



# **GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

## **A CASE STUDY ON THE COMPETENCES TO EFFECTIVELY LEAD INTERNATIONAL TEAMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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December 20st, 2017

# Title page

Global leadership in a higher education institution

Master thesis

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Master of Business Administration – HRM

December 20st, 2017

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## Preface

This master thesis proposal is part of the Master Business Administration, specialization Human Resource Management and will be reviewed and graded for the purpose to obtain the Master of Science Degree in Business Administration.

This master thesis proposal focuses on the subject internationalization in a higher education institution. Internationalization is a broad construct that could be operationalized and used in multiple ways. To ensure the scope and quality of this research, the focus of this report will be specifically on leading international research teams in higher education.

Exactly one and a half year ago, I came back from my half-year internship at an HR department in Malta. What I did not know before, is that it would have been the most rewarding and valuable experience in my life. Choosing for an internship abroad seemed as an excellent opportunity to become more independent and grow in both personal and professional development. However, in the first weeks I had a lot of sleepless nights and became homesick. I could not get used to the organizational culture I worked in and felt not supported by my manager. Besides, the Maltese language was the common informal language to communicate which consequently resulted in a distance between me and my co-workers. At this point, it was up to me: I could either choose to go home or try to change my attitude toward the situation and attempt to adapt to it. This latter was what I did and after some honest conversations with my co-workers, it appeared that they were not even aware of their behaviour and my fear of not fitting in. It opened the eyes of everyone. During the internship, I expanded my knowledge and skills and gained many new learning experiences out of a challenging (cultural) environment. My stay in Malta made me never stop trying, never stop believing and never give up.

My personal experiences with being abroad are the motivation to write a master thesis on the subject of internationalization. In the end, I felt really blessed with all the love and support I got from my co-workers. However, it is loud and clear that this could have worked out quite different as well. People should be aware of the presence of their foreign employees and should support them to adapt to the (new) work environment and culture. The increasingly changing population of people working in higher education institutions makes my story and the subject of internationalization very relevant.

During the process of writing this master thesis proposal, I faced some difficulties. Especially the process of achieving a clear research focus has been challenging. Besides, I had to deal with some serious personal issues as well. Sometimes, I was very close to giving up because I just felt myself not able to do it. However, I soon realized that the greatest glory in life is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall. I would like to thank Dr. A. Bos-Nehles for her feedback, support and guidance during this process. Besides, I want to thank my best friend Iris Uitvlugt for conducting a part of this research together and for always being there to help me.

Denise Arends,  
20-12-2017  
Almelo

## Abstract

This research aims to understand which competences are most effective to lead international teams in higher education institutions. The literature on global leadership forms the basis of this study. Global leadership refers to the process of influencing the thinking, attitudes and behaviors of an international community to work together towards a common vision and common goals. Those universal qualities that enable individuals to perform this job, are called global leadership competences. There are five dimensions of global leadership competences identified in this study. The first dimension, Global academic expertise, refers to the leaders' ability to understand and deal with the complexity of the international academic environment. The second dimension, Global team building, refers to the ability to build teams effectively in global contexts. The third dimension, Visioning, refers to the ability to vision where the institution and the team should go and the capability to motivate others to strive to achieve that vision. The fourth dimension, Cross-cultural relationship skills, refers to the ability to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships in cross-cultural contexts. The last dimension, Cognitive orientation, refers to the ability to change the own thinking and behavior depending on the circumstance.

An explorative single case study performed in a University in the east of the Netherlands explored several competences and practices that leaders possess and use to effectively lead international teams. In-depth interviews were held with 20 managers of the most internationally diverse teams of the university and document analysis added further data. The research shows that team leaders possess several competences that can be categorized to one of the above mentioned dimensions of global competence. Also related practices were identified that support a specific competence. An interesting insight of this study is the fact that the global competence development in leaders of international teams in higher education institutions follows a bottom-up approach. Working in the scientific field requires an academic to be globally oriented. Therefore, team leaders of international teams in higher education institutions consider working in an international scientific environment as something natural. To deal with the international and intercultural environment effectively, team leaders have developed their own competences without a leading (institutional) vision behind it. This insight suggests that in higher education institutions, there is less priority for profiling necessary human resources and required competences of global leaders needed to fulfill the specific job.

This study contributes to science by expanding the literature, since global leadership has so far never been studied in the setting of a higher education institutions. The results of this study reveal the competences and practices leaders owe and use to effectively lead international teams in higher education institutions. The practical implications mainly focus on the role of HRM in the process of competence development in global leaders in higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** Internationalization, Higher Education Institutes, Global leadership, Global leadership competences, Human Resource Management

## Table of contents

Title page .....	2
Preface .....	3
Abstract.....	4
Table of contents .....	5
Chapter 1. Introduction .....	7
1.1 Relevance .....	7
1.2 Research objective and question.....	8
1.3 Theoretical and practical contribution .....	8
1.4 Structure of the report .....	8
Chapter 2. Literature review .....	9
2.1 Globalization and internationalization .....	9
2.2 Internationalization in higher education .....	9
2.3 Global leadership .....	10
2.4 Global leadership dimensions of competence .....	10
2.4.1 Global business expertise .....	12
2.4.2 Global organizing expertise.....	12
2.4.3 Visioning .....	12
2.4.4 Cross-cultural relationship skills .....	12
2.4.5 Cognitive orientation.....	13
2.5 Schematic overview .....	14
Chapter 3. Methodology .....	15
3.1 Research objective .....	15
3.2 Research method.....	15
3.3 The case .....	15
3.4 Data collection procedure .....	16
3.5 Selecting of participants.....	17
3.6 Operationalization .....	17
3.7 Data analysis .....	19
Chapter 4. Findings .....	20
4.1 Global business expertise.....	20
4.1.1 Eagerness to work in an international environment .....	20
4.1.2 Managing international interactions .....	20
4.1.3 Accepting the complexity and its contradictions .....	21
4.1.4 Results-orientation .....	21
4.1.5 Summary of the section .....	22
4.2 Global organizing expertise .....	22
4.2.1 Team building skills .....	22
4.2.2 Summary of the section .....	23
4.3 Visioning.....	23

4.3.1 Articulating and communicating a tangible vision .....	23
4.3.2 Summary of the section .....	23
4.4 Cross-cultural relationship skills .....	23
4.4.1 Cultural sensitivity .....	23
4.4.2 Appreciating diversity .....	24
4.4.3 Cross-cultural communication skills .....	24
4.4.4 Managing cultural integration .....	24
4.4.5 Developing others .....	25
4.4.6 Summary of the section .....	25
4.5 Cognitive orientation .....	26
4.5.1 Cosmopolitan outlook.....	26
4.5.2 Behavioral flexibility.....	26
4.5.3 Open-minded.....	27
4.5.4 Summary of the section .....	27
4.6 Critical approach on internationalization .....	27
4.7 Competency profile .....	28
Chapter 5. Discussion .....	30
5.1 Reflection on literature .....	30
5.1.1 Internationalization .....	30
5.1.2 Global academic expertise .....	30
5.1.3 Global team building.....	31
5.1.4 Visioning.....	31
5.1.5 Cross-cultural relationship skills .....	31
5.1.6 Cognitive orientation.....	32
5.2 Theoretical implications .....	32
5.2.1 Importance of the dimensions .....	33
5.2.2 Interrelations.....	34
5.3 Practical implications and recommendations.....	35
5.3.1 Recommendations for the Participating Organization.....	36
5.4 Limitations and future research .....	38
Chapter 6. Conclusion .....	39
References .....	40
Appendix 1. Interview Questions .....	43

# Chapter 1. Introduction

In this introduction chapter, it first becomes clear what the relevance is for conducting this research. Thereafter, the research objective and question are described. The third paragraph discusses the theoretical and practical contribution of this research. Finally, a brief description is given of the structure of this report.

## 1.1 Relevance

During the last decades, higher education has become a real part of the globalization process: the cross-border matching of supply and demand (Qiang, 2003). This has resulted in new trends in higher education that have cross-national implications, including mass higher education, a global marketplace for students, faculty and staff and the global reach of new technologies (Altbach, 2015). Consequently, higher education can no longer be viewed in a stringently national context. Internationalization of higher education is seen as a way to respond to the impact of globalization and is an important resource in the development of higher education towards an aligned system with international standards that is open and responsive to the global environment (Qiang, 2003). There are various meanings related to the term internationalization but the key element in the term is the notion of interaction between nations and cultural identities. The relationships with and the response to other countries and cultures is shaped by a nation's unique history and culture and thus national identity and culture are key to the internationalization of higher education (Qiang, 2003). Internationalization of higher education is described as *'the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution'* (Knight, 1993, p.21). At the institutional level, internationalization encloses the integration of international, intercultural and global dimensions into the ethos and outcomes of higher education (NAFSA, 2008).

The role of a leader appeared to be crucial for the process of internationalization to succeed since the most powerful obstacle occurs when leaders do not recognize it as relevant (Green, 2007). In this paper, a leader refers to a person who manages a research team in a certain faculty on a day-to-day basis. This leader has become increasingly responsible for performing HR activities by using HR practices on the operational work floor (Nehles, Van Riemsdijk, Kok & Looise, 2006). Therefore, the leader has an unquestioned crucial role in implementing internationalization because they are responsible for executing related practices on the operational level. However, literature suggest that some obstacles occur regarding the implementation, when leaders feel that they have no spare time to spend on their additional responsibilities, are not well supported by HR managers, policy and clear procedures and most importantly, do not have sufficient competences to apply the practices (Nehles et al. 2006). This latter has become even more complicated since the complexity and diversity of the global context is diffusing increasingly within the domestic environment of universities. This has resulted in a changing composition of the population of research teams. People with diverse backgrounds and cultures are working more together in teams and therefore a greater demand is made on the leadership competences to lead such an international team effectively (Jokinen, 2005). The construct of global leadership originally came out of the needs of organizations that need to adopt global strategies to compete in the global marketplace and therefore needed people with global capabilities to develop and implement the strategic initiatives (Mendenhall & Osland, 2002). Global leadership in this context refers to the behaviour of a leader in directing the activities of an international group towards a shared goal through communication and interpersonal influence (Cotae, 2013). It is the process of influencing the thinking, attitudes and behaviours of an international team to work together synergistically toward a common vision and goals that requires certain competences of a leader in order to be effective (Osland, Bird, Mendenhall & Osland, 2006). The diversity of research teams within universities requires leaders to learn about culture and to invest in cross-cultural communication (Harris & Moran, 1987). When leaders gain knowledge about cultures and are able to communicate across different cultures, they will be more able to work equally with people with diverse backgrounds and lead multicultural teams effectively (Moran & Riesenbergs, 1994). Consequently, it is necessary to create a better understanding of which personal qualities these leaders need to effectively lead international teams. Several leadership competences for business executives to succeed in a globalized work environment are already identified. A global leader should for instance create and maintain a corporate culture that transcends cultural differences and establishes values and attitudes that are comprehensible and compelling for employees with diverse backgrounds and

cultural differences (Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2002). However, we do not know yet which competences leaders of universities need to effectively lead international research teams.

## **1.2 Research objective and question**

The objective of this master thesis is to identify the leadership competences required to effectively lead international research teams within higher education institutions. Higher education institutions include traditional universities and professional-oriented institutions, which are called universities of applied sciences or polytechnics (Kettunen, Hautala & Kantola, 2009). In the previous introduction, it became clear that leaders have a crucial role in the implementation of an international dimension in a university because they are responsible for executing related practices on the work floor. The increasingly diverse labour force in research teams, forces a leader to use specific competences to influence the thinking, attitudes and behaviours of the team to work together towards a common vision and goals. To effectively lead in an international environment, a leader should possess particular global competences that are translated into techniques and activities that support the common goal of internationalization on the work floor. However, there is little research on which competences are most effective to lead international teams in higher education and therefore the following research question is drafted:

*Which leadership competences are most effective to lead international teams in higher education?*

## **1.3 Theoretical and practical contribution**

The identification of the competences used by institutional leaders to support and implement organizational strategies related to internationalization would help improve responses to global demands to nurture and develop the professionals and competences needed for higher education institutions in the economy of 21<sup>st</sup> century. The outcomes of these global leadership techniques will form the basis for more (international) research in higher education institutions on the development of leading effectively in an international context. This will contribute to the research conducted to tackle the challenges for higher education institutions that arise from the complexity of today's world. Besides, this research might contribute to research regarding the development of global leadership competences in higher education, including issues where developmental experiences can be found, what measures should be used to assess the level of competences in an individual and how desired competences can be retained within the university (Jokinen, 2005).

More practical outcomes of this study are the greater awareness of the role of a leader in the internationalization process. Universities would invest in the development of the global competences of leaders to better respond to the international needs with a sense of global responsibility. From a human resource development perspective, understanding of the global competences of leaders may provide the base for international training activities in which learning and education, instead of measurement and assessment of competences, is more important. Therefore, it should be considered what methods of training are most effective to improve the techniques and related variables and to whom should they be offered.

## **1.4 Structure of the report**

This thesis consists of six chapters. In this first introduction chapter, the relevance of the study is described, as well as the research question, objective and theoretical and practical contributions. The second chapter includes a theoretical background of the subject of global leadership and its related competences. The third chapter, describes the methodology which will be used to execute the research. This chapter contains information about the case, the research method, the way in which participants are selected, the data collection procedure and the analysing procedure. Chapter four follows with an overview of the findings. These findings are discussed in chapter five. In the last chapter a conclusion is given in which the research question is answered.



## Chapter 2. Literature review

This chapter provides a theoretical background of internationalization and global leadership and its associated competences. First, it is explained what internationalization is and what it means for higher education institutions. Thereafter, a literature review is developed on the subject of global leadership and its associated competences. Finally, a research model is given that summarizes the literature and will be used for conducting this research.

### 2.1 Globalization and internationalization

Globalization and internationalization are often used interchangeably but have very different meanings. Globalization refers to uncontrollable world-wide phenomena (Altbach, 2015) and can be seen as the flattening of the world in which globalized trade, outsourcing and political forces will have an ongoing and increasing impact on all organizations and practices (Friedman, 2005). It reflects the context of economic and academic trends, that are part of the 21st century (Altbach & Knight, 2007). There are many definitions and interpretations of the term globalization but the right definition should be based on the political, economic or environmental context in which the term is used (Sullivan, 2011). Generally, globalization is seen as the flow of knowledge, technology and economy across borders that affect each country in a different way due to its characteristics (Sullivan, 2011). This emphasizes the influence of values, ideas and culture as unique characteristics and consequently, its impact on higher education. From a higher education perspective, globalization can be defined as “the economic, political and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p.290).

Internationalization refers to strategies, practices and policies implemented by countries, institutions or individuals to deal with the global trends (Altbach, 2015). The term has been increasingly used to describe the process of the growing involvement of organizations in international markets (Sullivan, 2011). It can be conceptualized at several levels, including world, national, state, community, organization and individual. Studies provided by business experts give an idea of the relevance of internationalization in higher education. Universities are at the centre of research and innovation and therefore can benefit a nation and the whole world (Sullivan, 2011).

### 2.2 Internationalization in higher education

In the context of higher education, internationalization is a way to respond and cope with the forces of globalization (Altbach, 2015). More than ever, the nature of education implies an international perspective (Sullivan, 2011). International competences in the open world of today have become a necessity, rather than an option and universities must educate and transform on a large scale in human experience to function effectively and comfortably in a world that is characterized by multicultural relationships (Bartell, 2003). Universities have to educate students the skills and abilities to be global citizens and also have to compete in the global marketplace of knowledge. In this paper, internationalization refers to “*the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution*” (Knight, 1993, p.21). A close related definition is given by Crisan-Mitra and Borza (2015), who stated that “the internationalization of higher education at national and institutional level in any country must be understood as the process of integrating an international intercultural or global dimension within the main functions of education system” (p. 187). Internationalizing higher education must involve active and responsible engagement of the academic community to be successful (NAFSA, 2008). Institutional strategies for internationalizing are for example the inclusion of an international dimension in the institutional mission and vision and financial support for student and faculty internationalization (Sullivan, 2011). International education and internationalization are sometimes used as synonyms. However, international education typically refers to activities of language study and international-focused courses, whilst internationalization can involve many different strategies, initiatives and stakeholders (Osland et al. 2006).

In the process of internationalization, stakeholders can either be a barrier or motivator (Sullivan, 2011). Different studies have showed that institutions that are more successful in internationalization have leaders who are enthusiastic and supportive and communicate the global vision to faculty and staff consistently (Green, 2007). Therefore, the leader should use an approach that emphasizes the creation of a culture of climate that values and supports internationalization and intercultural

perspectives and initiatives. A leader using this approach acknowledges that the working internationally is fundamental to the definition of an university and believes that without a strong belief system and supportive culture, the international dimension of an institution will never be realized (Qiang, 2003).

### **2.3 Global leadership**

With the rise of globalization, organizations and institutions face complex challenges related to leadership. Since the dynamics, complexity and diversity of the global context of today is diffusing increasingly into the domestic environment, a greater demand is made on the management and leadership competences at all organizational levels (Jokinen, 2005). Understanding international interaction is crucial for transnational organizations and the level of this understanding is related to the possession of international or global competences within an organization (Gupta & Govindarjan, 2002). Organizations need to adopt global strategies to compete in the global marketplace and therefore need people with global capabilities to develop and implement these initiatives (Mendenhall & Osland, 2002). These leaders are called global leaders and are distinguished by their willingness to leave their country or origin and take on new assignments that may require using a new language or adapting to a new culture (Folkman, 2014). The motivation to work in an international environment is clearly crucial for global leadership and refers to the commitment and willingness to exercise different global leadership competences in new situations (Jokinen, 2005). It is a fundamental factor that might affect the career choice since some people find their working environment conflicting with the own values, which will result in feelings of unrest and less productivity (Schein, 1985). Higher education institutions also become more globally oriented and administrative leadership seems fundamental to facilitates this (Fisher & Koch, 1996). The concept of global leadership in higher education institutions is still under-researched and therefore I will use the global leadership literature which is based on business organizations.

Global leadership can be defined as a process of influencing the thinking, attitudes and behaviours of an international community to work together towards a common vision and common goals (Adler, 2001). The term 'global' not only encloses here the simple geographic reach in business operations but also includes the notion of cultural reach in terms of people and intellectual reach in the development of a global mindset (Osland et al. 2006). The global context that shapes and challenges this type of leader is characterized by issues such as:

- multiplicity across a range of dimensions,
- interdependence among stakeholders and sociocultural, political, economic and environmental systems,
- ambiguity in terms of understanding causal relationships, interpreting signals, identifying appropriate actions and pursuing reachable goals, and
- flux in terms of quickly transitioning systems, shifting values and emergent patterns of organizational structure and behavior (Lane, Maznevski, Mendenhall & McNett, 2004).

### **2.4 Global leadership dimensions of competence**

The concept of global leadership can be approached by asking two questions: what capabilities do global leaders need to acquire in order to be effective? And: how can leaders most effectively develop these characteristics? (Osland et al. 2006). Several stakeholders, including researchers and HR departments, are all attempting to define the parameters of global leadership and global mindset. They want to find the characteristics and capabilities of individuals to determine how they can be developed in both individuals and organizations (Osland et al. 2006). The development of global competence in leaders is acknowledged as a high priority for most organizations and having a global mindset is identified as a prerequisite to manage transnational organizations effectively (Suutari, 2002; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1992). The process of competence development starts with an analysis of the global business environment and core competences, followed by the identification of the profiles of necessary human resources and ends with a profile of the required competences needed for a specific job or function (Jokinen, 2005). Global leadership competences are seen as *'those universal qualities that enable individuals to perform their job outside their own national as well as organizational culture, no matter what their educational or ethnical background is, what functional area their job description represents or what organization they come from'* (Jokinen, 2005, p.201).

The list of identified global leadership competences by empirical and non-empirical research is tremendous. McCall and Hollenbeck (2002) for example identified several competences by interviewing 101 executives from 36 countries. They found open minded and flexible, culture interest and sensitivity, cognitively complex, resilient, resourceful, optimistic, energetic, honesty and integrity, stable personal life and value-added technical or business skills as the most important global competences. Yeung and Ready (1995) found that the following capabilities as most important for a global leader: articulate vision, values and strategy, catalyst for strategic and cultural change, empower others and results and customer oriented. Consequently, Black, Morrison and Gregersen (1999) interviewed 130 senior line and HR executives in 50 companies all over the world and identified inquisitive character, duality and savvy as the most important global leader capabilities.

A lot of researchers have tried to review the empirical and non-empirical literature on global leadership competences since previous studies all came up with a different list of competences, identifying hundreds of different competences. Therefore, researchers tried to find dimensions of global leadership competences in order to make assessment more effective and easy. Goldsmith, Greenberg, Robertson and Hu-Chan (2003) for example held interviews with 28 CEO's and an unspecified number of current and future global leaders from various firms and identified fourteen different global leadership dimensions, including: integrity, constructive dialogue, shared vision, developing people, building partnerships, sharing leadership, empowerment, thinking globally, appreciating diversity, technologically savvy, customer satisfaction, maintaining competitive advantage, personal mastery and anticipating opportunities. Also Mendenhall and Osland (2000) tried to find overlap across the list of 56 global leadership competences they identified. They concluded that global leadership is a multidimensional construct with at least six core dimensions of competences, including: cross-cultural relationship skills, traits and values, cognitive orientation, global business expertise, global organizing expertise and visioning. These latter core dimensions have been used by Osland and colleagues (2006) to further categorize the identified competences of many empirical and non-empirical research. They reviewed a long list of previous research on global leadership and used the upper dimensions for their model as shown in figure 1.

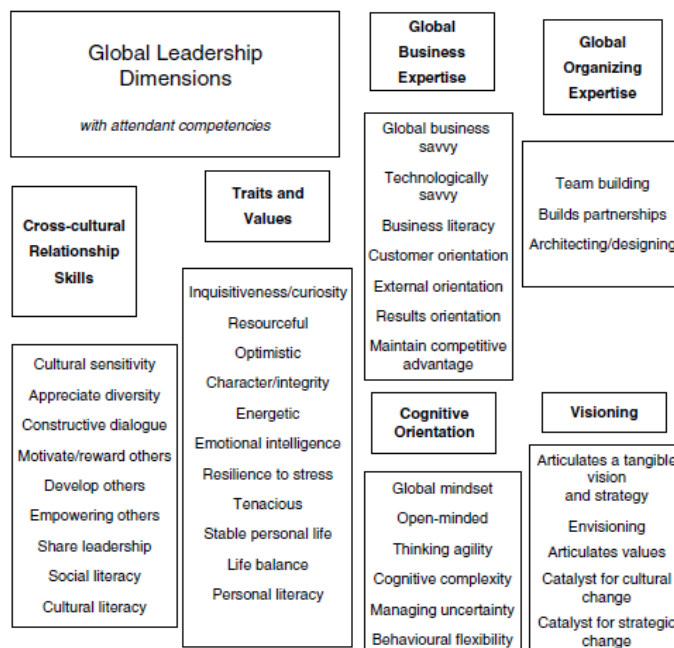


Figure 1. Categorization of global leadership competences (Osland, Bird, Mendenhall & Osland, 2006)

The upper model shows the six global leadership dimensions as identified by Mendenhall and Osland (2000) with attendant competences. With the exception of the dimension Traits and Values, I used these dimensions to further explain some identified global leadership competences of many empirical and non-empirical studies. However, since the list of identified competences is tremendous, only some examples of related competences are given. The dimension Traits and Values is excluded in this research because of its main focus on the character and personal life of the leader which is beyond

the scope of this research. I acknowledge the importance of this dimension but including this dimension will threaten the study's validity of measuring competences to effectively lead an international team. The remaining five dimensions will be further explained in the paragraphs below.

#### **2.4.1 Global business expertise**

Global business expertise refers to the ability of a leader to deal with complexity and understand the bigger picture (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002; Tubbs & Schulz, 2006). It is about having business and organizational acumen. There are several competences related to this dimension. First, a leader must accept the complexity and its contradictions. Acceptance of complexity and its contradictions describes a personal attitude towards the ambiguous and unpredictable (Jokinen, 2005). It is defined as seeing opportunity in adversity, using diversity to stimulate creativity, and being capable to lead life on many levels (Srinivas, 1995). Besides, a leader must be able to create creative solutions in the complex environment and switch their focus of concentration quickly from one thing to another (Jokinen, 2005). Also having global business and technological savvy are identified as important competences related to this dimension. This refers to the leaders' understanding of business environments and growth drivers (institutional, geographic, cultural and economic) that operate in and between countries and the knowledge about modern technology, especially computer (Osland et al. 2006). Business literacy refers to leadership roles such as being a business geographer, economic integrator and chaos navigator (Rosen, Digh, Singer & Philips, 2000). Also being customer-, external-, and results-oriented as a leader are competences categorized to this dimensions. Customer-orientations refers to the ability to take action whilst considering client needs and satisfy their major priorities. External-orientation refers to the ability to identify the forces out there in the world and the needs and opportunities that can be exploit. Having a results-orientation refers to the ability to consistently deliver required business results, set and achieve goals and meet deadlines (Osland et al. 2006). Finally, a leader must be responsive to change, balance short- and long-term considerations, understand interdependence and manage a budget on a worldwide basis (Bird, 2013).

#### **2.4.2 Global organizing expertise**

Global organizing expertise refers to leadership skills relating to organizing and structuring human and administrative processes in global contexts (Mendenhall, 2006). There are several competences related to this dimension. First, team leaders should have great networking skills in order to build and maintain networks (Srinivas, 1995). Besides, leaders must build partnerships and alliances (Brake, 1997; Goldsmith & Walk, 1999), pursue partnerships actively, build connections, create internal networks and build communities (Brake, 1997). Also team building is identified as an important competence related to this dimension (Osland et al. 2006). This refers to the ability of building teams that offer the best functional expertise from around the world. Therefore, leaders draw on the benefits of international diversity by bringing together people from many cultures with varied work experiences and different perspectives on organizational challenges (Neeley, 2015). All this helps leaders to compete in the international business environment.

#### **2.4.3 Visioning**

Visioning refers to the leader's ability to discern where an organization should go and the capability to rally subordinates to strive to achieve the vision (Mendenhall, 2006, p. 424). Having this ability help leaders to make better decisions, solve problems and improve relationships. There are several competences related to this dimensions. First, a leader must articulate a tangible vision and strategy (Osland et al. 2006). Besides, a leaders must be good in envisioning which mean picturing mentally a future event or events (Osland et al. 2006). A leaders also must have good Change Management and strategic skills (Bird, 2003). This refers to the process, tools and techniques to manage people in times of change to achieve a required outcome and the ability of setting a clear strategy and vision for a company and realizing that vision through small reachable goals. Lastly, leaders must have an entrepreneurial spirit and be good in inspiring and empowering others (Mendenhall & Osland, 2002).

#### **2.4.4 Cross-cultural relationship skills**

The cultural differences within global organizations have created some challenges for global leadership. Leaders nowadays should have cross-cultural relationship skills which refer to the ability to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships in global/cross-cultural contexts (Mendenhall, 2006). Therefore, a leader must be able to understand people from different cultures and engage with them effectively. A main priority of a global leader is to establish and maintain a corporate culture that

exceeds cultural differences and establish values and attitudes that are comprehensible and compelling for employees with diverse backgrounds (Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2002). Therefore, leaders should have desired competences that affect the way a leader attempts to influence others and approaches a certain task (Jokinen, 2005). Since the list of associated competences is tremendous, some examples are given below.

First, a leader should be cultural sensitive which refers to the awareness and sensitivity of other practices and cultures and the acknowledgement that cultural differences exist without assigning them a value (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002). Closely related to this is the ability to appreciate diversity which is about acknowledging and accepting cultural differences (Goldsmith et al. 2003). Consequently, a leader should have cross-cultural communication skills which refer to the understanding of the impact of cultural factors on behavioral communication and the ability to effectively deal with that (Harris & Moran, 1987). Besides, a leader should have the ability to motivate and empower others in order to give people the means to take more control in their work and lives and become even better and more independent (Yeung & Ready, 1995). Also developing others is a very important competence of a global leader which refers to sharing knowledge, skills or expertise with others as well as coaching others and encourage them to take steps in both their personal and professional development (Osland et al. 2006). Therefore, it is crucial to have good social skills to inspire with a personal vision and find a common ground with all kinds of people (Goleman, 2000). Being empathic for example, has a strong impact on the ability to cope and connect with complex situations and people from different backgrounds (Jokinen, 2005). Also social judgment skills are fundamental for recognizing and accepting the differences of the bigger picture without making value judgments. These skills refer to the ability of a leader to switch perspectives and understand global influences (Brake, 1997). Lastly, global leaders must sometimes share their leadership in order to be effective in the international and intercultural environment (Goldsmith et al. 2003). This means that leaders distribute their leadership responsibilities, such that people within a team or organization lead each other. By doing this, employees will feel more empowered and self-controlled, which will result in more engagement of team members, more team cohesion, trust and a higher level of consensus and satisfaction (Bergman, Rentsch, Small, Davenport & Berman, 2012).

#### **2.4.5 Cognitive orientation**

Cognitive orientation refers to the beliefs of a leader about self's, norms, goals and environments. It is about the personal attitudes and orientations. Cognition plays an active-dynamic role in regard to predicting and changing behavior (Kreitler & Kreitler, 1972). How well an individual observe and interpret the complex environment based on their cognition, determines their effectiveness to lead transnational organizations and groups (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002). There are several competences related to this dimension. First, a leader should think globally (Goldsmith & Walt, 1999). Adapting a global mindset appeared to be more important than refined structures and procedures and therefore, the global mindset is perceived as crucial to a transnational organization's strategy and success (Bartlett & Ghosal, 2002). Adapting a global mindset refers to the ability of a leader to develop and interpret criteria for personal and business performance that are independent from assumptions of a single culture or context; and to implement those criteria appropriately in different cultures and contexts (Maznevski & Lane, 2004, p. 172). Levy and colleagues (2007) state that global mindset is a cognitive structure that composes of two constructs: cosmopolitanism and cognitive complexity. Cosmopolitanism refers to a leader's enthusiastic appreciation of other cultures (Hannerz, 1996). A cosmopolitan leader is someone who is widely traveled and familiar with variety of cultures and ways of life. Having a cosmopolitan outlook is the main competence related to this construct and refers to having knowledge of cultures in different parts of the world, knowledge of geography, history and important personal of several countries and up-to-date knowledge of important world events (Thunderbird School of Global Management, 2017). Cognitive complexity refers to the leader's ability to perceive situations as highly differentiated and to integrate these differentiated constructs (Weick, 1996). In other words, it refers to how a leader looks at events, structures or experiences and how correctly this is analyzed based on how complex the cognition of thinking structures of leaders have become.

Another important competence related to this dimension is the ability to be open-minded (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002). This refers to the willingness to consider new ideas and the ability to being unprejudiced. Besides, global leaders should have thinking agility, which refers to being flexible in

thoughts and tactics when the situation requires it (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002). Also being able the flex behaviors is crucial for global leaders. This refers to the ability to flex the core behaviors in order to respond to each situation and circumstance in the most effective way (Osland et al. 2006). Lastly, leaders should have the capacity to manage uncertainty and being resilient to stress (Black et al. 1999).

## 2.5 Schematic overview

The model below represents a schematic overview of the literature above. The model shows the five global leadership dimensions of competence as discussed in the upper paragraphs and its relationship to the purpose of this study. The purpose of this study is to explore and identify which competences leaders use to effectively lead international teams in higher education. Therefore, the dimensions of competence as shown in figure 2, will be used to categorize the by research identified competences in order to conclude with a competence profile of leaders of international teams in higher education.

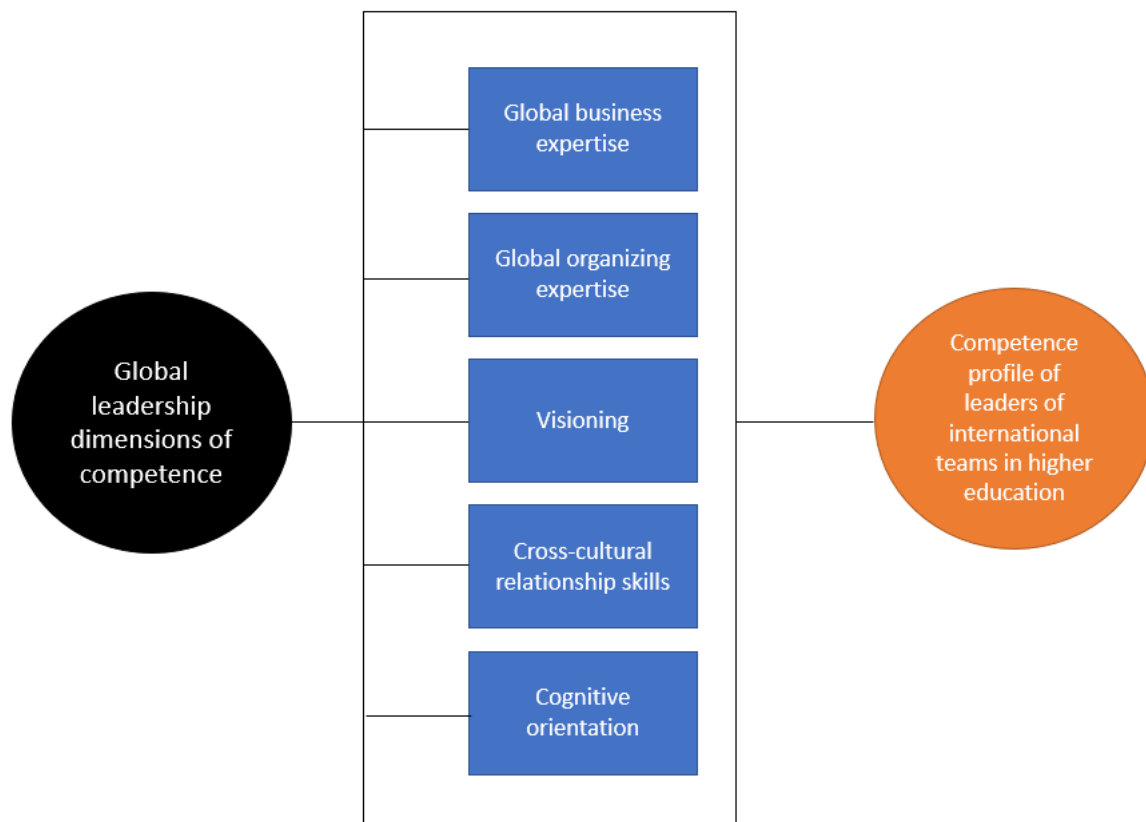


Figure 2. Schematic overview of literature

## Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter explains how the research is conducted. First, the objective of the research is described, followed by an elaboration on the research method: a single case study. Subsequently, the case in which the research is conducted is described. In the two following parts, a brief description is given of how data is collected and how participants are selected. Thereafter, an operationalisation table is presented with associated interview questions. The chapter ends with an description of how data is analysed.

### 3.1 Research objective

The research objective of this master thesis was to identify the competences used by leaders of international teams to lead effectively. It is assumed that a successful integration of an international dimension in higher education, needs a strong belief system and supportive institutional culture. The leader is crucial to this process: he has an unquestioned crucial role in implementing internalization because he is responsible for executing related practices on the operational work floor. However, due to the changing population of research teams, a greater demand is made on the competences of a leader to lead these international teams. This research aimed to identify those competences of leaders that are most effective to lead international research teams toward a shared vision and goals.

Furthermore, this research aimed to understand how Human Resource Management can support leaders of international teams in the internationalization process. The research is conducted in the University of Twente (UT) which is taken as the case for this case study. The results of this research are translated into an advice report for the HR Department that will cover both advice on strategic and operational (primary) level.

### 3.2 Research method

For this research a case study method is used. A case study is 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used' (Yin, 1984, p. 23). This research method enables researchers to analyze in-depth subjects (Ghauri, 2004) and gain an understanding of a certain phenomenon (Zainal, 2007). The basic approach of this research was to build a theory and gain insights in the subject of global leadership in higher education and therefore the purpose of the research is exploratory. An exploratory case study is most suitable when the amount of research regarding the subject is limited and the researcher wants to further explore a specific phenomenon (McCutcheon & Meredith, 1993).

The data in this research is gathered from one university. Therefore, this research is called a single exploratory case study (Dul & Hak, 2007). The University of Twente is the case. An advantage of using this method is that data is collected within the context where the phenomenon actually take place and thus there is less change of distortion (Yin, 1984).

The method of reasoning is based on the inductive approach, that moves from specific observations to broader generalization and theories (Trochim, 2006). This approach is also called a bottom up approach, starting with specific results from interviews with leaders of international teams, followed by detecting patterns and formulating tentative hypotheses and ending with the development of some general conclusions.

### 3.3 The case

This research is conducted within a Dutch university, called University of Twente. The UT is located in Enschede, a city in Eastern Netherlands. The UT is a research university where technical developments and their impact to individuals and society are the spearhead. This is reflected in twenty bachelor programmes and 31 master's programmes, managed by five faculties:

- Engineering technology (ET)
- Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science (EWI)
- Science and Technology (TNW)
- Behavioural, Management & Social Sciences (BMS)
- Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC)

By offering both technical and social studies, the UT is distinguishing itself from other Dutch universities, using the slogan 'high tech, human touch'. Currently, the campus welcomes 9600 students and over 2900 scientists and professional support staff from all over the world.

The rapid developments and changes in the environment, led by globalization, do also affect the University of Twente. They feel the urgency and responsibility to adapt and respond effectively to it. In the redefined vision of the UT, the global reach is embraced and the aim is to internationalize the work field completely during the coming years (Strubbe, 2015). This will have major effects on the university and therefore the UT wants to create an attractive international community, characterized by great diversity and mobility. This should finally lead to a university where internationalization in 2020 is an inextricable characteristic of education, that is reflected in the composition of the population and in all business aspects and outcomes of the organization (Strubbe, 2015).

The UT is very applicable to be the case for this research since internationalization is a main topic in the current organizational strategy. Their primary goal is to educate students the abilities to be global citizens (Strubbe, 2015). Besides, the UT wants to position themselves as a strong international university. Therefore, they want to attract and bind the most talented scientists to the university that goes further than the national borders (Strubbe, 2015). This already has resulted in the presence of multiple cultures and diversity within the faculties.

HRM of the UT wants to support the process of internationalization both on strategic and operational level to become 'The Most Welcoming University' for foreign employees. The HR policies should be aligned with the vision of the UT to integrate the international and intercultural dimension in the ethos and outcomes of the university. To find out in which areas HRM could be helpful, a research is conducted under a group of international employees to get a better understanding of their experiences and ideas about internationalization (Strubbe, 2015). Research showed that international employees experienced their contact with Dutch colleagues as difficult sometimes. Dutch employees did not always show understanding for the challenges and questions of their international co-workers. Besides, the Dutch language appeared to be the common informal language on the work floor (Strubbe, 2015). It is loud and clear that the university needs to be prepared for an international institutional culture. Literature assumes that the role of the leader is crucial in the process of internationalization. However, which competences the leader need to lead an international team in higher education specifically, has not been research yet. Therefore, for HR to be supportive in the process, an understanding of the competences used by leaders of international teams, is helpful to determine how global leadership can be developed in individuals and the university.

### **3.4 Data collection procedure**

To answer the research question, data is collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources refer to interviews, secondary sources refer to documents (McCutcheon & Meredith, 1993). Interviews with leaders of international teams were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews offer the possibility to deepen the questions and answers and change the direction of the interview when needed, while still maintaining a certain structure (Lee, 1999). To secure the reliability of the research, interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The following documents compiled and provided by the UT are used for data collection:

- Mission statement UT
- Vision 2020
- The Most Welcoming University
- HR strategy

This data provided information about the context in which the research is conducted and was helpful to focus on specific areas and to select the right participants.

Triangulation is used as a data collection method and refers to collecting data by using different methods to create a complete and coherent picture of the case (Yin, 2009). There are different forms of triangulation. For this research data- and theory triangulation is used. Data triangulation refers to the collection of multiple data sources and theory triangulation refers to the inclusion of different perspectives on the data (Yin, 2009). The use of this data collection methods ensure both the quality and right interpretation of the study.



### 3.5 Selecting of participants

The primary data of this case study was gathered from semi structured interviews with leaders of international teams at the University of Twente. To decide which leaders to interview, first a composition of each faculty regarding nationality, was analyzed. Table one shows the distribution of nationalities of employees per faculty in absolute numbers and percentages (Uitvlugt, 2017). This table also shows that in each faculty exist interesting international teams to study.

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>NL</b>	<b>EU</b>	<b>Non EU</b>	<b>% WP</b>	<b>% NL</b>	<b>% EU</b>	<b>% non EU</b>	<b>% non NL</b>
BMS	491	391	61	39	79,8%	79,6%	12,4%	7,9%	20,4%
ET	393	253	48	92	81,7%	64,4%	12,2%	23,4%	35,6%
EWI	471	327	56	88	77,1%	69,4%	11,9%	18,7%	30,6%
ITC	234	129	43	62	70,9%	55,1%	18,4%	26,5%	44,9%
TNW	577	398	71	108	67,1%	69,0%	12,3%	18,7%	31,0%

Table 1. Distribution nationalities per faculty

Subsequently, an analysis of all teams within all faculties is done to find international teams. An international team exists of both Dutch and Non-Dutch employees and a diverse composition of nationalities. Therefore, two criteria were set to determine what teams are most international and useful for this research. First, the team must have at least 30% international (Non-Dutch) employees. The second criterion was set based on the amount of different nationalities in each team. Within each team should at least 6 different nationalities be represented. This resulted in a selection of 32 teams of which the team leaders were invited for an interview. 20 team leaders were able to participate, which resulted in a response rate of 62.5%.

### 3.6 Operationalization

The interview questions were constructed based on the theory described in chapter 2. The complete operationalization of the constructs, which underlie the interview questions, can be found in table 2 below.

<b>Global leadership dimensions of competence</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Examples of competences</b>
<b>Global business expertise</b>	Global business expertise refers to the ability to deal with complexity and understand the bigger picture, including international interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acceptance of the context and its contradictions (Jokinen, 2005)</li> <li>- Global business savvy</li> <li>- Technological savvy (Osland et al. 2006)</li> <li>- Business literacy (Rosen et al. 2000)</li> <li>- Customer orientation</li> <li>- External orientation</li> <li>- Results orientation (Osland et al. 2006)</li> <li>- Responsive to change</li> <li>- Balance short- and long-term considerations</li> <li>- Understand interdependence</li> <li>- Manage a budget on a worldwide basis (Bird, 2013).</li> </ul>
<b>Global organizing expertise</b>	Global organizing expertise refers to skills relating to organizing and structuring human and administrative processes in global contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Networking skills (Srinivas, 1995)</li> <li>- Build partnerships and alliances (Brake, 1997; Goldsmith &amp; Walk, 1999)</li> <li>- Pursue partnerships</li> <li>- Build connections</li> <li>- Create internal networks</li> <li>- Build communities (Brake, 1997)</li> <li>- Team building (Osland et al. 2006)</li> </ul>
<b>Visioning</b>	Visioning refers to the ability to discern where an organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Articulate a tangible vision and strategy</li> </ul>

	should go and the capability to rally subordinates to strive to achieve the vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Envisioning (Osland et al. 2006)</li> <li>- Change management skills</li> <li>- Strategic skills (Bird, 2003)</li> <li>- Entrepreneurial spirit</li> <li>- Inspiring/empowering (Mendenhall &amp; Osland, 2002)</li> </ul>
<b>Cross-cultural relationship skills</b>	Cross-cultural relationship skills refer to the ability to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships in global/cross-cultural contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural sensitivity (McCall &amp; Hollenbeck, 2002)</li> <li>- Appreciate diversity (Goldsmith et al. 2003)</li> <li>- Cross-cultural communication skills (Harris &amp; Moran, 1987)</li> <li>- Motivate others</li> <li>- Empower others (Yeung &amp; Ready, 1995)</li> <li>- Develop others (Osland et al. 2006)</li> <li>- Social skills (Goleman, 2000)</li> <li>- Social judgment skills (Brake, 1997)</li> <li>- Share leadership (Brake, 1997)</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive orientation</b>	Cognitive orientation refers to the beliefs of a leader about self's, norms, goals and environments and the ability to change the thinking and behavior depending on the circumstance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Global mindset (Goldsmith &amp; Walt, 1999)</li> <li>- Cosmopolitan outlook</li> <li>- Cognitive complexity (Levy et al. 2007)</li> <li>- Open-minded</li> <li>- Thinking agility (McCall &amp; Hollenbeck, 2002)</li> <li>- Behavioral flexibility (Osland et al. 2006)</li> <li>- Manage uncertainty</li> <li>- Resilient to stress (Black et al. 1999)</li> </ul>

Table 2. Operationalization of the constructs

In order to create a coherent picture, the interviews started with a few general questions regarding the background, education and international experience of the team leader and the composition of the team. Thereafter, questions regarding different phases of employment of international employees (selection, onboarding, year reviews) followed to obtain a comprehensive image of how employees are supervised and supported. Furthermore, collaboration and intercultural interaction within the team were discussed to learn more about the way employees and leader interact. The complete list of interview questions can be found in the appendix. Table 3 shows which interview questions were directly related to one of the dimensions of global leadership competencies.

<b>Global leadership dimension of competence</b>	<b>Interview questions</b>
<b>Global business expertise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is your international experience?</li> <li>- How would you describe the environment you work in?</li> <li>- You supervise a group of international people. How do you experience your role as leader of such an international team?</li> <li>- What are, in your opinion, points of attention regarding internationalization?</li> </ul>
<b>Global organizing expertise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you make sure that people can do their jobs as best as possible?</li> <li>- What are points of attention when building a team?</li> </ul>
<b>Visioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do make sure that goals are reached?</li> </ul>
<b>Cross-cultural relationship skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are focus points in the selection process when hiring new employees? Which role does culture play here?</li> <li>- Which role does culture play in the onboarding process?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Which factors do you take into account to make sure a new international colleague functions optimally? (Room division, job descriptions, praying facilities etc.)</li> <li>- How do you take the culture of the employee into account when preparing and conducting year reviews? (Different questions, different focus areas).</li> <li>- How do you take culture into account during meetings?</li> <li>- Based on which choices do you create sub teams within your team? Which role does culture play here?</li> <li>- Which role does culture play in the collaboration between the members of your team?</li> <li>- Which difficulties regarding cultural differences do you experience in the collaboration between team members? How do you deal with this?</li> <li>- How do you stimulate intercultural interaction within your team?</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you try to describe your leadership style?</li> <li>- What is important in your opinion to effectively lead international teams?</li> <li>- What competencies and abilities are needed?</li> </ul>

*Table 3.* Interview questions related to the dimensions of global leadership competence

### 3.7 Data analysis

The procedure of data analysis was linear process. This means that data first was collected and thereafter interpreted. All interviews were recorded and thereafter transcribed to obtain a written report of the interview. The transcripts were read individually. The next step was reading the transcripts with two researchers together to look for categories in the data which could form codes for the analysis. After this first categorization the axial coding started, where the transcripts were read again and some codes were merged together where others were divided into two separate codes and all quotes were assigned to one or more codes. Lastly, the final codes and quotes were inserted into a table and each code was summarized to create a better overview.

## Chapter 4. Findings

In this chapter, the findings of the conducted interviews are discussed. In line with literature and the research model as shown in paragraph 2.8, identified competences are described according to the five dimensions of competence. The five dimensions global business expertise, global organizing expertise, visioning, cross-cultural relationship skills and cognitive orientations are identified as the core dimensions of competence of global leadership and therefore are used for the categorization of the identified competences of leaders of international teams. In the following paragraphs, the identified competences of leaders of international teams in higher education are described. Also several practices that team leaders use to manage the international team are described. These practices are described since having specific competences only does not always proved to be enough to lead the team effectively. In paragraph 4.6, a critical approach on internationalization is described. Although the identified competences are represented in almost every team leader, also some team leaders appeared to be quite critical about the internationalization process and leading an international team. These results are described since they might affect the effectiveness of the team leader and the team. Besides, they contribute to the representativeness of the study. In the last paragraph, a competence profile is given of leaders of international teams in higher education.

### 4.1 Global business expertise

In this case, global business expertise refers to the ability of a leader of an international team to deal with the complexity of the academic and scientific environment and understand the bigger picture, including the international interaction. There are several competences identified related to this dimension. Also several practices are identified that are closely related to a specific competence and used to effectively manage the team. These will be further explained in the paragraphs below.

#### 4.1.1 Eagerness to work in an international environment

All team leaders are very eager and motivated to work in an international academic and scientific environment. They consider internationalization as a natural process since the scientific field always have been international. Most of the team leaders have never even worked in a team that was not international and therefore would consider it as strange if a scientific field was not international:

It's all natural. There are no geographical borders in science. We do not see nationality. We see scientists. We are professionals; that is what matters (R7).

Science is international. It does not matter if you are Russian, American, Chinese or Dutch. Everybody speaks English. The language of science is broken English. It is needless to say we are international, that is just our field (R4).

Most leaders were surprised by the fact that their team is one of the top 30 most international teams of the university. However, one of the faculties seems to be outstanding since it only operates in international environments. None of these team leaders were surprised by the fact that they were such an international group. Although every team leader acknowledges that working in the scientific field requires an international orientation, some team leaders of other faculties recommended to watch how this specific faculty to learn from their approach and become more international:

Well, first of all I am very surprised that we are such an international group. I never actually realized. But that can be explained by the fact that I am in the middle of this group and when you are in the middle, you don't realize how international you are, it is just normal (R3).

Since I work here, I only work in international context. All students are international and the whole faculty is very international in general. Our faculty is very well-known worldwide, while the university is not (R11).

faculty has such a long international tradition and a much larger number of international employees. We could watch them if we want to learn, because they are very successful when it comes to internationalization (R12).

#### 4.1.2 Managing international interactions

Team leaders are all willing and motivated to manage an international team. Although the scientific field is international, they also like to experience those international interactions at the work floor in the home country. They appreciate the fact that they do not have to go abroad to experience international interactions and are very eager to manage the international interactions within their team. Team

leaders appreciate the presence of the many nationalities and cultures within their team and aim to establish and maintain a team culture in which people are proud of and appreciate diversity. Every team leader seems to be totally comfortable with managing an international team. As one of them said:

I really like it to lead such an international team. It is really a privilege to daily work with so many different nationalities and cultures (R5).

#### **4.1.3 Accepting the complexity and its contradictions**

Accepting the complexity and its contradictions refers to team leaders' ability to use diversity to stimulate new opportunities. The combination of different people, nationalities and cultures within a team is seen as an enrichment and most team leaders are proud of their team's diversity. Cultural differences are considered as something valuable and beneficial and are used to create a broader perspective, creativity and new opportunities. As one of them said:

I think it is really interesting. This means that, apart from the fact that they all have different educational disciplines and backgrounds, they come with very different creative ideas and create many new opportunities. It is more interesting than leading just a group of Dutch people (R11).

When someone from Africa works on a project with someone from Asia, you notice those people differ. But that does not mean the collaboration does not work. Bringing different disciplines together creates many new opportunities: that is our strength (R11).

However, team leaders find the individual differences in personalities and qualities more significant than differences between culture. When it comes to successful teamwork, team leaders rather focus on individual qualities than on culture. People are collaborating on the basis of expertise and quality:

It is about the individuals and their capabilities. You should not link them to their culture, especially not the prejudices you have about a certain culture. You just need to see them as individuals (R1).

#### **4.1.4 Results-orientation**

Team leaders are all very results-oriented, which means that they know which results are important and facilitate resources to achieve them. Team leaders all want their employees to achieve their own personal goals and do not always focus on how the tasks are done. As one of them said:

I am the team leader and I have to make sure that production is delivered. With production I mean that the students can graduate. But also that scientific publications are being done and that the projects we have adopted are also carried out (R7).

There are several practices team leaders use to achieve the highest results. First, team leaders *maintain a common language on the work floor*. English is seen and respected as the official language in the work environment. Difficulties with speaking this language are controlled by the leader by offering employees *English courses* to improve the quality of work. Besides, team leaders let people collaborate based on the individual qualities. Team leaders do have a good overview of what resources they have and by combining these resources, team leaders *balance individual's strengths and weaknesses* in order to achieve the highest results:

When you have a real team, you try to combine the qualities of people so that they can help one and another. Some people are not that academically skilled as others but they might be very important for the interaction and atmosphere in the group (R3).

To achieve the best results, team leaders aim to create a corporate environment in which people can do their work independently and can prove themselves to be successful. Therefore, team leaders aim to provide good support in particularly *time management* and *feedback opportunities*:

I have to create an environment in which people can do their work independently and also can prove themselves to be successful. They have to do what they can do best and if this succeeds, they get all the positive feedback from me (R6).

In order to make my employees feel successful, I have to guide them in particular time management. This means that they have to start with and finish their tasks within the set deadlines (R2).

Lastly, team leaders aim to *make sure that their employees do not suffer from any bureaucratic duties*. Especially hiring foreign employees involves many administrative policies regarding insurances,

residence permits and contracts that need to be handled. Team leaders consider this as a burden and state that these policies might result in bad team results. Therefore, they see it as their responsibility to facilitate employees in order that they do not suffer from any form of bureaucratic burdens and can do their jobs as good as possible. As one of them said:

My role is to facilitate my employees. I always have to stand up for them and make sure that they are not bothered by all those bureaucratic things. They just have to do their jobs (R2).

#### **4.1.5 Summary of the section**

Team leaders are all very eager to work in an international academic environment. They even would consider it as strange if the scientific field was not international. They appreciate it to experience international interactions on the work floor and are all very willing to manage international interactions. Working with so many diverse people is perceived as a privilege. By using diversity to stimulate new opportunities, team leaders show that they accepted the complexity and its contradictions. Cultural differences are considered as something valuable and beneficial for the team. To achieve the highest team results, team leaders are very results-oriented. There are several practices related to this competency, including: maintaining a common corporate language, offering language courses, combining people's qualities during collaboration, making sure that people can work independently by providing good support in time management and feedback opportunities and unburdening employees from bureaucratic duties.

### **4.2 Global organizing expertise**

Global organizing expertise refers to skills of a leader that relate to organizing and structuring human and administrative processes in the international academic environment. There is one competency identified that relates to this dimension. Also several practices are identified that are closely related to this competency. This competency and its related practices are further explained in the paragraph below.

#### **4.2.1 Team building skills**

Teams are most effective when carefully designed. Team leaders are very occupied with this design and want to build a team that offer the best functional expertise from around the world. Several practices are used by a leader to support effective team building. First, team leaders protect the mix of nationalities within the team and prevent one nationality from becoming a separate community within the team by *keeping the balance between nationalities when hiring new employees*:

Sometimes, there are too many people from Korea, so that becomes a subculture. Or too many people from China, or India, or Spain. So I try to mix it up and keep the balance (R4).

However, team leaders do not reject someone from an 'undesirable' culture when this person does have very professional and required skills. This indicates that the skills they are looking at are not necessarily culture-bound:

We have so many Iranian people now, that we prefer to have some other blood as well. However, when there is a very good Iranian with all the required skills, I just hire him. That is beyond doubt (R2).

For most team leaders, protecting the cultural balance also plays a role in the room allocation. Some team leaders assign employees an office only based on where there is a free spot, but most team leaders focus on *ensuring the cultural balance in room allocation* to prevent people from only speaking in their own language and to stimulate intercultural interaction:

I would never put Chinese people in one office with other Chinese people. Split them up. If I do not do that, they will constantly speak Chinese. That hinders their progression in English and other people in the room will not understand what they are talking about (R4).

Besides, team leaders *select employees based on their cultural understanding*. During the selection procedure, team leaders *look for certain personality traits in candidates* which they believe will help them adapt quickly to a different cultural context. Also *English skills are checked* to make sure few problems in communication will arise. By doing this, team leaders make sure that the candidates they hire realize what it means to work in another country and to work with different nationalities:

No matter the nationality, I check if they worked in an international team before and if they have worked outside their home country. That is very useful to make sure it would not be a complete shock to them (R13).

#### **4.2.2 Summary of the section**

Team leaders are very occupied with designing and building a team that offer the best functional expertise. Therefore, team leaders use several practices that support effective team building including: protecting the mix of nationalities when hiring new employees and during room allocation and selecting employees based on their cultural understanding, English skills and international appreciation and experience.

### **4.3 Visioning**

Visioning refers to the ability of a leader to discern where the university should go and the capability to rally subordinates to strive to achieve the vision. There is one competency identified that relates to this dimension. Also one related practice is identified. These will be further explained below.

#### **4.3.1 Articulating and communicating a tangible vision**

In order to achieve the best results, team leaders articulate and communicate a tangible vision for future (team) results. The content of this vision affects employees' perception of the university but also their vision of the leader's effectiveness. Team leaders see it as their task to articulate a vision that reflects the powerful image of the university as well of the leader himself and the team. Therefore, team leaders *organize every once or twice a month a group meeting* in which discussing the future outline, team goals and catching up with each other's work are most central topics:

I make sure that I communicate a clear vision and strategy so that we all know which way to go. I try to work as results-oriented as possible by setting clear deadlines about what the team has to achieve this year (R19).

I try to organize a meeting for at least once or twice a month in which everyone gets a chance to speak. Team goals are most important but also catching up with each other's work is crucial. These meetings forces people to participate (R13).

#### **4.3.2 Summary of the section**

Team leaders want to make sure that their employees are fully updated about what is expected from them now and in the future. Therefore, they articulate and communicate a tangible vision for future results which is in line with both the personal vision and the vision of the university. A practice which is used to support this competency, is the arrangement of team meetings every once or twice a month in which discussing the future outline, team goals and catching up with each other's work are most central topics.

### **4.4 Cross-cultural relationship skills**

Cross-cultural relationship skills refer to the leader's ability to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships in an international environment with people from diverse backgrounds. There are several competences identified related to this dimension. Also several practices are identified that are closely related to a specific competence. These competences and practices will be further explained in the paragraphs below.

#### **4.4.1 Cultural sensitivity**

Team leaders are cultural sensitive by being aware of the cultural differences and similarities between people but by not assigning them a right or wrong value. They respect the cultural differences but do not give a lot of attention to it. They aim to create an environment in which everyone accepts each other instead of trying to prepare people for every difference. They do not judge views that differ from the own views. Team leaders just accept that people are different and understand other points of view:

It just starts with respect. You do not need to blow up certain things, for example shaking hands or not. I try to create an environment where everyone accepts each other instead of trying to prepare everyone for every difference. You don't need to make that an issue, just accept it (R6).

*Having international experience* as a team leader is seen as a prerequisite of being cultural sensitive. To understand which differences might occur when people from different cultures work together, team leaders state that it is helpful when they themselves have lived in another country. This makes it more

easy for a team leader to understand people when they come up with something you would not expect from a local perspective:

I think it will be very hard if you did not live in another international context yourself. I think that it is the most essential part. By living in other countries you enlarge your awareness and that automatically makes it easier to deal with people from other cultural backgrounds (R11).

I have been in weird situations in other countries and that enables me to better manage my people now. It is crazy to experience a situation which everyone finds normal except for you, while no one notices you find it strange. I guess I do not see everything my people find strange, but I know and I understand that feeling (R20).

However, for some team leaders their international experience is limited to travelling around or attending meetings and conferences for short-term work purposes only, indicating that

#### **4.4.2 Appreciating diversity**

Team leaders acknowledge that having a diverse group of employees means that they have to recognize that all the people are unique in their own way. Most team leaders show a lot of personal interest in their employees and are concerned about both their professional as personal lives. By maintaining both formal and informal relationships with their employees, they aim to gain more knowledge of their culture and background as well as becoming more aware of cultural needs:

I am really interested in the personal situation of my employees as well. People are not always feel happy on their own. Therefore, I do not want to do everything in a formal way because that just does not work with people who are already so far away from home (R1).

One way of showing that team leaders appreciate diversity is by being very *tolerant regarding religion*. Team leaders want employees to feel free to express their religion. Therefore, they are all very flexible in employees the space to pray. However, when time schedules do not allow people to leave work to pray, team leaders are strict in asking employees to reschedule their prayer:

Religion is not an issue because freedom and tolerance are most important. I never had to intervene. Some of us use the praying opportunities, others just pray in their office, while their colleagues continue writing articles (R1).

#### **4.4.3 Cross-cultural communication skills**

Team leaders are aware of the impact of cultural factors on behavioral communication and acknowledge that effective communication with people of different cultures is especially challenging. Cultures provide people with ways of thinking, ways of seeing, hearing and interpreting the world. Thus, the same words can mean different things to people from different cultures, even when they talk the same language. As some of the team leaders said:

As a team leader, you have to be aware of what is going on during communication and trying to understand the cultural background that may be reflected in what the person is doing or saying. And then you have to act upon it (R13).

Especially with providing feedback, leaders are aware of the cultural differences that might exist. For example, Asian employees might find it really hard to deal with negative feedback since this is seen as failure. This could also apply for individual with other backgrounds or even genders. Therefore, team leaders try to be *agile in providing feedback by nuancing and balancing their message* depending on the receiver's personal feelings and needs:

There sometimes exist sensitivities in the way you provide feedback. For example, someone from Russia does need and expect an order. That means that everything I say, is interpreted as an order and you should be really careful with that (R5).

#### **4.4.4 Managing cultural integration**

Team leaders feel responsible for the successful cultural integration of their new foreign employees. Cultural integration refers to taking over values, behaviors and norms of the new culture. To manage cultural integration, team leaders use *shared leadership* as a practice which is about expanding the number of people involved in the process. It is used by a leader to speed up the cultural integration of new foreign employees. By distributing their leadership responsibility of managing cultural integration of employees, people within the team will take more care of each other. There are several more practices which are helpful in managing the cultural integration of foreign employees.



First, a *buddy system* is used for new employees. The new employee gets assigned to a more experienced employee to familiarize them with the country, the organization, the culture, the department and the work and to involve them in social activities. Where possible, new employees are assigned a buddy from the same nationality, because they might face the same challenges regarding cultural integration:

We work with buddies, which means some person of the experienced group is assigned to keep an eye on the new one, to make sure they will be fine, won't be lonely, getting involved with social activities etc. Just the central point of contact. If it is possible, we make sure the buddy is of the same nationality as the new one, because you see people adapt quicker (R18).

In some teams this is not officially called a 'buddy system', but it is a more natural process within the team:

I just introduce the new person and ask others to help the new one; that is such an automatic process, it is natural and self-evident. People just find each other very quick (R4).

Another practice team leaders introduced is providing an *information manual*. This manual contains all information about UT procedures, specific habits of the team and the country and other useful knowhow and is composed by the team itself. The manual is helpful for new employees to find harmony with the different norms and values of the new culture.

Lastly, team leaders *stimulate new foreign employees to find their own community* in the local city. Team leaders state that these communities are helpful in getting used to the new environment and the integration, since they function as a social safety net outside of work, in which people from the same national and cultural background help each other. The people in these communities can help each other with ideas on how to deal with specific local or other cultural habits:

There are so many international people at the university that new international people connect with other people from their culture very quickly. In no time they find out where to find people from the same country. That is easy for us, because the others will familiarize the new ones with the country and the cultural differences (R19).

However, some team leaders think these communities might also negatively affect the cultural integration of employees, since people will feel safe in their own community, spend a lot of time there and withdraw themselves from their team.

#### **4.4.5 Developing others**

Team leaders aim to make sure that people feel appreciated and want to give their employees the feeling that they really matter. Therefore, they want to develop the capabilities of employees, nurture their careers and manage the performance of both the employees and the team. Employees are encouraged by the leader to think about their own personal and professional development and to formulate specific goals for that. Focusing on talent development will help both the individual and the team to be most effective and achieve the highest results. *Annual reviews* are used by the leader to get a sense of people's happiness with work. During the annual reviews, team leaders do not only discuss what employees have accomplished but also what they aim to do the coming year and how that fits in the bigger picture:

I try to push my employees to invest in their own personal development. I want them to do the things which are considered as important for them. I always ask them what they want and how they want to achieve that (R11).

During the annual reviews, we discuss last year and make plans for coming year. It is important to make clear what is expected from each other and write that down (R8).

#### **4.4.6 Summary of the section**

Team leaders are cultural sensitive by being aware that cultural differences and similarities exist and have an effect on values, learning and behavior of people without assigning a positive or negative value to it. Having international experience themselves is seen as a prerequisite of being cultural sensitive because it makes it more easy for a leader to understand people when they come up with something you would not expect from a local perspective. Having a diverse group of employees is very appreciated by team leaders. Team leaders recognize that people are unique in their own way. One way of showing this appreciation is by being tolerant regarding religion in order that employees feel

free to express their religion. Team leaders also are aware of the impact of cultural factors on behavioral communication and try to be flexible in providing feedback by nuancing and balancing their message depending on the other's needs. When new employees start working at the university, team leaders feel responsible for their cultural integration and use several practices to manage this integration, including: shared leadership, assigning the new employee to a buddy, providing an information manual and stimulating employees to find their own communities. They also want to make sure that the employees feel appreciated and therefore put a lot of attention to the development of the capabilities of employees. Team leaders encourage their employees to think about their own personal and professional development and to formulate specific goals for that. Annual reviews are used by a leader to develop employees and to get a sense of their happiness and effectiveness with work.

## **4.5 Cognitive orientation**

Cognitive orientation refers to the beliefs of a team leader about self's, norms, goals and environments and the ability to change the thinking and behavior depending on the circumstance. There are several competences identified related to this dimension. There are also several practices identified that are closely related to this dimension and the competences. These will be further explained in the paragraphs below.

### **4.5.1 Cosmopolitan outlook**

Having a cosmopolitan outlook refers to the enthusiastically appreciation of other cultures and the knowledge leaders possess of cultures in different parts of the world. Team leaders have learned a lot of the norms, values and behaviors of other cultures. This knowledge is learned by experience of traveling around but also gained during interaction with foreign employees in the national culture. For example, team leaders know that hugging each other is quite normal for someone from Latin-America but can be very threatening for a Muslim. The same holds for shaking hands or kissing each other on the cheeks. Besides, team leaders learned that employees from some culture are in general more used to strict hierarchal levels and are very careful in voicing their opinion, having a passive attitude, would never call their team leader by their first name and would never disagree with a person higher in the hierarchy. Local people, however, are more used to egalitarian structures in which there are no strict hierarchical levels and where people do not hesitate to voice their opinion, speak up to their colleagues whenever they disagree and take initiative. Profiling these differences makes it easier for team leaders to adapt in different situations but also to teach their foreign employees new skills which can be used to appropriately behave in different settings:

As a leader, you have to learn about other cultures to understand how someone behaves. Some people behave differently than others but it all make sense when you gained knowledge about the specific culture and background (R16).

Asian people are a lot more modest and afraid to criticize the manager. The locals are used to that and appreciate it. It is better to have someone loudly voicing his opinion than someone who does not say anything and just watches how things go wrong. So when I am aware of these differences, it is very important for me to explain to people to voice their opinion (R4).

### **4.5.2 Behavioral flexibility**

Team leaders change their leadership style based on the individual characteristics of their employees. They are able to flex their behaviors during interaction with employees so that they can respond in each interaction in the most effective way. They do not lead based on a one-fits-all style but see every individual as someone who requires a specific way of treating and support. Culture does play a role in here but the differences between people's personality are more significant:

Leading an international team is not difficult because of different cultures: every person is different and that makes it difficult (R11).

You cannot treat people all in the same way. Equality is good but you want equality in results and not in the process. Some people just need another way of treating or more support than someone else. It is all about the person (R12).

However, some team leaders do not really change their leadership style based on the cultural differences and state that culture is just an average or a frame of reference:

You cannot say that you do this with Indonesian people and that with Dutch people. Obviously, Dutch people are generally more loud in comparison with other peoples but that does not mean I change my overall leadership style based on that (R1).

#### 4.5.3 Open-minded

Most team leaders are open-minded, unprejudiced and willing to consider new ideas. Their relationship with employees is based on honesty and equality in which team leaders admit that they are not all-knowing and believe that whatever truth is found, it might always have more to it than realized. Team leaders want their employees to take initiative and come with creative ideas and also support and reward that. However, when it comes to final decisions, team leaders know that they have to take responsibility:

Our relationship is based on equality. I do not assume that I know everything better. Some people can have very interesting insights of which I did not think about before (R9).

Everyone can be right but I am the one that makes the final decisions (R7).

Team leaders are also very *open to new (foreign) employees*. Some team leaders even mentioned the importance of welcoming bachelor students or other temporary workers such as guest researchers into the group because they bring a breath of fresh air which is beneficial for the group effectiveness:

I maintain a very welcoming policy. When someone asks us for the possibilities to join our team as a guest researcher and what that person does is in some way linked to the profession of our scientists, the answer is always yes. So instead of being restrictive, we open our doors and welcome everybody. It enriches our activities (R1).

Lastly, team leaders are very open to creating opportunities where people can meet and interact. Therefore, they *stimulate employees to organize social activities* in which people can enjoy and learn from the interaction with people from other cultures. As some of the team leaders said:

I stimulate social activities outside of work. If people come up with an idea, I always say okay, we have some money to arrange that. After that, you notice those people get along better on the work floor (R2).

#### 4.5.4 Summary of the section

Team leaders possess a lot of knowledge about cultures in different parts of the world. This knowledge is learned by experience of traveling around but is also gained during interaction with foreign employees. Having a cosmopolitan outlook is beneficial for a leader to adapt in different situations but also to teach foreign employees the new skills needed to appropriately behave in the national setting. Leaders act and behave upon the individual characteristics of their employees. Possessing behavioral flexibility makes it easier for leaders to respond in each interaction in the most effective way. Lastly, team leaders are open-minded and willing to consider new ideas. Therefore, team leaders maintain a very welcoming policy for new (foreign) employees and stimulate their employees to organize social activities in which people can enjoy and learn from the interaction with people from other cultures.

### 4.6 Critical approach on internationalization

The upper identified competences and practices are found to be most important to lead an international team and are represented in almost every team leader. However, some team leaders appeared to be critical about the internationalization process. This critical approach on internationalization is important for this study since it might affect the effectiveness of the leader and the team. Besides, it contributes to the representativeness of this study.

First, some team leaders seem to doubt about the financial benefits of internationalization, considering the amount of time and money associated with the internationalization process. Internationalization is associated with the arrival of many new foreign employees which need to be well taken care of and supervised. This requires many extra FTE's. Besides, some team leaders seem to be doubtful about the return on knowledge investment when hiring so many international employees. They think that Dutch universities do not benefit from hiring international employees that work at the university only for a couple of years because these employees are most likely to return to their home countries after they finished their study or PhD. Consequently, the knowledge they gained during their guest stay is no longer available for the university and thus the country. As a result of this, some team leaders are careful when hiring international employees, especially non-European, since they are most likely to

return to their home country after they finished their work. Another challenge team leaders face when hiring Non-European employees, is valuing the diplomas of the candidates. Team leaders do not know many non-Europe universities and therefore find it hard to figure out what grades and courses exactly mean. Some team leaders therefore prefer to hire employees with diplomas from European and well-known universities:

If someone studied at a certain European University, you will have better information about the background and skills of this person when comparing with people who studied at a non-European university (R7).

Besides, internationalization is accompanied with the arrival of many international employees. Although all team leaders are aware of the cultural differences in teams, not every team leader takes these differences into account when leading the team. Some state that culture is just an average or a frame of reference and they do not change their leadership style based on the cultural differences. Team leaders have to be aware and deal with the fact that some things might be understood differently by employees. However, some team leaders think that these differences are not based on culture and the individual differences in character and personality of people are more significant.

Lastly, one thing that interferes team leaders is that they do not experience HR to have an international orientation. Team leaders argue HR could use the amount of international experience within the university way more than it is doing right now. Also the fact the supportive staff often communicates in Dutch is mentioned by managers:

What really bothers me is that supportive staff continuously communicates in Dutch. Policymakers send me notes about teaching in Dutch. Then I tell them we have foreign people who I need to discuss it with, I need it to be in English. It is always the same story (R12).

I think the university's management has a problem. You should check to what extent the management and the faculties are international. The support staff is usually Dutch. That is where it starts. They should start hiring international colleagues. On team level internationalization is normal and natural, but the real internationalization is needed on a higher and more abstract level in this organization (R4).

## **4.7 Competency profile**

Based on the paragraphs above, a competency profile is composed for leaders of international teams in higher education institutions. This competency profile is shown at the following page. This competence profile includes the dimensions of competence and its related indicators, the identified competences and related practices. The global leadership dimensions of competence are adjusted and personalized based on the findings of this study. First, global business expertise is adjusted and changed to global academic expertise since this is the case of this study. Secondly, global organizing expertise is changed to global team building since it has been found that having team building skills is the most important competence related to the old dimension. The dimensions visioning, cross-cultural relationship skills and cognitive orientation remained the same since these dimensions of global competence also have been found to be really important for leaders of international team in higher education institutions.

**Competence profile of leaders of international (research) teams in higher education institutions**

<b>Global leadership dimension of competence</b>	<b>Competences</b>	<b>Practices</b>
<i>Global academic expertise: the ability to understand and deal with the complexity of the international academic environment.</i>	Eagerness to work in an international environment	/
	Managing international interactions	/
	Accepting the complexity and its contractions	/
	Results orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintaining a common corporate language</li> <li>- Offering language courses</li> <li>- Combining employees' qualities</li> <li>- Providing support in time management</li> <li>- Providing support in feedback opportunities</li> <li>- Unburdening employees from bureaucratic duties</li> </ul>
<i>Global team building: the ability to build teams effectively in global contexts.</i>	Team building skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Protecting the mix of nationalities during selection phase</li> <li>- Protecting the mix of nationalities during room allocation</li> <li>- Selecting based on cultural understanding</li> <li>- Selecting based on personal qualities</li> <li>- Selecting based on English skills</li> </ul>
<i>Visioning: the ability to vision where the institution and the team should go and the capability to motivate others to strive to achieve that vision.</i>	Articulating and communicating a tangible vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team meetings</li> </ul>
<i>Cross-cultural relationship skills: the ability to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships in cross-cultural contexts.</i>	Cultural sensitivity	- Having international experience
	Appreciating diversity	- Tolerating religion
	Cross-cultural communication skills	- Flexibility in providing feedback
	Managing cultural integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shared leadership</li> <li>- Buddy system</li> <li>- Information manual</li> <li>- Stimulating (foreign) communities</li> </ul>
<i>Cognitive orientation: the ability to change the own thinking and behavior depending on the circumstance.</i>	Developing others	- Annual reviews
	Cosmopolitan outlook	- Learning about culture
	Behavioral flexibility	/
	Open-minded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintaining a welcoming policy</li> <li>- Stimulating social activities</li> </ul>

Table 4. Competency profile of leaders of international teams in higher education

## Chapter 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Reflection on literature

Several competences of leaders of international teams in higher education are identified and categorized to one of the five dimensions as shown in the competency profile of paragraph 4.7. Besides, a couple of related practices are identified which are used by leaders to effectively lead the international team. A reflection on these findings will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

#### 5.1.1 Internationalization

It is found that team leaders did not experience major challenges with leading an international and intercultural team. One reason might be because of the fact that teams consist of highly educated scientists who belong to those most privileged in their own country and community. Team members use their intelligence to develop specific competences that help them to adapt faster to another culture. Employees understand and accept that people differ and most of them know how to interact in different situations effectively. Another reason might be because of the fact that the scientific field has always been international. In the university, scientists from all over the world come together to share their expertise and to discover new things. Not only is diversity of discipline fundamental when it comes to scientific discovery, also international diversity is really important since every scientist has their own specialization through studies, broadening and collaborative experiences. In this study, only the most international teams were chosen to participate. These teams have become so international since the specific discipline required and allowed it. Leaders of these teams consider working in an international environment as conventional since the scientific field has always been like that. Most of the team leaders have never even worked in a team that was not international and therefore would consider it as strange to lead a non-international team. This result suggests that leaders of international teams in higher education are not specifically educated or prepared for their function. Because of the international-orientation of the scientific field and the leader itself, leading an international team just goes without saying. There are no specific guidelines for team leaders to lead the international team, they just do what fits best in order to be as most effective as a team. This differs from what the literature is saying about the development of global competence in leaders. Literature suggests that the process of competency development starts with an analysis of the global business environment and core competencies, followed by the identification of the profiles of necessary human resources and ends with a profile of the required competencies needed for the specific job or function (Jokinen, 2005). Although literature thus suggests that competency development in global leaders follows a top-down approach, it appeared that in higher education institutions, especially universities, a bottom-up approach is more applicable. This means that leaders of international teams in higher education already fulfil their jobs with own required capabilities without an institutional vision behind it. This finding will be discussed in more detail in paragraph 5.2. In the sub paragraphs below, a reflection on the identified competences and practices will be discussed.

#### 5.1.2 Global academic expertise

It is found that leaders of international teams in higher education have global academic expertise. This refers to the leaders' ability to understand and deal with the complexity of the international academic environment. Therefore, a leader must possess specific competences. First, the leader must be eager to work in an international environment. The eagerness to work in an international environment is clearly crucial for global leadership since it is closely related to the commitment and willingness of a leader to exercise different global leadership competences in different situations (Jokinen, 2005). It is also a fundamental factor that might affect the career choice since some leaders find their working environment conflicting with the own values, which will result in feelings of unrest and less productivity (Schein, 1985). Eagerness to work in an international context is seen as a requirement for being able to motivate others within an international team. The same holds for the willingness to manage international interactions. A leader who understands and accepts the scientific global environment will be better able to manage international interactions on the work floor (Osland et al. 2006). Besides, accepting the complexity and its contradictions enables leaders to better use team's diversity to stimulate new opportunities and creativity (Srinivas, 1995). Next to this, leaders of international teams should be very result-oriented. Team leaders have to know which results are important and facilitate their employees to achieve them. This is in line with literature which suggests that global leaders must

have a great results-orientation in order to satisfy both the individual and organizational needs (Osland et al. 2006). To support this, team leaders maintain a common corporate language on work floor and offer employees language courses when difficulties occur. Besides, team leaders make sure that people can work independently by unburden them from bureaucratic duties and provide them good support in time management and feedback opportunities. In terms of collaboration, team leaders make sure that qualities of people are balanced and that people work together based on their shared interests. Identifying these practices suggest that just being results-oriented is not enough to lead the international team effectively and practices are needed to really achieve the best results.

### **5.1.3 Global team building**

Team leaders are very occupied with the careful design of their team. Having the skills to effectively design and build a team, helps leaders to bring out the best in people and increase the capability for cooperation (Spreitzer et al. 1997). Besides, bringing people together from many cultures, is beneficial for leaders since these people all have varied work experiences and different perspectives on scientific work which is helpful in exploring something new (Neeley, 2015). Therefore, team leaders protect the mix of nationalities during the selection phase and room allocation and carefully select team members based on their cultural understanding, personal qualities and English skills. The competency of global team building is in the literature identified as a related competency of the dimension global organizing expertise (Osland et al. 2006). However, there were no other competencies (i.e. building partnerships, architecting etc.) identified related to the dimension global organizing expertise indicating that this dimension is too broad to be applicable for leaders of international teams in higher education institutions. Instead, the dimension global team building is used since having skills and using practices related to this dimensions are found to be more significant for global leaders of teams in higher education.

### **5.1.4 Visioning**

To be an effective global leader, team leaders must discern where an organizing should go and rally subordinates to strive to achieve that vision. Therefore, team leaders make sure that they articulate and communicate a tangible vision for future results. According to the literature having a clear understanding of what is desired in future and how is planned to reach that, will put the leader in a position to share the perspective in a clear and straightforward way (Mendenhall & Osland, 2002). This will contribute to the production of people since they understand what is expected from them. Team meetings are used by leaders to communicate the vision clearly. According to the literature, there are some more competences which are related to this dimension, for example having change management and strategic skills (Bird, 2003) and having an entrepreneurial spirit (Mendenhall & Osland, 2002). However, in this study only the articulation and communication of a tangible vision is found to be related to this dimension, indicating that this is the most important competency of a leader of an international team in higher education to be effective in the international academic field.

### **5.1.5 Cross-cultural relationship skills**

Team leaders are found to have specific skills that enables them to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships in an international environment with people from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, having international experience is found to be a prerequisite. By living in other countries, leaders enlarge their cultural awareness which automatically makes it easier to deal with people from other cultural backgrounds. This is in line with literature which suggest that global leaders are distinguished by their willingness and decisiveness to leave their country or origin to take on work that may require adapting to a new culture (Folkman, 2014). Having international experience contributes to the leaders' cultural sensitivity since this enables them to increase the awareness and sensitivity of other practices and cultures without assigning them a right or wrong value (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002). Besides, it has positive effects on the cross-cultural communication skills of leaders which are also found to be crucial. By living in other countries, team leaders gained many new knowledge of people. This knowledge is helpful to understand the impact of cultural factors on behavioral communication (Harris & Moran, 1987). Especially when providing feedback, leaders are aware of the cultural differences that might exist. Therefore, they try to be agile by nuancing and balancing their message depending on the receiver's personal background.

Team leaders all appreciate the diversity of the team and show a lot of personal interest in their (foreign) employees. They want to make sure that people feel safe in their environment and therefore

are very tolerant regarding religion. Appreciating cultural differences will contribute to the harmony of different norms and values of other cultures (Jokinen, 2005). Besides, by being maintaining social relationships with employees, team leaders are better able to lead teams and find a common ground with all kinds of people (Goleman, 2000). Once new employees start working at the team, team leaders feel responsible for managing the cultural integration of the new foreign employees. Therefore, shared leadership is used as a practice by leaders to stimulate cultural integration. Leaders distribute their responsibility of managing cultural integration such that people within the team and organization take care of each other. By doing this, employees will feel more self-controlled and empowered which will result in more engagement of team members, more team cohesion, trust and a higher level of consensus and satisfaction (Bergman et al. 2012). Practices related to this competency are assigning the foreign employee to a buddy, providing an information manual and stimulating employees to find and connect to communities. Lastly, team leaders want employees to be happy with their jobs and therefore focus a lot on professional development. They encourage employees to think about their own development and to formulate specific goals for that. Annual reviews are used by leaders to get a sense of people's happiness and effectiveness with work. This competence is line with literature which suggests that global leaders must be able to develop and empower others in order to maintain good formal and informal relationships (Osland et al. 2006).

#### **5.1.6 Cognitive orientation**

Team leaders must think globally and be able to absorb and analyze information about people and cultures effectively. Cognitive orientation is important since it refers to the ability to change the own thinking and behavior depending on the circumstance. To do that, team leaders have a cosmopolitan outlook. This refers to the enthusiastic appreciation of other cultures and the knowledge of cultures in different parts of the world (Hannerz, 1996). This knowledge is used to appropriately behave in different settings. However, team leaders are strict in teaching their employees new skills when the cultural differences are too conflicting with the national culture and employees do not meet what is expected from them. Nevertheless, team leaders are very flexible in their behavior during interaction. They do not lead based on a one-fits-all style and see every individual as someone who requires a specific way of treating and support. Having behavioral flexibility makes team leaders able to flex the core behaviors in order to respond to each situation and circumstance in the most effective way (Osland et al. 2006). Lastly, team leaders are open-minded, unprejudiced and willing to consider new ideas. They admit that they are not all-knowing and consider various alternatives to finally stand on a position and act accordingly (Osland et al. 2006). They encourage employees to take initiative and are very open to new ideas. Especially when people come up with ideas for creating opportunities where people can meet and interact. Team leaders are also very open to welcoming new employees because they bring a breath of fresh air which is beneficial for the group effectiveness.

#### **5.2 Theoretical implications**

First, the present study meets the need for an expansions of the theory of global leadership in higher education institutions. The study provided insights into what competences team leaders possess to lead an international team. Besides, the study revealed several practices that leaders of international teams use to effectively lead the team. The identification of these competences form the basis for more international research in higher education institutions on the development of leading effectively in an international context. However, a more interesting insight of this study is the fact that global competence development in team leaders follows a bottom-up approach. Team leaders consider working in an international environment as conventional since the scientific field always have been international. Therefore, team leaders do for example not even look at the nationality of the employees but interact with employees based on their personality and qualities instead of culture. To be a good academic, it is fundamental to have international experiences and networks. Therefore, team leaders have always been globally-oriented. The scientific field of higher education institutions, especially traditional universities, requires team leaders to work international in order to strengthen the academic work and build international partnerships. Consequently, team leaders have developed their own capabilities to deal with the international and intercultural environment effectively. This differs from what was expected from literature suggesting that global leaders are selected based on an analysis of the global institutional environment and core competencies, followed by the identification of the profiles of necessary human resources to finally come up with a profile of the required competences needed for the specific job or function. The results suggest that in higher education institutions, the



development of global competences in team leaders follows a bottom-up approach instead of a top-down approach, indicating that there is less priority for profiling necessary human resources and required competencies of global leaders needed to fulfill the specific job. However, being internationally-oriented does not directly mean that team leaders also have developed all the desired global leadership competences. In fact, a global leader is not necessarily assumed to be a successful global leader yet. Next to the identified competences, the literature suggested even more desired competences which opens many new directions for future research. The same bottom-up approach as described above holds for internationalization of the university in general. Although the university has the ambition and guidelines to become more international, it appeared that some teams and faculties already are very international. This finding suggests that internationalization might be a natural process, guided by the required international focus of scientific work, that does not need to be pushed by all those specific strategic rules of the university regarding internationalization. This means that internationalization is not a result of a policy of the university. The focus on internationalization appeared to exist even much more longer in some teams and faculties and the strategy of the university to become more international might be a result of this.

Furthermore, the results of this study have implications for the global leadership literature on competences. Previous research considered many dimensions of global leadership competencies (Goldsmith et al. 2003; Mendenhall & Osland, 2000; Osland et al. 2006) but the current study assumes that there are five dimensions of global competences for leaders of teams in higher education institutions. However, in the context of higher education institutions, some dimensions play a significant role where others seem to be of minor interest. Besides, some dimensions seem to interrelate with each other whilst others not. This will be further explained below.

#### **5.2.1 Importance of the dimensions**

The first dimension Global academic expertise is very important for identifying and developing competences in leaders of teams in higher education institutions since this dimension is directly related to how well organizational strategies are integrated and communicated on work floor as well as achieving the best results. In the process of internationalization, leaders can either be a barrier or motivator. Institutions that are more successful in internationalization have leaders who are enthusiastic and supportive and communicate the global vision to their staff (Green, 2007). Team leaders of higher education institutions are enthusiastic and eager to work in an international environment, to manage international interactions and accept the complexity and its contradictions. Diversity is used to stimulate creativity and new opportunities. Besides, team leaders of higher education institutions are very results-oriented and use several practices to achieve the best results. The importance of this dimension is also confirmed in literature, suggesting that leaders need global business expertise to deal with the complexity and understand the bigger picture (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002; Tubbs & Schulz, 2006).

The second dimension Global team building is a new identified dimension but descends from the as in literature identified dimension Global organizing expertise. Results of this study showed that having team building skills are most fundamental for leaders of international teams in higher education to organize and structure human processes in an international context. Team leaders draw on the benefits of international diversity by building teams that offer the best functional expertise from around the world (Neeley, 2015). Effective team building helps leaders to compete in the global academic environment and strengthen the academic work. Several practices are used to support effective team building, including protecting the mix of nationalities and selecting employees based on specific criteria. Although this dimension only contains one related competency, it still is a powerful dimension since it directly affects the team effectiveness and thus the overall results of the team and university.

The third dimension Visioning is crucial for both the team and the institution since it is directly related to how well people are informed by the leader about where the institution and team should go and the motivation of others to strive to achieve the vision. In literature, the importance of this dimension has already been identified. Good visioning skills would help leaders to make better decisions based on the articulated vision and goals, solve problems more easily and improve relationships with employees (Mendenhall, 2006). In line with literature, team leaders make sure that they articulate and communicate a tangible vision (Osland et al. 2006). By setting a vision for the team, team leaders motivate others to realize that vision through small reachable goals. Although literature suggests even

more related competences (i.e. change management skills, entrepreneurial spirit etc.) to this dimension, only the articulation and communication of a tangible vision is been found to be significant for leaders of international teams in higher education.

The cross-cultural relationship skills dimension also plays a significant role in identifying the competences of leaders of teams in higher education institutions since it is automatically related to how well leaders deal with the different cultures and backgrounds of people in multicultural teams. Team leaders in higher education institutions should have desired mental and behavioral competencies that affect the way of how a leader attempts to influence others and approaches a certain task (2005). However, since the scientific field has always been international and team leaders have never even worked in teams that were not international, leading a multicultural team is considered as a natural thing. Team leaders appreciate diversity and are confident that interaction between team members will be successful. All team leaders are aware of how someone's culture influences the interaction and know how to adjust their behavior when the interaction is not effective. This seems to be a natural process and team leaders do not explicitly develop plans for that. Nevertheless, they distributed their responsibility regarding managing cultural integration of new foreign employees such that people within a team help and take care of each other. Having international experience is found to be a condition for leading an international team. This is helpful in opening up to other cultures and the understanding of which challenges arise when people from different cultures work together. Having international experiences makes it easier to understand people when they come up with something that differ from the local perspective. This result suggests that also in higher education institutions it is crucial that team leaders have gained international experience in order to lead an international team.

The cognitive orientation dimension seems to play a smaller role in the identification of global leadership competences in leaders of international teams in higher education institutions. This might be because of a lack of interview questions that measure competences related to this dimension. Therefore, results related to this dimension suggest an expansion of the literature regarding interview questions that measure cognitive orientation in leaders. Team leaders of higher education institutions do have a cosmopolitan outlook which is closely related to having a global mindset. Adapting a global mindset is perceived as crucial to a higher education institution's strategy and success. It appeared to be more important than refined structures and procedures (Barlett & Ghosal, 2002). Team leaders of higher education institutions learned a lot of cultures of different parts of the worlds and use this knowledge to change their leadership style based on the specific person, situations and circumstances. They are able to 'flex' their behaviors in order to act appropriately in the situation. This result suggests that team leaders of higher education do not lead based on a one-fits-all style. They are open-minded and willing to consider new ideas and therefore acknowledge that they are not all-knowing. Having such an attitude towards the ambiguous and unpredictable will help leaders of international teams in higher education institutions to shift the thinking when the situation requires it. For higher education institutions this is extremely important since it is automatically related to effectively dealing with changes that are a result of organizational strategies, such as internationalization.

### **5.2.2 Interrelations**

To be an effective team leader in an international context of a higher education institution, it is found that a leader should have global academic expertise, global team building skills, visioning skills, cross-cultural relationship skills and cognitive orientation. The importance of these independent dimensions is already discussed above. However, even more important is to understand how these dimensions interrelate with each other so that the highest effectiveness is reached.

First, to be an effective leader of an international team, it all starts with the willingness to work in an international environment and manage the international interactions. Without the motivation to lead an international and intercultural team, a leader is never able to motivate others. Second, a leader must achieve the best team results as possible. Therefore, a team leader must have a results-orientation and use several practices to facilitate an environment in which employees can work independently as well as together. Besides, a team leader must articulate and communicate a tangible vision and strategy so that every employee in the team is informed about the (future) team goals. Effective team building might contribute to achieving the best results because diversity can be used to build teams that offer the best functional expertise. Once a team is build and goals are set, team leaders must be

able to deal with all the different cultures of the international employees and develop and maintain interpersonal relationships with them. Therefore, it is found to be very important for team leaders to manage the successful cultural integration of international employees. Several practices are used to stimulate the cultural integration, including a buddy system and information manual. Besides that, a team leader should also be cultural sensitive and able to appreciate diversity so that employees feel welcome and free to express their own culture and religion. The cognitive orientation of a team leaders plays an important role here because it affects the way of how a leader thinks and behaves in a certain circumstance. Having a cosmopolitan outlook for example makes it easier for team leaders to really deal with people with all those diverse backgrounds. Also having international experience as team leaders themselves, makes it easier to understand people when they come up with something that differs from the local perspective.

In conclusion, one could say that it all starts with achieving the best team results and willingness to work in an international context and manage international interactions. An effective team leader has specific competences and uses particular practices in order to achieve the highest team results in an international context. As shown in the figure below, having effective team building skills might contribute to the results of a team. The same holds for visioning skills and cross-cultural relationship skills. Also cognitive orientation might affect the results of the team but it also affects how team leaders deal with people from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, it also affects the cross-cultural relationship skills of team leaders. Identifying these interrelations contributes to future research on how specific dimensions of competences interrelate and affect each other so that the highest effectiveness of a leader and a team can be reached.

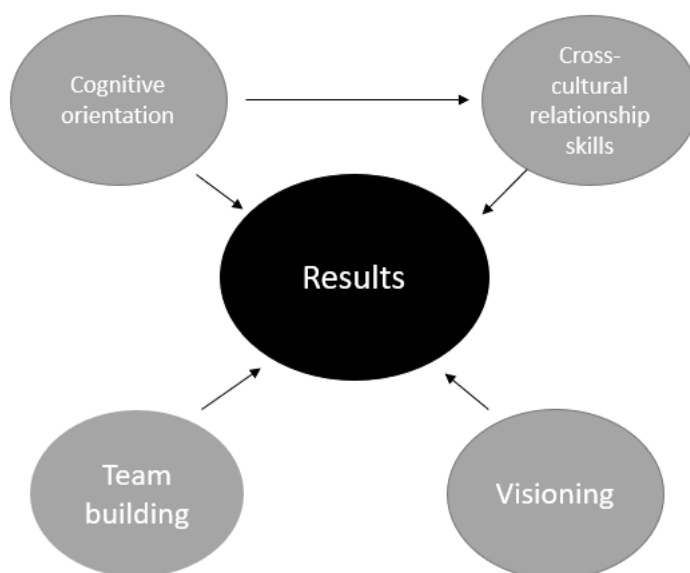


Figure 3. Schematic overview of interrelations between dimensions of competence

### 5.3 Practical implications and recommendations

First, this study aimed to identify which competences leaders of international teams in higher education institutions possess to effectively lead international teams. The identification of these competences contribute to the awareness of the role of a leader in the internationalization process. A leader must have global academic expertise, global team buildings skills and visioning skills. Therefore, a leader must be eager to work in an international environment and manage international interactions, accept the complexity and its contradictions, results-oriented, expert in team building and articulate and communicate a tangible vision. Besides, leaders must have cross-cultural relationship skills. Therefore, a leaders must be cultural sensitive, appreciate diversity, have cross-cultural communication skills, share leadership and develop others. However, the importance of this dimensions is not as strong as expected since team leaders give lead to very intelligent people who are cultural intelligent and do not face many difficulties with adapting to the national context. Lastly, leaders must be cognitively skilled to be well able to absorb and analyze information about people, traditions and cultural norms from around the world. Therefore, a leaders must have a cosmopolitan

outlook, behavioral flexibility and be open-minded. In this study, this dimension is not very comprehensive but it is expected that it is an important dimension to assess and develop leaders. However, leaders of international teams in higher education are very intelligent, rational and mostly do not prefer to talk about their own competence. Therefore, it is important to use a reliable and valid instrument that measures competences related to this dimension. Universities could invest in the development of the global competencies of leaders to better respond to the international needs. Understanding the global competencies of leaders may provide the base for international training activities in which learning and education is fundamental.

Besides competences, this study also identified several practices that are closely related to a specific competence and used by leaders to effectively lead an international team. The identification of these practices contribute to the knowledge about what methods are used to effectively give lead to an international team. Maintaining a common language on work floor and offering people language courses contribute to better team results. The same holds for combining people's qualities to collaborate more effectively, facilitate people that they can work independently by offering good support in time management and feedback opportunities and unburden employees from any bureaucratic duties. Protecting the mix of nationalities during selection and room allocation and selecting new employees based on their cultural understanding, personal qualities and English skills contribute to better team building in order that people are capable to do their jobs. Team meetings are used as an occasion to articulate and communicate a tangible vision and strategy in order that team members know what is expected from them. Assigning the new employee to a buddy, providing the information manual and stimulating communities are results of the leader's distribution of responsibility to manage the cultural integration of new foreign employees in order that people in the team take care of each other. Annual reviews are used for the development of others. Learning about culture contributes to being more cosmopolitan. Lastly, maintaining a welcoming policy is a result of being open-minded as well as stimulating and accepting the organization of social team activities. These practices can be used to help teams to be more successful in the internationalization process.

### **5.3.1 Recommendations for the Participating Organization**

This study was carried out at the University of Twente where the competences that leaders possess to effectively lead an international team were identified. Also several related practices were identified. Team leaders already possess specific competencies and the literature offers many more competences that leaders should possess, but the question remains whether that is really necessary. Leading an international team in higher education institutions seems to be normal since the scientific field has always been international. Team leaders are totally comfortable with leading an international and multicultural team and no major difficulties were experienced. HR currently does not seem to play a role for team leaders in their function of leading an international team. Team leaders fulfill their responsibilities themselves, in their own ways, and do not turn to HR for support in leading an international team since they do not experience how beneficial HR can be. HR seems to not profile their department as a professional body with a great amount of expertise and this is not considered as such. However, HR could be an essential partner in supporting team leaders in their leadership styles since HR departments in international organizations are very occupied with managing diverse human resources (Benschop, 2001; Friedman, 2007). Besides, some team leaders mentioned that they would like some support in how to effectively lead an international team by for example having the opportunity to attend courses or trainings that focus on intercultural leadership. Therefore, a number of recommendations on how the HR department can support team leaders of international teams were drafted. Besides, some recommendations were drafted that focus on the assessment and development of global leadership competencies.

#### *Recommendation 1: Campaign the way to HR*

In the current situation, leaders of international teams do not find the way to HR when they experience difficulties when leading an international team and some of them do not even know how HR could be beneficial. This can be explained by the fact that, over the years, team leaders have learned to deal with internationalization and leading international teams themselves and therefore are not even aware what professional support they miss from HR. The HR department is considered as support for administrative and labor contract-related tasks, not as a professional body with great expertise. In order to play a more outstanding role in the internationalization process, HR needs to be considered as a strong partner. Therefore, HR is advised to invest in an internal campaign in order to encourage

team leaders to find the way to HR. This campaign needs to send the message that HR aims to be a professional player in the internationalization process and should demonstrate how the HR department can add value. In order to reach this, it is important that HR clearly communicates the internationalization goals of the university, as well as the consequences, benefits and the supportive role of the HR department. Besides, it is helpful when HR is physically visible in the workplace. Both team leaders and international employees will be better able to find the way to HR when they interact regularly

*Recommendation 2: Select team leaders on their global competence*

Most of the team leaders just grown in their function and fulfill their jobs already for many years. However, since the university is growing, it is expected that also the amount of research teams will grow and this will result in the demand of more international-oriented team leaders. With the identification of the competences needed to lead an international team, HR can take major steps in the further development of a competence profile which can be used during the selection procedure of hiring new team leaders. Therefore, HR is advised to invest in a comprehensive selection process for identifying and selecting the most exceptional leaders. Good selection criteria must guarantee that only the very best candidates are selected and all efforts must be extended to create a truly representative body. Most importantly, a leader must have a recognized record of extraordinary achievement and leadership experience. This means that the leader has a couple of years of outstanding professional work experience and an indication of playing an important leadership role for the rest of his career. Besides, the leader must demonstrate that he or she has a personal commitment to serve the organizational goals and can earn trust at both local and global levels. Lastly, the leader should be self-aware and show a desire for learning. It is crucial for HR that they actively seek leaders who fit well with the organization's culture and fit better with the future vision of the organization than with the current state. Clearly, it will be efficient and effective for the organizing if someone can be selected, whether internally or externally, who already has many of the key competencies for success in the position. To that end, it will be useful to define a consistent selection process and use tools such as screening interview protocols and forms for comparing candidates among many possibilities.

*Recommendation 3: Develop competence assessment tools*

Team leaders mentioned that they never have been assessed on their global competences. They earned their jobs based on their many years of experience and were already expected to be successful in leading an international team. However, since the research environment is characterized by increasing uncertainty and an expanding diversity, leaders will meet more challenges which require individuals' readiness to transcend national traditions and boundaries. Consequently, HR is advised to invest in the alignment of team leaders who are globally competent by assessing and profiling people's likelihood to succeed in the context. This means the development of assessment tools which support both the selection and development process. Designed to accurately assessing an individual's competence is for example the 360 degree feedback tool. This tool consist of ratings and comments from the coworkers (team members, direct reports, internal or external customers etc.). Also self-assessment tools might be helpful. The responses can be used to generate a feedback report which can be used by the team leader to identify his or her strengths and areas of developmental need. Providing feedback is important because most team leaders receive little or no performance-related feedback from both HR or co-workers. Many team leaders therefore have a limited or incorrect understanding their own strengths and development needs. They therefore are unlikely to be able to prepare accurate plans to upgrade their own capabilities. Important in this process is that HR creates support and cooperation among team leaders by well informing them about the aim and benefits of using these new tools.

*Recommendation 4: Develop global competence in team leaders*

Leading an international team requires cognitive, behavioral and emotional development. This study already identified several global competences but it is expected that future research might identify even more crucial competences. Nevertheless, team leaders need to adopt a global mindset and integrate cultural intelligence into academic operations when leading an international team. Therefore, HR is advised to invest in the development of global competencies of team leaders. HR can offer team leaders training packages that focus on intercultural leadership. Working in a team that is built by a number of different nationalities presents challenges to the way in which team leaders work and

communicate. Differences can easily lead to miscommunication and tensions within the international team which will ultimately result in loss of time, money and revenue to the organization. By offering trainings, HR will eliminate the risks and pitfall that cross-cultural working brings. During these trainings, knowledge of culture's key components and drivers and their impact on communication must be discussed. Besides, it must contribute to the awareness of leader of their global skills and personal qualities to work effectively in an international business environment. Besides, HR can organize toolbox meetings in which leaders of international teams come together every now and then to discuss and compare cross-cultural challenges and to share practical tips, techniques and strategies for cross-cultural working and effective communication. During the development of global competence in team leaders, it is crucial to capture the process. Since team leaders are not yet reviewed on their global competence, HR must make sure that they carefully introduce and communicate the development process. However, in order to be successful, it is crucial to be strict in set deadlines.

#### **5.4 Limitations and future research**

It is acknowledged that this study is not without limitations. First of all, case studies are associated with the risk of getting lost in the data. It was especially difficult to connect results with the research model. However, since the coding was done by two junior researchers together and analysis was regularly discussed with other researchers, the risk of getting lost in data was reduced and transparency was increased. Besides, the interviewer biased, in which the verbal or non-verbal behavior of the researcher influences the responses, was reduced by conducting the interviews with two interviewers. Nevertheless, an important limitation of this study is the lack of satisfying interview questions that measure the cognitive orientation of team leaders. Questions related to this dimension of competence were asked in the first two interviews but it appeared that team leaders were not able to answer these questions properly. They did not want to talk about their own competence and a reason for this might be because of their rational intelligence and their technical-orientation. Therefore, several questions were adjusted and even some of them were left out. This resulted in a lack of valid interview questions to measure this dimension of competence.

This study aimed to find out what competences team leaders possess to effectively lead an international team. Therefore, team leaders were carefully selected based on clear criteria. However, the study did not aim to explore the perceptions of the international employees while it might be the case that team leaders experience their way of leadership differently than the international employees themselves. Therefore, it would be interesting for future research to interview international employees to assess whether or not the identified competences of leaders are that effective to lead the team. Besides, in this study the most international teams were selected since the intention was to identify competences need to lead the team. However, it might also be interesting to examine the need for global competences in research teams which are for whatever reason not so international. This research might identify possible reasons why the team is not yet so international and one of these reasons might be because of an inappropriate leadership style or a lack of global competence in leaders. Lastly, future research on global competence in higher education institutions must expand the list of the already identified competences and practices.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

This study aimed to understand which competences are most effective to lead international teams in higher education institutions. The study showed that the global competence development in leaders of international teams in higher education institutions follows a bottom-up approach. Working in the scientific field requires an academic to be globally oriented. Therefore, team leaders of international teams in higher education institutions consider working in an international scientific environment as something natural. To deal with the international and intercultural environment effectively, team leaders have already developed their own competences without a leading (institutional) vision behind it. This insight suggests that in higher education institutions, there is less priority for profiling necessary human resources and required competencies of global leaders needed to fulfill the specific job.

A number of competences of leaders of international teams were identified. Besides, several practices related to specific competences were identified that team leaders use to lead the team effectively. First, leaders should be able to understand and deal with the complexity of the international academic environment (i.e. Global academic expertise). Therefore, team leaders must be eager to work in an international environment, manage international interactions, accept the complexity and its contractions and have a results-orientation. Several practices are used by leaders to achieve the best (team) results, including: maintaining a common corporate language, offering language courses, combining people's qualities during collaboration, making sure that people can work independently by providing good support in time management and feedback opportunities and unburdening employees from bureaucratic duties. Second, team leaders must be able to build an international team effectively (i.e. Global team building). Therefore, a leaders must possess good team building skills. Several practices are used to support this competency, including: protecting the mix of nationalities when hiring new employees and during room allocation and selecting employees based on their cultural understanding, English skills and international appreciation and experience. Third, team leaders must be able to vision where the institutions and team should go and motivate others to strive to achieve that vision (i.e. Visioning). Therefore, team leaders must articulate and communicate a tangible vision. Team meetings are used as an occasion to share this vision. Fourth, team leaders must be able to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships in cross-cultural contexts (i.e. Cross-cultural relationship skills). Therefore, team leaders must be cultural sensitive. Having international experience is seen as a prerequisite of owning this competency. Besides, a leaders must appreciate diversity. Being tolerant towards religion is seen as a useful tool to show this appreciation. A leader also should have cross-cultural communication skills. Therefore, leaders aim to be agile in providing feedback by nuancing and balancing their message depending on the other's needs. When new employees start working at the university, team leaders feel responsible for their cultural integration and use several practices to manage this integration, including: shared leadership, assigning the new employee to a buddy, providing an information manual and stimulating employees to find their own communities. Lastly, team leaders must be able to develop others. Therefore, annual reviews are used to develop employees and get a sense of their happiness and effectiveness with work. Finally, team leaders should be able to change the own thinking and behavior depending on the circumstance (i.e. Cognitive orientation). Therefore, team leaders must have a cosmopolitan outlook. Learning about other cultures supports this competency. Besides, leaders must have behavioral flexibility. Lastly, team leaders must be open-minded and willing to consider new ideas. Maintaining a welcoming policy and stimulating employees to organize social activities in which people can enjoy and learn from the interaction with people from other cultures are practices resulted from owning this competency.

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## Appendix 1. Interview Questions

1. What is your educational background?
2. What is your professional background?
3. What is your international experience?
4. How would you describe your team? (Number of employees, composition, nationalities)
5. To what extent do people collaborate within your team? (Difference between education/research, staff and PhD's)
6. What is your role in the team?
7. You supervise a group of international people. How do you experience your role as leader of such an international team?
8. Could you try to describe your leadership style?
9. What are focus points in the selection process when hiring new employees? Which role does culture play here?
10. Which role does culture play in the onboarding process?
11. Which factors do you take into account to make sure a new international colleague functions optimally? (Room division, job descriptions, praying facilities etc.)
12. What are focus points during the year reviews?
13. How do you take the culture of the employee into account when preparing and conducting year reviews? (Different questions, different focus areas).
14. How do you take culture into account during meetings?
15. Based on which choices do you create sub teams within your team? Which role does culture play here?
16. Which role does culture play in the collaboration between the members of your team?
17. Which difficulties regarding cultural differences do you experience in the collaboration between team members? How do you deal with this?
18. How do you stimulate intercultural interaction within your team?
19. What do you need to effectively stimulate intercultural interaction within your team? (Advice, support, facilitations)
20. Which role could HR play in stimulating/enhancing intercultural interaction? Why?
21. Are there any other things you would like to add about the collaboration between members of your international team?
22. What are, in your opinion, points of attention regarding internationalization?
23. Do you have any further comments?