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## Internationalization in school

*How can internationalization be facilitated in the school context based on experiences from collaboration with China in Denmark?*

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# **INTERNATIONALIZATION IN SCHOOLS**

HOW CAN INTERNATIONALIZATION BE FACILITATED IN  
THE SCHOOL CONTEXT BASED ON EXPERIENCES FROM  
COLLABORATION WITH CHINA IN DENMARK?

**BY**  
**ULLA EGIDIUSSEN EGEKVIST**

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED 2018



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**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
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## CV

Ulla Egdiussen Egekvist received her MA in Learning and Innovative Change from Aalborg University, Denmark, and her BA in Cultural Encounters and Middle Eastern Studies from Roskilde University, Denmark. As parts of her BA degree she spent a semester at Flinders University, Australia, and a semester at the University of Southern Denmark, Denmark. While writing her MA thesis she was employed as a student assistant at the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University. As part of her work, Ulla played a significant role in initiating China-related activities in primary and lower secondary schools in Aalborg Municipality. This became the starting point for her PhD research. In the last six years, she has published several book chapters and journal articles. Furthermore, since 2016 she has worked more practically with internationalization and learning initiatives at SEA (Supporting Entrepreneurship at Aalborg University) as a project manager of an EU Interreg project “Science for Society”.





# ENGLISH SUMMARY

The overall aim of this PhD study is to contribute to research into internationalization of education by developing an understanding of the particularities at the school level that can be used as a foundation for discussing internationalization efforts in the school education context in the future. More specifically, the aim is to explore internationalization in the Danish school context that involves China-related activities organized by the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University. The aims are to explore these activities from the perspectives of leaders, organizers, and students, and to use this as a point of departure for discussions on how to facilitate a process of internationalization in the school context. Based on this, the following main research question has been reached:

How can internationalization be facilitated in the school context, based on experiences from collaboration with China in Denmark?

In order to answer this main research question, the following two sub-questions related to the student level and leader level, respectively, have been explored through empirical studies.

- 1) How can internationalization in schools be facilitated through facilitating students' development of intercultural competence?
- 2) What are the possibilities and challenges of facilitating school leaders' international experiences for the purpose of educational internationalization?

Theoretically, this study draws on theories and research related to learning, culture, internationalization of education, and educational leadership. Empirically, a qualitative approach was employed to collect material from two research sites: A school leader delegation visit to Beijing and a short-term study visit by Chinese students to Gug School in Denmark. Multiple methods were employed in the gathering of empirical material, including focus group interviews, participant observations, qualitative questionnaires, video, individual interviews, and portfolios.

At the student level, the study argues for facilitating internationalization in schools through a facilitation of students' development of intercultural competence in international activities by taking into account both descriptive and complex understandings of culture; ensuring student participation in meaningful learning activities; focusing on experience and reflection as an important part of the learning process; focusing on the dimensions of intercultural competence; emphasizing that intercultural learning is not necessarily easy; and taking into account that all communication is intercultural.

At the leader level, the study argues for a facilitation of leaders' international experience as part of an internationalization process at the school level. The possibilities hereof are related to leaders' participation in meaningful activities, which provides a foundation for learning through experience and reflection. The challenges are related to the realization of leaders' ideas of internationalization within the fields of engagement of teachers as well as financial and policy support.

Furthermore, the study argues for a facilitation of internationalization in schools that takes into account the particularities of the school context and creates the right context for facilitating students' learning and the development of intercultural competence, focuses on why we educate and letting this guide all endeavors in schools, and takes into account that internationalization is a learning process at all levels for all individuals involved.

The study contributes to new perspectives on the internationalization of education in the school context and concludes that more attention should be paid to internationalization in the school context through a focus on quality and why we educate, to the facilitation of students' intercultural learning in internationalization at home activities, and to the importance of leaders for a successful implementation of internationalization.

# DANSK RESUME

Det overordnede formål med dette ph.d.-studie er at bidrage til forskning inden for internationalisering af uddannelse ved at udvikle en forståelse af de særlige forhold, der gør sig gældende inden for grundskoleområdet, der kan bruges som grundlag for at drøfte den fremtidige internationaliseringsindsats i grundskolen. Mere specifikt er formålet at udforske internationalisering i dansk grundskoleregi, der involverer Kina-relaterede aktiviteter iværksat af Confucius Institutet for Innovation og Læring på Aalborg Universitet. Hensigten er at udforske disse aktiviteter ud fra hhv. ledernes, arrangørernes og elevernes perspektiver og bruge dette som udgangspunkt for drøftelser om, hvordan en internationaliseringsproces kan faciliteres i grundskoleregi. Dette har ført frem til følgende overordnede problemformulering:

Hvordan kan internationalisering faciliteres i grundskoleregi baseret på erfaringer fra samarbejde med Kina i Danmark?

For at finde svar på denne overordnede problemformulering er følgende to underspørgsmål blevet undersøgt gennem empiriske undersøgelser.

- 1) Hvordan kan internationalisering faciliteres i grundskoleregi gennem facilitering af elevers udvikling af interkulturelle kompetencer?
- 2) Hvad er mulighederne og udfordringerne ved at facilitere skolelederens internationale erfaringer som et led i internationalisering i uddannelsesregi?

Teoretisk set bygger afhandlingen på teorier og forskning inden for læring, kultur, ledelse og internationalisering af uddannelse. Empirisk er der anvendt en kvalitativ tilgang til at indsamle materiale fra to forskningskontekster: Et besøg i Beijing af en skolelederdelegation og et kortvarigt besøg af kinesiske elever på Gug skole i Danmark. Der er anvendt flere metoder til indsamling af empirisk materiale, herunder fokusgruppeinterviews, kvalitative spørgeskemaer, video, individuelle interviews, deltagerobservationer og portfolio.

Afhandlingen argumenterer for at facilitere elevernes udvikling af interkulturel kompetence ved at tage hensyn til både deskriptive og komplekse kulturforståelser, at sikre elevdeltagelse i meningsfulde læringsaktiviteter, at fokusere på erfaring og refleksion som en vigtig del af læringsprocessen med fokus på den interkulturelle kompetences dimensioner, at fremhæve at interkulturel læring ikke nødvendigvis er let samt at tage hensyn til, at al kommunikation i bund og grund er interkulturel.

Desuden argumenterer afhandlingen for at facilitere ledernes internationale erfaring som et led i en internationaliseringsproces i grundskolen ved at sikre deltagelse i

meningsfulde aktiviteter, der danner grundlag for at lære gennem erfaring og refleksion. Der argumenteres for udfordringer i forbindelse med realiseringen af ledernes ideer om internationalisering ift. engagement af lærere samt finansiel og politisk støtte.

På baggrund af erfaringer fra samarbejdet med Kina i Danmark argumenterer afhandlingen også for en facilitering af internationalisering i skolekontekster, der tager højde for: Særlige forhold ved skolekonteksten, at skabe den rigtige kontekst for at facilitere elevernes læring og udvikling af interkulturel kompetence, at fokusere på, hvorfor vi uddanner og lader dette guide alle bestræbelser på skolerne samt at tage højde for, at internationalisering er en læringsproces på alle niveauer for alle involverede personer.

Afhandlingen bidrager med nye perspektiver på internationalisering i en skolekontekst og konkluderer bl.a. at der bør lægges mere vægt på internationalisering i skolekontekster gennem fokus på kvalitet og hvorfor vi uddanner, være større opmærksomhed på at facilitere elevernes interkulturelle læring gennem '*internationalization at home*'-aktiviteter og på lederes betydning for succesfuld implementering af internationalisering.

# BACKDROPS OF THIS PHD JOURNEY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As a child, I dreamt of becoming the first astronaut to set foot on Mars! The combination of adventure and natural sciences seemed like the perfect cocktail to me. I loved to experience new things, gaze at the stars through my telescope and wonder who or what was out there, and learn about what the universe is made of.

I never became an astronaut, but as a teenager I did go on a 7-month adventure to Australia as an exchange student, and in some ways, it felt like landing on another planet. I recall learning about the U-Curve Model of Intercultural Adjustment (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1962, cited in Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009:23) during my stay abroad. The organizers explained to me how I would go through certain phases during my stay and while there would be challenges along the way, in the end I would overcome, accept, and be happy about it. For me, the reality of my intercultural experiences and adaptation process felt more complicated, and in the years following I often reflected on my experiences. Later, I went on short-term student exchanges during upper secondary school to France and Scotland, respectively, and as part of my BA studies, I returned to Australia to study for a semester. It only added to my interest in understanding what happens when people with different cultural backgrounds meet, and what the possibilities and challenges of internationalization of education are.

In 2009, as a graduate student in Denmark, I established cooperative endeavours with the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University (CIAAU). Although my knowledge of China was very limited, I joined the CIAAU in its efforts to promote interest in Chinese language and culture in the North Denmark region. As I learned more about the international work in the local schools and municipalities, I became increasingly interested in the possibilities and challenges related to the CIAAU's activities in relation to internationalization efforts at the school level. This became the point of departure for my PhD journey.

Hence, this PhD study is strongly based on a professional interest in understanding internationalization of education, intercultural encounters, and intercultural competence in general. Simultaneously, it is driven by a personal interest of developing a more comprehensive understanding of my own lived experiences abroad. Thus, it is taking a step back and looking at internationalization of education, not from a student, but from a research perspective – and hereby discovering ways, in an educational context, to contribute to peaceful and meaningful cooperation for human beings, in both the present and the future.

This PhD journey has been a period of intense learning for me, not only academically, but also personally. Many people have played an important role in my life during this PhD study, and I hereby express my deepest gratitude,

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To the school leaders, teachers, and students who so generously gave me access to their ideas and experiences. Special thanks to the school leaders, teachers, and students at Gug School for their support and engagement in the Chinese language and culture activities as well as their willingness to engage in research activities.

To my former host family in Australia, who provided me with experiences as a teenager that generated my initial research interest in internationalization of education and intercultural encounters.

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# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the theoretical background of and motivation for this PhD study. With this as a point of departure, the research objectives and questions are presented along with a brief description of the news value of the study as viewed from the beginning of the research process. Furthermore, in order to facilitate the reading of this thesis, the structure is outlined and the papers included are briefly presented.

## 1.1. RESPONDING TO GLOBALIZATION

Globalization has been widely debated in recent decades, and it is commonly agreed that globalization offers possibilities for nations and societies around world, for example through increased cross-border communication and cooperation. Concurrently, globalization challenges the abilities of nations, institutions, and individuals to respond appropriately to the changes it brings for society at present as well as those it will bring in the future. The question becomes how to deal with this challenge, which provides a central position to the education system and its general aim of providing individuals with the competences needed for today and tomorrow.

Within the education systems around the world, a response to globalization is the internationalization of education (Killick, 2011). In general terms, internationalization of education involves a reinvention of the education system based on the effects of globalization and includes a change from a national to a global-oriented thinking within the education system. It is a phenomenon influenced by various discourses, from a market-oriented thinking concerned with, for example, institutional profit gain and the education of a future workforce capable of providing economic growth of the nation, to a more humanistic thinking concerned with aspects such as peaceful human co-existence on the globe and cross-border collaboration (Dvir & Yemini, 2017). Moreover, it is a complex phenomenon that covers elements such as: International competition, English as lingua franca, international networking, education for global engagement, and mobility of students, teachers, and educational leaders (Deardorff, Wit, Heyl, & Adams, 2012).

Predominantly, higher education (HE) institutions worldwide have been actively engaged in the process of internationalization. During the 1980s, the international dimension in HE went from being incidental and individual to involving organized activities by institutions, based on intense political drive and support from governments. There was a need to make an organized response to globalization, the new information technologies, the European Union (EU), etc. (de Wit & Merckx, 2012). Since then, there has been a shift from understanding internationalization as a toolkit of responses offered to address the various possibilities and challenges

presented by the strong forces of globalization to the education system to instead understand it as a transformative phenomenon that is central to the educational institution and to the planning for the future by policy makers and educational leaders (Rumbley, Altbach, & Reisberg, 2012).

Despite the increase in intergovernmental institutions, such as the UN (Yemini & Giladi, 2015), and educational institutions focusing on internationalization of education, the practice and theory of internationalization faces challenges and is still an area in need of research. A rather substantial amount of research has been carried out on internationalization in the HE context throughout the years (Deardorff et al., 2012), which provides a good foundation for educational leaders and policy makers to use as a point of departure to learn about experiences and suitable practices and hereby make sense of internationalization in HE. Results of current research are numerous and include enhanced academic performance for students who had studied abroad (Sutton & Rubin, 2004) and evidence that a stay abroad decreases the time needed for university graduates to find their first job (Berkhout & Smid 2011, according to Deardorff & van Gaalen, 2012: 171). However, while some studies have found a clear relationship between internationalization and the quality of HE (Jang, 2009), others have shown that commercialization of education through enrolling international students in for-profit institutions can negatively influence the quality of HE (Mcgowan & Potter, 2008).

While it is possible to highlight several results from current research efforts, there is still a need for research within this field. For example, understanding internationalization issues from non-western perspectives, discussing the myths and misconceptions to which the instrumental focus on internationalization has led, such as understanding internationalization as an end in itself (Deardorff, de Wit, & Heyl, 2012), and focusing on how to facilitate and evaluate students' development of intercultural competences in internationalization activities (Byram, 2000; Deardorff & van Gaalen, 2012; Dervin, 2009). Furthermore, there is a striking lack of research into responses to globalization in other educational contexts, such as the primary and lower secondary school (hereafter referred to as 'school') context, which is the focus of this particular PhD study.

### **1.1.1. RESPONDING TO GLOBALIZATION IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT**

It is imperative to provide young generations with the competences needed to face the globalized world of today and the future. It is considered essential for them to cope constructively with globalization, as it is key to the survival of the individual, the nation, and the world in general. The education system plays a pivotal role in this development of competences, not only in HE, but also at the school level. Recommendations for a systematic change towards internationalization of education at all levels in the education system have been made by international organizations such as the Asia Society (2008) and by the EU through its Comenius, Erasmus, and

Erasmus+ programs. Many nations have responded to globalization through the implementation of internationalizing school education. For example, in 2001 Taiwan included cultural learning and international understanding in the guidelines for grades 1-9, and in 2011 international learning elements and goals for schools were emphasized. In Japan, guidelines for elementary school teaching that emphasizes internationalization were implemented in 1992 and further emphasized in 1996 (Lin & Chen, 2014). In Israel, the education system faces pressures to both nationalize and internationalize concurrently, but lacks regulation (Yemini & Giladi, 2015). In Denmark, where this study is conducted, various changes for internationalization in schools have been implemented since 1993. This will be discussed in detail in the sections 1.1.2 and 2.1.

As previously mentioned, reviewing existing research on internationalization of education reveals the limited research into it from the school level perspective, although there has been increasing attention since the initiation of this PhD study in 2011 (in particular with the works of Yemini and co-authors, e.g. Yemini & Fulop (2015) and Dvir & Yemini (2017)). Predominantly, the literature on internationalization of education in the school context comprises reports providing insights into the status quo and giving direction for the future (e.g. Arbejdsgruppen for Uddannelse i Fremmedsprog, 2011; CIEP, 2012; Regeringen, 2006; Styrelsen for International Uddannelse, Denmark, 2010; Undervisningsministeriet, 2004; UVM, 2014).

In terms of research, internationalization in schools has traditionally referred to international schooling originating from exclusive schools for children of diplomats (Yemini, 2012:153). This is a rather different context than that of public schools in a national context with the objective of providing education for the majority of the population. Some research related to the broad school sector involves experiences from the EU funded COMENIUS<sup>1</sup> programs, which have acted as a window of opportunity to engage in European activities within the EU (Gordon, 2001), while research by Heidemann (1999b) shows that the prevailing culture in schools determines whether or not internationalization takes place based on such activities.

Recently, Yemini (2014) has argued for a striking convergence between HE and school systems in terms of internationalization. Despite schools historically being oriented towards more national aims, whereas higher education focus on knowledge production, the two educational levels now seem convergent, and Yemini argues for combining research within the two fields. Dvir and Yemini (2017) did exactly that by publishing a study exploring policies aimed at promoting mobility by performing a comparative analysis of EU mobility programs aimed at the school level and HE.

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<sup>1</sup> As part of Europe's 2020 strategy, in 2013 the COMENIUS program and other EU programs were integrated into and replaced by the ERASMUS+ program.

Findings showed a “‘jump’ from macro-economic problems traditionally tackled at the government level to micro-level solutions on advancing individual agency and capacity” (Dvir & Yemini, 2017:205), e.g. in relation to the labor market and personal employability. Furthermore, findings showed that academic excellence is highlighted with no specific consideration to social mobility and social motives to implement mobility at the school level.

Internationalization of education research often focuses on specific activities of internationalization, in particular study visits abroad (for example (Byram & Feng, 2006; Dervin, 2009; Jackson, 2009; Snow & Byram, 1997). However, there is no widespread tradition of mobility at the school level (Yemini, 2012). Instead, focus is on internationalization at home activities, such as infusing an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the schools through activities such as international correspondence via e-mail or Skype and an internationalized curriculum. Thus, it is important to understand how to facilitate students’ intercultural learning in these activities, and also to understand the possibilities and challenges of intercultural learning for students from these experiences.

Research into internationalization of education is closely linked to research into foreign language teaching and learning. Internationalization activities often involve a dimension of foreign language teaching and learning, for example through study visits abroad. Furthermore, intensive research has been carried out on the development of intercultural competences, broadly defined as the competence to communicate and behave both appropriately and effectively in intercultural situations (Deardorff, 2009:xi) and within foreign language teaching and learning (e.g. Byram, 2009; Dervin, 2010). Intercultural competence is also defined as the expected outcome of internationalization efforts at the student level (Deardorff & van Gaalen, 2012). However, limited research involves research into intercultural competence in relation to school age students.

In addition, leadership is emphasized as important in internationalization of education in order to encourage and support internationalization initiatives, but few studies have leaders as their subject of research (Lin & Chen, 2014; Tinkham, 2011). Thus, it is important to develop a better understanding of the role of leaders in internationalization of education.

With limited research within internationalization of school education, many questions remain unanswered. Yemini suggests several future research areas:

“Is it possible to define the starting point and the end point of the process?  
What degree of diversity can be observed in the way in which internationalization takes place in different schools in different countries?  
[...] At what points can the school principal/leadership act to affect internationalization? What is the relationship between schools’



decentralization and internationalization? To what extent may the desire to internationalize or the degree of internationalization be dictated by availability of resources?” (Yemini, 2012:161-162)

Furthermore, there is a need for discussion on the practice of internationalization and ideas of internationalism and ‘*bildung*’ (formation) (Byram, 2012), and also on the values on which we build school education in the future, i.e. capitalist market orientation or values of human peace (Kemp, 2013). In line with this, Yemini (2014) argues that internationalization is now facing a challenge of fostering reconciliation and peace.

As stated in the above, research on internationalization from the perspective of schools is needed, both to understand and make sense of the particularities of internationalization at this educational level and to develop a more comprehensive understanding of internationalization in general. It is also an area in need of more research in the future within many areas. This study will partially fill this gap in the research on internationalization in schools by looking at activities of internationalization from the perspectives of leaders, organizers, and students, and will use this as a starting point for a discussion on how to facilitate a process of internationalization in the school context. China-related activities and cooperation with China in the Danish school context will be used as a point of departure for this study, as will be explained in the following sections.

### **1.1.2. RESPONDING TO GLOBALIZATION IN THE DANISH SCHOOL CONTEXT**

In Denmark, internationalization has been part of the school education context since the late 1980s to a greater or lesser extent. This has resulted in such changes as revisions of the aims of the Educational Act in 1993 and 2006, government encouragement of international activities, and several reports on the importance and status of internationalization in school (Arbejdsgruppen for Uddannelse i Fremmedsprog, 2011; Regeringen, 2006; Styrelsen for International Uddannelse, 2010; Undervisningsministeriet, 2004; UVM, 2014). Schools are under the guidance of the municipalities, and several municipal internationalization strategies have also been presented in the past few years (Aalborg Kommune, 2016; Ballerup Kommune, 2014; Duun, Muth-Ries, & Fink, 2014; Rudersdal Kommune, 2009). Section 2.1 provides additional information about the Danish school context and internationalization efforts.

Although internationalization has been part of the Danish school education context for some years, there is limited research thereof, i.e. a PhD dissertation on internationalization activities (Heidemann, 1999; Heidemann, 1999a; Heidemann, 1999c) and scholarly studies at the master level (e.g. V. V. Andersen, 2014). In addition, Kemp (2013) has discussed the internationalization of education in the

Danish school context and considers the idea of the world citizen, i.e. the human being who brings up solutions to global problems, to be the ideal for '*bildung*' and education, and thus represents the overall purpose of all education institutions.

### **1.1.3. COLLABORATION WITH CHINA IN SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH DENMARK REGION**

Since 2004, one of China's responses to globalization has been the establishment of Confucius Institutes around the world. Confucius Institutes are non-profit culture institutions financed by the Chinese Ministry of Education, and the aim is to promote the knowledge of and facilitate an interest in Chinese language and culture learning around the world through Confucius Institutes established at universities abroad as a cooperative effort between a foreign and a Chinese university.

In September 2009, the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University (CI AAU) became a reality. It was established as a collaboration between Aalborg University (AAU) in Denmark and Beijing Normal University in China, and in late 2010 the CI AAU initiated collaborations with a local public school, Gug School, and Aalborg Municipality.

In May 2011, the CI AAU conducted a pilot study of a Chinese language and culture week at Gug School, involving 38 students from grades 7 and 8. My findings from this study suggested that the experiences opened a door to a different world for many Danish students, teachers, and administrators, and that the activities were in line with the school's focus on internationalization and global citizenship (Egekvist, 2011).

This preliminary study also marked the starting point for this particular PhD study and my opportunity to follow and research initiatives related to China in the Danish school context during its beginning stages. Faced with the possibilities and challenges of entering the Danish school context and developing collaborations with Danish schools and municipalities, and having an interest of combining its activities with research, the CI AAU agreed to co-finance this PhD project along with AAU.

For the CI AAU, it was imperative to develop a better understanding of the Danish school system in terms of internationalization in order to contribute with China-related activities and develop collaborations between Denmark and China in ways that would meet the needs of the Danish school education. I found that while constructive initiatives and ideas of internationalization were presented in Denmark at the government level, there was an obvious need to take a step back to make sense of internationalization at the school level and develop principles for facilitating internationalization within the school education context. That is what this study will explore, using collaborations with China in Denmark as examples.

## **1.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS**

As explained, only a limited number of studies have addressed internationalization at the school level. The overall objective of this research is to contribute to the field of internationalization of education by developing an understanding of the particularities of the school level, which can be used as a foundation for discussing the internationalization efforts in the school education context in the future.

More specifically, the objectives of this research study are to explore internationalization in the Danish school context that involves China-related activities organized by the CI AAU and look at these activities of internationalization from the perspectives of leaders, organizers, and students. The study will use this as a point of departure for discussions on how to facilitate a process of internationalization in the school context.

Based on the above, I have reached the following main research question:

How can internationalization be facilitated in the school context, based on experiences from collaboration with China in Denmark?

In order to answer this main research question, the following two sub-questions related to the student level and leader level, respectively, have been explored through empirical studies.

- 1) How can internationalization in schools be facilitated through facilitating students' development of intercultural competence?
- 2) What are the possibilities and challenges of facilitating school leaders' international experiences for the purpose of educational internationalization?

These research objectives and questions were developed and revised during the PhD research process. The theoretical framework of the study, the development of possibilities for collection of empirical materials, and the insights that emerged during the analysis of the empirical materials have contributed to the final versions of the research objectives and questions. However, my desire to explore internationalization at the school level using China-related activities as the points of departure remained unchanged from start to finish.

## **1.3. THESIS STRUCTURE**

This thesis consists of two main parts: 1) A report organized into six chapters, and 2) Appendices A-F. Appendix A comprises the four papers included in this PhD study. In order to provide the reader with an overview and facilitate the reading, the thesis

structure is presented in the following sections, including details about the organization of the report and summaries of the papers and their relation to the research questions.

### 1.3.1. ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

Chapter 2 introduces the Danish educational context with a specific focus on the school level. Furthermore, the research sites of this study will be presented in detail. The purpose of this chapter is to both show where this study was carried out and give insight into decisions made during the process.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework of this study by drawing on theories and research related to internationalization of education, learning, intercultural competence, and educational leadership.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology of this study. It presents the research process, outlines the procedures of gathering and analyzing empirical material, and discusses the characteristics of the study, the qualitative approach employed, and methodological reflections along the way.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of this study in relation to the research questions.

Chapter 6 concludes the main scientific contributions, implications, and limitations of this study and presents reflections for future research areas.

### 1.3.2. PAPERS INCLUDED

As previously mentioned, this thesis comprises four published papers (see appendix A<sup>2</sup>). They are referred to as papers 1-4 based on their publication date. Summaries of these papers are provided in the following pages. Furthermore, an illustration of the coherence between the papers, stages of the research process, research questions, discussions in chapter 5, and links to the chapters in this report is available in figure 5 (see chapter 5). In addition, co-author statements from papers 2, 3, and 4 are available in appendix F.

**Paper 1:** Egekvis, U.E. (2012). Internationalisation of Education in Denmark: Why China and Chinese? In X. Du & M.J. Kirkebæk (Eds.), *Exploring Task-Based PBL in Chinese Teaching and Learning* (pp. 9-35). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Press.

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<sup>2</sup> Approval for parallel publication has been granted for all papers included.

This paper analyzes the historical and philosophical traditions of the Danish education system and contextualizes the theory and practice of internationalization in Denmark. It outlines current internationalization efforts within the Danish education system and discusses the background of the Confucius Institutes and more specifically the CI AAU and its cooperation with educational institutions in Northern Denmark. It argues that China-related activities are in line with the current needs of and trends within the Danish educational system, and it suggests that it is important to understand the particularities of the educational context in the process of implementing Chinese-related activities. Thus, this paper addresses the main research question of this PhD study.

**Paper 2:** Lyngdorf, N., Egekvist, U. E., Du, X., & Shi, J. (2013). Learning from designing and organizing an intercultural student exchange program. In M. J. Kirkebak, X. Du & A. Å Jensen (Eds.), *Teaching and learning culture: Negotiating the context* (pp. 27-42). Rotterdam; Boston: Sense Publishers.

This paper focuses on the facilitators' view on a short-term student exchange program involving a visit of Chinese students to a Danish school. It discusses the facilitators' learning experiences of designing and conducting international and intercultural activities that aim to develop an intercultural community of practice and facilitate intercultural learning among students. It argues that the combination of a descriptive and complex understanding of culture is helpful in the design and conduction phases in order to anticipate how the culture meeting will unfold in the design phase, while still maintaining the complexity and unpredictable nature of the actual intercultural meetings in the conduction phase. Also, it suggests that future Danish-Chinese student exchange programs focus on designing and facilitating meaningful activities that require interaction and cooperation between the two groups of students involved in order to ensure the quality of the intercultural learning experience. Thus, this paper addresses the main research question and sub-question 1 of this PhD study.

**Paper 3:** Egekvist, U.E., Lyngdorf, N.E., Du, X. & Shi, J. (2016). Intercultural competence in host students? A study of Danish students facing China at home. In F. Dervin & Z. Gross (Eds.), *Intercultural competence in education: Alternative approaches for different times* (pp. 31-50). United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

This paper focuses on the students' experiences of international and intercultural activities that aim to facilitate the development of students' intercultural competences. It involves a visit by Chinese students to a Danish school and analyzes the challenges and possibilities of using short-term study visits to develop intercultural competences in host students. It argues that challenges and possibilities are found within the categories of experiential learning, stereotypes, and coping strategies and support. It suggests that the development of intercultural competences is not necessarily the outcome of hosting an international student during a short-term visit, while support structures and the "right" facilitation of such visits are

emphasized. Thus, this paper addresses the main research question and sub-question 1 of this PhD study.

**Paper 4:** Egekvist, U.E., Lyngdorf, N.E. & Du, X. (2017). Internationalization in schools - Perspectives of school leaders. In the *International Journal of Educational Research*, 83, pp. 20-31. Elsevier Ltd.

This paper focuses on the role of school leaders and their experiences of international and intercultural activities. It argues that internationalization ideas can be developed through the acquisition of international experience abroad by leaders and their reflections on the experience. It suggests that international experiences can be used by school leaders to develop internationalization ideas at the school level through reflections of lived experiences, participation in meaningful activities, and active engagement in interaction with international and local colleagues. Furthermore, it suggests that the realization of the internationalization ideas depends on elements such as leadership, teacher engagement, policy support, and financial support. Thus, this paper addresses the main research question and sub-question 2 of this PhD study.

# CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

The introduction chapter and paper 1 in this PhD study provide some understanding of the research context of this study, i.e. the different levels of the Danish education system and preferences of teaching philosophies and methods as well as Denmark's responses to globalization within the education system. The purpose of this chapter is to provide additional analysis of the relevant research contexts: 1) The national context (section 2.1) analyzes the Danish school context, internationalization in this context, and the history of Danish-Chinese educational collaboration. 2) The research sites (section 2.2) analyzes the two research sites for collection of empirical materials for this study, i.e. Gug School and its visit by Chinese students, and the North Denmark region and its school leader delegation visit to Beijing.

## 2.1. NATIONAL CONTEXT: THE DANISH SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Danish school education system dates back to 1814 and on the national level it is regulated by the Educational Act, which has undergone several changes, in particular in the years 1937, 1958, 1975, 1993, 2004, and 2014. By means of the Educational Act all Danish schools share the same overall aims and need to follow certain requirements concerning the subjects, common objectives related to teaching, and regulations regarding leadership. However, the responsibilities of the schools lie with the municipalities, which can set additional objectives and standards within the national framework. Furthermore, each individual school has the freedom to define and implement local characteristics (Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality, 2016).

The aims of the Educational Act have also undergone changes over the years, i.e. in 1937, 1975, 1993, and 2006. The revisions of the aims of the Educational Act in 1975 bear witness to the reduction of the church's power in Danish society and the obligation of cooperation between parents and the school is stressed. In 1993 the pure national focus changed with the aim of learning about other cultures, and this was emphasized even further in 2006 with the aim of learning about other nations too. In addition, the preparation for further education was added. The revision in 2006 was made based on arguments of economy and international competition and as a part of the government's globalization strategy (Regeringen, 2006; Thejsen, 2009), as will also be discussed in the next section. The revision in 2006 can be considered a response to globalization, and it adds to a debate of fundamental relevance to the discussions of internationalization in school, which is also discussed in article 1. It is that of education and *dannelse*.

The Danish school system rests on the two pillars/purposes: Education and *dannelse*, which come from the German *bildung*. As pointed out by Husted (2008), there is a

distinct difference between educating someone (*'bildung'*-thinking) and educating someone for something (education-thinking). Traditionally, great emphasis has been put on *'bildung'* in the school education context, which is also clearly stated in the motto of the Danish Teachers' Union since 1920, "Learning is for life, not for school"; however, changes are noticed. Kemp (2013:13-16) discusses the presence of two contradicting ideals for the education system in relation to his argumentation about world citizen thinking, as presented in section 1.1.2. The two major opponents to the world citizen ideal are narrow nationalism and functionalistic market thinking. Kemp (2013:13) argues that nationalist thinking, which has been the classical opponent to world citizen thinking, is in decline, whereas the functionalistic market thinking, which is a newer opponent, has entered the school domain and focuses merely on the education of a successful workforce and refuses to consider general education or *'bildung'* that makes it possible for human beings to co-exist despite cultural and national differences. Thus, developments in the latest years indicate a movement towards a greater emphasis on "education" within the school education context.

### **2.1.1. INTERNATIONALIZATION IN THE DANISH SCHOOL SYSTEM**

In Denmark, innovation in the education system at all levels is at the center of attention at the national government level. Internationalization plays a significant role in these efforts, also in the primary and lower secondary schools<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, it was stated by the Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalization that:

"The school has often been overlooked in internationalization contexts. However, it is in the school that the foundation for further educational development is laid and the students' basic skills are formed. This is why it is important to correlate the educational levels when it comes to internationalization." (Styrelsen for International Uddannelse, Denmark, 2010:9)

A brief historical look at some of the important developments and discussions of internationalization in the Danish school education context until the initiation of this PhD study in June 2011 show significant changes since the late 1980s. In 1989 it became possible for language teachers to go on exchanges via the EU's ERASMUS program (Vohn, 1990), and in 1993 the aim of Danish schools was changed from being nationally oriented to also including a broader orientation by stating:

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<sup>3</sup> In Denmark, the primary and lower secondary school covers grades 0-10 with students between the ages of approximately 5/6 to 15/16.



The school shall familiarize the pupils with Danish culture and contribute to their understanding of other cultures and of man's interaction with nature. (Thejsen, 2009)

In 1995, the EU launched the SOCRATES program, which offered the possibility of student exchanges at the school level. The student exchange program developed further and changed its name to the SOCRATES II program (1999–2006), and the COMENIUS program (a sub-program under the Life Long Learning Program (2007–2012)) during those years, but the common feature was the possibility of student mobility within the EU (European Parliament, 1995; European Parliament, 2006).

In 1999 Heidemann's PhD dissertation presented the factors that hinder and promote transnational cooperation and internationalization in Danish primary and lower secondary schools. The main finding showed that the prevailing organizational culture in the schools determines whether or not internationalization takes place (Heidemann, 1999; Heidemann, 1999; Heidemann, 1999).

In 2003 a report on internationalization in Danish primary and lower secondary schools determined that the current internationalization efforts are too random, and recommended a more organized approach and support structure (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2003), which led to the formulation of a strategy for the internationalization of the education system (Undervisningsministeriet, 2004). In 2006 a report stated that all education in Denmark should have a global perspective and that future Danish public schools should be the best in the world (Regeringen, 2006). As already discussed in section 2.1, the same year the international orientation of the schools was emphasized in new formulations in conjunction with the revised aims of Danish schools. Finally, in 2009 the international dimension was introduced as a compulsory dimension of the teaching in all school subjects (Styrelsen for International Uddannelse, Denmark, 2010).

In May 2010 two reports followed up on the 2003 and 2006 reports. Firstly, a quantitative study of about 50% of Danish public schools established that 70% have worked with internationalization or the international dimension in school subjects, and that 80% of the school leaders consider internationalization important. However, 40% of the schools had no plan, coordinator, or resources for internationalization, and 25% had never worked with internationalization or the international dimension and had no plans of doing so (Styrelsen for International Uddannelse, 2010). Secondly, based on these findings, recommendations for the national and municipal levels were made in order to strengthen the internationalization efforts in the Danish education system through mandatory plans of action and various support structures (Styrelsen for International Uddannelse, Denmark, 2010).

In December 2010, internationalization was presented as one of 19 proposals for a reform of public primary and lower secondary education (Regeringen, 2010). The

internationalization proposal focused on an overall strategy for foreign language teaching that involved an increased focus on non-traditional foreign language teaching (including Asian languages), and an increased number of student exchanges. Six months later, in June 2011, a report by a task force for foreign language teaching emphasized the importance of multiple language skills and cultural understanding for the young generation. Furthermore, recommendations are made to implement international study programmes, have an earlier introduction of foreign languages, and offer the possibility of studying three foreign languages instead of the existing two (Arbejdsgruppen for Uddannelse i Fremmedsprog, 2011).

This was the status and point of departure for this PhD study in June 2011 with an increased focus on internationalization as well as through foreign language teaching, such as Chinese, in conjunction with the CI AAU's work and an emphasis on the importance for the Danish education system to provide the young generation with the competences needed in order to cope with the globalized world. Table 2.1.2 provides examples of internationalization inputs at the macro, meso, and micro-levels in the Danish school education system. Its purpose is to provide a better understanding of internationalization in the Danish school context.

Table 2.1.1. Examples of internationalization inputs in Danish school education

Levels	Internationalization inputs
<b>Macro</b>	
International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International mobility programs</li> </ul>
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The School Act</li> <li>• International advisors</li> </ul>
Municipal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internationalization strategy for schools</li> <li>• Support structures for school internationalization</li> <li>• International cooperation</li> <li>• International coordinator</li> <li>• Mobility of educational leaders and staff</li> </ul>
<b>Meso</b>	
Institutional	<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internationalization strategy</li> <li>• Support structures for internationalization initiatives</li> <li>• International cooperation</li> <li>• International coordinators</li> <li>• Active involvement of leaders and teachers</li> </ul> <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility: International mobility of leaders and teachers</li> <li>• At home: Language assistants<sup>4</sup>, international dimension in teaching, and content and language integrated learning (CLIL)</li> </ul>
<b>Micro</b>	
Students	<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility: Study visits abroad and international student visits</li> <li>• At home: International communication (e.g. via e twinning, e-mail, and webcam) and internationalized curriculum</li> </ul>

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<sup>4</sup> Language assistants are international student teachers or newly qualified teachers, who teach for a shorter or longer duration at a school.

## 2.1.2. DANISH-CHINESE EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATION

Denmark is the only country in the world to have had unbroken diplomatic presence in China since 1908. In 1950 Denmark recognized the People's Republic of China and was the first western country to establish diplomatic relations with China. This has created a foundation for a strong friendship between the two countries. As China has developed in many areas since its economic opening towards the international community, the collaboration between Denmark and China has grown, and currently the countries collaborate on a series of issues, including education (Lunde & Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Denmark, 2016). In 2008 the two countries signed an agreement for a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" (Denmark and China, 2008:2) through a continuous strengthening of collaboration within fields such as research, innovation, and education. Furthermore, the "Action Plan Denmark-China" emphasizes "Expansion of the relations between Danish and Chinese regions and cities within culture, education, sport, etc." (Udenrigsministeriet, 2008:26).

The establishment of Confucius Institutes in Danish higher education institutions also plays a role in the educational cooperation between Denmark and China. Presently, there are three Confucius Institutes in Denmark, at Copenhagen Business School, Aalborg University, and The Royal Danish Academy of Music, respectively, as well as seven Confucius classrooms, primarily in secondary schools.

## 2.2. RESEARCH SITES

The introduction chapter and paper 1 provide information about the function and organization of the CI AAU. As explained, since December 2010 the CI AAU has been engaged in collaboration with schools and municipalities in North Denmark in China-related activities, for example the teaching of various Chinese language and culture courses, facilitation of Chinese students' visits to Denmark, and school leader delegation visits. The CI AAU has been involved in research activities since 2011 (e.g. Du & Kirkebæk, 2012; Kirkebæk, Du, & Jensen, 2013) and for this PhD study I focused on two research sites to collect the empirical material in 2011–2012, i.e. 1) the North Denmark region and a North Denmark school leader delegation visit to China (presented in paper 4 and briefly in paper 1), and 2) Gug School in Aalborg Municipality and its visit by Chinese students (also presented in papers 1, 2 and 3<sup>5</sup>). The next sections will provide an overview and add supplementary information.

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<sup>5</sup> Gug School was anonymized in Papers 2 and 3. However, due to the non-anonymization in Paper 1 and my agreements with the school, I refer to the school by its name in this wrapping.

## **2.2.1. THE NORTH DENMARK REGION**

Denmark is a small country with 5.7 million citizens. The North Denmark region is one of five regions in Denmark. It covers about 8,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and with less than 600,000 citizens it is the smallest regarding population. The region consists of eleven municipalities; Aalborg Municipality, in which the CI AAU is located, is the largest and is also the third-largest in the country, with over 200,000 inhabitants (Region Nordjylland, 2012; Wikipedia, 2016). As previously mentioned, school education in Denmark is under the administration of the municipalities.

### **2.2.1.1 The North Denmark school leader delegation**

The Confucius Institute headquarters in China supports various activities in international mobility, for example international experiences for school leaders via organized delegation visits. The Confucius Institute covers all expenses in China, including domestic travel, food, and accommodation, whereas international travel, visa, travel insurance, and personal expenses are the responsibilities of the individual.

The CI AAU, myself included, organized the first North Denmark school leader delegation visit to Beijing from 6-14 October 2011. Participation was offered to school leaders at all educational institutions from K-12 (grade 0 to secondary school) in the North Denmark region and to all educational leaders at the municipal level. Twenty-six participants joined, 16 males and 10 females, of which 21 were leaders in schools, three were educational leaders for schools at the municipal level, and two were leaders in a secondary school. They represented eight municipalities and 20 schools (16 public schools, three private schools, and one public secondary school). This delegation visit is the research site of paper 4 in this PhD study.

### **2.2.2. GUG SCHOOL IN AALBORG MUNICIPALITY**

A combination of my own peripheral acquaintance of one of the international coordinators at Gug School and the fact that it was both a pioneer and one of the leading schools in Aalborg Municipality in terms of internationalization led to the establishment of a collaboration between CI AAU and Gug School during the winter of 2010. This collaboration provided the CI AAU knowledge about the Danish school system and possibilities of collaboration about China related activities, and resulted in collaboration with Aalborg municipality too.

Gug School is located in Gug, a suburb of Aalborg. It was established in 1870 as a small village school, but over the years it developed into one of the largest public schools in Aalborg Municipality with around 800 students from grades 0-9 (Aalborg Kommune, 2014; Pedersen, 1998) and with too little capacity to accommodate all student applicants wishing to attend the school (Skoleudvalget, 2016; Stenbro, 2005). Since late 2000, the school has been engaged with international activities, in

particularly through COMENIUS projects within Europe, and has had an international coordinator or a team of international coordinators. The 2011/2012 school plan states that globalization and internationalization are integrated aspects of daily school life. In August 2011, the school also launched four study programs from grade 7, one of which was an international study program that aimed to prepare students for an international community by providing them with international and cultural perspectives on life along with an increased focus on foreign language skills. Part of this focus included mandatory Chinese language and culture teaching in cooperation with the CI AAU in autumn 2011.

The school has been involved in several CI AAUs activities during the years, and in the years 2011 and 2012 it was engaged in two pilot studies, namely a Chinese language and culture course in May 2011 (Egekvist, 2011) and a study visit by Chinese students to Gug School in February 2012 (papers 2 and 3). Furthermore, the school leader from Gug School participated in the school leader delegation visit to China in October 2011 (paper 4), as previously presented in section 2.2.1.1.

#### **2.2.2.1 The study visit by Chinese students to Gug School**

During 2-5 February 2012, 22 Chinese students visited Gug School as part of a two-week study visit to Germany. It was an unexpected opportunity made possible by the main organizer of the exchange to Germany, Professor Jiannong Shi, who was interested in helping to facilitate Danish-Chinese cooperation and student exchanges. The study visit was planned and organized in around one-and-a-half months by the CI AAU, myself included, in cooperation with the school leader, the international coordinators, and the teachers in the international study program.

This visit by Chinese students to Gug School is the research site of papers 2 and 3 in this PhD study.

# CHAPTER 3. THEORIES

This chapter presents the theories related to the PhD study. Drawing on research on learning, internationalization of education, culture, and educational leadership, the following points are elaborated on: 1) Learning through experience and reflection, 2) Internationalization: Developing schools for today and tomorrow, 3) Leading internationalization in education, and 4) Interculturally competent students.

## 3.1. LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION

This section provides the theoretical approach to learning and reflection employed in this PhD study. These concepts are also discussed in the papers 2, 3, and 4, but will be elaborated on in more detail in this section.

### Learning through experience

The academic debate about the nature of learning is ongoing and approaches to learning vary greatly, with numerous theories having been presented over the years; from behaviorism, which assumes that the learner is a passive recipient of learning (e.g. represented by Skinner (Schultz & Schultz, 2000); to humanism, which emphasizes the role of the individual and the meaningfulness of learning and focuses on connecting learning situations with the real world (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984); to cognitivism, which focuses on internal processes in the learner and considers learning an active, constructive process (Piaget, 1959); and, finally, to social constructivism, which emphasizes the importance of the social context in learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Illeris (2007) states that all learning comprises three dimensions: A cognitive, an emotional, and a social dimension. Furthermore, these dimensions occur in two integrated processes, namely an internal acquisition process in the individual (psychological acquisition) and an external interaction process between the individual and the surroundings (social interaction). Thus, learning is stretched between these dimensions and may be analyzed from each of these approaches.

Traditionally, learning has been approached from a cognitive perspective as well as considered to be a cognitive process, but in recent years the social aspect of learning has been emphasized and, based on work with Jean Lave related to apprenticeship as a learning model (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Wenger<sup>6</sup> introduced the concept

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<sup>6</sup> Etienne Wenger is now Etienne Wenger-Trayner. However, I continue to refer to him as Wenger.

“Communities of practice (CoP)”, which is defined as “a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2011). Wenger’s work is inspired by Dewey (1938), who gave specific emphasis to the social nature of learning by focusing on ‘doing’ and ‘experiencing’ things that create meaning for the learner through purposeful interaction with others. Furthermore, from a sociocultural perspective it is inspired by Vygotsky (1978), who argues that individual learning and development take place through participation in cultural practices and interaction with other people in social contexts. Wenger (1998:134) also emphasizes the importance for learners to experience learning as meaningful and to integrate it as a meaningful part of their life.

Three important characteristics of CoP have been identified: The domain (joint enterprise), the community (mutual engagement), and the practice (shared repertoire). It is the combination of these characteristics that constitutes CoP, and its cultivation happens by their parallel evolvement (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2011). CoPs vary in size, and participation often includes both core group members and more peripheral members. Furthermore, while some evolve naturally based on a group of people’s common interest in something, others are created by a group of people for the purpose of gaining knowledge related to a particular field of interest.

In this PhD study a social constructivist understanding of learning is employed, and learning is regarded as an active process in which the individual creates meaning of his/her experiences through the interaction with others in interpersonal, cultural, and social contexts. Learning is the transformation of lived experiences into knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs.

## **Reflection**

Reflection is closely connected to learning, and with an increased focus on the individual’s ability to use what is learned in the educational setting in real world practice, reflection is considered to play a pivotal role and is thus gaining more attention in theoretical debates related to pedagogy and learning (Illeris, 2007:79). In the educational context, this means making sure to create suitable situations that provide a foundation for learners to reflect, individually and/or collectively, and relate it to practice (Illeris, 2017). A portfolio, which is presented in detail in section 4.3.1, is an example of a tool used to support reflection in educational contexts.

Researchers agree that reflection is usually centered on an experience, activity, or action, but the placement of such reflection differs, and some include both an anticipatory and retrospective kind of reflection (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Cowan, 2006; Schön, 1983). Reflection can be considered a learning process that involves an element of time lag. The reflection process derives from an individual’s interaction



with the environment, which may result in some immediate learning, but something remains unfinished and a subsequent processing may take place at a later moment when a suitable situation arises (Illeris, 2017:79). Furthermore, some anticipatory reflection may occur in relation to an experience. Boud, Koegh, and Walker (1985:19) do, however, point out that “reflection can be done well or badly, successfully or unsuccessfully”.

Theoretically, Schön (drawing on his work with Argyris on learning in organizations) and Cowan have made particularly important contributions to this field by supplementing and building on each other’s work. Schön (1983) brought attention to what professionals do through their self-reflecting practice and developed the concept of reflection-in-practice and reflection-on-practice. The former involves thinking as a situation unfolds by connecting actions to past experiences and knowledge, hereby combining anticipatory and retrospective thoughts. The latter involves retrospective reflections after an action or experience and involves spending time exploring what happened, why certain actions were made, and developing new understandings for future use. Cowan (2006) adds to Schön’s theoretical work by introducing yet another concept: Reflection-for-practice. This involves an anticipatory kind of reflection related to an experience that directs subsequent learning by identifying anticipations, needs, and objectives.

This PhD study pays special attention to the individual’s learning through reflection-for-action, reflection-in-action, and reflection-on-action, through both individual and collective reflections, thus, if done successfully, transforming lived experiences into knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs.

### **3.2. INTERNATIONALIZATION: DEVELOPING SCHOOLS FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW**

The concept of internationalization of education is presented in the introduction chapter of this thesis and also discussed in the papers 1-4 to a greater or lesser extent. This section elaborates on internationalization in more detail and presents the understanding of internationalization employed in this PhD study.

As presented in the introduction chapter, internationalization of education is a complex phenomenon covering numerous elements and influenced by diverse discourses. It is considered a dynamic and multidimensional process that changes over time and takes on different forms across countries and institutions (de Wit, Deca, & Hunter, 2015; Knight, 2004; Yemini, 2012).

Stier (2010) claims that internationalization in HE can be viewed as a composition of three ideologies: Instrumentalism (seeking to achieve economic and political aims), idealism (based on a belief in the ultimate good of the internationalization itself), and educationalism (seeking to fulfil educational values). These ideologies “refer to a set

of principles, underpinnings, goals and strategies which structure and permeate the actions and beliefs of educators, groups, organisations or societies” (Stier, 2010:340).

Definitions, strategies, and rationales of internationalization have been discussed extensively among researchers, but still its meaning has been considered vague and unclear (Deardorff et al., 2012; Dvir & Yemini, 2017). Currently, there is no generic definition of internationalization of education. The challenge is to develop a definition applicable to various countries, education systems, and educational contexts (Knight, 2012:29). De Wit (2002) categorizes definitions of internationalization into four approaches, saying that they will often reflect more than one: 1) The activity approach, which describes internationalization in terms of activities and focuses exclusively on the content of the activities without necessarily including organizational aspects needed to initiate, develop, or sustain the activities; 2) the rationale approach, which defines internationalization in terms of its purposes and intended outcomes; 3) the competency approach, which focuses on the human dimension and looks at internationalization in terms of developing new skills, attitudes, knowledge, and competences in those involved; and 4) the process approach, which frames internationalization as a process that integrates an international dimension into the major functions of an educational institution.

At a conceptual level, a distinction is often made between internationalization through mobility that is based on e.g. studies abroad and student exchanges and internationalization at home (Iah), involving e.g. curriculum development, integration of foreign students, and exchange of academic staff (Knight, 2012).

It is also important to note that internationalization of education involves actors, responsibilities, and activities at the macro, meso, and micro-levels. At the macro-level, it involves policy makers. At the meso-level, it involves leaders, teachers, and staff, who develop strategies, activities, and teaching contents. And at the micro-level, it involves students. Input and activities at a specific level may lead to direct results, e.g. participation number (outputs), to specific outcomes that are directly related to goals, e.g. intercultural competences, and to long-term impact, e.g. world peace or better labor market opportunities (Deardorff & van Gaalen, 2012:169).

While a generic definition is currently unavailable, Knight (2004:11) has coined one of the most accepted definitions, which states that, “Internationalization is the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”. Dvir and Yemini (2017) argue that the definition, originally aimed at higher education, can also be applied to schools. Traditionally, schools have been inward looking and oriented towards the local or national context; however, the role and function of internationalization has changed and evolved because of globalization (Dvir & Yemini, 2017). A similar argument for applying this definition in the school context has been made in paper 3 in this PhD study.

Within the school context, Heidemann (1999:8) defines internationalization as “the transformation process that takes place when transnational cooperation has clout at school”. This definition accentuates a close link between internationalization and school development and emphasizes that internationalization is more than activities, but also involves the school as an organization. Thus, internationalization is closely related to school development.

Moreover Yemini (2015) proposes the definition that internationalization can be defined as “the process of encouraging integration of multicultural, multilingual, and global dimensions within the education system, with the aim of instilling in learners a sense of global citizenship”. Hereby, Yemini wants to emphasize the superiority of these values within the education sector, as opposed to market-oriented thinking, and also places direct focus on the learner.

This PhD study builds on the definitions of internationalization presented by Knight and Heidemann and considers internationalization in schools at a conceptual level as describing a transformation process in the school involving the implementation of international, intercultural, and global dimensions in the teaching and organization of the school to accommodate the possibilities and challenges for school education at present and in the future due to globalization. Behind the words ‘transformation’ and ‘school development’ is learning, at both the institutional and the individual level. It is a learning process for the school as an organization, but this particular learning in itself is not the focus of this PhD study. Instead, in order to understand how such process can be facilitated, this study focuses on the perspectives and learning of individuals, that is school leaders, organizers, and students.

### **3.3. LEADING INTERNATIONALIZATION OF EDUCATION**

The concept of leadership in an educational context is discussed in paper 4. This section elaborates on leadership in more detail and presents the understanding employed in this PhD study.

Killick (2009) argues that many within the education sector fail to incorporate a sufficiently broad conceptualization of the term internationalization and explains that internationalized education is not about who, where, what, or how we educate, but more fundamentally about why we educate, and that content, methodology, and context should be shaped according to the basic values. This emphasizes the central role of educational leadership in internationalization of education in order to focus on why we educate, implement internationalization in accordance with the basic values, and lead those involved well.

Leadership consists of coping with change and leading others through a process of change (Cotae, 2013). Leadership theories are manifold, but within the field of educational leadership two of the main models are instructional leadership and

transformational leadership. Instructional leadership became popular in the early 1980s and proposes a top-down approach that emphasizes the role of the school leader in “coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school” (Hallinger, 2003:331).

As part of a reaction towards the previously dominating top-down leadership approach, transformational leadership gained a receptive audience within the education context during the 1990s. Emphasizing a social and bottom-up aspect, transformational leadership theory focuses on the interaction and development of a solid relationship between the leader and followers based on which motivation will increase and lead to great results. Transformational leadership was originally proposed in the general leadership literature by Burns (1978), who emphasizes that leadership is collective, dissensual, causative, and morally purposeful, and that transforming leadership is elevating. The theory suggests that the leader engages followers in a vision or an idea that motivates them to become involved, expand on the original idea, and feed it back to the leader, hereby developing a shared vision or idea. Thus, it emphasizes cooperation and collective action among individuals in order to reach the goals of an organization; hence, the engagement of followers is imperative for successful leadership (Burns, 1978; Hallinger, 2003; Heyl & Tullbane, 2012).

This PhD study is inspired by the transformational leadership theory in the discussions of leading internationalization in education. It emphasizes the role of the school leader to lead an internationalization process based on a close and constructive collaboration with the followers.

### **3.4. INTERCULTURALLY COMPETENT STUDENTS**

In order to discuss the approach to intercultural competence in students used in this PhD study, it is first necessary to define the concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘competence’. These concepts are discussed in papers 2 and 3 and will be elaborated on in more detail in this section.

#### **Culture**

Culture is a complex concept that researchers from a variety of academic disciplines, e.g. anthropology, sociology, and language studies, have defined and debated. Based on these discussions of culture, a distinction is often made between two fundamentally different approaches to the concept; these are referred to as the descriptive (essentialist) understanding and the complex (social constructivist) understanding.

The descriptive understanding of culture stems from a traditional, functionalist, scientific understanding. Culture is considered embedded in the individual and the

idea is that there is a linear causal relationship between how individuals behave and their cultural background (Plum, Achen, Dræby, & Jensen, 2008:61). From this point of view, culture is a barrier that needs to be overcome in intercultural encounters. Hofstede and co-researchers are a representative of this position; culture is considered a mental software that can be defined as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010:6). Culture reproduces itself, and change happens only very slowly. Based on research from the business world, the basic value orientations in societies have been described through six dimensions, namely 1) power distance, 2) uncertainty avoidance, 3) individualism versus collectivism, 4) masculinity versus femininity, 5) long term versus short term orientation, and 6) indulgence versus restraint. National culture scores have been used to identify their position relative to other countries, and this research has been used to determine or predict actions or reactions of members in particular societies (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2011).

The complex understanding was introduced as a reaction towards the descriptive understanding and is based on social constructivism. Within this understanding, culture is not considered an intrinsic part of a human being, but as a social construction and a practice among individuals in a community. Additionally, culture undergoes continuous changes through interaction, communication, and continuous negotiation among the members in a community. Thus, from this point of view there is not necessarily a causal relationship between how individuals behave and their cultural background. Elements such as gender, age, or education might be equally or more important (I. Jensen, 2007). Plum explains that:

“Culture is the filter through which we interpret our existence and orient ourselves in order to direct our actions. For members of a community, any cultural context signals a non-verbalised rule for what is right and wrong to do and say in different situations, and triggers in them routines and congenial ways of acting. Our own culture is something, which makes us feel at home in our place of work, in our country, in our family, among colleagues of the same profession, and in our ethnic groups. Culture is what we say and do together with other people in ways, which distinguish us from other groups and which signals membership of the group. When we are within our own cultural community, culture is the backdrop which we take for granted and do not think about.” (Plum et al., 2008:55)

In line with this, Holliday (2013) presents a grammar of culture that represents a map to guide us to understand the structures of culture and cultural events. This grammar is spread across the three domains of 1) particular social and political structures, 2) underlying universal cultural processes, and 3) particular cultural products. Holliday emphasizes that negotiation of culture takes place continuously as a process between individual and social structures. From this point of view, cultural resources, e.g. the

education system and educational institutions, are elements that impact us as human beings to a greater or lesser extent, and are something we draw on, but not necessarily something that limit our actions and understandings. Another advocate of the social constructivist understanding is Dervin (2009; 2012), who argues that cultures do not meet, individuals meet (Dervin, 2009:119). He rejects the idea of encountering cultures, but considers meetings to occur between complex and liquid individuals. Hereby, Dervin emphasizes that all communication is basically intercultural.

In this PhD study, I lean on a social constructivist understanding of culture, primarily, and consider culture a social construction and a process between people that undergoes constant negotiation. It is not something that defines us, but something we draw upon in our daily lives. However, I acknowledge the difficulty of delineating a sharp division between the two understandings of culture in practice. Thus, paper 1 presents Danish school culture based on Hofstede's theoretical work on culture, while a functionalist understanding of culture is also included and discussed in paper 2 in relation to designing intercultural meetings between students of different nationalities.

### **Competence**

Competence has become one of the most central concepts in education since the mid-1990s, but has also been debated in scholarly literature (Illeris, 2011; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). The concept attempts to illuminate what individuals, institutions, nations, etc. need to be able to do in order to appropriately face various challenges (Illeris, 2011:9).

The concept is democratic in the sense that all human beings have some competences and continuously develop. Competences exist at all levels and can be related to numerous contexts. Competence is closely related to learning and also comprises a cognitive, an emotional, and a social dimension. However, adding to this is a behavioral dimension and an action orientation, and the important aspect is what an individual can do with or through what has been learned and hereby cope successfully with new situations and challenges (Illeris, 2014:115).

Competence involves a sensibility to the particularities of a context and the ability of making judgements in contexts and of making qualified decisions based on these judgements, both spontaneously and based on more careful reflection (Beckett & Hager, 2000; Beckett, 2008). Furthermore, Illeris (2011) presents a "competence flower" that also includes elements such as creativity, empathy, intuition, fantasy, flexibility, critical stance, ability to combine, and resistance.

In this PhD study, based on the presented social constructivist understanding of learning employed, competences are considered to be a particularly qualifying kind of learning that involves a behavioral dimension. I consider it the ability to cope

successfully with new situations based on judgements, decision-making, and reflections.

### **Intercultural competence**

The field of intercultural competence is extensively researched (Deardorff, 2009), for example within language education (Byram, 2000; Byram, 2008; Dervin, 2010; Risager, 2006; Risager, 2007) and education in general (Deardorff et al., 2012). In general terms, an interculturally competent individual is basically a person who is able to live as a global citizen in the present multicultural and globalized world and cope successfully with the situations that may occur (Risager, 2000) based on “appropriate and effective communication and behavior in intercultural situations” (Deardorff, 2009:xi).

Definitions of intercultural competence vary greatly, and discussions about the concept are ongoing. However, Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) identify five components that guide intercultural competence models: Motivation (affective), knowledge (cognitive), skills (behavioral), context (situation, relationship), and outcomes (perceived appropriateness and effectiveness).

Byram (2008; 1997) has developed an influential model with a framework of five *savoirs* that are considered the components of intercultural competence. These are 1) knowledge (*savoirs*), 2) attitudes (*savoir-être*), 3) skills of interpreting/relating (*savoir comprendre*) 4) skills of discovery/interaction skill (*savoir apprendre/faire*, and 5) critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*). Byram defines intercultural competence as the ability to see similarities and mediate between cultures, and as being able to critically reflect upon both one’s own and others’ cultural perspective. Furthermore, he presents the notion of “the intercultural speaker”, who can mediate between cultures and negotiate in both and has a willingness to relativize own values, beliefs, and behaviors. Based on Byram’s theoretical framework of intercultural competences, Risager (2000) identifies three dimensions of the concept, namely 1) an affective, 2) a cognitive, and 3) a behavioral dimension, and advocates for a transnational perspective and a separation of language and culture.

Dervin and Gross (2016) argue for a critical stance towards intercultural competence models that tend to focus on success only, overemphasize differences, and provide a recipe-like perspective. They argue that our own complexity as human beings make it impossible to grasp the complexity of others, and that intercultural competence is composed of contradictions and instabilities. Thus, they argue for ‘simplexifying’ intercultural competence, i.e. accepting that we cannot access its complexity.

Common for these understandings is seeing intercultural competence development as a continuous and never-ending process involving both formational and educational aspects. It can be encouraged and supported in an educational context. However, it is

not limited to formal settings, but also occurs in informal learning contexts, e.g. through short- and long-term sojourns (Byram & Feng, 2006). Dervin (2009) also prefers “to talk about development of the competences as they are fundamental ‘human’ and ‘societal’ competences which every one of us makes use of on a daily basis—successfully or not”.

The difficult part of intercultural competence within the educational system is to evaluate whether a change has actually taken place in the individual. The Common European Framework and the Council of Europe developed a European Language Portfolio based on Byram’s model of intercultural competence. It includes three parts: 1) A language passport, providing an overview of language competences; 2) a language biography, which helps learners to reflect on and make judgements about their own learning process; and 3) a dossier, providing a possibility for learners to document their results and experiences (Byram, 2000; Little & Simpson, 2003) Furthermore, Byram (2000) suggests a portfolio as a useful tool, enabling the development of intercultural competence to be documented and made visible through the learner’s reflections. A similar approach with student journal writing in a study by Whalley (1997) proved successful in documenting a change in teenage students’ cultural understanding during student exchange between Canada and Japan.

In this PhD study, drawing on the presented theories of culture, competence, and intercultural competence, I understand intercultural competence as a particularly qualifying kind of learning related to intercultural encounters. It involves a behavioral dimension and the ability to cope successfully with new intercultural situations based on judgements, decision-making, and reflections. I lean on Byram’s model of intercultural competence and find inspiration in his work on the portfolio in the evaluation of intercultural competence. Furthermore, I keep in mind Dervin and Gross’s more radical position on intercultural competence and emphasize the need to focus on similarities in intercultural encounters.



# CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design and methodology of the PhD study. The research design presents the basic plan created to pursue answers to the proposed research questions and the actual process thereof. The methodology presents the approach used to explore, understand, and gain knowledge during the research process, including reflections thereof, and the consequences it has for the research results. The chapter includes comprehensive reflections from and of the research process and on my own role as researcher in the process.

## 4.1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHD STUDY

This PhD study has five main characteristics related to the research context, purpose, methodology, and methods. It is educational, explorative, social constructivist, and qualitative research, and also has certain ethnographic features.

Firstly, the PhD study takes place in the school education context and can be categorized as education research. Educational research “examines education and learning processes and the human attributes, interactions, organizations, and institutions that shape educational outcomes” (The American Educational Research Association, 2016). Educational research draws on multiple disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology, and aims to create a link between current educational efforts and tomorrow’s citizens (Hartas, 2010a). Similarly, this particular study also draws on multiple disciplines in its endeavor to explore efforts in internationalization of school education as a means to develop schools capable of embracing globalization and intercultural learning processes in students.

Secondly, the PhD study is an exploratory study in its attempt to seek a better understanding of internationalization of school education, which, as previously mentioned, is an area in need of exploration, and to lay the groundwork that will lead to future studies within this field. An exploratory study seeks to explore what is happening and provide better insight into a specific situation or issue (Thisted, 2010). The study includes some recommendations regarding internationalization in schools. The intention is not to provide conclusive solutions, but to contribute with insights that can be used for future research and practice.

Thirdly, the PhD study has certain ethnographic features. Spradley (1980a:3) defines ethnography as the work of describing a culture with the aims of discovering and understanding another way of life from the perspective of a native – to realize his/her vision of his/her world. Ethnographic research describes events that occur within the

life of a group of individuals, and has a particular focus on their interaction in the cultural context. The researcher generally participates in some part of the normal life of the group and uses what he or she learns from this participation to understand the interactions between group members. Thus, ethnography is not only about studying people, but also about learning from people (Spradley, 1980:3). Ethnographic fieldwork involves the ethnographer's participation in the life of the group, and thus he/she becomes as co-creator of reality through participant observations (Kristiansen & Krogstrup, 1999; Spradley, 1980b). Every ethnographic description is an interpretation (Van Maanen, 1988). Ethnography usually involves the use of multiple methods, among which participant observation is the key method, while others include focus group interviews, individual interviews, video, questionnaires, and diaries (Christensen, 2010:148). In this PhD study, research has been carried out at the two research sites, at Gug School and with the North Denmark delegation in Beijing. Multiple qualitative ethnographic methods were applied in order to study and learn from the two groups of people in these research sites.

Fourthly, the PhD study is based on a social constructivist research perspective. Social constructivism emphasizes the role of a social and cultural context in learning, and thus, as explained in section 3.1, learning is perceived as an active process in which knowledge is constructed. It also means that the knowledge produced in interviews and focus groups in this study is considered context dependent (Halkier, 2010; Illeris, 2007).

Finally, the PhD study is a qualitative study that aims to illuminate, describe, understand, and interpret the experiences of organizers, students, and leaders engaged in activities of internationalization of school education. Qualitative research approaches are employed when the researcher is interested in gaining a rich and complex understanding of individuals' experiences. It is an interpretive action. The qualitative research approach is based on the assumption that processes and phenomena in the world need to be described, understood, and seen as qualities before being theorized, explained, and seen as quantities (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:28). The quality of qualitative research is to be determined based on consistency in methods and well-documented material. Hence, a transparent research process and methodological reflections thereof are important (Kristiansen, 2010; Nielsen, 2007). Chapter 4 includes detailed accounts of considerations related to the various choices made during the research process of this PhD study.

## **4.2. QUALITATIVE EMPIRICAL MATERIAL**

The PhD study combines literature studies with empirical studies from the two research sites presented in section 2.2. Empirical materials for this study were collected based on multiple qualitative methods. Table 4.2 provides an overview of the empirical materials used for papers 1-4, and section 4.3 provides detailed accounts of the stages of the research process.

Table 4.2 Overview of the empirical materials in the PhD study

Paper	Time	Participants	Event	Location	Method
1	Mar-Jun 2012	School leader (n=1)	Chinese language and culture week	Gug School	Interview
2	Dec 2011 - May 2012	Organizers (n=4)	Chinese students' visit to Gug School	Gug School	Participant observations <sup>7</sup>
2	Feb – Apr 2012	13 to 14-year-old Chinese students (n=22) 13 to 14-year-old Danish students (n=23) Danish teachers (n=2) Organizer (n=1)	Chinese students' visit to Gug School	Gug School	Supporting empirical material: Video, student portfolios, focus group interviews, student diaries <sup>7</sup> , and individual interviews <sup>8</sup> .
3	2-5 Feb 2012	13 to 14-year-old Danish students (n=19)	Chinese students' visit to Gug School	Gug School	Student portfolios
3	18 and 23 Apr 2012	13 to 14-year-old Danish students (n=20)	Chinese students' visit to Gug School	Gug School	Focus group interviews
4	15 Sep 2011	Danish school leaders (n=19)	The North Denmark delegation visit to Beijing	CI AAU Learning Centre	Questionnaires
4	12-13 Oct 2011	Danish school leaders (n=12)	The North Denmark delegation visit to Beijing	Beijing	Individual interviews
4	6-14 Oct 2011	Danish school leaders' experiences in meetings and schools (n=19).	The North Denmark delegation visit to Beijing	Beijing	Video recordings
4	14 Oct 2011	School leaders (n=17)	The North Denmark delegation visit to Beijing	Airplane between China and Denmark	Questionnaires

Based on a social constructivist understanding of the world and inspired by Alvesson and Kärreman (2007:1267), I refer to 'empirical material' instead of what is commonly referred to as 'data'. I view 'data' as constructions, and the term 'material'

<sup>7</sup> Collective efforts by the authors.

<sup>8</sup> First author Niels Erik Lyngdorf was in charge of the collection of empirical material from the Chinese students' diaries and the individual interviews with two teachers and an organizer.

indicates that it is something the researcher actively has to do something with. However, I still refer to the process of ‘collecting’ empirical material.

The decision to have a qualitative PhD research design using multiple methods is based on the assumption that triangulation secures an in-depth research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:5), and it is common in both educational and ethnographic research.

### **4.3. RESEARCH PROCESS**

The PhD study process involved three stages. Stage 1 was student level, stage 2 was leader level, and stage 3 was internationalization in schools. The next sections, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, and 4.3.3 discuss the research process based on the background, aims, and results of these stages. Furthermore, for the empirical studies in stages 2 and 3, detailed accounts are provided regarding the process of collecting empirical materials. Moreover, the coherence between the stages, research questions, discussions in chapter 5, and links to the papers 1-4 and chapters in this report are available in figure 5 (see chapter 5).

#### **4.3.1. STAGE 1: STUDENT LEVEL**

The aim of stage 1 was to explore sub-question 1, which states: *How can internationalization in schools be facilitated through facilitating students’ development of intercultural competence?*

This question was addressed by looking at the Chinese students’ visit to Gug School from the perspectives of the organizers and host students, and has been addressed in papers 2 and 3. Paper 2 also briefly includes input from the Chinese students and Danish teachers.

The result at stage 1 was the publication of papers 2 and 3, which brought insight into students’ intercultural competence development, the importance of reflection in students’ learning process, the role of organizers in intercultural activities at the school level, and the possibilities involved in internationalization at home activities. These are also discussed in chapters 5 and 6. The insights from stage 1 informed stage 2 and 3 of the research process.

During this stage, standard ethical guidelines on qualitative research in Denmark were followed (Brinkmann, 2010), and prior to the Chinese students’ visit to Gug School, the school leader gave her consent for the CI AAU to conduct research in relation to the visit. The school leader informed the parents, teachers, and students thereof. In addition, I followed common ethical practice about including children in research (Backe-Hansen, 2002). The main Chinese organizer guaranteed permission to include the Chinese students in this research study.

## **Empirical materials for paper 2**

The empirical materials for paper 2 were collected based on the collective efforts of the authors. Paper 2 is primarily based on our reflections of our experiences as organizers of the study visit, and the additional empirical materials (which include video, the Chinese students' diaries, interviews, the Danish host students' portfolios, and focus group interviews) were included as support for our participant observations and reflections. Thus, in this section I focus on our participant observations and discuss the additional empirical materials in brief terms.

### **Participant observations**

As previously discussed, participant observation is a distinct method in ethnographic research (Krogstrup & Kristiansen, 2015; Spradley, 1980). In this study, as organizers of the student exchange to Gug School and researchers, we took on the role of participant observers. One might also say that we were 'organizer participants' and everyone was informed of our roles as researchers at the same time. For my part, during the visit and during my subsequent meetings with the Danish students, I would observe and engage with the students, then write a few field notes on my mobile, either out of sight or in the evening. In addition, inspired by Cowan (2006), we reflected upon our experiences in meetings before, during, and after the visit from China.

### **Supporting empirical materials**

The additional empirical materials for paper 2 were used to support our participant observations and reflections thereof.

Firstly, video recordings produced by a professional cameraman were used to support our memory of situations from the visit. Prior to the arrival of the Chinese students, we emphasized a particular interest in recording intercultural activities and conversations between the students. In the development of paper 2, the video material allowed us to revisit particular episodes, such as workshops organized at the school on day 1, and confirm or disconfirm our initial observations.

Secondly, the Chinese students had been given the task to write diaries during their visit abroad to Germany and Denmark, and the main Chinese organizer gave permission for the first author, Niels Erik Lyngdorf, to download and translate the diaries into Danish. The diaries were usually descriptive, but some included reflections on their experiences in Denmark. The diary writing was designed as an open task, but detailed information about the specific task and the presentation given to the students' is unavailable. In paper 2, the diaries are used as part of an evaluation of the study visit and without quotations. Section 4.4 includes reflections on ethical considerations in relation to this.

Thirdly, Niels Erik Lyngdorf conducted two interviews of about 1 hour in duration each: A group interview with two teachers from Gug School, and an individual interview with the last author of this article, Professor Jiannong Shi, who had made the visit by Chinese students to Denmark possible. Niels Erik Lyngdorf transcribed parts of these interviews. In this paper, the interview material is used as part of an evaluation of the study visit.

Finally, I designed student portfolios for the Danish host students with inspiration from intercultural competence theory and also conducted focus group interviews with them. Detailed information on this is provided in section about empirical materials for paper 3. In paper 2, this material is used in general terms as part of an evaluation of the study visit.

### **Empirical materials for paper 3**

The collection of empirical materials for paper 3 regarding the Danish host students can be divided into two phases, whereby the initial portfolios informed and led to the focus group interviews.

#### **Phase 1: Portfolio**

In Scandinavia, the portfolio has its origin in language, humanities, and process-oriented writing and focuses on both academic and personal development. In the Danish education context, it is commonly used as a tool for supporting learning and/or for evaluation. A portfolio is influenced by the context in which it is used and the purpose it is used for, and is a means to making the individual's learning visible. Essentially, the portfolio is inspired by Piaget's constructivist understanding of human beings' construction of the world through learning and cognition (Lund, 2008).

In this study, I found inspiration in Ellmin (2001), who emphasizes the development of the individual learner's metacognitive abilities, i.e. not only to know what you think, but also how you think. Ellmin considers the portfolio a tool that can assist students to embrace the future, in which demands are uncertain and it is necessary to be able to adapt to new situations and build on the basis of existing knowledge. Based on this, I consider it a tool to assist students in coping with the demands of the future, in which globalization is becoming increasingly important. Thus, it is a tool in line with the internationalization of education.

Inspired by Byram's theory of intercultural competence and arguments for the portfolio as a tool for the evaluation of intercultural competence (Byram, 2000), I designed a student portfolio (see appendix B) for the Danish host students. The portfolio was divided into themes and categories related to Byram's model for intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Byram, 2008) in order to guide students in

their reflection process before, during, and after the study visit from Chinese students. It was meant to both stimulate and bring insight into the experiences of the students.

Christensen (2010:149) emphasizes the importance of communicating with children in ways corresponding to their own ways of communication. In order to develop a portfolio for the target group, I entered into a dialogue with two teachers from Gug School, who offered to comment on my portfolio draft based on their knowledge of the student group. These comments guided me in developing a suitable length and language level for the portfolio. In order to accommodate new trends in IT communication, I provided the students with possibilities to take pictures etc. as a way of documenting their experiences and reflections before, during, and after the host experience.

In practice, I spent about 45 minutes with the host students in the morning on the day of the arrival of the Chinese students, assisted by former MA student Niels-Erik Lyngdorf. Firstly, the purpose of my PhD research was explained to the students. Secondly, the students were introduced to the portfolio as a tool to support their development of intercultural competences before, during, and after their experience of hosting the Chinese students. It was emphasized as voluntary for the students to work on their portfolio. Likewise, it was accentuated that this was their personal portfolio and was voluntary for them to share with me afterwards. However, I emphasized my research interest in learning about and from their host experiences and in having the opportunity to use it as part of this PhD research. Full anonymity was guaranteed at all times. Thirdly, the students worked on the first part of their portfolios, i.e. the part focusing on reflections before the experience. Finally, I briefly talked to the students about cultural encounters based on examples from Plum (2008) and Gullestrup (2003). I advised the students to be curious, ask questions, try to understand their guests' point of view, and to help each other reflect on challenging or obscure situations.

A week after the study visit I had arranged for a follow-up meeting with the host students in order to do a common portfolio reflection. However, most had forgotten to bring their portfolio, and I sensed a somewhat critical atmosphere about the experience. Some students had positive things to say, but the majority focused on negative differences between themselves and the Chinese. Afterwards, I looked through the portfolios I had received. Many were very brief and limited in their reflections. It left me with many unanswered questions, which led me to phase 2. I decided that I needed to learn more about the experiences of the students and triangulate the empirical material from the portfolios with focus group interviews.

## **Phase 2: Focus group interviews**

Focus groups are small structured groups that are often lead by a moderator, who guides the discussion based on pre-defined and open questions, with the purpose of

exploring the participants' views and experiences within a topic through group interaction (Litosseliti, 2003). Thus, it involves a group of participants who interact while focusing on a specific topic identified and facilitated by the researcher. The participants' interaction is the key feature of focus groups (Hobson & Townsend, 2010:233; Kitziinger, 1994:103) and it is important because it involves individuals learning from each other and re-considering and re-evaluating their ideas, understandings, and experiences (Litosseliti, 2003:19).

Based on the above, for this PhD study, I considered focus groups as a way to gain insight into the experiences of the host students and also as a context for students to learn through oral reflection (in contrast to written portfolio reflections) and interaction. Thus, the focus group discussions not only provided me with empirical material, but also provided the students with a learning context for them to share knowledge, experiences, and reflections.

I conducted four different focus group discussions, comprising 19 students. Each group consisted of five or six participants. The discussions lasted approximately 70-80 min each and were all sound and video recorded. I chose to work with pre-existing groups, i.e. students from the same class group (two from grade 6 and two from grade 7), in order to minimise the power gap, both between myself as an adult researcher/moderator and the young student participants, and also between the students from different grades. By working with existing groups, I aimed for an atmosphere in which it was legitimate and comfortable for everyone to express their own opinions (Halkier, 2010). Furthermore, as a way to create a relaxed atmosphere, I served cold drinks and candy during the discussion.

Before starting the discussion, I informed the students about the purpose of the focus group interview, what it was, and what their role was. Also, the following rules were stressed: 1) Everyone is entitled to talk, 2) Do not interrupt each other, 3) All viewpoints are equally valid, and 4) Listen to each other (Halkier, 2008). Furthermore, I got all the students' own consent to participate in the research and to accept being recorded and videotaped so that I could identify the participants during transcription. Concurrently, I guaranteed everyone full anonymity (Backe-Hansen, 2002)

Similar to the student portfolios, I developed an interview guide (see appendix C) with inspiration from Byram's model of intercultural competence, which includes an affective, behavioural, cognitive dimension. Furthermore, I used the portfolios as a point of departure, such as finding interesting or common elements, or themes lacking reflections. Thus, I formulated five to eight main questions related to the theme and sub-questions for each. The most important questions were discussed first, and I guided the discussion by, for example, encouraging someone to continue talking, asking more detailed questions, or encouraging students to provide examples.



Andersen and Ottosen (2002:28) emphasize the importance of considering the influence of the interview context on children. These focus interviews took place in two different physical locations at the school. The two grade 6 interviews were conducted in a classroom familiar to the students. It is reasonable to assume the students felt comfortable. However, due to the rather noisy surroundings, which influenced the quality of the recordings, the last two grade 7 interviews took place in a meeting room in a quiet corner in the teachers' lounge, which is usually an area off-limits to the students. Thus, the students were in unfamiliar territory, which might have made the students more uncomfortable than they would have been in a classroom setting.

According to Halkier (2008:38), focus groups can be structured in three ways, namely loosely, tightly, or as a combination. In this study, both a combination and tight structure was used. The two grade 6 interviews were conducted first on the same day, and while I as moderator guided the discussion, the participants were in charge of the discussions. Some participants dominated the discussion and left little space for others to join. Based on this, for the two grade 7 discussions, I emphasized to a greater extent the rule of not interrupting each other. Moreover, I tightened the structure, and ended up having a more dominating role in the discussions in my attempt to make sure everyone could share experiences and reflections. During my transcription of the interviews I realized that even though some students played a more dominating role in the first two interviews, it also enabled interesting discussions when the structure was looser and the participants were left more in control.

Following Kitzinger (1994:104), I included quotations from the conversations between the participants in paper 3, and not only statements by the individuals. Hereby, the importance of the interaction between the participants is stressed. Also, my presence as moderator and a co-constructor of the situation is emphasized in quotations of conversations that include me.

### **Analysis of empirical material for sub-question 1**

In this study, several analysis strategies were employed in relation to sub-question 1. In relation to paper 2, we, the authors, approached the field as reflective practitioners, thus designing and conducting the exchange visit as a learning cycle. During meetings in the process, we would analyze our reflections for, in, and on the experience (Cowan, 2006) and extract generalizations along the way. In the reflection-on-action phase, we revisited the experience through video recordings that could confirm/disconfirm our experiences/memories. Also, knowledge gained from the Danish students' portfolios and focus group interviews (see more details below)

and an analysis<sup>9</sup> of the Chinese students' diaries and interviews with the Danish teachers informed these reflection processes in more general terms.

In relation to paper 3, I transcribed the student portfolios in order to provide a better overview and conducted a document analysis focusing on the contents and identifying patterns and themes that emerged (Lynggaard, 2010) within the pre-defined categories related to intercultural competence. These were combined with my experiences and field notes from my follow-up meeting with the students and used as a point of departure for developing an interview guide for the focus group interviews.

Inspired by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), I began my analysis of the focus groups by writing my immediate thoughts, reflections, and impressions down right after the interview sessions. Afterwards, I transcribed the focus group interviews in paper 2 based on a strategy of maintaining the contents that were expressed and by listening/reading and re-listening/reading (to) the focus group interviews, thus I developed a more profound sense of all the students and their individual/joint experiences. I employed a meaning condensation analysis approach in order to capture the meanings expressed by the interviewees into shorter formulations and determine the main themes of interest for this PhD study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Based on this, seven categories emerged: Eating, home environment, physical appearance, interests, communication, coping, and other. I related comments from the individual students to each theme in order to create an overview, both in general and of the individual. The material was presented in paper 3 in relation to the students' pre-understandings, experiences during the visit, and overall reflections. Furthermore, it was combined with theoretical knowledge of intercultural competence and discussed within the three categories, namely experiential learning, stereotypes, and coping strategies and support.

#### **4.3.2. STAGE 2: LEADER LEVEL**

The aim of stage 2 was to explore sub-question 2, which states: *What are the possibilities and challenges of facilitating school leaders' international experiences for the purpose of educational internationalization?* This question was addressed by looking at the North Denmark school leaders' delegation visit to China from the perspectives of the public school leaders.

The result of this stage was the publication of paper 4, which brought theoretical and empirical insights into leadership in internationalization of education, the role of reflection in a leader's international experiences, and internationalization of

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<sup>9</sup> Since this was conducted by co-author Niels Erik Lyngdorf, I will not provide detailed information about this process.

education in general; further results were the discussions in section 5.3 as well as the theoretical and practical contributions addressed in chapter 6.

### **Empirical materials for paper 4**

Twenty-six school leaders from the North Denmark region participated in the delegation visit to China; however, for paper 4 I selected only those related to public schools, either at the institutional or the municipal level. Nineteen participants were either leaders at the school or municipal level or an international coordinator (and teacher), thus having a leader position in terms of international activities at the school. These were selected based on my interest in public school education, in which the individual schools do not necessarily have the same opportunities to emphasize international activities as private schools do.

I presented the aims of my PhD study and the delegation visit as a research site for me during an introductory meeting with the participants about one month prior to departure. The participants were informed about my collection of empirical materials before, during, and after the visit through qualitative questionnaires, video, and interviews. Everyone consented to participate, and anonymity was guaranteed.

An ethnographic research design was employed (Spradley, 1980:69), and the collection of empirical material involved three phases, namely before, during, and after the delegation visit. The participants filled out qualitative questionnaires both during the information meeting prior to departure and in the airplane on the way back to Denmark. In China, I did participant observations, conducted individual interviews, and made video recordings.

### **Participant observations**

Participant observation is a distinct research strategy and the most commonly used method for collecting empirical material in ethnographic studies (Spradley, 1980). Depending on how the researcher chooses to engage with the participants in the field during participant observations, the role of the researcher can either be as one of a total observer, a participant as observer, an observer as participant, or a total observer (Krogstrup & Kristiansen, 2015).

During the visit to China, my role was somewhere between participant as observer and observer as participant. I used my observations to explore the ideas that developed in the group and to gain insight into the thinking of the participants. In the evenings, I wrote down interesting things I had heard or seen, based on my memory and keywords from during the day, including my reflections thereof. My participant observations provided me with information useful for the individual interviews. Paper 4 focuses on the experiences and reflections of the participants, and thus, my participant observations were left out and only used to confirm interpretations of the

empirical material. They were, however, included in a short article published in the Danish school leader magazine *Plenum* (Egekvist, 2012).

### **Ethnographic interviews**

An interview is a conversation with a structure and a purpose, and the word 'interview' emphasizes that these are *inter views*, i.e. constructions of knowledge created in the conversation between the researcher and the interviewee (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Ethnographic interviews are a specific kind of interview that combines interviews and participant observations in ethnographic studies. The combination of observing and interviewing the informants in situ is believed to bring important details to light (Spradley, 1980).

The ethnographic interviews for this study were conducted on days 6 and 7, which provided me with time beforehand to develop good relations with the informants through many causal, friendly conversations. During these conversations, I asked for permission to conduct an audio-recorded interview. The interviews took place in various locations, such as in a quiet corner in the hotel lounge, walking on campus, waiting for the bus, or in the back seat on the bus. Due to the busy delegation schedule, all available moments during the two days were used to conduct the on-the-spot interviews of up to 10 minutes. Spradley (1980:84) states that "In ethnographic interviewing, *both questions and answers must be discovered from informant*". It is hereby emphasized that questions should be important and meaningful to the informants. In this study, I invited the participants to share their reflections of their experiences in China and ideas for their school in Denmark.

### **Video**

As part of my ethnographic approach, I video recorded episodes from formal visits to educational institutions with special focus on interaction between the Chinese hosts and the Danish participants. The recordings can be considered social constructions that represent a reflection of the experiences from my point of view (Raudaskoski, 2010). Video material was supplemented with both touristy and more professional photographs throughout the visit, and about 7 hours of video were recorded during meetings with Chinese school leaders and teachers, and lectures. It was used for the same purpose as a voice recording, but with the benefit of providing the possibility to revisit my experiences in China and being able to more easily separate the individual voices of people.

### **Qualitative questionnaires**

Survey research, in which questionnaires are the most widely used method, has been used extensively in educational research for the purpose of obtaining informants' views and attitudes regarding educational phenomena and situations. By being well

planned and considering essential elements, it can provide meaningful insight into educational matters (Hartas, 2010b). Hartas (2010) identifies four types of question, namely knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and attributes. They refer to what the informants know, what their opinions/beliefs/values are, what they do, and what their specific characteristics are. Furthermore, two question formats can be used, i.e. open-ended and close-ended.

For this study, I formulated open-ended questions that covered the four types of questions, hereby inviting the informants to answer without pre-defined categories. This is in line with the qualitative approach of this study, which is interested in understanding and illuminating the experiences and opinions of the participants. Thus, I refer to the questionnaires as 'qualitative questionnaires'. Questions were formulated in English, because the thesis is in English. However, in retrospect I should have written the questions in Danish, which was everyone's first language. However, seeing that English is commonly used in Denmark, it did not appear to provide problems for anyone. Two participants chose to write their responses in English, the rest in Danish. As I provided time during the information meeting to fill out the questionnaire and emphasized the importance for them to fill out the questionnaire during the flight from China to Denmark, the response rate was high, i.e. 100% before departure (19 out of 19) and 90% after the visit to China (17 out of 19 school leaders).

The pre-China questionnaire included an introductory note that stated the aim of insight into the background of the participants and expectations in relation to the delegation visit. The post-China questionnaire included an introductory note that stated the aim of insight into the participants' experiences and development of ideas in relation to their own school during the visit. Included in both questionnaires are evaluative questions used for the CI AAU's future work, and not just specifically for this PhD study. The final versions of the qualitative questionnaires are available in appendix D.

## **Analysis of empirical material for sub-question 2**

Several strategies were employed in the analysis of empirical material for sub-question 2 regarding the leader level.

Firstly, information from each of the two qualitative questionnaires related to the school leaders' visit to Beijing was gathered in one document each in order to provide a better overview of the information. Based on a meaning condensation approach, common themes from the answers were summed up in each category (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Secondly, the interviews conducted in China were transcribed with a focus on maintaining the content of what was said and analyzed based on a meaning

condensation process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), focusing on the ideas developed during the delegation visit. The ideas could be divided into two main categories, namely 1) internationalization and 2) schools and school systems.

Thirdly, parts of the video material from formal meetings in China was transcribed; i.e. all the questions asked by the Danish school leaders in these contexts, providing insights into their interest to learn about and from China. Following the same procedure with a meaning condensation process, these were divided into four categories as relating to classroom management/discipline, work structure, structure, or internationalization and international school cooperation. The video recordings were used as a way to revisit important episodes during the visit and supplement the interview material.

The empirical material was combined in paper 3 and related to the school leaders' reflections for, in, and on the experiences in China (Cowan, 2006). Furthermore, it was combined with theoretical knowledge of internationalization of education and discussed in relation to four key enablers of internationalization of education: Leadership, engaged embedders of change, policy support, and financial support.

### **4.3.3. STAGE 3: INTERNATIONALIZATION IN SCHOOLS**

Stage 3 involved a theoretical understanding of internationalization in schools and a literature review of the current internationalization efforts at the school level. Furthermore, this stage involved a process of bringing the results from stages 1 and 2 together in order to address the main research question, which states: *How can internationalization be facilitated in the school context, based on experiences from collaboration with China in Denmark?*

The results of this stage are paper 1, chapters 1 and 2, the discussions presented in sections 5.3, and chapter 6 in this PhD study and include theoretical and practical contributions to the facilitation of internationalization at the school level.

#### **Empirical material for paper 1**

Paper 1 was published as a chapter in a book titled “Exploring Task-based PBL in Chinese Teaching and Learning”, which was written by the CI AAU research team, and in which the Chinese language teachers conducted classroom research in their own classrooms. My chapter served as a background to understanding the context of this research and is based mainly on literature and reports, but it also draws on empirical materials from an interview first used in my previously mentioned working paper (Egekvist, 2011).

## **Interview**

Interviews are commonly used in qualitative research and can be considered constructions of knowledge created in the conversation between interviewer and the interviewee. Qualitative interviews are used by researchers to understand the world from the perspective of the interviewee and generate in-depth information (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009)

I conducted a 1-hour interview with the school leader at Gug School in relation to the CI AAU's first Chinese language and culture week (later referred to as "China week") at a Danish school in May 2011. The semi-structured interview was audio-recorded and took place in the school leader's office at Gug School two weeks after the course had ended. Interview guidelines were designed prior to the interview based on an objective to learn more about the school's experience in relation to the China week, and develop an understanding of the future of Chinese language and culture teaching at Gug School specifically and in Danish schools in general. The interview is only referred to briefly in paper 1, but a more in-depth presentation is available in Egekvist (2011).

I transcribed the interview in full with a focus on maintaining the contents of what had been said, and analyzed it based on a meaning condensation process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Knowledge gained from this interview was used directly in the presentation of Gug School, but also served as background knowledge throughout paper 1, which relates to the main research question of this PhD study.

## **4.4. METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS**

This section includes methodological reflections regarding this PhD study. Thus, I address the following points: 1) The researcher effect: Reflexive thinking, 2) Ethical considerations: Researching children's experiences, and 3) The PhD study in retrospect.

### **The researcher effect: Reflexive thinking**

It is generally accepted in education research that the researcher influences what is being researched, and reflexive thinking, which involves reflections on oneself, is emphasized as an important part of the methodological reflection process (Brinkmann, 2010; Krogstrup & Kristiansen, 2015; Wellington, 2000). For this PhD study, I acknowledge being part of the social world investigated, and consider it important to include information and reflections of my own background.

Firstly, I had been part of the CI AAU since prior to its inauguration in 2009 and related both my 9<sup>th</sup> semester project and MA thesis to CI AAU activities. Furthermore, as a student assistant I was the main catalyzer of cooperation between

the CI AAU and Gug School. In autumn 2010 the idea of extending the focus of the CI AAU to the school education context developed in my head, and I googled several public schools in Aalborg. In this process, I learned that Gug School was one of the leading schools in terms of internationalization in Aalborg Municipality, and I myself am both a former student of Gug School and still live in the area. Furthermore, an acquaintance of mine was a teacher and member of the school's 'international team', and an informal contact to her led to cooperation between the CI AAU and Gug School.

During the research process, I have reflected on my own role as the catalyzer and contact person to the school as well as an employee at the CI AAU. Being somewhat familiar with the school environment created a relaxed atmosphere for me, for example while conducting the focus group interviews. Concurrently, being a local in the Gug area benefitted my research due to the school's trust in my intentions about conducting research with ethical reflections, and my professional, but still local, relationship with various individuals at Gug School, i.e. teachers and leaders, who often confided in me and shared their candid experiences and concerns. Thus, it has provided me with opportunities to develop a better understanding of what went on behind the curtains of the CI AAU and Gug School cooperation, and in some cases form a bridge between the school and the CI AAU. On the other hand, my objectivity of the school was strengthened by 15 years of absence since my graduation and noticeable changes at the school, such as in staff, buildings, and aims, including the international orientation, which developed after my graduation.

Secondly, when I initiated this research it was my pre-understanding of internationalization of education that is was something positive per se. During the research process, my knowledge of internationalization of education increased, both theoretically and practically, which challenged and nuanced my understanding.

Thirdly, a combination of the previously mentioned delays in the research process, and wanting to establish a distance to the field, led me to withdraw from Gug School prior to engaging with the analysis of the empirical material and hereby provide a distance to the field and look my empirical material and experiences with fresh eyes (Brinkmann, 2010; Krogstrup & Kristiansen, 2015). In addition, a leave of absence during my PhD studies to work with internationalization in practice also provided a distance to the CI AAU and brought new perspectives to my research process.

### **Ethical reflections: Researching children's experiences**

The United Nation's "Convention on the Rights of the Child" states that the:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in



accordance with the age and maturity of the child (United Nations, 1989:Article 12,1).

Based on the above and the social constructivist research perspective of this study, I consider children to be active participants and important contributors to this world, and it is important to consider, develop a comprehensive understanding of, and take seriously their subjective experiences in and understanding of the world. It is an approach in which children are subjects from whom I learn (Christensen, 2010; B. Jensen, 2002). This also captures the basic meaning of ethnographic research: To learn from people (Spradley, 1980:3). Furthermore, in agreement with Christensen (2010:147), I believe that research with children should follow the same guidelines as with adults, thus, ensuring it is participant-friendly, comfortable, and meaningful.

Empirical materials from two groups of children, i.e. a Chinese and a Danish group, have been used in this PhD study. Firstly, as addressed in section 4.3.1, permission was given to us by a Chinese organizer to use the material for research purposes. However, I am unaware of the precise ethical considerations regarding the inclusion of empirical material regarding the Chinese children in paper 2. For example, what were they asked to write about in their diaries? How was the task presented to them? Was it voluntary or obligatory? Did the students give their consent? And were they informed about the use of this material for research purposes? In retrospect, this should have been accounted for.

Secondly, in terms of researching the Danish students' experiences, I considered various ethical aspects: Consent from the school and individual child, anonymity, and a relaxed and secure atmosphere in their school environment. Part of my considerations have also been to emphasize the importance of their experiences by giving them a voice through my research and into the research community of internationalization of school education, in which children are not well represented.

### **PhD study in retrospect**

Like much educational research, the research process of this study has been neither linear nor straightforward (Wellington, 2005:95). It developed and evolved differently than anticipated, mainly due to the reasons stated below.

Firstly, the research process was influenced by the availability of research sites. With the cooperation between the CI AAU, local schools, and Aalborg Municipality being in its initial phase, it was difficult to predict the developments of China-related activities in the school context. Thus, on several occasions the research process was influenced by a pragmatic approach and a question of what was actually possible. At other occasions unexpected possibilities emerged, such as the visit to Gug School by Chinese students. Thus, I had to act on this opportunity and develop a research design in a short time.

Secondly, it was influenced by knowledge gained and realizations that were developed in the research process, e.g. the need to also do focus group interviews with students, which is explained in detail in section 4.3.1 Furthermore, the role of China and Chinese language and culture activities developed over time. Being surrounded by Chinese language teachers at the CI AAU and inspired by the CI AAU's focus on developing Chinese language and culture activities, I was initially very focused on China. However, while China is on the rise and therefore of interest to many at present, I realized that China is merely an example of a particular focus within internationalization of education. I might as well have focused on activities related to another nation.

Lastly, the research process was influenced by the realities in my private life, in particularly circumstances related to the birth of my third child. It resulted in changes regarding deadlines and fieldwork, and extended my PhD study period. On top of that I have been working as a project manager and consultant on two EU projects for a considerable amount of time during the process.

This PhD research might not fit into a linear and ideal model of research, but it bears witness of the reality of research as often being non-linear and cyclical (Wellington, 2000:48). Reflections of my research process have made it clear that had I known then what I know today, I would (perhaps) have made some different decisions along the way.

Firstly, for paper 4 I could have asked the school leaders to read through the interview transcription and comment on it in order to make sure they had expressed themselves correctly. However, the employment of reflections-for/in/on-action approach made it difficult to allow for reflections afterwards regarding the reflections-in-action. Also, it might have benefitted the research if I had managed to interview all the public school leaders during the stay in China. I had actually planned to interview all 26 participants, however I ended up having limited opportunities to do the 5-10 minutes interviews with the school leaders in between the planned activities in the very busy schedule.

Secondly, for paper 3 the portfolio method did not bring forward the expected empirical material. In retrospect, I could have approached some parts differently, such as making the portfolio mandatory and including time during the stay for the students to reflect in cooperation with the teachers. This could have created a structure to support the students' learning and reflections.

Thirdly, it is suggested that computer software is useful for the researcher to pursue strategies and analyze the empirical material, hereby ensuring the quality of a qualitative study (Kristiansen, 2010). I considered using Nvivo, however, it remains unclear whether such software provides the foundation for an even better and more

exhaustive analysis, and based on the relative small amount of empirical material, I was advised and made a decision to do it manually instead.

Finally, it was my original intention to include a narrative account of Gug School's internationalization story in this thesis. This could have added a better understanding of the school's history, organization, values, and ideas about the future. However, the realities of life and time hindered this part of the research.



# CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

As presented in chapter 1, four papers have contributed to this PhD study. The aim of this chapter is to clarify and discuss the findings of the papers in relation to the main research question and the sub-questions 1 and 2. Thus, this chapter consists of three sections, which address the research questions of the thesis and the implications of the study. The internal coherence of the sections in this chapter with regard to the research stages 1-3, research questions, and papers 1-4 derived from the research process is illustrated in figure 5.

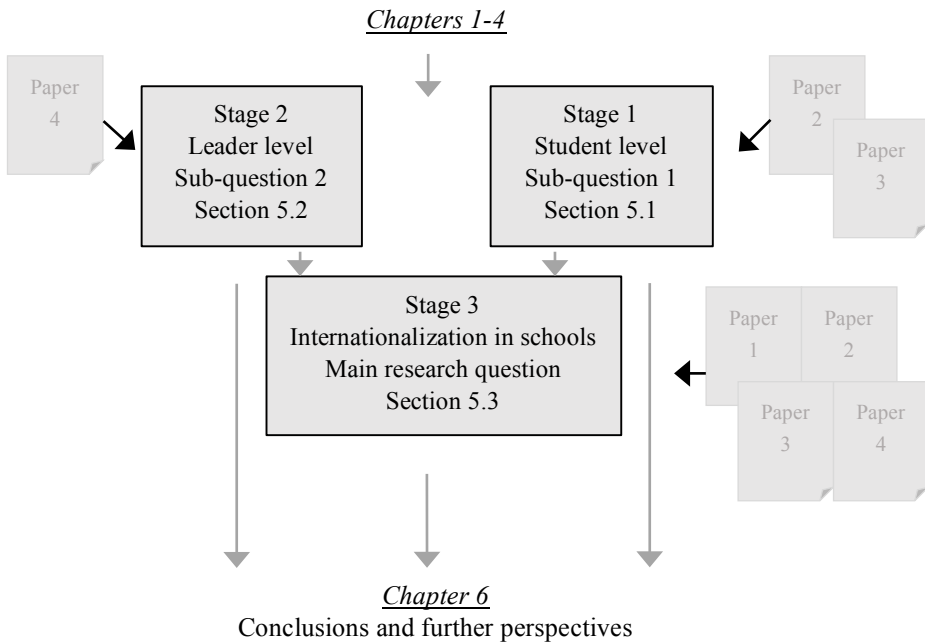


Figure 5. An illustration of the internal coherence of the sections in chapter 5, including links to the research stages, papers, and other chapters in this report.

## 5.1. SUB-QUESTION 1: STUDENT LEVEL

Sub-question 1 states: *How can internationalization in schools be facilitated through facilitating students' development of intercultural competence?* Papers 2 and 3 form the foundation for discussing this question by researching experiences from collaboration with China in Denmark from the perspectives of organizers and students in relation to the Chinese students' visit to Denmark. Chapters 1-4 supplement this by adding more details and perspectives in relation to the research contexts, theories, and methodology.

Seven points illustrate the main findings of these research perspectives and will be discussed in the following: 1) The “right” facilitation, 2) descriptive and complex culture understandings, 3) learning through experience and participation in meaningful learning activities, 4) learning through reflection, 5) focusing on the dimensions of intercultural competence, 6) intercultural learning is not necessarily easy, and 7) all communication is intercultural.

### 1. “Right” facilitation

Findings from paper 3 show that intercultural competence is not necessarily an outcome of a host experience as part of an internationalization activity at the school level. It is also possible to reinforce the students' negative hetero-stereotypes. This is considered a challenge to intercultural competence development. Furthermore, research has shown that that quantity (amount or time duration) of international activities do not necessarily lead to more open-minded or interculturally competent individuals (Dervin, 2009:124). Thus, it is argued that students' development of intercultural competences requires the “right” facilitation, and that the quality of internationalization at the student level can be ensured by ensuring an awareness of this. The “right” facilitation refers to a facilitation that takes into account the following points 2-7.

### 2. Descriptive and complex culture understandings

Based on the organizers' reflections in paper 2, the findings show that both descriptive and complex culture understandings are important to consider and be aware of in the planning and facilitation of internationalization activities that aim to facilitate students' culture learning. The descriptive understanding of culture was found to be useful in an attempt to try to anticipate reactions and differences between the two groups of students and how the intercultural meeting would unfold. Thus, it was useful in the design phase to structure and foresee the Chinese students' visit to Gug School – while keeping in mind that in reality culture does not determine human behavior, even though some traits might be more common among some groups of people. Simultaneously, the student exchange context was found to be apt for designing learning based on the complex understanding of culture, in particular as

the intercultural meeting provided a context for cultural negotiation and the practice of culture.

An awareness of the both contradicting and complimenting understandings is important to keep in mind when creating a context for the facilitation of students' development of intercultural competences. These findings also support the point made by Dervin and Gross (2016) of bringing awareness to the fact that no one can access the complexity of intercultural competence, but by recognizing and accepting this, we can attempt to navigate.

### **3. Learning through experience and participation in meaningful activities**

Paper 2 emphasizes the need to ensure the quality of internationalization by ensuring awareness of the importance of including meaningful learning activities for the students involved. Findings indicate that it is not so much the content of an intercultural learning situation, but rather the experience and participation that is the nexus for culture learning. The study included three workshops organized in relation to the Chinese students' visit to Gug School; these were designed as situated intercultural CoPs and aimed to provide contexts to learn about culture through meaningful activities that would stimulate mutual engagement, create joint enterprise, and shared repertoire among the students. This was to lead to interaction and provide opportunities for students to shape their own learning experiences.

The workshops unfolded rather differently, and findings show that a workshop related to the Chinese New Year was most successful as it involved the very meaningful task of creating a mural on a wall inside the school in the international corridor – leaving a visible and permanent result. The process involved active participation, interaction, creativity, negotiation, intercultural communication and cooperation, knowledge sharing, and meaningfulness for everyone involved, based on the principles of CoP (Wenger, 1998) and an emphasis on the social dimension of learning. On the other hand, a paper cutting workshop proved unsuccessful as it lacked many CoP elements in practice. It was unable to stimulate a common interest among the students, who would work individually on paper cuttings without a particularly meaningful purpose as opposed to working together on something meaningful in order to reach a common goal.

### **4. Learning through reflection**

The findings in paper 3 show the importance of not leaving the students' experiences to evaporate into thin air, but to use them as a point of departure for coping successfully with future intercultural situations. Thus, the quality of internationalization can be ensured by focusing on how learning through reflection plays a central role in the students' learning related to their host experience and development of intercultural competences. Two approaches to reflection were

supported during the Danish students' host experience: 1) Individual reflections in pre-designed portfolios with a focus on the dimensions of intercultural competence that supported the learning process before, during, and after the intercultural experience (or, as Cowan (2006) would say, reflections-for-action, reflections-in-action, and reflections-on-action). 2) Reflections in groups through focus group interviews that provided a context for the students to share stories of experiences and abilities to cope (un)successfully with the new, intercultural situations they had encountered based on judgements, decision-making, and individual reflections (Illeris, 2011) and to engage in joint reflections thereof. This was found to add nuance to the individual's own experiences, raise awareness of similarities and differences, and provide reflections on overall critical cultural awareness. A combination of individual and joint reflections of intercultural learning was emphasized positively.

Moreover, the findings show that it is important to facilitate and create support structures for students' experiences and reflections before, during, and after the international experiences. In line with Byram (2000), a pre-designed portfolio focusing on the dimensions of intercultural competence was considered a useful tool. However, it is suggested that it would benefit the learning to make it mandatory as well as to set aside time during the stay for the students to work on it.

## **5. Focusing on the dimensions of intercultural competence**

Findings from paper 3 show that it is possible to put focus on the dimensions of relevance in terms of the development of intercultural competence through a facilitation of meaningful learning and reflections. A development of intercultural competence might take place in the students' regardless, but as research has already shown, intercultural encounters do not necessarily lead to development of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009; Dervin, 2009). Providing questions related to the various dimensions of intercultural competence and facilitating a reflection process can support students' development hereof in an educational context.

## **6. Intercultural learning is not necessarily easy**

All learning takes place in a particular situation, and this situation influences the character and results of the learning. Research has shown that learning is not necessarily an easy task or something that only takes place in conflict-free zones (Dervin & Gross, 2016; Illeris, 2007; Weidemann & Bluml, 2009)

The findings from paper 3 also show that intercultural learning situations are not necessarily conflict free, but can be experienced as being both difficult and frustrating for those involved; e.g. dealing with difficulties in communication and facing stereotypes combined with the intense host experience. Thus, it is argued to be important to prepare students for the challenging aspects of learning through a host



experience as well as facilitate support structures for the students' experiences and reflections. Quality is ensured by keeping this in mind while focusing on creating meaningful contexts for learning. Instead of focusing on creating "perfect" meetings, conflicts need to be embraced as part of intercultural learning. It is about preparing students to deal with these conflicts – and supporting them in this process. Helping them understand this and not per se blame culture/nationality is an important step in the lifelong process for students to develop their intercultural competences. Making successful judgements-in-action demands ongoing practice (Illeris, 2011) and as Dervin and Gross (2016) emphasize, failure as part of intercultural competence provides a potential for future learning and success. Such learning can potentially be reached through reflection. Furthermore, based on Illeris' understanding of competence as including such elements as creativity, empathy, intuition, fantasy, flexibility, critical stance, ability to combine, and resistance, it is important to develop and encourage these abilities in students too.

Paper 2 displays that the Danish teachers experienced less interaction between the Danish and Chinese students compared to previous internationalization through mobility activities involving Danish and other European students. The reasons for this was not explored in detail, but it speaks to the importance of designing a framework to help students both embrace and cope with the obstacles they may experience in intercultural learning situations.

Based on the recognition that intercultural learning is not necessarily easy, it is also important to emphasize the findings of paper 3, which show that, for host students, the comfort of learning "at home" in a safe context with parental support was emphasized positively. Furthermore, laughter and the use of games as mediating objects were found to be positive elements in the intercultural meeting by providing a feeling of community and emphasizing similarities instead of differences in the students.

## **7. All communication is intercultural**

Based on a social constructivist understanding of culture as something being produced by and undergoing a constant negotiation and development, intercultural meetings do not involve communication between groups, but between individuals (Deardorff, 2009:6; Dervin, 2009:119). With this in mind, papers 2 and 3 also argue for a facilitation of intercultural activities for students that focus on quality in experience and the facilitation of reflections.

Instead of focusing on quantity in student mobility (number of students and duration of stay), or neglecting to engage in internationalization due to it being too complicated, this perspective also opens up for local training to be a way to facilitate learning and ensure students' intercultural competence development. Thus, similar to meetings with people living in other nations, who may speak another language and

are influenced by the particular structures of the society in which they are brought up and are resources on which they draw, meetings with individuals in a local, national context will also be intercultural. Awareness of this allows for other approaches to facilitating students' development of intercultural competence while ensuring the quality of internationalization activities.

In line with this, paper 3 suggests that facing and understanding stereotypes are important aspects of intercultural competence development in host students – not in order to eradicate them, but in order to understand how and why they are created and in which ways they may influence individuals in intercultural encounters.

## **5.2. SUB-QUESTION 2: LEADER LEVEL**

Sub question 2 states: *What are the possibilities and challenges of facilitating school leaders' international experiences for the purpose of educational internationalization?* Paper 4 forms the foundation for discussing this question by researching experiences from collaboration with China in Denmark from the perspectives of school leaders. Chapters 1-4 supplement this by adding more detail and perspectives in relation to the research context and theories of learning and leadership.

Four points illustrate the main findings of paper 4, and the supplementary perspectives are presented in chapters 1-4. These are 1) participation in meaningful activities, 2) learning through experience, 3) reflections of lived experiences, and 4) from idea to realization. These points are discussed in the following.

### **1. Participation in meaningful activities**

The Danish school leader delegation's visit to Beijing emphasized the social dimension of learning, and the findings in paper 4 show that it is possible to develop an awareness of internationalization among leaders through their participation in meaningful intercultural activities that lead to purposeful social interaction. The international experience in China for the school leaders from North Denmark and their active engagement in interaction with international colleagues provided a context for developing an understanding of similarities and differences between societies and school systems and a motivation for internationalization. However, not only was there inspiration from meaningful activities involving school leaders of different nationalities, knowledge sharing related to internationalization within the delegation group also led to the development of ideas.

### **2. Learning through experience**

The findings in paper 4 show that international experience for leaders can be used as a context for learning through experience as well as for facilitating professional

development and the development of ideas for internationalization at the school level through leaders' lived experiences abroad. The international experience provided a context for school leaders to share knowledge with international as well as local school leaders, which provided new insights related to internationalization. While some leaders may already be passionate about internationalization, others may need to develop such a passion, and an international experience abroad can be used as a point of departure for creating engagement among leaders in order for them to prioritize international, intercultural, and global aspects in school education – and inspire teachers to join.

### **3. Reflections of lived experiences**

An international experience abroad for leaders bears many similarities with study visits abroad for students and, as discussed previously, mere participation in intercultural activities does not necessarily lead to increased awareness, understanding, or intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009:xiii; Dervin, 2009). It is important to emphasize the element of the reflection of the lived experiences based on active engagement with local and international school leaders. The findings in paper 4 show that an international experience can be used as a context for learning through reflections for, in, and on actions, both individually and jointly in the leader group.

### **4. From idea to realization**

Research shows that leadership is essential to internationalization of education (Heidemann, 1999; Nolan & Hunter, 2012), and the findings in paper 4 point to leaders' international experience abroad as a way for leaders to lead the way in a global world and find inspiration as well as the motivation to get engaged in an internationalization process through personal experience, participation in meaningful activities, and reflections. Based on the perspectives of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Heyl & Tullbane, 2012), this can be used as a point of departure for engaging teachers to join in and move from an idea to the realization of internationalization. However, the realization of ideas also involves several challenges related to engaging teachers to get involved in the process, and having financial and policy support for the internationalization process.

## **5.3. MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION: INTERNATIONALIZATION IN SCHOOLS**

The main research question states: *How can internationalization be facilitated in the school context, based on experiences from collaboration with China in Denmark?* Papers 1-4 all form the foundation for discussing this question by researching experiences from collaboration with China in Denmark from the perspectives of organizers, students, and school leaders. Chapters 1-4 supplement this by adding

more detail and perspectives in relation to the research contexts and theories of internationalization, learning, culture, and leadership. Likewise, the discussions build on the previous discussions related to sub-questions 1 and 2, which have been explored through empirical studies.

Four points can illustrate the main findings of these research perspectives and will be discussed in the following, namely 1) the role of context, 2) focus on why, 3) realization of internationalization initiatives, and 4) internationalization is a learning process.

### **1. The role of context**

Deardorff, Wit, Heyl, and Adams (2012:vii) emphasize the relevance of including the particularities of contexts in internationalization of education research, but note that it is often neglected. The role of context is an important finding in all the papers included in this PhD study. Paper 1 illuminates the importance of understanding the particularities of the educational context in the process of implementing internationalization activities. The findings from paper 2 point to the importance of creating the right context for the facilitation of learning by creating cultural experiences and practices as a part of internationalization activities. In line with arguments made by Dvir and Yemini (2017), the findings in papers 1 and 3 also illuminate the possibilities of drawing on the conceptual work from internationalization in HE in order to understand and support internationalization in the school education context.

### **2. Focus on why**

The commonly used instrumental approach to internationalization, namely by focusing on the activity level and implementing internationalization through IaH and mobility activities, has been criticized by many (e.g. Killick, 2006). Furthermore, drawing on the complex understanding of culture as discussed in papers 2 and 3 and in Egekvist and Kirkebæk (2012), it is in fact not so important if internationalization in schools happens with a focus on China or what internationalization methods are used. Those engaged might learn different things by using different hows or whats, but it is the why that is important. The why is what should guide the endeavors in schools, and based on papers 1-4 it might be thus: We believe in developing individuals who are interculturally competent and capable of handling global challenges at present and in the future. We facilitate and support this development by developing an internationalized school environment at the leader, teacher, and student levels through various internationalization activities. For example, based on the findings from paper 4, it is important for school leaders to inspire followers to join in and add to the idea and vision of internationalization, and, based on the findings from papers 2 and 3, it is important to facilitate and support students' development of intercultural competence.

### **3. Realization of internationalization initiatives**

Research shows that specific enablers (leadership, engaged embedders of change, policy support, and financial support) are essential for the successful implementation of sustainable internationalization (Heidemann, 2003; Holm-Larsen, Ledstrup, & Stampe Rasmussen, 2002; Nolan & Hunter, 2012). In order to facilitate internationalization at the school level and develop interculturally competent students, paper 4 supports this by arguing that both qualified and engaged leaders and teachers are required and that support structures are needed in the education system.

### **4. Internationalization is a learning process**

Internationalization of school education can be regarded a learning process related to navigation in a globalized world for the education system, institution, and individuals involved. Based on the findings in papers 1-4, internationalization of school education can be facilitated by focusing on supporting the learning processes for the individuals involved: Leaders need inspiration and opportunities to develop ideas of internationalization in order to become visionary leaders. Furthermore, as argued in section 5.2, the findings from paper 4 show that leaders' international experience abroad can be used as a context for this by learning through experience and reflection. Teachers need visionary leaders who share a vision of developing interculturally competent students and who motivate them to become involved. Teachers need to understand how to facilitate and support students' learning and development of competences as discussed in section 5.1, and why it is important to do so. In addition, students need to be part of a school environment that prioritizes, facilitates, and supports their development of intercultural competence.



# CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER PERSPECTIVES

Findings from this PhD study have responded to the presented main and sub research questions and have helped to achieve the aim of exploring internationalization in the Danish school context that involves China-related activities organized by the CI AAU while looking at these activities from the perspectives of leaders, organizers, and students through empirical studies from two research sites, namely Gug School and the school leader delegation to Beijing. This was used to discuss how a process of internationalization in the school context could be facilitated.

Building on theories and research related to internationalization of education, learning, intercultural competence, and educational leadership, and also on empirical materials, this PhD study has provided both theoretical and practical implications for the fields of internationalization at the school level, leadership in schools, and intercultural competence in students. This concluding chapter presents the limitations, implications, and contributions of the PhD study along with possible future research areas.

## 6.1. LIMITATIONS

Various methodological reflections related to this PhD study have been discussed in section 4.4. This section adds to these reflections by addressing the limitations of the study.

A paper-based thesis has the disadvantage of relying on the number of papers that are required to complete the PhD study. Papers 1-4 in this PhD study have all had two purposes, namely 1) contributing to this PhD study and 2) contributing to the aims and requirements of a specific journal or book. These purposes have not necessarily corresponded. For example, paper 1 served as an introductory chapter to a book and, at the time, it focused more on bringing relevant information to the coherence of the book than to the PhD study. This report has, however, placed emphasis on the internal coherence of the papers and their contributions to the research questions.

Within a year of having started my PhD I had gathered all the empirical material for this PhD study. Many other research possibilities arose during my PhD time while working at the CI AAU, but I had to stay focused and work with the material I had already gathered instead of pursuing new research possibilities. Based on this decision, my empirical material is limited to the beginning phase of the CI AAUs work. Hence, this study provides some insight into the process of developing internationalization in schools through China-related activities, but some questions

remain unanswered, leaving room for more internationalization research, both in general and related specifically to the CI AAU's engagement with local Danish schools in the future. Some of these possible research areas are pointed out in section 6.3.

## **6.2. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

This PhD study has several theoretical and practical implications and contributions related to the student level, the leader level, and internationalization in schools, as presented below.

### **Student level**

This study indicates that the theoretical understandings of descriptive and complex culture understandings are important to include in the facilitation of intercultural learning activities for students. Attention needs to be paid to when and how the particular culture understandings make sense in internationalization activities. Thus, instead of maintaining a sharp division between these two culture understandings, this study advocates the more practical approach of using a more descriptive culture understanding in the anticipation of the culture meeting between groups of individuals, while keeping in mind that in reality culture is more complex and is created in the meeting between individuals rather than individuals being defined by culture.

Moreover, this PhD study emphasizes the importance of facilitating students' participation in meaningful intercultural activities and learning through experience and reflection. Based on the principles of CoP (Wenger 1998), this study found that learning through experience in social contexts that encourage cultural negotiation, interaction, creativity, intercultural communication, negotiation, knowledge sharing, and active participation, was particularly meaningful. Intercultural learning and the development of intercultural competence is not necessarily a result of internationalization activities or encounters, but such development can be encouraged and supported. Part of this involved students' individual work on portfolios, which was found to be useful as a tool to support students' reflections related to dimensions of intercultural competence, and reflections in groups, which could provide new perspectives to students' understandings.

Much research has been conducted on intercultural learning in mobile individuals in stays abroad (Burnett & Gardner, 2006; Byram & Feng, 2006; Dervin, 2009; Snow & Byram, 1997), also as part of internationalization of education activities. However, there is a lack of research exploring the learning possibilities for host students. This study suggests that a host situation is an apt context for students to develop intercultural competence in their own comfort zone through intercultural encounters, experiential learning, confronting existing stereotypes, focusing on similarities, and



reflections. This has been overlooked in research, but with internationalization growing more important than ever in a school education context where students are less mobile, it is important to develop an awareness of these possibilities in leaders, teachers, students, and parents.

Adding to this, based on the understanding that all communication is intercultural, this PhD study indicates that there are important opportunities of developing intercultural competence locally, and more attention should be paid to the facilitation of students' intercultural learning in IaH in general. There is a striking lack of research on IaH, and because mobility is less common and more difficult at the school level, there is a particular need to explore possibilities of intercultural learning in the local context.

Furthermore, much research is available on intercultural competence in adults, but with little research on development of intercultural competence in young learners, this study has improved the understanding by illuminating the experiences and giving voice to adolescent learners. Intercultural competence is a never-ending process with no particular starting point. By taking into account the young learners' cognitive and emotional development, this PhD study improves the awareness of possibilities and challenges related to the development of intercultural competence in young learners.

### **Leader level**

This PhD study shows the possibilities of facilitating learning in leaders through international experience in order to facilitate or improve an understanding of the importance of internationalization in order to engage leaders. It brings attention to the possibility of using leaders' international experience as a context for learning through reflections for, in, and on experiences, both individually and in groups (with international and local colleagues).

Leaders are rarely the subjects of internationalization of education research, but leadership is the most essential dimension to facilitate an internationalization process (Heyl & Tullbane, 2012; Nolan & Hunter, 2012). This study presents possibilities and challenges in leadership in internationalization of school education, improves the understanding of the importance of leadership in successful internationalization of education, and offers possibilities for leaders related to development of ideas and understanding of internationalization through active participation in and reflections of international experience abroad.

The challenge is for leaders to overcome challenges related to moving from ideas of internationalization to a realization of these ideas. Based on transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978), engagement among teachers is needed in order for them to join in and add to the leader's vision and ideas. Furthermore, financial and policy support is also needed in order to make a realization possible.

## **Internationalization in schools**

While internationalization has been widely discussed and researched in the area of HE in particular, little attention has been paid to internationalization in the context of school education. This study identifies the need to implement internationalization in schools with the aim of developing intercultural competent students and has improved awareness of current internationalization efforts in the Danish school context. In line with Dvir and Yemini (2017), this PhD study suggests that internationalization in schools can draw on research and definitions developed with internationalization in the context of HE and has improved the overall understanding of internationalization in the school context. This is important in order for school administrators, leaders, and teachers to understand why an implementation of internationalization is valuable.

This study suggests that more attention should be paid to internationalization in the school context. With globalization only expected to increase in the future, the development of intercultural competent students who are capable of facing the challenges of the future is as important as ever. It is, however, important to focus on quality in internationalization efforts and to let the “why” guide endeavors.

Meaningful learning through experience and reflection has been found to be particularly useful in this PhD study in relation to students, leaders, and organizers involved in internationalization of education. This study emphasizes that internationalization of education is a learning process at all levels and can be facilitated and supported. Realization of internationalization in schools requires leadership, engaged embedders of change, policy support, financial support, and support of the learning processes of the individuals involved.

This PhD study is based on experiences of collaboration with China in Denmark as an example of internationalization activities in the school context. China-related activities are new in the Danish school context, and while some research has been conducted on the teaching of Chinese language and culture in this particular context (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012; Kirkebæk et al., 2013), this study adds to current research efforts by providing insight into how China-related activities can be part of and contribute to an internationalization process in the school context in Denmark. It is, however, important to always focus on why we educate and let this guide endeavors.

### **6.3. FUTURE RESEARCH AREAS**

This PhD study has contributed to important areas within internationalization of education, but it has also illuminated several possible future research areas.

## **Student level**

Paper 3 identifies a need for more research into whether or not short-term sojourns are likely to confirm existing or establish new stereotypes. Similarly, papers 2 and 3 point to important learning perspectives for students related to a host situation and local intercultural encounters. With limited mobility opportunities in school education, it is important to research to what extent a facilitation of students' development of intercultural competences might as well happen locally.

In addition, paper 2 explains that the Danish teachers involved in the student exchange noticed a huge difference in the interaction level between the Danish and Chinese students compared to previous student exchanges with European countries via the Comenius program. More research is needed in order to explain this behavior and explore whether such pattern of interaction can be determined in other studies as well as find possible explanations for this.

## **Leader level**

Paper 4 provides insight into the development of ideas and reflections of leaders in relation to their international experience abroad. It would, however, be interesting to research how the school leaders made, or did not make, use of their experiences and the ideas they developed in relation to the international experience in China in their professional lives upon their return to Denmark. Adding to this, more research is needed in order to understand how leaders can influence the implementation of internationalization in schools in practice with the challenges and possibilities it brings.

## **Internationalization in schools**

Firstly, while many similarities and parallels can be drawn between, for example, internationalization in HE and internationalization in schools, there are still particularities that need to be brought to attention, and additional research is needed in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding thereof.

Secondly, research into successful and sustainable internationalization efforts at the school level is needed. Paper 4 points to a need for support structures for teachers in implementing internationalization, but research is needed to determine how it can be approached in a way that not only relies on the work of passionate teachers, which simply disappears when they leave.

Thirdly, there is a need to develop guidelines based on internationalization of school education research for school administrations, schools, leaders, and teachers engaged in intercultural encounters in schools. Papers 1-4 and chapters 1-3 all point to the fact that research on internationalization of school education is limited and current

guidelines are based on reports. Research efforts could complement these reports by illuminating possibilities and challenges of internationalization in this particular context.

Lastly, this study provides only a limited insight into internationalization of education at the school level with a focus on China-related activities. In general, there is a great need for more research in the school context to develop a better understanding of the particularities of this area. Internationalization of education is not a one-day wonder, so it is necessary to include a longitudinal study on schools, school leaders, and students involved in internationalization activities to create a better understanding of the long-term effects of internationalization efforts and hereby develop a more comprehensive understanding of the possibilities and challenges of internationalization in schools.

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# APPENDICES

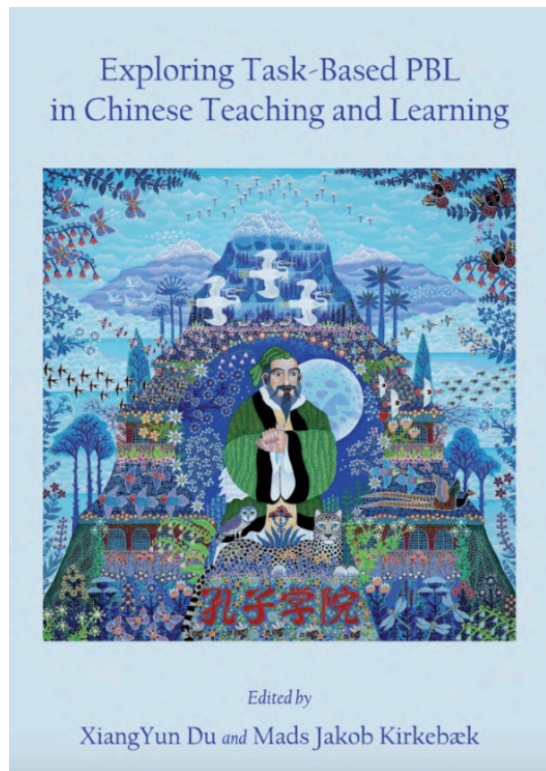
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# Appendix A. Papers

## Paper 1: Internationalisation in Denmark: Why China and Chinese?

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# CHAPTER TWO

## INTERNATIONALISATION OF EDUCATION IN DENMARK: WHY CHINA AND CHINESE?

### ULLA EGIDIUSSEN EGEKVIST

#### **Abstract**

The Danish education system is unique in many ways; objectives and concepts used are not easily comparable with those of other countries. In order to establish common ground for this book, this chapter presents the Danish Education system from primary to upper secondary school with a main focus on the primary and lower secondary school, including both factual information and philosophical traditions. In addition, the internationalisation strategies within the Danish education system are discussed, with an emphasis on how Chinese language and culture activities are compatible with the current internationalisation trends. Following this, the text offers background information on the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University (CI AAU), a presentation of the CI AAU's Chinese language and culture teaching in the North Denmark Region, and an introduction to the specific schools presented in chapters 4-7. Finally, the chapter is summarised, including reflections on its relation to the rest of the book.

#### **1. Structure of the Danish Education System**

In brief, the Danish education system is divided into ten years of basic education in primary and lower secondary school (grades 0-9), and an additional elective eleventh year (grade 10). Following this are three years of upper secondary education and various levels of higher education as illustrated in figure 2-1.

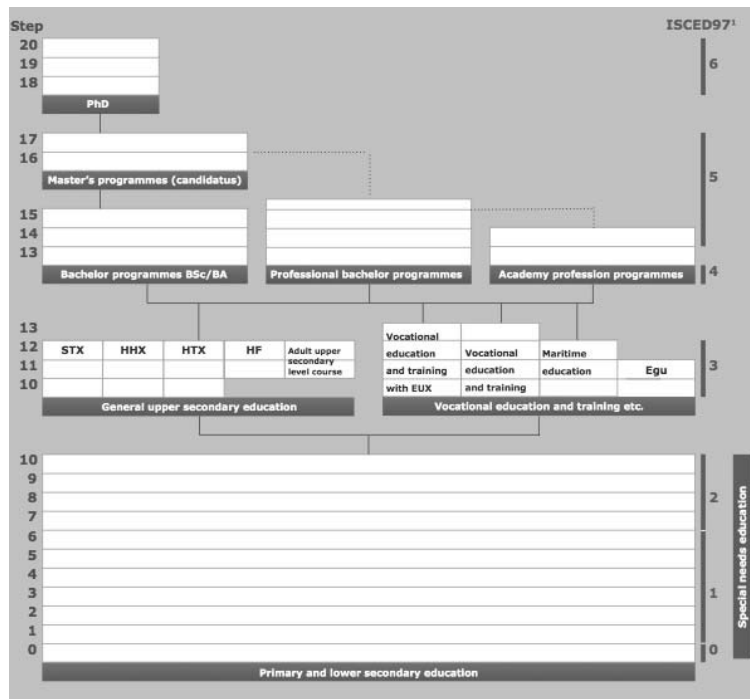


Fig. 2-1 Structure of the Danish education system<sup>1</sup>. Source: The Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation 2011a, 2<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>STX: The STX programme (also referred to as “*Gymnasium*” in Denmark) focuses on general education and study competences in the humanities, natural sciences and social sciences.

HHX: The HHX programme (also referred to as “*Handelsgymnasium*” in Denmark) focuses on business and socio-economic disciplines in combination with foreign languages and other general subjects.

HTX: The HTX programme (also referred to as “*Teknisk Gymnasium*” in Denmark) focuses on technological and scientific subjects in combination with general subjects.

HF: The HF programme emphasises both the practical and theoretical, and like the STX programme, it consists of a broad range of subjects within the humanities, natural sciences and social sciences (The Ministry of Children and Education 2012a. Available online at: <http://www.eng.uvm.dk/Education/Upper-Secondary-Education/Four-Upper-Secondary-Education-Programmes-in-Denmark>).

EUX: The vocational education and training with EUX programme combines general upper secondary level qualifications with vocational education (The Ministry of Children and Education 2012b. Available online at:

Education is compulsory for everyone between the ages of six and sixteen, but as long as acceptable standards as defined by the Ministry of Education are met, it is up to the individual to decide how to receive education: in public/private/independent schools or at home (The Ministry of Children and Education 2012e<sup>3</sup>).

Education from primary school to university is tuition free, and regardless of their social standing, students are entitled to public grant support (SU) from the age of eighteen for youth education attendance, e.g., upper secondary education and for six years of higher education studies. In addition, students can obtain state loans at favourable interest rates during their studies, and students with children receive extra grant support and state loan opportunities (Danish Education Support Agency 2012<sup>4</sup>). At the Ph.D. level students are usually employed with salary.

### 1.1 History and Philosophy behind the Folk School

The idea of creating a comprehensive school for all Danes dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but it was idealistic thinking in a time when the education system was divided into a school system in the countryside and a school system in the market towns. The course was set for a comprehensive school, but a breakthrough did not occur until the General Education Act in 1903 (*Almenskoleloven*), when the vision of an all-encompassing school system was adopted using the term “*folkeskolen*” (the Folk School). A middle school (*mellemskole*) was also established to serve as a bridge between the Folk School and higher education (Brøcher 2003).

Basically, the Folk School is built on a view of humanity derived from 18<sup>th</sup> century philanthropism, which is consistent with later research within the fields of psychology and personality development.

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<http://www.eng.uvm.dk/Service/~media/UVM/Filer/English/PDF/120312%20Education%20and%20training%20in%20DK.ashx>). Egu: The Egu is an individualised basic vocational education and training programme which aims at both employment and continued education (The Ministry of Children and Education 2012c. Available online at: [http://www.eng.uvm.dk/Education/Upper-Secondary-Education/Basic-Vocational-Education-and-Training-\(egu\)](http://www.eng.uvm.dk/Education/Upper-Secondary-Education/Basic-Vocational-Education-and-Training-(egu))).

<sup>2</sup>Available online at: <http://www.iu.dk/publikationer/2011/the-danish-education-system/The%20Danish%20Education%20System%202011.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Available online at: <http://www.eng.uvm.dk/Education/Primary-and-Lower-Secondary-Education/The-Folkeskole>

<sup>4</sup>Available online at: <http://www.su.dk/English/Sider/agency.aspx>

“The object of the school is to develop *all children's* capabilities - and *all capabilities* in children - and assist them in expanding any habitual perceptions of education prevailing in the environment they come from; not to draw hasty conclusions about their capabilities. And in a democratic society where we are all in need of each other, the school must also teach us to live in harmony and respect of each other” (Brøcher 2003, 25).

Over the years, a number of reforms have been implemented. 1969- 1972 saw many changes that form the basis of the Folk School today; for example, the decision to have ten years of undivided primary and lower secondary school, nine of which were compulsory, was made then (Brøcher 2003). In 2008, this was extended to ten years of compulsory education.

The concepts *dannelse*<sup>5</sup> (originally translated from the German *Bildung*) and “education” (*uddannelse*) are important to understanding the Danish education system (Andersen, Jørgensen and Skovmose 2008, Kettel 2003). *Dannelse* is a process and can be described as:

“... a goal for teaching, education, and upbringing in its broadest sense. That is, the formation of a self with the ability to reflect upon this self. That is a self with a relation to tradition, with knowledge, and the ability to cooperate with others, and with knowledge of how to deal with society in general. *Bildung* is then the formation of the young person’s mind so the young person becomes able to be part of society, tradition and a profession. It is also the ability to abstract, to be able to take in theoretical knowledge, and to use this knowledge in accordance with tradition and particular professions” (Henriksen 2006, 54).

Husted (2008) emphasises the difference between educating someone (*dannelses*-thinking) versus educating someone for something (education thinking). In particular, in the later years, many have criticised the development taking place within the Danish school system due to its increased focus on education and what is referred to as a management ideology and product orientation (Kemp 2008).

Today there is an increased focus on preparing children for the business world rather than life in general (Jørgensen and Skovmose 2008). In relation to the primary and lower secondary education system, the philosopher Peter Kemp (2008, 96) states that: “The ‘*dannelse*’ has disappeared, and only education is left.” According to Kemp, the one-

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<sup>5</sup>*Dannelse* is frequently translated to “cultural formation” or “liberal education”, but these translations do not denote the same deep and profound meaning as in Danish and German (Henriksen 2006).



sided focus on knowledge and skills is a breach of the humanistic pedagogy, which has characterised the Danish Folk School since N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872). Kemp (2008) does not advocate a return to past education acts, but rather for the development of a new act, which embraces globalisation and emphasises the development of children's cosmopolitan awareness and responsibility, the development of world citizens and cosmopolitan humanity.

The current aims of the Folk School, which form the basis of the Folk School system, is available in box 2-1.

“1. (1) The Folkeskole is, in cooperation with the parents, to provide students with the knowledge and skills that will prepare them for further education and training and instil in them the desire to learn more; familiarise them with Danish culture and history; give them an understanding of other countries and cultures; contribute to their understanding of the interrelationship between human beings and the environment; and promote the well-rounded development of the individual student.

(2) The Folkeskole is to endeavour to develop the working methods and create a framework that provides opportunities for experience, in-depth study and allows for initiative so that students develop awareness and imagination and a confidence in their own possibilities and backgrounds such that they are able to commit themselves and are willing to take action.

(3) The Folkeskole is to prepare the students to be able to participate, demonstrate mutual responsibility and understand their rights and duties in a free and democratic society. The daily activities of the school must, therefore, be conducted in a spirit of intellectual freedom, equality and democracy.

2. (1) The Folkeskole is the responsibility of the municipalities, cf, however, article 20, paragraph 3. The municipal board is responsible for ensuring every child in the municipality a free education in the Folkeskole. The municipal board is responsible for setting the targets and framework for the activities of the school within the provisions of this Act, cf article 40 and article 40a.

(2) Each school is responsible for ensuring the quality of the education in accordance with the aims of the Folkeskole, within the framework of the Act, cf article 1, and also bears the responsibility for determining the planning and organisation of the programme of education.

(3) Students and parents are to work together with the school in order to live up to the aims of the Folkeskole.”

Box 2-1 The aims of the *Folkeskole*. Source: The Ministry of Children and Education 2012d<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup>Available online at: <http://eng.uvm.dk/Education/Primary-and-Lower-Secondary-Education/The-Folkeskole/The-Aims-of-the-Folkeskole>

The aforementioned aims of the Folk School are also closely linked to the teaching philosophy behind and methods applied within the Danish education system. This will be discussed in section 1.2.

## 1.2 Teaching Philosophy and Methods

Using culture theorist Geert Hofstede's theoretical framework as a point of departure, the Danish culture is characterised by a low power distance, which influences the relationship between parents and children, teachers and students, and the Danish view on human beings in general. Based on Hofstede, the Danish Ministry of Education (2002<sup>7</sup>) presents some fundamental aspects of the Danish school system in terms of the relationship between teachers and students, teaching methods, and rewarded student behaviour:

- Inequalities among people should be reduced to a minimum.
- To some extent there should be interdependence between more powerful and less powerful people. Hence, teachers expect students to take initiative in the classroom.
- Teachers are professionals who pass on impersonal truths.
- Students treat teachers as equals.
- Organisations' hierarchies mean inequalities in terms of roles that are distributed according to convenience.
- Decentralisation is widespread.
- The ideal boss is a resourceful democrat.
- Privileges and status symbols are unpopular. Students should not "suck up to" teachers (Danish Ministry of Education 2002<sup>7</sup>).

Group and project work are learning methods, which are widespread and commonly used, and active student participation and innovative thinking is rewarded within the education system. Group work is inspired by learning theorists such as Jean Piaget and can be considered practical training for democratic decision-making. Thus, it is closely related to the aims of the Folk School (see box 2-1) (Den Store Danske 2012a<sup>8</sup>). Moreover, it can be considered an argument for using PBL and tasks at primary and lower secondary school level, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

In addition, Denmark is considered a feminine society, which refers to

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<sup>7</sup> Available online at: <http://pub.uvm.dk/2002/multikulturelvejledning/03.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Available online at: [http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Erhverv,\\_karriere\\_og\\_ledelse/Paedagogik\\_og\\_uddannelse/Undervisningsmetoder\\_og\\_-teorier/gruppearbejde](http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Erhverv,_karriere_og_ledelse/Paedagogik_og_uddannelse/Undervisningsmetoder_og_-teorier/gruppearbejde)

the expectation on people to be modest; to have great sympathy for the weak in society and, in terms of grades in school, to let the average set the standard. The mind-set of democratic equality permeates Danish society: everyone should have equal opportunities and be treated equally, and thus, teachers are expected to be kind and treat students equally (Danish Ministry of Education 2002<sup>7</sup>).

Danish education institutions are often decentralised in their organisation, and many primary and lower secondary schools are organised in self-governing departments and teams (Thrane 2011). This is closely connected to the school culture for teaching and learning, the emphasis on interdisciplinary methodology, and teachers' freedom of teaching methods and materials. Thus, the practice of teamwork and democracy is not only present in the teaching, but also in the teachers' working environment.

### 1.3 Primary and Lower Secondary School Education

Presently, primary and lower secondary school education in Denmark is generally carried out in comprehensive schools from grade 0-9, and students stay predominantly with the same class group for the entire duration of their primary and lower secondary education. On average, a class size is around 20 students and must not exceed 28 students. The schools are co-ed, there is no school uniform and students call their teacher by his/her first name (Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation 2011b<sup>9</sup>).

Danish teachers qualify with a Bachelor's of Education after four years of training, including six months of practical training from a teacher training college (*seminarium*). The 18 teacher training colleges in Denmark are the only institutions authorised to provide the four-year education programme. The teachers will usually qualify to teach two to three subjects, and they can teach classes from grades 1-10. Qualified teachers from other Nordic and EU countries can apply for a position in the Danish primary and lower secondary schools on equal terms with Danish applicants, whereas applicants educated in other places have to be approved by the Danish authorities (The Danish Union of Teachers 2009<sup>10</sup>).

Approximately 80% of the Danish children attend the public/municipal primary and lower secondary schools (the Folk Schools), and Northern

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<sup>9</sup> Available online at: <http://www.justlanded.com/english/Denmark/Denmark-Guide/Education/Schools-in-Denmark>

<sup>10</sup> Available online at: <http://www.dlf.org/english/the+folkeskole>

Denmark is the part of the country where most students (84%) attend these schools (Danmarks Statistik 2011). 14% of the Danish children attend either a private primary and lower secondary school (*privatskole*) or an independent primary and lower secondary school (*friskole*), and 4% attend an independent boarding school for lower secondary students (*efterskole*)<sup>11</sup> (Danmarks Statistik 2011). The Danish State subsidises approximately 70% of these schools' costs, while parents pay the remaining costs—on average DKK1000/€135 per month. In addition, many private schools have free or partly free places to children whose parents' cannot otherwise afford the school fee (Borgerservice 2012<sup>12</sup>).

Private and independent schools are free to determine the contents of their curricula, but they are required to provide the students with teaching that meets national standards. Thus, in grade 9 (and 10), all private schools offer the same final exam as the municipal schools (Borgerservice 2012<sup>12</sup>).

According to an OECD study, the particular school of attendance has little influence on the level of student achievement in Denmark. In this regard, they differ from many other nations in which the type of school attended can have drastic future consequences, both positively and negatively (Pont 2012<sup>13</sup>). This is also articulated in the following description of the Danish education system:

“The combination of non-academic reasons for founding private schools and the relatively low tuition fees means that, in contrast to other countries, Danish private schools are not generally considered "elitist," and they do not necessarily provide pupils with higher social status or advantages in terms of entry to higher education” (State University 2012<sup>14</sup>).

General support for the Folk School within the Danish population is perhaps also an important part of its success. However, there has been increasing public discontent within the past ten years, which can be traced back to the PISA wave. Historically, the Danish Folk School has enjoyed international recognition for its ability to include children across social class lines and it has played a key role in the Danish welfare system. However, an average Danish PISA performance has caused massive

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<sup>11</sup> The remaining 2% attend other kinds of schools.

<sup>12</sup> Available online at: <https://www.borger.dk/Sider/Privatskoler-og-friskoler.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> Presentation by Senior Education Policy Analyst at the OECD, Beatrice Pont, at the Danish School Students' Conference “School Summit 2012”, at the Danish Parliament, Christiansborg, May 3, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Available online at: <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/371/Denmark-PRIMARY-PREPRIMARY-EDUCATION.html>

criticism, and a growing number of parents and students choose private or independent schools as alternatives, especially in the Copenhagen area (Strand and Kamil 2011).

In recent years several changes have taken place within the primary and lower secondary education system, and part of these are related to the increasingly globalised world we live in. The internationalisation of education in Denmark will be discussed in sections 2-2.2.

## **2. Internationalisation of Education in Denmark**

David Killick (2006) argues that internationalisation of education can be interpreted as the education system's response to globalisation. At a conceptual level internationalisation of a school describes the transformation process that occurs when transnational co-operation has an impact on the school as an organisation, and thus, there is a close link between internationalisation and school development (Heidemann 1999).

A distinction is often made between “Internationalisation at Home” (IaH), involving for example, curriculum development and exchange of academic staff, and internationalisation through mobility, involving studies abroad and student exchanges (Jones and Brown 2007, Joris, Berg and Ryssen 2003). How an educational institution decides to go about an internationalisation process can therefore vary greatly.

Despite some initiatives like the Comenius projects, there is currently no widespread tradition for internationalisation through mobility at primary and lower-secondary and upper secondary school level in Denmark, and thus IaH would be the expected main focus for Danish schools working towards internationalisation.

At a more fundamental level there is also the question of why schools internationalise, and Killick (2006) argues that many fail to incorporate a sufficiently broad conceptualisation of the term and explains that internationalised education:

“is not about who we educate or where we educate, it is not even directly about what or how we teach those who come to be educated. It is, more fundamentally, about why we educate. Content, methodology, and context should be shaped in response to the values which drive our endeavours” (Killick 2006, 1).

Internationalisation does not only have an impact at an institutional level. Using the programme logic model, Darla Deardorff (2005) indicates that the outcome of internationalisation at an individual level is interculturally competent individuals, or in other words, people capable of living as

global citizens in the present multicultural and globalised world (Risager 2000). Intercultural competence development is a never-ending process, but it can be encouraged and supported in formal educational contexts.

In the past decade, a number of ministerial reports in Denmark have emphasised the need for internationalisation of the Danish education system (Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, The Danish Government 2006, 2010, The Taskforce for Foreign Languages 2011). Higher education is not the only focus of their attention. Recent initiatives are putting increased attention on the primary and lower secondary schools, and indeed the internationalisation of the entire education system is the overall objective.

In the 2010 report “The Internationalisation That Never Came to Life” (*Internationaliseringen der blev væk* (Styrelsen for International Uddannelse, Denmark, 2010)), it was addressed that many primary and lower secondary schools in Denmark actually do not live up to the minimum demands in terms of bringing in the international dimension to their teaching. The inclusion of the international dimension was made compulsory in 2009, and it is now required to be present as an integrated part of all subjects (and not only language subjects) from grade 0-10. In addition, students are expected to take part in at least one international project during their time in school. Thus, although focus on international aspects is highly emphasised, it is not always carried out in practice (Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation 2010b, The Taskforce for Foreign Languages 2011).

While internationalisation is not considered only relevant to foreign language teaching, and the inclusion of the international dimension is compulsory in every subject, languages are still considered to play a key role. Thus, the importance of focusing on language education at all levels within the education system has been stressed. Both teaching more language classes and offering an even greater variety of languages have been highlighted as an important part of the internationalisation strategy (Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation 2010b).

## **2.1 Foreign Languages in the Internationalisation Strategy**

Danish is the national language in Denmark, and students learn Danish from grade 0. English is compulsory from grade 3, but some schools begin the teaching as early as grade 1 (Frank 2012<sup>15</sup>). In grade 7, students have an option to study a second foreign language, primarily German, though

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<sup>15</sup>Available online at: <http://www.folkeskolen.dk/507923/engelsk-i-1-klasse-breder-sig->

sometimes also French, and 89% of the students leave grade 9 with two foreign languages (Olsen 2011<sup>16</sup>). It is a requirement for students continuing their education in general upper secondary school (STX, HHX, HTX, HF or adult upper secondary level education<sup>17</sup>) to have had two to four years of primary and lower secondary school teaching in German or French as a second foreign language (Uddannelsesguiden 2012<sup>18</sup>). Some schools also offer language teaching in a third foreign language from grade 7 or 8 with or without a school certificate.

In a 2011 report “Languages Are the Key to the World” (*Sprog er nøglen til verden*) the unique role of foreign languages was stressed and recommendations were made to begin the teaching of English in grade 1 instead of grade 3, to make the second foreign language, usually German or French, obligatory from grade 5 instead of elective from grade 7, and to offer a third elective foreign language with a school certificate from grade 7.

The importance of offering a wider range of languages as the third foreign language was underlined in the report, and Chinese, Spanish, Urdu, Portuguese, and Arabic were offered as suggested languages. Already a number of private/independent schools offer such teaching, but in general, the recommendations are still far from integrated into the school system, both in the private/independent schools and the municipal, public Folk Schools (The Taskforce for Foreign Languages 2011).

In the foreign language hierarchy in Denmark, Chinese has not been and still is not highly ranked. However, with the changing role of China on the world stage and the emphasis to introduce even more languages to Danish students, there appears to be room for Chinese in the future. English is undeniably the most important foreign language in Denmark, but German and French are also considered very important languages. German is important due to it being the most spoken native language in Europe (18%) and Germany being the neighbouring country to Denmark. Meanwhile, French is considered an important language of culture and is seen as a useful entrance point to other Latin languages (The Taskforce for Foreign Languages 2011).

For obvious reasons, Danish people do not encounter Chinese as often as German or French in a local context, but Chinese is spoken by approximately 1.3 billion people, and increased transnational mobility indicates that by 2050 Chinese might be a second language for many

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<sup>16</sup>Available online at: <http://www.folkeskolen.dk/69192/de-radikale-tysk-skal-vaere-obligatorisk>

<sup>17</sup>See previous note in figure 2-1.

<sup>18</sup>Available online at: [http://www.ug.dk/flereomraader/maalgrupper/6til10\\_klasse/optagelse\\_til\\_de\\_gymnasiale\\_uddannelser.aspx](http://www.ug.dk/flereomraader/maalgrupper/6til10_klasse/optagelse_til_de_gymnasiale_uddannelser.aspx)

people, just like English is today (Risager 2006). Moreover, according to Chen and Chung (1993 in Burnett and Gardner 2006), a maximal distance exists between Western and Eastern cultures, and thus, the introduction of Chinese could open a window to the East for Danish students and further their understanding of the global world—and the world outside of Europe.

At the upper secondary school level in Denmark, foreign language teaching is now facing many obstacles. An unfortunate side effect of an upper secondary school reform in 2005/2006 is that the percentage of students studying three or more languages has steeply declined from 41% in 2007 to 3% in 2009 at STX upper secondary schools and from 22% to 3% at HHX upper secondary schools. On the other hand, the percentage of students doing two level A<sup>19</sup> languages has risen from 13% to 31% (STX) and from 11% to 42% (HHX) in the same period. However, the reason for this trend is often that students choose English and then start up with a new foreign language, often Spanish, instead of pursuing German or French as a continuation of their language skills from primary and lower secondary school. German and French are facing difficulties attracting students in upper secondary school while more exotic languages such as Latin, Greek and Chinese are growing in popularity—perhaps due to an interest among the students to learn more about different cultures or the novelty of a language such as Chinese (The Taskforce for Foreign Languages 2011).

Chinese as a foreign language is new at the primary and lower secondary school and upper secondary school levels. The Ministry of Education estimates that, currently, approximately 380 students are studying Chinese as a foreign language at a beginners level (B and A) or Chinese area studies at the upper secondary school level. Furthermore, two upper secondary schools, Niels Steensens Gymnasium and Stenhus Gymnasium, are taking part in a pilot project to offer Chinese as a foreign language at a continuation level (Bühlmann 2012<sup>20</sup>). There is no official record of primary and lower secondary schools offering Chinese language and culture activities. The CI AAU's information shows that 14 primary and lower secondary schools in Northern Denmark have offered Chinese language and culture activities; however, it is very likely that there are other China/Chinese-related initiatives in Denmark of which we are unaware.

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<sup>19</sup>For more information on levels in upper secondary school, please see section 4.4 about Aalborg Handelsskole (Aalborg Business College).

<sup>20</sup>*Fakta om kinesisk som sprogfag og som områdestudium*. Unofficial document from the Danish Ministry of Education, last updated January 2012.



As presented in the aforementioned paragraph, a number of North Danish primary and lower secondary schools' and upper secondary schools' latest response to an increased focus on internationalisation has been to implement Chinese language and culture activities in collaboration with the CI AAU (Egekvist 2011, Egekvist and Kirkebæk 2012, Rannestad 2012, Keller 2012, Haensel 2012). Prior to the establishment of the CI AAU, no primary and lower secondary schools in the area were offering Chinese language and culture courses. However, a STX upper secondary school called Støvring Gymnasium in Rebild municipality south of Aalborg, was at the forefront and began offering Chinese in 2007. Additionally, a Confucius Classroom was established at the school in 2010 in co-operation with the CI AAU. As an argument for introducing Chinese, the head teacher has explained in a newscast that:

“...the Chinese are very skilled at listening to our way of organising the world, but we are mistaken if we believe that Western Europe and the US will set the entire agenda in the future. We need to understand what is happening in China, and our young people must be part of that and not just spectators” (Nielsen 2010<sup>21</sup>).

Besides introducing Chinese language and culture activities as a part of an internationalisation process, many educational institutions engage in international activities through well-established international programmes, which will be discussed in more detail in section 2.2.

## **2.2 Existing International Programmes**

International programmes and activities in Denmark have been increasing due to globalisation, especially under the auspices of the EU. As part of the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme, all levels of education from pre-school to upper secondary school have an opportunity to make use of Comenius offers, and in Denmark, there is widespread interest in doing so. At an overall level, Comenius' aims are to:

“boost the quality of school education in Europe and help young people acquire the basic life skills and competences necessary for their personal development and future employment” (European Commission 2012, 2).

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<sup>21</sup>Room a newscast about the opening of a Confucius Classroom at Støvring Gymnasium. In *TV 2 NYHEDERNE*, November 16 2010.

In practice, education staff, students, and policy makers are provided with concrete opportunities to learn about and co-operate on school relevant issues through a variety of opportunities: Comenius In-Service Training, Comenius Assistantships, Comenius School Partnerships or eTwinning, Comenius Individual Student Mobility, Comenius Regio Partnerships, and Comenius multilateral projects or networks (European Commission 2012). Individuals or schools apply through local agencies managed centrally on a national level. In Denmark, the Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation in the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education is responsible for Comenius and a number of other international programmes funded by the EU, bilateral agreements, or by the government.

Several Danish schools have already made use of the Comenius programmes, and at a municipal level, the international dimension of the primary and lower secondary education is sometimes further supported. Thus, by way of an example, in Aalborg municipality in Northern Denmark, international consultants from the Aalborg School Administration offer assistance and support to schools, including financially, in their internationalisation efforts (Aalborg Municipal School System 2011).

In terms of establishing China-related activities, the Aalborg School Administration has collaborated with the CI AAU since December 2010 and has given financial support to schools and staff involved in CI AAU-organised activities. Additionally, in 2011 Aalborg municipality provided the CI AAU with a downtown facility for the establishment of a learning centre for Chinese language and culture that is open to schools and the public<sup>22</sup>. A good foundation for Chinese language and culture activities exists; however, it remains a general challenge for international activities involving China that there are no established international programmes for Denmark-China activities.

In sections 3-3.1 the Confucius Institute as a cultural institution and the CI AAU will be discussed in order to provide the reader with a better understanding of the Confucius Institutes' work around the world and more specifically in Northern Denmark.

### **3. The Confucius Institute**

The Chinese thinker and social philosopher Confucius (551 BCE – 479 BCE) whose “primary concern was a good society based on good government and harmonious human relations” (Wing-Tsit 1963, 14), has

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<sup>22</sup>For more information on the CI AAU Learning Centre, please see section 3.1.

deeply influenced the Chinese way of thinking with his teachings and philosophy. Today, the importance of his influence can be noted by the creation of a platform in his name that promotes Chinese language and culture teaching, research and cultural exchange activities.

On November 21, 2004, the first Confucius Institute in the world was opened in Seoul, Korea, and the Confucius Institute's headquarters in Beijing, which is under the Office of Chinese Language Council International (*Hanban*), took its first steps towards reaching its goal of establishing Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms around the globe. By December 2011, there were 358 Confucius Institutes in 82 countries and more than 500 Confucius Classrooms around the world. Three of these Confucius Institutes are located in Denmark, at Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Aalborg University (AAU) and The Royal Danish Academy of Music, respectively, and three Confucius Classrooms have been established in co-operations with Danish education institutions.

China is not the first country to promote cultural exchange abroad. Institutes such as the Goethe Institute, the British Council, the Alliance Francaise, and the Danish Cultural Institute have existed for many years, and there are many similarities between such cultural institutions and the Confucius Institute. However, in contrast to these aforementioned institutes, a Confucius Institute is generally established in cooperation between a Chinese and a foreign University, and it is located at the foreign university. Thus, the CI AAU is established jointly by AAU and Beijing Normal University (BNU) and is located at the Department of Learning and Philosophy at AAU.

Each Confucius Institute creates its own unique profile, and activities offered by the numerous institutes may vary greatly. What all institutes have in common is the support and services provided from the Confucius Institute headquarters in Beijing, which includes training of Chinese language teachers, supplying textbooks, giving scholarships for students to study in China, and providing information about China in general as well as facilitating China-related research.

The establishment of the Confucius Institutes in Denmark indicates that Denmark and China have a mutual interest in promoting Chinese language and culture in Danish society. At a Danish ministerial level, the recognition of the need to further tighten relations between Denmark and China was emphasised when the former Danish minister of Education, Tina Nedergaard, issued a press release on November 16, 2010, in the Danish newspaper, *Politiken*, stating that she wanted to put Chinese in the curriculum in the upper secondary schools, a statement which was strongly

supported by many people in the Danish business and industry sectors (Fuglsang and Sætz 2010). However, good intentions are one thing; another is the actual implementation in practice of Chinese language and culture teaching into the Danish society.

### **3.1 The Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning (CI AAU)**

On September 18, 2009, the inauguration of the CI AAU took place at the Utzon Centre in Aalborg. The second Confucius Institute in Denmark was hereby established, and thus, a North Denmark platform for Chinese language teaching, cultural exchange activities and academic research became a reality.

The CI AAU's main objectives are: to provide Chinese language and Chinese language teacher training, to provide cultural exchange activities and to develop educational activities that contribute to creativity and innovation capabilities. Therefore, the CI AAU functions as a collective group of language ambassadors/agents and aims at providing Chinese language teaching and culture activities to people in Denmark who do not speak the language. It also aims at potentially promoting cooperation between Denmark and China through increased mutual cultural awareness, understanding and communication. In addition, the CI AAU strongly emphasises research.

Prior to the establishment of the CI AAU, such activities in Northern Denmark were scarce. Thus, a CI AAU Learning Centre for Chinese Language and Culture was established in 2011 as a facility to provide Chinese language teaching and a place to experience Chinese culture activities. The Learning Centre is open for schools at all levels and to the public, and it includes an exhibition of traditional Chinese culture elements such as antique wood furniture, a terra-cotta warrior sculpture, Chinese porcelain, Chinese music instruments, Chinese books, Chinese national costumes, classical Chinese paintings and calligraphy. The Learning Centre activities include workshops, days it is open to the general public and visits that offer experiences with paper-cutting, calligraphy, painting, tai chi, musical performances and a traditional Chinese tea ceremony for students and teachers as a part of their Chinese language and culture courses.

In addition, a pipeline project for Chinese language and culture teaching was launched in 2011. Through network building with schools, the objective is to establish a Chinese programme that builds on previous language teaching levels—from primary and lower secondary school to

upper secondary school and university. As a part of this pipeline project, a variety of Chinese language and culture course opportunities were designed for primary and lower secondary school levels<sup>23</sup>.

However, it was one thing for the CI AAU to offer such language and culture learning activities, but another to find a good way of helping and motivating people in the local area to engage in them and learn from them. Thus, along with the Chinese language and opportunities for cultural activities, the CI AAU has been working hard in order to establish a research environment among the CI AAU's employees within the fields of teaching, education, business, and industry.

As a part of the CI AAU's initiatives to establish educational co-operations between Denmark and China, the CI AAU organised an eight day delegation visit to Beijing for primary and lower secondary school head teachers in the North Denmark Region. The objective was to bridge the gap between Danish and Chinese schools, provide an opportunity for mutual learning and establish a foundation for future collaboration between Danish and Chinese schools (Egekvist 2012). In addition, the delegation visit did in fact establish a solid foundation on which to develop cooperation between the CI AAU and local schools and has played an important role in the CI AAU's overall development.

#### **4. Educational Institutions Cooperating with the CI AAU**

Denmark is a small country with 5.6 million people. As previously mentioned, the CI AAU is located in Aalborg in the North Denmark Region and is (by Danish standards) quite a distance from the capital of Denmark, Copenhagen (around 1.2 million inhabitants), which is situated in the eastern part of the country. The North Denmark Region is rather remote with around 580,000 inhabitants and contains 11 municipalities with Aalborg, the fourth largest city in Denmark of approximately 105,000 inhabitants, located in the southern part.

Aalborg University (AAU) is making considerable improvements for Northern Denmark due to its increasing number of university graduates and close cooperation with the regional industry and business sector. Since the 1970s Aalborg has developed from a working-class city with a strong industrial base to a "knowledge city" in which the service and education sectors employ more than 60% of the work force (Den Store Danske 2012b<sup>24</sup>).

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<sup>23</sup>More information about these courses is provided in section 4.

<sup>24</sup>Available online at:

Since its establishment in 2009, the CI AAU has cooperated with a number of educational institutions in Northern Denmark with regards to Chinese language and culture teaching activities:

- Higher education: Within AAU. Since autumn 2009.
- Upper secondary education: Four upper secondary schools in two municipalities (STX, HHX and EUX schools<sup>25</sup>). Since autumn 2010.
- Primary and lower secondary education: Fourteen schools in four municipalities in the North Denmark Region. Since spring 2011.

At the primary and lower secondary school level, the CI AAU has developed a strategy to gradually introduce an increasingly advanced kind of Chinese language and culture programme to the schools i.e., a “China day” (approximately five to seven lessons) or “China week” (approximately 25 lessons). These occasions are used to introduce Chinese language and culture teaching and to determine how co-operation between the school and the CI AAU might function. From there, they move on to establishing a short-term course and finally a long-term course if both the students and school have the required interest and commitment.

The initiative has enjoyed rapid success, but the CI AAU can only expand its activities up to a certain point due to certain logistical problems. At the moment, it is difficult for the CI AAU to offer regular teaching in locations far away from Aalborg. Thus, travel time has to be taken into consideration, and at present, one hour on public transportation is the maximum to which the CI AAU can commit. Hence, in reality, the majority of the educational institutions co-operating with the CI AAU are located in Aalborg municipality.

In this book, four kinds of teaching programmes at four educational institutions in Northern Denmark are presented. Table 2-1 provides a schematic presentation thereof within a framework of teaching programme duration (number of modules), the role of the subject (elective or compulsory) and the teaching context (in or after school).

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[http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Danmarks\\_geografi\\_og\\_historie/Danmarks\\_geografi/Danmarks\\_kommuner/Aalborg\\_Kommune](http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Danmarks_geografi_og_historie/Danmarks_geografi/Danmarks_kommuner/Aalborg_Kommune)

<sup>25</sup>See previous note in figure 2-1

**Table 2-1 The CI AAU's teaching programmes at four educational institutions**

<b>Educational institution</b>	<b>Klostermark School</b>	<b>Gug School</b>	<b>Skovsgaard School</b>	<b>Aalborg Business College</b>
<b>Modules of 2 lessons per class</b>	24	10	12	
<b>Regular Chinese class<sup>26</sup></b>				X
<b>Elective<sup>27</sup></b>	X		X	X
<b>Compulsory<sup>28</sup></b>		X		
<b>In school<sup>29</sup></b>		X	X	X
<b>After school<sup>30</sup></b>	X			

In sections 4.1-4.4, the four educational institutions mentioned in table 2-1 will be discussed in greater detail in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the contexts in which the teachings presented in chapters 4-6 were carried out.

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<sup>26</sup>Regular Chinese class: A long-term Chinese class based on a curriculum recognised by the Danish Ministry of Education and resulting in a certificate at the end of the course, e.g., as a level B or A in upper secondary school. For more information, please see section 4-4 about Aalborg Handelsskole.

<sup>27</sup>Elective class: Chinese language and culture classes, which are elective for the students. It refers to both elective classes as a free-time activity and in-school activity, where students have to make a choice among a variety of course options. Thus, the choice of studying Chinese language and culture does not necessarily represent an interest in the subject among the students. For some, it might be a choice between two evils or their last choice, and for others it might indicate a genuine interest.

<sup>28</sup>Compulsory class: Chinese language and culture classes, which are compulsory for the students. Hence, they are placed as an obligatory part of their school schedule.

<sup>29</sup>In-school class: Chinese language and culture classes taking place during normal school hours.

<sup>30</sup>After-school class: Chinese language and culture classes taking place after normal school hours in the students' free time.

#### **4.1 Klostermarksskolen (Klostermark School)**

Klostermark School is a private primary and lower school in Aalborg municipality. The school is located in the centre of Aalborg and has approximately 550 students from grade 0-10 with each year consisting of one-three classes.

Currently, the school does not have a specific internationalisation strategy, but it has had student exchanges to both France (ten-day homestays) and Germany (five-day homestays) for several years. It is obligatory for students studying German and French to join these student exchanges in grade 9. The school always invites the foreign students to visit Klostermark School; the Germans have visited every year, whereas the French have only visited twice so far.

The school has sent two delegations to Belgium and two to Scotland. Four teachers have participated in further education in Iceland, and some have been to Germany to receive education. In addition, the head teachers have been abroad a few times in the past two years, including as a part of the CI AAU delegation visit to Beijing in 2011.

According to the deputy head at Klostermark School, there are several plans for international activities in the future, for example, through Comenius projects and in co-operation with the CI AAU about Chinese language and culture activities.

The CI AAU's co-operation with Klostermark School includes: a free and elective after-school Chinese language and culture course for students from grade 8 and 9 (long term: with two lessons per week throughout the school year). Based on the current interest among the students, and as a result of recent positive experiences, Klostermark School has decided to offer another long-term CI AAU organised Chinese language and culture course in the 2012/2013 school year for grade 7 and 8 students. Furthermore, in August 2012 nine Chinese students from grade 7-9 students (age 12-16) will visit the school for a five-day student exchange in homestays with Danish students (arranged in cooperation with Gug School and the CI AAU). Chapter 4 will introduce more about the CI AAU's teaching at Klostermark School.

#### **4.2 Gug Skole (Gug School)**

Gug School is one of the largest municipal primary and lower secondary schools in Aalborg municipality. It is located in the suburb, Gug, in the south eastern part of Aalborg. The school has approximately 800 students from grade 0-9 with each year consisting of three to five



classes. According to the head teacher<sup>31</sup>, the vast majority of students are ethnically Danish, and thus, the student composition is not representative of the increasingly multicultural Danish society.

Over the past few years the school has worked with three focus areas, one of which is “world citizen”. In the 2011/2012 school plan it is explained that:

“The focus area world citizen is chosen with the aim that students at Gug School become willing and able to act with consideration for fellow man, nature and the environment, locally, nationally and globally. It is important to us that our students become prepared to live in a multicultural society where respect and tolerance are the keywords. Furthermore, it is important that we prepare our students to study or live abroad for some periods of their lives” (Skoleplan Gug Skole 2011, 7<sup>32</sup>).

Based on the “world citizen” focus, internationalisation and globalisation are integrated parts of daily school life. The school motto is: “Think globally, act locally!”, and all classes at Gug School work with this concept at certain times of the year.

Gug School was one of three “World Citizen Schools” in Aalborg municipality from 2008-2011 and has a long history of international activities via several Comenius projects, which have led to many visits abroad for students and teachers. In addition, the school has had five language assistants since 2004 from various European countries<sup>33</sup>, and the head teacher took part in the CI AAU delegation visit to Beijing in 2011.

In August 2011 Gug School launched a new initiative starting from grade 7 with four different study programmes: “Innovation”, “Body and Movement”, “Science” and “International”. All students now have to choose a specialisation programme, which runs from grade 7-9 (Skoleplan Gug Skole 2011<sup>32</sup>). 42 grade 7 students chose the international study programme, which includes some “content and language integrated learning” (CLIL) with English as the language of teaching, e.g., in maths and geography. In addition, the international programme includes English and German (three lessons a week each), with a final examination in grade 9, French (two lessons per week) from grade 7 to 9 and Chinese language and culture classes (two lessons per week) for ten weeks in autumn 2011.

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<sup>31</sup>Interview with the head teacher on June 7, 2011 (Egekvist 2011)

<sup>32</sup>Available online at: <http://www.gug-skole.skoleintra.dk/Infoweb/Indhold/Skoleplan/Skoleplan%20Gug%20Skole.pdf>

<sup>33</sup>For more information, please see Gug School’s homepage. Available online at: <http://www.gug-skole.skoleintra.dk/Infoweb/Designskabelon8/Rammeside.asp?Action=&Side=&Klasse=&Id=&Startside=&ForumID>

Gug School was the first primary and lower secondary school to engage in co-operation with the CI AAU in winter 2010. Since then the co-operation has included: Two “China weeks” (short term: one week with 25 lessons) (Egekvist 2011), a Chinese language and culture course (short term: ten weeks with ten modules of two lessons each) as an obligatory part of the international study programme in grade 7 and a three-day student exchange in February 2012 that included 22 grade 7 Chinese students in homestays with Danish students from grade 6 and 7. The cooperation will continue in the 2012/2013 school year when another 11 grade 7-9 Chinese students (age 12-16) will visit the school for a five-day student exchange in homestays (arranged in cooperation with Klostermark School and the CI AAU) and with a long-term after-school Chinese language and culture course (two lessons per week) in the 2012/2013 school year. Chapter 5 will introduce more about the CI AAU’s teaching at Gug School.

### **4.3 Skovsgårdskolen (Skovsgaard School)**

Skovsgaard School is a municipal primary and lower secondary school in Jammerbugt municipality. It is located in the small town of Skovsgård 35 km north west of Aalborg. The school has approximately 270 students from grade 0-9 with each year consisting of one to two classes. Recently, Skovsgaard School merged with Tranum School (approximately 120 students), and from August 2012, the name of the school will be Skovsgaard Tranum School.

It has been at least ten years since Skovsgaard School took part in international activities through a Comenius project, but Tranum School was part of an EU international project in 2010 and had students from Turkey, Austria and Romania visiting a grade 7 class for eight days, and the currently appointed deputy head was part of the CI AAU delegation visit to Beijing in 2011. At present, there are no specific plans for international activities; however, according to the currently appointed deputy head, many of the language teachers are interested in establishing some. In fact, he underscores how the school would like to focus more on international activities. However, an enthusiastic teacher taking the lead is essential. Another reason for focusing more on international activities is to live up to the aims of the primary and lower secondary school law in this area, which are currently not being met.

The youth school in Jammerbugt municipality used to have quite a few language assistants who were also engaged in teaching, but recently, this has been stopped in the youth school. However, one of the German

teachers at the school has German friends who visit the school once a year and function as guest teachers.

Skovsgaard School decided to offer Chinese because a large proportion of its students have never left Northern Denmark, much less Denmark itself; since the students do not travel abroad, the school has to bring the world to the students. The language teachers face difficulties motivating the students, and thus a decision was made to bring something completely different to the school, which was unfamiliar to the students. The decision to offer Chinese language and culture as an elective class in school for grade 7-9 was exactly what the students needed. It turned out to be the largest elective class, even surpassing numbers in PE and home economics, which are usually the most popular subjects among the students.

The CI AAU's co-operation with Skovsgaard School includes: an elective in-school Chinese language and culture course for students from grade 7-9 (long term: with two lessons every week for one semester). The cooperation will continue with a long-term after-school Chinese language and culture course (two hours per week) in the 2012/2013 school year. Chapter 6 will introduce more about the CI AAU's teaching at Skovsgaard School.

#### **4.4 Aalborg Handelsskole (Aalborg Business College)**

Aalborg Business College is a secondary school in Aalborg municipality. It is located in the centre of Aalborg. Aalborg Business College has approximately 2600 students. The school offers various education programmes: HG (basic training in retail/trade and office work), HHX (a three year upper secondary education within the field of retail/trade and office work (higher commercial examination)), and training programmes for private enterprises and the public sector (Aalborg Business College 2012<sup>34</sup>, Aalborg Handelsskole 2012).

In general, upper secondary school education students can study various subjects offered at three different levels: A, B and C in relation to the scope and depth of the subjects. Each level equals a certain number of teaching lessons, with level A courses having the most lessons and level C the least. The Danish Ministry of Education has worked out a detailed teaching plan for each level for the teachers to follow. The teaching plan describes the aims of the course, the main contents, the didactic principles

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<sup>34</sup> Aalborg Business College's homepage. Available online at: <http://www.ah.dk/aalborg-business-college.html>

and the teaching methods, evaluation and examination forms and regulations<sup>35</sup>.

Aalborg Business College has more than 20 friendship schools around the world, and internationalisation plays an important part in the school in general. Internationalisation has been positioned as one of five focus areas of the school in its 2012-2017 strategy, and the intention is to increase the availability of international opportunities such as study trips, student exchanges, internships abroad and networks for international students. The objective is that “these activities shall lead to international knowledge and competences to the students in order to prepare them for a globalised job market” (Aalborg Handelsskole 2012).

At an overall level Aalborg Business College aims to be:

“one of the leading schools in the region, offering internationally tailored education so that students from Aalborg Business School can always meet the needs of international competences in the business community. Likewise, it should be natural for graduates from Aalborg Business School to succeed in the international job market and in international study environments” (Aalborg Handelsskole 2012, 7).

The CI AAU’s co-operation with Aalborg Business College includes: regular Chinese language classes at HHX at level B (the 2011-2012 school year was the first of two years of study at the level B). It is an elective subject for the students and a long-term class with three sessions of 70 minutes teaching per week throughout the school year. Furthermore, the CI AAU has given individual lectures twice as part of a cultural understanding course. Chapter 7 will introduce more about the CI AAU’s teaching at Aalborg Business College.

## 5. Summary

This chapter has reviewed the Danish education system, in particular the primary and lower secondary school system, with emphasis on the fundamentally important concepts *dannelse* and education, the historical background and the teaching traditions and methods. Recent years’ development within the education system and the increased focus on internationalisation has been discussed in relation to foreign language teaching in Denmark in general as well as well-established international programmes such as Comenius and especially new initiatives within

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<sup>35</sup> Please see UVM (2012) for the full version of the study programme for the Chinese level A, B, and C.

Chinese language and culture teaching. Hence, the Confucius Institute as a cultural institution and, in particular, the CI AAU is presented in terms of its objectives, teaching activities, facilities for Chinese language teaching and cultural experiences, and research environment. Lastly, the four educational institutions, at which the teaching presented in this book in chapters 4-7 has taken place, are discussed. In general, this chapter serves as a background support and forms the foundation for the context of the Task-Based PBL teaching presented in this book.

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## Paper 2: Learning from designing and organizing an intercultural student exchange program

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## **1. LEARNING FROM DESIGNING AND ORGANIZING AN INTERCULTURAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, China's rapid development has drawn attention in all parts of the world. This has happened in a time when globalization and internalization are terms that frequently occur in the Danish educational context, and several ministerial reports call for more internationalization and an expansion of international activities to go beyond the borders of Europe and the West (The Danish Government, 2006; Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalization, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c).

In the North Denmark Region many primary and lower secondary schools (*grundskoler*) have shown a growing interest in offering courses in Chinese language teaching, even going so far as to arrange student exchange programs (Du & Kirkebæk 2012). In response to this, the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University (CI AAU) initiated a student exchange program between Danish and Chinese schools in early 2012. Two visits to Danish schools from Chinese schools were conducted within half a year, with the aim of facilitating both institutional development toward internationalization and individual student development toward becoming global citizens for both participating schools. In addition to benefitting the students and schools involved, the design and operation of the student exchanges provided learning opportunities for the designers<sup>1</sup> of the program. We will discuss these learning opportunities in this chapter, drawing inspiration from John Cowan's reflection theory.

The design of the student exchange program was inspired by Etienne Wenger's concept of the community of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998). In this chapter, a theoretical framework is developed by linking the concept of culture to communities of practice in order to understand and analyze the cultural and intercultural issues of cultivating a CoP. In order to understand, reflect on, and evaluate the program, we, the designers, documented the process using multiple empirical methods: interviews, video recordings, participant observations, student portfolios, and student diaries. These different pieces of documentation will be included in our analysis.

After the implementation of the experimental program, we reflected on the methodology of the design and the research conducted during the program. In this

chapter, we present our reflection by addressing two research questions: What are the challenges and possibilities involved in facilitating the creation of an intercultural CoP via such a student exchange program? What did the designers learn about culture in the process of designing and conducting an intercultural CoP?

In this chapter, we aim to present the design and conduction process of the exchange program, and reflect upon the methods that were used. The framework of culture and learning theory will be employed to analyze and discuss our empirical work, including methodology and process as well as the outcome of the program. Based on this information, we developed several recommendations on how to improve similar student exchange programs in the future. However, we begin with a brief introduction of the background of the student exchange program.

### THE STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The student exchange was an unexpected opportunity that arose in December 2011 and left us, the designers, with less than two months to prepare. Originally, the CI AAU had not planned to initiate any student exchange programs until later the following year, but after a successful delegation trip of 26 Danish primary and lower secondary school principals to Beijing earlier that year, there was a mutual interest in arranging a student exchange program. As a result, when a school in Hangzhou, China, planned a study trip to the northern part of Germany for 22 students of ages 13 and 14 and found that there would be time for them to spend four days in Aalborg, Denmark, no one hesitated to make the arrangements.

As this was a pilot study for the CI AAU, the short duration of the visit was considered ideal for an experiment, and we were quickly able to make agreements with a Danish partner school that would be willing to find 22 same-age host students and suspend regular schooling for the visiting days. The entire student exchange program turned out to be a meaningful learning experience not only for the students and schools involved, but also for us the designers, due to the data we were able to collect in relation to the student exchange and the reflections that took place during every phase of the program.

### LEARNING FROM REFLECTION

To dig deeper into the analysis of our own learning processes, we will focus on reflective learning, inspired by ideas of Donald Schön (1983) and John Cowan (2006). This will act as a meta-level analysis of our own learning in the designing and conducting of the exchange program as a CoP. Thus, we regard ourselves as what Schön (1983) would call “reflective practitioners” and see the entire process of designing and conducting the exchange program as a learning cycle in itself.

The concept of reflection for learning has been developed and discussed intensively by Chris Argyris, Donald Schön and John Cowan, all of whom supplement and build on each other’s work. Based on the ideas developed with Chris Argyris (Argyris &

Schön, 1978), Schön continued developing his concept of reflection in *The Reflective Practitioner* (Schön, 1983). Likewise, Cowan (2006) builds on ideas from Schön. We took inspiration from both of their works to look at our own learning process.

Reflective learning is often described as following a certain pattern with different reflection phases. Certain elements seem to reappear in most theories on reflective learning, while the role and placement of reflection changes. The reflection is most frequently centered on an experience, activity, or action, and the reflection related to this leads to a conceptualization or generalization that can be described as learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Schön, 1983; Cowan, 2006).

In order to structure this chapter in a chronological way, we find inspiration in Cowan's theory that describes the intervals of reflection as *reflection-for-action*, *reflection-in-action*, and *reflection-on-action*. Reflection-for-action is an anticipatory kind of reflection that takes place prior to an action. It is based on prior experience and knowledge related to an impending task or action. Reflection-in-action is, as implied, found in the process of operating or conducting an action and covers reflection that can lead to improvisation for solving challenges as they occur. This kind of reflection consists of both anticipatory and retrospective thought. Finally, reflection-on-action describes reflection taking place after a learning experience. It includes thoughts on what was done in the situation and tries to analyze and summarize the past experience and extract generalizations which will be of future use (Cowan, 2006, p. 36).

These three phases of reflection will be connected to different stages of our learning process from the student exchange, which are: theoretical considerations of learning and culture for the design of the exchange program (reflection-for-action), the design and conduction of the exchange program (reflection-in-action), and evaluation of the program (reflection-on-action). We go through each phase in detail in the following sections.

#### THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON LEARNING AND CULTURE FOR THE DESIGN OF THE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

In the *reflection-for-action* phase, we discussed what we knew from previous experiences and what could be brought into future student exchange activities. We discussed our anticipations, needs, and expectations, and invited the two schools involved to do the same, particularly the Danish school. We also reviewed and discussed learning and culture theory in order to strengthen our standpoint and prepare for the future. These theoretical considerations will be the main focus of this section.

#### *Culture*

To begin, we find it important to clarify our concept of culture since this should correlate with how one would choose to design the contexts in which it is learned.

Our understanding of culture in relation to learning is clearly reflected in our choice of learning design for the exchange program.

Definitions of culture vary; we found many different views and understandings of what culture is. In an attempt to connect this to a learning program, one will quickly realize that keeping to only one school of thought can be problematic. Classrooms and student exchange programs each provide different contexts and opportunities for learning about culture, and we believe that different culture understandings fit different contexts. Iben Jensen (2007) categorizes two types of culture concepts, which can be described as two opposing ideals: the descriptive and the complex concept of culture. We can use these two concepts in mapping how we use different elements of culture understandings for providing contexts in which to learn about culture.

The descriptive concept is characterized as the more static understanding of culture where the individual is part of a larger cultural holistic system, which, to a large extent, determines the individual. Culture is, in this sense, a homogenous group of people with a similar cultural identity, which is formed and reproduced in every individual through his or her socializing and growing up in a specific culture. In contrast to the descriptive concept of culture, the complex concept does not perceive culture as a self-reliant system to which all values and meanings can be referred, but instead one that is much more dynamic. The individual agent is not determined by culture, but plays an active part in the negotiation and creation of culture. Culture is created between people rather than inside people, as is the case in the descriptive concept (Jensen, 2007).

In reality, most culture theories have elements of both concepts. Geert Hofstede and colleagues (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), for example, have a very descriptive approach in their analysis and description of national cultures, but they also follow the more complex understanding of culture in distinguishing between cultures, subcultures, and intercultural meetings. Both Hofstede and Danish culture theorist Hans Gullestrup (2003) understand culture in layers with different grades of dynamics. Hofstede illustrates this using an onion shaped figure with a core and outer layers, while Gullestrup uses a bucket with core culture layers in the bottom and manifest culture layers in the top. Both consider culture in its core (including such things as fundamental world conception and basic values) to be hardly changeable, and in its peripheral or upper layers (including such things as manifest and perceivable culture aspects) to be highly dynamic and constantly in negotiation (Gullestrup, 2003; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

In our design of contexts to facilitate learning about culture, we consider both concepts. We acknowledge, like Gullestrup and Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, that the complexity of the culture concept makes it difficult to delineate a sharp division between the two culture concepts in practice. We find student exchanges apt for designing learning based on the complex understanding of culture. The actual meeting can facilitate a context-based environment with cultural negotiation and practicing of culture as described in the complex culture understanding. However,

we also found ourselves reverting to a more descriptive understanding of culture in the process of designing the exchange program, trying to anticipate possible cultural reactions and differences. This understanding and practical approach to culture will be connected to our standpoint on learning in the following section.

### *Learning – Constructivism and Situated Learning*

There is a great deal of variance in approaches to exploring what learning is and how learning happens. A constructivism standpoint is employed in both the design of this program and our research process. This approach does not only focus on how individuals learn through interaction with other people and their environment, but also gives attention to the social dimension or context for learning. John Dewey (1938), one of the well-known representatives of this approach, gives specific weight to the social nature of learning. By focusing on ‘doing’ and ‘experiencing’ things that create meaning, Dewey believes that learning takes place mostly through communication and purposeful interaction with others.

Dewey’s theories on learning through problem-solving and experiences have been further developed by scholars on learning and implemented in diverse educational practices. Echoing Dewey’s propositions, Lev Vygotsky (1978), from a sociocultural learning perspective, further suggests that individual learning and development takes place through participation in cultural practices and interaction with others in the social contexts.

Inspired by these works, this study is based on the belief that learning is an interactive process that occurs in interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts. Learning is constructive rather than reproductive. We also see social interaction as an essential aspect of learning; thus, learning takes place in situated activities (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, participation, activities, contexts, and culture are important elements in making learning happen; as Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) propose, learning is a process of participation in communities of practice.

Situated learning gives more weight to contexts, interactions, activities, and social construction of knowledge instead of decontextualized, abstract, and general knowledge. This perspective of understanding learning is often related to learning activities outside of a formal curriculum. In relation to the design of a culture- learning program, it is important for students to be engaged in meaningful activities so that they can learn about other cultures through intercultural experiences.

To summarize, in this study, we take the standpoint that learning is not only transferring knowledge, but more importantly, transforming lived experiences into knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs (Wenger, 1998; Jarvis, 1992, 2003, 2009). Therefore, in relation to culture learning, we depart from the complex culture concept, creating an environment in which learners actively participate in the process of creating knowledge and building up practices, beliefs, and values, which are complex and context-dependent. In order to provide students with this sort of

culture-learning opportunity, it is essential that the designers create the right context for facilitating learning by creating cultural experiences and practices.

*Designing a Reflective Intercultural Community of Practice for Culture Learning*

Our design for the culture learning exchange program is connected with our understanding of the concepts of culture and learning, both of which are associated with social practices and contexts of negotiating and creating new knowledge (and culture). In effect, the learning of culture becomes the practicing of culture. Originally, Wenger did not implement thoughts on culture in his CoP theory, but there are times in which meetings of CoPs are also meetings of different cultures, which is why culture matters to those involved in these meetings. Wenger's theory on CoPs is based on a sociocultural understanding of learning. According to this understanding, learning is not merely the transfer of knowledge in decontextualized spaces, which are contexts differing from those in which the knowledge originated, such as most classrooms. Instead, Wenger argues that learning takes place everywhere and at all times, including in classrooms – in which the intended content is not necessarily all that is learned – and is related to social contexts and processes found in communities of practice.

Through our design, we wanted to give the students the opportunity to experience and practice culture. People participate in a variety of social practices and communities all the time, whether at a playground, in families, or in work teams. Membership in these different communities shapes who we are and what we learn (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger, 1998). Our design promotes a community focused on the practice of culture and learning. For the individual, this means that learning is participating and contributing to the CoPs of which you are a member. For designers of programs like ours, the task at hand is to facilitate the right conditions for the development and cultivation of a CoP. This entails providing resources and tools for the participants of the CoP to develop and immerse themselves in the practice (Wenger, 1998).

To summarize what took place in this phase, was that we learned that theoretical knowledge of culture and learning are important resources in the creation of meaningful and ideal intercultural contexts for learning. Thus, based on the theories discussed above, an ideal, reflective intercultural program was designed, and in order to document the Danish and Chinese students' culture learning process<sup>2</sup>, multiple methods were employed for data generation, including interviews, video recordings, participant observations, portfolios, and student diaries. Before starting the program, we had expected there would be a great deal of complexity in learning and culture theory, but this complexity became even more apparent as the actual organization and conduction of the student exchange program unfolded.

#### ORGANIZING AND CONDUCTING THE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

In the *reflection-in-action* phase, we both planned activities for the students, particularly in cooperation with the Danish school, and carried out the actual student

exchange. We took positions as participant observers throughout this phase, making adjustments based on the students', schools' and designers' reactions to the program as it progressed.

The events from the student exchange program selected for this analysis will be presented in chronological order under headlines presenting different scenarios. We tell two stories detailing events that happened in the process of preparing for and conducting the student exchange. Each story includes scenes showing highlights of culture learning from the designers' point of view. They are presented with the following focuses:

- What did we, the designers, learn in the process of designing? What did we have in mind about our own and other's culture?
- How did the student exchange program unfold, especially with regard to intercultural interaction?
- How might we improve future student exchange programs?

The style of the narrative will be rich in descriptions and interpretations, and the points of analysis will be descriptions of selected scenes as they were experienced and interpreted by the designers. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) inspires this style of presenting data, for which he coined the term "thick description". This is useful from a methodological point of view since it allows the researcher to present data from a cultural context to the reader in a meaningful way. By presenting the events and reflection processes together, we aim to provide a meaningful way of presenting our data and analyses to the reader, and also to use these examples to illustrate our own learning as designers.

### *Let Us Go Ice Skating*

In the time leading up to the Chinese student exchange, many practical details had to be addressed, and most of the planning of and communication about the program between the Chinese and Danish sides went through the CI AAU. During the planning process, we held several internal CI AAU meetings to discuss the planning of the activities. In this process, the CI AAU's own cross-cultural composition often became apparent and was put to good use since the Danish and Chinese colleagues had different takes on what would be possible to plan and how the Danish and Chinese schools would react to the proposed program. The proposition of an ice skating activity can serve as example.

The two Danish CI AAU designers and the Danish school had come up with the idea of taking the Danish and Chinese students ice skating since the visit would take place in the winter months. This idea was intended to create an opportunity not only for the two groups of students to gain a better understanding of each other by participating in the same enjoyable activity, but also for the Chinese students to experience the local culture of ice skating since many of them are from Southern China where snow is rare. The Danish designers felt no anxiety in response to this

activity and were relieved to have found an outdoor activity despite the fact that it was winter. The idea of going ice skating was later presented at an internal CI AAU meeting, and the Chinese colleagues quickly voiced their concerns. They explained that as hosts, the CI AAU and the Chinese school would have a great responsibility to the Chinese students' parents. The physical safety of the students would be of utmost importance while travelling, particularly in a situation without parents around. Safety concerns are especially crucial when the students are from single-child families, since they carry many concerns from parents and grandparents while travelling.

It was difficult for the Danish colleagues to understand these worries because ice skating is a somewhat normal leisure activity during winter in Denmark, and it did not pose any risks in their mind. Thus, the debate took more than half an hour during the meeting, which was unexpected given the meeting's agenda. Although it was difficult for the designers to reach a common understanding on this matter, it was eventually agreed to adopt a conservative and flexible strategy. It was ultimately decided to temporarily remove the activity from the program and planned to ask the Chinese teachers of their opinion on it upon their arrival.

However, it happened that the Chinese teachers did not have any concerns regarding this activity. In fact, the Chinese students had already gone ice skating in Germany, and it was therefore decided not to include the ice skating activity in the final version of our program (see Table 3.1).

This event is a clear example of the complexity of culture and the unpredictable nature of cultural behavior and thinking. We were incapable of predicting reactions and attitudes about ice skating because culture and human nature are complex, and this was the case both for the Danes and the Chinese. Also, the episode illustrates the prejudices that can exist towards one's own culture, as was the situation for the Chinese, which demonstrates that although everyone has prejudices and expectations that are based on past experiences, it is necessary to remember that these are not always useful for predicting future experiences.

### *Workshops*

For the day of the Chinese students' arrival, we cooperated with the Danish teachers to plan three different workshops: Two with a Chinese theme and one with a

*Table 3.1. Final version of the program*

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Day 1 (Thursday): Arrival at noon. Workshops during the afternoon and communal eating at the school in the evening.
Day 2 (Friday): Regular Danish school day in the morning. Then visit the CI AAU's Learning Centre <sup>1</sup> in Aalborg and go on a GPS-run in the afternoon.
Day 3 (Saturday): Spend the day with the host family. Dinner at a Chinese Restaurant for students and host families.
Day 4 (Sunday): Departure in the morning.

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## Appendix A. Papers

more Danish theme. The students were divided into groups and assigned different workshops.

The idea behind the workshops was to create an intercultural CoP learning context. The workshops were designed to incorporate meaningful activities stimulating mutual engagement and creating joint enterprises and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998) that were easy to take on and could lead to interaction by, for example, creating tutoring roles for part of the group. Room for an open dialogue was considered equally important. The workshops would also give the participants the opportunity to shape their own learning experiences by exploring together and inspiring each other.

The Danish-inspired workshop involved letting the students cook dinner for everyone in the school's home economics kitchen. Danish and Chinese cooking traditions vary greatly, and participation in and experience with the cooking process was considered a good theme and an opportunity for knowledge sharing.

We expected most Danish students to have cooking experience both from home and from home economics classes at school, and most Chinese students to have little or no experience; to our knowledge, the intense Chinese school curriculum leaves no room for non-academic classes such as home economics, and many Chinese students do not play an active part in cooking at home since their job is to study hard. Thus, we expected the workshop to be an interesting experience for the Chinese students in particular.

The workshop played out with the Danish students taking the lead in the kitchen and helping to instruct their peers in the cooking process based on the tasks given by the teachers. Typically, the Chinese students worked in pairs with their Danish hosts, who would explain to them how to use the kitchen tools with which they were unfamiliar and the general rules of being in a kitchen and handling different kinds of food. Thus, the practicing of the workshop theme created the culture meeting and facilitated a learning context for the students to interact and inspire each other, while also developing basic cooking skills. In practice, this resulted in a number of workstations preparing various parts of the menu, with the teacher managing the overall process.

When dinner was ready, the Chinese students were surprised to find that one of the dishes was plain, raw carrots. The Danish teachers had prepared a menu that they believed was very Chinese-inspired (rice, stew, and raw vegetables on the side) to make sure it would be to everyone's liking; however, they soon realized that the Chinese guests were not used to eating raw vegetables. As a result, only a few Chinese students politely tried eating the raw carrots.

The second workshop was about Chinese paper cutting, which is a very old, traditional art in China and is regarded as a part of the national culture. For this workshop, we expected the Chinese students to have a great deal of experience and to be able to instruct the Danish students, allowing interaction and communication to take place. However, it turned out that most of the Chinese students did not have any experience, especially the Chinese boys, who lacked interest in the activity. They

appeared a bit puzzled, asking the teachers why they needed to do this and saying they did not know how to do it. This came as a surprise to us and we realized that paper cutting might not be as common an interest among Chinese students as we expected, so we had to come up with a solution. At first, we tried to let the CI AAU's Chinese language teachers do the instruction instead, but while the Danish students appeared to enjoy the activity, it seemed that the workshop theme simply was not of interest for the Chinese. Ultimately, we decided to redistribute all the students to the two other workshops.

Most of the students from the paper cutting workshop went to join the other Chinese inspired-workshop, which worked better both overall and in promoting cooperation between the Danish and Chinese students. The students were to paint something related to the Chinese New Year (which was to occur shortly) on a wall in an "international corridor" inside the school. They were not told what to paint, but through creativity, knowledge sharing, communication (mainly using English as lingua franca), interaction, and the use of Google Images as inspiration, the two groups reached a decision on something with which they wanted to decorate the wall (Chinese zodiacs and a dragon). The Chinese students helped the Danish students choose the right colors for the objects painted, explained to them the story and meaning behind them, and helped them write their names in Chinese characters. Having seen this, we tried to expand the task based on the large amount of student interest in the activity and asked the students to discuss the composition of the painting and what other elements should be included.

To summarize, during the *learning-in-action* phase, we made use of the descriptive concept of culture in our attempt to predict how the various workshops would unfold, despite us being well aware that culture is highly complex and difficult to predict. In some cases, we received the results we expected, while the complexity of culture was made clear in others.

We had designed workshops as situated CoPs in order to provide the students with contexts to learn about culture through interaction and practice, and we learned that the students' participation and negotiation in the workshop was the actual nexus for culture learning rather than the content of the workshop. This was clear in the design of the Chinese New Year workshop, which provided a good framework for intercultural communication, knowledge sharing, intercultural cooperation, negotiation, meaningfulness, creative thinking, and active participation for everyone involved.

The unsuccessful Chinese paper cutting workshop lacked many of the CoP elements mentioned above and was unable to stimulate a common interest among the students. Instead of working together to reach a goal, the students worked on their individual paper cuttings. Thus, despite intercultural communication, knowledge sharing, active participation, and creative thinking being possible, this workshop lacked the possibility of intercultural cooperation and negotiation since everyone was working on his or her individual paper cutting. Moreover, the workshop activity

lacked meaningfulness; where the others would prepare dinner for the group or create a painting on a wall for the school's students to enjoy in the years to come, this workshop group was only making some paper cuttings to put on a notice board.

#### EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

In the *reflection-on-action* phase, we invited the schools and students to reflect on the experiences of the student exchange program, asking them what they had learned, what was successful, and what could be improved in the future. We made use of a variety of evaluation and reflection tools: We had the Chinese students' journals and Danish students' portfolios, and we carried out focus group interviews with the Danish students. Additionally, we organized a self-evaluation process with the schools involved. And, finally, we held several meetings to discuss and reflect on the entire process; these took place both immediately after the student exchange and in the months afterwards.

From the Chinese students' journals, we found that most students chose to describe their experience with reflections on an activity rather than the activity itself. For example, on the second day of the program, the Chinese students spent a regular day in school together with their hosts, and the experience left a big impression on the Chinese students. They attended different classes and therefore had different experiences, but nearly half of them specifically chose to describe the atmosphere in the classrooms, whereas only a very limited number of the Chinese students mentioned the actual teaching content. The mere participation in and experience of the atmosphere in the classroom gave the Chinese students an understanding of the Danish classroom atmosphere, Danish student-teacher interaction, and Danish teaching and learning culture.

For the Danish students, the focus group interview situation also provided a framework for culture learning. The diversity in the students' experiences yielded insight on the complexity of culture. Often, the phrase "all the Chinese" was used initially, but in many cases it was changed to "some of the Chinese" as more information and other experiences were shared by other students.

Based on more in-depth talks with the Danish teachers, we learned that numerous Comenius projects<sup>4</sup> had given them valuable experiences which could be transferred and/or used as inspiration to an even greater extent in future international projects and student exchanges between Danish and Chinese schools. These teachers were able to offer information on how to deal with the host situation, thoughts on prompting cooperation between the students involved in the time leading up to the student exchange, and more ideas for designing learning contexts for the students.

To summarize, through the students' reflections, we learned that the experience of an activity left a greater impression than the activity itself. This could also support our learning from the workshops; that it is not so much the content, but more the experience and participation that is the nexus for culture learning.

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From the Danish teachers' reflections, we learned that their international experience from European contexts is a valuable source of inspiration which needs to be included in the design of learning contexts and in the student exchange program in general.

### OUTCOME

A few things become clear upon looking back on our experiences. Firstly, a descriptive understanding of culture based on previous experience and learning can be useful for anticipating how the future cultural meeting could develop in the designing phase. For us, this activity of anticipating and designing based on a descriptive culture concept is also a reflection process in which preconceptions of cultures, both others' and our own, are articulated and discussed, and thus the individuals' own knowledge and preconceptions are submitted to reflection (reflection-for-action). However, because of the complexity of culture and general human behavior, one can only prepare and design the practicing of culture to a certain extent. Different motivations lie behind human actions and decisions and culture is merely one of them. In practice, humans do not strictly follow certain cultural templates, but these theoretical templates can still be useful in designing and planning. The design and expected outcome will not always be consistent with how the actual events unfold, but this only provides a learning experience for the designers.

Secondly, we have learned that culture in its complex form, in the actual meeting between cultures, is an apt context for generating learning. The learning of culture comes with the practicing of culture. In the actual conduction of our learning design, we met unexpected situations. These situations had to be dealt with and triggered us to reflect on how to understand and resolve them. The workshops we had designed as situated CoPs gave the students a context to interact and practice culture, both in the sense of practicing activities related to the general national cultures and in the sense of working together and negotiating the activities. As designers of the activities, we learned that the simple participation, observation, and negotiation in practicing were the actual nexus for culture learning rather than the activity itself. This is reflected in both our own observations and in the Chinese students' journals.

### *Limitations*

During the different phases of the program, we became aware of certain limitations that affect the possibility of a successful outcome for a Chinese-Danish student exchange. Firstly, communication via English as lingua franca posed more difficulties than anticipated. Despite the fact that the Chinese students were attending a Foreign Language School, their English was rather limited, and for many students even very simple conversation was challenging. Feedback from the host parents to the Danish teachers emphasized communication problems, and the international coordinator at the Danish school suggested putting two Chinese students in each host family in

the future, or at least putting students with limited English together with students with more well-developed English communication skills. Also, in relation to CoP-designed workshop activities, communication problems caused difficulties in terms of creating joint enterprise. In an ideal setting, joint enterprise is the result of a collective negotiation process among members of a CoP, but it is difficult to negotiate without effective communication.

Secondly, the Danish teachers noticed a huge difference in the interaction level between Danish and Chinese students compared to previous student exchanges with European countries via Comenius. More research is needed in order to explain this behavior, but possible explanations are: The Chinese students' more limited English skills, the non-existent communication between the two parties in the time leading up to the actual student exchange, and the fact that a maximum distance exists between Western and Eastern cultures, which increases the acculturative stress on the students involved (Burnett & Gardner 2006). No matter the reasons, there was, with a few exceptions, a tendency for the Chinese and Danish students to stay with their own groups. This speaks to the importance of designing a framework for the students to interact and communicate to an even greater extent in the future in order to facilitate intercultural learning.

Lastly, it is important to be aware that intercultural meetings can potentially confirm existing or establish new stereotypes about others (Stangor, Jonas, & Hewstone, 1996). Whether or not short-term sojourns between Denmark and China are likely to confirm or disconfirm such thinking also needs further research.

### *Future Exchange Program Designs*

For the future designing of exchange programs, we will build on a similar framework of culture and learning theory combined with knowledge learned during the pilot study. We cannot predict cultural behavior or foresee intercultural clashes, even though some behavior may happen more frequently than others. What is important in future student exchanges between Denmark and China is the refining of our work in creating contexts to facilitate culture learning.

Based on these pilot study experiences, we will focus more on designing activities that require interaction and cooperation between the students, putting special emphasis on ensuring that students do not limit their interactions to their own group. The activities should provide a context for participation, observation, communication, cooperation, and negotiation of practice, and also be meaningful to those involved.

With all of this in mind, this reflection loop has ended and will be the foundation for the next exchange program in this growing international cooperation between Denmark and China at the school level.

## CONCLUSION

For the purposes of learning and writing this chapter, we have taken a very practical approach to culture and culture theory. We found value in both the descriptive

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and complex concepts and made use of them respectively in our own process and learning design. Looking back, using Cowan's understanding of reflection has explicated our own cultural backgrounds. In daily life, we are often unaware of, or pay little attention to, our own preconceptions of people from either foreign or shared cultures. In the course of cultural negotiation, these become clear, and in this chapter we try to stress the importance of always looking back and reflecting, as this will provide footing for future negotiations. Writing this chapter and reliving the situations through discussion and data analysis has generated as much learning as the conducting of the exchange program itself. In that sense, our quest of facilitating learning for others has been a good opportunity to take a closer look at our own process, and Cowan's reflection phases have been most useful in structuring this chapter as well as our experiences.

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The designers are the four authors of this chapter: Two have a Chinese and two a Danish ethnic background.
- <sup>2</sup> Findings of data concerning the students are reported in another on-going article
- <sup>3</sup> The CI AAU's Learning Centre is open to schools and the public and is a facility to provide Chinese language teaching and experience Chinese culture.
- <sup>4</sup> Comenius is part of the EU's Lifelong Learning Program and aims to boost the quality of European school education and provide individuals with skills and competences necessary for personal development and future employment (European Commission 2012:2).

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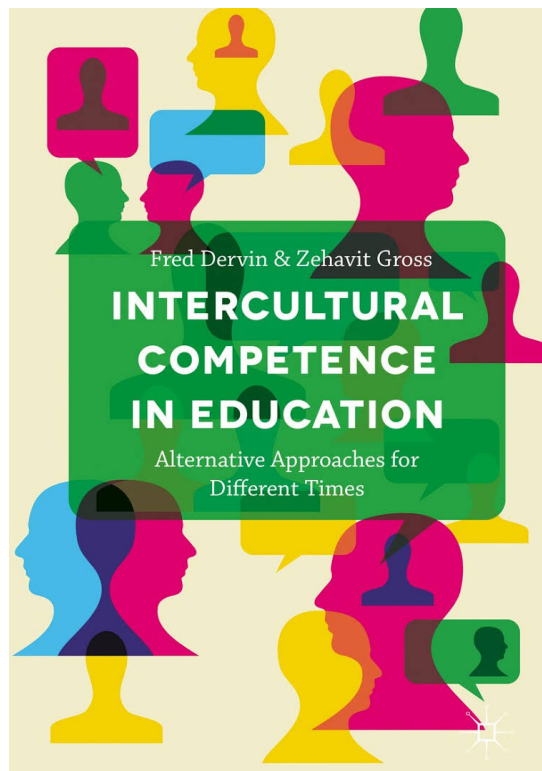
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## Paper 3: Intercultural competence in host students? A study of Danish students facing China at home

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<sup>10</sup> The text is available without page numbers in the following.



# Intercultural competence in host students? A study of Danish students facing China at home

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## Introduction

Intercultural encounters with individuals living in other parts of the world through study visits present students with situations in which learning can take place, particularly the development of what is most commonly referred to as intercultural competences. There has been much research in the field of intercultural competences based on mobile students engaging in studies abroad for short- and long-term sojourns (Byram & Feng, 2006; Dervin, 2009), whereas information on the host as the subject of study abroad research is scarce (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Weidemann & Bluml, 2009) and specifically lacking in relation to intercultural competence. Increased internationalization within education also makes it relevant to research student learning through internationalization at home activities that might bring about new perspectives on intercultural competence and intercultural meetings. In addition, most research deals with study abroad activities at the upper secondary school level and in higher education (Byram & Feng, 2006; Deardorff, 2009; Dervin, 2009), while research involving younger learners at primary and lower secondary school levels is less common (Snow & Byram, 1997).

The overall aims of this paper are to explore the potential of developing intercultural competence in students hosting an exchange student during short-term study visits, to examine the challenges and possibilities of short-term study visits at the lower secondary level, and to contribute to the discussions of internationalization at this educational level. More specifically, in this paper, we ask the question: *What are the challenges and possibilities of using short-term study visits to develop intercultural competence in host students?*

Theoretically, this paper finds inspiration in social constructivist understandings of culture based on the understandings of researchers such as Dervin (2009), Holliday (2013), and Jensen (2013), and also in Byram's (2008; 2009) research on the development of intercultural competences in individuals. Empirically, data used in this paper was derived from the study of a group of Danish lower secondary school students of ages 12 and 13 who hosted a group of same-age Chinese students in

homestays during a four-day study visit to Denmark in early 2012. Qualitative data was collected before, during, and after the visit by means of portfolios and focus group interviews.

It is important to stress that although we do not want to assess the possible intercultural competence development of the students, some evaluation on this matter is unavoidable. Instead, our main focus is to discuss host students' experiences in relation to the challenges and possibilities of using short-term study visits to develop intercultural competence in host students.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Culture, hybridity and negotiation**

In this paper, we employ an understanding of culture that emphasizes hybridity and considers cultures as being produced by individuals. A constant negotiation between the individual and the social world leads to the shaping and reshaping of culture. Cultures are not fixed entities but social constructions created by people, and they undergo constant negotiation and development (Dervin, 2009; Holliday, 2013). Thus, intercultural meetings do not involve meetings or interactions between cultures or groups, but between individuals (Byram, 2009: 186; Deardorff, 2009: 6; Dervin, 2009: 119; Wikan, 2002: 84).

Echoing Jensen (2013), we recognize the fact that in practice, it is difficult to delineate a sharp division between social constructivist and more essentialist understandings of culture. However, there is a need to be critical toward and continuously challenge essentialist understandings that treat "cultures" as things (Phillips, 2007: 42) and individuals as "robots programmed with 'cultural' rules" (Abu-Lughod, 2008: 158). The terms "Chinese" and "Danish culture", respectively, are used in this paper based on recognition of the fact that the particular structures of the society in which we were brought up have an impact on us as human beings and are resources on which we draw (Holliday, 2013).

### **A constructivist approach to intercultural competence**

Much consensus exists about the holistic nature of competences, encompassing cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social elements, but the most common characteristic of a competence is the pivotal role of action orientation: What is essential is not what individuals "have learned but what they can do with or through what they have learned" (Illeris, 2014: 114), and emphasis is on the ability "to cope successfully with new, unknown, unfamiliar, and unpredictable challenges and situations" (Illeris, 2014: 115). In relation to intercultural competence, definitions and models generally acknowledge that intercultural competence entails four dimensions, these being knowledge, attitude, skills, and behaviors, and requires the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with others in intercultural situations or contexts (Deardorff, 2009).

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This paper employs a constructivist approach to learning (Kolb, 1984; Wenger, 1998) and considers social interaction and experiences to be important parts of learning. Intercultural competence is considered a specifically qualified learning in relation to the intercultural area (Illeris, 2011). Such learning is a never-ending process that can be developed in both formal and informal learning contexts (Byram & Feng, 2006).

Inspiration has been found in Byram's (2008; 2009) research on intercultural competence within foreign language teaching, which is based on the ideal of the intercultural speaker being an individual who is aware of cultural similarities and differences and able to act as a mediator in intercultural encounters. Byram's model comprises five elements: 1) Knowledge (savoirs), 2) Attitudes (savoir être), 3) Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre), 4) Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire), and 5) Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager).

For this study, it is important to understand what it means for learners of ages 12 and 13 to be interculturally competent. At this age, students have just entered into the formal operational stage of adolescence (Inhelder & Piaget, 1999) and have not yet reached full cognitive capacity. Thus, new ways of thinking are still being developed, such as metacognition and critical reflection. These cognitive and emotional aspects influence young learners' development of intercultural competence, so while these learners may not be able to reach their full potential, it is still possible for them to develop elements of intercultural competence (Byram, 2008; Illeris, 2007).

### **Research methodology**

In this study, we have employed a qualitative research approach emphasizing the words, feelings, perceptions, and experiences of young host students. We hold that children are significant and competent social actors and take their life experiences seriously. We emphasize the importance of their reflections and lived experiences while keeping in mind that certain biological aspects influence their cognitive and linguistic abilities (Andersen & Ottosen, 2002). This was taken into consideration in the research design and in our analysis of the empirical material (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009).

### **Research context: A study visit from China**

In late 2011, a school located in Hangzhou, China, and with a focus on foreign languages, planned a study trip that would allow 22 students (12 girls and 10 boys of ages 12 and 13) to visit Germany during a Chinese school holiday in early 2012. The organizers found that there would be time to make a four-day sojourn to a school in Aalborg, Denmark, and through the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University (CI AAU), cooperation was established with a local public school willing to find same-age host students (14 girls and 9 boys, see Table 1). The objective of bringing the students together was to create an intercultural community of practice (Wenger, 1998), facilitate institutional development toward

internationalization, establish a foundation for future Danish-Chinese student exchanges, and possibly facilitate the development of intercultural competences at a student level.

With the exception of one case caused by unequal numbers, each of the Chinese students was randomly paired with a same-gender host partner in an individual homestay. In practice, the study visit included the use of English as lingua franca, workshops, a communal student dinner at school, regular school classes, a GPS run in the city, spare time spent with host families, and dinner for host families, students, teachers, and organizers at a Chinese restaurant. The design of the study visit as an intercultural community of practice and the organizers' reflections in relation to the visit have been discussed in a previous publication (Lyngdorf, Egekvist, Du & Jiannong, 2013).

### **Methods**

The following qualitative research methods were used to explore and document the study visit for the purpose of researching the Danish host students' intercultural experiences and learning:

- (1) Student portfolios (before, during, and after the visit)
- (2) Focus group interviews (after the visit)

Portfolio is a pedagogical documentation and learning tool that has the potential to clarify students' learning and development in various learning situations through the use of reflection (Ellmin, 1999; Lund, 2008). Host students were introduced to a student portfolio with predesigned categories in order to capture some of their understandings and intercultural experiences, and to stimulate reflection thereon (Byram, 2008). Prior to the arrival of the Chinese students, Danish students were asked to share their expectations of the visit and their guests. During the visit, they were asked to share particularly meaningful experiences and new knowledge. After the visitors departed, they were asked to share reflections on whether their expectations had been met. The portfolio was made voluntary rather than integrated into the school context. Nineteen students worked on portfolios (Table 1), but in some cases, descriptions and reflections were limited.

Two months after the visit, providing students time to digest the experience, four focus group interviews (referred to as FG1-4) of approximately one hour each were conducted with 19 host students (Table 1) to supplement the written portfolio data through the creation of a forum for oral reflections through shared experiences, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes. In order to create a safe context for students to share experiences, discoveries, and viewpoints, interviews were arranged in groups of five or six students according to their classes, with a researcher functioning as a mediator (referred to as M) and thus a co-constructor of the knowledge produced. The combination of a group of students and one researcher helped balance the asymmetric power-relation between adult and child (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009), and the serving

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of snacks and drinks generated a relaxed atmosphere.

Focus groups were expected to bring about discussions, joint reflection, and mutual learning through a sharing of experiences. Interview themes covered elements of intercultural competence and supplemented the portfolios by exploring incomplete information and common elements in more detail. The moderator transcribed the interviews based on a strategy of maintaining the contents of what was said, and the data was categorized, analyzed, and interpreted through meaning condensation (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010).

**Table 1 Research participants**

	Grade 6 Girls	Grade 6 Boys	Grade 7 Girls	Grade 7 Boys	All Students
Host students	6	6	8	3	23
Focus group interviews	6	4	7	3	20
Portfolios	5	5	7	2	19

### Limitations

One of the main objectives of internationalization efforts at the school level in Denmark is to establish a foundation for and initiate a process of intercultural competence development in students in order for them to engage actively in handling the multifaceted future challenges in the international arena (Styrelsen for International Uddannelse, Denmark, 2010). Schools make use of various activities to achieve this, including short-term international experiences, but primarily due to the young age of the students at this educational level, short-term international experiences often last less than one week. One might argue that such brief encounters cannot play a significant role in individuals' intercultural competence development, but these very short intercultural meetings are a condition of researching international activities at this educational level. Furthermore, Dervin emphasizes that:

Many researchers have demonstrated, for example, that people who travel a lot or spent extensive time abroad are not necessarily more open-minded than others (cf. for instance Phipps, 2007, p. 30) and sometimes they are even less. (Dervin, 2009: 124)

Thus, in relation to intercultural competence development, it is not the quantity (e.g. number of intercultural meetings or time spent abroad) that matters, but the quality of the intercultural encounters.

### **Ethical considerations**

It was emphasized as a condition for everyone involved, both in Denmark and in China, that the study visit would be used as a research context. The Danish school involved has a tradition of engagement and participation in research projects, and the Head of School gave permission both for research to be carried out and for students to work on portfolios and participate in focus group interviews for research purposes. The school informed the host students' parents about our research activities in relation to the visit.

In a meeting prior to the host experience, the students were carefully informed about our role as researchers during the visit and presented with copies of the pre-designed student portfolio. It was emphasized that working on the portfolio and sharing the reflections therein was voluntary. Furthermore, students were asked to participate in focus group interviews upon the departure of their visitors, and anonymity was promised in all cases.

### **Findings**

Findings in this study reflect general understandings, experiences, and reflections of the host students involved and are presented within the following categories:

- (1) Pre-understandings
- (2) Experiences during the study visit. Continuous revisiting of data showed that students repeatedly referred to experiences in relation to a) Dining and home environment routines, b) Interests, c) Physical appearance, and d) Language.
- (3) Overall reflections

Quotations from student portfolios and focus group interviews (translated from Danish into English by the authors) are included in order to give voice to the students (students are identified with abbreviations, e.g., G2-6, meaning Girl 2 grade 6), and each category is summarized concerning the possibilities and challenges of using short-term study visits to develop intercultural competences in host students. These will be used as a point of departure for discussion.

#### **Pre-understanding**

Findings from host students' portfolios show that their main expectations were for the study visit to be a fun, exciting, and/or educational experience. One girl wrote:

It will be exciting to learn about their culture and getting to know a Chinese. It may also be embarrassing and awkward in some situations due to our language and that we may not know what to talk about. (Portfolio, G13-7)

Host students' main expectations of the Chinese students were for them to be kind and

well behaved. Additional expectations among the students were for the Chinese students to be, for example, small, fast, serious, good at English, and similar to themselves. These findings bring insight into students' pre-understandings (Jensen, 2013) and hetero-stereotypes (Dervin, 2012).

## **Experiences**

### ***Dining and home environment routines***

Nineteen students shared experiences related to dining situations, which revealed differences in the use of cutlery or chopsticks, table manners, eating habits, preparation of ingredients, doing the dishes, and behavior while dining. Two boys elaborated:

What I remember best was when my mother had prepared a chicken and bacon sandwich [...]. He just chewed his food so noisily. [...] I have just never heard a human being eat so noisily (FG4, B7-7).

At breakfast [...] [my Chinese visitor] put buttery cheese on one side of the bread roll, then some ham, and some thin slices of chocolate [traditional Danish food "pålægchokolade"], and then he closed it. [...] We don't usually eat something like that in my house.

[...]

Well, we were having dinner, and then he has finished. Without carrying out his plate or anything, he goes to his room to find out something about an email. And we have not even finished eating. Then he comes and asks, "Can you help me with my email address?" We are having dinner. Then we have to get up and help him. (FG2, B4-6)

In addition, a girl noted a difference in the process of washing dishes:

They used cold water to do the dishes. Here we usually use hot water [...] I thought it was a bit strange, but still, I did not know if it was because they did not know you are not supposed to use cold water, or because they used cold water at home (FG2, G5-6)

Sixteen host students emphasized home environment routines related to showering, changing and washing clothes, and sleeping, and also differences in the everyday lives of Chinese and Danish students. In a focus group dialogue, three students shared experiences regarding changing clothes and sleeping:

G1-6: At first, I thought that perhaps she would be afraid of changing clothes in front of me. But she just quickly took off her pants and slept in her knickers.

B1-6: Mine wore all his clothes while sleeping. He wore it for 2 days [B2-6: *looks disgusted*]. It is so nasty.

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G3-6: Mine, she, what was strange was that the clothes she was wearing, then when she was off to bed, she just took off her pants, and then she wore pajamas underneath. And then the next day she just put on her clothes again on top of the pajamas. That was a bit strange. (FG1)

One female host also described differences in their everyday lives:

At least she has described it [school life in China] very well; that it is *really* hard, and that she would stay up until 12pm and do her homework. She finished school at 6pm, and then she would just sit in her room in the dormitory until 12pm. You see, they did not live at home, they lived at school. So I think it is really hard, because she also sent me an email saying “My teachers are *so* mean and cranky”[...] (FG3, G7-7)

Findings show some common traits in host students’ experiences regarding dining and home environment routines, which confronted them with tacit knowledge of cultural practices in their own environments through their visitors’ hands-on engagement. This also allowed students to gain knowledge about differences in school systems.

### ***Interests***

Seventeen students emphasized experiences related to interests such as sports, games, activities, school, and topics of conversation among friends. One girl shared an experience of learning about Chinese social interaction:

G7-7: [...] they asked us questions about which boys we thought were cute and so [laugh]. It was mega weird, I think. I did not even think they thought about such things.

M: Well, do you talk about such things with your friends?

G7-7: Yes.

M: Since you think it was strange...

G7-7: Yes. I think it was strange. I did not think they did so. Well, I thought that boys and girls could not date. And they said they could not.

M: But you still think it is strange for them to even think about...?

G7-7: Yes. But I don’t think it was strange. I just did not *think* they did. I did not think they were allowed to. And then they were teasing someone with some boy and so. And I did not think they were allowed to do so. I did not think they could date in China. I thought it was like with Muslims – that they cannot date anyone before getting married and so. (FG3)

Two boys elaborated on an experience related to gameplay:

B4-6: At [B5-6]’s house they asked if we should play poker. We said yes, because we knew what poker was. Then they bring out this box, and it was not that kind of poker they had. It was a different kind of poker. [...]



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B5-6: Yeah, it was a bit difficult to understand.

B4-6: Yes, but we learned in the end. It was pretty funny, and we won.  
(FG2)

The findings illustrate students' encounters with similarities and differences in both cultural products and practices related to interests between the Danish and Chinese students. For example, the Chinese students' interest in boyfriends and girlfriends was puzzling for some host students and thus illustrated the presence of a hetero-stereotype.

### *Physical appearance*

Twelve host students emphasized experiences related to aspects of the visitors' physical appearance, such as height, teeth, bracelets, glasses, and fashion. Two explained in their portfolios:

Almost all the Chinese either wore a bracelet or glasses. [...] I think it was strange that so many either wore a bracelet or glasses, because not as many people do that here (Portfolio, G8-7)

[It was surprising] that he was as tall as me. I always think Chinese look so tiny on TV. Perhaps they stop growing before us? (Portfolio, B2-6)

Likewise, differences in fashion trends were discussed in a focus group interview:

G5-6: Yes, they wore really colorful clothes. We usually wear black and white and darker colors. [...] They always wore red and... [*The girls speak all at once*]

G6-6: A jacket with ears and something that looked like a pirate. It was "Lalabobo" [fashion brand] [*All the girls laugh*]

G5-6: Yes.

B4-6: Also, all of their jackets were, at least in my opinion, these shiny ones, all smooth and shiny. (FG2)

Experiences related to physical appearance illustrate how host students were confronted with visible similarities and differences, both due to biological differences between and within the European and Asian races (e.g., height) and due to cultural practices in their home environments (e.g., bracelets and fashion trends).

### *Language*

English was used as a lingua franca, and six host students noted improvements in their own English as a consequence of the visit. However, in their portfolios, nine students pointed at the limited English skills of some Chinese students as a challenging aspect of the experience. Due to the visitors attending a school with a focus on foreign

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languages, the hosts had expected better skills. Three girls jointly reflected on the limited English skills:

G9-7: I also think it is because our language is more similar to English than theirs. There is not a single similarity there. [...]

G7-7: That is actually true. [...] Actually, I have never thought about the fact that it might be difficult for them to learn English. It is just as difficult for them, as it is for us with French. But of course, we have only had French for half a year.

G8-7: We have not learned much either. (FG3)

While there were some instances of limited English skills influencing attempts to understand situations or experiences and causing irritation for the hosts, nine students pointed at the use of activities such as board games, cards, soccer, foosball, and “truth or dare” as a way to interact positively with the Chinese students by getting to know them better and creating a sense of community. One girl shared an experience of playing the game “truth or dare”:

[...] I think they think it was funny, because it was the Chinese students who had to decide a consequence for us [...]. And then I believe they thought it was funny, because they could laugh with us at them. Whether it was them or us who had to do something, they could laugh with us. So there was a kind of community to it. (FG4, G10-7)

Students developed strategies to cope with language challenges, such as resolving misunderstandings or unravelling mysteries by asking clarifying questions or using digital translation tools such as Google translate. However, some did not make an effort to clarify communication, such as a girl who explained: “They probably could not understand what I said anyway” (G9-7).

Findings show that while host students experienced improvements to their English through the practice of English as lingua franca, lack of language proficiency proved to be a challenge and created gaps between hosts and visitors. Strategies to overcome challenges involved acting as a mediator and dealing effectively with misunderstandings or puzzling episodes through engagement in social activities. In addition, games established a positive and informal atmosphere of community in the intercultural encounter.

### *Students' overall reflections*

Looking back, students generally agreed that they had a good and educational experience through which some found new friends while others learned to take more responsibility or appreciate aspects of their own lives. As one boy explained, the experience was also an opportunity to experience some aspects of China at home: “Not to travel abroad to see how they are. To have the culture brought home” (FG2,

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B4-6).

The experiences led to overall reflections in relation to habits, similarities, and differences in general, as well as varying understandings of politeness. In one of the focus groups, a girl reflected on her visitor's habits:

I also thought about that in Denmark, with certain things, we could not imagine anything different. Therefore, in many cases I thought: "Oh, that was a bit strange." But then, after her departure, I reflected upon it and came to think it was a bit peculiar that we have so many things we cannot see done differently - with the cold meats and how they eat. [...] They just do it. They just try all kinds of things that we could not even think of. [...] Not only in terms of food, but generally speaking. [...] at least I now think a lot about it. That it is fine. That you do not always have to think about things in that way. (FG2, G6-6)

Another girl reflected on the similarities and differences between the Danish and Chinese students:

Well, there is not much difference in behavior in our age group; how you behave as a Chinese and as a Dane. But when there are differences, then it is reasonably big differences. [...] They behave very similar to us when they were hanging out with their friends. Then they had some things they could talk about. It was similar to us, if *we* were hanging out with our best friends. [...] They were also looking at all kinds of singers from Asia and said that they were hot and such things, like we did. It is kind of the same. (FG4, G10-7)

In addition to limited vocabulary, other reasons for communication difficulties were discussed:

G7-7: [...] It was a bit difficult. I also think they are just a bit shy in general, because they have been taught in their upbringing not to be so ahead of the curve. I also think the reason why you talked only with your own Chinese is because, firstly, it was really difficult getting to know your own Chinese, and then it is even more difficult getting to know the others. It takes three days or so, before you really know the Chinese, so that you can talk a lot with them.

M: But did that have anything to do with them being Chinese? [...]

G9-7: I think you judge them quickly.

M: How?

G9-7: Well, it is just like, because you know, because we have learned about China [in school], then you hear about how strict it is, and then you judge them to be these quiet and boring people, I think.

G7-7: Yes. M: Okay, yes. So did they live up to the things you judged

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them to?

G9-7: Many times, I would say. They were boring. [...]. She was very posh all the times. (FG3)

A few students expressed that they did not feel their expectations had been fulfilled. One experienced a very homesick visitor who did not engage in or share anything while visiting. Others expected something similar to a previous experience of international student exchange<sup>2</sup> (that they would interact with everyone, make many friends, and communicate easily via English).

Students' overall experiences led to discussing and reflecting on cultural practices, rules, and meaning constructions in different cultural environments, including their own. Understandings of "politeness" and "normality" in relation to such things as family and school life were widely discussed, and host students were confronted with the fact that "good manners" and the definition thereof stem from an individual's cultural resources, or what is learned from family and society during their upbringing.

### *Challenges and possibilities*

Students' pre-understandings of, experiences during, and overall reflections on the visit indicate several possibilities and challenges in developing intercultural competences:

- Students' pre-understandings indicate a willingness to engage in the host experience with a positive attitude (*savoir être*). However, students' retrospective attitude is closely linked to the (un)fulfillment of expectations during the experience.
- Concrete intercultural experiences in host students' own cultural environment provide possibilities for experiential culture learning (*savoirs apprendre/faire*) and confrontation of pre-understandings and hetero-stereotypes (*savoirs*). However, pre-understandings and stereotypes can be difficult to change.
- English as a lingua franca provides students with possibilities to improve their English through practice (*savoir apprendre/faire*) and to gain new knowledge in face-to-face communication (*savoir*). Conversely, the lack of language proficiency poses a challenge that demands effective coping strategies. Games were found to establish a positive atmosphere in the intercultural encounter by creating laughter, informal interaction, and a feeling of community.
- Some students' retrospective reflections on the host experience indicate curiosity, openness, and a readiness to suspend disbelief about both their own and others' culture (*savoir être*), in addition to an ability to critically evaluate practices and products in both their own and other cultures (*savoir s'engager*).

These challenges and possibilities will be discussed in relation to theory and other studies within the following categories:

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- Experiential learning
- Stereotypes
- Coping strategies and support

## Discussion

### Experiential learning

Hosting an international student creates an opportunity to experience an individual with another cultural background in a face-to-face meeting without travelling abroad. Homestays are an intense internationalization at home experience for host students, providing possibilities for them to learn in their comfort zones and seek parental support during the experiencing of similarities and differences in terms of cultural practices, which are some of the most noticeable signs of culture, and of which people may hardly be aware until they experience situations confronting them with unfamiliar practices (Holliday, 2013).

Byram and Feng (2006) argue that experiential learning about culture through hands-on experiences is more effective than classroom learning about culture. However, research on intercultural competence shows that face-to-face meetings between individuals of different cultural backgrounds do not automatically lead to intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009: xiii; Dervin, 2009). Similarly, in his research on competences, Illeris (2011) argues that even though practical experience in a specific field is considered desirable, it is rarely enough for an individual to develop a structured understanding and react both quickly and appropriately to new situations. Conscious, critical, and analytically orientated reflections are needed in order to develop a personal attitude and overview. Thus, a combination of practical experience and theoretical schooling is considered the best way to develop competences (Illeris, 2011: 44). This leads to considerations related to the design of study visits and the support of students' intercultural competence development before, during, and after host experiences, which will be discussed in the next section.

Based on a social constructivist understanding of intercultural encounters as involving meetings between individuals (Dervin, 2009), it is, however, also relevant to discuss why international study visits should be prioritized and whether intercultural encounters might as well happen locally. This study shows that the international perspective can bring about training in foreign language skills and raise awareness of similarities and differences between people. Elements such as different first languages and nation states can create borders between people. Phillips (2007: 50-51) argues for a need to challenge the tendency to exaggerate differences between cultures and focus more on similarities instead. This might result in a deeper sense of global citizenship, while a focus on differences could be used as a point of departure to reflect upon normality and the social construction of culture.

### Stereotypes

Host experiences can bring about some of the possibilities and challenges in

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confronting existing stereotypes formed around oneself and others in a process of stereotyping, re-stereotyping, and de-stereotyping, an example in our findings being the development of one student's understanding of Chinese dating practice.

Stereotypes are poorly nuanced images charged with values (both positive and negative) that emphasize differences and boundaries between groups of people and either ignore or explain away deviating examples (Illman, 2006). Stereotypes are “understood as tools for defining the otherness of the other and maintaining symbolic order” (Hall, 1997: 258). Once stereotypes become part of our worldview, they are difficult to change. As explained by Lippmann (1922: 64): “They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy.”

Increased intercultural contact between individuals does not necessarily disarm stereotypes (Hewstone, 1996; Illman, 2006), and Allport's research on contact hypothesis in relation to prejudice and stereotypes concludes that mere contact between individuals of different groups does not necessarily lead to a change of attitudes. Contact has to “reach below the surface in order to be effective in altering prejudice” (Allport, 1954: 276).

Keeping this in mind, it is crucial to create awareness of stereotypes in students involved in study visits. However, echoing Dervin (2012: 186), attempts should not be made to “break” stereotypes or replace them with the “truth.” It is unrealistic to believe that stereotypes can be completely eradicated. They will always exist, but it is possible to heighten the awareness of their existence and provide an understanding of how and why they are created, and how they may influence individuals in intercultural encounters.

### **Coping strategies and support**

Students' intercultural encounters in study visits are complicated and, in many ways, unpredictable. Similar to Weidemann and Blüml's (2009) study on German host families, the present findings show that it was not a purely positive experience for the host students involved; in some cases, it was found to be problematic to varying degrees due to such factors as language difficulties, lack of interaction, or specific negative episodes left unexplained. The findings illustrate a need to help students put cultural behavior in context and understand that there are, in fact, many similarities between people from different cultural backgrounds, no matter how different they may initially seem. Some behavior is universal, some is cultural, and some is personal (Storti, 2009).

This fact points to the challenge of helping students manage pre-understandings and expectations of the hosting experience in relation to the reality of the experience and of exploring certain experiences during the intercultural encounter. Learning situations are not necessarily conflict-free and can be experienced as both difficult and

frustrating (Illeris, 2014).

To assist host students, study visits can be designed in ways that prepare them in advance for the intensive and sometimes challenging character of the host experience through theoretical schooling. Themes and theories of culture, intercultural competence, stereotypes, coping strategies, human interaction, and the general etiquette of being a host (to avoid alienation of the other) could be addressed at a learner-appropriate level (Byram, 2009; Dervin, 2009). Furthermore, this study suggests that laughter and the use of games as mediating objects are positive aspects in intercultural encounters, which could be emphasized during the experience. Likewise, it is important that the experience is not merely left to evaporate into thin air, but used to create a foundation for coping successfully with future unfamiliar and challenging intercultural situations. Individual portfolio writing can assist students in their learning process in relation to the experience, and support through creation of a forum for joint reflections was found to add nuance to experiences, raise awareness of similarities and differences, and bring about overall reflections of critical cultural awareness. Thus, the “right” facilitation of intercultural learning spaces (see also Lyngdorf et al., 2013) and help during the reflection process can assist students in their intercultural competence development and their appreciation of diversity.

### **Conclusion**

Findings from host students’ experiences and reflections in this study indicate both challenges and possibilities of intercultural competence development in relation to experiential learning, stereotypes, and coping strategies and support.

The study shows that host students experience many challenges involved in the intercultural encounter despite its taking place in their own cultural environment and comfort zone. There is a continuous interaction between potential difficulties and possibilities in such a meeting, and the study shows clear signs of challenges related to cultural practices such as eating and visible cultural products such as clothes, both of which illuminate differences. However, the challenges host students encounter appear to be eased through laughter and games, which were found to bridge the intercultural meeting by bringing about a feeling of community and emphasizing similarities in the students.

It is essential to maintain awareness of the fact that intercultural competences are not necessarily the result of a host experience; the experience can also reinforce host students’ negative hetero-stereotypes. Thus, the “right” facilitation of the study visit is important in order to establish a context for possible intercultural competence development, and support is essential before, during, and after the experience. Shared experiences and joint reflection in groups were found to reveal many nuances to students’ experiences and lead to a critical cultural awareness among some of the participants.

## Note

<sup>1</sup> Five students had experiences from Poland and Sweden via EU funded Comenius programs.

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## **Paper 4: Internationalization in schools – perspectives of school leaders**

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# Internationalization in schools—Perspectives of school leaders



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Primary and lower secondary school

School leaders

Education

China

Denmark

International experience

Learning

Reflection

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores how internationalization ideas in primary and lower secondary schools can be developed through the acquisition of international experience abroad by leaders. The study was inspired by existing literature on internationalization and leadership, and theories of experiential learning and reflection. Empirically, qualitative material was derived from a study of nineteen Danish school leaders participating in an eight-day delegation visit to China. This study shows that international experience for leaders can be used to develop ideas for internationalization at the school level through reflections of lived experiences, participation in meaningful activities, and active engagement in interaction with international and local colleagues. However, the realization of ideas depends on various elements, including leadership, teacher engagement, policy support, and financial support.

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## 1. Introduction

Internationalization is a focal point within education systems around the globe, primarily in higher education where this concept has been widely researched, discussed, and applied (Deardorff, Wit, Heyl, & Adams, 2012; Lauring and Selmer, 2010). Other educational contexts, such as primary and lower secondary schools (referred to as 'schools' in the following), are also displaying a burgeoning interest in internationalization, although research remains scarce (Byram, 2012; Heidemann, 1999a, 1999b; Yemini, 2012, 2014; Yemini & Giladi, 2015). The importance of leadership has been widely emphasized in the successful internationalization of education (Heidemann, 1999a; Heyl & Tullbane, 2012; Nolan and Hunter, 2012), but leaders are rarely the subjects of internationalization research (Lin and Chen, 2014; Tinkham, 2011). With that in mind, the processes of internationalization at the school level and with regard to leadership require further research. In this article we ask the following questions:

- How do school leaders reflect on their international experiences in terms of developing ideas for internationalization?
- What are the possibilities and challenges of utilizing leaders' international experience as part of an internationalization process at the school level?

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This paper draws on research on internationalization in education and leadership, and on theories of experiential learning and reflection. Multiple qualitative methods were used to collect the empirical material for this paper, including qualitative questionnaires, interviews, and video recordings. The material was derived from a study of a group of Danish school leaders participating in an eight-day delegation visit to Beijing, China, organized by the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University (CI AAU) in order to bridge between Denmark and China. Twenty-six school leaders participated of which nineteen were in positions related to public primary and lower secondary schools<sup>1</sup> and were the focus of this paper.

## 2. Internationalization of education

### 2.1. Understanding of the internationalization of education

Internationalization of education is considered an education system's response or reaction to globalization (Killick, 2011; Rumbley, Altbach, & Reisberg, 2012). However, currently no generic understanding of the term exists (Knight, 2004). In the context of higher education, Knight proposes the definition of internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2003:2). This definition accentuates the nature of internationalization as an ongoing process, while the inclusion of the three dimensions, international, intercultural, and global, gives richness to the term. It also emphasizes the importance of integrating internationalization into the purpose of education at a policy level, and in the function and delivery of teaching and activities (Knight, 2004).

In the context of school education, Heidemann proposes the definition of internationalization as “the transformation process that takes place when transnational cooperation has clout at school” (Heidemann, 1999b:8). Internationalization involves a process of transformation during which leaders and teachers adapt the school to function in an international context, based on transnational cooperation at an institutional level (Heidemann, 1999a). Thus, internationalization of schools includes more than the implementation of international activities; it also involves the school as an organization.

In practice a variety of approaches to internationalization exist, at both the macro and meso levels, which reflect or characterize “the values, priorities, and actions that are exhibited during the work towards implementing internationalization” (Knight, 2004). Hudzik and Stohl (2009) state that internationalization efforts need to contribute to the core missions and values of an educational institution. Internationalization is not an end in itself, but a means to reach the core goals of an institution, thus the outcomes of internationalization should be studied in relation to the missions and values of a particular institution. Therefore, the same definition may be implemented in a variety of ways by particular institutions. For example, some approach internationalization in terms of different activities, while others create an atmosphere at the educational institution that promotes international and intercultural understanding and emphasizes local activities (Knight, 2004).

Internationalization of education is often based on the normative assumption of internationalization as a positive phenomenon (Byram, 2012). The intention is to engage in internationalization efforts in order to achieve the mission objectives of the institution, with the expected outcome at the micro level being the development of students' intercultural competences, i.e. their ability to interact effectively in intercultural encounters (Deardorff, 2009). There may, however, be unexpected results. Negative consequences are also possible (Deardorff & van Gaalen, 2012:168) such as the reinforcement of stereotypes through intercultural encounters (Dervin, 2009 and Egekvist, Lyngdorf, Du, & Shi, 2016) or programs and policies being unsuccessfully added without much consideration for the particularities of different context, such as different educational levels or different national educational contexts. Therefore, internationalization efforts cannot solely be approached in a quantitative manner such as by exchanging large numbers of students. The quality of the experiences and initiatives requires careful consideration in order to achieve the expected positive outcomes.

### 2.2. Model of internationalization in education

Nolan and Hunter (2012) pinpoint the four most essential and closely interconnected enablers for the successful implementation of sustainable internationalization in higher education as being leadership, faculty engagement, policy support, and financial support. Research from the school context indicates similar enablers: leadership, teacher engagement, policy support, and financial support (Heidemann, 2003; Holm-Larsen, Ledstrup, & Stampe Rasmussen, 2002).

Inspired by these works, we propose a model of internationalization in education that combines the macro, meso, and micro levels of education with these four dimensions: leadership, engaged embedders of change, policy support, and financial support. While all dimensions are closely interrelated, leadership is arguably the most essential dimension to facilitate an internationalization process.

#### 2.2.1. Leadership

Leadership consists of coping with change and leading others through a process of change (Cotae, 2013). While there are diverse theories on leadership, this particular study has been inspired by the concept of transformational leadership that

<sup>1</sup> In Denmark, “grundskole” (primary and lower secondary school) covers grades 0–9/10 with students aged approximately 6–16.

involves a bottom-up approach to educational leadership (Hallinger, 2003). Originally proposed by Burns (1978), this theory suggests that a leader engages his or her followers in an idea or vision that is sufficiently convincing to motivate them to become involved, expand on the original idea or vision, and feed it back to the leader. This creates a positive spiral that lifts the vision to new heights (Heyl and Tullbane, 2012). Thus, it focuses on stimulation of change through bottom-up participation and engagement (Hallinger, 2003). In line with this, Xing and Dervin (2014) propose four principles of successful educational leadership practice; (1) Setting directions through visions, goals, and action, (2) Developing people through individualized, intellectual, and emotional support, (3) Redesigning the organization through building a collaborative culture, developing structures to facilitate work, and establishing external communications and connections, and (4) Managing the instructional program.

With regards to internationalization, leaders play a vital role in bringing it into effect by actively facilitating and actualizing the initiatives. In the context of higher education, Nolan and Hunter (2012) accentuate strong visionary leadership by passionate and patient leaders as being imperative to initiating and engaging the community in the process of internationalization. Correspondingly, Heyl and Tullbane (2012) consider leaders to be important agents of change who can significantly influence an institution's future by being familiar with all initiatives, by shaping those that have the potential to truly internationalize the entire institution and that encourage students' development of intercultural competences.

In the context of school education, an active, or at least supportive, head of school is essential in order for transnational cooperation to have an impact on the school and lead to a process of internationalization (Heidemann, 1999a). Furthermore, international coordinators with clout can play a significant role as leaders of internationalization initiatives (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2003).

### 2.2.2. *Embedders of change*

Drawing on the idea of transformational leadership, the engagement of followers is imperative for successful internationalization (Hallinger, 2003). Nolan and Hunter (2012) emphasize that faculty members become the embedders of change in higher education, and that engagement is required in order for this change to be sustained. Similarly, in the context of school education, passionate teachers working tirelessly to facilitate, organize, and put internationalization into practice are indispensable in the process of implementing change. When teachers understand the meaning of a particular project, they are willing to invest in it, and thus bring about changes (Heidemann, 2003). The role of teachers is to work as a group towards the common goal of implementing internationalization in their teaching in order to facilitate student development of intercultural competence, that is, to achieve the expected outcome of internationalization efforts at the school level.

### 2.2.3. *Policy support*

The importance of policy mechanisms to sustain internationalization is emphasized in higher education. The vision of internationalization requires support through a strategy that clearly sets out timelines and key objectives. Furthermore, procedures of evaluation and new or modified strategic support may be required in order for those involved to drive the internationalization process forward (Nolan and Hunter, 2012). Likewise, making internationalization a focus area and developing an internationalization strategy and support structures at the macro and meso levels have a positive effect on internationalization in schools (Holm-Larsen et al., 2002; UVM, 2014).

### 2.2.4. *Financial support*

People and policies are limited by the availability of financial resources. However, while financial resources is a key enabler of successful internationalization (Nolan and Hunter, 2012), research in the context of school education has shown that successfully internationalized schools received less than average financial support for internationalization (Heidemann, 2003). Instead, schools have had to find the means themselves. Thus, innovative thinking is needed in order to obtain financial resources (Nolan and Hunter, 2012:132).

In summary, in this study, internationalization of education is considered to be the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, function, or delivery of education (Knight, 2003). It involves a transformational process in which educational leaders and staff adapt an institution to function in an international context (Heidemann, 1999b). We recognize that internationalization involves the macro, meso, and micro levels of education, in which leadership, engaged embedders of change, policy support, and financial support are key enablers. In particular, the role of educational leadership at the macro and meso levels is accentuated and imperative for initiating successful internationalization.

## 2.3. *Context: Internationalization in Danish schools*

Traditionally, school education in Denmark has been oriented towards national aims, thus the internationalization of schools is not a "natural" process (Kemp, 2013). In recent years, the importance of the internationalization of schools has been emphasized in ministerial reports (2010; 2014). However, schools are often overlooked in connection with internationalization efforts, despite this being fundamental to the abilities and future educational studies of the students. In general, internationalization in Danish schools has been considered unsuccessful with only 1/3 schools having worked with internationalization (Styrelsen for International Uddannelse, 2010). The absence of common objectives at the national level is considered a problem, because internationalization is let to be the affair of foreign language teachers or particularly

passionate teachers in the schools. Various recommendations have been provided regarding the initiation and support of internationalization, such as the establishment of cooperation programs outside Europe and the strengthening of foreign language programs (Styrelsen for International Uddannelse, Denmark, 2010).

In Denmark, school education is a municipal matter, with the municipal council outlining the targets and framework for activities for schools within the provisions of the School Act. Amendments to the School Act came into effect in 2014, though the aims of the Danish school education system have remained unchanged since 2006. The Act states that the school shall:

- Provide students with knowledge and skills
- Contribute to students' individual all-round development
- Make students familiar with Danish culture and other countries and cultures
- Contribute to students' understanding of man's interaction with nature
- Create a framework for experiences so that students develop awareness, imagination, and acquire confidence in their own potential and a background for committing themselves to taking action
- Urge students to learn more
- Prepare students for participation, joint responsibility, rights, and duties in a society based on intellectual freedom, equality, and democracy (Danish Ministry for Children Education and Gender Equality, 2015).

Inspired by Knight (2003) and Heidemann (1999b), internationalization at school level in Denmark is defined as the implementation of international, intercultural, and global dimensions in the teaching and organization of schools to achieve the purposes of Danish school education as stated above. The intended outcome of an internationalization process in Danish schools is the development of interculturally competent students who are able and willing to engage in and accept their responsibilities in a globalized and multicultural world.

### 3. Methodology and research design

#### 3.1. Learning from experience and through reflection

This study employed a constructivist approach to learning by emphasizing its social nature and giving attention to how individuals learn through purposeful interaction and communication with other people and their environment. Dewey (1938) argued that learning takes place through social and interactive processes, and thus emphasized doing and experiencing things that create meaning for the individual through participation in cultural contexts and interaction with others. Kolb (1984), developed an experiential learning theory that emphasized non-formal learning situations and focused on the individual's learning processes through concrete experiences, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. While Dewey and Kolb focused more on the individual's internal, psychological learning process, Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasized the social dimension of learning, suggesting that learning takes place in situated activities which influence the learning process.

Researchers such as Kolb (1984) have argued that reflection is closely related to the process of learning. This study found inspiration in Cowan (2006), who argued for the existence of three types of reflection, *reflection-for-action*, *reflection-in-action*, and *reflection-on-action*, depending on the placement of reflection in relation to action. Reflection-for-action takes place prior to an action and involves reflections in which learners specify their needs, aspirations, and objectives of a subsequent learning activity. Reflection-in-action are reflections made in the midst of the action, which consists of both retrospective and anticipatory thoughts. It involves taking stock of the situation: What is happening? What progress has been made? What remains to be done? Finally, reflection-on-action covers reflections made after a learning experience, which attempt to analyze and summarize the experience and extract generalizations that can be carried forward into subsequent activities.

In this study we emphasize the lived experiences and non-formal contexts for learning, and take the standpoint that participation, experiences, activities, and contexts are significant elements in learning. We accentuate the role of reflections in learning processes and emphasize the placement of reflection in relation to action or experience, as well as the character of the reflections. This guided the design of the visit, the choice of methods for the generation of empirical material, and was used as a framework to present the findings of the school leaders' reflections before, during, and after their international experience in China.

#### 3.2. Program design and participants

Based on the increased focus on and efforts to develop internationalization within the educational sector in Denmark, the CI AAU organized an eight-day delegation visit to Beijing, China, in late 2011. In line with the governmental recommendations made to supporting internationalization efforts at the school level in Denmark by establishing cooperation programs outside of Europe (see Section 2.3), the intention was to develop ties between Denmark and China, which is becoming an increasingly important player in the global community, create mutual understanding and educational inspiration, and possibly lay the groundwork for future cooperation between Danish and Chinese educational institutions as part of an internationalization process.

**Table 1**  
School leaders' backgrounds.

	Participants	Schools represented	Municipalities represented
Municipal head of schools (No. 1 and 2)	2	–	2
Municipal international coordinator (No. 19)	1	–	1
Leader at institutional level (No. 3–17)	15	15	8
International coordinator at institutional level and teacher (No. 18)	1	1	1
Sum	19	16	8

All interested school leaders in the North Denmark region were invited to join the delegation visit, which was financed (excluding visa and airfare)<sup>2</sup> by the Confucius Institute Headquarters and Beijing Normal University, China. Twenty-six Danish school representatives joined of whom nineteen (twelve male and seven female) were related to public school education and held an educational leadership position either at a municipal (macro) or institutional (meso) level. This group of public school leaders was the focus of this study (see [Table 1](#)).<sup>3</sup>

In practice, the delegation visit provided the school leaders with experiences, both through organized and independent tourist activities and through planned visits to educational institutions in Beijing, including three schools, a high school, a university, and a research center. These visits involved knowledge sharing with Chinese school leaders, teachers, and educational researchers.

We, the authors, were part of the organizing team and participated actively in the delegation visit process. The design and research of the delegation visit was guided by our framework of the internationalization of education and by our understanding of learning and the significance of reflection in learning processes.

### 3.3. Empirical material and analysis

Multiple qualitative methods were applied to explore the school leaders' reflections before, during, and after their international experience in China. Initially, during the informational meeting prior to departure, the school leaders filled out a qualitative questionnaire regarding, for example, their expectations of the upcoming experience and the current status of internationalization at their school or municipality (see [Table 2](#) and Appendix A in Supplementary data).

During the visit to China, brief on-the-spot interviews of up to ten minutes' duration were carried out with twelve school leaders on the sixth and seventh days, focusing on their ideas and reflections in relation to their experience (see [Table 2](#)). Additionally, to complement the interview material, seven hours of video recordings were made during formal meetings, and the school leaders raised over 150 questions, giving an insight into the processes of developing an understanding of the Chinese context, as well as their ideas of future possibilities and challenges based on this. Hence, these are considered to be indications of reflections-in-experience.

Immediately after the visit, the school leaders filled out a qualitative questionnaire, which mainly focused on their future plans and reflections in relation to internationalization through Chinese language and culture activities at the school level (see [Table 2](#) and Appendix B in Supplementary data).

The empirical material was analyzed based on meaning condensation and common patterns among the participants in relation to the existing literature formed the basis of the analysis ([Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009](#); [Nielsen, 2007](#)).

## 4. Findings

Following [Cowan \(2006\)](#), findings from this study will be presented with the school leaders' reflections before, during, and after their international experience in China.

### 4.1. Reflection-for-international experience

#### 4.1.1. Expectations and objectives

The findings show that the school leaders' main reasons for joining and their expectations regarding the delegation visit were:

- An interest in establishing cooperation with a Chinese school

<sup>2</sup> Eight participants from the same municipality received some municipal financial support.

<sup>3</sup> The remaining seven participants were representatives from a high school, a private school, and two boarding schools, and fall outside the scope of this particular study.

**Table 2**  
Empirical materials.

	Questionnaire before China	Interview in China	Questionnaire after China
Municipal head of schools	2	1	1
Municipal international coordinator	1	–	1
Leader at school level	15	11	14
International coordinator and teacher	1	–	1
Sum	19	12	18

- To gain insight into Chinese culture and its school system
- Networking opportunities with Danish and Chinese leaders
- To develop initiatives for internationalization.

Their objectives for utilizing the experience were related to the reasons and expectations stated above. Therefore, many sought to establish contact with Chinese schools in order to cooperate on international activities, such as communication via e-mail and webcam. A municipal head of school explained:

I have a clear expectation that the visit will support and provide inspiration to the municipality's development of a comprehensive international strategy. The group of school leaders is given insight into the visit, the Chinese culture and educational system through presentations. I hope that the visit will foster the establishment of partnership agreements, which allow for academic cooperation through IT and possibly student exchange (study visits). [No. 1]

Some school leaders aspired to use the experience for inspiration, both in general and specifically in relation to internationalization, in order to:

Get a deeper insight into the country, its education system, and its culture. This I can use to spread knowledge in my own organization and increase focus on the international aspect. [No. 15]

Get inspiration from Danish colleagues on how to implement the international dimension in the teaching. [No. 14]

Furthermore, some sought to establish future contact and teaching agreements with the CI AAU, while others wished to further develop previously established cooperation with the CI AAU on Chinese language and culture activities<sup>4</sup> in their schools.

#### 4.1.2. Internationalization

Everyone considered internationalization important, with references made to globalization and issues such as peaceful human coexistence and preparation for entering the international job market. Chinese language and culture activities were mentioned several times as being potentially beneficial for internationalization at the school level:

I find it very important that the schools prepare students to live in a globalized world in which international cooperation becomes a cornerstone. In connection to this it appears particularly relevant to give students insight into Chinese culture since China has become a very important collaborator. [No. 1]

The world today is "small". We can get anywhere. We must give Danish children/adolescents understanding to achieve peaceful coexistence and tolerance. [No. 8]

My school has children with many different backgrounds. We see it as a strength and want to give this focus. A focus on Chinese [language and culture, eds.] will be able to support this. In addition, focus on Chinese could dress students in relation to a future career. [No. 5]

Statements indicated that the internationalization efforts in the represented schools and municipalities are diverse, however the majority of the schools represented did not have an internationalization strategy. In fact, only one school leader clearly stated that her school had an internationalization strategy:

Yes, we have [an internationalization strategy]. We have a fundamental idea in relation to the world citizen line of thinking – think globally – act locally. Every year group works with the international dimension for shorter or longer periods of the school year. Furthermore, we participate in various Comenius projects and have language assistants. [No. 4]

The remaining schools did not have an internationalization strategy, but half had some or numerous international activities, themes, or focus points at their school.

<sup>4</sup> Chinese language and Culture activities included both mandatory and elective classes in school and elective classes as an after-school activity – all for a shorter or longer duration.



#### 4.1.3. Challenges and possibilities of Chinese language and culture activities

At the school level, all possibilities stated for implementing Chinese language and culture activities in a Danish educational context were related to the international dimension, either as inspiration, motivation, or as a specific area of focus in subjects. Challenges were related to economy, time, the practicalities of hiring teachers, and developing an understanding of the importance of such activities alongside other tasks and challenges in schools.

At the student level, the main possibilities stated were the preparation and qualification of students to participate and live in a globalized world, and to develop students' understanding of cultural similarities and differences. The challenges were related to the meaningfulness and importance of Chinese language and culture for the students, and their prioritization of these activities.

More specifically, one participant reflected upon the challenges and possibilities of implementing Chinese language and culture activities in Danish schools as follows:

The predominant advantage of bringing Chinese culture and language into the primary and lower secondary school is that the teaching provides students with insight and knowledge about cultural similarities and differences—an insight and understanding, which is very important for qualifying the students to actively participate in a globalized world. The primary challenge consists of building understanding for the importance of the task in the light of the many other tasks and challenges of the school. [No. 1]

#### 4.2. Reflection-in-international experience

Findings from interviews and videos covered two main themes: internationalization (experiences, expectations, and the establishment of Danish-Chinese cooperation), and schools and school systems (structure of Chinese schools and the school system, work structure for Chinese teachers, classroom management and discipline, and teaching methods). While questions asked during meetings showed the school leaders' interest in understanding and learning from the Chinese context and in developing a foundation for future cooperation, the interviews provided detailed insight into the development of ideas based on their experiences in China. The following sections provide accounts of findings from the interviews.

##### 4.2.1. Internationalization

Several ideas for internationalization at home were presented, such as online communication with Chinese students, Chinese language and culture teaching, and cultural cooperation with local businesses with an interest in China. Some also used the delegation visit for teaching purposes at home, such as through Skype communication with a 9th grade class about the experience and by collecting material to guide discussions of differences with students and teachers upon returning to Denmark.

Similarly, ideas were presented for student mobility, organized by individual schools or at the municipal or cross-municipal levels for a group of schools with a handful of students from each. A school leader elaborated on the idea of approaching internationalization with China through a process of, firstly, Chinese language and culture teaching, secondly, cooperation with a Chinese school, and lastly, student mobility. The school leader emphasized quality, stating, "it should not just become such a tourist thing" [No. 3]. Another school leader expressed a wish to try replacing formal language teaching with travel experiences.

A meeting with a Chinese professor emphasized the importance of intercultural meetings in internationalization activities:

It was very exciting, because it really confirmed that when we encounter something unfamiliar, we actually get an opportunity to appreciate why we are different and we gain an understanding of our cultures, and that insight is so important for the cooperation we need globally. So there is no doubt that whether it's China or elsewhere in the world, we can learn a lot from meeting each other to get this understanding. So I think it may be vital to realize that despite our differences, it is very important for us to meet and be in dialogue to actually create an understanding of each other. [No. 1]

Furthermore, a school leader reflected in general terms on the experiences, and on how and why it was meaningful as a context for inspiration and learning:

I get many ideas by walking around and looking. I get more ideas by walking around, using my eyes, and seeing, than by listening to the discussions, but that's because I'm such a visual person. But that is how it is! We are all different. So I absorb impressions. [No. 8]

Several suggested that the crucial element in the realization of internationalization through activities with China would be their ability to inspire their schools' team of leaders<sup>5</sup> and teachers to engage in the process:

I think there are many angles here. And I have not got a fixed idea so I can say:

"Yes, this is how we do it!" I must go home and talk to somebody about it. [ . . . ] Actually, I would have liked to have someone from the school leader team here to discuss this with. Because one thing is to come home and tell people about it

<sup>5</sup> In Denmark school leadership involves a team of leaders.

and another thing is having experienced it ourselves. This new vision gives us a different kind of motivation, which must now be communicated. We have pictures, we have stuff we can communicate with, but being here is what makes the difference. [No. 3]

#### 4.2.2. School and school system

Having visited and experienced Chinese schools, the school leaders proposed ideas for and reflections in relation to their own school, including physical activities, the school environment, and classroom management. Some reflected on ideas of physical activities during the school day, such as eye exercises, morning gymnastics, and running. Others considered playing music instead of ringing a bell between classes, designing a psychological counseling activity room for students, and introducing student group leaders or school uniforms.

Further reflections dealt with the differences between China and Denmark, and what the Danish school system can learn from the Chinese. Chinese discipline and classroom management were sources of inspiration, but the importance of taking into consideration the different contexts and traditions in the two countries is also emphasized:

The Chinese, for example, are good at structuring and managing classes and the teachers know where they want to go. That is one of the things we certainly could do more of in our daily teaching. But it must be linked to our view on learning where children are active and involved and help construct their own knowledge. If that link is possible I think that it can be really, really exciting, because I have seen at least some of the teachers use significant one-way communication. I do not think we should accept that, but we should learn from the way they structure and guide the class and make the teaching distinct. They are very clear on this point. I think that is very exciting. [No. 1]

What I think I will bring home from here is that when we began to develop an educational platform based on the 1960s, perhaps we threw away a little too much of the discipline and professional focus, and we could do with some of it again. [ . . . ] But in general I would say that we have a proud educational tradition which I think we should be careful not to throw away. [No. 15]

Another reflection regarded the Chinese's facilitation of very simple and focused as an inspiration for Danish schools with regard to the inclusion of students with special needs:

[ . . . ] Facilitation of small ideas that can turn into big ideas if we talk about inclusion. Thinking big might arise when you narrow it down to something smaller. How can we limit some things that might just need to be sharper? In Denmark, when we formulate a project, we have a tendency to make it big, wide and well-articulated. What I also see here is that they keep one thing absolutely straight. One tiny thing. Then they take only that particular thing and do it. For example, when we saw the morning gymnastics yesterday. It was very simple; it was one thing they do, and they all do it. [No. 13]

Finally, an important side benefit to the international experience was considered to be the general reflections and ideas that were derived from knowledge sharing within the group of Danish school leaders.

#### 4.3. Reflection-on-international experience

Due to several overlaps with the reflections-in-action, the presentation of findings in this phase focuses on those school leaders' reflections that added something new and which had a special emphasis on the school leaders' reflections on plans for the future.

##### 4.3.1. Future plans for internationalization

Plans for the implementation of ideas and knowledge gained during the experiences in China involved all levels of internationalization. A municipal school leader planned to use the experience as a point of departure for developing a municipal strategy for international cooperation and an international dimension in their schools. Other plans included internationalization through mobility with China and in cooperation with other schools at municipal or cross-municipal levels.

At the school level, the leaders' reflections involved plans for activities and ideas regarding organizational aspects of internationalization through Chinese activities. While the experiences and actual plans needed to be discussed with co-leaders and teachers at home, many planned to make use of the CI AAU's teaching offers (possibly in cooperation with neighboring schools) and aim for mobility opportunities in the future. Some also expressed an interest in the possibility of establishing a Confucius Classroom<sup>6</sup> at their school, giving Chinese language and culture a central role, and gaining financial support in the process. Economic considerations are important and pose a challenge to internationalization through mobility with China as public schools are free of charge. Another consideration of the reflections was the value of providing an opportunity for both a school leader and a teacher from each school to replicate delegation visit to China, since "the teacher has to do the work in the future" [No. 19].

<sup>6</sup> Confucius Classrooms can be established in primary and secondary schools in order to support the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture. Confucius classrooms are connected to the local Confucius Institute.

At the student level, plans involved both Chinese activities at school, in cooperation with the CI AAU, and the school leader sharing their knowledge from the delegation visit with students. Lastly, it involved future student mobility with China.

Several school leaders emphasized the CI AAU as an important collaborator at all levels in establishing and supporting the process of developing internationalization through school activities related to China, for example by providing Chinese language teachers and facilitating contact with Chinese schools.

#### 4.3.2. *International inspiration for the school and school system*

While some ideas can be transferred directly into Danish schools (e.g. using music as a bell), others will need adjustment. The reflections posed questions of how the Danish tradition for learning with a focus on the development of innovative competences in students can be combined with a more disciplined classroom environment. In this case, the Chinese style of discipline is not the aim, but can be used for inspiration in the Danish context. Other ideas inspired by the Chinese school system included developing ways of focusing on supernormal children<sup>7</sup> and introducing more physical exercise during schooldays. However, while new ideas are manifold, a few school leaders were more reserved:

For now, I don't expect to make any changes at home. It is more about telling about the visit and providing students and teachers a look into the Chinese culture from my experiences. China is a lot of things and I've only seen a small part that cannot be generalized. [No. 10]

For the school system in general, some were inspired by the Chinese approach to teaching at the schools visited, which involved teachers' teaching only one subject and having fewer teaching hours per week, and continuous collaboration with colleagues for professional development. On the other hand, a school leader reflected upon the values upon which the Danish school education is based, stating that the delegation visit to China "has confirmed that children have only one childhood. Not only school, thank you!" [No. 8].

## 5. Discussion

The discussion is divided into two parts. Firstly, we discuss how the school leaders reflected on their international experiences in terms of developing ideas for internationalization. Secondly, we discuss the possibilities and challenges to utilizing international experience in educational leaders as part of an internationalization process at the school level. For this part, we integrate our model of internationalization of education and the key enablers: leadership, engaged embedders of change, policy support, and financial support.

### 5.1. *Learning and developing ideas*

International experience for leaders bears many similarities with study visits abroad for students: going abroad, experiencing another country, culture, and school system, and the opportunity to learn through reflections on these experiences (Tinkham, 2011). It raises awareness of the possibilities of experiential learning as well as non-formal and informal contexts of learning (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). However, the design of such international experience requires meaningful activities that lead to purposeful social interaction in cultural contexts (Wenger, 1998).

The findings show that by participating in meaningful activities with international school leaders, teachers, and researchers during an international experience, it is possible for school leaders to develop a broader understanding of the universalities and particularities of, for example, school education and societies. The school leaders' reflections show that knowledge sharing through active engagement in interaction with international colleagues brings insight into the similarities and differences of school systems and societies in general. This then creates a foundation both for mutual learning and for the understanding of the possibilities and challenges of future international cooperation. Furthermore, through lived experiences from schools and knowledge sharing with international colleagues, it serves as a context for discovering new ways of approaching aspects of school education, and thereby provides opportunities to develop new ideas for schools at many levels and in many ways. As Heidemann (2003:146) states, differences first become a value when you aim for cooperation with someone who differs from you. Differences can initiate reflection on one's own practice, and can lead either to an appreciation of why things are done in a specific manner, or to inspiration for new approaches. These findings support the research conducted by Tinkham (2011), who found that short-term studies abroad for school leaders led to transformational learning.

This study found several reflections relating to knowledge sharing within the delegation group during the experience regarding issues related to internationalization and school education in general. These reflections play a significant role. Thus, the development of ideas is based not only on international, but also on inter-municipal and inter-institutional inspiration during the international experience. In addition, during the visit some used the Internet to share knowledge with students at home, and further knowledge sharing with key people at the schools is expected to take place following the visit.

<sup>7</sup> Research of "supernormal children" was discussed with a professor, and a visit was made to a special class for this group of students.

## 5.2. Developing successful internationalization: from idea to reality

### 5.2.1. Leadership

As previously stated, internationalization at the school level requires engaged school leaders who prioritize international, intercultural, and global aspects in the aim, function, and delivery of school education (Heidemann, 1999a; Knight, 2003). The task of school leaders is to direct the activities of teachers toward a shared goal of internationalization (Cotae, 2013), and to develop an understanding of internationalization as something to be integrated into, rather than peripheral to, the core mission of school education (Hudzik and Stohl, 2009). International experience provides the opportunity for school leaders to go abroad and lead the way in a global world, and to use the experience to inspire teachers and students both during and upon their return. Much research shows that the educational leaders' ability to influence the school conditions, motivate teachers and unleash the potential in the school is significant for the students' learning (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Thus, students' intercultural learning is also closely linked to educational leadership.

Furthermore, as previously discussed, it provides experiential learning possibilities through knowledge sharing with other leaders, both local and international, which can motivate leaders to engage in a process of internationalization. As argued by Xing and Dervin (2014), continuous professional development is needed for educational leaders, and the establishment of links between the schools and external connections locally, nationally, and internationally is essential to become successful. Also, Heidemann (2003) characterizes school leaders at internationalized schools as very passionate, but some school leaders may need to develop such passion. Thus, "best cases" of internationalization, or at least international activities, can illuminate the way for other schools (Nolan and Hunter, 2012).

The challenge remains how to move from the idea of internationalization to the realization thereof. International experience for leaders accentuates leadership as a vital enabler of successful internationalization, and in order to initiate an internationalization process in schools it is important to first raise awareness of the imperative role of leadership engagement, both at the municipal and institutional levels. Despite Danish school leaders working in teams, we agree with Tinkham (2011) that support structures are needed for leaders to reflect upon and share experiences after the sojourn period. As suggested by several participants, the CI AAU could be a liaison, though online platforms would provide more direct communication.

### 5.2.2. Embedders of change

As discussed, teacher engagement is an important factor in the implementation of internationalization initiatives. For teachers, the opportunity of international experience for leaders means having a leader who has developed an understanding of international school education and international activities through lived experiences, which can be shared with the teachers and used as a point of departure for an internationalization process. It provides a leader who shows the importance of going abroad and emphasizes internationalization through his/her actions.

In line with transformational educational leadership, findings from this study indicate a well-developed understanding among school leaders of the importance of teacher engagement and teachers' need for motivation and inspiration in order to embrace internationalization. However, developing an understanding among teachers of the importance of internationalization alongside other important tasks at the school level is a considerable challenge. For this purpose, upon their return leaders must identify key agents of change and connect with allies who have the skills required to drive the process of internationalization forward (Heidemann, 2003). Conversely, Tinkham (2011:193) found that "leaders' creativity, degree of reflection on the experience, and ability to involve others appear to play powerful roles in the internationalization of their schools".

The fact that international experience for leaders did not include the participation of teachers is a challenge, as several of the school leaders reflected. An inclusion of both a teacher and a leader from each school in future initiatives of international experiences would make it possible to cover two enablers.

### 5.2.3. Policy support

School education in Denmark is a municipal matter; therefore the importance of a municipal internationalization strategy has been greatly emphasized (Holm-Larsen et al., 2002; Styrelsen for International Uddannelse, Denmark, 2010). Nevertheless, none of the municipalities represented have implemented such a strategy, although one municipality has a municipal international coordinator to support internationalization in the local schools. Following the argument of Xing and Dervin (2014) successful municipal educational leadership practice must develop structures that facilitate internationalization in the local schools.

Policy support is closely linked to leadership at the school level. The possibility of international experience for leaders therefore requires an understanding of the importance of leadership among leaders at the school and municipal levels, and the need for support to initiate and sustain internationalization in the local schools.

### 5.2.4. Financial support

In general, international experience for school leaders represents a financial challenge to schools. In this particular case, the international experience was financed with significant support from China, and one municipality also provided additional financial support to its participating school leaders. Moreover, the experience included information on

opportunities for future financial support from the Confucius Institute, such as the establishment of Confucius classrooms, offers of Chinese language and culture education in schools, and assistance in creating links between Denmark and China.

This study shows that the possibility of international experience for leaders is related to innovative thinking. Thus, the idea of developing international cooperation with China among a group of schools (either at the municipal or cross-municipal levels) has been discussed and reflected upon, creating a foundation for future knowledge sharing and cooperation both within and across nations. Heidemann (2003) proposes keeping it simple by starting small, but thinking big. Cooperation among a group of Danish schools to develop international cooperation with China provides a foundation for support between schools (among leaders and teachers), and could divide administrative tasks and reduce costs.

## 6. Conclusion

The growing interest of internationalization at the school level calls for research to understand the particularities of internationalization in this specific context. The international experience in China for school leaders reviewed in this study was developed based on an increased focus on and effort to develop internationalization at the school level in Denmark. This study brings insight into the school leaders' reflections before, during, and after their international experience, their areas of interest (e.g. internationalization, the structure of the Chinese school system, classroom management, and Chinese society), and their development of ideas on how the experience could be used as an inspiration for the Danish school system. However, the extent to which the particular ideas were carried out in practice has not yet been researched.

This study suggests that international experience for leaders can be used as a context for professional development and for developing ideas for internationalization at the school level through lived experiences, participation in meaningful activities abroad, and active engagement in interaction with international as well as local colleagues. It brings attention to the utility of the leaders' experiences abroad as a context for and learning through reflection.

The study covers several layers of leadership at the school level and suggests that international experiences for leaders as part of an internationalization process can bring about both opportunities and challenges within areas of importance for successful internationalization, including leadership, teacher engagement, policy support, and financial support. International experience for leaders accentuates the importance of leadership in an internationalization process at the school level for leaders to engage teachers in the transformation process, and at the municipal level for leadership to develop an internationalization strategy or policy and structures for financial support.

In addition, it provides a context for facilitating an understanding of and motivation for internationalization among leaders, which can be used for leaders to guide the school through a globalized world. International experience for educational leaders can be used as a point of departure for facilitating teacher engagement, however by developing a joint international experience for school leaders and teachers it would be possible to facilitate learning and engagement among both groups of importance, while possibly developing a context for additional knowledge sharing. Finally, international experience for leaders can provide a context for innovative thinking to handle obstacles on the way to successful internationalization.

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2017.02.009>.

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## **Appendix B. Student portfolio (paper 3)**

# Portfolio



**Navn:**

**Klasse:**

**Min kinesiske vens navn:**



## Om portfolio

Du skal have besøg af en kineser, og der venter med garanti mange sjove og lærerige oplevelser forude. I denne portfolio skal du både fortælle om alle de ting, som du oplever, og prøve at tænke lidt mere over dem.

Portfolioen indeholder forskellige temaer, fx ”noget spændende” og ”en misforståelse”. Der er også plads til, at du kan fortælle om andre ting fra besøget, som du har lyst til at dele. Det kan du gøre ved enten at skrive noget eller indsætte billeder fra besøget. Du må også gerne vedlægge små videoklip fra besøget på en cd-rom eller sende dem til [uee@learning.aau.dk](mailto:uee@learning.aau.dk).

**RIGTIG GOD FORNØJELSE!**



# Tanker før besøget

## **Forventninger...**

Beskriv hvordan du regner med, at besøget bliver.

Beskriv hvordan du tror, at de kinesiske elever er.

Beskriv hvad du gerne vil have ud af besøget.

# Tanker under/efter besøget

## **Noget spændende....**

Her kan du fortælle om det, du synes var mest spændende under besøget. Prøv også at forklare hvorfor det var det mest spændende.

## **Noget svært....**

Her kan du fortælle om noget, du synes har været svært under besøget. Forklar gerne hvorfor det var svært, og hvad du gjorde for at tackle det.

**Noget mærkeligt....**

Her kan du fortælle om noget, der skete under besøget, som du synes, var mærkeligt. Prøv også at forklare hvorfor det var mærkeligt.

**Noget overraskende....**

Her kan du fortælle om det, du synes var mest overraskende under besøget. Prøv også at forklare hvorfor det var mest overraskende.

**En misforståelse...**

Her kan du fortælle om et tidspunkt under besøget, hvor I ikke forstod hinanden. Prøv at forklare hvad der skete.

Her kan du fortælle, hvordan I fik afklaret misforståelsen.

Prøv om du kan forklare, hvordan misforståelsen kunne have været undgået.

**Ligheder og forskelle...**

Her kan du fortælle om de **ligheder**, der var mellem dig og de kinesiske elever. Prøv også at forklare hvorfor der var de ligheder.

Her kan du fortælle om de **forskelle**, der var mellem dig og de kinesiske elever. Prøv også at forklare hvorfor der var de forskelle.

Hvis der var noget, som overraskede dig ved lighederne og forskellene, så prøv at forklare hvorfor.

**Viden om Kina...**

Her kan du fortælle, hvad du har lært om Kina, kinesisk kultur og det kinesiske sprog.

Her kan du forklare, hvad det betyder for dig at have fået den viden.

**Tænker tilbage...**

Her kan du fortælle om det ved besøget, der var/ikke var, som du havde regnet med.

Her kan du forklare, hvad du selv gjorde for at få det ud af besøget, som du gerne ville.

Prøv at overveje, hvad du har fået ud af besøget.



**Andre ting...**

Her kan du fortælle om andre ting eller indsætte nogle billeder fra besøget (skriv gerne et par ord til billederne).

## **Appendix C. Interview guidelines**

## Interview guidelines for focus group interviews (paper 3)

Theme	Questions
Introduction	Presentation round: Name and class
Experiences	<p><u>Startspørgsmål:</u> Når I tænker tilbage på besøget af de kinesiske elever, hvad husker I bedst eller mest tænker på? (Hvorfor netop det? Andre ting?)</p> <p>Hvad var det sjoveste, mærkeligste, sværeste eller mest overraskende I oplevede? (Hvorfor? Prøv at forklar/uddyb. Spørg ind til, om de andre oplevede det samme (<i>for evt. at nuancere eller understrege svaret</i>)?)</p> <p>Hvad har I fortalt andre (jeres venner/familie) omkring jeres oplevelse?</p>
Behaviour	<p><u>Startspørgsmål:</u> Hvordan oplevede I de kinesiske elevers adfærd/måde at være på? (Hvad overraskede? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke? Var der stor forskel på de kinesiske elever indbyrdes? Hvordan/hvordan ikke? Var det generelt for dem alle? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke)</p> <p>Flere nævnte, både i deres portfolio og da vi mødtes kort efter besøget, at høfligheden/uhøfligheden var noget af det, der havde overrasket. Prøv at fortæl om jeres oplevelser herom. (Hvad gjorde I for at forstå deres adfærd? Spurgte I ind til det? Har I overvejet, om adfærden kan forstås på en anden måde?) <i>Hvis de ikke selv begynder at tale om det. Evt... det undrer mig, at ingen af jer nævner høflighed/uhøflighed. + At sige farvel til slut.</i></p> <p>Hvordan tror I, at de oplevede jer og jeres adfærd? (Hvad tror I, de har set som karakteristisk for jer? Har I spekuleret over, om de kunne have opfattet jer som uhøflige, overhøflige eller andet? Fortæl gerne om en episode. Tænkte I over, hvordan I opførte jer, og hvordan de fx forstod det?). Tænker I, at det handler om kultur?</p>

## Appendix C. Interview guidelines

<p>Communication</p>	<p><u>Startspørgsmål:</u> Hvordan oplevede I det at skulle kommunikere med de kinesiske elever? (Udfordringer? Hvordan overkom I udfordringerne? Muligheder? Brugte I teknologi? <i>Om hvordan, de kommunikerede</i>)</p> <p>Hvad gjorde I for, at de kinesiske elever fik mulighed for at deltage i de fællesskaber, I er en del af? (I klassen, i familien, i fritiden, blandt værtseleverne?)</p> <p>Hvad gjorde I selv for at få mulighed for at deltage i de kinesiske elevers fællesskaber? (<i>fx deltage i deres lege med sten-saks-papir og den der tabte skulle synge en sang</i>). (Var det let/vanskeligt?)</p> <p>Mødte I nogle forskelle i jeres måder at kommunikere på? (Hvordan? Prøv at forklar/giv et eksempel.)</p>
<p>Future</p>	<p><u>Startspørgsmål:</u> Hvad ville I sige til andre elever, der i fremtiden skal være værter for en kinesisk elev under et udvekslingsophold af omkring 1 uges varighed? (Hvorfor netop det? Gode råd? Hvorfor skulle de vælge/ikke vælge at blive værter?)</p> <p>Kan I prøve at sætte ord på, hvad I har fået ud af at have været værter for de kinesiske elever? (Kan det at have en kineser boende give noget andet end at have en boende fra fx et europæisk land? Hvad? Fordele/ulempes?)</p> <p>Hvad kan I bruge den her oplevelse til i fremtiden? (Hvorfor er det evt. relevant for jer at have en forståelse for kinesisk sprog og kultur? Kunne I være interesseret i at komme på udvekslingsophold i Kina? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?)</p> <p>Hvad har I lært om <u>kultur</u>, som I kan bruge i fremtiden?</p> <p>Har I holdt kontakt med nogen af de kinesiske elever? (Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke? Hvordan? Hvad er forventningerne til fremtiden omkring kontakten? Hvad giver det?)</p> <p>Er der noget omkring planlægningen, som I kunne have ønsket havde foregået på en anden måde under opholdet? (Noget, som vi fra CI AAU eller skolens side kan gøre bedre eller anderledes en anden gang?) Hvordan var længden af opholdet?</p>

## Appendix C. Interview guidelines

## **Appendix D. Questionnaires**

## Questionnaire prior to the delegation visit (paper 4)

### Survey on the North Danish Principal Delegation's Visit to China

Dear Delegation Participant,

Thank you for your participation in this information meeting about the delegation visit to China in October 2011. We would appreciate it if you could spare 10 minutes to fill in this survey, which aims to get a picture of your background and expectations of this trip. The questions may be answered either in Danish or English.

Kind regards,

Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at AAU



Appendix D. Questionnaires

**1. Personal information**

Name:

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Position:

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Institution:

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Contact address:

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Telephone number:

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E-mail:

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**2. Please list some of your most important reasons for joining this delegation visit to China.**

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**3. Please list some of your greatest expectations regarding the activities and experiences during this delegation visit.**

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**4. What do you consider the major benefits and challenges of offering Chinese language and culture activities in your school – now or in the future?**

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**5. Has your school developed internationalisation strategies, and, if yes, how are they implemented?**

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**6. In which ways do you find internationalisation of your school important, and how do you expect to benefit from Chinese language and culture activities concerning this issue?**

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**7. How do you expect to make use of this delegation visit to China at your school?**

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## Questionnaire after the delegation visit (paper 4)

### Survey on the North Danish Principal Delegation's Visit to China

Dear Delegation Participant,

Thank you for your participation in this delegation visit to China. We would appreciate it if you could spare 10 minutes of your time to fill in this survey, which aims at understanding your experiences and development of ideas in relation to your own school during this trip. The questions may be answered either in Danish or English.

Kind regards,

Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at AAU



Appendix E.

**1. Your name:**

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**2. What have been the highlights during the trip? Please explain why.**

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**3. Did you get any new ideas for development at your school based on this China visit? Please explain.**

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**4. How are you planning to make use of this delegation visit to China at your school? What would be the challenges and possibilities?**

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**5. Based on your future plans in relation to this trip, how can the CI help you?**

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**6. What do you think of this delegation visit to China (e.g. in terms of quality, contents or organisation)?**

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**7. Do you have any suggestions for improvement of the delegation visit?**

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**8. As a part of the CI's research we would like to follow up on this delegation visit and do interviews with some of the delegation participants in spring 2012. Would you be willing to participate in a 30-60 minutes interview?**

Yes       No       Maybe

## **Appendix F. Co-author statements**

# Paper 2



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
DENMARK

The Doctoral School of Social Sciences  
Date of template: 25 September 2017  
Case No.: 2013-569-00017  
Document no.: 612213




## CO-AUTHOR STATEMENT

<b>Title of paper</b>	Learning from Designing and Organizing an Intercultural Student Exchange Program.
<b>Journal</b>	Published as a chapter in M. J., Kirkebæk, X. Y., Du, & A. A., Jensen. (Eds.). 2013. Teaching and learning culture: Negotiating the context, Pp. 27-42. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
<b>Published</b>	2013

<p><b>Description of PhD student's contribution</b> Name of PhD student: Ulla Egdiussen Egekvist</p> <p>Ulla Egdiussen Egekvist, participated in the research design, revised and restructured the draft of the introduction and theoretical framework, wrote the discussion and conclusion sections, and revised the paper based on the editors' comments.</p>
<p><b>Description of co-author's contribution</b> Name of co-author: Niels Erik Lyngdorf</p> <p>Niels-Erik Lyngdorf, participated in the research design, wrote a draft of the introduction and parts of the theoretical framework, gave comments for improvements during the development of the discussion and conclusion sections and in the revision of the paper.</p>
<p><b>Description of co-author's contribution (if applicable)</b> Name of co-author: Xiang-Yun Du</p> <p>Xiang-Yun Du, supervised the research design, wrote parts of the theoretical section, and gave comments for improvements during the development and revision of the paper.</p>
<p><b>Description of co-author's contribution (if applicable)</b> Name of co-author: Jiannong Shi</p> <p>Jiannong Shi helped make the research a reality through his efforts in making it possible for the Chinese students to go for a study visit to Denmark.</p>



Appendix G.

PhD student	Ulla Egiussen Egekvist		
I hereby declare that the above information is correct		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date		Signature	
25/9-2017			
Co-author	Niels Erik Lyngdorf		
I hereby declare that the above information is correct		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date		Signature	
04/12-2017			
Co-author	Xiang-Yun Du		
I hereby declare that the above information is correct		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date		Signature	
25/09-17			
Co-author	Jiannong Shi		
I hereby declare that the above information is correct		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date		Signature	

# Paper 3



AALBORG UNIVERSITY  
DENMARK

The Doctoral School of Social Sciences  
Date of template: 25 September 2017  
Case No.: 2013-569-00017  
Document no.: 612213

## CO-AUTHOR STATEMENT

<b>Title of paper</b>	Intercultural competence in host students? A study of Danish students facing China at home
<b>Journal</b>	Published as a chapter in F. Dervin & Z. Gross (eds.) 2016. Intercultural Competence: Alternative approaches for different times. P. 26-41. London: Routledge.
<b>Published</b>	2016

### Description of PhD student's contribution

Name of PhD student: Ulla Egdiussen Egekvist

Ulla Egdiussen Egekvist, was in charge of the research design and collected, transcribed, and analyzed the empirical material. She proposed the research question and theoretical framework, and also wrote and revised the entire paper.

### Description of co-author's contribution

Name of co-author: Niels Erik Lyngdorf

Niels Erik Lyngdorf gave comments for improvements during the development and revision of the paper.

### Description of co-author's contribution (if applicable)

Name of co-author: Xiang-Yun Du




Xiang-Yun Du, supervised the research design and gave comments for improvements during the development and revision of the paper.

### Description of co-author's contribution (if applicable)

Name of co-author: Jiannong Shi

Jiannong Shi helped make the research a reality through his efforts to making it possible for the Chinese students to go on a study visit to Denmark.

Appendix G.

PhD student	Ulla Egdiussen Egekvist		
I hereby declare that the above information is correct	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Date	25/9-2017		
Signature			
Co-author	Niels Erik Lyngdorf		
I hereby declare that the above information is correct	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Date	04/12-2017		
Signature			
Co-author	Xiangyun Du		
I hereby declare that the above information is correct	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Date	25/09-17		
Signature			
Co-author	Jiannong Shi		
I hereby declare that the above information is correct	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Date			
Signature			

# Paper 4



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
DENMARK

The Doctoral School of Social Sciences  
Date of template: 25 September 2017  
Case No.: 2013-569-00017  
Document no.: 612213

## CO-AUTHOR STATEMENT

<b>Title of paper</b>	Internationalization in schools - Perspectives of school leaders
<b>Journal</b>	International Journal of Educational Research
<b>Published</b>	2017

### Description of PhD student's contribution

Name of PhD student: Ulla Egidiussen Egekvist

Ulla Egidiussen Egekvist was in charge of the research design and collected, structured, transcribed, and analyzed the empirical material. She proposed the research questions and theoretical framework, and wrote and revised the entire paper.

### Description of co-author's contribution

Name of co-author: Niels Erik Lyngdorf

Niels-Erik Lyngdorf gave comments for improvements during the first stages in the development of the paper.

### Description of co-author's contribution (if applicable)

Name of co-author: Xiang-Yun Du

Xiang-Yun Du supervised the research design and gave comments for improvements during the development and revision of the paper.

### Description of co-author's contribution (if applicable)

Name of co-author:

Appendix G.

PhD student	Ulla Egidiussen Egekvist		
I hereby declare that the above information is correct	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date		Signature	
25/9-2017		Ulla Egekvist	
Co-author	Niels Erik Lyngdorf		
I hereby declare that the above information is correct	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date		Signature	
04/12-2017		Niels Erik Lyngdorf	
Co-author	Xiang-Yun Du		
I hereby declare that the above information is correct	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date		Signature	
25/09-17		Xiang-Yun Du	
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Date		Signature	

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