'the others' is integral to the international higher education process. The *modus discendi* is differentiated in order underline and emphasise how learning is related to the experience of a joint degree. However, the perspective of the *modus docendi*, also needs consideration as this is how students receive their teaching

and learning in each institution. It aids the work in going further in terms of addressing the need to consider the students' perspective of international higher education, incorporating through an understanding of their *modus discendi*, in joint degrees, the approach that institutions take to teaching and learning, as well as further developing international higher education as a meaningful activity for those receiving it. This allows for some systemic analysis of the learning framework in international higher education, as referred to by Kehm and Teichler (2007). In other words, on joint degrees in order to achieve the ontological discomfort referred to by Barnett (2007), the experience must necessarily generate self-reflection and awareness which is in relation to others (Levinas 2006; Bamford, D. N., 2010).

However, the intention of the thesis is not to explore ontological meaningfulness in higher education but to consider whether joint degrees can be considered as a meaningful activity in relation to the experience of international higher education.

Reference has been made to notions of ontological discomfort as part of the international higher education experience in the context of cultural engagement.

It is worth noting that there is some alignment of the present research aims with those of Alexander (2000:32), in terms a "commitment to the pursuit of understanding, the improvement of policy and the amelioration of practice". Although the methodological dimensions, which Alexander provides for policy directed international comparative study, cannot be aligned with the present project, his linking of the macro position with the micro, together with the need to understand the human face of education rather than purely national constructs, are all important for the amelioration of practice. He describes his own project as having an 'eclectic' paradigmatic basis as it employs both quantitative and qualitative methods that are not

driven by a policy study. Similarities can be drawn with the research being undertaken here but it should be noted that the focus for Alexander's extensive research was a comparative of primary education and the present study is a case study of international higher education. However the importance of the link between national culture and pedagogy established by Alexander is relied on here and applied in the field of higher education thus seeking to distinguish this work from others looking at the experience of the international classroom.

The students experience differences between two nationally developed approaches to teaching and learning, both with each other and also with the countries they are living in. The institutions have to adjust to each other and develop effective monitoring in order to provide a coherent experience and programme of study and the students have to make cultural adjustments on different levels in relation to each other, the country in which they are studying, and their host institution. The project is ambitious in terms of attempting to consider all these issues and understand the *way* the experience of so many layers of difference becomes part of the learning process. However, a rich description is offered through this case study. The depth of cultural interaction is what determines the reality for all the participants and therefore the research attempts to engage with the data at that level.

In seeking to present a narrative of understanding of the experience of joint degrees, this work is framed within a constructivist paradigm. Schwandt (1994) confirms that the constructivist approach attempts to understand the 'lived experience' of those living in the world. This is entirely in keeping with the present work. Schwandt states that:

The constructivist or interpretivist believes that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it. The inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors. To prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings; it is to offer the inquirer's construction of the constructions of the actors one studies (1994:118).

The interpretation of the individuals' experience and of the researcher's interaction with their meanings is therefore as important as the meaning given to the experience by individuals. The construction of meanings is offered here as a case study of the experience of international higher education. The importance of this theoretical approach for this work is underlined by Schwandt's reinforcement that the concern of the interpretivist is on knowing and being and not the method which, again, is what this research is seeking to explore.

### ***The importance of students' relationality in the classroom for international higher education***

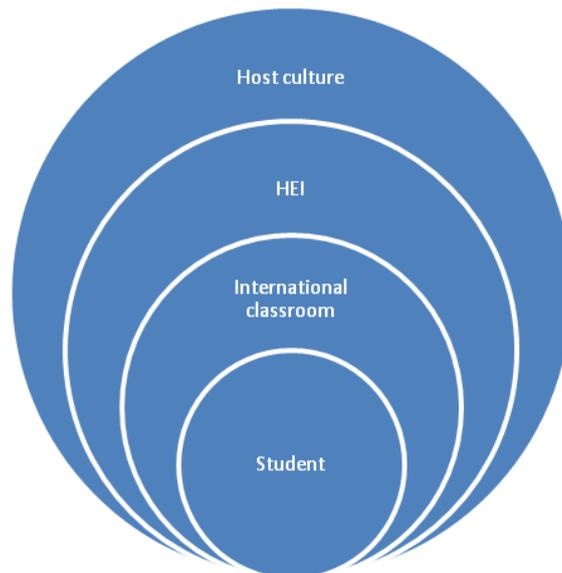
It appears from a review of the literature that questions with regard to individuals' *being* in the international higher education environment are often not addressed. Any consideration of the nature of higher education raises questions with regard to the ethical dimensions of initiatives, such as joint degrees, as defined in part by Altbach and Teichler (2001). The ethical dimensions are considered in more detail below.

In returning to the link between the students' relationality, culture and pedagogy reference is made to again to Alexander (2000) who, when acknowledging that there are standard educational norms, states that:

...no decision, or action which one observes in a particular classroom, and no educational policy, can be properly understood except by reference to the web of inherited ideas and values, habits and customs, institutions and world views which make one country, or one region, or one group, distinct from another (2000:5).

The engagement of the students with international higher education is viewed in the context of culture, as outlined by Alexander above, and thus the students' relationality within the context of this structure of interaction, so this context is applied at different levels of engagement.

***Figure 1: Diagram of student interactions and within a higher education environment***



This representation of students' engagement was first provided in Chapter One but is repeated here in order to reinforce the perspective of their relationality on a number of levels. The engagement with the different bodies in the learning environment underlines the importance of an ethical standpoint as students are required to engage

in learning activity within a sphere of ever-increasing levels of relationship and interaction with others.

One of the research questions seeks to explore whether joint degrees address the internationalisation ethos advocated by supranational bodies and we have highlighted that the research seeks to understand such questions at the individual level. Whilst the research seeks to address certain questions with regard to the experience of international higher education, there are broader questions that the research does not seek to answer. They are posed, however, because they are so important and form the underlying context for all education and all educators. One such question that has to be raised as an underlying principal is whether international higher education, in addressing the demands of globalised economies, is being delivered with an ethical perspective in mind. An analysis of the experience allows us to raise such questions. The question of ethics and international education is summarised by Altbach and Teichler:

...few have thought about the ethical base of mobility and international study. This is fertile ground for development. The ethics of recruiting students, earning profits from international higher education, charging fees, immigration policy, and other issues deserve study, and action. Issues such as transparency in exchange relationships, mutual understanding of countries and social systems, and of course, ensuring that exchanges benefit everyone involved, are all part of the ethical dimension (2001:23-24).

This ethical dimension therefore raises questions with regard to issues of transparency, the recruitment of international cohorts of students, the issue of mobility and international study, and the benefits of such mobility-based programmes. This

broader need for an ethical consideration directly relates to the experience at an individual level: there is mutuality between students' *being* in international higher education and the ethical dimensions of international higher education referred to by Atlbach and Teichler. In other words, the institutions need to consider the ethical implications arising from the educational experience of the students when developing such curricula. The students' learning of others' culture requires reflection which is dependent on the learners' reciprocal relationship with each other and the institutions (Brockbank and McGill, 2007). The need to consider this is an ethical dimension of the joint degree. Only by looking at the experience can educationalists gain insights. Barnett and Coate (2005) acknowledge that the acquisition of knowledge is a collaborative engagement - it is that which brings to the fore the importance of considering the ethical dimensions of joint degrees.

### ***5. Ethical Issues for the Research and Difficulties and Limitations in the Research Process***

There were aspects of the collection of data that required some consideration with regard to ethics; some observational data resulting from informal conversations and issues surrounding covert observation whilst providing a richer picture of the case, had to be weighed up in ethical terms. A justification for such an approach is the difficulty students often have with being completely open with their opinions in case they damage their grades. The students were happy to help with the research but the position of the researcher as an employee of one of the institutions must also be taken into account, both in terms of the sensitivity of some of the data and also in terms of the relationships with those being researched. These informal conversations provided the researcher with a more informed position with regard to the case but few have

been reported as part of the data set considered except within the vignettes in the Appendix 1. Consent and anonymity were therefore very important during the data collection process, and the concerns Fontana and Frey (2003) express in terms of treating human beings as human beings rather than objects of inquiry were borne in mind. Consent was sought from students and members of staff, lecturers, and programme leaders. Institutional consent was gained and voluntary informed consent was sought from students who were being observed. Informed consent was obtained prior to the first observation. BERA guidelines and the Data Protection Act were complied with in terms of the anonymity of the data. Information that was provided on a confidential basis was not reported directly although some reference was incorporated anonymously.

## ***6. Concluding Comments***

The intention of this chapter has been to outline how the research aims and questions posed in this case study were addressed in the research design. The conceptual influences that framed the approach to the research highlighted that a constructivist paradigm was necessary to address the research questions and to understand the reality of the experience of joint degree programmes of study. Emphasis was placed on the student experience but the staff views were also of value in exploring the experience of joint degree study. However, the design for the data collection was focused on developing an interpretative approach to understanding the student experiences (particularly their experience of different cultures) and their understanding of each other, which is also fundamental to their epistemological development.

The construction of the research design was influenced by Alexander's (2000) work on culture and pedagogy, as well as broader questions on the internationalisation of education which is what this case study exemplifies. It is however the intention to draw on insights given by this example of an international joint Masters case in order to inform practice and to provide insights into the experience of a joint degree, from a case example. It is intended that the research focus on the experience of joint degrees will raise questions with regard to current debates on the globalisation of higher education and the knowledge economy as well as considering, through the student experience, an analysis of the experiential learning on a joint degree.



## CHAPTER FOUR– CONTEXTUALISING ‘JOINT DEGREES’

### ***1. Introduction: The importance of joint degrees to international education***

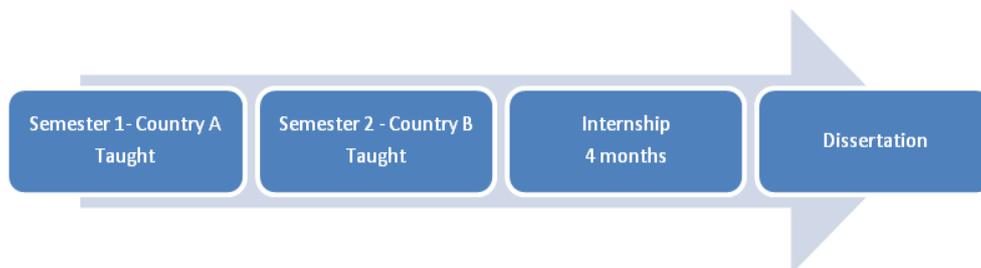
As we have seen from the previous chapters the joint degree is argued to be an exemplar of international higher education. This chapter explores the experience of a joint degree from both an institutional and staff perspective; how the higher education institutions are engaging with each other, the institutional basis for international higher education activity; and the academic quality expectations of such programmes. The latter is done through an analysis of the British Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) approach to joint degrees and collaborative provision and approaches by bodies such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business Schools (AACSB). Finally, the chapter offers an analysis of the students’ expectations of undertaking a joint degree and their initial cultural interactions. The chapter also considers the meaning of a joint degree and how it represents an international education experience.

The significance of the growth in such joint degree programmes was highlighted in a recent press report in the New York Times, “*Dual Degrees Are Gathering Steam*” (Guttenplan, D.D. 28<sup>th</sup>, March 2011). The skills needed to operate in a global environment are seen as an outcome of such education programmes and they are argued to be an employment advantage. The Institute for International Education (IIE) (Obst and Kuder, 2009; Obst, Kuder and Banks, 2011) promotes the importance of joint and double degree programmes stating that universities are looking to such programmes as a way to offer students international experiences. The claim is that they promote diverse language and ‘cultural fluencies’, which will prepare them for

successful careers. The possibility of students gaining transferable skills important in the global job market and gaining certificates which evidence qualifications in more than one country's higher education system (in this case they gain two Masters awards) would appear to make such programmes of study attractive to both institutions and students.

The structure of the joint degree courses in this case study is illustrated through the following diagram:

***Diagram 1: Joint Degree Course Structure***

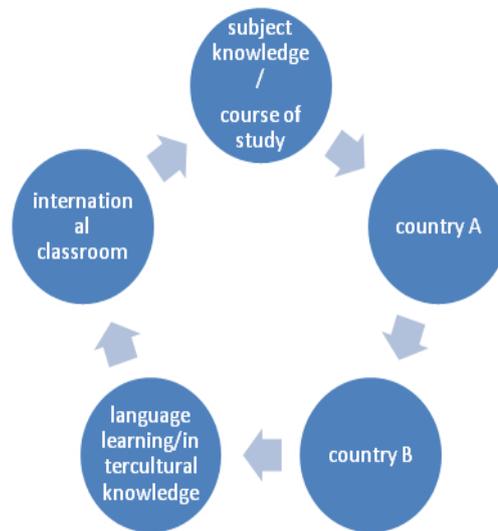


In order to achieve two Masters awards all elements of the courses must be completed. The regulatory frameworks of each institution are applied where the course is delivered – therefore one taught semester and the dissertation in the case of the UK institution and a taught semester and the internship in the case of the French institution. This illustrates both the joint nature of the curriculum but also its separateness. The delivery of half of the courses' teaching as well as the credit awarded is dependent on the 'other' institution.

*An example of internationalisation: the application of theory to joint degrees*

The diagrams below illustrate in visual terms how the dimensions of international education are incorporated on the joint degree experience and the engagement of the student in that process.

*Figure 3: Model of International Higher Education*

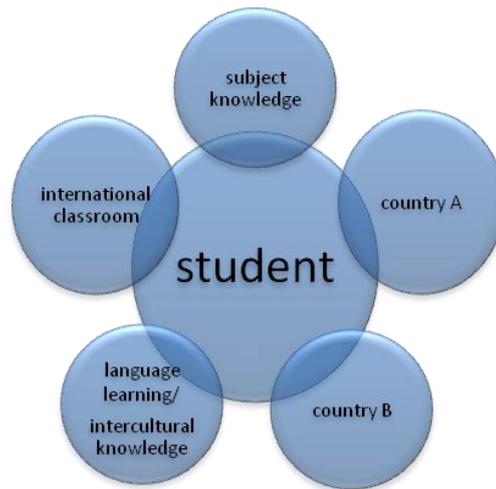


This diagram provides an illustration of the potential for knowledge acquisition in the international higher education environment and the dimensions of the experience in relation to Knight's definition.

The second diagram below offers a visual interpretation of the influences on individual students undertaking the type of programmes of study that are the focus for this research. The dimensions of international higher education are represented but the engagement with them by individuals varies and is subjective. That is they are not fixed aspects of the experience but are variable in terms of intensity, engagement and

reflection on the part of the students. It is these variables that lead us to consider an ethical dimension, to the experience, specifically because they impact on the student at an individual level.

**Figure 4: Model of international higher education for an individual student**



This model demonstrates the different aspects of international higher education represented by a joint degree. As we will note in later chapters however, there are differing levels of individuals' engagement with these circles of learning which rely on the student's relationality and way of learning in terms of achieving some sort of coherence with the elements above. This chapter considers how the differences between the institution in country A and the institution in country B, the cultures of the host cultures and the subject knowledge, may have a profound effect on that experience although there will be variation from individual to individual. The issue of difference and the impact on students leads us to consider that there is a need for an ethical perspective to international higher education. This will be returned to later in the chapter.

## ***2. The Definition of a Joint Degree***

The existing literature evidences a lack of clarity over the terms ‘double diploma’ and ‘joint degree’. The term joint degree has been used by the London institution to denote a course where two degree titles are achieved for a course that is jointly delivered by two partners. As mentioned in Chapter One, there are variations in its usage and it is often interchangeably used with the terms joint awards, dual awards and double diplomas. The difference in usage of the terms in France and the UK is an example of how institutions can interpret and operate differently within a national context.

An example of the usage in France is that the term double diploma is common parlance for the French institutions’ overseas activities. For example, for many French Business Schools a double diploma can be achieved by their students with partner institutions through simple articulation agreements. The French institution in the present case lists some 40 double diploma opportunities with partners, which are not joint programmes of study in the sense that the curriculum is not agreed by both partners: in essence they are study abroad programmes with an award. What this means for the partner is that they send an institution a cohort of students to take one or two years of a degree programme. This follows a collaborative agreement which is a matching of the credit on the partner’s courses, or for dedicated top-up one year degrees at undergraduate level. Students will then return to their home institution to receive an award as well as qualifying for the UK institution’s award. Hence, the partner’s students achieve a double diploma. This is a very simple model for international higher education and it was observed in practice at both the institutions

in this case, with the UK partner being the receiving partner. For the institutions involved, whilst some costs are incurred in terms of servicing the students and visits to partners, it does not involve the same commitment to collaboration as the full joint double award referred to above, or indeed the need for transparency and awareness of teaching methods. In other words, a so-called double diploma may actually refer to a year long study opportunity abroad and not to a full collaboration on the curriculum, with all that implies. The joint curriculum model necessarily presents more challenges and requires more transparency and communication between the institutions.

The key features of a joint degree were highlighted in Chapter One but some further discussion is necessary in order to elaborate on meanings in this growing facet of international higher education. Schule (2006) deals with the definition of joint and double degrees separately in the sense that they seem to be separate phenomena for him. Schule (2006:3) defines the terms in the following ways:

**Joint degree:** a single diploma issued by two or more institutions offering an integrated study programme. The single diploma (bachelor, Master, Doctor) is signed by the rectors of all participating universities and recognised as substitute of the national diplomas.[sic]

**Double degree:** two nationally recognised diplomas issued separately by the universities involved in the integrated study programme.

The joint nature of the curricula is important in relation to the *modus docendi* and the *modus discendi*. Schule (2006) makes the comment that the legal environment in Europe has prevented truly joint degree programmes, in the sense that one institution is responsible for the award, evidencing again that the term joint degree is something he sees as operating outside national regulatory frameworks, as diplomas would have

to be issued jointly by institutions. The definition in his view would seem to be about the title and not the curriculum. Schule's view of an integrated curriculum is that students undertake modules in the host that are part of other existing courses. This happened with the Masters in this study and was a cause for criticism by students. For the sake of clarity, for much of his paper Schule makes reference to JDDs (Joint Double Degrees) which seems the most appropriate description. Davies (2009) defines joint Masters as being "a Masters delivered by two or more HEIs awarding single or multiple diplomas" (2009:12), providing an accessible definition but Schule's definition is more precise.

### ***3. The Marketing of Joint Degrees***

The focus for much of the collaboration between institutions seems to be at the postgraduate rather than the undergraduate or doctoral levels. This is highlighted by the Bologna Trends reports and the recent AACSB (2011) report. Davies (2009) echoes this in finding that joint programmes of study are more likely to be offered at Masters level and are likely to grow in popularity because of the demands of the market. His findings indicate that a large majority of higher education institutions surveyed were planning to develop more joint degrees. This is also noted in the AACSB (2011) report.

This market popularity claim was examined in this case from the student perspective, to some extent in the questionnaire and the first semester interviews. In terms of the students' view of such programmes, they were asked in the questionnaire to rank from

1-8, in order of importance, a series of statements of their reasons for undertaking such a programme of study. It is interesting to note that the double diploma aspect of the programme proved a popular motivating factor attracting an average of 2.29 with 1 being the highest ranked response. This would seem to support the view of the EUA of joint double awards being an area for future growth for higher education institutions.

What is also important however and relevant to the present case, is Schule's (2006) acknowledgement that certain types of institution in Europe, such as the *Instituts Supérieurs de Commerce* also known as *Grandes Écoles* (Blanchard, 2009) have used double degrees in order to increase their competitiveness (2006:4). Schule (2006) identifies the positive aspects of JDDs with regard to joint curriculum development and the possible difficulties for joint degree programmes, providing a check list for consultation for institutions considering such collaborative ventures. He states that institutional profiles need to be given careful consideration since, for example, the differences between a professional approach to education and a theoretical approach could prove significant. Schule does not really give further detail on what these differences might be and how they would prove significant. The issue of difference is a theme that is returned to frequently in the thesis.

Other areas of concern are the application of ECTS credits in the context of differing workloads in institutions. Schule states that this can become a "major obstacle to international mobility unless the participating universities show a flexibility not built into the ECTS system" (2006:28). This was witnessed with the Masters in this study with the differing numbers of subjects studied at each institution and the difficulty in

the translation of grades from one system to another. Very few of the students achieve a Distinction from the London institution, where a 15/20 is needed from a French module in order to get a distinction. If the calculation is not done correctly most students will not get an overall distinction. The evidence suggests that students did not receive a Distinction for a 15/20 grading and yet it is equal to 75%. The bell curve expectation of British universities for award achievements is not reflected in this example and may be difficult to achieve in practice because of the inaccuracy in translation grades.

When acknowledging that joint Masters are not problem-free, Davies (2009) makes the following observation based on his findings:

One academic informant described the difficulties posed by variable entry points, credit weighting, workloads, learning outcomes – all compounded by incongruent national legislations. The difficulties meant that the course structure was not always clear to students and that course coordination was not always transparent, requiring a strong element of ad hoc compromise and approximation (2009:54).

The comments above with regard to the transfer of 15/20 to British grades were an example of such approximations. If nothing else this comment reinforces the need for a careful consideration of the ethical dimensions as the difficulties in working across national education systems clearly have an impact on the student experience and questions with regard to transparency. These differences and difficulties were commented on by students in interviews as frustrating aspect of their experiences.

#### ***4. Ethical Considerations with regard to Joint Degrees***

We can see the question of ethics being raised by Schule (2006) with regard to the issue of two awards being given for one programme of study. He cites the Coimbra Group's<sup>22</sup> position of concern at not being able 'to catch two fishes with one hook'. There is certainly a question of ethics to be raised with regard to the issue of an award of two Masters diplomas for the same work. How can this fall within a framework of meaningful activity for higher education institutions? The promotion of such courses inevitably relies on the promotion of the possibility of students gaining a double diploma. Observation of both institutions' marketing activity reinforces the emphasis that this aspect of the experience is given as it became a marketing tool. This is clearly not without foundation given the student rating of it as important to their choice of Masters programme. This raises a question with regard to the demand of the market taking precedence over academic integrity in this sort of collaborative activity. Certainly this particular aspect of such programmes of study raises questions with regard to issues of quality which may ultimately undermine the credibility of the joint double Masters awards. This was confirmed in some interviews with students and will be returned to in Chapter Five. Schule's (2006) solution to the problem of the possibility of a wilful misrepresentation on the part of students with regard to their qualifications, is that the diploma and diploma supplement should clearly state that the award is part of a double diploma.

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<sup>22</sup> A network of 40 European Universities formed in 1985 consisting of some of the most prestigious and oldest universities in Europe.

The position with regard to the responsibility for ensuring quality as far as UK institutions are concerned is expressed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)<sup>23</sup> in their Code of Practice on Collaborative provision:

The *Code* is based on the key principle that collaborative arrangements, whenever and however organised, should widen learning opportunities without prejudice either to the standard of the award or qualification or the quality of what is offered to the student. Further, the arrangements for assuring the quality and standards should be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those for programmes provided wholly within the responsibility of a single institution. This remains the case even when the partner organisation is itself also an Awarding Institution, as with joint or dual awards (1999:Paragraph 7, 1999 QAA code of Practice: cited in the QAA (2008:4) Outcomes From Institutional Audit Report).

The phrasing in this paragraph leaves some questions with regard to monitoring the delivery of programmes (or part of the programme) overseas and how far this can be achieved within other national frameworks of practice. The tone of the 2008 report is clear in expressing concern with regard to learners in collaborative partnerships being put at risk where there is distance from the UK awarding body. In addition this position is reinforced by the QAA with regard to the reliance on a partner's reputation as being insufficient from the perspective of quality (2008:13). The prestigious branding of a partner does not devolve quality assurance responsibility as far as UK QAA is concerned.

With regard to the joint curriculum aspect to joint degrees, the QAA's position would appear to place some doubt on the UK institutions' ability to accredit work done by students in a partner institution in another country without moderation of that work by the UK institution. An example of this can be seen in a QAA collaborative links

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<sup>23</sup> British national higher education quality awarding body

report (QAA, 2006) on the University of Westminster who received a limited confidence assessment from the QAA because it failed to demonstrate that the quality concerns of the QAA had been met with regard to its postgraduate double Masters activity with a French partner, which was a *Grande École*. The report demonstrates that the issue of quality and transparency - which, in that instance, could not be seen to be evident in the crediting of work done in another institution - are an important aspect of maintaining the standards expected of postgraduate higher education in the UK. This reinforces notions of international higher education being constrained within national frameworks of delivery despite the Bologna Process and has implications for this case because of the similarity of the institutions and programmes involved. Unfortunately no one from the University of Westminster was available to be interviewed and whilst the International Director from their partner in France was interviewed they were unwilling to respond to questions on their relationship with Westminster.

This example provides evidence of the QAA position with regard to international joint degrees and so the report was explored in further depth. The paragraph below highlights the potential issues with regard to the moderation of the modules that are delivered at partner institutions.

The report concluded:

... in allowing the partners of dual awards to be considered as 'equal partners', taking full responsibility for assessment and the confirmation of marks but not requiring the independent scrutiny of student work, the University is failing to ensure the proper oversight of the standards of its awards. Accordingly it is essential for the University to assure the

standards of all its awards in collaborative provision, with particular reference to external examiners' oversight of dual award programmes (QAA 2006:27, paragraph 105).

The tone of this excerpt is unambiguous in the allocation of responsibility of quality to UK institutions. It illustrates and reinforces the theme of transparency and effective management of collaborative partnerships and that the monitoring of academic standards for British degrees must be maintained by British higher education institutions. The University of Westminster audit report also clearly underlines the need for British institutions to continue to monitor standards with an emphasis on the necessity for the UK institutions to consider the quality of the students' experience at the partner:

Validation is for a specified time period of up to five years, followed by revalidation, which concentrates on the programme, not the partnership as a whole. The partnership is not, therefore, routinely subject to further scrutiny, and revalidation gives little explicit consideration to its developing nature or to partner institutions' continuing suitability to deliver University programmes other than in a commercial sense. Given both the lack of formal risk assessment procedures at approval and the limitations of partner evaluation at revalidation, it is considered advisable for the University to implement such procedures at approval and revalidation as are necessary to ensure partner institutions' initial and continuing capacity to maintain the quality of the student experience and appropriate academic standards (QAA, 2006:25).

It is clear from the wording above that a reliance on the Bologna implemented ECTS credit scheme is not sufficient to meet the QAA criteria and, from a UK perspective, UK external examiners need to confirm standards of marking in order to ensure that the standards of UK postgraduate education are being met. This is particularly relevant to the present case for the cohorts of students recruited by the French institution who

spend only one semester in London and who complete their dissertation at their home institution and are credited with the credits needed to complete their Masters. At the time the research was undertaken no moderation of the French students' dissertations was carried out: this confirms that there is an ethical issue here with regard to UK quality standards.

### ***The need for compatibility between the institutions***

The way in which the institutions interact with each other is therefore an important aspect of the student experience in facilitating the joint degree as a holistic international higher education experience. The dimensions of difference involved have the potential for enhancing the experience and producing additional educational benefits but care needs to be taken in communication, transition and aiding in negotiating the different *modus docendi* of each institution. The maintenance of communication between the institutions and a suitable transparent support network are fundamental aspects of the student experience. Whilst Beerkens (2004) aids in understanding the nature of collaborative networks of higher education institutions, his view that these networks have become so important that the nation state is losing its grip on higher education institutions and that international benchmarks are necessary (2004:19) has not yet come to pass. The discussion above reflects the continued importance of nation state frameworks for higher education. These rarely allow for only one diploma to be awarded jointly from different institutions. Schule (2006) and Guruz (2011) both comment on the difficulties with regard to this. Despite the introduction of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) in 2008, national legislation would be needed to overcome the difficulties of issuing a joint diploma.

Beerens does, however, underline the importance of the compatibility of the higher education institutions involved in a collaboration, to the extent that it is a precondition for the collaboration to succeed. With reference to the relationship of the institutions, in this case the Course Leader for the marketing communications joint degree (the largest and longest running of the three courses) had the following comments to make on the way in which these two institutions engaged in the collaboration:

A clear lead from the top has encouraged the development of the relationship. The lead is based on a personal friendship but also a recognition of the financial imperatives which characterise any joint initiative. Each director has helped the relationship by appointing a liaison person at each institution and although the personalities may have changed in the course of institutional reorganisation, the recognition of the value of the relationship remains as strong as ever. (Course Leader, France)

We can see from the QAA report above there is a strong emphasis placed on the importance of a liaison tutor in terms of making sure of the quality and equivalence of experience in educational terms of each institution. What is interesting to note here is the importance given to the 'financial imperatives' in the comments, thus tending to confirm - if only from the French perspective - the link to financial drivers for institutions engaging in international education. The QAA Code of Practice (2004:11, paragraph A6) warns institutions against financial or other temptations that may compromise standards. In the quote from the course leader above, the financial basis for the relationship is illustrated particularly by the tone of the last sentence with the word 'value' being used.

The collaborative tone of this comment is also interesting and not something that is reflected in the comments made by the students in their interviews with regard to operational issues. Many students commented on the differences between the

institutions and the difficulties that they had with negotiating those differences. We can see some of this difference reflected in Chapter Five on the differences in pedagogical approach of each institution. Despite this, Beerkens' (2004) identification of the need for "chemistry" between the actors would appear to be reflected in both the tone and the words of the interview abstract above and in comments made by other staff.

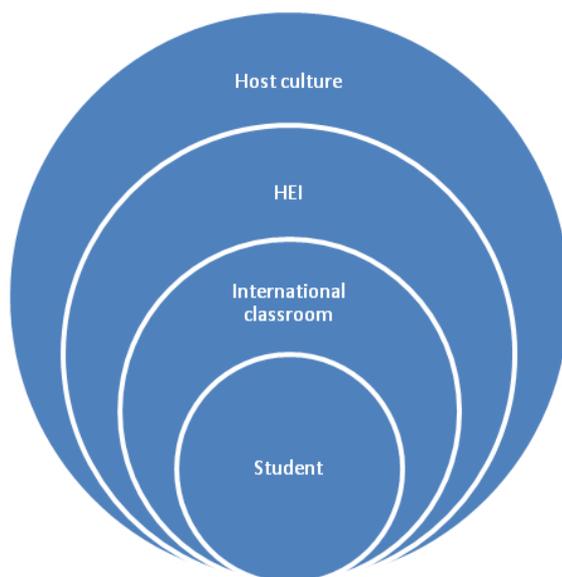
### ***Cultural Contexts***

An aspect of the experience of joint degrees is the way the institutions present themselves to each other and the students; each institution has different cultural frames of behaviour which the students have to engage with. Observations confirm that there were differences in the institutional cultures, and host culture of each of the partners, as they are based in different countries. This is represented as separate circles of engagement in Figure 2 above.

Alexander 's (2000) work on culture and pedagogy is cited in support of the attention given in the thesis to the differences in pedagogic approach taken in each institution, which are located in different countries. He states that the practice of teaching and learning relates to the context of culture, structure and policy in which the pedagogy is embedded. Therefore, the *modus docendi* (mode of teaching) at each institution will reflect both the institutional culture and the culture of the country in which the institution is located. Another layer of cultural complexity is added by the link between culture and pedagogy, illustrated by Welikala and Watkins (2008) who relate the *way* students learn with their cultural identity.

The importance of the joint degree, with regard to the issue of differing ‘cultural scripts’ (Welikala and Watkins 2008) of the students, is that the cultural engagement takes place on a number of levels. The following model is therefore presented again (previously provided in Chapter One) to illustrate the interplay between culture and education, and the different levels of students' engagement with culture. The reception of education in this case is therefore further complicated by engagement with the two national cultures and two differing HE institutions.

***Figure 1: Diagram of student interactions and within a higher education environment***



In order to make the joint degree experience as holistic as it might be if the experience was within one institution and one country, transparency and communication are vital as is the need to maintain the standards of quality and experience so clearly outlined by the QAA. We are reminded that the negotiation of difference represents the

cultural context of the joint degree as is the relationality with the ‘other’ in whatever format that is.

### ***5. The Institutional Motivation for Joint Degrees***

As Beerkens (2004:2) so clearly underlines, universities are currently bound in their behaviour by their national limitations. Given the models above, we can see that the experience of international higher education can be truly challenging. In addressing the research questions and in order to provide a richer case picture the perspective of practitioners and those acting for the institutions was explored. How the degree is managed and delivered will impact on students receiving the international higher education experience.

Ten interviews were carried out with practitioners, managerial, teaching and administrative staff from both institutions. The intention was to explore whether there were different approaches to teaching, learning and management of the degrees in each institution from a practitioner perspective, as well as addressing the final and broader sub questions of whether dual or double awards address the international ethos of the supranational policy making bodies. An additional interview was carried out with the International Director of another *Grande École* in order to give the findings greater validity and to explore the QAA position from the experience in another institution. Both the French institution in the case study and many of the high ranking *Grandes Écoles* have sought accreditation from AACSB and EQUIS in order to market themselves internationally. The position of AACSB and the branding of higher education institutions are considered in more detail below. According to

AACSB, seeking accreditation has a direct relationship with internationalisation activity.

***The AACSB perspective: is global branding important?***

The AACSB report on the Globalisation of Management Education (2011) provides some useful insights into Business Schools' motivation for engaging in international activity. AACSB acknowledges that in 2004 the primary reason for Deans to internationalise was the heightened educational experience of the students. However, in the 2011 report it states that financial motivations have increasingly played a more important role in "forming strategic program alliances" (AACSB 2011:14). It underlines the importance of international accreditation as being as much about "the pursuit of excellence (along globally recognised standards of quality) as it is about branding and positioning in the globalizing worlds of business and higher education" (2011:70). Notions of aspirations to excellence were raised in Chapter One and we can see these aspirations reflected in the data. Staff from both institutions commented on the institutional motivations for engaging in joint degree study, although the driving forces of Finance and international branding are more strongly expressed by the French institutions' staff. Students were made aware of the 'elite' branding of the institution at an early stage of their studies. The AACSB therefore makes some important observations on the institutions' engagement with each other which, in its view, are necessary ingredients for success.

It also states that one of the purposes of international accreditation is to eliminate the need for "potential collaborative partners to understand the differences between

national accreditation schemes” (2011:70). This seems to be a rather bold claim as it presumes that international accreditation is more important than national accreditation which is not a line that the QAA appears to have adopted.

The AACSB report provides a lot of case examples of the importance of ranking, accreditation and reputation in terms of Schools’ student exchange alliances and the selection of partners. The importance of these aspects of an institution’s profile were given greater weight when it comes to programme alliance partners, which in this instance would be taken to refer to dual award partners. The acknowledgement of these factors by the AACSB presents an important backdrop for the behaviour and motivation of the institutions in the present case.

The Course Leader from the French institution expressed the following views on international benchmarking with regard to both institutions:

The French institution is in the process of positioning itself as a quality destination for students in its national market using international accreditations (AACSB, EQUIS). Depending on various French student publication surveys the school appears between 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> position amongst the *Grandes Écoles* of which there are 39. Last year it appeared in the top 40 European management programmes in the FT classification. The London institution has a different profile and is considering accreditation with AMBA. It boasts a maximum rating of 24<sup>24</sup> in teaching quality excellence and 3A research assessment exercise rating in the Tourism subject. (*Course Leader, French institution*)

These comments with regard to international branding display that both league position and global branding are important to the French institution and that they

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<sup>24</sup> The 24 is a reference to the 24/24 the London institution received from the QAA

expect their partners to reflect similar ambitions. The interview with the Dean of the London institution also demonstrates the important role of the accrediting bodies on the operations of both institutions whilst acknowledging that the approach of the French had an influence on his thinking in this area.

***The UK perspective: staff views at the London institution***

The motivational aspirations of the French School in offering joint degree programmes were echoed in the staff responses at the London institution. In response to a question to the Dean as to why he had pursued the collaboration, the following comments were made:

The French School is a business school of some standing in the European scene, and it has to be said that their reputation was significant in my decision to progress this relationship. That being said, its genesis I think relates to the fact that I take the view that in the world in which we're currently living, globalisation being the way that you might describe that world, it's extremely important that students get exposed to alternative ways of looking at business and management practice. So the idea of a collaboration with the French School in the course area was attractive to me because I think it allowed those students to have that exposure to ways of looking at business and management practice. So I think that was the primary motivation for the collaboration, and we've attempted to develop similar models with other institutions in different parts of the world.  
*(Dean of the London institution)*

If we compare this response to that given by the French Course Leader we can see Finance is not given the same emphasis, perhaps reflecting the private funding model for the French *Grandes Écoles*. These elite Schools charge in the region of 8000-16,000 Euros per year as opposed to a similar cost for the whole course in the UK (only one year). The difference in these financial arrangements and the student profile

were justified in the interviews in terms of the need for flexibility for change that the London institution had to show in order to continue with the partnership. The following comments illustrate this point:

In terms of the financial arrangements for example, it became clear to me quite early on that the students that they were recruiting to the programme were different to the students that we were recruiting. They typically looked to recruit internally within the French school and the students that they recruit therefore bring less money to the pot than is the case for the students that we recruit who typically are international full cost students. And so we've had to be aware of the fact that it could look from their perspective as though we're the people earning all the money and they're the people doing all the work. So that's a sensitivity and that's had to be reflected in the financial arrangements. I think we've also learnt quite a lot about the differing approach they have to validation. They tend to be very focussed on a title and once that title has been agreed, what the professors get up to within the programme is rather more down to the professors than would be the case here where we have to go through a validation that specifies learning outcomes for the modules, for the course. And we have to deliver on those, so there is a very different approach to validation which is interesting. (*Dean of the London institution*)

There are a number of aspects to this excerpt that are interesting, the first being the misunderstanding that the French students pay an amount for the whole course rather than a fixed fee per year, the former being what happens in the UK. There is a cultural difference that the Dean has not reflected on. He has also misunderstood the amount of fees paid by the French students. The second striking aspect is the comment regarding the quality procedures and the admittance that they (that is the French) may be doing all the work in terms of the contact hours and modules that are delivered in France. This discussion of the numbers of hours in a class is a theme that arose in the interviews with the students and is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. This was clearly a difference in the teaching and learning approach of the institutions which, for the management, raised some financial considerations as, on the surface,

the French appeared to offer more class contact time. There is also the issue of measurement of achievement. In the UK this is measured through meeting the learning outcomes which is a difference between the institutions as the French institution had no such measure. It is more familiar to UK pedagogy parlance. This learning outcome parlance was referred to by other French staff as a difference which was difficult to overcome.

***The French perspective: staff views at the French institution***

The interview data from the French staff illustrated a difference in approach to international collaboration, to international activity in general, as well as to the administration and promotion of such programmes and the motivational aspects of engaging in such activity.

So I think it is a good idea to have a joint degree, a double degree programme, because I want to send the students abroad because I want them to realise how we have to learn and they have to know how to be independent, which is not the case in France...(Course Leader at French school and tutor at other GEs)

There was a clear desire to provide the opportunity for engagement with ‘others’, and a reflection that the *Grande École* system does not allow for the development of independent learning. When asked about French students views on difference, French tutors responded that there is a negative attitude amongst French students to different pedagogies as they have been ‘spoon fed’ in French Business Schools.

A comment from another International Director at a French School illustrates the different approach with regard to teaching and learning, most specifically learning outcomes:

...the profs are the doyens, the knowledge base, espousing their own research and their own professional experiences to the students ...And so the idea that you will have checks and balances in a curriculum that ascertains whether the learning outcomes have been met doesn't exist.  
*(International Director of French GE)*

The point about learning outcomes is important as it illustrates a fundamental difference in approach to British universities. The following paragraph considers the issue of difference from the perspective of an equality of experience. Transparency has been referred to previously with regard to the collaboration across borders. It is explored further below.

### ***Dealing with difference***

Difference is an important aspect of joint degrees in as much as it presents not only the challenge but also the learning opportunity. However, in order to facilitate this learning, transparency with regard to that difference is a fundamental requirement. Interviews and observations certainly revealed this difference not only in terms of the teaching and learning approach but also the size, league table positioning, location, administration and functions of the two institutions. The French institution closes for lunch for example and there can be no communication with staff during that time, a minor point but indicative of a cultural difference.

It is clear from the QAA report that the status (taken here to mean league table positioning) of an institution does not circumvent the requirement of UK quality processes, for example the requirement of external examining of partners' courses. This reinforces a preference for UK institutions of strictly adhering to the UK quality procedures and does not aid with dealing with difference. The Bologna position is one of harmonisation so, likewise, it does not deal with difference and provides institutions with little guidance on addressing issues of difference. The comments made with regard to learning outcomes above are just one example of the differences which directly affect students and how they negotiate with the institutions. When asked about the UK procedures, the following response was elicited:

..in France we don't have assessors like the QAA. We actually are Equis accredited and we have just been through the AACSB process, but they don't assess teachers and professors...When I was in a French *lycée*...we decided to go for accreditation...and they do a 10 day visit. And they come and they talk to the administrators and do lesson observations. The French teachers wouldn't let them in the room, they shut the door and it was a huge outcry to say that we are professional teachers, we do not need people to come and observe how we teach. We teach as we always teach in the best way so they are not allowed to come in. And we have unions involved with this, and everything, absolutely no way. The English people were kind of- just gobsmacked-...

She went further in reinforcing the difference between England and France:

Never known that, to observe a class, no the door was closed. And I think the other aspect of this is that for the QAA to insist on having external validation, it doesn't happen in France, who would externally validate? Who could possibly think that there would be somebody with a higher status above a professor who would actually critically look at their work?  
(*International Director of French GE*)

This excerpt portrays a fundamental cultural difference in approach to issues of quality, of teaching and learning, and norms of behaviour. It underlines how difficult

it may be to achieve transparency in reality. As Matthews (2000) observes, some of our norms of behaviour are deeply ingrained. Negotiation at that level of cultural difference is difficult to achieve.

### *Institutional culture*

The discussion above has raised the issue of difference with regard to institutional rules, procedures and norms of behaviour, and this has been linked to culture. This issue of cultural difference was explored in the interviews with staff in order to understand how they viewed and dealt with difference. This was important as it contextualises some of the students' comments with regard to difference.

When asked about the different cultures of each institution, the Dean of the UK Business School made the following comments:

*(Laughing)* I don't know whether culture has much to do with it. I think that reputation has something to do with it and I think that Finances have something to do with it. I've already mentioned that we've had to modify our thinking on the financial side to reflect the financial realities as they impact on the French School. I think the French School are collaborating with us, largely because of our position or our location. They want to offer their students a London experience and that they think is attractive to those students. We want to offer an experience to our students which is international, perhaps rural France wouldn't be the obvious location. But what we're offering them is an experience of a business school which is accredited by EQUIS and by AACSB which has some cachet and some value to our students I think. *(Dean of the London institution)*

The interesting aspect of this interview excerpt is the interviewee's laughter in relation to the mention of culture, perhaps demonstrating that the issue of cultural interactions had not featured in the internationalisation strategy of the London institution despite

the recognition of cultural difference between the British and the French at other times during the interview. The reaction might be seen as a cultural reaction in terms of norms of behaviour. In addition the word value is used with regard to branding by international bodies, something that does not address the student experience.

The London institution is a large, new university formed from a merger of two institutions. It has a range of mature university-wide regulations policed internally and externally through external examiners and QAA quality audits. The Business School is one of the five Faculties.

The following comment made by the Course Leader in France was not made in response to a question on culture. We can see that there is an aspect of cultural difference in terms of the rules and norms of behaviour that impact on students:

We are less than a 10<sup>th</sup> of the size of London and focus entirely on business related courses. It too is a result of a merger 10 years previously. Its most recent re-structure has created an international school through which prospective new courses following the marketing model will be developed. However, the current marketing course is a hybrid between the ESC<sup>25</sup> programme and the MSc programme but resides administratively under the ESC structure despite its international students. The international school headed by a senior professor has created a number of geographical divisions, one of which is for this institution because of the size and growth of the relationship. This is internal recognition both by the international school and the General Director of the importance of the role and the relationship. (*Course Leader at the French institution*)

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<sup>25</sup> The *École Supérieure de Commerce* Programme (ESC) programme is normally 3 years following two years of *classes préparatoire* after the Baccalaureate. It is the main programme of study offered in all *Grandes Écoles* that are members of the *Chapitre des Grandes Écoles*

These comments highlight the difference in approach of the two institutions. The Course Leader highlights the incorporation of the ESC programme. The difference in the French students' background and approach was also highlighted in their responses. This is discussed in Chapter Five in more depth.

When specifically asked about the culture differences of the institution the following response was elicited:

It would appear the university treats the business school as 'another partner': in some instances with little difference from a franchise college. My institution probably sees itself as 'privileged' and certainly equal partner for two reasons: the course has been very successful financially and the business school has invested heavily in raising its profile nationally and internationally. This sentiment is probably only initially felt at course level as the more tactical elements (admin exchange, partnerships office) are felt here. It is only slightly more widely felt within the business school as even after three years the development process is only beginning to spread more widely within both institutions. This is not a cause of tension – but it could be in the future as various members of academic and administrative staff encounter each other (often at a distance) and explain differences in terms of their own reference points and systems. Why spend time understanding someone else's (back office) systems if you are used to imposing a system on a hierarchical, power basis. Hence, the importance of the role of institutional liaison. I have described this role as the 'catalytic converter' in the relationship as problems can occur in other parts of the relationship which have to be resolved post hoc. It is also becoming clear that the role has an internal development dimension – explaining why and how the relationship adds to the strength of both institutions. The education is delivered according to the rules determined by the host institution and mutual standards are accepted. (*Course Leader for French School*)

Further to this, comments were made with regard to understanding and accepting difference, thereby making a clear acknowledgement that the difference between the two institutions creates a gap that needs to be bridged. However, there is an undercurrent of what might be identified as tension to the discourse, evidenced by the comment above on how the London institution sees the French and how the French

would like to be seen. This was not seen in the response given by the Dean of the London institution and evidences a gap in perspective which results in an unequal engagement. The difference in teaching and learning, as well as the rules relating to assessment, is acknowledged in the final comment. The driving force of ambition would appear to be the context for the action at all levels in the French school and the comments reflect this. The underlying tone of the excerpt reinforces this interpretation. Whilst aspiration, particularly international aspiration, is clear from the comments of the Dean in the UK, they are not given any particular emphasis by the French School. The different funding structures for each school may possibly provide a reason for this. In addition the observations confirmed the focus on ‘customer care’ at the French School. This was reinforced by student comments in interviews. This also underlines the difference in approach to the administration of the course. The last part of this chapter will continue to set the scene by providing discussion of the student expectations at the start of their course. This early data is important in understanding how students perceive their international education experience.

### ***6. Students Expectations of a Joint Degree: the International Classroom as a ‘Window of the World’***

This part of the chapter focuses on an analysis of the first stage data collected in London from fourteen student interviews and participant observations in the first few weeks of the International Marketing Communications course. The interviews explored the students’ initial interactions with each other in a large and urban environment as well as considering the demands of UK higher education on students coming to the UK for their higher education. The following extract from an interview

with a Canadian student illustrates many of the students' reflections at this early stage of their course:

I think it's amazing. I mean I talk to some people who complain about how things are done and it's really easy to get your back up about frustrations but if we talk about, and one of the things I'm fascinated about is inter-cultural communications. Hello, people do it differently and that's okay and it's not your way. It's like - go back to kindergarten and realise that part of if you say you want to work in a global environment you have to realise that people are going to do it differently and it's a great opportunity, not only with the street group from such a diverse background but actually understanding that you are going to walk in, it's like a huge home stay. You walk into 2 different cultures and say hey, this is how they do it and that's fine. It's different because you're a window of the world, we're so insular I think.

These positive and engaging comments provide an example of much of the initial optimism that was expressed by students. It allows us insight into the students' views of international higher education. It demonstrates that, for many of the international students in a heterogeneous group, it is not international Tourism that provides an opportunity to engage with those from other cultures in a meaningful way but their higher education programme of study.

The themes that arose from this first cycle of interviews were: issues relating to intercultural communication, whether this was covert or an overt issue; issues relating to the expectation of a studying on a joint degree programme; issues relating to problems or complaints in the administration of the programme; issues relating to language; and issues related to the students' learning. The issues with regard to pedagogy will be considered in an analysis of students' experiences in England and France in the next chapter. This part of this chapter, however, focuses on the initial approach of the students to dealing with difference.

Analysis of this first stage data demonstrates that there are three levels to the students' cultural experiences. Firstly, there are students' experiences of their interactions with each other; secondly, their experiences of their interactions with the institutions and thirdly, their experiences of interactions with external bodies which are significant aspects of their experiences of the countries they are studying in (see Figure 1 page 152).

The focus on cultural knowledge and student interaction is appropriate in the light of current debates on the internationalisation of higher education in the UK. Authors such as Haigh (2009); Kreber (2009); Jones, (2010); Turner (2009, 2011) and Van Gyn *et al.*, (2009) provide some useful insight into this debate. This debate focuses on a discussion of the link between the interaction of different cultures and epistemology in higher education. The international classroom became a theme of the first semester interviews and the findings are echoed in the work of Montgomery (2009) and Turner (2011). The observations corroborated the importance of this international classroom context to the programme. The students recruited by the UK institution in the year the first semester interviews were carried out were from 24 countries, including France. However, before exploring the students' expectations of an international course, some further discussion of the meaning of culture is given below in order to expand on the definition of culture in Chapter Two (McNamee and Faulkner, 2001) and to tease out some of nuances of the data in relation to the norms of behaviour and sense making carried out by students in their first semester of study.

### *What do we mean by culture?*

A good starting point for this discussion of the importance of culture in relation to the student's experiences is the consideration of what we mean by the word culture in this context. Geertz's approach to culture as being an "ingredient" of human beings and not merely an "accessory to human thought" (1973:83) is adopted here to underline why this social aspect to studying in another country needs to be considered. Culture is therefore, according to Geertz, part of the 'fabric' of the individual and, as such, inevitably part of the higher education experience which, for the purposes of this analysis, is broken down into the three aforementioned aspects of that experience. It is an 'ingredient' of the 'recipe' of knowledge acquisition in the making of those individuals' experiences. The environment presented is, in that sense, a new learning space where more than just subject knowledge is acquired. This links the joint degree experience to the backdrop of the broad debates referred to in Chapters One and Two.

Highlighting the importance of culture with regard to the students' experiences illustrates a view is that the globalisation process dominates the very mode of individuals' existence in the world today in facilitating a sort of a 'meze' of experience in an educational context. Higher education is another factor within that 'fabric' of meaning for individuals in the contemporary world. A quote from Lyotard illustrates the point:

Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and "retro" clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games (1984:76).

The value of this statement, although requiring further discussion, is not expanded on here, but it is provided as a useful illustration of the multiple identities that may be involved in everyday life on a superficial level and as a guide in explaining the influences on students embarking on an international course and the value which they think the experience offers them. Such courses and experiences perhaps offer an example of Matthews' (2000) cultural supermarket thesis and levels of cultural shaping. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five within the context of higher education. For the purposes of this chapter the discussion is restricted to the students' aspirations of cultural learning as explored in the first semester interviews.

### *Aspirations of cultural learning*

This eclectic approach referring to culture and life was reflected in interview comments with relation to the students' motivations when asked why they undertook a programme of study in two countries. An example of such aspirations is offered from the following excerpt from a student's interview:

To be honest I probably won't say I have 2 degrees because as an educator I frankly don't think you can get 2 Masters Degrees in a year. So I will chose one of them because I think that's what, I mean I like the idea and I love the idea of actually looking at 2 different institutions because internationalisation is a huge issue back home. So that was really why I liked the idea about going to France and the fact that you do it in English made it completely accessible. (*Canadian student*)

This comment raises the issue of cultural difference and the international context being accessible because the teaching was all in English as well as the importance of English as the lingua franca for the international learning as it made the country

mobility accessible to her. It is also important as it reflects awareness of the ethics of students being rewarded twice for the same piece of work. It indicates that some students did not want to be rewarded twice for the same thing as, for them, the experience was about becoming more international.

One of the American students also reflected on the cultural education aspect of a joint Masters programme, which included living in the different country as part of the educational experience:

I was so excited about the opportunity to actually go and to really become well versed in the language I feel like you have to live in the place where they speak it. I guess I just thought well I'm young it's great to have that opportunity to live in as many places as possible because it's not really until you live there that you really understand the culture, I think.  
*(American Student)*

Again the international motivation and engagement with other cultures is clear from this student. It is perhaps also worth noting that both these students were from North America and the opportunity to study in France was important even though neither spoke French. This was echoed by many of the international students. Coulby's (2006) work underlines the importance of communication with people from different cultures in education. However there was a lack of acknowledgement in interviews of the need for learning to be in both the host languages as part of the acquisition of cultural knowledge. This is a concern and raises questions with regard to students' motivations of being international which were so strongly expressed in interviews.

In this discussion of what we mean by culture, another dynamic that requires reflection is the issue of 'tacit' cultural knowledge, as referred to by Hampden-Turner and Trompennars (1994) and which, in Matthews' (2000) terminology, relates to levels of cultural shaping of which one is not aware. This tacit cultural knowledge which has little attention paid to it, becomes very important when the students interact with each other in their learning spaces. Students' *being* in the classroom in relation to others is an important part of the international education process. The observations of the student groups highlighted that a lack of awareness of others' 'tacit' cultural behaviour can make the group work environment unsettling. An example would be the way a person uses their hands in a conversation, or their tone of speech. What is acceptable in one culture is less acceptable in another and can cause irritation and there is often little opportunity for reflection on the cause of that irritation. Students' relationality is a key aspect of group work where interactions are fundamental to the success of the group. As the issue of group work was such an important theme in interviews it will be returned to in Chapter Five.

The students' expectations of 'international' potentiality were commonly expressed in the interviews, with the excerpt below providing an example:

Yes, I think anywhere you live you kind of figure out what's around you and what people expect. If you live here you know how to get the message out. I know what works in Los Angeles but I'm not sure it works here yet but I think living here and having the experience here you understand what people are like and what people are receptive too. I think marketing is kind of like a general foundation anyway but it becomes more specific to the area. So London has its channels of communication that are used a certain way versus France, which I'm not sure yet because I haven't been there. But I think if you live in a place that how you pick it up. With the course, I think, it's just how to do something and how to apply what you know. I think it's a great combination of a lot of different

things this course, which is ultimately why I chose it. (*Californian student*)

This Californian student expected and presumed that he would be fine in relating to individuals from different cultures because he was Hispanic and lived in California. In reality, his behaviour deeply offended two Far East Asian students who later transferred from the course because of what they perceived to be intimidation in their group. The student lacked awareness that his and other members of his group's behaviour had caused deep offence to other students (see Appendix 1, Vignette 1) and he was mortified when he realised that the behaviour that he considered as normal had caused offence. This is just one example of a critical incident where cultural difference proved difficult to overcome and the learning curve was not comfortable for any of those students involved. It also provides an example of the problems of negotiating between different cultures where the use of offensive behaviour involving swear words in another language did not carry the same meaning for those from the Western culture.

An educational environment that brings students together for very short periods of time and requires them to work closely together to produce a piece of assessed work, is something that has been argued to be extremely difficult even for those from the same culture (Bamford et al, 2006) and creates additional tensions that frequently result in stress for students. However, it also creates a space for acquiring cultural knowledge. Twigg's (2005) findings demonstrated that if students can function in a multicultural network they will adapt to the new environment more effectively.

### *The expectation of an international career*

An added importance to the acquisition of cultural skills is the expectation of a ‘becoming international’. For some students it underpinned the expectation of undertaking an international course which would offer the future possibility of an international career:

For me maybe it’s a kind of experience of working in an international environment because if I have this course, if I will finish education I am going to work in an international company, a big company and nowadays the staffing big companies they are all international and to know how to get on well with people from different cultural backgrounds. (*Russian student*)

Other students expressed the expectation that it would be relatively easy to become international through being on an international course and mixing with other international students. The expectation of employability in an international environment was also expressed. However, the reality of the first semester was often stressful and demonstrated difficulties in understanding others with a possible lack of communication with peers and sometimes disillusion.

Stone refers to “international knowledgeability” as consisting of:

knowledge that pertains wholly or mainly to a specific nation or group of nations...global or generic knowledge that is broadly relevant and transferable across borders (2006:337)(Stone, 2006).

This ‘international knowledgeability’ is not acquired through an intuitive or osmotic process but must be honed and aided in its development, or perhaps encouraged

through a pedagogy which recognises cultural difference and allows for individuality even within the context of nationally defined rules and norms of behaviour. Students come to the UK, with the expectation of a “British” education (Bamford et al, 2002). This is not what is meant by a pedagogy that encourages international knowledgeability, that is, travel overseas for education but rather it is the incorporation of the recognition of difference within the pedagogy as part of the education process. This is how institutions and policy makers envisage individuals’ acquisition of the transferable skills so often referred to.

There was clear evidence of this reflection from some of the students in the first semester, particularly the North American students. An example of such reflection on communication with others from different international backgrounds can be seen in this excerpt:

I definitely think that a good portion of my education here is going to come from the students I am interacting with in addition to my reading and research and everything. You know, just the little nuances there every day, businesses culture, personal and social culture. You get that from interacting with people. (*American student 2*)

This offers some depth to the reflection which was greater in some students than others who reflected merely on the experience broadening horizons rather than on the way international learning could be achieved. The student was also reflective of how the communication with others in an educational environment would be useful in the future:

I think that there are a lot of parts of social nuances that translate into business. Maybe it's just kind of anything from the levels of intimacy when you are greeting another business person. For example, in France women kiss each other on either cheek and they think it's funny that being from the USA I would maybe shake somebody's hand or if I know them well enough to give them a hug, but obviously that's different in a business setting. That probably wasn't the best example but you know, I think that it will kind of give you a gauge for what cultures need a little more personal space when you're in business and what to expect and what not to expect. (*American student 1*)

The findings of the first semester in an international course, which by its very nature is a heterogeneous environment, would seem to support the view that 'international knowledgeability' needs to be honed. Much of the literature (Turner, 2006; Hyland et al, 2008; Trahar, 2009) concerning international students' experiences of higher education in the UK demonstrates that international students have difficulty in making the transition to their new educational environment. Figure 1 in Chapter One highlights that there are different layers to the students' cultural experience and creating a space for experience to be developed as a learning experience engaging with each of those layers is undoubtedly a necessary aspect of international higher education. The data demonstrated that engagement with the institutional layer required further discussion.

### ***Students' interactions with the institution***

We have already seen that there is a need for transparency as part of the joint degree experience. However the data evidences that this transparency was not always apparent with regard to the students' interactions with the London institution. An example of a student reacting to the British institution learning environment in what may be viewed as a distancing way is offered in the following extract:

They give me so many projects and you do it in groups and it gave me a shock...I have the skills to study again but I never had a dissertation like this. In 4 months you have 6 dissertations. Every day I'm so worried...every day I check with my parents, with my sister, I'm so worried about how I can pass this. (*Malaysian student*)

The issue is how to overcome the heterogeneous characteristics of the group and to develop a homogeneous environment, thus creating an identity with the institutions involved in the joint degree experience. The findings from the first semester suggest that this may not have been achieved in the London semester. An international environment in a cosmopolitan city does not automatically develop the ability for successful cultural interactions either between the students and the institution or between the students themselves. Again the development of cultural awareness needs to be honed.

McAllister et al (2006) recognise the importance of reflection on the part of an individual in developing general cultural awareness and the student's comments below illustrate a reflective tone in response to a question concerning the importance of living in another country to the development of cultural competence. One student reflected:

I think living is essential because it's one thing for me to say this is how we do it. That's me, this is my perception and it's as much as I want to share with you and it's almost theoretical versus practical. I can tell you how to get a phone but until you actually have to do it, you don't walk into the office, see what it smells like, and look at what the forms are. (*Canadian student*)

This hints at the experiential element of international higher education which is made reference to by Kehm and Teichler (2007). One of the ways of highlighting differences in culture is to produce cultural categories. An example is provided in Hofstede's (2003) work. He has produced the model by which most choose to base such generalisations and these can easily be applied to the educational forum. A further example is offered by Turner (2006) who highlights the differences between Chinese and British learners. Whilst it seems that generalisation is unavoidable to a certain extent, it is also important not to essentialise cultures in an educational space as there is a need to resolve the barriers in communication rather than enhance and entrench them. The opportunity for group work on the course provides a forum to address the possibilities offered by interacting within the heterogeneous group, thereby producing an opportunity for a homogeneity to develop within the group. If it is facilitated correctly, there are possibilities for intercultural learning. However, group work also has its risks (Turner, 2009) in terms of enhancing the fragmentation within the group and the data demonstrates that this was an issue in students' first semester as it was observed amongst some of the groups. The subject of group work is returned to in more depth in the next chapter.

## ***7. Concluding Comments***

The focus for this chapter has been to consider the case from a number of different perspectives in order to provide a fuller and richer description and to place the case within the wider field of international higher education. The definition of a joint degree was explored which was followed by a discussion of the dimensions of joint

degrees as part of an international higher education process. It was argued that joint degrees may be considered as presenting ethical questions for higher education institutions which are centred around issues of transparency and the quality of the academic experience. The relationship of these questions with regard to the experience of joint degrees was highlighted as being fundamental to that experience. The view of the UK government in the guise of the QAA was discussed. An example of another London higher education institution was provided in order to offer further validity to the case examined herein. The importance placed by the QAA on the quality of academic standards, liaison between institutions and warnings against acting for the sake of financial imperatives were acknowledged as being an important aspect to the experience of joint degrees. Consequently, it was necessary to examine the motivation of staff in the institutions for embarking on such collaborations and the relationship that the institutions have with each other. Through an examination and analysis of data, differences in institutional *modus docendi* became apparent as well as differences in the institutions' motivations for engaging in this form of international activity. The French do not accept government inspection and they have a financial imperative to course development as well as a 'global' branding perspective and desire for 'market' positioning. The approach to the achievement of learning outcomes, that stems from UK nationally determined requirements, on completion of the course is also a key difference between the two institutions. These differences pervade the experience and set a tone for the student experience of international postgraduate joint degrees which is multifaceted and complex. In addition, the QAA position does not appear to facilitate or work towards a harmonising position as advocated by Bologna.

Further to this institutional discussion, the data collected from observation and interviews with students at the early stage of their joint degree experience were also discussed in order to explore initial motivations and expectations so that a comparison could be made with the final semester views from the students. The observations aided in further building the rich picture of the case in terms of students' cultural interactions both inside and outside the classroom in the early stages of their experience. The picture that this data offered was of students' expectation of becoming international with their experience of a joint degree facilitating this by developing international skills from undertaking an international course. Their expectation was the reward of an international career, thus linking the importance of international higher education with its experience as well as institutional motivations for offering such courses. The data brought to the fore their negotiations with each other, in terms of the group relationships and classroom experience, negotiations with the institutions and with the host culture. It also highlighted the importance of culture both to the *modus docendi* and the *modus discendi* with regard to the joint degree experience and that 'international knowledgeability' needs to be honed and aided in its development, which proved difficult during the semester in London. The optimistic expressions by students of 'internationality' in the interviews contrasted somewhat with the observational data, where the difficulties that students had in negotiating with each other, the institutions and being able to operate in a new cultural environment could essentially be attributed to either cultural misunderstandings, differing cultural behaviours, or a lack of knowledge of 'others' cultural patterns of behaviour. An additional dimension to this was that the group was split between the more culturally homogenous group of French students and a heterogeneous group recruited from all over the world. A key aspect therefore of the international classroom in relation to

joint degrees is the need for the teaching and learning to incorporate the facilitation of intercultural awareness between not just the students, but also the staff and the students, in order to address some of the presumptions made of an 'international course' as well as enabling intercultural communication to take place.



## **CHAPTER FIVE – DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES IN THE *MODUS DOCENDI* AND *MODUS DISCENDI* AS PART OF THE JOINT DEGREE EXPERIENCE**

### ***1 . Introduction and Context***

This chapter considers the students' responses from the questionnaire data and student and staff interviews on the teaching and learning in each institution. The questionnaire responses were rated on a five-point scale and focused on the experience of various aspects of the teaching and learning in each institution and the effectiveness of the respective pedagogical approaches for the students' learning. Reference is also made to observation data. The final section of the chapter focuses on the issue of group work which became a major theme of the interview data.

The object of the analysis was to identify whether there were differences in the *modus docendi* (mode of teaching) of the institutions offering the joint Masters programmes and to consider this in relation to the student experience. These differences were considered in relation to the institutions and the students' *modus discendi* (mode of learning). In order to address the research question of whether studying in two countries adds anything to the international higher education process, there is also some further discussion of the benefits of experiencing difference in the learning context. The students' perceived difference in the *modus docendi* raises issues of the need for transparency and quality in relation to the academic experience for the students. A large differential in the *modus docendi* experienced by the students suggests that further emphasis needs to be placed on the ethical dimensions of international higher education, as highlighted by Altbach and Teichler (2001). It demands attention be given to the need to understand the way students engage with

and negotiate that difference. Transparency and communication would seem to be significant aspects of facilitating the students' *modus discendi*.

Chapter Two highlights that the Bologna process has promoted student mobility and that joint Masters programmes are becoming increasingly popular (Davies, 2009). Papatsiba's (2006) discussion of the lack of convergence of higher education systems in the EHEA - despite the harmonising aims of Bologna - raises questions with regard to the reality of the experience of education in the European area if harmonisation is at a superficial level only. This chapter considers this harmonisation at the student experience level and if there are differences, whether there is transparency with regard to the differences for those experiencing them.

The data illustrates that although ECTS<sup>26</sup> presents an example of some systems level convergence between the UK and France, there is little real convergence in terms of the experience of joint degrees. If this study can be considered to provide an example of EHEA activity, what might be considered as being convergence at policy level may be at the expense of, and without the acknowledgement of, the student experience. The students' negotiations of difference require more than alignment of ECTS credits to overcome the issues of difference. This lack of any real convergence is echoed by Papastiba (2006).

The literature as discussed in Chapter Two indicates that there are identifiable national approaches to education. However, notions of national *modus docendi* need to be loosely defined as there is variation between institutions. We might observe that there

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<sup>26</sup> European Credit Transfer System

are huge variations in the application of but not necessarily the essence of the *modus docendi* within the UK itself. Despite this variation there is a cultural difference with institutions and the *modus docendi* in France. This difference is further complicated by the binary system of higher education in France which appears to be particular to France (Blanchard, 2009). There are large differences in the environment, constituency, entrance requirements, and *modus docendi* in the elite *Grandes Écoles* (Bourdieu 1989, Blanchard, 2009) compared to the state universities in France, and UK universities. The findings herein point to pedagogical differences at a national level which is echoed in Alexander's (2000) work on culture and pedagogy. This difference was observed by students and staff in interviews. Interviews with students from all three joint degree programmes showed little variation with regard to this issue, indicating variations in the subject within the business field would appear to be negligible compared to the cultural differences between England and France.

This chapter illustrates that the pedagogical approach in the *Grande École* is preferable to students from countries other than the UK and France. The students indicate a preference for the teaching and learning in the *Grande École* because of the small classes and the longer amounts of time in class, as well as the amount of information provided by tutors.

## ***2. Differences in Education Systems***

Following on from the comments above, the data from this research supports Papatsiba's (2006) argument that there is no evidence of convergence of education systems at structural and process level. It demonstrates that, at the student experience

level, there is a very real difference between the institutions which stems from the culturally and historically based national differences in educational approach (Deer 2002). This question of culture within higher education is a theme that runs throughout this thesis and the focus here is on the differences in teaching and learning approaches that are a consequence of national cultural differences.

### *The educational environment of the Grandes Écoles*

We can observe that an additional dimension to the ‘dealing with difference’ discourse, is difference within the French higher education system itself, that is, the *Grand École* system, which is particular to France. On the international stage *Grandes Écoles* present themselves as a natural ally to higher education institutions involved in commercial activity. They are competitive, elite schools that are focused on market perceptions and demand, compared to the French state institutions which offer education on an open access basis. However, the French view of higher education is, as Deer (2002) comments, not particularly geared towards the harmonising drivers of European policy, which was confirmed in interviews with French staff. Deer cites both issues in admission policies and practices and the recognition of qualifications and questions from those who work in these elite institutions (Deer, 2002) as difficulties that arise from the French system. These difficulties at the micro level of institutional collaboration represent differences between the UK and French institution. Many of the students from the French institution have entered the *Grande École* two years previously through the *Classes Préparatoires* route followed by the *Concours*<sup>27</sup>, that elite *Grandes Écoles* stage. For these students, the London-based

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<sup>27</sup> Competitive oral entrance examination

semester is in the third year of their studies at the French institution. This is another difference with the students recruited to the London institution, who had all completed an undergraduate degree in another institution either in the UK or another country. There is therefore a clear difference between the 'homogenous group' from France and the 'heterogeneous group' at the London institution. From the data there was no evidence that the students were informed of this difference by the institutions. Many commented on this lack of information with regard to the differences. Another example is offered by the grading schemes between the two institutions, which resulted in confusion to many students. It illustrates a lack of transparency with these joint degrees. Whether this experience can be applied more generally is open to question but this case demonstrates communication gaps with students that are often overlooked by staff and institutions.

With regard to the issue of partnerships, Deer comments with regard to *Grandes Écoles* that:

For professionals in institutions with the highest social status, entering into a partnership with foreign institutions or individuals has been a particularly difficult exercise for they have needed to select their partners, students or institutions carefully not only to preserve their status but also to satisfy their interests both at national and international level... the professional elite has appeared divided on this matter... (Deer, 2002:157-158).

This tension was evident in the French institution and communication sometimes suffered as a result. It was witnessed in comments on the relationship between the two institutions by some of the students recruited by the London institution. In addition, there appeared to be little acknowledgement that any awareness of the *Grande École* system is generally limited to France. Blanchard (2009) acknowledges

this. This section has argued that difference is fundamental to the joint degree experience, seen in this section as differences stemming from the French system but we may observe that communication of that difference is also fundamental to that experience.

### ***The educational environment of post-92 institutions***

Whilst the French system of higher education evidences very clear differences between elite institutions (*Grandes Écoles*) and the State funded universities with open access to all, the British system also portrays difference. This difference can be seen between the post-92 institutions (the former Polytechnics) and the pre-92 institutions, with the post-92 institutions continuing to offer more vocationally oriented qualifications and often requiring lower entrance qualifications. The past ten years has seen a blurring of this difference however, with many post-92 competing successfully, particularly in international markets with some of the pre-92s on an equal basis and many pre-92 institutions offering more vocationally oriented courses. Even Oxford and Cambridge have established successful Business Schools.

This study focuses on the experience of a post-92 institution and represents to some extent, this blurring of boundaries. As yet, few institutions offer such joint double Masters opportunities and as a consequence the entry requirements for the courses examined in the study were higher than those for other Masters courses in the institution. The institution in the study was able to boast, this can be seen in the Dean's comments in the interview excerpt below, of achieving the very highest inspection scores from the QAA for both its teaching delivery and for its collaborative

links quality monitoring. Despite this, the data evidences criticism of the London institution, both on the part of the students and the staff in the French institution.

### ***Differences in the courses at each institution***

The structure of the courses is made reference to again below in order to underline the complexity of the levels of difference involved.

All students on the International Marketing Communications course commence their studies in the UK, with a cohort recruited from all over the world and a cohort recruited through the *Grande École*. Therefore, the French recruited cohort consists of nearly all French nationals with very few direct entrants to what is the final and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the ESC<sup>28</sup> programme. As part of the joint Masters students take three modules in their first semester in the UK which are delivered over the course of a term and require students to be in class for nine hours per week. Students travel to France at the end of January and undertake a further eight modules of study for the International Marketing Communications course, which are delivered in weekly blocks with one week of teaching and one week of group work for each module. This teaching culminates in an exam for each of the modules at the end of the semester. For the other two Masters programmes students are required study for six modules in the French institution delivered in block format and requiring approximately 25 hours per week in class. Following the taught aspects of the course, students are required to complete an internship and a dissertation. The French students are required to hand in

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<sup>28</sup> The École Supérieure de Commerce Programme (ESC) programme is normally 3 years following two years of *classes préparatoire* after the Baccalaureate. It is the main programme of study offered in all *Grandes Écoles* that are members of the *Chapitre des Grandes Écoles*.

the dissertation for the French institution in early September whereas the students recruited through the London institution are required to complete this by a different date in September or by the following January. This structural variance was built in to address institutional regulatory differences, for example, many of the French students had already undertaken an internship and were required to complete their *Diplôme de Conférence des Grandes Écoles*, by a September deadline. This is just one example of the national differences in the approach to course delivery and required quality procedures. There are a number of these differences which can be viewed as having stemmed from national cultural differences. For example, whilst both schools are Business Schools, the French are funded through the Chamber of Commerce and require annual monitoring<sup>29</sup> to take place through a panel which has industry representation, whilst the London segment of the course is offered in a faculty of a UK state funded university and is monitored by the QAA.

### ***The students' perceptions of difference***

The collaboration of the two institutions could be perceived as a challenge, given the difference in national systems as well as the national status of each institution. The questionnaire data presents a disparity in the students' responses to each institution which is further explained through some of the interview excerpts provided below. The ethos of each institution was remarkably different. The French institution's message of elitism and the potential for future employment was witnessed in observations of the interactions between the students and the institutions and was supported by the open ended responses in the questionnaire. In contrast the London

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<sup>29</sup> A British term and process, there is not really a French equivalent

institution had a very different ethos and the possibility of future management employability was not constantly reinforced. This represents another level of difference and challenge for the joint degree experience. Deer's (2002) detailed discussion of British and French education aids in understanding the differences with the French system, in particular the ethos underpinning the elite French schools of business. This ethos falls in line with Bourdieu's (1989) analysis of French higher education with its emphasis on the acquisition of cultural capital. This aspect of French culture was represented in the tone and comments of French students in the interviews, in contrast with students recruited by the London institution. Although the interviews in the first semester underlined the importance of the acquisition of English as a skill to improve employment prospects by nearly all the students, the French students emphasised this more strongly as they regarded the acquisition of such cultural capital to be strongly linked to their future employment prospects. These two concepts were clearly connected in their responses. Darricotte and McColl (2008) further underline the elitism of the "classical system of French education" in their pragmatic discussion on how to deal with diversity in French Business Schools.

### *The students' perceptions of prestige*

The embedding of ideas of elitism naturally leads to an emphasis on hierarchy which is expressed in the most basic way by the importance given to league table positioning. This was evident at both an institutional and student level in the French institution.

The importance of league tables and market positioning is discussed in detail by Blanchard (2009) as part of her analysis of the management of French *Grande Écoles*. It was echoed in interviews with students in this study who made reference to the London institution's lack of position in the league tables. An example is given by a French student who concludes that the lack of reference to position must mean that the London institution is low in the tables. A French student observed:

My point is the first time it was in the league it was not so high, very, very, very low. It was one of the last so everybody thinks okay it's so bad that you... they don't want to be in this position. It's part of the game and for a business position it's not so good but I don't agree with newspapers, there is some influence, some advertising, it's part of the game. (*French student*)

This observation by this French student, whilst badly expressed, suggests that the lack of league position is the very worst position for an institution. French students regard the *Grande École* league table position as important for their future and influential in their experience of their education. A lack of league table position could impact on the future employability of the students enrolled, which would be unthinkable for the *Grande École*. The tone of the comments is critical and a lot of emphasis was given to future employment prospects by many of the French students in their interviews. Observations also evidenced the competitive positioning of each institution with regard to each other as well as the elite positioning of the French institution at various points during research contact with the students but its elite branding was also visible in all the French promotional material. The importance of the name and positioning of the school should therefore be borne in mind as having an extremely influential role in students' responses and expressions of their experiences. Most of the students demonstrated an awareness of the differing league table positions of each institution.

The interviews provided further insight into the opinions of the French students with regard to the importance of reputation. Generally, despite the elite claims made by the staff at the French institution most students regarded the French institution as a middle ranking institution but the highest ranking *Grande École* to which they could gain admission following their *Classes Préparatoires*<sup>30</sup>.

***The students' perceptions of pedagogy: differences in the modus docendi***

This theme of difference is visible on closer inspection of the *modus docendi* of each institution. Whilst the interview responses reinforce the questionnaire findings that students expressed a preference for the French system due to more class time and information<sup>31</sup> provided by tutors, a more complicated picture emerges through analysis of the interviews. For the French students, it became evident that this preference was also influenced by where students completed their undergraduate education, whether this was at a state French institution or whether they were ESC<sup>32</sup>*Grande École* students. Although this more complicated picture must be borne in mind, there is a clear critique made by the students of the learning and teaching at the London institution<sup>33</sup> but also more generally of the UK's *modus docendi*, with its emphasis on independent study and less class contact time. We can generalise here, as we saw in Chapter Two, that independent study and class contact times are similar in many UK institutions.

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<sup>30</sup> Specialist schools that take students for two years post-Baccalaureate and prepare them for the entrance exam (The *Concours*) to the *Grande École*.

<sup>31</sup> Such as lecture notes and journal articles and relevant textbook chapters

<sup>32</sup> Many French students are ESC (*École Supérieure de Commerce*) students, they study at the *Grande École* for 3 years and gain a *Diplôme de Conférences des Grandes Écoles*.

<sup>33</sup> The London institution received a "broad confidence" rating from the QAA for the university as a whole and for its partnership audit

It should also be borne in mind that overseas students come to the UK with what Welikala and Watkins (2008) describe as differing cultural scripts which will dictate, to a greater or a lesser extent, the adaptability or ease of transition of those students to the UK system. The data discussed below highlights that this transitional process does not happen as smoothly in the UK as it does in France which as I surmise is for a number of reasons, with class contact time or the format for that contact time being two of those reasons.

Some context is provided by Teichler (1998) which helps understand why this is the case:

Administrators, academics and students are so much socialized to take the national conditions of HE for granted that they are hardly aware of the extent to which they are national rather than global players (1998:88).

This socialisation is reflected in the *modus discendi* for each student. The *modus docendi* is inevitably and inextricably linked to national frameworks for education and a culturally steeped activity. Thus the experience of the joint degree is fraught with the potential for misunderstanding and miscommunication. This is particularly true for the communication in a classroom context which takes on greater importance when mobility occurs from one national framework to another. The effect is enhanced when this takes place within what is effectively only nine months. Encountering different pedagogies and understanding the expectations of the different approaches to teaching and learning, requires students to exist outside their own expectations and understandings, in addition to coping with the stresses of living and studying in another country (Bamford 2008).

### 3. The Demographic Background of the Students

The data presented here is from the questionnaire that was issued to the International Marketing Communications students at the end of the semester in France in two consecutive years, with n = 64 from a possible 108. The demographic breakdown of these respondents as representative of the total sample is provided in Table 4 below.

**Table 5 – Representative demographic statistics for students undertaking International Marketing Communications**

Demographics of Respondents (n= 64)	
UK <sup>34</sup>	10
France	22
Other	32
ESCEM	21
Average Age	24.2
Males	15
Females	48
Parents with degree(Father)	19
Parents with degree(Mother)	19
Parents with Masters	27
Parents with Doctorate	22
Studied Abroad before	31
Worked abroad	37
Travelled widely (overseas)	35
Travelled on holiday	58

It is worth noting that 76.1% of the respondents are female, that French students constitute 34.3%, with the majority of the respondents having come from ‘other’ countries. These were: Canada; USA; Greece; Italy; Germany; Egypt; Venezuela;

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<sup>34</sup> This is to some extent an anomalous figure as the London institution did not define them as UK students for fees purposes, (their country of domicile and education being overseas) -only 1 was defined as a UK student

Nigeria; Russia; Netherlands; Denmark; Turkey; Thailand; India; Norway; Brazil; Slovakia; Albania; Cayman Islands; Spain; and Japan. As would be expected in terms of social economic class predictors for those doing Masters programmes, most have parents that had undertaken higher education, with 34.3% having parents with Doctorates, 48.4% have studied abroad prior to undertaking this course and 54.6% had travelled widely, with 90.6% of respondents having previously travelled abroad on holiday. This demonstrated overwhelmingly that students have had exposure to other cultures through travel prior to joining the course, thus diminishing the arguments for joint degrees being a means of developing global perspectives for students. However, it may also be argued that the previous travel experienced by students was limited by a tourist perspective with only a superficial understanding of other cultures being achieved. The data appears to point to travel experience offering little in terms of a significant understanding of the cultures of the host countries, including the ways the higher educational systems differ in their pedagogical approach. Even though some have studied abroad before, it was clear from interviews with those students that this had not aided in managing the difference between the institutions.

#### ***4. The Student Experience of Each Institution***

The following table presents an analysis of various aspects of the students' teaching and learning experiences at the London and the French institution. On the face of it, the results present a rather stark contrast between the experiences of the students at the UK institution and the experiences of the students at the French institution. The final column shows the French responses (34.3% of the students) only, to illustrate that there is little difference between their views and the views of all the respondents.

**Table 6 – The Experience of Teaching and Learning at Each Institution**

<b>Teaching and Learning Experiences at Both Institutions</b>	<b>Total Responses of Good and Very Good as Percentages</b>	<b>Percentage of total of French only responses</b>
London: Course Structure	15	18.18
France: Course Structure	55	45.45
London: Independent Research	33	31.8
France: Independent Research	38	31.8
London: Module Content	49	9
France: Module content	63	63.6
London: Assessment Methods	20.6	27.27
France: Assessment Methods	39.6	45.45
London: Information Provided in Class	15	27.27
France: Information Provided in Class	67	72.72
London: Lectures	20.6	18.18
France: Lectures	63.4	63.18
London Seminars	17.4	22.7
France: Seminars	52.3	63.6
London: Independent Reading	42.8	36.36
France: Independent Reading	47.6	45.45
London: Group work	42.8	45.45
France: Group work	60.3	72.72
London: Access and Availability of Tutors	34.9	31.31
France: Access and Availability of Tutors	55.5	63.6

The figures in the table are presented as cumulative totals of the rated responses of good or very good of the student responses to a question asking them to rate their experiences of each item listed at each institution. The question posed in the questionnaire asked for a response for the French institution and the London institution thus allowing a direct comparison to be made on the basis of a Likert scale from 1-5, with 1 being very poor and 5 being very good for the aspects of teaching and learning listed above in each institution. In order to be able to manage the data in a representational format the frequency scores for good and very good were added together. The French students were extracted and are represented as percentages in the table above in column two. These students may be seen as different and distinct from the rest of the cohort as they have already been studying in the French institution for one or two years prior to going to London. Their semester in London therefore seems to be regarded more as a study abroad pathway rather than an integrated joint programme of study. This view was reinforced from the French students interviewed during their semester in London. Given this additional dimension to the respondents it was important to separate their responses to identify if there was any significant difference. The table indicates that this was not the case and, in some instances, the French response was more favourable to the London institution than the aggregated ratings of all the respondents. However, there is still a clear preference expressed by the French students for the teaching and learning methods employed in the French institution. If we look at some of the high scores given for aspects of teaching and learning there is a higher percentage of the total responses that come from French students: for example, the group work rating at the French institution is 72.72% compared to the total respondents rating as good or very good of 60.3%. What is surprising is that 55% of students felt the course structure was better in France. The

course was designed jointly but students responded that they felt there was a better structure in France. However, it also underlines the difficulties in realising a joint degree experience for students. The institutions appear to have left an impression of two separate courses rather than a joint course. This underlines a lack of communication of ‘jointness’ from the institutions.

### ***Open- ended questions on teaching and learning***

Respondents were also asked to provide a further explanation of their experiences using open-ended questions. Some examples of these responses are included below as they offer further insight into the experience of joint degrees that was not given in the confines of an interview exchange. The responses to these questions reinforce the findings from the interview data of a dislike by most for independent learning and of the difference in the *modi docendi* between the two institutions. There was little apparent change from the responses given at the start on their course, highlighted in Chapter Four:

I wasn't expecting the fact that in England the teaching is so light and they expect you to work a lot at home (*French student*)  
I realised the big difference between the two different education systems and that was a huge surprise. The practical approach of the French system was something more close to my educational background in contrast with the English individual research that took me a while to adapt (*Greek student*)

These important comments illustrate a lack of expectation of difference. This was reflected in comments from other students and was also reflected in interview responses explaining why the French institution may have received higher ratings. Table 5 demonstrates a clear preference for the lectures, seminars, course structure,

assessment methods and availability of tutors as implemented in the French institution, with a significantly higher percentage rating of either good or very good being awarded. Again the responses to the open-ended question on the differences shed more light:

It was very difficult for me to adapt myself to the English education system: there were few hours in class, a lot of readings. I prefer my own education system, I feel that I learn more that way (*French student*)  
In London the classes were too infrequent whilst in France there were too many. (*UK student*)

The part of the adaption I was most dissatisfied with was the lack of explanation about grading system differences, the extremely long lag between learning grades from the London institution and the French institution so if there was a discrepancy it was too late to do anything about it and lastly the lack of clear objective for the assessments, ...otherwise it was very vague and made the grades appear to arbitrarily assigned. (*USA student*)

This last comment was one of many similar comments made with regard to grading criteria and difficulties in adjusting to the differences. Perhaps this reflects the discomfort with the different teaching and learning approaches of each institution with, seemingly, a lack of cohesion and transparency between the two, which is so necessary according to Altbach and Teichler (2001). The last sentence from the US student has a critical tone, particularly with regard to academic standards.

### ***French students' views***

As the French students represented a large identifiable cohort whose experience of the joint degree varied from those recruited by the London institution, this section pays particular attention to their views on difference. The French students were more homogenous in cultural terms if we use nationality as a defining characteristic. In comparison to some of the comments made above, one French student felt that

adaptation was not the problem but the quality level which was sometimes inconsistently high and low in both institutions. Similar responses were reflected in other comments. An excerpt from another French student on the Finance Masters programme reinforces the perspective of the French students on the differences between two institutions:

I don't know if the others will agree with me but I think it's basically a difference in philosophy, goal of the studies. In France, business schools tend to project to make the students professionally ready at the moment they graduate,...technical or most of the technical issues understood and be able to use them. And almost not any information training once they get in companies, only just to adapt themselves to the new way of working. Whereas in England and not only England but all universities using Anglo Saxon model around the world, they tend more to make the students adaptable and be able to catch up very fast, and be able to adapt and understand any new type of work, any new field very quickly. That's the example I get from friends where I have for instance friends who did anthropology at LSE and she got recruited in bank for instance. Because she had very good grades in this field and she was really able to catch up extremely fast. Whereas in France it's something you don't really see. You go in field while you are studying and you stay in this field at least for the first year...(French Finance Masters student 1)

The benefits of a liberal education have been commented on by Palfreyman (2008). The excerpt above appears to echo notions of the development of critical thinking skills in British universities. It belies the view that overseas students have no awareness of the expectations of the London institution. It does however reinforce the differences in the *modus docendi*. The comments of another student, again from the Finance course, were pragmatic and offered a different view of higher education in terms of dealing with disciplining the young and 'forcing' them to engage with their academic studies:

Our system in France is based in such a way that you force the students, because you know that they are not going to work because they have a social life, too. And very young and they want to enjoy. So in such a way

that they force students to work on a daily basis. Like week per week per week, because if you don't work for 3 weeks you are going to have forgotten one month after what you did before. So it bets on the fact that students won't work ...while here it's the opposite. You're students, you pay, so you are responsible, so you are supposed to work at home at least 5 hours per hour of class. (*French Finance Masters student 2*)

Students may prefer the more directed pedagogical approach of the French institution and this is the reason for the learning experience ratings receiving more favourable evaluations. This preference lies in contradiction to the prevalence of group work on all the courses. The unpopularity of group work is returned to later in the chapter.

### ***Differences with regard to the use of group work at each institution***

The issue of group work is discussed here with regard to the theme of difference. Comments on the group work were negative both in terms of the amount required and the assessments, although there was a significantly higher score from the French students in the questionnaire for the group work at the French institution. Group work received a 42.8% rating as good or very good at the London institution and 60.8% at the French institution from all students. The French respondents rated group work in London as 45.45% and in France as 72.72%. An analysis of the amount of group work at the French institution for the International Marketing Communications course demonstrates that the first assessment for all eight modules in the French institution is based on a group work report. With regard to this issue a Nigerian/US student commented:

The educational experience and standards were too varied which made working in groups very difficult at times i.e.: people not showing up, not contributing etc, considering a large part of our grades is based we were not prepared/given any guidance as to how to manage groups. I

expected/preferred to have more theory in France. There was a lot of wasted time in France because of the course structure...more hours in class would be great. (*Nigerian student*)

This comment illustrates a more complex picture than the statistics in Table 5 above suggest. It also demonstrates the difficulties of working in groups for students with different cultural scripts (Welikala and Watkins, 2008). In addition not all students had a preference for the course structure in France, although it does underline the preference for more time in class.

As stated earlier, in France the term for the marketing course is divided into blocks for the eight modules with each module being taught in a block for a week and the second week being given for group work activities. An assessment takes place at the end of the second week. The Tourism and Finance students did not have a week off for their group work but the intensive group work activity was a feature for all the courses.

Again we can see a more complicated picture emerging than the questionnaire responses suggest. Many of the French marketing students were concerned that the structure of the course in France was not delivering the model they expected from the *Grande École* system, as they were only getting half the anticipated time in class with a week off every other week. The student's comments about group work above were reflected in most students' comments to varying degrees. The group work discussion is returned to in the final section of this chapter where the *ways* students learn in the group environment as well as the implications for their *modus discendi* are considered in more depth.

### *Tutor perspectives*

The responses regarding the questions on independent learning require further exploration, as both institutions received very similar scores with regard to the requirement for independent reading. The London institution received a 42.8% rating as good or very good and the French institution received 47.6%. An analysis of interviews conducted with staff and students indicate that students are required to undertake little independent research in France and that the majority of information is given in class. From the interviews it appears that in France, 75% of the information for students' courses is provided by tutors in class with the remaining 25% being gathered independently outside class. One student explained this as 75/25, (independent learning/information provided in class) for the UK and vice versa for the French institution. The score for the London institution's independent reading therefore takes on a much greater value as it is based on students' use of libraries and online databases, rather than the reading pack which is given out by tutors to each student at the French institution. This fundamental difference in approach was confirmed through observational data, including an inspection of the library facilities at the French institution, as well as interviews with members of staff at the French institution. An excerpt from the transcript of one of these interviews provided some interesting insights into the teaching and learning approach at the French institution. This transcript is taken from an interview with the English Course Leader of the international marketing programme. His tone and use of language underlined a clear view of difference that appears to be negative with regard to the French approach. This could be explained as his difficulty in accepting the differing pedagogical approaches of Britain and France and is therefore not a criticism that is grounded in an

epistemological framework. What we can take from the excerpt however is the acknowledgement of a lack of coherence and transparency in the two parts of the course:

Tutor 1(T1): Yes, one thing that I haven't quite got my mind around yet is this question of the comparative level of study for what is allegedly an integrated coherent Masters qualification.

Interviewer (I): That's an interesting question

T1: It is a very interesting question. And I'd be very interested to stick my nose in some other *Grande École* and see where they come out. But there appears to be still some gap between our respective understandings... I'd say they had a very distorted view about what a Masters experience is.

I: In what sense?

T1: I'd say that they are not required or encouraged to develop skills which Masters students here would take for granted, particularly in terms of assimilation of theory, critical thinking. Even fairly rudimentary research.

I: But then you say, almost half the course in France is taught by London tutors?

T1: Yes, a bit less than half. Three modules out of eight are taught by London people. But –

I: The two bits – it doesn't add up?

T1: Well they add when you know that those three people have to water down quite substantially the content of what they deliver in order to deliver it there. When you start out, you start out delivering what you think should be delivered at Masters level and then you find out that they actually aren't enjoying it or they don't like it or they don't do it very well or they complain. And so you water it down, that's what I've done progressively. So I'm very popular there now but it's because I deliver something which is closer to undergraduate level than Masters level.

This particular interview presented an extremely critical perspective and displayed a considerable amount of angst so therefore should be viewed with some caution. It illustrates difference, and a lack of transparency. Frustration is also expressed with that difference. He also appears to demonstrate that he is being pressured into doing something that he is not happy with. The differences that he alludes to, particularly with reference to standards, appear to justify the view taken by the QAA which was discussed in Chapter Four. An example of another of the London tutors' views who

teaches at the French institution suggests that the teaching approach was more akin to MBA teaching. Again an excerpt is provided to aid in understanding the differences in the *modus docendi*. The first comment is made by the interviewer who is attempting to seek clarification that the secretary to the course in France finds the research papers for the students:

Interviewer (I): You identify the journal articles and V finds them.

Tutor 3(T3): For each lecture yes.

I: For the students and gives them to them for each lecture. So for a whole week it must be quite a lot of material.

T3: There is four lectures I do, four stroke five so there's five papers.

I: Is that... when you say lectures how long are those?

T3: They're three hours.

I: Three hour lecture, do you break that up at all because here that would be a long..

T3: Yes, there is one break.

I: Do the students find that quite tough, because a three hour lecture is..

T3: No, they've nothing else for the rest of the day.

I: But there is not actually a seminar as such then, it's just literally..

T3: No its five mornings for one group, five afternoons for another group with the idea that you are giving them stuff to do every day.

I: Do you do any sort of seminar work based on their reading or it's literally you give them information.

T3: No because there is a need to set them up for the assessment, and to fulfil the criteria, to pump out a module worth of learning in five days, which is as the notion is it's ten lectures that's the maths. So they get ten, and in fact they get two.. I think that's the deal.

I: They get less learning than they get in London in one sense for the actual subject?

T3: They don't get the seminars formally I suppose they're getting two hours of lectures and one hour seminar notionally.

I: It doesn't work like that from what you're saying, because you've got to get through the..

T3: The numbers are the same okay, the maths is the same. It would be wrong to say the maths are wrong and people do it in different ways but I..I tend to teach in a slightly MBA way which there is a lecture then there is a discussion and stuff, it isn't a hard...the lines aren't as hard, they don't have to be as hard as with an undergraduate class of 80, it's a graduate class of 40-30, some of them will want to be involved and...

At this point the transcript gives the impression that the lecturer is not comfortable with giving this level of detail, and gives the impression of being rather stressed. There could be a number of reasons for this but clearly in terms of what is said about the nature of delivery, from this and other comments, the reality for the marketing course is that the students receive only marginally more teaching time per subject and less time with their lecturer in the French institution. For the other courses the more standard format for *Grandes Écoles* is followed with regard to the amount of teaching, with classes taking place from 9-12 and 2-5 each day. There is also a clear emphasis on processing the teaching in an intensive way, as opposed to encouraging a ‘*philomathic*<sup>35</sup>’ mode in the students. Fish (2013) echoes the need for business curricula to be centred around a more philosophical approach to learning. This lecturer then went on to say he provides briefing notes for the Course Leader at the French institution who holds tutorials if students request them during the week they are doing their group work. The students are therefore provided with all the reading they need and no extra research is required. The French students on this course outlined their concern about the week on/week off format, probably because it does not represent the standard *Grande École* format. Despite this, there was still more class time for the students and 63.3% preferred the lectures in France. The dependence on part-time lecturing staff appears to be a common occurrence in *Grandes Écoles*, as this is made reference to by Daricotte and McColl (2008). The transcript excerpt below provides an example of this. It is from an interview with two of the French students and highlights their uncertainty as demonstrated through their pauses, whilst not wishing to express direct criticism of their school:

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<sup>35</sup> Love of learning

French student 1 (F1): It will be different because we know that we won't have classes every week, one week class one week off, so it's a bit .....

Interviewer (I): That's not normal in..

F1: No that's not.

French student 2 (F2): Generally it's more like college we have....

I: How come, is that... do you know why it's one week off and one week on?

F2: We are supposed to work on our group project during the week off and [one word] lecture week in.

I: Are you worried about that?

F1: A bit. I hope we will have things to do because when one week off it's like one week holidays, so it's..

F2: I will need some time to organise my work life because...

The final assessments take place at the end of term and take the form of written exams. There are no revision classes held and no further contact with tutors once the week of teaching is concluded although tutors mark the group work. All of the first assessments for each module in France are written pieces of group work. A more detailed discussion of group work assessment is provided in the second part of this chapter.

### ***Why are there differences between tutor and student perspectives?***

It may be that what we have to deduce from this mixed picture is that most international students see their experience at the French institution as better than it actually is. This claim can be made as more in depth probing on teaching and learning approaches with both staff and students does not provide any evidence of a (much) better educational experience apart from greater satisfaction with small classes.

Perhaps what is being underlined here is that (ideally) the British *modus docendi* reflects a traditional approach aimed at developing critical thinking skills. The French

approach seems to be suited to international students who appreciate more contact time and information provided by tutors as well as a closer interaction with tutors (even if it is only the one tutor). The French institution's Course Leader for the Finance Masters commented:

We are slaves to the students, they email at 2 in the morning and expect a response, the questionnaire does not indicate the way we have to work.  
(*French Course Leader of the Finance Course*)

The more intimate and caring environment, the focus on activities with each other, together with an approach to the subject that is more pragmatic than theoretical would appear to contribute to the favourable student responses in the questionnaire. This intimate environment encourages a *philomathic* aspect to the *modus discendi* which is as a consequence of and is dependent on the students' relationality in the international classroom. Again national approaches to higher education are important here. The following comments from a French student at the French institution sum up the views of French students generally with regard to their preferences for the style of pedagogy at a *Grande École*:

I: Some people would describe the French *Grande École* system as elite, what's your view of that?

F: For the business school yes, because I don't know exactly how it works here but you have to pay in front the fees of the school so it's quite expensive, of course most expensive than the university which is free to study so the people who go in the..

I: So why didn't you go to university?

F: Because business schools are better especially for commercial and marketing or all that stuff.

I: You deliberately chose a school to get a good job?

F: Yes. Because especially the way to teach is completely different in the university there is like here, how you are not alone but you really have to work by your own and in the business school you have more courses more hours in the week and you have projects, I think it suited best for me, it was the best.

I: Why, why do you say that?

F: Because it was three years ago, so I think three years ago I needed to have some guidance. And last month the way they teach in the business school are closest to the professional atmosphere when you work in..

I: How do you know that, have you worked professionally or were you told that?

F: Before the Business School I did some two internship so I already knew this how it works.

I: They concentrate on practical skills as opposed to academic.

F: Yes to some help, we have theories in business school of course but we are to apply them in a professional project. (*French Marketing student*)

What is very clear from this dialogue is the focus given by the student to their future employment. Their *modus discendi* is therefore directly linked to their professional future and cannot be seen as *philomathic* in the general sense. For the international students the environment creates a dependence on each other which builds their relationality in connection with their learning. The two are therefore linked and result in a positive experience for most students at the French institution. Perhaps we can observe that the French approach is more suited to delivering a more generic level of education for all which is preferred by international students.

### ***5. The 'Marketing' Perspective***

We need to consider whether this positive view of the French experience is, when compared to the experience in the UK, the consequence of a more successful marketing or branding effort on the part of the French institution, thus indicating another clear difference. This emphasis on image and commercial activity by French business schools is commented on by Blanchard (2009) who demonstrates the competitive nature of the French schools.

The focus by the French institution on marketing themselves was also commented on by some of the students. Certainly, one of the students was very critical of the outward looking focus of the French institution which had little regard for the ethical dimension of the engagement with the students. The student came to the marketing communications course from an academic position in a Canadian university and was more reflective than others, in terms of the content of the course, what she learnt, and on the practices she witnessed. Again the cultural and academic background of the student bears some relation to the views expressed:

Canadian student (C): My real problem was fundamentally as I think I'm buying a degree. It's very – from my perspective, extremely superficial.

Interviewer (I): In London or in France or both?

C: In France. In London, I had some real problems with the class sizes and the contact with the instructors. And I wrote this to someone and asked, that I was a cash cow being moved through with as little contact and institutional resuscitation as possible...But, I talked to the instructors individually and I thought they were phenomenal in their response to me, maybe because I was in the middle of a personal crisis. But we all had a textbook regardless of some of the content, I felt the courses were quite light. But I could have [*inaudible*] the library resources were good, I did end up picking up articles and looking at, maybe because I was thinking about a dissertation. But I actually did independent research in London. I don't think anybody does independent research here.

This last sentence is an important observation and echoes earlier comments and the fundamental differences in the *modus docendi* in the two institutions. Whilst these comments provide some useful insight into this joint degree experience the cultural context of the students must be borne in mind. This student comes from Western Canada, so an understanding of the British system is to be expected. Despite this there is criticism of class sizes and contact time, resulting in a feeling of neglect. A reference to standards – where she states she is “buying a degree” is highly critical. There was an undercurrent of this critique elsewhere in the data but a lack of

willingness by students to express it more openly for fear of undermining their educational achievement.

When asked to reflect further on the more favourable view of the French institution, she made the following comments:

A small group, seminar style, you're in touch with your instructor, there's lots of discussion of ideas. Hands on, you feel like you're engaged. Yes, all of those things are Masters level but from my perspective as an instructor, it's very superficial. I'm sorry but if I do the analysis – ... I get 12 hours of instruction without a textbook, that's less than my first year students get. I'm thinking my gosh, I'm too hard on my students. I think there are those things that make them think they are part of an institution, part of a university. They're important, they're in a class, they're in a cohort, whereas it's very easy to lose that sense in London...They weren't kept constantly reminded that they're elite students in their dissertation. So I think that's part of the reason that they think that. One of the things, reasons I suggested to P in her cultural relations is the person I was talking to yesterday said to me, when I complained about not having a textbook and not having reading. They said no, well that's the French style, you expect that you are just going to copy down the words of your instructor. That was an epiphany for me because I kept thinking is this just a chintzy school? Or is it French education? And I didn't know who to blame.  
*(Canadian student)*

These comments are corroborated by those of Tutor 1 and represent a more critical view of the experience in France. This also underlines that little explanation is provided of the differences in teaching and learning approaches between the institutions, resulting in student confusion. The much needed transparency is therefore missing. Further, the communication gap is brought into focus by the fact that these comments came from a student working in education, who is a native speaker of English. One can only wonder at the miscommunication for others as a consequence of differences in cultural norms and language.

The effects of market orientation, and the contemporary culture of PR or 'spin' on schools is referred to by Green (1997) and this can be applied to higher education. Therefore the response to entrepreneurialism in higher education is not feeding the curricula in the way that Temple (2009) suggests that it should do in the UK. The student's comments above (F) point to the fact that this was the case for the French institution. For them the focus of the curriculum innovation appears to be the professional domain. It is argued here that the French institution is adept in adopting the commercial culture of the contemporary international higher education environment. The UK HEIs benefit from this international commercial environment in terms of student recruitment, with the large number of international students recruited to UK institutions being well documented at 418,000 in 2008/9 (HESA). However, they have not developed their 'customer care' policies, and evidence of international student dissatisfaction is well documented, (Bamford *et al*, 2006). The responses from this questionnaire confirm this dissatisfaction and perhaps raise questions for UK HEIs that need to be addressed if the UK wishes to maintain its present successful position in the international higher education market. Large class sizes, and few contact hours on the basis of this example, do not seem to meet expectations and this view does seem generalisable. For the experience of the joint degree the inevitable comparison of the *modus docendi* in each institution brings this into sharp focus.

## ***6. Effectiveness of Learning in Relation to Different Modi Docendi***

Table 7 provides some further insight into students' views with regard to the most effective aspects of teaching and learning in each institution. Students were asked to rate the effectiveness of the aspects of teaching and learning, as listed in Table 7 and

the frequencies for effective and very effective have been aggregated and are represented as a percentage in the table.

**Table 7 – Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning**

<b>Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning for Learning</b>	<b>Aggregate of Effective and Very Effective as a percentage (N=64)</b>
London: Clear Goals	30
France: Clear Goals	49.2
London: Independent Research	31.7
France: Independent Research	38
London: Module Content	20
France: Module content	60.3
London: Module Materials	17.4
France: Module materials	58.7
London: Assessment Methods	30
France: Assessment Methods	46
London: Quality of teaching	12.6
France: Quality of teaching	73
London: Lectures	60.3
France: Lectures	61.9
London: Seminars	17.4
France: Seminars	49.2
London: Information in class	22.2
France: Information in class	61.9
London: Library	60.3
France: Library	25.3
London: Group work	36.5
France: Group work	46
London: Access to tutors	22.4
France: Access to Tutors	52.3
London: Study Support	20.6
France: Study support	20.6
London: Adaption of content to International students	30.1
France: Adaption of content to international students	46.6

The French institution receives some notably higher scores for module content, module materials and information provided in class. Interestingly, in comparison to the experience ratings, the London institution's score for the effectiveness of lectures on their learning is 60.3% effective or very effective, compared with the French institutions receiving 61.9%. This makes much more sense than the experience data given that three of the modules tutors in France are from the London institution. This was also corroborated in the interviews where there is little criticism of the lecturers' delivery in either institution. It could be argued that the students' view with regard to their experience is directly related to how much information the tutor provides in class. In the French institution all tutors are required to provide a detailed module booklet. The Library score is also interesting as it is the only rating where the London institution scores notably higher. The Library facilities were commented on by the Canadian student above for their importance in relation to her learning experience. The students also appear to acknowledge that the French institution is more adapted to international students as 46.6 % of students rated their adaption as effective or very effective compared to 30.1% at the British institution.

It is also interesting to note the Access to Tutors score as, again, observations at the French institution as well as tutor interviews underlined that most of the London tutors are not as accessible as the tutors in France. The latter are not full time members of staff but are visiting lecturers and only available for the week they are teaching in France. The data indicated that the only tutor who was accessible in France throughout the course was the Course Leader. This may be a common feature of *Grande École* pedagogy as Darricotte and McColl (2008) confirm a similar model at ESC Rennes School of Business. At the French institution the Course Leader takes a very active

role in tutoring the students for all the subjects taught during the semester. For the International Marketing Communications course they are the only academic full time member of staff teaching on the course and therefore the only tutor accessible to the students.

### ***7. The Impact of Group Work on a Joint Degree***

The issue of group work features prominently in teaching and learning literature, with much having been written about the benefits of such activity, as highlighted by Pokorny and Griffiths (2010). Group work is a common learning and assessment method in Business Schools throughout the UK and France and the findings demonstrate the frequency of use on all the courses in both countries. It appeared to be more widely used in the French institution. As a form of cooperative work it has recognised pedagogic benefits and increases active or deep learning (Entwistle, 2009) of a subject through the engagement with the subject matter. However, there is a difference between collaborative work and cooperative work and whilst the two are often blurred (Strauss and U, 2007) there is an important distinction for the students as collaborative learning becomes unpopular because it is often assessed. This distinction is portrayed in the findings. The findings also demonstrate the importance of group work for cultural interaction but, despite these recognised benefits, it was unpopular amongst students. Cooperative work allows the development of intercultural awareness but collaborative assessed work can create cultural misunderstandings. If we consider group work in cultural terms and apply collectivist theory (as developed by those such as Triandis, 2001; Triandis and Berman, 1990) the benefits are clear, as the group will succeed in their task because of their consensual

approach. The basis of this view is that in collectivist cultures the focus is on group goals and achievements. However, for a culturally heterogeneous group, the potential for misunderstanding, where cultural expectations and norms of behaviour vary, is clear. There are two levels to consider, firstly, the possible heterogeneous approach of a group that may be inevitable with students from different countries collaborating on a piece of work, and secondly, in terms of the task itself, for example, the difficulty in producing a group piece of writing. The collaboration and group grading versus the focus on the individual's achievement on the learning outcomes represents a conundrum for students and staff alike. In cultural terms, the focus for both British and French education is on the individual's achievement, for example, the Cartesian mind-set for the French. If we compare this to the requirement for a collectivist approach to tasks which is more familiar to those from certain cultures, for example, those coming from China, (Triandis, 2001; Hofstede 2003) the different approach to tasks can lead to a possibility for misunderstanding as there is competitiveness within the group. In other words, the emphasis on individual achievement versus the dependence on collaborative action creates a tension within the group. This was witnessed in the first semester and the incident is described in Vignette 1 in Appendix 1. The possibilities for cultural conflict therefore exist from the beginning of the course.

### ***The cultural dimension of the classroom***

As a result of the findings it is argued that the heterogeneous dimension to classroom, in terms of students' cultural backgrounds, requires that assessment activity must be contextualised in cultural terms in order for students to benefit from the heterogeneous environment that they find themselves having to engage in. De Vita comments that:

...higher education institutions have a social responsibility to design learning tasks which foster students' development of inter-cultural adaptability (De Vita,2001: 32).

The final part of this chapter will therefore explore this issue in more depth and question whether the benefits of group work are justified both in pedagogic terms and in terms of the development of cultural skills.

### ***The impact of the heterogeneity of the group***

The first thing to note in a discussion of group work is the international make up of each group, which is the reason for the use of the word heterogeneity herein. Each group of students undertaking group work assessments for each of the modules taught, had a mixed cultural background. A further complication is that the data confirms that on the largest course, that of International Marketing Communications, group membership seemed to alternate with each module, which means a possible change in the group every two weeks during the semester in France.

Arguably, the cultural diversity of a particular cohort of students always has an impact on the teaching methods and assessment methods by adding another dimension to the debate of the traditional – for example, didactic - approach, versus innovative teaching and learning methods<sup>36</sup>. The rationale for a close examination here is that the issue of

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<sup>36</sup>The data demonstrates the students' preference for traditional lecture format, for example

group work<sup>37</sup> was a theme that was raised in interviews by many of the students without prompting.

Authors such as Montgomery (2009, 2010) and Trahar (2011) have explored the importance of culture in the classroom. The amount of group work assessment in post-92 institutions (Bamford and Pokorny, 2010) clearly has implications for the student experience because of these cultural interactions. The amount of group work assessment appeared to increase in the second part of this joint degree experience in France.

De Vita (2001) argues that cultural diversity can produce a positive experience for groups but there can be some difficulties. For example, a multicultural group will not share the same cultural assumptions as 'mono cultural' groups. Individuals work through the expected norms of their culture. If the group does not address their cultural differences, it will lead to difficulties in the group function. This was echoed in Welikala and Watkins' (2008) research. The findings here demonstrate that the teaching on the courses does not take into account the different cultural backgrounds of the students involved in the module. There was no evidence that tutors provided a clear explanation of the group function, its importance and its relevance to the subject being taught, as well as the beneficial results. In addition, it seems from the way students frame their comments on group work that there is no explanation given to them of the importance of taking on board the different cultural norms of the other group members so that the members can function as a group.

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<sup>37</sup>The frequency of the use of the word 'group' in the transcripts was 307 references and the word 'work' was referred to 385 times

The clear preference of the international students, particularly those from the Far East, is for more traditional teaching methods where the classroom communication is teacher to student and is not dependent on peer negotiation. Again, the findings echo Welikala and Watkins' (2008) research that students from some cultures regard the classroom as the place where their tutor does all the talking. Group work is an alien learning concept. The following excerpt from an interview with a Japanese student illustrates how difficult she found group work and how unfamiliar she was with its place in the learning environment:

Japanese student (J): For me personally, the group work was most difficult.

Interviewer (I): Why was that?

J: Because I've never done it before in my life. In an academic environment.

I: So was it difficult because you had to work with people you've never met and who are from different countries?

J: Yes, so many factors.

I: Can you tell me what.

J: Like the way we just collaborate, communicate, the pace of the work and just some of ... were quite disastrous. One of them, but some of them were really good.

I: So give me an example of what was disastrous and what was good.

J: Like sometimes I couldn't be in touch with one of the group members and he or she just doesn't turn up to the meeting and he or she doesn't seem to care. Also other people have to do it all, that's the situation.

The transcript highlights the issue of communication difficulties and a lack of an ability to resolve them with some of the group members. The student then continues by expressing that the small campus in France made this issue of not turning up for meetings of less importance as students would be able to go and get the missing group member from their accommodation. However, cultural learning does take place and this was illustrated, to varying degrees, in all the interview responses on group work.

The student also expressed that:

J: It was a good kind of opportunity to learn how I should react, I should behave in a group work and how other group members were expecting me to do.

I: What did you learn about how to behave in your group work?

J: Oh, I already have to be very, I have to take initiative or contribute a lot, as much as possible.

When prompted for some of the positive aspects of group work, the student made the following comments which are again representative:

J: It's fun. It's fun to try to complete one subject with friends. And because it's not only your work, you get a lot of new ideas from other people so it's very stimulating, and you see yourself better when you are put in a group. And what am I like?

I: And what did you feel – you learnt something about yourself?

J: Yes, kind of positioning myself in a psychological way, personality wise.

I: What did you learn about you?

J: I can be quite shy, like I am less active talker compared to other group members, especially – but I think I have a strong sense of responsibility...

This point with regard to shyness was explored further by the researcher and confirms the collectivist cultural values highlighted by those such as Hofstede (2003), as we can see below:

Maybe, yes. I'm not always blah blah blah blah, just I choose timing to say something. So somebody just don't see me speaking at all because I'm always waiting for the timing to be able to speak. (*Japanese student*)

Here the student is expressing a cultural norm with regard to waiting for others to speak. Again the cultural learning was explored in more depth and it is clear from the student's response and the responses of other students that the group work provided a

space for cultural interaction and observation. The student also demonstrates that she has reflected on her own cultural behaviours and how they differ from others.

J: It's very clear, for example when I am in a group work with Greek girls or Italian girls, some South European people like they talk really lively and very loud. And they are very straightforward. Whereas we, or Japanese, we are very, always try to listen and ..... talk now. And then I have no chance to speak, unless I really try hard. Some group works, my idea has not been counted for example a few times it happened. But I mean, it's not because they ignored me, just because I missed the timing to say something.

I: How do you feel about that?

J: I felt it's not very sensible things to keep on doing it so I started to change my attitude, especially after I went to the town in France, in the town in France.

I: In you changed?

J: Yes, and towards the end of the group works, I felt much more comfortable.

Here we see that the student is reflecting that she has had to adapt culturally in order to engage with the *modus docendi* of both the UK institution and the French institution. Interestingly, she talks of feeling more comfortable but not of the benefits of behaving differently.

### ***The appropriateness of assessing group work***

Group work is regarded negatively by many students for differing reasons. Li and Campbell's (2008) study illustrates that whilst group discussion was valued, group assessments with shared grades were unpopular. This view of shared grades versus individual work was reflected in my findings. An American student commented that:

The overwhelming majority of the grades and assessments come from group work. This was a definite struggle for me in the beginning because I was coming from law school, which was incredibly competitive on an individual level, as well as just being from the US, where group work isn't

that prevalent as you know! This is also a struggle if you are coming from a background other than marketing, because many of the students are very knowledgeable in the subject already. But because of the group work and the dynamic of the people you are working with, it allows someone who is not knowledgeable on the subject (like I was) to utilize their peers as living resources! (*US student*)

Here we can see the prevalence of group work assessments but also that the student found this to be to her benefit as she was not from a marketing background and felt she lacked some foundation knowledge. This also supports Li and Campbell's (2008) findings that weaker students are happy to participate in group work as it allows them to rely on the stronger members of the group although, in this circumstance, this student was not necessarily weaker but lacking in some of the knowledge of the others.

### ***Individuality versus the group***

Individual motivations are significant in students' attitude to group work assessment and their happiness or indeed acceptance of it as a mode of assessment. A Norwegian student commented on the difficulty of compromise when asked about group work:

That was a really hard thing as well. I told you I don't like my work to be reflected on other people's work. Yes it was like I accepted democracy, I just had to accept that, although I am not afraid to voice my opinions, I did it several times on the course. (*Norwegian student*)

This was a clearly negative comment with regard to group work, with an expression of frustration that it had been forced on him. Of course this was not so much that he had to work in a group but that his individual grade, which contributed to his overall Masters award, depended on the work of others. One cannot help but question whether, despite the fact that working in groups has positive outcomes in cultural

terms, it is ethical to assess postgraduate students in this way, when the degree itself is awarded through the combination of individual grades for each module. This particular student did not gain a distinction from the UK institution. A review of the overall degree achievements for one year reveals that only three of the 98 students, on all three courses, achieved distinctions with the majority of grades being merits.

A Spanish student also expressed concern but for different reasons. He felt the desire to work as an individual and that the amount of group work does not accurately reflect the experience of the workplace:

Spanish student (S): But I don't like the idea of all the time working in groups, I think that's not the point.

Interviewer (I): In what way?

S: In the real life you are not going to work in groups all the time. So I prefer sometimes to work individually.

I: But don't you think in real life, particularly in the marketing, you work as a team, you have to work as a team.

S: Yes, sometimes but not all the time. Because all their projects were group projects.

I: Was this in France? Or here, or both?

S: In France. Here was group projects as well but -...

I don't know, sometimes you go to your group, you want to do something, the others don't want to do it and you just say OK, I do whatever you want and that's all. But you don't really put the effort in, and -.

Yes, and me, I'm a kind of unusual person, so I don't like – I like to work in groups but this is not all the time so much.

I: Do you think you learnt anything from working in a group?

S: Yes, of course.

I: Like what?

S: I don't know! Yes, I know how to deal with people, how to [inaudible]. I know what is your role inside the group.

We can see this student is uncomfortable in the group situation but still he acknowledges that he learnt from it; he has difficulty expressing his emotions but his discomfort with the group process is clear. In contrast, group friendships can also

cause discomfort for group members. An American student on the Tourism course made the following comments on the difficulties with working in a group with people who had become her friends:

There were problems only because I think – and this is something that maybe carried over, but S knows. I think what's kind of difficult is that we became such close friends. But sometimes it's hard to draw the line between friendship and getting your work done. And so often times like in my final group project, which S wasn't in my group, there was a huge conflict because one of the girls that was in the class, her English I would say wasn't – I mean it was fine. But in terms of turning in a presentation, I had to change quite a bit of it. And in turn, I really hurt her feelings and as a friend, it's really difficult to have that boundary. If it's someone that I didn't know very well, it would have been easier for me to be like hey, I'm sorry like this is our group project, this is what we have to do. But it's really hard to be a bit, I don't know, demanding I guess in a group when you're really close. (*US Tourism Student*)

This part of her discussion related to the group work in France where, since there were only eight students on the course, she was very friendly with everyone. However, in London, where she had to take modules with other students who were not on her course, her responses to the group work process were more critical as she felt she was not participating in order to get everyone else a good grade:

Exactly but if you're doing group projects and you're the only one that feels that way, it is incredibly difficult, incredibly, because I don't have time necessarily - like I'm not here to get everyone else a high distinction.

In addition she also expresses concern that in London as she was studying with the other students not on her course, that other students did not have as good English language as those who were on her course:

I think English was more advanced in France. So as far as the content, like the English communicating wasn't nearly as hard. Second, I don't

know about – I don't know what scores you have to get here in English but I feel sometimes I wonder if people in my group how they could have got into a Masters programme in London, really.

The student raises an interesting point about the impact of the difference in delivery between the UK and France. In France, the module, the group work times and delivery are so short that there is no time to dwell on the group dynamics or the discomfort that arises from group interactions. The delivery of a module over 12 weeks in London seems to allow 'space' for disagreements to arise:

I feel really bad, on this before I forget. I think another reason why it was easier in France is because we did have less time, we didn't have time to procrastinate. I didn't have more than 24 hours to get upset with my group. I mean really and now it's drawn out over the semester. So we're trying to meet and no one can come, and I'm trying to send out e-mails and no one replies. But at home we all lived together, we had to, we were forced to turn it in the next day. So we were in turn, we had to work together. (*US student*)

Yes, and this is the thing for some of us, for me and for some others, we are used to doing everything at the last minute. You are used to doing everything since the beginning. (*Estonian student*)

Another issue for this American student was that she was the only native English speaker in her group. She felt this had a dynamic on group relations and also meant more work for her. Therefore, the cultural makeup of the group is also important as the presence of native speakers of English may result in those individuals bearing more of the burden of the workload. As Pokorny and Griffith (2010) have argued, it is difficult to undertake written work as a group and inevitably one member of the group will take the responsibility for the writing.

### *The competitive aspect of group work*

Some students recognised that the emphasis on group work encouraged competition which appears contrary to its objectives. Rather than encouraging cooperation, one of the Greek students witnessed how competitive students were with each other:

Greek student (G): Yes, you start to fight because in the simulation games you have to be the first, everybody is trying to get the first position and if you get to be the last you actually dropped out. It's like if you fail, so everybody tried not to fail, so they preferred to go up to high instead of just take the chance, take a risk to be the last one. We were within the group having fives and I didn't because my group was amazing, but other groups I could hear that there were problems like why did you do that, and we're not supposed to do that and you don't listen to me. Anyway growing competition even with the group... L for me was like a brother and I could see that the first simulation he was looking at me like that, I told him are you serious or are you just so competitive, and just said I will beat you down. But then he realised that it's just a game so we took on a very different aspect of whatever will happen will happen. But yes you could see that if there wasn't this bond between students you could actually think get serious conflict there.

Interviewer (I): Interesting. Do you think culture added to that?

G: Of course.

I: To make it worse?

G: Of course, of course. I didn't experience this because we were... as I told you I am flexible so I learnt how to adjust because I was with three French basically, me and I don't remember if there was... four French and me imagine. One of them was T so it was like as if he wasn't French. The other three one was K which was one of the students that I told you I have never met until the second semester so she was like such a nice French woman, never talks, never does anything. And the others too were not from the same course, they were from another course, so that was new. And they were okay, they were all French, they were talking French but thank god I could understand what they were saying and when I didn't understand it was T who told me okay we will do this and this and this, do you agree. But in other groups there were students that were more like strong and loud and they would want their opinion to be listened and to be followed like a leader or something. And if anybody else would disagree they wouldn't care, they would just want their way or the highway, it would be like this way. But I didn't experience that, I am sure you can get interviews that they will talk to you about these things because they don't want to go that person and name things.

The issue of the cultural approach to communication in the group and the recognition of the benefits of working in a group are important dimensions to the students' engagement with this type of classroom and assessment activity. Clearly this student felt that competition added to the miscommunication within groups. Welikala and Watkins (2008) echo this with regard to the issue of working in groups. Students from cultures where independence is encouraged as a cultural norm felt this type of working to be a hindrance, for example the Norwegian student above. Alternatively, for others it could mean that students would 'lose face' with each other, for example by admitting they were struggling with the language and so there are issues around the 'silent' student voice. We saw this in some of the comments from the Japanese student above. All this needs to be borne in mind when devising teaching and learning approaches for a culturally heterogeneous group. What does appear to be an outcome of the experience in France is that the mobility on the joint degree creates emotional bonds between the students which, on the whole, were not undermined by the group process. The need for interaction with each other in a small environment affected all students' and enhanced their *modus discendi*.

### ***The transferable skills argument***

On one level one can take the view that degree study should prepare students for the workplace and Cushner and Brislin, (1996) talk of human interaction as being the neglected dimension of business. This is particularly true of postgraduate business students where institutions and tutors should be aiding students with human interaction skills. Tutors argue that group work in the higher education setting, in

terms of developing employability skills, is the reflection of the actual business practice of working with others (Bamford and Pokorny 2010).

Group work aids students in achieving a 'deep learning' (Entwistle, 2009) of the subject. However, having a group assessment could appear to be rather contradictory as difficulty in communication undermines the learning process and this was a concern for students here. Whilst tutors may be clear about the benefits, group assessments on the courses were not based on a group skills element to the learning outcomes of modules or courses. Normally, learning outcomes are worded with a focus on an individual's achievement, in line with the *modus docendi* for UK higher education. Bamford and Pokorny's (2010) research echoes this promotion of confusion and mixed messages. The *modus docendi* can place an emphasis on collaborative working but the expectation of the *modus discendi* is on an individual learner in terms of assessment. In group work the individual's relationality with the other students takes on an additional dimension when being assessed in relation to others and this is even stronger in the joint degree experience. A Venezuelan student commented "All of us hate group projects, everyone hates group projects". This may be due to the fact that the assessment does not reflect the importance of the group interaction as well as the subject matter. It causes resentment and stress and could be seen as misleading students when considerable emphasis is placed on independent learning. The Venezuelan student commented at length on the issues as she saw them. She provided particular examples of difficulties with individuals in the groups she had been in and how stressful she had found the negotiations. The situation described below of group work incident demonstrates the depth of feeling and distress which are clearly visible:

That was horrible the way of assessing that, thank God I came first in both. But I came first because we had, the first time we had a huge breakthrough was good. And the second one, the financial one, that's another complaint that I have. We were, I'm not kidding, I wrote an e-mail to my Finance teacher of one of my last semesters and my undergraduate [*inaudible*] and I was like you're giving me this in English. Please help me, I am about to die. We had to make decisions on things, and they're like no, you have a Finance person in your group. My Finance person was never there, he's not from the group, from our group because we were mixed with French students. He was obnoxious, he treated all very bad, every time we were like can you please do this, we don't know how to do this, we don't know how to calculate these things. No, I hate it. Are you kidding me? If you hate it, great but how are you going to get a good grade? And he got the same grade as I did because the three of us and the other girl, there was 3 of our programme and another girl that thank God, she helped. Because we were going crazy and he got the same grade as we did for doing nothing. So we had to work all this 5 people, a group project with so much stress, you don't have time to negotiate things like that. That specifically, group project we hated. And besides that, it's just – group projects are awful. (*Venezuelan student*)

From this student's perspective there seems to be little value in 'group projects', which is the term she is using for assessed group work. She clearly demonstrated her communication skills and was able to articulate the problems. Here she is comparing the work place, where someone loses their job if they do not perform and the group project, where students who did not work benefited from the work of others.

Culturally, this student was confident with raising what she saw as issues in the interview. It is clear from the transcripts that others had been more circumspect in their comments but resentment and critique were still expressed.

### ***Social interactions***

The data from the interviews supports the importance of group work in terms of social and cultural engagement but the reality was that the social factor only became relevant once all the students were in France. Here, the constant group work assessment and

the intimate environment created a more social environment for students, with this being particularly true for the Tourism course which had far fewer student numbers.

As an American student states:

But then again, like I said, each of us are from a different culture so we bring in our own cultural attributes. And trying to work together is what makes it hard. But there are times when I can sit back and look and realise like wow, especially in France. This is amazing, we are all, each of us are from a different country and a) we're best friends and b) we can work together so well. Here in London it's been just different, again like for the reasons, I can't really state why, there are just differences, bigger, more stressful, people aren't on the same motivational level. It's a completely different setting but it's still here in London sometimes when you're finished with the piece of work and you did a really good job, you can look back and say like ah, that's really cool that we were all able to do that. And that's the best part of group work, not the little pieces in between. *(US student)*

However, it is clear that there were still group conflicts. This social aspect to group work has been argued by Pokorny and Griffiths (2010) to be an important aspect to group 'forming' and by Montgomery (2010) to be the enjoyable aspect of the international environment. The findings here support this and demonstrate the importance with regard to the students' view of the course as a whole. Montgomery (2010) goes on to comment in her study that group work was seen by many students as an opportunity to develop transferable skills and to gain knowledge from working with others. From the data it is certainly clear that social bonding between the international students took place in France rather than in London:

No, in the first semester to tell you the truth we were not bonding, because London is big and they would live one there and one there, so apart from one group of people that were all together, like me, L, M and all other, French people for example either they were friends that I've never actually seen until France semester, it was like wow. French people did not come with us apart from a few exceptions like T for example and I

don't remember who others, and in France I could see that even in the group of the people that knew each other already since London there was a competition growing. And we were divided into groups A1 and 2, A & B I don't remember, and thank god not in my group but the other group they most of the students told me that the competition was really high. In my groups things were more loose because of the students that there were involved in the group, I was fortunate let's say. (*Greek student*)

This very honest account of the social relationships on the course again demonstrates the dimension of difference with regard to the experience of the joint degree. The environment in London was distancing and students did not get to know each other well. This changed after they travelled to France and were dependant on each other for their social relationships, their academic work and the support they provided each other. This closeness was evident when observing the students in France and this continued between those who returned to London. For every year that the marketing course ran, a Facebook group was established to facilitate the continued social interactions of the group. International social networks therefore appear to be a clear outcome.

## ***8. Concluding Comments***

The findings indicate that personalities and culture can hinder the group process. This is enhanced by the different cultural backgrounds of the members of a group, particularly for students unfamiliar with working in this way in an academic environment. In a course that lasts only one year, there is little time to adapt to either. The success of the teamwork approach is dependent on the members identifying reward interdependence and role interdependence (Colbeck, Campbell and Bjorkland, 2000).

The arguments presented in this chapter establish that there must be some consideration of the cultural diversity of any particular cohort of students and that the teaching and learning methods will need to address issues relating to differences in cultural norms, a lack of familiarity with approaches taken in the UK, and possible issues related to communication, language and discourse styles. These differences should be viewed in a positive light if intercultural adaptability is developed properly and, as De Vita (2001) comments, will result in increased group performance. The dependence of individuals on each other and the degree to which the group is able to reach a consensus is unpredictable and unsatisfactory and intercultural training needs to be introduced when so much of the assessment is dependent on group productivity. The data underlined that the more intimate environment of the French school, together with the shorter time spent on group projects is one way to overcome all the issues of group work that are so well documented, such as, not turning up to meetings. This is not possible in France as the person was simply collected from their home! The data demonstrates that although students found the group processes stressful, a lot of learning did take place and that although this was intensive it was in the end more fruitful. It is worth noting that for none of the courses the transferable skills which the students frequently mentioned are part of the learning outcomes for the module or, in fact, the courses. Yet they are clearly the result of the group work process. Reference to the Vignette included in Appendix 1 is made here in terms of supporting the comments in relation to group work and cultural difference, and providing further evidence of the possibility of conflict and miscommunication. It was based on field notes of a critical incident regarding group work during the first semester in London

on the marketing course and illustrates an intercultural communication conflict resulting from group work which was not resolved.

With reference to the teaching and learning data, the issue of difference and the implications for the joint degree experience were outlined. In addition, the preference for the French institution was clear. This can be deduced from interview responses and the questionnaire responses. It is surmised that the reasons for this are that most of the students have not been educated in the UK and the French system is either, more familiar to their own, for example more time in class, or that the French school is small enough for their voices to be heard and they are paid more attention by staff. The 'access to tutor' responses indicate this, despite their access being to only one tutor. Clearly, one semester is, for the most part, too little time to adjust to the UK system which is, for most of the students, quite different in approach. It must be borne in mind, however, that the tutor perspective of what is offered in France highlights the difference with the UK in terms of the demands made upon the students, for example, the approach to pedagogy is more pragmatic and the students are required to do little in terms of their own research. Students are given most of the materials in class. It must also be remembered that the institution in France is one of the elite *Grand Écoles* which are privately funded and are not part of the open access university sector. Expectations of both students and their parents in *Grand Écoles* are therefore very different from any state institution, and a 'customer care' approach is a priority. The implications for a joint Masters course are quite stark, as it appears to be 'joint' in teaching and learning terms only on the basis of the title and the award. Notions of joint Masters awards are therefore called into question in terms of what is actually meant by the use of the word 'joint'. In this instance where each institution offers its

own award for the programme, the reality is perhaps merely the ‘outsourcing’ of a semester by each institution. Pedagogy in higher education institutions is rooted in national culture, as Teichler observes. The findings here, despite the whole course being taught in English and despite the joint title would not seem to contradict this view and a clear communication gap is evidenced between the institutions and the students.



## **CHAPTER SIX – STUDENTS’ CULTURAL INTERACTIONS ON JOINT DEGREES**

### ***1. Introduction***

While Chapter Two highlighted some of the existing work with regard to students’ cultural interactions in the higher education environment, this chapter builds on that work by considering such interactions in the context of the joint degree experience. The link between culture and education is considered as part of that experience. The chapter has two strands of discussion. The first focuses on the questionnaire responses that required students to consider their intercultural awareness with regard to a series of statements that were provided in the questionnaire with a Likert rating scale. Deardorff’s (2006) intercultural development inventory was drawn on in developing the questionnaire.

The second strand explores the students’ views of their cultural interactions, their relationality with others in the international classroom and some of the themes that arose from the interview data with regard to the issue of culture. This follows on from Chapter Four which explored the experiences of the first semester and the students’ motivations for doing a joint degree where they expressed a desire to become ‘international’ or work in an international environment. The data sets considered in this chapter were produced following the students’ completion of both semesters of teaching in both institutions. The analysis of the data relates to the questions posed by the thesis which explore issues of culture in relation to the experience of joint degrees: how does the education on joint degrees contribute to intercultural learning? How

does classroom interaction permit or further the intercultural understanding or awareness of students participating in joint degrees?

Joint degrees represent higher education institutions' engagement with the policy agenda being promoted by the EU, as evidenced in the Leuven Communiqué (2009). This policy agenda, which was discussed in Chapter One, has been further explored by those such as Dale (2010), in terms of the links between higher education and a Europe of Knowledge and the significance of joint degree initiatives such as Erasmus Mundus (Dale, 2012). Research into how students engage and experience their learning within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), particularly where country mobility is entailed and the experience necessarily involves cultural communication, is important to that agenda. The EU recognises that country mobility is fostering the interconnectedness of individuals from different cultures and developing skills important in the global job market. However, although Leuven reinforces the calls for a Europe of Knowledge and a culture of mobility, this is not quite the same as encouraging a culture of communication. This chapter examines the implications of this culture of mobility from the experience perspective and explores whether a culture of mobility encourages a culture of communication which is so important to the joint degree and when dealing with difference at so many levels.

### ***Revisiting the meaning of culture in this case study***

Whilst the meaning of culture has been touched on previously it is useful to revisit that discussion here in more depth, given the importance of cultural interactions to this research. As stated previously, Geertz's work (1973) is important in understanding

the relevance of culture to the students' education experience. This position underlines the importance of culture with regard to human interactions and communication, with culture representing the 'fabric of meaning' for individuals. We have witnessed in previous chapters the significance of students' interactions and communication to the experience of a joint degree, where dealing with so many levels of difference and country mobility brings those interactions into sharp focus.

McNamnee and Faulkner's (2001) identification of the culture of a group as being bounded by the "norms, roles, values, beliefs, rituals and traditions" (2001:67) of the people in that group aids in understanding how miscommunication can arise in a group that is heterogeneous in terms of the members' norms, roles, beliefs and values. We can see the students on each course and each assessment as members of that heterogeneous group. An additional complexity to this cultural heterogeneity is that much of individuals' cultural identity and thus cultural behaviours are tacit (Matthews, 2000). In theory the more heterogeneous a group the more potential there may be for miscommunication. An example would be that the members of the group may not be aware of the reception of their behaviour, particularly with regard to their nonverbal behaviour, such as time keeping, which can cause miscommunication.

Students' experience disruption to their meanings as they have been removed from familiar surroundings and placed in unfamiliar ones, where eating and greeting rituals, such as kissing on the cheeks as a form of greeting and demeanour, are different to their everyday experience (McNamnee and Faulkner, 2001). They may suffer culture shock as a consequence. Aspects of this culture shock - both positive and negative - were displayed in interview responses, and in questionnaire open-ended responses. The degree of variance in the responses often depends on individuals' engagement

with the new culture and a new environment, with those having previous study abroad experience demonstrating more ease of transition. The cultural background of the students also aids their transition, with those from what can be loosely defined as individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1990) demonstrating more ease of transition to their new environments. Transition difficulties were often displayed in negative reactions to small or trifling incidents, as well as in group work environments. Students demonstrated other aspects of McNamnee and Faulkner's (2001) definition of culture where assumptions concerning cultural frames of behaviour of others were different from their own cultural behaviours. These notions of the need for familiarity with guidelines for behaviour, appropriate gestures, tones and demeanour strike at the heart of the experience of the joint degree. In applying notions of cultural awareness on the part of the students to an analysis of the data, it was clear there was a disruption of meaning but also that students recognised that different meanings exist for others. The data illustrated that there are layers of complexity to this consideration of culture. Even in the most straightforward analysis these layers are represented in the students' interactions with each other, with the institutions and the host culture.

Stone's (2006) approach to intercultural effectiveness is useful in considering the nature of the students' cultural interactions with each other. He talks of intercultural effectiveness as being:

The ability to interact with people from different cultures so as to optimise the probability of mutuality successful outcomes (2006:338).

Rather than considering the effectiveness of the students' intercultural communications this thesis focuses on the intercultural learning of students on joint degrees, both in terms of their learning about the host cultures but also in terms of

their learning about each others' cultures. I refer to this learning as students' intercultural awareness. The reason for this is, as discussed in Chapter Two, that the term intercultural competence is inappropriate in the present context; the joint degrees were not setting out to offer intercultural education and there had been no emphasis on the development of intercultural skills – which the term tends to imply. The EU policy agenda does not require institutions to develop compulsory intercultural competence education but presumes that the building of a culture of mobility into education naturally leads to the development of such transferable skills.

### ***The importance of communication***

The discussion of intercultural skills or competences is traditionally positioned within the academic discipline of linguistics, however the advent of international higher education has repositioned this discussion in relation to higher education generally. The global labour market has dictated that these types of skill can no longer be regarded as merely linked to language acquisition but have become an integral part of a more broadly defined internationally skilled graduate. The work of linguists Spencer-Oatey and Stadler, who have developed a Global People Competency framework (2009), is an example. These broader international skills are also exemplified by researchers such as Norris & Gillespie (2009) who underline the importance of study abroad opportunities for those wishing to have international careers. If we explore this further, the link with learning on the joint degree is obvious - the sojourn abroad requiring additional skills from those participating - and the international classroom has brought this more clearly into focus. Cultural communication becomes central to the teaching and learning as individuals with

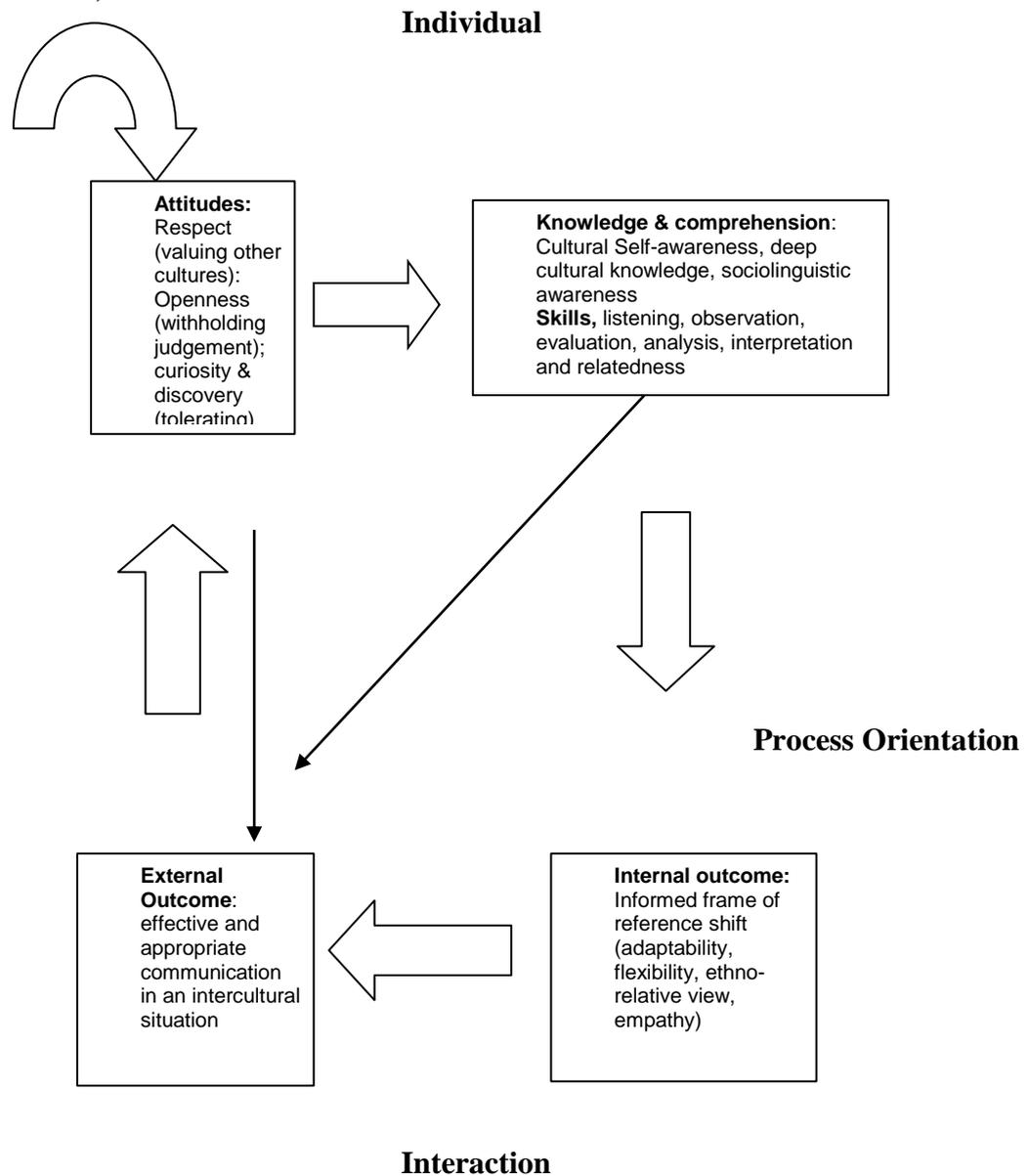
differing communication ‘scripts’, in terms of their cultural backgrounds, attempt to negotiate the differences and learn through the experience of those attempted negotiations. As Welikala and Watkins (2008) state:

All teaching and learning situations depend on communication, but different learners may have grown up with different scripts regarding the importance of talking for learning. Who should talk, when one should talk and what should be spoken seemed to have intertwined with varying cultural scripts which are related to talking. These scripts can influence any teaching-learning situation, and imply different views on the meaning of such situations, as well as the role of the learner and teacher (Welikala and Watkins, 2008:6).

In the international classroom environment the importance of being able to relate to and understand fellow students requires both the development of cultural awareness as well as subject based competences. The importance of the development of these skills is echoed by Hanassab (2006) who argues that cross cultural learning must be promoted in order to reduce discrimination to international students. The negative perceptions towards and communication difficulties with those from ‘other’ cultures is evident in the work of Harrison and Peacock, (2010). There is a need to develop a relationality between the individuals in the international classroom where cultural difference is overcome. Coulby (2006) underlines the difficulties by stating that whilst full understanding is probably an impossibility for most, especially those without second language ability, the “boldness” to understand more than one culture should be the aspiration of intercultural education (Coulby 2006:252). However, as intercultural education is not fully acknowledged in curricula terms in Western universities (Haigh 2009), the discourse of international higher education has something further to offer in addressing the internationalisation developments required by institutions in the knowledge economy.

The majority of that discourse centres around the use of the term intercultural competence and the meaning has been addressed by a number of authors. Deardorff (2006) considers it as an outcome of the internationalisation of higher education and her definition provides a model of intercultural competence based on 22 essential elements or attributes. Her model recognises levels or degrees of competence, and recognises that the development of a definition of intercultural competence is an on-going process. She also acknowledges that the definitions remain subject to controversy whilst continuing to evolve. The diagram below represents the development of an intercultural competence model as defined by Deardorff and was used to identify the main areas of development for students. Cultural interactions are part of this process:

**Diagram 2: Deardorff's intercultural competences (taken from Deardorff (2006:256))**



Whilst reference is made to this model of intercultural competence process, I argue that some aspects of this definition are only measurable in a subjective way. This has to be seen as an indicative process, which is observable but not quantifiable. The subjective positioning of individuals with regard to their competences means they are frequently viewed differently by each individual. For example, the questionnaire data indicated subjective positioning in terms of responses, particularly with regard to

external outcomes, as defined by Deardorff above. Interview data indicated that many achieved effective communication in an intercultural situation in the international group through the development of personal friendships. Do these communications as part of an 'in-group' on a course reflect true intercultural competence? Geertz's (1973) view of culture as the fabric of meaning underscores the need, in an international classroom, to understand or gain access in a relational context of the way students engage with each other. As he states, "understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity" (Geertz 1973:14). The questions posed in this study therefore take the position of challenging whether Deardorff's accepted orthodoxy is in fact the correct, as respondent's self-assessment suggests a subjectivity with regard to their intercultural skills. It is also necessary to consider whether specific action needs to be taken by educational institutions to facilitate such cultural learning in order to transcend the boundaries that Coulby (2006) suggests exist. In addition, Pederson's work (2010) implies that study abroad in itself will not achieve intercultural learning.

### *A common cultural heritage, cultural learning and the host cultures*

This section considers further the narrow focus of the students' cultural learning. The data demonstrated students' cultural engagement with fellow students only and little or no engagement with their host cultures. The evidence suggested knowledge or awareness of the cultural heritage of the host cultures of both institutions was minimal. This presents a distinguishing and separating feature between the intentions of the educational sojourner and the tourist sojourner. Both institutions are located in environments of cultural heritage. London presents obvious examples, whereas the

French institution is located in a provincial town which was an important part of the Plantagenet's' kingdom, and the location for the marriage of Henry II of England to Eleanor of Aquitaine. There is a common historical heritage between the two places and a mere stroll through the town in France permits access to such historical information and its connections with London.

Another aspect of cultural difference with the host cultures is the built spaces of the institutions and their locations to which, again, students made little reference. There is a noticeable contrast between the picturesque French town with its medieval architecture compared to the urban environment of the London institution. The data demonstrated a lack of recognition by students of the cultural heritage of both London and the particular region in which the French school is located. This cultural heritage dimension to the host cultures was not mentioned and yet the ambiance and location of one's living space have an important impact on individuals' transition to a new environment. The interview comments on the host cultures referred to food and fashion or styles of dress. The implication of this is that the historical locations do not provide students with any cultural capital. Cultural heritage is of surprisingly little significance to students' learning about difference on these joints Masters. The focus for the cultural experience of the students is on the differing cultural scripts (Welikala and Watkins 2008), which are largely based on the students' interactions with each other reinforcing the importance of those interactions to their educational experience.

### *The context for the intercultural skills discussion*

The context of the case study, as stated in Chapter One, frames the responses both in terms of the background of the students, their view of their international mobility and the makeup of the student body. The French institution as a *Grande École* of business is small and located in a provincial French town, with mostly French students. It reflects Bourdieu's (1989) analysis of these private business schools, with the demographics of the student body representing quite a homogeneous group in terms of social-economic status. The London institution is a large metropolitan business school within a larger university, state-funded and a pre-1992 university with an extremely cosmopolitan student population. The collaboration between the institutions therefore requires that students are educated in two countries within the framework of two different education systems.

The issue of competence development is addressed briefly here as we saw in Chapter Four an acknowledgement by both staff and students of the importance of this aspect of the joint degree. It is argued that the development of higher education to meet the demands of knowledge economy means that higher education has become equated with the commodification of knowledge or knowledge capitalism (Han, 2009; Watkins & Cseh, 2009). The importance of this debate is acknowledged but not explored in further depth due to limitations of time and space. However, the influence of the global economy on the labour market is a facet of the context for demand to develop intercultural competences. Students' views of future employment prospects and the need for competence development are relevant to their expectations and desires when undertaking an international course. If this competence development is seen as the

development of ‘knowledge’, then the exploration of development of intercultural competences is an important feature of the value of the joint degree. The fact that students learn in English in both institutions leads us to question more readily, (reflecting on Kehm and Teichler’s (2007) position highlighted in Chapter One) the additional value offered by international higher education. Do joint degrees offer further opportunities by allowing for the development of intercultural skills due to the students *being* with other international students in an internationally mobile environment? The questionnaire responses present a picture of an enjoyable, stress free experience that has given students the ability to collaborate across cultures and acquire cultural competence in at least one culture other than their own. The interview responses below were given after the semester in France.

The cosmopolitan environment of the London institution did not enhance the students’ ‘internationality’ despite the expectation of students expressed at the start of the course, as exemplified in a Russian student’s comments:

For me it’s a kind of experience of working in an international environment because if I have this course, I will finish my education I am going to work in an international company, a big company and nowadays the staff in big companies they are all international and to know how to get on well with people from different cultural backgrounds (*Russian student*)

The international profile of students recruited by the London institution do in part represent the ‘internationality’ of joint degrees and the potential for cultural learning but this was not fulfilled in the London semester. Student expectation was that their ‘internationality’ would increase as a result of their experience. The data confirms this

was the case following their semester in France. The evidence from the interviews shows that the experience of 'internationality' was individual and Deardorff's (2006) external outcomes were more obvious for some than others.

### *Cultural Shaping*

These findings leave questions unanswered and the exact nature of the cultural learning therefore requires further exploration. Matthews (2000) posits that cultural identity in contemporary societies comprises of three different levels of 'cultural shaping'. The only level that is achievable, recognisable and most accessible to students in terms of cultural learning is the 'cultural supermarket' level. The first level of 'cultural shaping' is what he refers to as 'deep' cultural conditioning, such as language and social behaviours which determine views of the self and how we comprehend the world. Because we think in our native language we can never be truly aware or objective about this cultural level of influence (2000:12). Matthews states that this level of shaping is below the level of consciousness and so often involves behaviour that is taken for granted on the part of the subject; thus it is difficult for there to be any objectivity or consciousness with regard to that behaviour. The consequence of this is the possibility for miscommunication, misunderstanding and the potential for stereotyping. The data for this study illustrates this being overcome, where students accommodate 'others' cultural behaviour as the 'others' became known to them as individuals. The data also provides examples of misunderstandings which those involved find difficult to resolve and therefore choose either to accept or reject, explaining the difficulties in terms of difference. Accepting difference is not the same as understanding difference and thus becoming empathetic.

It leaves questions about the development of a true understanding of cultural behaviours, particularly where most are communicating in a language that is not native to them which, in this case, is English.

With regard to the rules and structures of the societies which we inhabit, there may be little control but there is some ability for recognition or signification for individuals. This is the second level of 'cultural shaping'. This is exemplified in the UK classroom for many overseas students who have difficulty in referring to their lecturer by their first name. This common practice is a change in cultural behaviour that is difficult to change as it shows disrespect and therefore, for some, causes confusion and discomfort.

The third level of 'cultural shaping' is the 'cultural supermarket' level of influence which is fully accessible and controllable for all. Matthews makes reference to the globalised lifestyles of the contemporary era as an illustration of this. In applying this form of cultural shaping, education might be viewed as another addition to the eclectic lifestyle of successful individuals, who for example eat Chinese food at home, fly to other countries for their weekend leisure, wear Italian shoes and buy French handbags. The data for this case indicates familiarity with, and understanding of, globalisation as a consequence of living in two countries. In further support of this, the questionnaire responses indicated that 85% and 76.5% either 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' that they suffered culture shock when they arrived in the UK or France respectively. Yet culture shock and stereotyping were clearly evidenced in the interviews.

Matthews argues that from his anthropological perspective there is a universal basis for 'self'. He does not address the universality of recognition or signification of the other self as demanded by Levinas, (2006). Recognition of the identity of the other is necessary for communication with others which is so integral to notions of dealing with difference in this thesis – the development of the ontological awareness proposed by Jones (2005) as a consequence of the study abroad experience. However, Matthews' (2000) analysis of the different levels of 'cultural identity' and his 'cultural supermarket' thesis is useful in understanding the questionnaire responses. The deep level of cultural shaping throws light on the interview responses which clearly showed culture shock or a disruption of meaning which caused distress. The description of the 'cultural supermarket' for individuals' cultural identity in a more internationalised environment seems to be appropriate both in terms of the student responses and the identification of intercultural competences made by, amongst others, Deardoff (2006), Hunter, White and Godbey, (2006) and by Spencer-Oatley and Stadler (2009).

### ***The basis for the questionnaire***

The questionnaire was issued to three cohorts of International Marketing Communications students. In total, it was issued to 174 students with a 46.55% response rate. The questionnaire was part of the same questionnaire used for Chapter Five but the focus here is on the intercultural response items. As there had been no interventions on the course with regard to cultural learning, data collected in the third year was used for this data set, hence the higher number of responses than discussed in Chapter Five. Of the respondents, the largest homogenous group were the French students who amounted to a third (33.3%). The section of the questionnaire which

focused on culture drew on Deardorff's (2006) identification of intercultural competences for students, as referred to in Chapter Three. Her full intercultural skills inventory was not used, as the intention was to explore the students' view of their intercultural awareness and learning as part of the education process (and not the development of skills).

Table 8 provides summary statistics of the responses to statements on students' intercultural interactions, which they were asked to rate on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being 'strongly agree'.

**Table 8: Intercultural Awareness Responses**

Answer Options	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree	Rating Average
I have acquired an understanding of my own cultural norms and expectations of studying in two countries.	0	7	11	39	23	4.20
I have acquired an understanding of the concept of globalisation as a result of studying in two countries.	2	11	18	34	15	3.90
I have acquired an understanding of cultural norms and expectations of others as a result of my experiences of the course.	0	3	11	42	23	4.22
I suffered culture shock when I arrived in the UK.	40	28	6	5	1	1.98
I suffered culture shock when I arrived in France.	34	27	4	7	2	2.18
It is important to experience culture shock to become globally competent.	17	21	22	16	5	2.66
I enjoyed the experience of studying in two countries.	0	1	3	27	49	4.56
The course helped me to recognise that one's own 'world view' is not universal.	0	11	12	33	27	4.02
I found the experience of studying in two countries stressful.	18	31	8	17	6	2.61
Spending such a short time in each country did not allow me to become familiar with the culture of each country.	8	23	19	27	6	2.98

The course helped to live outside my own culture.	1	12	16	33	16	3.80
The course has given me the ability to identify different cultural behaviour e.g. greeting etiquette which will aid me in my future employment.	1	9	14	42	13	3.76
The course has given me the ability to collaborate across cultures.	0	2	5	47	25	4.29
The course has given me the ability to step outside one's own culture and experience life as the 'other'.	0	10	14	37	18	3.90
The course has made me understand different cultures and attitudes.	0	5	11	39	24	4.22
I have become more aware of my own cultural identity as a result of studying in France and the UK.	3	12	13	30	21	3.83
The course has helped me to develop the willingness to take risks in pursuit of cross cultural learning and personal development.	2	11	20	33	15	3.71
The course has helped me to be open to new experiences including those that could be emotionally challenging.	1	10	16	35	18	3.93
I have become linguistically and culturally competent in at least one language and culture other than my own as a result of studying in two countries.	12	10	7	31	21	3.73

Table 8 shows the spread of rated responses for these items and an average figure for the rating. Table 9 below shows the percentage for the rated responses of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' and a cumulative percentage. There are two very interesting aspects to this. The first is the high percentages of agreement for issues that are acknowledged as significant areas for cultural knowledge acquisition. We can see this in the response for self-awareness, 76.5% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed', that they had knowledge of others; 80.2% 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing', they had acquired an understanding of cultural norms and expectations of others as a result of the experiences of the course; and 88.8% 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' that the course had given them the ability to collaborate across cultures. This was the second highest

agreement score of 88.8% of the respondents ‘agreeing’ or ‘strongly agreeing’ with the statement. The table below shows these scores alone which for most items were highly rated in terms of ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’.

**Table 9 – Intercultural ratings: the sum in percentage form for agree and strongly agree**

<b>Intercultural awareness statements ( Adapted from Deardorff 2006)</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Represented as Aggregate Percentage</b>
I have acquired an understanding of my own cultural norms and expectations of studying in two countries.	39	23	76.54
I have acquired an understanding of the concept of globalisation as a result of studying in two countries.	34	15	60.49
I have acquired an understanding of cultural norms and expectations of others as a result of my experiences of the course.	42	23	80.24
It is important to experience culture shock to become globally competent.	16	5	25.92
I enjoyed the experience of studying in two countries.	27	49	93.82
The course helped me to recognise that one's own 'world view' is not universal.	33	27	74.07
I found the experience of studying in two countries stressful.	17	6	28.39
Spending such a short time in each country did not allow me to become familiar with the culture of each country.	27	6	40.74
The course helped to live outside my own culture.	33	16	60.49
The course has given me the ability to identify different cultural behaviour e.g.: greeting etiquette which will aid me in my future employment.	42	13	67.90
The course has given me the ability to collaborate across cultures.	47	25	88.88
The course has given me the ability to step outside one's own culture and experience life as the 'other'.	37	18	67.90
The course has made me understand different cultures and attitudes.	39	24	77.77
I have become more aware of my own cultural identity as a result of studying in France and the UK.	30	21	62.96
The course has helped me to develop the willingness to take risks in pursuit of cross cultural learning and personal development.	33	15	59.25
The course has helped me to be open to new experiences including those that could be emotionally challenging.	35	18	65.43

I have become linguistically and culturally competent in at least one language and culture other than my own as a result of studying in two countries.	31	21	64.19
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The highly rated agreement with the statements suggests a familiarity with the concepts. Some of the ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ ratings are interesting as they represent a difference with the interview data. An example would be the ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ rating with the statement that living in two countries was stressful. The response for “the course helped to live outside my own culture”, is also interesting as this means that 39.5% of students did not agree or strongly agree that the course helped them to live outside their own culture. Therefore, not all the students identified that the course did this, with 19.75% of students being ‘unsure’ and 16% ‘disagreeing’ with this premise. The observation data gave the impression of students mixing only with others on the course; the interview data confirmed this as does this rating, in other words that students lived in an ‘international bubble’ with little real engagement with either of the host cultures. In contrast 58% of students agreed that the course had given them the ability to identify different cultural behaviours which would aid them in the future employment. Given the importance that the EU has given to the development of such courses to facilitate mobility with the labour market, these are significant if conflicting findings.

Students were also asked to respond to a number of open-ended questions which sought to explore further their cultural development. These exploratory questions in the questionnaire enabled the triangulation of the interview responses by having a

format of response that would not be subject to issues of interview bias. The paragraph below discusses these responses in more detail.

***What increased intercultural awareness?***

To understand the students' views on what had furthered their intercultural awareness, they were asked an open ended question on what had developed their intercultural understanding. Students' nationalities are referred to merely as a guide to understanding their cultural background rather than categorising their responses. A variety of views have been provided here in order to demonstrate the different emphasis that individuals placed on different aspects of their experience. The findings support the need to consider individuals' negotiations in international higher education.

**Table 10 – Open-ended questionnaire responses on developing intercultural awareness**

Adaptability to work with people from different backgrounds is crucially important ( Indian student)

Meeting people who have different cultural background is open-minding . Human experience is above all to me.( French student).

Awareness of time management issues ( German student)

I learnt little new! I come to France and the UK every year anyway (Egyptian student)

Living together are the ones that taught me from other cultures. Students are one of the most valuable assets on the programme (Venezuelan student)

The best example was when we compared McDonalds offer in our different countries of origin: rice in Malaysia, no beef in India etc (French student)

It is not necessarily the programme that made me more culturally competent (German student)

These responses are interesting as they demonstrate that the students categorised other students in terms of national characteristics. Therefore, whilst the questionnaire responses demonstrate some aspects of cultural learning, the learning appears to replicate Hofstede's (2003) approach to culture by defining culture in terms of national characteristics. This type of categorisation of cultural behaviour may be viewed as appropriate for the business environment, particularly a marketing course, where anticipating or understanding general cultural norms are important in order to predict consumer behaviour. The potential for stereotyping was a strong theme emerging from the interview data, evidenced below and confirms a 'cultural supermarket' level of cultural interaction.

### ***Stereotyping***

A stereotype is a categorisation of race, gender, national origin in terms of distinguishing characteristics or behaviours that have positive or negative connotations (Neuliep, 2009). The difficulty is that human beings like to order and structure their world and categorise their experiences but such categorisation can lead to stereotyping. This categorisation is very evident in the data but very few interviewees seemed aware that over generalising or negative categorisation can be seen as stereotyping. However, the North American students were very aware of this issue and there were several comments made with regard to the desire to avoid making any stereotypical comments. It was rather interesting to note therefore that they were subject to the most stereotypical references by others. Some examples of these stereotypes, from both the questionnaires and the interviews are provided below, some of which came from the questionnaire responses to a question asking for examples of cultural learning:

**Table 11 – Examples of stereotypical comments**

<p>Americans wear flip-flops (<i>Questionnaire response</i>)</p> <p>Italians talk a lot (<i>Questionnaire response</i>)</p> <p>Working with French people- they are very goal-orientated and thorough, British people like referencing and research etc Americans- very laid back in their work ethic, less research. They tend to just re-word, paraphrase and jazz up material we have been given rather than do their own research. Good with words and strong written &amp; Verbal communication. Italians- very flaky when it comes to work approach (<i>Questionnaire response</i>)</p> <p>The French culture was horrible. Everything was horrible. Every time we talked to our landlord, he was horrible. Every time we wanted to get money he was horrible. The French people were, to pay the electricity, that was horrible. I speak a little bit of French and I was talking to a person on the phone and I'm like, "I'm trying to explain here that your webpage doesn't work. We want to pay electricity, just tell us where we can do it on line!" (<i>Interview response</i>)</p>
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The data demonstrates that there is a fine line between the need to categorise in order to give communications meaning and stereotypical commentaries. The elements of Deardorff's (2006) intercultural competence model are clearly not evident here, and whilst the last example is perhaps the most opinionated example of dealing with the host culture, the views expressed are representative of those expressed in the responses. We can observe that little adaption to the host culture took place.

The following excerpt from a Greek student demonstrates stereotypical phraseology in the description of both host cultures:

I prefer British people because they may be snobbish but they're snobbish in a very different way like French people seem to know everything in the world, they are supposed to be right in everything they never do something wrong, all people in the rest of the world have to behave the way the French person behaves. It's like everything is about them, everything like chauvinists. (*Greek student*)

In addition, a number of interviewees, particularly those from North America, made reference to an incident involving a tutor who had made a stereotypical reference in class. There was dismay expressed at the lack of action taken by the French institution for a derogatory reference that was viewed by many as racism towards the Chinese. Many of the European students and the institution itself shrugged it off, whereas all the North American students responded with outrage making a request for some action to be taken. This is a clear example of a cultural difference in communication. The learning about the 'others' in the classroom and developing the students' relationality appear necessary in order to minimise misunderstandings and the disruption to meanings.

### ***Learning about 'others': the development of intercultural skills?***

The high proportion of respondents 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' that they had become aware of 'others' cultural behaviour supports the view that forms of cultural interaction and thus learning are taking place. Students perceive themselves as developing their intercultural skills but this may be considered superficial since it relates to increased knowledge of greeting styles and interaction styles rather than the development of an understanding of 'others' cultural identity. Jones (2005) refers to students crossing international boundaries as opening themselves up to the

development of ‘ontological awareness’, which is the capacity to “identify component parts of the previously taken for granted” (2005:73). Thus the ontological security that comes from knowing the frameworks of one’s culture and society is disrupted so that individuals become more aware of behaviours that previously gave no cause for reflection.

We have seen that students’ interpretation of their cultural awareness appears to be along the line of Hofstede’s (1984) categorisation of national cultural behaviours but this should not restrict the development of an ontological understanding of the position and importance of individuals’ cultural identity in an educational setting, which is needed for the aforesaid development of relationality. If we follow Jones’ argument, existing and being educated within individuals’ own culture equates with ontological security. On the joint degree there is a need for us to reflect and question ourselves as individuals in cultural terms in order to signify the ‘other’. The data echoes Jones’ findings of personal growth but the tendency for students to categorise others was also striking and appeared to be more dominant in both the interview and survey responses than any reflection on personal growth. Despite this, some level of ontological awareness was evident. This can be seen in general terms of a demonstration of an increased awareness of others cultural norms in interviews and in the questionnaire open-ended responses. One of the students who made frequent stereotypical references in her interview also made the following remarks:

I realised the importance of considering the others’ point of view. Now I know the importance of considering the others’ point of view. Now I know it’s not about being right or wrong but the perspective is more important and dialogue can boost our knowledge and know how. (*Greek Student*)

Here we can see the development of this student in relation to how she can use her learning for the future. This demonstrates the development of cultural skills with an awareness of others and the possibility for empathy, adaptability and flexibility. There is not a consistent picture in the data of this sort of reflection as it varies from individual to individual.

### *Culture and group dynamics*

With regard to the issue of group work, there is a full discussion of the issues in Chapter Five, but it is necessary to include some brief comment here as it is so crucially interlinked to the development of cultural awareness.

The first semester in the UK saw a lot of difficulties with the group process, cultural misunderstandings and some negative attitudes towards ‘others’. Some of the responses from the second semester were still negative but overall showed a learning process. In the table below there are some examples of the responses from an open ended question with regard to how or what helped students to develop cultural skills:

**Table 12 – Culture and group work: open-ended questionnaire responses on cultural learning**

Because of the different nationalities, it was sometimes difficult to find my place in the group...we did not have the same methods to conduct group projects. It was sometimes very hard. ( French student)

I am quite disappointed that half of my degrees are based on group work. Whilst this is real world related, it's quite inappropriate to give a Masters degree based on group work as I have different standards than classmates (US student )

Group works helped a lot to learn a lot about other cultures. In most of them we worked in limited time periods so you can clearly see how people act when they are stressed and there is pressure on them.(Unidentified)

Group work helped identify different personalities and ways of working and behaving nothing from the course assisted, learning about other culture entirely depends on the individuals.(Unidentified)

Everyone knew about different cultures existing and clashing in this course beforehand. However, experiencing group work in ever changing groups led to the actual experiencing of that fact. No one can "teach" about cultural differences, one has to experience it first hand to get a feeling. (Unidentified)

These comments exemplify the clear emphasis placed by the students on the experiential aspect of cultural learning. Some students demonstrated recognition of challenges that are part of the cultural learning process:

I have to say I had two groups with only French and another group in communication with other foreigners, a German and I don't know from where she comes but whatever. With the French was like usual I used to be...my nature is to handle everything to split the work and stuff, so with French I am used to. But with the foreigners everybody everyone sticks to his habits, so of course the good thing is that according to the experience for example we come from business school, we are used to group projects but some of them had already worked in the communication field and some of them had already internships about that, on that. The positive aspect is sharing knowledge different knowledge. We had a better perception of the work but the problem was our different methods of

working. For example German write a very...they go straight to the point. When we ask them to do something it's that, that, that, they don't develop. Us French Brrrrr..we speak, we speak details and stuff like that so it was a bit hard at that point. Finally we got on well and found a compromise but it was hard. By being like that I think and I talked to the person in question that we skip a lot of things, like going straight to the point is very good but after how about the references and the literature review. I think that it's not negative it's difficult, this is the difficult aspect of the group work with foreigners but besides it was more positive than negative.  
*(French student)*

One of the interesting aspects of this comment is the constant reference to foreigners, underlining that the London group of students were viewed as outsiders, or 'outgroup' members (Neuliep, 2011), by French students. This created a tension between the two groups as those from the French institution viewed the 'others' as not having a common approach to work.

### ***Group dynamics and a homogeneous group***

An alternative view from a London student illustrates a frustration with students not speaking in English, directed in particular at the French students whom she accuses of not being "open-minded". The use of this phrase is interesting as it was used by many of the French students in their interviews to describe why they had undertaken the course.

I think that the fact that people don't speak English for instance in the institutions, the city halls blah blah, sometimes French people have the tendency to expect from the other people to be like them. I don't know if that's the problem with our French students but maybe sometimes they don't understand different cultures and maybe they don't want to understand difference. You see, I'm rapidly coming to the conclusion that we need to, what's in cultures because maybe they are not really open minded. Maybe they have not travelled so much, maybe they are a bit young. *(Russian student)*

In the following excerpt the student is critical and reflective on the motivations for becoming more culturally aware and on the nature of students' relationality. She comments that the socio-economic background of students can have an important effect on how they relate to each other.

It's just personal motivation, I think it's just maturity levels as well. People come to school for different reasons. You can see the difference, and I think it's also a cultural thing because also the Americans were just very full on, I'm not that full on but they were very on the ball and things like that, and then other cultures are more relaxed about it, or it's just individual motivation. (*sarcastic tone*) Like it doesn't really matter because I know Daddy's going to put me in a job anyway. More I don't really care, it's just something to do the next year. So the reasons for coming are very different and I think that definitely affects your working habits and motivation. (*Nigerian/US student*)

The need for the awareness of difference is therefore clearly expressed in both data sets. In addition it seems that individuals deal with this issue in different ways and a more culturally homogeneous group within a heterogeneous group can cause an imbalance in communications and, in some instances, tension. This was apparent between the French students and the more heterogeneous group of international students.

A number of issues require further comment. Working closely with others aided but also created difficulties in cultural recognition, a factor that Jones (2005) identifies as a negative effect of ontological security. But negative encounters were also part of the learning process. In addition, there was some clear progress towards the recognition of the importance of individual personalities, and encounters in a social setting facilitated this.

### *The social space and cultural awareness*

The importance of the social space, that is, encounters with each other outside the classroom, for international students has been well documented (Biggs 2003; Ryan and Carroll, 2005; Trahar, 2008; Montgomery, 2010). We can argue that their importance becomes greater in the joint degree experience because students are required to cross borders as a group in order to complete their programme of study. For some, this entails crossing borders twice as many of the students come from all over the world to the UK to begin their course, as evidenced in the country of origin data, and then have to be 'mobile' again to France.

Benhabib (2002) underlines the importance of cultural interaction in the knowledge society and the data demonstrates that the joint degree experience permits not only these cultural interactions but also the acquisition of additional cultural knowledge. We are reminded of Teichler's (2008) definition of the impact of mobility on knowledge as students' cultural interactions become part of the educational process, irrespective whether the experience is viewed positively or negatively. If we view international higher education as part of the global economy, the social networks that students develop are also an important aspect of the joint degree experience. Benhabib (2002) observes the importance of these social networks which transcend national frameworks of interaction:

The new global economy permits the growth of regional networks over and beyond the boundaries of nation-states, making it plausible for them to short-circuit traditional centralized decision making in banking, Finance, communications and interpretation (2002:17).

We can see that global growth and use of information technology (Castells, 2000) have resulted in the formation and spread of social networking sites such as Facebook. Continuing transnational communication was evidenced each year with the setting up of a Facebook group by each cohort of students. These social network groups facilitated the continuing social communication of the students following the completion of their course.

The data demonstrates the connectedness of students across national boundaries of culture which were as a consequence of travelling together. The social relationships that were established were essential for most in acquiring or increasing cultural knowledge and awareness.

### *Different levels of cultural engagement*

In an attempt to consider in more depth, the differences between that data, the observations of the cultural interactions, and the interpretation of interview responses, Matthews' (2000) 'cultural supermarket' theory, as stated above, is a useful frame of reference. Pederson's (2010) analysis of the intercultural sensitivity scale was also used in conjunction with the 'cultural supermarket' analysis to allow us to understand the data in a more holistic way.

Matthews' (2000) 'cultural supermarket' theory offers an analysis of the way individuals engage with culture. The ability to engage only at the 'supermarket' level of culture offers an explanation as to why students view themselves as culturally aware yet demonstrate behaviour that suggests the opposite, for example,

stereotyping. Benhabib (2002) supports a view that culture in the contemporary world may be viewed as more complex than national frameworks of behaviour. It is multi-layered and linked with an individual's identity. In other words, an individual's cultural identity is informed not just by their family and place of origin but also by the many experiences and interactions they have, including their educational experiences. It is not within the parameters of this thesis to consider questions of identity but it is raised here as an important aspect of the way individuals engage with others on the joint degree, both in terms of their expectations and their interactions. This complexity is echoed in Matthews (2000) where culture in the global environment is portrayed as the particular influences that stem from national cultural frameworks on a way of life, an individual's identity, their experiences and engagement with the different cultural influences they encounter.

This is not to say that individuals' cultural identity is wrapped up in a post-modern determination of cosmopolitan selfhood that can only be defined as a consequence of global influences. The data from the students seems to indicate otherwise. Their attachment to national frames of cultural identity appears evident despite the international environment. However, what Matthews (2000) outlines is that in contemporary society, culture and self may be combined into a framework which influences how a person experiences the world, thus making this perspective very relevant to both the students' *being* and their experience of international higher education. We witness in the students' comments generalisations of others' cultural selves and also their own. However, importantly Matthews argues that:

...underlying these formulations there is a universal basis of self, as both interdependent and independent, as part of and apart from other selves. The self universally is made of past memories and future anticipation linked to an ever-shifting present; selves tell themselves in an ongoing construction made of words; and selves live in a world of others ever present in mind, but that others cannot ever fully understand ( Matthews, 2000:12).

This enables us to understand how the students respond so positively in terms of rating themselves highly with regard to elements of intercultural awareness in the questionnaire responses and yet display some stereotypical approaches in interviews. The interview excerpt from a Venezuelan student given below provides an example of a typical response with regard to her full cultural awareness. In response to further questioning to explore her meaning with regard to her statement about this, she replied in the following way:

Venezuelan student (V): For working, for example. When you have, and then if I'm hired hopefully, fingers crossed and I have a meeting with an Asian client, I now know how to address them, how to talk to them, what to wear, what not to wear. What's an important topic, what's unimportant topic. We exchanged that in the programme, we had good tips of you should talk to this, you should talk about that. We were all talking like no this is not at all, you can never put on (*laughing*) a sex commercial in the US, but in South America just put it there, they will love it. And we all know for example if I meet with someone, (pause) I think that I can talk about, I have topics to talk about with people from every continent. And I know that they are going to appreciate it and I know things that I can't talk about.

Interviewer (I): So you've learnt an awareness of other people.

V: Yes, fully and cultures.

I: Do you think the institutions should do more to facilitate that or do you think that

V: I think that happens. It happens more in France than here, because here you're in London, it's big, it's whatever. But in France, everything, you are forced to be together. But in here, they could encourage more meetings, not just for example they did the first week that I missed! But one in the middle, it would be cool.

We can see from the text that this student is very confident that she has both experienced cultural learning and developed cultural awareness as she was able to address the issue without hesitation or the need to reflect. This implies she is comfortable with notions of acquiring cultural learning despite it not being part of the course. The excerpt also permits an insight into how the intimacy of the French environment facilitated the relationality between the students which is so important with regard to developing cultural awareness. The *modus discendi* appears to be culturally determined and yet there is little evidence of this in her response. Welikala and Watkins (2008) argue that the cultural scripts that students come with will impact on the learning that takes place.

All teaching and learning situations depend on communication, but different learners may have grown up with different scripts regarding the importance of talking for learning. Who should talk, when one should talk and what should be spoken seemed to have intertwined with varying cultural scripts which are related to talking. These scripts can influence any teaching-learning situation, and imply different views on the meaning of such situations, as well as the role of the learner and teacher (Welikala and Watkins, 2008:6).

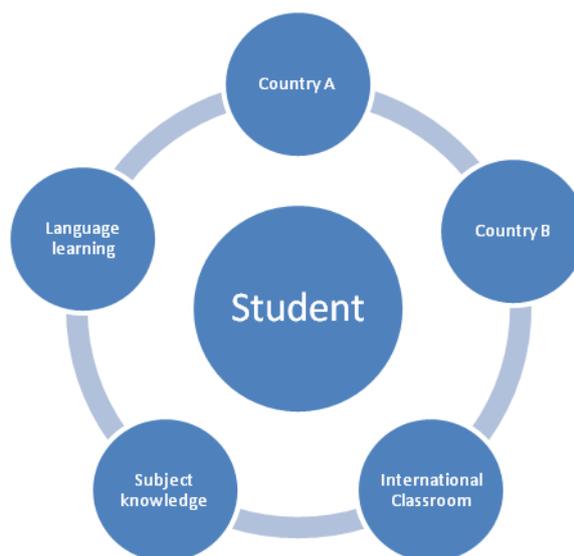
The intimacy of the French environment facilitates the communication between the students. This is clearly demonstrated as the students learn this awareness of their different cultural scripts when they have to live together in a close environment. An example is the final sentence above where the Venezuelan student states that the students were forced to be together as well as her emphasis on how to talk and how to behave.

## ***2. Student Experiences of Culture in the International Higher Education Learning Environment***

This part of the chapter focuses in more detail on the interview responses in relation to the cultural interactions of the students. A thematic analysis of the data was carried out with the intention of understanding through a constructive interpretation the ‘lived reality’ for students of these cultural interactions.

Figure 4 below demonstrates, from the student perspective, the elements of international education that are experienced as a consequence of mobility. This diagram displays a radial circle of knowledge that is open to each and every student. It provides a diagrammatic form of the student’s *being* in international higher education and I argue that each circle is an aspect of the students’ *modus discendi*. The data provides evidence of different levels of engagement of that *modus discendi* depending on the students’ *philomathic*<sup>38</sup> inclination.

***Figure 5: The student in the international higher education environment***



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<sup>38</sup> Love of and engagement with learning

The international higher education learning environment is illustrated by the circles that surround the student. These circles represent the dimensions of international higher education.

### ***The key themes arising from the interview data***

In considering these dimensions of international higher education the data highlights some key themes with regard to students' negotiations and their cultural interactions. The most important themes are addressed here in more detail because of their importance to the students' experiences on joint degrees. In worth noting that a significant aspect to the data was the different approaches students from different cultures adopted to the interview environment. Those from Latin or Mediterranean cultures displayed a tendency to be more talkative and engaged with the process and some of the students displayed more open and reflective responses. This could be attributed to cultural norms and not a lack of reflection on the individual's part. The key themes arising were: awareness of own cultural norms; cultural shaping and personal growth; host culture reactions and engagement; language acquisition; stereotyping; personal development, friendships and social interactions.

### ***Awareness of own cultural norms***

As we can see from Table 9 above there was an affirmation by students that they had acquired an understanding of their own cultural norms, with of 6.54% respondents, 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' with the statement. When this understanding was explored in the interviews, findings demonstrated that there were different levels of

awareness with some being more open to exploring this awareness than others. This does not mean that individuals had not become aware of their cultural norms of behaviour but that they were either unwilling or unable to reflect on this in the interview. This could be viewed as a culturally framed response. The excerpt below demonstrates an engagement and willingness to speak about culture and the individuals' development:

Venezuelan student (V): In the way of being, I'm still close to my family, but my brother and my sister, I've never been that dependant but I am less and less dependent. In Venezuela you don't go out of your house, you don't leave your house until you get married. I was bored of that and I said no, I need to leave, so I came here. And it's just – I don't know. It's good.

Interviewer (I): Do you think that you've achieved some personal development and in what way?

V: Yes, I think – masters or no masters, I think people change and people develop things every day or year or month. I've been studying in two different countries, that I've never lived. I've been in France, I've been in the UK but I've never lived tolerance, the words that I've learnt a lot about different cultures, a lot.

I: Like what?

How many times you shower, when you shower, what you value is good, what do I value. Manners, I saw a lot of manners., way of drinking, drinking, a lot. Friendship, how they value friendship, how they value family. I am passionate, absolutely passionate about food and I will open a restaurant and what I was looking more was, when I was talking with my friends, so what did you eat today? Like all my friends, I learn a lot about cuisine and food in different countries.

The passion of the experience is conveyed in the text above and to some extent this underlines the intimacy and intensity of the friendships that developed across cultures. There appears to be some understanding that national cultures have shaped individuals to particular modes of existence and behaviours. National categorisations of culture

were not, for the most part, a source of conflict in France but of cultural learning. Attitudes of openness, tolerance, and curiosity were demonstrated in many of the interviews. This interview above exemplifies the three levels of Matthews (2000) cultural shaping, the first level of cultural shaping that “conditions us as to how we comprehend self and world”, the second level of rules of behaviour, and the final comments on food indicate the third level of shaping, the ‘cultural supermarket’ level. The excerpt above also demonstrates the importance of the role of food in an internationally mobile environment. It seems to play an important role in this level of cultural shaping and offers an example of a conscious cultural choice made in a ‘supermarket style’ as Matthews suggests. Tastes and smell, especially with regard to food are important indicators of the loss of the familiar and therefore pose adjustment hurdles.

### ***A cultural shaping analysis and miscommunication?***

The second level of ‘cultural shaping’ is defined as being the rules and norms of behaviour that govern a society, that certain behaviour is ‘forced’ because of societal conventions. Students’ behaviour and interaction in relation to this level were witnessed in the observations, for example the French students who both whispered in French during class and also spoke French, despite the other students’ lack of comprehension. A convention of behaviour that is not uncommon in Business Schools in France but which for some students caused discomfort. Matthews (2000) argues that this level of cultural shaping is of greater importance than analysts of culture have recognised. The data demonstrates that individuals’ encounters with different rules and norms of behaviour bring the potential for conflict in a group work

environment. As we saw above, French students approach group work in a different way to other international students. This suggests a lack of development of intercultural sensitivity amongst students. It seems to indicate that the acceptance level (Pederson 2010) of the other's culture has not been acquired. Another illustration of codes or rules are the many comments made in interviews in relation to different dress codes both in the UK and in France.

This dress code observation could also be related to Matthews' (2000) 'cultural supermarket' level of shaping, which is a fully conscious awareness of different aspects of national traits. He suggests that individuals, particularly in affluent contemporary societies, construct their lives from the global cultural supermarket. It is suggested here that international higher education represents another aspect of this consumer focused cultural supermarket.

### ***Learning about the host cultures***

There is little evidence of 'real' interaction with, or learning about, the host cultures. The transcripts from both staff and students demonstrated that students socialised and learnt with others from their course. The contact with others from outside the courses appears to have been quite limited and students seem to exist in an 'international bubble' which was enhanced by the experience of travelling to France. Comments on the experience of France and interactions with the host culture varied with some being more negative than others, an example of which is provided below:

Well, before I headed to France, everybody was like oh you know the French, they're snobs and this, this and that. I'm saying no, no, no, give them a chance. But to be honest with you, the only thing that I found really shocking was, - once again being in a small town you're mostly mixing with people from your course and with teachers and things like that. So I didn't really mix that much. And I had good and bad experiences. At one point, I was constantly harassed by old men in France which was just – I don't understand. I thought everybody else was going through it but it turned out it was only me. And I'd be walking home and just old men would stop and honk and try to pick me up. And I was OH! And I was so shocked by it and I was just like is it because of the colour of my skin? Is it just because I'm a young female walking by myself? But the town in France in general is pretty safe but for me, that was one thing. And I think because I didn't speak French and I didn't understand what they were saying, it threw me off any more. So I was thinking what the hell is going on! Why am I being harassed by these older men? At least if they were young and cute – that would be one thing. But 75 year old men with their hair cut pulled over is not cute. So that was one experience. And then once again you have your different – like any experience you get some really mean people and then you get some really friendly people. So I didn't really have any major problems when I was there. (*Nigerian/US student*)

This student, in common with others who come from a more culturally diverse background, demonstrated a more open-minded response to her cultural encounters.

### ***Language Acquisition***

In addition to the lack of engagement with the host cultures there was little evidence of third language learning. The language of instruction for both semesters was English and although French classes were offered, students did not engage in the opportunity to learn or to improve their French and, indeed, often displayed resentment at having to speak French. When asked if they learnt any French, this student replied:

No! I have studied French for 6 years beforehand between primary school and secondary school and I completely forgot all of the basics. We had

this one class which is once a week but when I got there, for whatever reason we didn't have class for the first month I was there and it was only once a week. So after that, it wasn't like a very intense, I didn't feel like I was learning a great deal from it, so I didn't really go and that was it. So I learned je ... I want this or I want that, or thank you. So I learnt the very basics but that was it. I think that was probably one of the disappointing things that I really wanted to learn how to speak French. (*US student*)

The emphasis on English was displayed in the excerpt below:

In English yes, we go to class, it's in English. We go to all the social things are in English and you can get by with just all of the things, like going to the market or going shopping is all the same thing. You can point to it and you just learn one or two words here and there and that's it. I think that was possibly one of the biggest disappointments, not being able to actually pick up French. (*Greek student*)

The same student further explained that she felt it was a burden being able to converse a little in French as other students relied on her skills:

Greek student (G): Yes but because I am Greek I didn't see it as oh my god now I have to go with them again to go to this, I found it amusing for me because I would practice my language as well. Even though I know that they would even give me a hard time, not the students but the French people that I would try to..

Interviewer (I): Was this just Paris or in the local town itself?

G: In the local town basically, basically, in my residences. In my residence, in the Reception the same thing, "we don't speak English here." Everything, any problem... okay I know French but I don't know for example how the cable is called in French I am not that expert compared to the English that I can speak. L for example he went to Le Clerk once and he wanted an adaptor for his... because the European and the English is different so you have the three and the two, so he went to the supermarket and he asked for an adaptor, he can speak a little bit because Spanish and Portuguese are similar with French, so he was trying to put the right pronunciation of it and put it like in a French way. Sometimes it would work actually but in that particular time he couldn't, so he was like this... the guy was so offended because of the way he did this... he was like 'Mon Dieu what are you doing, what are you saying' in French. And L was explaining this to us and it was so much fun, even in

the...if you want something you have to say that in French. In the local town it was even harder because it's more close.

It seems that students regarded having to speak French either as a joke, annoyance or inconvenience. It is not surprising therefore that little was learnt about the host culture, with the emphasis in terms of their learning and communication being with other international students.

### *Challenges to cultural communication and learning from those challenges*

In response to a question asking for the interviewee to give an example of communication difficulties, the following response was given:

I can't, no. I would talk to somebody on the subway and because my French would be not obviously the French that they could understand and sometimes I would stop and make a pause to think of the word that I have to use, they would be okay faster please because I have someone else waiting for me. Then I would talk to them in English because that would be the faster way and they would be I am sorry, you are in France and you have to talk French. I got this behaviour and you are in France and you have to speak to me in French, I got this in banks HSBC which are supposed to be international, I got this in *Societe de General* and other banks, I got this in the University itself in the Reception, yes. Every letter that we were receiving in our Inbox was in French, yes. If you could not speak French you could not live there, you have to be with someone else. Marguerite if she wanted to get a mobile for example she had to pick me, if she wanted to go to the kiosk thank god that they knew us because there was only one of two so she would go Orange I told her how to say Orange SIM card, Orange, [one word] like the ten Euros and that's it. If she wanted to pay for something she would look at the till and she would pay and that's it.

It was hard. It was hard, it was really difficult. Even the menus were basically in French in the restaurants. (*Greek student*)

Despite the examples of challenges some students provided in their interviews, there were also clear illustrations of learning, adapting and acceptance. This suggests that for some students the requirement of living in a different culture adds to the educational process. In a question with regard to whether there was any learning about French culture some students felt they had acquired more knowledge:

Definitely, definitely. The whole concept of the French being snobs. Living there and it's so hard to try to explain exactly what it is because it's something that you just live and experience and you learn about without even realising that you're learning about it. So the way sometimes they're not necessarily the most friendly but then learning to appreciate when they are friendly and when they're not. Just the various culture elements which are very hard to put into words, especially if you have to stop and think about all the little bits and pieces. But did I learn anything? Yes. What can I say that I learnt though? I lived there for a couple of months. Just, I think just being there and just watching the way they dress or getting on to public transport or not talking on your phone. Just over time you just learn to appreciate or pick up some of the manners. When I first got there, I was like oh the French are so snobbish and then I was coming back to London for a trip and was thinking oh, the British are so loud, what is this! So without knowing it I had begun to appreciate some of their characteristics. I think over time you just begin to pick up small little bits and pieces that at the end create a larger picture such as when you talk or how you talk or the way you dress or you don't dress. Or the way you order or even restaurant services and how you order and whether or not you're allowed to stand up and go and get a menu by yourself. So just all these little bits and pieces that you begin to appreciate and learn what is considered to be acceptable and not. (*American student*)

This shows some initial culture shock in terms of a disruption of meanings followed by acceptance in terms of the culture, behaviour, and – most significantly - adaption. However, this engagement and acceptance of the host culture was not common to all.

In some interviews there was evidence of the maintenance of the students' existing cultural identity and a lack of acceptance of either or both host cultures. The following comments from a Greek student demonstrate difficulties in adaption and

some stereotypical comments, although there is recognition that individuals should not be categorised:

First of all I knew about French culture and people and the rest, I knew that I would hate it because I hated it since I was in school when I was learning French. The only thing that I got from it is that it confirmed by first impression that yes France sucks. Yes. Apart from a few things like the food...and all that. France sucks. Yes. For me it's like out of the picture as a...apart from the south of France like Nice and Cannes and there are very...(pause)

Yes. I am not saying that if I see a French person I am like 'Oh my god', I am not like that obviously, I accept everyone, it's just that I know from before that we can not for example be in a romantic relationship. In business it could be okay because they are very like not disciplined but they are very focussed in what they do and they are very ambitious because they want things to get done and they are very...they want to be the first. In business if you want to be as much the best you can be its production, it's official, effective for business. But when it comes to relationships like friendships, like other relationship they're bad for me for a Mediterranean person they're not suitable. I am very giving, they are like a wall, you can go as much as there, after that doesn't go. And they have their own culture, because there have been a couple of French and another...I could see that they were having very many differences and disputes and arguments because of the fact that he's French and he would rather talk to French with his friends, rather than include this girl in his group of people, because she doesn't speak French. And they had to all speak English so she could understand. (*Greek student*)

On the contrast with British culture the following comments were made:

Being in London I learned how to apologise even if I just nudge someone, yes that is...I think I just got used to it. it's not that I believe that this is the right thing to do, I totally believe that, but since I was a kid because my father is like that, I knew that this is the proper way to do it. I was always keen on guys for example that would open the door for me, so I was always in that kind of behaviour. But living in Greece all my life I learned how to not be bothered, but I said okay fine, since you don't do it I don't have to do it. But being here I just got used to it again and I am apologising all the time...Because my father obviously lived in a culture that's based on British culture.

This demonstrates the student's awareness of difference and a willingness to adapt to it.

### *Awareness of differences in dress*

Responses generally indicated that difference in appearance became an issue for some in France amongst female members of the course. Whilst students were critical of English culture, the opinion of French culture was that it had even less to offer. In an attempt to explore this further, the following response was elicited:

That is such a myth, you should go to Italy and see how girls are dressed, you should go to Greece and see how they're dressed. You should go to the Salonika in Greece they are dressed amazingly, in France come on...all they do is they wear a scarf of Louis Vuitton it's supposed to be wow a trend, yes it's just a scarf name labelled, branded, it's nothing. Or the short hair, they all have short hair, but did you actually ask a Mediterranean guy if he liked short haired girls, no because long hair is more feminine. I don't care about being trendy and fashionable and all that, I want to be attractive to guys, yes. I don't want to be attractive to my girlfriends telling me wow that's a nice skirt, it doesn't work this way.

Really. I was like this, I didn't feel any.. Maybe the Americans because they used to wear flip flops but you cannot wear flips flops in the rain, the American I don't know, I don't know. No. I never had this kind of pressure, but maybe because I didn't sense it as a person, I don't know. If somebody did obviously there was. Maybe because also I don't know but maybe you come from a culture where women make an effort to look like a woman, attractive. (*Greek student*)

This student then went on to say that, although she was from a similar culture (thus demonstrating some reflection), in the past she had been a bit of a 'tom boy' and her friends on the course had influenced her and taught her to wear makeup. Observations on differences in dress were also made by the French students:

One thing I love about London is that people don't care how you dress, what you do, which is such a good thing ...in Paris, people look at you if you are dressed funny" ( *French student*)

This observation of the conservative nature of French culture was made by other students. According to Hofstede's (2003) dimensions of culture, both British and French cultures are individualistic in their outlook but the difference between them is demonstrated here together with cultural learning with regard to that difference.

The acceptance and adaption or sensitivity to other cultures is dependent on compatibility with the deep level of 'cultural shaping' referred to Matthews (2000). The disruption of meanings appears to be less traumatic for some from particular regions or nationalities and the ease of transition is more straightforward, such as those from Latin cultures transition to living in France. A Chinese student commented that the transition from the East to the West had been the difficulty. Whilst she could see differences in English and French cultures, the transition between the two had not been difficult as they are more similar to each other than Eastern cultures to Western. The *modus discendi* is conditioned by this level of 'cultural shaping' and there is little conscious awareness of the reasons for the critique. The data does not offer sufficient insight into the difficulties with the UK *modus docendi*, merely, that there is a preference for France.

### ***Personal development and friendships***

Some students clearly recognised that cultural difference is a barrier that can be overcome. This emphasises once again the need to develop a relationality with others and an acceptance of cultural difference.

When you know the other person. It's easier to speak with them, you know the kind of sentence they use...more the cultural, not barrier but differences, different approach of work, so sometimes it was oh, why is the procedure like that or like that. So you have to be open to different way to conduct work. (*Norwegian student*)

I mean I talk to some people who complain about how things are done and it's really easy to get your back up about frustration but if we talk about and one of the things I'm fascinated about is inter-cultural communications. Hello, people do it differently and that's OK and it's not your way. It's like, go back to kindergarten and realise that part of if you say you want to work in a global environment you have to realise that people are going to do it differently and it's a great opportunity, not only with the street group from such a diverse background but actually understanding that you are going to walk in, it's a huge home stay...Its different because you're in a window of the world, we're so insular I think.(*Canadian student*)

The last excerpt illustrates the importance of the cultural learning to future employment prospects and provides evidence of the cultural dimension of these joint degrees.

Personal development came through reflection on learning about cultures and interacting with others. This interconnectedness became part of the learning process of the joint degree experience. This reflection and evidence of personal development varied from student to student but was a feature of the experience for all.

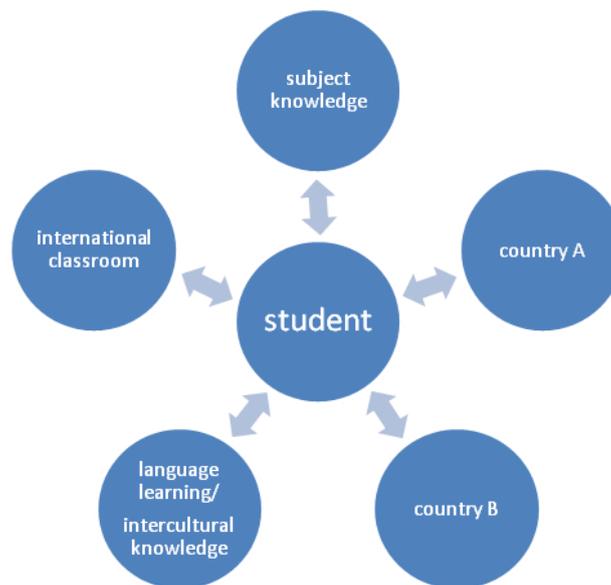
### ***3. Concluding Comments***

The findings from this data set clearly demonstrates that, despite the focus for these joint degrees being on business education with cultural learning not being integral to

the courses, the international classroom and international mobility did achieve increased cultural awareness. This is illustrated by the fact that students felt that they had increased their awareness of their own cultural norms and that, to some extent, they acquired intercultural awareness. There was clear evidence that students became aware of their different cultural scripts for learning (Welikala and Watkins, 2008) and that differing norms of behaviour can affect peer interaction. However, it is argued that this increased cultural awareness may only be at the 'cultural supermarket' level (Matthews, 2000). There is some evidence of learning of what Matthews defines as level 2, but little acceptance of those different rules of behaviour. There was also clear evidence of categorisation of national behaviours which resulted, to some extent, in bias or stereotyping. The findings support Pederson's (2010) call for intercultural training to be incorporated as part of the study abroad process, or, as in this case, the joint degree experience. The high response rate to the questionnaire with regard to "becoming culturally and linguistically competent in at least one other culture or language other than my own", can refer only to English competence since it was the language of tuition. Very few of the students had sufficient contact with English or French culture to have any real learning of those cultures. The French students' responses were always framed in the same way as each other, that they had become more 'open-minded', thus demonstrating that their cultural frames of awareness had expanded beyond their own socio-economic subculture. The extent of this was however unclear. What we can say is that the evidence demonstrates that there are certainly surface level intercultural skills and awareness acquired on joint degrees. This occurs through the international classroom and in the international higher education environment, but any deeper level of cultural development and knowledge requires development of the relationality between individuals. The recognition and

acknowledgement of cultural awareness requires integration into the curriculum. It is dependent on the relationality between the students which needs to be facilitated through the teaching and learning approaches on an international higher education course. The context of the joint degree experience and the way students engage with it is illustrated below:

**Figure 6: A student in an international education environment**



The data demonstrates that, in the international higher education environment offered by a joint degree, individuals' negotiations vary in emphasis but that their *modus discendi* incorporates cultural learning. This cultural learning varies with individuals but the more reflection there is, the more effective it would seem to become. We can conclude that reflection becomes necessary in order to derive meaning from the joint degree experience.





## CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSIONS

### *1. Introduction*

This thesis has sought to understand the experience of international higher education through offering a glimpse of the individual's negotiations and interactions in the context of a joint degree. The approach was to explore that experience through a case study of a set of joint degrees offered between two institutions, one in London and the other in France. In order to provide a rich description of the case, although the focus was on students' experience of international higher education, practitioners views were also examined as were reports from the QAA and some of the Bologna Process communiqués. The dimensions of international higher education, as aspects of the joint degree, were identified as being students' cultural interactions; international mobility; the relationality between the students; and the *way* students experience the learning environment. These were explored with an emphasis being given to culture as an overarching dimension.

The lens of the personal allowed insights into the complexity of the issues for students, staff and institutions. The necessity of understanding the negotiations of individuals on joint degrees was justified due to promotion of such programmes within the higher education policy context of the European Union, most specifically, the 'Europe of Culture' and 'Europe of Knowledge'. In addition the findings highlighted the need to understand and deal with difference as part of the international higher education process, both for individuals, institutions and for policy makers.

## ***2. The Implications for International Higher Education, a Summary of the Findings***

In Chapter One, I questioned whether joint degrees are distinguishable as an education process from internationalised higher education in general and whether international higher education exemplified by joint double Masters is distinguishable from higher education, for example Masters degrees offered and taught in one country but which have large numbers of international students. The thesis sought to take a critical view of whether joint degree courses are merely taking advantage of ‘market opportunities’ and the demand for sojourner experiences as part of the contemporary globally mobile environment and the importance of joint degrees in internationalising higher education. The chapter considered the key contexts for the learning in such programmes of study, whether there is additional value gained by this type of mobile educational experience and the tensions with nation state orientated frameworks for delivery as well as the value added through the development of intercultural awareness.

Chapter Two considered the existing field of research and the place of this work within this field. Some of the broader debates were examined - such as the debates in relation to the Bologna Process - as they underline the importance of the issues raised by this study for the policy context. The link with the research questions and the existing field of work was outlined and the gaps in the existing literature demonstrated. From a discussion of the literature it was established that there was a need for an in-depth examination of the ‘lived reality’ of international higher education under the auspices of the joint degree. It was argued that the research

approach adopted here - that of a case study of the experience of such degrees - was appropriate and would provide a contribution to the existing field of work.

The methodology for the research was outlined in Chapter Three. An argument was made for the use of a constructivist framework underpinning the research approach as this framework allows for the exploration of the 'lived reality' of the experience of the joint degree. It allows us to understand the 'meanings' for the actors experiencing this type of higher educational process and sense-making from the individuals' perspective. The research questions (listed in Chapter Three) focused on both the teaching and learning aspects of the experience as well as the cultural interactions of the students and whether the international classroom facilitates intercultural learning as well as the larger question of what the education on joint degrees adds to the educational process of a Masters degree.

The consideration of the institutional perspective in Chapter Four highlighted that issues of difference need to be given further attention as do ethical issues, such as the need for transparency and maintenance of national quality frameworks as well as considering the differences in the teaching and learning approaches of institutions and the implications of those differences for students. The difficulties arising out of the practice of group work assessments we clearly witnessed. In addition there is a need to aid students in their cultural negotiations as well as dealing with institutional difference, such as understanding the differences in the assessment frameworks of each institution as well as the *modus docendi*. These issues of difference become part of the students' negotiations in international higher education and permit us to see how classroom interaction can further intercultural learning amongst students.

Transparency was found to be a significant issue from the experience perspective, both in terms of institutional communication but also in terms of the differences between teaching and learning in the institutions and with regard to quality procedures.

The need for transparency underlines that the ethical context of international higher education requires further consideration both from institutions but also from policy makers. Warnings from the QAA with regard to the temptations of financial benefits would not appear to have been heeded. In fact it was clear that financial benefits provide an incentive for institutions engaging in international higher education. The arguments presented with regard to the marketisation of higher education are a backdrop to international higher education activities. These financial incentives are linked therefore to market forces which create tensions for the student experience as the motivation for engaging in them is not the education experience or process.

Chapter Four explored some of these tensions with regard to the institutional perspective and the claims that international bodies, such as the AACSB, make about joint degrees appearing to represent the future for international higher education activity. The chapter explored the different *modus docendi* of each institution which resulted in an effect of the separateness of each institution rather than 'jointness', thus highlighting again the issue of difference with regard to teaching and learning in each institution. The separateness of each institution is further entrenched by national frameworks of quality monitoring and regulations which provide the structures for Masters' education that institutions must follow in order to maintain governmentally set standards of quality. The UK QAA position was examined both in terms of the

Code of Conduct for Collaborative Provision and through an example of an institutional audit. The wording of both documents highlighted that delivery outside the UK of UK higher education must be subject to UK quality procedures. Interview data confirmed that the QAA approach was unlikely to be acceptable to French institutions.

Another difference that was highlighted were the ‘global branding’ approaches of the institutions which became part of the student experience as it was linked to recruitment and institutional messages of status. This had an influencing effect on students’ attitudes to their host institutions. This was both positive and negative. Returning to the question of ‘eliteness’ of international higher education raised in Chapter One, we can observe that the content of the courses did not seem to give the students an ‘elite’ educational experience in terms of intellectual challenges in the classroom. On the other hand ‘eliteness’ is achieved in experiential terms because of the uniqueness of the experience, the social network of contacts that students acquire and the transferrable skills that students appear to acquire and in terms of the different type of experience offered to a Masters taught in one institution. This experiential aspect of the joint degree required personal reflection as part of the students’ *modus discendi* in order to deal with difference. Thus experiential learning takes on an importance that was not anticipated by the institutions and was as a consequence both of the group work assessments, that became a forum for the cultural learning, and due to the demands of cross-country mobility at postgraduate level. The acquisition of transferable skills had been identified in the students’ expectations of the course but the means as to how that was to be achieved were not really given much consideration either before or on completion of the course. Exposure to learning in two different

countries was not the focus for the cultural learning as there was no explanation of the cultures of those countries and little transparency with regard to the differences between the institutions. Exposure to the host cultures was found to be limited as students operated in a 'bubble' of other international students. This could have been addressed, as the first semester demonstrated that 'international knowledgeability' (Stone 2006) could have been more honed and developed through teaching the students to deal with difference and raising their cultural awareness. In order to offer an international higher education experience that is distinguishable this would appear to be fundamental, both in terms of their experiences on the joint degree and with regard to the development of their 'international knowledgeability'. A 'space' for reflection is key to cultural learning as those such as Pederson (2010 and Arkoudis *et al* (2013) acknowledge.

The findings in Chapter Five indicated that different *modi docendi* in institutions, and the differing personalities and cultural backgrounds of students, can hinder the success of the teaching and learning on joint degree Masters programmes. There was a lot of evidence of the group process being a source of tension in terms of the teaching and learning experiences of the courses but that the more intimate environment in the French institution allowed difficulties to be overcome because of the need for reliance on each other and due to the 'international bubble' in which students exist. The data evidences a clear preference for the environment in the French institution which could be for a number of reasons. These include student perception of closer contact with tutors, more hours in class and a social dimension to the courses that cannot be present in a large urban institution. The potential for difference between the two institutions, teaching and learning methods and experiences of the students call into question the

use of the word ‘joint’ to describe such a programme of study. This chapter offered a comparative perspective to the thesis which is discussed in more detail in the following section.

In Chapter Six we saw that ‘international knowledgeability’, defined in Chapter Four, was sometimes achieved through reflection on the engagement with ‘others’ and personal development as a result of the experiences of studying in two countries. This varied from individual to individual and depended to a certain extent on a willingness to reflect on difference and learn from the experience. There was clear evidence that students became aware of different cultural scripts for learning and that different norms of behaviour have an effect on peer interaction, which was so important in their group learning. Whilst there was evidence of some cultural learning, there was also a tendency demonstrated in the data to categorise cultures negatively, or stereotype and so cultural learning was surmised to be superficial only. Few students had much contact with the host cultures and the data supports Pederson’s (2010) position of calling for intercultural training to be incorporated as part of the learning on such programmes of study. The French students responded in a very similar way to questions on culture and most stated they had become more ‘open-minded’ as a consequence of the experience, something that Brown and Holloway (2008) identify as a consequence of students’ adjustment to their new learning environment.

This is perhaps the best way to describe the additional value offered by such intentional programmes of study if we return to the broader question of what is the point posed by Kehm and Teichler. The relationality between individuals is significant to the experience and needs to be emphasised and drawn on as part of the

teaching and learning of such programmes of study with cultural difference incorporated into the *modus docendi*. In order to achieve the additional value of such programmes of study reflection is fundamental to deriving meaning from the experience.

### ***3. Contribution to the field of knowledge***

In presenting a glimpse of the student negotiations and reality of the educational experience of postgraduate joint degrees, as representative of international higher education, the thesis offers an original contribution to the field. Although it is not the only study done of joint degrees, it is the only study carried out on the experience of postgraduate students that attempts to understand the complexities of the experience, in particular, how dealing with so many differences is such an important part of the learning process as well as the experiential nature of such programmes. In addition the case study approach has provided a richer picture of the experience, providing insights into the complexities of cultural interactions on such programmes and the embeddedness of experiencing difference as part of the learning process. This rich picture differentiates the work from Culver *et al's* (2012) study which also looked at the value added by dual awards, as seen in Chapter Two. No other work 'paints a picture' of the complexities of the international parameters of the joint degree experience taking into account: the students' countries of origin, their previous experience of education systems which informs the *modus discendi*, the different *modus docendi* of each institution and differing cultures of each institution, the dominant language of instruction and students' relationship with it, the cultural

heterogeneity of one group of students interacting with the culturally homogenous group in a new culturally heterogeneous environment followed by the experience of a culturally homogeneous environment. If we consider the issue of language alone we can see an example of this complexity where students who are native speakers of English are taught in a different English (Americans in the UK for example) to their country of origin and have to communicate with others who are not native speakers; French students study in their own country and another country but not in their native language, all non-native English speakers have to attain intermediate English prior to entry but this is not academic English and then have to negotiate in a third country where the language is for most not one they are familiar with.

At every level the case study demonstrates the asymmetry of the experience. Geertz' (1973) view of culture as the ingredient of human beings is mixed differently for each individual's recipe of knowledge acquisition. The findings from this case study bring this into sharp focus. This rich picture painted by the findings in this case study allows us a glimpse into the experience of postgraduate joint degrees. It gives insights that have previously only been touched on and will inform both individuals embarking on such programmes of study, the institutions who offer them and also the policy makers, who according to Dale (2012) have given little thought to the experience of such higher education programmes of study.

In reflecting on the importance of the relationality context of the individuals involved, in other words, a context of 'thou affects me' (Buber 2004) - this includes staff as well as students - as the foci for these types of programmes, the thesis presents a framework for the development and implementation of joint degrees which makes the

acknowledgement of the student experience on those programmes key to the success of international higher education. Whereas most of the existing literature has focused on either the student experience or the policy context, this thesis argues that these perspectives cannot be considered in isolation.

If international higher education does not develop within this framework of mutuality where students are partners in the education process, then perhaps it cannot really be seen to offer much more than long term travel opportunities. The three aspects of Barnett and Coate's (2005) higher education curricula represent the theoretical basis for the context of mutuality to form part of an educational approach where students are partners in the education that is received. The consideration of students' *being* in relation to international higher education activity can be seen as an aspect of the *way* students learn with culture informing both the *modus discendi* and the *modus docendi*. The acknowledgement of students' being in higher education goes to the heart of the educational experience and notions of academic identity as argued by Barnett and Di Napoli (2008).

As such this thesis also explores the students' negotiations in international higher education, thus addressing the call by Garango, (2009) to research those negotiations. In line with the need to examine these 'negotiations' the thesis used a constructivist approach to understanding individuals' 'realities' of their learning. What makes a joint degree something additional to education in one country with a class of international students? A constructivist framework facilitated a view that the learning on joint degrees is transformative because of its experiential focus and the reliance placed by the students on each other. The *way* that students learn stems from the

relationality of students with other students. In attempting to provide students with an understanding of their global environment the educational process relies on the students developing an understanding of each other through experiencing their relationships with each other in and out of the classroom. This relationality which formed part of the educational process was evident throughout the data.

### ***The importance of joint degrees for intercultural learning***

Communication as an aspect of the classroom experience is central to the students' experience. It is the medium for the development of their cultural awareness. In order to facilitate communication there is a need to develop their consideration of the 'other', (Levinas, 2006). The classroom provides a space for the encouragement of students' relationality where effective communication is the result, rather than a categorisation of the 'others'. The joint degree provides the 'common ground' (Akoudis *et al*, 2013) where the students are forced to interact. The commonality of the experience of their travel together differentiates the international classroom on international degrees taught in one country. The difficulties of students communicating with 'others' in a diverse classroom environment where the course is international but delivered in one country and students are resident in one country during their course, are acknowledged by those such as Akoudis *et al*, (2013) and Mott-Smith (2013). The joint degree experience provides the 'common ground' for the students' interactions and cultural learning, although it is also acknowledged that the need for a space for reflection is also important to this process.

The ontological discomfort that arises from the demands of international mobility which the joint degree requires places an emphasis on students' relationality in educational terms. Coulby (2006) has stated that there is a need for intercultural education to aid negotiation between cultures as opposed to demonstrating that there is more than one culture. The difficulty is that most of the teaching and classroom interaction is not defined as intercultural education and is centred around the subject discipline. However, the culturally heterogeneous environment and travel together on the joint degree requires students to negotiate with those from other cultures in a way that they do not have to if they remain in the same country. This could be argued to be as a consequence of the more intimate environment in France but the inclusion of the French group provides the common ground which was witnessed amongst the students, (please refer to Vignette 3 in Appendix 1 for an example). It evidences that for many it was the common experience they held together that bound them together – despite their differences, although the data also illustrated that this varies for individuals.

Expectations are high from both the teaching and the learning perspective and of the cultural experience. Leask (2007) points out, the international classroom requires teachers to be able to use the cultural diversity in the classroom as one of the resources available to them and to be able to do this they must also develop intercultural skills. The course demonstrated that joint degrees encourage an emphasis on *being* in higher education because of the emphasis on the students' relationship with each other as being at the heart of the learning process in a context of internationalising the curriculum.

The thesis thus brings into view the multiple dimensions of difference which structure the students' experience but which also provide the common ground for them to interact with each other.

### *The comparative perspective of the thesis*

One of the research questions sought to identify what the different approaches to teaching and learning in each institution were and a further sub-question posed was whether studying in two countries adds anything to the education process. The findings in Chapter Five identified that there were differences in the *modus docendi* of the institutions. This comparative perspective to the thesis also offers a contribution to the field as the literature evidences a gap with regard to comparisons of pedagogy in higher education institutions in a cultural context. The thesis therefore builds on the work of Alexander (2000) in looking at the link between culture and pedagogy. The findings discussed in Chapter Five pointed to pedagogical differences between the two institutions which can be identified as being at both institutional and national level, thus echoing Alexander's work. The students' views of the differences were highlighted as polarised in terms of students' preferences towards their experience of the French institution. Whether this pedagogical difference can be applied to other subject fields would require further exploration but indications from interviews were of a difference in the philosophy of the pedagogical approach between the institutions and that this may be applied to other subject fields. The discussion explored in Chapter Two clarifies that the UK approach to teaching and learning is steeped in notions of independent study and less class contact time and whilst this varies across subjects it is a culturally steeped approach across the British system – perhaps most

commonly evidenced in the use of the term 'reading for a degree'. The comparison of the pedagogy in the two institutions offers us a glimpse of these differences through the student and staff experiences of those differences. The data confirmed the similarity with regard to pedagogy in France and the work of others such as Blanchard (2009) and Bourdieu (1989) in respect of the approach of the *Grandes Écoles* to the delivery of their education.

The data indicated a clear preference for the French system by nearly all the students and this was surmised to be due to: the fact that many of the students on the courses were educated in systems other than the UK, that the larger numbers of hours in class represented something more akin to their own education cultural norms, in terms of familiarity of approach, or simply that the institution in France was small enough for their voices to be heard and that they were paid more attention by staff. One semester appeared to be too little time to adjust to the UK system or even acculturate, as the time of the sojourn is too short. The implications of this comparison of the teaching and learning and thus finding of difference appears to be that these Masters awards were joint only on the basis of the title. The delivery of the curriculum in teaching and learning terms did not appear to be 'joint'. The comparison of the experience between the institutions demonstrates considerable difference in the teaching and learning, curriculum and administrative procedures.

In terms of a comparison of the physical environment, the classrooms and format for delivery of the teaching in a classroom were similar but the responses to items on the survey with regard to the teaching and learning at each institution demonstrated a

perception of dissimilarity with the teaching and learning experience at each institution.

The interviews evidenced a communication gap which gave an impression of 'separatedness' in a teaching and learning context between the institutions and this was reinforced through the survey responses. In other words, the courses were not joint in the students' view, with the institutions acting as two halves of the whole but were separated by a number of factors so that the experience in each was referred to separately and with comparisons made between the two. To address this, at the very least the institutions could have offered an explanation of these differences between the institutions as well as the importance of the cultural context of the institutions would perhaps have aided students in understanding the pedagogical approach of each institution.

A comparison between the courses was not possible as there was an imbalance in the size and makeup of the cohorts, so this comparison was not made.

A further comparison can be considered in terms of the cultural groups, with responses being grouped into three: the French students, the native speakers of English and the non-native speakers of English. We can see similarity in the French responses to questions of culture and motivation, that the experience led them to being more 'broad minded', for example and the 'cultural supermarket' analysis seemed to be appropriate. For the native speakers of English assessed group work was seen as a burden because of their ability to communicate in English. This burden appeared to arise because group interaction was dependant on communication in English with a reliance on their English ability by the non-native speakers. In addition the North

American students appeared to be more 'sensitive' or aware to issues of diversity and the need for reflection on difference. Perhaps the highest level of cultural learning was witnessed from those who were non-native speakers of English, coming from outside the EU. A comparison of the responses from this group evidenced cultural learning at a higher level, both in terms of becoming aware of others cultural norms but also with regard to language acquisition.

#### ***4. Limitations***

As the research approach was that of a case study it is difficult to offer any general propositions from that data but insights into the experience of international higher education and joint degrees, as well as the negotiations and complexities for individuals encountering difference on so many levels, have been given. The research findings provided a rich picture of the experience of international higher education and allowed for the in-depth exploration of the individuals' voice. As Simons (2010) highlights, the insights offered from an exemplar can be seen as invaluable in presenting an informed position drawn from an in-depth investigation.

Another limitation for the research was the cultural norms of the researcher. These were viewed as limiting for both the interpretation and collection of the data as all the research data was collected in English as this was the lingua franca for the courses and for all the students. The researcher decided not to conduct interviews in French with the French students for this reason and as this would have had a differential effect on the data responses, although data was also collected in France. The researcher could

not have communicated in the native language of all the respondents involved in the case study.

In addressing the possible reliability and validity and limitations of relying on interviews alone the data was triangulated through the questionnaires and observations, through sources other than interviews and questionnaires, such as the QAA reports, and texts such as Zeldin (1980) and Bourdieu (1989).

The cultural norms of the students both in the interview responses and the questionnaire responses would also have had an effect on those responses. The interview process itself was limited by the cultural parameters of interviewer and interviewee behaviour. The interviewer was clearly more able to engage with interviewees from some cultures than others, for example those from Latin cultures who appeared to be more comfortable in an interview environment, exemplified in the interview with the Venezuelan student whose dialogue evidenced little hesitation in responding to questions. There was evidence displayed on analysis of the interviews that the dialogue was more engaged with respondents from certain cultures. This was clearly a limiting factor in obtaining full responses in all the interviews.

The status of the researcher as an employee of one institution could also be viewed as limiting as there may be a bias towards one's own institution. With this in mind I tried to maintain an objective position and take a reflexive position in the interpretation of the data. Another consequence of this was that access at the French institution was problematic, so observations could not be carried out to the same extent as in the UK.

However, this has to be balanced against the insight gained from the familiarity with the institutions involved which facilitated the building of a rich picture of the case.

### ***5. Concluding Remarks and the Future?***

The thesis was concerned with understanding international higher education in terms of how it is done and also *how* it is received and thus experienced by students in their learning and their (inter) cultural experience. The theme of culture was important for the thesis because it was threaded through all aspects of that experience including the teaching and learning in each institution. However, this theme of culture did not arise as part of the formal curriculum on any of the courses but arose from students' relationality and country mobility.

The award of two Masters diplomas for what amounts to the same work appears to be double counting but the pressures of the market mean that this is unlikely to change.

A discussion of ethics thus becomes a central concern for both the students and institutions of higher education for this and other reasons, such as the need for transparency and quality of experience. The fact that the whole course is delivered in one language also negates the basis for the award of two separate diplomas and raises ethical questions with regard to the basis for two Masters diplomas being awarded.

On the other hand national frameworks for education make the award of one diploma for a joint course difficult to achieve and as yet there is no supranational body with the authority to validate transnational programmes of study. It would be a pity if 'market forces' promoted an environment where 'fudging' of credits, the 'separateness' of

joint programmes and the award of two Masters for the same content became the standard practice rather than the seeking of transparency across national borders and equality of experience, as this undermines the pursuit of excellence.

What is clear is that there is a need to consider the student experience and that the future of this kind of provision is dependent on it. It is apparent that the engagement in joint degree activity by institutions and students relates to the experience of it and its success is reliant on the experience of it. The symbiosis between the institutions and between the students is evident and the thread of that symbiosis runs throughout. The thesis proposes that students' communications and interactions are fundamental aspects of their learning in such programmes of study and a 'space' needs to be created when designing curricula that allows for student reflection and develops their openness and awareness in order to promulgate an acceptance of the 'other'. The objective of developing communication, awareness of the other and mutual understanding or cosmopolitanism through personal reflection, points to the importance of a curriculum designed to enhance students *knowing, acting and being*, as conceptualised by Barnett and Coate (2005). The thesis illustrates the need to find a common ground for interactions across cultures and this is achieved through the shared travel and experience of another new culture together in the joint degree. Arkoudis *et al* (2013) point out, successful student interactions across cultures require further action on the part of tutors in a culturally heterogeneous classroom. This glimpse into the students' negotiations and interactions within the context of these degrees permits us to understand how this might be achieved but personal reflection is a fundamental element of achieving such learning.

The future will surely see a growth of joint degrees. The continued marketisation of higher education, increased use of technology and the influence of Erasmus Mundus and EU policy, will inevitably result in a rise in these types of programmes where the education experience is a shared process between one or more higher education institutions and the students. If these courses are to be useful educationally more work will need to be done to ensure greater integration in the design and delivery of the courses and to develop pedagogies which will help the students learn from their inter-cultural experiences.



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## APPENDIX 1

### Vignette 1 – student interactions

One of the modules for the course in the first semester in London required that students carry out their assessment in groups. The groups were self-selected in the first teaching session when students had no real previous knowledge of each other, except for some initial conversations in Induction week.

Observation of classroom interactions had provided some insight that all the group work for the module was not going well as in some groups, the French students were speaking in French to each other to the exclusion of other members of the group which was causing a slight but observable tension. This is did not however seem to be too much of an issue in class and seemed to be generally accepted conduct.

The view of this practice not being problematic changed considerably following a discussion with one of the female international students recruited in London. One of the international students came to see me on November 21<sup>st</sup> to say that she wished to transfer from the course. My initial reaction was great surprise. This student's disposition was one of a positive nature, who was always very polite, and helpful. She had told me previously that her sister was living in France and had always said how much she was looking forward to going to France. She was so positive about the course that she had volunteered to help me with my research. The tone and approach of this conversation was very different however. In the past conversations had revolved around how important the intercultural interaction aspect of the course was for her. It was therefore shocking that she no longer wished to travel to France, such was the depth of her enthusiasm and sincerity in previous conversations. Her initial explanation was that her Japanese friend had decided to transfer course and that she thought this was a good idea so she wished to do the same. However, because the change of heart was so shocking, the conversation continued, probing the reasons for the complete change of heart. It did not take too much probing in fact to discover the real issues behind both her transfer and that of her Japanese friend. As she started to talk about her experiences I listened and was in part surprised but in a way also not surprised by some of the difficulties her group had in communicating with each other as she had no difficulty in communicating with me. She described her feelings of inadequacy in her group and that this directly affected her ability to go to France in that she could not see how she could adapt to a new culture and a new country. This she said was the major reason she was choosing to change course. Again this was a great surprise considering that her sister was living in France and she had been so keen to join her before. She seemed to be adopting an absolutely opposite position to the one she had held earlier in the term. On further probing with regard to this, it became clear that it was not her ability to embrace another new culture which was at the root of her discomfort but it was the behaviour of the other members of her group that had so deeply affected her and her friend that she felt she was unable to continue on the course. Indeed from her description of the way she was treated this was inevitable. Neither she nor her friend had been able to assert themselves within the group and establish either boundaries of behaviour or equality of treatment or address what could be described as abusive behaviour of the other members of the group. She told of failed arrangements for meetings with two of the other girls from France failing to turn up to five of the seven arranged meetings. That she had been told "you don't understand the topic" and that every time she spoke she was told "you don't

understand”. One of the French girls had said that she always got good grades so “so don’t worry about me as I always do my work at the last minute”. She continued by saying that she had been particularly offended by the American male in the group using a French swear word every time she or her friend spoke up or tried to assert themselves with regard to meeting or completing the work. As soon as he muttered this word the two French girls with whom he lived laughed. This made the student referred to here and her Japanese friend feel very uncomfortable as they felt they were not being treated with respect and were being laughed at by the other three. They were also both shocked at the use of such a word, the student confirmed, with her sister living in France the meaning and could not bring herself to repeat the word to me, even though it was in a language she did not speak.

In addition to this, when the student had asked to contribute, the swear word was used again and she was told that she was not allowed to. She asked the tutor to change groups which he allowed but it was clearly too late to influence her decision to leave the course, either for her or her friend.

The American student was also known to me. He was Hispanic from California and gave the impression both in words and behaviour of his confidence in interacting in a multicultural environment. Much of the initial part of the conversation with him was grounded in his bravado that he had done nothing wrong, with initial denials of swearing and then an admittance that he had sworn in French as a joke without directing it at anyone. I asked if he thought that his swearing had been deeply offensive to the other girls, he said no but when asked if he considered the effects that it might have on those not used to swearing he seemed shocked and did not seem to have given it much thought. In fact it was clear from his reaction and comments that his behaviour and actions in the group had been bravado in front of the French girls with whom he lived. He had not really considered the effects and exclusion on the other two girls who were quietly spoken. Neither had he comprehended the insecurity that the French girls chatting in their native language had incurred which was then reinforced by his swearing in French. In fact he appeared to be mortified when he realised what offence he had in fact caused and he immediately offered to apologise to the two girls which seemed to be the correct course of action. The incident was then closed from the perspective of the British institution but two of the students withdrew at the end of the first semester.

## **Vignette 2 – How the institutions work together**

The collaboration began with a chance meeting or even a casual conversation that someone in the International Office had about someone from France wanting to visit the newly formed London institution. The meeting was the first of many meetings with the International Director of the French institution. A common vision of the possibilities for international studies was immediately apparent as were the possibilities for joint collaboration with the respective institutions. However, despite this, it took some four years before the first course was ready to recruit students. In order to maintain the collaboration, compromise was a necessary element as well as understanding and negotiation - negotiation of cultural norms and negotiation of national frameworks for educational delivery. The possibilities for miscommunication and misunderstanding were enormous.

The differences between the institutions were obvious and numerous but the often everyday negotiations had not been evident at the planning stage. They appeared and evolved as the collaboration continued and as the numbers of enrolled students grew. The French institution was small, the students were principally French in terms of cultural background, although it had a strong international vision when the collaboration commenced. It was located in a small French town and was part of the elite group of the *Grandes Écoles* for business. These Schools were established by Napoleon and are privately funded and unique to the French Higher Education system, being separate from the state university sector. For those who wish pursue a career in business they are the preferred choice for their higher education. At the time the collaboration began the School was listed in the top twenty of over 200 Business Schools in France. It had been awarded elite accreditation by EQUIS and AACSB and was rated highly in the Europe wide rankings of Business Schools by the Financial Times. Their resources were not stretched in the same way as most UK institutions either in terms of class sizes, facilities offered to students and student support or in the marketing of their programmes. The French institution was typical of a mid-ranking *Grande École*, (there are only 40 that are part of the elite group known as the *Conférence des Grandes Écoles*). In addition they could respond very quickly to the market, student demands and to change – something that was very different to my own institution. A market ethos underpinned the delivery of their education and was something that was unexpected for UK colleagues.

My institution was the opposite of all of these things. It was a large urban institution, at the lower end of the league tables, and had an extremely diverse student population with over 5000 international students. Postgraduate classrooms in business were mostly heterogeneous in terms of the students' country of origin with no single group being represented in any overly dominant numbers. The quality processes were bureaucratic and required courses to be externally moderated. The French institution had a panel of industry experts who they reported to once a year but the discussion and input from this panel was informal and advisory only. There was no external moderation of academics required either at the approval of the course stage or annually. Changes were made annually in the first few years to accommodate student observations on the need for improvement. The only real commonality with the French institution was the desire to offer an 'international course' experience. The students and tutors had to negotiate these differences continually throughout the academic year and as the first year progressed the differences in the institutions, the mode of teaching and the students became more apparent. The French institution were however aware of the differences in standing between the institutions but the ability to be flexible and the location of London were important – as well as the 'chemistry' between colleagues on both sides that facilitated understanding and communication.

Observation of the interactions between the institutions offers an analogy of a marriage where opposites attract. In order to maintain the collaboration compromise is a necessary element as well as understanding and negotiation, negotiation of cultural norms and negotiation of national frameworks for educational delivery. The possibilities for miscommunication and misunderstanding are enormous, for example, the abhorrence of French lawyers for English contract law. On one occasion a French lawyer was heard screaming at the International Director of the French institution at the prospect of the contract being governed by English law. Another example of what

might be perceived as a mismatch in the collaboration but certainly something that evidence a very different *modus operandi* of the institutions was the accreditation by a prestigious international body of the French institution. The London institution's reputation and lack of presence in the league tables, was called into question in a public forum. During the AACSB accreditation one of the panel members from the UK called into question the partnership with London institution. The London institution had to commit to seeking accreditation themselves in order to continue with the partnership. Whether the London institution would have this ambition without the pulling influence of the French is doubtful. Seeking such accreditation pushed London institution further in the direction of internationalisation.

Despite this and the need for creativity in fitting a postgraduate course into a course for which it was not designed, the common vision and the chemistry between the partners as well as the influences of future income generation and European policy initiatives were positive enough for the collaboration to succeed.

The analogy of a marriage is a good one with an opposites attract frame of reference. The culture of each organisation is very different. The London institution was very large and very bureaucratic e.g. an idea for a new course could take 2 years in terms of processing and planning and even then may not recruit. At the French institution things seem to take a few months and they then had a captive audience to recruit students from, because of the ESC programmes. Teething problems on the course caused problems for the following year in France and word of mouth amongst the students created more pressures as students were in the French institution for three years and a customer care approach was demanded and expected. Finances never seemed to be a cause of limiting action which was not something public institutions in the UK are familiar with. In contrast the London institution can iron out the problems for the next year and the second cohort is usually larger, this certainly happened with International Marketing Communications. Trying to match the build-up times for courses therefore is just one example of the mismatch between the institutions. Another example is the administration – this has caused a need for a great deal of communication some misunderstandings and at times exasperation as the coordinators try to negotiate between two very different and sometimes immovable systems. An additional problem for the London institution is that admissions, accommodation and degree awarding powers are all managed centrally and the School has no way to change these centralised systems. The School itself has managed some things but it has required a lot of effort and internal negotiation – there is still more work to be done as there is overlap in the timings of the semesters for example and the French students at a different stage with their dissertation. Other administration difficulties which cause stress for colleagues from both institutions and for the students have been the visa application processes – communication with Embassies is often difficult, time consuming and the result may not be the straightforward, or the one wished for e.g. students are refused entry visas for France, or extended visa for the UK so they cannot get a visa for France. During the 2007/8 academic year both the London institution and the French institution provided more support than ever for the students but this was met with complaints that they had not done enough to help the students and some transferred because they found the process too onerous. The staff in both institutions felt that it was difficult to know how much more help can be given with this but it is a very important aspect of transnational education and the course team felt the need to spend more discussion time seeing if they can improve the system. The view of the

staff is that the support that the students require was sometimes exhausting and the more support they provided the more the students appeared to need. The distance, institutional differences, cultural differences appear difficult to overcome in this context and the potential for misunderstanding has grown significantly.

### **Vignette 3 – End of teaching in France**

I arrived in France on a beautiful sunny June day – it was the end of the formal teaching and examinations. My train was late so I was left instructions on how to get to where the students were by the Course Leader at the French end, at the Reception. The directions were not clear and after wandering around the medieval streets for a while I could hear the sound of non-French voices and laughter. As I approached a rather beautifully renovated French house some of the students I knew came out with their cameras. As they saw me they said hello and I was immediately propelled into the midst of their ‘joie de vivre’ at completing their exams and finishing in France – forever! -as some said. I had arrived at their end of term ‘social’ which was being held at one of the tutor’s houses.

The students were high in spirits and very happy that it was all over (they had of course forgotten about that the fact they still had a dissertation to write and an internship to do). Many expressed to me, within a short time of my arrival, that they were very, very tired. What was clear on walking into this segment of their life was there was a lot of ‘bonhomie’ amongst them. I can’t say how many group photos were taken but certainly of the 30-40 students who were there nearly all wanted a photo of the group with their tutor. One of the French students had brought a plain T shirt and was getting everyone’s signatures on the shirt. What was also evident was that I had walked into a ‘family group’. They all appeared very close, were comfortable in each others’ company and their different cultures no longer seemed to be a separating factor. When we were inside the house a lot wished to talk to me and I tried to say hello to as many as possible. Some commented that they had become even closer and that they had got to know everyone rather than a few select people as had been the case in London, where the group was a lot more disparate. This was clear just from mixing with them at this social event – the comments made to me just reinforced what I was witnessing. However, despite this engagement with each other it was also clear that many were leaving the town in France that day, almost after their party in fact. I later saw two of the Greek girls at the airport – a mere three hours later – the desire to leave France was compelling – they said they had enough! Others were leaving the day after, including the handful of French students who were there. In fact two of the French students were starting their placement in France the following Monday – it was Friday. They had decided to complete their dissertation by September so they did not have time for a break. The two Greek girls told me that they had decided not to hand their dissertation in until December, they were very clear about this and said they couldn’t – they were exhausted, and that the semester in France had been very intense. I had a long conversation with the Egyptian student who said that he had a lot to tell me about the course but he was going off to do a placement in Germany first. I asked him to email me but one of the things he felt he needed to tell me there and then was that we shouldn’t have made a collaboration with a school in mid-France,

that it was in the middle of nowhere and that location should be a key factor in the decision to undertake a course collaboration.

At the time he didn't seem to care or was not aware that the French School was a prestigious French school – this was not to be the case when he spoke to me 6 months later in London.

It was clear that some of the students had become very close to each other during their French sojourn and this was certainly due to the size of the institution and the town itself. They left as they felt there was nothing else to do.

Of the French students who were there, I spoke with a French student about his accommodation problems. As it was a problem in the UK he felt the London institution should sort it out. The implications of his actions in legal terms had been explained, that is, the implication of the rent owed and that he had contractual obligations with no proof of transfer of those obligations and the responsibility was his alone. He did not appear to acknowledge or want to acknowledge that the issue of his accommodation was his responsibility and it was clear that he still did not understand the procedures. This difficulty was to remain and resulted in him not being able to graduate from the London partner. There seemed to be some tension surrounding this particular student and he stayed on the periphery of the group seeming to be engaged with the others but at the same time not. I later discovered that this was a result of some tensions over a 'break-up' with one of the Greek girls who was happy and relaxed to be going home. She later told me she would never go out with a French man again. However, it was clear that some of the students had become very close to each other during their French sojourn and this was certainly due to the size of the institution and the town itself. They left as they felt there was nothing else to do.

## APPENDIX 2

### Survey of students' attitudes to studying on a joint Masters programme

I would be very grateful if you could fill in the attached questionnaire, which forms part of the research being carrying out on the educational experience of students who are completing their Masters programmes at ..... .. and .....

The survey is voluntary and the data collected from the survey will remain confidential and anonymous.

If you have any queries regarding the survey please email Jan Bamford at  
katherinebamfy@yahoo.co.uk

#### Please tick the appropriate responses to the following questions.

1. I applied and was accepted for the MA at:

London	
France	

2. My country of origin prior to enrolling on the Masters programme was:

France	
UK	
Other (please state country)	

3. How much experience have you had of other countries?

	Yes	No
I have worked abroad		
I have studied abroad (other than semester at London )		
I have travelled widely		
I have travelled to other countries on holiday		
I have not travelled outside my country before		

4. Please state whether you are:

Male	
Female	

5. Please state your age in years:.....

6. Please provide the a) profession/occupation of your father and b) whether he works full-time.....

7. Please provide the a) profession/occupation of your mother?.....

8. Please tick the educational level of your parents

	Father	Mother
Primary		
Secondary (up to 16)		
High school/matriculation/16-18		
Higher education - degree		
Higher education – postgraduate degree		
Doctorate		

For the following group of questions could you please provide an answer by ticking the box most relevant to your answer:

**1 = strongly disagree (SD), 2 =disagree (D), 3 unsure( U), 4 agree (A), 5 strongly agree(SA).**

	<b>1 SD</b>	<b>2 D</b>	<b>3 U</b>	<b>4 A</b>	<b>5 SA</b>
9. I have acquired an understanding of my own cultural norms and expectations of studying in two countries					
10. I have acquired an understanding of the concept of globalisation as a result of studying in two countries					
11. I have acquired an understanding of cultural norms and expectations of others as a result of my experiences on the course					
12. I suffered culture shock when I arrived in the UK					
13. I suffered culture shock when I arrived in France					
14. It is important to experience culture shock to become globally competent.					
15. I enjoyed the experience of studying in two countries					
16. The course helped me to recognise that one's own 'world view' is not universal.					
17. I found the experience of studying in two countries stressful.					

18. Spending such a short time in each country did not allow me to become familiar with the culture of each country.					
19. The course has helped me to live outside my own culture.					
20. The course has given the ability to identify different cultural behaviour e.g. greeting etiquette which will aid me in my future employment.					
21. The course has given me the ability to collaborate across cultures.					
22. The course has given me the ability to step outside of one's own culture and experience life as the 'other'.					
23. The course has made me able to understand different cultures and attitudes					
24. I have become more aware of my own cultural identity as a result of studying in France and the UK					
25. The course helped me to develop the willingness to take risks in pursuit of cross cultural learning and personal development					
26. The course has helped me to be open to new experiences including those that could be emotionally challenging.					
27. I have become linguistically and culturally competent in at least one language and culture other than my own as a result of studying in two countries.					

28. Please rate your experience of (by circling the appropriate number in the column) the following at .....and London :

**1=very poor, 2= poor, 3=satisfactory, 4= good and 5=very good**

	France	London
a. Appropriate Course structure	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
b. Module content	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

c. Independent research	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
d. Assessment methods	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
e. Information provided in class	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
f. Lectures	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
g. Seminars	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
h. Amount of independent reading required	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
j. Group work with other students	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
k. Access/availability of tutors	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

29. Please rate the following according to how effective you found the following for your learning: (1= very poor, 2 =poor, 3=satisfactory, 4=effective and 5 =very effective)

	France	London
a. Clear Goals and Standards	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
b. Independent research	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
c. Module content	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
d. Module materials	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
e. Appropriate assessment methods	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
f. Good Quality of teaching	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
g. Lectures	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
h. Seminars	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
i. Information provided in class	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
j. Library facilities	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
k. Group work with other students	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
l. Access/availability of tutors	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
m. Adaption of content to the international background of the group	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
n. Study Skills Support/workshops	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
o. Generic skills	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

30. Please provide some further information in the space provided on how you felt about adapting to the different education systems, particularly reflecting on your experiences before and during the programme.

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**31. Please list the following in order of importance with 1 being the most important:**

a. The award of two Masters	
b. The opportunity to study in 2 EU countries	
c. The opportunity to go to a prestigious French school	
d. The opportunity to live in London and France	
e. The subjects taught on the programme	
f. The opportunity to study Marketing Communications	
g. The possibility of developing my international career	
h. The opportunity to carry out a placement as part of a postgraduate degree	
i. Other (please specify)	

32. Please use the space below to provide some further detail on your experiences of the course.

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33. If you have acquired more in depth knowledge about other cultures can you provide some further detail about what assisted you in your learning about other cultures.

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34. Can you provide some examples of the ways you may have become more culturally competent and how this may will help you in the future. For example, understanding the social rules of another culture, understanding issues affecting trust in another culture, understanding meeting etiquette, introduction etiquette, implicit rules governing conversations.

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**Thank you for completing this survey! NB. Names of the institutions have been deleted**

### **APPENDIX 3**

#### **Guideline interviews questions for joint degree experience**

What did the course give you?

How do you perceive UK education?

How do you perceive French education?

What do you think are the differences?

What will you take away from your experiences?

What was more important, the education, the qualifications or the social networks – can you explain why?

How do you regard your personal development as a result?

How if at all has the process transformed you?

What have you learned about other cultures? Can you give me an example?

In what way do you have more awareness of others/other cultures?

How different is the cultural experience in France and the UK – can you give me examples?

Have you learned more about yourself – can you explain in what way?

Can you describe your cultural awareness in terms of critical cultural encounters?

What is your overriding comment on the experiences that you have had on the course and in both countries?

## APPENDIX 4 – EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Jan Bamford  
WS 30012

### *Introduction*

**I've got some questions but I'd like you to talk as much as possible.**

About the whole programme?

**Yes, about everything. So I can start you off and maybe interrupt you and ask, but I'm sure you're going to cover some of the things.**

Let's start per country, first London, then France. So London, my first programme, I started with *[inaudible]* because I used to live in Venezuela. And when I sent my *[inaudible]* always send it through Royal Mail. As you know *[inaudible]* countries, it doesn't work. My papers got there, in December when I was already here studying and all that. So *[inaudible]* then started with everybody here. I got here, and I was like well I'm just *[inaudible]* waiting for classes. I didn't know when classes were going to start. I didn't know where to go, I didn't know what to do. And one night, one of my course friends *[inaudible]* he said *[inaudible]* and I'm like where are you studying? And he said I'm studying the same thing, what are you doing! And that's how I knew where were we on the programme when *[inaudible]* on the Friday. So the whole week that they did getting to know each other, I wasn't here. I was in London, not doing anything, just *[inaudible]* because I didn't get the mail.

Then, I think, I don't know if I'm going to be able to say I have a masters degree in two countries, two diplomas. But at the same time, I don't feel comfortable saying it because for example here, we had a few courses, a few modules. I didn't think we covered many things, service sector marketing was from the book, exactly from the book. And *[inaudible]* read the book and whatever. I just don't think the way of assessing it for the presentations was OK. The first week we had a supposed curve of grading, and he said don't worry, anybody who is going to be here the first week will have a curving of course *[inaudible]*. So *[inaudible]* we went on the first week, we got the worst grades and we had very good presentations. He said they were very good, this is a curve, this is not the curve. Everybody in the next week got better grades because they managed and learned from our mistakes. That was not fair.

For other modules, market research, Nile is very scary. I loved him, and he is a very good teacher, because I kind of like scary teachers. But sometimes he *[inaudible]*, this is very confidential, *[inaudible]* but don't tell *[inaudible]* because I am scared of him. He used to *[inaudible]* very much into rude, and I think if you want respect, give respect to students. And not just, with me he did it twice and I went to him and I said I just think that wasn't appropriate. And he answered back very rudely, and like I don't understand this. Of course, nobody else complained because you don't want your grades to be affected and even though you say your grades won't be affected, humans are humans.

**So you take a philosophical approach.**

Yes, of course and it was not just me, it was the entire class, there was this specific guy that he used to say things all the time. I said, how is this guy not crying, what's wrong with this

guy? Then, for example my dissertation, the first part, what's the word in English? The first thing you get for your dissertation here.

### **The proposal?**

The proposal, yes. I got a very good grade and I have a good grade, I think that I did a good job, but I got a 78, I didn't get a 90 or something. There is something wrong, and I love that there is something wrong because you can tell me *[inaudible]*. My feedback was, very good, very good, congratulations.

### **But that's an A?**

No, it is an A. But

### **That's a good A.**

I know but still there are things that I know are already wrong because when I handed it in, I was like oh, I forgot something, I forgot this and I forgot that.

### **So no one explained to you the British system *[inaudible]* 90%.**

I know but *[inaudible]* whatever.

### **You didn't get 80%**

I would just like some feedback in the way of improve this maybe, because I know there were some things wrong but nobody said. I was like how is that because I've already done two dissertations *[inaudible]*. And I was like maybe I'm prepared but *[inaudible]* all those things, how come I didn't get any feedback on improve this, when I knew that I made mistakes. In my methodology I made 2 crucial mistakes. No one said anything, *[inaudible]* I love getting an A but *[inaudible]*. And the whole grading system of the UK and France, I hate it. I hate it. Most in France because in the UK, they have their things, but in France when they explain it to you, I'm like you're kidding me, this is the reason that you're giving me. You cannot know more than the teacher. I'm not knowing more than the teacher. The teacher is the teacher because he knows more than all of us, like you're telling me that I cannot get an A? Like an A is a 17 and it's impossible to get a 17 because if I get a 17 I'm going to know more than the teacher? I was *[inaudible]* what! it was just very weird. Let's keep going on London!

What else? Marketing communications. John Wright, I liked him, I come from a Spanish background, this whole thing was very good for me to have vocabulary in English and marketing. But John Wright *[inaudible]* as though he was going to have a heart attack, all of us, right there, in class. He needs to check his health, really. He used to get in, he was – *[inaudible]* we were like freezing, he came in, running *[inaudible]*. *[inaudible]* open the windows! We were all freezing and I'm like I'm sorry, *[inaudible]* don't open the windows, please. And he was just horrible. And he *[inaudible]* never mean to me because thank God, I agreed with him, but twice, students didn't agree with him and he was like I'm not *[inaudible]*. And we were all like, OK. Nice healthy discussion. And I don't know, the tests, I got a bad grade for the test, and I didn't get the feedback. I don't know why did I get that grade, I don't know anything. I don't know I barely passed and I'm like, why? I really just

want to know why the tests, and the grades [*inaudible*] to get to us in France. We never got them, like when we finally got them it was like so far we were like oh this test, remember it, oh this project.

And what else here? I think they could change the way of giving classes, not just – when you give students and young people such a freedom like you have 2 days a week and one day a week and that's it because you have seminar, seminar, seminar. They do whatever they want, let's face it, everybody's young, everybody's going to go party. There are people that never came to classes, and when I saw them I'm like are you on my programme? Oh yes, yes, I was just [*inaudible*]. Their attendance sheet doesn't – the thing that we have to sign doesn't work at all, everybody signs for everybody. And yes, I'm bitter about me going to class every day and some people not going to class at all.

**But didn't you feel that you learnt more by going to class all the time?**

It was from the book! That's what I'm telling you.

**But there's a process by sitting in class and listening to it.**

For marketing communications, yes. For market research, I love market research, because I'm very interested [*inaudible*] I love it. The service sector, it was as if it never happened, like. I read the book! It's a very good book but –

**And did no one explain to you that you were supposed to make up the rest of the week with self-study? So it's meant to be 40 hours a week.**

Do you really think that – I read the entire book because I'm a very hard person on myself and I need to get A so do you really think -. Half of my class doesn't have the book, [*inaudible*] in France they were using the book like –

**There's a library.**

They use [*inaudible*] computers, when the IT floors are full. It was very, we have a [*inaudible*] population in my class, it's just - , yes it was weird, I don't know. And what else can I say? I think we didn't do enough [*inaudible*] I love having masters degree, and I'm not going to go to USA because it's your concern. But I'm not going to go out there and say no, my programme, don't go to my programme. I would never trash a thing that's giving me a good thing.

**Didn't the seminars challenge you so that if you hadn't done the reading –**

The only person that would challenge you if you didn't read was Nile because he would ask for example, I remember a specific example of Hennessey. We had two parties before that class, the one party in the Rocket and the other party [*inaudible*]. Nobody read anything, anything, anything. I remember looking at the Hennessey [*inaudible*] and he asked something specifically about Hennessey. And we were all like, err, and he was like [*inaudible*] he was the only one who would challenge you if you didn't [*inaudible*]. And he was the only one who knew if you didn't read anything. For the rest, service sector, the seminar was for giving presentations, the entire -. We had one class the first week, saying this is what you are going to do, and then it was [*inaudible*] presentation. It was just really –

and then the lectures, even the slides were, I'm not kidding you, they were just the book was right there. We were are they kidding? I spent all week, the past week reading this and I come here and you are going to repeat it to me. *[inaudible]* frustrating.

**When I did my first masters, we had one hour a week for each class, one.**

One?

**One. And the rest of the week you read and you had to read to keep up with the classes. If you didn't, you would fall so far behind. We had exams at the end of a whole year. So you were forced to fall terribly behind. But so the time in class shouldn't, at masters level, dictate the amount of work.**

I know, but we had more classes. More modules, we just had those few modules and well, nice. I liked them, I love marketing and communications and I love, people hate the book but for me it really helped for my vocabulary in English for marketing things, it really helped. All the things that –

**So you never felt you had too much to read?**

I like reading. We had, well we had to read the entire book of everything. Market research, we had to read two books, it would be helpful if for example when they say you've been accepted, whatever, when you send the mail, *[inaudible]* send a list of the books that we have to buy. So we buy them, because some of them are cheaper in Amazon in America. If I would have gone on there, I could have started them reading them and got here, reading. And of course they want us to read while we are having the class but I don't know.

**And so in terms of how did you perceive the French side of things then?**

France is another thing! They need, this is not an option, they need to give us a list in advance of what do we have to read and where we can find it. The *[inaudible]* book *[inaudible]* me and a friend, because I found it in the US and I had to run through the UPS guy because he was *[inaudible]*. *[inaudible]* book is not there, there are 2 books in the library that we cannot take out, and *[inaudible]* I'm sorry we cannot. And then we receive an e-mail on Friday. On Monday *[inaudible]* you have to read this book and a lot of articles. And we get there Monday and Gareth was like, so you read the book I assume because this is *[inaudible]* this was another thing that I loved *[inaudible]* I loved it. He explained everything from the book but it was everything, taken from the book. And he was giving so many examples from the book and we were like what book? Like really. It was just so frustrating and in *name* we had to read a lot more. And he was constantly giving us like 3 different things, and we were like, we don't know what to do. And instead of giving us constant one hour whatever for the whole month, if you gave us like for example, *[inaudible]* management, that was *[inaudible]*. That was the first week in February. In June we had the test. A lot of people were like, well, you have to imagine as if we had never read it because you have to re-read everything again. Imagine in your case you had never read the book in your masters, you have to read it all again.

**We finished classes in April, we had exams in August. So we had from April to August to revise.**

So it was even better. But that's the other thing like we had one week, before we [inaudible] we all went to talk to Peter, like we need a week, and we got a week. I got [inaudible] oh no, I'm losing time, I'm losing time, [inaudible]. In France –

**Did you prefer the French system of more classes?**

Yes, I prefer the French system.

**Is that because you think it's closest to the South American system, so you have an idea of the educational system is that there's more time in class.**

No, I would like the one hour thing in France. The perfect balance would be a mixture between UK and here, because in South America, Venezuela, [inaudible] we have for each module, one day a week. For example here, and you have whatever hours and then the next week like it's one time per week, taught twice if [inaudible]. [inaudible] Venezuelan type of, like [inaudible] more like here than in France.

**For theory?**

Yes, but it's just like a constant teaching, just one week trying to [inaudible] everything there, giving me 3 hours a day for one week and then not [inaudible] studying something else for 4 months. I don't think that's a nice way

**I understand. What do you think you're going to take away from your experiences?**

My friends! I love brand management, the classes in France I think they were – for most of the reasons [inaudible] and the classes in France. The classes in France were like sponsorship, I loved it, everybody hated the teacher because he was very rude as well, but I loved it [inaudible]. Brand management, all of us, all of us were like we need more hours with this person. He was too good, even if we had the entire time, like we had here in London, we would have had more classes than what we had there. He was so little time and it's like a week, this is all, put it there in your mind. But for example, brand management was, I can't explain the experience of that class, that was a pleasure of learning. We were all like – please –

**Where was he from?**

He's English.

**Is he from industry?**

Yes, he worked a lot in luxury branding. Robert and the last name is very difficult so I don't know. And he lived in France, he's been living in France for a long time. he was just –

**That's good, at least you had one class –**

No, I have a lot of classes I liked. [inaudible] didn't think they needed that much time, everybody hated negotiation. He was late all the time, we were all like [inaudible] not assessing. What else? Sponsorship I loved. I really liked, branding was again the best. Advertising, I want to work in advertising so advertising was also good. But things like

advertising that we had two days of advertising. You could have put some more in the week of negotiation for example. Or in media management

**So for you the structure doesn't work.**

*[inaudible]* students really don't say I want more hours, it's weird. We are there to learn, we wanted more hours, so it's just like –

**Students don't usually say that, give us more hours.**

That's the thing.

**Especially in England.**

That's the thing, normally they don't say it so if we were saying please give us more hours, that should have given you a hint that we're liking the classes. And because liking the classes, advertising is the fun part of *marketing* that everybody likes. Two days, and one day we were just talking about the product, it was just – it *[inaudible]* everything that we know and just -.

**So what's more important to you, the education, qualifications or the social networks?**

I value my friends a lot that's the problem. I met a lot of good friends here. I love education. Qualifications, I want to go to New York after here, I'm going to stay here in London because *[inaudible]* passport, I'm going to work in London hopefully for a year if I get in any place here. And then I want to go to New York and in New York, or South America, if I go and say I have this degree, I have these two degrees, they're going to love me without even saying anything. So to where I want to go, it's more important the qualifications. For my personal life, *the networking* because of my friends. But the education, it's important to have qualifications, you cannot get the qualification without the education.

**You said something about being embarrassed to say you had a masters degree, does that mean you think you didn't get the education?**

No, I think it was just – I'm afraid, and we discussed, it's like a lot of us discussed this a lot. I'm afraid that sometimes, because when you say I'm a masters, and when you're in England masters and in France you think you're like oh, whatever! I think we're all very good, I think we were taught good things. But we were all like, what if they ask something that we should know and we don't know? And we were all answering our questions like I don't know. We should know things that were not included in our masters, and they need to know what they taught us in our masters.

**But in England it's not about the amount of knowledge, masters does not indicate the amount of knowledge. It indicates a person's ability to think, that's what it's about. it's about your critical thinking skills.**

Then I'm fine!

**So it's about pushing you, how much you read, because you can never stop reading and in fact, in England it used to be that – there's Oxford and Cambridge still do say that, when**

**you say you're studying for a degree, you say I'm reading masters. You never say I'm studying, you say I'm reading, because you're reading. But the level indicates your critical analysis skills.**

For England I am amazing.

**So if you've got a distinction on your masters programme it means you've got good critical skills. So they're not going to ask you did you learn about blah blah blah and blah blah.**

For example in Venezuela or Argentina, they would fully say

**So there's a cultural difference you see in England, what a masters indicates is someone that has reached a certain level of critical ability.**

Then I'm going to be good working in England!

**So you're not going to be asked on the page of so and so did it say –**

In Venezuela why did they ask things like that? Or they were also asking things like so tell me what you can do, what did you learn how to do. And we were like, what am I going to tell *me what you can do*. yes we did this for analysis. *Can you do a SWOT analysis* -it's very different.

**Yes, it's about the amounts, whereas in England it's not like that. You can get amounts but it's up to you how much you do. Do you think that someone should have explained the differences with the education?**

I would have still *[inaudible]* even a lot of friends the last day and they were saying like well, oh these programmes and something good. If I had the choice again, I would take it again.

**The point about, the reason why British education is valued is because of the critical development, that's the idea behind it. You can do lots and lots of study and lots and lots of classes, but you don't necessarily get that critical focus. Do you think you achieved that?**

I do think.

**You changed your way of thinking about things? Your ability to criticise.**

*My undergraduate was not* very specific. I would *[inaudible]* the Venezuelan learning system and I was fully internationally focussed. So they told us some things, not that specific thing about the UK critical thinking. But they were saying what you are asked here at Procter and Gamble is never what they are going to ask you in London for Procter and Gamble. And then we talked about Asia, Africa. I had for my 4 years that I was undergrad, we already, we developed a lot of that critical thinking. That was very valued in my specific *[inaudible]* but in here, I've been practising it way more.

**It's about being able to solve the problems, and that's what employers want to see that you can solve. And a masters degree indicates that you have an ability to think laterally, to solve problems, to provide evidence to solve those problems. And that's the general idea.**

**Do you think the whole process has transformed you, studying away from home for such a long period of time?**

I have a weird family. Half of my family lives in Venezuela, half my family lives all over the world. I'm a very special person in the way of my brother, my sister and I were nomads going from country to country to country.

**So you have a very international life.**

But at the same time in Venezuela, we are very very close to family and in here, it's just like, everybody in classes, almost everybody is from Europe. And if not they're from the US. They went to see their family at least 3 times and I'm like well, my ticket to visit my mum because £1,500 I can't go visit her. It's like *[bye]* and it's been hard, but I can manage it because I have my friends and I have a boyfriend here. But for example now that I came back here, my closest friends left, *[Name]* doing a million things. Diana lives in Heathrow, one of my closest friends from the programme are not here anymore. It's definitely, definitely been like oh – so now I'm alone really. It hasn't changed me in a bad way, it has made me stronger.

**In what way?**

In the way of being, I'm still close to my family, but my brother and my sister, I've never been that dependant but I am less and less dependent. In Venezuela you don't go out of your house, you don't leave your house until you get married. I was bored of that and I said no, I need to leave, so I came here. And it's just – I don't know. It's good.

**Do you think that you've achieved some personal development and in what way?**

Yes, I think – masters or no masters, I think people change and people develop things every day or year or month. I've been studying in two different countries, that I've never lived. I've been in France, I've been in the UK but I've never lived... tolerance, the words that I've learnt a lot about different cultures, a lot.

**Like what?**

How many times you shower, when you shower, what you value is good, what do I value. Manners, I saw a lot of manners. Way of drinking drinking, (laughing) a lot. Friendship, how they value friendship, how they value family. I am passionate, absolutely passionate about food and I will open a restaurant and what I was looking more was, when I was talking with my friends, so what did you eat today. Like all my friends, learn a lot about cuisine and food in different countries.

**Do you think this is going to help you for your future life?**

Oh fully, yes. It will.

**In what way?**

In my long term plans *[inaudible]* my restaurant, because I will open a restaurant.

**Make sure you tell me where it's going to be.**

Oh, it's in Argentina. It's in Mendoza it's in the middle of a vineyard, it's going to be like up so you can see all the vineyard. It's going to be a seasonal restaurant.

**That sounds wonderful.**

I even know the name ...I know everything, I have the first name ... And the networking, as you said, is good, I have friends almost in every continent, and I just, if I am going there, please help me here, help me there. I'm doing this, I'm doing that. But the friends that you build here, even if you're not the closest friends but you spend *a lot of your life* together. They are very very good for your life, when you travel, when you don't travel, if you have kids, when your kids travel. I'm very into the friends, international friend thing.

**So the network has been important. Do you think you've then developed an awareness of other people's cultures that you are going to use? As opposed to just saying oh yes, I've got friends.**

No, the awareness of the culture.

**In what way?**

For working, for example. When you have, and then if I'm hired hopefully ( crossing fingers) and I have a meeting with an Asian client, I now know how to address them, how to talk to them, what to wear, what not to wear. What's an important topic, what's unimportant topic. We exchanged in the programme, we had good tips of you should talk to this, you should talk about that. We were all talking like no this is not at all, you can never put on a sex commercial in the US, but in South America just put it there, (laughing) they will love it. And we all know for example if I meet with someone, I think that I can talk about, I have topics to talk about with people from every continent. And I know that they are going to appreciate it and things that I can't talk about.

**So you've learnt an awareness of other people.**

Yes, fully and cultures.

**Do you think the institutions should do more to facilitate that or do you think that –**

I think that happens. It happens more in In the Town in France than here, because here you're in London, it's big, it's whatever. But in In the Town in France, everything, you are forced to be together. But in here, they could encourage more meetings, not just for example they did the first week that I missed! But one in the middle, it would be cool.

**Were there any critical encounters that you learnt from?**

Yes.

**Can you tell me?**

In France. Every time we wanted to find out what are our grades, the first thing they said, and they used specifically a word, and you can quote me if you want because I talked to

Peter and he said no, I didn't say that. And we were three like - yes you did! This is not London, you will get your grades 2 weeks after your passes. Lie. Lie. Huge, huge lie. Not only that, we had to go every week to have our grades, they didn't have our grades and there was a moment that he got rude. Peter and Valerie both. No one will have their grades. Why we have *our negotiation* grades, negotiation was a third class, we were opening mail, we were like – just the 2 weeks I don't know. *Not even London* it took that long and you said In London, it's not like that. And he told me, I wrote it in every evaluation Marianna," there is the door".

### **Really?**

Yes. I looked at him and I said I'm not going to say anything right now because if I say something now he's going to think that it's out of an impulse. I waited and I said Peter I just think that it was very rude what you said and you shouldn't have said that. Oh what, it's just a joke. For me it's not a joke. In any culture *I think saying that's the door it's a good culture*. The next day after that, after Peter had said that to me, I'm sure Peter said *something* .....whatever. There was this *boxes* outside of Val's office and we were doing the advertising and we needed a box to send *the shoes* that we made. And I went and asked her, I was the only one who went and asked for the grades all the time because everybody was like no, they're going to be mean to us. And I'm like I'm going to go and if they're mean to me, why do they have to be mean to me. It's my right to ask for my grades. So I went there, I said Val can I have the *boxes and* the grades. Can I have the box that's outside? Yes, you can have it. There was a paper on top of the box and I said, do you need this paper? No, I don't need it. I just put the paper under the box that was there and she came like, have the box. She just lifted the box and gave it to me, I went, OK thank you. Do you think I have time to put your grades and do this? I don't have time to prepare boxes for students, so now please leave me and let me put your grades on the board. I'm like you have to be kidding me, I'm sure Peter told her something, but this is not my fault. It's your job to be on top of things for students. So I was like so yes, that was a foolish [*inaudible*] if you're not on their good side, not saying anything that they don't want, they're going to be fine. They were like hi Marianna, when they saw me in the hall. But every time I went to ask for a grade, you're going to answer me like that. I think respect has to be reciprocated, of course they respect fear first and we all respect all that. But they have to give a little bit back, not saying things like that. So after that I was like I'm just not going to talk anything, and every time Peter – [*inaudible*] anybody needs help, I would [*inaudible*]. And then it's just –

### **Do you think staff need to have cultural training?**

Yes! They need to, they fully need to have cultural training. I thought Peter should have cultural training.

### **Do you think that is for international students, that is really intimidating and off-putting?**

For me it wasn't intimidating, for me, I don't get easily intimidated because I am one of those people that I am in student body councils. I have been in jail in Venezuela fighting for the Government. I'm a very active politic against terrorists. So I'm sorry, you are not going to intimidate me. Peter as a teacher telling me 'there is the door', but you are going to make me feel bad telling me that, why should you? So I told it to Peter, I wrote it in *every* valuation and they were like this is anonymous. *I wrote my name* so they would know who specifically *who was saying it*. I think it was just a very rude way, and they were all very

rude, they were never giving us straight answers of anything we know. The organisation, huge organisation in In the Town in France, they fully knew. They don't have a good structure, they don't have a good direction. Classes are great and when weekend comes, everybody forgets about everything, but I don't!

**Were there any critical encounters of a similar nature with students?**

Yes, everybody – for example I remember. After the last week, after one of the tests, I cannot explain how much we studied for the PR test with Michael. We studied, there were so many things to read, study and that same day we had sponsorship. *That day it was the same* - too much and we were all dying. We got 2 tests, I loved the tests but I couldn't pass the test without reading anything. But you could not pass the test without knowing something like Michael taught us but in other things, basic maybe, a lot of students were just very annoyed. Why did I study, they were just asking about CSR and stuff. I liked it, I'm not going to go complain -... if you want to- *lower the test*. Peter was not there, we write e-mails to Peter and he doesn't answer. We want to know things about our grades, about our courses, about books. He doesn't answer. When he answers, he's like oh, hi, they're not all the time available. He goes *all the time* and if you're not in school, they're just, *you can* read.

With the sponsorship class, a lot of students went and asked about the book and they all got bad things. The problem was that all students went to Danny or to me and said can you please tell Peter, can you please tell Peter, because nobody wanted to talk to Peter, because it was just very frustrating for them. The negotiation thing, the journal that we had, none of us understand that. We can come to the negotiation *trial yes* every day at your class, you put something about what you learnt today and that's it. And then at the end, you make a journal. We brought our handwritten journals to class and we transcribed it and that's what we did. This is time that we can use *for understanding* PR and sponsorship. And we went to ask Peter first, we couldn't have electronic things. Thank God I did mine handwritten but half of the class they did electronic. They all had to transcribe things first and then transcribe to the test. Because he didn't have a valid answer on why couldn't we have electronic things or why can't we just hand it in. And it was so frustrating, 2 students went and asked Peter, we have a long journal, we have it on our computers, we have to study PR and sponsorship. Can you please, can we bring the thing? " Well let me tell you, ha ha ha. Keep smiling," that was specifically what happened. We were all looking and we were like No. and I like Peter, he's a nice person but there's a difference between – my nice person that I say hi Peter, and my teacher. We were all, when he said keep smiling, turn around and left, we were like this - . We couldn't believe it, we were like, are you kidding, this is really the answer that Peter gave .

**Maybe we need to think about that. Was there anything happened with students like in your group work or anything that was of a similar nature? Was it just literally with the institutions?**

We all thought it was very very super that every week when we had the group, the week for group project, it's not good having group project and not having the teacher there to answer any questions. And they were like no, that's the idea you do it in a week, you do it with the teacher not there, not while you're in class. If we can manage to read it and work on the project, give us a project and we'll manage your time. No.

**Do you think it's very stressful to work in a group with people from all around the world?  
Or you're trying to meet to a common point.**

No, we all met for a common point, we all did – because of course, my point of view is very different from a Norwegian point of view, from a US point of view. It's very different and we all said *this is how it's done in my culture*, we have to all – like if you want to mix it all, let's mix it all, we have to find one that can be legal or anything or let's find a place that has nothing to do with any of us and let's put it there. All of us hate group projects, everybody hates group projects. But the things that we were saying, for example, in real life, because everything our teacher says, in real life when you're working, you're going to be working with a group. Yes, but if that person doesn't do their job, they're going to get fired.

**Or you have a boss tells you what to do.**

Exactly. Or in this one, you're going to get fired.

**Maybe at postgraduate level it works better because you're more mature and you can say OK well this is? –**

*Are you familiar with what we had in Mark Strat?* I work very good under stress, I think the best that I work is when I'm under stress. When there is a lot of stress, it's very good, OK. We had a group work with, I had in my group the oldest member, so don't think they're more mature. And he was the only – like he speaks Spanish, he's from Spain, Maro, you can ask anybody. His English is not that good, so we were thinking all the time well maybe it's a language barrier. No, no, no because when I tried speaking things in Spanish and explaining, he was horrible. This is the thing that we have a week. We don't choose your team, that's good. At the beginning we were all like well maybe, if they would have put him in that group I would never work with him. For example, things like that. At the end, nobody wanted to work with him because he was just a mess. We were like betting who gets Maro this time? everybody hated working with him. He's a very nice person, outside. So we had 5 *[inaudible]* ABCDE whatever and we had, and this is for branding. We were like what does *Marketing Strat* have to do with branding? This is weird. So we had 4 products in total, you had 2, I had 2, in this universe you would have to put your products, but it was a marketing thing to beat the competition, launch a new product. But this was two decisions per day. And it was clear literally 1 ½ hours to make a decision, you get the test, you get the decision. It was very very stressful. You had to work with 5 people to make a decision in 1 ½ hours of what about your company. And the person that gets last, even if you did a great job, if you're last, you fail.

That was horrible the way of assessing that, thank God I came first in both. But I came first because we had , the first time we had a huge breakthrough was good. And the second one, the financial one, that's another complaint that I have. We were, I'm not kidding, I wrote an e-mail to my Finance teacher of one of my last semesters and my undergraduate *[inaudible]* and I was like you're giving me this in English. Please help me, I am about to die. We had to make decisions on things, and they're like no, you have a Finance person in your group. My Finance person was never there, he's not from the group, from our group because we were mixed with French students. He was obnoxious, he treated all very bad, every time we were like can you please do this, we don't know how to do this, we don't know how to calculate these things. No, I hate it. Are you kidding me? If you hate it, great but why are you going to get a good grade? And he got the same grade as I did because the three of us and the

other girl, there was 3 of our programme and another girl that thank God, she helped. Because we were going crazy and he got the same grade as we did for doing nothing. So we had to work all this 5 people, a group project with so much stress, you don't have time to negotiate things like that. That specifically, group project we hated. And besides that, it's just – group projects are awful. Horrible Horrible!

**I don't want to keep you too much longer, you've been great. In terms of the process of going to France, was that stressful?**

The insurance, that we talked about so much, thank God I got *Erasmus* and all that. The insurance that they made some] students here, of course it's London, it's going to be more expensive. In France, you can get one four times cheaper and they didn't ask for the insurance like Marianna [*inaudible*] insurance. They asked for insurance, they were like no, you can give it to us next week. If I would have had to pay an insurance here in London and they told me that, I would have no idea how angry I would have been. In here, insurance, if you didn't find a very cheap insurance, it could cost you up to £200.

**Did some of this put you off going to France? Because some people were put off going to France.**

Many people, [*inaudible*] Russia, we all loved her, we were all crying, she was like no, I can't any more. Thank God –

**They had such a good time.**

Yes, but thank God I didn't need a visa, I got the Erasmus and all that. But when I thought I need the insurance, in Venezuela with the currency exchange, finding money, like finding the Government to give you permission. When the Government knows that you're against the Government, it's so difficult every time my mum tries to send me £50. It's just impossible, if she doesn't send it from her account in the US, it's impossible. So when they came in and said the £200, I'm like, I'm gonna die, please, please, I need to get Erasmus. If I didn't get Erasmus I would have been like in debt for all my life for something like that. But yes, the visa thing was horrible for many students. Katie, one of my best friends here, -

**Did you learn something about the French culture as a result?**

The French culture was horrible. Everything was horrible. Every time we talked to our landlord, he was horrible. Every time we wanted to the cafe he was horrible. The French people were, to pay the electricity, that was horrible. I speak a little bit of French and I was talking to a person on the phone and I'm like, I'm trying to explain here that your webpage doesn't work. We want to pay electricity, just tell us where we can do it on line. 'on line'!

**So culturally, are you more comfortable in London or France?**

Absolutely in London because for example –

**But you learnt about French culture.**

Of course, but in France my grandma is French and she's like that. So kind of know it but I hate it. I am very very much *better over here*. In London they are polite, in Venezuela they

are polite. When I go to France and I say bonjour. When I go into the shop, I expect bonjour. I was just like, why can't you say hello, good morning to people? And some people tell me what is a good morning to people when they get on the elevator? I'm like because that's what you do. You're polite to people. Maybe I'm extra polite but I prefer being extra polite that under polite.

**So you didn't find that, because people have this idea that London is a distant, if you go outside London, English people are quite friendly. In London –**

I found very very friendly people in London.

**They're more distant and the idea is that in a small French town they should be more friendly.**

No,

**But they're French.**

They are French. And French are very different. every time someone did I was like oh you're so French. They're just so French and yes, in England they are very distant, compared to Venezuela [*inaudible*] how you hug your boss when you see him, it's just, I prefer the English one. I prefer you being distant but polite than being just nasty. You know the French culture, it was just –

**And was it better with the French students because I think there were some issues with the French students in the first semester compared to when you got to France.**

Where?

**In some of the classes there was a little bit of –**

They are very dramatic, they are very dramatic and there still is a lot of drama going on.

**Culturally how can we say cultural friction?**

The thing, at the beginning –

**So the class friction and then –**

For me, from the beginning we developed mini groups, another group. So in my mini group we had three French students and they were nice, they were amazing. One of those people [*inaudible*] at the end I was like, [*inaudible*] she was known to cause a lot of drama. There were 2 French students that were very nasty towards anybody and if you're nasty with me, I'm not going to go like oh, she's nasty and talk back. I will go to her and say why are you nasty to me? what's your problem? These 2 French students caused a bit of drama between the French and one girl from Germany I think, because the boyfriend thing. We had a lot of drama in this group, a lot this year. You have no idea, the things that have happened. But the French, the 2 that we had in my mini group, they were great. For example Julienne, do you know her, with glasses?

**No I don't.**

She's so sweet, she's just so sweet, she *[inaudible]* in France. She helped us with everything. She was just, Julianne would have died in France.

**So they did help you when you got to France.**

Oh yes. *[inaudible]* the international association of students, that was great, they were waiting for us. We had a lot of bags, they helped us with the bags, helped us opening a bank account, helped us getting a cell phone, everything. But the French students, every mini group had a French friend and all French students helped. For example *[Ange]* he was never there. Vincent, I found the day that I was *[doing my studies]* that he *[inaudible]* and I'm like oh, hi. Do you live here? Oh yes. And I'm like, live here? Some people never really got engaged into –

**They didn't seem to engage yes, exactly. Whereas the rest of you were engaging with each other and they seemed to be outside. And I wondered if it was different and when you went to France they were more engaged, although I noticed at the party last week there weren't that many French students there.**

That's what I'm telling you. The people that were always outsiders were the French. The people that were always, I don't want to be here, were the French. We were all together all the time, but even for example Michael *[inaudible]* he's French, every weekend he went to Paris but when he was there, he was there, he was there with all of us. Vincent when he was there, he was just – we called him the ghost. We had many parties ....we'll have a party *[inaudible]* . Where were you my friend? *[inaudible]*

**Maybe I'm mistaken but I counted about 5 French at the party that you had, it was all the international students, there were very few French.**

Yes, they were just little. And everybody was like oh, I don't want to go to that party. I'm like are you kidding me? I want to go, I want to drink everything *Peter* give me. We were all very excited to go there.

**I saw that but was it a sign of anything that people left so quickly?**

They were all very tired. We were all very tired, and I'm not kidding, that night, well the last 3 days before sponsorship and Peter, I slept 5 hours. We never stopped writing. I woke up in the middle of the night crying because this finger, I'm sure it's broken in a way. Because right now it still hurts when I'm writing. We wrote so much. Lauda, she spent like one hour and then she passed out to her bed. I was there and I was like, I need to pack, I don't want to pack. We had to pack, I had to close my bank account, I had to run from there to close my bank account and they told me you cannot close it today, you have to close it tomorrow morning. I'm like I have to close it tomorrow morning. We had to clean, because we had to clean even the plugs. I'm like what, the plugs? We have to clean, we have to pack, Katie was moving to my room because we had to move it and move out. It was a very stressful day that day, so most of the people were tired. Others were just leaving there and others just were not part of *the programme really*.

**They weren't engaged?**

There are people that I just , Vincent for example he was part of the programme, but *when I think about* He was like, when I think about – we have a spectacular, one of the group teachers that allows you to – I was *[inaudible]* Facebook *[inaudible]* pictures. Just something as simple as Facebook, he's so absent, I don't know, it's just like when we talk about *[inaudible]* for one month, whatever. He missed his entire social experience, I don't know.

**Last question, what would be, if you were to sum it all up, in one overriding comment.**

I have something to give you if you want that because the last day we did a party and a friend of mine and I went around and she rang people and said *IMCo to you* and everybody answered. I loved it, I loved the social scene. I think that education, I would have wanted more education. I would have wanted more hours. If a student says more hours, please give us. It was a great experience, it was a great experience. But more personally than academic. But academic, France, very good classes, just give us more time.

**Thank you.**

## **APPENDIX 5**

CASES	Nationality	Intercultural Learning	Cultural encounter	Culture shock	Stereotype reference	Cultural category	Personal development	Pedagogy	UK ref	French ref
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	Greek	<p>Yes</p> <p>Learnt to deal with difference, to understand codes of behaviour and to keep quiet</p> <p>Had discussions with girls from other countries about relationships</p> <p>Not used to different cultures – in Greek university just Greeks</p> <p>-many gangs in UK</p> <p>Critical incidents with witnessing a couple of fights</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Americans wear flip flops in the rain</p> <p>observation</p> <p>Comments on dress – short skirts and legs</p> <p>blue with cold</p> <p>Lots of cultural examples eg:</p> <p>Fights</p> <p>Gave example of wording of emails</p> <p>Speaking loudly as a Greek person</p> <p>Gave examples of dealing with host culture in France</p>	<p>Yes in France and UK</p> <p>Shocked at punks in Camden</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>-Chinese are not very faithful even though they look innocent</p> <p>Stereotype English and French</p>		<p>X dress</p> <p>Competition in groups</p> <p>Thinks this is something everyone should do if they wish to excel in the international business oriented field</p> <p>Had challenge being on own in UK</p>	<p>Group conflict</p> <p>Like class interaction in FR.</p> <p>Thought UK boring</p> <p>Did not understand what had to do for dissertation</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Comment on Greek view of the English</p> <p>Loved London but realised politeness of English not meant from heart</p> <p>-thinks Greeks more genuine</p> <p>- saw a stabbing and no one cared</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Hated French culture in school but liked food</p> <p>French arrogant British snobby</p> <p>Was told she was in France so she had to speak French – every letter from the institution was in French</p>
	US	<p>Acculturation – changed dress style – wanted to blend in – stopped wearing flip flops</p> <p>Already had cultural awareness from previous study abroad</p> <p>Said had some very intense cultural discussions</p> <p>On previous study abroad stayed in American groups</p> <p>Had to answer questions about us</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>examples cultures clash</p> <p>students put others cultural box est</p> <p>witnessed tension in groups and cultural conflict, people stressed as could not express themselves in English and sometimes 2 members of a group had a real arguments fr guy and Spanish guy had a cultural clash</p> <p>suffered being stereotyped – sometimes discussion would be an attack on americans</p>	<p>Said No</p> <p>Studied abroad before but then said in final comment had culture shock</p>		<p>Yes</p> <p>more than stereotype</p> <p>Some people more aggressive in groups but not sure if culture or personality</p> <p>French know what they want and go for it including expressing themselves, Americana more guarded and pick battles</p>	<p>Lots of reflection, dress, was told looks American style of life, more European</p> <p>developed an able to cope in group work but uses word interesting a lot and seems defensive in some comments not as independent as thought said</p> <p>sometimes put on defensive – being asked questions had to internalise a lot of behaviour – walked away from confrontation despite all negatives it was worth it</p>	<p>Critical incident in group work</p>		<p>Fr</p> <p>more focus diff priorities and kept themselves separate</p>

	Brazilian	X social hierarchy more imp for difference than culture Surprised by cultural differences in small travel times	cultures different in short travel times EU cultures not that different		yes		own cultural id reinforce	communications part of the subject eg: meaning of blue		Parisians arrogant
	EYGPT	Forced to interact with others because it was a small town in Fr Learnt by observing critical incidents of others	A lot of cultural fights with flat mates		Stereo type qualified – you can see qualities shared between people from certain countries French were a community of their own	Yes – confident comment Spanish laid back, Italians a mess, Egyptians lazy Germans – I have to get it right Was told he was a loud Arab Venezuelans aggressive	Chose programme for work placement Learnt from critical incident Competition amongst students – some peoples work discarded because other think they are right and they want an A Made more open minded and less judgmental Learnt life in London culturally different from Egypt – very fast Best time of his life	Strong critic of student centred learning Big difference between UK and Fr education Problems with group work – pro group work but disadvantages too many – some people were rejected and left on their own Previous learning style law so critical others had business background and of reading ( could be just because of previous subject studied) Refers to Egyptian education - memorisation	Did little academia work in London Nothing new in UK as came every week	Wanted to learn French but was impossible Admin in France chaotic Preferred France because had classes every day but recognised it was like going back to school One assessment after another and at time thought stressful
<b>CASES</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Intercultural Learning</b>	<b>Cultural encounter</b>	<b>Culture shock</b>	<b>Stereotype reference</b>	<b>Cultural category</b>	<b>Personal development</b>	<b>Pedagogy</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>French</b>

	French	I have to interact all day long with 20 nationalities Discusses culture as if its something to like or dislike Likes to share Does cooking class with flatmates every Sunday From southern France so this very different People think she is Fr even if she does n't speak	Reference to different dress in UK		yes	yes	Learning English an investment and it was important to come to London focussed on developing her CV Very Have to be more open and reflective when you are abroad Will take back Xmas things from the UK	Important description of approach in FR -More professional London more academic	Much more reading in UK – does n' is crazy as his tutor says they don't read thinks he does n't know how much they read	Students don't read in France
	French	yes become international	French stick together Lots examples from UK culture Metro/fish & chips, shopping, service			Yes	Wants international career Developed ability to adapt to others -dialogue Communication -adaption-wealthier -'picky' (pedantic)	Group work different approach of different cultures caused a problem Differences in pedagogy French very direct, handouts at beginning but liked uk Not monitored and developed skills like organisation under English method	Yes importance of English and being 'picky'	Business schools in France the same in approach
	UK/French	Stereotypical assumption initially caused culture clashes but then these broken down and its about individuals Felt had cultural sensitivity from previous travelling	There were tensions with groups even among Fr between those from different campuses	Yes And he is half French – found strikes difficult	Yes Said disliked Americans but Katie ok because she tried to alter behaviour French arrogant Culture clash (mentioned culture clash more than once)	Yes Gave details on Egyptian culture	Brought out own culture by meeting so many others 'I think I've woken up this year' was educated at Kingston uni Its given me motivation to work and the skills eg: negotiation Become more confident	Like pedagogy of Fr Group work good but hard on good students	People isolated in London Found time in London a waste of time	Initially thought Fr cold People came together in Fr

	Russian	Felt Russian, French and UK cultures not that different Need to adapt be open to changes eg: shops not open on Sunday London not British culture French spoke Fr in class to be expected because so many of them ( she speaks Fr) Language a part of culture			People stereotype	Yes There are common behaviours and most problems are about personalities	Felt international	Learned from group work	No communication with UK people	
	French				Yes Germans organised Italians speak too much but did n't think was stereotyping – no reflection	Living in UK different from Fr Lots of people in London Did n't have problems with cultures because there were Fr people on the course	Motivational issues Difficult to cope to different approach at the beginning but wasn't a big problem But time management a problem Learnt autonomy Bad first day in UK stayed with him Was interesting to meet different cultures	Very different approach Confrontations in group work -were told to stop speaking Fr by the other to group work students French students have a particular approach Said they should have more help with referencing as its not the same in Fr Could not talk about critical thinking		Professional approach of Grandes Ecoles better for business subjects Too many fr people on the course difficult to see others
	Italy	Tried to learn from others You have to learn to study in a different context	Not easy to study with 'others' from different cultures – she could as she was open-minded Need for open-mindedness Some people had problems with the Fr because the Fr did not mix Was told that's your Italian way	No but heard student stereotyping		More personality than culture but cultural behaviour evident and can dominate peoples categorisation	Lots of competition Become more independent incredible experience	English system different from Italian Lack of feedback Problems in groups – people not know how to work in groups	English try to understand and poor spoken English and help English very precise but more open minded Poor services at London	Liked Fr approach – practical more professional Different sense of humour

	Spain	Learnt about norms of behaviour in other countries	Felt was living in an international community		no	Yes – people of a society have characteristics-people mainly the same – difference comes when you work or the way of working	Learnt could not trust people Very competitive Learnt more English in Fr Learnt how to deal with people from group work and role in a group Learnt skills for work Thought behaviour of students childish trying to get tutors attention Gossip among students Was excluded from groups sometimes -	course is made for French people not international prefers more classes/lessons than have in UK in Spain teachers talk and you take notes and have a big exam at the end way of teaching in Fr better as Mon-Fri and more modules in a shorter time does not like working in groups – problems with groups group self selected with people they lived with reinforced cultural id	Learnt more about UK than other countries - English people live outside London British more open to other cultures	Did not learn as much Fr as would like Fr more similar to Spain than UK Did not mix much with French students You have to move to them they will not move to you
	Japan	Yes French people more conservative than British Learnt different ways of working	western culture different to own culture different/changed approach to deal with others		yes	Yes Southern Europeans are really lively and loud	group work taught about herself/ more confidence/communication skills had to learn to take initiative learnt she was shy but also reserved does not speak all the time and sometimes it was hard to speak but felt this was not sensible to started to change attitude and felt more comfortable with group work	failed a group project/group work also fun/stimulating /preferred French – said it was more approachable and better to do coursework after one week of teaching. Style in fr better for her as she can get lazy so going every day	Lived in UK 9 years	more conservative /dress/ Catholic Aware of French different style of dress

							become Anglicised living in UK for 10 years	good Group work most difficult for her Problems with group and people not turning up		
	French					Yes – Germans good for group work, hard to understand Asians	Education European not international Stronger French identity	Teacher talks but don't write a lot in UK – opposite in Fr, don't know how would carry out research with what did in UK even though done already in Fr Clear pedagogical differences	Imp of Eng degree Students turn up – no respect	Went Grande Ecole as pushed to do so, more chance of getting a job, reinforced in prepa Classes full and prompt attendance, talking in class permitted (t his comment not prompted
	US	Refers to competitiveness of us students and how		yes	no		Growth Lots of social interaction Gained international perspective	Good group work French side very intense and a bit of a struggle as not used to that way of working Great interaction with classmates Peers are living resources		Learned Fr
	German									
	Norway						Social networks happen anywhere you go	Research methods not challenging No REAL information for exams – class discussions don't		Fr better because subjects

								make good notes Small classes liked In France more hrs per week and then a project but no depth to subjects Good critique FR pedagogy UK traditional – like other UK institutions – went to Sunderland Expected teaching to be how marketing was in Fr		
	US/Nigerian	Group work demonstrated how to work with people diff countries – gave example Learnt how to communicate in other cultures Realised norms take for granted are not for others	French Dress -		no	Yes American very full on Other cultures more relaxed Was able to explain a different perspective to Fr person that they would not have thought of –	Learnt about weaknesses from group work Learnt to work with people from different cultures Got more personal dev from ug study abroad Learnt about personal work ethic and maturity Added some Frenchness	Did not understand grading, should be more feedback No depth to classes in FR Advantages and disadvantages CRITICAL INCIDENT – group work which affected view of London		Harassed by old men in Fr Fr classes no good so did not learn Fr – disappointed not to learn French
	Venezuelan				Excellent description of different cultural encounters					

	French	You have to learn to be open to conduct work in a different way	Differences with cultures but also differences with individuals – gave example of two from Germany working differently				We are a big family Very enthusiastic about experience Vastly improved English – could n't understand anything at the beginning Social networks on course important	Working with international students had to work together and agree point – said this wastes time Different way of working from different cultures		Fr do group work differently – they just divide the work
	French		tended to mix with just Fr – difficult to get to know eng people / be friendly with them			yes	Importance of English, learning English in England	More homework in the UK No theory or references in Fr To justify always does nt seem relevant to me' More practical preferred Fr more structured have to get up in the morning Seminars in the UK good	English people nicer than Fr London expensive Missed Fr food but liked UK food – did nt want to admit it	talked of dress and English girls wear anything – Fr are conservative – get looked at if flashy
	French	Some good international learning Getting on with someone more about personality than culture Habits and culture only important at the beginning	No incidents in his group yet I was aware of one More awareness of own cultural id - Frenchness		Yes		Degree most important as it is proof of English ability Blamed poor reputation of London school for not hearing from 25 job applications	Preference for UK approach as did ug in university in Fr Said Fr had already done all the subjects in Fr but eng knowledge of marketing made it more enjoyable	Difficult living in London – accommodation problems	

	Canada n		Talks of racist comments from tutors No one responded to complaints only North.Americans reacted Cheating tolerated Shocked only discovered pedagogical cultural differences at end of course		Yes	no		Very engaged with students but not Masters level Students unhappy with level of assessments/1500 words for a group assessment Can't talk about course being crap as they will not get a job Very Good description of teaching	Happier in UK	French system is about the school you went to
	Russian /Armenian/Greek		You get bits from everyone and everything Dated one of the French students but found communication with French difficult because of cultural difference			Yes-stereotype Chinese and Japanese – negative tone to comment on Chinese and group work	Felt had developed a less superficial attitude to life, mother and friends said really changed Felt all reflected on development Recognition of the other Imbibe some Frenchness, more analytical, maturity Students had a good communication together	Preferred small classes and intensity of 1 week delivery – liked the directed approach, authoritative approach Poor library in France but did not use the one in the UK	UK part boring ( lives in the UK anyway with mother	Liked the Campus environment but not at first
	4 interviewees MAIST US, Lithuania, Slovenia, Italy	Yes but found interaction with other cultures challenging in group work situations	Yes Culture was highlighted in group work but cultural differences were not a problem because they were good friends Cultural learning of France observation Cultural differences cause issues in the classroom		Yes – reflection on this in group work	no	Friendship, family little interaction with host culture Lots of frustration expressed especially from the American because no class interaction, recognition of reason is cultural difference Stressful living in	Good discussion Grande Ecole teaching Lots on group work Impact of non-native speakers of English on native speaker Modules taught in blocks, one course a	Boring on London	Focus on assessment in FR, time challenge No interaction with FR students Dropped learning Fr as too much work – learnt Fr people don't like speaking English, Fr very different culture from

			different members of the group had a different view of their cultural exp eg: not talking in class problem for the US student but not Lithuanian				London because of cost Become more confident – learned more sustainable tourism in London Own cultural identities grown Reflection on cultural difference in group work	week, no teaching of group skills Program me of joint degree distinctive – different from all the others View of the international classroom		the American
	Group interview w MSc IFS	Not really 3 months not long enough to learn about a culture but talked about acculturation Taking on the customs of a new place which makes them seem alien at home	Yes with British people friendly compared to Paris Open minded Talked about British apologising for bumping into you event if its not your fault				Lots of reflection on the benefits of the Anglo-Saxon methods ie: results based rather than process oriented of the Fr	Liked external speakers – very focussed Discussed differences in pedagogy – good comments on Fr style enforces control – UK can work at last moment but tutors never check students understanding in Fr Anglo-Saxon system makes students more adaptable and able to cope with new environments	Some liked UK system but had been at university in Fr Surprised by few hrs in class Complaint about UK food	Discussed benefits of Fr business school system-differences Fr university and Grande Ecole Going to Grande Ecole is just about getting a job – chances of getting a job cut by 50% if don't go

