NETWORKS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Internationalization in higher education is of growing importance as institutions respond to globalization trends. Cross-border partnerships between institutions have existed for many years, but the model of bilateral agreements has shifted towards institutions joining networks with multiple institutions. This case study examined one European institution and how it used and was involved in an international network. The research question guiding this study was: How do higher education administrators in a European institution implement internationalization through an international network? Three key themes emerged from the data collected as related to how the institution uses the network: Prioritizing the network; adapting to the network challenges; and establishing partnerships beyond the network. The findings from the study led to three recommendations for practice: Develop a communication plan, including a lasting mission statement; empower the secretariat to be the key facilitator; and encourage individualized strategies for each institution. Three areas for future research were also identified: Compare the network at other institutions; compare the network studied to other networks; and investigate the senior leadership in other European institutions working on internationalization. Overall, this research aims to help administrators plan for best practices related to using networks to amplify internationalization strategies in their institutions.

Keywords: internationalization; networks in higher education; dynamic systems theory; European culture of internationalization
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Chapter 1: Introduction

As the world becomes more globalized, it is important to study trends in internationalization to assess the effectiveness of various strategies. The purpose of this case study is to understand the complexities of implementing internationalization for higher education administrators in one institution that is involved in an international network. For the purposes of this study, a network is defined as an international collaboration between multiple institutions around a broad issue or goal. This study examined one European university part of one network to understand how the institution is involved as part of the network to deepen knowledge about best practices related to using networks. The findings from this study will help higher education administrators determine how best to utilize networks to further global programming and policies as part of an institution’s internationalization strategy.

Internationalization strategies in higher education take varied forms, with scholars debating the very definition of internationalization and how to measure its effectiveness. It is generally agreed upon, however, that internationalization in higher education institutions (HEIs) is due to globalization trends (Knight, 2004). Additionally, higher education institutions are major competitors in the global economy, and many of the strategies implemented by HEIs are a direct effect of globalization (Billingham, Gragg, & Bentley, 2013).

This chapter will provide a brief summary of the research related to internationalization and networks to provide background and context for the problem of practice. The significance of the study is described next along with the research question. Key terms used in this study are then defined, followed by a detailed overview of the theoretical framework that framed the overall study.
**Context and Background**

Prominent scholars in the field of international education such as Knight (2004) and de Wit (2002) have discussed the many definitions associated with internationalization and the need for a conceptual framework to be a part of a definition. The ratio of the number of international students to domestic students, the number of international faculty, the number of cross-border higher education partnerships, and the number of activities or outcomes related to the curriculum, student competencies, and academic programs (Delgado-Márquez et al., 2013; Knight, 2015) are just some of the factors that are a part of internationalization as a concept. Knight (2004) proposed a comprehensive definition of internationalization that emphasizes the relationship between the integration of international activities and their purpose and delivery. This definition is informed by the open systems theory framework as outlined by Katz and Kahn (1966). The dynamic systems theory (DST), which, as described below, incorporates this comprehensive definition of internationalization and serves as the theoretical framework guiding this study (Zhou, 2016).

Although scholars debate the definition of internationalization and what effective implementation of internationalization looks like in higher education, it is clear that an internationalized HEI is more successful, with stronger performance indicators (Knight, 2013). A study that assessed the internationalization of HEIs and their reputational and institutional performances of the top 50 universities worldwide found that there is a strong correlation between high internationalization and reputation as well as high institutional performance (Delgado-Márquez, Escudero-Torres, & Hurtado-Torres, 2013).

As Knight’s (2004) definition indicates, internationalization in HEIs is a process that continues to evolve as the world becomes more globalized. More recently, HEIs’
internationalization strategies have moved away from the more traditional concept of solely increasing the percentage of international students on campus towards more cross-border initiatives, particularly ones that incorporate technology (Chapman, Pekol, & Wilson, 2014). Cross-border partnerships between HEIs have existed for many years. The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) has noted that since 2006, international branch campuses, in which institutions partner with other institutions or countries to establish off-shore entities, have increased by 43% to 249 branches in 2017 (Garrett, 2017). Within this context, twinning partnerships, with two institutions entering into a long-term agreement to achieve certain goals, have also become popular (Chapman, Pekol, & Wilson, 2014).

As technology has advanced, HEIs have found more ways to collaborate through online education and network partnerships. Leveraging brand and content, HEIs have utilized various online platforms to offer online education, such as massive open online courses (MOOCs). Utilizing platforms such as Coursera and EdX, MOOCs have interested individuals of all backgrounds, including those who are curious about a subject and will likely drop out. Thus, HEIs have a unique challenge in understanding course content and ensuring that there is interest amongst diverse profiles (Custer, 2013).

The utilization of cross-border and network partnerships by many HEIs in particular has especially grown recently. There has been a growing shift in HEIs moving from the more traditional one-on-one cross-border partnerships to establishing a network of partnerships that are varied but include student and faculty exchanges within the network (Rumbley & Altbach, 2016). This is a trend that corresponds to the postulates of Metcalfe’s Law and the overall network effect (Hampson, 2015). Metcalfe’s Law states that the value of a network grows
exponentially; coined by a computer scientist, Metcalfe’s Law can be applied beyond the internet and computer networks (Odlyzko & Tilly, 2005).

In higher education, the law can illustrate the network effect in that partnerships of HEIs as part of a network can be magnified due to its inclusion as part of many institutions and institutional resources. This is especially due to the increasing importance of knowledge sharing; as Hudzik (2016) described, knowledge societies supported by an effective system will grow in importance as collaborations shift into more of a global scale. Thus, size can be important and when there are more institutions part of a network, there is more information sharing and other resources available for those part of this larger network (Chapman et al., 2014; Van Hove, 2014).

However, institutions need to utilize the network and take advantage of the network effectively. This is especially since networks are not without their challenges. For example, Castro et al. (2016) studied a research network, Cultnet, working at 28 different universities in 15 countries. The researchers found that it is important to incorporate an intercultural dialogue framework as part of the overall network and have systems in place for the integration of student activities and staff professional development to support these activities as well (Castro, Woodin, Lundgren, & Byram, 2016). It is clear that operational complexity increases with the addition of many HEIs as part of one network. Thus, without the recognition of priorities and the understanding of different resources and capacities of each of the HEI as part of the network, long-term sustainability and the prospect of success is not likely (Chapman et al., 2014).

Rumbley and Altbach (2016) argued that higher education particularly is positioned at a crucial nexus of internationalization as the local aspects of internationalization, such as student mobility and campus efforts, are coming together with the global aspects of internationalization, such as the understandings of overall internationalization trends and strategies. It is important for
practitioners and higher education administrators to have access to information and ways to understand internationalization strategies better (Rumbley & Altbach, 2016).

**Significance of the Problem**

Internationalization is a priority for many HEIs as globalization increases and HEIs compete to produce globally minded students (Billingham et al., 2013). While exact figures were not found, significant amounts of resources and funds are allocated towards international activities (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Thus, it is important to understand the many ways HEIs internationalize, particularly the dynamics that collaborative interactions play in this process, to support HEIs in efficiently and effectively implementing their strategic priorities. The strong progression towards implementing network models to incorporate a variety of internationalization activities characteristic of HEIs, including student and faculty exchanges, online courses, and research (Chapman et al., 2014; Hawawini, 2016), contributes to the need for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of how networks function and expand.

Additionally, while frameworks are available to measure the effectiveness of internationalization, the dynamic systems theory as described in this study can provide administrators a comprehensive tool to assess various internationalization strategies (Zhou, 2016). This study will be one of the first to apply the DST model and it will add to the research on assessing internationalization strategies. By utilizing the tools described in DST to understand internationalization, university administrators may have access to a set of criteria to refer to in thinking about and measuring their internationalization plans. Thus, the results of this study may support administrators in reaching their goals of allocating funds towards types of international activities that have shown to be effective or successful in higher education.
This research study may also be important at a global scale. Internationalization strategies help students be better prepared for a globalized workforce (Yeravdekar & Tiwari, 2014a). Recent restrictions on and intensified discrimination of immigrant populations worldwide may shift the flow of international students away from Europe and the United States, and there will be more emphasis on network models and educational initiatives that move away from thinking about place/space and home campuses (de Wit, 2017). Optimists view the future landscape of internationalization in HEIs with vigor as they deepen their understanding that growth and exchange can be accomplished through connectedness (de Wit, 2017). Greater attention will also be paid to Africa, Asia, and Latin America as the focus will shift from the more traditional places of Europe and the United States where internationalization has historically been more present (de Wit, 2017). Thus, studying network models becomes increasingly important as an overall lens to evaluate and understand internationalization strategies, particularly as political trends continue towards anti-immigrant nationalism and populism (de Wit, 2017).

In summary, adding to the research on internationalization strategies, particularly by studying a network model with many partners throughout the world, will have significant implications for higher education administrators because it will assist them in identifying and implementing their strategic priorities more effectively. At the institutional level, this study may help to inform policies to better allocate resources depending on the type of internationalization strategy being considered at an institution.

Research Problem and Research Question

International activities have increased dramatically in scope and complexity in the last two decades (Knight, 2013; Yemini & Sagie, 2016), and higher education administrators are approaching internationalization in different ways (Garson, 2016). Consortia and networks have
emerged as powerful models to further an institution’s internationalization strategy (Burley, Gnam, Newman, Straker, & Babies, 2012). The purpose of this case study is to understand the complexities of implementing internationalization strategies for higher education administrators in one institution that is involved in an international research network. Network models as opportunities for internationalization efforts are investigated by studying one international research network with many partner schools throughout the world. Within this network, one European institution will be focused on in order to understand how the institution is involved in and using this network.

The research question is as follows: How do higher education administrators in a European institution implement internationalization through an international network?

**Definition of Key Terminology**

For this study, the key terms are defined as follows.

- **Internationalization:** Knight (2004) proposed a comprehensive definition of internationalization that emphasizes the process of integration of international activities to the purpose and delivery. Knight (2004) posited the following definition: “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 11). This definition has carefully chosen terms such as “process” and “integration” and “international, intercultural or global dimension” because each word adds to the holistic nature of internationalization. Internationalization is an ongoing effort, and the three dimensions (international, intercultural, and global) emphasize the interactions between countries and cultures. Lastly, Knight’s (2004) definition also incorporates the idea that internationalization
needs to be a part of an HEI’s mission (“purpose”) and what the institution can also offer (“delivery”) (p. 11-12).

- **System**: This study will use the definitions of a system as proposed by Ackoff (1971) and Von Bertalanffy (1972) in which systems are a set of elements that are interconnected and interrelated.

- **Open System**: Expanding from the system definition, an open system includes the environment as an external force that affects the system (Mele, Pels, & Polese, 2010).

- **Network**: Cross-border collaboration with many institutions focused around a broad set of activities with an issue or a goal (Chapman et al., 2014).

**Theoretical Framework: Dynamic systems theory**

As de Wit (2002) and Knight (2004) argued, a conceptual framework needs to be associated with internationalization in order to understand how internationalization is being used in the context of higher education. An overview of some of the key frameworks that has helped to shape how internationalization is planned and assessed is described further in the following chapter. The theoretical framework that was used for this research is the dynamic systems theory (DST). It uses the open systems theory as its foundation in that it is based on an organization’s ability to adapt to external pressures (Mele, Pels, & Polese, 2010).

DST as proposed by Zhou (2016) applies many of the principles of the open system theory. In open systems, the environment is a major part of the structure in that the system exchanges energy and information within the environment (Skyttner, 2006). Skyttner (2006) defined the environment as the level or system that links one system to the next higher system. The author also posited that it is important to define boundaries that are not a part of the environment in thinking about systems and how they relate to their environments. Skyttner
(2006) described that generally, there is a hierarchy of systems, and the less complex structures and units (subsystems) are part of the larger and more complex units (suprasystems).

\[ \text{Figure 1.1. Hierarchy of systems showing how subsystems are a part of the suprasystems.} \]


Zhou’s (2016) DST model is specific in its application to internationalization in higher education, and addresses Knight’s (2004) definition of internationalization being a holistic and changing process. DST defines dynamic systems as a multitude of systems that change over time. It is a comprehensive framework with five levels (global, national, institutional, programmatic, and personal) and five components within the levels (purposes, outcomes, programs, approaches, and projects). There are many sub-systems that are interconnected but continually changing.

The main tenets of DST include the following:

- The system is constantly changing and that the environment plays a large role in the change as external factors create international reorganization and reconstruction throughout the system;
- One dynamic system has many interconnected sub-systems with the same forces
operating at each of the levels.

- There are two states of dynamic systems: initial state and attractor state. Initial state refers to the initial starting point of the system right before when changes are occurring and affecting the system; attractor state is the temporary stability state of the system in between the change process. The attractor state builds on previous ones during when stability occurred as part of the internationalization process with external forces creating change.

- There are parameters placed around the dynamic system that can help to move the system forward or stop it. Control Parameters support movement through its various states. A Control Parameter can be a small factor that imparts system-wide changes so it is important to understand all components and contexts of the system.

In applying DST to internationalization in higher education, Zhou (2016) detailed five levels where internationalization occurs: global, national, institutional, programmatic, and personal. Global refers to the broadest and global context in between and across countries. National refers to the needs and priorities of one country. Institutional refers to the individual institutions’ needs and priorities. Programmatic refers to internationalization efforts in specific departments or disciplines within an institution. Personal refers to the individual efforts related to internationalization, such as the activities of the faculty, students, and administrators.

As part of the DST framework, Zhou (2016) also described that there are additional five components (purposes, programs, approaches, projects, outcomes) within these five levels. These five components help to answer the why, where, how, and what happens as part of the process and outcomes related to internationalization activities being implemented within the global,
national, institutional, programmatic, and personal levels. The five components are described as follows:

1. Purposes refer to the overall goals and objectives for internationalization;
2. Programs refer to where there are areas where internationalization could happen effectively;
3. Approaches are ways in which one would develop programs to move towards meeting goals and objectives;
4. Projects are the activities resulting from the internationalization efforts; and
5. Outcomes are the final stages of internationalization and help to answer the larger effects of the internationalization process and its implementation.

As seen in Figure 1.2, each of the five levels and components in the framework are seen as steps moving up from the individual and personal level all the way up to the global level. As the levels progress upwards, the five components become bigger and more encompassing because complexities related to internationalization increase at the larger levels. While each of the levels has its own states, parameter, and context as described, all levels are also interconnected and interactive – there is continual change as part of one dynamic system. Thus, all of these described factors and the relationships between each state need to be considered in the analysis of internationalization at each level or as an overall dynamic system.

Figure 1.2 relates directly to Skyttner’s (2006) model as part of the open systems theory in which the smaller, less complex systems are a part of larger systems (Figure 1.1). Zhou (2016) even described how her DST model is an upside-down cone shape. The shape is reversed from Skyttner (2006) but Zhou’s (2016) DST model includes many of the concepts from a hierarchy of systems as part of an open systems theory as well.
Figure 1.2. Dynamic Systems Theory of internationalization as proposed by Zhou (2016).

Opposing Theories and Critiques

**Historical theories.** Scott (2003) described rational systems to be based in Max Weber’s theory of bureaucracy and Frederick Taylor’s input on efficiency and scientific management. Rational systems theory considers systems to be instruments that can be organized in a way that can achieve set goals with enough planning and structure. The structures and processes of systems are made to maximize efficiency. By contrast, natural systems are ones in which organizations evolve and are adaptable. The natural systems perspective was rooted in the viewpoint of organic systems. These early theories eventually led to and contributed to the development of the general systems and open systems theories.

**Closed and isolated systems.** Skyttner (2006) provided excellent context and definitions of a closed system. Closed system theory is one of the opposing theories to the open systems theory. In a closed system, the environment does not have exchange with the system. It can take energy from the environment but does not exchange anything with it. A step further within the closed system is an isolated system in which the system does not have any interactions with the environment in any way. These two systems are different from the open system theory, in which the dynamic systems theory is based, which includes the environment as a major component of the framework in that the system exchanges energy and input with the environment.

**Quantum systemicity theory.** Boje (2014) questioned even the definition of systems as described in this study, and advocated for “systemicity” which takes into account the process of fragmented, shifting, and overlapping dynamics and relationships of the various parts that make up the system. In this theory, instead of one whole system, there are many interconnected systemicities that are situated in many contexts that can provide various perspectives, such as social, political, cultural, economic, political, and economical. All of these contexts are not
nested within a larger system as one whole, but are connected in a variety of ways. Some contexts may not even interact or are contradictory to each other (i.e. ecological contexts and economic contexts).

Henderson and Boje (2015) argued that the systems theories, including the open systems theory, are grand narratives and ignore the deeper relationships and stories of people and how they define meanings. The authors described how systems theories are too focused on chronology and assume a static analysis. As systems theories generally characterize chronology and analysis of the whole, Henderson and Boje (2015) posited that the systems theories favor the more integrated and structured cultures in analyses. From their perspective, these models are too general to understand people’s experiences.

**Rationale**

Even with the opposing theories and critiques as described above, the DST is still an ideal framework for this study. The historical theories before the development of the open systems theory do not include the environment and do not mention the external factors to the systems as significant. Overall, the DST model is directly related to and is derived from the open systems theory in which the environment plays a significant role. DST recognizes the value of the environment in that it plays an important role in shaping how the overall system is organized and structured.

The systemicities model as posited by Boje (2014) and Boje and Henderson (2015) are focused on storytelling and gaining a deeper perspective of people’s stories. This framework would tie in well for researchers seeking to understand meaning and in-depth stories for descriptive analyses as part of the narrative methodology. This perspective, however, is not an ideal way to study how a network model may or may not amplify an institution’s
internationalization strategy in the context of a case study. Boje is a renowned author in the field of narrative methods and the concepts behind sense making and storytelling. Although these are important ideas and the approach renders valid information, this study has a focused research question and propositions as part of the case study methodology. Furthermore, while individual interviews are an important component of this case study, in-depth stories related to the participant’s experiences in the ways that Boje (2014) envisioned is beyond the scope of this research.

**Application**

Mele, Pels, and Polese (2010) argued that managers in particular should understand systems theory and how to plan for structural changes. This is because only by understanding systems can one act in adaptive and proactive behaviors to ensure the system’s survival. In this way, the DST is a highly effective tool to maximize the level of understanding about systems and internationalization strategies in higher education. By employing the dynamic systems theory framework as part of the case study methodology, the researcher was able to gain a holistic overview of the network being studied as well as how the network was utilized by one of the institutional partners.

Figure 1.2 illustrates how the DST framework was be applied to this study. DST explores the relationships and interconnectedness between the five levels internationalization, including global, national, institutional, program, and personal. The DST model provided a conceptual framework to study one network with international partners at the global and national levels. In order to assess the other three levels of the framework (institutional, program, and personal), one partner institution was focused on to study how the institution used the network.
The case study methodology approach was utilized in this study to better understand one network and one of its partner institutions. Overall, this study will strengthen important research in the field of internationalization and the increasing use of networks to amplify an institution’s internationalization strategy. Furthermore, this study aims to help higher education administrators in assessing and allocating resources to internationalization strategies that may be more effective, such as types of networks depending on an institution’s priorities.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a brief overview of internationalization in higher education and made the case that this is a growing priority for institutions. Zhou’s DST and its tenets were also presented in this chapter. While there are some critiques related to DST, it was still the best theoretical framework for this study as it provided a holistic overview of the status and implications of a network and an institution’s responses to external globalization trends. Thus, understanding ways to best measure and evaluate innovative programming and initiatives may help higher education administrators throughout the world determine effective strategies.

The following chapter will provide a detailed review of the literature and present current research on internationalization and institutions’ use of networks as part of their internationalization strategies.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 1 introduced the study, the research problem, the significance, and the theoretical framework for the study. This chapter provides a comprehensive review of relevant literature supporting the need for this case study on a network model guiding an internationalization strategy in higher education. The purpose of this case study is to understand the complexities of implementing internationalization for higher education administrators in one institution that is involved in an international research network.

While significant research on internationalization in higher education exists, there is a gap in the literature regarding network models as effective tools of internationalization strategies. The findings from this research may help higher education administrators identify and implement ways to prioritize and allocate resources towards effective internationalization strategies. Thus, this study may primarily be helpful to higher education administrators. The research question guiding this study is: How do higher education administrators in a European institution implement internationalization through an international network?

Three strands of literature related to this topic on internationalization in higher education will be presented as part of this literature review. These include: history and frameworks; network models; and regional strategies. First, it is critical to document the overarching history of conceptual frameworks through seminal works informing internationalization to understand how there has been a progression to a more holistic approach in planning for and implementing internationalization strategies. Second, the topic of network models will be defined and an assessment of how institutions are utilizing networks with technology and in other innovative ways will be provided. Finally,
regional internationalization strategies will be thoroughly explored to compare and contrast how internationalization is planned and implemented throughout the world. A particular emphasis will be given to European institutions and Europe’s approach to internationalization given that the institution featured in this case study is located in Europe. This review also includes a summary of the literature and presents the theme of how internationalization is progressing towards the use of networks. This will help to better understand internationalization in higher education and inform this case study that will assess how one institution is utilizing a network to amplify its internationalization strategy. Lastly, this chapter will end with theoretical propositions for this study based on the literature and current research on internationalization in higher education.

**Internationalization Frameworks**

As de Wit (2002) and Knight (2004) argued, a conceptual framework needs to be associated with internationalization in order to understand how internationalization is being used in the context of higher education. While many frameworks exist to evaluate the effectiveness of internationalization strategies, including the dynamic systems theory used by this study, themes delineated in other frameworks are also critical to an analysis of assessment and effectiveness related to internationalization strategies. To provide a deeper overview of internationalization in HEIs and its progression, this section will explore seminal frameworks that categorized international activities into matrices before discussing the network model in the next section.

**Internationalization matrices.** A variety of frameworks exist as matrices to evaluate the effectiveness of internationalization strategies in HEIs. These include a four-quadrant matrix that categorizes internationalization activities (Davies, 1992); a three-
dimensional internationalization cube with policy, support, and implementation encompassing as the primary components (Van Dijk & Meijer, 1997); a culture-based framework (Bartell, 2003); and an import-export model that incorporates international reach and richness (Hawawini, 2016).

**Four-quadrant matrix.** Davies (1992) matrix, published on the cusp of the acceleration of the most recent wave of internationalization of higher education, specifically aimed to illustrate implementation approaches to universities increasingly immersed in global education. In Davies’ (1992) matrix, institutions are placed in quadrants A through D. Institutions in quadrant A have ad hoc, individual or departmental arrangements that are not systematic; institutions in quadrant B have international activities that are well organized, more defined, and correspond with its strengths and market opportunities; institutions in quadrant C enjoy a considerable level of international activity and support services and encompass a wide area, with a high number of institutional agreements, but these are not well coordinated; institutions in quadrant D have a coherent internationalization strategy with a systematic mission and operating procedures that are well coordinated throughout the university. Davies envisioned institutions by assessing where they belong on the matrix and to which quadrant they aim to progress – in this way, universities could plan what they needed to accomplish and what strategies to implement to accomplish their move to their ideal quadrant. Quadrant D, however, is the ideal quadrant to reach if HEIs are looking to establish a systematized and centralized strategy for the whole institution. This was one of the earliest models for higher education administrators to plan how to position their institution based on the various quadrant characteristics.
Internationalization cube. Following a study of 51 higher education institutions in the Netherlands, Van Dijk and Meijer (1997) extended Davies’ (1992) two-dimensional matrix into a three-dimensional cube to account for how internationalization is managed at the central level or in other ways. The three dimensions include policy, support, and implementation and they align along the following parameters in eight cells that comprise of the “cube.” The cells progress from internationalization not being a priority with one-sided support and ad hoc implementation (cell 1) to internationalization being a high priority with interactive and support from various constituents and systematic implementation (cell 8).

Unlike Davies’ (1992) two-dimensional matrix, Van Dijk and Meijer’s (1997) internationalization cube is not intended to be a model where universities can “move” from the first cell to the last eighth cell. Similar to Davies’ (1992) model, however, “cell 8” is clearly where universities with a clear internationalization strategy and an advanced level of infrastructure are placed. Van Dijk and Meijer (1997) described how both top-down and bottom-up interactions and management can be effective in initiating and implementing internationalization policies; both ways of implementing internationalization strategies can be done as assumptions about management styles are not a part of the overall model.

In assessing the interactions between the three dimensions (policy, support, and implementation) and the level of international activities, Van Dijk and Meijer (1997) concluded that increasing the budget and staff to operationalize and implement internationalization strategies correlates to effectiveness; stronger institutional investment results in higher results; and the higher the priority placed on internationalization, the
more effective the policies are university-wide. Interestingly, within the 51 institutions studied in the Netherlands, it took larger universities an equal effort to produce the same results as smaller universities. It was clear, however, that the larger institutions had more resources and were able to undertake larger international activities; thus, these larger universities were able to show larger results (Van Dijk & Meijer, 1997).

**Culture-based framework.** Sporn (1996) described the importance of understanding university culture and how it contributes to strategic planning and implementation. In thinking more broadly than Van Dijk and Meijer (1997) with respect to how culture is an embedded part of policy, support, and implementation, Bartell (2003) expanded on Sporn’s (1996) idea to include internationalization as a university priority. Based on his case study of two universities, Bartell developed a matrix of how internationalization can occur on a spectrum – low to high internationalization. One end being limited with token international students and a systemic and cohesive strategy that is integrated with the curriculum on the other end. Bartell concluded that university culture plays a significant role in how HEIs respond to internal and external forces related to internationalization. Thus, as higher education administrators consider the planning and implementation of any internationalization strategy, it is also important to consider how the institution’s culture is oriented.

**Import-export model.** Hawawini (2016) proposed a comprehensive internationalization model that incorporates many of the ideas from the previous models. He argued that the current definition of ‘internationalization’ with respect to a university is too inward focused, and in order for an overarching internationalization strategy to be effective, HEIs need to look outward as well. He defined the former as “importers” and
the latter as “exporters” in that importers “bring the world to their campus” and exporters “send their students abroad” (p. 38). Hawawini’s definitions of these ideas are detailed in his internationalization matrix model that combines international reach (how HEIs send students and establish joint ventures abroad) and international richness (how HEIs have integrated diversity of students and faculty on campus). He argued that this creates a two-dimensional framework that can help to classify HEIs. There are seven classifications within the matrix for how to describe an institution along the international reach and international richness axes. The “metanational higher education institution” is located on the farthest upper right of the matrix, and Hawawini describes this kind of institution as a “truly global higher education institution” (p. 70). It is an integrated and interconnected network of campuses throughout the world with a diverse group of students and faculty.

In Hawawini’s (2016) ideal internationalized HEI, the “metanational institution” has at least three main campuses in cosmopolitan cities in Asia, Europe, and the Americas with regional satellite campuses to reach their neighboring areas as well. All of the campuses are of similar size and each complement each other in their regional expertise. Faculty research is a symbiotic relationship and utilize the overall network. Additionally, the organizational structure would be such that associate deans would have dual reports to the institution-wide dean of faculty and to the head of campus so that there is an integrated managerial structure. Hawawini also envisioned that faculty would be based at their campuses but the students could move freely between campuses as part of integrated programs so that they can experience different cultures. Hawawini’s import-export model is one of the latest models that emphasizes the importance of networks as being a part of an internationalization strategy.
Summary

An extension from Davies’ (1992) matrix model, Van Dijk and Meijer’s (1997) internationalization cube can be used to analyze decision-making processes as well as the implementation of internationalization strategies. In a significant study in the history of internationalization, Van Dijk and Meijer (1997) concluded that there was a direct relationship between institutions that prioritized internationalization through increased staff and funding in order to operationalize and implement strategies - this led to more effective and successful internationalization policies. Bartell (2003) utilized Sporn’s (1996) organizational culture ideas to describe how HEI administrators need to account for organizational culture as they plan for and implement internationalization strategies. Hawanini (2016) expanded on these models by developing a framework for an ideal global HEI – one that is an interconnected and integrated network of complementary campuses throughout the world and is able to meld regional knowledge to create new and more advanced knowledge. All of these frameworks apply the main principle of the dynamic systems theory – the environment and its external forces are important variables in which to consider how an institution is and can be structured related to internationalization.

Network Models

This study uses Chapman et. al.’s (2014) definition of networks as cross-border collaborations focused around a broad set of issue goals. Cross-border and institutional partnerships are newer models of internationalization opportunities (Rumbley & Altbach, 2016). Hudzik (2016) hypothesized that as HEIs become more engaged, mobility of students, faculty, and staff will become more and more diverse, dense, and competitive in
the coming years. Collaborations will naturally evolve into networks with international partnerships with multiple goals, such as student exchange, faculty exchange, research collaborations, and dual/joint degrees (Hudzik, 2016). As Hudzik argued, networks can serve more complex needs than bilateral partnerships, and can be used to better HEI reputations, research funding, and scholarship.

This section will detail how HEIs are utilizing networks to connect with students through technology and through strategic institutional partnerships. It will first define the kinds of models related to institutional partnerships – physical models, such as centers and international branch campuses (IBCs), and virtual models – and it will show how networks can be particularly good models for regions and HEIs throughout the world seeking to integrate internationalization activities.

Physical Models

Host countries with established partnerships that include a physical presence of foreign institutions are characterizing themselves more and more as education hubs – countries that promote education, training, innovation, and research (Knight, 2011). Knight (2011) defined the concept of an education hub as part of a country or city’s plan to create a critical mass of local and foreign actors, including students and educational institutions. Educational hubs will be further defined in the following section. An institutional center abroad can include research centers, and offices for alumni support, student and faculty recruitment, and fundraising (Knight, 2015). Two leading organizations on IBCs (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education and Cross-Border Education Research Team) jointly defined IBCs as an entity that is owned (at
least in part) by a foreign educational institution that provides an academic program which leads to a degree (Garrett, Kinser, Lane, & Merola, 2016).

This review defines physical models to include the physical presence abroad of an institution’s centers and IBCs. The main difference between centers and IBCs is that while IBCs awards degrees to students, an institutional center provides the space for alumni gatherings, conferences, and other intellectual exchanges.

Centers. Centers are generally smaller-scale versions of branch campuses with limited presence abroad (Helms & Rumbley, 2012). Centers can include research centers for academic and intellectual exchange where students are taught. There are currently 217 global centers throughout the world (Rumbley & Altbach, 2016). Generally, they access leased space and are primarily used for classrooms and offices for limited staff to provide on-site available support to study abroad students, international recruitment, alumni and fundraising efforts, and foreign residents for education courses (Helms & Rumbley, 2012; Lacy & Link, 2014).

Universities use centers abroad to further their internationalization missions. There are many prominent cases of universities building centers throughout the world to facilitate student and faculty engagement by building a network of centers connecting geographic regions (Lacy & Link, 2014). Columbia University is an ideal model of utilizing its centers abroad as global hubs, with eight centers in eight cities offering classes to students, working with local institutions, and driving interdisciplinary research studies (Masri, 2016). An example of a research project conducted via Columbia’s global center in Nairobi is a “teledentristy” project being led by an assistant professor at Columbia in partnership with the University of Nairobi to use a camera to look inside
patient’s mouth, the images of which can be seen in by dentist in New York and Nairobi to flag suspicious cases (Redden, 2014). Columbia is also unique because it is now offering courses in its core curriculum at its centers abroad; Columbia students can take courses that fulfill requirements for their degrees in a center abroad. This is unusual because core courses are generally done at the host institution or at international branch campuses.

**International branch campuses (IBCs).** Since 2010, there has been a 26% increase in the number of IBCs throughout the world (Garrett et al., 2016). At the end of 2016, there were 251 IBCs in 76 countries (Dicken, 2016). Growth in IBCs is largely driven by institutions in Europe and the United States with the top host countries being China, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Malaysia, and Qatar (Garrett et al., 2016). As of 2017, there were 33 IBC “exporting” countries – the top two were the United States and the United Kingdom with 77 IBCs were established by the United States and 38 by the United Kingdom (Helms, Brajkovic, & Struthers, 2017). With respect to the “importing” countries, there were 76 top importers with China and the United Arab Emirates being the top ones – 32 IBCs in China and 32 in the United Arab Emirates (Helms et al., 2017). The primary reasons institutions establish IBCs include increased internationalization, institutional status, revenue, and enriching existing connections and opportunities between institutions (Dicken, 2016).

Mihut et. al. (2017) reported that in a recent survey, the majority of the HEIs establishing IBCs own the facilities. The campuses and physical spaces were likely built for the IBCs specifically. While this is advantageous as the spaces are physically owned by the host HEIs, there is also a greater cost and risk associated with it if the IBCs were
not successful. The other way that host HEIs establish IBCs is by jointly sharing costs with foreign HEIs and also the local governments to subsidize the expenses.

Altbach (2010) described many challenges with the growth in IBCs and explained that some only provide a “limited curriculum” and seem to resemble “office complexes rather than academic institutions” (p. 2). Other limitations of IBCs include challenges with recruiting campus faculty to teach abroad and maintaining student quality and academic rigor for the more selective institutions (Altbach, 2010). Hawawini (2016) also argued that IBCs add little value beside increasing an institution’s brand and reach; given that these are mainly clones of the home campus, the faculty deliver similar lectures and the students are generally from the same region, so there are limited opportunities to learn from a diverse group. Generally, international branch campuses include academic and student facilities, such as student accommodations, libraries, and research facilities (Becker, 2010). These provide the foundation for student experiences similar to the institution’s home campuses. While scholars have critiqued IBCs’ quality compared to the home campuses (Altbach, 2010), other studies have found that student perceptions and their experiences in IBCs are satisfactory (Wilkins, Stephens Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012).

Virtual Models

Internationalization today needs to take into account technology and digitalization to progress towards new frameworks of virtual mobility (Bruhn, 2017). Although still a recent phenomenon, massive online courses (MOOCs) are being applied as a key internationalization tool. Bruhn (2017) argued that in positioning and including aspects of digitization, global, intercultural, and international dimensions need to be incorporated as
part of internationalization strategy for HEIs today. Global refers to how virtual internationalization and delivery of programming such as MOOCs reach beyond institutional and national levels; the intercultural dimension refers to intercultural competence that can be showcased more broadly in online education given that students from throughout the world can be included in virtual classes; lastly, international refers to the number of countries that can be involved effectively as part of the virtual mobility efforts.

Caniglia et. al. (2017) reviewed 46 articles that described 147 HEIs in global collaborations. Europe had the highest number of collaborations. The main areas of collaboration were around virtual teaching and on research, with the teaching category including one class to entire programs. The collaborations on research included activities such as faculty and staff exchanges between several institutions to support researchers in developing proposals and also to conduct, analyze, and disseminate research findings.

Bruhn (2017) presented several excellent examples of HEIs utilizing virtual internationalization initiatives, including the collaborative online international learning (COIL) developed at the State University of New York that offers joint classes from with partner HEIs at various countries as well partnerships with HEIs through a technology company, Georama, to offer virtual field trips. All of these efforts take into account the need for HEIs to be flexible in their approach to internationalization and to utilize information and communications technology in innovative ways to expand their international reach (Bruhn, 2017).

Ruiz-Corbella and Alvarez-Gonzalez (2014), and Caniglia et. al. (2017) described how virtual mobility can be a useful strategy to amplify internationalization efforts to be
inclusive to countries throughout the world. Ruiz-Corbella and Alvarez-Gonzalez studied 256 master’s degrees offered through distance learning courses at HEIs in Europe, Latin America, and central Asia. They documented a growing pressure for greater specialization related to online education due to an increasing supply of online education courses and virtual offerings. Innovations underway are particularly happening around sharing the mobility of programs and perspectives related to mobility tools, such as credit transfer, quality assurance, etc. The authors argued that one type of internationalization strategy (physical vs. virtual) is not necessarily better – they are complementary and reinforce each other. Thus, the use of virtual efforts, particularly as part of networks, can amplify an HEI’s overarching internationalization strategy.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation of networks is of growing importance as the number of global partnerships and collaborations between HEIs continues to increase. Leite and Pinho (2017) argued that the measurement of research collaborations should go beyond the quantitative number of studies published between researchers because these can lead to replication of publications and self-plagiarism. Quantitative measures alone are also not providing an overall perspective of how research collaboration is actually functioning – qualitative data, such as perceptions through surveys should also be gathered as complementary information. Other measurement factors include having stakeholders verify data, keeping data collection and analytical processes open, and regularly updating impact and evaluation indicators (Leite & Pinho, 2017). Figure 2.1 outlines the principles that Leite and Pinho advocated should be applied in assessing research networks.
Akkerman et. al. (2012), meanwhile, studied network effects at the level of the interorganizational network and the level of the networking behavior of individual organizations at five networks in the Netherlands. The researchers combined two frameworks to analyze the five research networks: the collaborative network perspective and the managerial networking perspective. The collaborative network perspective views interorganizational networks as systems of coordination between independent organizations, and the managerial network perspective focuses on the networking activities of the managers in the individual organizations that comprise part of the network. The managerial activities this dual framework assesses include the number of relationships and the number of interactions with contacts. The collaborative network perspective takes a broader view than the managerial network perspective (Akkerman, 2012).

Table 5.8: Leiden Manifesto Ten Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Principles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data integration</td>
<td>Quantitative evaluation should support qualitative, expert assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment</td>
<td>Measure performance against the research missions of the institution, group, or researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local relevance</td>
<td>Protect excellence in locally relevant research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplicity</td>
<td>Keep data collection and analytical processes open, transparent, and simple</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>Allow those evaluated to verify data and analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Account for variation by field in publication and citation practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative judgment</td>
<td>Base assessment of individual researchers on a qualitative judgment of their portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>Avoid misplaced concreteness and false precision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of the evaluation</td>
<td>Recognize the systemic effects of assessment and indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of the evaluation</td>
<td>Scrutinize indicators regularly and update them</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Based on Hicks et al. (2015)
The Dutch research networks analyzed by Akkerman et. al. (2012) included a range in the number of HEIs that comprised the network, from 13 to 28. Each of the networks were organized around various disciplines as well, such as primary education to social work to management and business. The study revealed that the networks made up three types of structures: centralized, sparse, and dense. Generally, the concept of centrality refers to the number links a node (HEI) has to other nodes as part of the network. The HEIs that were part of the centralized networks (primary education teacher and social work) had intermediate levels of degree centrality and were members of a large number of subnetworks. The HEIs in the sparser networks (commercial economics and management, economics, and law) had low degree centrality and were members of fewer subnetworks. Lastly, colleges in the dense nursing studies network had the highest degree centrality and highest rate of participation in subnetworks. Overall, the researchers found that the more centralized and greater number of subnetworks in HEIs, the higher the percentage of satisfaction amongst graduates. The network with the most collaborative subnetworks performed better than those with fewer collaborative subnetworks. This is directly related to how collaborative subnetworks are more efficient at division of labor and task specialization which enables the subnetworks to utilize resources effectively (Akkerman et al., 2012).

Amey and Eddy (2015) designed a model of developing effective strategic partnerships. They argued that an effective model grows out of the “first order” in which there are superficial and ad hoc relationships linked to a “second order” change process in which the operation and foundation structures of the development of the collaborations...
are questioned in order to focus on priorities. Seven components need to be discussed and analyzed as parts of successful partnerships: exploring motivations; developing partner relationships; communicating and framing purpose; creating collaborative structures and resources; leading various partnership stages; generating partnership capital; and implementing strategies for sustaining partnerships. Each of these variables is important to include to arrive at a holistic understanding of why and how partnerships can be most efficient and effective.

Several recent examples of successful networks as part of internationalization efforts in HEIs provide insights into network dynamics and structure. Teichler (2017) described a successful example of a network with academic and professional scholars in higher education, the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER). This membership network was formally launched in 1990, with a clear vision related to implications of higher education research throughout the world and across disciplines. The network continues to be an effective resource for higher education scholars, with thematic and well-attended conferences and a small number of other activities. The network is loosely organized with a small number of core activities and a consistent number of 200 members, and it has significantly contributed to higher education academic research by producing many high-profile trainings and research publications (Teichler, 2017).

Another example of a successful network model is a six-year project-based consortium developed in Scotland (Ackland, Robert, Swinney, & Wallace, 2017). The network is comprised of adult education institutions, and it is demonstrated as being an effective model for how networks should work employing shared objectives and
understandings. The authors noted that there were some incidents of misunderstandings that revealed the importance of trust and collaboration, but these incidents solidified the partnerships between the institutions. Thus, it is important for consortia and networks to have clear goals and to recognize how common experiences can further trust which is essential to effective collaborations (Ackland et al., 2017).

In another study of networks, Bowry and Teather (2005), meanwhile, concluded that for any HEI network to be successful, a clear mission statement needs to be defined regardless of who initiates the creation of or membership process for joining a network. Furthermore, full commitment and participation is important so that all HEIs can benefit. Dixon et al. (2013) and Duffield et al. (2013) corroborated many aspects of these best practices, especially related to a guiding mission and goal. The authors argued that overall, a clearly defined governance model with common goals needs to be in place to promote trust and fairness; furthermore, face-to-face meetings should be incorporated with virtual meetings to cultivate stronger relationships and partnerships.

**Summary**

This section demonstrated that strategic partnerships through networks are the newer models of internationalization. As opposed to the historical matrix frameworks of internationalization as described earlier in the chapter, the network model can be analyzed more holistically by looking at how various parts of an institution (i.e. program, faculty, students) utilize the network. Dixon et al. (2013) identified many benefits of strong institutional partnerships, including stronger student, faculty, and staff development leading to effective exchanges and research collaborations. The network model includes both physical and virtual traits as part of its components related to
internationalization. Evaluation is important when and after instituting networks. Analyses of the motivations to institute partnerships and of how the network is functioning are important to maximize the benefits of being in a network and to ensure effectiveness (Leite & Pinho, 2017).

**Regional Strategies**

To fully grasp the nuances of an internationalized higher education network and its use as an effective tool in the present and in the future, it is important to provide an overview of the complexity of global education and diversity amongst and between regions. It is especially important to review regional internationalization strategies because this concept involves HEIs in all countries. For this case study of a network, it will be especially helpful to understand how partnerships and collaborations as part of internationalization are understood and implemented throughout the world.

Altbach and de Wit (2015) dated the origins of internationalization in universities as far back as the 6th century, beginning with Nalanda University in India. The Indian subcontinent was home to three highly active centers of learning in the 6th century: Nalanda, Takshila, Vikramshila (Tripathi & Bajpai, 2017). Nalanda and Takshila in particular were unique in that these centers drew students from throughout Asia to study a variety of disciplines (Yeravdekar, 2015). Although there is a strong history of internationalization, Asian countries, particularly India, are behind the Western countries with respect to number of inbound students, research production, and globally ranked institutions (Tripathi & Bajpai, 2017). A discussion and comparison of these regions will be described below.
The 20th century brought forth a number of new initiatives in Europe and the
United States, such as the Institute of International Education and the German Academic
Exchange Service, as international exchanges were seen to be a priority after World War
II as peacekeeping initiatives (Deardorff, de Wit, Heyl, & Adams, 2012). The number of
international entities and exchange programs increased further after the Cold War; the
Fulbright program in the United States and the Erasmus program in Europe were two
important advances to internationalization and early strategic partnerships (Altbach & de
Wit, 2015). This section will describe regional specific internationalization policies and
will argue that they promoted early strategic partnerships that have led to the network
model present today. As it is beyond the scope of this review, this chapter will not focus
on several regions where internationalization has also been implemented, including the
Middle East, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.

Asia. The primary countries that have contributed to the largest number of
students studying abroad are in Asia (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014). These include China,
India, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, and Turkey (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014). From
these countries, China and India are the major exporters of students for higher education
(Altbach & de Wit, 2015). In 2011, Chinese and Indian students accounted for 45% of all
students completing their tertiary education abroad (Gopinath, 2015). As such, the
discussion below focuses primarily on India and China. Overarching themes related to all
Asian countries as well as countries in the Middle East and the Gulf region will also be
discussed throughout the section.

India. Whereas the number of Chinese students studying abroad has increased
every year, the number of Indian students has stabilized since 2008 at approximately
200,000 (Agarwal, 2011 as cited in Gopinath, 2015). Yervadekar (2015) argued that although the Indian government has made several declarations to promote internationalization, implementation has not occurred effectively, and the number of students leaving India far outnumber the number of students coming to study in India. For example, in 2012, the number of inbound students was 31,000 while the number of outbound students was approximately 200,000. The main source of students to India are from Asia and include Nepal, Bhutan, Iran, Malaysia, and Afghanistan (Yervadekar, 2015). In comparison, in 2015, the number of inbound students to China was approximately 400,000 and the number of outbound students was 523,000 (Tripathi & Bajpai, 2017).

In light of the fact that the number of outbound students far exceeds the number of inbound students, the Indian government is keen to establish educational hubs to attract foreign students and foreign HEI investment (Yervadekar & Tiwari, 2014b). Knight (2011) defined education hubs as areas of condensed HEIs and academic services and businesses. Knight’s comparison of six countries with different kinds of education hubs is widely regarded as an important framework for thinking about educational hubs. Although continually increasing and diversifying, the main countries investing in and establishing educational hubs include Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain (Knight, 2011). Knight (2011) also assessed that Qatar and Singapore are the most advanced in terms of strategic planning and an integrated approach to becoming prominent hubs. Qatar and Singapore have incorporated a knowledge economy as part of a nationwide strategy for many years and have invested
considerable financial resources to establish cities with dense HEIs and academic institutions (Knight, 2011).

Yeravdekar and Tiwari (2014) contended that, while there are several cities in India (Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore) that could become educational hubs, some key challenges in the current Indian higher education system need to be addressed first. This includes the fact that India needs to determine whether it can compete particularly with countries like Qatar that has invested billions of dollars in establishing educational hubs (Knight, 2011; Yeravdekar & Tiwari, 2014b). In addition to repositioning itself for educational hubs, India could also do more to establish regional partnerships with countries with educational hubs (i.e. with Singapore and Malaysia) since India also has the comparative advantage of a powerful IT sector within the knowledge economy (Yeravdekar & Tiwari, 2014b).

As Indian institutions and the government have recognized how the country is falling behind, India has started a few initiatives. One of India’s primary strategies involves strengthening its current ties with the United States and European countries (Pilkington & Nair, 2013). Scholars in the United States are the most numerous group of collaborators with scholars for research and publication in India followed by Germany, and then, the United Kingdom (Pilkington & Nair, 2013). Interestingly, Pilkington and Nair demonstrated that France and India have similar trends with respect to institutional history and how the two countries have integrated the World Trade Organization and the General Agreement on Trades and Services (GATS) framework in order to increase their competitive advantage in higher education. This framework is a way for countries to strengthen ties. France and India also have one of the oldest collaborations in social
sciences; an agreement between the two countries was signed in 1978 to better social sciences’ research and it currently includes a network of institutions in India and France for faculty exchanges, joint organizations of conferences, and exchange of research communications (Pilkington & Nair, 2013).

India is also implementing the strategy of establishing or joining consortia and networks to further the country’s internationalization strategy effectively (Tripathi & Bajpai, 2017). India launched the Global Initiative for Academic Networks (GIAN) in 2014 to promote scientific and technological knowledge within Indian institutions by establishing relationships within India and throughout the world (“Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN),” 2018; Tripathi & Bajpai, 2017). Furthermore, partnerships with top-ranked universities in the world are also slowly increasing; as of 2014-15, a total of 51 memorandums of understanding were reported between Indian institutions and HEIs throughout the world (Tripathi & Bajpai, 2017).

**China.** China is advancing its approach to internationalization and has integrated policies that go beyond increasing the number of international students enrolled in the country (Rui, 2014). There is a renewed focus on international collaborations for research publications and exporting Chinese knowledge. A primary way Chinese values are being promoted abroad is through Confucius Institutes. These are centers for Chinese language study and are incorporated by HEIs as centers or departments as part of a partnership with the Chinese government – there is a large network throughout the world of these centers. There is also much controversy, however, as the partnerships are funded by and align directly with the Chinese government and scholars question the level of academic freedom in these institutes (Rui, 2014).
China is also working with countries like the United States to establish initiatives aimed at increasing the number of inbound students to China (Tripathi & Bajpai, 2017). For example, the US-China Strong Foundation launched the ‘100,000 strong’ initiative to send 100,000 U.S. students to China by 2014 (which was surpassed) (“100,000 Strong,” 2018; Tripathi & Bajpai, 2017). In 2015, President Barack Obama and President Xi Jinping jointly announced another initiative to increase the number of K-12 students studying Mandarin in the United States to one million by 2020 – a fivefold increase (“1 Million Strong,” 2018).

Rui (2014) argued that China is looking to Western nations for models of internationalization for HEIs and is seeking to combine Chinese and Western elements. English proficiency tests are now a part of Chinese schools, and China is the largest country with more English speakers than any other country in the world. Analyzing the number of scholarly publications, the number of international students, and the growing number of Confucius Institutes, Rui (2014), contended that while China’s strategy has been seemingly successful in emulating the Western model, more needs to be done to foster an intellectual environment that has encompassed American and European institutions for centuries.

Hammond (2016) compared China and Japan and found that because of historical Western military involvement in China and Japan, both countries have incorporated a strong sense of nationalism as part of their education systems. In China, global competition with respect to research and studying abroad is more recognized and China is seen to be more competitive than Japan. In the late 1990s, China implemented a policy to enhance high-level technological and managerial skills in HEIs. This has resulted in
China currently ranking as the second largest university producing scientific papers in the world, and it has significantly decreased the number of Chinese students who leave the country to study abroad. In 2008, students coming to China, mostly from South Korea and Japan, to study outnumbered students leaving China for the first time. This is likely in large part the result of the CAMPUS Asia Program which has been promoting student exchanges between China, Japan, and South Korea with HEIs as part of a network since 2012 (Hammond, 2016).

**Smaller countries.** Just as the larger countries in Asia have prioritized internationalization, smaller nations have also incorporated internationalization as a goal for all HEIs (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014; Ho, Lin, & Yang, 2015). In addition to investing in scholarly collaborations and the number of top-ranked universities, Japan recently announced an initiative to attract 300,000 international students to enroll in Japanese universities by 2020 (Ho et al., 2015). Taiwan is also seeking to improve the overall quality of education to increase the number of top-ranked universities, but it is also focused on primary and secondary schools (Ho et al., 2015). As described above, Singapore is an excellent example of a country that has invested in educational hubs and has attracted an increasing number of international students (Knight, 2011). Malaysia is another country that has been attractive for IBCs as several country-wide policies have been enacted to make it easier to establish IBCs and joint degree programs (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014).

Additionally, Abd Aziz and Abdullah (2014) found that while Malaysia has a significant number of international students, it is attracting students mainly from Asia. This is similar to countries like India and Japan (Hammond, 2016). While the United
States is still the top study abroad destination, Japan has now become the second most popular for Chinese students as well (Hammond, 2016). In Malaysia’s case, Abd Aziz and Abdullah (2014) argued that Malaysia should rethink its priorities for internationalization to diversify the countries from which the students come from and to also focus more on research and development to move beyond increasing the number of international students.

**Latin America.** Internationalization in Latin America has been more of a reactive and ad hoc activity responding to offers to collaborate presented by Western institutions rather than a strategic effort (Berry & Taylor, 2014). An International Association of Universities (IAU) survey conducted in 2012 showed that 51% of institutions in Latin America marked internationalization as a priority (vs. United States and Europe with 71% and 68%, respectively) (Berry & Taylor, 2014). In many cases, such as in Chile and Brazil, even while it seems like HEIs have placed internationalization as an important priority, implementation does not take place and specific programs are not executed in fulfilling the general goal of internationalization (Gacel-Ávila, 2012). The region, however, is also under researched and there is a general lack of information on internationalization in Latin America (Gacel-Ávila, 2012).

Gacel-Ávila’s (2012) assessment of Latin American countries found that the main challenges related to internationalization for HEIs were a lack of funding, limited staff and faculty expertise, inflexible curriculum, and a language barrier. Governmental policies lack structure and are not coordinated. While many HEIs may have internationalization as part of their missions, effective strategies are not implemented and changes related to internationalization in faculty research, student mobility, and
curriculums are rare. In light of these barriers, for internationalization to be effective in Latin America, it would need to be a part of an integrated policy; governments and HEI administrators would benefit from rethinking internationalization as a cost-effective way to capitalize on the cultural aspects and overcome systematic deficiencies (Gacel-Ávila, 2012).

Berry and Taylor (2014) compared six private and public institutions in Mexico and Colombia to assess how the two countries have planned for and implemented internationalization in HEIs. Berry and Taylor found that while all participants in the study of higher education administrators noted internationalization as a priority, there were few examples of initiatives that were being implemented aside from the recruitment of international students. A lack of financial resources was cited as a significant deterrent, and public universities in particular faced additional challenges as they are tied to the governments which can be politicized and have complicated bureaucracies (Berry & Taylor, 2014). The authors did find, however, that institutions part of an international consortium or network were better off because this raised the profile of the institution and also helped them apply for joint research funding, which provided additional resources for the institution.

This conclusion by Berry and Taylor (2014) is supported by an analysis Henao and Velez (2015) conducted as part of a report for the European Parliament. Although Colombia seems to be further behind than countries like Mexico that has had internationalization as an agenda since the 1990s, Colombia has implemented a number of strategic partnerships with European institutions (Henao & Velez, 2015). France, Spain, Germany, and Italy have established significant links with Colombian institutions.
with respect to faculty and student exchanges, joint degrees, and research networks (Henao & Velez, 2015). As of 2014, of the 240 joint degree programs reported by HEIs in Colombia, 158 were developed with these European Union countries (Henao & Velez, 2015). Colombia has also established joint scholarship initiatives for talented Colombian students to study in Europe through partnerships with the French government, the European Commission, the British Council, and the German Academic Exchange Service (Henao & Velez, 2015). Henao and Velez (2015) argued that these partnerships have had important effects on elevating the quality of HEIs in Colombia and can perhaps be an effective model for other Latin American countries.

**Africa.** Countries in Latin America and Africa face similar challenges and opportunities related to the planning and implementation of internationalization in HEIs. As in Latin America, there is a lack of information on internationalization of higher education in the African continent (Adeoye, Anyikwa, & Avant, 2012; Alemu, 2014). Furthermore, the primary challenges also relate to brain drain and a lack of funding and implementation of internationalization, even if HEIs declare this concept as a priority (Alemu, 2014). The colonial history in Africa, however, seems to also be a factor in how HEIs are responding to internationalization in that there is a great emphasis on emulating the Western model (Gyamera, 2015).

Gyamera (2015) compared three public universities that have prioritized internationalization in Ghana. All have utilized the following strategies to implement internationalization: mission statements; strategic collaborations; international centers; benchmarking; and foreign experts. Gyamera reported that all of the institutions defined internationalization as increasing the number of international students and intercultural
exchanges. Administrators in two of the universities in Ghana also discussed the perceptions around unequal partnerships with Western institutions and the feelings of exploitation and its direct relations to the colonial legacy in Ghana. Thus, Gyamera advocated that there needs to be clearer expectations around the memorandum of understandings between institutions. Furthermore, the strategies that included Western institutions and Western experts did not seem effective as the Ghanaian institutions were already aware of the knowledge and planning processes related to internationalization. What was lacking, however, is that HEIs were not able to sufficiently overcome the inherent and systemic challenges related to internationalization in the African continent. Thus, Gyamera advocated that HEIs in Ghana and throughout the African continent should reposition themselves to utilize their strengths in indigenous knowledge systems and emphasize regional connections related to Africanization. This strategy could help to differentiate and strengthen partnerships and collaborations between African institutions and Western institutions (Gyamera, 2015).

Adeoye et. al. (2012) also found similar challenges related to internationalization in Africa as part of their study that surveyed 446 professors and students in Nigeria. The main factors in this study that the participants attributed the challenges of implementing internationalization in Nigeria and Africa were related to a lack of funding; poor technology; lack of leaders; and insufficient level of commitment to teaching and research. Language was also reported to be a significant barrier to collaborations and partnerships with institutions taking place in Africa as in other regions. The authors argued that transformational leaders who can be innovative would be important in promoting internationalization effectively in Nigeria and in the African continent. Similar
to studies in Latin America, Adeoye et. al. (2012) also advocated for increasing the number of strategic collaborations and partnerships, and the authors concluded that a greater emphasis should be placed on opportunities around technology with e-learning and online courses.

**United States of America (U.S.).** Higher education in the United States was modeled after Oxford and Cambridge in the United Kingdom in the 1600s (Deardorff et al., 2012). World War II spurred internationalization in HEIs as national security became a driving force for increasing international education in the United States (Deardorff et al., 2012). This sentiment of national security as the impetus continues even today as one of the key funding sources that is still in effect today supporting internationalization in HEIs is the Title VI of the National Defense and Education Act (Hunter, de Wit, Howard, & Egron-Polak, 2015). Passed in 1958, Title VI supports language learning, world area, and regional studies (Hunter et al., 2015). The Fulbright Act of 1946 and then, the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961, support scholarships to research and study abroad for students and staff (Deardorff et al., 2012). Additional smaller programs also exist in the Departments of State, Education, Commerce, Agriculture, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (Hunter et al., 2015).

The second wave of changes related to internationalization in U.S. institutions of higher education occurred in the 1980s (Deardorff et al., 2012). The United States engaged in a strategic priority to improve the education system in the early 1980s and to rethink internationalization after the United States National Commission on Excellence in Education reported in 1983 that American education was not adequate in responding to global trends (Adeoye et al., 2012). In a 2008 study, however, the Department of
Education concluded that, when comparing primary and secondary American students to others, American students were still not testing as well as their counterparts in Europe; American achievement levels have stagnated whereas other Western countries were surpassing the American students (Adeoye et al., 2012).

These challenges have been exacerbated as the federal programs supporting international education have continued to be cut (Hunter et al., 2015). Hudzik (2015) argued that even with the governmental support, internationalization in HEIs in the United States is not uniform, and it is driven by HEIs. As HEIs respond to globalization and market forces, generally, the strategy related to internationalization in HEIs has been focused on increasing the number of international students to generate additional revenue and increase diversity on campus (Hunter et al., 2015). Collaborations and partnerships are occurring, but with the primary idea of increasing funding as opposed to educational exchanges (Hunter et al., 2015).

As the number of institutional collaborations increase, there is room for growth in U.S. students’ enrollment in foreign institutions as compared to other countries’ outbound students (Hunter et al., 2015). Even with initiatives such as the ‘100,000 Strong’ program to send students to China, most U.S. students continue to choose Europe and the United Kingdom as their top choices for study abroad (Hunter et al., 2015). While the United States is also a top destination for international students now, with the increasing number of educational hubs in other regions as described above, it will be important for the United States to think long term and strategically about utilizing technology and partnerships to continue to attract top scholars, students, and faculty (Hunter et al., 2015).
Every five years, the American Council on Education’s Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE) undertakes a project to map internationalization on U.S. campuses. The most recent survey conducted in 2016 reported that, generally, American HEIs have had strong progress in the area of external internationalization efforts, such as student exchanges, whereas internal efforts, such as internationalization of curriculum and professional development of faculty, have occurred at a slower pace (Helms et al., 2017). The top three activities that were prioritized for U.S. HEIs related to internationalization included increasing study abroad opportunities for U.S. students, recruiting international students, and building partnerships with institutions abroad. Strategic partnerships also related directly to the increasing interest in HEIs to offer on-campus global learning opportunities to reach a broader base of students (Helms et al., 2017).

While the number of partnerships has been increasing, however, it is important to note that only 40% of institutions who responded reported having a strategy in place for such collaborations (Helms et al., 2017). Within this percentage of HEIs, the top countries identified for partnership expansion (i.e. China, South Korea) correlated strongly to those also targeted for international student recruitment – thus, it is likely that revenue generation is a factor behind these partnerships as well (Helms et al., 2017; Hunter et al., 2015).

Following the election of President Donald Trump and his administration’s executive orders to bar citizens from certain countries from entering the United States, academic associations and HEIs have responded with statements of concern that international students may not feel welcome in America and may choose other countries
in which to study (Helms et al., 2017). Instead of focusing on inbound students, however, this may be an opportunity for American institutions to strengthen curricula and faculty development as well as increase external partnerships to promote virtual learning and research collaborations (Helms et al., 2017).

**Europe.** Similar to the United States, internationalization efforts of higher education in Europe also increased in the 1970s and 1980s (De Wit & Merkx, 2012). In 1976, the Council of the European Communities enacted an action plan for the implementation of programs for education improvements. Whereas in the United States, national security dominated educational policies, the council’s program promoted the values of harmonization, Europeanization, and globalization – these themes are still embedded in the European educational system today (De Wit & Merkx, 2012). The 1980s resulted in the advent and consolidation of several of these significant programs, including COMETT (COMmunity programme for Education and Training in Technology), that established collaborations between higher education and industry, and Erasmus (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students), that increased student mobility and exchange throughout Europe (De Wit & Merkx, 2012). Every year, over 250,000 students from the European Union participate in study abroad or student exchange as part of the Erasmus program (Beerkens, Souto-Otero, de Wit, & Huisman, 2016). Since 1987, over three million students have participated in the Erasmus program, and the number of countries involved has increased from 11 to 33, to also include non-European Union members as well (De Wit & Merkx, 2012).

Beyond student mobility, the Erasmus program has had an important impact on internationalization in Europe particularly by facilitating additional education reforms.
These included the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), which ensures university credits are transferred throughout the European Union; and the Bologna declaration and process, comprised of meetings amongst the education ministers in the European Union that have resulted in agreements to establish standardized processes related to university degrees and credits, as well as collaborations (Hunter et al., 2015). Successes related to partnerships as part of the Erasmus program also led to the newly launched framework, Horizon 2020; this is Europe’s biggest research and innovation program with €80 billion of funding over seven years, and it is supported by Europe’s leaders, the European Commission, and the European Parliament (Hunter et al., 2015; “What is Horizon 2020?,” n.d.).

The Erasmus program was expanded in 2014 to Erasmus+, bringing a 40% increase in funding and a stronger focus on improving job prospects and funding opportunities in the field of sport (“Erasmus+ - The EU programme for education, training, youth, and sport (2014-2020),” n.d.). The budget for the Erasmus+ program is €14.7 billion, and its three primary objectives include:

- **Mobility Exchanges** — These include grants and scholarships for exchanges for youth, students, teachers, and staff in and outside Europe; scholarships are also available for students outside Europe to undertake their Master’s degree in an institution in Europe as part of the Erasmus Mundus joint master degrees.

- **Cooperation Projects** — Educational and industry partnerships;

- **Embracing Sport** — Funding is available for sports events and collaborative partnerships that include transnational sport organizations.
In addition to increasing employability in quantifiable ways, such as learning new languages, Erasmus students develop meaningful soft skills, including increased cultural awareness and tolerance (Mattern, 2016). These skills developed as part of the Erasmus+ program and its predecessors are immeasurable and contribute to the overall embedded culture of internationalization in Europe (Hunter et al., 2015). A study of three universities in the United States and one in the United Kingdom reveals the dynamics of planning and implementation, and the effects, characteristic of the Erasmus+ program (Coryell, Durodoye, Wright, Pate, & Nguyen, 2012). The study showed changes made in all of the institutions related to implementation structure, academic curriculum, and research. One U.S. based institution was just beginning its planning stages for internationalization, and it did not have an established administrative structure to support internationalization efforts. A larger U.S. institution did not have an overarching internationalization agenda, and it decided against creating a structured administrative office. The university recently created an international programs council with faculty, students, and staff reporting to the Provost to increase the number of opportunities for research and study abroad. The last U.S.-based institution studied had a highly structured and centralized administrative office focused on being a resource to faculty for international research, increasing international opportunities for students; the curriculum was also an integrated one that included two years of coursework in one foreign language; lastly, the institution undertook program evaluations with annual data-driven reporting on students studying abroad, number of active memorandums of agreement, and amount of funding raised for international initiatives.
Coryell et. al. (2012) found that at the institution in the U.K., although internationalization was a decentralized operation, it was clear that international activities and the idea of a global university was embedded in the institutional culture of the students, faculty, and staff. There was one central international office that supported faculty and students, but the main way the staff, students, and faculty accessed international experiences was through the Erasmus program. Students were also expected to travel during breaks and were encouraged to apply to various grants through the institution as well as the Erasmus program. These initiatives were all undertaken by students on their own. All international activities, research, and collaborations were in a public database that was managed by one individual who devoted 50% of their full-time position to keeping the database updated. This study was particularly important because it found that while the institution in the U.K. did not position itself as an “international” HEI, it clearly had an embedded culture of internationalization and seamless transitions with respect to student and faculty international activities and other HEI partnerships (Coryell et al., 2012).

European HEIs and the Erasmus+ program that includes student, faculty, and staff exchanges are not without their challenges. Bartram (2013) found significant differences in home and host HEI approaches to international students, and some students have found insufficient support for academic and personal reasons in their host HEIs. Based on these findings, Bartram (2013) advocated for more detailed pre-departure programs that emphasize self-direction and proactive participation as strategies. Additionally, there are certain countries and regions that participate more in Erasmus program than other parts of Europe (Beerkens et al., 2016). Some barriers to participation in the Erasmus program
include curriculum inflexibility, language, financial resources, and lack of interest (Beerkens et al., 2016). Glass (2014) also reported that there were internal obstacles related to funding as part of institutional collaborations. For example, many partnerships still occur on personal and/or individual faculty levels, and they lack consistency and stewardship (“The State of Higher Education,” 2014). Without institutionalized partnership structures, quality of scholarly research and other academic activities can also be an issue (“The State of Higher Education,” 2014).

A variety of push and pull factors shape the composition of participants in international programs and their priorities. In addition to educational opportunities, tourism is also a driver for students coming from the region (via Erasmus program) as well as from other countries (Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap, & Axelsson, 2015). Although there is a wide variety in the countries chosen by students as part of the Erasmus program, capitals and metropolitan regions attract a higher numbers of students than smaller cities and towns, or rural areas (Van Mol & Ekamper, 2016).

Nordic countries are also increasing in their popularity with regional students as well as with students from other countries. Koppen (2014), for example, studied international students in Sweden, for example, to understand why they chose to study in Sweden and more generally, if they were not European, why they opted to be in Europe. She found that the Nordic brand associated with the Nordic countries was an important factor for international students. Nordics are and continue to be seen as a model compared to many other countries, especially because there is a strong focus on peace, social welfare, innovation, and education (Koppen, 2014). She also found that the Nordic countries were seen as more attractive to the international students she studied in terms of
the quality of education as well as for touristic factors. She noted that although education policy changes in Denmark and Sweden had begun to go against the original Nordic model given that tuition fees were introduced, the brand remained universal and represented the primary reason for why international students were choosing to study in the Nordic countries. Thus, Koppen emphasized that the Nordic countries should continue to cultivate the idea of the Nordic brand, which would benefit them all, because Nordic countries are thought of as a unit.

The primary factor in advancing internationalization in HEIs is how internationalization is incorporated as part of an institutional strategy (Hunter et al., 2015). The fourth global survey on internationalization of higher education published by the International Association of Universities (IAU) demonstrated that of the 604 institutions surveyed in Europe (from a total of 1,336 throughout the world), 61% of European HEIs indicated that they had an internationalization policy versus 44% in North America (Hunter et al., 2015). This is in addition to many HEIs in Europe that distinguish their internationalization strategy as being separate from their international activities and efforts that make up part of other regional collaborations, such as the Erasmus program, as described above (Hunter et al., 2015).

Additionally, as De Wit and Merkx (2015) argued, other key differences between Europe and the United States relate to how internationalization is driven in the United States by the Departments of Defense and State as well as private foundations, professional associations, and HEIs. In Europe, meanwhile, internationalization takes on a top-down approach with policies implemented by the European Commission and national governments. Furthermore, in the United States, various parts of international
education (i.e. study abroad) are fragmented and led by faculty; in Europe, these activities are mainly student-driven, and all exchanges and international activities are a part of the EU mobility framework under a strategic approach (De Wit & Merkx, 2012).

**Summary**

This section provided a detailed overview of internationalization history and policies at various regions throughout the world. Although not all regions were covered, generally, many forces, including colonial history and globalization, affect the kinds of strategies HEIs utilize in various regions. Altbach (2016) contended that colonial policies also affected Asian and Latin American higher education, particularly in India where the British education system was enacted early, and in some countries in Latin America, where the Spanish relied on the Roman Catholic Church for educational policies. However, contemporary links to colonialism in other regions like Africa have not been found to be as strong in relation to higher education (Gyamera, 2015).

Many regions in the world focusing on internationalization are attempting to emulate and integrate themselves into the Western model, but there are also some significant differences within the Western model itself. This is especially the case in the different approaches between the United States and Europe. While the United States tends to focus on area studies and foreign language study as part of its international education mission, the focus in Europe related to international education is around mobility and the establishment of exchange networks for student, faculty, and staff (Hunter et al., 2015). There is also a strong culture of internationalization in Europe, and international agreements, such as the Erasmus program and the Bologna process, were
designed to strategically harmonize the higher education system and ensure that internationalization is integrated (Altbach, 2016).

**Theoretical Propositions**

Based on the literature review on the progression of network models and regional internationalization strategies, this case study has two theoretical propositions.

1. Internationalization in institutions occurs at various levels, and it is important to have a holistic view by looking at the global, national, institutional, program, and individual levels.

2. While there are challenges, the network model is an effective tool to amplify an institution’s internationalization strategy.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented a review of several significant frameworks of internationalization that increasingly incorporated broader concepts, such as institutional culture and networks, which are also critical to an analysis of assessment and effectiveness related to internationalization strategies. Considering this, the dynamic systems theory framework is best suited to analyze networks being utilized for internationalization, given that networks are newer models representing internationalization efforts. Regional specific internationalization strategies and the growing importance of networks as part of internationalization were also explored to demonstrate the many ways that higher education administrators can understand and assess internationalization as part of an institutional priority.

While globally, many approaches to internationalization exist, it is clear that Europe exhibits a particularly strong culture of internationalization that has furthered
important advances in this field, principally through the use of collaborative institutional partnerships and networks. Following a thorough review of internationalization models and regional strategies, this chapter concluded with two theoretical propositions for this study. The following chapter will present the case study approach as advocated by Yin (2014) as the methodology used for this study.
Chapter 3: Research Design

This chapter will outline the methodology that was used for this case study examining the dynamics of a network of partnerships between international higher education institutions operating globally. It explains the rationale for using a qualitative approach by briefly reviewing qualitative research and the strengths and appropriateness of the case study strategy of inquiry. It also outlines the processes that were employed for participant recruitment, data collection and storage, and data analysis. The researcher’s positionality and potential biases related to the study, and methods for assuring adherence to trustworthiness and protection of the human subjects, are also described in this chapter.

The purpose of this case study is to understand the complexities of implementing internationalization for higher education administrators in one institution that is involved in an international research network. The research question explored for this study is:

How do higher education administrators in a European institution implement internationalization through an international network?

Qualitative Research: Case Study

Qualitative research generally seeks to describe and explain research participants’ experiences related to an event or phenomena (Ponterotto, 2005). Qualitative studies use theoretical frameworks that help shape the research problem and the collection and analysis of data (Creswell, 2013). Among other characteristics, qualitative research includes inductive and deductive reasoning, focuses on the participants’ multiple perspectives, and illustrates a complex and holistic account of the study (Creswell, 2013).

The explanatory case study strategy of inquiry outlined by Yin (2018) was used for this research. Employing a case study methodology allows a researcher to provide a
holistic overview of an institution or organization; while not intended to study an entire
organization, case studies can focus on a particular issue or phenomenon as part of a
research study’s design, data collection, analysis, and findings (Noor, 2008; Yazan, 2015).
Creswell (2013) asserted that case studies need to be bounded and narrowed to reflect the
purpose and intent of the analysis to retain a clear focus. Multiple sources of evidence
and documentation for data collection (triangulation) should be used to conduct an in-
depth review and analysis of the case (Yin, 2018). As such, this approach was determined
to be the best suited for an investigation of one international network and how higher
education administrators in one institution are using the network to support
internationalization efforts.

The case study approach’s qualitative nature was not historically highly regarded,
and scholars advised against its use if sufficient cases were available to conduct statistical
analyses as part of a quantitative study instead (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). With the
publications and contributions of key scholars, among others, Stake, Merriam, and Yin,
however, case study research has been justified as a legitimate and rigorous methodology
that can approach questions and analyze phenomena in a way that quantitative studies
cannot (Yazan, 2015). Analyses of each of these theorists’ perspectives include Baxter
and Jack’s (2008) article on study design and implementation for the case study
methodology; Boblin et. al’s (2013) use of Stake’s approach in three acute-care hospitals
which also compared Yin’s approach; Noor’s (2008) descriptive case study on four
organizations explains strengths and weaknesses of the overall case study approach; and
Yazan’s (2015) excellent overview of how the three methodologists’ (Yin, Stakes, and
Merriam) design, analysis, and implementation converge and diverge. These analyses
provide researchers, particularly novice researchers, with comprehensive understandings of the ways in which each theorist’s perspective aligns better with a particular way the researcher intends to design and implement their research questions and the purpose of a study.

**Postpositivist Approach.** This research study utilized Yin’s (2018) approach as part of its case study methodology. Yin advocated for objectivity within the research design to limit researcher bias and emphasized the importance of a strong conceptual framework and theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis to explain cause-and-effect relationships. Yin’s definition of a case study relates to his postpositivist paradigm and asserts that case studies are structured empirical inquiries that address “how” and “why” as part of the research questions. He acknowledged, however, that case study research excels in illustrating a relativist perspective in which there may be multiple realities with multiple meanings, thus it is “post” positivist in essence.

This study used the case study approach as part of the postpositivist paradigm as advocated by Yin (2018). The research question and the proposed research and methodology designs align well with Yin’s definition of an explanatory case study. Specifically, the research question begins with “how” higher education administrators navigate planning and implementing internationalization by using a network; this is directly related to the most fundamental part of a case study in that case studies explore decisions or set of decisions related to why and how and the results of the planning and implementation (Yin, 2018).

Additionally, the research design for this study is an embedded, single-case design as described by Yin (2018). The study analyzes one institution’s use of a network
as part of its internationalization strategy, and also includes the embedded subunits within
the institution, such as senior faculty, administrators, and staff who use the network and
navigate processes related to internationalization. Lastly, Yin’s approach fits well with
the data collection and methodology design for this study. This includes the collection
and analysis of a variety of types of data, including interviews, surveys, observations,
memos, and written materials from the interviewees. In conducting the case study, Yin
recommended the need to remain flexible and open to potential changes in research
questions and the dedication to maintain an unbiased perspective. Thus, while the process
may be linear, it is also iterative and needs to be adaptable to the research and data at all
stages (Yin). This recommendation was used in this case study as the number of subunits
was expanded to include administrators and faculty from five other partner institutions in
the network in order to gather broader perspectives on the network.

Data Collection

The researcher received Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board
approval first before undertaking any data collection. The researcher also received
permission regarding the use of the network as a case study from the secretariat of the
network, and approval from the European institution of focus. A few additional
institutional approvals were also gathered before interviewing individuals from several
partner institutions.

As Stake described in his seminal work, the details related to data gathering can
be overwhelming, but the most important planning should be focused around what needs
to be known and the relationships that can be uncovered (Stake, 1995). Yin (2018)
recommended the researcher remain open to unanticipated occurrences, and he also
suggested being prepared by creating a list or matrix of tasks to check and an organized system for data analysis. Yin stressed the importance of maintaining a methodological and organized data collection process by keeping notes as part of a chain of evidence, since the case study inquiry process is more complex than in other methodologies.

These were all important suggestions taken up by the researcher as there was a need to interview additional individuals from several other partner institutions in the network. As part of this study, faculty, administrators, and staff in one institution in Europe were interviewed via phone, video, or in-person. Individuals from five partner institutions were also interviewed in order to gain a broader perspective on the network and its use by other institutions. Additionally, the researcher attended two important meetings related to the network as a non-participant observer. The study used the snowball sampling technique in that the researcher asked the participants to recommended who they thought would be a good fit as participants for the study (Yin, 2018).

The case study approach places a strong significance on interviews. Although the approach generally has low sample sizes, the primary data (interviews) are much more in-depth so the data derived from the interview responses is considered rich and thick (Noor, 2008). Thus, detailed and comprehensive interview questions were important to ensure rich data were collected. Yin (2018) advocated that the researcher tap a variety of data sources as part of the case study approach. Thus, the interviews were supplemented with archival records, documentation, and participant and phenomena direct observations. Both Stake (2006) and Yin pointed to the importance in particular of documents because serve as substitutes for the activities that the researcher is not able to observe and can also
confirm (or disconfirm) data collected from interviews. This study took all of this into consideration and had four of these sources of evidence (see Table 3.1).

The data collection process for this study was bound in its activities given that it focused on one network, and one institution in the network. More specifically, how the administrators, faculty, and staff at the institution became involved and used the network, with a particular emphasis on the administrators. Furthermore, the institution’s and its administrator’s activities as part of the network and additional partnerships resulting from the network were explored. The data collection process took approximately four months.

The data sources for this study included direct observations from two meetings related to the network, interviews, documentation review, and archival records related to the network and its institutional partners (see Table 3.1). A few of the archival records and documents (i.e. reports) were in another language; in this case, the researcher used Google Translate for translation into English and then, confirmed the translation was accurate with one of the interviewees.

The researcher attended two meetings to observe interactions between leadership, faculty, and administrators to see how the network is structured and how it functions. As an observer at these meetings, the researcher focused on writing detailed field notes that included descriptive and reflective components, particularly related to processes and action items. The field notes were an important data source as the subtleties of the participants’ interactions – tensions, excitement, and understandings – further helped to identify challenges and processes related to the network and how the institution of study specifically used the network. The documentation and archival records also helped to supplement information on the network and its partner institutions collected through
interviews and observations. The unobtrusive nature of these data also ensured that they were accurate and unbiased by the case study research itself (Yin, 2018).

Table 3.1

Data Collection Sources of Evidence and Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Evidence Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archival Records</td>
<td>Organizational charts; maps; network surveys; lists of network contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Network-wide e-mail correspondences; committee meeting agendas and reports; funding requests; meeting minutes; memos; program plans; websites; media articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Observations</td>
<td>Meeting observations; field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>8 interviews with faculty, staff, senior administrators in a partner institution in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 interviews with faculty, staff, and senior administrators in 5 other partner institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Storage

All interviews, phone, video, or in-person, were recorded on the computer or on an iPhone. The interviews were transcribed by hand. During the direct observations and interviews, the researcher also took detailed field notes to review and categorize afterward as part of the data analysis.

All data collected for the study, including memos, field notes, archival records and documentation review, were placed in labeled folders in Dropbox, an online platform that can only be accessed by using secure login information known only to the researcher.
All handwritten materials, including transcribed interviews with margin notes, were filed in manila folders and placed in a file cabinet in a secure location in the researcher’s home, to which only the researcher had access; these notes were also typed up and placed in Dropbox. The archival records and documentation collected were also labeled and uploaded in MAXQDA, a data software, for analysis and to have additional copies on file.

Lastly, prior to data analysis, all participants had an opportunity to perform member checking of the transcripts via email so that they were able to correct or amend interview data before any of the data were reviewed and analyzed.

**Data Analysis**

Yin (2018) advocated for a step-by-step logical approach to data analysis overall, including asking a question related to the overall research question and then, identifying the evidence that address the question. As part of this approach, the use of propositions or hypotheses as an overarching strategy for data analysis is a recommended technique and was used for this study. The two theoretical propositions were listed in the previous chapter.

Yin (2018) recommended that researchers use a computer software program to find patterns and categorize data. MAXQDA was used for coding and other analysis. Yin cautioned that while computer software is helpful, it is unrealistic to assume that qualitative data analysis is like quantitative analysis in which data output is the result of preset algorithms in the computer software; in qualitative analysis, the researcher inputs the algorithms needed for the software to use, i.e. codes related to the types of evidence as described in Table 3.1.
Yin (2018) advocated for starting with an analytic strategy before data analysis. The analytic strategy involves searching for patterns and insights in the data, including field notes, memos, and other researcher notes. For this study, the field notes were especially helpful in thinking through how to code and group together thoughts and ideas as part of the coding system altogether. In addition to observations and memo notes, coding and categorizing the interviews also helped establish key themes in order to establish findings within and throughout all of the interviews.

**Coding.** Yin (2018) cited and recommended Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) as the source for coding tactics. As described above with its importance in data input and output in a computer-assisted software, coding is one of the most important processes undertaken as part of the data analysis. This case study used the definition of “code” and first cycle and second cycle data coding process as described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014).

First, it is important to provide a brief overview of how this study defined a “code” and how it used codes. Saldana (2016) defined a “code” as a word or a short phrase that help to symbolize the meaning behind language and visual-based data. He likened coding to the title of a book or film in that the title represents the overall content and spirit of the book or film. Saldana viewed coding more as a transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis. He also acknowledged that coding is an interpretive action and the amount and level of coding can vary. In addition to interview transcripts, Saldana recommended that the researcher’s analytic memos and field notes be coded as reflective data. Saldana also suggested preliminary jottings and codes as soon as data are collected to ensure that early ideas and thoughts are written
down so the researcher does not have to rely on memory. Lastly, for multiple participants’ interview transcripts, Saldana recommended coding one transcript completely and then progressing to others.

Organization, perseverance, and the ability to deal with ambiguity are key skills described by Saldana (2016) for effective coding and extensive data analysis. Ambiguity plays a large role especially in coding as coding is not a precise science. Related, Saldana also detailed the importance of being flexible, creative, rigorously ethical, and to have an expansive vocabulary in order to code effectively and to be able to have clear representation of data.

**First cycle coding.** First cycle coding includes over 30 approaches (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). After reviewing all of these approaches, the researcher chose the following methods from Miles, Saldana, and Huberman as described below to code data as part of the first cycle coding process.

The primary three methods that were undertaken as part of the first cycle coding process include descriptive, In Vivo, and process coding. Descriptive uses a word or phrase to summarize a passage of data; In Vivo coding also uses a word or short phrase but in the participant’s own language; process uses “-ing” words to illustrate actions.

The other type of coding that was utilized is referred to affective methods coding. This type of coding focuses on participant experiences: emotion, values, and evaluation. Emotion coding labels emotions as described by participants (as In Vivo in quotes to represent participant quotes) or as summarized by the researcher; values coding refers to the participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs; evaluation coding applies non-quantitative data significance to descriptive or In Vivo coding, such as “+” or “-” to represent positive
or negative evaluations. In MAXQDA, affective methods coding were done using emoticons and placing emoticons to showcase where there were positive or negative feelings during the initial coding review.

Exploratory methods of coding to search for patterns in the data was also used. This includes holistic, provisional, and hypothesis coding. Holistic coding refers to one code for a large data unit and is seen more as a preparatory method before a detailed coding process; provisional coding includes a list of researcher-generated codes; hypothesis coding lists predetermined codes to assess researcher-generated hypotheses. These methods relate directly to deductive coding and an empirical approach in that the hypothesis coding lists can come from the theoretical framework, research questions, hypotheses, challenges, or key variables as described by the researcher. Inductive coding, by contrast, detail how codes emerge progressively during data collection.

Lastly, procedural coding methods to help make connections in the data were also utilized in this study. This type of coding is more specific, and includes protocol coding and causation coding. Protocol coding refers to pre-established or recommended systems, such as in disciplines with previously tested coding systems. Causation coding attempts to map out causality related to the how and why specific outcomes occur. Causation coding can help to illustrate motives, beliefs, processes, various interrelationships, and the complexities surrounding actions and phenomena (Miles et al., 2014).

**Second cycle coding.** After first cycle coding of all data using the methods above was completed, second cycle coding as described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) was conducted in the MAXQDA software. The following two methods related to second cycle coding were undertaken: pattern coding, and narrative description. Pattern
coding groups the first cycle summaries into categories or themes; causes/explanations; relationships among people; and theoretical constructs. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana acknowledged that pattern coding can happen quickly as themes across participants connect, but it is important to be flexible and open so as not to lock data into neat categories that may not always fit the data. Once pattern coding was underway, narrative description to expound on patterns and filed notes helped to summarize observations for this study.

After the coding process was complete, the following specific strategies related to data analysis as described by Yin (2014) were employed for this case study: pattern matching, and explanation building.

**Pattern Matching.** Pattern matching compares an empirically based pattern, based on the findings from the case study, with a predicted one as part of a framework or proposition before data collection. If the patterns are similar, the results can help to strengthen internal validity. Pattern matching can help support or show discord with the theoretical framework and its hypotheses. This was used to compare and contract the principles related to the framework used for this study.

**Explanation Building.** This strategy analyzes case study data by building an explanation about the case. Explanation building requires the how and why to be explained as part of a set of causal links. It is similar to pattern matching as the initial propositions, which can be a part of the theoretical framework, are compared to the findings. One of the main pitfalls of this approach is selection bias; thus, an explanation can develop which does not address key data found during the data collection. Yin (2018) recommended, however, that following a chain of evidence, being open to other
explanations, and having all data stored where they could be examined by a third party, are all important safeguards that can help to decrease selection bias. This analysis technique was used in assessing how data from the study related to the literature review and previous research.

**Positionality and Limitations**

The researcher acknowledges that there are biases on her outlook towards internationalization strategies and its effectiveness. Her interest in this topic stems from her work in the field of international education and her own student experience in a liberal arts institution that valued international students and international programming. These were particularly powerful experiences because as a South Asian immigrant to the United States, the connections to international students and international programming were important ways to reconnect with the South Asian culture. This was particularly important because it allowed the researcher to broaden her perspective and she undertook several research projects as an undergraduate and MA student in Latin America and the Caribbean. All of these experiences have shown her that a great need exists to integrate international and domestic students together as part of programming around global topics and the importance of exchange of ideas and experiences. These experiences and values have contributed to her identity as an Asian American woman.

The researcher’s previous and current work experiences in higher education are also attributed to her interest in internationalization. Working in the field of international initiatives and programming has opened many opportunities for the researcher to work with and befriend incredibly dedicated and resourceful faculty, administrators, staff, and students. Having had similar student experiences in many countries and working in
international programming, the researcher has a unique outlook on how internationalization strategies can function at various levels throughout HEIs.

Prior to the study, the researcher recognized that there are some biases she needed to consider and limit. The primary biases included the researcher’s identity as a woman of color; an immigrant; and an administrator in higher education working on international initiatives. While these characteristics can be helpful in the field of internationalization, as a researcher, it was important to have an unbiased view and a balanced perspective in speaking with and assessing other institutions’ internationalization strategies.

The researcher’s current position within an academic center in an institution that has contributed significant resources towards international programming was also a bias. Her work in international programming has provided her with valuable experiences that have shown her the importance of senior leadership supporting and implementing international activities effectively. The belief in that internationalization should be a priority was a bias. However, the researcher understood that others may feel differently and maintained an objective perspective regarding this point. It was with this understanding that the researcher limited her biases in interviewing participants and reviewing documentation as it was important to find ways of assessing how other institutions think about internationalization and networks, including perhaps those without the resources or the prioritization of internationalization.

The other limitation of this study was with respect to its methodology as a case study. As the study profiled one network and specifically studied one partner institution in Europe, it helped to showcase one example of a network as part of an internationalization strategy. Furthermore, the network and institution studied are different in their histories
and structures from many other institutions that may seek to utilize the results from this study. This case study may still be helpful to higher education administrators in all institutions, however, because of the thick, rich descriptive and explanatory analysis this study provides. This is especially in the case of administrators seeking to learn more about internationalization strategies, particularly around how research and exchange collaborations work as part of an international network. This research may also be useful to scholars in other fields studying the dynamics of the network model.

**Trustworthiness and Verification**

The researcher recognized all biases as part of her positionality as described above and limited these biases. She recorded all interactions with the participants to ensure verification and reliability and listened to all interviews during the data coding and analysis stage. The research participants had an opportunity to review the transcription from the interviews and to respond to any questions or concerns. Observational notes and memos were also written during the interviews to strengthen the validity of the data. All of these parts integrated with the interviews to facilitate a holistic overview and understanding of the research – the multiple data sources furthered validity and credibility of the research study (Yin, 2018).

The documentation review and participant interviews contributed to triangulating various data sources to increase credibility and is a strength in case studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Yin, 2014). Triangulation is especially important as part of a postpositivist approach (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

For trustworthiness, the researcher also followed guidelines set forth by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.
Triangulation of data sources, persistent observation, and member checking the transcripts with all interviewees confirmed credibility and confirmability; thick description with detailed field notes and memos ensured transferability; an external audit with the adviser, second reader, and third reader of the research and its findings ensured dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Protection of Human Subjects**

All steps as described by Yin (2018) were undertaken to ensure that this study followed the highest standards of research ethics from the stage of participant recruitment, through data collection, analysis and storage after the study’s completion. Yin described the following ways to ensure the protection and safety of research participants: informed consent, protecting participants from harm, protecting the participants’ privacy and confidentiality, and selecting participants equitably. The researcher received informed consent from interviewees and followed all procedures as learned in the web-based training course by National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research. Particular importance was placed on making sure that participants understood informed consent as well as the fact that their participation was completely voluntary. Pseudonyms for the participants were used during the data collection, and analysis, and will be used for any publications resulting from the study as well. The network and any institutions described as part of the network were also be given pseudonyms; furthermore, any distinguishable activities or processes that directly related back to an individual or institution were disguised with more general labels or statements to ensure complete confidentiality.
Yin (2018) also described the importance of privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity in his discussion related to ethical considerations for data collection and analysis. Privacy refers to preserving information, including any associated information related to an individual or an organization; confidentiality refers to agreements related to an individual or an organization’s data and what may or may not be done with the collected data; anonymity refers to ensuring that there is a lack of any identifiable information on the participants or the organizations or the network being profiled as part of this case study (Miles, et al., 2014). The researcher also took all of these issues into consideration to ensure privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity beginning with even the initial part of the data coding process as detailed above.

While there was little risk in partaking in this study as it primarily involved interviews as well as archival records and documentation review, the researcher fully understood the risks to the participants, the network, and any institutions described in the study. Recognition could lead to individuals losing their jobs and reputational risks for the network and institutions. The researcher was fully aware of the importance of confidentiality and ensured anonymity of all of the interviewees and redacted names of the institutions and used pseudonyms as necessary. Data collection, storage, analysis, and reporting was all be confidential. All guidelines established by Northeastern University and the participating network and institution was maintained.

**Conclusion**

This chapter detailed the qualitative case study methodology as advocated by Yin (2018) that was used for this study. While there are many ways to frame the case study methodology, Yin’s postpositivist and explanatory approach in all aspects, including data
collection and analysis, were utilized for this study as it aligned well with the research question and its propositions. The data collection and analysis procedures based on Yin, the researcher’s positionality and limitations, and the protection of human subjects who were part of this study were also described. The following chapter will present and describe the results and findings from this case study.
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand the complexities of implementing internationalization for higher education administrators in one institution that is involved in an international research network. The research question guiding this study is: How do higher education administrators in a European institution implement internationalization through an international network? This chapter presents the findings that emerged during the data collection and analysis process.

As described in Chapter 3, this was an explanatory qualitative case study as detailed by Yin (2018). Yin advocated for a strong conceptual framework and theoretical propositions to help guide data collection and analysis. Dynamic systems theory (DST) was used as the study’s framework, and the theoretical propositions were as follows:

- Internationalization in institutions occurs at various levels, and it is important to have a holistic view by looking at the global, national, institutional, program, and individual levels.
- While there are challenges, the network model is an effective tool to amplify an institution’s internationalization strategy.

Three primary themes that directly relate to the theoretical propositions emerged in assessing how Mainland University (MU, pseudonym) implemented internationalization using the International Network (IN, pseudonym). See Figure 4.1 below. The themes and subthemes identified relate directly to the codes used to group and categorize the data as described by Yin (2018) and Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) in Chapter 3. Pattern matching and explanation building analysis techniques were used to assess how the findings related to the DST and the theoretical propositions.
The first two themes broadly describe the outcomes related to how MU was using IN as part of an internationalization strategy. The third theme demonstrates how MU supported these outcomes in its implementation of the IN. The themes and subthemes that encompass them are as follows:

- Prioritizing the network
  - Supporting the network at the leadership level
  - Leading MU initiatives at the operational level
  - Hiring staff with strengths related to internationalization

- Adapting to the network challenges
  - Vision uncertainty
  - Lack of communication
  - Differences in systems and cultures

- Establishing partnerships beyond the network
  - Leveraging connections to establish a research center
  - Gathering data and information from institutions in the network
  - Developing informal and personal connections
Figure 4.1. Three themes as related to how Mainland University’s uses the IN as part of its internationalization strategy.

The researcher conducted eight interviews with participants at MU and 10 interviews with primarily senior-level administrators from five of the other institutions part of the network. These additional interviews provided data used to support the themes that emerged from the analysis of the eight interviews, archival records, direct observations from attending two IN meetings, and documentation.

An overview of how MU and the IN are structured is described below; subsequently, the three themes and its subthemes are described in detail based on the data collection and analysis.

International Network (IN) Overview

The IN began as a collaborative initiative with approximately 10 institutions. It was established over a decade ago as part of a senior leadership meeting from a few of the institutions. As one interviewee noted, “They had a vision and said, let’s do it…it was
very much a top-down process, and it was very informal the way it came about” (Bonnie, pseudonym, personal communication, May 22, 2018). A one-page agreement statement with a general overview of the network was formalized shortly after the network’s launch. This was not a signed agreement, but it laid out the general principles agreed on by all institutions. This document describes the network broadly and places much of the responsibility of funding research activities on individual institutions.

An institution voluntarily takes on the role of being the secretariat of the IN every few years. Each institution contributes the same amount annually to a central fund that is housed within the secretariat. The secretariat is also responsible for checking in with the various committees and compiling committee reports that are distributed to the senior leadership twice a year. The measure of the IN activities lies in its committees that meet throughout the year and produce various outputs. The fund managed by the secretariat supports activities related to the committee meetings and allocates funding per senior leadership decisions on requests. The committees are described below. Beyond the operations of the primary committees, there are additional joint activities, including an internship program for students and a more recent effort to develop joint online courses between network institutions.

The IN is comprised of many committees. At the highest leadership level, there are two committees – a senior administrators committee and the presidential committee. These two committees are grouped together for this study as both of these are decision-making committees and approve funding requests. At the administrative or operational level, there are many committees that were formed to collaborate together for a program or to address a particular issue or theme related some, if not all, of the institutions in the
network. Including the leadership, there are eight primary committees that have been and continue to be active with meetings and other outputs. The seven other operational committees are as follows: facilities; informational technology (IT); student exchange program; research center around a global theme; international development and globalization program; print/digital collections; and the environment. See Table 4.1. Committee names were altered and made more general to preserve anonymity. Representatives from each of these committees were interviewed for this research.

Table 4.1

*Committee Structure of the International Network*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Operational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Administrators</td>
<td>Informational Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Exchange Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Development and Globalization Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Print/Digital Collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the operational level, the seven primary committees are decentralized. As a senior administrator noted, they are “a typical example of bottom-up driven initiative” (Brad, personal communication, May 24, 2018). A new committee is launched when individuals at several institutions express interest in addressing a challenge or a topic of interest: “There is not a structured way, but if you have an idea about what you want to do, you have to propose it for the agenda [for the leadership committee] and then, they say yes, we go for it, or not” (Brad, personal communication, May 24, 2018). Funding
levels for the committees allocated by the leadership committee are modest, and initially, fund the host institution’s expenses related to the meetings. Faculty and staff travels, however, are not funded by this IN fund (Liam, personal communication, July 3, 2018).

The committees play a central role in the network, producing activities, programs, conferences, and joint reports. Each committee is required to submit an annual activity report, but it is up to the committee to report on their outputs given that no structured report format exists. A senior administrator admitted that the flexibility given to committees does “not push people hard enough to be more concrete” (Liam, personal communication, July 3, 2018). As part of the benefits of it being a global network, however, these committees support institutions’ interests in global topics and are a part of the “driving force” of the institution; there are activities and outputs, including many unexpected and positive ones, because this structure exists (Liam, personal communication, July 3, 2018).

Once the proposal to start a committee is approved at a leadership meeting, the committee is given an initial amount of money to launch around a certain theme or research initiative. There are no standard measures for how committees are evaluated, but each committee submits a report to the secretariat that is given to the senior administrators and the presidents for review during their annual meetings. These reports include funding requests to support committee activities and meetings. These requests are then voted on for approval by the senior administrators. The senior administrators are responsible for reviewing committee reports and funding allocations after receiving feedback from presidents. In the past, the presidents would also weigh in, but reviewing reports and updates have been delegated more and more to the senior administrators.
Feedback regarding this process included the following observation: “What we really want to do is have a time to talk to each other about the issues facing our universities” (June, personal communication, June 12, 2018). Indeed, in recent years, the meetings primarily with the presidents have become more discussion-based and serve as a venue for leaders to share information and to confidentially ask for advice.

**Case Study Site: Mainland University (MU)**

MU is one of the largest public institutions in Europe. As a well-regarded research institution, it welcomes thousands of international students, especially through its many exchange programs. MU is governed by a board with the overall management of the institution led by a president who is a faculty member. MU is a public institution and receives a significant amount of funding from the government. As such, MU is restricted in some of its internationalization strategies, particularly related to increasing the number of international students in its programs (Bonnie, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

Nonetheless, MU’s leadership has and continues to embrace internationalization. About a decade ago, the institution launched its first strategic plan. To preserve the institution’s anonymity, the plan is not described in detail, but overall, this strategy focused specifically on raising the institution’s profile internationally and in recruiting top faculty and students. The timing of this strategic plan aligned well with MU being an inaugural member of the IN and helping to start the network. In large part due to the platform and vision of the strategic plan, MU has risen in global rankings and has increased the number of student exchange programs and international students. MU has expanded on its goals since its first strategic plan. Its focus is now on building from the
successes of its original plan to recruiting talent, bridging research and practice, supporting interdisciplinary collaborative efforts, and strengthening internal culture around its mission.

MU’s strategic efforts to focus on internationalization and its building on this platform of being a global research university have been successful. MU has been able to recruit top researchers and academics from abroad, and this has directly led to MU receiving large research grants, including Horizon 2020. Horizon 2020 is European Union’s largest research program offering over $90 billion of funding for research and innovation from 2014 through 2020. Overall, there is a low success rate in receiving funds from Horizon 2020, and for higher education institutions, strong competition exists amongst top research universities throughout Europe.

Participants from MU all described the importance of internationalization and elaborated on how the IN contributes to the institution’s overall strategy. Brief descriptions of the study participants who were interviewed for this study are presented below in general terms and using pseudonyms. It was not possible to describe the participants’ affiliation or role in committees within the network for reasons of confidentiality. The eight committees described above were represented within the case study site; they were focused on various themes of interest for the IN (i.e. environment, facilities, IT), and they included the leadership group with high-level administrators.

Outside of the case study site, one president of an IN institution was interviewed. No additional committees were represented in the ten interviews with the five additional IN institutions.
Table 4.2

Overview of the Case Study Site and the International Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Institutional Role</th>
<th>Committee Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case Study Site</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse</td>
<td>Mainland University (MU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Student Exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie</td>
<td>Mainland University (MU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Mainland University (MU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Mainland University (MU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Mainland University (MU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eve</td>
<td>Mainland University (MU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Research Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>Mainland University (MU)</td>
<td>Faculty / Administrator</td>
<td>International Development/Globalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hestia</td>
<td>Mainland University (MU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Print / Digital Collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other IN Institutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Eastern University (EU)</td>
<td>Senior Administrator</td>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>Northern University (NU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gus</td>
<td>Borderland University (BU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gita</td>
<td>Borderland University (BU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaan</td>
<td>Borderland University (BU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad</td>
<td>Borderland University (BU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Borderland University (BU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rex</td>
<td>Borderland University (BU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>Southern University (SU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Western University (WU)</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 1: Prioritizing the International Network

MU has taken a two-tiered approach in its prioritization of the IN. It is of significance both at the leadership level — encompassing the president, leading faculty, and senior administrators — and at the administrative level. The seven primary committees are described as being at the administrative or operational level since much of the network activities and outputs are from the committees. The leadership has prioritized the IN in that it is the only global network that MU as an institution is associated with and contributes its resources towards supporting faculty, staff, and student activities. The leadership values the network in that they feel like it is “like a business network where you meet and you have informal dialogues about what works” (Sam, personal communication, May 22, 2018). While topics of discussions are broad and it is not easy to collaborate “because all universities are engaged in their own processes and their own education and research,” the MU leadership is “very positive about these initiatives” and supportive of all research and joint activities coming out of the committees (Sam). This is especially because MU is a lead institution in many of the committees that are a part of the IN (Table 4.1).

This prioritization of the IN from the leadership and operational levels has led to individuals feeling empowered to take leadership roles to successfully begin and complete projects. As Steve described: “MU is very fond of [the IN] and very supportive, but at the end of the day, somebody has to do the job” (Personal communication, May 22, 2018). As MU is the lead on many collaborative initiatives, one or two administrators and staff take on the responsibilities of organizing and project management to implement projects to completion. In his description of how network activities at the MU through the
committees are implemented, Steve detailed that the IN projects can be additional responsibilities and they can be very time consuming, and the “top management priority” becomes “people at the floor” level priorities. However, because individual performance is also monitored on international work, these projects and collaborative efforts are seen as beyond “an extra or a ‘nice’ thing” which can be the case with other initiatives (Steve). This provides an additional level of support to projects undertaken by administrators and staff.

MU prioritizing the network adds to the staffing and financial support for MU-related projects and activities because there is more activity being led by MU in the IN committees. For example, for a network-wide report that MU co-led, the IN leadership provided financial support to help with designing the report. As Steve commented:

I wouldn’t be able to go to our communications department saying we need this assigned work to be done. They would say, sorry, we haven’t got the time…I mean, you need to hire somebody else do it, and we did get some money to actually do that. (Personal Communication, May 22, 2018)

In this way, MU is able to use the IN in its broader internationalization agenda and it is also beneficial to individuals because they are able to lead joint efforts and add to their experiences that support their performance reviews as well.

**Subtheme: Supporting the IN at the leadership level.** At the leadership level, MU supports the IN activities by financially contributing to be a part of the network annually. As an institution, MU is only a part of two networks, including the IN, which is the only one that includes institutions from throughout the world (Bonnie, personal communication, May 22, 2018). Bonnie the IN as:
It’s a really big thing for us… it gives us so much information and different perspectives. It is very dear to us, and something that our management, our leadership, and the rector really appreciate and really prioritize to take part in meetings. It’s certainly very much on the radar.

The IN is a key part of the institution’s internationalization strategy given its important role in helping MU understand who can be strong partners in regions throughout the world. Bonnie noted that “we now have access to many excellent universities, and for some of them, in the near future, we will make a closer and deeper bilateral collaboration” (Personal communication, May 22, 2018). The IN provides an important platform for MU to have opportunities to meet with potential student exchange and/or research partners.

The decision to join the network was made at the presidential level at MU, and it remains a priority for the current leader and senior administrators (Bonnie, personal communication, May 22, 2018). Bonnie noted that MU is deeply invested in the network and it is not a challenge for the institution to be involved as it is a part of the overarching institutional strategy. She commented, “As you may know about universities, if you have a rector or a president or vice chancellor with a strong vision, then it’s really not that hard.” At the leadership level, MU prioritizes attending the annual presidential and senior administrator committee meetings. Bonnie also remarked that one of the primary benefits was information sharing at all levels, including the presidential, faculty, and staff levels, and “to be able to get good advice and sharing of best practices” (Personal communication, May 22, 2018). Additionally, at the personal level, “It’s a great opportunity for me, you know, I know exactly where to go and who to call or who to
write...we’re really good friends actually” (Bonnie, personal communication, May 22, 2018). A strong level of trust and confidence characterizes both the leadership and operational levels of institutions within the network.

MU also supported the IN because the institution served in the secretariat role for two years. Since this time, MU’s leadership has set aside a certain amount of funding to support an institutional-wide fund to ensure that staff and faculty have the resources needed to be able to travel throughout the world for committee meetings, benchmarking analyses, or for other staff learning opportunities. This fund also provides additional scholarship support for students as part of the summer program (Jesse, personal communication, May 22, 2018). Some of this fund can be used for student support and it is specifically dedicated to facilitating attendance at network-wide summer student programs, and it is a supplementary resource in addition to the European sponsored student funding opportunities. Furthermore, a few years ago, MU sent an administrator as part of a staff exchange program to visit a partner institution for a few months. With personal and professional time commitment related to staff exchanges, however, this has not happened often (Bonnie, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

As described in Theme 1, MU’s support of the IN is cyclical, and this, in turn, supports MU in connecting its administrators and staff and implementing broader projects that supports its internationalization agenda.

**Subtheme: Leading MU initiatives at the operational level.** MU leads initiatives at the administrative or operational level through its involvement in the primary committees. Of the eight representatives from the committees interviewed from MU, six interviewees had all taken lead roles in overseeing a large-scale program or
initiative. The other two were new to their roles at the institution, and they were still learning about the IN. Both of these individuals, however, described their views on the importance of the IN and how they planned to be involved as part of the committees and the committees’ activities. For example, the IT committee was launched recently. The IT representative at MU (Peter) expressed eagerness to work on a “sharing agreement” to create a collective report or document as a result of various institutions’ IT departments coming together to facilitate an idea of research partnerships and data collection to carry out within the IN institutions (Personal communication, May 22, 2018). The enthusiasm and effort Peter was willing to contribute to such a project indicated his interest in helping to further MU’s research and support the IN institutions through such a visionary idea.

One of the examples of a productive and efficient committee as described by many interviewees was the environment committee. It is structured with a chair or co-chairs from one or two different institutions as part of a smaller steering committee. One of the interviewees from MU (Steve) had co-chaired this committee in the past. The researcher was also an observer in one of the steering committee’s meetings. Although it was an informal meeting over videoconference, the meeting was well executed. There was a discussion around needing to set up priorities for the overall committee, but in general, the committee seemed organized and purposeful. The steering committee had developed work plans with leads for all projects, and the meeting focused on several ongoing projects, including a report related to the Sustainable Development Goals and faculty and staff exchanges. The committee members had recently completed a strategic plan, and all individuals had access to a shared folder on an online platform where
documents and projects were located. MU’s representative was very engaged. It was clear that MU was leading many of the efforts related to this committee.

Steve described the environment committee as “if not the most successful, then at least one of the two most successful ones in producing some actual tangible outcomes” (Personal Communication, May 22, 2018). Steve had played significant roles in supporting the efforts of two large initiatives: producing a detailed report on sustainability practices at the IN institutions and supporting MU in its hosting a large sustainability conference. The report was widely shared and used as a reference and guide within the IN institutions and beyond. Interviewees from all of the six institutions from this study also frequently cited this report as an exemplary example of a collaborative product coming out of the network. The sustainability conference was also very successful and included high-profile speakers, such as a prime minister of a country in Europe and the EU Climate Commissioner, as well as panelists from many of the IN institutions. These two outputs exemplified two of the many examples initiated and executed by the environment committee.

A more recent committee formed around international development and globalization also demonstrated MU’s leadership role. That committee was launched within the last few years with the idea of institutions collaborating on activities that broadly addressed the divide between the developed and developing countries. After its launch, a faculty member from MU and another network institution began a collaboration to implement the committee’s first project. This resulted in a collaboration with the summer exchange committee to conduct an innovative summer field course to bring students from all over the world to a developing country in Asia. The course ran for the
first time in 2018 with approximately 30 students, including some students from institutions outside the network. In addition to lectures with the two primary faculty members, there were guest lecturers from the IN institutions, primary through videoconference.

Overall, this course was a great success, with one student noting that it was “an exhaustive and transformative experience for all of us” (Personal communication, September 16, 2018). While the other institutional partner was engaged, MU prioritized and led this initiative by funding the faculty member’s travel to Asia. At the operational level, the individual from MU took the lead in coordinating much of the course, including the programming and logistical aspects of collaborating with an institution in Asia and with about a dozen non-profit organizations as part of the student projects. This was in addition to this individual’s role as a faculty member co-teaching the course.

While managing and overseeing this course was a huge effort, the interviewee also noted that it was a “passion project” (Hunter, personal communication, June 8, 2018). When describing the challenges and efforts behind coordinating this program together, it was clear that Hunter’s emotional and personal investment in the program was clearly a motivation. At a presentation of this course that the researcher attended with other IN committee members, all attendees commented on this course’s success and its potential to be a template of how collaborative efforts between committees and within IN institutions can be effective. Similar to the environmental committee, this committee and its innovative course example illustrate how MU prioritizes the network which supports institutional as well as network-wide activities. This level of support directly leads to the
implementation of interesting programs that strengthens MU’s internationalization agenda.

Subtheme: Hiring staff with strengths related to internationalization. As a result of utilizing the two-tiered approach in prioritizing the network at the leadership and operational levels, MU has empowered individuals to lead initiatives that support the institution and the network. At the leadership level, the past president prioritized internationalization which led to MU being an inaugural member of the IN and the current president utilizes the IN as part of MU’s internationalization strategy. The level of commitment from the leadership has directly influenced individuals at the operational level to take on leadership roles to ensure that collaborative efforts are prioritized and successfully implemented.

The ability to lead and operationalize these collaborative projects across the IN as described above relates directly to how MU has hired the appropriate type and level of staff and administrators with experiences and strengths related to internationalization. In analyzing the backgrounds and interests of the interviewees, it became clear that MU’s institutional goal of recruiting top talent extended beyond researchers and academics to the staff at the operational level as well. All of the interviewees from MU had thoughtful responses related to what internationalization means to them and to their institution. It was clear that they were deeply aware of this topic, especially related to how their roles and how they were part of an institutional-wide strategy.

Individuals and their strengths as related directly to their field were of vital importance to the number of activities and outputs resulting from MU’s engagement with the IN. As mentioned above, six of the eight interviewees from MU had all taken lead
roles in overseeing an important program or project. All of these six individuals had unique backgrounds suited to their roles. For example, the student exchange committee representative from MU had years of experience working on internationalization and student mobility; the senior administrator from MU who supports MU’s internationalization strategy had work experience in three different continents; and the environment committee representative from MU had over 10 years of experience in sustainability.

Beyond work experiences, all six of the eight individuals who had a lead role in a large project from MU were deeply committed to their research and/or field. As Hunter described in the process of establishing a new summer course in Asia, there were several iterations of the concept paper that included collaborations with several network institutions as well as a global south partner and a dozen non-profit organizations for student internships. There was a complex level of coordination and management required of this new initiative, but Hunter led the efforts and it was a huge success. Similar to Hunter, the other six individuals who led projects were very passionate in speaking about their research topics and/or collaborative projects. These individuals’ interest in ensuring personal and institutional success directly correlated to their high level of engagement and leadership roles in their committees within the IN. Although it is up to individuals to take on additional responsibilities that are a part of collaborative projects, in reviewing these six individuals’ experiences related to the network-wide projects as well as their own personal backgrounds and interests, MU seemed to match these individuals to their roles effectively.
Theme 2: Adapting to the Network Challenges

As this study used the dynamic systems theory framework, it was important to analyze the IN at the network-level and how MU responded to the network’s system and structure. The IN is a relatively small network of about ten institutions. Document analysis and interviews revealed that the small size of the network of well-regarded institutions contributed to an increased number of collaborations because there was a sense of trust in all of the institutions. As a senior leader at an institution noted, “when we meet, we can be open about our issues and help each other become better instead of trying to impress each other” (Gus, Personal Communication, May 24, 2018). Trust and collaborations are directly linked, and this idea that trust is easier to be developed because of the small size of the network was echoed by most of the interviewees.

It was found that there were structural challenges that persist within the IN that can hinder progress at the leadership and operational levels. These challenges included uncertainty around vision; lack of communication; and differences related to systems and cultures. See Figure 4.2. In spite of these broader challenges, MU has successfully engaged in the IN in meaningful ways to further its internationalization agenda. This has largely been due to MU building on the foundation of relationships and established trust that has come with the history and size of the IN. While this relates more to the third theme and its subthemes, the idea of trust is also an important component that is embedded within how MU has adapted to these challenges related to the IN. Before describing how MU has addressed these challenges, the three subthemes around these challenges are discussed below. All three of these challenges are related to each other.
**Figure 4.2.** Key International Network challenges identified in this research study.

**Subtheme: Vision uncertainty.** The history of the IN plays a large role in the uncertainty around the network’s vision. The IN was launched a decade ago with a small group of about 10 institutions. It began with high-level engagement with senior leadership from most of the institutions; the leaders had a goal of increasing collaborative research efforts between the institutions. When research collaborations did not come together effectively, other initiatives, such as student mobility and the environment, were prioritized and these committees were launched when the senior leadership involvement at these committees was high (Personal communication, September 17, 2018).

Since the start of the IN, however, there has been a change in all of the member institutions’ leadership, and all senior administrators, except for two, are new to their roles (Jann, personal communication, May 24, 2018; Personal communication,
September 17, 2018). This includes the fact that all heads of the institutions affiliated with the network have changed in the past few years as well. At the presidential level, this has led to conversations around what the network means and although uncertain about its overall direction, the leaders find the network beneficial. From MU’s perspective, while there is some uncertainty regarding its vision, its president stated that they believe the network is going strong (Bonnie, personal communication, May 22, 2018). This is echoed by the leader at another institution who commented that their institution is “very satisfied being a part of the network” and believed the most important outputs from the network are the committees and their collaborations (Gus, personal communication, May 24, 2018).

In addition to the new leadership at the presidential and senior administrators’ levels, since a new institution takes the responsibility of being the secretariat every few years, there were additional changes to the primary network contact and leadership. A senior administrator noted that the IN mission statement had only been developed once when “expectations were very ambitious” and he was not sure what the mission statement or goals of the IN were now (Jann, personal communication, May 24, 2018). Several other senior administrators commented on the uncertainly related to the IN’s vision, including the MU participant who mentioned that while it is a great network, “Would there be some other way to go? You know, to make this . . . to have a goal or a vision...It kind of lacks that a little bit.” (Bonnie, personal communication, May 22, 2018). Jann also described how there was “a lot of trust and knowledge within the network that has developed over the years; and now, it has a different role than back in the early days” (Personal communication, May 24, 2018).
During a student exchange committee meeting the researcher observed, the participants reflected on this shift and the committee’s role within the IN. The student exchange committee was tasked with coming up with a new proposal for student courses and exchanges by the IN leadership as a key student program run by this committee had lost its funding. There was confusion and frustration, however, as the committee attempted to bring together ideas from various institutions into one proposal. In describing how the IN senior leadership had provided more guidance to the committee earlier in its history, one participant noted, “This came down on us, but now, it is difficult to understand what is required of us” (Personal communication, September 17, 2018). There were additional conversations related to the disappointment felt by many participants at the lack of leadership by the secretariat and the lack of guidance being provided by the IN’s leadership in more recent years (Personal communication, September 15, 2018).

Many of the participants in the student exchange committee meeting also commented on the declining role of the IN leadership and the lack of communication and understanding about committee expectations. The committee members were uncertain about the path forward especially with the changes in leadership and the decrease in available funds for a key program (Personal communication, September 17, 2018). The researcher attended the last student exchange committee meeting as the committee was dissolved soon after. At the time of writing, the IN leadership was working on a plan to either replace the committee or think of other ways to promote student exchange between institutions.
Subtheme: Lack of communication. The uncertainty about the overall vision and leadership changes has led to a disconnect between the operational and leadership levels. At the operational level, many participants commented on there not being a good medium for communication to or from the leadership, especially when some of the committees are seeking guidance around the committees’ and network goals. Jesse noted, “So, you are still getting orders from those above you but there is not a connection that makes it easier to respond to the demands of the senior level” (Personal communication, May 22, 2018). Hunter similarly said, “I sometimes experience a gap between the presidents, senior administrators, and those who are actually going to conduct the work” (Personal communication, June 8, 2018). Other committee members, however, have accepted the status quo and plan on continuing with the committee; Hestia noted that because the leadership “haven’t decided which direction we should go, I think they’re quite happy with us just knowledge sharing” (Personal communication, July 12, 2018).

As an observer in a student exchange committee meeting, the researcher also heard frustration in conversations around leadership expectations. Some felt that there was “passing the ball” as to who leads and how to take directions from the leadership. There was a clear need for guidance with the end of funding for a key program and committee members had asked for input from the leadership, but did not receive helpful responses. Related to this feedback from the committee to the senior administrators, several meeting attendees also described their sense of disappointment in the lack of leadership communication through the secretariat. While there was secretariat involvement, several attendees were frustrated that they did not have communication directly from the senior administrator at the secretariat. One committee member
commented on there not being a “real channel of communication or information” which is furthered by “who has what information at what time” due to the staggered meeting timing of the committee and the leadership (Personal communication, September 14, 2018). This has led to some confusion about whether the leadership is aware of committee questions and vice versa.

On the leadership end, of the eight senior administrators interviewed, all of them commented on the IN and its committees being a bottom-up led structure. As such, several senior administrators described their frustrations with some committees not understanding their feedback around committee members needing to lead initiatives. Liam described his attendance at one of the committee meetings which he felt was a waste of time because while “there were interesting conversations...you have to get somewhere” (Personal communication, July 3, 2018). Vincent had similar sentiments about the same committee and thought it was trying to be too ambitious, especially with respect to how much the committee was asking for financial support from the IN (Personal communication, July 23, 2018). In the interview with the representative from this committee, however, neither of these concerns were brought up as issues; the leadership’s concerns were either not communicated to the committee directly or were not being addressed by the committee.

Another example of the disconnect in communication and frustrations felt on both leadership and operation levels was manifested in interviews and field notes related to the student exchange committee. Several senior administrators commented on there needing to be an innovative new program as part of the student exchange committee, especially as the funding for a program was about to end. This feedback had apparently been provided
to the committee members for a few years, but “they keep coming up with the reiteration of the same program, but it needs to be something different” (Jaan, personal communication, May 24, 2018). Four of the senior administrators interviewed did acknowledge that there needed to be a clearer vision for the IN, but did not comment on to whether this led to the seemingly unfocused nature of some committees, including the student exchange committee.

Several senior administrators also commented on the need for committee members to take leadership roles, and that the secretariat was responsible for ensuring committees were moving forward. For example, Sam noted that change in committee leadership could lead to shift in priorities, but the secretariat needed to step in:

If the person who has the initiative has a clear vision and a commitment, then the [committee] will fly. If then the person moves on and someone else takes over the group without that vision and without that commitment...then, very soon, they start asking... well, what do the [leaders] expect us to do. They don’t have an expectation because the initiative was created bottom up but now, they expect the [leaders] to tell them top down what to do. It’s the role of the secretariat to motivate them, to keep them going. (Personal communication, May 24, 2018)

Many of the senior administrators commented on the successes of the environment committee. The more recently established facilities committee was also described as a successful collaborative effort. Interestingly, there were a few members of the facilities committee who were also in the environment committee, and the facilities committee was also modeled similar to the environment committee. Both had steering committees that meet virtually three to four times a year and a structured way of
approaching projects with institutional leadership (Dante, personal communication, May 24, 2018). Dante also commented on the environment committee’s evolving from smaller benchmarking projects to more complex projects of interest to the committee members, such as energy and other sustainability issues. This progression of the environment committee collaborating well enough to produce a book and organize large conferences is unique; it shows that these outputs were possible in this committee even with the changes in leadership at the network level and changes in staff and administrators at the steering committee level over the past decade.

In addition to the lack of a channel between the operational and leadership levels, committee members were also not aware of other committees’ activities. “It is a challenge when you have a network where you have activities and when the activities become a bit siloed” (Jesse, personal communication, May 22, 2018). Sam similarly noted, “I’m not sure about much of what [other committees] are doing. I am getting some materials…but it’s like a one-way communication” (Personal communication, May 22, 2018). During the student exchange committee meeting the researcher attended, one attendee asked about the IN committees and whether other committees were active or dormant (Personal communication, September 15, 2018). There was a sense of surprise amongst some of the meeting attendees that there were many active committees and some had or were working on interesting network-wide collaborative projects.

**Subtheme: Differences in systems and cultures.** The challenges related to vision uncertainty and communication are furthered by the fact that there are many institutions from throughout the world involved in the IN. Some committee members struggle to come to an understanding related to implementing ideas or changes due to
language and cultural differences (Sam, personal communication, May 22, 2018; Jaan, personal communication, May 24, 2018). Similarly, Jesse questioned, “We come from such different institutions and so many different backgrounds and cultures. How to implement change? What types of resources can each institution put into it?” (Personal communication, May 22, 2018). Thus, developing a vision and coordinating the staffing and financial resources to implement projects within committees can be a challenge as well.

The IN is of more significance and utilized more by some institutions than others. The prioritization of the IN for certain institutions, such as MU, means that there are more staff and financial resources available for initiatives related to the IN for staff, faculty, and students at those institutions. This has led to a “lopsided relationship where you’ve got some institutions contributing small amounts and some institutions contributing large amounts” (Vincent, personal communication, July 23, 2018). The “lopsided” contributions may also be due to the IN not being of significance to higher-ranking universities who may not as interested in pursuing additional activities (Hunter, personal communication, June 8, 2018). This kind of relationship with the IN is also furthered by institutions in regions with cultures that value the top down approach; for example, Gita noted that her experiences working with Asian institutions showed her that the senior leadership mandates to prioritize and collaborate on research has helped to increase these institutions’ relationships with the IN (personal communication, May 24, 2018).

These examples related to developing a vision within committees and only some institutions prioritizing the IN also illustrate that the IN is lacking in a strong network-
wide identity. Each institution with its different system and culture has branded the IN differently for their students, staff, and faculty (Jesse, personal communication, May 22, 2018). However, this has not been successful for the network because many individuals in the IN-affiliated institutions are not aware of the network or its activities (Hunter, personal communication, June 8, 2018). Even with the committee members who are deeply engaged in network activities, they are unsure of how to describe the IN’s mission and how it is of benefit to the institution and to them (Hunter).

These concerns were echoed in the student exchange committee meeting the researcher attended. A broader discussion around the meaning of the IN led to some committee members describing their challenges related to difficulties explaining what the network means. One participant noted there is “no common goal” and it was hard to describe how the network can fit within an institution’s goals (Personal communication, September 16, 2018). This is particularly the case as institutional goals are different for all of the institutions affiliated with the IN.

**Adapting to the challenges.** In spite of these broader challenges at the IN, MU has been able to utilize the IN as part of its internationalization agenda. MU is a former secretariat for the IN, and has had the leadership experience needed to understand how the network and committees function. As Gita described, “It’s important that each university sooner or later takes over the chair just for that kind of identification with the alliance” (Personal communication, May 24, 2018). Being the secretariat helped MU become more deeply engaged with the IN, and its identification as the secretariat at a broader scale has permeated to the committees and individuals involved with the IN.
Additionally, while MU has prioritized the IN as part of its platform for internationalization, it has also recognized its weakness in tangible research collaborations. Recently, MU joined the only other network that it is a part of at an institutional level, a European-wide network focused on research. The network has helped MU to apply for funding from the European Union. This has contributed to some successful applications and MU has become a top recipient of funds from Horizon 2020. While still in progress, MU is also dedicated to being involved with the new European Union-wide initiative, Networks of European Universities, which was proposed by the French President Emmanuel Macron in September 2017.

Responding to the lack of vision and silos being formed at the operational level, the MU president has established a new initiative to periodically meet with committee representatives and project leaders. The meetings primarily occur before the larger leadership meetings for the IN. These meetings provide a channel for committees to provide updates to and receive guidance directly from the senior leadership. This has also led to strengthened relationships between the leadership and committee representatives at MU. As Bonnie described, “we’ve kind of personalized it a little bit because before that, it was quite formal and everything was in writing” (Personal communication, May 24, 2018). As these meetings present opportunities for committee members to be introduced to each other and to get to know what the other committees are doing, MU administrators and staff have the added bonus of learning about how they can collaborate in the future part of MU departmental projects as well as network-wide initiatives.

Although there were a few interviewees from MU who commented on the lack of vision and uncertainty at the broader network level, MU has been able to brand the IN to
benefit itself. MU successfully launched a partnership with a large corporation recently to offer undergraduate and Master’s student scholarships for the summer or academic year. This partnership extends scholarships to students from the IN universities as well as two other prominent institutions. This exchange program is growing, and in 2017, there were 16 students who received scholarships to study at MU. This program has helped MU with the decrease in funding for the student exchange program within the IN. This partnership and student exchange program was important to have already been established since the senior leadership dissolved the student exchange committee and its collaborative exchange program in 2018.

Theme 3: Establishing Partnerships Beyond the Network

The IN is a key part of MU’s internationalization strategy. As such, MU has leveraged its connections with institutions affiliated with the IN to establish additional partnerships. These additional relationships have contributed to the institution’s prestige throughout the world and furthered MU’s internationalization agenda. Examples of these include bilateral exchange programs between MU and an institution within the IN to more complex programs, such as the scholarship program described above and a research center housed in MU. Trust was an important factor in all of these relationships and a key mechanism in ensuring that these partnerships were implemented successfully. Although intangible, trust and informal personal connections built over time between individuals throughout the network were significant concepts that ultimately supported how MU operationalized internationalization through the IN.

Subtheme: Leveraging connections to establish a research center. One of the largest initiatives that MU has leveraged from its association with the IN is a research
center that is based at MU. To preserve its anonymity, the research center will be described in general terms.

One of the eight primary and active committees within the IN is a research collaboration of the research center. Described by one interviewee as “the only living research collaboration” within the network, the research center has received governmental and private funding for its activities (Sam, personal communication, May 24, 2018). MU has and continues to contribute significant amounts of funding, and the IN has funded the smaller activities of the center related to the IN, including graduate student conferences. About five years ago, the research committee part of the IN restructured itself to form a smaller steering committee with representation from nine institutions within the IN.

For the first two years of this new steering committee, MU and the head of the research center took the lead in chairing the committee. The research center has been the “driving force” behind the committee and its many activities since the beginning (From documentation, April 2018). The steering committee has resulted in greater integration of the research center and its activities with the IN. It has developed a clear strategy with a focus on research and joint funding, and the steering committee is committed to meeting once a year in conjunction with a student conference and a scientific conference. The steering committee has established four themes as part of its mission statement, with one IN university taking the lead on each theme. MU is the lead on one of the themes. The committee produces many activities related to the research theme and the center, including large scientific conferences, meetings, and student networking and conference opportunities. Additionally, the center hosts two special summer courses with researchers
and scientists from the center. The courses are aimed at IN students, but are open to any Master’s level student or upper level undergraduate students.

In recent years, the center has advocated for and supported young researchers by hosting student conferences. Begun in 2012, this type of conference has taken place every two years and has been hosted by different universities within the IN. More recently, the student conference has been held every year in conjunction with the steering committee meeting and/or another larger conference or symposium on the research topic with researchers from all over the world. This level of support to students has been an important way for the research center to broaden its research impact and also establish deeper connections within and beyond the network.

For example, the center has also used its connections by being a part of IN to connect with another organization that advocates for innovation and entrepreneurship in the research field. During the two years that MU chaired the steering committee, the center established a connection with an organization that is connected with research centers, universities, and companies across 14 countries in Europe. As part of the summer courses the center hosts, one of them is in conjunction with this organization and it is an innovative online and on-campus course. The program has established an alumni program that supports students in their research endeavors by connecting them with for-profit and non-profit institutions part of the organization as well.

Subtheme: Gathering data and information from institutions in the network. Benchmarking analyses and the sharing of confidential data related to staffing, funding, and programs are some of the primary activities within the IN committees. Several of the committees conduct benchmarking analyses every year as these reports help individual
committee members plan for their units in their institutions (Hestia, personal communication, July 12, 2018). These analyses are important because they help institutions understand each other’s resources and areas where there could be synergies based on mutual interests (Bonnie, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

Additionally, the IN committees’ in-person meetings have been helpful for MU as the institution has expanded its international reach. Bonnie commented that as part of the network, “You really get to know these institutions quite well and you will have informal coffee talks…some of them [presidents] are really good friends also and that certainly opens new windows of opportunities that you wouldn’t be able to see if you just looked at the landscape of universities” (Personal communication, May 22, 2018). Hestia echoed this comment in her own experiences being a part of the committee meetings’ social dinners and activities:

And, walking together…you get to be with someone that you get really close to…you get to talk about your husband and your kids and you drink a lot of wine, and you enjoy yourself. Then, you really, really say what’s going on. For example, in discussing politics…And then, you can talk about what’s really going on within your whole organization. What you don’t want is for that to be in memos or notes… So it’s a lot about trust, and us knowing each other, and knowing each other over the years. (Personal communication, July 12, 2018)

These interactions have all been helpful for MU. Within the past few years, the institution has established a policy in which students from the IN institutions with an exchange partnership with MU do not pay tuition fees for the summer courses. MU also recently signed agreements with two institutions in Asia and Australia as part of a
bilateral partnership for student exchange, staff exchange, and closer research collaborations (Bonnie, personal communication, May 22, 2018). More recently, the partnership with the institution in Australia has further expanded to include a research fund for joint research proposals between the two institutions.

Overall, for MU, the progression of getting to know other institutions began within the IN committees as part of their initial benchmarking analyses. The leadership and operational levels became more deeply engaged with the network as the individuals developed informal relationships with their counterparts at other institutions. This led to the implementation of bilateral partnerships and agreements between institutions.

**Subtheme: Developing informal and personal connections.** All MU participants commented on feelings of trust and friendship between individuals that has developed with other administrators within the IN. This extended to most of the interviewees at all of the IN institutions. In fact, the word “trust” was used 43 times by 14 participants in relation to the benefits of being a part of the network.

The idea of trust between individuals within the IN permeated throughout all of the themes identified in this research study. It was clear that without this feeling of trust, the activities coming out of the network would not be possible. The relative small number of institutions connected within the IN has contributed to the development of strong relationships between individuals at the leadership and operational levels. One senior administrator noted that trust was important because there was already an established sense of “peer institutions” which helped to decrease feelings of competitiveness and made meetings more productive (Gus, personal communication, May 24, 2018). Another participant commented on the small number of institutions and individuals involved
within the network, “The secret of the network is the number” (Gita, personal communication, May 24, 2018). Additionally, MU as an institution is only part of one other network of higher education institutions; the IN is the only one that is a truly global network as it encompasses institutions throughout the world. As such, there is great value in sharing information and learning from other institutions about challenges related to universities (Bonnie, personal communication, May 22, 2018).

Although this idea of informal and personal connections formed by the network was a part of all interviews, it was the most salient with the interviewees from MU. Beyond the activities of the network, individuals at MU have used the network as part of their personal network. Interviewees commented on e-mailing and calling others within the network to ask for advice related to their other responsibilities (Bonnie, personal communication, May 22, 2018; Jesse, personal communication, May 22, 2018; Hestia, personal communication, July 12, 2018).

Since relationships have become informal, there is an understanding of quick responses. Hestia cited an example of a governmental report she was completing for her job that required a trend analysis, and she was able to use her network effectively:

So, we have a network where we ask a question and we get replies immediately in one day. And it's not every part the network, but with [the number of] institutions [in the network] where you can receive responses from six or seven countries, that is enough because you get the idea (Personal communication, July 12, 2018).

True friendships have also developed with the individuals at MU associated with the committees within the network. For example, at the conclusion of one interview as the researcher was leaving, one interviewee bid goodbye and asked the researcher to give
their best wishes to a colleague in another country and commented that their families had connected during travels abroad.

MU has supported the cultivation of trust by prioritizing the IN amongst the staff, students, and faculty. The increased amounts of funding and continued interest in furthering international collaborations have greatly contributed to the level of engagement at the operational level. This has directly helped with the broader implementation of MU’s internationalization goals of expanding its global reach and recruiting top international talent, including faculty, administrators, and students.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed analysis of the three themes and its nine subthemes that emerged from the research study. The first two themes described the overall activities related to how MU prioritized and supported the IN at all levels, including the leadership, operational, and individual levels. This level of commitment and support, in turn, led to increased activities and benefits to MU’s internationalization agenda. These two themes directly related to the first theoretical proposition because they described how internationalization is a part of all of the levels, including the broader network-wide level. The third theme demonstrated how MU leveraged its connection with the IN to further implement its broader internationalization goals by understanding how other institutions work and developing broader partnerships. This third theme related to the second proposition that supported how using a network is an effective tool to further internationalization.

In addition to in-depth documentation and archival analysis, eight individuals from MU were interviewed and an additional 10 interviewees from five other institutions
affiliated with the network were interviewed. The data showed that there was a strong relationship between how involved the leadership was in the network to the level of engagement and amount of activity in the operational and individual levels. MU was strategic in its vision and goals, and that has resulted in its hiring top talent throughout the institution. Furthermore, in spite of challenges associated with the IN, MU has been able to use the network as a platform to implement smaller and large-scale programs as part of an institutional-wide mission and strategy.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations for Practice

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand the complexities of implementing internationalization for higher education administrators in one institution that is involved in an international research network. The research question guiding this study was: How do higher education administrators in a European institution implement internationalization through an international network? This chapter provides a discussion of the findings and themes from the previous chapter as they relate to the theoretical framework and the three theoretical propositions. The three themes and nine subthemes described in Chapter 4 will be discussed in relation to the relevant literature. This chapter will conclude with recommendations for practice and for future research on internationalization in higher education within the context of networks.

Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework

This case study used the dynamic systems theory (DST) as developed by Zhou (2016) to help frame the research question, data collection, and the findings. All of the three themes presented in this study align closely with the DST. The main principles of the DST can be summarized as follows:

- Dynamic systems are a multitude of systems that change over time;
- There are two states of dynamic systems (initial and attractor) with parameters that can propel or stop systems;
- The environment plays a large role in systemic changes;
- There are five levels (global, national, institutional, programmatic, and personal) and five components within these levels (purposes, outcomes, programs, approaches, and projects);
Each of these five levels can be visualized as steps – moving up from the individual and personal level to the global level;

The five components within these progressing levels help to answer the why, where, how, and what occurs as part of the processes related to internationalization strategies.

Applying these principles from the DST to this case study of Mainland University (MU) using the International Network (IN) helped to structure the research study and its findings as described in three themes. The research question and the themes in this study addressed all five levels described by Zhou (2016). In this analysis of the five levels as related to this research, the five components help to showcase how MU uses the IN. This case study may help higher education administrators conceptualize how their institutions can generally use networks as part of their internationalization strategies.

The first theme related to the prioritization of the network at both the leadership and operational levels. This provided a lens for viewing how the IN is important to everyone associated with the network at MU. Zhou (2016) described that the relationships between the broader levels (global, national, institutional) and the smaller levels (program and personal) are interconnected and interactive. In this case study, the leadership and operational levels are analogous to Zhou’s larger and smaller levels. Thus, it is important to consider the factors and relationships between and within these levels.

The second theme described the IN’s challenges and how MU has adapted to these challenges. This theme directly relates to the five components as described by Zhou (2016) – purposes, programs, approaches, projects, and outcomes. The analysis of these components as part of the challenges and how MU has addressed these challenges help to
answer the why, where, how, and what MU has enacted in its goal to incorporate internationalization in its mission.

The third theme focused on how MU has leveraged its connections and relationships from within the IN to partnerships at smaller and broader scales beyond the network. This theme relates to Zhou’s (2016) five components, particularly the broader “outcomes” component. This theme also connects more broadly with one of the key tenets of the DST and the open systems theory described in chapter 1 in that systems are constantly changing and the environment plays a large role in supporting systemic changes. More specifically, as related to MU, partnerships formed beyond the IN help the institution at a global scale in its branding and its impact. This includes the recruitment of top talent and MU’s impact as it continues to support strong collaborations and produce significant research to benefit society. This effect on MU, in turn, supports the IN in MU’s deeper engagement within committees and producing tangible outputs.

Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Propositions

Based on the literature review as described in detail in Chapter 2 on network models and internationalization strategies, two theoretical propositions were proposed. Both of these propositions listed below were supported by this case study.

3. Internationalization in institutions occurs at various levels, and it is important to have a holistic view by looking at the global, national, institutional, program, and individual levels.

4. While there are challenges, the network model is an effective tool to amplify an institution’s internationalization strategy.
The first proposition related to Zhou’s (2016) dynamic systems theory in its linking of the various levels with respect to how this study analyzed leadership and operational levels. Previous research has also shown that internationalization implementation occurs at several levels (Hawawini, 2016; Seeber, Cattaneo, Huisman, & Paleari, 2016). Seeber et. al. (2016) described many factors at the environmental, organizational, and intra-organizational levels and how they each contributed to the implementation of internationalization at an institution. For example, internationalization functions at a broader level related to institutional collaborations and prestige at the senior leadership level whereas internationalization is more strongly associated with benchmarking and building cooperation at the operational and middle management level (Seeber et al., 2016). This further supports this study’s use of the dynamic systems theory framework as an effective tool in providing both a broader level and specific level overview of how an institution uses a network as part of its internationalization strategy.

In assessing how MU utilized the IN as part of the second theoretical proposition, while it did not fit precisely within the concept of a “network model” as defined for this case study, the theoretical proposition was still supported. Chapman et. al.’s (2014) definition of networks as cross-border collaborations around a broad set of goals was used. This study defined the network model to be more inclusive of physical and virtual traits as part of an institution’s components related to internationalization, such as physical centers abroad and the use of technology and digitization. For example, at the time of writing, MU did not have a physical presence abroad. However, MU’s renowned research center as described in this study exemplifies many of the components related to the physical and virtual traits as part of a network model. The research center offers
student exchange programs and organizes annual student conferences in different regions throughout the world. Additionally, although MU is not currently a part of the IN’s online course initiative, it does offer other courses with both on campus and online components.

The second proposition also listed that there are inherent challenges to utilizing network models. This case study identified a few of the challenges in the IN: vision uncertainty, lack of communication, and differences in systems and cultures as there are many institutions throughout the world. Despite these challenges, MU was able to utilize the IN as a way to leverage connections with affiliated institutions as part of an effective strategy to support its internationalization efforts.

**Theme 1: Prioritizing the Network**

MU’s two-tiered approach in prioritizing the International Network at both the leadership and operational levels stems from the strong internal commitment to MU’s strategic plan that included internationalization. Internal strategy is an important part of institutional commitment that ensures its success (Van Dijk & Meijer, 1997). As part of the overarching theme of prioritizing the network, the subtheme related to senior leadership’s commitment to internationalization was also supported by previous research. For example, in Kettler’s (2018) study of three institutions, she found that all of the university presidents were a key component of internationalization efforts and concluded that strong leadership and vision are important to how internationalization can be implemented successfully. All three presidents Kettler studied were committed to internationalization and prioritized it as part of an institutional-wide strategy.

Related to the second subtheme at the operational level, as described in Chapter 2, Van Dijk and Meijer (1997) also found that an institution’s increased level of priority on
internationalization led to more effective policies and results. This was related directly to how the institutions were strongly positioned operationally, with respect to an increased budget and talented faculty and staff. A stronger level of commitment to the operational level of internationalization resulted in higher results (Van Dijk & Meijer, 1997). This supports the finding from this case study at MU that found that supporting the IN at the leadership level resulted with the institution leading initiatives and following through with projects through the network’s committees.

This finding in a European institution is further supported by more recent research on how institutions throughout the world incorporate internationalization as part of an institutional strategic plan. Hunter et al. (2015) described that of the 604 institutions surveyed on internationalization of higher education in Europe, 61% of them indicated that they had an internationalization policy. As was the case with MU, internationalization is an important component of institutional strategic plans in most European HEIs.

While MU’s commitment was an important factor for why individuals were empowered to take leadership roles in committees, it is also clear that individual personalities and strengths contributed to the energy and progression of collaborative efforts. Several participants from MU commented that leading or being a part of projects for the IN were additional to their full-time roles at their institutions, but there was an understanding that these activities would support their performance reviews as well. The interviewees were all passionate about their committees and projects. The right talent for the positions seemed to be an important part of how MU was able to be such an effective leader at the programmatic, institutional, and network levels.
This idea of a well-matched individual in the right role for international activities could be related to the European culture of internationalization more broadly. Several of the participants commented on their interest in international activities stemming from their own prior experiences, including personal experiences such as the Erasmus student mobility program. As detailed in the literature review related to internationalization in Europe in Chapter 2, students who participate in the Erasmus program have demonstrated intercultural and other soft skills that help increase their employability in the future (Coryell et al., 2012; Hunter et al., 2015; Mattern, 2016).

Related to this concept, at the institutional level, MU’s culture likely also contributes to how its faculty and administrators think about internationalization. Interviewees being deeply interested and passionate about the topics and committees also emerged as a reason as to why individuals at MU were more engaged with the IN. This is likely related to an overarching European culture of a top-down internationalization approach with policies set by the European Council or European Commission (De Wit & Merkx, 2012). For example, the year 2008 was established as the “Year of Intercultural Dialogue” by the Council of Europe and the European Union (Castro et al., 2016). The promoted white paper describing this theme from the Council of Europe described the importance of openness and respectful views that foster cooperation (Castro et al., 2016).

More recently, in December 2017, the European Union, European Council, and the European Commission announced a call for European Union universities to develop networks of institutions that focus on innovative and student-centered curricula that are jointly delivered across campuses (“European Universities Initiative,” 2018; Navracsics, 2018). For 2019, this call for applications offers 30 million Euros of funding to six
innovative network models ("European Universities Initiative," 2018). This broader European culture of intercultural exchanges and even networks of universities is embedded in individuals at MU. Thus, this internationalization culture manifests itself at the operational level in the progress and activities being implemented at the institutional level, especially through the committees within the IN.

Bartell’s (2003) detailed framework related to organizational culture supports these findings from MU. In addition to MU having a hierarchical organizational structure in which the leadership prioritizes internationalization, norms and shared values within MU’s organizational culture are also important factors that support the implementation of internationalization at the operational level. As Bartell described, an institution with a culture of openness to external forces and with a hierarchical structure that supports creative innovation and passion provides “an integrated cultural underpinning” that allows for effective internationalization (p. 66). In MU’s case, in assessing internationalization through the dynamic systems theory, as a European institution, globally and regionally, it is responding to globalization within the context of the European culture of cooperation and openness; institutionally, it is a priority and the leadership values it as a part of a strategic plan; programmatically, it is operationalized with enough staffing and funding resources; and individually, faculty, administrators, and staff are well-suited and feel passionate about their roles. These are all embedded cultural characteristics that tie in Bartell’s organizational culture framework to Zhou’s (2016) dynamic systems theory.
Theme 2: Adapting to Network Challenges

In analyzing the IN at a network-wide level and through the dynamic systems theory framework, three main challenges were identified: vision uncertainty, lack of communication, and differences in systems and cultures. Before discussing these challenges and MU’s approach to the IN, it is important to describe how the IN and its size was seen to be successful by all participants.

Effectiveness of the IN. An assessment or an evaluation as cited in the literature (Leite & Pinho, 2017) of the IN has not been conducted in the last decade. Quantitative and qualitative measures have focused on student surveys as part of the student exchange program. Additionally, a few committees regularly conduct surveys after committee meetings and after the completion of collaborative projects. These surveys address a few of the principles described by Leite and Pinho as necessary to measure the effectiveness of research collaborations and other benchmarking analyses.

Although not measured quantitatively or through surveys, the qualitative data gathered by this study found that participants did view the IN to be an effective and successful network. The small size of the network with approximately ten institutions was frequently described as a strength as it led to strong relationships between individuals. Previous research has shown that the larger the network, the greater the access of availability of resources for all institutions part of the network (Chapman, Pekol, & Wilson, 2014; Van Hove, 2014). Larger networks magnify the network effect in their pooling of the many institutions’ resources (Chapman et al., 2014; Van Hove, 2014). This idea was brought up by a few of the participants in this study in that the small size of the network meant there were fewer funding sources for several projects that some
committees wanted to undertake. Additionally, for one smaller institution in particular, one participant noted that the size of the network meant that it was challenging to find research collaborators at the other International Network institutions as the area of importance to that institution was not a priority to the other institutions. Hudzik (2015) noted this to be an overall drawback in partnerships as well – strategic plans for institutions do not always match up to collaborative partnerships’ strategic plans or visions.

In a study of five networks in the Netherlands, however, the researchers found that the smaller “subnetworks” within networks that were designed for specific tasks were more efficient at division of labor and task specialization which allowed for more effective use of resources (Akkerman et al., 2012). This latter research is more relatable to the IN as it is a smaller network, and MU specifically has adapted to utilizing network resources through its deeper engagement with the committees.

Research in the social sciences has demonstrated that smaller groups have higher levels of trust and cooperation. For example, optimal distinctiveness theory details that smaller groups are inherently more cooperative because people want to be a part of groups that are small enough to feel inclusive but big enough to be distinctive (La Macchia, Louis, Hornsey, & Leonardelli, 2016; Leonardelli & Loyd, 2016). Smaller groups are also associated with greater collective responsibility, and when groups grow larger than 100 to 200 members, trust is decreased because there is a limitation to the number of interpersonal contacts one is able to manage (Dunbar, 1995 and 1998 as cited in La Macchia et al., 2016). La Maccia et al.’s experiments supported previous findings.
and demonstrated that people trust smaller groups because of inherent beliefs that such
groups are trustworthy and benevolent.

Directly related to the International Network, its small size was also seen to be of
benefit in the building of trust between individuals. The president of one institution
described the IN as an alliance of peer institutions that allowed for more relaxed
conversations without a sense of competition. Although there were some institutions
within the IN that could be seen as competitors, participants described the network as a
platform that allowed for a natural progression of trust with all involved individuals,
including the senior and operational levels. This is also due to the standardized
integration of professional development and informal social gatherings as part of the
committee meetings and other network-related activities. Previous research has also
identified that the integration of professional development and other efforts to build
community foster strong relationships and collaborations coming out of the network
(Castro et al., 2016).

**Vision uncertainty and lack of communication.** Related to the first two
challenges identified within the IN, changes in leadership contributed to the uncertainty
around the vision and the future of the IN. This was furthered by a lack of
communication from the leadership to the operational level. For example, several
individuals at the operational level described the committees as historically being a top-
down led structure with senior leadership direction and involvement. This sentiment was
echoed by many attendees in a network meeting related to the student exchange program
the researcher attended. All of the senior leaders interviewed, however, commented on
the committees being a bottom-led structure and pointed to the successes in the tangible
activities produced by committees that understood this structure and the decreased role of
the leadership. Interestingly, the leadership decided to not fund the committee related to
the student exchange program moving forward. It was clear that there was a shift in the
way the leadership viewed committee structures in more recent years, but this was not
communicated effectively or understood by many of those interviewed or heard from
through the network-wide meetings the researcher attended at the operational level.

**Differences in systems and cultures.** The broader regional and national
strategies contribute to the inherent differences in systems and cultures that exacerbate
vision uncertainty and lack of communication. As described in Chapter 2, regional
strategies throughout the world differ in their approach to internationalization in higher
education. With institutions from different systems and cultures as part of a network,
there is an even greater need for an agreement around vision and a more concerted effort
to communicate effectively.

All three of these interrelated challenges are not unique to the IN. Research in
other networks demonstrated that there needs to be a consensus around a vision and
priorities, and coordination through communication and effective systems must be in
place (Akkerman et al., 2012; Castro et al., 2016; Pfotenhauer, Jacobs, Pertuze, Newman,
& Roos, 2013). As described in chapter 2, successful networks with institutions from
throughout the world have a clear mission and shared objectives that support trust and
effective collaborations (Ackland et al., 2017; Bowry & Teather, 2005; Teichler, 2017).
Operational complexity with respect to how to coordinate tasks and activities and the
number of shared objectives increase with the addition of many HEIs as part of one
network. Thus, without the recognition of priorities and the understanding of different
resources and capacities of each of the HEI as part of the network, long-term sustainability and the prospect of success is not likely (Chapman et al., 2014).

Adapting to challenges. Adaptation is a complex concept as related to how higher education institutions respond to internal and external forces in planning for and implementing internationalization strategies. This is especially the case with challenges related to institutions being a part of networks. MU has addressed each of the three identified challenges by prioritizing the IN to advance its internationalization strategy and recognizing where the IN does not fit with institutional goals. For example, MU has joined a European-wide network with the goal of increasing research efforts and is also seeking to be a part of the new Networks of European Universities. As Sutton (2018) described, successful partnerships are the result of careful planning and while the original founders of the partnerships may change, those involved sustain relationships and “demonstrate a wonderful sense of flexibility, openness, and innovation” (p. 20). MU has enacted this concept by ensuring that the IN remains a priority with the leadership with supports MU to take leading roles to help operationalize activities within committees.

Additionally, as described in the literature review in Chapter 2, institutions utilizing virtual initiatives through technology were able to be more innovative in expanding their international reach (Bruhn, 2017; Caniglia et al., 2017; Ruiz-Corbella & Álvarez-González, 2014). As described previously, although MU is not involved in the formalized online course initiative with other institutions within the IN, MU uses technology to engage students and faculty through its research center. Additionally, MU was a key institution part of the summer exchange program that had online components
and it led the efforts related to an exciting summer field course in a developing country in Asia that utilized videoconferencing tools.

**Theme 3: Establishing Partnerships Beyond the Network**

As seen from the previous two themes that emerged from this research, MU prioritizes and utilizes the IN as a key component of its internationalization strategy. MU has benefitted from the IN through its increased connections and institutional partnerships that have contributed to additional exchanges and programs for MU.

MU has recognized that while institutional partnerships are important, they also require a high level of commitment at the senior leadership and operational levels. With this understanding, MU has used the IN to carefully choose institutional partners for additional degree or other student exchange opportunities. This is aligned with research on successful models of institutional partnerships. Taylor (2016) described that there are nine stages as part of a successful model for how institutions can establish partnerships. This model emphasized that institutions need to be deeply committed at all stages, including the very last stage (sustaining partnerships). Amey and Eddy (2015) designed a similar model with seven components, but it also included an interesting idea of a progression of relationships from the “first order” in which relationships are ad hoc and superficial to the “second order” in which there is a higher level of communication to focus on priorities. This directly relates to the contributing factor to the successes related to the IN and to MU’s use of the network: trust.

**Trust.** Trust was described as important many times by all participants at the leadership level due to the small number of institutions that are a part of the network and at the operational level with individual relationships. In the social sciences, trust is a
function of various experiences and relationships. Creed and Miles (1996) describe several ways to think about trust that applies directly to this case study. Trust can be built in many ways; in the International Network, it is process-based – defined as through personal experiences and recurring contact and exchanges. Reciprocity and continued contact leads to long-term commitment and mutual obligations and expectations. Additionally, Creed and Miles explain how the attitudes of managers and leaders set trust expectations within organizations. In relating this idea to this case study, Mainland University leadership level’s trust in the other institutions part of the network when it was established likely permeated to how trust was seen and internalized by individuals at the operational level. This may be the case with individuals at the other network institutions as well.

Creed and Miles (1996) also describe how trust is important for network firms to function effectively. Their definition of network firms are similar to how networks are defined for this case study, primarily that they must be adaptive to external forces. Investing in trust at all levels of an organization means that cooperative actions should start the process of trust building, as this leads to a sense of obligation and cooperation. This idea also relates to the optimal distinctiveness theory described above as part of the second theme.

This can also be observed in the literature on networks and partnerships between institutions. Sutton (2018) provided numerous examples of successful international partnerships with institutions from various countries. In addition to being flexible and open to changes, these partnerships were successful because, among other characteristics, there was a strong sense of trust and transparency. Dixon et al. (2013), Duffield et al.
(2013), and Ackland et al. (2017) all also described the importance of trust and fairness in order for partnerships to be successful. Related, Dixon et al. (2013) also detailed how face-to-face meetings and the commitment to being physically present to visit partners and go to meetings help to cultivate stronger relationships. MU’s senior leadership is present at network-wide meetings and the institution is especially well represented in committee meetings. Overall, trust was important to how MU approached and was able to use the IN by establishing strong relationships for its own benefit but also being open about and leading benchmarking efforts to benefit the network as a whole as well.

**Recommendations for Practice**

As described in chapters 1 and 2, network models that incorporate alliances and partnerships with multiple institutions can be an important part of an institution’s internationalization strategy. The findings from this study offer three recommendations for practice that may be helpful for higher education administrators to consider when they contemplate the benefits of networks and ways to leverage opportunities by being a part of a network.

The recommendations below support the dynamic systems theory framework as used for this study in that networks as part of an internationalization strategy should be incorporated at all levels – global, national, institutional, programmatic, and personal. At the global and national levels, the reasons for forming and being a part of a network need to address a need that is responding to global forces; at the institutional and programmatic levels, the network should be a priority that adds value to faculty, staff, and students; at a personal and individual level, the network should offer opportunities to support interpersonal relationships that can lead to trust and strong partnerships.
Recommendation 1: Develop a communication plan, including a strong mission statement. One of the underlying challenges of the network that was studied was that there was a lack of strong communication that related directly to a loose and unstructured mission statement. This statement became particularly unclear with the leadership changes in the decade since the network’s inception.

Before a network is formally announced or launched, the leadership team within a network should develop a communication plan that addresses the goals of the network and how it can be best described internally and externally. The leadership also needs to come up with a mission statement that embodies the vision of the network. With respect to a network that is being reshaped from its original purpose, it would still be helpful if the senior leadership developed another or a clearer mission statement. The committees and those involved should be given an opportunity to weigh in. As a consensus may not be possible on specific changes, an opportunity to weigh in would be helpful from key committee members to ensure that the vision captures the many activities of the network. The overall mission should be responsive to global forces considering that is the point of many institutional internationalization strategies. This flexibility will help the network to remain adaptable to changing external forces.

Beyond the mission statement, and related to the communication plan, the senior leadership should also create a set of documents, including one with general talking points related to the vision and mission of the network and one that serves as a guide for expectations related to the secretariat and the committees. These documents may be helpful if they are already a part of an online portal with institutional access so that they can be easily accessible and can be edited if necessary. These documents will help with
the branding of the network so that, while each institution may be using the network in
different ways, there will be an understanding about the overarching network-wide
responsibilities and goals.

**Recommendation 2: Empower the secretariat to be the key facilitator.** In this
study, there was a sense of misunderstanding regarding the secretariat and its role within
the IN. The unfocused nature of communication and frustrations over the disconnect with
feedback between the leadership and operational levels may have lessened if the
leadership within the secretariat had been more engaged. This recommendation is directly
related to the first recommendation emphasizing a communication plan because this plan
should also define the role of the secretariat.

The institution that is the secretariat for the network needs to recognize that it is
an important role to ensure that all institutions and committees are on board with the
vision and mission of the network. The commitment to being the secretariat and the
efforts required to maintain strong relationships and responsibilities need to happen at all
levels, including at the highest levels of the institutional leadership. Thus, before an
institution takes on the secretariat role, expectations about the responsibilities need to be
clearly laid out, so that the senior leadership within the institution is also involved. With
this level of commitment and engagement, the secretariat may feel more empowered to
make decisions and give the critical feedback needed to committees who may be
unfocused or unclear about collaborative efforts. The secretariat will also need to provide
clear directives that committees and committee leads need to be engaged and involved in
order to move forward with network-wide projects.
Recommendation 3: Encourage individualized strategies for each institution.

The institution studied for this research was able to utilize the IN to develop strong relationships and to leverage connections into partnerships beyond activities related to the network. This extended to student involvement as part of joint conferences, and individual administrators and faculty members who were able to form strong interpersonal relationships that led to successful collaborative projects.

Collaborative initiatives at all levels should be encouraged. While network-wide activities, such as those that include some or all institutions should be the primary focus for the senior leadership and the secretariat, opportunities for individual relationships to form should also be incorporated as part of meeting agendas. Institutions are at various stages of or are thinking about internationalization strategies in different ways. As such, each institution should be able to utilize the network in innovative ways depending on their goals. This may lead to different levels of contributions by each institution to the network, but this can also yield strong partnerships that would not have been possible without the platform of the network. Hudzik (2015) described this kind of network structure as advantageous because in this way, a network can offer introductions to a range of different institutions but specific collaborative efforts can still be limited to a few network institutions. Lopsided contributions to the network are not damaging as long as there are enough network-wide initiatives that are being supported by the senior leadership and secretariat. For both network-wide and institutional initiatives, it is important for individuals to engage at a personal level for broader implementation strategies and ideas to be operationalized successfully.
Recommendations for Future Research

As described in Chapter 2, there has been a progression of higher education institutions using internationalization frameworks that use networks to amplify their strategies. As the dynamic systems theory (DST) shows, it is also important to consider the interconnected levels and relationships that affect the planning and implementation of internationalization strategies. As such, the DST is a useful framework to consider in assessing internationalization strategies in higher education. This study is the first that has used the DST framework since Zhou (2016) applied it to describe internationalization efforts at Stockton University.

Three primary areas have emerged from this case study as recommendations to pursue in future research related to networks and internationalization strategies.

**Recommendation 1: Compare the International Network’s use at other institutions.** As is with case studies, this research focused on one institution. This study found that the institution used the network effectively for its internationalization efforts while also contributing to the network. This study interviewed participants from five other institutions part of the network. It was clear from these interviewees that other institutions also prioritized the network and were invested in its success as well. In fact, several of the participants from the other five institutions were co-chairs of committees and/or helped to lead some of the larger projects described in this study. One participant from another European institution in the network was also heavily involved in coordinating another large project not described in this study that was built from an initial benchmarking analysis. Thus, it would be interesting to understand how the network is being utilized at other institutions associated with the network, and to see if similar or
other themes emerge from studying these institutions. This would especially be the case to analyze institutions from various regions throughout the world to understand how historical regional strategies do or do not contribute to how individuals and institutions are thinking about and operationalizing internationalization related to networks.

**Recommendation 2: Compare the International Network to other networks.**

Metcalfe’s Law states that the value of a network grows by the square of the size of the network. This is part of the network effect as described in Chapter 1. In theory, size is important and the larger the network, the greater the access of availability of resources for all institutions part of the network (Chapman et al., 2014; Van Hove, 2014). This study, however, found that the small network size was an important factor in the level of trust and informal relationships that were formed. Thus, it would be interesting to compare this network to others of similar size or larger to determine whether the key themes found in this study are present in other networks.

**Recommendation 3: Investigate the senior leadership in European institutions working on internationalization.** This study presented the idea that the individuals interviewed at the case study site were particularly suited to their roles due to their own personal histories and experiences and the culture of internationalization in Europe. This directly relates to the literature detailed in Chapter 2 that describes regional strategies. The history and broader regional strategies can affect how HEIs in specific regions respond to global trends and consider internationalization strategies. Further research on factors that contribute to senior administrators’ roles in internationalization strategies and their personal and professional experiences may confirm or provide additional insights into whether the history of internationalization in Europe has and
continues to develop individuals more committed and better suited to thinking about and understanding internationalization strategies in spite of global challenges.

**Conclusion**

The research question for this study was: How do higher education administrators in a European institution implement internationalization through an international network? Zhou’s (2016) dynamic systems theory framed the research, and Yin’s (2018) postpositivist approach and an explanatory case study analysis helped to structure the findings into three themes and nine subthemes. The three primary themes were: Prioritizing the network; adapting to the network challenges; and establishing partnerships beyond the network. This study identified three key themes in how one institution in Europe is utilizing its association with an international network of alliances. It was a unique case study as it focused on one significant part of the institution’s internationalization strategy – one network that includes institutions from all over the world. This chapter provided a detailed analysis of these three themes and its nine subthemes from Chapter 4 in relation to the dynamic systems theory framework and the two theoretical propositions. Both of the theoretical propositions were ultimately supported by this research.

As described in Chapter 1, research on networks and institutions’ use of networks as part of an internationalization strategy is lacking. This case study was also the first since Zhou (2016) to use the dynamic systems theory framework to analyze internationalization in an institution. This research specifically focused on how an international network is used by an institution at the global, national, institutional, programmatic, and individual levels. The findings highlighted that the history and
broader regional strategies can affect how HEIs in specific regions respond to global trends and consider internationalization strategies. The values of intercultural understanding and cooperation in Europe support the organizational structure and culture of internationalization in institutions like MU. Trust was also an important component as to why the IN was seen to be successful and how MU was able to utilize the developed relationships to establish partnerships beyond network-wide activities. More research needs to be done, however, to compare and analyze best strategies for prioritizing and using international networks.
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Appendix: Interview Questions

Date: 

Place: 

Time of Interview: 

Interviewer: Pushpa Asia Neupane

Interviewee name (Pseudonym) and title: 

RESEARCH QUESTION: How do higher education administrators in a European institution implement internationalization through an international network?

Interviewee Background (5-10 minutes)

A. Interviewee Background

1) Can you tell me a little bit about your background and interests?

2) How did you come to work at this institution?

3) Tell me about your position. What does your position entail?

B. Interview Questions -- Semi-structured format

1. I am using the widely accepted definition of internationalization as a continual process. What does internationalization mean to you?

2. Please tell me about your program and project that is a part of the International Network. What is the network’s mission and how does it fit into your work?

3. Can you tell me about the process to have your work be a part of the network? Please describe how you got involved with this network.

4. I am looking at internationalization in a holistic way by using the dynamic systems framework that looks at processes very broadly and then, specifically by departments and programs and projects. Can you describe in detail the process for how you did or would begin a collaboration with an institution part of the network or the network itself? How does it work at the broadest to the smallest levels?

5. How did you design or plan and implement the activity you are associated with the network? Can you describe the planning, who you worked with, and how it came about in detail? Please also describe how funding works if it is related to how you were able to implement your activities.
6. What do you see as the benefits of being a part of this network? Please give me an example or tell me about a time when you witnessed the benefits of the network come together.

7. How do you document interactions and/or activities that comprise part of the network dynamics? Can you tell me what you use to document activities?

8. What are the biggest challenges that you have encountered at the broadest and smallest levels of network implementation? Can you tell me 1-2 examples?

9. What are some challenges that you see even if you may not have experienced them?

10. What problem-solving strategies have you used during challenges or how would you approach challenges that you have witnessed or think may occur as part of this network?

11. How do you define success related to your efforts and activities you are involved in as part of this network?

12. How do you assess any metrics related to your activities part of the network? (I.e. Do you have annual statistics with reports or other kinds of program reports?)