



Erasmus Mundus Programme

Project UNIQUE

University Quality Exchange

Focus Group Summary

May 2014

FH JOANNEUM - University of Applied Sciences, Graz (AT)
Claudia Linditsch, Doris Kiendl-Wendner & Thomas Schmalzer

With Inputs from

Rahul Singh, Anuj Sharma, Natalia Ushkova, Fuming Wang, Juan Antonio Enciso González, Maria Andrea H Recio, Anna Matros-Goreses, Theodora Nandjaa

VSU – Voronezh State University, Russia

BIMTECH – Birla Institute of Management Technology, India

UIBE – University of International Business and Economics, China

ITESM – Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, Mexico

PoN – Polytechnic of Namibia, Namibia

Methodology

While quantitative methods deliver results which can be statistically analyzed and easily interpreted, they are usually not very powerful in providing researchers with initial ideas in the explorative phase of a study. **Qualitative methods** and especially focus group interviews have proven to be very useful to do exactly that.

A **focus group** is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting (preferably a round table) where participants are free to talk with other group members. Focus groups provide researchers with initial ideas in the exploratory part of a study, they can be useful in the process of interpretation and evaluation of results and situations and they can produce further research questions.

Focus Groups are usually conducted with **5-8 participants and 2 coaches**. As regards the participants, it is recommended that a diverse group with multiple different backgrounds, a variety of experience and views on the topic are present in the meeting. Each partner university of the **UNIQUE** project has to submit a list of participants and coaches of the focus group to the coordinator.

As regards the coaches, one of them serves as the moderator and leads the group discussion by initiating the discussion, by asking specific additional questions, by passing on the word to the next participant and by taking care of the time management. The second coach takes minutes and provides back support. Often, focus group interviews are recorded and/or filmed. This depends, however, on the willingness of the participants whether they feel comfortable with recording and/or filming. For the **UNIQUE** project focus group interviews we do not require that you record and/or film the focus group interviews. Each partner in the **UNIQUE** project, however, is required to submit written minutes of the focus group interviews.

In the **UNIQUE** project focus group interviews are used to ask experts a number of questions, which need to be resolved before continuing our project activities. With these interviews it is also aimed to specifically analyse the most essential issues about the internationalization of higher education, which are most important for the involved interviewees and their respective fields.

These are included in the next research step – the ranking survey. As an additional advantage of the method, the partner organisations conducting the interviews get a better insight into the mind-set of the interviewees and a good feeling on how much they already know about the topic and in which way the next steps can be planned.

In the **UNIQUE** project the material derived from focus groups is used as explanatory background on which the project team builds the quantitative research, in the form of fully structured expert questionnaires.

The specific project relevant information delivered by the focus group interviews can be described as follows:

- Information, which helps the consortium to define missing standards and gaps vs. the quality standards of the European Union in higher education;
- Information, which supports the **UNIQUE** project in understanding differences in higher education;
- Information, which helps the consortium to understand expert's perceptions of standards in higher education;
- Information, which helps the consortium to understand "cultural" differences (regional, national, institutional);
- Information, which helps in the development of recommendations highlighting crucial factors that influence or even hinder change in national QA systems and how to overcome them.

Setup

5-8 focus group members and **two experienced moderators** are involved. In each of the involved countries the selected moderators use an interview guideline to ask questions and to set the discussion in motion.

It is strongly recommended to record the focus group interview with a voice recorder or a similar tool, if it is possible within your institution and causes no internal problems. Further, it is essential to take notes during the focus group interview and if needed from your side you can also transcribe it.

The interview can be in English but need not be. So if you feel more comfortable to have the focus group interviews in your national language please do so. Therefore, the questions which are going to be asked during the interview need to be translated into your national languages. Still, the **report about the focus group interviews** needs to be in **English**.

Focus Groups and participants

The focus group interviews were realized during the April 2014 in all partner universities, senior university staff participated at the focus group.

The interviews were perceived as a good opportunity to discuss the issues of comparability of the educational system. The discussion encourages interest between the participants to get to know more about the education system in Europe, e.g. in India: "It also **generated interest among participants** to know more **about the European system** and ways to align two different systems to give more international exposure to students." It also showed the problems, and gaps between the different educational systems and quality standards. "There are huge **differences between the standards in Mexico and those in Europe**; mainly in the areas of research, tutoring, standardized grading curves, and work schemes" (Mexico), "An deep exploration helps us to see some **problems and gaps in education quality standards** between China and EU" (China). It is a common understanding between the partners to study differences and to find the effective way how to establish comparable educational and quality standards. "The importance of **implementation of double-degree programs** was discussed, as they allow faculty to learn more about the European education quality management system and **implement best practices in the Russian education system**" (Russia).

Tab.1: Participants of the focus group interviews

PARTICIPANTS	India	Mexico	Namibia	China	Russia
Director / Dean	2	4	7	6	5
Professor	7	0	3	0	0
Associate professor	5	0	0	0	0
Assistant professor	5	0	0	0	0
Coordinator / Manager	0	3	4	0	1
No. of participants:	19	7	14	6	6

Questions

The following question guideline applies:

1. Which factors influence the higher education standards in your country and in your university?
2. How important is the comparability of higher education standards around the world for your university? If yes, why is it important for your university?
3. Is international cooperation with other countries essential for your university? Which facts illustrate that international cooperation is essential for your university? And why is it important for your university?
4. Where do you see problems and gaps in relation to different quality standards between the European Union and your own country?
5. How do you handle the comparability of student exchange (incoming & outgoings) currently? Do you think that your method applied is an effective one or do you see potential for improvement?
6. Do you think that quality indicators such as rankings are important to students when selecting a specific university for an exchange semester?
7. Where do you see the major challenges in aligning European and third country quality standards for international student mobility?

Summary of the Statements

Question 1: Which factors influence the higher education standards in your country and in your university?

PROJECT PARTNER	STATEMENT
INDIA Birla Institute of Management Technology	<p>Factors influencing higher education standards in India:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) is responsible for higher education in India; there are 16 agencies under HRD which are engaged in regulating HE. On technical education, regulatory agencies like University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) give norms and quality standards which institutions need to follow. In addition, accreditation agencies NAAC and NBA have prescribed quality standards that institutions need to follow in order to get accredited. Faculty quality, training, culture, commitment and ability to teach varies drastically from region to region in the country Leadership, governance, and support from institution and stakeholders Student quality, education background, economic background Research scope and quality has high inequality Duration of bachelors program is 3- 5 years, depending on topics Academia- industry/outside connect and connect to larger (international) world <p>Factors influencing higher education standards at BIMTECH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching quality and pedagogy Student diversity and cultural orientation Student intake process Student mentoring Interaction with stakeholders and governance Quality of academia industry interface and encouragement for research Infrastructure facility, use of technology
MEXICO EGADE Business School	<p>Factors influencing higher education standards in Mexico and at EGADE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Accreditations The higher education institutions compete amongst them through international accreditations' standards, because foreign education is highly valued in Mexico. Tecnológico de Monterrey has always been measured by international standards. Therefore, the school has already acquired international competences and has always been compared with institutions abroad. This has helped to obtain several accreditations. In the particular case of EGADE Business School, international accreditations were even obtained before than national accreditations (CONACYT). One difference between national and international accreditations is the assessment. This process is not as rigorous for national accreditations as it is for international ones. Besides these factors, the school's quality assurance takes into account if quality standards are aligned with its mission and vision. Public vs. private education system There are differences between public and private higher education. Generally, public schools do not meet the same international competitive levels. Visitors from other universities recognize Tecnológico de Monterrey, in comparison with other public and private universities. Basically the opinion held is that at Tecnológico de Monterrey they get what they are paying for, mainly in terms of accreditations. Visitors appreciate the assessment given to the students and the training that teachers have (teachers are sent abroad to get their master degree, PhD., etc.), the solid training programmes and development of teaching skills, the training and assessment of learning outcomes. These are evidence of actions that differentiate Tecnológico de Monterrey

	<p>among other institutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders The school's management takes into account the opinion of different stakeholders in order to identify relevant quality standards for the institution. • Context Sometimes quality is measured by how well contextual problems are solved; if they are linked with Mexican problems or if they meet the country's challenges. • Budget It is a necessary resource to meet competitive quality standards. For example, it is required for the payment of accreditations, and for the development of technological and human resources. • Others The generation of semi-annual academic indicators, monitoring and evaluating student learning, programme evaluation, monitoring of alumni (with trajectory at 5, 10, 15 and 20 years of graduation, one of the school's strengths) and selection process of students, are other factors that influence the quality standards.
<p>NAMIBIA</p> <p>Polytechnic of Namibia</p>	<p>The higher education standards at the Polytechnic of Namibia are influenced by factors like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality teaching and learning, • research output, • professionalism, • community development and • engagement. <p>Adherence to internal and external requirements like the National Qualifications Framework Standards in qualification development, are also factors that influence the education.</p> <p>Other factors are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • qualification of lecturers, • infrastructures, • networking • poor quality education at high school level also influences the standards and • lack of funds from the government. <p>University-industry collaboration is the key to ensure national demand-based education can produce students that can be absorbed in industry (employability of students).</p> <p>National development agenda and the national qualification framework especially the level descriptors. Mathematics and science output learners from high schools are too low. The involvement of industry in higher education. Funding constraints. The issue of quality, government policies and acts. Research culture and output.</p>
<p>CHINA</p> <p>University of International Business and Economics Beijing</p>	<p>In relation to the factors influencing the higher education standards in China and as well in University of International Business and Economics (UIBE), the main points and comments offered by the participants are reported as follows:</p> <p>A. Changes of national policy are one of the most influential factors on higher education standards. For example, innovative ability development is raised in "The Eleventh Five-Year Plan for Education Development 2020". It is one of key improvement for educational quality standards in the proposals of the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>B. The objective of students' development is another key factor that influences education's quality. UIBE emphasizes internationalization of future personnel. For that reason, requirements of the standards should be considered and made accordingly. It is</p>

	<p>hard to identify quality standards only on paper. All elements have to be included when it is drafted. The requirement of quality can be shown in teaching and research activities.</p> <p>C. Assurance Measures and System is another influential factor on higher education quality standards in China and at UIBE. We have identified excellent goals for future development. For example, internationalization of personnel, the goal cannot be realized because assurance measures in finance are weak.</p> <p>D. The objectives and policy of national education are most influential. There are two groups of students on the campus: international and domestic students. The objectives and policy in relation to the two groups are different. There is no doubt that all related elements will influence the education quality standards.</p> <p>E. The teaching model and qualification of lecturers are influential. Educational standards should not be conceptual and theory, but should include with real situations and practical examples (micro issues) in order to make appropriate standards and requirements of quality standards. The objective of student development, teaching methodology, and qualification of lecturers directly influence education standards.</p> <p>F. National economic policy and social system are other rather important factors on China's and our university (stated-owned) higher education standards. First, national economic development requires the university to provide personnel for its needs. This directly influences higher education standards. The social system in China is also an influential factor in education standard development. For example, China is a socialist country, the standards introduced by the government give universities the order to provide wider coverage of study programmes with consideration of other industries' interest and different regions and business. This influences students directly and education standards for students from different sources.</p> <p>G. Strategic target of university development is another direct influential factor on education standards. For this purpose, details of quality standards should indicate requirements of this strategy.</p> <p>H. Administrative system of a university is an indirect influential factor on education standards. As the nature of a university is different, it may bring a positive or negative influence on the quality standards. Public universities are state-owned institutions which have to follow the rules and policies given at national level. Private universities enjoy more freedom in decision making in relation to its own interest. The influence from these two systems cannot be avoided in rule-making.</p>
RUSSIA Voronezh State University	<p>At present, one of the most important tasks for the Russian education is the preparation of highly qualified specialists for the national economics. This is impossible without integrating Russian universities into the global education system. The fact that the country as a whole and universities in particular are interested in internationalization of the higher education ensures more flexibility concerning the standards of the third edition and "3+" edition. In comparison with the standards of the second edition, these ones allow to design educational programmes providing together with compulsory general professional disciplines wider international and interuniversity components. As a result, there is a possibility to expand the optional part of an educational programme, design and establish programmes in foreign languages, and considerably facilitate international academic exchange.</p> <p>Another key factor are the requirements of employers, which young specialists have to live up to at the labour market. Under these conditions, modern HE standards become more practice-oriented in an effort to match employers' requirements and enhance professional and general competences of university graduates.</p> <p>One more factor is the arising competition between universities. It makes VSU actively apply not only Federal educational standards but ISO standards as well.</p>

Summary of the common factors identified:

1. **Educational criteria** – defined as the accreditation criteria, or external standards, for national or international perspective of different types of the system.
2. **Strategy documents** and institutions in charge of the education system - ministries of education, national policies, norms and quality standards on the national level.
3. **Stakeholders** – support from different stakeholders.
4. **Students and quality of the school preparation** – quality of education at high schools, students selection process, educational background, students development, students diversity and cultural background.
5. **Contextual problems** – cooperation with the industry and business, society and country problems solved at the university, labour market connections and employability of the absolvent, country challenges.
6. **Quality of the university/faculty** – quality of the training, courses, organizational culture, commitment and ability to teach, research output, professionalism, arising competition between universities, infrastructure and equipment, teaching methodology, qualification of the lecturers, strategy of the university.
7. **Budget** – financial resources needed for the accreditation, staff and funding constrains.

Question 2: How important is the comparability of higher education standards around the world for your university? If yes, why is it important for your university?

PROJECT PARTNER	STATEMENT
INDIA Birla Institute of Management Technology	<p>VISION: To be known for developing ethical global leaders and entrepreneurs striving for sustainability and inclusive growth.</p> <p>With BIMTECH's vision to develop global leaders, comparability of higher education standards is important for finding equal standards. Connecting and comparability with global institutes also helps in benchmarking institute's practices and internationalization of the institute. Meeting students and faculty members from other countries enhances competitiveness at global level. To achieve this, the institute has been actively engaged in faculty and student exchange, conducting joint research, executing joint projects & conferences and running joint academic programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparability in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, credit system, grading system, academic term duration, and award of degree • Research quality comparability, • Legal aspects of awarding degree i.e. requirement to be fulfilled to receive degree, • Scale of importance is high because of execution process, we have to deliver with help of comparability scales.
MEXICO EGADE Business School	<p>Comparability of global standards is very important for several reasons. Some of them are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global competition Tecnológico de Monterrey, through its exchange programmes, is at the same level of its competition. These programmes are shown as an interesting alternative to complement student education. The school also has international offices promoting competition and encouraging students to learn about other institutions abroad. • Positioning abroad Foreign students recognize the positioning of Tecnológico de Monterrey. To maintain this recognition the quality of the institution must be preserved in order to be a top of mind choice for people abroad. • Mission The mission of Tecnológico de Monterrey includes a commitment: "to be internationally competitive". Therefore, it has to be compared with universities from other countries to comply with this mission. • Students and parents Both parents and students pay significant amounts of money for the programme, hoping to receive an education with equal or higher quality standards than that of foreign institutions.
NAMIBIA Polytechnic of Namibia	<p>The University comparability is very critical for the Polytechnic of Namibia especially with other science and technology universities around the world. This is evident from the elaborate partner profile.</p> <p>It is especially important for international benchmarking purposes in terms of curricula development, staff and student exchange programs for knowledge, experience (skills) and cultural transfer. Transferable curricula and facilities are very critical in terms of university ranking and knowledge economy or "global village technology transfer". This issue is very much articulated in our internationalisation policy and strategy.</p> <p>It is very important because it helps the Polytechnic of Namibia to compare themselves with other universities in the world. They train international students and therefore the comparability help improve the applicable quality standards. Many of the students attend international university and this helps in comparing the available standards, curricula and policies.</p>

<p>CHINA</p> <p>University of International Business and Economics Beijing</p>	<p>Regarding to importance of the comparability of higher education standards around the world for UIBE, The main points and comments made by the participants are presented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. It is extremely important for UIBE to be identified a level of international qualification in comparability of higher education standards with other universities in the world. In China, it is encouraged to build up 1st level of higher education institution in the world. For that purpose, it is very difficult to identify a level of international qualification without the comparability, As UIBE set up a global expectation as the 1st group of Internationalized Universities in China, a similarity of higher education standards is particularly important and will provide a good foundation and clear direction for future development of UIBE. B. It is very important for UIBE to promote teacher and student mobility under condition of comparability with partner universities. If there is no comparability of higher education standards, it would be very difficult to promote teacher and student mobility. It is also very hard for students to select their courses when they get to host university. C. It is greatly helpful for students to select an institution for their degree program. As most of international students go back to home country, the comparability of higher education standards provide a good foundation and easy way to get recognized. It will be greatly helpful to find a job. D. Comparability provides a strong support for our international cooperation in exchange programs. We developed the courses and majors based on advantages of American and European structure in the same field of international business and economics. Many textbooks we use for our teaching are published by American and European companies. It indicates that some parts of our standards come from the western rules that provide comparability in the education standards. This similarity provides a strong support for our international cooperation in exchange programs from which both the Chinese and foreign students enjoy the benefit of the comparability. E. It is so important for UIBE to realize the goal of our mission with a comparability in the standards because China' economy becomes a very important part of economic globalization which requires changes in higher education to provide effective training for those who move from one part to another of the world. UIBE is committed in International business and economics that is closely linked with all related areas of economic globalization. F. The nature of the university and the objectives of UIBE's development strategy in teaching and research require a comparability of our higher education standards with our partners in the world. For example, one of our objectives is to provide the students with theory, acknowledge and applied skills for international responsibility at a government, international business, and other institutions.
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RUSSIA Voronezh State University	<p>Comparability of educational standards is an essential background for the joint programme development. In addition, availability of joint or double degree programmes is crucial for a university positioning and competitiveness.</p> <p>For students those programmes provide possibility to obtain new knowledge, practical skills including independence, ability to adapt to the national environment and significant increase in the level of language proficiency while taking a study period abroad.</p>
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Summary

Comparability of HEI is very important for each of the partner`s university, especially for following reasons:

1. **Competitiveness** at the global level - university positioning and competitiveness, enhances competitiveness at global level, global recognition. International recognition and ranking is influenced by comparability, it strengthen sustainability and inclusive growth.
2. **Equal Quality Standards** – comparability is important for finding equal standards; it helps in benchmarking institute`s practices and internationalization of the institutions. The comparability helps to improve quality standards.
3. **International cooperation and joint/exchange programmes** - essential background for joint programme development, and teachers and student mobility. Comparability provides a strong support for international cooperation in exchange programs.
4. **Benchmarking** - important for international benchmarking purposes in terms of curricula development, staff and student exchange programs, research, credit system, grading system, academic term duration, and award of degree. Changes in HEI in terms of economic globalization require comparability.
5. **Students** - the comparability of higher education standards provide a good foundation and easy way to get recognized for students in finding a job, possibility to obtain new knowledge, practical skills including independence, ability to adapt to the national environment and significant increase in the level of language proficiency while taking a study period abroad.

Question 3: Is international cooperation with other countries essential for your university? Which facts illustrate that international cooperation is essential for your university? And why is it important for your university?

PROJECT PARTNER	STATEMENT
INDIA Birla Institute of Management Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International cooperation helps in increasing the visibility, branding and recognition globally. Accreditation, as well as ranking of the institute requires international inputs such as involvement of faculty and students in exchange programmes, joint global research projects, joint global consulting projects, joint seminars etc. BIMTECH is executing it with 5 global universities including FH JOANNEUM and University of Maryland. International cooperation is a priority within the institute's vision and mission statement and started with the establishment of the international relations office in 2003. Activities engaging students to help the student in generating international perspectives, personality development, understanding of international markets, improving soft skills, working in cross cultural and virtual teams, time management, and understanding the different academic systems followed at partner universities. This in turn will help students to find an international internship and/or placement. Study needed to examine the impact on internships and final employments due to international mobility of students It is of high importance as BIMTECH is guided by their vision and pursuing international accreditation which demands a clear direction and execution strategy for this.
MEXICO EGADE Business School	<p>Tecnológico de Monterrey considers international cooperation as very important for the enrichment of its students and the prestige of the institution.</p> <p>Some events that prove this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International agreements ITESM has over a thousand agreements with institutions throughout the world, covering all regions. As a result, students learn from other cultures, have different perspectives and develop a moral sense wherever they go. And when they come back to Mexico they put into practice everything they have learned. The institution sees this international broadcasting as something that will bring value to the country and allow for further development. Relationships between national and foreign students Relationships with foreign counterparts give the opportunity to compare and learn best practices. Through a partnership, the student develops skills that can be complemented abroad. Students that come and go enrich themselves through their experiences and achieve a multicultural learning in the classroom. The more cultures there are in a classroom, the more examples and ideas each student will be transmitting to both the class and the teachers. In particular, the teacher learns to work in a multicultural classroom and develops values such as tolerance and respect. The overseas counterparts of Tecnológico de Monterrey acknowledge the follow-up given to its graduates and the management of the employability index. Entrepreneurship through the creation of new companies at local, regional or global levels and self-employment of graduates, results in the generation of wealth within the country. The responsibility of welcoming foreign students is huge. It may even be bigger than that of sending students abroad, given that when receiving students, the institution has the responsibility to serve as ambassadors representing the country, culture, business, institution, the educational model, among others.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best management practices An example of best practices is the invitation of Aalto University in Finland to Tecnológico de Monterrey to train the international affairs office in relation to international best management practices. During this event, there will be participation of partner universities or members of the Partners in Management (PIM).
NAMIBIA Polytechnic of Namibia	<p>International cooperation with other countries universities is very crucial because it helps in exposing PoN students and staff to other education and industrial systems e.g. our engineering students spent 50% of their studies (which includes exposure to experimental training) in German institutions and 50% of their time at the Polytechnic of Namibia. The credibility of the university is boosted by exchanging students and lecturers because they learn from each other's' experience. Such interactions bring improvement of quality.</p> <p>Other factors that are crucial are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint programmes development; • Benchmarking of curriculum model; • Support from international partners e.g. external moderators; • Serve on various international committees or advisory boards; • Jointed research (resulting in articles in renowned journals) and • upgrading laboratories' standards. <p>Other reasons for institutional cooperation includes: North-South and South-South cooperation for teaching; partnerships in terms of research projects and donors and accreditation by international bodies.</p> <p>It is very important because it help PoN in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint programmes/curriculum development with other universities. • Benchmarking programmes, structures, policies, systems with other international universities help PoN to improve. • Awareness of cultural sensitivity, flexibility and adaptability help our students to adjust to other international universities. <p>International cooperation gives PoN access to expertise in terms of collaboration and networking as well as financial resources. International cooperation also helps us for closing partnership agreements in terms of staff development/staff exchange.</p>
CHINA University of International Business and Economics Beijing	<p>International collaboration is of course an essential part of UIBE's strategy. Thereinafter the most essential points and comments mentioned by the participants are described:</p> <p>A. It is an essential element in the development of international cooperation between other educational institutions and UIBE. It has become more and more important in future collaboration in research, teaching, exchange programs. We are sharing with our partners designing, developing, and teaching of the courses in Master Degree Programs that strengthen our advantages in higher education of international business and economics in China. For example, EMBA with University of Marryland, the standard of the evaluation on the outcome of students' study was developed and used for the program. It improved our standards in evaluation of teaching and resulted in improvements. This is a real positive example of international cooperation at UIBE.</p> <p>B. It is essential for the enrolment of international students at UIBE. Based on those links with our global partners, we have set up a summer school with the support from the related universities in the world. Until now, UIBE has over 120 partners all over the world. They have brought teaching methods and assessment systems that lead the students and lecturers of UIBE to new concepts in teaching and learning processes.</p> <p>C. It is very helpful for UIBE to set up international double degree programs. One example is the double Bachelor degree with a French university that provides an opportunity for our students to have an experience in a different culture. This helps the students to increase</p>

	<p>their competitiveness in finding a job in China.</p> <p>D. A collaboration helps students to increase their ability in dealing with issues of different cultures and practical skills. A cooperative program with the University of Birmingham offers an opportunity for some students to enrich such experience.</p> <p>E. It promoted the reputation of UIBE in EU countries for a good position of international business and economics. The EU-China Managers Exchange and Training Program is one important example to show how essential international collaboration for UIBE is. The designing, development, implementation of the training program according to needs of EU managers showed a comparability in the related areas and as well as importance of such collaboration from our side.</p>
<p>RUSSIA</p> <p>Voronezh State University</p>	<p>International cooperation in the field of education is a major component of the effective functioning of the university, which has the potential for strengthening good neighbour relations, significantly increasing competitiveness of the university and its ranking both inside the country and abroad. International contacts positively influence the quality of education.</p> <p>One of the main goals of the VSU international activity is to develop the inter-university contacts in the framework of cooperation agreements, which are set up with HEI of foreign countries. One hundred and eighteen HEI from twenty-seven countries of the world are partners of the Voronezh State University.</p> <p>From 2010 to 2014 712 VSU students have taken an exchange semester at partner universities in Germany, France, Spain, Belgium, Austria, Ireland, Sweden, Poland, Estonia, USA, China, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus and other countries.</p> <p>More than 30 VSU students graduated from double-degree academic programs. Academic mobility of academic staff is another important component of the international activity. In 2013 more than 150 scientific and pedagogical workers participated in international conferences and implemented joint research projects.</p> <p>VSU engages guest lecturers from the leading universities outside of Russia. Yearly more than 20 lecturers come to share their knowledge with VSU students.</p> <p>Top priorities of the VSU international activities are scientific and educational cooperation, academic mobility in the framework of the international projects. In 2013 nine projects were implemented at VSU which includes Erasmus Mundus projects, Tempus projects, FP7 projects and projects of British council.</p> <p>Annually the Department of International Cooperation is carrying out staff development courses: "International scientific and educational projects for promotion of quality of education".</p> <p>The "Academic English" programme has been implemented at VSU. The programme's aim is to form a group of lecturers of all the qualifications with a competence to communicate in international environment within scientific and academic fields.</p> <p>In 2013 and 2014 representatives of Germany, France, Ireland, Israel, Canada, USA and China Embassies have visited VSU.</p>

Summary

International cooperation is essential for each of the universities.

The reasons are different, but the facts that illustrate international cooperation are as followed:

1. **Increasing visibility and ranking** – international cooperation helps in increasing the visibility, branding and recognition globally. It further helps with the international accreditation, as well as with ranking of the institute. It significantly increases competitiveness of the university.
Benchmarking programmes, structures, policies, systems with other international universities help the universities to improve their visibility and rankings.
2. **International exchange programmes, international projects, research activities, joint programmes** – involvement of faculty and students in exchange programs, joint global research projects, joint global consulting projects, joint seminars, scientific and educational cooperation, academic mobility in the framework of the international projects, development of international cooperation, international double degree programs and international agreements are essential issues when it comes to international cooperation for the partner universities.
3. **Improvement of quality** - students and lecturers learn from each other's' experience. Such interactions bring improvement of quality. Therefore, it can be said that international contacts positively influence the quality of education.
4. **Students relations** - relationships between national and foreign students bring the opportunity to compare and learn best practices from multicultural learning in the classroom, participating in foreign exchange programmes, raise the employability, students increase their ability to deal with issues of different cultures and practical skills. There is a need to create awareness of different cultural backgrounds which means that students need to learn cultural sensitivity, flexibility and adaptability to adjust to the standards at other international universities.
5. **Vision and mission statements** – international cooperation is included in the vision and mission statements, international offices are established. International cooperation has the potential for strengthening good neighbour relations.
6. **Management of the university** - is a major component of the effective functioning of the university's international relations.

Question 4: Where do you see problems and gaps in relation to different quality standards between the European Union and your own country?

PROJECT PARTNER	STATEMENT
INDIA Birla Institute of Management Technology	<p>Gaps in relation to different quality standards can be expressed in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program design, duration and work load during the program; • Pedagogy - EU is more lecture and tutorial based, BIMTECH is class discussions and case based; • Students quality is varying and comparability is difficult as in India more fresh graduates join master's program whereas in Europe students with work experience join master's program, undergraduate is similar usually; • Student intake criteria is different in different countries and in India; • Rigour by students' in academic life is different, frequency of monitoring varies; • Evaluation of learning outcome, grading system, credit system is different; • Quality of teachers, their recruitment and appraisal can differ; • Quality and focus of research is different; • Coping ability and mechanism for work pressure varies in India and the EU; • The approach used for self-management of different countries varies; • Flexible academic system has a different meaning for different persons in different countries; • English is a challenge for students from non-English speaking European nations, and local language in class or group work for Indian students. <p>There is a high number of identified gaps which are existent when comparing the EU and India. Still, both parties can minimize these gaps when collaborating with each other.</p>
MEXICO EGADE Business School	<p>There are differences between the EU (European Union) and Mexico's quality standards, and despite of the efforts that have been made in some areas, there are some that need development:</p> <p>Research. Lack of investment and knowledge development and also strengthen the impact measurement of the research made that translates to knowledge, a practice performed better in the EU. This problem is reflected in the accreditations. It is very common that recommendations are made to reinforce research, for example, recently was obtained the 5 stars in the QS ranking and part of the feedback was to improve research.</p> <p>Tutoring and mentoring. In the national standards established by CONACYT, the Public Education Ministry and undergraduate Associations, there is a required percentage of mentoring/ tutoring of students per professor that represents an important factor in the national evaluation compared to the international accreditations.</p> <p>Standardized Curves for Grading. When academic quality is measured abroad it is observed that professors' use standardized curves for grading, and it is important to consider that the curve is not biased towards high notes. In many foreign Schools this practice is mandatory. In the case of Tecnológico de Monterrey, this is not a quality measurement, nor is mandatory and/or encouraged.</p> <p>Paternalistic scheme vs self-taught. In the administrative area, Tecnológico de Monterrey has a paternalistic scheme offering a face to face tutoring in which the student is advised from academic matters up to extra issues of the school. To the foreign student all these services that the school offers – the user services centre, tutors, coordinators, and heads and academic advisers- draw their attention. This is one of the issues that the Mexican student resents, for example, when doing a virtual exchange where the work scheme is self-taught, and denotes a wide difference between the paternalistic model of Mexico and the self-taught model in Europe or North America.</p>

	<p>Another difference is that in Europe, students are self-taught and are not obligated to go to class and there is no attendance required, they just have to hand over their exams or reports. On the other hand, in Tecnológico de Monterrey study is collaborative; there are activities in the classroom that force the student to class attendance. For education in Mexico it is a great advantage to give follow up to the student and enrich them in class, this being a great disadvantage for the European schools. In contrast, if autonomy is considered as a value, this customized follow up will be a deficiency.</p>
<p>NAMIBIA</p> <p>Polytechnic of Namibia</p>	<p>Credit and notional hour requirement gaps are high. More credits at undergraduate level in Namibia compared to less credits in Europe. Europe has more credits at post graduate (Masters) level than in African universities. Flexibility of curricula composition and content is higher in Europe compared to Namibia. Similarly, the teaching load is higher in Namibia compared to Europe.</p> <p>Language barriers are most common challenge- especially in writing.</p> <p>Language barriers in terms of our students going to other universities where English is not an official language. Gaps in terms of resources and infrastructure between European and African universities. The issue of disunity among African universities compared to European universities that are well organised and united. The difference between credits and levels in the European frameworks and the ones in Namibia. The gap between student life in terms of socializing and networking. Namibian students are not exposed to other broader knowledge outside class environment.</p>
<p>CHINA</p> <p>University of International Business and Economics Beijing</p>	<p>Regarding to the problems and gaps in relation to different quality standards between EU and China, the main findings mentioned by the participants are explained thereafter:</p> <p>A. The problem is a difficulty in comparing those standards: EU's purpose is to set up a system for resource-utilization in education, but China's focus is on differentiation of the standards for different groups in order to help them to get equal opportunity for general education. The gaps in quality standards are that the Chinese standard is more principle-oriented while EU standard is more specific. The EU has made a series of rules and policies including 4 elements: students' capability, outcome of study, service to students and credit transfer system. The Chinese educational policy is now moving to the improvement of educational quality as a key task from external expansion in scale and increase of training quality.</p> <p>B. The gaps in some parts of quality standards such as the guiding principle in Chinese standards are more institutional-control-oriented with much responsibility for teachers at universities. In relation to quality standards, China has set up a Chinese language standard for international students. The quality for professional areas depends on each individual university. As western rules, a focus is on writing and reading for an academic purpose. But speaking and listening is also very important in communication. If we look at the weight of each section in language test, there would be no big difference. In education quality standards, the Chinese as a difficult language in the world is taught on a more traditional model according to the nature of the Chinese characters. We are moving to a new model as Westerners used for language training based on the needs of students.</p> <p>C. A Chinese university is still teacher-centre oriented although it is changing according to the nature of a subject. UIBE representatives found out that the biggest difficulty is that most students prefer the traditional concept of teaching (teacher-centre orientation). It is found out that the traditional teaching model still avails in the EU, but is now moving to students-centre orientation which means that the teaching plan is developed based on needs of the students. The teaching method is required to change according to the demand from students.</p> <p>D. Some gaps can be seen as follows in the quality standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University is main part in quality standards in EU while an institution is a part of

	<p>implementation in China;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A discipline is based on the reform of education quality standards while a degree program is a key element in the standard. • A capability of students is emphasized during their lifelong learning process in EU while an ability of a major study is very important at a Chinese university. • Position of students is different: The Chinese students are in a passive position while EU students are in an initiative position at a university. <p>E. The problems may be clearly seen in related areas between EU and China:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding principle for quality standards is still influenced by model of planning economy in China; • Lack of unified criteria for quality control in China; • The Chinese standards authorize more responsibility to a university which is proposed to provide education and to take a care of students while EU students are also equally considered as a subject of the quality standards. EU students have more freedom to plan and manage their study. • A heavy involvement of the government in assessment process. Assessment system for education quality is government-orientation in China while more non-governmental agencies are authorized the responsibility in EU countries.
<p>RUSSIA</p> <p>Voronezh State University</p>	<p>A significant part of the problems arises in the implementation of one of the priorities of international cooperation - implementation of joint educational programs.</p> <p>Most of the difficulties are associated with the organization of the educational process within the academic mobility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The difference in approaches to the educational process: Russian educational standards are much less taking into account out-of-classroom academic activities of students. In Russian programs greater emphasis is put on in-class activity, such as attending lectures. As a result, the average "weight" of disciplines in Russia ranges from two to three credits, which obviously is less than average five or six credits per discipline in European study programs. • The need to organize lecturing in a foreign language to be able to attract exchange students from abroad. • The difficulty of mutual recognition of grades, while there are no common criteria and national systems of assessment of student performance. • Organization of joint-degree programs (the topic includes a whole range of issues, ranging from overcoming asymmetries in academic mobility and the need to increase the attractiveness of the faculty in the eyes of foreign students to the closely related improvement of living conditions). • Different approaches to the organization of study itinerary: greater autonomy in the learning process of students at foreign universities and clearly fixed schedule for Russian students at home universities, which is defined by the deans of faculties, primarily in the interests of each of the faculties. • A complex system of examinations at universities abroad, in which students must develop a self-examination plan, determine the date of the exam and enrol for an exam in advance – this is not the case in Russia as everything is pre-fixed. • The absence of adequate legal framework for the recognition of joint diplomas. Lack of common mechanisms of development and implementation of international educational programs and assessment criteria. • Dependence on Russian universities on the federal state standards of higher education. • A diploma, issued in Russian HEI, follows a standard and obligatory form, excluding any add-ons, and the information about the completion of joint international program is excluded as well from a state-approved diploma. • Three-year undergraduate programs in some European countries that are not recognized by the Russian Federation. • Differences in conceptualization of the term "quality of education" between Russian and European universities. • Different political, social and economic realities in the countries of the partner

	<p>universities, which graduates of Russian and foreign universities have to face.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particularly noteworthy as a problem is the lack of technical equipment in Russian HEIs, complicating the full use of advanced multimedia learning tools. • Russian students often find it difficult to self-finance their study abroad even if it is only living and transportation costs (in this sense, individual grants are a rare exception); and the language barrier is also a problem.
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Summary

There are different approaches to quality standards in various countries that are specific, because they show the differences in terms of economy, social and cultural standards.

However, following similarities were identified across countries:

1. **Pedagogy** – there are huge differences between the teachers approach to the lecturing and teaching process. Some are tutorial-based, some are teachers-oriented, some have flexibility in curricula, and others are centrally managed. Still, all project partners agreed that the approach to the pedagogy process is a problem.
2. **Grading system** – and credit system varies around the globe. No global standards are set therefore the grading system was identified as one of the gaps in the educational systems.
3. **Quality and focus on research** – there are gaps in quality standards and it is reflected also in the process of accreditation.
4. **Language barriers** – the language barrier is a problem, especially with the non-English speaking countries.

Question 5: How do you handle the comparability of student exchange (incoming & outgoings) currently? Do you think that your method applied is an effective one or do you see potential for improvement?

PROJECT PARTNER	STATEMENT
INDIA Birla Institute of Management Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First it is assumed that the partner university is accredited by an agency or government which means that it is a good quality institution, so students are accepted. Incoming students do not need to do a test of admission and English as partner institution declares the nominations on the given conditions For incoming students, an orientation is organized to brief them about BIMTECH's culture and academic system and to remove any confusion For outgoing students, pedagogy and courses offered by partner institution is accepted by programme Grading system is accepted and grades converted to BIMTECH system through a method designed for EU system. For other systems, there is different method. Student quality is accepted by partners so we do not need any additional process Improvement needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to align the process of information sharing like courses to be offered or academic year planning to match with the systems with partner institutes Sometimes class teaching goes a very Indian way by professors which is not suitable for exchange students – a solution needs to be found Faculty and other staff training to handle exchange students is necessary in the future.
MEXICO EGADE Business School	<p>Agreements with institutions. Tecnológico de Monterrey makes comparisons with institutions and sign agreements with those of equal or better academic quality. If the institution is equal to or better than the Tecnológico de Monterrey academic quality standards, then students' efforts should be similar.</p> <p>Benchmarking. The academic service areas of Tecnológico de Monterrey make benchmarking with first world universities. Recently, the president and members of the board visited a recognized university to exchange their best practices. This leads to the understanding that the exchange is not only among students but also among different academic service areas.</p> <p>Educational model. Tecnológico de Monterrey students' spend more time in each course abroad and are genuinely busy and very eager in gaining experiences. However, it can be considered that the academic model has abused the student, expecting to spend most of his/her time studying. The academic model should be redefined in order to enrich the academic experience but considering the student as a person and human being, promoting their need to relate to other students. For European students, the quantities of work are considered overwhelming.</p> <p>Another difference is the ECTS credit system, the equivalent to units. Some universities do not establish a certain number of units, there are courses with 2, 4 or 6 units and/or modules rather than courses. In the current educational model, this does not exist, but the school is working on an educational model that incorporates a similar credit system in order to give the same flexibility as the universities abroad.</p> <p>In relation to professors, Tecnológico de Monterrey offers many training programmes with vanguard methodologies. This translates into distinction and competitiveness.</p> <p>Interestingly, Tecnológico de Monterrey participated in an OECD project named Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes whose aim was to know if it is achievable to compare competencies among countries. The participants included 17 countries and Mexico participated with 14 public universities and Tecnológico de Monterrey as the only private school. The school participated in three areas: economics, civil engineering and generic skills. The school was above the average in all the areas, demonstrating that it is comparable with other countries. The project is still on, and the school is willing to continue to participate in these studies.</p>

<p>NAMIBIA</p> <p>Polytechnic of Namibia</p>	<p>Students from European institutions are well funded while the students of PoN are not due to inequality in exchange rate and funding limitations. European institutions have many restrictions/requirements compared to African institutions for example health, insurance, visa permits and other restrictions. Credit transferability is possible and learning agreements are in place before students arrive or depart to the host institutions. Access to information might be a barrier for exchange students at all levels, academic and social. The current system is effective. However, synchronization of exchange programme systems and administrative procedures could be improved.</p> <p>Transfer of credit is very important for student exchange. There are several projects which deal with this transfer of credits. It is important when PoN engages with this agreement that the department must make sure that there is comparability. If there is an agreement with another university where exchange happens notice must be given in return and proof of academic record must be provided. The department needs to take care of this matter.</p> <p>The system should be streamlined in such a way that there must be forms where students can indicate the intent of credits, attach the relevant documents and go through a system. Orientation of students was reported to be effective. Incoming students are given the necessary support. Funding: PoN has a limited number of students going to other universities.</p>
<p>CHINA</p> <p>University of International Business and Economics Beijing</p>	<p>Regarding the handling of comparability of student exchange and an effectiveness of an applied method, the major comments made by the participants are described as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. An appropriate language and textbooks are selected. For a convenience of foreign students (incomings), UIBE provides courses designed and taught in English. UIBE also selects the textbooks written in English and published by international companies. Teaching hours will be adjusted to meet the requirements of international students for recognition by home university. <p>For outgoing students, UIBE collects all information about courses and majors related to theirs. Some recommendation and comments will be made for their reference. All these measures provide a guarantee for the students to sort out problems concerning the selection about the institution, the major and the courses at a host university.</p> B. Macro measures were taken in dealing with the comparability of exchange programs. They include effective communication channels at 3 levels (individual, school and university) through which UIBE's staff keeps regular contact with the students at the host and the home university. C. Some hints for study, living, and social issues are given to the students before or after their arrival at the university. All related issues are included such as credit transfer, internship, accommodation, travel and health care. D. Number of courses needed to be done by incoming students is flexible to meet the requirements from the home university for the recognition of a full semester. E. Customization of the courses is provided for a specific group (incomings). In order to strengthen a comparability of exchange students, UIBE has provided specially designed programs based on the needs of the students. EU-China Managers Exchange and Training Programs is an example of this kind. F. An assistant system was set up for solving the problems with international students. Very often some problems arise due to cultural issues. An effective communication is a good way to find out problems in time and to settle them in due time. But an improvement is still needed to be made in relation to the teaching methodology for different levels of the participants in a same group for their study.

<p>RUSSIA</p> <p>Voronezh State University</p>	<p>Regarding student exchange programmes, the compatibility of study programmes between different universities has already been successfully reached. The list of subjects to be studied varies depending on the university, but a way to transfer Russian credit ‘weights’ in ECTS has already been developed. Russian students, after consultation with the person responsible for the implementation of the programme, choose an individual academic plan for the exchange period, so that the total semester load at a partner university is approximately 25 to 30 credits. The description of the programme content allows to be more flexible taking into account the interests of Russian students while transferring the study results.</p> <p>In the context that the Russian credit system is different from ECTS, and the credits here correspond to bigger academic workload, there are always difficulties with transferring credits earned by European exchange students in ECTS and proving their actual study load.</p> <p>One of the means to establish comparability is cooperation agreements.</p> <p>As a rule, the conditions prescribed in the contracts define the practical implementation of student exchanges, indicating the duration of training, the number of exchange students per semester/year, the financial terms of the exchange and the procedure of selection of students for participation in the programme.</p> <p>As a practical step towards finding balance between different curricula and content of academic disciplines, the organization of academic mobility of faculty members of universities is helpful. The result of their internships abroad is the development of joint lectures, manuals, research projects, joint supervision over students’ thesis projects.</p>
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Summary

The comparability is mainly based on the agreements between the hosted and sending institutions. These agreements strengthen the trustiness about the quality of the students, the courses and the credits gained. Most of the incoming/outgoing students participate in some kind of assistant system that helps them to get orientation at the receiving university, or give them guidelines in choosing the right university in case of outgoing that fit their study needs.

The grading system is transferred into the university system, rather based on the agreement between the institutions, or according to various schemes.

There are variations in the funding schemes that affect the quality of the exchange programmes.

Regarding the system of education, some educational system incorporate foreign students into the existing courses, while others create special courses and studying materials for the foreign students.

Areas for improvements:

- The system of information exchange about the partner universities and possibilities of exchange programmes.
- The process of education can be modified to fulfil the needs of the foreign students.
- Synchronization of exchange programme systems and administrative procedures could be improved.

Question 6: Do you think that quality indicators such as rankings are important to students when selecting a specific university for an exchange semester?

PROJECT PARTNER	STATEMENT
INDIA Birla Institute of Management Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality indicators like ranking are important for incoming students as they have not seen the institute and ranking help them to judge on the institute where they go for an exchange semester. However, it is not an important criterion for outgoing students in the initial years of exchange but does impact student's decision making in subsequent batches. Apart from ranking and accreditation, selecting an institute is based on feedback by senior students, courses offered at partner institute, location, expenses and exchange term duration.
MEXICO EGADE Business School	<p>Rankings are indicators of interest to students, but not to all of them. Usually outgoing students are those who ask about this indicator but incoming students do not because it is given by the home school. It is assumed that the home school offers partner universities options with accreditations and rankings similar to theirs.</p> <p>The internationalization area has tutoring functions, explaining students the options they have, sharing the rankings and advising on those universities that contribute more to their education. In addition, some students with no intention to obtaining a double degree see the opportunity to be advised by the internationalization area. Other reasons for not considering the rankings are because they come to know the culture and doing business in Mexico.</p> <p>It can be said that between 30-40% of the students are interested in the rankings. If the student already has a destination in mind, he/she won't mind too much.</p> <p>Something important in choosing the exchange university has to do with branding. The positioning of Tecnológico de Monterrey is very strong thanks to all their international offices. The reputation/branding is an essential factor even more influential than the ranking and therefore EGADE Business School constantly works on improving this factor.</p>
NAMIBIA Polytechnic of Namibia	<p>Ranking is important however it is not a determining factor for the exchange programme selection. We mostly look at availability programmes, credits and MoUs (strategic selection of partners is considered).</p> <p>Quality indicators like rankings are important to students this is in terms of structures, teaching and learning when choosing a university for an exchange semester. Agreements made by exchange universities play a major role in this issue. In some cases it's more than what they will get in classes that they are looking for, so therefore it's the total experience that counts. Some students go for a particular country, particular town, particular Programme, depending on the kind of exposure that they will get and the opportunities that exist. In our case we don't have an option for students to choose for exchange semester abroad so it's about the opportunities that arises. Desperate measures sometimes forces students to go for exchange programmes. Another students can look at chains of hotel existed in certain counties so they wanted to get into that culture and there were certain subjects tailored to those cultures. So it's about the involvement of the industry in the curriculum of WIL aspect because they are dying in those needs of expertise offered by the industry. In some instances industry offers a rotational career for instance 5 years in Europe, another 5-years in USA therefore this can be a determining factor. In our case our establishments are limited in the sense that they are on a small scale. Hotel managers that existed in Namibia can't make decisions of the chains. The curriculum that we are proposing /designing now will spell out contemporary trends.</p>
CHINA University of International Business and Economics	<p>Regarding to importance of quality indicators in selection of a specific university for exchange semester, the major responses made by the participants are detailed as follows:</p> <p>A. It is not the most important for students to select a university for exchange program. The key issue should be a field of study and purpose of exchange program. A good relation</p>

<p>Beijing</p>	<p>between the cooperative partner universities and a location of the institutions are very important for exchange students. As students have different objectives for an exchange semester in addition to a consideration of credit transfer. Some of them want to enrich their experience in different cultures, history, business environment and so on.</p> <p>In China, there is no ranking for universities. Incoming students select UIBE for exchange program based on the environment of exchange programs and business areas they are interested in and provided by UIBE.</p> <p>B. The benefit from the programs is most important factor in consideration. Feedback from our outgoing students shows that the students select an educational institution for exchange semester according to their interest, living costs, social and cultural environment. Quality indicators are important, but benefit from such indicators is not clearly and easily seen for them. If they are on a degree program, a ranking may be most important to students.</p> <p>C. Nature of the program (domestic or international) is another factor for a consideration. Most students are interested in international programs because of variety of students from different countries. They can learn a lot of communication skills in dealing with different cultural issues.</p> <p>D. Qualification and background of lecturers are also important in selection of university for exchange program. An experienced and high qualified lecturer usually draws close attention from students for selection of a program.</p> <p>E. If an indicator of quality is provided for all majors or schools, it may influence a selection of a receiving institution. But it is believed that most important factors include a location, an environment, interesting subjects and language for lecturing, personal expectation from an exchange program.</p>
<p>RUSSIA</p> <p>Voronezh State University</p>	<p>Obviously, international ranking of a university has a great influence on the choice of students and their parents. However, this factor is not the only one that guides their choice. When choosing a university a student takes to consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the position of the university in national and international rankings; • duration and intensity of the university international cooperation; • opinion and reviews of other students who participated in the past in exchange programs offered by the university; • staff experience in teaching international students and number of current international students; • social and academic infrastructure; • availability of informative website; • geographic location (proximity / distance from the capital); • cost of the programme. <p>Some experts consider that ranking does not have a great influence if the university international cooperation system works properly.</p>

Summary:

The quality indicators such as rankings are important for students in the process of the university selection, but it is not a crucial indicator. It is a different opinion if the university ranking is important for incoming or outgoing students, but in general ranking is more valid for outgoing students. 30-40 % (estimated) of the students is interested in rankings.

Other factors apart from ranking:

- feedback by senior students

- courses offered at partner institute,
- location,
- expenses,
- exchange term duration,
- contribution to the field of study,
- culture,
- branding of the receiving institution,
- agreements between the universities,
- involvement in the industry,
- expertise,
- credits,
- qualified lecturers,
- accreditation,
- social and academic infrastructure.

Question 7: Where do you see the major challenges in aligning European and third country quality standards for international student mobility?

PROJECT PARTNER	STATEMENT
INDIA Birla Institute of Management Technology	<p>In India there are only broad policy guidelines for quality measurement and every institute has its own teaching and assessment standards which results in difficulty in aligning the quality standards whereas in Europe there is a comprehensive quality standard system that is uniform at most places.</p> <p>The major challenges for alignment for student mobility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality indicators of European institution not known • Quality of public and private institutions is not standardized in India and not known for Europe • There is no common standard of quality indicators in India • Different pedagogy, credit system, assessment methods for learning outcomes • No standard credit transfer system in India • Learning process depends on work culture, study culture and preparation for class by students • Transparency in assessment and evaluation • Different teaching learning process • Cultural exposure and cultural sensitivity • No single information exchange in India for higher education
MEXICO EGADE Business School	<p>One challenge is the culture. It is important to raise awareness in the student before, during and after leaving the exchange country. Incoming and outgoing student's take actions as they usually do, not understanding that mobility is precisely to learn another way of doing things. The challenge is to adapt and change, and learn from it. Accordingly, the internationalization area challenge is to develop introductory courses that teach characteristics of the country, the culture, the institution and the academic programme.</p> <p>It is a challenge to compare internationally, e.g. the rankings. When you do a ranking as the Financial Times and have an indicator such as delta (change) in increased salary, they are measuring different cultures with a British metric that do not necessarily work the same way. The challenge is to understand that a European culture is not better than other, and vice versa; the difference between the two is the best. The enrichment is in the variety and not in the standardization of everything because then the competitive advantage is lost. Context is also a big challenge. For example, the Asian culture considers the context as a focal point rather than the individual. If the West is compared to the East, the context would have much more importance and this factor is not being considered. The world's population is concentrated mostly in Asia so it would be worth understanding this challenge.</p> <p>In Latin America the challenge is the gap between public and private schools. Public schools have different mobility and funding systems. In fact, among countries of Latin America the cultural differences are abysmal and the same happens even in Mexico, where it can be seen differences in culture between the north, central and south. It is needed learning from the region.</p> <p>A major difference in the educational model is the programmes duration. In Mexico the programme duration is longer, careers last almost 5 years compared to Bologna (3 +2) scheme. In addition, the school calendar is different.</p>
NAMIBIA Polytechnic of Namibia	<p>The most challenging issue is the transferable credits- aligning the credit so that there are equivalent credit transfers for (incoming and outgoing) students. Financial issues. Cultural barriers and issues. Signatory European framework- In Africa we don't have a common framework for recognition of the qualifications. This is always challenging when you want to compare European standards with national standards in African countries, thus a welcoming result from this project would be that dialogue has started developing regional standards framework.</p> <p>There is a lack of recognition of credits across borders e.g. engineering degree from Germany are not recognized here, students in Namibia must have a master's degree to be registered for Architecture degree in Germany. Education systems do not talk to each other in terms of promoting exchange of students. Information sharing between EU universities and African</p>

	universities should be smooth. Undermining of unified and standardized standards will make work difficult with collaborating partners. Intentional discrimination, issue of visa, funding initiative and similar systems across the world (i.e. programmes, requirements, fees). High work load and inflexibility of systems at PoN were reported. In some cases too many requirements, expatriation issues and health insurances were experiences among our students going abroad.
CHINA University of International Business and Economics Beijing	<p>Regarding to major challenges in aligning European and third country quality standards for international student mobility, the major comments from the participants are describe as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. A challenge lies in development of courses in aligning EU and American quality standards. The ways they followed are different from each other. The system of course designing is also different. But their courses are outcome- oriented. It provides different ways to meet their target at different schools. B. Application of educational reform in EU and US is not effective because the Process in EU indicates willingness of the government while private agency is responsible for implementation of the unified standards. In US, involvement of the government is limited in quality standards. A application and implementation of “the outcome of study ” is on voluntary base without unified requirement. Different universities have their own model of outcome of study. This situation challenges effectiveness in application. C. The major challenges come from cultural issues and social value that is represented and shown through the way of teaching and learning. It is not difficult for students to understand the specific requirements of successful completion of a course at a host university. But it takes time to get used to learning environment where is a major source for challenges. From this feature, it is found that development and research on outcome of study is more politican-oriented in EU and revails in a region rather than the country. D. Some challenges lie in the way of learning by students because concept of receiving education is different between China and EU. The Chinese students think that teachers should provide all details of information including the answers to any questions when a student put up. Class is teacher-center oriented. When they come to a host university, they feel very challenging because they have to find all answers. E. Individual performance in class activity is another challenge. The Chinese are not used to raising many questions in class because they think that it is not polite to cut in a lecture. Most of them prefer to fill-in model of teaching and raise a question at the end of class.
RUSSIA Voronezh State University	<p>The difference in credit weight, which signifies different priorities in evaluation of in-class and independent academic activities of students;</p> <p>The language barrier, when often only some courses can be offered in English;</p> <p>The lack of state regulation in the area of other commonly acceptable standard.</p>

Major challenges identified:

1. Teaching/learning process

Different methodologies of learning are one of the major challenges. It come from cultural issues and depends on work and study culture. Some systems are outcomes oriented; some are teacher oriented (for instance Chinese students think that teachers should provide all details of information including the answers to any questions when a student put up). The individual performances in the courses are different (e.g. The Chinese are not used to raising many questions in class because they think that it is not polite to cut in a lecture).

2. Cultural differences

Culture and its nuances is a big challenge. The challenge is the ability to adapt to change and to learn from it. Also, the international exchange programmes are also about the country, culture and benefit from the differences.

3. Quality indicators

The quality indicators are not known, therefore there is a different way to meet the targets of different schools. There are no common quality indicators defined.

4. Evaluation and credit system

There are no rules of the credit transfer and the system of evaluation of the foreign students. At some institutions there is a lack of recognition of credits gain abroad.

There is also a lack of recognition of the degrees and qualifications (e.g. engineering degree from Germany are not recognized in Namibia). In Africa, for example, there is no single framework for qualification.

5. Context

is also a big challenge. For example, the Asian culture considers the context as a focal point rather than the individual. If the West is compared to the East, the context would have much more importance and this factor is not being considered. The world's population is concentrated mostly in Asia so it would be worth understanding this challenge

6. Ranking

challenge to **compare internationally**, e.g. the rankings When you do a ranking as the Financial Times and have an indicator such as delta (change) in increased salary, they are measuring different cultures with a British metric that do not necessarily work the same way

7. Programmes duration and calendar

A major difference in the educational model is the **programmes duration** (e.g. in Mexico the programme duration is longer). In addition, the **school calendars** are different.

8. Unified standards for the incoming students

Funding requirements and requirements for the national law are implied, such as visa, health insurance systems, fees, programmes requirements.

9. Gap between public and private schools

In Latin America, and India, the challenge is the **gap between public and private schools**. Public schools have different mobility and funding systems.

10. Financial issues

11. The language barrier

The selections of the English courses are often limited.

Conclusion

The focus group interviews organized by the partners in India, Mexico, Namibia, China and Russia reached its goals and brought the relevant answers to issues regarding higher education in European union and quality standards in comparison to other non-EU higher education systems.

International cooperation is a crucial and essential aspect for the higher education institutions in partner's countries. Cooperation is part of the vision and mission statements and in most cases is part of requirements for reaching accreditation criteria or the national education strategies. International cooperation is mostly based on the agreements between partner universities, which is a guarantee for the institutions of the quality of the students and courses and it gives the possibility to cooperate on the long term platform.

International cooperation helps in increasing the visibility of the institution and higher its ranking globally. In general, the international cooperation helps to increase the quality and functioning of the universities. The universities also benefits by the exchange programmes, international projects, research activities and joint programmes.

"The enrichment is in the variety and not in the standardization of everything because then the competitive advantage is lost." (Mexico)

The gaps and challenges are identified in the quality standards and comparability of the institutions. As a main challenge is the system of teaching/learning that is implied in different countries. Different types of teaching originate from various cultures, requirements, systems and quality standards. The system of evaluation and grading makes comparability is a challenging process, additionally there is a lack of recognition of the qualification. Quality standards of research are also one of the gaps between the universities.

Challenges were identified as a basis for the following discussions and possible improvements in the system. There is a strong willingness to work on the gaps and challenges to find a suitable solution and effective system of the quality standards in higher education. Moreover, the current discussions support the creation of the additional steps, in some of the institutions, to help those who implement the programmes of international cooperation at the universities (measures beyond the scope of the project).