

SAIMAA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Business Administration

International Business

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**TOPICALITY AND TEACHING IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETING STUDY
MODULES IN SAIMAA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

Bachelor's Thesis 2010

ABSTRACT

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Topicality and Teaching in International Marketing Study Modules in Saimaa

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The aim of this thesis is to paint a picture about marketing study modules in Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, other selected universities of applied sciences in Finland, and in Shih Chien University in Taiwan. The research examines what is being done to assure quality education to international business professionals of the future. Topicality of the education is essential especially in the field of marketing. Saimaa University of Applied Sciences is renewing its marketing study modules and the thesis is done for the benefit of the school.

Observing the teaching in Shih Chien for spring semester 2009 and being a student in Saimaa University of Applied Sciences for 3,5 years enabled using personal experiences in the empirical research. Included are also perceptions and observations of two lecturers in Taiwan and two lecturers in Finland that were interviewed for the research. Theoretical information was used to define and examine the vast concept international marketing from an educational point of view.

No remarkable deviations were found in the examined curriculums. In the interviews lecturers expressed similar perceptions and methods on teaching marketing. Marketing is a universal science. Universities of applied sciences have own specialties reflected in the education, in SUOAS it is most seemingly Russian trade. Based on the findings it was suggested that in SUOAS's curriculum for degree programme in International Business the focus alternative to Russian trade could be e.g. communication or technology. Greater collaboration inside the universities of applied sciences as well as with other local actors was encouraged. For example practical training could be used more efficiently, as a channel that enables exchanging information between local working life and SUOAS. The competence areas and study modules are of unique design in the examined universities of applied sciences. They were easy to comprehend, but in Saimaa University of Applied Sciences somewhat universal and predictable. A proposition was made to portray offerings in a more interesting way the even if the contents of the curriculum remained the same.

An interesting topic for studying in the future is if the marketing study modules have changed, what has/has not been done, and why. The research suggested also regular surveillance of graduates. Examining what potential students look for in SUOAS degree programme in International Business would be of help in building the attractiveness of studying and the schools image.

Keywords: International marketing, Education, Study modules, University of Applied Sciences

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoite on kuvata markkinoinnin opintokokonaisuuksia Saimaan ammattikorkeakoulussa, muissa valituissa suomalaisissa ammattikorkeakouluissa, sekä taiwanilaisessa Shih Chien Universityssa. Tutkimus pohtii sitä miten tulevaisuuden kansainvälisen kaupan osajille taataan laadukas koulutus. Koulutuksen ajankohtaisuus on erityisen tärkeää markkinoinnin alalla. Saimaan ammattikorkeakoulu uudistaa opintokokonaisuuksiaan ja opinnäytetyö on tehty koulun hyväksi.

Kevään 2009 oppilasvaihto Shih Chien Universityssa ja 3,5 vuoden ajan Saimaan ammattikorkeakoulun oppilaana oleminen mahdollisti henkilökohtaisten kokemusten hyödyntämisen empiirisessä tutkimuksessa. Työ sisältää myös tutkimusta varten haastateltujen kahden taiwanilaisen ja kahden suomalaisen opettajan näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia. Teoreettista tietoa hyödynnettiin kansainvälisen markkinoinnin laajan käsitteen määrittelemiseen ja tutkimiseen markkinoinnin opetuksen näkökulmasta.

Tutkimustulokset eivät osoittaneet suuria eroavaisuuksia mukana olleiden opetussuunnitelmien välillä. Haastatellut opettajat esittivät samankaltaisia käsityksiä markkinoinnin opettamisesta ja opetusmetodeista. Markkinointi on universaali tiede. Ammattikorkeakouluilla on omat painotuksensa jotka heijastuvat opetukseen, Saimaan ammattikorkeakoulussa painotus on mitä ilmeisimmin Venäjän-kauppa. Tutkimustulosten perusteella esitettiin, että koulun Kansainvälisen kaupan ohjelman opetussuunnitelman vaihtoehtoinen painotus voisi olla esimerkiksi kommunikaatio tai teknologia. Yhteistyöhön sekä koulun sisällä että koulun ulkopuolisten toimijoiden kanssa kannustettiin enenevässä määrin. Esimerkiksi ammattiharjoittelua voitaisiin hyödyntää paremmin tiedon kulun paikallisen työelämän ja ammattikorkeakoulun välillä mahdollistavana kanavana. Kompetenssialueet ja opintokokonaisuudet ovat tutkituissa kouluissa erilaisia. Ne olivat helposti ymmärrettävissä, mutta Saimaan ammattikorkeakoulussa jokseenkin yleisiä ja ennalta arvattavia. Työssä ehdotettiinkin että koulu esittäisi tarjontansa mielenkiintoisemmin, vaikka tarjonnan sisältö pysyisi samana.

Mielenkiintoisia jatkotutkimuksen aiheita olisivat se, ovatko markkinoinnin opetuskokonaisuudet muuttuneet, mitä on tai ei ole tehty ja miksi, sekä mahdollisten opiskelijoiden Kansainvälisen kaupan ohjelmalle asettamat odotukset. Tämä olisi avuksi opiskelun houkuttelevuuden ja Saimaan ammattikorkeakoulun imagon kehittämisessä. Tutkimuksessa ehdotettiin myös valmistuneiden opiskelijoiden säännönmukaista seuraamista.

Kansainvälinen markkinointi, Koulutus, Opintokokonaisuus, Ammattikorkeakoulu

ABSTRACT

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1 INTRODUCTION

Because the problems that a bachelor of business administration faces in their working life do not adhere to the division of any school subjects or sciences, in the education of these BBA's problems should be learned to solve in such a form as they are going to be faced in the future's professional practice. (Virtanen 2001, according to Ojasalo 2003, p. 53.) This sentence arouses interest in examining the International marketing study modules in Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, which in the research is referred to as SUOAS. The abbreviation UAS is used when referring to university of applied sciences. As Ojasalo (2003, p. 57) states in the article about business administration education, essential challenge is to shape study modules to respond better to the needs of working life. Universities of applied sciences are differentiated from scientific universities with practicality, and one of the differences that are stated is collaboration with local businesses and working life. The better studies are tied to real-life, the better graduating students are prepared to the challenges of working life. Another challenge arises from marketing itself, as marketing is a science that constantly evolves and changes.

1.1 Topic

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences is reforming its marketing study modules. Keeping up with the trends and needs of the business combined with solid knowledge and skillful teaching is valuable to both the university and its students. Student exchange period in Taiwan in spring 2009 provided the researcher with the opportunity to learn about teaching, also teaching of marketing, in Shih Chien University, which is referred to as SCU in the research. Interviews with two Taiwanese lecturers give insights to how educational superiority is perceived in SCU.

The thesis utilizes personal experiences and information provided by both universities to compare their best practices and to benchmark them. Additionally other Finnish universities of applied sciences and their marketing study modules are considered as comparison. As an International Business student it is interesting to study how teaching of International Marketing is perceived in different educational establishments.

Because of the schedule the teacher interviews in SCU have been the first tasks done in the research. The topic was chosen days before leaving to Taiwan and so the actual information gathering was intended to start only after settling to the life and culture in the opposite side of the world. Limited supply of international marketing books in English in the SCU library made it difficult to assemble information about the topic during the student exchange. The interview structure was thereby made with possibly inadequate information about the topic. This has resulted in rather wide-ranging interviews that give insights in many matters; possibly some questions could have been formulated in a more specific and particular manner.

1.2 Research method

The study method of the thesis is empirical and qualitative. A big emphasis is on the teacher interviews that are made with selected individuals with a semi-structured, permanent interview framework. The sources used in the research consist of e.g. the interviews, studies about teaching in universities of applied sciences, study modules of different schools, various books about marketing, and articles and Internet sources that discuss international marketing. As is characteristic to qualitative research method, creating models, instructions, principles, and descriptions in the research is intended (Vilkka 2005, p. 98). By examining curriculums and their structure in different schools it is possible to make comparisons, but absolute truths about intentions and range of thoughts behind the curriculums, or structural decisions cannot be precisely determined or tabulated; as is expedient to qualitative research method.

An interview is often the way to gather information when qualitative research method is utilized. The interviews in this research were conducted as semi-structured interviews, where the researcher selects most essential topics or themes and then discusses with the interviewees in a free order (Vilkka 2005, pp. 100-106). The findings could be transformed into statistics but it is more insightful to interpret the interviews as they are. The interviewees have shared their understanding of selected topics and personal experiences as examples of practice in their schools. These examples are best described in words, additionally due to the limited number of interviews the findings should not be generalized to the absolute practice of the whole educational institution.

Vilkka (2005, p. 114) indicates that the interviewees should be selected based on their expertise or experience related to the theme or focus of the research, thus the interviewees in this research were selected based on their expertise on marketing and experience in teaching marketing. Student exchange in Taiwanese SCU enabled interviews with two Taiwanese lecturers and observing lectures in the university.

1.3 Objectives

The aim of this thesis is to paint a picture of marketing study modules in Finland and what is being done to assure a professional, successful, valid, and valuable education to international business professionals of the future. SUOAS is renewing its marketing study modules and this thesis can be of some assistance in reflecting their focus and specialty to the surrounding world and time, but also in anything that has to do with passing on the knowledge of marketing regeneration. A marketer should always be able to stay ahead of consumers and competition in order to succeed. It is ever so important to have the advantage of being ahead and avoid the danger of failing to adjust to new circumstances. One goal in this thesis is to find out how this applies to the teaching of marketing and how this is applied in the teaching of marketing in Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, and also other universities of applied sciences in Finland and Shih Chien University in Taiwan.

The study deliberates the contents of a marketing study module; what it could and perhaps should be. For comparison there are going to be other educational establishments and their marketing study modules used as examples too. A difficulty is that different objectives always exist for different schools and their marketing study entities. Every school wants to differentiate itself from others and this also impacts degree programmes and their focus. This is why it is important to keep in mind the perspective of SUOAS. An interesting spice to the mix will be the Taiwanese representative, SCU.

As the thesis is done for the benefit of SUOAS, it takes a viewpoint of a student of the school and viewpoint of the Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, but also of an exchange student. As Anttila (2005, p. 276) notes, the researchers interest in the topic impacts the results in a qualitative research method, but also his or her lifestyle, profession, and history affect the viewpoint a researcher adopts. Being a student of SUOAS for 3,5 years and having studied in SCU as an exchange student might affect objectivity when conducting the research. This should not affect the reliability of the thesis for this kind of personal experience is always somewhat unique. A student studying marketing education might find different viewpoints on subjects that are obvious to a marketing professional.

The findings of this thesis can be used to enhance the marketing studies in SUOAS. It is important to explain reasons for making these suggestions. Anttila (2005, p. 282) states that the results of a qualitative study should benefit more than just one subject in the research, thus it should be noted that additionally other universities of applied sciences and their teachers can find different, comparative viewpoints from the research. The objective is not to design a new study module but study what kinds of practices are utilized in other schools and other countries, and if there is something that could be taken advantage of in SUOAS. The objective is to help SUOAS provide its students with even better marketing studies that are up-to-date with the challenges of the present and future times. The industry as well as science is one that constantly needs new ideas, work force and perspective. The challenge for a UAS is to educate the science for people in such an industry.

2 DEFINING INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

Marketing should be distinguished from coherent subjects such as e.g. analytical geometry for marketing cannot be done in the same way in different countries that have different kinds of economies, cultures and political systems. Efficient marketing is always localized, locally customized. (Kotler 2005, pp. 2-3.) Marketing is a world, and operates in a world that is constantly changing. There are approximately as many definitions of marketing and from as many points of view as there are marketers. Every company has to apply marketing to their operations and as all the companies are individual so are their interpretations of what is marketing and especially: how marketing is understood; what should marketing be; what should it consist of and what should it aim for.

The definitions of marketing are changing all the time as is marketing itself; marketing is a lively science. The number of descriptions might be confusing but can serve as a benefit as well. Whether a company is choosing their marketing strategy, a student is studying the basics of marketing or a UAS is modifying its marketing study modules, every one of them can find a suitable alternative. A challenge lies in finding the proper one.

Before studying marketing from an international point of view, the students have to have the basic knowledge of marketing, the terminology and basic concepts. Usually there is a book that the teacher has chosen as course study material. In most of the examined books about international marketing (Albaum, Duerr, & Strandskov 2005; Albaum & Duerr 2008; Blythe 2008; Keegan & Green 2008; Kotler & Keller 2009; Solomon, Marshall & Stuart 2009; Usunier & Lee 2009) there is an introduction or a leading chapter where the basics of marketing are recapitulated. This benefits the teacher by saving time and students by providing the opportunity to revise and make sure that they possess all the necessary information before deepening their knowledge on the subject.

2.1 History in short

The need for marketing might be all that is stable about marketing. Historically stages of development can be divided in four categories that predominantly portray the development of companies' operational environment; these eras are production, sales, demand and customer orientated stages (Haverila et al. 2009, pp. 221-226; Blythe 2008 pp. 3-4).

In the early twentieth century companies prioritized production; answering high demand and manufacturing relatively coherent product lines. Demand exceeded supply and consumers did not call for differentiation or customization, or personal sales. During 1930s sales became of utmost importance, as a result of vigorous industrialization and depression. The customer was not necessarily in the minds of salesmen, main goal was to sell as much as possible to as many as possible. (ibid.)

Since 1960s marketing has gained more and more recognition. In the 1960s and the following years demand was furthermore low and companies started differentiating their products to the consumers' liking. This era in marketing can be seen as the initial stage of segmenting. In the forthcoming years companies became increasingly customer orientated selecting the customer segments on which they would concentrate. In recent years the focus has shifted on regular customers. Comprehensive marketing exists but it is more effortless to sell and market a company's supply to existing customers rather than new ones. (ibid.)

At present times the challenges that marketers internationally face have been the dramatic changes in the global environment. Not many decades ago the environment of majority of companies were in fact not global, but local and of a remarkably slower pace (Kotler 2005). Apart from political uncertainties Buckley (2002) takes cognizance of technology, exchange rates and consumer tastes being unstable in today's marketing environment.

2.2 Trends and future expectations in International Marketing

Since 1990s the biggest influence in marketing and all communications has been the Internet. Internet enabled putting out information and marketing for the consumers to find. Social media utilizes Web 2.0 which provides the opportunity to take the consumer in as an active participator and content provider. Social media researcher Janne Matikainen describes social media as media whose contents providers are the users of the service (Mäentausta 2009). Thus a whole new way of thinking and behaving on the Internet is required from both consumers and companies. Matikainen states that social media is an example of fast developing Internet which is here to stay, but argues also that companies have not yet found a way to exploit social media's financial benefits extremely well. Lehto (2009) sees social media as a trend that should be examined more in SUOAS and is doing research on how to utilize social media in teaching.

Blythe (2008, p. xv) has considered changes that have influenced marketing since 1996 when he first published *Essentials of Marketing*. Major improvements in technology are mentioned and the ubiquitous nature of global marketplace is revealed. In the editions one to five there has been a chapter dedicated to international marketing, which has been replaced with a chapter about sales marketing in the sixth edition. International issues are included in each chapter, where relevant. A similar change in SUOAS has been excluding international marketing course from International Business curriculum. As the degree programme is international there is no longer segregation between marketing and international marketing.

According to the sixth edition of *International Marketing and Export Management* major changes in international marketing, developed over the past ten years, are among others uprising of information with the technological advances and lowered costs in communications, the development of the Internet and e-commerce, and the development business functions supporting software that is constantly becoming more sophisticated and diverse. This is very commonly noticed in the marketing study modules of the schools examined. Also the further development of logistics and supply chain

management has resulted in most of the schools putting more focus on the subject and on “new concepts and methods, advances in information technology in its most broad sense, and major advances in physical equipment and facilities”. (Albaum & Duerr 2008. p. xi.)

2.3 Defining marketing internationally and from an educational point of view

A question to be asked is if international marketing studies should prepare the students for knowing the basics of marketing, the essentials of consumer behavior, and marketing research before graduating, after which they should advance to higher understanding of marketing in an actual company. Or should the education in universities of applied sciences shift more focus on more liberal marketing education by adding creative problem solving and alternative ways of looking at the world to the study modules? Perhaps the education should combine different kinds of subjects to complement each other. (Stringfellow etc 2006; Kotler 2005, p. 37.)

Stringfellow (etc 2006) defines the problem that marketing academics face in both research and education:

“How can marketing academics get closer to, and contribute to, the world of marketing practice, and yet maintain sufficient independence and objectivity so as to retain the fundamental integrity that defines their unique contribution to knowledge production and dissemination? Too close, and research becomes consultancy, students become trainees. Too distant, and marketing education becomes irrelevant, students learn nothing of value to their future careers.”

Studies in a UAS are differentiated from university education by practicality, therefore learning by doing projects that combine all skills needed in a student’s profession is justifiable. Including all aspects of learning objectives in one course is contemporary and projects are encouraged. Marketing education aims in transmitting basic concepts, tools and examples of the leading companies’ to students (Kotler 2005, p. 36).

The books (Albaum, Duerr, & Strandskov 2005; Albaum & Duerr 2008; Blythe 2008; Keegan & Green 2008; Kotler & Keller 2009; Solomon etc 2009; Usunier & Lee 2009) that were examined in the research contained many similarities. The books were provided by lecturers and the library of SUOAS; they are mainly meant to be used as marketing course material and contain basically a structure for a marketing course. It was expressed by the lecturers that publishers are eager to provide teachers with latest publications, to the extent that they do not have time to examine all the books. As the books discuss marketing that is a fast-developing science, it is reasonable to update the material in a rapid pace. Most recent success stories of the field can be presented in the cases, and latest developments can be addressed. From the point of view of teaching marketing alternative teaching methods can be introduced. For a lecturer planning a course, the wide variety of books provides multiple choices to choose from. The contents are similar and mostly contain an introduction to (international) marketing. Also there are chapters about markets, e.g. entry modes or strategies, marketing environment, communications, product, pricing, and logistics. Finance was itemized in only one of the books although its importance has been emphasized lately.

The books used in other schools than SUOAS varied greatly, as did the number of books and journals named as course material. For example the course International marketing in Haaga-Helia (2009) uses all the following as course material: Global marketing a decision-oriented approach (Hollensen, S. 2004); Consumer behaviour and cultural consequences for global marketing and advertising (Mooij, M. 2004); Marketing communications a European perspective (Pelsmacker, P. 2004); and International Marketing Strategy (Bradley, F. 2005). In Oulu UAS (2009) the course called International marketing uses the books International marketing (Terpstra, V. 2000) and International marketing (Czinkota, M. R. 2004) as course material. In Turku UAS (2009) curriculum course material of the course International marketing is the book Global Marketing – a decision oriented approach (S. Hollensen 2004).

3 UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

The Finnish non-university sector of higher education, i.e. polytechnic institutes nowadays mostly referred to as universities of applied sciences, started to take shape with an experimental project launched in 1991. In ten years the Finnish universities of applied sciences have created a strong and professionally oriented network of higher education institutions and today they provide higher-level education for about 100 000 students. International education is one of the main activities of UAS. The number of foreign degree students at Finnish universities of applied sciences is approximately 3 000. With the growth of academic exchange, international networks in research and development will also grow. Internationalization serves an instrument for both professional and for regional development. (SUOAS study guide 2009.)

Former South Carelia Polytechnic, since 2009 SUOAS, was regularized as a polytechnic by Council of State in April 1998 and a project called Development of Teaching was launched in 1.1.1999 in SCP. The final report of this project is examined more closely in paragraph 4.3. The final report aggregates two interim reports published in 1999 therefore presenting findings from a relatively new educational institution in 2001. This educational system as a whole is recent; the duality in higher education providing university and polytechnic education was launched in the 1990s in Finland. (Laitinen 2001, pp. 9-12.)

Studies in a UAS are a practically oriented alternative to university education and provide the students with extensive professional skills combining theoretical knowledge with career skills. Universities of applied sciences aim to raise the level of vocational training and flexibly respond to the training needs of students and the fast developing working world. (Laitinen 2001, p. 14; SUOAS study guide 2009; Vilkkä 2005, pp. 15-16, 19.) Ministry of education (2009) defines the links between universities of applied sciences and the labor market as new or improved products developed by universities of applied sciences, as well as

services and production machinery; devices; and methods for the needs of their regions.

As Ministry of Education (2009) states, universities of applied sciences mostly conduct research and development geared to the needs of business and industry, that is usually linked to the structure and development of the regional economy. Today's R&D aims at developing interaction between education and R&D, staff development and networking between universities of applied sciences, universities and research institutes. In universities of applied sciences the focus of research is on practice, topicality and working life inspired research; Söderqvist (2004, according to Vilkkä 2005, p. 12) finds that differentiation between universities and universities of applied sciences is strengthened by UAS research serving economic life and local development. The duality in higher education calls for differentiation, and universities of applied sciences, as remarkably younger educational institutions compared to universities, have to substantiate their existence as well as the equality with university education. Forming an identity of their own assists in these efforts and it is important for a university of applied sciences to form an identity that is appealing to potential and existing students, lecturers, and the economic life.

Questions that universities of applied sciences have had to answer while forming identities in their relatively short history are listed in Antti Kauppi's article (Kauppi & Huttula 2003). Questions about viewpoints of the schools connection to working life, know-how, generating knowledge, learning and teaching have to be answered in daily lives of universities of applied sciences. Answers to the previously mentioned question can be found for example in curriculums, educational objectives, contents of the teaching, teaching methods, student counseling and teaching evaluations (Kauppi & Huttula 2003, pp. 6-7).

3.1 Degree Programmes and various Study Modules

The Finnish law provides general direction for the universities of applied sciences and it is then the UAS that relatively freely defines its degree programmes and study plans based on the schools stated objectives, identity.

Extensiveness, flexibility and optionality are desired but only to the degree where the quality of teaching is not jeopardized. Parikka (1999, according to Laitinen 2001, p. 35) sees investing more in business administration education justified, for expertise in business and marketing in many fields is forecasted, additionally combining different faculties such as technical and business studies is described well-grounded. (Laitinen 2001, pp. 31-35.)

Numerous Finnish universities of applied sciences have a variety of different degree programmes within diverse faculties. Business Administration faculties contain multiple varying combinations of studies focusing on different aspects of the field. In this research SUOAS, Haaga-Helia's Porvoo point, Oulu UAS, and Turku UAS were selected to be examined more closely from a wide range of degree programmes concerning internationality, business, and/or marketing because they have similar degree programmes in International Business. The schools' curriculums and course contents have been examined on the Internet. The other universities of applied sciences do not present studies as divided into competence areas, so there is no International marketing category, but all Haaga-Helia (2009), Oulu UAS (2009) and Turku UAS (2009) have a course called International Marketing, which is not offered in SUOAS (Soleops 2009) degree programme in International Business.

In Haaga-Helia an entity of courses, called Marketing and Sales constitutes a part of studies required for the degree in International Business. Compulsory Marketing and Sales courses are all together three: Marketing, Marketing Research, and International Marketing, in addition to three free-choice courses Advertising, Services Marketing, and Brand Management (Haaga-Helia 2009). Out of these six the compulsory course are similar to the International marketing module in SUOAS. The course International marketing is different in Haaga-Helia from that in Oulu (2009) where the objective is that the students can plan, implement and control marketing activities, or Turku (2009) where the objectives are similar to Oulu's. In Haaga-Helia groups of students have each a partner company from the working life that they cooperate with in a development project, there are guest lecturers too.

In Turku University of Applied Sciences (2009) the degree programme in International Business emphasizes student participation and working in multicultural groups, the focus is on managing production and marketing in the international environment. In Turku UAS (2009) the curriculum structure is divided so that out of total 210 credits, Professional specialization studies involve 81 credit units. Out of those 81 credits in Professional specialization studies, Marketing competence studies include 20 credits. The obligatory courses that consist marketing are Strategic Marketing Management (3 cr), International Marketing (3 cr), and Global Supply Chain Management (5 cr). (Turku UOS 2009; SUOAS Soleops 2009.)

In Turku UAS (2009) there are various elective courses concerning marketing: Services Marketing (3 cr), Integrated Marketing Communications (3 cr), Consumer Behavior (3 cr), Visual Communication (3 cr), E-Commerce (3 cr), Business to Business Marketing (3 cr), Sales Management (3 cr), and High-Tech Marketing (3 cr). SUOAS does not have such an extensive list of elective courses but e.g. course High-tech Marketing could be an interesting adaptation by challenging the traditional marketing and presenting new innovative ways of marketing; the course in Turku UAS (2009) discusses marketing in innovative high-technology companies and raises students' understanding of the role that marketing has in different phases of growth and development in these companies (Turku UAS 2009).

Also SCU professor Lee (2009) discusses in her interview the elective course Digital Marketing and how it she finds knowing of new innovative technology important for the students, and reason for planning a course like Digital Marketing. In Haaga-Helia (2009) the category called ICT Tools contains one compulsory course MS Office, and free-choice courses Microsoft Office pro 1, Creating and manipulating pictures and layouts, Basics of web design, WEB-tools for SME-businesses, and SAP as a management tool. There is also an elective course Advertising that discusses the main area relevant to modern advertising and printed material by practical work and lecturing, teaching students to read different types of ads more critically, and to strategize, plan and create appropriate print advertising pieces with Photoshop and InDesign.

These kinds of courses are not presented in the SUOAS curriculum for degree programme in International Business as a choice for elective studies. The students can attend courses in other faculties such as technology, but it can be argued that presenting the courses to students in the curriculum would attract more students to participate in the courses presented.

It is interesting that in Oulu UAS (2009) there are elective courses Desktop Publishing, and Image Editing that discuss similar topics as previously mentioned in Haaga-Helia (2009), and also courses Computer Skills, Statistical Research, Introduction to Programming, Prep Course in Computer Skills, and Advanced Computer Skills, in degree programme in International Business. Perhaps this identifies Oulu UAS and Haaga-Helia as universities of applied sciences specializing in technology skills, but some similar competence areas could be adapted to SUOAS as well.

Oulu UAS Curriculum table for degree programme in International Business does not identify marketing or international marketing studies as their own category. Professional studies in comprise of 90 credit units. A total of 13 credit units out of these 90 credit units can be seen comparable to International Marketing competence area courses in SUOAS: International Marketing (4 cr), Professional Selling and Customer Relationship (3 cr), International Marketing Management (3 cr), and International Marketing Communications (3 cr). Language courses contribute 12 credits to the professional studies, it is noteworthy that there are all together six languages to choose from: Finnish, English, French, German, Spanish, and a bit surprisingly Japanese. (Oulu UOAS 2009.)

3.2 Student exchange and training abroad

It is desirable that degree students in International Business go abroad to study or to do their practical training, for that is the best way to internationalize apart from interacting with students that come to Finland as exchange students. Various exchange programs guarantee a suitable option for all students that wish to participate in student exchange. Additionally schools have their own collaboration with partner universities without national or international exchange programs. Staff mobility is of great importance too. Collaboration between universities extends to lecturers visiting other countries to gain and share different perspectives. Turku UAS (2009) expects students in degree programme in International Business to study abroad for one semester or to obtain a double degree in a partner university abroad.

In Haaga-Helia (2009) it is stated that every third of their students studies abroad, on student exchange or on work practice. In SUOAS the number may be smaller but the number of exchange students from abroad, welcomed to study in SUOAS, is large. This ensures the students a multinational studying environment in Finland too. Additionally since 2009 when the degree programme in International Business has been taught entirely in English it is possible for any foreign students to study in the programme.

Practical training forms an essential part of studies in UAS. In degree programme in International Business practical training constitutes 30 of total 210 credits (SUOAS Soleops 2009). Like studying also training abroad broadens students' viewpoint and provides an international perspective that is so important for any student but especially one in degree programme in International Business. Training abroad has often delayed students' graduation according to Laitinen (2001, p.51) but students have felt that the benefits - enrichment of learning and professional expertise- outweighed the disadvantages. Additionally training abroad might provide learning possibilities that could not necessarily be found in students' home country and make it easier to work abroad in the future.

3.3 University of Applied Sciences and working life

The process of teaching marketing strives to communicate basic concepts, tools and examples of leading companies to the students as Kotler (2005. p. 36) notes. As the focus of degree programme in International Business is worldwide, focusing either on merely local SME's or only on global MNE's is not desirable. The working life and its needs, especially those of the local economic life have to be considered as is required by the Finnish law (15.5.2003/352). Kotila (2004, according to Vilkkä 2005, p. 16) has discovered that instead of local, the economic life is nowadays regionally uncommitted, despite of the local nature of small- and medium-sized entrepreneurship. Perhaps the companies operate in Finland but their markets are abroad, or the operations might be local but availability of raw materials depends on other countries. This means that the companies' operations are at the same time both local and national, and global and international (Vilkkä 2005, p. 16). Thus it is possible to cooperate with local companies that are international either directly or indirectly. Often it seems that taking an international point of view is easier to do via leading MNE's that are regularly depicted in books and publications concerning international marketing. Local economic life can often serve appropriate examples that are familiar to students and therefore easier to comprehend.

A UAS is expected to cooperate with other actors in its area, like the local economic life. Laitinen (2001, p. 74) notes that the working life representatives think there is know-how in the school and wish for more collaboration through projects, but the strengths of the school should be marketed more. A versatile network and good cooperation between teachers and students are preconditions to successful projects with the economic life, possibly including other educational institutes (ibid). Previously mentioned local actors can certainly be from other than the local economic life. Collaboration with other educational establishments enriches the operations of a UAS, providing various viewpoints and expectations to the operations of the university of applied sciences.

The cooperation with working life can take many forms and versatile cooperation is most desired. Cooperation should always benefit both sides, therefore it is reasonable that a university of applied sciences considers the local economic life when planning its curriculum, designing courses and course contents, and welcomes both ideas and representatives from the working life. Through students' practical training and possible Bachelor's theses a university of applied sciences introduces its competence to the local economic life. Also researches and complementary training are offered to the economic life. In return a UAS is entitled to expect involvement in designing the education, implementing the education, and creating training and working places.

4 SAIMAA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Altogether there are five faculties on three campuses in SUOAS. In the faculty of Business Administration there are the degree programme in International Business and the degree programme in Business Administration. The other four faculties are Fine Art and Design, Health Care and Social Services, Technology, and Tourism and Hospitality. Due to the proximity to Russian border Saimaa University of Applied Sciences has specialized in Russian trade. Additionally in international cooperation the emphasis is on Nordic countries; Western Europe; new EU member states; and China and Malaysia in Asia. Students are encouraged to take advantage of exchange programs and students from abroad are welcomed to study in SUOAS, in addition there is a lecturer exchange scheme. Multicultural environment that foreign students and lecturers create is respected and strong commitment to international R&D is recognized. (SUOAS general information 2009.)

4.1 Degree Programme in International Business

The degree programme in International Business in SUOAS prepares students for diverse aspects of international business operations. The content of the

studies is stated to correspond to labor market needs and some courses are completed in workplace projects with local companies. Additionally foreign languages, culture, and internationalization form an essential part of the programme. (SUOAS study information 2009).

A Bachelor of Business Administration does not focus on marketing but should be able to work in the market environment, whose every operation is somehow linked to marketing. The basic business skill areas are marketing, finance, management and entrepreneurship. The core competences of a Bachelor of Business Administration specializing in International Business are international marketing, international business, logistics, culture and language studies (SUOAS study information 2009). Usually there are no requirements to have experience in marketing or other aspects of business prior to the studies in lower-level UAS education. The degree programme in International Business provides an exceptional opportunity to focus on the special characteristics of Russian trade by including three courses concerning business in Russia as alternative studies to the courses of Marketing Management, Sales Management, and Marketing cases.

Degree programme in International Business, taught entirely in English, was launched in fall 2009 in SUOAS. The degree programme curriculum consists of basic and professional studies, and elective study modules (20 cr), placement (30 cr), and Bachelor's thesis (15 cr). Core studies, language and intercultural competence, and business skills constitute the basic studies (39 cr). The professional studies consist of three competence areas that are international business (12 cr), international marketing (21 cr), and logistics (12 cr). Additionally there are elective studies.

The school profile defines the syllabuses. Location near the Russian border has had an impact on the offering; students can focus on Russian trade in their studies, which means focusing on Russia in all the competence areas. Students can also include Russian language studies in their study plan. Mutually exclusive considerations are found in every competence area in professional studies. Focusing on Russian trade disables students from participating in

international business courses Introduction to eBusiness and Business Project since they will take courses Business Environment in Russia, and Business Operations in Russia. Learning eBusiness has been emphasized in various occasions because a noteworthy amount of business and marketing is done in an electronic environment with the help of information technology. In international marketing studies a student focusing on Russian trade will be excluded from courses Marketing Management, Sales Management, and Marketing Cases. The equivalent courses for Russian trade students are Russian History and Culture, Operational Norms in Russia, and Marketing in Russia. In competence area of logistics two exclusive courses are Operational Logistics and Logistics in Russian trade.

4.2 International marketing study module for degree programme in International Business

According to the Finnish law (15.5.2003/352) a university of applied sciences decides on study modules of the degree programme, according to degree regulations. The degree regulations are approved by governing board of the school; SUOAS degree regulations (2009) state the study goals and regulate among others formation of studies. Studies are divided into modules and education is provided in courses within the modules. Courses are mandatory, alternative or elective. It is said in the SUOAS degree regulations (2009) that at the beginning of the course the lecturer may make changes in study materials; methods; and grading requirements, and potential changes must be notified to the students and the office of student affairs in the department in question.

It is then the lecturer's choice to alternate the course and its contents. If the contents are detailed and e.g. possible cases are named, taking into account rapid changes in the business environment might be questionable. The courses in SUOAS's International marketing study module are named in a simple manner, and their contents are not itemized either. That gives the lecturer the opportunity to diversify the course contents according to occurring events.

The curriculum of each degree programme comprises of basic studies, professional studies, advanced professional studies, applied practice and final thesis. In SUOAS degree programme in International Business international marketing, international business and logistics are the three competence areas of professional studies, whose goals are regulated also. Professional studies in SUOAS aim to, in their chosen fields, guide the students to the relevant problems and applications, including pertinent scientific and artistic basis. The objective is that the students obtain such knowledge that they can operate as independent experts and participate in developing the professional work environment. (SUOAS degree regulations 2009.)

The Finnish law (16.6.2005/423) states five objectives that are general to all education in universities of applied sciences. Apart from the previously mentioned objectives, that are also stated in the degree regulations of SUOAS, the law provides that the education assures readiness for ongoing education; sufficient communicative and language skills; and abilities that international operations require in the particular profession. The teachers' duties are among teaching and guiding e.g. to develop teaching accordingly to development of the working life; engage in composing syllabuses; take part in research and development tasks; get acquainted with working life; and partake in professional skills perpetuating and developing training. Lecturers cannot rely on the same know-how for many years if the objective is to provide quality education.

Participating in research and development, and keeping in touch with the working life assure alternative viewpoints on the lecturer's expertise areas. Also the lecturer remains motivated and interested in what he or she is teaching when the lectures are not similar every time, and the lecturer's enthusiasm reflects on the students too. Interaction with the local working life is developed in SUOAS in a project called Luotsi. This is a channel for local companies and students to connect, where the knowhow of SUOAS student base is commercialized (Luotsi project depiction 2009). The project is, at least for now, intended for graduating marketing students in degree programme in Business Administration, thus it does not benefit students in degree programme in International Business. Both Finnish lecturers interviewed for the thesis are

involved in the Luotsi project. A similar project is carried through in Turku where Turku UAS (2009) is involved in a service for companies of all sizes, which can acquire services connected to e.g. marketing or internationalization from the universities and universities of applied sciences involved.

4.3 Courses concerning marketing in SUOAS

The basic studies in degree programme in International Business contain two courses related to marketing; Basics of Marketing which is a part of a bigger entity called Basics of Business, and Business-to-business Marketing. These courses do not belong to the professional studies, but are examined more closely in the research since they are the basis for studying marketing in competence area of international marketing. As the degree programme is itself International Business, it should be noted that even though the word international is not employed when discussing the courses, everything should have an international outline.

The course Basics of Marketing is executed in order to introduce the foundation and preliminary understanding of marketing to students through basic concepts. The students are familiarized with segmenting a market; targeting; positioning; and marketing mix as well as marketing communications mix. The course contains lectures and business case exercises, and selected parts of the book Marketing - An introduction (2009) by Kotler et al. are utilized as study material. Also other schools have courses discussing the basics of marketing; a student is not expected to have preconception on the subject. In some universities of applied sciences the course is a prerequisite for other courses concerning marketing but this is not always the case.

The course Business-to-business Marketing discusses topics Organizational buying, Business customers, Goods classifications in business markets, Buying situations, and Relationship management. Prerequisite for the course is basic studies of business and marketing. The aim is to introduce main concepts and features of B-to-B marketing, create understanding of what B-to-B marketing is and of the nature of the marketing and purchasing of industrial products and

services, creating and managing of customer relationships in B-to-B marketing environment through lectures, cases and group exercises. Teaching aids are lecture notes and handouts, and Business Marketing Management book by Hutt and Speh. All in all the course Basics of Marketing is what introduces the students with marketing, followed by more detailed and defined information in the course Business-to business Marketing. (SUOAS Soleops 2009.)

In SUOAS students are able to attend the course Consumer Behavior after passing Basics of Marketing course, which ensures students have a basic understanding of marketing before ensuing professional studies in marketing. The contents of the first year course Consumer Behavior are described through concepts: perception; learning and memory; motivation and involvement; attitude formation and change; personality and the self; consumer decision process; groups and opinion leadership; and family structures, social class and age. Students learn to use these concepts as a background when designing marketing to consumers. The employed lecturing aids are lecture notes and handouts in addition to selected chapters of Solomon, Bamossy and Askegaard's book Consumer behavior, European perspective published in 2002. After passing the course Consumer Behavior students presumably understand the main features of consumer behavior and know how to apply consumer behavior patterns to actual marketing decisions. Lectures containing class exercises, case exercises, group works, and a presentation are listed as teaching methods in this course. (SUOAS Soleops 2009.) In SUOAS the course Consumer Behavior is obligatory but in Turku UAS (2009) curriculum the course is an elective, and in Oulu UAS (2009) and Haaga-Helia (2009) curriculum there is no course called consumer behavior.

Marketing Management course is also a first year course in SUOAS degree programme in International Business and it acquaintances students with special features of international marketing, focusing particularly on global industrial marketing and companies. Basic knowledge about marketing analysis, planning and controlling systems is acquired in this course that is a part of professional studies; students have to have passed basic studies of business and marketing prior to Marketing management course. The teaching methods are lectures,

cases, group exercises, and written exams in addition to reports and presentation. Topics are listed as Marketing Management Process; Core Competence and Competitive Advantage; Developing and Planning of International Marketing Strategies; Internationalization Process; Market entry strategies; and Alliances and partnerships, Mergers and Acquisitions. (SUOAS Soleops 2009.)

In Oulu UAS (2009) the course International marketing management aims at having the students understand the importance of strategic view on marketing through contents that are listed as product, pricing, distribution, marketing communications, and global competitive strategy. In Turku UAS (2009) the focus is more on markets: internationalization, and choosing and designing market entry strategies.

Multiple free-choice studies concerning business in different parts of the world are offered to students in both Oulu UAS and Turku UAS. In Turku the students have free-choice studies such as Business in Europe, Doing Business in North-America, and Business in emerging markets (Turku UAS 2009). In Oulu students can attend to courses Doing Business in EU, Doing Business in Asia, or Doing Business in Russia (Oulu UAS 2009). In Haaga-Helia (2009) curriculum there is an elective course Russian Studies and Excursion, which students can attend to if they wish to spend a week in St. Petersburg studying the local life, society, and business, and learn the language more.

As an alternative course for Marketing Management the students in SUOAS can choose the course Russian History and Culture. This means that students, who have chosen to focus on Russian trade, will include the course Russian History and Culture in their first year of studies, Juridical Issues in Russia in their second year of studies, and Marketing in Russia in their third year of studying. Alternatively students focusing on International Business rather than Russian trade will take the course Marketing Management in their first year; Sales Management in their second; and Marketing Cases in their third year of studying.

Since the courses are offered only in later phase of studies for degree programme in International Business, more detailed course descriptions cannot be found from the Soleops database of SUOAS. As the courses are portrayed in the curriculum by their names without more detailed information about the courses' contents, it is possible to alter the courses in the becoming years as the science and industry develop. It is probable that no groundbreaking changes are made to the course outlines the lecturers have once planned, but as time changes, the lecturer's and students' current interests, trends, appropriate methods, topical means, as well as lecturers themselves change.

Marketing Research course is stated to familiarize students with planning and implementation of marketing research and interpretation of results, and use of marketing research as decision making support. The course is set to be taken in the second year of studies; Managing Customer Relationships and Marketing Communication are second year courses as well. Thus more detailed course descriptions on the latter two cannot be found yet in SUOAS Soleops (2009). The benefits from this are presented in the previous paragraph. In Haaga-Helia (2009) there is a compulsory course Marketing Research where students will in groups implement a quantitative market research, using the program SPSS. In Oulu UAS (2009) there is an obligatory course Statistical Research and in Turku UAS (2009) there are two courses in integrative studies called Statistics for Business Studies and Research Data Analysis.

4.4 From South Carelia Polytechnic objectives into SUOAS practice?

The final report from the project named Development of Teaching was published in 2001 aggregating two interim reports published in 1999. The project studied South Carelia Polytechnic, current Saimaa University of Applied Sciences. The strongest focus in the project was on collaboration with working life; teaching and learning as an ongoing development process and the role of the polytechnic as an expert of local commercial and industrial life. Forecasting changes and answering to challenges that are not yet even defined are highlighted as problems of polytechnic education in the final report. (Laitinen 2001, pp. 10-12.) Nearly ten years later the same challenges remain, as

forecasting future trends is underlined but at the same time the education should provide students with knowledge and understanding of existing problems, and tools to solve them.

Cooperation between experts of different fields is discussed more deeply in this research in chapter six, teacher interviews. It should be stated that Laitinen (2001, p. 13) points out that a fusion of subjects in different faculties has been desired, which consequently requires intensified cooperation between educational institutes and faculties as well as flexibility in teaching. Still for example negative attitude towards anything new, passiveness in planning, executing and following up with changes and development, and people who are going their own way were specified as South Carelia Polytechnic's weaknesses ten years ago, even though great expectations were told to exist towards development and changes. Some of the threats mentioned were non predictive development of the workforce's competence needs, unstable situation in Russia, and protracting economic crisis in Asia. Networking, development of inner and outer image, and staff that is able to innovate were seen as the opportunities in South Carelia Polytechnic. (Laitinen 2001, p. 20.)

Today the staff could be defined as innovative, and changes in e.g. curriculums, studies, and in location can be seen as image building. Networking is on the agenda and at least discussed greatly. The focus has not yet shifted towards Asia but interest in Russia has remained. The development of workforce's competence needs presumably always remain non predictive, therefore forecasting and investigating best practices to do this is essential in order to stay up to date. Networking can once again be stressed in order to succeed in finding out the competence needs of working life.

In the final report of the project Development of teaching Laitinen (2001, p. 31) states that there were fragmentariness, overlapping and economic losses in the faculties, degree programmes, and curriculums of that time in South Carelia Polytechnic, which complicates the students' and working life's understanding of the studies. The problems are told to be addressed but it could be that the competition between faculties, which Laitinen refers to, is still on factor

hindering collaboration between experts of different fields. South Carelia Polytechnic was advised to pay attention to developing of curriculums, taking future trends and alternative operations models into account. As the competition in educating future experts tightens, faculties, that allocate their resources in assessing competence needs in the long run, will prosper. (Laitinen, 2001, pp. 25-26.) The need for this kind of a research was presented by lecturers in SUOAS, which demonstrates that attention is paid to developing the curriculums, and various means that help in designing up to date education, are welcomed.

An interesting remark about SUOAS and Lappeenranta University of Technology fusion by 2015, made by rector of that time in South Carelia Polytechnic Kari Eklund (2000), has been elicited by Laitinen (2001, p. 17). Ten years later a fusion is not yet happening but SUOAS is moving to the same campus with Lappeenranta University of Technology while both remain independent. Perhaps in the future more cooperation is done between the two educational institutes and the differences and similarities between the university and university of applied sciences become more distinctive.

5 SHIH CHIEN UNIVERSITY

Praxis translates into using a theory or a belief in a practical way (Oxford dictionary 2005). Shih Chien University (2009) refers to itself as a Praxis University with artistic environment and friendly atmosphere. Former Shih Chien College of Home Economics was founded in 1958 and before renaming it in 1991 Shih Chien College of Design and Management, had evolved into an institution granting bachelor's degrees that attained university status later in 1997. Nowadays the Shih Chien University comprises of two campuses, one in Taipei and one in Kaohsiung, and three colleges, adding up to 15 000 students. The University is cooperating with partner institutions in e.g. Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands, contributing to students' and faculty members' exchange, joint programs and projects. All the personal experiences utilized in this thesis are from College of Management in SCU Taipei Campus, located in Northern Taiwan with approximately 10 000 students. (Shih Chien University 2009.)

There are four academic units in SCU. In addition to College of Management there are College of Human Ecology and College of Design the Taipei campus, and College of Management in Kaohsiung Campus in the south of Taiwan. (ibid.) The College of Management in Kaohsiung has similar faculties as the one in Taipei but the findings in this research cannot be applied to Kaohsiung for it was excluded from the research.

In the College of Management in Taipei there is faculty of Business Administration including Master's Program that is the focus on the thesis, but also faculties of Accounting, International Trade, Risk Management and Insurance, Finance and Banking, Information Management and Applied Foreign Languages, along with Graduate Institutes of Enterprise Innovation and Development, of Finance and Insurance, and of Information Technology and Management. (Shih Chien University 2009.)

5.1 Exchange program

All together there were 17,742 foreign students in Taiwan in 2007. The number is divided into 2,306 students in exchange programs; 5,259 students in degree programs; and 10,177 foreigners studying Chinese language. Out of the foreign students in degree programs a majority, 70 per cent, came from Asian countries and 19 per cent came from United States. (Foreign Students in Taiwan 2009.) The Taiwanese Shih Chien University collaborates with various partner institutions around the world, but based on information given by SCU, the number of students coming from abroad to study in SCU has increased in recent years. Nowadays ten to fifteen exchange students are welcomed every semester. The number of SCU students going abroad is increasing as well, according to the Office of International Affairs.

Most commonly exchange students in SCU study business, but also out of the 17,742 exchange students in Taiwan in 2007 the majority, 27.3 per cent studied business (Foreign Students in Taiwan 2009). In spring semester 2009 in SCU there were two Canadian, six Finnish, four German, and one exchange student from the Netherlands, in addition to a German and a Chinese student both studying in the Netherlands.

The two Canadians were studying fashion design and two Germans were studying communications design mainly in College of Design, but all four participated the Chinese Culture lectures with other exchange students. Eleven out of fifteen exchange students were from the field of business. All eleven attended the course Digital Marketing with approximately 30 local students with background in business or IT studies.

A partner university that defines itself as a praxis university seems an excellent choice for SUOAS and as one of the schools examined in the research. Practice is what identifies universities of applied sciences in Finland. Still there are always cultural differences that affect how the school and teaching are perceived. It is noteworthy that a Taiwanese student would do this kind of a research from a totally different point of view. As do the schools SCU and SUOAS, also the lectures as a whole differ in SUOAS and SCU. The following are some of the observed differences but not all of them.

Students in SCU attend classes for one week in the beginning of the period before deciding which courses they will enroll, thus the first lectures give insights to and a bigger picture of what the course contents are. The lessons last five minutes longer in SCU compared to the 45 minute classes in SUOAS. The lecturers, and often students as well, use a microphone while speaking in SCU when lecturers in SUOAS might feel more comfortable addressing students in a more informal way. The lectures' nature and contents vary in both universities depending on the lecturers persona, number of attendants, lecture topic etc. In SCU the exchange students, their nationalities and opinions are taken more of cognizance, it seems. Also Lee (2009) made notice of the Taiwanese students being most often under-graduate and thus of younger age than most SUOAS students. This affects the teaching as well.

5.2 Courses in marketing in SCU

As majority of information about SCU curriculums and courses is provided in Chinese, it was necessary to request the university staff's assistance when gathering information for the research. Exchange student adviser Mia Mai was of great help by presenting a list of marketing course outlines in SCU. Some of the descriptions are in Chinese, but an exchange student who is originally from China was kind enough to translate them into English.

The list concerning marketing courses in the faculty of Business administration contains four mandatory courses that are Marketing Practice, Marketing Management, International Marketing Management, and Seminar on Marketing Management. Optional courses are Marketing Research, Digital Marketing, Network Marketing, Marketing Management, and International Marketing Management. Additionally there are courses Fashion Marketing I & II, Food Marketing, and Fashion Product Marketing that Business Administration students can attend. (SCU courses on marketing 2009.)

The course Marketing Practice provides foundation for other courses in marketing, for the main purpose it stated to be familiarizing students with marketing concepts and tools. The objective is to learn how to satisfy consumers' demands and further profit both employees and the company, eventually creating progress and prosperity for the society. The course contains a real life case study, enterprise organization management, and marketing management concepts. With the help of these contents students learn how to employ theory efficiently in marketing tasks. The course Marketing Practice in SCU is equivalent to Basics of Marketing in SUOAS, although the viewpoint in the course outline is slightly different. In SUOAS the aim is explained in a comprehensive way: to familiarize with characteristics of segmenting a market; targeting; positioning; and marketing mix as well as marketing communications mix. (SCU courses on marketing 2009; SUOAS Soleops 2009.)

Encouraging students to systematic and insightful thinking procedure is the objective in Marketing Management course in SCU. The course outline is interestingly different from those in SUOAS, portraying the challenges that a marketer has faced to this day and will encounter in the future. The course outline in SCU courses on marketing (2009) states:

Marketing people always face many hard-decision problems. They have to determine the features and quality of products and the service they should offer, decide the price, choose the distribution channels, make marketing expenditure budgets and decide how to assign the resources to advertising sales team and other promotion tools and so on. However, the complex level of previous market cannot be compared with nowadays market. In the past, the domestic market did not to worry about the in break of outside competitors, but now they have to face many huge international companies and the challenge from the companies which have accomplished global strategy. Besides, with the appearing of new products, new distribution channels and different kinds of enterprise type, the consumers' living type changes a lot. All of these imply more challenges and threats in the future new world. This course is aiming at foster students a systematic and perspicacious thinking procedure.

The managerially oriented course International Marketing Management in SCU has three main objectives that are stated as follows: to expose students to the different socio-cultural, economic, and geopolitical environments in which global marketing strategies and programs are formulated and implemented; to examine the cumulative impact of changes in these environments on marketing opportunities and threats; and to help develop relevant management skills for planning and expanding activities in global markets. The course is stated to address problems that small and big companies encounter when operating across national boundaries and with foreign countries considering exporters, licensors, joint ventures, and/or the multinational companies. In SUOAS the course (International) Marketing Management focuses particularly on global industrial marketing and companies. (SCU courses on marketing 2009; SUOAS Soleops 2009.)

Learning objectives in SCU are how to study foreign markets, how to choose foreign market entry methods, knowing international marketing product and pricing strategies, knowing approaches to international promotion, learning organizational aspects of international marketing, and learning approaches to

planning and controlling of international marketing. In SUOAS similar marketing activities and topics are discussed, but in course contents text instruction and discussion are not stated, though one would imagine these methods are employed as well. The Seminar on Marketing Management aims in teaching the students how to utilize marketing concepts in an appointed case thus gaining experience in real life marketing. An equivalent course in SUOAS is Marketing Cases, which is an alternative to the course Marketing in Russia. (ibid.)

The course concerning marketing, which exchange students were able to attend in spring 2009, was Digital Marketing. Lecturer in this course was Dr. Maria Lee who was also interviewed for this thesis and therefore Digital Marketing course is examined more closely. The course aims in providing the students with a comprehensive outline of the major digital channels being used. This is done by investigating the key trends in e.g. mobile marketing, blogging, games, digital media, digital point-of-sale, Web 2.0, consumer created content, and IPTV. Additionally the course outline states that best practice examples are explored on how leading marketers currently use the previously mentioned channels for effective marketing. (SCU courses on marketing 2009; SUOAS Soleops 2009.)

The course Digital Marketing does not focus on how to do marketing on the Internet; the examples discussed what technologies can be utilized in the near future. Interactive advertising boards in Japan or exploiting Second life are just examples of what was presented to the students as best practices in marketing. The course also contained two group works in same groups, where students of at least three nationalities cooperated. First assignment was to design a questionnaire about digital channels and how people perceive different forms of digital marketing. The questionnaire was designed together and then sent to people of different nationalities, genders, and ages. After that the questions were analyzed and presented to the class. The group, that the researcher was in, consisted of German, Taiwanese, and Finnish students specializing in both business and technology. The questionnaire discussed topics such as mobile phone usage, blogging, digital cameras, using the Internet for shopping, the time spent in the Internet, different search engines, purchasing of latest products, etc. Because of different cultural backgrounds, different educational

backgrounds, and sometimes troubles understanding each other made it challenging to execute the assignment. At the same time it was very educating.

For the second assignment the lecturer had invited representatives from three Internet companies, who introduced their businesses to the class. The companies' businesses were interactive and the assignment was to use these companies' services. The service that the researcher's group selected was Record Cup. First a theme for a competition had to be invented, and then the competition was brought online in Record Cup. The group had to show an example of how to participate in the competition; if it was to present the funniest or weirdest road sign then the group searched for pictures of such road signs and put them on the Internet; if the competition was about blowing the biggest ball of chewing gum the group shot a video of blowing a big bubble gum and put it online. The company representative would come to see the finished group works and selected a winner. The aim was to get people interactive, to participate in the competition. The participation rate was not great, and it never became clear how many users the service had all together. The idea was very good and a great way to learn. In practice there was little discussion of what is good or bad, how the assignment could be done, or how it should be done. It was an experience but perhaps in the end some kind of a summation could have been done in order to assure that students had learned from the experience.

6 TEACHER INTERVIEWS

In the spring of 2009 the researcher had the opportunity to not only participate in Taiwanese Shih Chien University's Digital Marketing course and observe the teaching of Dr. Maria Lee but also interview her and another marketing lecturer Ming-hung Hsieh. In the fall 2009 two Finnish lecturers were interviewed in the Finnish Saimaa University of Applied Sciences. Lecturer Ville Lehto teaches International Business students in SUOAS e.g. the courses Basics of Business and Marketing Management, Jyri Hänninen teaches mostly Business Administration students specializing in marketing, in Finnish. Lecturer Hänninen's interview was executed in Finnish and translated into English afterwards; the other three interviews were followed through in English. The researcher has attended Lehto's courses before thus there are a Finnish and a Taiwanese lecturer whose teaching can be analyzed also from a personal point of view, and a Finnish and a Taiwanese lecturer whose teaching has not been observed personally.

Lecturers' background, their marketing courses, course contents, marketing and International marketing study modules in their school, expertise updating, and university's role in all this were of interest in the interviews. Also the lecturers' personal views about teaching marketing, what is taught in their classes and their universities, and what they would suggest as a good marketing course module were discussed. The interview structure was designed by the researcher, considering proposals of improvement via email from instructor Viskari and lecturer Lehto that acted as a company representative. There was no possibility to test the interview structure and the questions' accuracy in advance.

Some parts of the interviews address teaching. It is noteworthy that teaching is always somewhat subjective and the lecturer's personal experiences have an impact on what and how he or she lectures. Also what is perceived as productive teaching or efficient studying is subjective as well as what a lecturer

presumes is expected of him or her. Laitinen (2001, p. 69) enumerates the teaching methods of that day as e.g. different kinds of controlled work groups and role plays; learning diaries; portfolios; seminars; commenting summaries and essays; and guidance provided outside the school, which are all still utilized in some ways in teaching in SUOAS. Laitinen reminds that in some occasion traditional lecturing is in place and makes note that in lecturers' opinion better quality of teaching comes from versatile teaching methods.

6.1 Conducting the interviews

All of the interviewees were given the interview structure prior to the actual meeting, as well as information about the thesis. The interviews were recorded with a mobile phone and then transmitted to a laptop for transcribing. In every meeting the interview was of the same, open structure. Thus the questions are the same apart from some additional questions that arouse from the interviewees' answers. Due to the open nature of the questions the answers varied according to how the interviewees understood them. The educational systems and school structures differ in Finland and in Taiwan, in addition cultural differences have had an impact on the answers.

The interviews in Taipei, Taiwan were conducted in the SCU premises. Attending the course Digital Marketing executed by lecturer Maria Lee provided the opportunity to request her participation directly. The interview with lecturer Lee was conducted in her office in SCU Research and Development department. Exchange student adviser Mia Mai kindly acted as intermediary that first approached other teachers, and agreed on the interview with lecturer Hung-Ming Hsieh, scheduling the interview and sending him the interview structure and other information about the thesis. Interview with lecturer Hsieh was implemented in a conference room. In SUOAS lecturers Lehto and Hänninen were approached via email and the interviews were conducted in SUOAS premises; Lehto in his office and Hänninen in two separate class rooms.

The research addresses to four sections of the finished interviews. They are enlarged upon in the following chapters 6.2 to 6.4.

6.2 Designing courses and selecting course materials

The courses in SUOAS are designed during a so called development day. As lecturer Lehto explains, the teachers gather once a year to design syllabuses, study modules and the outlines of courses. The group consists of different teachers and might differentiate during the day. For example all the lecturers that teach courses on International Business plan their courses together and check that all the required information is taught. Lehto also tells about inter-departmental discussion that addresses using other lecturers from e.g. accounting department in the marketing courses. He believes that these kinds of discussions have not yet led to anything on practical level, although he could see for example experts of accounting giving their view on marketing and pricing issues.

Lecturer Hänninen tells that during courses that he executes with other teachers they go through the course contents, but that it is difficult to react during the same academic year if something basic comes up. Working together is natural when you have courses together, Hänninen sums. Lecturer Lehto is executing a course with Jaana Tanhuanpää who he refers to as an expert in using CRM, knowing all the systems and programs. The lecturers utilize both parties' expertise by Lehto giving the students the theoretical ideas during the course and Tanhuanpää teaching how to use the tools of the computer systems. According to lecturer Lehto he might not have enough time to continue with this course so it is possible that Jaana Tanhuanpää will continue executing the whole course.

The bigger picture for the courses and study modules comes from the head of degree programme in International Business, the lecturers discuss what things should be taught, and in which courses to assure that the same subjects will not be taught in different courses. After this is done during the development day the designing of courses is quite free, Lehto expresses.

In SCU there is also an equivalent meeting at least once every semester where a committee defines the contents that should be included in the courses, lecturer Hsieh informs. In the committee meetings colleagues of a certain department meet students that have graduated from that department and are working at the time, but also students currently in the program. Hsieh believes the graduates can have insight to the usefulness of the teachings in working life, and current students can share their desires and problems they are having. Also representatives who do networking in companies are included in the meetings to share ideas. These meetings provide a guideline with projection to each course, Hsieh explains. Lecturer Lee notes that SCU does not have a course coordinator that many other schools in Taiwan have in order to avoid different courses with same contents. Both Hsieh and Lee note that the course outline is then designed solely by the teacher without any further regulations from the university, only an approval to teach the course but this is told to be simple consulting.

Hsieh refers to intensive evaluation, involving all the Taiwanese schools, which the Bureau of Education has been conducting in the country. The lecturer expresses that one way of standing out in this evaluation is to show how well students stand out in the job market. Having all procedures and systems in order is a proof of the department trying to provide good quality of teaching. In Finland the learning objectives of universities of applied sciences are regulated on a national level, Lehto points out and continues that also school profiles play a big role in the syllabuses and course modules.

Reasons for forming the particular international marketing courses were inquired in a later stage of the interview. The idea for the course Digital Marketing and the design of the course are both by Lee. She found that Internet marketing is regularly being taught and wanted to plan a course that does not focus on Internet marketing, but trends in rapidly changing IT technology that newcomers incorporate. Hsieh is interested in new product development and launching, and marketing strategy and research methods, thus he has planned courses that relate to his personal interests and expertise areas.

During the conducting of this research, the economic downturn starting in the late 2008 had its effects in word economy. Lehto notes that current changes in the economy have an effect on the changes the lecturers make to study plans, courses, and study modules. All of the courses have history and the current courses have been executed as planned before, Lehto states. Lee believes that though economic crisis affects IT industry, the field is pushing for new inventions and moves ahead no matter the economic situation. People for example do not spend as much money by going out, hence the trend is to play games at home, Lee notifies.

Theory into practice

When asked about balancing theory and practice or favoring another both lecturers Lehto and Lee remind that they do not work in scientific universities, thus theory and practice are not strictly separated. Lehto finds important to take theoretical ideas and learn how to use them in practical work. If and when the lecturer finds new proven research in articles from theoretical world and sees a way to take it to a practical level he will include them in the courses. Lehto sees applicability as the key to using theory in his courses, some contents are based on old theory that still applies to the current times, but he wants to keep up and use the most recent knowledge as well. In SCU the course Digital Marketing is offered to under graduate students with various backgrounds in education, especially in IT, Lee reminds. Therefore she introduces IT theory but focuses on teaching the practice, whereas with graduate students she stresses theory with practice in the background. In the future Lee wishes to incorporate more cooperation with working life to show students hands on experience in marketing. Digital Marketing course includes best practice case studies and group works. Lee wants to offer the students better background with cases from real companies. Also Lehto includes student works and case studies in his courses, often provided by the study material books, depending on how well the book goes with the course contents.

Lecturer Hänninen is executing a course where students contact with actual local companies that give the groups a job description concerning marketing to implement; therefore not theory but practice is the main focus. It should be noted that this course is not for students of degree programme in International Business but students specializing in marketing. Lecturer Hsieh is executing a course students are doing their own research, a marketing plan but not for a real company. After assigning a topic for years Hsieh now proposes the students several sources where issues can be found, after which the students describe themselves the topic for their research. By doing this he wants to motivate students although it might take more time for the students to get started. Hsieh notes that because most of the students in the course are doing research for the first time they are taught very detailed knowledge; starting from how to form a sentence. By doing this students will feel more comfortable starting their work and learn by doing, which is the only way one can learn in Hsieh's opinion. Lehto finds that the way students learn is e.g. setting up an imaginary company and then considering theoretical ideas from that company's point of view, even though it was a lot of work for the students. Case studies in which students can create as much as possible themselves are Lehto's objective when creating case studies.

Study material for a course might be books, publications, articles, Internet, magazines etc. Lee uses all of the previously mentioned, consulting most of all books but in the course Digital Marketing lecturer uses Internet as the main source of study material due to the fact that majority of digital trends is found on the Internet. Hänninen notes his teaching has changed since the Internet generalized. He is happy to have a computer and a projector in classrooms for the lectures can be executed with a loose readily made structure. Hänninen might go to class and search Google with the students for examples; he finds this enhances the quality of teaching.

Lee additionally cooperates with companies in the IT industry and therefore has access to the forefront of technological breakthroughs. Hsieh finds own experiences as the best way to teach and explains that making his own research requires going through several publications. Hsieh studies a lot, also

older theories and then remodels them. Lecturer Lehto selects the study materials and study material sources according to the course contents and outline. He first designs the course and then searches for a book which has similar contents, selecting the whole or parts of that particular book. Supportive material is sought from scientific articles of which copies are provided in Moodle, a web-based learning environment. Also the Internet is used as a study material source by Lehto.

Perspectives of students, graduates, employees and employers

Dr. Lee finds the question about how students' perspective is considered in marketing study modules hard because of the various backgrounds the students have. The course topic is digital marketing hence students come from both Business Administration and Information Technology departments. If an IT student works in marketing field, Lee finds it okay adding that one of the IT students in the course is in her opinion doing marketing, and for her the Lee imagines the point of view of a marketer. Hsieh wants to teach the students the latest trends, the best practices of research when executing the course. In SUOAS students' voice is heard in the course feedback, states Lehto. He wishes to receive more feedback from the students for it is important when planning individual course contents and objectives. Hsieh notes that in SCU there is an incentive for the students to give feedback, for if the whole class participates in the evaluation they will be rewarded.

Graduates' perspective is well taken into account in SCU according to Hsieh. SCU graduates were invited on the anniversary of the university to share how they are doing after entering the working life and share their opinion how to help current students succeed in their future work. In SUOAS the graduates are given the opportunity to give feedback through a question form about the quality of teaching, tells lecturer Lehto.

On employees' perspective Lee states that as technology trends and the industry are moving on so rapidly, they should be aware of current situation and how things might change. Hsieh sees that graduated students can give their

point of view as employees; students that work as interns in companies but still attend courses also are seen as an asset. The same view is shared by Lehto, as he explains that students who are working and studying at the same time usually take a practical viewpoint to matters and on a single lecture some of the needs of practical life can be addressed. Lehto would welcome a system where people that have studied in SUOAS were interviewed.

Lee finds employers' perspective most important of the four. Hsieh receives feedback by inviting employers to the committee meetings (see paragraph 6.2). Hsieh values the feedback from employers high in helping the students in the highly competitive job market; what kinds of skills or training should be enhanced in the program and thus how to modify the courses. As students do their internships in these employers' companies the feedback on their performance is instant. Sustainability is what lecturer Hänninen would like to build. He sees that in order for the school to benefit from the relationships with businesses the know-how in SUOAS has to be commercialized. That is what Luotsi project is about, developing from occasional assignments to sustainable relationships by providing better quality to the companies and coming up with new things, Hänninen explains. Lehto is also involved in launching the Luotsi project and is going to study the needs of local employers and how the teachers' expertise meets these needs in his pedagogical thesis as well.

6.3 Making the marketing study modules

Next question in the interview enquires that if a teacher wants to make amendments and additions to a study module and courses it comprises of: are they based on e.g. feedback or teacher evaluation, and how hard it is to change the study modules.

Lecturer Lehto states that the additions to the existing marketing study modules are based partly on student feedback, but mainly the feedback has influence in designing individual courses. In the previous year's development day, explains Lehto, it was noticed that different courses have similar contents. By combining these courses new three credit courses concerning today's relevant information

could be formed and added to the curriculum. To the question about how common it is to make additions and amendments Lehto answers that he has worked for SUOAS only for a year thus he can only guess and tell what he has learned in that year. After a year Lehto also has various ideas about how to alter his courses the next year although he thinks he has made many changes to the courses already. After making big changes to the curriculum in the last year's development day Lehto feels that perhaps fine tuning might be all that is needed this time.

When starting teaching in SCU after ten years of working in another school, Hsieh points out that he had to adjust his way of teaching greatly. Hsieh himself has changed his syllabuses considerably after transferring to SCU. Especially in the beginning it is important for the teacher to receive students' sometimes frank opinions on the courses, Hsieh stresses, and specifies that the value of the feedback lays in knowing what the student really need and then making adjustments to the teaching.

Lee expresses that the study modules in SCU are permanent but during the course breakthroughs in the field might reshape the syllabus slightly. Personally she likes to make changes and will share with the students what is happening in the industry at the moment; new trends or technologies. Some parts of the course outline might be left out during the course, as a planned field trip was in spring 2009 because of the shortness of the semester. Doing field trips is fun and they are good to have, good experiences to see for not only this course but also to see what is happening in Taiwan's IT field, Lee explains. She also notes that it is good to bring what is happening in the outside world inside the university.

International perspective

The most courses in SCU are taught in Chinese; hence international students cannot attend without superb language proficiency. Hsieh does not have any exchange students in his courses but confesses to loving cultural differences. He reveals that one important teaching he tries to include in his courses is

broaden students' thinking. In practice Hsieh will start his teaching with local and national perspective to introduce the topic to the students with familiar viewpoint. Only after that Hsieh will initiate other cultures and different nations to them, so the students can compare the way of doing marketing locally and then the way of doing it from the international perspective. Hsieh encapsulates that for his students to open up he wants them to be able to travel abroad in order to prepare themselves to embrace rather than reject or resent other cultures.

Lee notes that the international students in her courses give an international perspective to the class. She will ask the exchange students their opinions on what is happening in their home countries; different ideas and practices. Lehto will also occasionally ask exchange students' viewpoints to welcome global contents to the courses. Hsieh will ask his students to observe other parts of the world, as an example he uses the best new products being awarded in Germany designing association. By deliberating why this kind of product is appreciated internationally Hsieh finds the students will learn multidimensional thinking and local mindset is brought to a broader international mindset.

When asked if there is a perspective in their courses towards a certain part of the world, e.g. USA or China, the interviewees have various viewpoints. Lee finds that it is important to include all the parts of the world even though she educates future marketers in Taiwan for people should be aware of what is happening internationally. Hsieh describes the perspective through products; he feels a new product should be universal and the concept of a new product does not depend on its origin. The product should cross the barriers of culture it is; the people who interact with the product in different ways in Hsieh's opinion. In Lehto's courses the focus tends to be more on the western parts of the world, more particularly on Europe that he finds similar to United States. Asia and China are not considered as much. With previous experience of doing business in the developing countries Lehto would in the future like to design a course from that expertise area of his.

Benchmarking as an instrument

As lecturer Hänninen phrases, especially developing marketing requires communication. Hsieh uses his colleagues' assistance directly and indirectly as an indicator of his own teaching. Other teachers that are executing same courses can be browsed on the Internet, where Mr. Hsieh or anyone else can log on to and see other teachers' course materials and explanations on what and why they teach what they teach. He finds this helpful and uses other teachers' websites as a source of different approaches and perspectives on different ideas and materials. Additionally Hsieh might write to his colleagues to ask about the way they teach. Lee shares some concepts, like new trends with her colleagues too, although she expresses usually being the first one to introduce others what is happening in the field.

Lecturers Lehto and Hänninen do not do benchmarking with other universities or cooperative institutes, but Hänninen wants to be open with his colleagues because he sees the SUOAS organization as a team. Lehto would like to learn from others as well as share his knowledge and know-how with others. Lehto sees that there are two ways of playing in the team. There are resources assigned for benchmarking if a need for it is recognized, as Hänninen informs. Personally the lecturer does not go through curriculums or study plans in other universities of applied sciences, but sees that inside the organization, the direction is towards planning and doing together especially in marketing. It is more fruitful to work in small groups where the teachers' know-how comes together; more is accomplished than sitting alone behind one's desk Hänninen tells. Everyone should do one's share and be able to trust each other for the cooperation and exchanging work and skills, ideas and knowledge to succeed.

Lee is cooperating with a Taiwanese III, Institute for Information Industry in various ways. Also other Taiwanese universities work with the institute and this provides an opportunity for joint efforts and benchmarking. Lecturer Lee sees that it is important to share some thinking, ideas and also resources. Also Hsieh notifies that through publishing journal papers in several journals he is happy to share expertise.

Benchmarking can also be done through going abroad and seeing for oneself what is done in partner institutions. Welcoming foreign lecturers brings differing methods and viewpoints and provides alteration in courses for both students and lecturers. Lehto notifies that the Ministry of Education is monitoring the performance of Finnish educational institutes. Lehto mentions teachers are assigned a week of lecturing abroad. He is personally interested in going abroad to see what is done and how, in other schools in other countries and believes that usually lecturers spend one week abroad and then return home. In Lehto's opinion collaboration with universities with similar expertise area thus developing international point of view.

Hsieh implies that Taiwanese students' perspective is not in his opinion international enough and that it is important, considering the students' future, to broaden the perspective. Perhaps Taiwan's small square and relatively short history contribute to this. Hsieh describes the present situation in Taiwan by comparing ten per cent passage rate for high school graduates to be accepted to a university fifteen years ago; and the 150 universities that are competing today because of oversupply in higher education. Taiwanese universities and their success are monitored, similarly to how the Finnish Ministry of Education is monitoring how well educational institutes are performing.

Expertise updating

In SUOAS the school informs lecturers weekly of courses and seminars for the lecturers to attend, Lehto states and specifies that personally he has not had time to attend the courses yet because of other tasks but is interested in doing so in the future. Hänninen mentions that there are assigned hours when the lecturers are required to develop professional skills or prepare the lectures.

Lecturers Hänninen and Lehto tell that there are no mandatory trainings or courses for teachers in SUOAS, and assigned hours for developing oneself are not divided into pedagogical or expertise areas. The requirement is to spend assigned working time to develop oneself and choose freely how to do this, Lehto specifies. Enabling factors are: access to article databases where latest

articles in the field can be read; publishers who are eager to send the latest copies of diverse publications to teachers; and possible connections to the working life. In the field of marketing expertise updating is in the lecturer's hands. Lehto finds himself updating every time he is planning a new course, reading new and old publications and finding something new every time. Hänninen states that as he does a lot of reading economic magazines and publications, through trends forecasting of future products and services is possible. As Hänninen describes, through the development in environment everyone can forecast the direction where the world is going.

Forecasting trends and technologies is the reason Lee has planned the course Digital Marketing. In Lehto's courses best practices in current and past business are examined, for reflecting how things were done in the past shows students how the world changes and how new skills and ideas are required. Also the future is considered in Lehto's courses, but he finds that since there are no certainties of what will happen, merely different scenarios are examined.

Lecturer Lee tells that there are courses and trainings provided for the teachers to stay up to date but that during the semester she reads magazines and journals to get more information for self-improvement and during a longer summer break from lecturing she will attend the voluntary training. The professor's knowledge, expertise and know-how are based on real life not school, pedagogical studies are not as important for a university professor as for e.g. primary school teacher, Lee notes and continues that SCU sometimes invites outside professors to share experiences on teaching itself, teaching style etc. Hsieh also notes that the training is voluntary but that he attends out of personal interest. He finds that being a teacher is his own choice and as he wants to lecture he wants to do it well. The best way to do this in Hsieh's opinion is to have students that are interested in what he teaches, SCU does not require him to do basically anything of this sort. That is considered by Hsieh to contribute to why he has been satisfied working for SCU for so many years.

7 ANALYSING THE FINDINGS

Reliability of a research should be considered throughout the research process, choices, decisions, and how the decisions were made should be explained as well as the appropriateness of the decisions. Due to varying theoretical acquaintance and previous understanding different researchers might have concluded differently with the same rules of interpretation, although it should be possible to make the same conclusions that were result of this research. (Vilkka 2005, pp. 159-160.) With the same experiences and knowledge another researcher should come to the same conclusions that are presented in this thesis.

As was mentioned earlier in the text, for example a Taiwanese student would most probably have a different viewpoint because of different cultural and possibly educational background. Having studied in SCU as an exchange student and being a student of SUOAS for 3,5 years provides personal experience that is always somewhat unique. Objectivity has been pursued in the decisions made when conducting the research, therefore personal experience should not affect the reliability of the thesis.

7.1 International Marketing today in universities of applied sciences

Teaching depends greatly on the person who is doing the lecturing; some lecturers emphasize theory and others put more weight on practice. As universities of applied sciences offer alternative higher education preparing for practical expertise, it is also a form of education in which commitment to practice requires development of more structured theories; meaning that theory and practice belong seamlessly together. (Laitinen 2001, pp. 16-18.) Learning by doing should be emphasized in teaching new marketing trends too.

A decade ago in South Carelia Polytechnic the teachers argued that the degree programmes were topical, attractive and working life inspired. The following reasons were given: teachers have good connections to the working life; study plans are designed in cooperation with the working life; some of the lecturers have their own companies; students do practical training in the working life; the instruments are up to date; there is optionality; and customer based thinking is implemented (Laitinen 2001, p. 37). This is still true but not enough in today's world. The reasons that were given can apply to any school today, but also internationality, networking with the local actors not just companies, stressing communications, and specializing are nowadays a must.

Great expectations towards development and changes remain, and many endeavors are made to support as well as follow up with SUOAS development. According to Lehto (2009) there are still two kinds of teachers in SUOAS, the ones that innovate and share their know-how by collaborating, and the ones that might be afraid of sharing their expertise or do not find it necessary. In times when collaboration, interaction and networking are emphasized this can come across extremely undesired. The trend is to be proactive meaning that instead of reacting to given orders one should have the attitude of executing desired and necessary operational changes (Laitinen 2001, p. 55). Being proactive and innovative are necessities in implementing, developing, and teaching marketing, and so is communication as Hänninen pointed out.

7.2 Current International Marketing Education in SUOAS

Personal experience shows that courses in marketing often focus on Europe and European Union since many Finnish companies operate inside EU. The course material books are often written from the viewpoint of United States but other than that United States, Asia or China are not discussed. In SCU Europe was not of such importance but United States was examined as well as China, Japan, and Asia in a broader sense. In SUOAS the different backgrounds of students are not as noticed. If an assignment is done in groups, usually different nationalities are mixed in both SUOAS and SCU, but in SUOAS this or

students' national viewpoint is not emphasized as much. Internationality comes from the topics and assignments; not from the students.

The current SUOAS International marketing study module does not differ significantly from study modules in other schools examined. The similarity shows there are no inconvenient deviations to education offered elsewhere in Finland. The specialization in Russian trade identifies SUOAS profile. A person revising degree programme descriptions in different universities of applied sciences, might be attracted to SUOAS if interested in Russian trade. If there is no desire in specializing in Russian trade, SUOAS might not stand out from other universities of applied sciences. Additionally there are other universities of applied sciences that have focus on Russia. Finding a new innovative way to portray its offerings could prove profitable to SUOAS. A question that was asked earlier in the text was if UAS education should shift more focus on more liberal marketing education by adding creative problem solving and alternative ways of looking at the world to the study modules. Perhaps the education should combine different kinds of subjects to complement each other. This could be a guideline for making changes in the study modules.

Some of the schools studied have shifted their focus on culture, cultural differences and intercultural communications. Increased emphasis on the critical importance of cultural differences is something that should be considered in a degree programme that focuses on internationality. The objective is that graduates can communicate with people around the world; do business with them and do marketing with them. In SUOAS's curriculum, International marketing competence area, there are courses Managing Customer Relationships, and Marketing Communications. In competence area of Language and intercultural competence there are courses Business Correspondence, Business Negotiations, and Intercultural Communications. In International business competence area there is a course Global Operating Environment that contains introduction to sociocultural environment, as well as political and legal economic environment. From the point of view of marketing, communication is essential. Should it be emphasized more from this point of view?

Multidimensional and multicultural mindset can be obtained in many ways, also with the help of exchange or foreign students. In one of the courses in SCU exchange students presented their home country. This was a change to the usual course contents and provided the opportunity to show what is done in different fields in different countries. If the focus was on marketing and advertising, making these kinds of presentations in SUOAS would show students and lecturers the international perspective on how marketing is in various countries. This would not require welcoming guest lecturers from abroad; the exchange students already attend the course and could enrich the contents of the courses this way.

The trend in the working life today is working in various teams and especially in an international environment cooperating with people with different nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Students in degree programme in International Business have the opportunity to experience this while studying. In the working life it is impossible to choose the people to work with, thus it would be educating to form various groups where people with different cultural backgrounds and skills meet. As the same lecturers execute many courses to same classes, it is possible to the lecturer to learn specialties that the students possess and mix students with different interests and special skills, if the groups are not formed by students themselves and do not stay the same through the years. Personal experience shows that it is comfortable to work with the same group of people, not taking advantage of the experiences a multicultural class can offer.

It is not possible to compose such degree programme or curriculum that covers all the basics that a student needs to know about marketing, and include all next generation trends in the studies too. This is especially in degree programme in International Business which focuses on marketing only as one of the competence areas. If a student is working in three to five years after graduation it is possible that the next “new thing” is already there for learning and utilizing. But for students to know what “the thing” in marketing and advertising is at the time of studies, and in the becoming years, would enhance his or her possibilities when applying for a job and at time of promotion.

7.3 Teachers' perception of International Marketing and Study Modules

An interesting finding is the vast deviations in how the teachers understood and answered the interview questions. It proved to be a challenge to determine what particular topics to interpret and analyze. English was used as the language when conducting the interviews with three of the teachers although none of the participants are native English speakers. Hence some of the concepts were occasionally misunderstood or misused. It could have been explained in the beginning of the interview what is meant by a study module, course contents, and syllabus. Some specifying questions were made by the interviewees and the interviewer, but more specific questions set in the interview structure would have made the research more consistent.

In SCU the teachers can modify the courses relatively freely. Lecturers can quite freely design courses and formulate their contents according to their own expertise, interests, current times or perhaps students' wishes. It is only at the end of the previous semester when the students are informed of the courses that are being held next semester. In SUOAS the syllabus for three and a half years is finalized before a new year class starts, and is permanent. The courses are planned out and described broadly so that they can be modified according to the changes occurring in the field. Laitinen (2001, p. 23) stresses readiness to fast and surprising changes in order to serve individualized educational services; an university of applied sciences has to be flexible and for example not finalize whole educational supply for many years forward. However, students have wished for all degree programme contents for all academic years to be seen at the beginning of studies according to Laitinen (2001, p. 38). This is the way that is operated currently; every year class has a finalized curriculum when they begin their studies. The study modules, courses and course contents are fixed and changes can only be done only within these limits.

Making changes to the syllabuses, course outlines and contents varies depending naturally on the teacher, too. Both lecturers Hsieh and Lehto expressed that during and after the first year of teaching in their current positions, making great changes to the educational offering was desired. The

feedback from students has the largest influence on course outlines, and this feedback is valued as well as desired. In SUOAS the students are requested to give feedback and the number of provided feedback is monitored. Still it is implied that students are not active enough. This could change if the students understood that their feedback is valued and that it has an impact, if not on them at least on the next year class. In SCU the students are encouraged to give the feedback by a potential reward. When discussing the implementation of planning degree programmes, the opinions of lecturers, students and working life varied greatly.

According to the Development of teaching project's final report a decade ago students and working life did not find the planning as collaborative as lecturers did (Laitinen 2001, pp. 38-39). Presumably the findings would be fairly similar today, for the collaboration is not noticeable at least for an occasional student. Students' perspective is sought through feedback, most often on the Internet. This method can be argued for not being constructive; when the feedback is given via question form on the Internet the student and teacher do not discuss the matters. Clarifications cannot be made if the course has ended before giving the feedback. One way of changing this practice would be reserving one of the last lectures for constructive conversation and feedback both ways. Hsieh called for sometimes frank opinions which are easier to present on the Internet.

Taking students to participate in developing school culture and in appropriate strategy groups is encouraged also by Laitinen (2001, pp. 28, 60) in order to get a broader base for development work. Additionally mature students with a long working experience that are working and studying at the same time could be benefited from in SUOAS. Usually these kinds of students have classes in the evening but timetables could probably be set. Having the two kinds of students working together could prove to be very fruitful with collaboration of experience and new ideas. Hsieh discussed the link that has been built between students with long working experience and with no real life experience. Because all the parties benefit from this kind of a model it should be considered.

Using recently graduated students as experts on how the education has served them, could be a useful asset to the schools. The graduates could discuss with both the teachers and students, during a lecture on a topic of the course or e.g. during the tutorials. Laitinen (2001, p. 29) sees the functionality of graduates' educational competence as a natural component of surveillance. Some Bachelor's theses discuss how students succeed after graduation and some graduates tell their former teachers how they are doing in the working life, but a consistent surveillance would show SUOAS what was successful in the education and what the graduates suggest could be taught to the next generations.

Collaboration with other faculties, departments, and local actors

In SCU not only lecturers but also students, graduates and representatives from working life are invited to share ideas of what is required from the education in the future. This brings in the dimension that is widely emphasized in Finnish UAS education, cooperation with working life. In Taiwan both of the interviewees are constantly doing scientific research of their own. Additionally at least Dr. Lee intensively cooperates with the working life. These are ways to be on top on the field and know what are the needs and hopes of the students' future employers. Hsieh also expressed wanting to establish a center where all the departments could benefit from each other. As an example he uses combining fashion design students' products and marketing students' skills.

Lehto brought out the conversations about using experts from other fields than marketing. This would give insights to how marketing interacts with other operations in a company. Also combining technical and business studies has been discussed previously in the text. Kotler (2005, pp. 38-39) calls for specialists that master accounting and finance, technology, database marketing, telemarketing, CRM and customer profitability analysis, for companies need and strive for differentiation of products and services. Working together is natural when you have courses together, Hänninen noted but inter departmental collaboration was found problematic even a decade ago. Perhaps

the easiness would be found in working together, if collaboration was put into operation.

Lee is involved in many companies' research and development efforts thus gaining firsthand knowledge of what is happening in the industry worldwide. Hsieh participates in international development of his field. International perspective is therefore present in everyday life. He recommends students to keep up with typical journal papers that demonstrate the idea of a theory. All of the lecturers feel it is important for the students to make extensive group works in order to obtain understanding of how a marketing plan for example is carried out. The amount of work that is appointed per a course is given but within these boundaries the extent of required work might vary greatly. Additionally even bigger picture could be taken into account. A project comprising of multiple departments might provide deeper understanding of how operations are in a company. Understanding viewpoints of a marketing student could prove useful for a student specializing in corporate and financial law, and a marketing student could be interested in learning what an accountancy student finds important.

In Finland both lecturers interviewed are involved in commercialization of the student bases' know-how, establishing the Luotsi project. Inter-departmental cooperation is not emphasized, for the Luotsi project is intended for Business Administration students, graduating marketing students to be precise. Luotsi project depiction (2010) states benefits of the project as reacting to changes and needs of local business life, cultivating students' entrepreneurship skills, cultivating the quality of teaching, and strengthening the working life inspired methods of studying. In the interviews it was implied that this project could expand to concerning other departments which would benefit the school in various ways. Connections to economic life are stressed, required by law even, and building networks between local companies and the school necessary. Including one degree programme is the way to introduce the project but in the long-run it might prove narrow. The networks and connections can benefit everyone in SUOAS and all that SUOAS has to offer should be elicited.

However, Laitinen (2001, p. 16) explicates the findings in surveys made approximately a decade ago in polytechnics in Jyväskylä, Tampere and Turku. All of those polytechnics pursued continuous interactive rapprochement of education and working life. It can be argued that since the objectives have remained for nearly a decade, sufficient efforts to attain this are questionable. It is relevant to ask if including working life is meant to be done by including examples or the actual working life representatives and cases for actual companies. Including real life cases in study modules might narrow down the width of cases but would strengthen the connections between SUOAS and the local economic life.

Practical training is still a place for collaborating with the businesses with local international competence, but it should not be the only link. Practical training can provide an opportunity for lecturers to network too. At present the collaboration between employer's representatives and school's representatives seems minimal as only papers might be exchanged between the place of work and school. Laitinen (2001, p. 78) has found that the working life wishes more participation from teachers and that both working life and teacher benefit for the teacher has a live connection to the working life and can in return share knowledge of present practices in education. Perhaps visiting the workplaces during practical trainings provided a natural basis for discussion about how the current education is perceived, what the companies wish from the UAS, what is happening in their field at the moment, and how the collaboration could continue. In addition to being a chance to do some marketing of SUOAS, making these kinds of visits would raise students' self-assurance, and build as well as maintain relationships.

Expertise in various fields

In SCU exchange students were able to attend the course Digital Marketing. The topics in the course (e.g. mobile marketing, blogging, games, digital media, digital point-of-sale, Web 2.0, consumer created content, and IPTV) are relevant and not examined on such a micro level in SUOAS, where the focus is directed on digital value chain. As social media is highlighted currently in the field of marketing, learning these characterizations could prove useful in SUOAS too. In SCU also IT students attended the course Digital Marketing, but since inter departmental collaboration is promoted this could be considered in SUOAS as well. (SCU courses on marketing 2009; SUOAS Soleops 2009.)

Knowing what is being done in other educational institutes and outside world is essential if being up to date is desired. Benchmarking can manifest itself in examining the best practices of other universities of applied sciences or other lecturers, from same field or another. Laitinen (2001, p. 56) notes that learning from others can be done by e.g. going to see how other faculties operate, what and how things are taught elsewhere. Laitinen (2001, p. 40) states that lecturers were somewhat reluctant to go and teach in other faculties than their own, reasons for this were e.g. economical factors, curricular difficulties, the familiarity of one's own faculty, long distances, and purely not being interested. Inviting guest lecturers from other universities of applied sciences, or even other SUOAS faculties and from abroad, would broaden the viewpoints of students as well as lecturers, and provide an opportunity for benchmarking. It is possible that inviting guest lecturers encouraged SUOAS lecturers to share their expertise elsewhere. Lehto (2009) expressed that at the moment, in his opinion, lecturers mostly go abroad only for the required time that is one week.

A lecturer should update his or her expertise in order to provide valuable education. Expertise in both the lecturer's field and in pedagogical competence requires improvement that can be acquired in various ways. Laitinen (2001, pp. 63-65) has called for developing skills and sensitiveness as an instructor, encourager and external enabler, and a dedicated lecturer is regarded as giving immediate feedback, exploring various educational stimuli, and means to

differentiate. Laitinen states as well that lecturers' pedagogical skills should be continuously updated and the know-how that is already in the house taken advantage of.

Every lecturer has their own background and personal competences that they capitalize, but is it possible for everyone to benefit from the competences? Is the network inside the school extensive and intensive enough to ensure everyone can practice their particular expertise? If and when the same lecturer executes a course for many years could something be left unnoticed, when another person could provide new, diverse perspective? In SCU both interviewees told they will make changes to every course in order to stay focused and interested in what they teach. This did not come up in the interviews in SUOAS. Perhaps this was self-evident or if there are changes they are not planned as knowingly as in SCU.

8 CONCLUSIONS

All in all there were no remarkable deviations in the curriculums examined. In the interviews lecturers expressed similar perceptions and methods on teaching marketing. After all marketing is a universal science, even if efficient implementation of marketing is always locally customized (Kotler 2005, p. 3).

Universities of applied sciences have their own specialties that should be reflected in the education, in SUOAS it is most seemingly Russian trade. For a student not specializing in Russian trade the curriculum provides an opportunity to learn more about eBusiness, Business Projects, and Marketing Cases for example. As is seen in other universities of applied sciences, in SUOAS's curriculum for degree programme in International Business the focus alternative to Russian trade could be communication, or technology. It is interesting that Oulu UAS (2009) curriculum contains multiple elective courses concerning technology; and so does the curriculum in Haaga-Helia (2009). It was suggested that some similar competence areas could be adapted to SUOAS as well.

Also there are offered courses about business EU and Asia. Lehto (2009) mentioned the desire to exploit his personal experience in developing countries, which could be a very successful topic for an elective, and later on even a compulsory course. The competence areas and study modules are of unique design compared to other universities of applied sciences. They are easy to comprehend, easier than some other ones provided by Finnish universities of applied sciences, but in some ways familiar and predictable. A proposition to portray its offerings could be made even if the contents of the curriculum remain the same.

In the future an interesting topic for studying is if the marketing study modules have changed, what has/has not been done, and why. Also regular surveillance of graduates has been suggested in the research. Examining what potential students look for in SUOAS degree programme in International business would be of help in building the schools image and attractiveness of studying in SUOAS.

The local economic life has to be considered in many aspects that have been presented in the research. The findings encourage using local expertise in the planning and implementing of courses, and making students' abilities more available to the outer actors, near or far. Networking through collaborating projects and practical training should be considered, for the benefits could be remarkable. It has also been discussed that lecturers themselves find various teaching methods as one measure of quality. Making the research showed that there is strong will in SUOAS to stay up to date. Especially in the field of marketing it is essential and a constant challenge to meet.

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TEACHER INTERVIEW

Date:

Name:

Profession:

Status:

Employer:

Courses:

1. Background

- a. Educational background?
- b. Nature of employment (full-time/ part-time/ visiting, ...)?
- c. Previous experience in teaching?

2. Courses

- a. Number (current, on average; required/ voluntary)?
- b. Number of students?
- c. Most important contents?
- d. Correspondence with other teachers?
 - i. courses (marketing, business, other substantial courses)
 - ii. other schools
- e. Correspondence with working life?
 - i. visiting lecturers
 - ii. visiting companies
 - iii. real life situations

3. Course contents

- a. Course outline (design by whom)?
- b. Course contents (design by whom)?
- c. Study material sources (books/ subject publications/ Internet/ magazines/ ...)?
- d. Emphasis on?
 - i. theory (best known/ most recent/ most interesting/ ...)
 - ii. practice (case studies/ student works/ ...)

4. Marketing study modules

- a. How permanent?
- b. Level of details?
- c. Perspective (how are the following considered)?
 - i. Students
 - ii. Graduates
 - iii. Employees

- iv. Employers
 - d. Amendments (feedback, teacher evaluation, how common)?
 - i. during the semester
 - ii. during the course
 - e. Benchmarking (with other teachers, universities, cooperative institutes)?
- 5. International marketing study modules
 - a. International perspective?
 - b. Differentiation from basic marketing study modules?
 - i. national vs. international
 - ii. worldwide perspective
 - iii. emphasis on MNE's, international markets, ...
- 6. Expertise updating
 - a. Required/ voluntary?
 - b. Educational?
 - i. pedagogical
 - ii. in the field of Marketing
 - c. Training, tutorials, etc provided by employer?
 - d. Staff mobility?
- 7. University
 - a. Initiative for courses/ course outlines (by whom)?
 - b. Emphasis on?
 - i. theory
 - ii. practice
 - iii. professors expertise (education / real-life experience/ other requirements)
- 8. Others
 - a. Notifications?
 - b. Additions?