

# UNIVERSITIES AND STUDENT VALUES ACROSS NATIONS

*Simon U. Kragh*

*Sven Bislev*

Department of Intercultural Communication and Management,  
Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

## **Abstract**

Over the past decade universities have become increasingly global. International contacts, cooperation, exchange and communication is used for benchmarking research and teaching. English-speaking universities, in particular, are actively recruiting huge numbers of foreign students to increase the pool of paying and qualified students. At Copenhagen Business School, a significant number of students (5-10%) are on exchange - in and out - every year.

Many foreign students find that they encounter a different world when signing up for classes at CBS - a world of different values and norms, expressed in discourses and practices in and around the university. This study investigates, through focus groups and a survey of 800 students, the character of this experience of contrast. What values do foreigners from different nations arrive with, how do they experience the difference and what do they feel about it? We relate our findings to broader notions of nationally different values in order to discuss both a general value problematic and issues of comparative and intercultural higher education.

**Keywords:** University and business school cultures. educational values, students' preferences, cross-cultural experience.

---

## **Introduction**

Does globalization harmonize cultures? To a certain extent, it does: more and more people around the world relate to a small set of cultural icons – brands, symbols, objects, etc. – that commercial and media machines are disseminating. But does this process amount to a real shift, an equalization of more deeply held belief and concepts?

The world of universities has for centuries been a force for globalization. If harmonization is going on, it should be happening here. In contrast, the experiences of students having studied abroad, and of faculty having worked at universities in other countries, point to considerable differences in teaching and learning styles between countries. There is an overwhelming amount of anecdotal information about striking differences and entertaining misunderstandings, told and retold at academic meetings, but also a growing empirical and analytical literature providing evidence of those differences. Visiting US professors to East European countries have commented on the different approaches to teaching (Marcic and Pendergast, 1994); Hofstede has illustrated his famous 4 dimensions drawing on personal teaching experiences from a number of universities (Hofstede 1991, 2001) and the differences have been addressed from the strategic-institutional perspective of educational establishments encountering globalization and privatization (Jarvis, 2001). Together, there is strong evidence that attitudes to professorial authority, degrees of student participation in teaching and learning, and approaches to knowledge at universities vary widely across nations.

At the same time, it is often assumed that the globalization of higher education may lead to a convergence of values and norms in line with Levitt's prediction from 1980 (Levitt, 1995) that the world, due to increased international communication would move towards a common, global set of preferences. In an analysis of 1300 foreign students at the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Gooderham and Nordhaug (2001) thus found strong similarities between the values of

students coming from 11 European countries, concluding that a significant convergence of values is taking place across Europe.

Using data from a survey conducted at Copenhagen Business School, we show that there indeed are large cultural differences among universities in different countries. These differences are systematically interconnected, constituting coherent cultural patterns. Differences in attitudes to professor-student relations, professors emphasis on factual knowledge, the frequency of case-discussions and group work are strongly linked to each other, and vary together in a relatively predictable way, suggesting the existence of an underlying value dimension common to these different approaches to teaching and learning.

However, while the institutions display large differences from country to country, the surveyed students do not. The students have relatively similar preferences independently of their country of origin and are more egalitarian and participation oriented than the international average of universities. They do not seem to be influenced by neither the values of their home university, nor the exchange university where they have studied for a semester or two.

If the analysis of the universities point to a world consisting of different national university cultures, ranging from very authoritarian and fact oriented to very egalitarian and discussion oriented, the students are best described as a transnational subculture with relatively similar, egalitarian and discussion-oriented values.

### **The data**

The present analysis of educational values and practices at universities and business schools is based on 386 foreign exchange students studying at Copenhagen Business School in 2002 and 2003, and 430 Danish students from CBS, with experience from foreign business schools and universities. The questionnaire was sent to the total populations of exchange students, ingoing and outgoing, and the respondents constitute ca. 30 and ca. 50 % of the respective populations.

In the student questionnaires we asked the students about a variety of behaviours and attitudes at their home universities and the institutions they visited, and about their own preferences in relation to these issues. The present analysis relies on the answers to those questions that concern authority and participation at the universities. The data from the foreign and Danish students have been merged and subsequently aggregated to the national level. Descriptions of conditions in the different countries, which we use in the analysis, are thus averages of Danish students experience in a given country and of the foreign students experience with their home-university in this country. The data on Denmark refer exclusively to Copenhagen Business School and are averages of foreign and Danish students' experiences.

The students in our populations are all business students. There is probably a certain bias in that, as business students can be imagined to be increasingly 'global' in outlook, as the business world is quickly globalizing. On the other, that bias is unlikely to be large: business students are in many respects – in terms of age, social conditions, life styles - like other students. Some of the institutions in our study are university-level business schools; others are business departments in universities. This difference, too, we believe is of little importance to our results. Even if the surveying of only business students did exaggerate the differences between students and their institutions, the very significant distinctions found mean that the main results are likely to hold up.

We have relied on the student's answers as descriptions of their institutions. If those answers had been subjective and biased, we have expected to find variation along national lines in the descriptions given of a certain institution. There was very little variation, however, so we assume that our respondents are qualified observers. They are experienced people, students who see their institutions through lenses that are formed in interaction with other students and with different institutions. They have all studied in at least two countries, in many cases more.

The contents of the questions were determined on the basis of 10 focus groups and a number of in-depth interviews with foreign and Danish students. The first version of the questionnaire was tested in a small

pilot study that resulted in a few questions being dropped and others reformulated to ensure that the terminology was comprehensible and consistent.

In the survey, we received answers from students with experience from 31 different countries. The distribution of respondents is skewed with a large number of students having experience from a limited number of countries, while very few students have experience from the rest of the countries. In order to limit the number of countries with very few students, the analysis includes only countries with 7 or more respondents per country. With 7 students per country, the spreads around the national averages reduce to an acceptable level, at the same time as it gives a relatively large number of countries in the aggregated sample.

In the present paper, we restrict the analysis to answers to five questions concerning the organizational culture at the universities. We asked the students to characterize their home and exchange universities along these four variables, and to indicate their own preferences.

The four variables and the questions were as follows:

1. *Reproduction of facts versus critical discussion*: "At your [home/exchange] university, what is mostly emphasized by professors: Reproduction of facts and textbook knowledge, or critical discussion and individual perspectives?" This question is intended to measure the extent to which individual independence and critical participation is valued in the institutional culture

2. *Authoritarian or egalitarian relations*: "At your [home/exchange] university, how is the relationship between professors and students: Professors treat students as equals, or professors are authoritarian?" Here we look at the degree of egalitarianism in the institutional culture.

2a. *Authoritarian or egalitarian relations*: "At your [home/exchange] university, how do you address professors: formally, by title and surname, or informally, using first name?" This is a more simple and concrete measure of question 2, focusing on the formality of student professor relations.

3. *Amount of student group-work*: "At your [home/exchange] university, how much is group work used in teaching?" This is a question measuring how much responsibility for own learning and team-work skills are valued in the institutional culture.

4. *Amount of business cases*: "At your [home/exchange] university, how much are business cases used in teaching?" Assuming that case teaching implies class discussion, i.e. that students have to be active in the teaching process, this measures the extent to which critical participation is valued in the institutional culture.

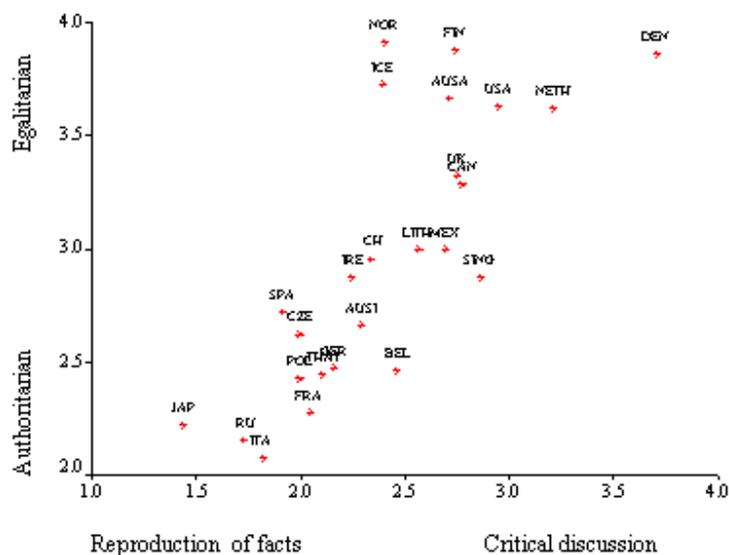
In questions 1-4 a numerical scale from 1 to 5 was used in answering. Answers to question 2a were binary – formal or informal.

## **INSTITUTIONAL CULTURES: UNIVERSITIES AND BUSINESS SCHOOLS**

### **Authority and Participation**

Diagram 1 shows the individual scores on questions 1 and 2 aggregated to the national level. The figures are averages of students from the respective countries.

Diagram 1: Relation between professor-student relations and the character of classroom teaching



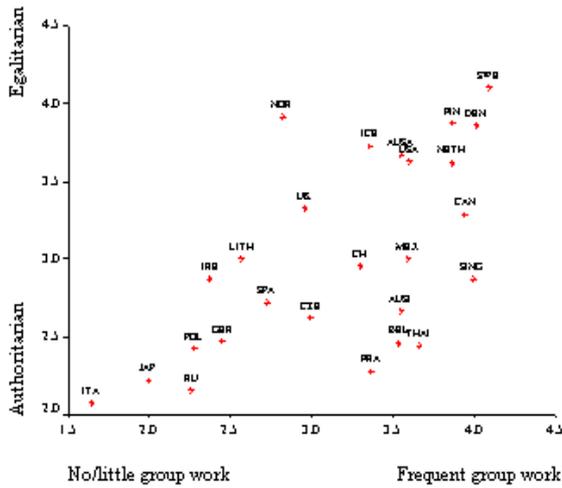
( $r=0.80$ ;  $p<0.001$ )

First, it is apparent from the diagram that each of the two variables shows considerable variations. The approach to participation implied in the question about discussion or facts, as well as the level of egalitarianism at the institutions, differ considerably between the national institutions. Those variations are somewhat similar – but not completely - for the two variables. The nations that have the most discussion-oriented teaching and learning styles are Finland, Denmark, Netherlands, Great Britain, USA, Canada, Australia and a mixed group comprising Singapore, Mexico and Lithuania. The nations with egalitarian cultures are the same, except that the mixed group is replaced by Norway and Iceland. In the low end of both egalitarianism and discussion orientation we find Japan and Russia, with Poland, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Thailand, Austria and Belgium close by. The correlation between the two variables is quite high, as indicated.

The question about authority and critical discussion refers to the professors' demonstrated attitudes (personal attitudes or forms of behaviour required by the institution) towards students, as seen through the eyes of students with experience of both CBS and foreign universities. The survey also asked a series of question referring to the importance of concrete forms of teaching at the institutions: whether the institutions relied on lectures or dialogue teaching, what kind of teaching materials were mostly used, how much case-teaching and group work were used. All these forms rely on different levels of student involvement in the learning process: high levels of dialogue in class, case-discussion and group work imply that students are supposed to be proactive and participate actively. Conversely, lectures, few or no case discussions and little group-work suggest a one-way communication from professors to students who listen, rather than participate.

Among these teaching forms, group work is the one that is mostly dependent on the students' involvement and ability to assume responsibility for their activities, at the same time as it is a teaching form that directly addresses the demand for the social competencies needed in order to collaborate with others. It leaves the initiative in the hands of the students who are supposed to find a way on their own without detailed instructions from the advisor. We expected that local universities and business schools that tend to have an authoritarian teaching style should use less group work than more egalitarian institutions. This seems to be the case (Diagram 2), although the correlation is lower.

Diagram 2: Use of group work and professor-student relationship

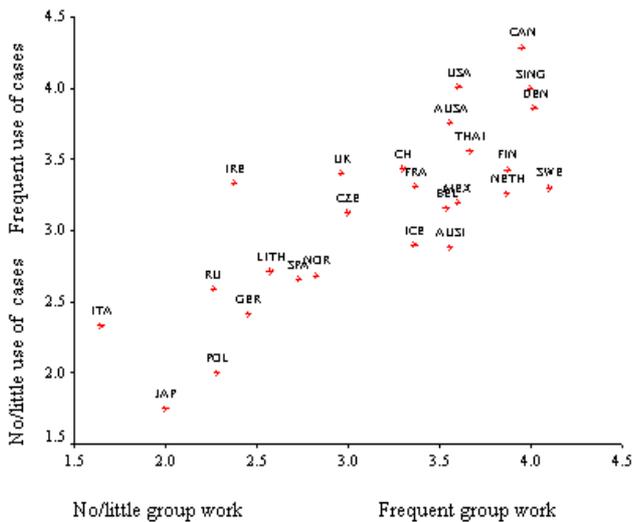


( $r=0.62$ ;  $p<0.001$ )

Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Australia, Netherlands, Canada and USA which are among the more egalitarian nations, have a high frequency of group work while the East European countries, Germany and Italy represent the opposite combination. The notion that students are independent and active, which underlies the correlation between authority and group work, is also related to the form of teaching as suggested by diagram 3

-  
-

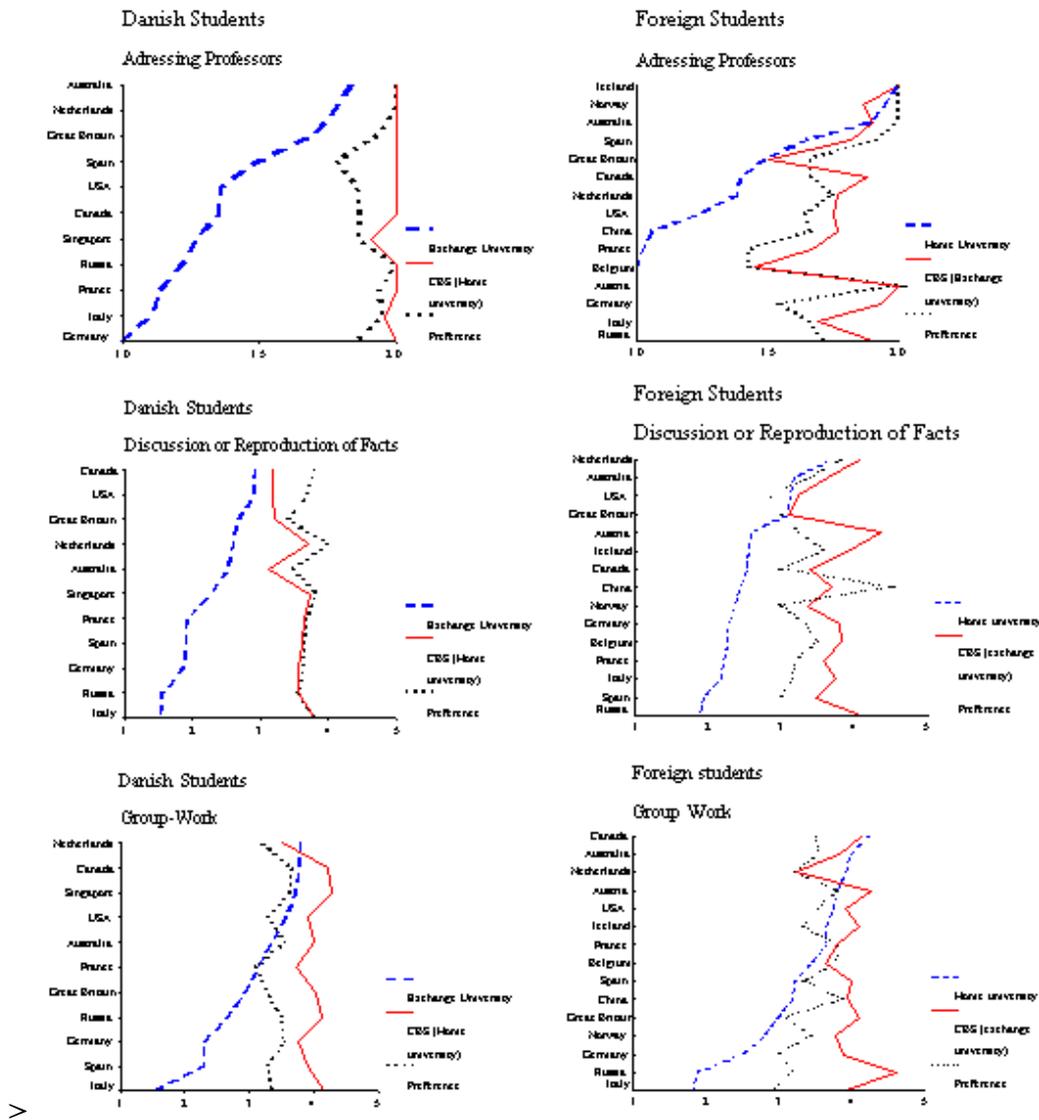
Diagram 3: Use of group work and fact-oriented teaching



( $r=0.77$ ;  $p<0.001$ )

Universities emphasizing reproduction and factual knowledge also tend to use group work relatively little, whereas countries with more a more discussion oriented teaching style also tend to give students the freedom and responsibility of group work.

Diagram 4: Use of group work and of business cases



(r=0.80; p<0.001)

As diagram 4 shows, there is also a correlation between the use of group work and the use of business cases, with the nations situated in clusters similar to the other diagrams. Group work and case discussion both represent form of a dialogue-oriented teaching style.

The correlation matrix in table 1 includes question 2a: whether students address professors formally or informally. Unsurprisingly, it correlates strongly with the question about the professor's attitudes to students. The diagram gives a clear impression of the interrelatedness of all the variables. High levels of participatory teaching – dialogue, cases, group work – correspond to high levels of the egalitarian attitudes of professors to their students and the degree in which they emphasize critical discussion, and vice versa: when students are only little involved in the teaching, professors tend to be authoritarian.

Table 1

	Addressing professors informally	Egalitarian relationships between students and professors	Critical discussion emphasized by professors	Frequent use of business cases
Addressing professors informally	1			

Egalitarian relationships between students and professors	0.89**	1		
Critical discussion emphasized by professors	0.59**	0.80**	1	
Frequent use of business cases	0.36	0.51**	0.71**	1
Frequent use of group-work	0.44*	0.62**	0.77**	0.80**

\* Correlations are significant at the 0.05 level

\*\*Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level

The contrasts between the institutional values in different places are large and vivid. From our focus groups, we have reports from East European students about professors' authoritarian attitudes towards students. A Hungarian student thus told us that "You have to show respect to the professors and not let them lose face. If a professor has made an error, the students will not tell him directly, but approach him saying something like: 'I don't understand, please explain'. It is apparent that the authoritarian attitudes reported by the students coexist with a non-participatory approach to students and an absence of critical discussion of viewpoints: in some cases, "questions can be asked, but after class proper" and in other cases "questions must be written down in order for the professor to select", and professors are always addressed formally.

At the other end of the spectrum, a Danish student – comparing CBS with a French university - describes the relationship between professors and students at CBS as much more informal and family-like. Her account of group work illustrates the participation and discussion-orientation of her fellow students at CBS: "At CBS everybody discusses a lot and you can spend a lot of time debating which particular word to use in the report. Everybody must have seen what each member of the group works with and put their mark on it – you are supposed to know all aspects of the project". Also American-style MBA schools are egalitarian and discussion oriented, irrespectively of their location. At the Asian Institute of Management in the Philippines - a replica of Harvard Business School – professors, we were told, are "easy to socialize with" and students address them by their first name. All classes, except in finance, are based on case-discussions.

## UNIVERSITIES AND NATIONAL CULTURE

The analysis has so far focused on university-internal factors, but the fact that e.g. the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries cluster together suggest that the systematic differences between the countries may be due to broader socio-cultural conditions at the national level. This seems in fact to be the case. The level of authority and participation correlate substantially with a number of socio-cultural indicators.

We thus find a number of significant and substantial correlations with Hofstede's value-dimensions (Hofstede, 2001), as seen in table 2

Table 2. University Culture and Hofstede's 4 Dimensions

	Power Distance	Individualism-Collectivism	Uncertainty Avoidance	Masculinity - Femininity
Addressing Professors Informally	-0.40	0.28	-0.54*	-0.62**

Egalitarian relationships between professors and Students	-0.51*	0.39	-0.62**	-0.64**
Critical Discussion Emphasized by Professors	-0.33	0.30	-0.70**	-0.57**
Frequent use of Business Cases	-0.37	-0.15	-0.62**	-0.32
Frequent use of Group Work	-0.24	-0.06	-0.41	-0.54*

N=20

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

As we might expect, the level of professorial authority at the universities correlate significantly with Hofstede's "power distance" index, but it is the "uncertainty avoidance" index and the "masculinity" index which not only correlate strongest with the educational indicators but also with the largest number of indicators.

The "uncertainty avoidance" index shows the ability to accommodate to and accept ambiguous situations without stress, and the correlation with the educational variables suggest that societies that are good at handling ambiguity also tend to have university or business schools educations that emphasize student participation in class, group work, egalitarian relations and informality between students and professors.

Also "masculinity" correlates nicely with the educational variables. Masculinity measures primarily the achievement orientation of individuals, their willingness to put the achievement of goals above other considerations and, having achieved them, to display the success.

It should be taken into consideration that Hofstede's data are more than 25 years old while the educational data are recent. Keeping these reservations in mind, however, the correlations suggest that the egalitarian and participation oriented universities are located in countries that have high power distances, tolerate relatively high levels of ambiguity, and have feminine values.

Hofstede's indices are not the only value dimensions that correlate significantly with the authority and participation at universities and business schools. Data on the role of women in society also correlate substantially with the data on teaching styles. The number of women in parliaments (lower house) thus correlates strongly with the level of authority between students and professors ( $r=0.72$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and substantially with the other variables except the frequency of case-teaching.

Similarly, a large number of indicators from the World Values Survey (Inglehart 1997; [www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)) suggest that the university values are linked to other socio-cultural phenomena. For example, the WVS question about tolerance towards homosexuals (whether one would avoid homosexuals as neighbours) correlates substantially with egalitarian and participation oriented educational styles at universities.

In other words, when teaching styles at universities in different countries differ, they do so because they are connected to other socio-cultural phenomena that also differ across countries, and these background variables – e.g. the role of women in society and tolerance towards homosexuals – are also linked and correlate strongly. In general, as suggested by Inglehart (Inglehart 1997), socio-cultural values go together in relatively predictable ways across nations, and change as relatively coherent "syndromes". The correlations suggest that the educational cultures at the universities tap into these syndromes.

Inglehart explains the different cultural values across the worlds' countries with the different levels of modernization of the societies. The most advanced societies – the richest welfare societies - in the world are among the most egalitarian both in terms of women's' participation in society, emancipation of minorities and tolerance towards out-groups. As shown by Hofstede (2001), there are high and significant correlations between the findings from the World Values Survey and his own results, suggesting that his four dimensions also are linked to processes of modernization and part of larger value-complexes which universities also tap into. High levels of student participation, informal and egalitarian relations between students and professors, extended use of critical discussions in class, case-teaching and group work on average tend to go together with egalitarian and emancipatory tendencies in society at large, and are characteristic of the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries and the Netherlands.

In short, cross-national differences in educational cultures at universities exist because universities are embedded in national cultures. This is in a way quite remarkable, given the long history of university globalization. For many centuries, universities have been a force for globalization, and the interim of national science systems looks like a parenthesis, and an unaccomplished one, in this history.

To recapitulate very quickly the history of the university institution, the first universities were institutions of churches or empires. Those regimes saw themselves as universal, i.e. recognizing no national particularities, and some analysts have seen the world of science as a modern religion – i.e. systems of thought with universalist aspirations. The emergence of nation-states as the dominant societal institutions entailed the development of research and knowledge systems that were defined in terms of national conditions and interests (Lundvall & Maskell, 2000). These institutions of science and higher education were organized, or at least overseen, by nation-states, resulting in numerous national peculiarities in the way institutions were built and operated (Altbach, 1998; Ben-David and Zloczower, 1962). Strategies for higher education became related to national norms and structures.

It remained, however, a norm of the scientific communities that the methods and results of science must be submitted to international scrutiny. Because scientific truth was still seen as objective and context-independent, scientists from even the most restrictive and closed and totalitarian nations were allowed (although frequently under restrictive conditions) to have access to foreign literature and to travel abroad. Students were also to a certain degree allowed to travel abroad for exchange visits. While the rest of society was being submerged in nationalist self-reflection, elements of universalism and globalization survived in the world of higher education.

When globalization started to expand again in earnest, after the Second World War, research and higher education were among the first sectors to initiate international cooperation. When globalization and post-industrialism expanded to break down the barriers between not only national societies, but also states and corporations, the world of science lost some of its exceptional status, its claim to uniqueness and universalism (Nowotny, e.a., 2001). Postmodernism meant the beginning of the fall of objective science. But the speed of globalization has been uneven. Our measuring of the different values in national university systems shows something about, how uneven.

## **STUDENT VALUES AND PREFERENCES**

So far the analysis has focussed on the behaviours and values in the institutions as reported by the students. We now turn to the students and see to what extent they reproduce this picture. The first question we ask is if the students prefer egalitarian and participation oriented teaching styles such as those found in the Anglo-Saxon countries, Scandinavia and the Netherlands, or if they prefer the opposite, or something in between? This leads to the second question: where do the student's preferences come from? Do they reflect the values of their home universities or the exchange universities, or are their values independent of the experience with universities at home and abroad?

The data in Table 3 show the difference between foreign students' values and those of their home universities. We use the variables from Table 1.

The picture is unequivocal: all the means show that compared to their home universities, foreign students at CBS want more informality, want more critical discussion, more frequent use of business cases and

group work than what is the average norm at the home universities:

**Table 3. Foreign Students at CBS**

	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Informality between Professors and Students (addressing professors)</b>		
Students' preferences	1.75	0.20
Home universities	1.34	0.38
<b>Emphasis on Critical Discussion</b>		
Students' preferences	3.33	0.43
Home Universities	2.56	0.51
<b>Frequency of Business Cases</b>		
Students' preferences	3.91	0.33
Home universities	3.23	0.65
<b>Frequency of Group-Work</b>		
Students' home universities	3.43	0.30
Home universities	3.27	0.74

Generalizing from the sample of 26 countries, the students have values that are more egalitarian and participation oriented than the global average of universities. The picture repeats itself when we look at the Danish (CBS) students and compare their preferences with their descriptions of their exchange (i.e., non-Danish) universities:

**Table 4. Danish (CBS) Students who have studied abroad**

	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Informality between Professors and Students (addressing professors)</b>		
Students' preferences	1.91	0.07
Exchange universities	1.39	0.28
<b>Emphasis on Critical Discussion</b>		
Students' preferences	3.68	0.17
Exchange universities	2.24	0.51
<b>Frequency of Business Cases</b>		
Students' preferences	3.77	0.22
Exchange universities	3.21	0.75
<b>Frequency of Group-Work</b>		
Students' preferences	3.40	0.19
Exchange universities	3.01	0.75

Another striking feature revealed by the diagram is that the students, in contrast to the universities, are remarkably similar. While the universities show large dispersions around the means as measured in the standard deviations, the students – foreign and Danish alike – have values that are much less dispersed.

For most of the variables, the standard deviations of the universities are between 2 and 4 times larger than the standard deviations of the student scores, implying that the students as a group are much more similar than the universities. And while the group of Danish students does have smaller standard deviations than the group of foreign students at CBS, their preferences are still much more alike than the university values. The one exception is the preference for discussion or reproduction (question 1), where Table 3 shows a standard deviation among foreign students of 0.43. In the diagrams below, Figure 5, it can be seen that this is due to a group of Chinese students having divergent attitudes from most. The reason for this is not easy to divine.

The findings thus support Gooderham and Nordhaug's (2001) conclusion that student values show a high degree of convergence and cross-national similarity. One should, however, be careful not to draw too wide inferences from that. Our data indicate that it does not suggest a *general* tendency towards convergence of values. The existence of large differences between educational styles at the world's universities indicates that these institutions embody values that are still very different showing no similar signs of a homogenization of values. In other words, comparing students to universities, the former constitutes a transnational, globalized subgroup sharing similar values across their country of origin, while the universities represent a national diversity of different educational cultures.

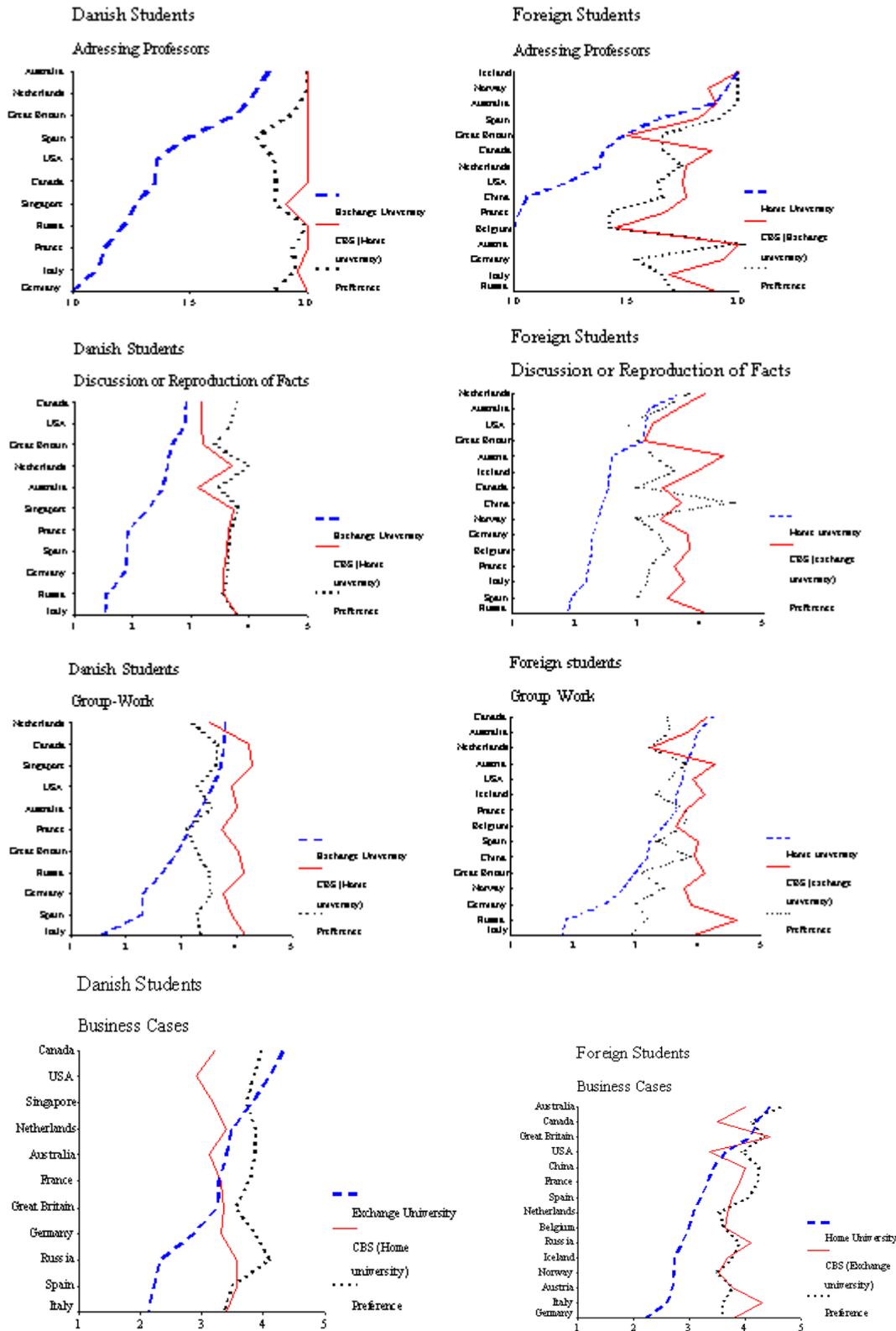
What role do the home universities and the exchange universities play in the formation of these preferences? Theoretically it may be argued that the country of origin where students are brought up is crucial for the formation of values, and it might be assumed that students therefore tend to reflect values from their country of origin, including their home university. This is one of the essential arguments in the literature on cross-cultural communication, the argument being that the culture of origin influences the behaviour and values of individuals – through socialization or "programming of the mind" (e.g. Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars, 1997).

On the other hand, the globalization thesis as proposed by e.g. Levitt (1995) takes the point of departure in the increased intercultural interaction and focuses on the effect of globalization on the formation of values, arguing that values converge at a global scale. If cross-cultural contact plays a serious role in the formation of values, we should expect to see that foreign students at CBS approach values and norms at CBS while Danish students with experience from foreign exchange universities should adopt values and norms from these institutions.

The data, however, do not support those notions: as already seen in tables 3 and 4, students have similar values across national divides, and at least the CBS students retain those values also after being abroad. If the cross-cultural experience of studying abroad should have an important impact on the values of the students we should expect them to differ according to the variety of values at the exchange universities, and not converge around a mean.

Figure 5 gives the same information as tables 3 and 4, using national averages rather than total averages, and includes information on both the home universities and the exchange universities of Danish students and foreign exchange students at CBS. In the graphs, students describe the teaching styles in non-Danish universities (punctuated blue line) and at CBS (unbroken blue line). The third, dotted, line shows students' personal preferences.

### **Figure 5. Observed Teaching Styles at Home Universities, Exchange Universities and Student Preferences**



The left column of the diagram has Danish (CBS) students reporting their experience with different exchange universities, their perception of CBS and their preferences. The students are ordered according to where they have been abroad. Read horizontally, each graph shows the difference between perceptions of exchange universities, the CBS, and preferences. Read vertically, there is an interesting but modest tendency that for example Danish students who have been to Australia perceive CBS as less discussion-oriented than those who have been to the Netherlands – and report personal preferences differing in the same way. But this is a much smaller tendency than the overall similarity of student values and dissimilarity of universities.

The right column of graphs shows how students from different countries perceive their home universities' values, those of CBS, and their own preferences. Read horizontally, again, we can gauge the difference between home university, CBS, and personal preference. Read vertically, we find that they report very different conditions at home universities and CBS values and personal preferences that are much more similar across students from different nations. In most cases, the students' preferences are very close to CBS and similar cultures, but in the case of the use of group work, all students – including the Danes – seem to think there is too much of it at those places.

With this evidence, we are unable to draw the intuitive common-sense conclusion that there is a causal link from the globalization of university education, via the widespread practice of studying abroad, to student values. Our data seem to suggest the contrary: there is no causal relationship between student values and the cross-cultural experience of studying abroad.

Two reservations must be made here: first, our data on value *changes* cover only CBS students. Accordingly, the conclusion has to be that if students alter their values as a consequence of exposure to foreign values, it only happens for students whose values are not already egalitarian and participatory: values can possibly be changed through socialization, but only in the direction of more participatory and egalitarian values.

The second reservation applies to possible *indirect* effects of globalization: other factors related to the overall process may affect the students, making their values converge around egalitarian and participation oriented norms. Students everywhere are, for example, avid media users, and it would not be surprising if it turned out that those students who go abroad on exchange visits are among the most eager consumers of foreign cultural products. If that is the case – and the cause – however, we are discussing a self-selection mechanism, not a socialization process.

## CONCLUSION

Universities display wide differences in educational styles. These differences grow from roots deep in the social and cultural characteristics of the nations in which they are located and operate. The large majority of university professors originate and live in the local society, and it is therefore not surprising that values at the universities correspond to values in society at large. As suggested by Hofstede, and empirically supported by the analysis in the present paper, university education is culture-bound and closely linked to basic socio-cultural conditions at the national level. The fact that universities continue having different attitudes to teaching in spite of long standing traditions for international cooperation – in particular in research – may well have its explanation in the integration of the universities in the national cultural context. If this is true, we would assume that the educational cultures of the universities will change in so far as society changes, unless deliberate action is taken by university management to develop the institutions in a culturally autonomous way. If, e.g., egalitarian and participation oriented teaching forms are introduced in otherwise authoritarian societies, such universities will tend to become cultural enclaves in their respective countries, and become part of a transnational subculture with values characteristic of the richest European societies and the Anglo-Saxon world, notably USA. Several East Asian business schools operate as enclaves in their local culture, having copied the methods of instruction, including the egalitarian and discussion oriented culture, at leading US institutions.

By the same token, some countries seem to have universities that are more authoritarian and less participation oriented than the larger society around them. It is e.g. surprising that Italy and Germany, according to students from these countries, belong to the more authoritarian group; in both countries, the universities seem to be more authoritarian than their socio-cultural context. Here, faculty seems to have favoured a conservative approach by not following the norms and values of the surrounding society.

In contrast to the variety of national approaches to teaching at the universities, the students who choose to go abroad as exchange students share a homogeneous set of egalitarian and participation oriented values. They all tend to share the values characteristic of Scandinavian, Dutch and Anglo-Saxon universities, and their values differ from those of their home universities to the extent that these university values differ from the participatory and egalitarian ones. The more authoritarian and the less participative the universities are, the larger the differences between student values and the prevailing values at the universities.

The intuitive explanation of the difference between national university values and student preferences would be that the students' values are becoming 'global' due to increased international contacts, but our evidence points in a different direction: while we have no 'before' and 'after' data, the fact that our CBS students, even after extensive stays in very different foreign institutions, retain a largely homogenous set of values, suggests that the exposure to other educational styles **either** does not lead to adoption of the foreign values **or**: only leads to such adoption, if those values are more egalitarian and participative than the ones brought from home. A more plausible hypothesis could be either

*self-selection*: students who decide to go abroad have egalitarian and participation oriented values which they have developed independently of – or in opposition to – their home universities. Exchange students are a transnational subgroup with similar values which set them apart from the international diversity of universities.

Or, alternatively:

*One-way change*: globalization may produce value harmonization, but only in one direction – towards more egalitarian and participative values.

The two hypotheses are not in conflict. The first may be a specification of the second.

What are the implications of such findings? What are the effects of this segmented, one-way influence of globalization? Have we spotted another version of US cultural imperialism – the hegemony of the business schools – that will cement the superpower's dominance through forced cultural emulation? Or have we traced the progressive course of modernization, in which the younger generation - naturally - takes the lead?

We have found preferences, attitudes and values that are different between groups and places. In a fundamental sense, there is no way of evaluating those different preferences and attitudes. There is no objective measure of good or bad values, and no culture can be held to be superior to other cultures in a general sense. What we can say is that there seems to be a timeline, perhaps an evolutionary logic, to the differences: the more authoritarian and hierarchical values came first, deriving from a less liberal, less democratic society and surviving into modernism and industrialism. The more egalitarian and participatory values evolved out of – or in opposition to – those, reflecting more recent turns of social and cultural history. But this evolution has been both gradual and uneven and has had its peculiarities in all the different cultures. The cultures of the US and Scandinavia are equally participatory and egalitarian, but unlike each other in other respects, as demonstrated by Hofstede and Inglehart.

In our business school universe, those modern values seem to fit very well with developments in the business world. The flexible application of knowledge, the cultivation of creativity and innovation, are important characteristics of corporations and regions that are successful in the wealthy parts of the world (Florida, 2002). Those features are most likely better served by business schools teaching in a way that stimulates students to be independent, creative and cooperative. Likewise, the relationship between economy and polity in the rich world is characterized by network governance, managerialization, flexible institutions, and a growing role of digital technology for communication and information (Pierre, 2000). In this context, there is less use for adaptation to authorities, and more for critical and innovative participation in decision-making processes and development. In this sense, the forces of the market as well as the changing relationship between market and state may imply a change towards egalitarian and participation values. Whether the market prevails – as it frequently does - and whether it goes to extremes - as it always tries to do – remains to be seen.

#### *References:*

Altbach, P. 1998. *Comparative Higher Education: Knowledge, the University, and Development*. Boston: Ablex

Banfield, Edward C. *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. New York: The Free Press, 1958.

Bell, D.. 1976. *The Coming of Post-industrial Society*. N.Y.: Basic Books

Ben-David, J. and A. Zloczower, 1962, "Universities and Academic Systems in Modern Societies", pp. 45-84 in *Archives Europeennes de Sociologie*, III

Böhm, Davis, Meares and Pearce, 2002. *Global Student Mobility 2025*. IDP Education Australia.

Collier, M.J. & R. Powell, 1990. "Ethnicity, Instructional Communication and Classroom Systems". *Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Fall, pp. 334-349

De Wit, H. 1995. "Education and Globalization in Europe: Current Trends and Future Developments", pp. 28-53 in *Frontiers*, Vol. 1, nr. 1

Dunn, R. and S.A. Griggs, 1995. *Multiculturalism and Learning Style - Teaching and Counselling Adolescents*. Connecticut: Praeger.

Florida, R., 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class - and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York: The Perseus Books Group

Gooderham, P. and O. Nordhaug, 2001. "Are Cultural Differences in Europe on the Decline?", pp. 48-53 in *European Business Forum*, Issue 8, winter 2001/02

Hofstede, Geert. *Cultures and Organizations. Software of the Mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991.

Hofstede, Geert. *Culture's Consequences. Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*. Second Edition ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001.

Inglehart, R. *Modernization and Postmodernization. Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Jarvis, P. 2001. *Universities and Corporate Universities*. London: Kogan Page

Jochems, W., J. Snippe, H. J. Smid & A. Verweu, 1996, "The academic progress of foreign students: study achievement and study behaviour". *Higher Education* 31: 325-340

Johnson, E., 1997. "Cultural Norms Affect Oral Communication in the Classroom", *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, no. 70, Summer

Kumar, K. 1995. *Modernity and Post-Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell

Levitt, Th. "The Globalization of Markets." In *Global Marketing Management*, edited by R.D. Buzzell, Quelch, J.A., Bartlett, C.A. Reading: Addison Wesley, 1995.

Lundvall, B.-Å & P. Maskell, "Nation states and economic development -from national systems of production to national systems of knowledge creation and learning" pp. 353-372 in Clark, G. L., M.P. Feldman and M. S. Gertler (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Geography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000

Liotard, J.-F., 1979. *La condition post-moderne*. Paris: les editions de minuit

Marcic, D. and Prendergast, C. "Perceptions of Faculty and Students Towards Case Teaching in Czechoslovakia: A Coming Velvet Paradigm Shift?" *Journal of Management Development* 13, no. 7 (1994).

Nowotny, H., P. Scott & M. Gibbons, 2001. *Re-thinking Science*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Pierre, J. 2000. *Debating governance - authority, steering, and democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ramburth & McCormick, 2001. "Learning Diversity in Higher Education: A comparative study of Asian international and Australian students", pp. 333-350 in *Higher Education* 42

Shank, M.D., M. Walker, and T.J. Hayes, 1996. "Cross-Cultural Differences in Student Expectations". *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* Vol 7 (1) pp. 17-32

Trompenaars, Fons. *Riding the Waves of Culture*. 2. ed. London: Nicholas Brealy Publishing, 1997.

Watson, J.L., ed. 1997 *Golden Arches East. Mcdonald's in East Asia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Wilkinson, J.W., A. Mahara and P. G. Quester, 1996. "Asian Students: Their Experiences and Perceptions of Australian Universities". *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* Vol 7 (3) pp. 65-80.

#### **About the authors:**

Simon Kragh is associate professor at the Department of Intercultural Communication and Management at Copenhagen Business School. His research has been on cross-cultural marketing, and the cultural context of foreign operations and communication.

Sven Bislev is associate professor and Head of the Department of Intercultural Communication and Management, Copenhagen Business School. He holds a Master's degree in political science and has published books and articles on globalization.

#### Authors' addresses:

Sven Bislev  
Head of Department  
Intercultural Communication and Management  
Copenhagen Business School  
Dalgas Have 15  
DK-2000 Frederiksberg  
Denmark  
tel: +45 3815 3195  
fax +45 2851 1849  
e-mail sb.ikl@cbs.dk  
[www.cbs.dk/departments/ikl](http://www.cbs.dk/departments/ikl)

---

Journal of Intercultural Communication, ISSN 1404-1634, 2005, issue 9.

Editor: Prof. Jens Allwood

URL: <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/>.