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## **Exchange Students at CBS: Perceptions, Values and Differences**

### **The study**

The data reported below are a preliminary first take from a project that studies the values of students from different nations<sup>1</sup>. We are investigating exchange students at CBS as well as CBS students who have been on exchange visits, using focus groups and questionnaire surveys.

The aim of the report is to find out how CBS differs from the other universities in our exchange networks, especially as regards the culture of education – the values, behaviours and concepts that go into learning practices at CBS. In this first report from the project we look at how foreign students perceive and assess CBS and how they differ from the Danish students in terms of perceptions of CBS and other universities.

After a brief section on our data, we report the main results about study programmes and teaching, students' work, the authority of professors and science, and the way foreigners perceive the Danes. In these sections, all foreign students and universities are presented as one block, to be compared with CBS. A final section presents, for a few of the tables, how the national differences run between

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<sup>1</sup> The present report is part of a larger research project "Globalizing Universities" which seeks to evaluate two interrelated hypotheses. On the one hand the purpose is to investigate the cross-cultural assumption that a person's culture of origin influences his or her cross-cultural perceptions and on the other, the project seeks to evaluate the modernization/postmodernization thesis which states that cross-cultural value differences to a large degree are due to different socio-economic conditions. Together, these two propositions imply that differences of cross-cultural perception may be related not only to the cultural background of the students, but in the last resort also to the socio-economic conditions in the country or culture of origin where the home universities of the students are located and where they are brought up. The data consists of surveys of foreign students at CBS who supposedly perceive the school from the perspective of their respective home-universities located in countries at different levels of economic and social development.

foreign students and institutions. The brief conclusion raises a few questions of our own concerning the internationalisation of CBS.

## 1. DATA

### The surveyed students

The data consist of a total of 416 responses. A questionnaire sent to a total of 900 exchange students in December 2002 produced 328 answers, and a March 2003 internet survey, using an almost identical questionnaire, gave a feed back of 88 answers. The responding students come from 37 different countries. Almost 2/3 are female.

In the Spring semester of 2003, we conducted an internet survey, sending the same questions to Danish students who had spent one or two semesters at a foreign university as exchange students in spring 2003 in order to be able to cross check the data from the foreign students and for further intercultural research. The 400 responses from that round are not yet fully incorporated in this preliminary report – where they are inserted, it is indicated with an asterisk:\*

Table 1: Countries of origin of responding students:

Germany	43	Poland, Czech Rep, Slovakia	10
France	39	Great Britain	10
Canada	25	Baltic countries	10
USA	24	Poland, Czech Rep, Slovakia	10
Italy	23	Iceland	9
Norway	22	Romania	3
Asia*	21	Greece	3
Spain	17	Hungary	2
China	17	Turkey	2
Latin America**	16	Georgia	2
Finland, Sweden	15	S. Africa	1
Austria, Switzerland	14	Nigeria	1
Netherlands	13	Portugal	1
Russia, Belarus, Ukraine	13	Macedonia	1
Belgium	11	Cameroon	1
Australia	11	Rwanda	1
Great Britain	10	Israel	1
Baltic countries	10	Uzbekistan	1
		Total	416

\* Japan, India, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Pakistan, Taiwan, Indonesia

\*\* Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Panama

The questions in the survey were constructed on the basis of 10 focus groups of different sizes conducted in the autumn of 2001 and spring 2002.

Most questions are phrased as five-point scales, asking for answers ranging, typically, from “not at all”, via “somewhat” to “very much”. In general, one cannot assume equidistance between the

points on such a qualitative scale, and our data are perhaps best reported as frequencies – different fractions of respondents giving one or the other answer. Occasionally, when it seems proper and justified, we treat the scales as ordinal and calculate averages – as if the distance between “not at all” and “only a little” was the same as between “somewhat” and “very much”.

Most of the questions are organized in groups of three, the first relating to conditions at the home university, the second to conditions at CBS and the third asking about students’ preferences. At the end of the questionnaire, we listed a number of evaluative statements and asked the students to express agreement or disagreement with them on a five-point scale. In the report, we have frequently collapsed the first two and the last two categories to underline the significant differences that are in some of the answers.

Our research assistants, Mette Johnsen and Rikke Winther, tested the questionnaires on fellow students, contributing very much to their quality, and administered the first round. Rikke continued in the project, organized the results of the first questionnaire and the whole process around the second.

## 2. STUDY PROGRAMMES AND TEACHING

We have asked the students how their home university programmes are typically structured compared to CBS. Asked how many courses they typically follow at home, the typical answer is between 5 and 12 courses a year – not too different from here. In terms of the mix of mandatory and elective courses, there seems to be a difference between CBS and the home universities of the foreign students, the home universities relying less on mandatory courses than CBS. As for preferences, the foreign students prefer a more flexible structure than the one at CBS with 86% favouring a combination of electives and mandatory courses where electives constitute at least half the courses followed. From the students' perspective, CBS has a more rigid structure of study programmes than their home universities.

Table 2. How is the study programme structured at your home university?

	Only or mainly electives	Half and half	Only or mainly mandatory
At HU	11	32	57
At CBS *	16	15	69
<i>Preferences</i> **	24	61	14

\* Danish student's answers

\*\* Both foreign and Danish

### Structure of teaching

We asked the foreign students to what extent they thought teaching in class at CBS was structured or unstructured. A comparison with the answers to this question and the corresponding answers to identical questions about conditions at their home university and their preferences, indicates that the foreign students find teaching in class at CBS as having relatively little structure compared to

conditions at their home universities, but also that they prefer a level of structuring somewhere between CBS and their home universities.

Table 3. How structured is the teaching?

	Very structured or structured	In between	Very unstructured or unstructured
At HU	74	19	7
At CBS	47	32	21
<i>Preferences</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>3</i>

We also asked to what extent professors stick to course materials in class. Consistently with the level of structure in class, the answers indicate that they do to a considerable extent at the home universities, and less so at CBS.

Table 4. To what extent do professors stick to course materials?

	To a large or v. large extent	To some extent	To a little or v. little extent
At HU	80	17	3
At CBS	61	32	7

### **Class participation**

The form of teaching most frequently found at the home universities is ‘lectures by professors’ – 64% indicate that to be the only or main form of teaching. At CBS, they encounter more class discussion and dialogue – 30 see that as dominating at CBS against only 5% at home universities. Still, 36% report that lectures are the main part also of their CBS experience. As for preferences, a majority – 60% - prefer a judicious mixture: half lectures, half discussion.

Table 5. Mostly used teaching form: lectures or discussion and dialogue

	Lectures, only or mainly	Half and half	Class discussion and dialogue, mainly or only
At HU	64	31	5
At CBS	36	34	30
<i>Preferences</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>13</i>

Table 6. How much do students participate in class?

	Very much or much	Some	Very little or not at all
At HU	32	35	33
At CBS	61	29	10
<i>Preferences</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>4</i>

According to the foreign students, class participation is much higher at CBS compared to their home universities. The number of foreign students who report that students participate much or very much at CBS is the double of students who say that participation is very high or high at their home universities; and compared to the respondents who say that participation is low or non-existent at CBS, more than three times as many report that students participate little or nothing at the home universities.

The preference is, this time, close to the CBS figure: 61% prefer a lot and only a very small proportion of the students prefer little or no participation. This picture repeats itself when students are asked if classes always should include dialogue between professors and students:

**Table 7.** Classes should always include dialogue

	St agree or agree	Neither nor	St disagree or disagree
Foreign students	77	15	8

Similarly, when asked if the success of a course depends on student participation, although fewer of them agree with this statement compared to Danish students:

**Table 8.** A course can only succeed if students participate actively

	St. agree or agree	Neither nor	St disagree or disagree
Foreign students	52	28	21
CBS students*	64	22	15

Participation in class is sometimes part of the grade – 41% say it is so at their home university, 51% say no. We did not ask about CBS, as we assume to know that it almost never is part of the grade here.

That a larger number of foreign students are positive towards one-way lectures does not mean that they should abstain from asking questions during lectures. Foreign and Danish students equally share the belief that it is legitimate for students to interrupt lectures asking questions:

**Table 9.** Students should not interrupt lectures by asking questions

	Strongly agree or agree	Neither nor	Strongly disagree or disagree
Foreign students	7	6	87
CBS students*	5	9	86

## Use of Cases

At CBS, business cases are used more than at the average partner university – 62% say they encounter business cases often or very often at CBS, against 41% at home universities. Students’ preferences are for even more business cases – 72% would like to see them often or very often.

**Table 10** Use of business cases

	Very often or often	Occasionally	Rarely or never
At home university	41	29	30
At CBS	63	29	9
<i>Preferences</i>	72	26	1

Asked about their preference for course material in general and given a choice between textbooks, compendia and lecture notes, respondents vote 23 % for textbooks, 26% for compendia and 34% for lecture notes.

### 3. STUDENT WORK

#### Group Work

One important behavioural and cultural dimension of higher education is the attitude to individual or collective work – although we assume the attitudes to group work to be complex: group work can be seen as a form of collectivity, of subsuming one’s self under a collective whole. From another angle, intensive group discussion may serve the function of developing and qualifying the views of each participating individual. The group can be an identity or a mirror.

Respondents claim that there is some group work at their home universities: 46% reported that group work is used very often or often. At CBS there is much more – close to 80% said that CBS uses group work very often. Student preferences are closest to their home universities with 48% preferring group work very often or often.

Table 11 Frequency of group work

	Very often or often	Occasionally	Rarely or never
At home university	46	22	55
At CBS	74	18	14
<i>Preferences</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>21</i>

However, while 55% of the students say that their home universities use group work rarely or never, less than half prefer this frequency of group work. The large majority of foreign students want a moderate amount of group work: ‘occasionally’. Only a few prefer to have group work either very often, rarely, or never, and the conclusion seems to be that they feel that while there is too little at home, too much is experienced at CBS.

To pursue the idea that groups can serve different functions and be used in different ways, the questionnaire asked about the organization of group work – ‘everybody contribute to all sections of the project’ versus ‘tasks and responsibilities are clearly divided among members’. More than two thirds of the students who answered the question said that at home universities group members clearly divide tasks and responsibilities among themselves when doing group work, and less than a quarter report that everybody contribute to group work at the home universities. At CBS the prevailing norm is different: almost half the students say that everybody contribute and half that responsibilities are clearly divided. At the home universities, students thus practice a more detailed division of labour in group work compared to the practice they encounter at CBS, and preferences are very close to the CBS model:

Table 12 The organization of group work

	Everybody contributes to all sections	Tasks and responsibilities are clearly divided
At Home university	22	78
At CBS	45	55
<i>Preferences foreign students</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Preferences CBS students*</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>47</i>

In comparison, the preference scores of the Danish students are the almost exact opposite of the scores of the foreign students: 53% of the Danish students prefer a low division of labour in group work, while 47% prefer a high division of labour. In an interesting way, the preferences of the foreign students are very close to CBS practices and far from their home universities' practices, while Danish CBS students would like an even more deliberative style of group work.

There is no or very little difference in the Foreign and Danish students' attitudes to group leadership. Asked whether they feel that important group decisions should be made by consensus, majority or by a leader, there is an equal split in both groups between consensus, majority and the possibility of appointing a group leader. Practically all students support democratic decision-making in the groups.

Table 13 Decisions in group work:

	Full consensus	Majority rule	A leader
Foreign student' preferences	48	49	3
CBS students' preferences*	42	56	2

On the other hand, the amount of discussion that takes place in groups with Danish students is clearly excessive for the foreigners:

Table 14 Danish students discuss too much in group work

	St agree	Agree	Neither nor	Disagree	St disagree
Foreign students	26	38	15	19	2
Danish students*	2	16	38	41	8

Both foreign and Danish students are democratic, but the foreign students seem to think that the work style of the Danes goes from deliberative to talkative.

With regard to grading of group work, the foreign students tend to prefer collective grading, in contrast to Danish students who – in accordance with official policy, but contrary to the general practice at CBS (!) - tend to prefer individual grading. For the foreign students it means that they assume collective responsibility for the group work.

Table 15 For group work, students should always be graded individually

	Agree or st. agree	Neither nor	Disagree or st. disagree
Foreign students	26	27	47
Danish students*	43	28	29

It is curious that the Danish students who practice and prefer a low division of labour in group work prefer individual grading, and that the foreign students who tend to split up the work process want to share the responsibility. It is a finding that deserves further investigation.

## **Workload**

The exchange students work more when they are at CBS:

Table 16 Minutes spent preparing for each class:

	30 or less	60	90 or more
At HU	52	25	23
At CBS	29	22	49
CBS students*	26	35	38

At their home universities, the foreign students prepare less for class than the Danish students at CBS. However, when they study at CBS, the preparation time of the foreign students increases and aligns with the norms of the Danish students: a considerable proportion actually work harder than the Danes. In the focus groups, two rather different attitudes were expressed with regard to the foreigners' experience of their Danish classmates: some saw them as hard workers and were surprised at their inclination to prepare for classes during the semester; others commented that Danish students were too busy with their outside jobs to be seriously engaged in studies. If these attitudes are representative, the duality may be hidden in the figures and will have to be extracted in a later phase.

Work is also differently distributed over the semester: at home universities, there is a tendency that most work is done close to exams. At CBS, the foreign students observe less of an exam orientation and a more continuous work effort. The students' preferences are for an even less exam oriented distribution of the workload than what they experience at CBS.

Table 17 How is work distributed over the semester?

	All or most during semester	Evenly distributed	All or most close to exams
At HU	19	20	61
At CBS	31	29	40
<i>Preferences</i>	38	48	14

It should be noted that the foreign students description of the distribution of the workload at CBS somewhat exaggerates the low level of exam orientation. The responses of the Danish students to the same question indicate that 55% of the Danish students actually place most or all of their work load close to exams, i.e. a figure which is closer to the foreign students' reported behaviour at their home universities than it is to their perception of study habits at CBS. In a certain sense, they tend to 'idealize' the study habits at CBS.

### Motivation to work

To explore the motivation of foreign and Danish students, we asked about the importance of grades as a work motivator. If grades are needed to elicit an effort, we see it as evidence of extrinsic motivation, as opposed to an intrinsic motivation that stems from personal interest and involvement.

Table 18 All class activities during a semester should be graded

	Strongly agree or agree	Neither nor	(Strongly) disagree
Foreign students	40	18	43
CBS students*	30	16	54

Table 19 Courses at CBS have too few exams

	Strongly agree or agree	Neither nor	Strongly disagree or disagree
Foreign students	20	18	61

CBS students*	14	21	64
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Table 20 If a work is graded I work harder

	Strongly agree or agree	Neither nor	Strongly disagree or disagree
Foreign students	73	13	14
CBS students*	80	12	8

Both Foreign and Danish students concur with the effectiveness of extrinsic motivation. Due to the more authoritarian nature of foreign universities we expected the foreign students to be more extrinsically motivated than the Danish students, but this is not confirmed immediately. Even though a small percentage of foreign students want more exams than their Danish counterparts, and appear to be more extrinsically motivated, the differences are small and CBS students are cynically realistic about the effect of grades in the latter of the three questions.

As a further measure of the motivation of students in relation to their subjects, we asked them how frequently they read literature relevant to the course but outside the curriculum. A third of the foreign students never read literature outside the curriculum as opposed to only 10% of Danish respondents.

Table 21 How often do you read course relevant literature outside the curriculum?

	Daily or weekly	Monthly or quarterly	Never
Foreign students	27	40	33
CBS students*	37	53	10

This does point to more intrinsic motivation at CBS. The answers may be descriptive of behaviour (CBS students read more voluntary literature) or indicative of values (CBS students see it as positive to read more).

Pursuing the same subject in a broader perspective, we asked the students why they were “taking a university level degree”? Maximum two reasons could be indicated. There were no traditionalists – very few ticked off “to please my parents” – and few idealists (“to contribute to society”). Extrinsic motivation could be ticked off as “to succeed in the business world” and “to earn more money” – they received a good number of answers, while the most ‘intrinsic’ answers (“to learn and gain new insight” and “to develop myself as a person”) were the most frequently indicated. The foreign students as a group do not differ substantially with Danish students on these questions.

Table 22 Why do you study?

	Foreign students	CBS students*
Succeed in business	45	58
Learn and get new insights	54	66
To earn more money	19	23
To develop myself	53	50
To contribute to society	7	4
To please parents	2	1

We asked the exchange students how hard it is to study at CBS – to see if the expectation of a different motivation, if justified, turned out as a more pressing demand on their time and effort. The answers lean to the ‘hard’ side - with 42% finding it hard/very hard, 14% easy or very easy. 44% say ‘neither hard nor easy’. The opportunity to add specific comments here is used by 154 respondents, and the result is very diverse, both in terms of positive/negative loading, and in terms of evaluation of the study programme demands. Perhaps the most frequent reason for saying it is hard is “lots of readings”.

#### 4. AUTHORITIES: PROFESSORS AND SCIENCE

##### Power distance: students and professors

We asked the students about the relationships between professors and students – if students were treated as equals or in an authoritarian way.

43% say that relationships ‘at home’ are authoritarian or very authoritarian which contrasts sharply with the small percentage who sees CBS relations in the same way: only 8% claim that conditions at CBS are authoritarian, and a full 70% say that professors at CBS treat students as equals.

Table 23 Student-professor relations

	Very equal or equal	Neutral	(Very) authoritarian
At home university	35	23	43
At CBS	70	22	8

As one concrete and crude measure of the same thing, we also asked how students address professors: formally or informally. The answers are consistent with the student's perceptions of the level of authoritarianism. At their home universities 72% use a formal type of address (surname, title) and 28% address professors informally while 18% address professors formally at CBS and 82 informally.

As to preferences, 18% prefer to address professors formally, 50% prefer to address them informally while 31% have no preference. A considerable number of foreign students thus tend to disagree with the perceived authoritarian conditions at their home universities, preferring a level of power distance closer to the norms at CBS.

Foreign students are, on the average, more respectful of professors than the Danes (at least they say they are). They do, however, believe, like Danish students do, that evaluations should have direct consequences for professors. The higher level of respect for professors’ knowledge does not translate into automatic acceptance of any kind of teaching:

Table 24 Student evaluations should have direct consequences for professors

	Strongly agree or agree	Neither nor	Strongly disagree or disagree
Foreign students	65	24	12
CBS students*	68	22	9

It is also interesting to note that the foreign students do not interpret the higher level of equality between students and professors as a lack of respect of the professors on part of the students. In fact, when compared to the answers given by Danish students to the same question, it appears that foreign students are more inclined to believe that the Danish students respect their professors than the Danish students are themselves.

**Table 25** Danish students respect their professors

	St agree or agree	Neither nor	St disagree or disagree
Foreign students	65	27	8
CBS students*	44	40	16

The reason for this difference could be looked for either in the values of the foreign students, or in the expectations that students have: if not explicitly shown otherwise, they will look for attitudes and values similar to their own.

### Epistemology

Professors may either stress reproduction of facts and textbook knowledge or critical discussion and individual perspectives. Here, a clear difference emerges: at home universities, most respondents see their professors as leaning towards the reproductive end, while at CBS, they see them leaning towards the critical side. Asked about preferences, the students like the critical versions best, although not quite to the extent practised at CBS .

**Table 26** Learning emphasized by professors

	Reproduction of facts	In between	Critical discussion
At home university	54	27	19
At CBS	12	25	62
<i>Preferences</i>	9	56	35

In order to assess whether foreign students have a different epistemological perspective compared to Danish students at CBS, we asked both groups a series of questions related to the possibility of identifying objective truth. 77% of the foreign students saw it as possible, though difficult, to reach objective truth against 61% of the Danish students (the first two statements in the diagram), while 24% of the foreign students stated that it is impossible to obtain or that it is an illusion against 39% of the Danes. In comparison, the Danish students are somewhat more reluctant to accept the possibility of obtaining objective truth, although a majority support the notion.

**Table 27** Is objective truth possible?

	It is possible to identify objective truth	Objective truth is an ideal which is not always reached	Objective truth is an ideal which can never be reached	Objective truth is an illusion
Foreign students	11	66	13	11
CBS students *	7	54	21	18

Foreign students: N=88 (this question was only in the internet survey); Danish students: N=400

Students at CBS thus appear to have a more ‘constructivist’ view of knowledge than the foreign students, who correspondingly seem to adhere to a more positivist epistemology.

Respect for professors also have epistemological implications: foreign students in our focus groups indicated that they saw – or were supposed to see – the status of professors as emanating from their superior knowledge. Danish students, we believe, are more sceptical and less deferent towards professors. We tested that through asking if the ‘viewpoints’ of students and professors were equal:

Table 28 Student’s viewpoints are equal to professors

	Strongly agree or agree	Neither nor	Strongly disagree or disagree
Foreign students	30	28	42
CBS students*	34	37	30

The difference is not as large as some of the other differences we have found, but significant none the less: there is more respect abroad than here. We suggest an epistemological reading of the figures: Danish students, to some extent, see themselves as co-producers of knowledge, meaning that knowledge has a subjective aspect; it only exists when somebody ‘knows’.

## Exams

Different forms of examination may express something about the epistemology pursued in learning: multiple choice is not a good way of testing individual perspectives and independent thinking, for example. After some testing, we decided to first ask if the students were accustomed to oral or written exams.

Table 29 Type of exam

	Oral	Written	Other
At HU	7	85	8
At CBS	47	37	16
<i>Preferences</i>	24	54	13

On this point, CBS is really different from our colleagues and exchange partners. The written essay or multiple choice that completely dominates in most places is only applied in one-third of CBS exams, as the students see it.

Students’ preferences are quite far from CBS here – 17 percentage points separate their CBS experience from their preferred form. Still, the distance to ‘home university’ practices is even greater: a gulf of 31 percentage points. Asked what specific form preferred, most votes are for “written, closed book” (27%) as opposed to the written, open book exam (13%). The oral exam includes both the CBS synopsis (8%) and the traditional question- and answer-exam (11%).

According to the exchange students, there is a considerable difference in the extent to which professors inform about exam requirements.

Table 30 To what extent do professors inform about exam requirements

	To a large or v. large extent	To some extent	To a little or v. little extent
At HU	76	20	4
At CBS	41	38	21

Together with the answers about the structure of teaching, it gives an image of a relatively ‘loose’ teaching culture at CBS. At this point, CBS seems slightly not quite to deliver the extent of security and order that students prefer when the talk is about formal things like plans, exams, and grades. A positive reading says that teaching at CBS appears as much less exam oriented compared to teaching at the home universities. Still, the students’ desire for objectivity and structure reappears a couple of times in the following.

In somewhat the same vein, when asked how much they ‘gain from attending class’ at CBS compared to their home universities, the picture of CBS comes out rather negative.

Table 31 How much do you gain from class?

	V. much or much	Some	V. little or little
At HU	73	22	5
At CBS	44	32	24

The link between teaching and exams is also assessed very differently between CBS and home universities. 81% report feeling that courses prepare them for exams to a ‘large’ or ‘very large’ extent at their home universities – CBS scores only 28%.

Table 32 Do courses prepare you for the exam?

	To a v. large or large extent	To some extent	To a little extent or not at all
At HU	81	17	2
At CBS	28	46	26

There are basically two ways to interpret these figures: they may indicate that CBS does not prepare the students sufficiently for the exams, but they may also be due to the students’ expectations which reflect conditions at their home universities. If we look at the Danish students’ responses to this question, it appears that 67% believe that CBS courses do prepare the students well for the exams, suggesting that the low score of the foreign students may be due to their pre-conceived expectations towards teaching, to the general confusion of being in a foreign environment, and perhaps to the different requirements at CBS.

We specifically investigated the ‘synopsis’ exam, which is used extensively at CBS. We met some criticism of it in the focus groups. 76% of our respondents had tried it. They were asked to tick off a maximum of three words out of a list generated from the initial interviews and focus groups. The table below ranks the answers according to the percentage of selections. As can be seen, the CBS ‘own’ students are more accustomed to the ‘synopsis’ exam and its underlying rationale of subjectivity and relativity:

Table 33 Perception of CBS synopsis exam

<i>Foreign students</i>	<i>CBS students*</i>
Challenging (30)	Challenging ((28)
<i>Confusing (21)</i>	Good reflection on course content (21)
Good reflection on course content (16)	Demanding (16)
Demanding (14)	Stimulating (13)
Complex (13)	Fair (11)
Stimulating (13)	<i>Confusing (11)</i>
Fair (6)	Complex (8)
Unfair (4)	Enlightening (7)
Enlightening (4)	Unfair (6)

The two groups largely agree on seeing the synopsis exam as challenging, a good reflection on the content of the course, as demanding and stimulating. However, in contrast to the Danish students, the exchange students clearly see the synopsis exam as confusing: this concept ranks as second in the list of the foreign students and as number 6 in the list of the Danish students. All in all, the foreign students seem to accept the synopsis exam as a challenge, but feel less at ease with it than the Danes.

The students were asked what materials they mostly use in preparing for exams – textbooks, compendia, distributed lecture notes or own notes from class. The largest difference reported by the exchange students were related to the use of compendia and own notes from class: At the home universities, compendia are used to a considerable degree, but at CBS they play a dominant role in teaching, testifying to the CBS professors’ need to supplement with literature which is not part of the standard textbooks.

Table 34 Use of compendia

	Very often and often	Occasionally	Rarely or never
At HU	40	21	39
At CBS	75	16	9

The importance of own notes from class in exam preparation at the home universities indicates the dependence of the students on lectures and is closely related to the lower levels of class discussion and the higher emphasis on reproduction of knowledge, as well as the higher authority of professors at the foreign institutions.

Table 35 Own notes from class

	Very often and often	Occasionally	rarely or never
At HU	88	7	5
At CBS	51	24	26

## 5. PERCEPTIONS OF DANISH STUDENTS

Even though the foreign students emphasize the importance of student participation in class, more than half of them agreed with the statement that Danish students always need to express themselves

in class. A considerable, but lower percentage of Danish students share this point of view, and a higher percentage disagrees.

**Table 36** Danish students always need to express their opinion in class

	St agree or agree	Neither nor	Strongly disagree or disagree
Foreign students' opinion	56	37	17
CBS students' opinion*	41	33	27

The opinion of the foreign students may be due to their experience at their home universities where participation is lower; at the same time as they prefer the CBS style of teaching, they see the Danish students as somewhat self-centered.

**Table 37** Danish students lack self-criticism

	St. agree or agree	Neither nor	St disagree or disagree
Foreign students	40	31	29
CBS students*	31	29	29

Respondents were asked how they perceive their co-students, in Denmark and at home, in relation to a number of adjectives. The adjectives and the scores are listed below in two separate tables, because the questions were organized differently in the two samples. The adjectives were chosen from the statements in the initial focus groups.

**Table 38.** Adjectives describing Home University and Danish students

**N = 85:**

<i>Disciplined</i>	Very or some	Average	Little or not at all
Danish	58(1)	27(1)	16(1)
Home Uni	34	39	22
<i>Creative</i>			
Danish	31	28	41
Home Uni	53	33	16
<i>Lazy</i>			
Danish	6	16	79
Home Uni	28	31	41
<i>Competitive</i>			
Danish	56(1)	27(1)	18(1)
Home Uni	75	16	10
<i>Collectivistic</i>			
Danish	38	27	36
Home Uni	26	31	43
<i>Unfocused</i>			
Danish	25	25	49
Home Uni	21	37	42
<i>Independent thinkers</i>			
Danish	58	25	18
Home Uni	49	33	18

1) N=416

The Danish students seem to the foreign students to be relatively disciplined and collectivistic, and to be thinking independently (a nice observation: collectivism and independent thinking can go together). They are also deemed to be more competitive than cooperative, but less so than students at home universities. They are also seen as less lazy and creative than students at 'home universities'. A possible explanation of the latter, suggested by comments from by a group of East European students in one of the focus groups preceding the survey, may be that 'creativity', for the foreign students to some extent refers to something else than academic creativity. A 'creative' or smart student may in some contexts be a student who gets through with a minimum of effort.

## **NATIONAL AND REGIONAL DIFFERENCES**

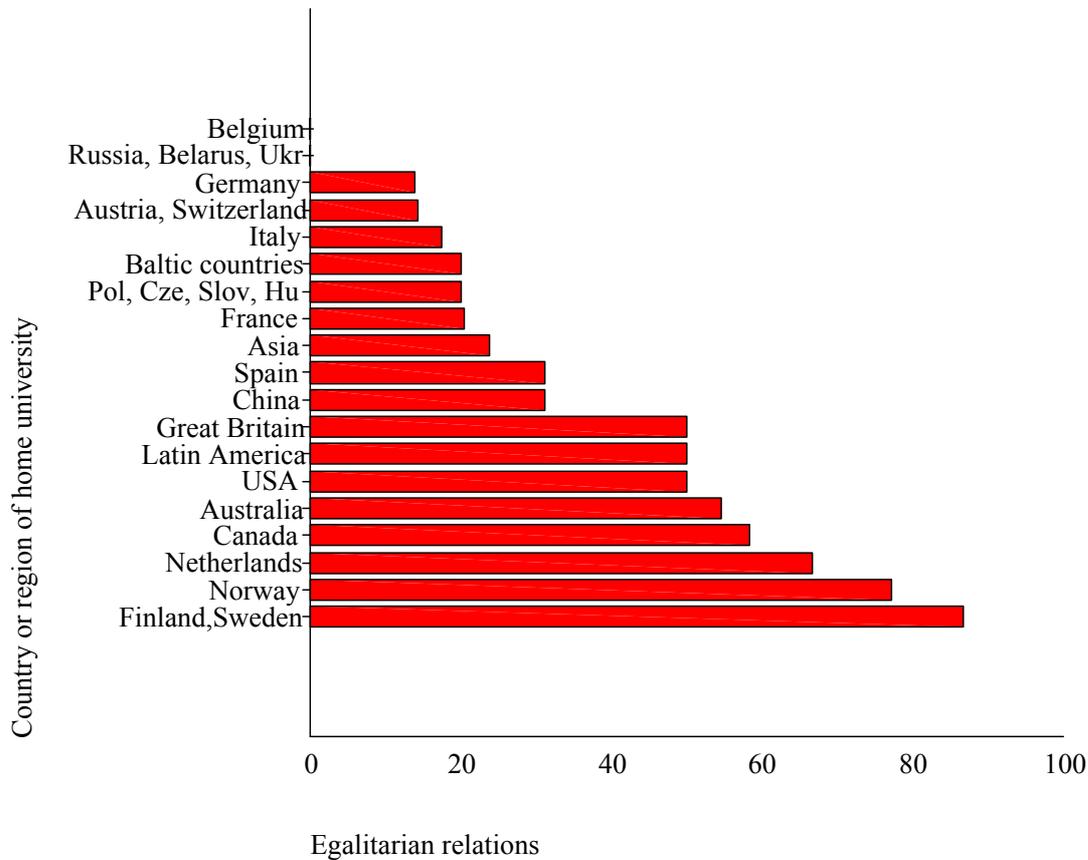
The foreign students on exchange at CBS cover a wide range of people from different nations and universities, and to refer to them as a group with specific characteristics is a generalization bordering on the meaningless. In actual fact, a number of the foreign universities work in ways not too dissimilar from our own. What our figures show, however, is that even with this extremely generalized approach, a number of significant differences between CBS and 'everybody else' show up.

In this section, we present a first take on the differences among the 'foreigners'. To do that, we have divided them into national and regional groups. By doing this, not only do we get a view of the differences among the exchange students and their home universities, but we can also form a picture of the position of the educational style of CBS in the international context. We limit the analysis to the most salient factors: those related to the relationship between professors and students, the approach to knowledge, the level of student-centered teaching, and how much students feel that they gain from attending class.

One of the variables that distinguish CBS sharply from most other universities is the low 'power distance' (level of authority) between professors and students and the informality of the relationships. Judging from the student's answers, CBS comes in as the third or second most egalitarian university in the world:

One of the variables which distinguishes CBS sharply from most other universities is the low power distance between professors and students and the level of formality of the relationships. With 70% percent answering that professors treat students as very equal or equals, CBS comes in as the third or second most egalitarian university in the world.

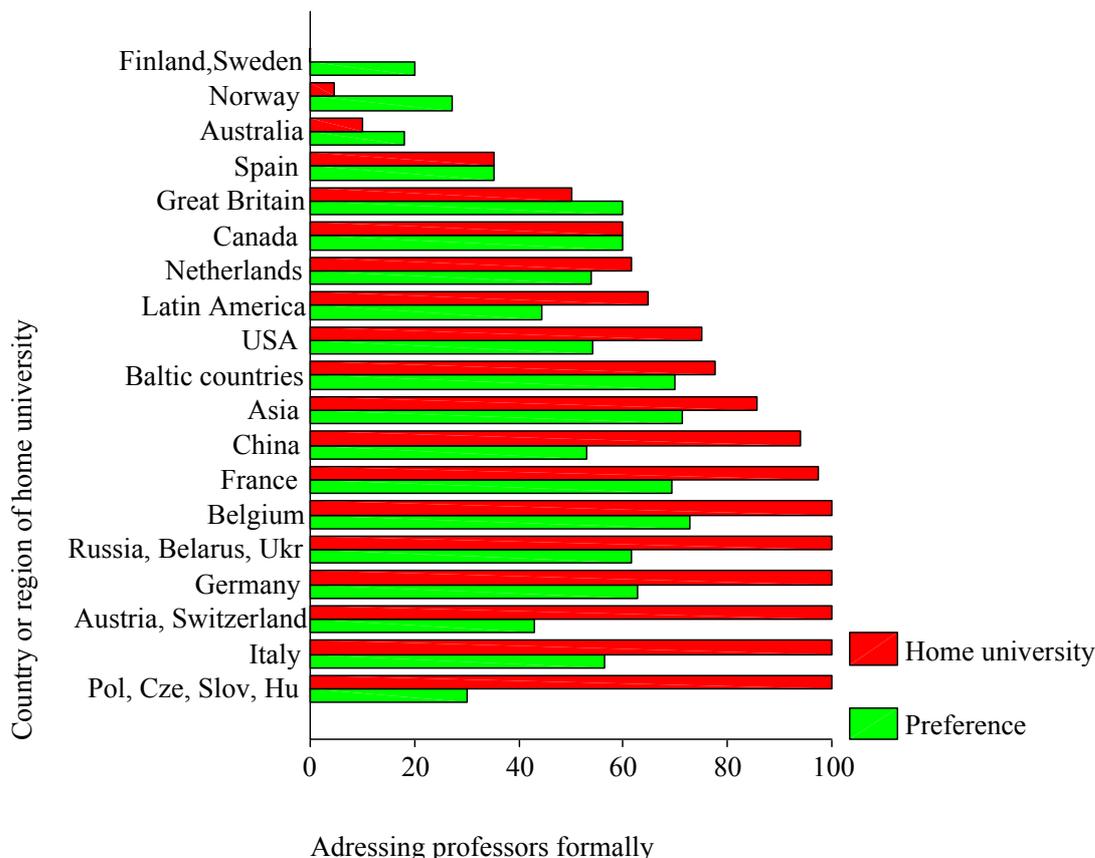
**Fig. 1: Do professors treat students as equals?**



The level of egalitarianism/authoritarianism at the other universities differ widely from university to university, with Belgian, Russian, Belarussian and Ukrainian universities coming in as the most authoritarian; in fact, no students from these universities reported that professors treat them as equals or very equally.

The question on how students address professors, formally or informally, gives an indication of the student's preferences:

**Fig. 2: Do you address professors formally or informally?**



Home university N=416  
 Preferences N=416

The home university bars represent the percentage of respondents who answer that they address professors formally at their home universities. The preference bars represent the sum of answers from those who say that they prefer to address professors formally or that they have no preferences. The differences from the preference bars up to 100 are thus the percentage of respondents who prefer to address professors informally.

The numbers show that there is a considerable difference between the percentage of students who prefer formality or are indifferent, and the number of students who report that they address professors formally at their home universities.

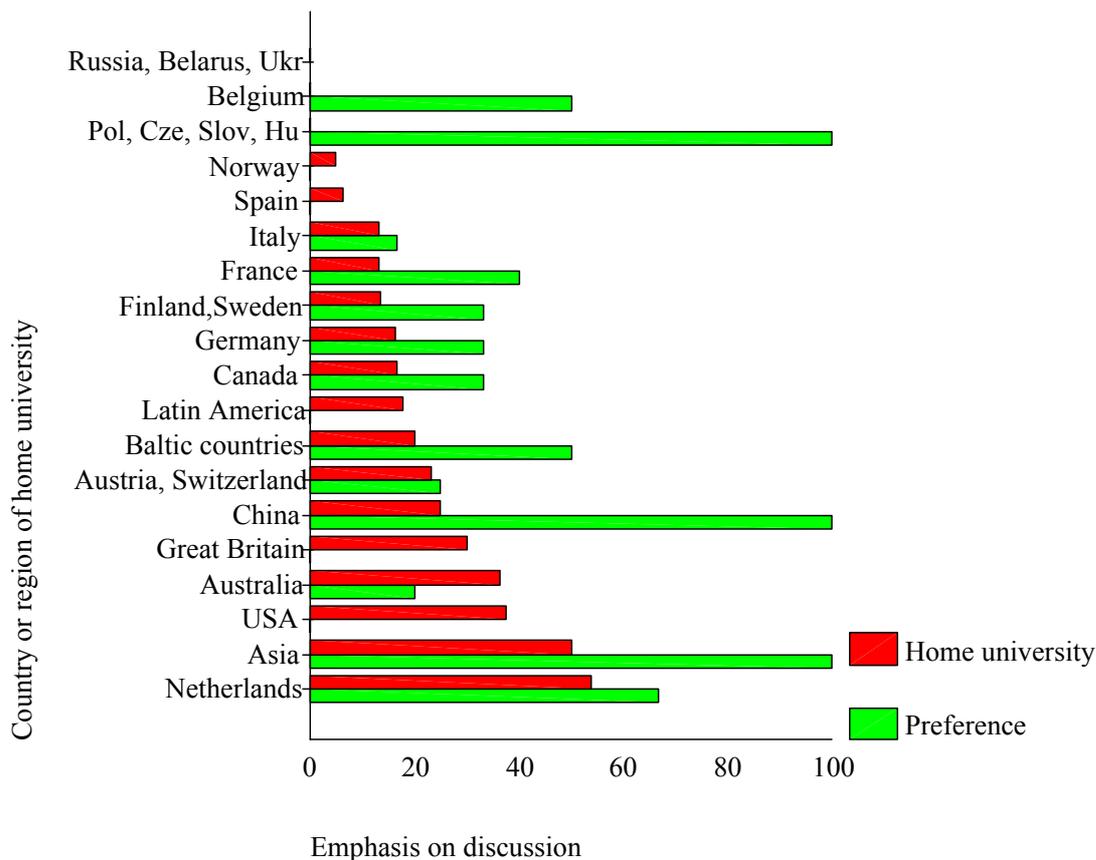
18% of the foreign students say that they address professors formally at CBS, a figure which, here too, places CBS among the most egalitarian universities, among the other Scandinavian countries and Australia. After this 'informal' group, there is a 'mixed' group of European and Anglo-Saxon countries, where practiced formality goes from 40 to roughly 60%. The 'formal' group of 80-100% comprises East, South and Central Europe, and Asia. The Americas are in an in-between position, where 'Latin America' is a mixed bag of 13 rather different schools. The USA is perhaps surprisingly formal (75%).

A cross reference to Danish students with experience as exchange students abroad shows that 35% of Danish students have no preferences, 5% prefer the formal style, and 60% prefer the informal, suggesting higher preferences for informality compared to the foreign students.

Also the degree of discussion and dialogue as opposed to the reproduction of facts and textbook knowledge differ from university to university. At the fact oriented extreme, The East European universities stand out as being the most fact and reproduction oriented, while the Netherlands, Asian business schools and the American, Canadian and Australian schools are among the most discussion oriented. CBS comes in as one of the top scorers with 62 percent of the foreign students saying that professors at CBS emphasize discussion and dialogue, but the CBS score is also above the average of student preferences: only 35% percent of the exchange students prefer discussion and dialogue as opposed to the learning of facts. While the students want more discussion in the more fact-oriented schools, they appear to want less discussion in the most discussion oriented institutions.

Interestingly, Danish students see much less difference between CBS and their foreign experiences – they indicate differences in single digits.

**Fig. 3: do professors emphasize reproduction or discussion?**



Home university N=416  
 Preferences N=88

NOTE:

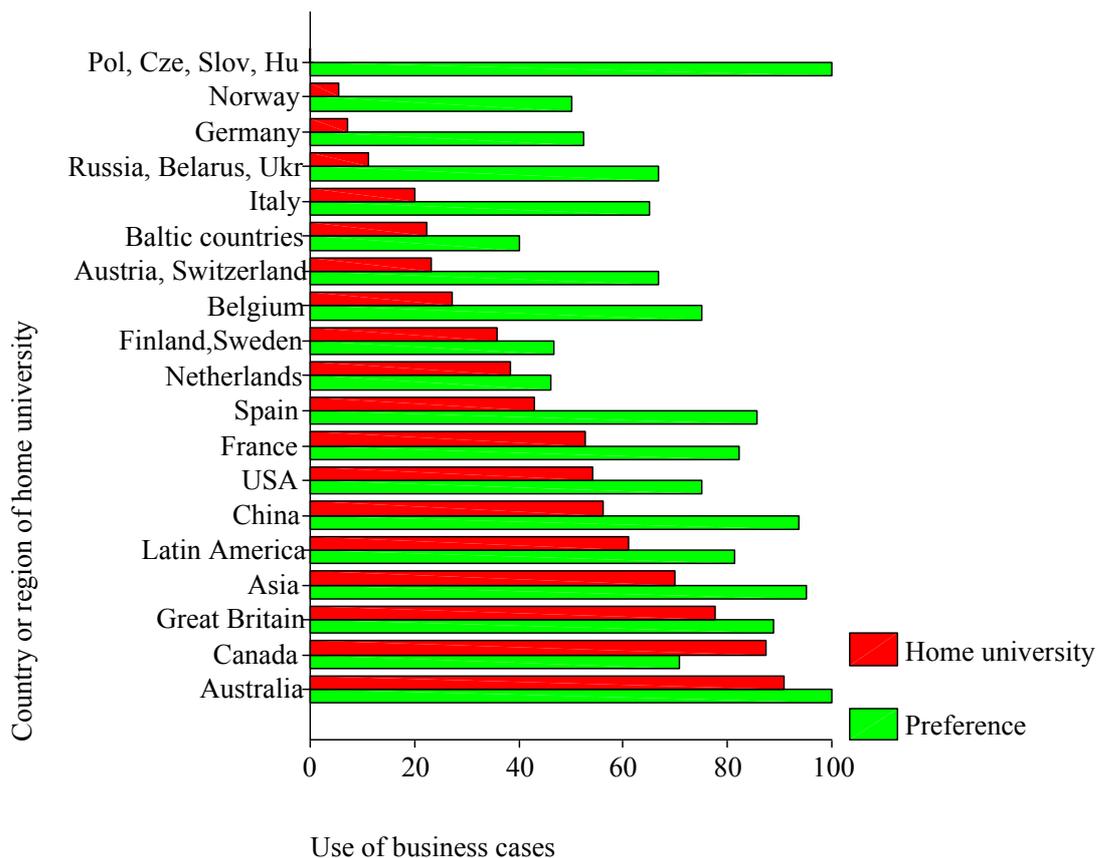
The percentages indicate the proportion of students who report that professors emphasize discussion and dialogue ‘much’ or ‘very much’, and for preferences, the proportion of students who prefer this amount of dialogue and discussion as opposed to reproduction of facts.

The lacking bars for Belgium and Russia, Belarus and Ukraine are due to the fact that there were no answers indicating equality at the universities; the lacking preference bars are due to no answers indicating preferences for much or very much dialogue and discussion. The question on preferences were not part of the first round of questions; the low number of respondents suggests that the preference statements should be taken with a great deal of caution. The high figures for some countries are evidence of very few respondents.

The reason for the high dialogue figure for ‘Asia’ must be that a good number of our exchange students from Asia come from very modern, US-inspired, institutions.

A third large difference is in the use of case materials in teaching. Together with the level of dialogue in class and professors' emphasis on discussion, case teaching is a student-centered and participatory style of teaching, and it is therefore not surprising that the countries scoring high on professors' emphasis on discussion, as a rule, also make extended use of business cases:

**Fig. 4: How often do you use business cases in class?**



NOTE:

Percentages shown are those answering ‘often or ‘very often’ (foreign students at CBS)

The number of student who report that business cases are used very often or often ranges from zero in the group of Poland, the Czech republic and Slovakia, and reaches a maximum of more than 90%

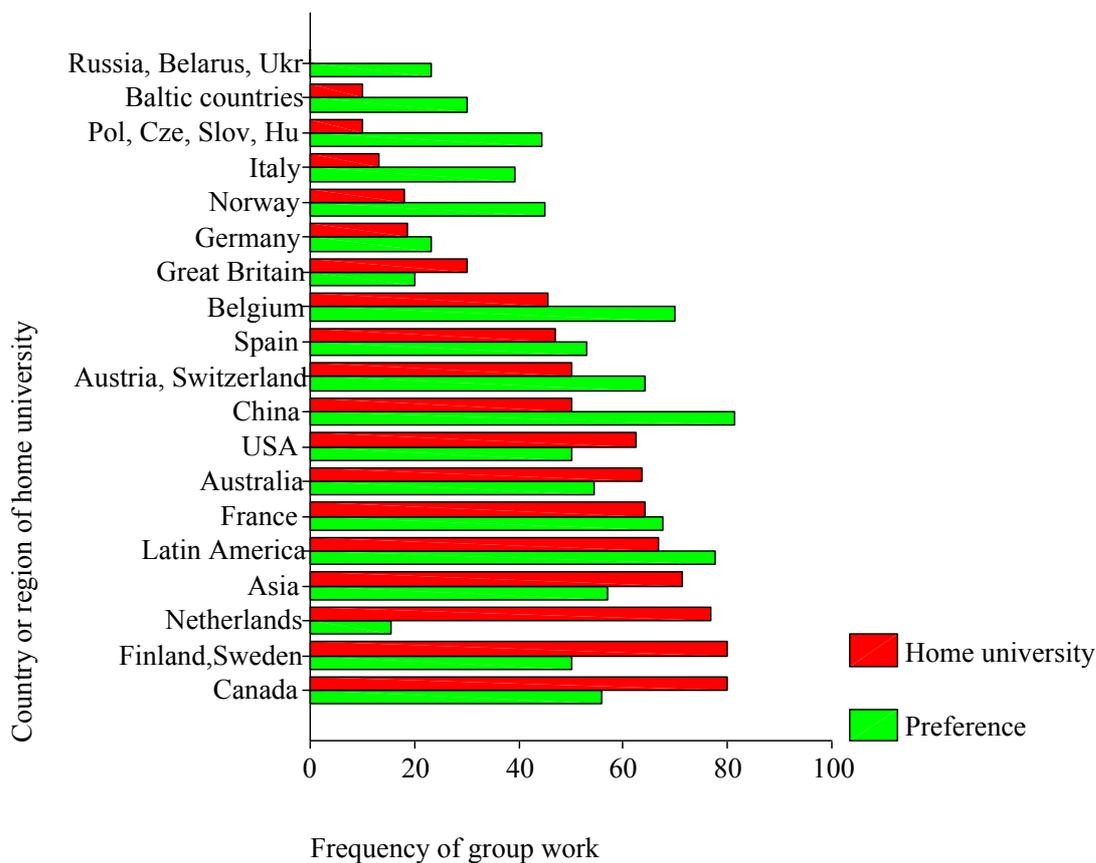
in the case of Australia and Canada. Denmark is located in the upper end of the distribution with 63% of the foreign students reporting that professors here use cases very often or often.

Again, the Danish students have had different experiences – 54% have seen cases very often or often abroad, against 43% at home. These figures might show the effects of students’ choice of university and their selections of courses at home and abroad.

Group work is the next marker of differences to be reported here. Here, too, there are considerable differences among the national groups of universities, but the sequence and grouping is different: Finland and Sweden are at the top, with the assembled Americas, and with Asia, France and the Netherlands. In the bottom: Eastern Europe, Italy, Norway, Germany and perhaps Great Britain. For CBS, 75% of the students report that they often or very often work in groups, placing the school close to the top of the national groupings.

The Danish students with experience as exchange students abroad concur with the relative difference, and their preferences are at a level with the foreigners.

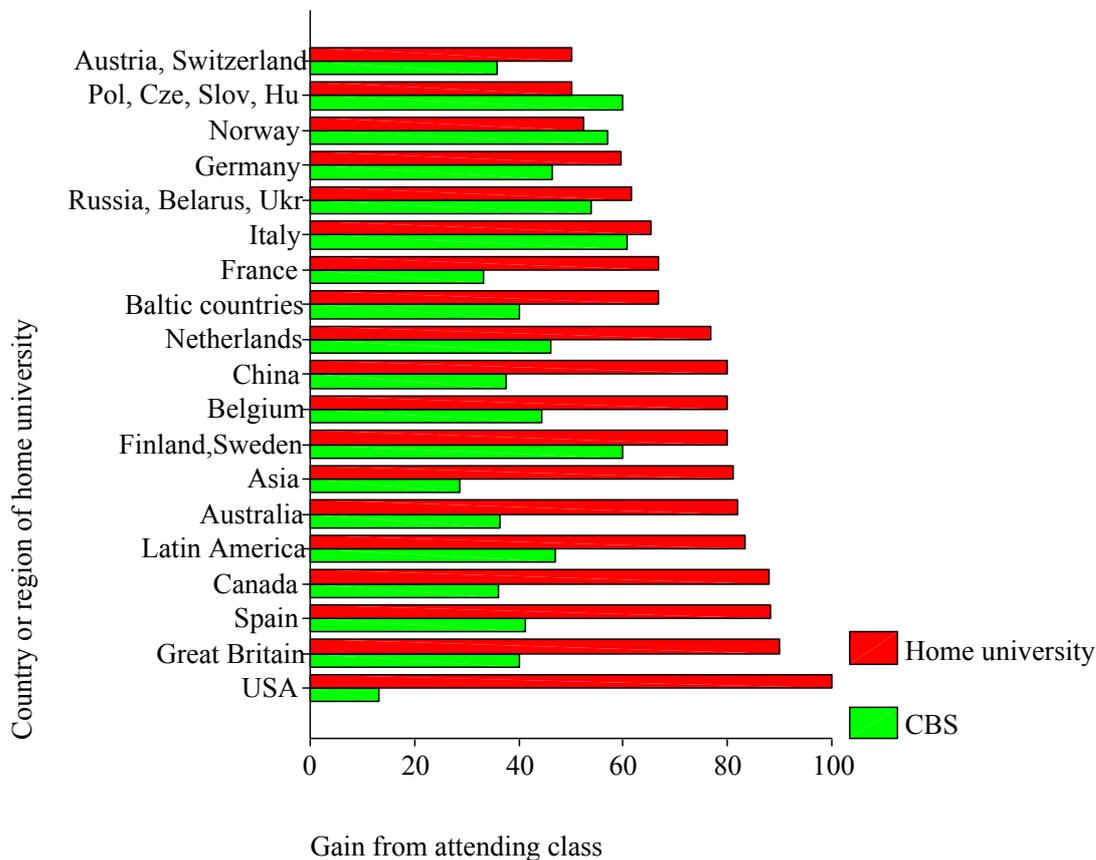
**Fig. 5: How often do you use group work?**



NOTE:  
Percentages answering ‘very often’ or ‘often’ (foreign students at CBS)

Fifthly, foreign students seem, on the average, to perceive that they gain relatively little from attending class at CBS. In fact, only Norwegians and Central Europeans see the gain from CBS classes as superior.

**Fig. 6: How much do you gain from attending class?**



Home university N=416  
 Preferences N=416

NOTE:  
 Percentages answering 'very much' or 'much' (foreign students at CBS)

The overall scores for CBS are well below the scores given for their home universities. There may be several reasons for this, including low quality teaching, but it is hardly the only reason. It is much more probable that the low scores have to do with the different environment that the students encounter at CBS. It is quite likely that the low scores given to CBS by the foreign exchange students are due to factors related to the cross-cultural encounter. Hopefully, they should not be taken as an indicator of objective quality.

**Conclusions**

One way of summing up and generalizing the findings is by contrasting the most salient reported characteristics of CBS with the educational styles at universities which differ the most from CBS:

CBS	Universities that differ most from CBS
Class discussions	Communication of facts

Group work	Class teaching
Egalitarian relationships	Authoritarian relationships
Unstructured teaching	Structured teaching
Low division of labour	High division of labour
Dedicated students	Less dedicated students
Subjectivist and fragmented approach to knowledge	Objectivist and coherent approach to knowledge
Weakly defined performance criteria	Clearly defined performance criteria

This is, of course, a crude generalization, but it suggests that the characteristics of CBS as described by the foreign students are not just local particularities of a business school in Denmark, but part of a larger paradigm. In general, egalitarianism, ambiguity, subjectivism, recognition of the fragmented nature of knowledge (as exemplified in the use of compendia) and self-expression values (as exemplified in the Danish students' need to express themselves) can be seen as representing postmodern values, typical of a business school in a postindustrial or postmodern society. In the same way, it is possible to identify the opposite set of behaviours and values as representative of industrial age or modern approaches to education. It is in some respects not dissimilar to the description that the organisation analyst Peter Senge gives of American schools in the 19th century: "The result of this machine-age thinking was a model of school separated from daily life, governed in an authoritarian manner, oriented above all else to producing a standardized product, the labor input needed for the rapidly growing industrial-age workplace – and as dependent on maintaining control as the armies of Frederick the Great" (Senge 2000: "Schools that Learn"). Such schools are emphasizing the learning of facts, standardization, rationality and repression of individual self-actualization.

It is worth noticing that these broad paradigmatic differences entail different value criteria. What is good practice in an industrial age environment, is not necessarily so in a postindustrial context: while structure, discipline and personal self-restraint might have been conducive to the development of industrial society, it does not follow that these values also are functionally relevant in postmodern societies.

The distribution of values and behaviours in universities across the world indicates that there are important differences in the degree of modernity or postmodernity of the institutions, ranging from decidedly industrial age universities in Russia and other East European universities and Germany, to more postmodern institutions in e.g. Australia, Denmark, UK, USA, and the Netherlands.

It also seems that students express a number of values and preferences which are more similar than behaviours and values at the institutions: while the universities differ considerably, the students appear to share at least some elements of a globalized youth and university culture. In this way, the data suggests the possibility of gaps between student values and university cultures. This may be a source of tension at some universities, and for others, a possible competitive advantage when students decide where to study abroad.

## Perspectives

A study like the present has some possible strategic implications for universities and business schools. This report adds evidence to the common knowledge among professors and university administrators that students, when visiting foreign institutions, experience ways of working,

thinking and interacting that differ, positively or negatively, from their home experience. Students react to those differences either positively – viewing it as better, new, more challenging – or negatively – feeling dissatisfaction with complexity and incomprehensibility.

For universities wanting to internationalize – most universities nowadays<sup>2</sup> - a strategic choice ought to be made as to what foreign universities are most suitable partners. Numerous considerations apply, of course, but among them, financial considerations and quality considerations are natural issues: students with the financial resources to travel and pay tuition – directly or indirectly – are more attractive than others; and students from good universities likewise. This study points to a third perspective – the issue of cultural compatibility. A university may fit more or less well with the values of contemporary students and with other universities. Awareness of the degree of compatibility is crucial – even if total adaptation may be unsuitable for financial and quality considerations.

We suspect that students from certain cultures are more likely to feel satisfied by the local experience than others – that for example students from less ‘postmodern’ universities tend to like being at CBS. Our data seem to indicate it might be the case, but the analysis has not been finished yet.

The question of cultural compatibility also goes for the broader issue of university alliances. Alliances must presumably work best if there is some form of mutual agreement on the values and practices of teaching and research. And this agreement cannot be fully assumed to exist – cultures influence strongly the formation of institutional norms and practices.

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<sup>2</sup> cf. H. De Wit, 2002, *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press; for Denmark: Cirijs, 2003, *Det internationale uddannelsesmarked. Danske perspektiver*. [www.cirijsonline.dk](http://www.cirijsonline.dk)