

# Toward a New Practice of Internationalization: A Case Study on a Short-Term Study Abroad Program at European Institutions of Higher Education

Roland Schwald

Department of Business & Computer Science, Albstadt-Sigmaringen University

Anton-Guenther-Str. 51, D-72488 Sigmaringen, Germany

Tel: 49-0-7571-732-8305 E-mail: schwald@hs-albsig.de

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## Abstract

This case study describes the development of a short-term study abroad program for business students at two European universities that had previously not cooperated with each other. It explains that the two institutions of higher education first organized a joint summer school and after positively evaluating its outcome decided to continue this cooperation by organizing so-called Marketing Weeks. The Marketing Weeks would take place one semester at the institution in France and the next semester it would take place at the other institution in Germany. The participants were asked to complete questionnaires about the Marketing Weeks after each event. Based on their answers, the Marketing Weeks were adapted each time. The paper explores the positive as well as the downsides of such a business-themed short-term study abroad program. Based on the analysis of the findings, the author gives recommendations for other institutions that seek to establish similar programs.

**Keywords:** Business education, Europe, Internationalization, Short-term study abroad

## 1. Introduction

The internationalization process of - for example - German universities has been a matter of discussion for quite some time and especially so since the 1990s (Teichler, 2003). Similar can be said for universities from other countries of course.

As societies become more open in nature it is suggested that universities too should become more open and hence more international (Yang, 2002). Therefore, international education has become a significant aspect of many university curricula at institutions around the world (Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005) and the internationalization process of universities itself is an important factor with respect to the future of higher education (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). Generally speaking, the whole area of higher education has meanwhile become much more internationalized than it was still the case for example 30 years ago (Zammuto, 2008).

Internationalization of universities can have multiple implications: from offering foreign language courses to international research projects and international student, staff and faculty exchange programs. It can even mean the development of joint degree programs by universities located in different regions of the world. What all those types of internationalizations usually have in common is that they are geared toward improving intercultural intelligence and competence as well as intercultural communication skills of students and faculty. In other words: Universities are trying to cultivate an international mindset among their students and academic staff members. Shaping the mindset of people is dependent amongst other things on who interacts with whom. Being exposed to new experiences, for example short immersion experiences, can be a basis for the change in a person's mindset (Gupta, 2002).

While international experiences and knowledge potentially can be helpful for students of all fields of study, they are especially important for business students as they often work across multiple borders and cultures (Earley & Peterson, 2004) from the first day of their employment. Regardless of one's opinion on the well-known discussion between Friedman and Florida on whether the world is flat (Friedman, 2005) - that means that countries such as

India for example and their organizations are now on a (nearly) level playing field with the US, Europe, Japan and so on - or whether it is rather spiky (Florida, 2005) with economic clusters in certain areas of the world, it is safe to say that business students need to be in any case increasingly aware of the international business context. Companies have realized that they need employees with global capabilities (Pless, 2011) and they will therefore prefer graduates with international business experience because present-day managers, including early career managers, have to deal with culturally diverse workforces, with cross-national teams (real and virtual ones) and with international assignments (Härtel, 2010 and Peppas, 2008). Companies such as Daimler AG from Germany emphasize that international experiences, especially internships abroad and study abroad, are advantageous for graduates looking for employment in their company, especially for those interested in positions with an international focus (Riolo, n.d.).

One possible way to provide students an international perspective is by offering and promoting study abroad programs, for incoming as well as for outgoing students. Study abroad programs as a means to enhance student mobility can be an important way to connect young people from different countries (Rhodes, 2010).

Business students studying at one of the many universities in Europe can usually choose among many such study abroad programs. There are programs for those who want to spend one or more semesters abroad, maybe even want to get a degree at an international institution and there are other programs aimed at students who want to spend only a limited number of days or weeks in an international environment.

Especially for the last mentioned group of students, short-term study abroad programs have become popular among business students as well as students from other areas. In the United States of America for example, 45.1% of the Baccalaureate students and 62.0% of the Master students studying abroad in 2007/08 opted for short-term programs, a term that includes all programs of less than eight weeks of duration (Open Doors, 2009). Other researchers however classify short-term study abroad more broadly as student activities outside of the home country for any period less than a semester (Sanchez et al., 2010).

Among the types of short-term study programs for business and management students cited in recent research are international study tours (Weaver & Tucker, 2010 and Peppas, 2008), summer semesters abroad, and service-learning trips (Sachau et al., 2010). The components of short-term study abroad programs and courses for business administration students at institutions of higher education reportedly have included visits to companies and other organizations, cultural tours, guest speakers, social gatherings as well as pre-trip activities (Rough et al., 2002).

While there seems to be almost unanimous agreement at institutions of higher education that international aspects should be an essential part in the education of students, many business schools remain national or regional from an organizational point of view (Doh, 2010). In Germany for example, only about 10% of all university students complete at least some part of their studies abroad (Heimann, 2008). However, governments are increasingly interested that institutions of higher education send more students abroad. The US Secretary of State for example actively encourages American students to go abroad (Clinton, 2010).

Also, it is for many institutions of higher education a big question how to translate their commitment to become more international into a practical conceptual framework (Qiang, 2003). This however is very important as universities need to have a good strategy to achieve their internationalization and here especially their study abroad goals (Dunkley, 2009).

This paper will look at short-term programs abroad as one of the means for universities to promote an international mindset. Study abroad in general plays an important role today in the higher education curriculum (Norris, 2008) with short-term study abroad programs being the fastest growing form of study abroad (Mills, 2010). There are very different types of short-term programs that universities currently offer: There are for example short-term administrative, teaching and non-teaching staff exchanges between universities. In Europe they are especially popular among the universities that have signed the so-called ERASMUS charter, which basically constitutes a European Union framework for cooperation among higher education institutions. In the academic year 2008/2009 more than 36.000 people have taken advantage of the ERASMUS staff mobility program for example (ERASMUS, 2010). However, research suggests that more opportunities for international exchange for educators are needed (Cook, 2009).

Language courses abroad are another classical example for a short-term study abroad program. They are offered year-round and – unlike the ERASMUS exchange programs for faculty and staff – they are mostly geared toward students. A student interested in improving his or her language skills can choose among a variety of courses in Europe and other parts of the world. However, language learning doesn't occur inevitably just because someone is taking a course outside his or her home country for a week or two and it is unclear whether short-term foreign

language studies abroad lead to lasting linguistic benefits for the participants (Allen, 2010).

Another classical type of short-term program is the so-called summer school. Summer schools are offered for teaching and also for non-teaching academic staff as well as for students, usually graduate students. There are various types of summer schools / summer universities that however I will not further elaborate on in this paper.

For this specific study, I will not look at one of the just described classical short-term exchange programs but at a more recent phenomenon: The development of a short-term study abroad program in the business area in the form of a cooperation of two international, in this case European, universities with a general international mindset that have the intention of exploring new practices of internationalization.

## **2. Research Method**

This is a largely exploratory research paper, in essence mainly a case study. Often, the authors of case studies tend to favor qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Though some statistical data was captured during the research project, the majority of the findings are based on qualitative data gathered through observation as well as some semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

To put this research project in perspective: This case study presents the first phase of a broader research study on the internationalization of business schools in Europe. To better understand the study conducted I will in the following discuss the research setting that describes the background of the study, followed by the research goals and the research tools used.

### *2.1 Literature review*

A review of grade three classified journals on management development and education (ABS, 2010) for the last five years was performed (Note 1). Also, the abstracts of articles in the Journal of Studies in International Education (which had dedicated their November 2010 issue to study abroad programs) and in the Frontiers journal for the same time period was scanned to see what previous studies on short-term study abroad programs had been performed so far. Articles with keywords like education cooperation, study abroad and similar were searched for.

As other scholars have found out before me already, articles about management issues in the international education sector in business related journals are rare as only little research has been done so far in this area (Härtel, 2010). It is even harder to find articles in grade three or higher business journals about study abroad programs. A possible explanation could be that the major academic journals on business and management education are US centric (i.e., a large part of the authors, editors and readers are from the US) but that short-term business study abroad programs perhaps make – comparatively – less sense for US colleges and universities than they do possibly for those in Europe or Asia for example.

There are plenty of articles on the internationalization of universities in general (see for example Bennett, 2011 or Ching, 2012 or Burnett, 2009) so are articles on study exchange in general. However, articles on short-term exchange programs are scarce, though there are some publications. One article for example describes a short-term immersion program in the South Pacific (Tarrant, 2009). Another author describes a two-week student and faculty exchange program between a North American and a Korean university (DeLong, 2011) although that project took place in the design and fine arts departments of the two universities involved and not in the business administration departments as described here. Mills describes in her paper (Mills et al, 2010) a three week study abroad program in Quebec City, Canada which was organized by a local university and where students from other countries were invited to participate.

### *2.2 Research setting*

One of the two primarily involved organizations in this study is a French higher education institution, a so-called “Ecole de Commerce” from a large urban area, and the other organization is the business administration department of a smaller state university in rural Germany. The two European universities had not previously cooperated or worked together on any project so far. However, there had been some pre-existing personal contacts between members of the two universities involved. Both organizations were interested in exploring new practices of international cooperation with a university from its respective neighboring country. As France and Germany have politically and economically strong ties it can be safely argued that a cooperation of institutions from both countries makes particular sense.

Based on the already pre-existing contacts, the first phase of the cooperation, the initiating phase (see figures 1 and 2), had been planned and put into place in the spring of 2009. This initiating phase consisted of a summer school type of event. This week-long program, which was called “European Academy of Business and Science” (EABS),

took mainly place in a conference center in a small village near the Franco-German border. The program was organized jointly by the two universities involved as well as a non-profit organization that teaches and does research on the European integration process. The EABS took place outside of the regular curriculum of the two institutions. The participating students volunteered to take part. Because of available funding, the participating students received free travel to the event's location and were paid all accommodation costs.

Participants of the summer school were students ( $n = 21$ ) from France and Germany as well as lecturers, researchers and faculty members responsible for the development of international activities at their respective institution. One goal of this event was to see whether there was enough common ground for further collaboration between the two universities.

The two universities had agreed beforehand that both institutions could send ten to twelve students to this event. While the French university selected their students largely based on German language skills, the German business students were selected based on English and French language skills as well as a letter of motivation.

The main theme of the EABS was the internationalization process of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the border region of Germany, Luxembourg, and France. Several company visits and presentations from local politicians and speakers from some regional associations helped to better understand the internationalization process of SMEs located in European border regions. The research findings were presented on the final day of the event and were later included in a scientific publication on that topic.

### *2.3 Research goals*

From the point of view of the researcher involved in the project, it was intended to not only support the students' research projects of this cooperation (as was the case with the main topic of the EABS, the internationalization of SMEs in European border regions) but to also investigate how this cooperation would develop over time. Therefore, the author of this paper was involved not only with the development of the cooperation itself, especially after the main promoter and project manager had left the project, but also with the analysis of the cooperation from a scholarly point of view. The main purpose of the research project was to examine the determinants of success of that specific cooperation and trying to deduct from that some generalized recommendations for similar projects, especially short-term study abroad programs with a business theme at European higher education institutions.

### *2.4 Research tools*

It was one goal from the beginning of the project to continue and extend this cooperation only if the main parties involved, particularly the students, would go along and support it. Therefore the behavior of the two groups of students during the course of the EABS was observed. The attention here was particularly directed toward communication and teamwork between the French and the German students during group work. That means it was observed for example if and if so how much more the French students communicated with their fellow French students and the same for the German students, whether there were any frictions visible between the two main groups and whether the students in general seemed to be able and willing to productively work together.

To collect the opinion of the participants more systematically, a questionnaire was prepared to analyze the outcome of the EABS, the first joint event. The questionnaire, which was prepared by the non-profit organization that facilitated and supported the EABS was handed out at the end of the event and had to be completed by the participants (students and academic staff). In addition to the questionnaire, upon return from the EABS the participants were asked during largely unstructured interviews whether they could imagine attending a purely business-themed, also just one week long program at the respectively other university.

During the subsequent joint events, a similar data collection process took place, i.e. the students had to answer questions in a questionnaire, first using an online survey tool called "inquiry", later on a similar tool called "2ask". In addition to that, some of the students were also interviewed after the events.

## **3. Results**

By judging from the questionnaires that the majority of the participants of the EABS returned at the end of the week, it became clear that the respondents wanted to continue this cooperation. Also, the observation of the interaction between the student groups showed positive results, i.e., communication inside and between the groups was good and the mixed teams worked well or even very well together.

Thereafter, the next part of the cooperation was arranged: Students from the German institution were invited to take part in an English language, week-long seminar on marketing at the French institution. This marketing themed short-term study abroad program lasted a bit over a week and was titled "International Marketing Week".

In spring 2010, several business students from the German university were selected to take part in the Marketing Week at the French university. Together with their French co-students they listened to lectures by different local professors and at the end of the seminar they had to work on an international marketing case study with a final presentation on the last day of the event. The German students were awarded a certificate of participation as well as 3 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) points. ECTS in essence is the European equivalent of the credit systems at US institutions.

To keep travel and accommodation expenses at a minimum but also to gain insight into the daily lives of the French students, it was arranged that almost all German students could stay with students from the French host university. One result of this was that even months after the short-term exchange program officially ended, participants stayed in contact with each other by writing email messages and calling each other. Social media like Facebook also helped to maintain contact after the end of the International Marketing Week in France.

The students were interviewed after their return and the outcome was in general very positive. After this again successful event, it was jointly agreed upon to install this Marketing Week on a mutual basis, i.e., in spring of every year the event should take place at the French institution and in fall it would take place at the German university. The main theme of the event in France was "Services Marketing" while the Marketing Week in Germany had "Marketing Communication" as its main theme. It was also agreed upon that not only students should be included in this exchange but that there should also be at least one faculty member from the respective other university doing some teaching work.

The Marketing Week which took place in October of 2010 in Germany was a mandatory seminar for the local students ( $n = 21$ ) in the 7<sup>th</sup> semester of the Bachelor of Business Administration Program. The French university sent nine students to the Marketing Week, selected primarily based on their German language skills. This International Marketing Week started with an introduction on Thursday of the first week and lasted until Friday of the following week. It was therefore slightly longer in duration than the similar course at the French institution. The French students all could stay with German students at their apartments and thus were fully integrated into the student life of their German counterparts. On Saturday an optional visit to an automobile museum and a local festival was arranged. Sunday was a day off for the French students which they used amongst other things to do some sightseeing.

On one of the seminar days a professor from the French university was lecturing at the event in Germany. The Marketing Week thus became not only a platform for student exchange but also for the short-term exchange of faculty members of the two institutions. On yet another day the whole Franco-German group was visiting several companies in the region around the university.

With regards to content, the last day of the seminar was reserved for a comprehensive case study presentation. The French students received 3 ECTS points for their successful participation in the program in Germany.

The first Marketing Week at the German institution was a success based on returned questionnaires about the seminar as well as discussions with the participants and observations during the event. One of the lecturers pointed out that both student groups for example would now better understand the different problem-solving methods of French and German students.

Table 1 gives an overview of the so far held joint short-term study abroad programs.

As mentioned before, the participants were asked to complete questionnaires after the events. The composition of the questions changed over time but there were several questions that were asked after all the events, including the basic question whether the participating students in fact enjoyed the Marketing Weeks (see table 2). The finding here is that the majority of students liked their respective Marketing Week. An interesting observation is that the students traveling to the other university always liked the event, while the students who experienced the Marketing Weeks at their home university were slightly less enthusiastic. Unfortunately, for the events in France there are no data for the local students available yet. From anecdotal evidence one can conclude however that they too liked the event. To what degree however is somewhat unclear.

Another question that was always asked was whether the participants thought if the length of the program was fine or not. The results (see table 3) show that the majority of the students thought that the length was fine. An exception to this was the first event at the university in Germany, where none of the French students agreed that the length was right. Seven of the nine French students answered that the program was too long while two said it was too short. As they have stayed in Germany for almost eight full days – from Friday to Friday – with basically a full agenda the whole eight days, it was decided to shorten the program somewhat. Therefore, at the next event in

Germany, the French students arrived on Sunday and left on Saturday of the next week. All French students then said that the length was OK.

A third of the German students that were asked after the last event in March 2012 said that the program in France was too short while the other two thirds said it was OK. One lesson learned from that data was that the program should be designed to fit one week with the option to stay longer (or of course arrive earlier) for sightseeing and similar activities. But the organized core program itself should last five to a maximum of six days.

Questions with respect to improvements in intercultural competence including communication skills in an international context were largely answered positive. That means that the students felt that those short-term programs have improved their relevant skills in that area. This is in line with other studies that found that students that take part in study abroad programs improve their communication skills (Orahood, 2004) and that they also gain interpersonal skills because they have to communicate with people from different cultures (Orahood, 2008).

However, there are some issues with this finding: The analysis is based on self-evaluations of the students. There is a chance that the students gave “politically correct” replies instead of realistic answers. For example, talking to some of the German students revealed that there is still a misunderstanding of cultural differences. When some were asked about how they evaluated the organization in general of the French edition of the Marketing Week, several German students grumbled about a perceived lack of planning on the French side. This could for instance indicate that the students didn’t yet understand differences in the way people from both sides organize projects and events like these. French students that I interviewed while they were attending the German edition of the Marketing Week pointed out for example that they were surprised about the rigor – and length – of the lectures.

Another point that has to be mentioned is that the majority of German students (60%) at the Marketing Week in October 2011 said that this week had not improved their cultural sensitivity. One possible explanation for this could be that there were more German than French students present so that not every German student had the opportunity to become more familiar with a French guest student.

Closely related to communication skills are the language skills. The joint events were conducted almost exclusively in English. The students were asked whether their language skills in general had been sufficient to successfully take part in the event. The vast majority of the students who answered to this question said yes, as they thought their language skills were sufficient. After the March 2011 Marketing Week, the German students were asked if they thought whether an intensive French language course prior to the event in France would have improved their experience. The majority (80%) answered that this would possibly have made a positive or a very positive impact. One of the German students who went to France in March 2012 said that during the lectures it was not necessary to speak French “but in the group work it is better to speak French, the reason is that a lot of French students prefer to speak French not English.” Another German student who was asked how useful he or she would consider French language skills for the event in France said that this was not important: “The English language is enough”. Yet another student found that “French language skills are not needed for the [Marketing Week] but it is a good thing to have at least knowledge of some basic words ...”

#### **4. Discussion**

Short-term study abroad programs such as those in the format described here are appealing to students and institutions of higher education for several reasons. Foremost, knowledge about how to deal with people from other national backgrounds and cultures can be an important asset for recent business school graduates. Study abroad programs including short-term study abroad programs therefore have become a regular feature at many business schools and business administration departments at universities worldwide.

Also, they are less expensive than full study abroad programs. There are several reasons for this. Short-term study abroad programs of the type described in this paper mainly make sense if travel time is not too long. Usually, travel time is positively correlated in some way with travel cost. For a relatively short distance like between two western European countries, travel by train is often possible and relatively inexpensive for students. Also, since it is easier to find a place with a host student for just a couple of days rather than for a whole semester, the accommodation cost can be very low or even zero if a host student is willing to offer his or her apartment to a guest student for the duration of the event. Therefore, for financially less fortunate students this type of study abroad program seems to be especially suited.

Another advantage of this type of study abroad program versus full study abroad programs is that it doesn’t disrupt much the regular study program, i.e., the students from the sending as well as the receiving university continue with their regular classes without much of a disruption. This is possible since these types of programs only take a

bit more than a week and also because it is often possible to schedule them so that they begin shortly before regular classes start.

As many students have steady partners and don't want to leave them behind for a whole semester or longer, these short-term study abroad programs can be an attractive alternative for these students. Similarly, many students have sideline jobs that they need in order to finance their studies. Being away for only a couple of weeks or even just some days they usually don't lose these jobs and therefore can better finance their business studies (Mills et al, 2010).

Though student exchanges with universities from neighboring countries are not as exotic or unusual for the participants as exchanges with universities from culturally and geographically very distant places, they actually do help students to make international experiences and broaden their horizon (Teichler, 2003). So, even a short-term program helps students in their own internationalization efforts.

As the Marketing Week in Germany was only one part of a complete course module, the German students had to continue this course without their French co-students for the remainder of the semester. According to the lecturer in charge of that course, the academic performance of those local students was significantly better than that of students who took the same course in previous semesters but without any French co-students. He unambiguously traces that back to the Marketing Week that took place at the beginning of the semester.

According to some analysts, the majority of students, at least in Europe, think that studying in another country, even if only for a short period of time, is a sensible thing to do (Teichler, 2009). Business students will get insights in different management practices for example.

There are also some limitations to the short-term study abroad concept described in this paper.

For the one week short-term study abroad program described in this paper it was impossible to award the full credit points that a student would normally get for taking a full course. As a consequence, the participants do have to take a complementary course at their own institution in order to gain the required credit points.

Another disadvantage compared to full study abroad programs is that – naturally – a student living for only a very short amount of time in a foreign country, even if he or she is fully integrated into student life, will not be able to immerse himself or herself to such a degree in a different culture as would be the case for students going abroad for one full semester or more.

In the case described, to accommodate the incoming French students, the German university had to adapt the relevant courses so that they would fit the program. That means for example, changing the language of instruction, the structure and flow of the course and so on. This additional work might stop faculty members generally interested in organizing such a program from actually doing so.

Also, it took a relatively high amount of effort to achieve positive results due to the short-term character of the event itself and the comparatively high preparation time.

Of course it is very difficult to say whether by participating in one or more such short-term programs the business students later on really become considerably "better" business managers due to those programs.

Also, the lack of integration of courses and curricula was a challenge. Both institutions have very different courses and curricula. It was a challenge integrating the seminars into the regular courses offered at both institutions, though in the end this challenge was mastered by including all necessary stakeholders at an early stage of the program's development.

## **5. Limitations of the Study**

In this paper I have described an approach to develop a business-themed short-term study abroad program for a smaller university. Since this paper is based on an actual case study this was not so much about statistics and numbers but more on the content side of short-term study programs. Very limited statistical analysis was applied by means of evaluating self-report questionnaires to assess the joint international events described in this paper. A major limitation is that the sample size was relatively small.

In addition to that, the results of this study may not necessarily be generalized beyond the specific context described in the case study. More research is needed to confirm that the findings can be transferred to other contexts, i.e., to short-term study abroad programs at different institutions in a different setting, e.g. in different countries and regions of the world. Also, the case study was limited to one program type only. Additional research insight could potentially be obtained by analyzing and comparing other program types as well.

Another point one has to bear in mind is that this research on a short-term study abroad program in Europe could not really measure its impact on the student's personal and intellectual development. It remains unclear up to what point short-term study abroad programs can keep up with the benefits of full-term programs. Some researchers have pointed out that students who spent a full year abroad have benefited more from those programs than students who went abroad for summer terms only (Dwyer, 2004 and Kehl, 2008). However, other North American scholars have recently pointed out that students who went abroad on a short-term program benefited from those programs due to the first-time effect they had experienced (McKeown, 2009). However, in Europe many students already had previous travel abroad experience, e.g. as exchange students during high school (Levinson, 2006). It is uncertain if they will benefit to the same degree from this first-time effect.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings above and the general experiences of the author with this project, there are a couple of recommendations one can make.

Short-term study abroad perhaps makes particularly sense for institutions within some geographical proximity. If one considers Asia for example, collaborations of universities from the Philippines and Japan or Thailand and the Greater Mekong Sub-region could potentially work well. In Latin America, universities from Argentina and Brazil could potentially successfully work together for example.

An essential component that may even decide the outcome of a specific cooperation alone is communication. The persons organizing the exchange programs must be able to - at the very least - effectively communicate with each other. Also, a culture of internationalization that is present at the institutions involved will most likely enhance the intercultural learning objectives. Any collaboration with international partner universities based solely on technical grounds will per se not be as fruitful from an intercultural point of view as those where a culture of learning in an international context is present.

On the other hand, to focus only on the intercultural side of such short-term study abroad programs would mean to neglect an essential fact: Apart from gaining insight into other cultures and customs, students interviewed during the Marketing Weeks mentioned that they wanted to increase their understanding of the subject they were studying, in that case marketing. Therefore, the content of such programs must also be carefully selected and, if necessary, adapted.

When it comes to the start and end dates of semesters as well as the exam periods, universities from different countries can differ greatly. It has proven to be a challenge to schedule the Marketing Weeks so that they would fit the basic time requirements of the two institutions involved. In particular, it appears to be advisable to schedule that type of programs so that they don't interfere with the main exam periods of the other institution, i.e., they should be set at times of low exam activity.

As students are often short of cash, it is commendable to do everything from an organizational point of view to keep expenses for the students at a minimum. If possible, financial assistance from organizations and charitable trusts should be sought.

And finally, as not everything might work perfectly from the outset of such an international cooperation, it is important to be patient.

Other success factors are: the levels of the courses should be very similar (Brodin, 2010), student selection is important, support from the dean of studies should be sought, a clear definition of the role of the instructors is needed, a quality management system to ensure the quality of provision should be activated, and the standards for granting ECTS points to students of the other university should also be set. And, finally, it has proven helpful to include extra-academic program points to make the event more interesting and fun and to help in the bonding process of students from the universities involved.

## 7. Conclusion

My aim was to contribute to the field of education research by exploring a business-themed short-term study abroad program at two European universities.

The special focus in this paper was on the conceptual and practical development of a joint short-term student exchange program for business administration students involving two European universities, one from Germany the other from France.

It has described a phased cooperation approach that starts with a week-long event similar to classic summer schools. After the success of that event a series of one week study abroad programs, alternatively held one semester at a French university, the other at a German university, took place. The paper described the benefits of



that type of short-term study abroad programs and their drawbacks, especially compared to traditional full semester study abroad programs. Finally, suggestions regarding several design elements of that type of short-term study abroad programs for business students as well as recommendations for further research directions were given.

The paper also presented one viable model to develop a short-term study abroad program. It also intended to shed some light on the labor-intensive processes often necessary to initiate such exchange programs and therefore the paper can be particularly useful for higher education staff members running such programs.

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### Note

Note 1. The grade three classified journals scanned for the literature review were: a. Academy of Management, Learning and Education, b. Management Learning, c. Studies in Higher Education, and d. British Educational Research Journal.

Table 1. Sequence of the joint short-term study abroad programs offered

Month and year	Location	Type of event
April 2009	Franco – German region	Summer school
March 2010	France	Marketing Week
October 2010	Germany	Marketing Week
March 2011	France	Marketing Week
October 2011	Germany	Marketing Week
March 2012	France	Marketing Week

The table above shows that the location for the short-term study abroad programs alternated between Germany and France.

Table 2. Attractiveness of the Marketing Weeks for the participating students

Responses	October 2010	March 2011	October 2011	March 2012
	Germany	France	Germany	France
% of German participants who liked the event	77%	80%	80%	100%
N <sub>CG</sub> (number of German participants who completed the questionnaire)	21	5	5	6
N <sub>TG</sub> (total number of German participants)	21	5	8	12
% of French participants who liked the event	100%	N/A	100%	N/A
N <sub>CF</sub> (number of French participants who completed the questionnaire)	100%	N/A	100%	N/A
N <sub>TF</sub> (total number of French participants)	9	N/A	3	N/A

As we can deduce from above, the majority of the participants liked their Marketing Week.

Table 3. Participating students' opinion regarding the length of the Marketing Week

	October 2010 Germany	March 2011 France	October 2011 Germany	March 2012 France
% of German participants who agreed that the length was OK	71%	80%	60%	66%
N <sub>CG</sub> (number of German participants who completed the questionnaire)	21	5	5	6
N <sub>TG</sub> (total number of German participants)	21	5	8	12
% of French participants who agreed that length was OK	0%	N/A	100%	N/A
N <sub>CF</sub> (number of French participants who completed the questionnaire)	100%	N/A	100%	N/A
N <sub>TF</sub> (total number of French participants)	9	N/A	3	N/A

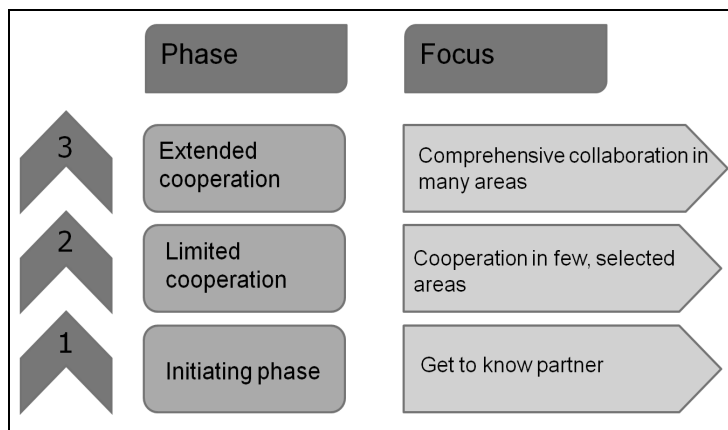


Figure 1. Phased cooperation approach between universities

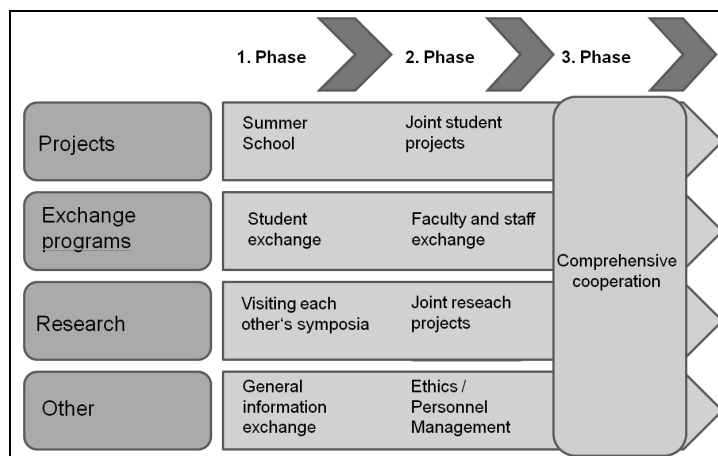


Figure 2. Examples for collaboration activities in different phases of cooperation