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Evaluation and development tool for effective internationalisation of vocational education and training

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The thesis (30 ECTS) commisionned by The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) focuses answering the research questions about the main challenges and obstacles in internationalisation activities of selected institutions of vocational education and training (VET). What measures have the VET institutions created to overcome the challenges? How could these good practises be implemented from the educational administration level to better serve the educational field and how to improve the effectiveness of internationalisation in VET institutions?

The main objective of this study is to create an evaluation and development tool for VET institutions to make the internationalisation more effective. The outcome of the study provides tools for development and building of the effective internationalisation of VET. On the basis of the results of this study VET institutions and vocational education providers can gain knowledge about the level of effectiveness in their international activities and what measures to take to improve the quality of internationalisation of VET. The study serves the needs of the FNBE as the agency allocates governments' subsidies for internationalisation of VET.

The theoretical framework of the study is built from the themes given by the commissioner. The methodological part followed the qualitative method and the strategy of the study was action research as the researcher is part of the organisation where the study was implemented. The data collection was implemented by using theme interviews and conducted in three cycles. The purpose was to gain wide perspective about the topic from different representatives of VET.

In conclusion the effective internationalisation is built on three pillars; managements' and teachers' commitment and the importance of the internationalisation strategy. Challenges and obstacles occur when some of the pillars are lacking or are not functioning well in the organisation.

Keywords
Internationalisation of education, Finnish vocational education and training, VET, internationalisation of VET, effectiveness of internationalisation in VET.

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1 Introduction

The Finnish society is getting more dependant of its international know-how and as our culture is getting more diverse the competition among expertise is accelerating. Changes in the international operational environment, globalisation and the increasing multi-culturalisation creates expectations for the Finnish education system and the economic life. Business life calls for international expertise and the need for competence to work in an international environment increases. Acting in a world where changes are more rapid, the investments in competence can be seen as the sustainable core of Finland's success. Innovative and creative individuals provide the foundation for successful society. With the effective internationalisation the Finnish society enables active operations and success in international business and in all professional fields. This will promote society's ability to function in open international environment and, support the balanced development of a multicultural society and participate actively in solving global problems.

The background for this research is European Unions' targets and Finnish national goals for internationalisation of vocational education and training (VET). One of the main actions at the EU level is to improve the quality of VET as stated in the Copenhagen process. The goal of the Copenhagen process is to enhance the performance, quality and attractiveness of the VET by improving the cooperation between European countries. More widely the priority of the Copenhagen process is to strengthen the development of the European labour market and increase the mobility of VET students and people who have completed their degree in VET. (The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2014b.)

According to Copenhagen process (European Commission 2002, 2) the aims for the internationalisation of vocational education and training are as follows:

> Strengthening the European dimension in vocational education and training with the aim of improving closer cooperation and promote mobility and the development of inter-institutional cooperation, partnership and other transnational initiatives, all in

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order to raise the profile of the European education and training area in an international context so that Europe will be recognised as a world-wide reference for learners.

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture states internationalisation to be an essential part of the vocational education and training. The targets for the national level of VET are in line with the goals stated at the EU level. The European cooperation aims to improve the vocational skills at European level by promoting the mobility of students and persons with vocational qualifications. (The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2014b.)

The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) allocates governments' subsidies for internationalisation of VET. The main goal of the governments' subsidy operations is to provide support for different start-up and experiment projects in the educational field. These projects produce models and methods for dissemination to improve or change some particular development area. Projects support the implementation of the national educational policy and reconciliation of the needs of education providers. The main goal of these operations is to favour extensive and network-model based projects. In addition to internationalisation projects, The FNBE allocates governments' subsidies for different projects related to general education, vocational education and training, liberal adult education and projects related to the training of municipal educational administration. (The Finnish National Board of Education 2014b.)

The Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) coordinates grants for different EU-funded internationalisation projects. The main target of the projects related to VET is to develop it within the European framework and in co-operation with other EU-countries. The main target of the project is to give support for students' on-the-job-learning periods in other countries and support for international learning skills for teachers and students. The internationalisation projects are an important way to familiarise students and teachers to the best practices of other countries and also to teach foreigners about the ways of learning in Finland. (The Centre for International Mobility 2014a.)

1.1   Objectives

In this study the focus will be in FNBEs' interest in internationalisation of vocational education and training as the agency allocates governments' subsidies to projects based on effective internationalisation of VET. The study is also interesting for CIMO as it grants EU funding for internationalisation of VET. The main objective of this study is to create an evaluation tool for VET institutions to make the internationalisation more effective. The outcome of the study provides tools for the development of the effective internationalisation of VET. On the basis of the results of this study, VET institutions and vocational education providers can gain knowledge about the level of effectiveness in their international activities and what measures to take to improve the quality of internationalisation of VET. The evaluation tool for effective internationalisation also serves the FNBE and CIMO and gives practical information and ideas for further research in the field of effectiveness in vocational education and training.

To reach the objectives of the study the researcher collated information about the internationalisation of VET, its obstacles and challenges and good practises to make the international activities more effective. By covering the perspectives from different representatives of VET and by investigating the good practises of vocational institutions and implementing them for general use, the study serves the needs of more effective internationalisation. Participants were chosen based on their wide-ranging knowledge about international operations. With their notable experience of active internationalisation, the participants provided extensive standpoints about the topic so that the researcher received the most valuable information for the final outcome of the study.

1.2   Research problem

The purpose and objective of this thesis is to create an evaluation and development tool for effective internationalisation activities of VET by defining the obstacles and challenges that arose from the international activities in educational institutions. The main research questions of this study are:

1.) What are the main challenges and obstacles in internationalisation activities of selected VET institutions?

2.) What measures the selected VET institutions have created to overcome the challenges?

3.) How these good practises could be implemented from the educational administration level to serve the educational field more extensively?

4.) How to improve the effectiveness of internationalisation in vocational education institutions?

5.) What kind of support can the FNBE provide for educational institutions to overcome the challenges and make the internationalisation activities more effective?

1.3   Thesis structure

The structure of the study is portrays in Figure 1 below. This research is divided into eight chapters. After the objectives and introduction of the research, the next chapter presents the field of vocational education and training in Finland and how the steering and funding of VET has been organised in the Finnish education system. The third chapter introduces the framework of internationalisation of VET and goes deeper into national and European objectives of the internationalisation and the funding of international operations of VET. Literature review about internationalisation of education is presented in chapter four by covering the main elements of effective internationalisation. The chapter also provides a background for the empirical part of the research

which is presented in chapters five and six. Outcomes of the research with conclusions and recommendations have been presented in the last two chapters of the study.

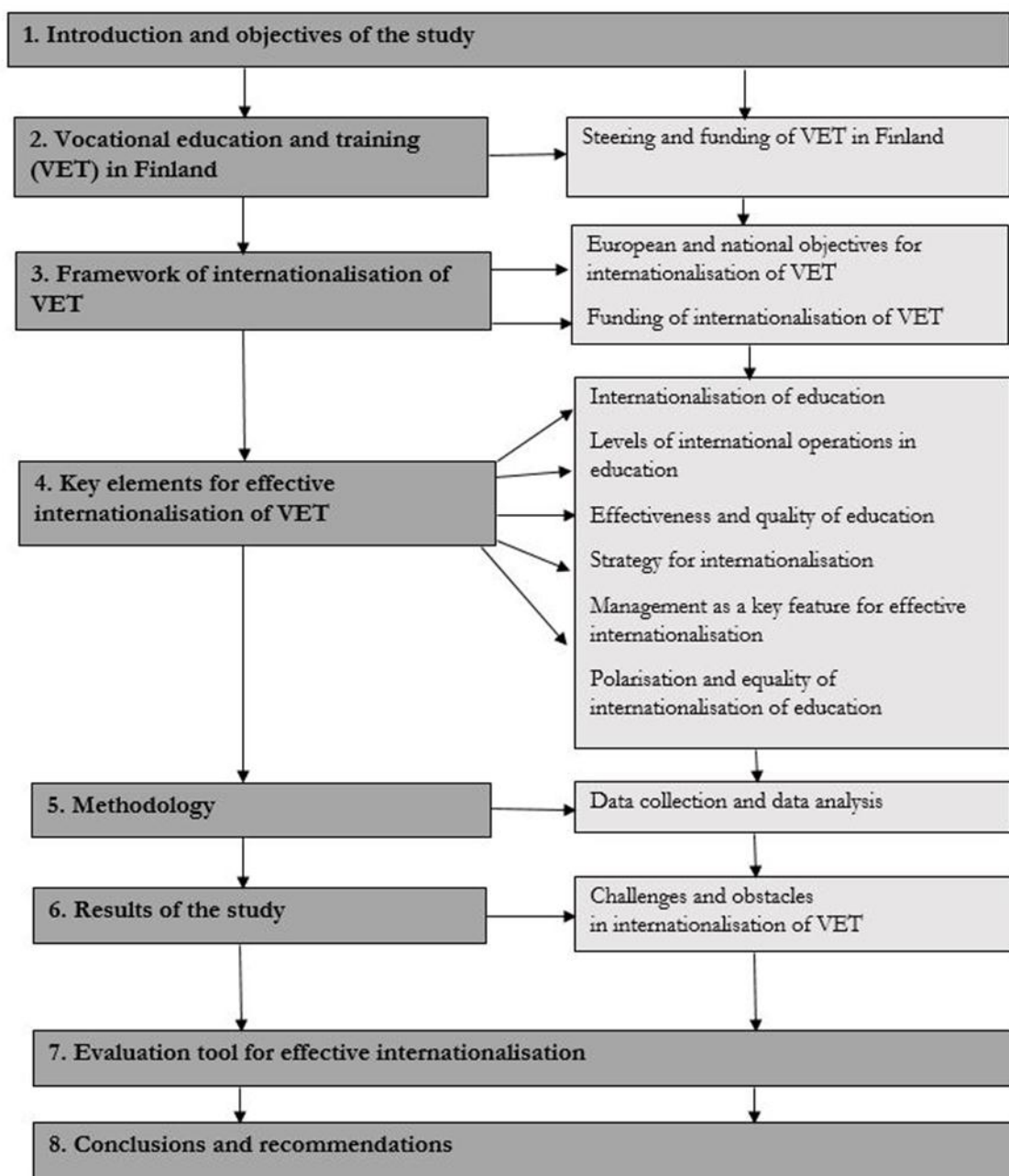|	
1. Introduction and objectives of the study	
2. Vocational education and training (VET) in Finland	Steering and funding of VET in Finland
3. Framework of internationalisation of VET	European and national objectives for internationalisation of VET Funding of internationalisation of VET
4. Key elements for effective internationalisation of VET	Internationalisation of education Levels of international operations in education Effectiveness and quality of education Strategy for internationalisation Management as a key feature for effective internationalisation Polarisation and equality of internationalisation of education
5. Methodology	Data collection and data analysis
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Figure 1. Structure of the study

2 Vocational education and training (VET) in Finland.

This section will begin by describing the context of the study by defining vocational education in Finland. Next, steering of VET is discussed. Finally, the chapter covers the funding of vocational education and training.

The Finnish education system consists of nine-year basic compulsory education after which the student continues to post-compulsory upper secondary level education. This comprises of general or vocational education and training. Both paths usually take three years and give the eligibility for higher education. (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2014a.)

The system of VET comprises of vocational upper secondary education and training and vocational further education and training. VET is designed both for younger people moving to working life as well as for adults who already have a career. Adults can participate and complete the same vocational upper secondary qualifications as young students. They also have the possibility to participate in the vocational further education and training which can be completed after vocational upper secondary qualifications as continuing education and training. (Ministry of Education and culture 2014a.)

The main goal of the Finnish VET is to develop the Finnish economic life and the labour market as well as to promote the employment opportunities and improve the vocational skills of the population. The system of VET also aims to measure up the needs of the know-how in the current labour market. The vocational education and training forms a continuum for basic education to strengthen the competence throughout the participant's life. (Local Finland 2014.)

Students who complete vocational upper secondary qualifications will have the professional skills and qualifications needed in the working life. The scope of the qualification is 120 credits and the studies generally take three years. Previous studies

and work- experience can be used as an advantage and can be credited for part of the studies. (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2014a.)

Further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications are also a part of the vocational education system in Finland. These qualifications can be completed as competence-based qualifications in which students can have preparatory training. (The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2014a.)

2.1 Steering of vocational education and training

Activities related to steering of education providers are guided by different objectives laid down in legislation and in national core curricula. The main principle of the Finnish education legislation lies in the idea of steering instead of control. The system is based on guiding and steering through support, information and funding. In Finland, steering of education takes place on a more generic level compared to other countries. Finnish education legislation gives education providers autonomy to organise the day-to-day practicalities of education and tuition according to their preference. The Finnish system also relies and places trust on the skill and talent of teachers. (The Finnish National Board of Education 2014c.)

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) draws up the legislation concerning the vocational education in Finland and the decisions made in the Council of State. MOEC supervises and steers the field of vocational education. The legislation is formulated on the basis of the policies in Finnish governments programme and the Ministry's education and research plan (KESU). (The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2014a.)

The FNBE is responsible for drawing up national core curricula which provide the guidelines for the objectives and contents of VET. For the development and planning of vocational education and training, the MOEC appoints National Education and Training Committees for the different vocational education sectors. The MOEC grants authorisations to provide education to education providers, determining the fields in which they are allowed to organise education and training as well as determining their

total student numbers. Education providers decide which vocational qualifications and study programmes within the relevant fields of education will be organised at their vocational institutions. (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2014a; Eurypedia, Encyclopedia on National Education Systems 2014b.)

The education provider of vocational education and training can be a municipality, municipal education and training consortium, registered community, foundation or public utility. Additionally, the Finnish government upholds education centres for Sami regions. Swedish education is organised in Swedish speaking or bilingual vocational institutions. Education provided by municipalities or municipal education and training consortium follows the Local Government Act. Administration of education provided by government or private operator is also legislated by specific laws. (The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2014a.)

The education providers of VET are responsible of organising the education so it is in line with the core curricula and the education will meet the needs of the local economic life. The education provider decides also independently what kinds of educational institutions are maintained. The operations of education providers are instructed according to the law and guided by the national core curricula. Every education institution is obliged to have a principal who is responsible for operations. (The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2014a.)

2.2 Funding of vocational education and training

Education in Finland is publicly funded through public tax revenue. The key feature for the Finnish education culture is to see it as an investment and a prerequisite for the Finnish prosperity. The public education system guarantees equal opportunities for education for the entire population despite socioeconomic or ethnic background, domicile or gender. (Eurypedia. European Encyclopedia on National Education Systems 2014.) This chapter covers general funding of vocational education and training and in chapter 3.2. the researcher goes deeper into the issues related to funding of international activities in VET institutions.

The Finnish government and municipalities are in charge of financing the vocational education in Finland. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture grants funding for vocational education. The funding is calculated based on three different factors, namely performance, number of students and unit prices. The funding is not earmarked, so the education provider can decide how to use and allocate funds. (The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2014a.)

Since 2006 part of the funding for vocational education and training has been performance and effectiveness. For the performance-based funding a performance-index is calculated for the education providers. The indicators used are graduate employment rate, continuation to higher education, reduction of the dropout rate of students and the qualifications and training of the teachers. (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2014a.)

The share of the performance based-funding for the qualified schools is 3 per cent of the annual central government grant. The profit index is not applied to schools which are not able to provide required information for the profit index calculation or educational institutions which have a low number of students and the profit index calculation is therefore not possible. Furthermore, vocational special education institutions are not part of the profit index calculation. (The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2014a.)

The quality prize award is one of the funding mechanisms in vocational education and training and part of the performance-based funding. The competition of vocational education and training has been organised annually since the year 2000. The assessment criteria used in the competition is The EFQM Excellence Model. Educational organisations can use this model as a tool for self-evaluation, as a framework for the educational organisation's management system and as a tool for identifying individual areas for improvement. The quality prize is awarded to education providers who have systematically developed their provision in line with the education policy. (The Finnish National Board of Education 2014d.)

The Finnish National Board of Education collects all the information concerning unit prices and performance based funding in vocational education. The information is gathered on the reporting system of funding in education supervised by FNBE. (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2014a.)

3   Framework of internationalisation

In this chapter the researcher presents the framework of internationalisation of VET and goes deeper in national and European objectives and goals of internationalisation in order to give the reader a wider background understanding of the topic. This part of the study also goes deeper into financing, and covers information about the funding of vocational education and training in more detailed.

Changes in the international operational environment can be seen as an opportunity as well as a challenge for the Finnish society. Indeed, this is what vocational education and training has to react to. It is important to invest in continuous development and know-how so the Finnish economic life and competitiveness will become stronger in the international operational environment. These goals have been written into the Development Plan for Education and Research (KESU) and at the European level as stated in the Copenhagen process. At European Union level, the declaration of Copenhagen defines the targets for the VET to improve the quality and attractiveness of VET. The Copenhagen process also emphasises the importance of mobility and information exchange at an international level. (The Finnish National Board of Education, HAMK University of Applied Sciences, Centre for International Mobility 2008, 3.)

The above mentioned goals are stated in the curriculum of VET and in the qualification requirements. At the outset, the purpose for these goals is to better prepare the students to operate and working international companies in Finland as well as in international environment abroad. The globalisation of economic life and expanding integration of Europe is increasing the mobility and competition for a skilled labour force. In addition, the vocational institutions are becoming more multicultural, which requires new expertise from teachers. Hence, the meaning of language and communication skills as well as knowledge about different cultures is becoming more important. (The Finnish National Board of Education et al. 2008, 3.)

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture promotes the internationalisation of VET by supporting the learning periods completed abroad and has made the crediting system of studies abroad more effective. (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2014c.)

3.1 European and national objectives for internationalisation of VET

The objectives for the development of vocational education and training in Finland are based on the Development Plan for Education and Research (KESU) approved by the Finnish Council of State. The focus in vocational education and training for the years 2011-2016 is to develop the sustainability and quality of VET and to strengthen the equivalence of the education and labour markets in Europe. Furthermore, the goals include the enhancement of vocational competencies, a guarantee of the equality of education and an increase in the effectiveness of vocational education and learning as well as lifelong learning. (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2014b.)

Also at EU level the main action is to improve the quality of VET. The national targets for VET are based on European Union goals for vocational education and training which are stated in the Copenhagen process. The goal of the Copenhagen process is to enhance the performance, quality and attractiveness of VET by improving the cooperation between European countries. The underlying priority of the Copenhagen process is to strengthen the development of the European labour market and increase the mobility of VET students and people who have completed their degree in VET. All the member states of the European Union and labour market organisations have signed the contract of the Copenhagen process. (The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2014b.)

The Copenhagen process was established in 2002 and it has produced concrete tools to increase the transparency of education and the mobility of VET students (see Table 1).

Table 1. European tools for VET (The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2014b)

ECVET = European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training)	EQF = European Qualifications Framework)	EQARF = European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training)

The common tools defined in Copenhagen process (ECVET, EQF, EQARF) have been implemented to improve the quality of the qualifications and to make the qualifications more comparative at the European level. (The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2014b.)

3.2   Funding of internationalisation of VET

In addition to public funding granted by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, the Finnish National Board of Education allocates government subsidies for vocational education and training. The main goal of the government subsidies is to provide support in different start-up and experiment projects in the educational field, which produce models and methods for dissemination and aims for improvement or change in some particular development area. These projects aim at supporting the implementation of national educational policy and development needs of education providers. The produced models and methods for dissemination and the models aim for improvement or change in some particular development area. The main goal of this operation is to favour extensive and network-model based projects. (The Finnish National Board of Education 2014b.)

One of the main areas for which the Finnish National Board of Education allocates government's subsidies is the internationalisation of VET. Basically, the cooperation between different countries is seen as one of the main focuses of internationalisation of VET.

The subsidies can be used for the mobility of both students and teaching staff, for internationalising the curriculum, as well as for international projects. The focus is, for example, to create individualised, flexible learning paths for students as well as to develop teachers' international work periods. Also international peer-learning and the development of assessment to improve the quality are emphasised. (The Finnish National Board of Education 2014b.)

The main goal for the internationalisation projects funded by the government's subsidies is to spread and exploit the information and experience gained from international cooperation and to achieve the EU goals for lifelong learning. Furthermore, the projects should meet the needs of the multicultural and global labour market as well as the knowledge-based skills requirements of VET. In addition the project funded with government's subsidies should improve the networking and cooperation skills between different VET institutions. (Kulmala 2014, 8.)

The Centre for International Mobility CIMO supports the internationalisation of VET by allocating EU funded exchange- and scholarships. By way of illustration, VET institutions can apply for support for on-the-job-learning periods abroad, for working periods or continuing education periods abroad. (Centre for International Mobility 2014b.)

The EU programmes support different development projects in vocational education and training. In these projects, Finnish VET institutions, together with foreign partner organisation can develop on-the-job-learning practices, learning materials, pedagogical methods or the professional skills of the teachers, to name but a few. (Centre for International Mobility 2014b.)

4   Key elements for effective internationalisation

In this part of the thesis the researcher draws together the relevant concepts around internationalisation of VET in related to the final outcomes of the research. The background for the themes in the literature review rises from the researchers' commission in FNBE. According to the discussions with the representatives of the organisation the successful and effective internationalisation in VET is built on the following themes: management, internationalisation strategy and polarisation and equality of education. Obstacles and challenges in vocational education and training can occur if one of the themes is weaker or lacking from the operations.

Before the previously mentioned topics are discussed, this chapter begins by covering the critical literature review about internationalisation of education to give the reader wider insight about the topic in general.
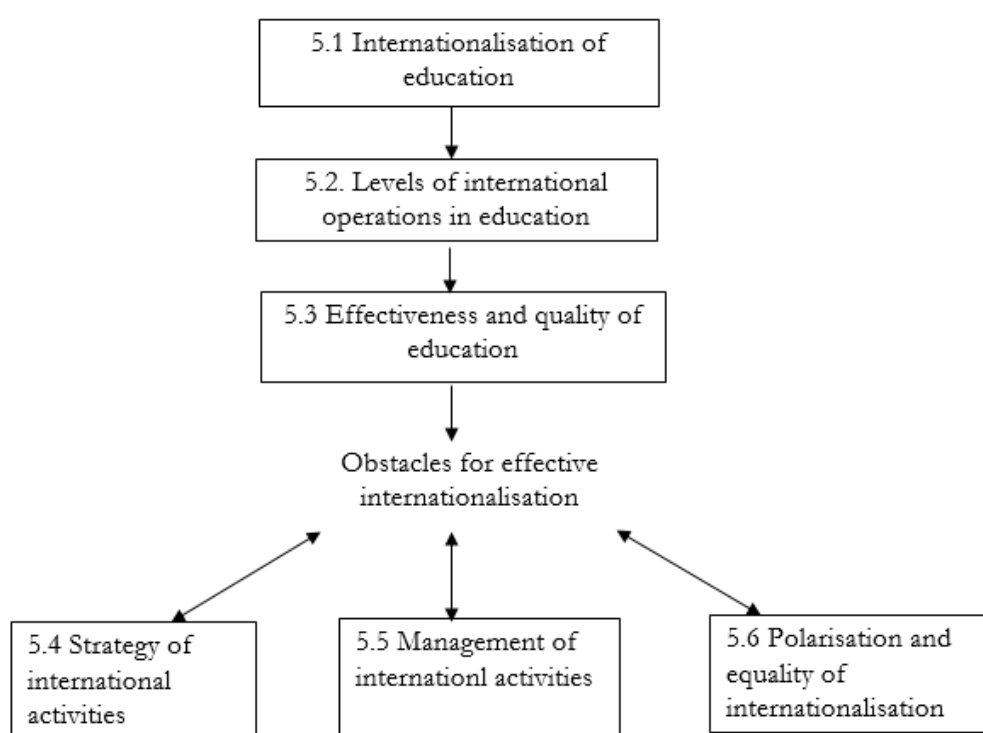

Figure 2 Structure of the literature review chapter

4.1 Internationalisation of education

This chapter introduces different perspectives into internationalisation of education. The main critical literature review deals with issues around internationalisation of higher education. These definitions adaptable to the VET sector as the EU-level goals for the higher education stated in the Bologna process emphasise the same main goals as de-fined in the Copenhagen process for VET. Both processes highlight the importance of international mobility and cooperation on the European level. Similarities in internationalisation of higher education and VET include the view that both see internationalisation as an essential way to improve the quality of education and to give international dimensions to the national education systems. Students' and teachers' mobility provides international skills needed in the labour market and the knowledge needed in the changing society. (European Commission 2014b.)

Despite internationalisation and globalisation being linked terms, differences exist. According to Knight (2012, 5) the difference between terms globalisation and internationalisation is that globalisation is often connected with such concepts as commercialism and competitiveness. Globalisation includes the worldwide flow of ideas, services, resources, economic values and technology. Internationalisation differs from globalisation as it highlights the relationship between different countries, cultures, people, systems and institutions. According to Knight the term internationalisation has gained influence from globalisation in both positive and negative ways. Knight postulates that the definitions 'competitiveness' and 'commercialism' which were earlier closely connected with globalisation have since been strongly connected to internationalisation of education as the cross-border education development is increasing in all educational fields.

Söderqvist (2002, 29) has defined internationalisation of higher education with the adaptation as follows:

> The internationalisation of a higher education institution is a change process from a national higher education institutions into an international institution leading to the inclu-

Bradenburg and de Witt (2011, 16) see globalisation as a rival term for internationalisation. Globalisation is considered to have a negative tone and it is regarded to be more predominant than internationalisation. According to Bradenburg and de Witt internationalisation has become a synonym of "doing good" and represents the humanistic values against the world of economics, which the term globalisation represents. Bradenburg and de Witt also define the nature of internationalisation to be an essential improvement instrument for the quality of education and research.

According to Knight (2012, 4-5) the internationalisation of higher education is a process where international, global and intercultural dimensions are integrated into functions and goals of the educational institution. This process of change is adapted to serve best the needs and interests of every individual educational institution. Knight emphasises that there is not a specific model of internationalisation that would be best for all educational institutions but every country and educational institution will form the internationalisation model according to their goals, rationales and expected outcomes. The suffix –"isation" refers to the internationalisation to be a process of achieving or enhancing goals. Developed teaching and a curriculum consisting of international, intercultural and comparative elements, and internationalisation helps to build up intercultural and international knowledge, values and skills of students. Knight emphasises that understanding internationalisation assures that the international dimensions are combined in a sustainable way in all the important functions of educational institution; teaching and learning, knowledge production and research as well as for the service to the community and society. The goal of internationalisation is to prepare students to operate in a more interconnected world.

Van der Wende (1996, 189-191) has studied internationalisation in related to curriculum. He studied characteristics, which were essential for internationalised curriculum and found that the process of internationalised curriculum will lead to educational change and aims to improve the quality of education. Van der Wende's model for successful internationalised curriculum consisted of three parts to bring about changes in

education. The first steps for effective internationalisation were adoption, implementation and institutionalisation. Secondly Van der Wende noted that educational change has different dimensions. These social, behavioural and organisational changes make his model closely related to Knight's. Third step of Van der Wende's model is that the different actors of the internationalisation process have different, significant roles. Fourthly he pointed out that the process is determined by the innovations' characteristics itself. Final dimension of the model is that the internationalisation process is a long process including several obstacles and several adjustments.

Tran (2013, 495) emphasises that the pedagogies and curriculum for international education should be adapted to the contemporary vocational education pedagogy and curriculum development in wider sense. Growth of internationalisation of VET will increase the need to teach the students to operate in international and intercultural context. Thus, the international pedagogy should meet these needs among domestic students as well as international students.

4.2   Levels of international operations in education

According to Mattila (2011) international operations in educations can be defined as a pyramid where the size of each level describes the amount of students participating in different international actions. Internationalisation pyramid has been made for basic education and vocational education and training but it can be adapted for all educational levels. The pyramid describes the different international actions in educational field and each level completes the other. The three lowest levels of the pyramid describe the domestic international activities which are important when creating equal opportunities for all students. The two upper levels describe the national or international activities which include mobility of students and teachers as well as different projects. Thus, internationalisation is viewed as a two part process.
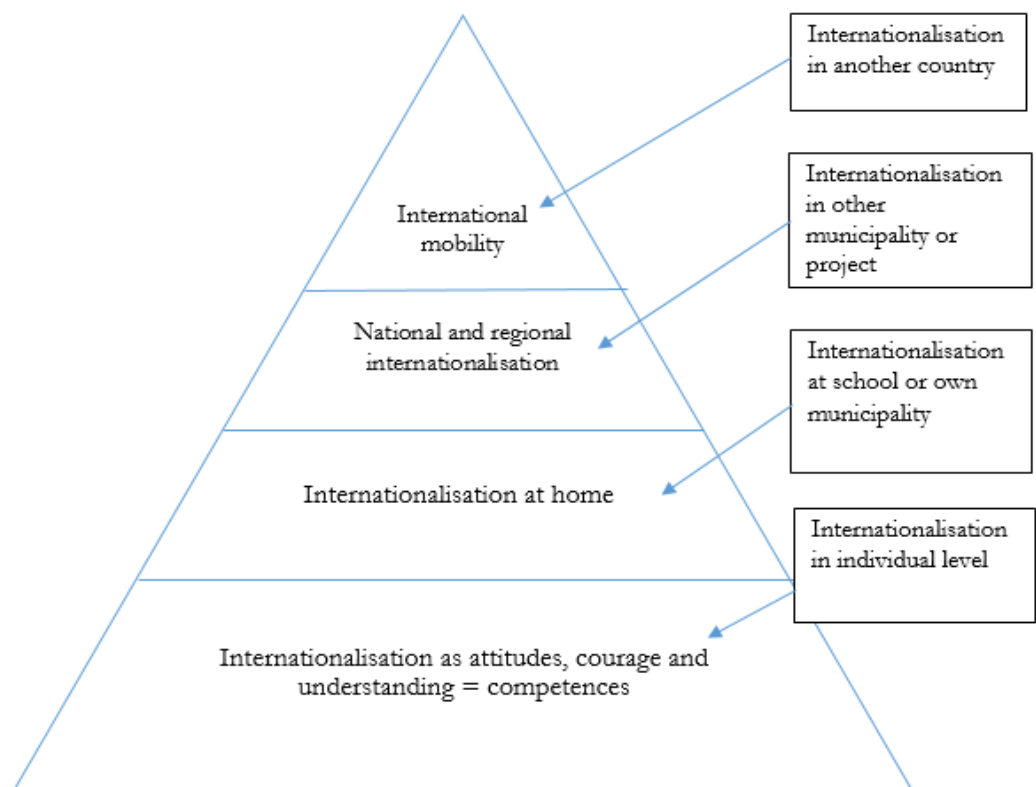
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Figure 3 Internationalisation pyramid (Mattila 2011)

The lowest level of the pyramid can be understood as the individual international pro-
cesses. The goal for this level is to increase the awareness of cultural diversity and un-
derstanding of the differences of people and nationalities. Educational institutions
implement this level by giving global and cultural education. (Siekkinen 2013, 15-16.)

The second level of the pyramid is internationalisation at home. This consists of inter-
nationalisation of individual school and own region. As an example, educational insti-
tutions that emphasise internationalisation at home can have different theme weeks
around different countries and cultures. Also virtual international skills and under-
standing media as well as language education are part of internationalisation at home.
Additionally, the international students and teachers who bring their know-how for the
international operations in Finnish education institutions are related to internationalisa-
tion at home. Internationalisation at home can be part of the curriculum and contains
language learning and co-operations with educational institutions in twin-cities (The

Finnish National Board of Education, HAMK University of Applied Sciences, Centre for International Mobility 2008, 19; Siekkinen 2013, 16.)

Third level of the pyramid consists of national and regional internationalisation. This part includes international co-operation with different educational institutions and work organisations. In addition, the research into international competencies and sharing of innovations with other partners is part of the national and regional internationalisation. (Siekkinen 2013, 16.)

The top level of the pyramid is international mobility. According to Garam and Korkiala (2010, 7) international mobility can be defined to be students' and teachers' studying or working abroad. Students stay abroad as exchange students or gain experience in international working life by doing internships or on-the-job-learning. The period for staying abroad varies from a few weeks to a whole academic year. Generally, the periods for students in VET are shorter than for students who have exchange programmes within higher education. Teachers can have experience in mobility related to different international projects by visiting twin cities and countries, as well as have teaching periods in different countries. The exchange experience of VET teachers can also be directed to some working-life organisation in another country. This way the teachers can have information about different education systems, educational methods, vocational skills requirements and techniques of certain vocation. Through this, international perspective will be transferred to Finnish classroom situations. Teachers' enthusiasm towards international activities will positively affect students' international activities. (Garam & Korkiala, 2010, 7; Koramo 2012, 15-22; Mattila 2011.)

4.3   Effectiveness and quality of education

An output or activity is effective if it does what the intended user or beneficiary, inside or outside the organisation requires it to do (Haberberg & Rieple 2008, 13).

Effectiveness of education can be regarded to be a part of a profitability concept. When evaluating the profitability rate of education one has to take into account the

effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the actions. In the context of education, effectiveness describes actions done correctly and efficiency describes actions done in a correct way. (The Finnish National Board of Education 1998, 19.)

According to the Finnish National Board of Education (1998, 19) education is profitable when the goals of the educational institutions and individuals at national and international level are achieved. Efficiency of education can be understood through functional and flexible education system and through good quality teaching. According to FNBE, education is effective when the abilities gained through education meet the needs of individual growth and the development of culture and working life. Education is economical when resources are allocated according to the main goals of the education and the amount of the resources is appropriate in relation to the educational services.
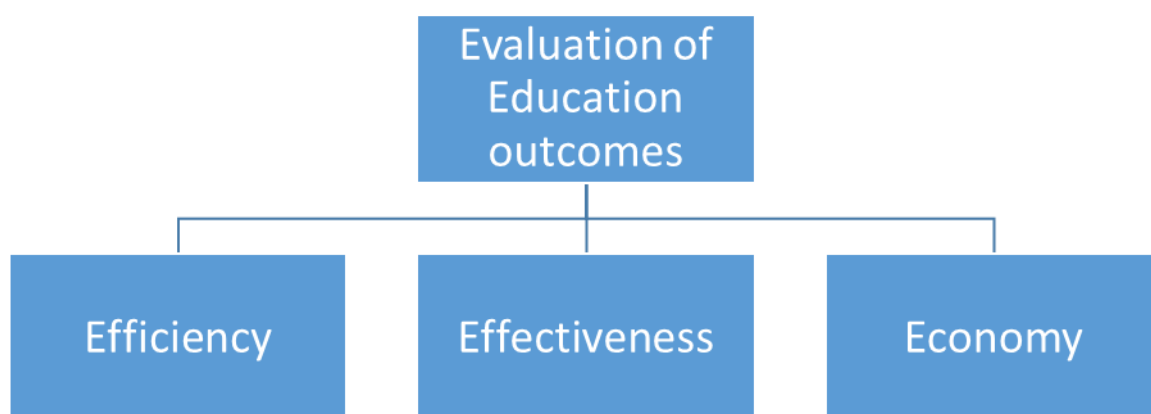

Figure 4 Concept of profitability (The Finnish National Board of Education 1998, 20)
20)

According to the Finnish National Board of Education (1998, 33- 34) qualifications achieved at school will promote the positive development of the individual and improve the growth of personality and help to form healthy self-esteem. Education has primary and secondary effects. Evaluating the effectiveness of education requires that the impact on society and on the individual are assessed during and after the education. Therefore the evaluation of the effectiveness has to take into account the effects of a longer time span.

As a social institution education has a centre stage in society and therefore affects it in several ways. Effectiveness of education at organisational level is usually defined on the economic or technical basis and sometimes the concept of effectiveness is regarded to be a synonym for productivity or related only to the performance of organisations. (Korkeakoski & Tynjälä 2010, 10.)

Effectiveness of education is usually described as a relationship between goals and results, although Korkeakoski and Tynjälä (2010, 10) argue that to defining the concept of effectiveness is not that simple. For example teaching can produce learning outcomes even though the main goals of the education are not achieved. It is also important to separate direct learning impacts and impacts emerged from the outside world. According to Korkeakoski and Tynjälä the wider perspective for the effectiveness of education can be understood as the individual and social achievements. Concept of effectiveness can also be understood through the concept of efficiency where the goals for the education are seen as optimal input-output-relationship. Therefore, efficiency and effectiveness can be seen as related terms.

Korkeakoski and Silvennoinen (2008, 228) also point out that the concept of effectiveness of education can be understood as a relationship between the organisations' internal output and its outside criterion. One example of this is the relationship between the learning results and the needs of the working life or eligibility for further studies. Effectiveness is an impact of organisations' utility- and exchange value on the market. Concept of effectiveness gives means to measure the quality between a customer and a service provider. In contrary to other concepts (profitability, productivity and efficiency) the concept of efficiency transfers the analysis from the inner service abilities to the outside service abilities and to the quality of service.

The criterion for evaluating the effectiveness is to increase the individual (customer) or collective (society) well-being. According to Korkeakoski and Silvennoinen (2008, 228) this means to fulfil the needs of customers or to reach the goals of the society. With the concept of effectiveness, the functionality and profitability of social and political systems can be examined and understood.

According to Koski (2014, 3-4) effectiveness can be described how well a reform, service, intervention or action achieves its objectives. Effectiveness as a concept of administration is defined as abstract aim without referring to any specific goal. Effectiveness is intended to assess the ultimate advantage of certain goals: those organisations' outputs which are achieved outside the organisation, and how they respond to the needs of customers or how well they achieve the given social and institutional objectives.

Table 2 levels of effectiveness (Scotti 2004 in Koski 2014, 4)

Activities→	What is to be done in order to reach the expected impacts?
Outputs→	What issues indicate that the things have been done?
Outcomes→	What happens as a result of actions?
	Immediate effects: Matters which can be controlled
	Intermediate effects: Matters which will be controlled
	Ultimate effects: Matters which can be contributed

Education can be seen as a continuous development and support process of the individual. Education aims to increase the knowledge, skills, competencies and know-how of the students. The quality of education can be analysed in the light of teaching. Do the teaching methods provide the needed competencies and extra value for students and how could the results be measured? The main goal of education is to help the students to reach as far as they can in their lives. As this idea comprises several different factors it is complex to define the meaning of effectiveness and the quality of education. As important as the learning results and success in education are, the importance of the benefits and quality of living after school career cannot be undermined. (Raivola 2000, 48-50.)

According to Raivola, Valtonen and Vuorensyrjä (1999, 14) the concept of effectiveness cannot be understood without the concept of quality. Harvey and Green (1993 in Raivola et. al. 1999, 80) point out that the absolute definition of quality is problematic

and it has been difficult to connect it to any fixed measuring indicators. In the educational research the concept of quality has usually been defined in comparison to other criterions such as level of knowledge, improvement of results or the efficiency of operations.

Korkeakoski and Silvennoinen (2008, 225) define quality to be a selected group of features or characteristics related to a certain subject. These all have different meanings and importance. Improvement of the quality usually means increasing the ability to meet its requirements and objectives. Improving the quality also requires information about the mutual expediency of interacted factors. As a result quality definition should include also the resources and other activities used to support or restrict certain environment.

Systematic planning and implementation of international operations of educational institutions together with the transparency of actions will increase the motivation and positive attitudes of the teachers and students involved in the process. These will also improve the quality of education and the image of the institution. Achieved benefits in internationalisation will increase the effectiveness of vocational education and training. Qualifications of the graduates are equivalent for the skills needed in the economic life which will benefit the growth of the Finnish society. (The Finnish National Board of Education 2010, 5.)

4.4 Strategy for internationalisation activities

According to Haberberg and Rieple (2008, 6) strategy can be defined to be a path which an organisation follows to become an effective performer. Strategy is a set of actions where the organisation develops resources or services so that the users find them valuable.

Drawing up the internationalisation strategy should give guidelines for the actual development plan for internationalisation and that in turn should include detailed activities how to reach all the goals for international operations. With the help of strategic

planning the international operations are made visible and clear. Strategic planning shows and how the international operations are connected to the main functions and development of the educational institution. Strategic planning makes the international operations more systematic which helps the practical work of personnel. For this reason staff and the students should be involved in formulating strategy for internationalisation. (The Finnish National Board of Education 2010, 8.)

The FNBE (2010, 9) highlights that strategic planning alone does not make the educational institutions international. Therefore, when the planning work has been done, the educational institution should pay attention to implementation and quality control of internationalisation as well as the commitment of the management.

According to a report by FNBE, Cimo and HAMK University of Applied Sciences the strategies of educational institutions do not state future visions for development or measures to be taken to increase the internationalisation. Despite the lack of information concerning the internationalisation at strategy level the international operations in practice are wider and more extensive. (The Finnish National Board of Education, Centre for international mobility & HAMK University of Applied Sciences 2008, 32.)

The abovementioned report states that a majority of education providers or educational institutions do not have a strategy for internationalisation and that mostly the international operations are mentioned briefly in the organisations' main strategy. Strategic documents concerning internationalisation should include practical goals and operations and there should be clearly stated resources, roles and the main principles for the international operations (see Table 3). (The Finnish National Board of Education, Centre for international mobility & HAMK University of Applied Sciences 2008, 34.)

Table 3. Design of organisations' strategy (The Finnish National Board of Education 2010, 10)

The basis of the organisations' strategy consists of:	Operational environment and analysing the changing trends
	Mission of the organisation
	Core know-how
	Values of the organisation
According to previous matters the organisation decides and implements:	The vision for the future
	Strategic goals which aim to reach the vision
	Practical measures to achieve goals in a long term and in an annual level.
When designing the internationalisation strategy it is important to consider:	Operating in multicultural environment is part of the professional skills
	The working language of multinational organisations is mostly English but there is an increasing need for other languages as well
	International business environment requires language skills but also abilities to operate with different environments
	The working environments are getting more international and the customers are increasingly multinational.
	Also the clients of the public sector are getting more and more multicultural.

The most efficient way for organisation is to draw up a complete strategy model for international activities, where the alignments of international operations are included in the main strategy of the organisation (see Figure 5). This way the international aspects are considered in every step of the strategy work. Clarifying the international aspects together with the future's visions and values of the organisation will bound the interna-

tionalisation with the general operations of the whole organisation. (The Finnish National Board of Education 2010, 9.)
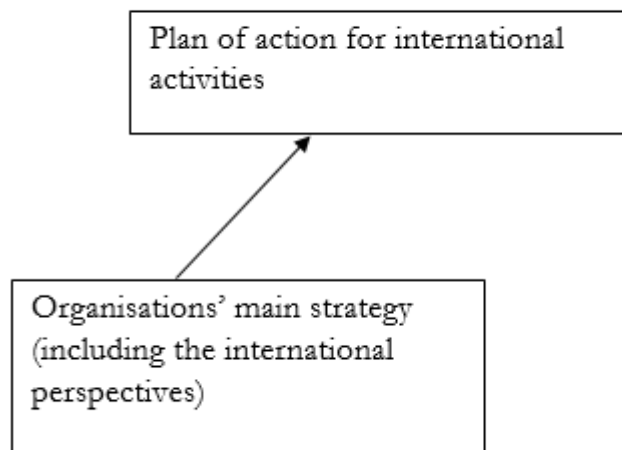
Plan of action for international activities

Organisations' main strategy (including the international perspectives)

Figure 5. Complete strategy model for internationalisation (The Finnish National Board of Education 2010, 8)

4.5 Management as a key feature for effective internationalisation

Bush and Jackson (2002, 417) suggest that there is a strong connection between level of schools' effectiveness and management skills. Management and leadership of the school is invariably the main factor in high performance schools and, therefore, the management also has a strong influence in motivating teachers. Teachers' attitudes and motivation reflects the quality of teaching and learning.

According to Söderqvist (2001, 97-98) the internationalisation is a holistic function in educational institutions and it requires active development with other institutions and other countries. International activities require participation from the whole organisation and therefore calls for the involvement and commitment of the management. Internationalisation requires multicultural idealism and language-competencies and there-

fore raises challenges for the management level to change processes so that the preparedness of the employees is high enough to implement the international activities.

Söderqvist (2002, 36) sees the management of internationalisation as a dynamic and holistic change process in all levels of organisation's operations. The holistic perspective includes several dimensions such as information, organisation, planning, implementation, evaluation and financing. The management system of internationalisation includes the previously mentioned dimensions. It is important for the management to decide and analyse who in the organisation is responsible of each dimensions and how widely they are implemented.

The Finnish National Board of Education states (2010, 17) that when organising the international activities in educational institutions it is important to consider the alignments from the management level and ensure the commitment of the management. Many educational institutions have a person in charge of the international activities who is responsible for the joint alignments and management of the international activities.

The guidance and support from the management level is significant because the international activities are not economically profitable as such, and therefore it is important that the international issues are well presented in the board of directors. It is also essential to bind the international activities as part of the everyday life in teaching and guidance. This way the students, being the most important target group of internationalisation will be reached. (The Finnish National Board of Education 2010, 18-20.)

4.6 Polarisation and equality of internationalisation of education

The Research and development plan of Ministry of Education and culture for 2011-2016 emphasises the importance of equality in education:

> Finnish education and cultural policy to guarantee equal opportunities and the right to culture, high- quality free education and prerequisites for full citizenship for everyone, irrespective of their origin, background or economic standing. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012, 11).

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2012, 41) has set goals for internationalisation of VET. One of the goals is to increase the flexibility of education and improve the students' possibilities to participate in education in different life circumstances. Related to flexibility, one of the aims is to increase equality by creating possibilities for everyone to participate in international activities. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture states that the measures taken to improve the quality of internationalisation is to extend the students' mobility and increase the possibilities for every student to participate in internationalisation activities.

According to Jahnukainen and Järvinen (2008, 140) equality can be divided in three different ways in the field of education; equality in relation to education possibilities, education arrangements or the equality of educational outputs. Education possibilities means that the individual has equal opportunities in education despite the social, economic or regional background. The reason behind the differences between students depend on their personal differences in motivation, intelligence and talent. In relation to education arrangements it should be arranged so that it equalises the students' social and cultural differences. If the aim is to equalise educational outputs the goal should be to divide the outputs equally between students from different social backgrounds.

In regard to internationalisation the equal opportunities mean that every student is offered the opportunity to study intercultural competencies. It is the student's choice how to exploit the given possibilities. If the goal is to achieve the equal outputs in edu-

cation, the international aspect is to guarantee equal opportunities at different levels such as mobility and internationalisation at home. (Siekkinen 2013, 20.)

Polarisation in internationalisation can be understood from several different dichotomies such as inclusion/exclusion, take part/drop out and fortunate/underprivileged. The concept of polarisation considers both phenomena in different extreme ends. From the point of view of internationalisation polarisation can also be understood with the concept of accumulation. Some of the students are highly motivated and therefore have good opportunities to internationalise. These students start their international activities earlier and collect experiences and language skills. Because of the international experience it is easier for them to extend their activities in different international projects and networks. The threshold to participate is lower for those students who have some experience, than for those who are still in the shadows of internationalisation. For this reason the teachers and other school staff have a very big responsibility and influence of motivating students equally to participate in international activities. (Siekkinen 2013, 32.)

5 Methodology

This section of the study begins by describing the empirical part of the research followed by the research philosophy and research startegy of the study. Next, data collection and data anlysis are discussed and, finally, the researcher describes the present study in the light of action research.

The empirical part of the study was conducted from April to July 2014. The research followed a qualitative method to answer the following questions:

1.) What are the main challenges and obstacles in internationalisation activities of selected VET institutions?
2.) What measures have the selected VET institutions created to overcome the challenges?
3.) How could these good practises be implemented from the educational administration level to serve wider the educational field?
4.) How to improve the effectiveness of internationalisation in vocational education institutions?
5.) What kind of support can the FNBE provide for educational institutions to overcome the challenges and make the internationalisation activities more effective?

The research philosophy behind the study was interpretivist. Typical feature for interpetivism is that it emphasises differences between people and objects and when conducting the research the researcher understands differences between humans in our role as social actors. Interpretivist philosophy holds the idea that the researcher adopts an empathetic stance and understands the world from the interviewees' point of view. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012, 137.)

The strategy for the study was action research as the researcher is part of the organisation where the research was partly implemented. According to Saunders et al. (2012,

183) action research focuses on promoting organisational learning and to produce practical outcomes by identifying issues as planning action, taking action and evaluating action.

According to Kananen (2009, 9) action research can be defined as a research which is implemented among people who work in the same organisation, and the research is conducted within the boundaries of everyday working life. Action research is seen as process of professional learning and development. It focuses on the real, practical working life problems which the organisation becomes aware of and tries to remove. The basic element of action research is a permanent change and it holds the idea of better future. Action Research is seen as an operation which springs from the activity and power, not from outside guidance, commands or development activity. It is in this aspect that the power of action research lies, as the people concerned will find solutions together and at the same time are committed to the change.

Action research can be defined as a democratic and participatory process and its purpose is to produce practical knowledge for people to ease their everyday lives and increase well-being. Action research is strongly related to a participatory worldview. In addition to everyday experiences and outcomes being important for the action research, the inquiry also has an important role. Action research can be seen as the development of knowing and knowledge but with a different aspect from normal academic research. The five main characteristics of action research are emergent development form, human flourishing, participation and democracy, practical issues and knowledge- in- action. These characteristics arise from the reflections of people researched in practice. (Reason & Bradbury 2007, 1-2)

Cooperation is also an essential element in action research. Research is carried out with the participants who are affected by the problem in question. Cooperation in action research is not always unproblematic due to collisions with different people and their different goals, lack of confidence or authority issues. Collaboration requires shared goals, which is also an essential part of the action research. (Kananen 2009, 9-10.)

According to Kananen (2009, 12) action research is not only a research method but rather a set of research methods, and as mentioned earlier, also called a research strategy (Saunders et al. 2012, 183) The central elements of action research are the following factors: operational development (amendment), co-operation and research. Action research is process-based and due to the successive cycles it allows constant development for organisation's operations. A single cycle follows the repeated steps, which can vary depending on the research phenomenon. The simplest cycle of action research consists of the stages of planning, action and evaluating. The research is usually described as a form of a spiral (see figure 6).
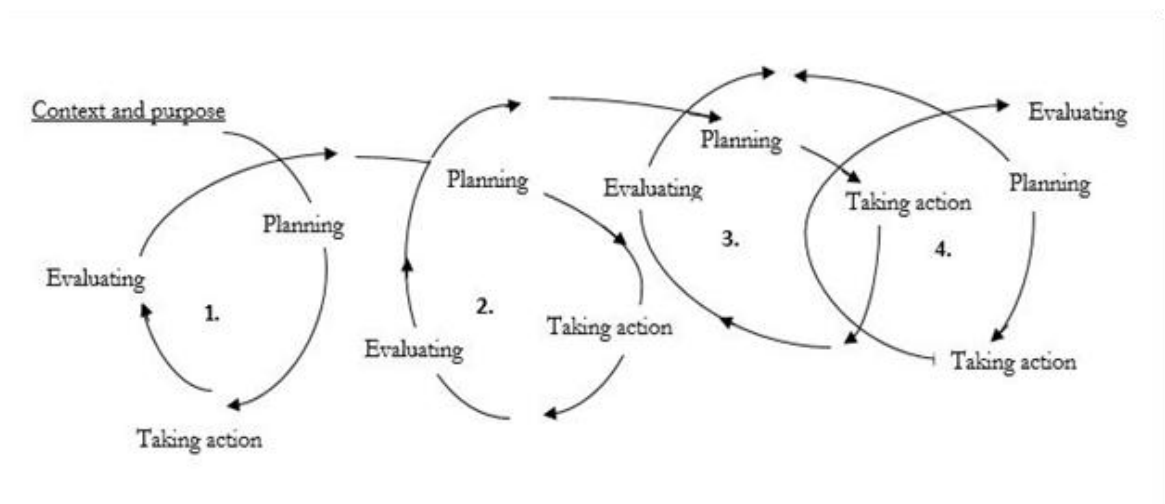

Figure 6. The action research spiral (adapted from Saunders et al. 2012, 83)

5.1   Data collection

For the data collection the researcher used a half-structured focused interview. Theme interviews can be defined also as "the general interview guide approach". The half-structured interviews are also called theme interviews as the discussions are allocated to certain themes which are discussed during the interview. Theme interviews are closer to non-structured than structured approach and therefore can be called half-structured approach, as the themes discussed are the same for all interviewees. Interviewees participating in theme interviews are chosen on the basis of their knowledge about the topic and so the interviewer will have the data which is most valuable for the research and for the further study. Typical feature of the theme interviews is also that the inter-

views are not attached strictly to qualitative or quantitative approach and it does not consider how many interviews should be made or how deep the interviews should go. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2004, 47-48.)

According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2004, 43) the interviews should be well-planned and initiated by the interviewer. During the interview the researcher should maintain the motivation of the interviewee and earn the trust of the interviewee. With this approach the researcher can create a confidential relationship with the participants and receives the most suitable information about the topic being discussed.

Data collection of the present study was implemented in three parts. First, the researcher conducted the semi-structured face-to-face interviews in the Finnish National Board of Education and in the Centre of International Mobility and Cooperation (CIMO). Participants of the first round were two professionals from two agencies who have wide-range of expertise and experience from the field of international activities in vocational education and training. The purpose of the first round interviews was to cover the in-sights of administrators at national level related to internationalisation in VET.

The main themes in the interview arose from the organisations' development needs to investigate certain aspects more deeply. First cycle of the interviews was drawn up to four following themes: 1.) Defining the internationalisation in VET 2.) Obstacles and challenges in internationalisation, 3.) Polarisation of international activities in VET institutions, 4.) Assessment of effectiveness of internationalisation of VET. Themes of the interviews were sent to the participants before the interviews so they had time to analyse and go deeper to the themes being discussed.

Based on the results of the first interview cycle, the researcher compiled the second round interview structure to be conducted in five selected vocational educational institutions. The interviewees were chosen because of their responsibility of organising the international activities in their vocational institution and therefore had an extensive knowledge about the topic. The second cycle interview questions were based on is-sues

that emerged during the first round of interviews and consisted of following themes: 1.) Defining the international activities in the educational institution, 2.) Obstacles and challenges in internationalisation, 3.) Management's role in internationalisation, 4.) Polarisation of international activities, 5.) Assessment of effectiveness of internationalisation of VET.

There were five interviews from five different vocational institutions. From one vocational institution there were two interviewees, head of international affairs and coordinator of international affairs. Both participated because they had certain responsibilities related to international activities and wanted to share their wider insights about different parts of internationalisation. When the researcher analysed the results of the empirical part, the interview was regarded as one as the participants represented insights of the one, certain vocational institution. Other participants of the second cycle interviews were two managers of the international affairs, coordinator of international relations and a team leader of the international affairs.

To gain a wider perspective to the themes, the researcher chose vocational institutions from different parts of Finland. Due to logistic reasons, three of the interviews were implemented using Skype and the other two were conducted face-to-face. The themes of the interviews were sent beforehand to all participants as well. All participants at the second cycle of interviews were part of the organisations whose activity in international matters is high and they have implemented several levels of internationalisation during a long period of time. Therefore, the researcher gained valuable information about the obstacles, challenges and good practises in the everyday matters around internationalisation. The purpose of the sampling was to gain wider insights from different parts of Finland about the topics relevant for the study.

There were altogether seven interviews. Two were conducted from the administrators' point of view on the national level and the other five from the vocational institutions' point of view. All the participants were chosen because of their responsibility tasks and job description in the organisation and because the respondents had relevant information and experience about international activities in the VET field. The partici-

pants of the interviews along with their codes are presented in Table 4 in random order.

Table 4. Presentation of participants

Participants	Code
Interviewee No. 1	A1
Interviewee No. 2	A2
Interviewee No. 3	A3
Interviewee No. 4	A4
Interviewee No. 5	A5
Interviewee No. 6	A6
Interviewee No. 7	A7

Third cycle of the empirical part was the evaluation round in the researcher's work organisation, The Finnish National Board of Education. The workshop was organised in early July 2014 and it consisted of five experts around international affairs of FNBE. Participants were the head of international unit of the FNBE, two counsellors of education and two special advisers, all professionals around the international operations in the FNBE.

Purpose of the workshop was to inform the experts in FNBE about the results of the interviews and analyse and discuss how the findings from the field interviews could be taken advantage of in the FNBE. The workshop also aimed to explore what kind of supportive model would best serve the FNBE and which themes and aspects it should include to best serve the actions in FNBE and the international operations in VET educational institutions.

5.2   Data analysis

All the interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and then analysed using the thematic analysis approach. For recording the researcher used Apple iPhone's voice recorder to have high-quality data about the interviews and also to store the interviews after transcribing. All the participants were asked for permission to record the interviews. The interviews conducted by Skype-programme were recorded as well as the workshop in the FNBE. All the interviews were transcribed directly after the interview to avoid memory loss or other distraction in analysing the data. The researcher read and analysed the interview transcripts several times and then coded the data.

To guarantee the validity and reliability of the study the research was well-planned and scheduled and followed a systematic way of conduct. The risks and biases of the study were minimised because of the well- designed structure of the research. All the interviews were held in Finnish language and the structure of the interviews and results were translated into English afterwards. Moreover, the citations of the interviewees were translated into English by the researcher.

There are several ways to analyse the qualitative data, depending of the quality of the data. It is important to point out some principles before analysing the data. The researcher has to know the material well and there is no point of drawing conclusions too early on. (Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 151-152).

In this study, the structure of the theme interviews served well as tool for coding and analysing the data. With the coding, the data was sifted and divided into different themes so the researcher had the possibility to make final conclusions about the topic.

After transcribing the data, the researcher used Microsoft Word and PowerPoint programmes to divide the data into different themes. After the data was analysed, finding the relevant themes for the research was fairly straightforward.

5.3 Action research implementation of the study

As mentioned earlier, the study followed the action research strategy. The empirical part was conducted in three cycles; two rounds of interviews and the evaluation round at the researchers' organisation. The following figure (Figure 6) describes the action spiral cycles of this study.

In the figure, the first cycle of the spiral represents the process of the first round of interviews. First, the main themes were covered with the commissioner in the FNBE and, based on these themes, the first round of interviews was implemented in the FNBE and CIMO. The second cycle of the study begun with the evaluation of the results from the first round and with designing the second round themes according to the previous results. After conducting the interviews in vocational institutions, the researcher planned the evaluation workshop held in the FNBE and evaluated the results raised from the workshop discussions. After combining findings from all three cycles, the final out-come that is, tool for effective internationalisation, was planned and drawn up. The spiral continues on cycle four and provides preliminary guidelines on how the research should be continued after implementing the tool for education providers.
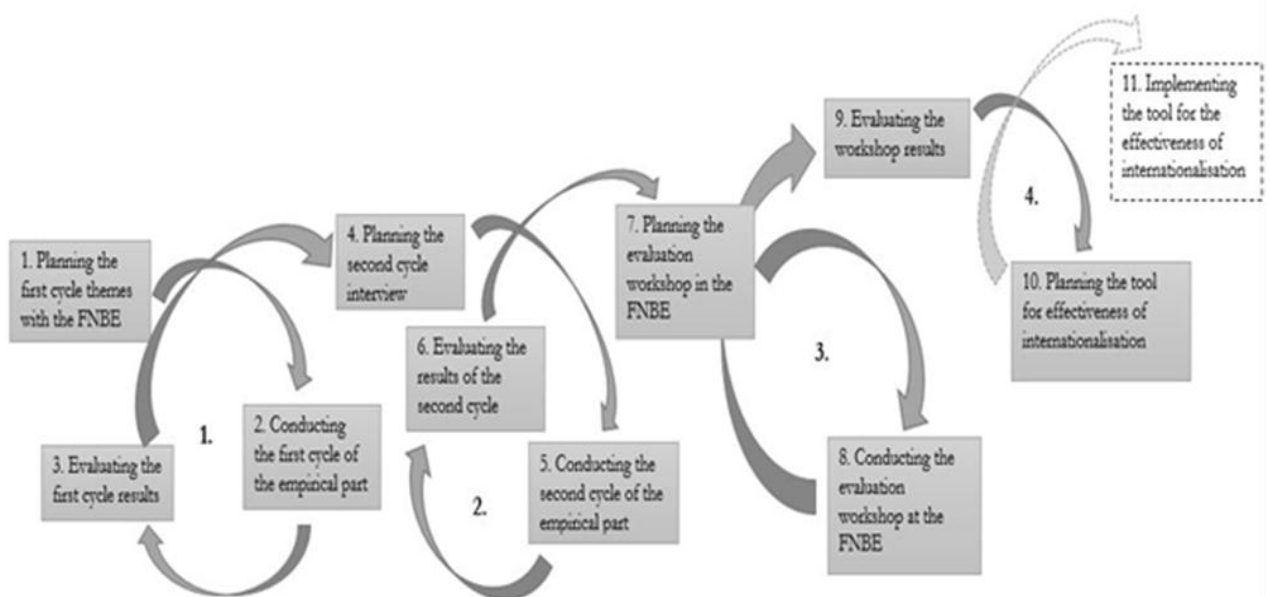

Figure 7. Action research spiral of the study

6 Internationalisation in selected VET institutions

This chapter presents the main results of the empirical study. The results are summarised in a following model (Figure 5). According to the respondents of the VET institutions, the main obstacles and challenges were mostly the same issues that arose from the inter-views on the national level. Effective internationalisation depends on management is-sues and teachers' attitudes towards internationalisation. Strategy also plays large role in building successful international activities. According to the respondents, effective internationalisation is built on three pillars: management, teachers and strategy. Challenges and obstacles occur when some of the pillars are not functioning well in the organisation. From the following figure, it can be seen how the different factors influence the internationalisation of VET institutions, as reported by the respondents.
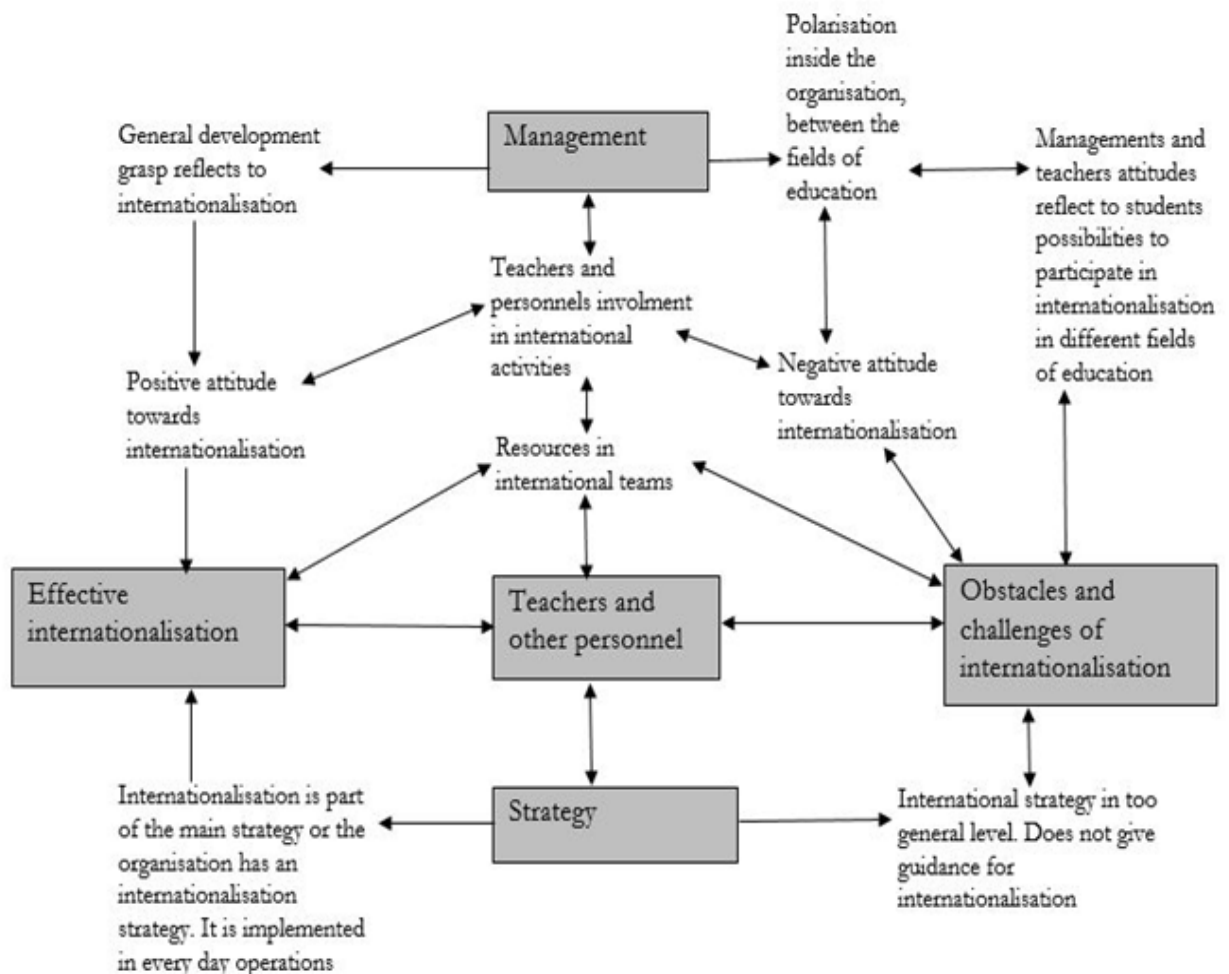

Figure 8. Relations of the pillars of effective internationalisation

According to the interviews during the first cycle, the administrators at national level defined internationalisation of VET to be development of education in the European context. This includes ECVET- credit system and European qualification framework EQF. Internationalisation of VET also follows the geographical trends in Finnish economic life and therefore the international operations are directed towards Russia, China, India and Africa. The export of education has also an important role in international activities in VET as well as the international competition activities as Skills Finland, EuroSkills and WorldSkills. The main reason why VET in Finland should internationalise is because international operations will support the development of Finnish education. Finland is becoming increasingly dependent on international expertise and individuals are required to have international skills. In addition to Finnish labour market is becoming more international, as well as the economic life is becoming more globalised.

According to the administrators, internationalisation of VET means that global and international questions are brought as part of the educational contents from the students and teachers point of view. Different opportunities such as on-the-job-learning abroad or teachers' exchange programmes will increase the international aspects in learning and teaching. Furthermore, different systems from other countries can be adapted as part of Finnish education system. Hence, the international activities enable networking with other VET institutions which is an important way of engaging in co-operation and peer-learning. The main reasons to internationalise, according to administrators, can be divided in three. First, individual reasons including self-development learning of broadmindedness and tolerance. Internationalisation also gives better abilities for future working career. Secondly, internationalisation serves the needs of the organisational life and it can be seen as an essential part of organisation's development as a whole. Third aspect of the internationalisation are economic and social reasons as it is important to develop the Finnish economic life and markets in an international framework. Also one of the reasons to highlight internationalisation is that it increases a good image of the educational institution in question.

All the participants from the vocational institution level represented VET institutions where the international operations are active and operate in all levels of internationalisation pyramid, which is represented in chapter 4.2. All the participants are part of national networks in doing international activities and therefore they have experience about the guidance of internationalisation from administrative level.

Majority of the respondents from the vocational institutions stated that in today's society the internationalisation is increasingly viewed to be important and as the smaller educational institutions have merged to bigger ones, there are more resources for international staff and teams. Most of the respondents also mentioned that in comparison to other countries, Finland has high internationalisation rates in every VET institution even though some of the institutions are more internationalised than others.

Most of the respondents mentioned that the international operations are organised through international teams. These teams mostly consist of heads of international units and internationalisation coordinators and assistants. Most of the VET institutions also have teachers in different fields of education who are responsible for the international activities in their respective fields. These teachers do the preliminary work with the students who, for example, wish to participate on the-job-learning period abroad. Additionally, they cooperate with the international office to ease the work load of the coordinators and heads of the international units. Some of the respondents, however mentioned that in their vocational institutions the responsibility of international activities lies in the shoulders of too few people. In relation to the size of their vocational institution, the amount of personnel and teachers responsible of international activities is rather small and therefore the quality of internationalisation can suffer.

6.1 Challenges and obstacles in relation to management and teachers

One main key for successful internationalisation is the management's attitude towards the general development of the organisation. According to the experiences of administrators, the obstacles of internationalisation are more likely to occur if the management is uninterested to develop the operations in the organisation including international activities.

The results among vocational institutions are in line with the administrator's experience. All the respondents from VET institutions highlighted that their management is committed to international activities and they felt that the support from the management has been essential when organising the internationalisation. Some of the respondents had prior experience about management unsupportive of international activities and therefore found that there is a big difference depending on the activity levels of the management.

> Management level has to be committed and encouraging towards internationalisation. It is not enough that the international office does all the work, management has to be able to commit the whole personnel. Cooperation inside the organisation is essential. (A6)

> Managements should make the international activities concrete to everybody and the operations should be discussed during the joint meetings. This will help to create the image that internationalisation is equal to other main operations. (A3)

> It is very important that management emphasises that internationalisation belongs to everybody. (A5)

> It is not enough that the highest level of management is committed. Every headman and chief should be involved too. (A1)

Some of the respondents noted that one obstacle is also that sometimes the international activities have to be justified to the organisation's management and they are not seen as the core functions of the organisation. International activities are pigeonholed inside the organisation and can sometimes be seen as one separate function, which can be taken away if the economic situation weakens. On the other hand, those respond-

ents who had a good experience about the commitment of the management stated that the international activities are seen as a core functions of their certain VET institutions. Majority of respondents highlighted that the cooperation between management, staff and international office is important and it is essential that management has a strategy to commit all in the educational institution to participate in some point to international activities.

> In the long run the goal of the internationalisation should be so built-in to organisations operations that there is no need for separate personnel for internationalisation. Everybody should be capable of doing international activities. (A5)

According to the administrators at national and all respondents in VET institutions management should also highlight the importance of being a part of some international network. Working in networks was seen as a very effective way to involve new people in internationalisation.

> Internationalisation is not so natural for everybody. Taking small steps, observing at first or just listening at first are good ways to get in to international activities. Everybody can do something, despite of the experience or language skills. (A4)

Newcomers do not have to be alone and they can start from small tasks or just observe at the beginning. Joint projects are recommended, where people can discover that internationalisation does not require perfect language skills or experience from different countries, but that everybody can participate with their individual skills and knowledge.

The other main challenge, according the all respondents in VET institutions, was related to teachers. Teachers' attitudes reflect directly to students' motivation towards internationalisation as they are easy to involve in international activities. Teachers also have a big influence to encourage students to apply for example to take part in on-the -job learning periods abroad or if the teacher has taken part in mobility activities. Therefore, she or he can bring new international contents to the everyday teaching and hence increase the internationalisation at home in the certain field of VET. According

to the respondents in VET institutions teachers´ attitudes can present a big obstacle for internationalisation. If the teacher is not motivated, feels that she or he does not have enough language skills or does not see internationalisation as an important matter, it will affect the contents of instruction and reduce the level of international activities in certain field of education.

> There are still some teachers who are afraid of international activities. They are afraid to speak English. (A4)

> There are still some attitudes that there is no point in internationalising. Some teachers can state that they have managed well only here in Finland and with Finnish language so who needs any international activities. (A6)

> Something should be done to make the teachers understand that internationalisation is something that is worth working towards. Students should be seen as the clients of our school and therefore it is teachers' task to serve students' to achieve a better future. (A7)

One big challenge according to respondents is the teachers' working time. It was seen problematic, as the international activities can take time away from free-time and teachers' working time is bound to collective agreement. Therefore it is difficult to define the payment of the evening- and weekend work. This also weakens teachers' motivation to participate in international activities.

> Some teachers think that internationalisation is not part of their job or that involving in international activities is extra work and it does not pay so well. (A4)

> Some teachers would be willing to participate, but they feel that it is too difficult because internationalisation takes time from their free-time and they are not sure whether they get paid or not. (A3)

Respondents stated that the management should be able to commit teachers to participate in international activities by encouraging them first to observe from others and

then by step-by-step begin to have international content in their field of education. Respondents noted that it is important for the management to emphasise that every teacher can participate in spite of their previous knowledge, and issues such as language skills are not factors that will bring closure to all kinds of international activities.

Support mechanisms should be in place for teachers to commit the international activities. Teachers' attitudes towards internationalisation are closely related to polarisation of international activities, which is covered in more detail in the next chapter.

Teachers' attitudes towards internationalisation was strongly emphasised from the results of VET institutions. However, the administrators at national level did not raise the topic as strongly, they highlighted mostly the importance of the management's commitment when organising effective internationalisation.

6.1.1   Polarisation of international activities

The first cycle of the interview template included questions about the polarisation between different vocational institutions. According to the administrators, polarisation in different schools is decreasing because of the alignments in government programmes and in KESU. Nevertheless, there are still, according the administrators, VET institutions which are more active in international operations than others. Respondents stated that the reason behind this might depend on the management's commitment towards internationalisation, geographical location or the size of the educational institutions as well as lack of financial resources. In addition, the influence of the local economic life can play a big role in internationalisation; if the local businesses requires international expertise and language skills it is natural for the educational institutions to pay more attention to students' international know-how. On the contrary if the local economic life is concentrated only doing business in the Finnish market, the local VET institution might not see the importance of internationalisation if the future career focus of the institutions' students' is towards the small local businesses.

Difference between the results in regard to polarisation in interviewees that represented VET institutions is that they highlighted the polarisation inside the educational institution between different fields of education. Even though the institutions have aligned to offer internationalisation equal to all fields of education, majority of the respondents from VET institutions stated that at their educational institution some fields of education have stronger internationalisation activities than others. Rest of the respondents mentioned that they recognise the problem in general but in their vocational institutions the polarisation between different fields of education is not that strong. Some of the fields of education, such as tourism and catering services have long traditions in international cooperation but otherwise, according the respondents there is not a certain rule which fields are internationalised and which are not. In some VET institutions there are still fields of education which completely devoid of international activities. The main reason for this, according to the respondents, are the teachers. As mentioned previously, the teacher has a major impact on internationalisation. If the teacher is not interested in or motivated by international activities it can prevent students and whole fields' internationalisation. Additionally, polarisation can be caused, according to some respondents, if the field of education does not find cooperative companies from other countries, preventing the on-the-job-learning periods abroad.

> Teachers are not interested or committed to internationalisation. Also, because the nature of internationalisation is somehow a passion for people who do it, changes in personnel in some field of education can influence the whole process of international activities. (A5)

> Even though the teacher does not find partners from other countries, is does not prevent him or her from doing international activities in Finland. There are several ways to make the students active in internationalisation. (A3)

> Yes, there are certain fields of education which are more internationalised than others. This depends of the teachers. Despite of the field of education, students should have equal opportunities to participate in international activities. (A7)

One of the ways of avoiding polarisation, according to respondents is to be part of some international network. Networks give peer-support and they are seen as a good way to participate for all persons despite their knowledge about international activities. Management has a big role in preventing polarisation. General alignments and commitment of the management influence the rest of the staff and therefore can prevent polarisation.

6.1.2   Internationalisation strategy

In addition to management the other essential aspect for successful and effective internationalisation is strategy. Even though the goals for the internationalisation are defined at the national level the reality differs from the theory. The administrators at national level highlighted the importance of strategy and the results are in line with the VET institutions. Most of the respondents from vocational institutions stated that the international activities are still not completely included in the main operations at educational institution level and without the strategy the activities can be forgotten from the institution's operations. Some of the VET institutions representatives were satisfied with the internationalisation strategy and, according to them, it is well implemented in everyday life. However, these participants also stated that the strategy has an essential role in building an effective internationalisation.

The international strategy is also related to management issues. If the management level is open-minded towards internationalisation then most likely the internationalisation strategy will guide the operations. Also the strategy was seen as an important tool when justifying the importance of internationalisation especially when the economic situation is weaker and the educational sector has to make budget cuts. If the internationalisation is not part of the organisations' strategy, it is easier to cut from the operations.

> In big organisations there should be an operations model of internationalisation for every field of education. This helps adaptation for the everyday operations and also popularises the international "slang" for the rest of the organisation. (A3)

There should be clear goals and tasks stated in the strategy how to implement internationalisation in all level of internationalisation. (A1)

The goals of the internationalisation are stated as per cents in our schools strategy. This is a very good way to concretise how much is there to be done. (A5)

The strategy should mention also how important the internationalisation is for the city and therefore should be highlighted also in the strategy of every vocational institution. (A2)

In related to internationalisation strategy the respondents of VET institutions noted that it is also important to draw up operations model for international activities for every field of education. This should be confined to the organisations' main strategy or internationalisation strategy. The reason behind this is that in practise the strategy can be too high-level and therefore the operations model should cover the short-term action plans, schedules and goals. Especially if the internationalisation strategy is bound with the organisations' main strategy the need for the operations model is required.

6.1.3   Other challenges

The respondents in the vocational institutions noted that one of the challenges in educational institutions is to create a built-in system for the internationalisation. Most of the interviewees mentioned that the international activities are organised from the international offices and in some institutions have certain teachers who are responsible for organising the international activities in their VET field. Clear message from all the respondents was, that the international activities should have more resources in general. Majority of respondents stated that in most cases the reality is that the responsibility lies only on the shoulders of the certain teachers and offices and the other personnel do not feel that the internationalisation should involve everybody in the organisation.

One of the challenges and obstacles indicated in the results was also the nature of international activities. The general attitude in schools seems to be that the international coordinators, teachers and those who are involved with the matter, do the work as a passion and it is seen as a "hobby" for them. Sometimes the case is, as the results also indicate that it is difficult to define what the actual work contribution for international activities is. Organising the international activities at school level includes a lot of work during free-time as well. This is one reason why the rest of the personnel do not feel that they should get involved in international activities, as it is seen as extra work in addition to regular teaching work.

According to the interviews the international activities can also be seen as "luxurious" tasks. The general impression might be that the international activities include only travelling, sightseeing and evening events with the international guests. Due to this impression internationalisation is labelled as something that does not improve the actual educational tasks and therefore the attitudes can be negative.

Some respondents noted that one challenge can be students' background. Some of the students have problems at home and support from the family is seen as important as the students are still quite young. Another challenge is that financial support for the period abroad is lacking, and the students can have credit disorders or other financial issues that can prevent the period abroad. These issues require extra effort from the international office to interview the students if they really have the preparedness to live abroad.

In todays' world, where the economic situation is difficult, the respondents mentioned that one obstacle for internationalisation is to find companies who wish to engage in co-operation with the on-the-job-periods. Because of big lay-offs the companies do not have resources to take students for the job-period. This situation is increasingly intensifying in Finland but also in other countries.

6.2 Effectiveness of internationalisation

According to the administrators at national level the evaluation of effectiveness of internationalisation of VET is quite a difficult area. The topic has been on the agenda of internationalisation experts for quite a long time and so far no ways to measure the quality and effectiveness of internationalisation exist. Instead there are several measurements made of rates of students' and teachers' mobility but there is still limited information how the internationalisation of VET effects the students' future and organisations operations. The reason behind the lack of instrumentation to measure or assess the effectiveness is that it is difficult to analyse the core meaning of effectiveness.

The administrators stated that one of the core purposes of education in general is to raise students to become active Finnish citizens and provide them with those abilities needed for a successful life and for a successful career. With the international experience the student can operate also in the international field and have better opportunities to have a successful career and life. With longer time span these factors, according to the respondents, measure the effectiveness of internationalisation. Additionally the international development of teachers and other staff increases the effectiveness of the whole organisation. Levels of effectiveness of internationalisation should be assessed both from the individuals' and from the organisations' perspective. Administrators also noted that internationalisation should consider the whole organisation, it should built-in in all operations and so the focus should be in high-quality and high-production internationalisation.

Effectiveness of internationalisation of VET can be defined also through the international business dimension. Administrators stated that to compete with same business level, Finnish education system has to produce work-force for the labour markets to meet the needs of a more demanding business sector. Internationalisation brings extra value for the students' and gives them opportunities to enter international business life.

Effectiveness is seen, according to the respondents of the VET institutions students' feedback as the influence of internationalisation on their future lives and careers. Even a short period abroad can improve self-esteem and language skills, instill trust in indi-

viduals of their own expertise and give abilities to apply for jobs abroad. Through international experience young people feel that they have grown-up and are ready to live more independently.

Furthermore, most of the respondents in VET institutions mentioned that international activities have been effective if some good practises, established through international cooperation, remain in school's everyday life. From the respondents experience most of the students who have international experience are better motivated towards they studies and are more likely to be successful in their career than those who have no international experience. According to the experience of the respondents, it is also more likely that those students who have had international experience will continue their studies in higher education. Moreover, the internationalisation can have a positive side effect on students' families. Through the internationalisation the whole family can benefit from the experience and the positive impact will be transferred to younger sisters or brothers and also for the students' future children.

As stated earlier the national administration measures only mobility rates and educational institutions measure financial effectiveness of internationalisation. There are no qualitative ways to measure effectiveness of internationalisation. To prove the importance of internationalisation, it was a clear message from the VET institutions that it could be important to have qualitative indicators of effectiveness of internationalisation. All of the respondents highlighted the importance of measuring the effectiveness.

> Instrumentation of measuring effectiveness is totally missing. Assessment of internationalisation is loose from the other operations. Quality of internationalisation, funding and ways to measure the effectiveness should go hand in hand. (A3)

> There should be some indicators to measure, how the internationalisation has effect to language skills, employment opportunities, self-esteem, postgraduate studies etc. (A4)

> Government should offer some instruments to measure effectiveness. Todays' world when the economic situation is getting worse, it would be very important to have some indicators to show how important international activities are in the long run. When the schools tighten their budgets, it is easy to cut from the international activities. (A6)

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It is difficult to measure the effectiveness. It should be measured in a long run, how it affects the students' life and for organisations' operations. (A1)

6.3   Good practises to overcome the challenges

The vocational institutions had found some good practices to motivate the personnel in international activities. One of these successful ways, according to the respondents is to gather information about the experiences of those teachers who have had a working period abroad. Sharing the information, how the work period can bring variation in the normal routines and can give tools to adapt the other cultures and teaching methods into Finnish system. Sharing the information about different funding opportunities can also lower the threshold to participate in international activities.

In addition to teachers and management level, some of the respondents stated that the human resources department is also committed to their international activities to ease the bureaucratic issues concerning internationalisation. One good way of committing the personnel, is to take the international activities as part of the appraisal interviews. With this method the management can cover the willingness to participate in international activities and so the organisation can have new staff involved in internationalisation.

A key for successful internationalisation, according to the respondents is to have well-planned and clear models of implementing international activities. The knowledge rises from experience. There should be enough time to plan and organise and involve the students and teachers from the very beginning. A good way, when preparing students for on-the-job-learning periods, is to let them ask questions from the incoming students. Additionally, some of the respondents stated that there should always be a contingency plan. This is very important, because operating with other cultures can lead to clashes and misunderstandings at several levels. Also, when regarding the students' mobility, it is important to remember that the students are very young and therefore new situations can lead to problems.

In regard to measuring the effectiveness, the respondents highlighted that it is important to adapt the results of international cooperation to Finnish system. This shows the concrete benefits of the internationalisation for those who had not taken part in the project or other international activity. Some of the respondents also noted that they have gathered information from students' mobility to measure the level of effectiveness of international experience.

6.4   Expectations for the national administration

In addition to the wishes concerning measuring the level of effectiveness, as stated in the previously, the respondents noted that the importance of internationalisation should be highlighted by the governmental level. It should be important to understand what the effects in long run are and therefore maintain and increase the international activities in every VET institution.

One of the problems which was mentioned in the interviews was that there should be general, standard requirements for teachers and personnel who are responsible of international activities. According to the respondents, national administration level should define the minimum level of tasks and responsibilities internationalisation personnel should have.

The funding is allocated by level and type of education. This makes the co-operation between general education and general upper secondary schools more difficult. These processes should be made easier by the national administrations. According to the respondents, the assessment of international activities should be clearer. Respondents wish better and more concrete feedback about the international activities in order to make their next projects and operations more effective and successful. Also the national administrators' should, according the results, encourage educational institutions to apply for the EU funding for internationalisation. This holds the key to expand the field of international experts in the VET field.

The Finnish National Board of Education should encourage more vocational institutions to apply funding. This should be a little bit more binding because the applying is more voluntary in todays' system. (A4)

We wish more feedback from FNBE. It would be nice to know what is there to improve during the next project. (A3)

Networking should be obligatory for every vocational institution. It is a very good way of share experiences and learn from the others. (A6)

More mentoring, consultation, peer-assessment and peer-learning were also in the wishes of the respondents. Newcomers should have special training for applying the EU funding from the government. Furthermore, respondents noted that there should be a variety of seminars and gatherings for people involved in international activities.

7 Evaluation tool for effective internationalisation in VET

In this section, the purpose and the ultimate outcome of this study is presented, and how it could be implemented in practise.

The idea for evaluation tool for effective internationalisation arose from the need of the Finnish National Board of Education. As the agency allocates government subsidies for VET, it is important for FNBE to receive information about the level of effective-ness of internationalisation. The researcher organised an evaluation workshop for the internationalisation experts in FNBE in early July 2014. The aim of this workshop was to cover the main results from the interviews of cycle two and analyse what kind of model would best serve the needs of vocational institutions and FNBE. The model should also serve the needs of CIMO as the agency grants EU funding for the internationalisation of VET.

Discussions during the workshop highlighted that the international activities in VET are significant because every profession in today's world is regarded to be international. Internationalisation also enhances the image of vocational institutions. According to the workshop results, there should be a minimum level for every school to improve the international activities and in addition, some parts of the funding of the vocational institutions should be based on the results of international activities. This way, the importance of internationalisation would be emphasised in schools' everyday activities. Further, the themes around effectiveness arose from the discussion during the workshop. Vocational institutions should gather information about internationalisation with questionnaires or feedback forms to see the benefits of the activities in the international field.

After analysing the results from the interviews and from the workshop, there was a clear message that even though international activities in these certain, selected vocational institutions are in good shape, the problem is to indicate the effectiveness of internationalisation. The attitudes of management and personnel strongly reflect the

level of importance granted for internationalisation. Therefore, it is crucial to have in-struments to measure the level of effectiveness and quality of internationalisation at on organisational level as well as to show that internationalisation has an effect on the in-dividual student.

The final outcome of this study is a SWOT- analysis tool for VET institutions. Accord-ing to Barney (1995, 49-50) and Chermack and Kasshanna (2007, 387) SWOT analysis is a tool commonly used in strategic planning. The letters stand for Strengths, Weak-nesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and opportunities describe the organisa-tions achieved goals which are in line with organisations' strengths and how they should be used to reduce the organisations vulnerability to threats. Placing the weak-nesses and threats to the SWOT -matrix shows how to overcome obstacles and weak-nesses to achieve organisations' opportunities and how to prevent weaknesses to avoid making the organisation more vulnerable to threats. Every organisation is faced with various internal and external forces that might compromise potential stimulants as well as limitations when it comes to the organisations' performance or its objectives. Hence, SWOT thinking holds the idea that managers should start by evaluating and identifying those factors that help or prevent the organisation in reaching its potential.

SWOT -analysis is seen as a useful tool that helps observe new opportunities and initi-ate new programmes. SWOT matrix can be a beneficial form of brainstorming which leads to a process of decision-making and shows the future possibilities through a sys-tematic approach into both positive and negative concerns. (Chermack & Kasshanna 2007, 387-388.)

7.1   SWOT-analysis for effective internationalisation

The purpose of the SWOT -matrix of this present study is to gather information about the level of effectiveness in vocational institutions. The matrix includes questions around three themes, all of which, according to the results, have been indicated to be keys for effective internationalisation. By answering the questions and placing them in correct boxes, the VET institutions can have concrete information about the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of international activities. The completed SWOT analysis can be used to indicate which parts of internationalisation need improvement in order for the level of effectiveness to be raised. The SWOT-analysis also supports the future development planning of vocational institutions and helps to evaluate the needed strategic objectives for the internationalisation.

The SWOT -analysis of this study is designed so that the management together with international teams could answer the questions concerning their international activities. With the cooperation of management and international teams, both parties will have valuable information about the current status of international activities. The study also recommends that teachers should be involved in formulating the SWOT- analysis in order for their opinions and ideas about the topic to be heard as well.

The results of this study show that VET institutions would like to have more support and peer-learning from others schools as well as support from the national administration. For the further development of this SWOT-analysis, it could be beneficial for the vocational institutions to have a peer-assessment workshops organised, for example by the FNBE or CIMO. This way, the results of the SWOT-analysis could be discussed and shared with others. Making the results clear and explicit, different parties can learn how the weaknesses and threats could be transferred into good practises, strengths and opportunities. National administration level could operate as a mentor in offering advice and recommendations how to overcome threats and weaknesses and how to increase the level of effectiveness of international activities.

The SWOT analysis of this study has been drawn up based on the results of the first and second cycle of the interviews. The questions have been compiled together with

FNBE experts during the evaluation workshop. The SWOT matrix includes questions about the themes of internationalisation strategy, organising the international activities, level of mobility and international perspectives for the curriculum to be placed in the SWOT -matrix according to the current status of the international activities (see Table 5).

7.2   SWOT-matrix for vocational institutions

Questions:

1. **Internationalisation Strategy**
    1.1. Does your school have an internationalisation strategy?
    1.2. Does your school have an operational model for international activities?
    1.3. Is the internationalisation strategy implemented at your school's everyday activities?
    1.4. Are international activities regarded to be part of the main operations of your school?

2. **Organising international activities**
    2.1. Are international activities organised so that the responsibilities are shared among the whole personnel?
    2.2. Do you have specific staff for international activities? Do they receive compensation for the work?
    2.3. Is the management of your school committed to international activities?
    2.4. How are teachers encouraged to promote and participate in international activities?
    2.5. Do you have teachers in your school who are responsible of international activities? Do they receive compensation for the work?
    2.6. Is your school part of some international network?

3. **Mobility**
    3.1. Do your students have equal opportunities to participate in mobility periods?
    3.2. Do the teachers of your school have equal opportunities to participate in mobility periods?
    3.3. Do you gather information about the effects of mobility periods?

3.4. Is there polarisation between different fields of education in your school? If so, what are the main reasons for this?

4. International perspectives in the curriculum

4.4. Does the curricula include elements from different levels of internationalisation? For example, bringing international contents as part of the teaching, theme days of different countries etc.

4.3. Does your school have a curriculum especially designed for foreign students?

4.4 Do the teachers who have had a exchange period abroad exploited their knowledge about different cultures at their teaching?

Table 5. SWOT-analysis matrix for effective internationalisation

SWOT- Analysis for measuring the level of effectiveness in VET institution	
Strengths:	Weaknesses:
Opportunities:	Threats:

8   Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter summarises the key findings and presents the discussion about the connection between the results of the empirical study and the critical literature review. This section also presents the possible future studies in the area, according to results raised from the empirical part. Also, the researcher's reflections on the learning process of this master thesis are discussed.

The purpose of this study was to create an evaluation tool for effective internationalisation for VET by answering the research questions related to the main challenges and obstacles of internationalisation activities of selected VET institutions and what measures the selected VET institutions have created in order to overcome the challenges. Additionally, the research questions asked how these good practises could be implemented from the educational administration level to serve the educational field more widely and how to improve the effectiveness of internationalisation in vocational education institutions. Finally, the study set out to explore what kind of support the FNBE can provide for educational institutions to help them overcome the challenges and make internationalisation activities more effective.

The outcome of the study provides tools for development and building of effective internationalisation of VET. On the basis of the results VET institutions and vocational education providers can gain knowledge about the level of effectiveness in their international activities and what measures to take to improve the quality of internationalisation of VET. The study serves the needs of the FNBE as the agency allocates governments' subsidies for internationalisation of VET.

The researcher collected information with qualitative method by conducting interviews in administrators at national level and in selected vocational institutions. After the results were gathered the researcher organised an evaluation workshop in researchers' organisation to analyse and investigate how the results could be implemented for the

favour of national administration and vocational education and training providers more general.

On the basis of the results, effective internationalisation of VET is built around three main factors: Management attitudes and teachers' attitudes towards internationalisation and the strategy of international activities. Obstacles in internationalisation occur if one of the factors is not functioning or is lacking from the organisations' operations.

The results of this study are in line with the literature. Söderqvist (2001, 97-98) in chapter 4.5. highlights that international activities in education require participation from the whole organisation and therefore calls for management's involvement and commitment.

The results state that the meaning of international strategy is closely related to the attitudes towards internationalisation. Strategy should include the main tasks and goals of the international activities to bind them into the main operations of the organisations. If the vocational institutions do not have a strategy for internationalisation or it is not in daily use, it will reduce the level of effectiveness of internationalisation. The literature supports the results. In the chapter 4.4. of this study, it is stated that strategic documents concerning internationalisation should include practical goals and operations and there should be clearly stated resources, roles and the main principles for the international operations. (The Finnish National Board of Education, Centre for international mobility & HAMK University of Applied Sciences 2008, 34.)

According to the results, polarisation can occur inside the VET institutions, between different fields of education. The main reason for this is teachers' commitment towards internationalisation. If they do not see the importance of bringing the international contents as part of teaching, the students do not have the opportunity to participate in international activities.

In the literature review, in chapter 4.6. Siekkinen (2013, 20) states that every student should have equal opportunities and they should be offered to study intercultural com-

petencies. It is the students' choice how to exploit the given possibilities. The threshold to participate in international activities is lower for those students who have some experience than for those who are still in the shadows of internationalisation. For this reason the teachers and other school personnel have a very big responsibility to motivate the students equally to participate in international activities. If the goal is to achieve equal outputs in education the international aspect is to guarantee equal opportunities in internationalisation at different levels.

8.1   Suggestions for further research

It is evident that issues around internationalisation are part of the everyday life in all professional fields. Labour market requires international skills, not only language skills but skills to operate in multinational environment in Finland and abroad.

Themes around effectiveness of education are complicated and multidimensional. There is no unambiguous definition for effectiveness of education. This study concentrates on themes around effectiveness, of which were seen important by the commissioner and the themes that arose from the results of the empirical part. Therefore this study does not provide an extensive model for effective internationalisation of VET as the research was limited to few vocational institutions, all of them being very active in international operations. Active participants were chosen because of their notable experience and wide-ranging standpoints about the topic.

For the further research the issues around effectiveness of internationalisation could be investigated more deeply. The clear message from the results of the empirical part was that there is a need for measuring quality and level of effectiveness of internationalisation. It would be interesting to investigate how different dimensions of internationalisation (students' mobility, teachers' mobility, international curriculum etc.) will affect in national, organisational and in individual level.

The study excludes the perspectives of the non-active operators in the field of internationalisation. For further research and broader perspective of the topic, it is recom-

mended to have a bigger sample of VET institutions including the non-active VET institutions in Finland. As this study focuses on international activities in general, for the further research it would be interesting to investigate the level of effectiveness at different levels of internationalisation, for example basis from the internationalisation pyramid (Mattila 2011) presented in the chapter 4.2.

The importance of teachers' attitudes as part of the effectiveness was surprisingly strong in the results. When reflecting the issues around teachers' attitudes, I was thinking that the main reason for the attitudes might be the difference between generations. This study does not cover teachers' own opinions but as mentioned earlier, teachers' attitudes have a big influence in related to motivating students' internationalisation. It would be interesting to investigate the teachers' commitment more closely and find out the teachers' own opinions and attitudes about the internationalisation.

8.2   Reflections about the study

Writing this thesis has been interesting process and I have learned a lot during this path. I felt that the thesis topic was motivational, and I have learned a lot from the field of vocational education and training as well as from the issues around internationalisation.

When reviewing the literature it was challenging to find all the relevant aspects for the research as there is a lot of literature about the internationalisation of education. I tried to keep the theory as close to the subject as possible and only study theory actually related to the specific topic. I felt it important to limit the theoretical framework and to take into consideration only theories that were relevant for this actual thesis work.

Conducting the actual research and analysing the results has been rewarding as I could have different insights at the national administrators and from the representatives of VET institutions.   However, having so many people involved in the empirical part of the study raise challenges to fit the empirical part inside the researcher's timetable.

Overall I have learned a lot during the whole thesis process about the topic itself but also about the project planning, research methods and deepen my knowledge about the different operations in my organisation.

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Attachments

Attachment 1. Interview template. Round 1

Interviewer:

Place of the interview:

Date and time:

Name and title of the interviewee:

Themes of the interview:

1. Obstacles and challenges of internationalisation;

2. Polarisation of international activities in active and non- active educational institutions;

3. Assessment of effectiveness of internationalisation in vocational education and training.

1. Obstacles and challenges of internationalisation:

1.1 Can you define the internationalisation of vocational education and training?

1.2 What are the main components of internationalisation?

1.3 What are the main reasons for VET institution to internationalise?

1.4 What are the best ways for educational institutions to internationalise?

1.5 What support The Finnish National Board of Education and CIMO could offer to increase the internationalisation in VET educational institutions?

1.6 What the main obstacles are in related to internationalisation?

1.7 How the obstacles can overcome?

    1.7.1 What support the education provider can offer to overcome the obstacles?

    1.7.2 What support the administrative level can provide to overcome the obstacles?

2. **Polarisation of international activities in active and non- active educational institutions;**

2.1 In your opinion, is the internationalisation of VET polarised in active and non- active vocational institutions?

2.2 In your opinion, what are the reasons affecting the polarisation?

2.3 Can you name some common features which make the vocational institutions active in internationalisation? How about common features which affect the non-active participation in internationalisation?
  2.3.1   In your opinion what are the reasons for passiveness?
  2.3.2   Are there some measures to make them more active? How could education provider or administrative level help them to activate their international operations?

2.4 In your opinion, how the polarisation could be prevented?
  2.4.1   Does the size of the vocational institution or the financial resources affect the polarisation?

2.5 The Finnish National Board of Education and CIMO allocate funding for internationalisation projects. Can you name some measures, from the funding point of view how to avoid polarisation?

3. **Assessment of effectiveness of internationalisation in vocational education and training.**

3.1 Can you define, in your own words, the effectiveness of internationalisation of VET?

3.2 How do you see the short-term and long-term objectives for the effectiveness of internationalisation? What are the aims of effectiveness in organisations' operations, regionally, nationally and internationally?

3.3 What are the main reasons, in your opinion, affecting the effectiveness of international activities?

3.4 What are the main obstacles of internationalisation in the light of effectiveness?

3.5 How do you see the importance of networking in related to effectiveness?

3.5.1 What are the main challenges in related to international networks in VET?

3.6 The Finnish National Board of Education and CIMO allocate funding for international projects. What kind of projects should, in your opinion, receive funding to improve the level of effectiveness?

3.7 How the projects have affected the effectiveness of internationalisation in a long-term?

3.7.1 Does the internationalisation projects have some common features which make the project more effective?

3.7.2 How the administrative level or education provider could support the projects to make them more effective?

Attachment 2. Interview template. Round 2.

<u>Obstacles and challenges in internationalisation of VET</u>

<u>Interviewer:</u>

<u>Place:</u>

<u>Date and time:</u>

<u>Name of the educational institution:</u>

<u>Name and title of the interviewee:</u>
1. **Definition of international activities;**
2. **Obstacles and challenges of internationalisation;**
3. **Management's role in internationalisation;**
4. **Polarisation of international activities;**
5. **Assessment of effectiveness of internationalisation in vocational education and training.**

1. **Definition of international activities:**

1.1 What kind of international activities you have in your educational institution and how the internationalisation is seen as part of the everyday life in your organisation?

1.2 How is the internationalisation organised at your school? (teams vs. one person)

1.3 Are you part of some international network?

1.4 Has the international activities brought additional value for your organisation? Can you give some example?

1.5 What are the main components of internationalisation?

1.6 What is the best way for educational institution to internationalise?

1.7 Do you have strategy for internationalisation? How do you see it is implemented in practice?

2. **Obstacles and challenges of internationalisation:**

2.1 What kind of obstacles or challenges you have faced in internationalisation?

2.2 How did you overcome the obstacles and challenges?Miten olette voittaneet nämä esteet?

2.3 Can you name some general challenges in VET field?

2.4 How the education provider could support your school to overcome the obstacles?

2.5 Do you wish to have more support for the international activities? What support the administrational level could offer for more effective internationalisation?

3. **Management's role in internationalisation:**

3.1 What management's role is in related to internationalisation?
3.2 How the management level of your school has committed to international activities? How does it show in practice?
3.3 Is there something you wish to have more from the management level in related to international activities?

4. **Polarisation of international activities;**

4.1 Do you think that international operations are polarised in active and not-active educational institutions? Can you think of some reasons?
4.2 In your opinion how the polarisation could be avoided or prevented?
4.3 How the education provider or administrational level could help to prevent the polarisation?
4.4 What the meaning of international networks is in related to prevent polarisation?

5. **Assessment of effectiveness of internationalisation in vocational education and training (in related to themes such as quality, productivity and profitability):**

5.1 How do you define the effectiveness of internationalisation?
5.2 In your opinion, what are the main reasons which make the internationalisation effective?
5.3 Are the international operations increased the effectiveness? How?
5.4 What are the main goals of short-term and long-term effectiveness? For example in organisational level, regional level, national level and international level?
5.5 What are the obstacles and challenges in internationalisation in related to effectiveness?
5.6 How does operating together with international networks affects the effectiveness of internationalisation?
5.7 What the challenges are in related to networks in international operations?
5.8 How the administration level could support internationalisation in related to effectiveness?