

Worldwide Virtual Ed.?

An empirical study of ICT for and in internationalization
processes in a business school

by

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Abstract

This report addresses the issues of internationalization and how information and communication technologies are parts of internationalization processes in higher education. It is frequently assumed that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are pivotal in globalization of higher education and in internationalization processes, by posing opportunities for integration across time and space enabling distributed nodes to work as units in real time. Moreover, it is claimed that globalization and new technologies has lead to a global market for education, in which new providers of higher education operate, and that this competitive agenda poses significant threats to traditional providers. This report investigates these assumptions through a case study.

This study reports findings from a case study of a private business school – The Norwegian School of Management BI (NSM), an institution which many would regard as a new provider of higher education; it is a private, market-based institution, it is heavily involved in continuing and executive education, and it uses ICT for and in educational provision. It also, as opposed to public Norwegian institutions, has developed a subsidiary abroad and franchises its executive education, and is involved in a number of strategic alliances. In the eyes of many beholders it would be seen as a stereotype for a higher education institution operating in a global market. In consequence, we regard the NSM as a theoretically relevant case for studying developments in higher education, and particularly relevant for internationalization processes and impact of ICTs, as the institution has strategies and experience in both areas.

To provide some background and focus for the empirical work central concepts are discussed related to globalization and higher education, international competition and cooperation, and the role of Information and Communication Technologies in internationalization related to potentials for overcoming space and time boundaries. Guided by these considerations, we present qualitative data derived from policy documents and interviews with key actors at the institution, focused on four main themes: Internationalization as strategy, international operations, ICTs for internationalization, and challenges for internationalization. In terms of internationalization as strategy, internationalization is seen as a competitive strategy in both domestic and foreign markets. The way to achieve competitiveness is unanimously recognized as through cooperative means and the way to achieve international presence is through cooperation with local partners.

In terms of the second main focus, how ICTs are related to internationalization, we highlight the difference in perspectives of ICTs for internationalization and ICTs in international activities and internationalization processes. In terms of the first perspective, ICTs, though important, are not considered to be a driving force for internationalization in higher education. ICTs are however regarded as very central supporting in ongoing international activities, and as such is regarded as a success criterion.

This report highlights a number of challenges and sometimes controversies related to globalization, internationalization and the role of ICTs: the loose coupling between higher education policy and practice, competition and cooperation as joint forces, the widening focus in internationalization and the lack of adequate integration, and tensions between standardization and local adaptation in internationalization.

Keywords: globalization, internationalization, information and communication technologies, higher business education, Norwegian School of Management

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This study has been undertaken in association with a larger study of internationalization of distance education at four European universities, the Universities of Lund, Bologna, Cambridge and Leuven – all universities established in the Middle Ages, carried out by Jan- Olof Nilsson and Kjell Nilsson at the Department of Sociology at University of Lund. We benefited greatly by wetting our ideas with the Swedish team.

10th December 2002; Sandvika & San Francisco

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1. Introduction

Internationalization is today a central concern of higher education institutions, not at least business schools. According to Windham (1996), the increasing importance of internationalization in higher education seen by both the institutions themselves and national governments, reflects that the environment for higher education has changed, seen in three central dimensions: economy, policy and technology. As a general background, the emergence and growth of a global information/knowledge based economy is important. Likewise, the emergence of an international labor market for highly skilled professionals, especially within information technology is central. Related, “the fastest growing area of trade is in exchange of services” (Windham 1996), and higher education is one of the largest exporters within the service sector. In the international market for educational services, business schools have a large contribution, as management and business programs are favored programs of international students. In the USA, export of education, measured in study-fees, amounted to \$7.5 billions in 1995, in Australia \$1.2 billions in 1993 (Mallea 1998). In Britain, export of education is more than twice the value of all export of coal, gas and electricity (McNamara & Harris 1997). Moreover, internationalization is far more than geographic mobility of students, and now incorporates activities such as program franchising, development of subsidiary institutions abroad, and trans-national distance education. In terms of the latter, new information and communication technologies are seen as a most important factor for the continued expansion of internationalization, and according to some authors (Windham 1996), might even become a substitute for international mobility.

The aim of this study is to investigate internationalization of higher education and particularly the role ICT play or can play for or in internationalization processes in higher education. More specifically, this study focuses on the emergence of an international market for higher education, in which internationalization is seen as a competitive strategy. Consequently, the study attempts to gauge the ways institutions are aware of and acts upon internationalization as a competitive strategy. Secondly, the extent to which ICT is seen as central for internationalization and potentially how ICT has been used for internationalization and in international activities, are central questions in this report.

The following research questions have guided this investigation:

- 1) What are the rationales behind internationalization of higher education and what are the dominant approaches to internationalization in business schools?

- 2) To what extent is ICT seen as a means to internationalize higher education and how are ICTs employed in internationalization processes?

To gain insight into these issues, this report presents literature on globalization and internationalization in higher education, and the brief literature that discusses the link between internationalization and ICTs in higher education. Neither of these areas is reviewed comprehensively. The aim is rather to tease out some central perspectives that have been introduced into the debates of internationalization of higher education, and how information and communication technologies are seen within this frame.

Secondly, it presents empirical data on internationalization and use of information and communication technologies from a case study of a private business school, the Norwegian School of Management (NSM). The Norwegian School of Management is seen as a relevant case for the research questions and conceptual frame for various reasons. Firstly, NSM is a private institution operating in a national and to some extent international market. Consequently, central dimensions of internationalization connected to international competition and cooperation could be investigated in a private, market-based institution. Secondly, a private business school could in theory be more advanced with regards to internationalization and use of ICT, for two reasons. The market situation could in theory lead to a more adaptive behavior, but more importantly, business studies are considered to be amongst the most internationally oriented courses of study, with regards to content, degrees and student body. Thirdly, and most importantly, NSM have internationalization and extensive use of ICT in education very high on its strategic agenda, and have developed extensive strategies for both areas. In addition, NSM has quite a lot of practice with regards to a number of international activities. As such, we regard this institution as central for investigating at a micro level, the intersection between internationalization and ICT and the controversies and challenges associated with these policies.

We emphasize the micro perspective in this study in an attempt to account for how ICTs are used in internationalization processes. The literature on internationalization and ICT is chiefly occupied with conceptualizing macro level trends and how they affect higher education institutions. We contend however, although this literature has its merit, it is not very suitable for understanding how ICTs intersect with internationalization in higher education. Based on our detailed data of one institution, which of course have limited generalization, we find that the impact of ICTs in internationalization processes are indirect and tied to routine activities in teaching, administration and research, rather than being a driving force of internationalization.

2. Globalization and internationalization of higher education

Internationalization of higher education has become an important strategy in higher education development, emphasized by international organizations, national governments and higher education institutions. The concept internationalization in higher education can be seen related to three other concepts – globalization, regionalization and nationalization. To some researchers, the international dimension is inherent in higher education, reflected for instance in the idea of a ‘university’ and that there exists one common academic model worldwide (Altbach 1992). However, Altbach states, the universality of higher education has over the course of history been replaced by increasing nationalization, in the sense that these institutions are seen as national institutions. Higher education institutions today are seen predominantly as national institutions, funded and regulated by national governments, and regarded as important for development of national economies partaking in the global economy.

Globalization is regarded as an important source of economic and societal development. The idea of globalization is related to economic development, with important social and cultural dimensions. According to Castells, a global economy is something distinct from an international or world economy, and is defined as “an economy with the capacity to work as a unit in real time on a planetary scale” (Castells 1996, p. 92). This has been made possible due to the new information and communication technology. The structure of the economy embraces core activities such as production, circulation and consumption, and components, such as capital, labor and markets, which are organized on a global scale. But, according to Castells, the globalization thesis ignores the influence of the nation states in shaping the structure and dynamics of the new economy. According to Castells, the global, informational economy remains even in periods of deregulation of national economies “a highly politicised economy”(ibid. p. 90). As such, the process of globalization of the economy simultaneously leads to deregulation and more nation state intervention. “Thus surprising as it may be to emphasise the economic role of the state in the age of deregulation, *it is precisely because of the interdependence and openness of international economy that states must become engaged in fostering development strategies on behalf of their economic constituencies*” (ibid. p. 90).

How does the concept internationalization in higher education relate to the concepts nationalization and globalization? In general, internationalization can be seen as strategies to expand higher education provision and ideas

across national boundaries. Michael Porter, for instance, has defined internationalization as “a process by which teaching, research and service functions of a higher education system become internationally and cross-culturally compatible...The main goal of internationalization is to put in action programs and activities which enable higher education institutions, students and staff, to take part effectively in a world characterized by increasing international cooperation, exchange and interdependence” (Porter, 1990, p.78).

According to Knight (1999) globalization and internationalization are dynamically related concepts, and that internationalization of higher education can be seen as a proactive response to the catalyst globalization. Internationalization and globalization are, then, two different concepts but united by the same dynamics. Globalization can be understood as the process of increasing convergence and interdependence of economies and to the liberalization of trade and markets. And the concept internationalization refers more to the process of increasing cooperation between states or to activities across state borders, but reflects a world order in which nation states (still) play a central role (Scott 1998).

Internationalization of higher education as such can be seen as a strategy taking account of both global and national challenges. Other authors' claim that the link is not that easy, and claim that globalization represents a radically new challenge for higher education institutions, as well as internationalization, for instance by embedding internationalization in a market logic rather than a cultural logic.

2.1 Perspectives on internationalization: competition and cooperation

Traditionally, internationalization in higher education was traditionally seen as a co-operative effort, as seen in the exchange of students and staff, and as reinforced for instance by EU programs like ERASMUS and SOCRATES. More recently, however, competition in international markets is seen as an emerging rationale for internationalization. According to Van der Wende (2001), “where as political, cultural and academic rationales have been driving internationalization over the last decades, now, increasingly, economic rationales play a role”(p. 2).

This has also been reinforced by the debates over education as a service linked to the WTO initiated GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) agreements and the impact on trade liberalization on higher

education services (Knight 2002). In this context, higher education is seen as a tradable service, which can be marketable worldwide and to which the regulations of export and import apply. Moreover, it is the aim of GATS to eliminate the trade barriers that regulate the international market of higher education. GATS discern four modes of service supply, which are relevant to higher education provision: cross border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence and presence of natural persons. Of these cross border supply (e.g. distance education) and commercial presence (e.g. offshore campus) are novel approaches to internationalization, where as consumption abroad (student mobility) and presence of natural persons (faculty mobility) are traditional approaches to internationalization in higher education (Ryan 2002). GATS is considered to have far reaching consequences for higher education, as it problematizes the role of national governments and the public and private characters of higher education. The debates on trade in higher education services are polarized, and by several authors regarded as the true face of globalization of higher education - the commercialization of higher education (Altbach 2001).

However, international “trade” is increasingly realized through international cooperation with other higher education institutions, such as partnerships, alliances and consortia (Ryan 2001). In consequence, “the blend of competitive versus co-operative international relations poses significant challenges for the institutions” (Nifu 2001).

2.2 Internationalization approaches

Internationalization in higher education traditionally referred to exchange programs and student mobility. According to van der Wende (1997), internationalization is often used to connote individual mobility, which is a narrow conceptualization of internationalization, disregarding internationalization of institutions and higher education systems. Wende also points out that “internationalization can no longer be considered as a marginal, add-on activity focusing mainly on the international mobility of students and teachers. But that internationalization is becoming an important dimension in higher education policy as developed at the institutional and the national level, related to the challenges of globalization, which are increasingly affecting the higher education sector” (Wende 2001, p. 1).

As such, various efforts can be said to represent internationalization of higher education. This study will be based on a broad conceptualization of internationalization, covering internationalization via enrolment, the teaching process, via resources and via locations (Echevin & Ray 2002).

According to Knight (1999), a following “broad” taxonomy of internationalization efforts can be presented.

Table 1: Approaches to internationalization

Approaches to internationalization of higher education	Descriptors of approaches to internationalization in higher education institutions
International reforms/policies	Reforms of higher education systems using non-national degree structures, titles, credit points, diplomas, use of foreign language etc for the bulk of students.
International institutions (export)	Franchising programs and degrees to other countries. Institutional subsidiaries in other countries. Trans-national distance education institutions.
International activities and programs (export and import)	Study programs for international students co-existing with other national programs for national students, bi- and multilateral exchange and cooperation agreements, student and faculty exchanges, recruitment of international students and staff, trans-national distance education as part of institutions’ education programs, international accreditation or other international quality review systems
International competence and learning	Aims, curricula, teaching materials, etc emphasizing development of international/global competencies and understanding
International processes	Integrating international and intercultural activities into teaching, research and other services
International ethos	Focus in policy papers, mission statements etc which emphasis on creating an international learning environment

This table indicates that there are a number of activities and strategies that can be conceptualized as internationalization in and of higher education institutions.

Drawing upon all the perspectives developed above, in terms of globalization, internationalization strategies, and approaches, the following figure illustrates the arguments:

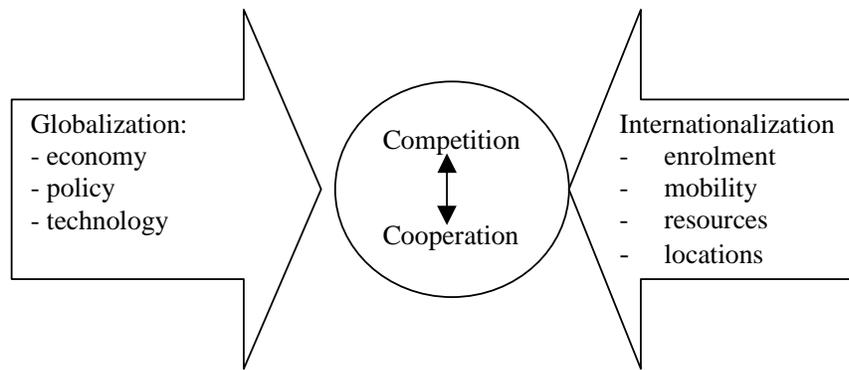


Figure 1: Globalization and internationalization in higher education

Below, we shall discuss how ICTs fit into this picture in higher education.

3. ICT and internationalization

The literature on technology and internationalization is fragmented and rarely empirically based, and debates seem chiefly occupied with conceptual issues. Specific research studies on the use of information technology for and in international activities are rare, and usually case based (Mason 1998).

Notwithstanding, it seems to be a common assumption in scholarly literature and policy reports that information and communication technologies, particularly the Internet, is driving developments towards globalization and internationalization of higher education. The emphasis on assumptions is warranted, as little research has been carried out to investigate or disentangle this issue. This conviction can for instance be seen in the following statements:

- “The development of information technology has provided a major avenue for the import and export of higher education” (Craft et al 1998 p. 468)
- “Technological advances in communications are powerful instruments which can serve to further internationalization of higher education and to democratize access to opportunities.” (International Association of Universities 1998)
- “Technology holds great promise for helping colleges and universities provide the global competencies that students need to live and work in a borderless world” (American Council of Education 2002)
- “We believe that the internationalization of higher education might be a natural consequence of the dissemination of intense Internet use by academic communities around the world. Thus, we argue, the computer network might become one of the main instruments of this internationalization process” (Fava-De-Moraes & Simon 2000).

The idea that internationalization and ICTs are linked in higher education, parallels the analyses of the emergence of a global economy, and how new technologies provided the necessary infrastructure to enable a global integration of operations; that is the material foundation for a new economic paradigm (Castells 1996). Related, what features of ICTs are relevant for understanding how ICTs can enable (rather than “cause”) internationalization in higher education?

ICTs cover a range of applications and systems. According to Escamilla, Gómez-Tagle & Céspedes (2001) Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be classified as analog and digital technologies. Analog ICTs are radio, television, video and audio conference (although

they can also be digital). Digital ICTs are computers, digital networks and all the applications that can be run on them. Discussing ICTs in relation to internationalization of higher education focuses on largely on networks and particularly the Internet (Fava-de-Moraes & Simon 2000; Downes 2000).

ICTs, and particularly the Internet, enables internationalization due to its ability to overcome space and time boundaries, thus enabling distributed nodes to work as a “unit in real time”. However, although features of ICTs that can enable transnational integration, we contend that these provides the potential for integration, rather than integration in itself. Thus, what potentials do ICTs have for the internationalization of higher education?

- Information and communication technologies enable the distribution of and access to *information*, anytime, anywhere in the world. Teaching materials, research reports, etc can be easily and cost-efficiently distributed to dispersed sites, and relevant information is potentially just a “click” away.
- ICTs enables *communication* across distributed places, and over time spheres, particularly through asynchronous means of communication, like e-mail. This means that students and teachers can communicate, ask questions, and receive feedback, without being physically co-located. This is important, as education and learning are interactive processes.
- ICTs can based on its ability to ease distribution of information and communication entail *interaction* between agents and *coordination* of activities over distributed nodes. The latter role is enhanced trough the spread of standardized technologies.

As such, the existence of new technologies can entail the proliferation of global “distance” education. However, empirical evidence suggests that this is not the case (Mason 1998; Cunningham et al 2000). According to Mason: “Whilst competition amongst tertiary education providers is certainly brisk in most developed countries, the market in question, even for those offering distance education courses, is primarily regional, in some instances national, but not often international. In fact, the number of truly global courses, let alone programmes or courses, is still very limited” (Mason 1998)

As such, although these features of information and communications technology enabling internationalization can be readily observed, we contend that the effects of ICTs on internationalization are likely to be indirect (Bourke 2000) and highly interwoven with routine activities in higher education. This means that we a see a need for detailed studies of how

ICTs are used in conjecture with internationalization processes and activities, to assess the potential impact of ICTs on internationalization.

3.1 The confluence of trends: internationalization and ICTs in competitive markets

In recent years, several concepts have been introduced in the scholarly and policy literature on higher education that attempts to catch the impact of globalization and new technologies on higher education. Concepts such as “borderless education” and “transnational education” attempts to bring together trends affecting higher education, such as globalization and new communication environments, related to new higher education provides, lifelong learning, marketization of higher education, etc. These concepts are umbrella terms that seem to cover almost everything: from import and export of education, competitive and collaborative arrangements home and abroad, and education delivered at distance to branch campuses abroad. What is borderless or transnational education, and how do these concepts conceptualize the relation between new technologies and internationalization of higher education?

“The term ‘borderless higher education’ refers to a range of interlocking activities – including e-learning, other forms of transnational provision and new providers (e.g. for-profit universities) – that cross a variety of ‘borders’, whether geographical, sectoral or conceptual” (Ryan 2002, p. 1). The concept was investigated in two large national reports, one Australian (Cunningham et al 2000) and one British (CVCP 2000), that use this concept to describe and analyze new online “for profit” educational ventures by both traditional and new providers. These providers particularly target professional education and the lifelong learning market, and consist of virtual universities, corporate universities and for profit universities, consortia of universities, etc. Establishing consortia to offer online education has been a common approach sought by traditional public or non-profit private universities, and these have particularly focused on business education and information technology. These ventures represent a commercialization of international higher education. However, “borderless higher education is still embryonic. In terms of technology and as an industry” (Ryan 2002, p. 3).

The concept “transnational education”, is more concise and means “all types of higher education study programme, or sets of courses of study, or educational service (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding

country is based” (Adam 2001, p. 13). The latter concept targets the geographical boundary perspective to a larger extent, but does not specifically emphasize technological modes of delivery, although this is one dimension in the definition. Arrangements included in this umbrella term cover franchising, branch campuses, offshore institutions, twinning arrangements, distance education, virtual universities and corporate universities. Mirroring the perspective above, these arrangements are seen as “different” from traditional providers, particularly related to the market logic of these educational enterprises. “There seems to be no limit to the proliferation of such modalities or arrangements, as long as the demand for higher education is still growing, and the *possibilities for a global market* continue to emerge” (Wilson & Vlăsceanu 2000, in Adams 2001, our emphasis).

Consequently, it seems that in these studies the link between technology and internationalization is primarily understood as the emergence of a global market for education and the development of new actors that attempt to capture this market. We therefore see these concepts as discussing opportunities and, more so, threats to higher education institutions posed by the conjoint developments of a global market and new modes of delivery in higher education (Ryan 2001). This can for instance be seen in the both the Australian and the British “The business of borderless education” reports, exemplified by the following statement: “It had seemed to us that there was too little awareness of the potential threats and opportunities and that as a result UK institutions would be poorly positioned in competitive terms (CVCP 2000).

However, empirical findings of the existence of borderless and transnational education suggest that it is indeed a marginal phenomenon. According to Mason (1998) no single institution meets the criteria for being a global distance education institution.

1. Students in more than two continents of the world able to communicate with each other and with the teacher,
2. an express aim on the part of the teacher or institution to attract international participation
3. course content devised specifically for transnational participation
4. support structures – both institutional and technological – to tutor and administer a global student body
5. operations on a scale of more than one programme and more than one curriculum area, with more than 100 students

Moreover, empirical findings point to that borderless education is largely directed at certain segments of the education market. Particularly the

continuing education markets, and confined to subject areas such as business (particularly MBAs), information technology, and to some extent foreign languages (Adams 2001; Bluestain et al 1999; CVCP 2000). The host institutions are mainly located in USA, UK, and Australia, and the targeted markets are primarily South East Asia and Southern Europe (Hosie & Mazzarol 1999). To a large extent, these activities fall outside the traditional activities and markets of established (public) higher education institutions. Moreover, evidence from the last few years (since 2000) also suggest that the new online providers have fared abysmal in the recent economic downturn (Ryan 2002), and there are few examples of successful cases (Cunningham et al 2000).

Nonetheless, “Significant numbers of institutions view transnational education as some sort of threat to their standards and their existence. The scale and intensity of the threat is misjudged as it is currently confined to certain sectors of educational provision” (Adams 2001). Why this is so is an interesting question, which we today do not know the answer to.

4. The case study

The Norwegian school of management, NSM, is seen as a relevant case for the research questions and conceptual frame for various reasons. Firstly, NSM is a private institution operating in a national and to some extent international market. Consequently, central dimensions of internationalization connected to international competition and cooperation could be investigated in a private, market-based institution. Secondly, a private business school could in theory be more advanced with regards to internationalization and use of ICT, for two reasons. The market situation could in theory lead to a more adaptive behavior, but more importantly, business studies are considered to be amongst the most internationally oriented courses of study, with regards to content, degrees and student body. Thirdly, and most importantly, NSM have internationalization and extensive use of ICT in education very high on its strategic agenda, and have developed extensive strategies for both areas. In addition, NSM has a quite a lot of practice with regards to most dimensions of internationalization (as seen in the table above): student exchange, international programs, and language of instruction, international staff and internationally oriented research. In addition, NSM has licensing agreements with various institutions and has developed subsidiaries in both China and Lithuania. In terms of use of ICT in education, NSM has a large distance education department, and aims at using ICT in regular on campus programs, although this is not implemented successfully at the moment. There is however, only one transnational distance education program operating currently.

However, NSM claims that the internationalization strategy has not been completely successful and now aims at a “radical internationalization at all levels of the organization”. This means that NSM as an institution where internationalization and ICT are very highly emphasized, also can contribute with insights on why these strategic aims might be difficult to implement in practice.

Data on NSM’s strategies, practices and potentials of internationalization and ICT will be gathered using the following sources of data:

- Policy documents on internationalization and use of ICT
- Secondary data
- Interviews with key actors in the organization (top leadership, people with responsibility for internationalization, international programs, distance education, and key faculty) on their viewpoints on strategies and practices of internationalization, and the roles or potential roles ICT have for and in internationalization of higher education.

The selection of the respondents was made on two considerations: Firstly, we wanted to include a number of respondents from the top leadership at the institution as we assumed that they would have a good overview of both policy and practice at the institution. Secondly, we included respondents that were responsible for internationalization and ICT at the institution, as we assumed they could give us a fair representation of the ongoing practices and problems at the institution. Out of the ten respondents, three were from the top leadership, five worked closely with international affairs, and two worked closely with ICT and distance education. Two of the respondents were faculty in administrative positions, two were faculty and six held administrative positions. It was not however aimed at comparing the various groups' opinions, as the sample is too small. Likewise, in the presentation and analyzes of the interview data, we emphasized common themes and assessments, rather than variance, as we aimed at presenting a descriptive account of NSM. There is a great deal in overlap between the ten respondents' attitudes, but where there is a clear indication of divergences in opinions these are reported.

The interviews were carried out by using thematic or open-ended questions, and an interview guide was prepared in advance (enclosed in the appendix). The majority of the interviews were carried out by two interviewers, as to increase the reliability of the data and the validity of our interpretations. The immediate comparing of notes and interpretations was significant for the analysis of the data.

The qualitative data for this study will be analyzed with the intent of providing a picture of NSM, as stated by written sources of documentation and assessed by central respondents in the organization. Consequently, the intent is mainly descriptive mode of analysis. This picture will be partial on many accounts:

- it's a temporal "snap shot" of the organization from 2000 to 2002,
- the organization itself is very complex and our data do not account for all stakeholders' perspectives or experiences at various levels and places in the organization,
- likewise the respondents are few but represent the organizations most central members with regards to internationalization and ICT, and
- the study relies partly on policy documents, which are inherently normative in nature in that they present as desired future rather than factual information.

Consequently, findings and conclusions from this case study must be interpreted with care. Likewise, the nature of the case study, the number of respondents, and the data obtained, does not allow for very specific analyses.

The mode of analysis aimed for here is thematic analyses of the empirical material. This analysis is considered a low-level conceptualization that focuses on identifying themes in the data of theoretical significance. This is particularly relevant for internationalization strategy and policy. Explicitly here, competition and/or cooperation will be emphasized. In terms of internationalization practices and activities, the taxonomy of internationalization activities as presented will be used as a framework. In terms of use of ICT for internationalization, two ideas are emphasized: The respondents assessment of the role played by ICT, and based on the data, to outline a “working” framework for the uses of ICT in internationalization processes at a private business school.

Data and analyzes are presented thematically in the following manner: The first chapter outlines the internationalization policy and its relationship to dynamics of international competition and collaboration under globalization, and international activities and operations. The second chapter focuses on the intersection of ICTs and internationalization, and the questions of internationalization for and in international activities. The last chapter outlines the challenges of internationalization.

5. Internationalization as strategy

NSM has a concrete strategy for internationalization and has put internationalization central on its strategic agenda. In the corporate strategy of 2000-2002, internationalization is one of three prioritized areas on its strategic agenda, stated as “Increase the level of internationalization in all areas” (NSM 2000a). This was seen as vital in NSM’s overall ambition to become one of the leading European research based business schools. In line with this agenda, a specific internationalization strategy was developed as a means to realize NSM’s international strategy (NSM 2000b). This strategy is quite comprehensive, with many ambitious aims, encompassing internationalization of faculty and research, internationalization of the student body, develop international operations, and improve international relations and communication.

The respondents expressed a lot of viewpoints on whether and how internationalization is important to an institution like NSM. What we tried to gauge was their assessment of internationalization as a strategic instrument. Policy documentation was also available to shed light on these questions. Three dominant themes emerge in the data.

5.1 The importance of internationalization

Is internationalization important to an institution like NSM? This question is very interesting, not as much for how respondent assess the question (they all are very positive) but more for the unclearity and vagueness in the responses. Neither the policy documents nor the interviewed actors are particularly clear on how and why internationalization is important for NSM. What is recognized is, as claimed by most respondents and expressed in the policy documents, that NSM has an international ambition, as for instance spelled out by the school’s formal vision “to be the leading research-based business school in Europe” (NSM 2000a). Moreover, by putting internationalization high on the strategic agenda, this indirectly signals that importance is attached to internationalization at the institution, at least formally. Internationalization as stated was one out of three focus areas in the strategic agenda in 2000-2002.

But respondents are critical to the achievement of these goals. This has also been recognized by the central leadership at the institution, in their evaluation on the goal achievement of the strategic plan, where they claim that the degree of internationalization is still to low, and that there is need for radical internationalization at all levels of the organization (NSM 2002).

This means that internationalization though formally recognized to be of strategic importance, is still not successfully implemented, thus questioning how important the internationalization agenda has been in the day to day operations of the school until now.

5.2 The rationales of internationalization

A second major issue in the data concerns reasons for why internationalization is seen with strategic importance or the rationales identified. In the internationalization strategy of 2000, three rationales are identified under the heading “why be international?”

The first reason stated for internationalization concerns the “intrinsically international” nature of academic research and that being a research-based business school in consequence (per se) means to be internationally oriented. Most of the respondents also emphasize this idea as self-evident. Moreover, participating in international conferences and publishing in international journals are highly regarded activities by both individuals and the institution, and are seen as key performance indicators of internationalization (NSM 2000b) and well as a key quality criterion. In this regard, internationalization is seen as a quality development measure. The respondents frequently pointed to this, and they tend to see quality of research and quality of education as interrelated. For instance, they put forward arguments like “research of international standing will attract international scholars that will contribute to the quality of research and educational programs”. What is also assumed is that research of a high international standing is pivotal for the profiling of the school internationally, and that it is central in building an international brand name. The role of international ranking of business schools based partially on research output is here seen as central by many¹.

The second reason stated in the internationalization strategy is globalization of the business community, and that preparing students for careers in global workplaces creates new demands on business education programs. This external rationale for internationalization is not however emphasized by our respondents. What is emphasized by a few of the respondents is catering to the needs of Nordic firms’ subsidiaries abroad, presented under the slogan “Follow Nordic industry abroad”.

¹ BI ranked 8th on research in Financial Times ranking of European business schools with respect to research.

The third reason stated is that the “business of education is becoming increasingly international and students increasingly mobile (NSM 2000b).” The respondents however, express that the increasingly international business of education is a double-edged sword in that it represents both an opportunity and a threat. On the one side it allows for tapping into foreign markets, whilst at the other it represents a new competitive situation in the Norwegian domestic market. The respondents tend to explain this by reference to what they see as a particular situation both in Norway and for NSM. In terms of NSM’s situation, the respondents point to that the school is the only large provider of business education in Norway, and as such has captured the Norwegian market. This means, according to the respondents, that NSM cannot expand in Norway and that one has to go abroad for further growth, if desirable.

Secondly, and interrelated, the only real competition that NSM has in the domestic market are foreign institutions, particularly British, American and Australian institutions that recruit students in Norway. This is also seen related to the fact that Norwegian students are very mobile and that the Norwegian state has a loan and stipend arrangement that pays for tuition costs for Norwegian students abroad, but not in Norway (a situation which NSM regards as unfair and effectively hinders fair competition). The effect, anyhow, is that more than 15 000 Norwegian students carry out full degree programs abroad sponsored by the Norwegian government, whilst about 5000 do parts of their degrees abroad (Statistics Norway 2001), making at total of approximately 9 percent of all Norwegian students. In terms of subject areas, business studies are the most common subject students study abroad (Lånekassen 2002). Consequently, NSM faces competition from international agents over Norwegian students, particularly within business studies. NSM, realizing that many Norwegian students prefer to have at least parts of their programs abroad, are eager to promote student exchange as a part of regular degree programs. According to respondents this is one reason for the large portfolio of exchange agreements NSM has, covering approximately 100 institutions on all continents. Moreover, in the new five-year master program to be implemented in 2003², the fifth year extension (from 4 to 5 years) is devoted to international exchange for all students. According to the president: “This is a breakthrough for internationalizing higher business studies at NSM” (NSM 2002).

² BI will from fall term 2002 restructure their degree system to a bachelor and master system for all full degree programs. This is in line with the reform of the Norwegian public higher education system to be implemented in 2003.

A last reason that many respondents focus on, though not recognized in formal policy documents, is that the internationalization agenda is seen as a response to an external evaluation that were critical to NSM's efforts in this area (EQUIS 1999). As such, quite a few see internationalization policy mostly as symbolic compliance with external demands

5.3 International competition and cooperation

The third theme concerns the question of whether NSM has an ambition to compete in an international market, and if so, what will be the strategies pursued. As indicated above, one of the main reasons stated for internationalization is the increasing globalization of higher business education, opening up potential markets abroad and new competitors. The question then is whether NSM has an ambition to “capitalize on these trends” (NSM 2002b). The respondents express that at presently, goals and strategies are unclear. This is for instance reflected in the question close to all the respondents pose: for instance “what is and should be NSM's markets” and “in what international markets should NSM be in”. In the official strategy documents, NSM's international markets is considered to be Asia, Scandinavia and the Baltic region (NSM 2000a), thus reflecting the geographical areas where NSM already has international presence. A few of the respondents do, however, claim that these operations have been initiated rather coincidental and usually by personal connections, and they ask for a more thorough considerations with regards to international operations, which they see as part of the overall development of the institution. In the words one respondent: “These questions need to be thoroughly considered in relation to developing NSM as a leading business school”.

What there however seems to be a broad agreement on is the way to compete internationally: strategic alliances with international firms and higher education institutions. Consequently, the rationale is neither competition nor collaboration, but both. This illustrates the tension between the two strategies. In the policy documents, alliances and networks is seen as the most important tool for internationalization (NSM 2000c). All of the respondents claim that NSM and Norway is “no global meeting place” (in the words of one respondent), and consequently NSM has to go abroad rather than recruit international students to Norway. None of the respondents think that it is possible to recruit students to Norway on a broad scale. Moreover, setting up institutional subsidiaries abroad is not favored. One reason why NSM needs strong local partners, according to respondents, is that it doesn't have a global brand name like Harvard or Oxford (or similar “elite” institutions), and in consequence will not be able to succeed by

establishing new institutions abroad. The approach emphasized is establishing partnerships with good local institutions and offering joint or double degrees is considered a suitable approach to tap into foreign markets. Licensing educational programs to local institutions is another approach pursued. The international alliances NSM is currently engaged in is

- Network of 100 partners for exchange of students and faculty
- Alliance with eight European and two Asian business schools for a bachelor program in marketing
- Strategic alliances with a Chinese and an Australian university on a master of management program (executive education)
- Alliances with two European companies operating in China for education and research services
- Strategic alliance with one UK and one Canadian university for a net-based program in project management
- Establishment of a full-scale business school in Lithuania (where NSM is the largest share holder)

The major challenge seen for strategic alliances is how to find and attract suitable local partners. The quality and reputation of NSM, particularly with regards to research, is seen as a key determinant for establishing alliances with local partners.

6. International operations and activities

What concrete strategies are pursued in terms of programs and activities? As seen in NSM's broad internationalization policies, internationalization is seen as a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing student and faculty, educational programs and institutional strategic development. Likewise, the concrete activities and programs pursued can best be described as a portfolio of activities that can be identified with internationalization in a broad sense. Using the typology developed by Knight (1999) NSM's current activities can be described by the following table (table 3).

The majority of efforts are concentrated within the area of international exchange and mobility. All the respondents emphasize that this is the area where NSM has most experience, and the most success, particularly in terms of student exchange. Consequently, this is regarded as the most important part of international activities at presently by all respondents.

Table 2: Approaches to internationalization at the Norwegian School of Management

Approaches to internationalization	Descriptors of approaches to internationalization in higher education institutions	NSM practices
Reforms	- reforms of higher education systems using non-national degree structures, titles, credit points, diplomas, use of foreign language etc for the bulk of students	- Reform of degree structures towards Master and Bachelor degrees
Operations	- Institutional subsidiaries in other countries - Franchising programs and degrees to other countries - Trans-national distance education institutions	- Subsidiary in Lithuania; the International school of management - Joint programs in China (Shanghai and Beijing) - Franchising in Australia
Programs	- international study programs (for international and domestic students) - trans-national distance education as part of institutions' education programs	- MBA, Master of Science, and Bachelor of Business Administration - Project Management Education on the Internet (PME)

Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bi- and multilateral exchange and cooperation agreements, - student and faculty exchanges, - recruitment of international students and staff, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100 exchange partners - Student exchange: 220 went abroad, 213 came to Norway (2001) - Faculty exchange: no formal exchange agreements, but privately initiated exchange 24 faculty went abroad, 6 came to Norway (2001) - International students in full degree programs - international faculty: 20 % (2001) - faculty with international doctoral degrees: 60 % (2001)
Competence and learning*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - objectives, curriculum, teaching materials, language of instruction, etc emphasizing development of international/global competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language of instruction and syllabi dominantly Norwegian in undergraduate programs - International topics largely covered in specialization areas for advanced students (4 or 5th year) - One program with a unique international profile offered to Norwegian students
Processes*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrating international and intercultural activities into teaching, research and other services - International evaluation/accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ad hoc practices - EQUIS accreditation
Ethos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus in policy papers, mission statements etc which emphasis on creating an international environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NSM's ambition is to be a leading European business school - NSM has placed internationalization high on its strategic agenda

* There is no secondary data available on these dimensions from the NSM. The information is gathered from interviews from key respondents, and is furthered explained in the text below.

But as seen in the table, information is not readily available to shed light on all these dimensions. This is particularly so, with regards to the integration of international dimensions in educational programs that cater mainly for

Norwegian students (the undergraduate and *sivil* programs³). Such integration can focus on content, language and teaching processes. In policy, the official objectives are to promote cross-cultural perspectives through specific course offerings, syllabi and guest lectures, more use of English as the language of instruction, and develop more international programs (like MBA, M.Sc. and BBA).

The respondents however were asked to shed light on this dimension, with particular reference to the curriculum content and language of instruction. In terms of curriculum content, comments were chiefly made on syllabi and textbooks, not as much on curriculum areas covered. The respondents claim that it has been a tradition for skepticism towards international literature amongst students and that professors have wanted to use their own textbooks, as textbooks represents a considerable income for a number of professors. Most respondents, however, thinks that it is a positive development towards using more international literature in regular, Norwegian degree programs. With regards to the international orientation in the curriculum in general (regardless of language), an official goal is to analyze the international orientation in all programs, but this is yet to be implemented. A recent study by Engwall (2000) investigated the literature in the curricula in Nordic business schools, in terms of country of origin of the authors. His findings indicate that at NSM domestic titles account for 35,5 % and international titles account for 64,5 %. 50% of the international literature is American. Specific topics like international management and international marketing are offered mainly as specialization areas in the graduate programs, and in the specialized *diplomeksportmarkedsfører*⁴ (international marketing) program.

In terms of language training and language of instruction the official policy is that more instruction should be carried out in English (NSM 2000b). The respondents however, vary in their assessment of this policy. Most think that this is an important dimension to internationalization, and that it ought to be reinforced, whilst a minority see this as a problem. It is seen as a problem because, language itself is not considered to increase international awareness, and secondly, because teaching in a foreign language might alienate certain faculty. Moreover, a few of the respondents are critical to the exclusive emphasis on English, rather than other foreign languages, and see

³ In the international programs, the MBA, M.Sc, and Ph.D. the content and language of instruction is officially English

⁴ This four-year program has an explicitly international profile and the only program with mandatory student exchange (3 terms). The program is offered through an alliance of eight European and two Asian business schools.

this as a “sad development” (according to one respondent) as enrollment in language courses in German, French and Spanish has declined over the last years.

The overall assessment of the respondents is that the integration of international dimension in the educational programs is still too weak, but that there has been positive developments lately. The respondents as well as official policy seem to expect that this will be furthered when the new degree structure (Bachelor and Master) gets implemented in 2003.

7. ICT and internationalization

When discussing the role of ICTs related to internationalization of higher education, we discuss these in two ways: one concerns the role of ICT for internationalization (that is as a driving force), another concerns the role of ICTs in international activities. We asked the respondents two questions: Is ICTs important for internationalization? And how are ICTs employed in international activities?

7.1 Technology as a driving force

The respondents are quite divided in their responses to this question. Half of them think that ICT is an important factor for internationalization of higher education and half of them think that it's not. The reasons stated for why ICTs are important largely focus on the ability to deliver information and communicating without the barriers of space and time. This is seen especially relevant for research, as it is thought to enable closer collaboration between academics internationally, and for recruitment of international students.

The respondents that do not consider ICTs to be of importance express various arguments for their standpoint. The arguments all focus on the potential (or lack thereof) for international delivery of distance education, focusing on understandings of what education and learning is. One reason stated is that the nature of education and teaching is so that it cannot be standardized to a large extent, and in consequence cannot be mass-produced and packaged for an international market. A second reason stated is that internationalization is seen as a state of mind that can only be achieved through knowledge and experience, and that such personal knowledge always will be locally embedded and cannot be delivered through electronic information systems. Thirdly, some of the respondents are critical to the demand for international distance education, particularly with regards to undergraduate education. They do not think that there is a market for online undergraduate education, which is inline with empirical findings from other studies (Adams 2001; Bluestain et al 1999)

Most of these respondents however do recognize that ICTs can be used as part of existing international activities, as a supplement, and for integration of international perspectives at the home campus. The support function of ICTs is by all respondents regarded as central. With regards to this latter function, one respondent claimed: "Virtual internationalization can never

replace physical mobility, but it can be utilized better, particularly with respect to those students that for various reasons cannot go abroad.”

7.2 Use of ICTs in international activities and processes

What potential roles can ICTs play in international activities? The responses of our interviewees indicate that there are five main functions of ICTs in international activities at NSM presently. However, having a comment of one respondent in mind “ICTs are central, but have very varied functions, as ICTs are used for near say all operations in a higher education institution today”. As such, the role of ICT in internationalization processes is seen as embedded in routine activities of the institution. And in consequence, this classification represents a crude simplification.

7.2.1 Transnational distance education

Most of the respondents are skeptical about delivering educational programs internationally through Internet technology. Moreover, most see the Internet as a supplement rather than as a stand-alone mode of delivery in general. NSM’s experiences with international delivery of distance education is however quite limited. At NSM, there is currently only one program offered as an international distance education program, the PME program (Project Management Education). The PME⁵ program is a part-time program in project management for working adults, and consists of various courses at Masters level.

The program was developed and is offered through an alliance of the NSM, a Norwegian university, and a British and Canadian university. In addition three corporate partners are involved. The program was initially developed on request of the three corporate partners, to educate their employees that work across the globe. It is however, now open for individual enrolment as well. The program is offered as a distance education program internationally, but targets Norway, UK and Canada. It is however plans to expand to China and Eastern Europe.

The program uses a mixed-mode delivery format, with on-site assemblies and Internet delivery. This form of delivery, referred to as “hybrid learning”, is considered by all respondents as the only suitable form of delivering distance education today. However, face to face teaching is again regarded as a challenge in international operations. In the PME program, assemblies are held in UK and USA, for European and North American students

⁵ www.pme.no

respectively two times during the program. Local teachers are used in these plenary sessions. All other activities are net-based (3 sessions). However, the net functions mainly as a channel of distribution of information and communication, according to respondents.

The respondents regard the program as the most sophisticated international activity NSM is currently involved in. And this form of international university – business partnerships, is by many of the respondents regarded as a very interesting form of international activities for NSM. But it is also seen as a challenging format in terms of working with many and very different partners to develop and deliver a program. Also, it has had its problems, particularly economic ones. Other challenges are the pedagogy of distance education and the need for a certain degree of standardization of content and qualifications. In this regard, developing and selecting syllabi that is relevant for all students has been a challenge.

NSM's regular distance education programs (offered through NSM's center for distance education) cater mainly to Norwegian students, although quite many of them are located abroad. There are currently no plans for developing programs or courses for an international market. The strategy of the distance education unit is to provide services for the international operations and programs that NSM already has and will be engaged in (NSM 2000d).

7.2.2 ICT as support in international programs

A second role is the use of ICT as a support in ongoing international activities. Our respondents regard this as extremely important, and the dominant role played by ICTs in international activities. The respondents also claim that use of ICT is a key success criterion for international programs. For NSM's international operations, ICTs, particularly the Internet and e-mail is used to correspond with students, delivery of term papers, posting of information, etc. As such, it is a channel of distribution and communication. In this regard, NSM's e-learning portal Apollo is used extensively as a learning tool for the international students in China. Consequently, the respondents regard ICTs as a tool for internationalization, rather than as an internationalizing force in itself. In the words of one respondent: "ICT gives us the tools for an easier internationalization process"

7.2.3 ICT for marketing and recruitment internationally

Empirical studies have showed that ICT is crucial for international marketing of higher education, as the availability and quality of information is a crucial variable when students choose education internationally (Hosie &

Mazzarol 1999; Bourke 2000). Thus, ICT is important for the mobility of students, and for the recruitment of international students. Our respondents also confirm this. The Internet is regarded as the most important venue for promotion and information to prospective international students. According to the international office, the web is also very effective in this regard as most international applicants have used the Internet to obtain information about the school before applying. However, the quality and accurateness on the information provided on web sites must be high, according to the respondents.

7.2.4 Partner and network administration for student exchanges

With regards to student exchanges, ICT is used extensively for administration of exchange agreements. According to the international office, information distribution and communication is now conducted mainly through e-mail and the Internet. The administration of NSM's large number of exchange agreements is problematic, and there have been initiated projects for using NSM's student and course administration system, for international exchange administration. In addition, e-mail is used for information and communication with NSM's students that are on exchange in other countries.

7.2.5 Use of ICT to introduce international perspectives in home campus activities

The last role of ICTs is regarded as very important, but there is little systematic information about the use of ICT in regular teaching, research and learning activities in general and for the purpose of internationalization in particular. In terms of research, the respondents assume that ICT is of vital importance for international collaboration and communication between researchers. No information is available however to verify this assumption.

Likewise, the Internet as a channel for information is regarded as very important for academics and students alike. With reference to students' learning, a study of the use of library and information services by students in 1997 indicated that already then, the Internet was regarded as the third most important channel of information for the students in their studies after lectures and syllabi. Moreover, all faculty used electronic information resources in their research (Studconsult 1997). There is every reason to assume that the Internet is equally if not more important today.

NSM has a strong policy on the use of ICT in teaching and learning, and projects have been initiated to implement the policy. However, a recent study has showed that the practice is ad hoc and based on individual teachers' interest (Welle-Strand & Thune 2003, Welle-Strand & Tjeldvoll

2002). As such, there are a few lead users at the institution, whilst the majority use ICT as a supplement to regular teaching, predominantly to communicate with and send information to their students. In terms of using ICT in teaching processes to introduce international perspectives, little information is available. Our respondents repeatedly mention one example. There is currently a professor that uses teleconferencing technology to teach MBA and Master of Management courses jointly with a US business college and a US university. These courses on strategic IT management are taught simultaneously in the US and in Norway through two-way sound and picture lecturing.

7.3 ICTs as tools in internationalization processes

The functions outlined above show that ICTs are used in many ways and in many routine operations related to internationalization. This is due to the ubiquitousness of technology in higher education today. As such, although ICTs are not seen as very central for internationalization, it is vital in internationalization processes, and for supporting and coordinating international activities.

How do these uses of ICT relate to the various approaches to internationalization? The following figure portrays the links between uses of ICT and approaches to internationalization, focusing on internationalization via enrollment, mobility, resources, and locations.

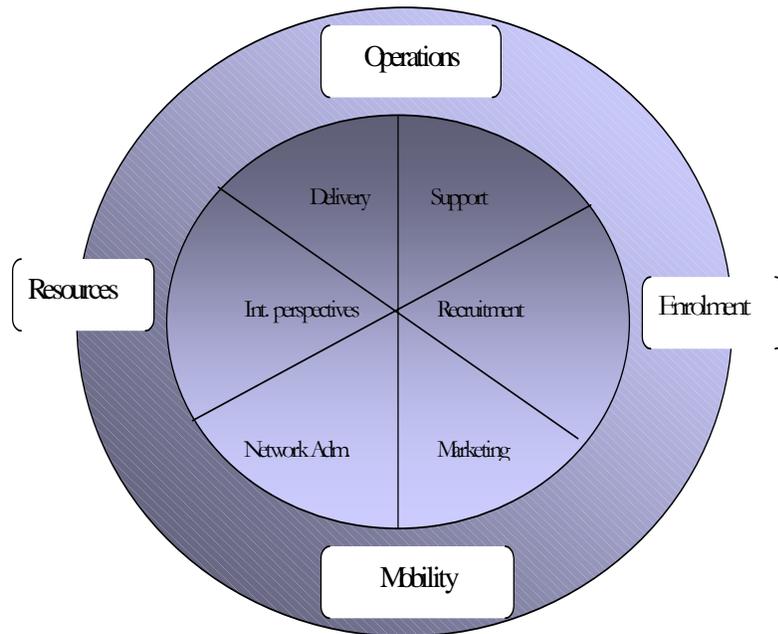


Figure 2: Uses of ICTs in international activities

The functions are considered to be overlapping with the different internationalization approaches. This means that marketing and recruitment functions are seen as particularly important for enrollment and mobility; delivery and support roles are likely to be emphasized in international operations (programs located abroad); and the use of ICTs to introduce international perspectives in home campus activities is important for internationalization of educational resources.

In the following, we will continue on discussing the challenges of internationalization generally, and for ICTs in internationalization processes, related to the broadening of the internationalization concept, the links between policy and implementation, and the dilemma of standardization and local adaptation.

8. Challenges of internationalization

All respondents note that internationalization is a central policy issue at the institution. But questions are asked, as seen above, with regards to the success of implementation of internationalization. The respondents emphasize two issues that highlight “the problems of internationalization policy”.

8.1 The lack of concretization of internationalization

The most frequent comment made during the interviews was the simple question, “what is internationalization?” The respondents claim that there are different opinions towards internationalization, and that the lack of concretization hinders implementation of any internationalization policy.

There seem to be two major and inter-linked questions, with regards to what internationalization is, or can be. Is internationalization something that you do at home or abroad? Stated differently, does internationalization concern a process to integrate international dimensions into home campus activities, or is it the activities of the institution, faculty and students abroad? Both policy and respondents claim however, that internationalization should start at home, and that internationalization of the “home arena” is a precognition for successful operations abroad (NSM 2000c). But many are also convinced that internationalization for NSM is essentially about setting up operations abroad, rather than to include international perspectives and processes at home. With regards to exploring international markets and ventures, the internationalization policy states that “Ideally, such ventures would also increase the international perspectives in domestic operations” (NSM 2000b). But there is not stated any ideas about how to archive this.

The second question concerns how to measure internationalization. The question is whether internationalization can be measured with simple performance indicators like exchange ratios, or whether internationalization is best understood as a mind-set. Respondents emphasizing internationalization as an attitude and a set of skills and knowledge tend to emphasize that internationalization needs to be integrated in the home environment, not by setting up activities abroad. Consequently, they question the internationalizing effect of such activities.

8.2 Weak links between formal strategy and everyday practices

The second major problem identified by the respondents with regards to the internationalization policy, is the felt mismatch between the formal policy and strategy and the day to day operations of the school. Most respondents emphasize that internationalization in higher education is fashion, and to some extent used in policy documents for rhetorical purposes. However, some also relate internationalization with the legitimacy of the school as a research based higher education institution. But all question the degree of integration of the internationalization policy in the operations of the institution. Consequently, internationalization is seen as an-add on, rather as a substantial area in itself.

This is also seen as related to the management of internationalization, or rather international activities and operations abroad. NSM has a large portfolio of activities and operations that could be classified as internationalization. These have been initiated usually by single individuals and have come into practice much by “coincidence” (according to the respondents). They also point to a lacking, overall framework for the management of international activities. These perspectives were identified in the policies of 2000, and an international office with a director of international affairs established in 2001, in place of the pervious offices of international exchange. However, respondents also claim that responsibility also needs to be “pushed downwards” in the organization, giving the departments more and clearer responsibilities.

This must also be seen in light of the expansion of the concept of internationalization and the extent of international activities. According to Wende, Beerkens & Teichler (1999) the concept was traditionally used to refer to exchange of students, where as now it has been broadened to include curricular and degree reforms, quality improvement systems and strategies of institutional development. The expansion of the concept and activities can also be seen at NSM. However, the systems in place to manage internationalization are still essentially for managing student exchange.

8.3 Challenges of international operations and activities

The respondents see a number of challenges for international operations. For one, ensuring financial support from the government and the Norwegian business community is seen as difficult. Moreover, to develop academic resources for such programs and involvement from faculty is problematic, as

academic and faculty resources are very short on the institution. In terms of competencies, the respondents claim that a radical new set of competencies need to be developed in the organization, encompassing knowledge of legal and financial sides of international education, knowledge of international marketing and promotion, and not least competence in managing an extensive network of collaborative alliances and exchange partnerships.

Lastly, to solve to intricate balance between standardizing an educational program to allow for just evaluation of qualifications, whilst adapting to local circumstances, is mentioned as a key challenge (Jensen 2002). And related, the differences between idiosyncratic educational systems are a challenge. This is particularly seen with regards to credit and diploma recognition and transfer. With regards to this, developing international degrees like Master and Bachelor is seen as a vital instrument for further internationalization, and particularly for competing in an international market.

The dilemma of standardization and local adaptation is a challenge that is seen to get even bigger in transnational distance education. The respondents indicate that such programs are in nature standardized, and that this pose challenges for the quality of the learning experience. The respondents relate this to culture, language and content issues.

Other challenges that are seen specifically related to ICT concerns infrastructure, competence and pedagogical challenges. These challenges have also been identified in previous research on the challenges on full-scale implementation of ICT in teaching and learning activities at the institution (Welle-Strand & Tjeldvoll 2002, Welle-Strand & Thune 2003).

As a summary, it seems that at NSM, three main challenges is currently emphasized: First, the broadening of the internationalization concept is confusing, and has not been followed up by systems, that incorporates both in the strategic thinking and in management, this broader perspective. Secondly, the weak links between policy and practice need to be resolved. As such, the internationalization agenda needs to be considered strategically as well as pushed downwards in the organization. Thirdly, there is a tension between standardization and local adaptation, and the respondents see this tension intensified in international delivery of distance education.

9. Discussion and concluding remarks

This report has addressed the issues of internationalization and how information and communication technologies are parts of internationalization processes in higher education. It is frequently assumed that ICTs are pivotal in the globalization of higher education and in internationalization processes, by posing opportunities for integration across time and space enabling distributed nodes to work as units in real time. Moreover, it is claimed that globalization and new technologies has lead to a global market for education, in which new providers of higher education operate. Moreover, it is claimed that this competitive agenda poses significant threats to traditional providers. This study has reported findings from a case study of a private business school – an institution which many would regard as a new provider of higher education; it is a private, market-based institution, it is heavily involved in continuing and executive education, and it uses ICTs for educational provision. It also, as opposed to all public Norwegian institutions, has developed subsidiaries abroad and franchises its executive education, and is involved in a number of strategic alliances. In the eyes of many beholders (and in Norway it certainly is⁶), it would be seen as a stereotype for a higher education institution operating in a global market. In consequence, we regard the NSM as a theoretically relevant case for studying developments in higher education, and particularly relevant for internationalization processes and impact of ICTs, as the institution has strategies and experience in both areas.

The data from this study highlights a number of interesting points in relation to internationalization of higher education. By drawing on the perspectives outlined above, we will now discuss some of the case study evidence within a general framework of globalization, internationalization and information and communication technologies as instruments for global integration in higher education.

⁶ In Norway, the recent public debate on higher education has introduced the concept “BI-fication” of higher education. In Norway the Norwegian School of Management is usually referred to as BI, and as such many of the trends in higher education, such as marketization, internationalisation, etc, is in Norway associated with the NSM.

9.1 Globalization and internationalization policies in higher education

As seen above, globalization and internationalization are seen as dynamically relate concepts. To what extent is internationalization seen as a response to globalization of higher education? And to what extent does it represent a market logic based on international competitiveness rather than international cooperation? Findings from this case illustrate the awareness of a global market for higher education, and that this presents opportunities as well as threats. That students are increasingly mobile and that international competencies are increasingly emphasized are seen as driving forces for these developments. In consequence, NSM has a clear ambition of being a leading international business school and radical internationalization at all levels is sought. At the same time, globalization of business education poses a threat because it undermines the stronghold NSM has in the Norwegian market, as Norwegian students are relatively mobile. In consequence, NSM is promoting international exchange for all its students, and has developed an extensive network of exchange partnerships. The case also illustrates the problems of competing in international markets. In the eyes of our respondents Norway is no global meeting place, and they highlight the need for developing international brand names if one is to succeed on its own. But neither of these strategies is seen as feasible. Rather, international competition can only be pursued through international cooperation, through development of strategic partnerships with local higher education institutions and businesses, as well as development of networks of institutions. Thus, within a global educational market, our respondents highlight the network dynamics of competition and cooperation.

A second point that this case illustrates is the broadening of the concept internationalization, and how this affects the institution. Where as traditionally, internationalization was used synonymously with international student exchange, a broad portfolio of activities are pursued today. Most of these are loosely coupled, and there is little strategic management or coordination of these activities. The systems that are in place reflect the traditional student exchange perspective, and have not incorporated the broader internationalization perspective. Moreover, as seen above, there is considerable confusion amongst our respondents on what is actually meant by internationalization, and several fault lines seem to emerge. One concerns the internationalization effects of operations abroad and how this is related to internationalization of the “home arena”. These two perspectives are not fully reconciled, and the respondents highlight the need for better ways of utilizing the internationalization effects of operations abroad, particularly for integrating international dimensions in the educational

programs. This also points to issues of how internationalization can be used as a quality development measure, and several respondents call for more strategic thinking on how internationalization can be used for developing the institution as a leading European business school.

9.2 ICTs as drivers and tools for internationalization

The second major research question in this study concern how does ICTs act as driving forces and how is ICTs tools in internationalization processes? The literature presented seem to expect that there is a close link between spread of information technologies in higher education and internationalization, amongst other things, that the joint impact of these trends have lead to the development of a new market and new provides associated with the concept borderless education. We do not find much evidence on this in this case study. Although information and communication technologies are seen as central, they are not seen as driving forces for internationalization of higher education by most of our respondents. Education is regarded as onsite interaction between students, and between students and faculty. It is not seen as something that can be mass- produced or -packaged for an international market. This is also reflected in the one international distance education program NSM currently runs which uses a hybrid mode of delivery. This conviction of the importance of face to face interaction in education, mirrors Castells' hypothesis on the impact of IT on the educational sector:

Schools and universities are paradoxically the institutions least affected by the virtual logic embedded in IT, in spite of the foreseeable quasi-universal use of computers in the classrooms of advanced countries. But they will hardly vanish into the virtual space. In the case of elementary and secondary schools, this is because they are as much childcare as they are learning institutions. In the case of universities, this is because the quality of education is still, and will be for a long time, associated with the intensity of face-to-face interaction. Thus, the large-scale experiences of "distant universities", regardless of their quality, seem to show that they are second-option forms of education which could play a significant role in a future, enhanced system of adult education, but which could hardly replace current higher education institutions (Castells 1996, p. 397).

Based on this case, we question the direct impact ICTs can have on internationalization of higher education. What we do see, is the need to discern the questions of ICTs for internationalization, and in international

activities. The findings from this case suggest that ICTs are highly important as a tool for an easier internationalization process. Use of ICTs are also regarded by many of our respondents as a key success criterion in international operations, and is used to deliver parts of educational programs, as a support tool in international operations, as a marketing and recruitment instrument, to administer international networks, and to introduce international perspectives into home campus activities. The latter of these is regarded as very important, but is a role that we do not know much about, based on this study.

This micro level study of internationalization and use ICTs highlighted a number of interesting issues on how ICTs can be utilized in internationalization processes. Most importantly, ICTs are today embedded in the routine operations of higher education and internationalization processes. As such, it seems that literature on the topic either overestimates or underestimates the role of ICTs. We consequently see the need to more empirical analyses of the role of ICTs in internationalization processes in higher education.

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Appendix

List of acronyms

BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
EFMD	The European Foundation for Management Development
EQUIS	European Quality Improvement System, managed by EFMD
GATS	General agreement on trade in services
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
M.Sc	Master of Science
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NSM	The Norwegian School of Management. In Norwegian called Handelshøyskolen BI
PME	Project Management Education
WTO	World Trade Organization

Interview guide

We asked our respondents the following questions (translated to English; for questions in Norwegian see next page):

- 1) What strategies and ideas does the Norwegian School of Management have for internationalization, and how would you assess internationalization as a strategy for NSM?
- 2) Competition in an international market or international cooperation. Which of these does best describe NSM's approach to internationalization?
- 3) Can you describe some of NSM's internationalization approaches, and what is your assessment of them?
- 4) Would you say that Information and Communication Technologies are central for internationalization and if so, how?
- 5) Are there any examples on how ICTs have been used in internationalization processes?
- 6) What structural and organizational obstacles are central in internationalization, and how can they be addressed?

Intervjuguide

1. Hva slags tanker og strategier har BI for internasjonalisering og hvordan vil du vurdere internasjonalisering som strategi for BIs virksomhet?
2. Konkurransen i et internasjonalt utdanningsmarked og/eller internasjonalt samarbeid. Hva vil du si er mest dekkende for BIs strategi?
3. Kan du nevne noen konkrete eksempler på internasjonalisering, og hva er din vurdering av disse tiltakene?
4. Oppfatter du at Informasjons- og kommunikasjonsteknologi som sentralt for internasjonalisering? Og eventuelt på hvilken måte?
5. Finnes det eksempler hvor IKT har vært benyttet for internasjonalisering?
6. Hva slags strukturelle og organisatoriske hindringer tror du internasjonalisering kan møte? Hva slags løsninger ser du/hvordan har disse blitt møtt?

Centre for Education Management Research (CEM)

BI's Centre for Education Management Research (CEM) was established in 2002. CEM's work focuses on the executive position and leadership in public and private universities, colleges and schools as well as in corporate training.

In the global knowledge economy when the quality of learning is key in value creation, the quality of decision making and implementation of organized learning becomes decisive for the competitiveness of corporations, nations and educational institutions at all levels.

Through research, evaluation and development activities designed in active interplay with key external stakeholders, CEM is committed to produce new knowledge about educational leadership in the global knowledge society and promote knowledge transfer and competence development to public and private stakeholders.

For further information about CEM, research projects and publications visit the CEM website at www.bi.no/cem