Academia in two different parts of the world

Cultural differences in international student perceptions'
regarding academic education

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Academia in two different parts of the world: cultural differences in international student perceptions regarding academic education.

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Abstract

Purpose: This explorative research looks into the cultural dimensions regarding academic education and examines the existing cultural dimensions in this field. By answering the question 'How do international students perceive the differences in academic education between their home and host environment?', academic education has been mapped through international student's perception and the differences that they have experienced. This study contributes to the field of the cultural dimensions of academic education and the acculturation of international students to a new academic environment.

Method: An exploratory, qualitative study was performed, by interviewing 20 international Asian students in the Netherlands. The participants were found through study associations, online social pages and snowball sampling. Furthermore, an interview guideline was created. The guideline contained questions that asked about the differences the participants experienced regarding different topics in academic education, such as, 'How is it different in the Netherlands when it comes to learning objectives in academic education?'. Lastly, the data was analyzed through thematic analysis and coding.

Results: The findings resulted in 3 main dimensions in academic education, namely: open mindedness towards diversity versus compliance, equality versus hierarchy and long term versus short term relation'. These dimensions were found due to cultural differences in individualism versus collectivism and power distance between the home and host environment.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that national cultural differences affect the perception that international students have regarding academic education and that the existing cultural dimension are applicable in academic context. Further, research is advised regarding the participants education which should be of one specific field, and that the participant should be only bachelor or master student in their home and host environment. Furthermore, research regarding the relation between emotions and the perception of academic education is advised.

Keywords: Academic education, international students, cultural differences, cultural dimensions, acculturation, Hofstede.

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1. Introduction

The world has shrunk in terms of time and space, increased mobility of people is leading to large groups of privileged migrants. International students are part of these privileged migrants. After the 1999 Bologna Accord, more and more international students are coming to the Netherlands to study (Wildt & Gasteel,2019). International students are a financial asset to universities, these students enrich universities with their diverse heritage and perspectives, which increases cultural awareness and appreciation (Bevis, 2002; Harrison, 2002). They bring a wide range of knowledge and skills in many areas, contributing to the knowledge capital and to the professional field of the host country. The arrival of international students is beneficial for the host country as these students contribute a range of assets. However, it is also beneficial for the students themselves, as they receive higher education in the host country (Berry, 2005), and they gain intercultural experience. In the transition from their previous educational culture to the host educational culture, students can face a number of factors that influence their acculturation to the new environment.

It has been found that international students who attend education at a university abroad may experience a culture shock. Especially when the way of delivery of the education and the expectations the university has from the students is different from the previous educational culture that international students have experienced in their home country (Zhou et al., 2008). A study by De Vita (2001) refers to this as cultural learning style, which proposes learning to be culturally based, this may then explain why certain teaching methods and learning tasks in some cultures may be ineffective in others. Previous study also shared that adjustment for international students is easier when the cross-cultural transition is smaller, like from Germany to the Netherlands. However, a large cross-cultural transition like China to the Netherlands requires more adjustment and is harder for the international students (Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

Research regarding international students has so far mainly focused on the area of differences in learning styles. Much research has also been done in the context of second language learning (Severs, 2010), social life and barriers of international students. Rienties and Tempelaar (2013) performed a qualitative research to characterize the typical differences in academic and social integration, in order to understand the impact of cultural dimensions on academic and social integration. To date, studies have also been conducted to conceptualize international education (Madge et al, 2014). But there is a gap in conceptualizing academic education following the perception of international students. Until now there is limited literature on the perception of international students regarding academic education. This explorative research looks into the cultural dimensions for the academic context following the perception of international students.

Several scholars have compiled cultural dimensions such as Hofstede, Hall and Trompenaars. These cultural dimensions have been developed by studying people in professional context and resulted into models defining national cultures (Hofstede, 1986; Hofstede, 2001; Würtz, 2017; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997).Studies on the influence of international cultural differences regarding organizations have often been conducted by scholars from business schools. These theories can also be interpreted in the context of education, when comparing the relation between a manager and employee with that of a teacher and student. Especially, as Hofstede described in his work the importance of the dimensions in educational context (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010). Further, given the centrality of the cultural dimensions of Hofstede in cross-cultural management theory, it has also been central in educational context such as learning styles (Manikutty et al., 2007).Also, a quantitative study by Sulkowski and Deakin (2009) focused on the impact of culture on student behavior and enhancing teaching and learning in a multinational classroom using Hofstede's

dimensions. This research examines whether these cultural dimensions are sufficient to explain the cultural differences in higher education between the home and host environment, using international student perceptions.

The perception international students have of academic education is often based on the experiences of the students or on experiences from friends and family. Also, growing up in a different environment can affect their perception. Often these students already have a certain picture of how things normally go in academic education due to their previous academic environment. As a result, students who are going to study abroad may enter the academic host environment with a completely different perception. Because of this students may experience both positive and negative differences and consequences in their academic education in the host environment. This explorative research focuses on international student perceptions regarding academic education and the impact of cultural differences on their perception. The aim of this research is to examine the current cultural dimensions in the context of academic education, to develop cultural dimensions for academic education. This is done by detecting the cultural differences international students experienced in the facets compared to the perception they had about academic education. This study can help future international students with their acculturation process to new academic environments.

On the basis of semi-structured interviews, data is collected on the academic perceptions of international Asian students in the Netherlands, by looking at the differences in the aspects of academic education between the home countries of the international students and the Netherlands. The following research question is going to be answered 'How do international students perceive the differences in academic education between their home and host environment?'.

In the following sections, a literature review will be presented in which the most important concepts of this study are elaborated. After, the method used in this research is described, which includes the design of the study, the participants, the procedure and the data analysis. Next, the results of the study have been laid out, in this part the most notable findings have been presented. And finally, this paper is ending with the discussion, the practical implications, limitations and advise for further research.

2. Theoretical Framework

The following section discusses the relevant literature related to acculturation and cultural differences. The cultural differences will be discussed using the cultural dimensions of Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden – Turner and Hall. Further, literature on international student perceptions' regarding academic education is provided.

2.1 Acculturation

Migration has led to the creation of the acculturation models. The increase in migrants led researchers to investigate the processes immigrants go through when settling elsewhere abroad. Acculturation models initially focused only on the migrants, theories mainly argued that migrants underwent a process in which the emphasis came down to replacing their own cultural heritage with that of the host country (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga & Szapocznik, 2010). But over the past three decades Berry and his colleagues have been conceptualizing acculturation as a bi-dimensional process (Berry, 1992; Berry, 1997; Berry, 2005; Berry, 2006; Berry and Kim, 1988; Berry et al., 1987; Williams and Berry, 1991). Berry defined acculturation as the process of change that takes place as a result of two or more cultures coming into contact (Berry, 2005). Based on the acculturation models it is reasonable to expect that international students may encounter a range of differences due to the new culture (Safdar et al., 2003; Berry, 1997). These differences can become stressors, if international students consider these differences as a difficulty. Frequently mentioned stressors found from previous literature regarding international students and their acculturation regarding academic education considered teaching style (Aubrey, 1991; Liberman, 1994). According to Aubrey (1991), international students may find it difficult to adapt to the teaching style of their host country. International students with pre-education in countries that focus on learning through memorization may find it more difficult to adapt to critical thinking which is highly valued in Western education. A qualitative study by Liberman (1994) focused on the educational experience of international students in Amerika. The findings showed that international students experienced difficulty to adjust to the critical thinking approach and the interactive teaching style.

2.2 Cultural differences

2.2.1 Hofstede's cultural dimensions in academic education

Hofstede's (1986, 2001, 2011) research covers a considerable place in the characterization of cultural dimensions. Based on a qualitative survey regarding attitude analysis, completed by employees from more than 50 countries, Hofstede found the six key dimensions on which cultures differ, namely: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term vs. short-term orientation and indulgence vs. restraint.

The dimension power distance is about the extent to which less powerful members of organizations expect and agree unequal distribution of power. In high power distance cultures people are more likely to accept a hierarchical structure and show respect for position, age, and authority compared to low power distance cultures (Hofstede, 1986). In educational context this cultural dimension can cause differences in the relation of the teacher and student, as teachers can be considered as someone higher in the hierarchy compared to the students. While in low power distance cultures students and teachers treat each other equally, the hierarchy is less visible. Students used to high power distance might experience difficulties in the relation with their teachers in low power distance environments. But also, in the communication with the teachers, students from high power distance cultures could experience differences. As in the communication in high power distance environment people lower in the hierarchy have respect for those higher in the hierarchy. This can also impact the way students and teachers communicate in class, such as class discussions.

The dimension individualism versus collectivism comprises the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. Cultures with individualism have loose ties between individuals, and individuals are expected to look after themselves and immediate family. While in cultures with collectivism individuals have integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups (Hofstede, 1986). In individualistic environments people are expected to think and act for themselves and the rights of the individual, independence and self-expression are highly valued concepts. In contrast, in collectivistic environments conformity and the well-being of the group are highly valued concepts. People in collectivistic environments tend to respect traditions and elders (Blodgett et al., 2008; Sulkowski & Deakin, 2009). In the context of education students from collectivistic environments might experience differences in individualistic environments. As in collectivistic classrooms teachers are in charge of class activities. The students in this class environment do not debate with teachers as they want to prevent confrontation and conflict in order to safe 'face'. While in individualistic classrooms it is more common for students to engage in discussions with teachers, as teachers encourage students to show initiative and personal ideas. Also, in the examination, students from collectivistic environment can experience differences. Hofstede states that people from collectivistic environments value traditions, examination can be part of this. As the traditional way of examination is the written exam, but in the meantime different kind of exams are taking place in educational context such as presentations, assignment, projects and oral exams.

Hofstede's third dimension masculinity versus femininity concerns gender roles. This cultural dimension is about the extent to which societies value predominately stereotypical male or female attributes. In masculine societies, emotional gender roles differ quite from each other and concepts such as assertiveness, aggression and personal success are highly valued. While in feminine societies gender roles have overlap and concepts such as humility and modesty are highly valued (Hofstede, 1986). Also, in the context of education classrooms from masculine environments can differ from classrooms in feminine environments. As in masculine classrooms competition amongst fellow students is common and grades are important.

The fourth-dimension uncertainty avoidance is about the tolerance of society's to uncertainty and ambiguity. This dimension is indicating the extent to which members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations. In high uncertainty avoidance environments concepts such as written rules, consensus and intolerance towards deviations are common. But in low uncertainty avoidance environments people have tolerance towards ambiguity and risk-taking (Hofstede, 1986). In the educational context students from high uncertainty avoidance environments might experience differences in low uncertainty avoidance environments. Students might feel threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations in the classroom, as these students are used to concepts such as written rules and consensus. Students can experience differences regarding the way of teaching and the class activities as in their previous environment they are used to the teachers being in charge in the class and sharing all the knowledge, but in low uncertainty environment teachers involve students.

The fifth dimension of Hofstede is related to long term orientation based on being focused on future rewards, or the fulfillment of future needs and desires. People from the long-term orientated environments tend to plan and place much importance on perseverance and thrift. But people in short term orientated environments value short-term success and self-gratification (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005). In the educational context students from long term orientated environments might experience differences in short term orientated environments. According to Hofstede people in long term orientated environments study hard and link failure to a lack of effort. While in short term orientated countries failures are seen as a lesson to improve. This might impact student's perception regarding retakes in educational concepts.

Indulgence versus restraint is the sixth and newest dimension, added in 2010. This dimension focuses on aspects known from the literature on happiness research. Indulgence societies represent relatively free fulfillment of basic and natural human desires associated to enjoying life and having fun. In indulgence societies more people declare themselves very happy. In these societies people have a perception of personal life control and freedom of speech is important to them. Further, these societies have higher importance towards leisure time and in the wealthy indulgence societies they are lenient towards sexual norms. Restraint societies represent controlling and regulating needs through strict social norms. In restraint societies the percentage of people who declare themselves very happy is less. In these societies people have a perception of helplessness, they perceive that what happens to them is not their own doing. Furthermore, the freedom of speech is not a primary concern in these environments. People have lower importance towards leisure time and in the wealthy restraint societies they are stricter towards sexual norms (Hofstede, 2011).

Hofstede's cultural dimensions are mainly based on an employee surveys and focus on national cultures. Originally, the dimensions were defined in an organizational setting. Some scholars considered the cultural dimensions of Hofstede in educational context and previous research showed that the cultural dimensions of Hofstede impact learning and teaching as well (Hofstede,1986; Joy and Kolb, 2009). According to Hofstede and colleagues (2010) masculine countries characterize education through competition like striving for excellence and failure is seen as a disaster. In masculine societies, the best students are the norm. But in feminine countries, excellence is kept discreet and failure is seen as an unfortunate incident, which can provide feedback for learning. In feminine societies, the average student is the norm (Hofstede et al., 2010). Countries with strong uncertainty avoidance culture expect teachers to be in the role of expert and rather have structured learning based on precise objectives and detailed assignments. In countries with low uncertainty avoidance the learning situations are not structured, but are often open and the tasks and objectives are broadly defined (Hofstede et al., 2010). Previous research showed that high power-distance and strong uncertainty avoidance is negatively related to student centered education (Jippes & Majoor, 2008). As countries with high power distance and strong uncertainty avoidance rather prefer teacher centered education (Zhou, Topping, & Jindal-Snape, 2011). Previous study by Volet and Ang (1998) found that when Asian and Australian students had collaborated in student centered education methods, the students preferred to work with students from the same nationality, the findings showed that the cultural differences between the international Asian students and the Australian students were considered disadvantageous for working together.

2.2.2 High context versus low context culture

The cultural dimensions of Hofstede do not reflect a clear dimension in terms of communication, for this the communication model of Hall is also used. Hall proposed that cultures can be identified based on the messages the members in a given culture prefer to use, and he defined these as high context or low context communication. In some cultures, communication occurs predominantly through explicit statements in text and speech, these cultures are categorized as low context cultures. In other cultures, messages include other communicative aspects such as body language, the situation and paraverbal signals these cultures are categorized as high context cultures. People from low context environments communicate in ways that are consistent with their feelings. In low context environments people have a direct, confrontational, and explicit approach. The listener receives the message as sent, there is no need to think about the message in order to understand and grasp the correct meaning. While people from high context environments communicate without referring to the problem directly. People from high context environments use indirect, nonconfrontational, and vague language. It depends on the listeners ability to understand the correct meaning of the context (Würtz, 2017). In educational context this could mean that students from high context environment communicate more indirectly whereas students from low context environments communicate directly. Which can cause

miscommunication when these two cultures meet. This can cause difficulties for students to communicate with the host fellow students and teachers. Further, this cultural difference could also impact the writing of students in assignments.

2.2.3 The dimensions of culture by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner

Through a qualitative study the scholars Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) also researched cross-cultural differences, which resulted in seven dimensions. This dimension model aimed to clarify cultural differences in multinational organizations, in order to present comprehension for managers and to prevent misunderstandings due to cultural differences.

The universalism vs. particularism dimension reflects the importance of rules and laws in a society, in contrast to personal relationships. In universalistic societies there is emphasis on rules, values, codes and standards. People believe that these aspect takes priority over the needs and claims of personal relationships and that regulations can be applied to everyone and should be used to regulate what is right. Particularistic societies on the other side put emphasis on personal relationships. People in these societies look at the circumstances to decide what is correct or ethically acceptable. In educational context this dimension could impact the relation between students and teachers and fellows. As in universalistic societies student might be used in following rules and agreements, while in particularistic societies students might consider the agreement based on the relation with the person with whom the agreement was made. This might lead to a different attitude of people from particularistic societies towards the agreement, for example thinking of deadlines, meetings and assignments.

The dimension individualism vs. collectivism of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner is about the relative importance of individual versus group interests. The focus of this dimension is whether people function as a group or as individuals, similar to Hofstede's individualism dimension, which can be found in chapter 2.2.1. There is also connection between the achievement vs. ascription dimension with the power distance dimension of Hofstede. This dimension emphasizes on how people distribute status and authority, as described in chapter 2.2.2.

The neutral vs. affective dimension concerns how people deal with the display of emotions. In neutral societies, people do not openly reveal what they think or feel. In these societies people hide their emotions. Furthermore, they are cool and self-conscious in their behavior, lacking physical contact, gestures or strong facial expressions. In affective societies people are more open with their emotions. Features of affective societies are easy and open flow of emotions, verbal and nonverbal expression of thoughts and feelings, clarity and expressiveness, and fluid and dramatic delivery of statements (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). On academic level, this can mean that students have different ways of communication and presentations, but also in writing. Especially in assignments that involve discussions and argumentation students from different environments might experience differences to the new way of sharing emotions in academic context.

The specific vs. diffuse dimension concerns the decision of people in how they engage colleagues in the different areas of their lives, like their professional and personal lives. There is an emphasis on the extent to which people combine or separate their personal and working lives. People in specific societies tend to have clear boundaries between their work and personal lives, they first analyze all different parts of their lives individually before combining them. Also the authority relation outside the work environment is different. In diffuse-oriented societies there is no clear distinction between work and personal life. These people perceive their work and personal life interrelated. Due to which the hierarchy of the work field can be visible in social areas outside work (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). On an academic level, there can be an impact on how students interact with each other and with teachers. Where students from specific communities keep different elements in their

lives separate and students from diffuse communities combine different elements and relationships. This in turn can have consequences in academic collaboration as well as socialization.

The sixth dimension is about the degree to which people believe they can exercise control over their environment, contrasting the believe that the environment controls them. In internal societies people believe that nature is complicated but that it can be monitored by people who make the effort and have the required knowledge. These people therefore have more controlling approach and perceive changes as uncomfortable. On the other side, in external societies people do not have a controlling approach. Instead of trying to control the environment, these people prefer to live harmoniously and adapt to the environment. In external societies there is more acceptability of flexibility and change, people are willing to accommodate to reach harmony (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). In the field of education, this means that students can have different views about the way of education. In internal societies, students may hold the view that they can speak out and implement change only with the consent of those involved, while in external societies, students engage in what is being done and said by others. For example, you can think of the design of education, personal assignments, group assignments and lesson schedules.

The last dimension sequential time vs. synchronous time includes how people manage time in different cultural environments. The dimension long term orientation vs. short term orientation by Hofstede involves cultural differences in the area of time, but not specifically on how people manage their time. And in education this can be a relevant. People from sequential time environment like organized events. There is high value for time and punctuality, planning and staying on schedule. People don't appreciate it when their schedule is interrupted, they focus on one activity or project at a time, they are punctual, they set clear deadlines and keep to the deadlines. While people from synchronous time environments often work on several projects simultaneously, and perceive plans and commitments as flexible. In this environment people have a flexible approach towards work and also allow others to be flexible in tasks and projects. There is only emphasis on punctuality and deadlines when it is related to meeting objectives (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). In educational context aspects such as deadlines and meeting can be frequent. These aspects depend on how students manage their time. Cultural perceptions regarding time can cause misunderstandings amongst students and teachers with different cultural backgrounds regarding time. For example, when students plan a meetings at a specific time, the perception of this time can differ amongst students from sequential environments and synchronous. The students from sequential environments will be punctual whereas the students from synchronous environments will see the time flexible. This also counts for deadlines.

2.3 International student perceptions regarding academic education

Literature research has been conducted on international students' perceptions regarding academic education. A number of facets of academic education have emerged from the literature review. By searching databases for articles on international students' perceptions on academic education, topics were found in which students experienced differences from their previous academic environment. In addition, there were also discussions with fellow international students and Dutch students who have followed education abroad. In these interviews, the students were briefly asked about differences that these students experienced in the academic education in the host and home education, and they were also asked about how they would cluster these differences. The subjects were then grouped and given a name that fits the cluster. In this section, an overview of the different aspects of academic education is presented. The various aspects have mostly been compiled from literature from previous studies. These previous studies deal with among other things, the perspectives of international students regarding academic education and the differences they faced compared to their previous education in their home country. The different aspects are divided into the following 7 themes, namely; content subject area, learning objectives, curriculum design & way

of teaching, educational level & way of examination, the teachers, the fellow students and the campus. Each theme consists of several aspects. Until know there has not been literature on International students' perception of the content area of their chosen studies. The goal has been to gather data during the interview with the international students, based on their perception of their study in their home country and the content subject area in the Netherlands. The different aspects are discussed in the following sections.

2.3.1 Learning objectives
Learning objectives can be considered as the required competencies in order to study on academic level. In general, some learning objectives that pop up are the aspects independency, critical thinking & argumentation, writing & presentation skills, creativity, project management, field knowledge, practical skills and independency. For some learning objectives such as critical thinking & argumentation, writing skills, creativity and project management international student perceptions can be linked based on previous literature. But for the aspect presentation skills, independency, field knowledge and practical skills previous literature was not found.

Non-European or Asian international students often cope in western higher education with the competencies critical thinking and argumentation. Asian exam-oriented and teacher-centered education limited international Asian students' opportunity to practice speaking English and their ability to argue or debate (Jiang & Altinyelken, 2020). Durkin (2008) studied Chinese and other Asian master's students at British universities. These students tried to adapt to western norms of critical thinking and argumentation. According to the perception of these international Chinese and other Asian students, the western style of critique and debates is insensitive and unnecessarily offensive. As a result, these students did not follow the western style to critical thinking and argumentation. The study showed that majority of the students chose to combine their own cultural approach and the western style to critical thinking and argumentation.

Asian exam-oriented and teacher-centered education limits international Asian students' opportunity to practice writing skills. The scholars Jiang & Altinyelken (2020) concluded that the writing skills of international Chinese students were relatively poor comparing to those of the host students. As they had learned to write essays following the standards set for the examinations. In a qualitative study on international students Vyncke (2012) found that especially international students from 'non-Western' backgrounds, have difficulty in implementing a critical dimension in their writing. Cultural background plays a role in influencing the student's writing styles, but the students showed to have the capacity to learn and master a new discourse. The problems they encountered were due to uncertainty in demonstrating an argument, insufficient subject knowledge, and problematic issues surrounding the essay genre, such as authorial voice and assessment demands (Vyncke, 2012).

Most Asian learning styles especially the Chinese learning style differences in many ways from the Dutch learning style. A study by Biemans and Van Mil (2008) demonstrated that the learning habits of international Chinese students differs compared to the Dutch educational context. For instance, international Chinese students learning and work focused on memorization and reproduction of the facts instead of deep processing. The international experience showed these students that creativity is also important when it comes to studying, as this is not part of their local education system.

A variety of strategies can be used to enhance learning, such as taking notes in class, summarizing information or creating a conducive learning environment (Ormid, 2011). Effective learning strategies or project management allow students to effectively use their strengths and monitor their time, concentration, effort, and comprehension (McKeachie, Pintrich, & Lin, 1985; Riding & Sadler-Smith, 1997). Previous studies show the learning challenges that international students have faced and how learning strategies of international students differ from the ones used by host students. Ramsay et al.

(1999) studied the academic adjustment and learning process of international students at an Australian university. The study found that international students had difficulties in understanding lectures, due to their vocabulary or the speed of the lecture. International students felt challenged when tutors spoke too fast or gave limited input. In addition, several differences in learning preferences between international and host students popped up. International students believed that critical thinking skills and faculty's feedback on writing skills were essential for learning, whereas host students expressed that collaborative learning and peer support were salient to learning.

2.3.2 Curriculum design & way of teaching
The curriculum design can be compared to a course blueprint mapping content to learning objectives. It includes the course outline and builds the course with assessment strategies, exercises, content, subject matter analysis, and interactive activities for each learning objective (Ryan, 2021). Aspects that can be linked to the curriculum design & way of teaching are the program, the course, the lecture, teaching approach and student participation in class. Based on existing literature the perception of international students regarding teaching approach and student participation in class are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Over the past few decades in assuring high quality education, European higher education has shifted towards student-centered learning and teaching (Jiang & Altinyelken, 2020). The student-centered approach in European higher education includes practices such as collaborative learning, active learning, experiential learning, self-regulated learning and emphasis on critical and analytical learning (Klemencic 2019). However, some international students expect that correct information and answers to questions come naturally from the professors and that students' focus on understanding this information from their teachers', which point toward a teacher centered approach (Wang, 2004).

Several research studies revealed that some international students do not participate in class discussions as much as their host classmates (Yildirim, 2014). In a qualitative study of international students, Poyrazli and Isaiah (2018) found that the participants were unfamiliar with large class sizes. Scholars suggest that the host classroom atmosphere, especially the quality and degree of interactions, could cause confusion and anxiety among international students, as most international students are used to listening instead of speaking in class (Edwards & Tonkin, 1990; Craig, 1981). In western classrooms, for example in a Dutch classroom, students can interrupt lecturers and raise questions or express their opinions. However, most international students, for example Chinese students remain silence and do not raise questions or respond. To them being silent is seen as a way of showing respect to teachers in classrooms and asking questions can be seen as disrespect of the class time and the teacher (Jiang & Altinyelken, 2020). The scholar Yuan (2011), concluded that that understanding culture of college classrooms helped students develop a sense of belonging in class, which encourages students. In westerns higher education students are expected to express their thoughts and propose questions freely, whereas being quiet in class can be considered as incompetent and inattentive. But in Asian countries and the higher education, being quiet in class would be perceived as a sign of good self-discipline and respecting teachers in Asian countries.

2.3.3 Education level & way of examination
The education level includes, among other things, the workload and degree of difficulty of the education, and the type of examinations and the assignments can be considered in the way if examination. In the following paragraphs international student perceptions regarding these aspects will be introduced based on previous literature.

Soiferman (2020) researched International students' expectations on a Canadian University. The research showed that international students expect a more advanced level of education and highly trained teachers, compared to their home institutions. Further, these students expected that class

attendance is not important as long as the students get their assignments completed. Another perception that these students had, was to receive all of the information for exams from their textbooks and teachers.

In a qualitative study of international students, Poyrazli and Isaiah (2018) found that the participants were unfamiliar with the norms of objective grading. And the scholar Ramachandran (2011) found that many international students have met with difficulties understanding faculty evaluation and grading methods. Further, the scholar Selvarajah (2006) performed a quantitative study on international students at a university in New Zealand. The study suggests that there is a relationship between culture and education. The study shows that the European and Asian student group have different educational objectives and prefer different assessment methods. The scholar examined the assessment methods examination, individual assignment, group assignment and oral presentation amongst international students. Students had to order the examination methods from the most to the least preferred method. The results confirmed that international students prefer individual assignments most. A previous case study on Chinese international students in the Netherlands concluded that the Dutch exam requirements and assessment standards were different and more challenging. Teachers in the home country of the student pointed important content that was most likely to be tested, and students prepared for exams through memorization and repetition. But in the Dutch context students' own understanding of the content was required, as well as practical application of the knowledge. Exams with open-ended questions and differences in assessment criteria presented a challenge for these international students (Jiang & Altinyelken, 2020).

2.3.4 Teachers
This part of the report covers the perception of international students regarding teachers. In the following paragraphs different aspects that can be linked to the teachers such as the student - teacher relationship, interaction, the status of the teacher and the knowledge of the teacher have been laid out, mainly based on previous literature.

Tseng and Newton (2002) found that international students' relationship with their teachers was important to their learning. A good relationship effectively helped international students achieve their goals and promote professional development. Also, Pinheiro (2011) found that international students experienced an involving, engaged and connected teacher as positive and a teacher associated with disengaged and disconnected as negative (Birnbaum, Cardona, Gonzales & Milian, 2012). The scholar Yuan (2011), concluded that that understanding culture helped students develop a sense of belonging in class, which encourages students. Also, making international students understand the culture of college classroom will clarify the expectations of their teachers. For example, in westerns higher education students are expected to express their thoughts and propose questions freely, whereas being quiet in class can be considered as incompetent and inattentive. But in Asian countries and the higher education, being quiet in class would be perceived as a sign of good self-discipline and respecting teachers in Asian countries. From the study of Jiang and Altinyelken (2020) it turned out that some international students pointed out that teachers in their home country tend to provide more guidance and support, while teachers in the Netherlands give students more freedom and room for independent thinking. The study concluded that these international students favor a more supportive relationship with lecturers and expect more commitment from them. In the interaction with teachers, Littlemore (2001) found that metaphors are frequently used in the classrooms, and international students' interpretations of those metaphors might significantly differ from professors' intentions due to language and cultural gaps.

Further, the status of the teacher in the classroom can differ to international students. In the cultures of some international students, it might be expected to obedience to their teachers due their positions, while students in most Western classrooms are expected and encouraged to challenge

their teachers (Yee, 1995). McCargar's (1993) research shows that international students most strongly oppose the idea of disagreeing with the teacher. These students strongly favor acceptance of authority by the teacher, they believe that they should agree with the teacher and want more error correction.

Lastly, some international students expect that correct information and answers to questions come naturally from the professors and that students' focus on understanding this information from their teachers'. On the other side, Western teachers (and students) are used to getting critical questions from their students. Also, teachers are looking for the ways of encouraging classroom discussion (Wang, 2004).

2.3.5 Fellow students

In this part the perception of international students about their fellow students have been discussed, based on previous literature regarding the different aspects that can be linked to the fellow students such as the communication, collaboration, social support and social activities. Communication is an important aspect for fellow student intercourse of international students. Cultures of international students and host students can differ greatly from each other in how much they rely on verbal messages to convey meaning. Words, phrases, and sentences in combination with context such as background, preprogrammed responses of the recipient, and situations are used together to convey meaning. Cultures can distinguish among high-context and low-context communication. International students coming from a high-context culture may sometimes feel that they are not understood in the low-context culture because they are not used to saying everything explicitly (Yildirim, 2014). Different scholars also found that common words or expressions can be interpreted differently by international students with different cultural backgrounds (Yao, 1983; Walfish, 2001; Chang, 1996).

Also, collaboration in projects and assignment involves fellow students. Collaborative learning requires students to interact with peers. Previous studies have noted that international students do not actively collaborate with host students in learning (Lee & Rice, 2007; Yuan, 2011). Lee and Rice (2007) found that international students worried about English proficiency and often felt uncomfortable in group-work or interaction with host classmates. That is why many international students prefer collaborating with peers from the same country or with similar cultural backgrounds (Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998).

Further, international students often struggle to build relationships with host students and mention that there is a lack of social support and inhospitality by host students. International students identified friendships as difficult, many preferred to find friends from similar nations and cultures to their own (Zhao, Kuch & Carini, 2005). Previous research indicate that host students are unfriendly and not inclusive. Due which international often developed their own support networks with students from their home country or with other international students (Birnbaum, Cardona, Gonzales & Milian, 2012).

Lastly, in a qualitative study, international students reported the enjoyment gained through activities with others and interacting socially and positively with people around them (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013). Also, research on international students suggested that physical activity has socializing purposes (Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn, 2010; Walker, Jackson, & Deng, 2007). Li and Zizzi (2018) performed a case study on the use of physical activities by international students. The participants in the case study used physical activity mainly as a social approach. Also, Li's and Zizzi's (2018) performed case study showed that international students socialized with their friends mainly through lunch and dinner parties. They gathered together in one's apartment in order to cook and eat together.

2.3.6 Academic campus

Also, the campus, its buildings and facilities can be considered as aspects of academic education. In earlier literature differences in the perception of students popped out regarding the campus buildings and the library. In the following paragraphs these differences are described. Birnbaum and colleagues studied international students' perceptions of their U.S. host institutions. The international students observed that the campus' buildings are robust and in constant use. Many students had never been inside such large buildings. The international students also noticed that teachers did not have their own classroom, but instead an office which they could personalize. Further, students noticed the openness of the campus, in terms of physical space and security. Students admired that the campus and the buildings are so clean and safe, despite its openness. As they were used to different situations in their own country. Students were used to security and protection of buildings by guards in prevention of vandalism and not everyone could just visit the campus (Birnbaum, Cardona, Milian, and Gonzalez, 2012). Harmon and Wales (1999) studied the perception of international and domestic students about campus libraries. The study confirmed that international students utilize the library more frequently for all purposes, class assignments one to five times a week, as a place to study, than do domestic students. Datig (2014), studied international students' fundamental perceptions of libraries. From the study it appeared that international students recognized the importance of the library as providing a location to study and complete other academic work, but also a place to develop their greater knowledge. International students mentioned that the library was used as an academic meeting place, where students can meet new people with same interests or where students can gather to work on their assignments, either in groups or independently. In this study the aspects regarding academic education have been used as a helping framework during the interview with international students. An overview of the different theme's and the aspects can be found below in figure 1.
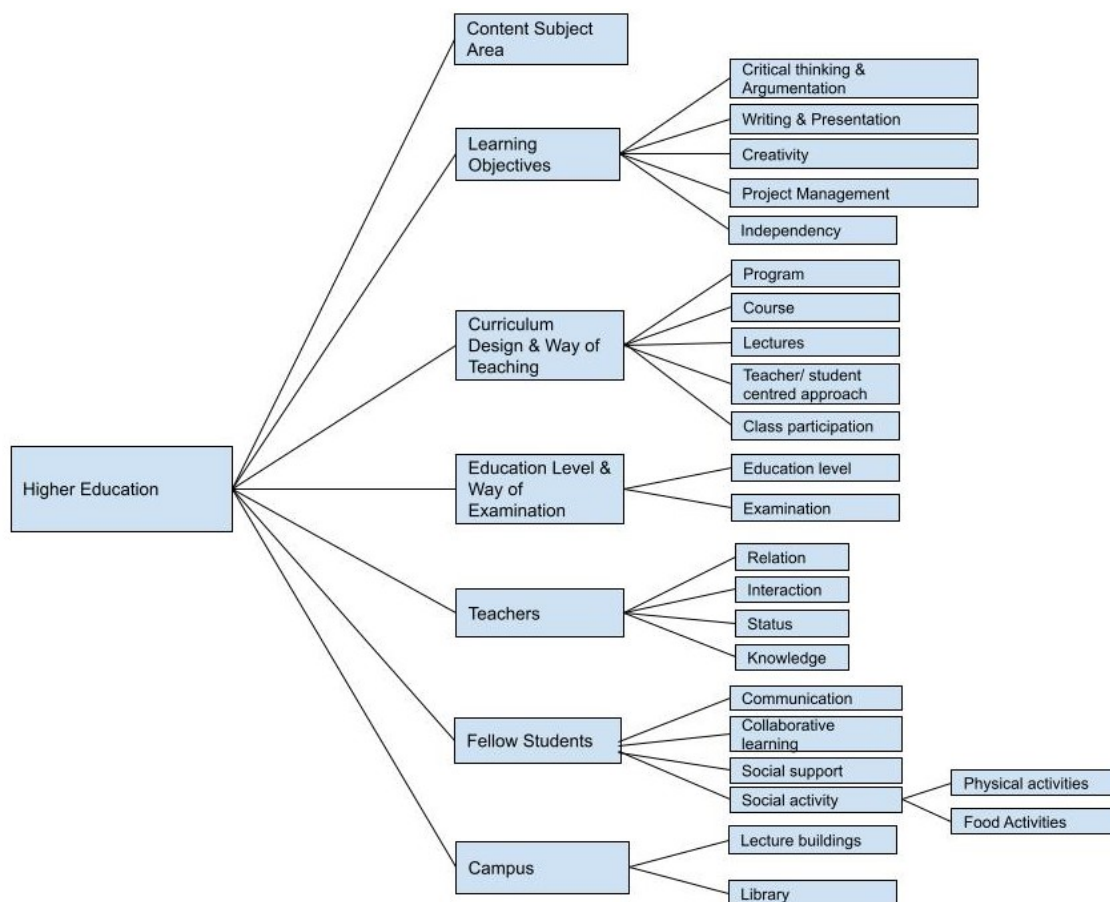

Figure 1 Overview of the facets based on existing literature

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

A qualitative research is performed with international students to find their perception regarding academia education. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate due to the explorative nature of this study. Since the focus has been on gathering information regarding the behavior of the international students, the emphasis has been on the quality and depth of the collected data. An inductive approach was considered, it provided a straightforward approach to deriving findings from the interviews, by gathering data to investigate and to then find an answer (Kurtisi & Ullah, 2019). For this research semi-structured interviews were performed with the students and different perceptions regarding the facets of academic education were investigated. Before the search for participants, the approval of the ethics committee of the University of Twente was received.

3.2 Participants

For this study, interviews have been conducted with 20 participants. Coming to a total of 20 interviews. Participants are approached through international student associations from the university of Twente such as the Association of Chinese Students and Scholars in Enschede, Indian Student Association @ University of Twente and Indonesian Student Association Enschede. In order to find participants messages were posted on the Facebook pages of these study associations, but also outside the university of Twente messages were posted on Facebook pages such as 'Indian Students in the Netherlands' and other general Facebook pages with international students in the Netherlands. Students who were interested could comment and the researcher then contacted them to schedule an online meeting for the interview. The snowball effect has also been applied in order to find more participants.

The participants have been anonymized, no one can find out who participated in the interview, nor can this be traced back to the subsequent report. Only the researcher knows about its participants' identity. The participants have recently completed or are following an academic study at different universities in the Netherlands, so not all students have completed academic education at the same university. Of the 20 participants there were six international Chinese students, six international Indonesian students and eight international Indian students. The participants were between the ages 23 and 31 years old. In all, nine of the participants were female students and 11 were male students. The participant are students from social sciences and engineering studies. In all, 11 participants were students from the social sciences field and nine of the engineering field. An overview of the participants can be found in table 1.

Table 1.

Overview of the participants

Participants	Country	Gender	Age	Study field	Start in NL
Participant 1	China	Female	24	Social sciences	2019
Participant 2	China	Female	24	Social sciences	2017
Participant 3	Indonesia	Female	28	Social sciences	2020
Participant 4	Indonesia	Male	25	Social sciences	2019
Participant 5	India	Male	26	Engineering	2019
Participant 6	Indonesia	Female	25	Social sciences	2019
Participant 7	India	Male	23	Engineering	2020
Participant 8	India	Male	26	Engineering	2020
Participant 9	India	Male	27	Engineering	2017

Participant 10	Indonesia	Female	27	Social sciences	2019
Participant 11	Indonesia	Female	23	Engineering	2020
Participant 12	China	Male	25	Social sciences	2019
Participant 13	India	Male	23	Social sciences	2020
Participant 14	India	Female	24	Social sciences	2020
Participant 15	China	Female	24	Social sciences	2019
Participant 16	India	Female	24	Engineering	2021
Participant 17	China	Male	31	Engineering	2020
Participant 18	China	Male	27	Social sciences	2019
Participant 19	Indonesia	Male	24	Engineering	2019
Participant 20	India	Male	24	Engineering	2019

3.3 Interview guide

Prior to the interview, literature research was conducted on international students. A number of facets of academic education emerged from the literature review. The interviewer designed a framework based on the existing literature from the theoretical framework. Additionally, this study made use of semi-structured interviews. An interview guide was created with the help of the framework. The interview guide was created based on the literature review regarding the existing differences in international students' perceptions on academic education.

The interview guide starts with a short introduction and the aim of the study, followed by some demographic questions. The first question is 'What are aspects that you think I should include in this research, what aspects do you distinguish in academic education?'. The purpose of this question was to explore other important facets in academic education according to the perception of the participant. With this question it could be confirmed whether the facets from the literature study correspond and whether there were other important facets that were missing. This question serves to gain more insight from the participants, input for the interview and helps to create the facets of academic education. Question two was focused on the specific content subject area of the participant about the specific study. The goal was to find whether the study that the participant follows corresponded with the image that the participant had about it in the home country. In case the study content was different compared to the home country, it helped in understanding where the differences came from. Questions three to eight retrieved information regarding the differences in the Netherlands compared to their home country regarding the participants' perception of the following aspects: the learning objectives, curriculum design and the way of teaching, education level & way of examination, teachers, fellow students and the campus. With the goal to gain a better view of the facets and the differences that the international student experienced compared to the view they had. Further, participants could tell about the cause of the differences in their perspective. These questions helped to recognize the sub themes. Specific questions were also asked about the sub-themes from the literature research. Some participants mentioned new aspects in the first questions, these aspects were elaborated at the end. In order to conclude the interview several ranking questions were asked to summarize which aspects of academic education in the Netherlands are considered very different or similar compared to the academic education in their home country. These questions were also asked to summarize which aspects are considered most difficult or least difficult compared to their home country. The interview guideline can be found in appendix A. Another part of the used materials was the informed consent which all participants agreed on.

3.4 Data analysis

The interviews have been recorded, so the focus during the interview could be on the conversation. To prevent that personal data could be retrieved from the recorded interviews all the interviews were given numbers, these numbers have been used in the whole study. Once the interviews were

conducted the collected data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, this is a process in which patterns or themes within the collected data are identified in order to forward conclusions and ideas about the research, which is a compatible approach in a qualitative study (Kurtisi & Ullah, 2019). As indicated earlier, the data collected from the interviews were first transcribed. By using the interview guideline, main categories and subcategories had already been created. After transcribing, these main and subcategories were reviewed several times to see whether the information corresponded to the main and subcategory content. This showed that there was data that deviated from the (sub)categories. As a result, all data from the subcategories were again divided into fragments and the fragments were coded, using Microsoft Word and Excel. After this process, the fragments were re-categorized, with the deviating data placed in the correct (sub)category. It also happened that certain fragments have been given a place in several (sub) categories, as they were contributing data regarding different topics and the topics were linked to each other. After the fragments were recategorized, the clusters that belonged together were put together and these clusters were read several times to see if the data now matched and connected with the other fragments. Subsequently, the most striking results were extracted from these recategorized fragments. Lastly, the names of the main and sub categories have been re-examined to see if this matches the results.

In order to assess the reliability, two interviews (around 10%) have been coded by another coder who made use of the researcher's codebook. To calculate the intercoder reliability Cohen's Kappa has been calculated. In 1977, a Kappa between the 0.61–0.80 has been described as substantial agreement by Landis and Koch (Bartok & Burzler, 2020). For this research Cohen's Kappa has been calculated using Microsoft Excel and hand calculation. After the second coder had coded the interviews the researcher and the second coder went through the codes. The second coder's opinion was asked about the coded sections and the codes given. Some of the coded fragments led to discussions and some codes were changed. Resolving the problems helped to improve the credibility and the trustworthiness of the chosen method. It was found that the coded interviews have a reliability coefficient of 0.65.

4. Results

In the results section the main findings from the interviews with the participants will be presented. The results of the interviews will be presented in a similar sequence as mentioned in the interview guide, see chapter 3.3.

It is mentionable that results from the first question of the interview are not included within the results section, due to the participants being unable to mention new additional aspects during the interviews to enrich this research. All aspects mentioned by the participants overlapped with the aspects discussed in upcoming chapters.

Also, some participants were unable to discuss the second question regarding the differences in the course subject area, because most of the participants had achieved their bachelor degree in their home country, while they were getting their master degree here at the academic scenery of the Netherlands. Therefore, the course subject area is not completely comparable. In some cases the content subject area of a bachelor's degree achieved in a home country was from a completely different field of study, adding even more to the fact that the course subject areas are not completely comparable. One general difference in the content subject area that has been mentioned by the participants has been the difference in practical knowledge. Participants experienced that in academic education in the Netherlands the application of knowledge is higher compared to academic education in their home countries. This difference is further discussed in chapters 4.1.5. In figure 2 the main results based on the data gathered from the interviews can be found.
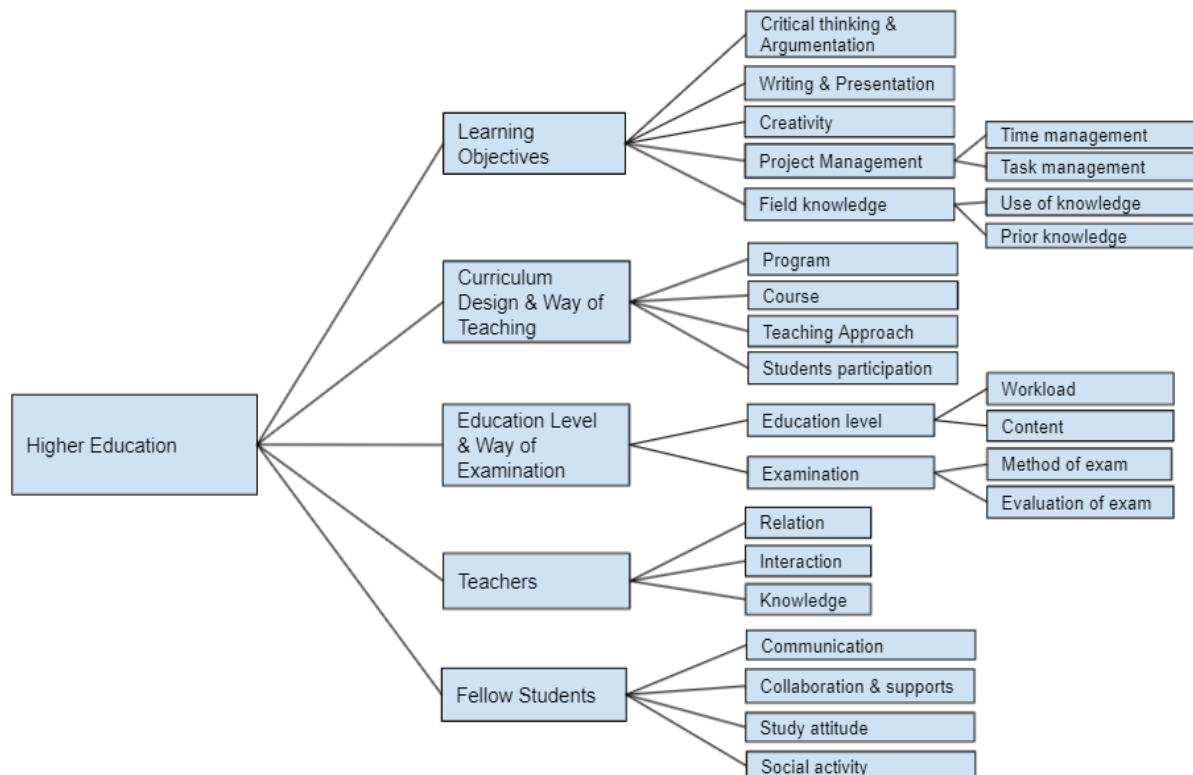

Figure 2 Facets of academic education according to international student perceptions

4.1 Learning objectives

In this chapter the differences regarding the learning objectives between the academic education in the Netherlands and the home country of the participants are discussed. First the differences regarding critical thinking and argumentation are discussed, followed by the differences in writing and presentation, creativity, project management, practical skills, field knowledge and finally the differences in independency are discussed.

4.1.1 Differences in critical thinking and argumentation

In the field of critical thinking and argumentation, a total of 2 discussion topics have been identified, namely: The usage and importance of critical thinking and argumentation. These topics are further elaborated below.

The main comment made about critical thinking and argumentation is that in the Netherlands this learning objective is required and used more than in Asian academic education. In total 17 participants made comments about this. This finding might suggests that in the Netherlands students are more capable of individual critical thinking to understand the contents of their studies. In total 9 participants commented about this. One of the participants stated the following:

> '*I think in the Netherlands the study curriculum makes you to put effort on your own to understand things, as teachers go through the topic very fast in class, and you have to think for yourself what is happening and why. It is more on your own effort. In that case you have to use and think more critical and argumentation'* (P5).

However, participants also commented that in their home country the knowledge was all gained from books or by teachers. Students were not required to have the critical thinking and argumentation as there was no focus on this. In total 6 participants commented about this. One of the participants gave the following example:

> '*But in China just like follow the books and really no need to use a lot of independent or critical thinking. An example, in China we take a final exam, but not in a very strict way, the teachers gives the range and highlight the important points before we will go to the exam, to actually learn those important points by heart. But in the Netherlands, you need to study for yourself and have deep comprehension of everything'* (P2).

Furthermore, the participants commented that in the Netherlands students are given more opportunities to express their ideas and they are being encouraged by the teachers to be critical, as the teachers are open to diverse ideas and opinions. This notion can be very well observed during discussions in Dutch classrooms. In total 11 participants commented on this. One of the participants stated:

> '*Like here in the Netherlands they encourage more to be critical about the materials that the professor taught in the lecture and I can see there are more questions to discuss during the lectures'* (P12)

In the education systems of the participants' home countries there is more emphasis on compliance and conformity, students follow the teachers and teachers did not encourage students to be critical or have diverse opinions. In total 8 participants commented regarding this. One of the participants told:

> '*In India education system is like an Echo chamber, there is less emphasis on questioning, critical reflecting, self-criticism, critical thinking and argumentation but more emphasis on what is told by the teacher'* (P13).

Concerning critical thinking and argumentation applied in writing skills, participants mentioned that Dutch students are more engaged in this skill compared to students from their home countries. The

responses suggested that there is not much emphasis on writing skills concerning critical thinking. Students can for example use findings from existing papers and copy paste without activating a thought process to understand the material. In total 2 participants made a comment about this. An example:

> '*Writing paper or thesis in the Netherlands they are very critical, they want things to be right on the paper. In India they do not write much papers, however they submit they say it is okay, there is no emphasis on the critical thinking and argumentation. But here they control strictly and when something is not good or lacking you have to* change that' (P8).

Also, some participants mentioned that in the Netherlands the students are direct and explicit in their communication, this increases the critical thinking and argumentation of the students. However, in Asian countries the students are less direct and more implicit in their communication. This causes the students to become less actively engaged in critical thinking and argumentation. In total 3 participants commented about this. According to some students there are also differences between private universities and state universities. One participant referred to this difference in Indian academic education:

> '*But it also depends on where you study, what kind of college in India. Because there are 2 types of colleges, and if you are in the top universities the difference will be less. I was in the state universities. Also, when doing you master in India in the second type university the critical thinking and argumentation will not be as in the Netherlands it will be less. Maybe the type 1 universities are comparable to the Netherlands*' (P9).

The private universities in Indonesia also differ from the state universities, an Indonesian student stated that:

> '*So back home they would give a lot of case studies and they want us to have this critical thinking, like what might happen if the cases would be different. The lecturers in the Netherlands tried that too. Also, for the argumentation, we are encouraged to have good argumentation for why we do thing in a specific way*' (P4).

One participant mentioned that the critical thinking and argumentation of students also depend on the size of the class. For some courses in the participant's home countries there are less students compared to the classes in the Netherlands, teachers are then able to give more individual attention to students, resulting in teachers being more interactive with students so that the students are more engaged in their critical thinking and argumentation. The participant stated:

> '*Specific study program courses there would be with around 10 students, and here maybe 30. The difference is that by having less students the teachers will have more attention for the students, compared to here. As the teachers have more attention for the students, students are expected to give more results, which requires the student to use critical thinking and argumentation. The ability of critical thinking of students here in the Netherlands is already quite critical, as Dutch's are known for their directness and openness in their opinion. That culture is not common in Indonesia, but because the small number of students in class, it is the other way around, the teacher can freely appoint students to answer their questions. If no one answers, the teacher will casually appoint students*' (P4).

4.1.2 Writing and presentation
In the field of writing and presentation, a total of 5 discussion topics have been identified, namely: the amount of writing assignments, the writing style, the plagiarism check, the amount of presentation assignments and the given time for the presentations. These topics are further elaborated below.

The main comment made about writing is that in the Netherlands there is more emphasis on writing skills. There are many writing assignments such as reports or projects. However, in the home countries of the participants, there is less emphasis on writing skills. There are not many assignments that stimulate students in their writing skills. Instead, there is more focus on written exams. In total this has been commented by 8 participants. Yet, it has been mentioned that mainly the private universities in Indonesia also have assignments, such as writing papers and project reports. Those universities do put some more emphasis on writing compared to state universities. Also, in Indian top-ranking universities the importance and emphasis on writing is more compared to low ranking universities. According to one of the participants:

> '*It depends on the university you go to in India, the university I went to is the same, quite similar to the UT when it comes to the writing skills, but there are some Universities in which they have higher writings even compared to the Netherlands and other world universities*' (P5).

Another difference the participants experienced is that in the Netherlands, students are required to write to the point and succinctly. When assignments are given, students are told to write a maximum of X pages, while in the previous environment students were expected to write more. It is not required to write to the point and short. Students are told to write a minimum of X pages. In total 7 participants made a comment about this. One of the Indonesian participants stated:

> '*You need to use several formal words and make it to the point. You do not have to explain everything, but you do need to explain to the point. Here you have a maximum amount of papers, you cannot go beyond that. Back home, sometimes the more papers the better*' (P11).

A reason for this could be that people in the Netherlands are direct. One of the Indian participants also suggested this:

> '*So, the writing here it is more direct, for example in exams we have to write to the point and not long answers. Also, in papers, assignment or project writing, here they want us to write to the point*' (P14).

Also, in the Netherlands when students have to write, they need to paraphrase, as the writing is checked for plagiarism and the citations. According to the Indian and Indonesian participants this phenomenon is less considered in their home countries. Students can copy paste or translate from other papers, google or search engines. In total 5 participants made a comment regarding this. An example stated by one of the Indonesian participants:

> '*Maybe the difference is that in the Netherlands they really look seriously into your citations. Because in Indonesia we write in Indonesian, so sometimes when some just translate English to Indonesian they won't reformulate, they just copy and paste the translation and they can just hand it in like that. There they did not consider that as plagiarism, here in Netherlands they are strict on that*' (P6).

However, according to one of the Chinese participants, in China the referencing is also considered important, students need to refer to the used material:

> '*The referencing in the paper is more or less same, like a global standard. When you use information from some other paper, you need to make a note of that and tell your reader where you got it from. Maybe the format is a bit different, but the requirement is the same*' (P17).

The main comment that has been made by the participant regarding the learning objective "presentation" is that in the Netherlands, students have to present more often, because of the projects, but also the assignments in class. However, participants mentioned that in their home countries there were less presentations, as students did not have many projects and the assignments

were more in the form of solely a writing assignment. In total this comment has been made by 8 participants. Two examples, respectively by a Chinese and Indian participant, can be found below.

'The presentation in the Netherlands we have a lot, this is a big difference. In China we don't have that much group work so the teacher gives more individual work and assignments for that we do not have that many group presentations' (P15).

'We only didn't have that many presentations back in my home country. Because here in the Netherlands we have presentations for lectures, sometimes students have to discuss and present their work at the end of the lecture, but also for the different projects we have to present, there that was not common' (P14).

Some Indonesian students experienced the opposite and mentioned that they had to give more presentations in their home country, as the teachers had more time due to the semester system. Teachers would assign students to present some topics of the subject content in class. An IT student commented on this:

'I think a difference will be that there the teachers ask more presentations from students compared to here. I think the difference is because we have here quartile system and back home semester system. In quartile system we practically have only 2 months of study, the teacher has to give all the material in every meeting. But in the semester system the teacher does not have to give all the material in every meeting. Teachers will only explain on the topic and ask students to form groups or work alone to have presentations of everyone' (P4).

The teaching styles of lecturers differ, which allows for students to get the opportunity to give more presentations. However, there are also differences in the universities concerning this matter. One Indonesian communications student experienced that in private universities in Indonesia students have to perform more presentations, due to the abundance of projects and assignments in their courses. The participant stated the following:

'In Indonesia in my bachelor years I had a lot more presentation activities, like I said for every subject we had projects and at the end also present the project. But I do not think that it happens in all universities there' (P6).

Another difference has been the experiences by participants regarding presentation time restrictions. In the Netherlands when students have to present, they get a predetermined time limit for the entire presentation. In total 2 participants made a comment about this. For example, one of the Indian participants stated:

'And you have to make in the given time for presentation in general like 10 to 15 minutes. So, you have to make sure that whatever you made and information you want to share should fit in that 10 to 15 minutes' (P21).

Therefore, the presentation requirement is in accordance with the writing in the Netherlands.
It seems that Dutch universities have instilled a somewhat similar requirements, where presenting and writing information succinctly is more appreciated.

4.1.3 Creativity

In the field of creativity, the following three discussion topics have been identified, namely: the frequency and use of creativity and the role of the teachers in student creativity. These topics are further elaborated below.

The main comment made by the participants regarding creativity is that in the Netherlands there is more emphasis on creativity compared to their home countries. In total 10 participants made a comment about this. In the Netherlands students have to think more creatively when doing assignments, projects and exams. In the home countries this is not the case. Students there have to

reproduce information from the books and teachers often. According to some Indonesian students, creativity depends on the type of university in Indonesia. In the state universities there is more emphasis on exams and therefore students need to study the theory from the books and teachers. There is no need for creativity in answering questions. However, in the private universities in Indonesia students need to think creatively and go beyond the theory which is given by teachers, similar to the situation in the Netherlands.

The participants experienced that in the Netherlands teachers encourage students to be creative. In total 5 participants made a comment about this. Below an example by a Chinese student is cited:

> '*In the Netherlands at least from my experience in the Netherlands they encourage more about creativity at least they say it. Back home I think creativity is not the first goal in Chinese university*' (P12).

In the Netherlands, teachers want students to share their opinion and ideas and teachers will not tell students that they are wrong. Some participants suggested that this could be caused by some cultural differences between their home and host country. Below an example by an Indonesian students is given:

> '*I think the difference is because of the culture that everyone here can say and give their opinion. I think I haven't seen here a lecture were a teacher asks a question, and when the students answer is not correct, the teacher blames the student or give the impression that the student is wrong. For example, the teacher asks what is 2 plus 2, students say 3, the teacher won't say ''no your wrong, you are stupid''. Here the teacher will give an impression ''Okay close enough, but not there yet'' or ''How do you come to that answer?'*' (P4).

An interesting notion is that students feared to answer questions incorrectly in their home country. According to some participants, this fear is caused by the difference in the power of the teacher student hierarchy. The participant stated:

> '*I think it is also because of culture, I believe in Asia in a typical academic situation the teacher holds more power position than the students, also the fact that we are afraid that we are going to give the wrong answer instead of just try an answer*' (P4).

4.1.4 Project management
In the field of project management, the following two discussion topics have been identified, namely: the time management and the cooperation in personal and group project management. These topics are further elaborated below.

The main comment made by the participants regarding the different experiences in project management concerned time management in both individual assignments and group projects. In the Netherlands students and teachers value time and they are punctual in their work. In total 12 participants commented regarding this difference. These participants noted that in academic education in their home countries there was less emphasis on time management for both individual assignments and group projects. Students there are used to procrastinating their work. There is less value for time and punctuality. In total 12 participants commented regarding these differences. One of the Indonesian participants commented the following regarding punctuality in the Netherlands and Indonesia:

> '*Also, being punctual here for Dutch is important, where as in Indonesia it depends, example 'If we have a meeting at 4 we will meet at 5 and stop working at 6'' its common there but here in the Netherlands we cannot do so*' (P4).

Another Indonesian participant suggested that this difference in punctuality and discipline could be due to cultural differences. The participant stated:

> *'In Indonesia we were more chill because maybe more casual. Meanwhile in the Netherlands they are stricter about the timeline, they are more disciplined about it. Maybe because of the culture. Dutch students are stricter with the schedule. Like if we say we should meet at 8 am, they will be there at 8 am. In Indonesia, if we have meeting at 11, they can come at 11.30, they are more chilled and casually. Here they are strict with the schedule, if they say they will finish at 10 am, they will be finished by 10 am. In Indonesia the schedule can change'* (P10).

Some students suggested that the procrastinating behavior back home and the punctuality in the Netherlands is caused by the differences in the usage of multiple feedback moments with a supervisor for the duration of a project or assignment. In the Netherlands students have these so called 'fixed in between feedback moments'. This means that students have to keep up their work in order to get feedback, but in the home country there are no fixed in between feedback moments. In total 3 participants made a comment regarding this difference. A Chinese participant said:

> *'In China we do have different projects in the study but we do not have in-between feedback from the supervisor. We can just procrastinate our project or assignments at the end of the study and we can finish it two days before the deadline, that's also fine. But in the Netherlands, we have a very fixed schedule with in between feedback and you can talk to your supervisor about how to improve your work'* (P2).

Thinking of group project management, in the Netherlands students divide the work among each other and everyone does their parts themselves. In the home countries of these participants, students also divided the work, but there is still a group sense, meaning that students would help each other. In the Netherlands however, according to the participants, when doing group work there is no group sense. Yet, the independency as a result is highly valued by the participants. In total 14 participants commented about this. Example by and Indonesian participant:

> *'I think in here for example if teacher gives group project and the fellow students divide work among themselves, it's like they do their parts them self. But there is no sense of group orientated, they probably do not see it as a group project. It's like you do chapter one, I do chapter 2, she does chapter 3, that's it, it's very clear. But in Indonesia say if we had to do a video, some is the director, actor etc. We all had our own roles to play when making this video. We need to help each other in this case. I someone is not a good actor and has the role of actor, somehow we help them to act, it's not like its awkward and we let it be awkward'* (P3).

4.1.5 Field knowledge
Regarding the field knowledge, two discussion topics have been identified, namely: the difference in the use of the current field knowledge and the requirement of the previous field related knowledge, which will be further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Practical vs. Theoretical
The main comment about the differences for this learning objective is that in the Netherlands the field knowledge is application based, but in the home country the field knowledge is theory based. Participants experienced that the content in class and the homework in the Netherlands is theory application based while in the previous environment it was theory memorization based. In the Netherlands students have the option to follow an internship, but other than that the lectures, the assignments and projects are practical as well, which forces students to apply the knowledge, but in the previous environment the focus was on the theoretical part and not the practical application of the knowledge. Furthermore, the participants experienced that in the Netherlands understanding the knowledge is relevant, because you also have to be able to apply it, but in their home country it is mainly about memorizing the knowledge, understanding is not required. In total 12 participants made comments about this. Three examples by participants are shown below.

'You at least need to know the theory or model, you need to understand it. Professors in the Netherlands want us to at least understand and be able to apply it in practical life in cases. In Indonesia this is not the case, only need to know it' (P20).

'So, if I had to learn about digital marketing in India, I would just learn about it from text just theoretically, I wouldn't know the practical application of that knowledge. But over here I am also forced to use it, in assignments or projects, that way I also learn about it' (P13).

'I feel like here the field knowledge is not just by heart, you should know it, but you should also understand it. Back home you should know enough about it to come back to memorization. It doesn't really ask you for deep understanding or intimate knowledge' (P13).

According to some participants, the way of teaching is a potential explanatory factor for the differences between the practical and theory oriented aspects in academic education. An Indonesian participant stated:

'But the way of teaching, the professors here are giving you a theory and then they will give an assignment that requires the student to critical thinking and the assignment will be really practical like real life matter. While back in Indonesia usually the professor will just give presentation like lecture and the assignment would be about this equation we can use the formula' (P20).

Prior field knowledge

In the Netherlands they expect students to already have certain field knowledge, as they do not start from the basics. When students apply for a study, the university checks their previous study in order to see if their previous study matches the field they are applying for. The participant said that also in their home country having prior field knowledge is important, but there they check the knowledge with entrance examinations. Students need to study and give exams to show that they have the knowledge for the study they are applying for. In total 6 participants have made a comment about this. An example of this by a Chinese participant:

'In the Netherlands they pay attention on the prior knowledge to the major background. Cause the application to the university is based on the background study and knowledge. But also, in China it is important and evaluated, cause if you want to change your major, you have to learn those knowledges and pass the exam' (P1).

There is a difference in the way students are checked on their prior field knowledge according to an Indian participant:

'In India before entering a university student are examined for the Bachelor and the Master. In the Netherlands this is not the case, you can just hand in application forms and previous education certificates. I think the role of field knowledge is equal in both places, but in India they do tests before admission' (P5).

Another difference that participants experienced with regard to field knowledge and admission to the study program is that in the Netherlands students also have to follow a premaster before starting a master's degree. Although students have completed a study with comparable prior knowledge, they must complete a premaster in the Netherlands in order to gain certain relevant knowledge before they can start the specific study program. The premaster phenomenon is not known in the home countries. In total 4 of the participants commented about this. An Indian participant said:

'Because the concept of the premaster for example, it is to get you up to that level of field knowledge where you are comfortable enough to take master. But the premaster concept wasn't really a thing back home in India' (P13).

One of the participants suggested that in the Netherlands with the premaster the goal is to prepare students with equal field knowledge, the Indian participant said:

> 'When I started masters here I had a lecture I already had learned about in Indonesia, but I had to retake the introduction class here in the Netherlands along with the premaster students. So, all the international students had to do it, because they told us it is very difficult. So here even though we already had that knowledge, we had to retake it, they want to make sure we have the same knowledge' (P13).

4.1.6 Overview and the perceived reasons

Table 2

Overview of the differences regarding the learning objectives

Aspect	Participants	Main discussion topics
Critical thinking & argumentation	17	The use of critical thinking and argumentation is more in the Netherlands.
	11	Teachers perceive critical thinking & argumentation of students important in the Netherlands, while in the previous environment teachers prefer conformity.
Writing & presentation	8	There are more writing assignments in the Netherlands.
	7	The writing style in the Netherlands is short and to the point.
	5	In the Netherlands the plagiarism check is stricter, while in the previous environment students could copy and paste data, except China.
	8	In the Netherlands students have more presentation assignments.
	2	In the Netherlands students are given a specific time to present.
Creativity	10	In the Netherlands there is emphasis on creativity, while in the previous environment students were required to use the taught material.
Project management	12	The time management in the Netherlands is more punctual, in the previous environment students used to procrastinate.
	14	The cooperation in personal/ group assignments and study behavior is less in the Netherlands.
Field knowledge	12	The field knowledge in the Netherlands is application based, students are required to apply the taught material in assignments and project, but in the previous environment memorization was required not application of the taught material.

There are several reasons for the differences in the learning objective according to the Chinese participants. Firstly, a reason can be the difference in Bachelor study back home and the Master study here in the Netherlands. Secondly, the difference in the major back home and here in the Netherlands.

Also, in some Asian countries, universities have less individual freedom to have their own curriculum or courses or to add changes. They have to go through many departments, because it affects all universities of that field in the whole country. Also, the people in charge, mostly older people, are reluctant for changes and students can't question them because they don't have the power to change their thoughts. However, in the Netherlands individual universities have the freedom to change courses as they wish, and students can question or trigger a discussion if they don't like something about the design.

Culturally, in the previous environment participants were used to collectivism, due to which students almost fully relied on their teacher. While in the Netherlands there is more individualism and students are used to being independent. Furthermore, there is difference in power distance between

the environments. In the previous environment students used to respect their teachers and having contradictory opinions was considered rude, which impacted the critical thinking and creativity of students. Teachers, especially the aged teachers, have the idea that students have to follow their ideas, norms and values, solely for the reason that they are the teacher, the authoritarian figure. In the Netherlands people are more critical. Teachers encourage students to think in a different way.

There are also differences in the goal of the learning objective. In the Netherlands it is more process oriented. It is relevant that students understand the content, but in the Asian countries it is more result oriented. The grades have more emphasis.

4.2 Curriculum design and the way of teaching

In this chapter the differences regarding the curriculum design and the way of teaching between the Netherlands and the participant's home countries are discussed.

4.2.1 Differences in the curriculum design

Regarding the curriculum design, four discussion topics have been identified, namely: the difference in the quartile and semester system, the course organization, the elective courses and the course evaluation methods. These topics are further elaborated below.

The main comments regarding the differences in the curriculum design consider the organization of the program. The participants experienced the following difference in the organization, namely: in the Netherlands the study program is divided in 4 quartiles of each 3 months, but in their home country the study program was divided into 2 semesters of each 6 months. In total this comment has been made by 19 participants. An Indian participant commented the following:

> *In India we have in one year two semester, each 6 months, but here we also have 2 semesters and 4 quartiles of 3 months'* (P5).

Also, the participants commented that in the Netherlands students have around 3 to 4 courses in a quartile and after two months there are exams, but back home students would have 6 to 8 courses in a semester with a midterm exam and a final exam. In total 17 participants have made a comment about this. Some participants said that the difference in the quartile and the number of courses cause a higher workload in the Netherlands. The schedule becomes tighter compared to their program back home. In total 10 participants have made a comment about this. An example by a Chinese participant:

> *'So, I feel like in the Netherlands the program is tighter. Here we need to learn 3 or 4 courses in one block. In the Netherlands we have 4 blocks in every academic year, like 4 quartiles. In China we just have 2 block, 2 semesters in one academic year. In the Netherlands you need to learn like 3 to 4 courses in one block which is three months. But in China it was like 6 courses in 6 months, that's why our workload is not that heavy'* (P15).

Furthermore, the participants pointed out that in the Netherlands there are compulsory and elective courses. This was also the case in the home countries of the participants. However, there are some differences in the compulsory and elective courses. Participants mentioned that in the Netherlands students can choose elective courses related to the study program but in the previous environment the elective courses were not related to the study program. In total 6 participants have made a comment about this. A Chinese participant said:

> *'But these optional courses are not related to my major but things like art, psychological or historical like for the hobby you like not for your major'* (P12).

Lastly, Participants have experienced differences in the course evaluation. In the Netherlands there are different parts for the evaluation of the course, but participants said that back home mainly written exams and the attendance are part of the evaluation. In total 8 participants have made comments about this. An Indonesian participant said:

> *'I think the examination is way different. Back home it is like written exam and the attendance. In here there are variety of grading like oral exam, presentation, report and written exam'* (P11).

4.2.2 Difference in the way of teaching and how students respond

The findings of the differences between the Netherlands and the home country of the participants regarding the way of teaching and how students respond have been discussed using the following topics; the teaching approach and the student participation. Regarding the way of teaching and how students respond, six discussion topics have been identified, namely: the difference in the student centric teaching in the Netherlands vs. teacher centric in the previous environment, the difference in teachers encouraging students to share knowledge and be participative, active student participation vs. passive, impact of teachers on student participation, impact of fellows on student participation and the attendance check. These topics are further elaborated below.

Teaching approach

The main comment participants have made about the differences in the teaching approach is that in the Netherlands the teaching approach is student centric and in the home country of the participants it is teacher centric. In total 15 participants have made a comment about this. An Indonesian participant said:

> '*I think in Indonesia it is more teacher centric, meanwhile in the Netherlands it is more student centric. In Indonesia the teacher was more active, they explain the material and will give assignment and after that they will talk about the assignment, and give feedback like this is good or wrong. In the Netherlands student opinion is the court, there is not something wrong or right, sometimes teacher says it depends on your opinion*' (P10).

As mentioned by the participant, in the Netherlands students are involved with the teachers, but back home the students used to just listen to the teachers. Teachers in the Netherlands encourage students to share knowledge. They are open to different opinions. In total 9 participants have made comments about this. Participants mentioned the following:

> *'Here teachers try to encourage you to speak up and share your ideas, back there not really, mostly teachers speak and students listen'* (P3),

> *'Over here there is quite significant emphasis on student interaction in general, students are expected and encouraged to interact here, like even lecturers are interested in what you have to say. But there it is much more teacher centric, in the sense that teacher explains you listen'* (P13).

In the Netherlands, sometimes, teachers don't give the lecture, but they assign students to present certain topics or cases to the class. Participants experienced that teachers do not always give the lecture and share all the knowledge as back home, sometimes students are responsible to teach to each other. In total 10 participants have made a comment about this, an example by an Indonesian participant:

> *'In here I had a course were the first half of the quartile we had theories and guest lectures. But the other half of the quartile, the students had to present to other students, so you know the topics not directly from the teacher but from fellow students and we also had to give feedback'* (P11).

Several participants suggested that the difference could be caused by the size of the class. There is a difference in the teaching approach based on the number of students in the class. When the class is small, teachers are more able to focus and give attention to all the students. That way the teaching approach is more student centered, but when there are many students in a class, it becomes difficult to have a student-centered approach. An Indonesian participant said:

> '*Maybe because my program is not that large, like sometimes the class is only 30 students, so the lecturers give you like more attention. But back home the class is like 50 or 60 students, so they cannot give you full attention because there are lot students*' (P11).

In this example the participant explains that in the Netherlands the class size is smaller, teachers can give more attention to students, but back home the classes are bigger with almost double the number of students. In such a case the teachers are less able to maintain a student-centered approach. An example by an Indonesian participant:

> '*The teacher gives only a small amount of material in the lecture and the students are being asked to improve on the topic, the teacher give an example with 4 options and ask the students what should be improved for every option. By doing so, the teacher involves students more and demands more from the students*' (P4).

Another aspect that could impact the way of teaching is the age of the teacher. Some participants experienced that the aged teachers back home prefer the teacher centered approach, while younger teachers have a more student centered approach. One of the Chinese participants said:

> '*For the older professors who lean more into the traditional way of teaching, they are sharing their ideas that's all. The younger professors are more willing to hear the ideas from the students*' (P12).

Students participation

The main comment that the participants have made regarding the differences they have experienced in the student participation is that in the Netherlands students are active in the classroom with questions, answers and discussions. In their home countries, participants were used to students being passive in the classroom. In total 15 participants have made a comment about this. One of the Indonesian participants said:

> '*Mostly the voluntary participation here is more frequently, like giving answer. Back home we wait to be appointed to answer*' (P4)

Participants experienced in the Netherlands that teachers encourage students to participate in class, to share their opinions, but the participants were not used to this back home. There teachers would not encourage students to talk in class, to have discussions with the teacher or to ask questions, while in the Netherlands teachers want students to disrupt and say something. They give students opportunities to share their ideas. Students are free to speak up their opinions. In total 12 participants have made a comment about this. A Chinese participant said:

> '*In China there is less discussion in the class. Student are allowed to speak, but they are not encouraged by the teacher, there is no emphasize on student participation. In the Netherlands teachers want students to disrupt and say something*' (P1).

Participants experienced that back home students used to be passive and not actively participating in class, like students in the Netherlands are. The reason for this is that teachers back home could react mean or make students feel inferior when saying something in class. In total 5 participants have made comments about this. Participants said that they used to fear the teacher's reaction back home. An Indian participant said:

> '*Because when asking or answering a question, teachers could react mean or maybe offending, as in ''no that's wrong, you don't know'', but here in the Netherlands even though*

they are direct, they don't bring it offensive but more like ''interesting answer, but when thinking like this then that' (P14).

Also, students in the home country would be more passive, because teachers used to have a higher position in the hierarchy. An Indonesian participant said:

'Also, sometimes we find that our teachers' explanation is not 100 % correct, students here can just raise their hand and ask the teacher or mention it. In Indonesia this situation rarely happens. If you think that the teacher is not giving a correct lecture or answer just go with the flow and question yourself ''why did we not ask?''. Here at least one person will ask or mention and discuss it. Because usually the teacher holds more respect and a higher position than the students back home' (P4).

Participants also talked about differences in how fellow students would react when students participate in class. In the home country participants experienced that when students are actively engaged in class, the fellow students show some kind of disapproving reaction, by excluding this particular student from social activities. For this reason, sometimes students would not participate, because of how other students think and react. In total 6 participants have made a comment about this. One of the participants said:

'In China asking questions, interrupting the teacher, will ask the student more psychological/social pressure, it's not only the opinion of the teacher but also of the fellow students, if I speak, what will the teacher and fellow students think of me. It is not normal in china, if you do that other people may think you try to show off, or think you are very active' (P1).

Students fear how others will judge them based on their questions and answers in class. When a student is too active in class, he can be excluded by the fellow students, because he differs from the rest. There is no socialization with this active student. Therefore, students were not used to participating in class. Some participants did want to participate, but due to social pressure they preferred asking the teacher in private to prevent fellow students' judgement. One of the Indonesian participants explained:

'For example, the fellow students, if a student is being a smartass in class, he or she won't have any friends. Because when the teacher asks something and no one is answering, all students ask each other if they know it, and when no one knows the answer they feel equal. But if some student answers the teacher will like him more and the discussion will be more between that student and the teacher and other fellow students won't socialize with that student. But here the fellow students are professional they do not act like that towards students who answer' (P4).

Participants also commented that in their home country participation, presence in class, is mandatory. There is an attendance system. Students are checked whether they joined the class or not. Students need to have an attendance between 70 to 80 percent. If students do not meet the required attendance then they are not allowed to do the final exam and will not be able to pass the course. The required percentage can differ per teacher and university, but in the Netherlands participants have not experienced this attendance system. In total 7 participants have made comments about this. An Indonesian participant said:

'I feel like in Indonesia we have like absence list, we have to attend at least 70% of the class so we are able to join the final class, so it is kind of mandatory' (P20).

'In all universities there they have their own attendance criteria, student will not only be assessed on their examination but also their attendance. You have to attend say 60 to 75 percent, it can vary among universities, to pass the course. Students have to come to class but they are not expected to say anything' (P20).

Some participants pointed out that in the Netherlands students are self-motivated and attend classes, so there is no need for an attendance check, but in the previous academic environment students did not see the need to go to class, which is why there is an attendance system. In the Netherlands, students go to class themselves, because they are afraid of missing out on important knowledge. Other reasons as described by the participants are the way of teaching and the number of students in class. In the Netherlands assignments are carried out during the lessons, classes are not just theory and because the groups are small, there is focus on the individual. On the contrary, in the home countries, there are more students in the classroom, which causes a lack of practical assignments, making students think there is no need to be in the classroom, because they can also study the material themselves or with fellows. An Indian participant said:

> *'I think because here the population is less, and most of the things that you learn you have to apply so people actually prefer going to university so they can learn it and they can apply. In India I would say because there are a lot of people firstly and secondly there is nowhere that you have to apply the knowledge. So, if you are okay with studying for the examination and going to the exam that is fine, so people don't prefer going to the class in India, that's why they need to make it mandatory with the 75% attendance. Here there is no such rule, because students go to university by them self'* (P21).

Another Chinese participant said:

> *'I feel in China if you don't listen to the class, you can still finish the assignment and pass the course, so students feel like they don't have to listen carefully in class or participate in class. But in the Netherlands you have to focus, if you miss anything, a little bit like small points, you might miss important points in your exam, that is the difference'* (P15).

4.2.3 Overview and the perceived reasons

Table 3

Overview of the differences regarding the curriculum design and way of teaching

Aspect	Participants	Discussion topics
Curriculum design	10	The course organization in the Netherlands is tighter due to quartile system but in the previous environment students were used to the semester system and they had more time for their courses.
	6	In the Netherlands the elective courses are study related, while in the previous environment the elective courses were not related to the major.
	8	The course evaluation in the Netherlands consists of various methods like traditional examination, oral examination, projects and assignment. In the previous environment students were mainly used to traditional examinations.
Way of teaching	15	Student centric in the Netherlands vs. teacher centric in the previous environment.
	12	In the Netherlands teachers encourage students to share knowledge and be participative.
	15	In the Netherlands students participate actively, while in the previous environment students were passive.
	7	In the previous environment being in class was mandatory in the Netherlands not.
	5	In the perception of students, the reaction of teachers impacts student participation, but in the Netherlands not.
	6	In the perception of students, the reaction of fellow students impacts the participation, but in the Netherlands not.

Participants mentioned different reasons for these differences in the Curriculum design and the way of teaching between the Netherlands and their home countries. Some participants mentioned that the domestic education of the teachers is one of the reasons, as domestic education of the previous environment differs from the education of Dutch teachers. However, some teachers in the previous academic environment studied abroad and have a comparable way of teaching like the Dutch teachers. In total 5 participants have made comments about this.

Also, participants referred to the differences caused by the type of university back home. In the Netherlands, students experienced that all universities are equal, but in their home country there are state universities and private universities. Universities also have rankings. High in ranking are the universities that are very good in quality and lower in ranking are the universities with less quality, In total 5 participants have made comments about this.

Furthermore, participants referred to the size of the classes. Participants experience that in the Netherlands the amount of the students per class is lower compared to in their home country. When the number of students per class is high, it becomes difficult for teachers to use certain teaching methods. In the Netherlands, therefore, it is easier for teachers to handle a student centered teaching approach, to focus and involve students in class. On the contrary to the Netherlands, in their home countries the amount of students per class is nearly double. This way it becomes difficult for the teachers to apply a student centered teaching approach, as teachers cannot focus on all students and have an organized lecture. In total 3 participants have made a comment about this.

Finally, participants also referred to some cultural differences which are causing differences in the curriculum design and the way of teaching. The participants experience differences in the hierarchy and the individualism between the Netherlands and their home countries. In total 3 participants

commented regarding the power distance as a cause for the differences in the curriculum design and the way of teaching. In their home countries teachers used to have more power compared to students, which caused differences in the way of teaching and students' participation in class. The participants said that there used to be a gap between teachers and students, but in the Netherlands, teachers and students are equal. There is a smaller power difference. Concerning individualism, participants have experienced that in the Netherlands teachers and students stand for individualism. Teachers encourage students to have individual opinions and to have individual performance. However, in the home countries students and teachers were used to collectivism. Teachers were always guiding the students and students were used to following the teachers, neither did teachers encourage students nor were students used to having their independent opinion. This difference in individualism and collectivism also caused differences in the way of teaching between the Netherlands and the Asian countries.

4.3 Differences in the education level & way of examination
In this chapter, the differences regarding the education level and examination in the Netherlands and the home country of the participants have been discussed. In the following sub chapters the educational level such as the content and the workload, the level of examination and the method of the examination have been discussed.

4.3.1 Education level
A total of two discussion topics have been identified when it comes to the education level. Those are the educational content and the workload. These topics are further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Content
The main comment that participants have made regarding the education level is about the content of the education. Participants have experienced that content wise the education level in the Netherlands is more difficult compared to their home countries. Participants mentioned that the content in the Netherlands is based on theory, when students have assignments or project work, they should consider the theories and content that they have learned. Students also mentioned that the content is application based in the Netherlands. Students have to apply the things that they are being taught in practical assignments. In the previous environment participants were not used to applying the content in projects and assignment. In total 13 participants have made a comment about this. An Indonesian participant commented:

> '*In the Netherlands it is based on theory it is harder, than compared to Indonesia there we should be creative*' (P10).

Furthermore, participants have indicated that in the Netherlands students should prepare for the lessons by reading articles. If students go to class unprepared, they will not be able to follow the content that is being discussed by the teacher. At home the participants were not used to this, there they could go to class without preparation and everything was explained by the teachers. An Indian participant said:

> '*As in India the teachers share all the materials during the lecture and we can make notes of that, but here we first have to read the papers and then in class we can discuss those, the teachers will also give material but if you did not prepare the reading than it is difficult to understand the materials from the teachers. So back in India you could just go to class, listen and make notes, the teacher would explain everything. But here in the Netherlands you have to prepare before going to class, they expect you already know certain things and do not explain from the basics*' (P14).

Other than the content of the educational level, a lot of students also commented on the workload they have in the Netherlands. They claim that the workload is heavier compared to the workload they used to have in their home countries. In total 12 Participants have made comments about this. Participants experienced that the difference in workload has to do with the quartiles system in the Netherlands and the semester system in their home countries. In total 9 participants commented on this. An Indonesian participant referred to:

> *'In the Netherlands we should learn out topics in short period like because of the quartile, we have like 4 subjects in 1 quartile. I should learn all of it within 3 months. It needed more effort because back then in Indonesia I could have 6 subjects within 6 months, it has longer period and I can learn it well'* (P10).

Also, because of the quartile systems that is applied in the Netherlands, participants experienced that the workload is higher as the pace is running faster in the quartile system in the Netherlands. One participant shared:

> *'And for the curriculum design I feel the workload is quite high here, I think because of the quartile system. So, 3 months 3 subjects and courses and at the end you have to take exam and projects. Back home we have 2 semesters, we have time to think and study a lot, because it is 6 to 7 months. Here the quartile system runs very fast, sometimes by the time you think okay I am good with the subject I am learning something the module will be over'* (P8).

Furthermore, participants have experienced that there are more projects and assignments in the educational system of the Netherlands. These are individual, but also done in groups. In their academic education in the home countries there were few to no projects and assignments, it mainly consisted of midterm and final exams. The projects and assignments they have in the Netherlands require a lot of time for preparations such as reading, but also meetings with group members. As these assignments run simultaneously with the regular lessons and exams, this results in a higher workload for the students. A total of 10 participants commented on this. An Indonesian participant explained:

> *'Level of education: We had a lot of assignments, exams and meeting. Back home it was also a lot, but I can take it. Maybe because back home I did not have a lot meeting, so I did not have preparation for that, but here I do. Like preparing meeting by reading articles, preparing for lectures also reading, exam, presentation, oral exam it is a lot'* (P11).

Participant claimed that projects or assignment back home used to be easier and took less time to prepare, as teachers already guided with specific material and information:

> *'In China we need less time for preparation of assignment and projects, because as I already said, there we get less material but more specific and detailing for reading compared to here in the Netherlands. There they give enough information to understand the projects and come with your own ideas'* (P12).

However, in the Netherlands the participants themselves had to search for materials. They also noticed that the information that they were given by teachers wasn't very specific and that they were required to do more reading for assignments. A Chinese participant said:

> *'But I also feel like Dutch teachers have higher requirements, they always ask me to read more and know more articles, like when writing one paper you need lots of articles to prove your point. In China they don't have that high requirement, maybe around 5 articles to support your writing is enough, but here not'* (P15).

According to some participants the level of education and the workload in the private universities in Indonesia are comparable to the Netherlands. An example given by an Indonesian participant who used to study on a private university in her home country:

'Not all Indonesia Universities are like my Bachelor University. Mine was one of the best qualities. There are universities that I would say have an easier level of education. If I compare the university I went to in Indonesia to the University in the Netherlands, I would say it is comparable, it is hard but doable. Also, the workload is pretty similar' (P6).

4.3.2 Examination

In this part the differences regarding the examination have been discussed. Based on the interviews, the following aspects are highlighted: the level of examination, the method of examination, the way teachers evaluate exams and the grading system.

Regarding the level of the examination, two discussion topics have been identified, namely: the theory application and theory memorization-based examination and the role of teachers in helping students to prepare for exams. One discussion topic appeared regarding the examination methods. This topic is that there are different examination methods in the Netherlands, while there used to be only one traditional examination method according to the international students. Finally, regarding the teacher evaluation of the examination, the discussion topic was that in the Netherlands students can have their own reasoning and answer for exam questions as long as they get the point of the question, but in the perception of the international students, the answer should be standardized by what is taught in class. These topics are further elaborated below.

Level of examination
The main comment participants have made about the level of examination refers to the goal of the examinations. Participants have experienced that in the Netherlands the examination has more emphasis on the application of the knowledge, while in the academic education back home, the participants were used to examinations that required memorization of the knowledge. In total 15 participants have made comments regarding the differences in application or memorization, a Chinese participant said:

'*In Chinese exams you can find some standard answers like from the textbook or the materials, you don't need to do some adjustment. In the Netherlands if you want to answer you have to use more than one key point, you have to combine knowledge and use creativity, so there is no standard answer here'* (P15).

Another Indonesian participant gave an example regarding engineering exams, back home the exams required students to use the correct formula and calculate the right answer, but in the Netherlands, it goes beyond the calculation, they want students to understand the meaning of the answer and the practical result of the calculation, the participant said:

'For example, if we have a question about temperature, so you calculate and the answer is 10, for Indonesia this is it. But in the Netherlands they ask like, Wat does a temperature of 10 mean for the material or the chemical? What will happen? Is it good or bad? So, the level of examination is a bit harder here' (P20).

Also, it has been indicated that teachers in the Netherlands do not spoon-feed students, while in the academic education in the participants' home countries this was often the case. In the academic education in their home countries, participants were used to receiving a summary from teachers with the topics that would be part of the tests in terms of theory. Students could prepare for the test by learning only these topics. The participants did not experience this in the Netherlands, it has happened a few times that a teacher gives a summary, but this is very broad and comes down to all content. A total of 12 participants commented on this, an Indian participant said:

'Back home teachers used to tell what the key areas are and what to focus on, here they do not emphasis on any area to focus, it's all the materials' (P8).

Furthermore, participants said that tests in their home countries often cover the treated materials from the textbooks and what has been discussed in class, sometimes there are small changes in the questions, which means that students have to memorize the material well, there is no application of knowledge. One of the Indian participants said:

> '*The level of examination is way very good here than in India. There more or less if you read from the textbook you get 90 percent very easily, it is given for you, you just have some good memorization than you can score 90 plus. Here it is not like that, they really evaluate based on your critical thinking, which is really good*' (P9).

Finally, 5 participants with an Indian background also mentioned a difference in the exams related to the level of the examination. In their home country, the participants were used to exams containing questions from the exams of previous years. If participants practiced some of the exams from previous years, they would find repetition in their own exams, but in the Netherlands not. An example from one of the participants:

> '*So back home, what I was told if you practice 5 question papers, so 5 exams from the last 5 years you will for sure get 60 to 70% of the marks. The rest of the 30% depends on how much you study. So, imagine the easiness of the exams you get*' (P16).

Method of examination
The methods for the evaluation in the Netherlands differ, it depends on the course content, there is more variation compared to the home countries. In the Netherlands there are exams, projects, assignments and oral exams. Sometimes courses have different evaluation methods combined. But in the home countries of the participants, there were often only exams. It could be MCQ or essay questions, but there was no practical aspect like doing assignments for the evaluation. In total 13 participants have made comments about this. Participants have experienced that in the Netherlands, some courses did not have traditional exams, but only an assignment or project. In their home countries, however, the participants were used to traditional exams, a participant said:

> '*So here in the Netherlands sometimes we only have an assignment or project for some subjects, so no written exam. But in China there is always a written exam for every subject*' (P15).

In the Netherlands, for some subjects, if a traditional exam is not the right way to evaluate, teachers can choose another type of evaluation. However, in the participants home countries, every subject got evaluated with a traditional exam, an Indian participant explained:

> '*But in India even for a course that should not have theoretical information, for example like film, you can't learn to make a film by just writing an exam, but there they give a written exam. I feel like there is a lot of emphasis on unnecessary and redundant formalities or ceremonies like exams*' (P13).

Only one Indonesian business engineering participant mentioned that in his home country, there were mainly multiple-choice exams, since there were many students. For one subject there could be 4 classes with multiple teachers. Every class would have their own teacher and every teacher could have their own teaching style, content and exam evaluation, but the final exam would be the same. Therefore, the students would mainly have multiple choice exams as the answers are standardized and it is easier and faster to examine The participant said:

> '*I think it is because we have a lot of students there. There for some courses there would be in the same week like 5 different lectures for different groups like group A, B, C etc. with different teachers. For the standardization of the answers and how teachers judge the answer of the student it would differ a lot. Sometimes the different teachers teach different materials, they might prefer different books and materials. What also happens that one teacher teaches his classes certain theories and models, but the other teacher does not, so*

even though we follow the same course, but in different classes with different teachers, the knowledge can vary. But we all receive the same exam' (P4).

The way of evaluation

In this part the main comment regarding the way teachers evaluate the answers of students in exams will be discussed. The participants have experienced the difference that back home the answers used to be standardized. Students were required to answer as the teacher had taught in the lectures, but in the Netherlands, students can have their own reasoning and answer. In total 12 Participants have made comments about this. A Chinese participant said:

> *'Teachers in China evaluate your exam based on standardized answer sheet, if you write a lot of things, but nothing is from the standard answer sheet, then no points. The most important is that you mention these points, then you can also extend and explain it extra. Here if we have open exam and we write an answer which is not expected but for which we have a good reasoning and it makes sense, they will give points. But in China as far as I know we always have this standard answer and it is hard for you to come with some new points outside the standard answer'* (P17).

In the Netherlands it is common to have your own reasoning and to discuss this with the teachers, but Indian participants explained that back home the teachers would not appreciate this kind of behavior. In total 4 participants have made comments about this, one of the participants said:

> *'Another mayor difference is that teachers here account for your own personal creativity, they appreciate individuality of thought and original argumentation. If there is an idea that is kind of novel they are interested and would use it, but in India if I had a really good idea there was a reluctance to adopt that idea'* (P13).

Indian participants experienced that teachers get angry when students try to reason their answer, a participant said: *'India if this would happen and a student would explain or reason his answer, the teacher will say a few things back and the they will get angry and make a scene. I think the difference is because teachers there they think they are right always, they know more than students'* (P5).

Some participants also mentioned that in the Netherlands they are required to give short answers that are to the point, but back home they could give long answers. Another Indian participant pointed out that, due to the boldness in the Netherlands, students have to give answers that are to the point even in exams. In the Netherlands, when students write unnecessary information in their answers, teachers can take away points on their score. Example by Indian participants:

> *'Here teachers want precise answers, in short words, to the point. If you write a whole story and somewhere their correct answers are written, then that answer is false, because the teacher wants short and precise answer. Back home sometimes it works to write a long answer and when some of the keywords are mentioned you do get the points'* (P7).

> *'Dutch people are known to be direct, lecturers even in exams write that ''anything that is irrelevant is not included, you will get a penalty in that'' I think is says, if your answer is short don't make it longer. Back there the answers for a written exam could be pages'* (P3).

Grade system

Participants have noticed some differences in the grading system. In China, students can receive a maximum of 100 points for an exam. If they have 60 points or higher they pass the exam and their exam will be graded between 1 and 5. When a student has nearly all 100 points, the grade will be a 5. But in the Netherlands the grade can be between 1 and 10. A Chinese participant said:

> *'So, the grading here in the Netherlands the first point is 10, but in china it is 100. Here the credit is your point, so maybe 6, 7 or 8. In China we have GPA (Grade Point Average) system*

of your course. There if your final grade is a 5 it means you have got almost all 100 points. But to decide is a student has passes, we use the score system, to pass student needs 60 out of 100 points' (P17).

The Indonesian grading system is comparable to the system in the Netherlands, with the maximum score being 100 points. However, the exams are graded with letters instead of numbers, these letters range from A to D. A score between 85 and 100 is an A, C is a passing mark and D is a failing mark.

The Indian grading system also has a maximum score of 100 points, but in order to pass the exam students need a score of at least 40 points. This means that the minimum amount of points required to pass is lower. The grading in India is similar to Indonesia, when students have a score of (around) 100, they get graded with an A. A score below 40 points is an F, which is a failing mark. An Indian participant explained:

'So, in India if you have 40 of the 100 points you pass, but here you need 55 of the 100 in order to pass. They grade with A, B, C or D. You get an A if you have over 90 points, you get a B if you have more than 80 points, C if you have more than 70 points and F is failed so below 40 points' (P7).

It appears that Indian students are quite competitive and grade oriented. They always try to get the highest score. A participant said:

*'*So *back home the grading is out of 100, most students score around 60 to 70, but that is not good enough, then between 80 and 90, so compared to the Netherlands that is high, but in the context of the Indian system that is actually really low, the best performers get between the 90 to 100. Because of these high grades it's not meaning that much, if you hear someone has 97, you are indifferent to that, because there are hundreds of others that also have that. But here most people get between 6 and 7, you don't really get easy an 8 or 9, because they only grade really special projects with a 9. Also, here with a 5.5 you pass, but in India with a 4 you already pass, so the bottom is lower. The grading system here is much healthier'* (P13).

4.3.3 Overview and the perceived reasons

Table 4
Overview of the differences regarding the educational level and examination

Aspect	Participants	Discussion topics
Education & Examination al level	15	In the Netherlands the education and examination level is harder due to the difference in the theory application-based content vs. memorization in the previous environment.
	12	In the perception of the student teachers used to spoon feed students before the exams, but in the Netherlands teachers do not guide student for the exams which makes examination harder in the Netherlands.
	12	Higher workload in the Netherlands due to the difference in the quartile vs. semester system difference.
	10	In the Netherlands the personal and group assignments, project and the lectures are running simultaneously.
Examination method	13	Different examination methods the Netherlands vs. traditional examination method according to the international student perception.
	12	In the Netherlands student can have their own reasoning and answer for exam questions as long as they get the point of the question but in the perception of the international students the answer should be standardized by what is taught in class.

Some participants explained that the differences are caused by the course design. A total of 6 participants have made comments about this. As in their home country the course design is reluctant to change. Also, the goal of the course differs. The students share that they got tested on the memorization of knowledge in their home countries, but in the Netherlands the application of knowledge is more important. Then there are also cultural aspects which lead to differences in the level of education and examination. A total of 3 participants have commented on that. One participant referred to differences in independency and collectivism. Independency is common in the Netherlands, which is also noticeable in the education and examination, but participants experienced more guidance in their home countries. Participants also experienced differences in masculinity. In their home countries, participants experienced a lot of competition in grades which leads to higher masculinity. Furthermore, the population of the students was also mentioned by the participants as a reason for the differences. In the home countries, there are more students per study. The classes are larger, which makes it difficult to apply certain types of education and exam methods, because it is not feasible for the teachers. Lastly, participants referred to the teachers. The quality and approach to teaching and examining can differ per teacher, in total 4 participants have made comments about this.

4.4 Differences in the teachers

In this chapter the differences between the teachers in the Netherlands and the teachers in the home countries of the participants will be discussed. The differences regarding the relation between the teachers and students will be discussed first, followed by the interaction between teacher and student and the knowledge of the teacher.

4.4.1 The relation between teacher and student

In the field of the relation between teachers and students, three discussion topics have been identified, these are the position or status of student and teacher, respect between student and teacher and professionalism and formality between student and teacher. These topics are further elaborated below.

The biggest difference that participants have experienced in their relationship with teachers is that teachers in the Netherlands treat students as their equal. In their home countries, the participants were accustomed to teachers displaying a certain degree of higher power and status, there was an obvious hierarchy. In total 18 participants have made comments about this, one of the Indian participants stated:

> '*Huge differences, because as I said there is more hierarchy in India, and teachers are someone on top of the hierarchy*' (P13).

Due to this, participants also experienced differences in respect towards the teachers. According to the participants, students in their home countries should show a lot of respect to the teachers. But that is not the case in the Netherlands. In total 14 participants have commented on this. One of the Indian participants said:

> '*Quite some differences, because in India students are expected to respect their teachers*' (P14).

Several participants experienced that the teachers in their home countries demanded to be respected by the students, while in the Netherlands participants haven't experienced that kind of situation. Example by one of the participants:

> '*Here they are very casual and open, they don't expect a student to respect them. There it is a hierarchy running. You have to respect them there is a tension. You have to speak in a certain way to them otherwise they don't like it, that's demanding respect*' (P16).

In their home countries, participants were used to respecting teachers, as it is common there to respect older people, and people with higher position in the hierarchy. In total 8 participants have made comments about this. An Indonesian participant said:

> '*We respect them as we know that they are older than us, they are more superior than us*' (P3).

Teachers were seen as equal to their parents, which is why they were respected by the teachers as if they were their parents. An Indian participant said:

> '*You position your teacher as your parent. Because teacher is the one who gives you the knowledge*' (P9).

Further, in the Netherlands, participants experienced that the relationship between teachers and students is professional but also informal. In their home countries, participants were used to a professional and formal relationship with their teachers. In total 16 participants have made comments about this. An Indonesian participant said:

> '*In the Netherlands you have to respect each other. Here the relation with teacher and student is more professional, they should respect each other. In Indonesia you are in the level below your teacher, it is not professional, student respect the teacher, but teacher did not care about student*' (P11).

Some participants have experienced differences in the relationship with young and old teachers in their home countries, while in the Netherlands young and old teachers have no differences. Participants have experienced that in the relationship with the younger teachers in their home countries, students and teachers are more equal. Their relationship can be more informal and friendlier, similar to the Netherlands. However, with older teachers, there tends to be a gap in the relationship, which makes the hierarchy difference more visible. In total 5 participants have commented about this. Two Indonesian participant said:

> '*I feel like some younger teacher will teach us as friends, while older teachers will be like I am the teacher you are my student, there will be a gap*' (P10).

> '*Back home there were teachers who were close to me because they are younger, but lecturers who are older I really treated them with respect, I felt like scared to talk to them, I would be anxious to mail them*' (P6).

4.4.2 The interaction between teachers and students

In the field of interaction between teachers and students, three discussion topics have been identified, namely: the topic of the interaction, the way of interacting and how students approach teachers. These topics are further elaborated below.

The main comment participants have made regarding the interaction between teachers and students has been about the topic of the interaction. In the Netherlands the participants experienced that the teachers interact about topics that go beyond the academics, such as social and professional topics. With the teachers back home, the participants were used to having interactions regarding academics only. In total 13 participants have made comments about this. A Chinese participant said:

> '*In china we never talk about life things, just study related. In the Netherlands I can talk about topics beyond study related. They talk about private things and care about us, in China I have never seen this. In China teachers never cared about my life, never talked about how I am doing, about my emotion, but in the Netherlands, they do care about your mental health and your life*' (P2).

Also, in the interaction topics there are differences depending on which teacher the students interact with in their home countries. This is related to the differences between young and old teachers, as

described in the previous chapter. The younger teachers have broader interaction topics, but the older teachers only stick to the subject they teach. In total 5 participants have commented on this. An Indonesia participant said:

> '*For the younger teacher they will be friendlier, but the older teacher there will be like a gap of student and teacher. With the younger teacher I can discuss more casual and we can talk not only about the subject but also the real life, like for example I can ask her ''do you think it will be nice in real life if I work for this company'' I can ask her opinion and she will share her opinion and give direction to my future*' (P10).

Another difference that the participants have experienced in the interaction between teachers and students, is regarding the way they interact. According to the participants, the interactions between students and teachers are direct, but not offensive. In their home countries, participants weren't used to interacting in a direct manner with their teachers. Students have been used to respecting teachers and talking in an indirect way to prevent offending teachers. Respecting teachers while having interactions has a link with the relation differences between teachers and students in the Netherlands and in the participants' home countries. In total 10 participants have made comments about this. An Indonesian participant said:

> '*Here it is related to how direct students can be to teachers and how normal the teachers receive it. For students here it is common, but for me it was a shock, like isn't that impolite*' (P4).

When students interact they consider respecting teachers, but on the other side participants have experienced that the teachers back home can interact in a direct and offensive manner towards the students. In total 3 participants have made comments about this.

Another difference participants have experienced in the interactions between them and their teachers, is in the way students can approach teachers. In the Netherlands students can approach their teachers by just calling directly their name, but in their home countries, participants had to use terms such as sir or madam when approaching them. Participants have connected this to the difference in respecting teachers which can be found in the previous sub chapter. In total 8 participants have made comments about this, a Chinese participant explained:

> '*Only you don't call the teachers name directly. If the teachers last name is Yao we call him teacher Yao, but here you can call the teachers name*' (P17).

4.4.3 The knowledge of the teacher
In the field of the knowledge of the teacher, three discussion topics have been identified, these are the average knowledge level of teachers, the teacher's ability to apply knowledge and how teachers respond when they lack in certain knowledge. These topics are further elaborated below.

In general, all of the participants claimed that they have not experienced any differences in the knowledge of the teachers. Teachers in the Netherlands and teachers in their home countries are both knowledgeable and have studied in order to teach. Some participants have experienced differences in the knowledge amongst the teachers in their home countries. In the Netherlands all teachers have equal knowledge in their field, their knowledge is standardized. But in the home country their knowledge differs. In total 3 participants have made comments about this, an Indian participant said:

> '*I have seen teachers in India who know much more than teachers here in their subject, but I have also seen teachers in India who know much less than teachers here, so on an average it is the same. Here all the teachers are almost similar*' (P21).

Furthermore, several participants commented that teachers in the Netherlands are more knowledgeable compared to their teachers back home. This is related to the Dutch teachers applying

their knowledge in practice or using practical examples in their lessons. In the participants home countries, the teachers were less experienced in this. Their focus was mainly on the theoretical side of their knowledge. In total 5 participants have made comments about this, an Indonesian participant said:

> *'I think the professors here in the Netherlands they are not only good with theory but also the practical in real life, like when they give lecture they also give example of what would happen in real life. In Indonesia it is not the case not every professor can do this'* (P20).

The main comment participants have made about the knowledge of the teachers is regarding the way teachers respond when they lack certain knowledge. In total 18 participants have made a comment about this. In general, when teachers lack certain knowledge in the Netherlands and in the Asian countries, the participants have experienced that the teachers would say something amongst the lines of ''I will look it up and we will get back to it next class''. A total of 10 participants have made comments on this. However, the participants did notice that there are differences, as teachers in the Netherlands will admit openly that they do not know. However, teachers from their home countries tend to not admit that they don't have that knowledge. There teachers will ignore the question, tell they will get back on it next time and still ignore the question or they try to give an answer, even though the teacher is not sure, example:

> *'When in Indonesia the lecturer does not know the answer, I think they will not admit it. They will just answer the best they can' (*P6). In total 15 participants have made a comment about this.

Also, 6 of these participants reasoned that teachers want to prevent losing face. By not admitting to not having the needed knowledge and giving an answer that might not be accurate, they hope to prevent losing face. This can be linked to the hierarchy and power difference between teachers and students. Teachers don't want their students to lose their respect for them, as they want to maintain their position in the hierarchy. As can be found in the results from earlier, the participants said that they are used to respecting teachers in their home countries. An Indian participant said:

> *'In the Netherlands if they do not know, they will say that they don't know. Back home they won't say that they don't know, they will try to give an answer, even if they don't know. It's a power difference, they do not want to look small in front of people because they are professor, it feels also for students like professor should know everything'* (P8).

4.4.4 Overview and the perceived reasons

Table 5

Overview of the differences regarding the teachers

Aspect	Participants	Discussion topics
Relation between teacher and student	18	Relation between teacher and student equal in the Netherlands vs. visible hierarchy in the perception of the international student.
	14	Student and teacher respect each other equally in the Netherlands vs. student respects teacher in the perception of the international student.
	16	The relation between the teacher and student is professional, informal & friendly in the Netherlands vs. professional & formal in the perception of the international student.
Interaction between teacher and student	13	Topic of interaction between student and teacher beyond academics in the Netherlands vs. only academic related in the perception of the international student.
	10	Student and teacher interact direct in the Netherlands vs. student interacts indirect to teacher to respect and prevent offending the teacher in their perception.
	8	In the Netherlands student approach, the teachers by their name vs. by sir or madam in the perception of the international student.
Knowledge of the teacher	3	All teachers have standardized knowledge in their field vs. the knowledge of the teachers vary amongst each other.
	5	Ability to apply knowledge in practice in the Netherlands vs. lack in applying knowledge in practice in student perception.
	18	Teachers admitting to lack in certain knowledge in the Netherlands vs. saving face in the perception of the international student.

As mentioned earlier there are differences in the education of the younger and the aged teachers. The younger teachers have often experienced education abroad and may have gotten the western style of education. These teachers have a more student-oriented teaching approach, similar to the western way of teaching. There also are differences in high power distance and low power distance, as participants have gotten used to the hierarchy between teachers and students in their home countries. In their home countries teachers have higher position compared to students, therefore students respect teachers, this is causing pressure on the teachers in aspects such as their knowledge and loosing face.

4.5 Differences fellow students

In this chapter the findings regarding the differences between fellow students in the Netherlands and in the home countries of the participants have been discussed. First, the differences in their communication has been described followed by their study attitude, collaboration and social life.

4.5.1 Communication

In the field of communication amongst fellow students, two discussion topics have been identified, the way fellow students communicate and the topics they communicate about. These are further elaborated below.

The main comment that has been made by the participants is regarding the difference between the way fellow students communicate with each other in the Netherlands and in their home countries. Participants have experienced that in the Netherlands the communication amongst fellow students is direct, whereas in their home countries, participants used to communicate in an indirect way. In total

17 participants have made comments about this. An Indonesian participant gave an example of a situation regarding the directness of students in the Netherlands, the participant said:

> '*Once during an online group meeting, we had been discussing for hours, then this Dutch girl just said ''I think what we have discussed, we can discuss it in like 5 minutes, but know we have spent more than one hour for this, can we just like end this already'* (P3).

Participants said that fellow students in their home countries communicate indirectly, in order to prevent offending someone or hurting their feelings. In total 6 participants have made comments about this, an Indian participant said:

> '*In the way of communication there is difference, here there is much more a direct or blunt kind of communication. If there are problems people don't think of the other people's sensitive they just tell you did this wrong, they tell you what to change, and you have to change it. But over there, there is a lot of emphasis on not offending another person, not saying something in a way that hurt or offend people. That is the biggest difference in the way of communication*' (P13).

Furthermore, participants also experienced differences in the topics that fellow students talk about. The main comment made by participants says that in the Netherlands fellow students mainly talk about academic topics such as homework, projects or assignments, while fellow students from their home countries used to talk more about personal and social topics such as family, relationships or food. In total 11 participants have made comments about this, an Indian participant said:

> '*And the topics of communication with fellow student here in the Netherlands are mostly related to academics and sometimes like professional life. But back home we would be talking about almost everything, like academic, family, problems and plans, it would be more social our communication*' (P14).

Some participants said that the way and topics of communication depend on the relation between the fellow students. When students know each other well and for a long time the communication becomes more personal. In total 6 participants have made comments about this, an example given by a Chinese participant:

> '*I do not perceive any differences in terms of communication. I think it really depends on your relationship with the fellow student. For example, in the Netherlands and in China if we don't have very good or deep relationship with a fellow student we just keep our politeness*' (P2).

4.5.2 Study attitude

In the field of the study attitude of fellow students, a total of 4 discussion topics have been identified, namely: the relation between the student and the study attitude, the difference between the study attitude of Dutch fellows and the fellows from the previous academic environment, time management of the fellows and the attitude towards working and studying together. These topics will be further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

In general, the participants commented that the study attitude of fellow students in the Netherlands and in their own countries depend on the students themselves. There are various types of students, they could be lazy or diligent. In total 12 participants have made comments about this, a Chinese participant said:

> '*I think here this is the difference between different persons and not cultures. But the class mates whether China or the Netherlands their study attitude is similar, even the preparations are similar. So, to those who are eager or those who are lazy in study or preparation*' (P12).

Even though participants have claimed that the difference depends on the student's personality, they have also commented that the study attitude of the Dutch students is better compared to their

fellow students' back home. In total 11 participants have made comments about this, A Chinese participant said:

> '*In China there are 2 extremes, your either super lazy or super diligent. In the Netherlands I do not see such extremes. Students are really responsible for their selves, but they just want to pass the exam, they get a 6 and then it is done. They won't be super lazy or super diligent. In the Netherlands students are more average level*' (P2).

Participants experienced that their Dutch fellow students used to be focused on their studies and keep up with their work, there was almost no procrastination an Indonesian participants said:

> '*A difference here is that students mostly in general are more motivated, focus and prepared, compared to back home. There they can just prepare nothing and come to class and wait on the teacher to say everything*' (P3).

Also, participants mentioned that their fellow student's home were more competitive in their study attitude. Their focus was mainly on their grades. On the other hand, in the Netherlands, students want to learn because they are interested, not for the sake of their grades. In total 6 participants have made a comment about this.

Lastly, the participants believe that their Dutch fellow students are more punctual, they value time and also have respect for another student's time. Fellow students in the Netherlands do not procrastinate as participants were used in their previous academic education. In total 6 participants have made comments about this.

Participants also commented that fellow students in their home countries often used to study together, but in the Netherlands this study attitude has not been experienced. The participants claimed that the independency of Dutch students is higher. In the Netherlands there is more emphasis on independence in academic education compared to the home country. In total 17 participants have made a comment about this. Most participants experience that the independency in the study attitude of Dutch students is higher as students would even work independently in group projects, which was not common in their home country. In total 11 participants have made a comment about this. An Indonesian participant said:

> '*In the Netherlands the students were more individual, we had assignment and did it by our self, even though it was a group assignment, we did it by ourselves and we would discuss it later. Meanwhile in Indonesia we did it since the beginning together, like we discuss together and we decide all things together*' (P10).

Apart from the project work, participants experienced this difference too in studying and exam preparations. In their home country students used to study together, but in the Netherlands, they experience the opposite. An Indonesian participant said the following:

> '*Independently as students here have to study for their self's, back home it is not that common, there we form a group and study and discuss together. I also have some friends who do their bachelor here, they formed them self a group to study together, they are all south east Asian. It is quite common there to study together not only for project assignments but also for exams*' (P4).

4.5.3 Cooperation & support
In the cooperation amongst fellow students in the Dutch and the participants' home countries academic education, there were mainly 3 topics that have popped up from the interviews, namely; the differences in the way fellow students cooperate, the impact of the relation of fellow students and the differences in how fellow students deal with conflicts or disagreements. Also, regarding the support of fellow students in group work, personal assignments or studying, 2 discussion topics were

identified, namely; the process of helping and the difference in independency. These 5 topics will be further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

The main comment that participants have made regarding the way fellow students cooperate in the Netherlands and in their home countries, is that fellow students in the Netherlands work more individually. Dutch students work even in group projects and assignments individually, while fellow students in the home country were mainly used to collaborate in group projects and assignments and do all the work together. In total 15 participants have made comments about this, an Indonesian participant said:

> *'In group meeting in the Netherlands they will like ''Okay this is my part, this is your part, we do it by our self, after we finish we can make it as one part''. Meanwhile in Indonesia we have 4 parts, we will discuss it together for the 4 parts'* (P10).

But the relationship with fellow students in their home countries has an impact on the cooperation amongst fellow students. According to the participants, when a group of fellow students who are friends have to work together, they will do everything in the project together. But when the group consists of fellow students who are not friends, the cooperation can be similar to the one in the Netherlands. Since students are allowed to create their own groups, the groups often consist of friends and the project work is done together. In total 9 participants have made comments about this.

The way fellow students in the Netherlands and in the home countries of the participants deal with conflict or disagreement has to do with the way they communicate amongst each other. As described earlier in this chapter, participants experienced that in the Netherlands fellow students communicate directly with each other, this is also the case regarding conflict solving. In their home country, participants were used to indirect communication amongst fellow students in conflict solving. In their home countries, students often form groups with their friends. Emotions also have a big role in groups like these. Students tend not to be blunt towards their friends, as they don't want that to impact their friendship. Because of the friendship and the emotions participants told they could not be direct in conflicts, they wanted to solve issues harmoniously. In total 12 participants have made comments about this difference in collaboration amongst fellow students, a Chinese participants said:

> *'If someone doesn't catch up with the schedule here we criticize more directly, like ''You need to take this seriously, you will affect other people in this group''. The difference will be for example if someone doesn't catch up with the schedule here we will tell that person ''you will affect others'', so that's the direct way. In China I would tell that guy '' Hi friend if you don't finish your part in time, I cannot finish the following part in time'', in my opinion this is the more indirect way'* (P17).

> *'If you do too much or too less, they might complain about it. In China If one person did all the important work in the group assignment, that student would not complain. Cause if that student is better or has more knowledge, the student is willing to help and feels responsible to help' (P1).*

Participants also shared that, due to these aspects, it was quite common in their home countries that some students would not do their tasks and others would, while in the Netherlands all students worked equally on the project. An Indonesian participant said:

> *'Back home people are more reluctant to do groupwork, people rely on one person of the group, but in the Netherlands the whole group would do their things and would be eager for the team and be more willing'* (P6).

A Chinese participant said that this difference could be connected to the relation with the group mates. The participant said:

> 'In *the Netherlands in every course new people arrive and the member of the group might not know each other, which might cause these distance and clear boundary in each other's tasks.*

Further, regarding the topic of students supporting each other, the participants experienced that back home, they never had to literally ask for help, while that does happen in the Netherlands. At home, students were often already working on assignments, projects, and studying for exams together. If they needed help it came naturally, there was no need to specifically ask classmates for help. However, in the Netherlands asking for help is a more formal process. In total 11 participants have made comments about this, an Indian participant said:

> 'So *back home, actually asking for support wasn't necessary most of the time, because you were doing everything together, like study in a group or do the assignment in a group, so if there was any issue, you could just tell and they would help. Sometimes even when for example studying late in the evening I could just give a call and they would explain or come over to my place to explain. But here, I feel there is too much formality. It is not like helping your friend but a colleague. You have to ask them and sometimes even schedule a meeting, because they are busy'* (P14).

Participants suggested that this difference has to do with the fact that there is more independence in the Netherlands, while the students are more dependent on each other in their home countries. In total 9 participants have made comments about this.

4.5.4 Social life
The social life of students in the Netherlands and students in the participants' home countries had few differences. The main comment that participants have made regarding the social life in the Netherlands and their home countries, is that in the Netherlands the social gatherings are more alcohol related. Back home the social gathering would be more food related. In the Netherlands students would go to cafes and have a drink, but back home students would go and have lunch or dinner. In total 9 participants have made comments about this, an Indonesian participant said:

> '*One different related to culture for example to have a party that involves drinking like going to a pub, bar or to invite to our house is here common, but back home that kind of interaction is not common, there we have parties in the form of having a feast having dinner*' (P4).

Also, some Indian participants have mentioned that in their home countries they would go to each other's house and have food with their family. In total 5 participants have made comments about this, one of the participants for example said:

> 'So, *you just go to their house, you eat, their parent is kind enough to cook and you can latterly stay at their house for a couple of day and study together and they still don't care. But here you have to put like time slots, though you feel like your friend here with a person, that's it, you don't have that kind of bonding where they call you at their house or their parents make you some food*' (P9).

4.5.5 Overview and the perceived reasons

Table 6

Overview of the differences regarding the fellow students

Aspect	Participants	Discussion topics
Communication amongst fellow students	17	Fellow students in the Netherlands communicate directly vs. indirect in the perception of international students.
	11	Fellow students communicate only about academic related topics the Netherlands vs. Personal and social topics in the perception of the international students.
Study attitude of fellow students	12	Study attitude of fellows in both academic environment depends on the student being diligent vs. lazy in the perception of international students.
	11	Fellow students have average study attitude in the Netherlands vs. lazy or diligent in the perception of international students.
	6	Fellow students are punctual in the Netherlands vs. procrastination in the perception of international students.
	11	Fellows work and study independently in the Netherlands vs. fellows cooperate in work and study in the perception of international students.
Cooperation & support amongst fellow students	15	Students work independently in the Netherlands vs. cooperation in the perception of the international student.
	9	The relation with fellow students impacts the cooperation in the perception of the international student.
	12	Dealing with issues and disagreements directly in the Netherlands vs. indirect and harmonious in the perception of international student.
	11	Supporting fellow students goes with formalities in the Netherlands vs. naturally in the perception of the international student.
	9	Fellow students are independent regarding support in the Netherlands vs. fellows depending on each other in the perception of international student.
Social life	9	Social gatherings amongst fellow students is alcohol related in the Netherlands vs. food related in the perception of international students

In the Netherlands, people are very individualistic, whereas in the home countries of the participants the individualism is not high. The people in their home countries tend to be collectivistic, people always stick together and include people. Participants mentioned the level of directness as another reason for the differences between the fellow students. In the Netherlands students are more direct, they live in a low context culture, students are more explicit. But in the home country of the participants, people are not that direct, they have underlying rules, students are more implicit. Lastly, the differences depend on the relation with the fellow students, like friendship or collegiate. When they have a relationship like friends, they will be more open to each other and behave differently in certain situations.

5. Discussion

In this chapter special findings will be discussed. Furthermore, the theoretical and practical implications and the limitations of this research will be discussed. Finally, some ideas will be discussed for follow-up research.

5.1 Differences in academic education

5.1.1 The difference in preference for diversity or compliance in academic education

One of the common threads of this research concerns the difference in open mindedness to diversity and compliance within the Dutch academic education in comparison to academic education in the Asian home countries of the participants, respectively. Open mindedness to diversity will be used here as a term representative of the broad range of aspects, such as open mindedness to new perspectives, new ideas and creative thinking, which can be integrated within an environment, such as academic education. The results of this study suggest that in the Netherlands there is more open mindedness to diversity in academic education, while in an international students perspective compliance is the norm. International students experienced that it is important in Dutch education that students are independent and can speak for themselves, as there is open mindedness for different opinions. This is an unfamiliar concept for international students. They are used to the concept of compliance by accepting and reproducing the information taught by the teachers, where there is no room for input by students. This difference can be recognized in different elements of academic education. It is reflected in the learning objectives critical thinking, argumentation, creativity, writing and the field knowledge. Furthermore, the impact is also found in the way of teaching and the student participation. These elements will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The difference between theory application based and theory memorization based education

In academic education in the Netherlands, the content which is taught has to be applied by students in their academic performances. Students are required to give their own interpretation to course materials by applying the given material in relevant assignments, projects, lectures, discussions and examinations and show that they understand the course materials. This requires students to apply learning objectives, such as critical thinking, argumentation and creativity. Concerning the writing skills, in Dutch education it is important for students to express themselves in their own words and to not blindly copy knowledge, as this is strictly checked with the plagiarism control, to which students were not strictly used in the home education. In Dutch education, there is open mindedness to diversity and it is welcomed that students differ in opinion, answer or approach from others, as long as this can be explained. While in the previous academic environment students were used to memorization based education. Students were mainly required to memorize the content taught by teachers. Applying critical thinking, argumentation or creativity were not common. This was also recognized in the writing assignments, projects and examinations as students were used to reproduce the memorized knowledge. Vyncke (2012) found that especially international students from 'non-Western' backgrounds, have difficulty in implementing a critical dimension in their writing and that cultural background plays a role in influencing the student's writing styles.

Due to this difference in theory application and memorization, the international students experienced that the education and examination level is harder in the Netherlands compared to the previous environment. The exams in the Netherlands not only test the memorization ability of the students, but also the ability to apply information and understand the topic information. In Asian academic education, exams mainly tested memorization as students were required to answer as precisely as possible what they had been taught. A study by Jiang and Altinyelken (2020) underlined that the exam oriented and teacher centered education that most Asian students are accustomed to, limited the international Asian students' opportunity to practice their ability to argue or debate. The

scholars also concluded that the Dutch exam requirements and assessment standards were different and more challenging. These differences can be caused by the concept of individualism in the Dutch academic education and the concept of collectivism in Asian academic education. In individualistic environments people are expected to think and act for themselves and the rights of the individual, independence and self-expression are highly valued concepts. In contrast, in collectivistic environments conformity and the well-being of the group are highly valued concepts. People in collectivistic environments tend to respect traditions and elders (Blodgett et al., 2008; Sulkowski & Deakin, 2009). In the Netherlands international students need to apply critical thinking, argumentation and creativity in order to justify their individual work while in the previous environment these same students were used to reproduce the existing knowledge. Therefore, these findings are in accordance with literature.

The difference between student centered and teacher centered education
The difference in diversity and compliance can also be recognized in the way of teaching. This research shows that in the Netherlands the way of teaching is mainly student centered. Dutch teachers encourage students to be participative in class, to share personal knowledge, opinions and to have discussions, while in the previous environment the international students were used to a teacher centered teaching approach. International students were used to teachers sharing the knowledge and guiding the students in the previous academic environment.

Klemencic (2019) described that in student centered teaching practice collaborative learning, active learning, experiential learning and self-regulated learning are common. These practices are underlined by the experience of the international students in this study. Previous research by Wang (2004) found that in the teacher centered approach correct information and answers to questions are mainly dependent on the professors and that students focus on understanding this information from their teachers. Student centered education is open to diversity, as teachers encourage students to speak up, while in teacher centered education the teacher guides the student in everything and students accept the knowledge as taught by the teachers, which is pointing towards compliance. Difference in uncertainty avoidance can impact the way of teaching. In the Netherlands there is low uncertainty avoidance, but in the previous environment high uncertainty avoidance. In countries with high uncertainty avoidance culture, students expect teachers to be in the role of expert and rather have structured learning based on precise objectives and detailed assignments. In countries with low uncertainty avoidance the learning situations are not structured, but are often open and the tasks and objectives are broadly defined, which defines student centered teaching (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Furthermore, regarding the way of teaching, it was found that the students in the Netherlands were more actively participating in class, while international students were used to being passive in class in order to respect the lecturers by being quiet in class and listening to the lecturer. This difference can also be explained by the concept of individualism in the Netherlands and the concept of collectivism in the previous environment. Also, the difference in the hierarchical position of the teacher and the international student in the previous environment impacts the current student participation in class. Having diverse opinions, being critical or arguing with teachers can be perceived as disrespect, due to which students did not actively participate in class discussions or share opinions in the previous environment, while in the Netherlands these are very common activities. This difference can be explained by the low power distance in the Netherlands and the high power distance culture in the previous academic environment. Also, scholars Jiang and Altinyelken (2020) found that in western classrooms, students can interrupt lecturers and raise questions or express their opinions, while most international students, remain silent and do not raise questions or respond, as being silent is seen as a way of showing respect to teachers in classrooms and asking questions can be seen as disrespect of the class time and the teacher. In Asian academic education, being quiet in class would be perceived as a sign of good self-discipline and respecting teachers (Yuan, 2011).

5.1.2 Differences in equality and hierarchy in academic relations

This chapter discusses the academic interrelational position of students and teachers.

The results of this research show that there is a difference in the relationships between students and teachers in the Netherlands and the previous study environments of the international students. In the Netherlands students and teachers have somewhat equal positions of hierarchy, while in the previous environment the students used to see their teachers as individuals with a higher up position in the hierarchy. The students' respect for the teacher was mainly based on this difference of hierarchical position. Previous research by Yee (1995) also proved that the status of the teacher in the classroom can differ in the cultures of some international students. It might be expected for international students to be obedient to their teachers due their hierarchical positions, while students in most Western classrooms are expected and encouraged to challenge their teachers. McCargar's (1993) research shows that international students most strongly oppose the idea of disagreeing with the teacher. These students strongly favor acceptance of authority by the teacher. They believe that they should agree with the teacher. This difference in the relation between students and teachers is also visible in other elements of academic education such as the interaction between students and teachers and the knowledge of teachers. These will be further discussed below.

It was also found that due to the higher position of teachers in the previous environment, students had to treat teachers with respect, which also affected their interactions and student participation in class. In the Netherlands the students experienced that they can be direct with their teacher, but in the previous environment this was not possible as the teachers had to be addressed with respect. In the Netherlands it is normal to have doubts about what your teacher says, you can discuss this with your teacher and share your opinion and argue or have discussions. However, these were not common practices for international students, as being direct and participating in discussions can easily be taken as rude. Durkin (2008), studied international Asian students at British universities and found that in the perspective of international Asian students the western style of critique and debates is insensitive and unnecessarily offensive. This difference can be explained by the low power distance and low context culture in the Netherlands and the high-power distance and high context culture in the home countries of international students.

The hierarchical difference between students and teachers was also recognized in the knowledge of the teacher. It has been noticed that when teachers lack certain knowledge, they admit this in the Netherlands. They feel no pressure to know everything, but in the previous environment the teachers were not ready to give in to such circumstances. Teachers would talk around it or ignore it, in order to save their reputation, as in collectivistic societies teachers are expected to be experts and know everything. This difference in the knowledge of the teacher can be linked to the low power distance and individualism in the Netherlands and the high power distance and collectivism in the previous academic. In previous literature Wang (2004) found that some international students expect that correct information and answers to questions come naturally from the professors. This is in accordance with the results from this research.

5.1.3 The difference in long relationships and short relationships with fellow students

This research has shown that the duration of the relationship of an international student with their peers affects certain aspects of academic education. The relationships of international students with Dutch peers are often of short duration, because the courses in the Netherlands have a duration of three months and the students do not all have the same schedule during the academic year. In some cases students only have a joint lesson or project once a week for three months and after that course they never meet again. As a result, the international students are often independent and forced to do academic related work individually. In the previous environment of international students, all students who followed a particular study had the same schedule. These students saw each other

daily and had a long relationship. As a result, students experienced more group cohesion and were more often involved in their studies together. Peers of international students in the Netherlands prefer independence, while in the previous environment peers of the international students preferred working and studying together. This difference is also found in cooperation amongst international students and their Dutch peers in projects, assignments, exam preparations and in supporting each other. Previous studies have noted that international students do not actively collaborate with host students in learning and that international students prefer collaborating with peers from the same country or with similar cultural backgrounds (Lee & Rice, 2007; Yuan, 2011; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998). As international students often struggle to build relationships with host students, due to lack in social support by host students (Zhao, Kuch & Carini, 2005) and unfriendly and exclusive behavior of the host students, due to the independency and the explicit communication (Birnbaum, Cardona, Gonzales & Milian, 2012). This difference can be linked to the individualistic and specific culture in the Netherlands and the collectivistic and diffuse culture in the previous environment of the international students.

Furthermore, it has been found that the peers of international students in the Netherlands are more direct in daily and project related communication, because students see each other little and know each other for a short period of time, their focus is mainly on the academic work that brings them together. Dutch students only communicate related to academics. In the previous environment, as indicated earlier, students see each other more often and they also know each other for a longer time, due to this, they are also involved with each other outside of academic context. This was also apparent in the communication topics that used to be beyond academics in the previous environment. Students would also communicate about personal and social topics. Considering students had a closer relation and were more involved in each other's life, their way of communicating becomes indirect. By communicating indirectly, they want to avoid hurting each other or disrupting their relationship. As described by Yildirim (2014), cultures can distinguish between high-context and low-context communication. International students coming from a high-context culture may sometimes feel that they are not understood in the low-context culture because they are not used to saying everything explicitly. These differences can also be linked to the individualistic, low context, specific, neutral and universalistic culture in the Netherlands and the collectivistic, high context, diffuse, affective and particularistic culture in the previous environment.

Lastly, the difference in the relation between students also influenced their time management in the previous environment. As students were more like friends they used to spend more time on socializing, which caused procrastination in their personal and joint work. However, in the Netherlands students are more independent. They have their own time management and focus on punctuality. This difference can be caused by the sequential time and the universalistic culture in the Netherlands and the synchronous time and the particularistic culture in the previous environment.

5.2 Theoretical implications

Broadly speaking, this research contributes to the gap in the applicability of the cultural dimensions in the field of academic education and the acculturation of international students. With this research, the differences of academic education are conceptualized using international student perceptions, and the applicability of the existing cultural dimensions in academic context were examined. This in turn contributes to the literature on the acculturation of international students in the academic education field.

It is found that the differences international students experience in academic education of the host environment are caused by cultural differences. The result form the interviews contributed knowledge to examine the applicability of the existing dimensions in academic context. From the differences that the students experienced between their home and host environment it can be stated that various cultural dimensions of Hofstede, Hall and Trompenaars and Hampden were recognized in educational context. The dimensions that influence the academic field include: Individualism vs. collectivism, low power distance vs. high power distance, femininity vs. masculinity, low uncertainty avoidance vs. high uncertainty avoidance, sequential time vs. synchronous time, universalism vs. particularism, specific vs. diffuse, neutral vs. affective and high vs. low context. It is found that the characteristics of a countries national culture can also be recognized in the academic content such as the education system, the way of teaching and the academic relations, underlining Hofstede's previous research and statements regarding the impact of culture on education.

The differences experienced by the students in the academic context were mainly linked to the dimensions individualism versus collectivism and low power distance versus high power distance of Hofstede and the overarching dimensions of Trompenaars and Hampden. If the differences in the current education systems are not addressed, on the long-term international students might feel excluded from the host environment. When students are not aware that it is normal and that they are expected to be independent, they can feel extra pressure and stress if they are suddenly no longer supervised by the teachers and fellow students. In addition, they have to contribute to the lessons with their own knowledge. Due to the independent behavior of fellow students and the perception they have of teachers being higher up in the hierarchy, it can become difficult for these international students to ask for help. As a result, students might start to isolate themselves, which in turn can affect their academic performance.

This research examined the cultural dimensions and resulted in the dimensions that play a role in academic context. Also, the major differences in the facets of academic education between the home and host country have been highlighted. On different academic facets such as the learning obligations, the way of teaching, level of education and examination, the teachers and fellow students literature regarding international student perceptions existed (Jiang & Altinyelken, 2020; Durkin, 2008; Vyncke, 2012; Yildirim, 2014; Edwards & Tonkin, 1990; Craig, 1981; Yuan, 2011; Birnbaum, Cardona, Gonzales & Milian, 2012; Yao, 1983; Walfish, 2001; Chang, 1996; Lee & Rice, 2007; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998). This research elaborates on this existing literature and covers the gap with knowledge on other aspects within academia. Furthermore, the perception international students have regarding the different facets of academic education and the cultural differences international students have faced regarding their perception of these facets have been explored more deeply.

5.3 Practical implications

From this study, several practical implications for the -Dutch- academic education institutes and international students could be suggested. The main practical take away from this study is the insight in the differences that students have experienced in the facets of academic education, as well as a more developed understanding of these differences.

It has been found that international students have certain differences in their behavior towards the facets of academic education due to cultural differences which can be found in chapter 5.2. This could be a helping tool for both the international students as the host environment to understand each other's behavior and to find a solution to better deal with these differences together. Academic education institutes should help international students to adapt to the new academic environment, in order to improve the acculturation process of international students.

International students should be informed about the differences that they will face in the new academic environment. These differences can be seen as warnings, things that students have to take into account, but also as challenges or innovative elements in their academic and intercultural experience. This way, students know in advance what they are getting into and can decide whether it suits them and whether they can handle it, so that they do not face unexpected surprises. The main differences that international students and host institutes should consider are listed in table 7.

Table 7

Main differences in academic education between the host and home country

Academic environment in the Netherlands	Academic environment in the home country
Acceptance of diversity in student performance, which include critical thinking and argumentation between students and teachers.	Acceptance of conformity in student performance, which include students being obedient towards teachers.
Theory application based education and examinations.	Theory memorization based education and examinations.
Student centered teaching approach.	Teacher centered teaching approach.
Actively participating in lectures, sharing knowledge and opinions.	Being passively active in lectures and not voluntarily sharing knowledge or opinions.
Students have an equal position in the relation with the teacher.	Teachers have a higher position in the relation with students.
Fellow students communicate direct and prefer working independently.	Fellow students communicate indirect and prefer working and studying in groups.
Punctuality and fixed deadlines.	Flexibility regarding time and deadlines.

Academic educational institutes should focus on introducing new coming international students to these differences that students can expect in the new academic environment and the expectation that teachers have from students. By doing so, the institutes can attract students who are ready for innovation, who enjoy taking challenges, to the right educational environment.

Educational institutes can also organize opportunities for international students to gain experience in the host environment before they actually start their studies, so that the students can make their choice with certainty. To join trial classes might be difficult as students are not on the locations, but

institutes could arrange online meetings for the international's students, so they can have a view of how the education in class is going and what kind of differences they can expect. Furthermore, educational institutes can create pre-study programs, through which all international students can receive lessons 1 week before the official study program. This pre-study program includes host teachers who actually give lectures and host students who volunteer to follow the pre- study program and join the classes and activities, so the international students also experience the work differences with the fellow students. This way host students support the international students in their acculturation process. The lessons of the pre-study program can capture the cultural differences in academic education between the Netherlands and the Asian countries, conveyed following Dutch academic education culture, so that the international students are aware of the cultural education differences and actually experience them in the classroom before the real study program has started. In this way, the students can dive into their study program with good preparation and get used to the cultural differences compared to their perception of the facets of academic education.

5.4 Limitations and further research

A limitation in this study was time. Conducting interviews required a lot of time from the researcher and the participants. Due to time constraints and the Covid-19 circumstances, a relatively small group of students have been interviewed.

Also, this study has low generalizability, due to the 20 participants being from 3 different countries, namely China, Indonesia and India. Therefore, it is difficult to apply the findings of these onto international students from other parts of the world as they might have other perspectives and opinions on the Dutch academic educational system. However, this research does show valuable insight into a big fraction of the international students studying in the Netherlands. In order to improve the generalizability, research could include participants from other Asian countries.

Furthermore, another limitation this research contains concerns the participants. Participants often followed their previous education in a different field compared to the education field they are currently following in the Netherlands. Therefore, it was difficult for them to distinguish the differences in the various academic facets. These participants indicated several times that they did not know whether differences were specifically related to their previous education and current education or because it had to do with the differences in academic education in the Netherlands and their home country. To improve the research generalizability and clear the uncertainty of participants, further research could focus on specific study fields, for instance solely the field of social sciences. Participants can be chosen more specifically based on the condition that their previous study in their country and their current study in the Netherlands should be of the same field.

Another limitation related to the participants concerns the differences in their bachelor and master education. All the participants involved in the interviews were master students who had finished their bachelors in their own country. Participants experienced differences in their academic education between their own country and the Netherlands, but due to the difference that they followed a bachelor study in their country and a master study in the Netherlands participants were doubting whether differences were related to their bachelor and master or the places they studied. To improve the generalizability, further research could focus on only master students. This is possible if only students who follow a specific double master are admitted to the research. These students then have the master study in the home country and in the host country. There can also be a study that focuses on bachelor students from a specific study field. A special group can be developed with students who follow part of their bachelor's degree in the home country and the second part in the host environment. This will be a large study and take more time. This way there will be no doubt in whether the difference is caused by the difference in bachelor and master education or the difference in culture.

Further research can focus on how students have experienced education in their home country. With a focus on the emotional state of students during the academic education system in their home country. To research whether this also affects how they perceive academic education in the host country. The current study looked at what differences students experienced, and what the cause of these differences was. However, the emotions associated with their academic experience in the home country and in the host country were not examined. This research can be realized by using a survey and an interview. By looking at their emotional state related to the different facets, for example:

- I was very happy / neutral / unhappy with the way of teaching in the academic experience in the home country.
- I was very happy / neutral / unhappy with the way of teaching in the academic experience in the host country.

Participants can first fill out a survey about emotional involvement in the different facets of academic education in their home and host university. After this, the researcher can use interviews to find out what differences they experienced and what the reasons were for this. After the results of the survey and the interview are in, it can be analyzed whether the emotional state and the differences that students have experienced are related. To avoid doubts, the respondents should be specific. The researcher can put together a study program with an Asian university and a Dutch university, in which the students first follow lessons in the home university and then in the host university. It is important that the education in the home university and the host university are of the same direction and field of knowledge. Researching the emotional aspect could give deeper understanding of why participants experience differences. This can also be connected to the cultural differences and the acceptance of these cultural aspects by the participants.

5.5 Conclusion

To conclude, this study examined the existing cultural dimensions in the field of academic education, by researching the differences that international students have experienced in the academic environment of their home and host country. This study contributes to the field of the cultural dimensions of academic education and the acculturation of international students to a new academic environment. The results of this research gave input to answer the main research question 'How do international students perceive the differences in academic education between their home and host environment?'. Based on the findings three main dimensions have been created regarding academic education. The first dimension is 'open mindedness towards diversity versus compliance', which is divided into theory application and theory memorization based education and student versus teacher centered education. The second dimensions is 'equality versus hierarchy' in academic education. This dimension concerns the relation with teachers and its impact on the education. And the last dimension is the 'long versus short term relation', which is about the relation between fellow students and its impact on academic relation. These dimensions have been compiled by looking for main features in the differences that students have experienced and by then testing the differences with the existing cultural dimensions of Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden and Hall. This showed that several dimensions from these models also apply in an academic context. The main differences in academic education were found in the cultural differences in individualism versus collectivism and power distance between the home and host environment. It is found that national cultural differences affect the perception that international students have regarding academic education and that the existing cultural dimension are applicable in academic context. This study covers gaps in the research field and also contributes practical implications for the field. Further research is advised regarding the participants education which should be of one specific field, and that the participant should be only bachelor or master student in their home and host environment. Furthermore, research regarding the relation between emotions and the perception of academic education is advised.

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Appendix 1: Interview Script

Introduction

Hi, I am Beheshte Rezai, a communication studies student at the University of Twente. I am currently working on my graduation thesis and this interview is part of it. This research focusses on the differences in the perception of academic education that international students have. International students often already have a certain perception of how things normally go in academic education in their own country. This perception can be based on, for example, personal experience or experiences of friends and family. The aim of this research is to find out, the cultural differences between international students in their perception of academic education in the Netherlands compared to their home country. In order to help future international students in the acculturation process within the new academic educational environment. I would like to inform you that this interview will remain anonymous, except for me, no one will know that you participated or what you have discussed.

We will start with some demographic questions
What is your age?
What is your country of origin?
Are you a bachelor or master student?
What do you study?
When did you start studying in the Netherlands?

Prior literature research was conducted on international students. A number of aspects of academic education have emerged from the literature review, such as Teachers, Fellow Students, Academic Competencies, Curriculum Design & The Way of Teaching, Content Subject Area and the Academic Campus.

Question 1: What are aspects that you think I should include in this research, what aspects do you distinguish in academic education?
(Student speaking)

*Note to self
Every aspect they name, ''Can you explain it?'', to see if you get to sub aspects or not.
Summarize and go on to next topic

The next question is about the ''Content subject Area'' of the study which you are following.
Question 2: You came to the Netherlands to study ... (appoint STUDY), do you have the feeling that your (study) in the Netherlands is different from how it is in your home country. If so, in which points do you see these differences and what causes them?
(Student speaking)

*Summarize and go on to next topic

You are an international student, you come from a different environment, you have gained experience and you know how things work in that environment. I would like to talk to you about a number of aspects of academic education, especially the differences you see or experience between your home country on the one hand and the Netherlands on the other. The first topic I want to address is 'Learning Objectives'.
Question 3A: How is it different in the Netherlands when it comes to Learning Objectives in academic education?

*Note to self
If a topic is mentioned briefly, continue to ask: What do you mean? How did that happen? Can you explain it further? Can you tell us more about it? Why do you think it is like that?

If a topic has not been mentioned, ask it: You have named a number of aspects, but I notice that you haven't named…, what do you think about that? What differences are there when you look at…?
· Critical thinking & Argumentation
· Writing & Presentation
· Creativity
· Project Management
· Practical Skills
· Field Knowledge
· Independency
Summarize

Question 3B: Why do you think there are differences between Learning Objectives in the Netherlands and your home country?

(Student speaking)
*Summarize/ next topic

The next aspect I would like to hear of from you is about the differences you have experienced when it comes to the 'Curriculum Design & Way of Teaching'
Question 4A: What are the differences in the Netherlands when it comes to Curriculum Design & Way of Teaching, compared to your home country?
(Student speaking)

*Note to self
What do you mean? How did that happen? Can you explain it further? Can you tell us more about it? Why do you think it is like that?

You have named a number of aspects, but I notice that you haven't named…, what do you think about that? What differences are there when you look at…?
· What the program looks like
· What courses look like
· How lessons are taught and how the student responds to it
· Lecture what is happening, what does it look like?
· Teacher / student centered approach
· Student participation in class
Summarize

Question 4B: Why do you think there are differences between the Curriculum Design & Way of Teaching in the Netherlands and your home country?
(Student speaking)

*Summarize/next topic

Thinking of the Education Level & Way of Examination,

Question 5A: What differences from your home country have you experienced in the Netherlands when it comes to the Education Level & Way of Examination?
(Student speaking)

*Note to self
What do you mean? How did that happen? Can you explain it further? Can you tell us more about it? Why do you think it is like that?

You have named a number of aspects, but I notice that you haven't named…, what do you think about that? What differences are there when you look at…?
· Level of education
· Level of examination
· Method of examination
Summarize

Question 5B: Why do you think there are differences between the Education Level & Way of Examination in the Netherlands and your home country?
(Student speaking)

*Summarize/ next topic
The next topic I want to address are ''The Teachers''.
Question 6A: If you reflect on all the experiences you have, what differences do you see between Dutch teachers and those from your home country?
(Student speaking)

*Note to self
What do you mean? How did that happen? Can you explain it further? Can you tell us more about it? Why do you think it is like that?
You have named a number of aspects, but I notice that you haven't named…, what do you think about that? What differences are there when you look at…?
· Relationship with the teacher
· Interaction with the teacher
· Status of the teacher
· Knowledge of the teacher
Summarize

Question 6B: Why do you think there are differences in Dutch teachers and teachers from your home country?
(Student speaking)

*Summarize/ next topic

Now I would like to talk to you about other aspects of academic education, focusing on the differences you see or experience between your home country on the one hand and the Netherlands on the other. The second topic are the ''Fellow Students''.
Question 7: How is it different in the Netherlands when it comes to Fellow students and what causes the differences?
(Student speaking)

*Note to self
What do you mean? How did that happen? Can you explain it further? Can you tell us more about it? Why do you think it is like that?

You have named a number of aspects, but I notice that you haven't named…, what do you think about that? What differences are there when you look at…?
· Communication
· Study Attitude
· Cooperation
· Support
· Social life
Summarize

Question 8: Now I would like to talk to you about the buildings and the campus, what differences have you experienced in that, and what causes the differences?
(Student speaking)

*Note to self
What do you mean? How did that happen? Can you explain it further? Can you tell us more about it? Why do you think it is like that?

You have named a number of aspects, but I notice that you haven't named…, what do you think about that? What differences are there when you look at…?
· Teaching Buildings
· Library
Summarize

In the beginning you mentioned a number of other aspects of which you think that should be addressed in such a study, now we are going to talk about these aspects.
(Student speaking)

In order to conclude the interview, I would like to ask some ranking questions.
· If you had to make a top 3, in which aspects do you experience the biggest differences and why?
· If you had to make a top 3, in which aspects do you experience the least differences and why?
· If you had to make a top 3, in which aspects do you experience the most difficulty and why?
· If you had to make a top 3, in which aspects do you experience the least effort and why?

Appendix 2: Interview Transcript

Access to this appendix upon request