Conceptualizing Competence in The International Summer School at the University of Oslo

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Contents

CONTENTS .................................................................................................................. 2
PREFACE ...................................................................................................................... 6
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................................................. 8

1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................... 9
   1.1 THE BACKGROUND .......................................................................................... 9
   1.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS ......................... 9
   1.3 THE OUTLINE ................................................................................................ 12

2. CASE PRESENTATION ............................................................................................. 14
   2.1 THE INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL ...................................................... 14
   2.2 MAIN OBJECTIVES ....................................................................................... 14
   2.3 THE ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCE .......................................... 16
   2.4 AHEAD OF OTHERS ..................................................................................... 17

3. THEORETICAL CONCEPTIONS ............................................................................. 19
   3.1 TERMINOLOGY AND UNDERSTANDING OF COMPETENCE ......................... 19
       3.1.1 The Concept of competence and change in meaning ................................ 19
       3.1.2 The Concept of Competence – documents ........................................... 20
   3.2 QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION - INTERPRETATIONS ............................ 23
       3.2.1 The concept of quality – documents .................................................... 24
       3.2.2 Expectations to Changes in Conceptualizing Quality ............................. 28
   3.3 KNOWLEDGE .................................................................................................. 29

4. THEORETICAL APPROACHES ............................................................................. 30
   4.1 SOCIAL THEORY OF LEARNING .................................................................... 30
   4.2 THEORY OF CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION .......................................... 35
       4.2.1 Identifying change on the macro level .................................................. 35
4.2.2 The market enterprise ideology and knowledge ........................................ 36
4.2.3 Meeting the change at the micro-level .................................................... 37

5. THE RESEARCH PROCESS ............................................................................ 39

5.1 The Interview Guides and the Choice of Language ...................................... 40
5.2 The Choice of Interviewees ....................................................................... 41
5.3 The Interviews ............................................................................................ 42
5.4 Conducting Interviews ................................................................................ 44
5.5 The Research Design .................................................................................. 46
5.6 The Role of the Interviewer ......................................................................... 47
  5.6.1 A traveling miner, who am I? ................................................................. 47
5.7 The Process of Analysis and Its Challenges ................................................. 49
  5.7.1 “Deconstructing competence” ................................................................. 49
  5.7.2 Stages and reliability challenges ............................................................ 49
  5.7.3 Reliability in discovery of data and its validity ....................................... 52

6. REPORTING RESEARCH INTERVIEWS AND INTERPRETATION ............... 54

6.1 Management ............................................................................................... 55
  6.1.1 Complexity of the concept of competence ............................................ 55
  6.1.2 Continuity and change ......................................................................... 56
  6.1.3 Competence, quality and other competencies ...................................... 59
  6.1.4 The importance of conveying knowledge ............................................ 61
  6.1.5 Knowledge distribution, vision and predilection .................................... 62
  6.1.6 Quality related to service ..................................................................... 63
  6.1.7 Quality - predicting potential conflicts ................................................. 63
  6.1.8 Measurable and instinctive measure of quality ..................................... 64
6.1.9 Quality measured through evaluation ................................................................. 65
6.1.10 Quality conveyed through various tools ............................................................ 65
6.1.11 Quality – continuity and change ........................................................................ 66

6.2 THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF ............................................................................. 67
6.2.1 Conceptualizing competence .............................................................................. 67
6.2.2 Competence - continuity and change ................................................................. 69
6.2.3 Knowledge – continuity and change ................................................................. 70
6.2.4 Knowledge – understanding past and present .................................................. 71
6.2.5 Quality Assurance and self - evaluation ............................................................ 72
6.2.6 Quality - product and process .......................................................................... 72
6.2.7 Quality – ever present continuity and change .................................................. 73

6.3 THE PEDAGOGICAL STAFF .................................................................................. 74
6.3.1 Conceptualizing competence ............................................................................ 74
6.3.2 Competence - continuity and change ................................................................. 74
6.3.3 Knowledge ......................................................................................................... 76
6.3.4 Quality – plurality of the concept ..................................................................... 78
6.3.5 Quality and change ............................................................................................ 79

6.4 THE FOCUS GROUP ............................................................................................. 80
6.4.1 Conceptualizing competence and knowledge ................................................... 80
6.4.2 Quality ............................................................................................................... 82

7. CONCEPTUALIZING COMPETENCE AT THE ISS ................................................. 84
7.1 SUMMING UP – THE MANAGEMENT ................................................................. 84
7.2 SUMMING UP – THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF ............................................... 87
7.3 SUMMING UP – THE PEDAGOGICAL STAFF .................................................... 89
7.4 SUMMING UP – THE FOCUS GROUP ................................................................. 91

8. GENERAL SUMMARY AND OUTCOME OF THE ANALYSIS ....................... 93

8.1 SIMILARITIES ................................................................................................. 93

8.2 DIFFERENCES OR DISTINCTIONS ............................................................... 94

8.2.1 The administrative staff ............................................................................. 94

8.2.2 The management and the focus group ....................................................... 95

8.2.3 Shared understandings and distinctions among some groups .................... 96

8.2.4 The management and the administrative staff - team ................................ 96

8.2.5 Shared and distributed competence of the summer school ....................... 97

9. LEADERSHIP OF THE ISS AND ITS CHALLENGES .................................. 98

10. CONCLUSION .................................................................................................. 103

REFERENCES ...................................................................................................... 106

APPENDIX 1 .......................................................................................................... 112

List of interview guides ...................................................................................... 112

APPENDIX 2 .......................................................................................................... 130

List of figures ........................................................................................................ 130
Preface

The idea of writing my thesis about The International Summer School\(^1\) arose in 2006. During that time I was already involved in some informal discussions with a few members of the staff at the ISS regarding the scope of my interests connected to the ISS. In December of 2007 I decided to focus my thesis upon the issue of competence, quality, knowledge and management of the summer school, and I made the choice to write the thesis in English. The final acceptance of the project by the Faculty of Education and other formal procedures regarding allotment of the advisers Kirsten Sivesind and Tone Dyrdal Solbrekke took place in February of 2008. At this time I made oral and written contact with the informants regarding the purpose of the research, confidentiality and the interview procedure, and how the findings would be reported. I also invited them to take part in my qualitative interviews in the near future. The Application to The Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) for acceptance of the project was submitted as well.

The notion of change according to Professor Paul Trowler, his guest lecture at the University of Oslo and usefulness of his theory in relation to my project was also considered. We discussed the future outlines of the project and the choice of language for the thesis. I received the final letter of acceptance from The Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) in March 2008.

There are several reasons for choosing The International Summer School as the object of my examination and they are based on my own experience as a student-participant in a literature course during the summer session of 1982, a teacher and my own professional interests. My personal conviction that the summer school represents a figure of international education that should be offered a lot more space in the international academic and quality-related context was intensified by my own experience as a Norwegian teacher there since 2003. Moreover, my involvement increased even more during my studies in Educational Leadership at the University of Oslo. That was when I began to notice other important details in management and the content of the summer school courses, gaining both more theoretical as well as practical experience and guidance in evaluating the school’s practices. The possibility of

\(^{1}\) The International Summer School - name used interchangeably with the ISS, summer school, international summer school or school
being able to work at the ISS every year and withdraw from other working contexts, gave me an opportunity to see the differences and compare the practices in other organizations. Being bilingual myself, my background, my international and multi-cultural experiences are areas which are a part of my everyday life and create a great number of opportunities to look at things from a different point of view. My conscious and sometimes unconscious exposure to different experiences, active participation in various working contexts and practices, seems to structure and restructure my knowledge and views on how management of education might be improved.

Finally, I also felt that the time was mature to present the school in times of increasing international exchange of students, globalization in general, but also because of its indirect peace-bringing impact with focus on several political conflict areas in the world. The school has a unique position, because of its long experience in cross-cultural and multi-national context, its mission and the very sense of the metaphor “Come to Norway. Meet the world!” (ISS).

My study of competence, quality and knowledge as practiced at the International Summer School is looked upon from a distributive leadership perspective advocated by James P. Spillane presenting “the interactive web of leaders, its followers and their situation” (Spillane 2005, p.1) and the summer school’s “community of practice” (Wenger 1998). The study provides a worthy example of practices that can be used by other organizations, or in other similar international learning and teaching contexts in the light of important changing processes taking place on the world scale today. In June this year (2009) the International Summer School also received a prestigious University of Oslo Prize for Best Learning Environment, for the positive social interaction between students, faculty, staff and administration in a multicultural setting (ISS 2009f).
Acknowledgments

I wish to express my special thanks and appreciation to the staff of The International Summer School at the University of Oslo, Norway, who offered me time and patience to interview them, as well as my advisers Kirsten Sivesind and Tone Dyrdal Solbrekke from The Faculty of Education for their assistance and help along the process of writing this thesis.

Nevertheless, this work would have never become a reality if The International Summer School had not made an impression on me since I started working there. I owe my indebtedness to the whole International Summer School as an outstanding international academic organization with practices and values which are worth pursuing for any organization of this kind.

Many thanks to my friends for their reflections and comments, especially to Tomasz Bończak-Ozdowski and Danuta Haremska for their creative support with the realization of my thoughts into the presented figures.

Finally, I also owe a debt of gratitude to the administrator of The International Summer School Torild Homstad from St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, US for our precious conversations and support towards my own mission of sharing of at least some parts of the summer school’s community of practice with the readers of this work.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The background

Competence, knowledge and quality in an educational context are issues important to leaders, teachers and students. However, it seems that experts neither quite agree how to define the concepts, nor how to secure competence, knowledge and quality in educational contexts. One of the main problems seems to derive from the lack of a common or shared understanding, whether among scholars, students or parents. It also seems that almost every context gives us a somewhat different understanding of the concepts. From Etienne Wenger’s social theory of learning (1998) it is known that through participation and engagement in certain activities with certain people, people get involved in social communities and construct identities in relation to these communities. They belong to particular groups, understand and know how to interpret what they do, and they are shaped by them (Lave & Wenger 1991). Peoples’ understandings are strongly related to the contexts they participate in, the people they work with, the groups they teach, the physical environment, the structures and the economic and financial challenges. In our everyday lives we need different kinds of competence or competencies. Peoples’ needs keep changing as well as their understandings of the concepts of competence; knowledge and quality have changed, if one thinks about them from a historical point of view (Stensaker, 2008, pp.1-2). Considering Wenger’s ideas on the relevance of the context, it is likely to think that The International Summer School has its own meaning of competence, quality and knowledge. Furthermore, the ISS creates a community of practice which actively negotiates and renegotiates its content by shaping it in continuous relation to the local and global context it has naturally been a part of through its entire history (Wenger 1998).

1.2 The Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This thesis presents my examination of the process of conceptualization of competence at The International Summer School, University of Oslo. The main goal is focused on description and critical examination of the conceptualizing process of different understandings and conceptions of competence among seven interviewees representing the management, the administrative and the pedagogical staff at the summer school. I also
examine how the conception of competence at the summer school is related to concepts of quality and knowledge. Apart from the conceptual study, I subsequently relate the empirical findings to the leadership practices which generate valuable knowledge about The International Summer School.

My primary focus is on the internal context, but also partly embedded into a larger context of external expectations towards higher education institutions today due to unavoidable participation and engagement of the school’s practices in the local and more global contexts at the same time (Wenger 1998, p.133). In order to do so, I make references to some European as well as national documents illustrating how the concepts of competence, quality and knowledge are presented there. I also allow for a critical academic voice in relation to those.

The examination focuses also on comparing and exemplifying the conceptions obtained through interviews and their thorough analysis, to understand the question whether the interviewed groups share or diverge in their understandings and perceptions of competence, quality and knowledge. I compare and present the interviewees’ understandings in relation to time and space aspect, which are central distinctions for the analysis. The time aspect concerns possible changes in both understanding and practices during the time the interviewees have been working in the summer school. In order to get a more complete picture of the concepts discussed, I analyse the contexts which they are a part of and their understandings in general, by using elements of theory on change by Paul Trowler. This theory embraces the internal as well as the external and more global context, in which the summer school functions. I also make use of the social theory of learning by Etienne Wenger (1998), and Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theories on communities of practice and situated learning.

Further on, I present several figures illustrating the conceptualization processes at the summer school, which serve as an attempt to visualize the complexity of the subjects under discussion. The main figure called “Deconstructing Competence” (Appendix 2) provides a simplified illustration of the content and contexts (internal and external) of different direct and indirect influences in which the ISS conceptualization process takes place. The other figures on the other hand (Appendix 2, figure 1, 2, 3, 4), contain a “list of ingredients” of ideas and understandings of competence which characterize each of the interviewee groups separately.
My intention is not to evaluate competence at the summer school in order to provide readers with any ready-made definitions of the concept of competence, or to compare teaching and learning processes in terms of quality of the content or evaluation between courses or other academic institutions. In my presentation I do not take into account any concrete exam results or student and teacher assessments, although they certainly represent an important side of the summer school’s success and impressive number of applicants every summer, as these are well documented already.2

The subject of my study is to focus on the concepts of competence, quality and knowledge at The International Summer School which both explicitly and implicitly show the leadership practices of the summer school staff involved in their interactive and dynamic roles, functions and contexts, and the process of learning similar to the one described by Wenger (1998). Through distributive leadership perspective of James P. Spillane, I present the leaders and “the followers” who interact with each other and shape their elements of leadership practice (Spillane 2006). In addition, distributive leadership can also be used as a diagnostic tool for reflecting on the practices of an organization (ibid., p.89). Through this, I hope to involve the readers in reflecting upon the leadership and administrative practices of this school and/or any other similar academic institution.

My purpose is to describe and compare interview data according to the following research questions which have guided my empirical study:

1. **How do the management, the administrative, the pedagogical staff and the focus group at The International Summer School, understand the concept of competence and the related concepts of quality and knowledge?**
   
a) **How do the groups conceive the change in their understanding of competence and the related concepts?**

b) **How are the concepts reflected in the leadership practice at the ISS?**

2. **What are the similarities and differences in understanding of the concept of competence between and/or within all the groups?**

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2 Information available at the ISS Administration Office
3. What are the implications of similarities and/or differences among the groups in regard to the leadership of the summer school?

Finally, my hope is that this thesis in these times of globalization, cultural exchange on all levels, and political conflicts in some parts of the world, will draw attention to a small, but powerful unit of the University of Oslo, The International Summer School. Indirectly, through the process of conceptualization of competence, my aim is to reflect upon leadership practices which are characteristic for The International Summer School, as well as the way they understand the concept of competence in relation to their own international and multicultural academic setting and their mission of “Six weeks of academic experience and international good will” (ISS). The process of conceptualization of competence, combined with understanding of quality and knowledge that is presented here is far from complete. It should rather be viewed as an infinite process that points towards some important context- and time-related aspects of the concept, possible changes and differences in conception in the internal and external political setting, and its relevance in educational academic contexts. Presented examples focus on the importance of tacit knowledge and the awareness of one’s own practices which often pass unnoticed and unarticulated (Wenger 1998, p.47). I also hope that descriptions obtained through the interviews will encourage and engage other similar organizations to reflect upon their understanding of competence, and gain insight into their own practices by comparison with The International Summer School.

1.3 The Outline

My thesis consists of ten chapters followed by six interview guides in Norwegian and English language (see Appendix 1). The analysis is also supported by one main figure called “Deconstructing Competence” and four other figures where each represents the conceptualizing process among interviewees from the management, the administrative, the pedagogical and the focus group separately (see Appendix 2). The structure:

The Preface sets the context for my thesis

1. Chapter 1 – Introduction presents the background of my thesis, its purpose and the research questions.

2. Chapter 2 - Case Presentation introduces The International Summer School at the University of Oslo, Norway, some historical background of the school, its main objectives and its
academic and cultural experience, followed by the school’s position in the international academic student exchange context.

3. Chapter 3 - *Theoretical Conceptions* presents changes and expectations towards interpretation of the concept. The chapter refers to some terminological examples and reflections in understanding of the concept of competence and its related concepts of quality and knowledge in several contexts. I refer mainly to the way the documents are presented in some key policy documents issued by the OECD\(^3\), and/or other documents, on the international and national level.

4. Chapter 4 – *Theoretical Approaches* describes parts of the social theory of learning on communities of practice by Etienne Wenger (1998), and on situated learning by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), as well as the theory of change within higher education by Professor Paul Trowler (2008).

5. Chapter 5 – *The Research Process* describes the research design I have used, followed by interview guides, presentation of the interviewees, the interviews and their characteristics. I also describe my role as the interviewer and the data collection process. The chapter contains different stages of the process, reliability issues and challenges in the process of analysis.

6. Chapter 6 – *Reporting Research Interviews and Interpretation* contains quotations and examples from the interviews illustrating interpretations of the concept of competence and its related concepts, and also the interviewees’ descriptions of change, all treated separately by each group of the interviewees.

7. Chapter 7 – *Conceptualizing Competence at the ISS* sums up the reports treated in chapter 6, and presents the emerged themes from the whole process in every group separately.

8. Chapter 8 – *General Summary and Outcome of the Analysis* summarizes and presents similarities and differences found in my research in conceiving and possible change in the concept of competence, and its related concepts among the groups.


10. Chapter 10 – *Conclusion* sums up the conceptualization process and its outcomes in relation to the presented theories, policy documents and leadership practice at the ISS. Finally, it also presents the value of this research for leadership practice in other organizations.

\(^3\) Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
2. **Case Presentation**

2.1 **The International Summer School**

The first summer school session for English-speaking foreign students at the University of Oslo was organized in 1947. It was offered only for American participants, and was an expression of gratitude for educational opportunities provided for Norwegian students in the USA during and after World War II. The first session included eleven specific courses; four in the sciences: geology, geography, botany, and zoology; four in the humanities: language, literature, history, and arts and crafts; two in the behavioral sciences: politics and social problems, and economics and foreign trade; as well as a general cultural survey course (Vannebo 1996, p. 20). The International Summer School (ISS) is a part of the University of Oslo. The ISS’ sessions are held annually from late June to early August at Blindern, which is the main campus of the University (ISS 2008a).

* Becoming international - the 1950s and the name change

During the 1950s the number of non-American students increased steadily, which finally resulted in changing the name of the school in 1958 from the Summer School for American Students to The International Summer School. Since 1947 about 23,000 students from more than 150 countries have attended. In recent years the student body each summer has consisted of about 570 students from some 90 countries. The entire history of the ISS has played an important role in the efforts of the University of Oslo to reach out internationally (ISS 2008a).

2.2 **Main Objectives**

*International Comparative Perspective of the Summer School*

The ISS is a center for learning in an international context. Its academic purpose is to develop and convey knowledge among people representing different cultures. Promoting
cross-cultural understanding and good will, is another philanthropic purpose of the school (ISS 2006, p.1)\(^4\).

The ISS’ long and continuous experience, participating students who represent multi-national cultures and backgrounds, various courses aiming at international understanding and exchange of views, open for the comparative perspective on the studied topics and a deeper understanding of the problems being discussed (ISS 2008b).

The ISS’ aim is also to create a forum where students can share intellectual challenges as well as cultural and social experiences. The purposes are reflected in the ISS motto: "Six Weeks of Academic Achievement and International Good Will" (ISS 2008a).

The number of students applying to the school is three times higher than the number of accepted students. Many students return to the ISS, they seem satisfied and also recommend the program to others (ISS 2008e\(^5\)). The fact that almost all students complete their courses successfully and the content of the courses is regarded as relevant for the competence that the students seek to build up, indicates quality of the content. According to the ISS management, the student feedback, the extensive evaluations that the school receives from the students, also indicate that the experience of the international learning environment at the ISS is unique and valuable. Six weeks long close contact on different levels of everyday life and learning, gives the opportunity to develop a better understanding of cross-cultural interaction.

The ISS has also been called a mini-United Nations and has in cooperation with NORAD, Nansenskolen in Lillehammer, and Rotary, been involved in a number of special confidence-building projects for participants from conflict areas, e.g. the Middle East, Caucasus and former Yugoslavia. The idea is based on «Friendliness, Frankness and Tolerance» and the philanthropic belief that positive international coexistence may help to increase understanding and good will between nations (ISS 2008a).

In the past few years the school has also had intensive Norwegian language courses for Japanese students from Tokai University. The ISS, in partnership with the Higher Education

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\(^4\) Regulations for The International Summer School (English translation by the author)

\(^5\) Information collected from the period 2003-2008
Consortium for Urban Affairs (HECUA) also offers two interdisciplinary semester programs during the regular academic year to American students who have completed their freshman year in US (ISS 2008c). In cooperation with the University of Oslo, the ISS also offers an introductory Norwegian language course for approximately 60 European students who will continue their studies at a Norwegian university during the fall semester as a part of the Erasmus (EILC) program (ISS 2009g). Until recently, the ISS administered the so-called Oslo Year Program, intended for North American undergraduate students who wish to spend a semester or a year studying at the University of Oslo and who are enrolled in a college or university which did not have a bilateral agreement with the University of Oslo.

Generally, the programs offered by the summer school are interdisciplinary and experiential, and focus on a comparative approach to developing an understanding of contemporary Norwegian society. The school’s hope for the future is to continue developing the program to be among the leading summer schools worldwide, and also to coordinate it further with the increasing number of student mobility programs offered during the regular semesters at the University of Oslo (Årsplan 2007, pp. 3-5)\(^6\).

### 2.3 The Academic and Cultural Experience

*Come to Norway - Meet the World!*

The ISS is a forum for both academic and cultural experience. The academic program offers courses on the undergraduate (bachelor) level, focusing on Norwegian language and various aspects of Norwegian culture and society, as well as a number of graduate (master) courses dealing with topics of broad international interest. The courses focus on a comparative perspective where the Norwegian examples are often given as a basis for discussion, but also are a significant part of the summer school’s goals and mission. In addition, the courses are supplemented by various field trips, often related to topics discussed during the classes. Participation in lectures is compulsory and 75 % minimum attendance is required to take the final examination. After successful completion of all requirements, participants receive The International Summer School Certificate of Achievement and a transcript of grades. All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and

\(^6\) Annual Program 2007 (English translation by the author)
students can have their credits transferred to their home universities (ISS 2008d). A full program for both undergraduate and graduate students consists of a minimum of three class periods daily. However, students may also sign up for additional courses as auditors without taking exams or writing papers. No credit is given for courses audited. Those who receive scholarships are required to take a full program, deliver written papers and sit for exams.

In addition to courses and class field trips the ISS offers a wide range of extra-curricular cultural and social activities such as cultural evenings, film seminars, discussions, sporting events, and excursions in Oslo as well as to the mountains and fjords in other parts of Norway. The participation of many nationalities from all over the world in beautiful scenic environment also provides an opportunity to stimulate intellectual exchange and experience.

2.4 Ahead of Others

The Door - Opener for Further Regular Studies

In recent years internationalization of higher education has become an issue of high priority (Årsplan 2007). For The International Summer School this has been the case through its entire history. The ISS has been the leading institution in providing international opportunities in Norway long before the international experience was developed elsewhere in Norwegian higher education. It is worthwhile to mention that before the more global internationalization began, the ISS was for a long time the only larger academic meeting place for international students at the university (ISS 2008e).

The summer school has had a pioneering role in many ways. The curriculum and American college credits from the summer school have not only been recognized by the United States Office of Education since its very beginnings in 1947 (Vannebo 1996, p.12), nowadays, all the courses are accredited according to European Credit Transfer System, which also testifies that the quality of the programs offered has been recognized internationally. Many of the interdisciplinary master program courses in English have started at the ISS and have later been developed and integrated into the regular university programs. Several courses have been subject to revisions and improvements, later to become permanent (Vannebo 1996, p. 21). Norwegian language courses for example, started at the summer school. The ISS plays an important indirect role in recruiting foreign students to the regular exchange programs offered by the University of Oslo. The six weeks at the summer school gives them
the opportunity to “taste” experience of a foreign country and get acquainted with both the university system and Norwegian people and culture. Many of the students come back to the ISS more than once and wish to keep in touch with the people they met during their stay at the summer school. The ISS has also developed an Alumnus page which will gradually be available for registration for all the students who have participated in the courses since 1947 (ISS 2008e).
3. Theoretical Conceptions

3.1 Terminology and Understanding of Competence

The word competence might be problematic in the way it is used and understood. For example, according to Webster’s dictionary the term is defined among others, as “fitness or ability”. There are also synonyms like “capability”, “capacity”, “sufficiency”, “proficiency” and “skill” (Webster Online Dictionary 2009). The concept is difficult from the semantic point of view because of its connotations which depend on disciplines (contexts) in different ways and many theoretical approaches, but no single conceptual framework (Rychen & Salganik 2001, p.45). Due to the limited scope of my examination I chose not to elaborate these distinctions in my present study, except in cases where a closer explanation is needed.

From my own experience at the summer school, as well as from the pilot interview, in the summer school context, the concept of competence is closely related to and used together with the concepts of quality and knowledge. Due to the term’s complexity and inseparable semantic relationship with the other concepts as well, I found it necessary to treat the concept of competence more broadly in meaning i.e. in relation to the concepts of quality and knowledge. Thus, I present the main concept first (competence), followed by the concept of quality and how it relates to knowledge in the analytical presentation. The concepts are to some extent presented as described in policy documents issued by, or related to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), to European and National Qualification Framework, Bologna Declaration and reforms related to those.

3.1.1 The Concept of competence and change in meaning

The changes taking place in society today require a different kind of competence than fifty years ago and “long-lasting truths” from that time may no longer be appropriate (Global Higher Education 2009). The constant process of renewal also requires new ways of thinking about education as well as a different perspective on knowledge, skills and competence as a whole. This kind of attitude is also reflected in current policies related to higher education. The understanding of competence is also changing and combines the old with the new, where teachers or educators are no longer the only ones who possess knowledge, but have a new role which combines the “old” teacher or professor with a new facilitator or adviser,
who is capable of giving students support when needed, showing the way and enabling the students to become autonomous in their further development of knowledge (ibid.). As in Dewey’s theory on Education and Experience (1938/1997), the teachers are to provide students with experiences that are valuable for enabling them to function in society today. The role of a teacher includes different competencies, and a more reflective and holistic attitude concerning education. The teachers become agents, helping and giving advice and necessary tools for the students to empower them to make their own decisions and act independently further in their life (Dewey 1938/1997, p. 66). From the cognitive perspective, empowering students means providing them with tools like the basic content i.e. knowledge, plus the skills and action competencies on how to go further, develop and construct as Piaget describes, new knowledge of the already attained key competencies which better enable them to contribute to society (Bråten 2002, p.17). The educator’s role as an adviser as well as a teacher must be placed within a larger holistic context of the world and sensitivity to ethical and human rights, values, democracy and ideals of social justice (Global Higher Education 2009; Salganik & Rychen 2003). Thus the educator’s new role encompasses a different way of understanding the kind of competence required in higher education today, which includes both the internal and the external environment in which it takes place.

3.1.2 The Concept of Competence – documents

For the sake of getting a more complete picture of the external background of expectations directed towards academic institutions today and the imposed standards to which the summer school has to relate to some extent, it is worth examining some important political documents treating the concept of competence, and the reason why such documents were necessary. Thus, in this section of my presentation I look at a few key documents issued by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), first of all the OECD’s DeSeCo Project - Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations, as well as other documents launched by the OECD.

Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo)

DeSeCo is a conceptual framework document which provides for the main guidelines intended for many other related policy documents, initiatives, reforms or agencies/organisms related to the present understanding of competence and quality both internationally and nationally (the ones I mention are the following: Bologna Declaration,Overarching
Qualification Framework, National Qualifications Framework, Quality Reform in Norway and NOKUT).

The OECD’s DeSeCo Project’s intension was to provide for theoretical and conceptual foundations for competencies and gather a wide range of expert and stakeholder opinion in order to analyze which key competencies are necessary for today’s societies, challenged by various complex demands placed on individuals and their lives. Defining such competencies was believed to improve assessments of how well prepared people are for life’s challenges and to identify main educational goals and aims of lifelong learning (The Definition and Selection of Key Competencies 2005, pp. 4 -18). According to OECD’s Director for Education Barry McGaw, DeSeCo’s goal was to develop a frame of reference for assessments and indicators of competencies that would have a resonance with the information needs for policy-makers (Rychen & Salganik 2003, p.Viii).

In the final report of the Project by Rychen and Salganik from 2003, DeSeCo recommends adopting a concept of competence in which competence is defined as the ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context through mobilization of psychosocial prerequisites, (including both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects. (Rychen & Salganik 2003, p. 43).

This intentional and normative, as well as functional, demand-oriented approach focuses on a holistic view of the demands that individuals face today, but the primary focus is on the results the individual attains. The demands are different, context-dependent and situational, and require various competencies. The most important demands are more closely formulated through key competencies. Each of the competencies encompasses abilities and skills, knowledge (including tacit knowledge), motivation, value orientation, attitudes and many other social as well as behavioral characteristics which when mobilized, make an individual capable of dealing with particular situations (Rychen & Salganik 2003, pp. 43-44).

The primary focus of this understanding of competence is on results that individuals achieve through their actions or choices with respect to the demands related to a specific task or area. Competence is thus approached on the assumption of the situated learning theory by Lave and Wenger which argues that knowledge is developed through actions in many different contexts (Lave & Wenger 1991) and is conceptualized in relation to the demands. According to Rychen and Salganik, competence cannot be directly measured or observed, but it is the
performance or actions, and the outcomes that are observable and measurable (Rychen & Salganik 2003, pp. 55-58).

DeSeCo’s conceptual framework for key competencies classifies competencies into three broad categories – the use of tools interactively, to interact in heterogeneous groups and to act autonomously. All three categories are interrelated and collectively constitute a basis for identifying key competencies. The central idea behind the competencies is the ability to act and think reflectively and presumes the ability to apply methods or strategies to cope with different situations, adapt to change, learn from experience and think critically, which is also the core of the general view of competence (Rychen & Salganik 2003, pp. 85-104).

As in any other context-related differences within education, understanding of competence has to be related closely to the narrower, more specific context in which it is used. Competence in higher education also includes specialized knowledge and skills obtained among others, through use of modern technological tools on an advanced level (Rychen & Salganik 2003).

Qualification Framework

Qualification Framework is another official document from the Bologna process, which defines in detail every qualification brought under it, and is related to competencies attained through other educational systems. Its purpose is to compare and integrate all the qualifications issued by different academic institutions into a common structure. It consists of common reference points, referring to learning outcomes, supported by a range of techniques, regardless of the system where a particular qualification was acquired (Overarching Qualification Framework 2005). Setting detailed and fully reliable standards for knowledge and competence used for educational purposes is undoubtedly difficult, if not impossible. Nevertheless, in these times of international mobility and internationalization such a system of standardization is indispensable in order to be able to compare the content and the competencies provided by other systems than our own. Standardization of requirements makes it easier for institutions like the summer school to compare and evaluate to some extent, the academic competencies students present when applying for the courses at the summer school or any other academic institution.
3.2 Quality in Higher Education - Interpretations

Although policy documents give standards for the kind of quality they expect from the academic institutions, providing a universal definition of quality in higher education is a challenging task. According to Cheng and Tam, educational quality is a controversial and vague concept. If higher education was to be treated as a system, it could be looked upon as a set of elements that constitute the input, process and output of the educational system, providing services that satisfy both external and internal actors through meeting their explicit and implicit expectations (Cheng and Tam 1997, p. 23).

Cheng and Tam also differentiate between internal and external stakeholders in the process of quality management, where each of these groups might define quality in different ways and prefer different ways of assessment, as well as account for contradictory expectations (Cheng and Tam 1997). As different stakeholders might prioritize different definitions of quality, Harvey and Green (1993) categorize views on the concept into five groups: quality as exceptional, high standard quality; quality as perfection or consistency with no defects; quality as fitness for purpose of the customer; quality as value for money; quality as a continuous process of empowerment and enhancement (which can also be included in the other categories) (ibid., pp. 9-34).

The approaches to defining quality are many - some refer to processes, other to products, costs or benefits, still other ones to users or customers. Often quality refers to requirements and expectations and contains characteristics that are important and necessary for a product, service or a process (Cheng and Tam 1997). However, there is no total agreement on how to measure quality, or whether it is indeed measurable.

Since a universal and a standardized definition of quality is difficult to obtain, the issue of quality in higher education is a topic of continuous discussion among scholars, governments, researchers and students. The purpose of higher education has changed in the last decades and is a matter of discourse which is still going on. Focus on market orientation, economic development, provider-consumer attitudes, competitiveness, employability and outcomes towards education are only some of the tendencies that dominate higher education discourses. Thus the old role and mission of universities as only knowledge conveying institutions is no longer present in the new vision of education today (Karseth 2008).
3.2.1 The concept of quality – documents

Internationalization and globalization of the world, economic development and larger mobility of students have given rise to changes in the purpose of higher education today. Lack of a unified agreement among politicians and scholars on the content and expectations as to what kind of quality, knowledge and competence should be provided by academic institutions, had an impact on forcing international policy makers to provide for universal documents for European education. These documents were to give standards, fit the needs and requirements and be applicable both on the international as well as national level (Rychen & Salganik 2001; Rychen & Salganik 2003).

**Bologna Declaration**

The Bologna Declaration is such a key document which was a turning point in the development of European higher education. It is a pledge signed by 29 countries to reform their higher education systems and coordinate their policies. The Declaration’s intention was not to impose reform forcing governments to reform their systems, but to make the systems more “compatible” and comparable, and converge with respect to each country’s autonomy and diversity. It was also an answer to challenges which face European systems related, among others, to the growth in number of students and diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates, shortage of skills in important areas, and the expansion of private and transnational education. The deadline for completing it has now been postponed until 2012 (The Bologna Process 2020. 2009). The common goal of the Declaration is to create common space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education (The Bologna Declaration 1999).

Quality in other words, is looked upon as development of students’ specific skills and abilities in order to facilitate their access to the labour market, prepare for work and competitiveness on the international basis.

**National Qualifications Framework**

Development of the European Qualification Framework has equally caused and influenced educational changes on the national level. The Ministers participating in the Bologna process have also decided to commit themselves to implement national qualifications frameworks,
certified according to the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2012 (The Bologna Process 2020. 2009). In 2007 the European Parliament agreed on establishing the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) to promote student mobility and Lifelong learning. Working on the changes in university structures, its curriculum and different focus from content-driven to outcome focus as the main objective, have caused tensions among scholars and the policy makers. The concept of quality in education has changed together with the dominating system change, from commitment to knowledge teaching into learner-centred acquisition of skills, efficiency and outcomes in education, as Karseth argues in her review analysis of central documents (Karseth 2008, p. 59). In Norway, the National Qualifications Framework was accepted on 23rd March 2009 (Det Kongelige Kunnskapsdepartementet 2009). The resolution of proposed descriptors for the framework intention is, among others, to fit all higher education, it should be understandable for everyone, show progression between different levels, be measurable and divided into distinction between knowledge, skills and competence. The descriptors are not subject-specific, and are intended to be read within the context of each discipline. Separate descriptions for some fields of education will still be elaborated in the near future (Det Kongelige Kunnskapsdepartementet 2009). The move from the content-driven (what to teach) programs to focus on the outcomes and its measurable dimension (what the students will be able to do) is certainly going to be an issue among scholars in the time to come. The discourse on the purpose and validity of the framework will probably still go on as well, as higher education is facing new challenges connected with standardization and lack of distinctions between certain unique types of education, and lack of clarity and explicitness of the framework (Karseth 2008, pp. 51-52).

Although the National Qualifications Framework has formally not been implemented in Norwegian academic institutions yet, some of the expected changes have already been introduced. The requirements from the National Qualifications Framework to be implemented in Norway are to provide for better comparability between different systems of education and larger competitiveness on the international level. The Quality Reform introduced in Norway is an example of equalizing the system with the aims of The Bologna Declaration.

Quality as presented by the National Qualifications Framework, has its focus on measurable and comparable results within national and international educational systems, thus it seems
standardized, but is also context/subject related. The measurable characteristic of quality does not concentrate on the content of education as much, or on the reflective traditional attitude on knowledge acquisition, but through standards it allows for more transparency and comparability of different qualifications across borders, and due to this fact, an easier competitiveness and mobility of students between nations.

The Quality Reform in Norway and Quality Assurance

One of the elements to assure quality in Norwegian higher education was the implementation of Quality Assurance Systems and accreditation of higher education in 2003. The reform gave all state and private institutions the same rights to apply for accreditation of their programs and it also introduced a new grading system in the Bachelor, Master and PhD degree structure. The Reform took the initiative to make Norwegian academic institutions more competitive on the international scale through cooperation with foreign academic bodies and facilitating international student exchange (NOKUT Higher Education 2009).

Indirectly, the reform initiated an important process in making comparison between academic institutions’ programs possible, as well as forcing cooperation and evaluation of program content and quality. Both institutions and students had to follow certain internationally accepted rules and regulations. Students were forced to finish their courses within certain time limits, but education was more flexible. The process seemed natural as the growing mobility of people across national boundaries made such cooperation indispensable and also triggered new ways of thinking about quality.

Quality in this case through implementation of certain standards of requirements and accreditation incentives, seems again to have its highly important measurable dimension, making various Norwegian (both public and private) and foreign educational systems comparable and compatible on a large scale. Quality Reform in Norway had its impact not only on the individual level, but also on the institutional level, where academic institutions gained a chance to compete between themselves both nationally as well as internationally to attract foreign students as well as academics to study, exchange competencies and cooperate on valuable research issues.
Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)

Another example of standardization and control in maintaining quality and to provide for both comparability between international systems and better competitiveness among Norwegian and international academic institutions is the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT).

NOKUT is an independent governmental agency, concerned with the quality assurance and quality enhancement of higher education and tertiary vocational education in Norway and the recognition of foreign education qualifications. It was established in January 2003 for the purpose of controlling and contributing to the development of quality in higher education in Norway by means of evaluation, accreditation and approval of quality systems, institutions and programs. Higher education institutions in Norway are still entirely responsible for quality in their own programs, but are now required to document their requirements with quality assurance (QA-system). Universities for example, may conduct study programs and grant degrees on all levels without formal approval by NOKUT. NOKUT has the right however, to revise given accreditation programs and sanction institutions by withdrawing their rights to continue if the requirements are not fulfilled. Evaluations are carried out by external panels of experts appointed by NOKUT, and all the agency’s documents and decisions are public. NOKUT also participates actively on an international basis on the issues concerning accreditation and quality recognition across borders (NOKUT Higher Education 2009).

Summing up, one can say that NOKUT represents an institution which controls and monitors quality to secure the primary and originally assumed understanding of quality as intended by The Bologna Declaration and other related documents, as well as its right implementation on the national and international basis. Preservation of quality in Norway by this institution is effectuated through pursuing internationally agreed standard requirements, as well as evaluation, revision and sanctions.

NOKUT’s role and quality assessment procedures in the context of the summer school provide for an acknowledgment of the ISS practices and quality of the school’s programs, and are useful tools to compare and evaluate different international programs of education in the student admission processes to the summer school courses.
3.2.2 Expectations to Changes in Conceptualizing Quality

Looking retrospectively at the content of presented international as well as national policy documents, initiatives or reforms, it is worthwhile to sum up “the background picture” and the external context of higher education in which conceptualization process of competence and quality has been taking place.

*External quality control*

The issue of competence quality emerged as an international topic of interest among politicians, leaders, and other stakeholders during the 1990s, and was a result of several simultaneous changes in society including the growth of knowledge-based economies, New Public Management initiatives to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and competition in higher education due to an expanding number of students, globalization and internationalization (Stensaker 2008, pp. 417-418). Politically, the need for external control of quality and monitoring seemed to be indispensable, and the change to monitoring and control took place for pragmatic and ideological reasons. The concept of quality in the traditional sense of the word, which constituted an integral and implicit element in higher education and academic professional responsibility in learning and research, was partially replaced by control and monitoring (Harvey & Askling 2002, p. 69). In the 1990s academic institutions experienced a demand to be able to demonstrate the quality of their activities. It was a time when academic institutions were forced to submit to government requirements of “value-for-money” and “fitness-for-purpose” (ibid., pp. 69-70). The old self-evident and implicit property of academic learning and research was gradually replaced by various legitimatized measures of control related to transparency, accountability and compliance, but also by an encouragement to improve methods and procedures to meet new challenges in the society. Quality was to be developed, measured and monitored by the institutions themselves through self-evaluation and assessment, peer-review, audit, accreditation or student surveys (ibid., pp. 69-83).
3.3 Knowledge

"We are drowning in information and starving for knowledge" by Rutherford D. Roger
(Teacher’s Mind Resources 2009)

The Oxford English Dictionary defines knowledge as information, understanding and skills that people gain through education or experience. Knowledge can for example, be practical, medical or scientific. It might also refer to the state of knowing about a particular fact or a situation (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 2009).

In education, the concept of knowledge has many implications, but as with the concept of competence or quality people interpret it in various ways, which also depends on the context it refers to and who uses the word.

John Dewey’s theory treats knowledge in several ways. In one of them, knowledge is a result of an individual’s process of inquiry which assumes that the inquiry has been competent and sufficient and the conclusion is trustworthy (Dewey 1938/97). The second meaning of knowledge is treated collectively and refers to a significant number of individual inquiries which result in the same conclusion. People generally accept such a conclusion as more “true” than the inquiry of a single person. This kind of knowledge is generated outside the individual processes of inquiry and does not involve any cognitive processes such as inquiries of the trustworthiness of the content. It looks upon knowledge as a combination of inquiries and the products of those inquiries. The products are then viewed as answers, but removed from the contexts in which they were generated they become “objective truths” (Teacher’s Mind Resources 2009).

From the social theoretical perspectives on learning, knowledge as information constitutes only a small part of knowing, but knowing involves first of all active participation in meaningful social practices with resources that enhance the ability of people to participate, discuss and to see new horizons. Knowledge is situated and combines both cognitive and situated tasks which thus become means of opening new horizons. Wenger says that “our institutions are our designs, and they are hostage to our understanding, perspectives and theories”. Our theories (knowledge) are thus social, practical and involve context-related actions (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998).
4. Theoretical Approaches

The theories presented in the following part of this analysis are only a few of a range of possible approaches to learning. The ones I found most useful are the theory by Jean Lave and Wenger on situated learning (1991) and the social theory of learning on communities of practice by Etienne Wenger (1998), as well as the theory of change within higher education by Professor Paul Trowler (Trowler 2008, university lecture). Many other theories are by no means less relevant, but due to limitations of this case study, I confine my presentation only to those mentioned above. Thus, I use my research questions as guidelines for reporting on learning, change and practice as well as leadership at the same time, bearing in mind Spillane’s perspective of the distributed leadership practice shared by the leader and his followers (Spillane 2006). For the sake of clarity and better understanding of how theoretical assumptions work in practice, my primary intention is to present parts of relevant theories in this section, and exemplify them afterwards, by referring to concrete examples from the summer school context.

4.1 Social theory of learning

The reason for recognizing the usefulness of Wenger’s social theory approach to learning in my thesis was based on “learning” looked upon as practice, “not as a goal or a special category of activity, (but) as a stage and the object, the road and the destination” (Wenger 1998, p. 95). Still another reason was my practical as well as theoretical experience within educational domain assisted by interactive and dynamic engagement with people I have worked with for several years. This experience paved my way to discover “a group of people who shared a concern and passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger 2009, p.1). Thus followed a recognition of the concept of “community of practice” when entering “the community of practice of The International Summer School”. Yet another important reason for choosing the social theory of learning, were similarities and the coherent links between Wenger’s theory and the distributed leadership perspective by Spillane (2006).

The social theory of learning assumes that involvement in social practice is the basic process by which we learn and become who we are. This kind of social theory of learning does not concentrate on analyzing the individual, or social institutions, but the situated informal
communities of practice like the one present in The International Summer School at the University of Oslo, which engages people in shared activities over time. The theory on situated learning has been elaborated by Lave and Wenger and further by Wenger on communities of practice. The theory investigates a number of issues concerning community practice, situated learning, social practice, meaning and identity (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998).

The nature of situated learning and the constant interaction with the environment and its context on a daily basis are often underestimated or neglected when people talk about learning and refer to seemingly unimportant activities they perform. People’s learning processes occur not only individually and within the classroom context as it is often practiced, but in every instant of our social participation in various activities. The International Summer School is an example where the classroom situation is only one of many alternative ways of learning, and does not necessarily make people remember or learn better than the other motivating, engaging and spontaneous contexts they participate in. In my presentation of Wenger’s theory I use his perspective on learning and concentrate on “the summer school’s community of practice” and situated learning by Lave and Wenger, treating it as a learning and dynamic social unit of such practices. The summer school practices include, often indirectly and unnoticeably, distributed leadership practices that Spillane refers to, performed both on the individual level as well as the collective level (Spillane 2005), undergoing processes of collective and individual mutual influence and interplay in time, space and context (Wenger 1998).

Wenger describes three dimensions of the relation by which practice is the source of coherence of a community: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire.

Mutual engagement

The first characteristic is that mutual engagement of participants does not exist in a vacuum; it means that people are engaged in actions where they negotiate meaning with one another involving artifacts and history (Wenger 1998, pp. 51-54). A community of practice in other words, is a matter of mutual engagement on many levels – being able to interact while working, be included in formal and informal conversations, to know and understand what is happening and participate in the atmosphere of the community. Some of the engagement
might be visible while others might be less visible, and thus underestimated or even totally unrecognized (Wenger 1998, pp. 73-75).

Communities of practice include diversity and partiality at the same time. They involve people with different interests, problems or of different age groups, but all participants are mutually engaged in the relations of the community they are a part of. They specialize and distinguish themselves, hold different positions, but they all develop shared ways of doing things, creating both similarities as well as differences, and a unique identity. Mutual engagement includes the competence of the community, but also the competence of others which is meaningfully connected to their shared practice, being both a resource and a limitation at the same time, which together create a complementary contribution. Mutual engagement involves several mutual relationships of complexity of power and dependence, expertise and helplessness, authority and collegiality, fun and boredom, and many more. (Wenger 1998, pp. 76-77).

**Joint enterprise**

The second dimension is joint enterprise. Wenger refers to three points which keep a community together: a) collective process of negotiation, b) it is defined by the participants in the very process of pursuing it and a negotiated response to their situation; c) it involves a goal that creates mutual accountability among participants in their practice (Wenger 1998, pp.77-78). These joint enterprises develop in larger historical, social, cultural and institutional explicitly articulated contexts, requirements and conditions.

The explicit collective contexts of the summer school and its history give and force forward a constant process of negotiation through various everyday social and cultural activities and assessments embedded in pursuing the goals and mission of the organization. Yet there are contexts, which are implicit as well, but no less binding, as Wenger says (Wenger 1998, pp. 77-78). The presented theory though, does not explicitly account for the power relation aspect, present in Trowler’s theory on Learning Regimes (Trowler & al. 2005, p. 436 - 437), which I do not elaborate in this thesis, but mention in my presentation of Trowler’ theory on change.
**Shared repertoire**

The third dimension is the shared repertoire which is a source of community coherence. The joint enterprise creates resources for negotiating meaning which includes certain routines, language, tools, stories or concepts that the community of practice has developed, and have become a part of their practice. At the same time, practice is learning as Wenger says, and learning becomes knowledge as well (Wenger 1998, p. 95). The negotiated meaning includes a history of mutual engagement and points of reference which can also be applied in new situations, and which include both linguistic as well as non-linguistic elements. The actions of the participants might spontaneously reflect well-established interpretations or metaphors and the history of usage of these references (Wenger 1998, pp. 82-83).

Wenger’s social theory of practice has its own set of assumptions and foci as to what matters about learning and the nature of knowledge, knowing and knowers, and can be summarized in the following way:

1. Learning is social and people are social beings participating in certain activities with certain people, they are engaged in practices of social communities constructing identities in relation to these communities. Participating is a form of belonging to a team or a clique which influences people in that group, has an impact on who we are and how we interpret what we do

2. Knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises

3. Knowledge involves active participation in realization of these enterprises and engagement in the world

4. Meaning is people’s ability to experience and engage in the world in a meaningful way

The components of Wenger’s theory are interrelated and mutually defining and include:

1. Meaning – a way of talking individually and collectively about our changing experience of the world as meaningful

2. Practice - a way of talking about shared history, artifacts, social resources and perspectives that sustain mutual engagement
3. Community - a way of talking about social configurations in which our actions are regarded as worth pursuing and our engagement is recognizable as competence

4. Identity - ways of talking about how learning changes who we are and how this creates our own personal histories as members of these communities (Wenger 1998, pp. 4-5).

According to Wenger’s view, all people belong to communities of practice, whether it be at home, work or hobbies; they are everywhere and develop their own practices, rituals, artifacts, symbols, stories, language and histories. The communities we belong to change along our lives, but even if they dissolve physically, their existence continues in many ways through certain practices that are preserved. The communities of practice are often informal and “do not issue membership cards”, says Wenger. They even hardly come into explicit focus, but the people involved are subconsciously familiar with them. We know who belongs to our communities of practice and why, and we can probably distinguish who are the core members of the community from the ones who are only more peripheral members (Wenger 1998, pp. 6-7).

Wenger’s theory focuses on participation where learning has its mutual implications for individuals as well as communities and organizations. For organizations like the summer school, the school’s knowledge and competence are a result of practices which the school preserves and develops continuously through active involvement inside the organization, but also in relation to the external changes and expectations taking place in society as a whole.

Learning is not a separate activity from all that people do otherwise, it sometimes occurs when one least expects it; it is an integrated part of people’s everyday lives. It is there, but people do not have systematic ways of talking about this familiar experience, according to Wenger (Wenger 1998, p. 8). It is just assumed that it occurs; people wish to take charge of it, direct it and make it happen, but it matters what approach one takes and how it is articulated (ibid. 9). The community’s perspectives influence its conception of learning, and are important in a world that is complex and changing. Learning as participation takes place in actions and practices. These practices constitute a part of culture and history and represent a continuous process of social and historical continuity and discontinuity at the same time. This combined process forms the identity of a community of practice (Wenger 1998).
4.2 Theory of Change in Higher Education

Wenger’s theory on communities of practice (1998) and Lave & Wenger’s theory of situated learning (1991) can also be related to a broader context and should not be separated from the external influences and political changes taking place in the global society today. Because of this, I found it reasonable to proceed with some theory on change and its implications in higher education as developed by Paul Trowler (Trowler 2008, university lecture).

4.2.1 Identifying change on the macro level

According to Paul Trowler universities, in general seem to be very stable and unchanging institutions, but under the surface there is constant change. Combining stability with change causes a lot of tension in managing those two, not only on the macro-level, but on the micro-level as well, in places like departments or smaller institutions (Knight & Trowler 2001 p. 28; Trowler 2008, university lecture) like the summer school.

Sets of ideological resources are important (ibid. 2001, p.38). As we consider the change processes that are going on in higher education and begin to question the content of what and how we teach and how we want the teaching and learning to look, it is necessary to reflect upon our conceptions and practices. Trowler refers to ideological coalescence within “enterprise” (sets of ideologies which Trowler calls “enterprise”), and the ideological themes around questions concerning “what academics do with their students, how they do it and what they want them to look like, be able to do and try to achieve in the future” (Trowler 2008, university lecture). He emphasizes the importance of reflecting whether we want students to change the world, work efficiently or read literature in a creative way. Thus, the answers we give ourselves might have an influence on how we will conduct education in the future. Trowler identifies four ideologies or sets of ideological resources that are a part of the current university discourse today:

1. enterprise – vocationalism, preparing students for work or research as contributing to the country’s economy etc.

2. traditionalism – which concerns creating new students of the discipline, often using traditional pedagogical methods
3. **social reconstructionism** - preparing students to think about power structures in the world and preparing them to change them, for example feminism, Marxism

4. **progressivism** – which is concerned about the student’s development, helping the student to develop intellectually and in other ways (Trowler 2008, university lecture)

These sets of ideologies are combined and people often take part in two or three of them at the same time. Some ideologies tend to dominate more than others according to the historical, social and economical events that take place in the society. Current ideologies change the discourses among scholars and politicians as well.

### 4.2.2 The market enterprise ideology and knowledge

According to Trowler, the market enterprise ideology seems to be dominant in higher education today, and involves policy documents, massification, work intensification for academics, and the state’s regulatory role, which implies the state being more involved in higher education. Another dominant feature is marketization of education in terms of fees, treating students as customers and knowledge as something to be delivered, or the delivery of learning outcomes, as if they were physical things and no longer part of learning process. Trowler describes changes in structures which include disciplinary fragmentation, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, less core academic staff and more control by the state. “Knowledge is modified” and students “cash in their credits or degrees”, the role of an academic as a key person becomes outdated and is no longer the only one, becoming rather just one of many resources available to obtain knowledge. University students today, have other resources at hand - like technology, support or skills which must be mobilized in learning (Becher & Trowler 2001, pp. 4-10; Trowler 2008, university lecture).

Analyzing the changes taking place in higher education, and contradictory to the discourses taking place in higher education, Trowler’s point of view is also that the academics themselves become more skilled, and mobilize not to be captured by managerialistic discourse of those who think of knowledge as a commodity to be cashed in or traded (Trowler 1998; 2008 university lecture).
4.2.3 Meeting the change at the micro-level

Change has an impact on our practices, but a lot depends on how people meet and adapt to change in their experiences and the contexts in which they work. According to Trowler change is unpredictable – it can be beneficial, “domesticated” (adapted), but can also make the natural strange (Trowler 2008, university lecture).

In change processes academic individuals and the roles they take on are important. What academics think about learning and teaching as well as the back-stage stories or narratives behind their practices, combined with their emotional engagement and recurrent practices of what they do unconsciously and their appropriateness, have an impact on the development of meaning and knowledge in the organizations (ibid.).

Universities represent many different cultures or communities of practice which consist of individuals with their “schisms” (Trowler 2008, university lecture) that bring conflicts as well. But people also work in teams or collectively. Individuals are important according to Trowler, but the importance of individuals has to be balanced by a sociological collective point of view. He refers to the presence of the cognitive domain, but also to the affective domain, which is often neglected and of great significance in the process of change.

Trowler uses the term Teaching and Learning Regimes, (a developed use of communities of practice by Wenger), which is a constellation of rules, assumptions, practices and relationships related to teaching and learning issues in higher education. Teaching and learning regimes include the importance of identities in interaction, power relations, codes of signification, tacit assumptions, rules of appropriateness, recurrent practices, discursive repertoires and implicit theories of learning and teaching. They all depend on context and disciplinary differences. They are also contested and dynamic, but nonetheless coherent and distinctive (Trowler & al. 2005, p. 436). Trowler’s term of Teaching and Learning Regimes (TLRs) refers to many of the components used by Wenger, but takes into account the development of power relations (therefore called regimes), and the effects they have on the practices of work groups. Power relations and their application imply various ways of exercising power in the process of change and its implementation (Trowler 2008, university lecture).

The dynamic social relationship within the teaching and learning regimes is embedded in the context people participate in – the stories or histories of the institution they tell each other,
the way they speak and their recurrent practices (Trowler 2008, university lecture) – including what they do without being aware of it (tacit knowledge in Wenger 1998, p. 67). Though they may seem unimportant, the narratives and histories have an impact and influence on people when changes take place, because peoples’ practices are situated in their contexts. Members of teaching and learning regimes (communities of practice in Wenger 1998), develop ownership to things, make their own tacit assumptions, develop codes of signification (Trowler 2008, university lecture; Trowler & al. 2005) and an affective and emotional attitude towards things, ideas and practices they are a part of. That in turn, is one of the reasons why transference of good practices does not always work, and adaptation of changes works better. Adapting changes or “domesticating” and “translating” of new ideas or innovations, as Trowler says, means making changes suitable and compatible to context, but innovations are emotionally preloaded, not neutral, thus their implementation will include some parts that might be preserved while others might be added (Trowler 2008, university lecture; Trowler & al. 2005).

Introducing change involves looking at the congruency of the teaching and learning regimes (Trowler & al. 2005, p. 436). Congruency means whether the changes are appropriate and will “catch on” in a particular context or situation. Trowler suggests that the so-called low-rezolution proposals (low-rez.; small changes) will function best, and not those that involve highly defined vision. From Trowler’s point of view, high-rezolution proposals do not allow for domestication and are exclusionary (Trowler 2008, university lecture).

Wenger’s and Trowler’s theories have a lot in common and focus on practices which take place in teaching and learning. Trowler’s theories, however, relate to change that is taking place at the present time, and in contexts of different levels of higher education. He also mentions the importance of academic roles in the process of change and the ideological discourses going on. His theories include power relations in the implementation of changes as well. Trowler’s focus is on the collective practices and changes in a broader context, which all together have an impact on our practices. Nevertheless, both Wenger’s and Trowler’s theories are based on a sociological and context-related approach to learning and teaching, and can be looked upon as complementary in their relevance for the conceptualization of competence at the summer school, and thus how leadership of the school is conducted.
5. The Research Process

In the following chapter I describe my examination process in terms of ideas concerning the research design and the method I have chosen to use. I start with presenting my tools of investigation i.e. the interview guides, the interviewees, the interviews and their characteristics followed by the research design and description of some elements from the phenomenographic research method which I found useful for my research. Further on, I proceed with a description of the data collecting process. Here, unlike the traditional descriptive approaches where the researcher interprets the phenomenon through his or her own predetermined perspective and where the situated context might be neglected, my intention was to study the objects’ own (i.e. the interviewees’ from the summer school) understandings and experiences of the phenomenon of competence in their context of the ISS, and to capture possible similarities and/or differences in how they experience it (Marton in Bowden & Walsh 2000, p. 2). The dominant method for collecting data in my study has been by means of individual interviews, but also includes a focus group interview and some historical documents and artifacts.

Although I chose to concentrate my examination basically on knowledge from the individual interviews and the focus group interview, but nonetheless, I also regard some of the policy documents, as well as historical documents, and artifacts concerning the school as important elements in presenting a more complete picture of the ISS case I am describing. As the “geography of practice” - the local and the global contexts, are important for their practice, learning and identity, all of these elements are interconnected, mutually influential, and interdependent in time and space both within the interviewees’ own context, but also within the whole process of knowledge interpretation (Wenger 1998, pp. 96-97; 130-133). Thus, mentioning some of the information from the interviews triggers other topics or facts relating to other elements touching either the summer school’s history, experience or other circumstances. Neglecting them would leave the whole picture of the ISS case study incomplete. In addition, although only marginally, my own experience from the summer school and other educational contexts make me more knowledgeable in my role as a researcher (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 82). Nevertheless, the limitations of this research forced me to present only some of them.
The interviewees have been grouped into management, administrative and pedagogical staff because the grouping was already present there at the ISS, but also on the assumption that the interviewees’ positions and roles in each of the groups were likely to have a common initial point of departure and reference related to their tasks and content of their work. Moreover, their experiences were more likely to be comparable due to their similar roles and the immediate context within the summer school as well. Nevertheless in my examination, the group division does not exclude the possibility of having distinctions within the groups, something which I account for in some of my comments in presentation of the results, and in the figures illustrating each of the groups separately (Appendix 2, figures 1-4).

The focus group interview consisted of pedagogical staff only, except one interviewee who belongs to management group, but is closely connected with the pedagogical staff through the interviewee’s position and role at the ISS. The choice of the interviewees particularly for that group was limited due to the individuals’ availability.

5.1 The Interview Guides and the Choice of Language

Since the interviewees from the summer school represent different working areas and positions, I found it necessary to make amendments in some of the questions I wished to use from the interview guide. It turned out to be most appropriate to have slightly different interview guides for the management, for the pedagogical, and for the administrative staff. The guides were written in two languages, in Norwegian and English (Appendix 1). The language choice was among other reasons, the following – The International Summer School is a Norwegian-American venture and some employees have English as their native language (or are bilingual). My thesis in also written in English, because English has become madre lingua and a global language of most people today. The students who come to the International Summer School are foreigners and also speak the language. English is a language widely used in academic research, and writing the thesis in English enables more people to become acquainted with the ISS. There were also some linguistic differences in connotation and meaning of the concepts described in my thesis, which already appeared

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7 I chose to use the name “management” (leaders) when referring to the interviewee group, and “leaders” or “leadership” when describing leadership in the end of my thesis
during my pilot interview, but are not taken into account in this examination. The interview guides consisted of the following:

1. Introduction with information about the general format

2. “Warming up section” with more general questions related to either history or objectives of the ISS, the interviewee’s previous experience at the ISS etc.

3. Main questions concerning: concepts of competence, knowledge and quality (understanding, change in meaning and some additional questions related to these topics), communication and leadership/management practices

4. The final section: probes concerning clarification of the concepts between English and Norwegian.

5.2 The Choice of Interviewees

My choice of interviewees depended on their availability and on their position at the school. The number of persons I could interview depended on the natural limits of this case study, and my intention was to have a variety of interviewees who would represent a “mini cross-section” of the summer school’s staff.

I was able to interview representatives of different areas in the ISS which consisted of four persons from the permanent staff and three from the temporary pedagogical staff. There was unequal distribution of gender, with only two male interviewees and five women.

The teachers were the dominant group among the individual interviews, but in order to distribute them I made an effort to interview teachers representing different subjects and/or levels of Norwegian language instructors. Finally, I ended up with seven interviewees, two of whom represented the management, two the administrative staff, and three the pedagogical staff.

While preparing to conduct the interviews and reading literature about the focus group interviews by Bente Halkier, I also found it desirable to conduct a focus group interview (Halkier 2007). This gave the interviewees a new chance to present their conceptions and understandings, but this time in a group setting, and a new possibility to compare concepts with the initial findings and to look for similarities and/or differences between the focus
group interview and the individual interviews. The interview was also an opportunity for the interviewees to redefine their views which they initially presented in the first individual interview.

5.3 The Interviews

The qualitative depth interview - characteristics

The following reasons were among the ones that I found the most reasonable for choosing qualitative research as the most appropriate approach. I used the depth qualitative research which attempts to cover both the factual and the meaning level. It requires the interviewer to listen to the meanings expressed, the explicit information, but also to what is between the lines (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 30). This allowed a depth investigation which enabled taking into account the contextual aspect and the specific situation of the school. Without reducing and quantifying the collected information into numbers, the qualitative interviews allowed me to approach the problem from different angles and perspectives and explore contradictory issues (Rubin 2005 vii-ix). At the same time it is important to bear in mind the purpose of the study and the type of information one wants to attain. In the case of the summer school, it was neither the size nor the numbers which constituted my focus of interest, but the interpretation, understanding and experience of competence in relation to quality and knowledge that the interviewees talked about. The depth interviews conducted at the ISS, the context itself and the situation, including underlying reasons for understanding or doing things in a specific way without the interviewer’s interference (deliberate naïveté), was to obtain descriptions that were as inclusive and presuppositionless as possible (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, pp. 30-31). On the other hand, the requirement of sensitivity and my knowledge of the topic of the interview can be said to contrast with the presuppositionless attitude, and required a critical attitude towards my own presuppositions. Nevertheless, the interviews carried out at the summer school provided me with new information and gave me new insights into the school’s practices.

As mentioned previously, the dominant method of collecting data in my examination consisted of individual semi-structured depth interviews and one focus group interview. A semi-structured interview encompasses a more guided form of conversation, which considers specific aspects of the topic and does not freely take into account all aspects of the
interviewees’ world, which would have been the case in an open type of interview (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). I conducted and supervised the conversation, and the interviewee remained an unequal partner in the dialogue (ibid., pp. 33-34). The interview’s purpose was to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewees with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (ibid., p. 27), a way of obtaining knowledge which is suitable and characteristic for the phenomenographic method. Thus the interview conversation allowed me to capture the multitude of views on a topic and showed the complexity of the interviewees’ world (ibid., p.7).

*The focus group interview - characteristics*

According to Halkier (2007), a focus group interview is a structured group process used to obtain detailed information about a chosen topic. This type of interview often explores attitudes and perceptions of individuals in a group setting, in my examination the interviewees were from the summer school. The interviewees had an opportunity to hear each other’s responses and make additional comments as they heard what other interviewees said. Patton says that it is not necessary for the group to reach any kind of consensus, but the social context where people have a chance to consider their own views in the context of the views of others is an important aspect of a focus group setting. The technique is used for a group consisting of six to twelve participants who are brought together with a facilitator to discuss the ideas or concepts of interest (Patton 1987; Halkier 2007). The focus group from the summer school consisted of seven interviewees, thus fulfilling the recommended requirements.

My role as the facilitator was to keep the discussion on track and ask the questions. To strengthen the reliability and validity of my empirical investigation, I asked questions in several different ways, addressing the topics from different angles or with the help of other additional questions. My own communication skills helped me to create an informal and relaxed atmosphere, where the members of the group felt free to express their opinions (Halkier 2007, pp. 54-56; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 82). The goal was to obtain a natural conversation that addressed in depth the selected issue. It involved open-ended or unstructured questions which were to stimulate the discussion and concern the topics. The members of the group were asked to share and exchange their ideas and experiences in order to generate either new information or redefine their own attitudes. The social context of the
interview facilitated a natural and more spontaneous participation, where the context allowed group members to participate without having the feeling of being forced to do so.

5.4 Conducting Interviews

The pilot interview

The first interview to be conducted in my examination process was the pilot interview, which became a part of my examination material at a later stage, together with the rest of individual interviews, but it also allowed me to test critically my interview guides and to adjust them according to the intension of my research. This interview was conducted at my home due to both practical and other reasons, such as creating a social, relaxed atmosphere, and an experimental informal goal-oriented setting (Halkier 2007, p. 42). The experience gave me an insight on how an interview should be carried out and the possible dangers related to it. The interview lasted one hour, and I proceeded with the transcription, looking for the focus, themes and matters of interest for the thesis. I also sent the interview transcription for verification and kept sorting out the topics.

Individual interviews

The rest of the individual interviews were conducted according to the new interview guides. The process of interviewing always started with a general introduction, the informal consent, ethical and confidential issues and the purpose. The interviews lasted for approximately one hour each and took place either in the summer school office, or by telephone, depending upon the availability of the interviewees.

Focus group interview – the process

My choice in recruiting interviewees for the focus group interview was based on the assumption that the chosen six participants were representative for the summer school and suited to take part in the interview. The choice was also partly based on “force majeure” i.e. the availability of people at the time the interview was taking place. My choice was not based on gender, age or any other criteria than the place of work and background, i.e. the summer school. The participants, except one, represented the teaching staff, and were women only. One of the persons was from the management.
The process of interviewing, as in the other interviews, started with a general introduction, the informal consent, ethical and confidential issues, and the purpose of the focus group interview in relation to the whole examination and the previous individual interviews. The interview was conducted at my home and lasted for about 2 hours.

Our meeting started in an informal and relaxed atmosphere, with some introductory social small talk about everyday activities. It was the first of its kind - an opportunity to meet together privately, but still with a specific purpose, the focus group interview, which concerned all of us in one way or another. The advantage of knowing each other from The International Summer School made it easy to discuss any topic of interest without the formality which was more dominant during the individual interviews conducted in different settings. Kvale and Brinkmann say that these type of interviews are “well suited for exploratory studies in a new domain, since the lively collective interaction may bring forth more spontaneous expressive and emotional views” than in individual interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 150). This was also the case among the summer school’s interviewees.

My role during the interview was as Scott says “to wear different hats and assume different tools throughout the course of discussion” (Stewart & Shamdasani 1990, p.70). In the initial part of our gathering, my role was extended to be not only the facilitator/researcher, but also the hostess responsible for the food and drink I offered to the participants. The task was partly challenging due to constantly evolving dynamics of the situation and the “shifting of hats” requiring continuous mental alertness to both the main purpose, such as listening and observing the interviewees’ attitudes and making notes, and to other more practical aspects of the situation (Kreuger 1988, p. 75).

The interview questions were the same as the guiding questions used during the individual interviews, but were limited only to the main concepts: competence, knowledge and quality. No strict guide was used and in my role as a facilitator I guided the conversation along the interview. The interviewees were asked to answer simple open-ended questions where no other stimulation for the discussion was necessary. The atmosphere was relaxed and informal with some bursts of laughter mixed with serious subject matters, focused on the main purpose of the interview and on food and drink I offered to the group.

The interview was recorded, but not transcribed due to quality-related obstacles and the nature of such a group interview itself. The group interaction reduced to some extent the
control of the conducted focus group interview (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 150), which made the transcription difficult. My own written comments with some key words and the recorded conversation were the basis for my later comparison with what was said during the individual interviews earlier in my examination.

5.5 The Research Design

Since the semantic interpretation of a concept together with its connotations depends on experience and is context-dependent, my presentation represents the summer school’s own meaningful semantic interpretation of the concept of competence rather than a linguistic formulation of theory, and is only one of several possible figures of theory related to the subject (Bas van Fraassen 1989, p. 217). For the purpose of obtaining information on different understandings and meanings of the concept of competence at the summer school, I chose to make use of elements from phenomenographic research design and present descriptions of understandings of the competence concept through seven individual, semi-structured qualitative interviews. The phenomenographic research method is an empirical study of the differing ways in which people see, experience, understand and conceptualize various phenomena in the world around them. The method is based on different disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, and education and is developed from a number of studies of learning in higher education in the 1970s at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden (Marton 2004, p.1). The classical aim of phenomenography is to single out the differences in the ways the phenomenon is experienced and to define the outcome space of those variations in conceiving and understanding the phenomenon (Marton 1981). According to Bowden, knowledge appears in the relation between the people experiencing a certain phenomenon and the context of the phenomenon itself. Furthermore, the method gives the possibility of expressing different interpretations of the phenomena and provides a way to discover what kind of meaning underlies the ways individuals interpret and understand the phenomena, and ultimately leads to new insights in topic being researched (Bowden & Walsh 2000, pp. 48-49).

In my examination, the use of elements from phenomenographic approach in the summer school were limited to the conceptualization of competence and the related concepts of quality and knowledge on two levels - the individual and the collective level. The third level was the final goal of identifying the most common conceptions, understandings and
distinctions among the management, the administrative and pedagogical staff, and the focus group at the summer school together.

5.6 The Role of the Interviewer

5.6.1 A traveling miner, who am I?

Kvale’s metaphors concerning two types of interviewers, and as well as my own linguistic and philological background have influenced my fascination for and reflection on the kind of interviewer I represent in my own research. Neither of the two alone seemed logically distinct enough as Kvale puts it (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 49), and I soon realized that in my research I represented both of them.

The miner metaphor treats knowledge as a buried metal and the interviewer as a miner who unearths the valuable metal. Some interviewers might seek to quantify objective facts as in quantitative research; others “dig out” the essential meaning in their qualitative research. The knowledge to be discovered is uncontaminated or unpolluted by the miner. The interviewer searches for the data or meanings from the subject’s pure experiences (ibid. p. 48). Finally, by using different techniques characteristic for phenomenographic research - such as theme condensation, extracting information, gathering into categories (themes in my examination), and looking for similarities and differences, plus comparing them, one hopefully gets a more complete and true range of descriptions of the conceived phenomenon (Bowden & Walsh 2000).

The second metaphor sees the interviewer as a traveler on a journey that leads to a story told at the end of his journey. While wandering through the unknown landscape, the traveler enters into conversations with the people he meets. The subjects tell stories from their own world. The traveler might choose specific sites of interests or topics, which by questioning and using the interview method, brings the traveler to the goal of his/her research. The content of the stories is in turn described qualitatively and restructured, to be told as stories to others and/or the ones who have told them. The stories might result in multiple meanings when unfolded through the traveler’s interpretations. The journey can lead to new knowledge, but can also trigger a self reflection process and have a transformative and formative effect by bringing the traveler into new ways of self-understanding and uncover previously taken-for-granted suppositions. The traveler’s conversations might guide the story
tellers to new insight and understanding, to reflect on the previous taken-for-granted or seemingly natural understandings (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, pp. 48-49).

However, both methods can also be combined. The meaning is there all the time, but it is transformed when it comes to the surface i.e., in reality in the very moment of the interview process, in the dialogue with the interviewer. I believe that the “very metal” can never be pure, the knowledge is always there if we know that it exists, it is always in relation to something and/or someone. We become and are aware of its existence, but it is undiscovered for “the inexperienced tourist” (Bauman in Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 49). The knowledge might be contaminated, but it depends on the perspective and the point of view of the researcher. Giving an exact answer is complicated, and my conviction is that the interviewer’s role remains double - as a traveling miner.

According to Kvale the miner and the traveler metaphors represent different concepts of knowledge formation, each of them standing for alternative genres and rules. In the miner metaphor the knowledge exists already, it is as if engineered by human beings while the traveler metaphor treats knowledge as art and represents the post modern constructive understanding (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, pp. 48-48). In my research I was probably more of a miner in the beginning of the process, but as I continued the search or the journey I found myself being a traveler.

My own experience from the ISS has assisted me, but it is dynamic and never becomes stable, and the interviewing process plus analysis, enabled me to discover new information. I am “traveling all the time, and discovering the metal”, i.e. there will always be new undiscovered knowledge for me along the way. Nevertheless during the process of analysis, my own critical awareness of possible subjective interpretation was important, and taken into account as far as possible for the examination to be reliable. Furthermore, since practices are always situated, being an experienced researcher in that sense made me capable of seeing the underlying meaning and discovering themes more easily than if I had not known the context at all. I believe that this kind of expertise helped me to detect and interpret what was said in the right way, and look upon emerging themes from different points of view. Keeping that critical attitude hopefully made my examination more reliable. Nevertheless, there will always be some subjectivity in the interpretation of new discoveries. It is based on previous experience, culture and knowledge. New information is being discovered constantly in the process of negotiation (the dialogue), and within the relation during the interview (Taylor
1989). The question of to what extent the discovered knowledge really represents the interviewees’ conceptions and understandings of the phenomenon is a matter of reliability and validity (Marton 2004, p. 6). Still, although it is hard to avoid being influenced by our experiences, my goal while conducting the semi-structured interviews was to reduce this influence to a minimum. As I proceeded with my investigation, my intention was to keep my role as an interviewer with the *tabula rasa* assumption and try to “*bracket all my preconceived ideas to see what presents itself*” (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 207).

5.7 The Process of Analysis and its Challenges

5.7.1 “Deconstructing competence”

My process of analysis consisted of several stages and trials which I describe in detail in the following section of this chapter. Nevertheless, I hereby wish to describe briefly the process of finding the themes and their distinctions in a more illustrative way by supporting it with a figure called “*Deconstructing competence*” as well (Appendix 2).

The process itself started as an investigation of a phenomenon that I experienced as good and positive, and thought to be competence, without really knowing exactly the generation and creation of its content. In order to learn about “*that something*” I started my journey as a traveling miner making use of elements from the phenomenographic approach and the semi-structured interviews, as the tools of investigation. The deconstructing process consisted of preparing the topics in advance and grouping the participants. The deconstructing process was further partly conducted by the interviewees themselves during the interviewing process. The elements that emerged, either immediately during the interviewing process or later in my analysis, were collected again according to various criteria which formed themes or sub-themes of the competence of The International Summer School and its context.

5.7.2 Stages and reliability challenges

To describe different stages of my analysis of the interviews and challenges related to the process, I describe the individual interview analysis first, and look upon the focus group interview afterwards.
My analysis encompasses some of the stages Kvale and Brinkmann refer to (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, pp. 201-210), which should be interpreted as a process where the stages are interrelated and often overlapping. It can be divided into the following:

1. An attempt to define the criteria for classification

2. Sorting of expressions in terms of similarities and differences between them

3. Capturing the meaning as intended by the interviewees through meaningful patterns and relations

4. Attempts to categorize the themes by means of figures

5. Checking of the openness and awareness of not imposing any preconceived ideas of my own

6. Several analyses (listening, combined with reading of the transcripts, treating the collected themes from different angles, rearranging of the figures’ classification and comparison, keeping “purposeful distance” between the analyses

7. Final classification of themes, description in light of chosen theories and purpose of the research

The results of theme condensation (or pooling), and initially obtained categories of themes underwent several stages of different choice and classification procedures until I finally arrived at the results I describe in the following chapters.

As there is no commonly accepted scheme for defining criteria of classification of a phenomenographic analysis (Dall’Alba 1995, p. 42), the process of doing so resulted in several attempts of classification. My linguistic and semantic competence helped me to classify words, expressions and utterances into domains, spaces of meaning or larger units, which later on became meaningful semantic hierarchies of classification (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 203). Bowden in his article on “Some methodological issues” mentions different stages of the phenomenographic research process and the importance of coherence in methodology, planning and clear intention (Dall’Alba 1995, p. 56). He provides examples of several theoretical descriptions of the method, possible ways of theme condensation of the content, such as selection procedures based on criteria of relevance, interpretation in relation
to context, and selection of quotes which make up data pools where the boundaries
separating individuals are abandoned, and the focus is on the theme condensation (ibid., pp.
60-61). Initially, my choice was to collect the pool of meanings into matrices, which I hoped
would help me to find relevant categories of the concept of competence. I chose to use
matrices to classify relevant extracts of the utterances, but I finally abandoned the de-
contextualization method because it did more harm than good. As Johannessen and Tufte
describe the problem, the collected data in matrices was chopped into unrelated units without
the meaningful and relevant context in which the utterances appeared (Johannessen & Tufte
2006, p. 165). As a consequence, through my own process of learning along the
classification process, I found out that the reliability and intention of the research and the
coherence of the phenomenographic method would be distorted and wrong. The same
argument, as well as for the sake of reliability, guided me when I consciously decided to
present larger units of the transcribed material in this thesis. Nevertheless, in the process,
listening to the interviews and taking notes of the main themes and subthemes turned out to
be the best way to keep the “sound picture” of the context. This stage, along with the written
transcripts, consisted of comparing utterances and collecting them into units or domains on
the basis of their similarities and differences of either explicit or underlying hidden between
the lines, meanings of interpretation. In order to strengthen the reliability of my attempt to
analyze the interviews, I made use of the written transcripts by reading them and labeling the
utterances.

Yet another challenge was the amount of descriptions and understandings that had to be kept
in mind at the same time during the process of analysis. The uncertainty of finding the right
interpretation of the real underlying meaning during the process was confusing and
challenging as well, but not uncommon in this type of research (Bowden 2000). I found
myself “hearing” what the informants were saying all the time, their utterances and the
whole context of the conversation in analyzing the underlying meaning.

According to Kvale and Brinkmann, the interpretation of the meaning of texts encompasses a
variety of approaches (2009, p. 208). Being the interpreter of the interviews conducted with
the summer school interviewees and going beyond what was directly said in order to work
out structures and relations of meanings not apparent directly in the text (ibid., p. 2007) in
addition to deconstructing the concepts and the themes, I made several attempts to find the
underlying message in the context of the ISS and “to interpret the spirit and not the letter”
I underwent stages having thought that I had “caught the animal” (Lycke 2008), to later on find more complexity. According to Bowden, some of the themes might remain blurred and unclear, something which is often pointed out by the critics of phenomenographic research.

In some cases the interviewees explained their understanding by means of words that had a different underlying meaning than others when answering the same questions (Bowden in Bowden & Walsh 2000, p.56; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, pp. 211-213). This was a challenging experience, but a valuable warning of a range of possibilities of interpretation and linguistic underlying significance which can be discovered by several readings, and the necessity of providing distance to the research objects at some stages of the interpretation. The choice of words, metaphors or the language of the community of the summer school’s practice, or even purely linguistic differences, also functioned as indicators for diverse conceptual content. This is easier to discover when being an experienced and knowledgeable interviewer and knowing the culture than for an “outsider” unaware of the context (Dall’Alba 1995, p. 21). Nevertheless, the evaluation and interpretation might still lead to multiple potential meanings by different interpreters, which is often a common objection to interview analyses (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 211). These objections are also contrary to the postmodern attitude which allows for a legitimate plurality of interpretations and a perspectival subjectivity which might give more fruitful results (ibid., p. 212-213). In my case, I was alone and the only one to analyze the meaning. Returning back to the miner who digs to discover and uncover the uncontaminated truth, the question of where the real meaning exists seems impossible to answer, but an interrelational interpretation regards the meaning to exist between the subjects in their inter-action. On the other hand, due to the power asymmetry between the interviewer and the interviewee, there is a danger of subjective interpretation of meaning and an ethical matter, thus questioning the validity of interpretation (ibid., pp. 217-218).

5.7.3 Reliability in discovery of data and its validity

My examination is based on qualitative interviews with a relatively small amount of interviewees, where social, communicative and intersubjective aspects of the interview situation triggered various interpretations and stories of the summer school’s seven interviewees’ understanding of competence. Evaluation of the outcomes and their validity requires caution and good craftsmanship (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, pp. 248-253), as
possible erroneous assumptions previously mentioned, might influence trustworthiness of the research. On the other hand, the method has its strengths as well as weaknesses, apart from weaknesses and dangers mentioned initially. The communicative validation – the utterances of the interviewees, the way they expressed their conceptions and understandings formed the meaning of the themes, and involved member validation (ibid., p. 255). The theme categorization is an important tool in discovering different understandings, and the results presented the knowledge in relation to the interviewees’ understandings at the time the interviews were conducted. The themes emerged and were classified during the search for similarities and differences in the collected data of my research (Bowden & Walsh 2000, p. 25), but as there is no power balance in a guided semi-structured interview situation, my own critical role as interviewer, was to try not to imply or dominate what was being talked about, but still fulfill my role as a guide of the conversation. In case of my own recorded comments or utterances, I was cautious not to interpret myself, but the objects of my research.
6. Reporting Research Interviews and Interpretation

The results from the ISS conceptualization process consist of dominating themes and sub-themes which are also visualized in the figures (Appendix 2). All the themes taken collectively represent a sample of descriptions of conceptions, practices and ideas which are characteristic for the summer school’s practices, and thus conceptualize the summer school’s concept of competence. Many of the themes and sub-themes can be partly semantically overlapping and therefore have been placed under several theme components in the figures I present. The figures refer to each of the interviewed groups; the highlighted red-colored “Goals-Mission” in the figures is the dominating theme for all the groups, except the focus group where some of the main themes have not been discussed due to limitations imposed on the length of the interview, but are implicitly included and shown in faded colors. The red-colored descriptions marked with astrix, are distinctions, more relevant or emphasized by the group, or distinctive from the other groups. The themes in the figures are not exhaustive and in many ways are mutually complementary.

For the sake of a more holistic view of the conceptualization process at the summer school and the more global context in which the summer school functions, I offer some space to the time aspect of continuity and change; continuity and change in understanding of the concepts, which also includes other external changes that have taken place since the beginnings of the ISS, and their influence on both structural and content-related matters.

My first research question relates mainly to the summer school’s understandings and perceptions of the concept of competence, but also to possible changes in understanding the concept and/or the related concepts of quality and knowledge. As the interviewees’ awareness of change is expressed in different ways and contexts in the interviews, or “goes unnoticed” (Wenger 1998, p. 94), I chose to weave it into various parts of my presentation following the ways the interviewees talk about it.

The first research question and its subthemes, is as follows:

1. How do the management, the administrative, the pedagogical staff and the focus group at The International Summer School, understand the concept of competence and the related concepts of quality and knowledge?
a. How do the groups conceive the change in their understanding of competence and the related concepts?

b. How are the concepts reflected in the leadership practice at the ISS?

6.1 Management

6.1.1 Complexity of the concept of competence

The management’s conception of the concept of competence is described in terms related to Wenger’s and Lave and Wenger’s (1998; 1991) many aspects of theory on social practice and situated learning, and is the following:

*Competence means simply that you have a background, experience which enables you to perform the job, that you know the job. Possessing competence means to learn the job, that one strives to gain experience in such a way that one knows how to do the job the best, to improve one’s own performance continuously, and in interaction with those you work with, and within the educational context that you deal with…*(interviewee A)

The management stresses the importance of context-related competence, understanding students’ and teachers’ background, dynamic interaction with the students and continuous improvement of one’s own abilities.

Further on, the management’s understanding of the concept includes a number of different competencies as well. The second interviewee distinguishes between low and high levels of competence. The high (academic) level of competence is the type of competence the school wishes to maintain:

*It’s not a word that I heard people use at the summer school, and I guess I would think competency as the ability to do something and if you think about competency, we think about high levels of competency, not low levels, but it could also, to me personally, be that one can do something or the documentation, so a competency*

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8 The word *competency* (plural form: *competences*) in Am. English, refers to *competence* as used by others.
could be a diploma or a CV or something that shows that someone has had a background in something, but it’s kind of “a double edged sword”, because competency in its true meaning of the word, would really mean the skill I guess. It’s a difficult word which should be defined, and probably everyone of us would understand it in a different way (interviewee C)

[...] you could say that there are many different competences, there is the competency involved in teaching, there’s a competency involved in giving service to students and the faculty, You could probably use other words than competences in talking about those things. An important part of our competence is to understand the background of the students and the teachers, various situations, in a way understanding their points of reference (interviewee C)

It is interesting to notice that the concept competence has probably not even been discussed among people working at the ISS, and the practices behind it might be interpreted as a part of many tacit assumptions (Trowler & al. 2005, p. 436) in the school and an unnoticed ownership attitude (Wenger 1998; Trowler 2008 university lecture) towards their own work.

6.1.2 Continuity and change

The management’s descriptions concerning continuity and change related to the school were partly expressed indirectly through the interviewees’ descriptions concerning other topics such as the historical background of the school, or the name change from the Summer School for American Students to the to the International Summer School. The school, which was originally meant to be only a “one season arrangement”, turned out to be successful and has now had its 63rd session since 1947. Although the initiative was taken right after the Second World War, it is still based on the same principles of mutual understanding and peace advocating ideas. The following extracts show typical characteristics of the course content and teaching methods at the very beginning of the ISS’ existence, which in many ways are now extended, but have not lost their validity, importance and interest. Looking from the social theory of learning point of view by Wenger (Wenger 1998), the extracts illustrate the ISS’ long tradition in extra-curricular, outdoor and social practices that have been preserved until today:
Continuity

When it concerns the academic part, the school has always offered courses about Norway, Norwegian language, culture, history, politics…(interviewee A)

From the very beginning there was an extra-curricular component of the summer school, a social component of the summer school, which was perhaps not quite the way the Norwegian university education would have been run where the focus was ...you went to lectures, you took your exams, then anything separate from that, was maybe not in the purvue of the university, that was... purely aside from that, whereas this cultural component of getting students out to the field and getting them to experience Norwegian culture, foods, landscape, that maybe wouldn’t have been the same as the style of education, the university education of the time (interviewee C)

A significant change took place in 1958 when the school began to be more international. The student body had then changed from American students only to students who came from all over the world and represented different cultural backgrounds. The extract also contains information about the school’s multi-national context as early as the late fifties:

Change

[...] In 1947, it was then The Summer School for American Students started, organized for the first time with 221 participants. This was the summer school in 1948 and 1949 and further on. Gradually other than the American students started to be interested in that possibility. So already in 1958 the school’s name was changed from Summer School for American Students into the International Summer School, and the number of students as well as nationalities had grown. Last year the number of our students had reached as much as 500 students from about 90 different countries on the 6-week courses. In addition we also had assignments for Erasmus courses, and all together we had almost 600 students during one summer session... And today about 20% of them are Americans, until the beginning of 1980 about 50%

9 Information based on 2007 session
were American, but later on the number of Americans had decreased, but during the last years it has been stable, and has been about 20%, something we regard as optimal…(interviewee A)

In addition, the management also refers to significant changes that have taken place in relation to broader mutual cooperation with the University of Oslo and courses offered across different faculties and master programs trying to integrate the ISS into the university.

On the other hand, not only structural changes and the change in student body have taken place at the school. When asked whether the interviewees experienced any changes in understanding of the concept of competence in relation to work at the school, they express their views by dividing change in two types: the external changes and the internal changes.

*It certainly has! I have certainly become more aware…one should, after having worked here for 16 years […] Yes, absolutely, also because I feel that during these 16 years there has been a change in improvement of competence in running the school, and both students and teachers in a way encounter the summer school with more expectations and requirements from the outside and looking from the internal point of view it has caused more awareness and more reflection on competence and what is needed for this job. […] Yes, first of all the school has grown, and in order to service both the students and the teachers, there is a need to have more competence to run a larger volume […] there’s been a change in technical learning devices, it requires competence, so the teachers expect that you have a Power-point, overhead […] and what’s important for us is that students with different backgrounds and teachers, … we have them only for a short time, and we cannot lose time…In other words it has to function and we have to have a whole apparatus which is there, available if there’s something that doesn’t function, and we have to solve it quickly. (interviewee A)*

The external changes, tension and even pressure, have been caused by external factors such as expectations from the outside where improvement of the school’s competence and requirements from the teachers and students have become more dominant. A larger student body, as well as more nationalities represented at the ISS, require new competencies in dealing with new situations. On the other hand the internal changes are related to an understanding of competence in general, competence awareness and dealing with challenges
related to the volume and time, and diversity of the students’ backgrounds. Similarly to Wenger’s and Trowler’s theories on individual and collective approach to learning (Wenger 1998; Trowler 2008, university lecture), the citation indicates the management’s clear awareness of reflecting upon competence needed in the summer school context; continuous development and fulfillment of students’ and teachers’ expectations both individually and collectively, showing constant internal context-related development moving parallel with the external development and changes taking place in the world.

6.1.3 Competence, quality and other competencies

The management’s connotative interpretation of the word competence often relates to quality or other characteristics the school looks for when recruiting new staff, which implies the plurality of the concept. For example, the skills to perform the job, the international experience and the desire to provide service. When recruiting staff, the management’s view reflects the same attitude as in Lave and Wenger’s theory on individuals in communities of practice who cannot be separated from the context (Lave and Wenger 1991, pp. 14-17; Wenger 1998, pp. 3-15). The management also underlines in several places cooperation and the importance of recruiting team members.

Possessing an overall understanding of the summer school’s context, its mission and knowledge as a part of human formation and cultivation (Westbury 2000, pp. 15-54), represents quality at the summer school. The management refers to these characteristics as parts of competence and quality at the same time, and says further on that having quality is contagious, so it is important to have motivated teachers as well as motivated students. The concept of quality overlaps, and is in this respect, in complementary distribution with competence. In the dialogue about recruitment of new staff, the management exemplifies certain qualities as a part of the ISS perception of competence:

In looking for staff, there’s a number of things that we look at,... of course that they have the actual skills in order to perform the tasks that we need to have done, people’s experiences in encountering other cultures and also their abilities. Perhaps you could say cross-cultural communication, teamwork - what we see as a competency, an ability or a talent for working together with other people, working well with other people, and perhaps service and a desire for service orientation...

(interviewee C)
Cross-cultural competence embeds an understanding of different teaching and learning traditions and methods, from the interactive and reflective ones, with those where students regard the teacher as the only authority figure and reject team or group work with other students. The management speaks about teachers’ and staff’s competence and their awareness of those differences, but also having respect for other traditions and views on how teaching should be conducted.

Apart from a strong linking of competence to the immediate ISS context, it is also described in terms of a technical skill:

...competence in a very narrow meaning of the word, can be looked upon as something technical, to know the job, but at least in our context, I think that competence is very much linked also to understanding of the context (interviewee A)

Competence is also understood as a background and a tool to be able to adjust and to have the right focus on knowledge:

If things are adjusted, then you’ll get focus on the knowledge you are to convey, the cultural encounter which is to be experienced...Of course, it’s important to have competence to prepare things in such a way that focus is on the right direction. I do not treat competence as a distinctive value, I treat competence as a tool, as a background, as a tool to adjust, so people can focus on the right thing (interviewee A)

Wenger describes reification which gives form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into “thingness”. “Having a tool to an activity, changes the nature of that activity” (Wenger 1998, pp. 57-59). The ISS projects its own meaning which exists in a reality of its own, and is an abstraction, but which also can be a process and a product (ibid., pp. 58-60). The context-related competence of the summer school and their integrated knowledge as described by the management is such a tool used in order to focus on conveying knowledge and in giving it the right direction. Reification though, must be reappropriated into the local process in order to become meaningful (ibid., p. 60). This view seems similar to Trowler’s domestication or translation of knowledge into the local context (Trowler 2008, university lecture).
The understanding of competence is also connected with the students’ expectations and the summer school’s ability to deal with the cultural diversity of learning and teaching backgrounds in order to fulfil these expectations:

 [...] what they expect from a course, what they bring of teaching practices, learning traditions, and come with their expectations about everything from the teacher, and are skeptical for example towards all forms of learning from peer students, group work and this kind of activities, some expect that they will learn everything, as much as possible, while they’ll be confused if you challenge them to problematize, put a question mark on the things the teacher says, what the book says... While others come from traditions where they are used to a very interactive teaching method and have large expectations of that. So it’s very important to know those backgrounds...

(interviewee A)

6.1.4 The importance of conveying knowledge

Dealing with cultural diversity of learning and teaching is also a matter of knowledge possessed by the staff and conveyed within a comparative perspective. The description of knowledge at the summer school is expressed as something with substantial content that the ISS wishes to convey, for example knowledge about Norwegian politics, peace research, but also much more. The reflective attitude and the comparative aspect towards the concept of knowledge is important also as an ability to extrapolate and be able to let the students see its validity in various contexts. The ISS view on the importance of knowledge has its parallels in academic learning reflected by Karseth (Karseth 2008, p. 59). Wenger refers in his theory to “engaging students in meaningful practices, to enhance their participation and opening of their horizons, so they can put themselves on learning trajectories they can identify with and reflect, involve in discussions and actions” (Wenger 1998, p.10). Engaging students in meaningful practices and student participation is and has been, an integral part of the summer school’s activities, both the formal ones integrated in courses and discussions, but also in extra-curricular activities, field trips, visits to the museums, and other informal gatherings arranged by the students themselves since the summer school’s very beginning in 1947 (Vannebo 1996, pp. 12, 20).
I associate knowledge with conveying a substantial content that we wish to convey in various courses. We wish to convey knowledge about Norwegian politics, peace research… (interviewee A).

[...] but also a deeper understanding of the subject, than they do, and also in our context that you are able to extrapolate from the knowledge we convey, for example about a theme such as Norwegian art, to convey that knowledge, give them insight, and at the same time you wish to give them this knowledge to broaden their reflective space, not only give a deeper understanding of Norwegian art, but also a deeper understanding per se and make them use of the knowledge you have acquired in Norwegian art, in your own tradition..., so you can take subject after subject and so on, and the comparative aspect as first of all substantial…(interviewee A)

6.1.5 Knowledge distribution, vision and predilection

The management underlines in several contexts that the university represents an academic knowledge institution where respect for that kind of knowledge is crucial in order to be able to run and administer an organization like the summer school. It shows deep respect for the knowledge conveyed in various courses. Looking through Spillane’s perspective, the ISS knowledge is distributed among the staff (Spillane 2006, p. 88), among people working there, and is not in hands of the management only. Trowler makes a comment on the roles academics have, what they think about learning and teaching, combined with emotional engagement (Trowler 2008, university lecture). In order to administer a place like the ISS, the management also says that it is equally important to have a vision of what is being done and the goals of the organization, plus the predilection which supports Trowler’ s view on the importance of the affective domain towards the work one is involved with (ibid.):

*I feel what is very important for administrating a venture, is that you have a vision, an understanding, a predilection for the thing you adjust for, and at the university, in a knowledgeable institution you have to first of all have a deeper respect for the academic knowledge which is conveyed and acquired in various courses and classrooms, and I do not have subject-related knowledge in all those fields we teach. I think it’s basic to have respect for those who have that competence that you care that it will be conveyed, and acquired as well as possible, and you in a way have to know what the goal for the venture is!* (interviewee A)
Trowler talks about ideological coalescence within an enterprise. The ISS vision and the goals lead and guide the school’s practices towards their chosen direction, their decision on the ideology or a combination of ideologies of “what academics do with their students, how they do it and what they want them to look like, be able to do and try to achieve in the future” (Trowler 2008, university lecture). The interviewee expresses also the affective aspect in conveying knowledge, a genuine care for the knowledge to be conveyed.

6.1.6 Quality related to service

Quality conceived by the management means service, care and availability as well:

I think about people who are willing to give a little bit extra or not always defining themselves in terms of limitations in their responsibilities, but who are willing to give this little bit of extra service, that they don’t lock the door at five o’clock or don’t think, well that’s somebody else’s responsibility ...”det er ikke mitt bord”. (it’s not my responsibility)... but are willing when somebody comes to them with a question, and they say “oh, but I know somebody who CAN help you !”, [...] that they don’t just turn the person away, but they help the person out to the next step. And it’s related to that kind of service. It’s related A LOT ... A lot of this is related to service (interviewee C)

6.1.7 Quality - predicting potential conflicts

Openness and the ability to communicate with people representing different cultural backgrounds and knowledge, and the awareness of various communication styles are understood as qualities that help to predict potential conflicts. These are also included in the management’s conception of quality:

I think that an aspect of that is an openness to discussing things where you might have a potential conflict or you have people with strong opinions, which I think we all do, but we are willing to listen the other person’s point of view and willing to talk, to communicate and of course it’s really important too, in this context. It’s maybe even complicated by the fact that we have not only different personal communication styles, but our personal communication styles are influenced by our culture and our cultural background, and I think we have from ten to twelve different nationalities represented in our staff every summer we have to be aware that sometimes
differences are not conflicts as much as there are differences... maybe... the communication styles that we have to think about, and how we are going to demonstrate for our students, and our staff, that we're multicultural and that it's a positive thing rather than a negative thing...(interviewee C)

The extract as in earlier utterances, focuses on cross-cultural context awareness at all times, and stresses the importance of dialogue in understanding of differences rather than focusing on negative aspects. The citation refers also to communication practices not only among students participating in various courses, but towards foreign staff members as well, as role models for the summer school students.

6.1.8 Measurable and instinctive measure of quality

The perception of quality among management personnel reflects the complexity of the concept and a clear relationship with the other concepts - competence and knowledge. Quality is presented as measurable in terms of results on the one hand, but non-measurable or instinctive on the other, but still observable:

*There is of course a measurable quality too, in terms of teaching, where one can see the teachers, whether language teachers or in non-language courses, that they are able to see different cultures that the students come from, and maybe adjust things in their teaching to reach out to students rather than expecting students to get what they have to provide in one certain way or that the teachers find time being creative figuring out the ways to present their material so that the students understand ...I think some of it is instinctive, but if we look at different areas we can look for example at the staff, what kinds of international or intercultural experiences had they had, and the same thing with teachers, have they taught these kinds of students before, do they exhibit an interest in it when they talk to us about it or are they just interested in a teaching job for three or six weeks, and of course there are the other, the measurable competences too. Quality can sometimes be measured in terms of results...we can often measure quality by how successful the persons were ...when they were working with people* (interviewee C).
6.1.9 Quality measured through evaluation

Assessment and evaluation as conceived by the management are powerful tools in maintaining quality at the summer school. They are also practiced in different ways and for various purposes. A lot of the evaluation plays an important role in relation to a holistic view of how the school is being administered. It helps the school to “look forward and backward at the same time”, keep the balance and combine the old with the new (Stensaker 2008, p. 421; Spillane 2006, p. 21), and predict necessary changes for the future or to avoid problems. Assessment at the ISS is described as a tool used for the evaluation of quality, planning and prediction, but is not the only measure of it, as it can be subjective. This reflective approach to evaluation results is found in one of the utterances below:

[…] we do an incredible amount of evaluation, evaluations are never perfect [...] but they do give some sort of benchmark, so that we can look at what are the issues one year and the issues the next year and so on…(interviewee C)

I think it’s important that over the years in many ways we’re almost able to predict the areas because of course it’s not only within these six weeks it’s the end, we think what we could have done better, you get feedback all the way through informally and formally […] The evaluations are important for a number of reasons, but they’re not the only measure of quality, it’s important that they’ll NOT be the only measure of quality, because they are also subjective (interviewee A).

The positive attitude of the ISS towards evaluation as a quality measurement at the ISS is in contrast to Stensaker, who refers to evaluation reports as a burden and the cause of conflicts among academics (Stensaker 2008, pp. 421-422). Different views as well as the absence of a more reflective evaluation can equally be a matter of reliability and subjectivity within an organization and outside it. At the ISS evaluation is used for many purposes, and has a positive effect on further improvement of the school’s practices.

6.1.10 Quality conveyed through various tools

The understanding of quality is described as something that the summer school strives for, a characteristic that should penetrate the whole organization and be conveyed by means of knowledge and other tools, together with goal awareness - the mission and its purpose.
It means as if to get the best, the optimum out of the situation, quality in relation to conveying of knowledge it means that you are to provide students with so good quality in the way you convey the information, ... and if you succeed in that throughout the whole system. Conveying of quality through learning tools, the books you use, the technical tools, the way we teach... I look upon it that quality is something that penetrates the whole organization, whole work, the whole knowledge institution, so this is after all quality in conveying knowledge and knowledge acquisition, that’s what is the primary issue [...] everything that’s happening to strengthen it, it’s important as an additional tool in order to attain the quality you wish and have a hope to convey (interviewee A).

The management expresses their views on the fundamental overall understanding of how to convey and acquire knowledge through various tools (Wenger 1998). The way knowledge is conveyed and the teaching methods used seems to be of great importance, together with learning materials such as books and the use of new technological tools. Knowledge is mediated and reified through various means; it also represents externalized ideas used in practice (Wenger 1998, pp. 59-62; Spillane 2006, p.18) to obtain quality the ISS wants to have. An understanding of the components on all levels, together with the school’s mission, helps to provide for quality at the summer school.

6.1.11 Quality – continuity and change

When asked about changes in the understanding of the concept of quality, the management refers to the need of improvement of quality due to external changes such as a larger student body and expectations from the students and teachers, but to experience that quality today, depends on motivated students and teachers. Therefore, a more selective admission of students to the summer school is necessary to preserve quality. Similarly to Trowler (Trowler, university lecture 2008), the management expresses that “Good quality, motivated students and teachers” have, as already mentioned previously, a contagious effect on each other. The management is aware of changes in the understanding of the concept of quality through the years, but they express satisfaction and pride in having preserved the human formative aspect of education and knowledge that is characteristic for the ISS:

Yes, I think so [...]. There are various aspects, because the number of applicants is very large, we can be very selective in choosing students, also when we give them
scholarships, and then we have certain quality-criteria in relation to whom we choose, that concerns our students who at the outset have expectations. So in order to have quality in teaching, you have to have motivated teachers, motivated students. If the administration organizes for the motivated teachers, for the motivated students collectively, than you can in a way get the optimum out of what you want to convey, then quality has such a contagious effect! ...[and] also the teachers feel that the summer school has taken care of this human formation aspect and the joy of acquiring knowledge which they perhaps do not experience as much in other places,... so looking at it in this way, they again become more aware of it...(interviewee A)

6.2 The Administrative Staff

6.2.1 Conceptualizing competence

The answers related to the understanding of competence among the administrative staff characterized the concept as difficult to describe. Nevertheless they connect it with a number of characteristics and relate it to quality, academic knowledge, service and students’ satisfaction. Also being able to communicate and to present good results, are is among the features that indicate that there is competence involved in the performance. The concept is described as an acquired, learned or even innate/inherited characteristic that makes a person capable of performing certain tasks.

It’s not so easy. When I hear the word “competence”, I think of a quality, a learned quality, an acquired quality, and perhaps also a quality you are born with, so that you are able to perform certain types of tasks (interviewee D).

The other interviewee expressed the following:

A difficult question ....I assume that you show that you know what you are doing to provide the service, that we have competence in providing quality courses, we are able to show the results, so the students are satisfied [...] because we have an academic knowledge behind [...] In administration, that we have people who back up to be able to deliver quality in education, and the same through the administrative service that we have good communication (interviewee B).
The last extract relates the concept very closely to the summer school’s context and the interviewee’s own administrative position there - the administrative service and the results combined with knowledge of knowing “what it’s all about”. The citation shows the ownership attitude toward work done at the ISS, which both Wenger and Trowler refer to in their theories (Wenger 1998, pp. 200-202; Trowler 2008, university lecture).

When speaking about recruitment of new staff one of the interviewees (D) indirectly refers to several other important interpretations of the concept and includes professional, social and cross-cultural competence of the staff, and the fact of participating in a larger global context of international mutual influence and knowledge. Wenger in his theory on social learning refers to identity of participation (Wenger 1998, p. 56), which in the case of ISS also includes international influences. The following citation shows this identity awareness, although it is not always stated explicitly:

We have clear priorities with regard to competence, the professional competence, which is important of course, but more important than in the rest of the university, because you have the social and the cultural aspect as well. It’s not stated so many places, only some places for the teachers, but it’s important to be aware of it in relation to international impulses which we are a part of (interviewee D).

The administrative staff admits that the concept of competence related to knowledge has not been discussed or “philosophized” and regards the question as difficult to answer, but knowledge is perceived as a useful tool towards achieving desired goals:

Personally, I do not philosophize what knowledge really is, but in relation to my job, knowledge is something acquired, it can be a quality, but often information which you can make use of in order to achieve something. It’s difficult to define something you don’t think about spontaneously by yourself (interviewee D).

The conception of knowledge is regarded as having competence which as exemplified above, reflects some of the tacit assumptions (Trowler & al. 2005, p. 436) at the ISS - an understanding of the content of what constitutes knowledge in the organization, but not necessarily so easy to define in a more concrete way.

When asked about the most important characteristics of competence in relation to the administrative job, the interviewees underline importance of international knowledge and
personal abilities, apart from being structure- and detail - oriented. The interviewees express logistics as a challenge in many ways, and use such metaphors as “multi-tasking”, “herding cats” or “overbooking” as in seat flight booking, (related to problems of classroom booking), which reflects doing an almost impossible job. The administrative knowledge is perceived as possessing some creative abilities like inventiveness in facing challenges connected with coordination of various administrative tasks.

The ability to look at one’s own organization from the outside as a whole is regarded as competence which helps to notice where improvements are needed. Such knowledge can also be related to seemingly unimportant common knowledge of details such as appropriate clothing and understanding what is natural for one culture, but not necessarily for other cultures (interviewee D). The interviewee’s attitude shows the administrative ability of grasping both the overall picture and the context-related details which make up the total.

6.2.2 Competence - continuity and change

The perception of continuity and change in relation to competence among the administrative staff was mainly expressed through other concepts or themes discussed during the interviews. The interviewees’ understandings differed, and to the question whether their understanding of competence has changed, one interviewee responded in the following way:

Yes, to a certain extent. I think that I have seen a slightly different type of competence valued than the human-relation competence, which probably is one of those that it is difficult to obtain, but the ISS is probably very specific because it is (the competence) both formalized and not formalized. The school has focus on the type of competence needed to create a whole in organizing. If you look at other work places at the university, they have perhaps more limited areas in their tasks, they for example, work only with exam admission or exams, and need competence only within regulations, understanding of admission rules, but summer school has a more holistic profile...both the teachers and students [...] we offer further service, and this requires another type of competence. This has probably not changed the meaning of the word competence, but I have probably got a different view of the type of competence needed in relation to work (interviewee D).

The interviewee also mentions that he/she has changed his own understanding of competence by adding to his/her repertoire an important and different kind of competence –
the relational competence, which is very specific for the summer school and its context. In other words, from the constructivist point of view (Piaget 1958), the person has enriched or broadened his/her own already existing understanding of the concept by conceiving it from a holistic point of view which includes a combination of several competencies at the same time, built up through several years of experience.

The interviewee mentions changes in the university structures, i.e. the external changes, but not in the content within the summer school itself. The person’s perception indicates that although the structural changes have taken place within the university on a larger scale, they have not affected the school itself, particularly the content, which has remained the same because the school has, as the interviewee says, “found its own profile along 60 years and to which (the profile) both the teachers and the students respond very well” (interviewee D).

Identity is reflected through social student participation (Wenger 1998), conveying of knowledge in the way it is done in the summer school’s practices, and seems to have been present long before the university’s quality reforms have taken place. The ISS’ recurrent practices in certain areas have not changed, but the structures have. The interviewee says:

> In practice, we have been there before the university has, not everywhere, but especially in regard to conveying of knowledge, assessment and student activity…

(interviewee D).

The second interviewee (B) is of a different opinion, and does not feel to have experienced change.

### 6.2.3 Knowledge – continuity and change

When asked about the change in their understanding of the concept of knowledge the administrative staff admitted the following:

> I think I’d say to be honest, I have not empondered on that before, but I my ability to interact towards people from different cultures has changed (interviewee B).

> As in the case of competence, I haven’t made up my own definition of it, but I think I have experienced the cross-cultural knowledge and competence as important at this place, and that’s what I thought when I started working here (interviewee D).
The administrative staff does not seem to have reflected upon the concept of knowledge and possible changes related to it, but the second interviewee has, as in the case of competence, noticed the dominant cross-cultural focus at the ISS in comparison to other work places.

6.2.4 Knowledge – understanding past and present

Again the role of the context and its relevance mentioned by Wenger and Trowler are characteristic for the summer school (Wenger 1998; Trowler 2008, university lecture). Moreover, knowledge is presented as an integrated component of competence, and includes the history of the ISS, and its artifacts, but also as a dynamic process which involves its context – the geographical and political orientation in the world, knowledge of the university structures and all the activities involved in running the school, apart from the specific skills needed for administrative purposes. The way knowledge is conceived by the interviewees has a broader meaning and entails understanding as well. The combination of all the characteristics together related to past and present experiences, seems to be THE competence.

If I think in relation to my work, without knowledge what the summer school is about, then I wouldn’t be competent in my job, because you have to have history about it, you have a lot of knowledge, I have more history, more understanding and I think knowledge is understanding, it’s all connected...and by having more quest to do it properly and to be competent. [...] It all encompasses a small idea of what’s happening around in the world and “having feelers”. Knowledge in terms of students, that’s the knowledge of an understanding where the people are coming from, that’s the first thing, and then administrative duties, to know what kind of rules and regulations we are working under in order to do things properly which are not inappropriate, to know how the university is run in order to provide the services correctly to students, faculty and administration and having the knowledge of the world and of people... you have to know small details what the summer school does, and what the university at large does in order to know the rules...(interviewee B).

Again the context, as described by the interviewee is multiple - there is the internal school context, then there are several external contexts the ISS is a part of - the university context with its structures and the way it is run, and finally the world and the global contexts connected with the summer school’s students - where they come from, their own educational
system, and their cultural background. The dynamism of the context is a combination of continuity and change at the same time (Wenger 1998, p. 94), as well as experience. The changes seem to be imposed and forced by the world out there, but knowledge is adapted to the expectations from the outside and at the same time in accordance with the summer school’s own context, vision and goals.

6.2.5 Quality Assurance and self - evaluation

The administrative staff of the ISS conceives quality as an academic quality of high academic standards for the services provided and the program. Introduction of Quality Assurance and the school’s own evaluation are looked upon as tools to check quality at the summer school and are viewed as indicators of where improvement is needed.

*I think I wish to give as much quality and administrative services as I can, and quality in academic sense... and I think that we're all together on that goal, we really strive to provide services to everyone...that you have a high academic standard...and that you check it along the way...Not everything is as it should be. There's always room for improvement and that's part of having Quality Assurance and that's evaluation, and finding out whether we're doing what we're supposed to be doing...* (interviewee B).

6.2.6 Quality - product and process

One of the interviewees looks upon quality in two ways – as a product and as a process.

*I think about quality in relation to a product. When we offer a product, then it's good, and the summer school is a quality product as a whole. We work a lot to preserve it as a quality product...* (interviewee D).

Furthermore, the administrative staff talks about the importance of the total experience of the school as a quality product, which includes many aspects - professional quality, quality of the curriculum, of the teaching staff and the teaching methods, clever students and social interaction, special atmosphere etc., all of which make the social well being into a positive and successful experience which makes up the quality.
Quality as a process is expressed in terms of thorough formative and summative evaluation of what is being done and how, through evaluations received from students, pedagogical staff and other staff members:

*It’s a process which should be present there. Yes, we have a lot of evaluation related to the academic and the social part... student evaluations, the teachers’ evaluations, the teachers and the staff, have a sort of total evaluation...so I think we’re clever in getting information on that. We read them very thoroughly to be able to make improvements for the following year* (interviewee D).

Quality is a process in constant development for the improvement of the future content and program of the ISS.

### 6.2.7 Quality – ever present continuity and change

The change in quality as referred by the administrative staff is perceived rather as an awareness of the presence of existing official documents on Quality Reform and Quality Assurance, but not necessarily as a change in the quality of the school itself imposed by the policy makers. The strong identity of the ISS and its role as an academic and multicultural institution are a part of the concept of quality and continuity. As shown below, the school has always had its routines and traditions of preserving quality through assessment and evaluation processes. Routines in the ISS’ practice (their repertoire) are “reinvented” and developed; their enterprise is tuned and changed through evaluation by looking back and forth, and then renegotiated (Wenger 1998, pp. 94-95). The interviewee expresses also change that is going to take place in the near future when the school becomes a part of the quantitative assessment at the University of Oslo.

*... We are a little more aware that we have Quality Reform, Quality Assurance which we implemented gradually, but I think we’re in a sort of traditionally-bound circle, we do it every year (evaluate), and we’re very conscious about the role the school is supposed to have, both in relation to professional and social content, so in a way we have not been influenced by the swingings from the departments and the university, [...] and it’s going to be interesting to see now when we’ll be forced into such a quantitative system to which we’re going to report on our quality on the basis of our evaluations from the teachers, students... a kind of experience-based evaluation as well* (interviewee D).
6.3 The Pedagogical Staff

6.3.1 Conceptualizing competence

The ISS pedagogical staff understands competence as a more profound knowledge, professional performance and ability to do the job. The concept is also conceived as an ability to provide explanation for challenging Norwegian issues, cross-cultural orientation, and as Trowler formulates it “to be able to play different games” - the human-relation game, the teaching game, the psychological game and other ones (Trowler, university lecture 2008).

...how best to get all the various difficulties in Norwegian across to the students and to make sometimes very different people join together, and to handle people ...so it is the competence of the subject, competence in teaching, and also some psychological knowledge and competence...(interviewee E).

Another interviewee defines competence as “a synthesis of knowledge and skills or a combination of theory (knowledge) and the ability to transform it into good practice”, but regards it problematic to describe the concept in exact terms (interviewee F).

6.3.2 Competence - continuity and change

The conception of continuity and change in relation to competence among the pedagogical staff differs in their awareness of change although all the interviewees talk about changes that have taken place either in general or in their own perception due to their experience over time and the time they have been working in the school. One person is convinced that no change has taken place, but later on, during the interview, refers to changes which are expressed as getting new experience or developing of one’s own abilities and skills. Looking through Piaget’s constructivist lenses (Piaget 1958), and Dewey’s importance of experience (Dewey 1938/1997), the interviewee constructs his knowledge on the basis of his own experiences. The interviewee “builds up his/her competence” all the time. Throughout many of the utterances, the interviewees verbalize and conceive the concepts and change from different perspectives, but in reality refer to the same thing. Their connotative references often cover several context-related areas; some interpret them individually, while others look upon them in general. They sometimes speak about “competence” and refer to “knowledge” or the other way round, or due to semantic overlapping or blurred boundaries (Bowden in
between the concepts, they often refer to both at the same time. The interviewees get confused themselves which concept they refer to:

I think that now, that’s another 20 years of teaching ... I think I gained more knowledge of how I should deal with people and situations, that’s the main thing... and also you try out new ideas, you always come across new problems and things you haven’t encountered before, and you have to try to solve them and that’s how you build up your competence... (interviewee E).

Yet another interviewee feels uncertain about the change and finds the question difficult to answer. The person describes some of the experiences as a change by referring to her/his own experience as a student and work as a student adviser, a time when the teachers’ and students’ expectations were different from those today:

... in relation to new understanding of learning and teaching practices nowadays, teaching competence..., those things have changed through the years. The things you expected from students before, and how they made use of that knowledge then, that’s probably a little bit different, I think students are different... I think there has been a change (interviewee F).

Students’ expectations and demands of academic institutions are interpreted as similar to New Public Management “customer and service-institution relationship”, with “less distance” between the teachers and the students. “Less distance” might imply less respect for the knowledge and expertise of the academic staff, equal rights/level and a right to “buy knowledge as a product” or a commodity as Trowler says (Becher & Trowler 2001, p.10).

I think they expect much more attention and follow-up both from the administration and the staff, while earlier they expected more attention related to the subject matters. There was a greater distance between the staff and the students at that time... (interviewee F).

On the other hand, change is also experienced as a personal enrichment of the repertoire, a deeper understanding, or even a different kind of competence. The question is again difficult to answer:
I’ve got a different understanding of competence, and “what do I mean by possessing competence?!” If someone asked me whether I have competence, I would say: “Yes! I do have competence!” But it would contain something else today! (interviewee G).

Change among the pedagogical staff, involves other kinds of competencies as well, and is connected with getting experience, the ability to predict students’ questions when teaching, having a more clear view of the students’ expectations and goals of the course. It also includes new pedagogical and methodological practices which develop over time, and is looked upon as a process of getting knowledgeable and being plunged into “the water in which the new fish is no longer new in the water it swims” (Trowler, university lecture 2008). This implies then, that the new practices become an integral part of the staff’s everyday practice. The interviewee quoted above reflects that there has been a change within that person’s own conception of competence, but not within the school itself.

6.3.3 Knowledge

The concept of knowledge is described in terms of facts, but also as a knowledge of peoples’ backgrounds, and stresses the importance of an academic level of knowledge which contains educative as well as formative values. The following interviewee presents an extended aspect of knowledge – conceived as a tool to broaden people’s experiences across various contexts and fields. The interviewee underlines knowledge’s transmissive value, almost as an unpredictable value and usefulness later in life. Again knowledge’s essential role, as advocated by Wenger has a value of its own, by being a tool for further reflection and use (Wenger 1998).

I understand it as erudition, a lot of book erudition, but it concerns other aspects of life too, that you gain knowledge about each others’ backgrounds and such, but I mean academic knowledge... Because I am a teacher, and although the social aspect is very important, but my focus is that all that I teach remains when the course is over... that the students take it with them, at least parts of it! (interviewee F).

The utility and reflective value of knowledge is exemplified and compared to the interviewee’s own experience as well. This interpretation encompasses a different value of knowledge, a tool to broaden one’s own knowledge by becoming acquainted with other ways of thinking than their own.
I use a lot of my own experience [...] so the things I have learnt, they have an impact on my life, so I wish that my students remember the concrete things [...], and not only facts, but that they become acquainted with other ways of thinking, which are characteristic for humanities [...] It happens that you often can make use of them...so they have this transmissive value (interviewee F). The next interviewee’s conception of knowledge is presented from a different point of view. The former one was presented as something more concrete that is “to be taken and used”, a tool to teach and learn new things. The following example stresses a more abstract understanding related to the interviewee’s abilities and skills to convey necessary knowledge within scope of the courses. At the end, the interviewee shows uncertainty and confusion whether the concept relates more to the concept of competence or to knowledge:

Knowledge - to be able to convey, an ability to convey grammar and language use in such a way that the students understand it. That’s knowledge for me. You can be a professor and you’ve done a lot of things, but if you don’t have this ability to convey...Of course knowledge is to know a lot about the society, the grammar, but I feel that here at the summer school, knowledge means knowing how to make a course intensive. Students don’t have time, one has to convey that knowledge at the very moment, and if not then it’s too late...When I’m saying it, I feel that perhaps it doesn’t fit into the traditional concept of knowledge [...] perhaps it’s more of a competence (interviewee G)

Knowledge is perceived as wisdom as well, something acquired over time due to one’s interests.

Knowledge is such a lot of things [...] to me knowledge is in a way connected with wisdom [...] It’s not something you learn quickly because you have to pass an exam in it...it’s something you acquire because you are interested in things (interviewee E).

Otherwise the interviewees have not expressed their views on change of the concept of knowledge directly, except from descriptions referring to other concepts, which indirectly also refer to knowledge as well.
6.3.4 Quality – plurality of the concept

The concept of quality entails a lot of different conceptions among the pedagogical staff. The concept seems interesting to the group, but as in the case of the other concepts being discussed, the perception was not at all easy to describe in a few words. One of the interviewees expresses a plurality of the concept, and gives a description of quality as something that functions well and is good at the same time.

*It’s an interesting concept one has to divide into several small pieces, I guess. Quality means that something functions well and that it is a combination of something which functions well and it is good as well!* (interviewee F)

The interviewee continues further that it can be something more substantial which follows ethical conventions and scientific clarity, and takes into account the human aspect. Quality is described as something that one strives to attain, thus implying a change and improvement in the long run.

*Or it can be something more substantial and proper, which follows ethical and scientific guidelines, the human aspect, and that it is something that you strive for* (interviewee F)

When speaking about the evaluation of quality at the summer school, the interviewee problematizes the challenge of making good evaluation forms, but regards assessment as an important tool for communication, improvement of the right things at the ISS, and as Stensaker advocates, that focuses on the positive aspects of evaluations (Stensaker 2008, p. 421):

*...I think it’s an advantage that the school evaluates its courses; that’s a way of communicating with students, to get a chance to alter and correct the things that don’t function, to have a chance not to be self-critical, but to realize what has functioned well, ... because when you are a teacher, you focus on improving things [...] so I think evaluations help, but it’s not so easy to answer the questions in such evaluations, it’s not easy to give correct answers or to include everything...* (interviewee F).
The interviewee describes quality in terms of a balance between preserving the old identity with new directions, a sign of preserving the school’s identity along with the introduction and adaptation of new subjects; a continuous process of change as well:

... it’s a very fine balance following new directions and keeping the old identity of the summer school, which I think, by bringing in new subjects and finding niches may be the summer school has something to offer...(interviewee F).

The other interviewees relate quality in a way which is very closely related to their own work and teaching practices at the summer school, the importance of preserving it and its continuous improvement.

**6.3.5 Quality and change**

A change in understanding the concept of quality is conceived by the interviewees as a tendency or trend in certain areas and by some people, like Quality Reform at Norwegian universities. One of the pedagogical staff members refers to influences from *the new speech* advocates of New Public Management and their policy, but not necessarily as a real change among scholars:

... I don’t think necessarily that the concept has changed among those who know what quality is, or among academics, and not in everyday speech, but I think there is a tendency for example, what we call Quality Reform of Norwegian universities, and generally speaking this kind of New Public Management. So it becomes a sort of new speech, a new form of hollowing out of the concept where the concept of quality is labelled on things that don’t belong there, for example in order to save money or to gain profit, to hide or cover things... So I think officially, both in the public and private sector, the concept has a tendency to be hollowed out and misused like in the case of concepts of modernizing or freedom of choice (interviewee F).

The understanding of quality by that interviewee implies that there is a different and/or shallower attitude towards quality among New Public Management advocates than among academics, who react to misusage of the concept for the sake of gaining profit or save money.
6.4 The Focus Group

6.4.1 Conceptualizing competence and knowledge

The focus group discussion was concentrated on the three main concepts – competence, knowledge and quality. The concept of knowledge was not discussed separately, but was naturally integrated in the discussion of the other concepts. Similarly to previous individual interviews, the focus group spontaneously started expressing their opinions about the concept of competence. As in many of the previous individual interviews, the concept itself turned out to be quite complicated “to catch” (Lycke 2008). Everyone in the group was in agreement that it is difficult to treat it separately from the concept of knowledge and quality, and to provide an exact definition or interpretation of competence.

In relation to teaching and learning within the summer school’s context, the focus group shared their understanding that competence was knowledge of the subject being taught, like the language or grammar etc., combined with the ability of conveying that knowledge to students. In other words, the ability to make use of possessed knowledge on the subject when teaching. The pedagogical staff’s interpretation of competence included many sorts of different abilities and skills combined together, for example knowledge of the subject, ability to convey it to the students, cognitive abilities like pedagogical and psychological knowledge about people and human relations, ability to motivate students etc., as well as experience. Experience was conceived as a relevant part of competence as well. The concept entailed several different kinds of competencies, but knowledge constituted a large part of the concept in general. The focus group underlined the importance of knowledge within the concept of competence, as one has to have “something” to convey or to communicate. Competence here was conceived as a skill to convey relevant knowledge to students. For example, a teacher can have a lot of knowledge (“something to communicate”), but be unable to convey it to his/her students. In this case the group would regard the teacher as incompetent in teaching that particular subject. One of the interviewees was of the opinion that knowledge in general should be separated from knowledge of the subject.

The group discussed the conception of competence in various contexts, and admitted that their discussion and understanding was focused mainly on their own very narrow context and understanding, mainly limited to the educational academic context of the summer school. Diverse context-related connotations of the term of competence were mentioned,
where the meaning behind was totally different from the one discussed in the summer school context. The interviewees referred to examples from a broader educational context such as documenting the academic background, competence providing courses or competence goals. By asking themselves what the group members associated with such names or labels where the word “competence” was used, the group reached the conclusion that competence in those contexts was rather related to gaining a permission to do something or a proof or documentation of having acquired knowledge in a certain field or about a subject, and gaining a permission to perform those skills in, for example employment-related contexts.

The focus group’s discussion was very vivid and gave way to several reflections on the subjects discussed. It also provoked an interesting utterance, which was used several times during the interview - “We don’t use those words, we do the job, but it is interesting to let the technical language meet the reality and see how it functions!” (interviewee F).

Before concluding the focus group interview, one of the interviewees reflected upon where along the way somewhere, the meaning of the concept has changed and was distorted. An interesting observation was made and compared, that the concept is defined at the “top”, and “sent” further down to those who work closely with the content of it, but those (“we” – as the interviewee said), are seldom asked about how “we” understand and experience it in practice. In reality, the group’s statement indicates that there is a gap in communication between those who define the concept and those who practice it. The interpretation is conceived by the group as imposed by policy makers, and the meaning and understanding is distorted on its way to those who deal with it (focus group interview, interviewee H). The citation might be related to tensions and conflicts that arise between policy makers and the academics, treated by Karseth (2008), Stensaker (2008) and Trowler (2008) in their research.

An overall agreement within the focus group was that the concept of competence and the concept of knowledge are overlapping, and that knowledge constitutes a part of competence and is very much context-related. The concept of competence is a complex combination of several competencies and/or abilities and skills, which include not only subject-related knowledge, but also knowledge about human beings, fields like psychology, pedagogy or methodology and more. All the interviewees agreed that it takes time to build up one’s competence; in other words, experience is necessary as well.
One might conclude that the complexity of the concept of competence as described by the focus group reflects the same opinion as the content of many of the definitions the policy documents mentioned in the earlier chapters of my thesis do. Competence is context- and subject-related, it involves different kinds of skills and abilities, both cognitive and affective, in addition to experience.

### 6.4.2 Quality

The focus group’s first impression of the quality concept was that it is not as hard to define it as it is to obtain in practice. The conception of quality among the focus group interviewees triggered some discussion and diverse reactions. The time aspect, the politically influenced slogans or new speech, and changes that have taken place in education, were distinctive features that had an impact on the understanding of the concept by people in general, but not necessarily on people such as the interviewees themselves, because of their awareness of outside pressures to force upon people a different understanding of quality than the scholars and academics conceive it to be.

Quality was associated with something good; for example good service, which according to the group, probably is easier to measure than the quality of teaching, but then again the group problematized what good service or good teaching is, and whether we are able to conceive it objectively or not. Later on, the group shared their opinion that quality IS difficult to measure and the conception of good quality is very subjective; nevertheless it can be measured through results.

The group gave examples from their understanding of the concept of quality and referred to it as “*a good product*” which was associated with a lot of work put into making it. One interviewee’s opinion was that probably the understanding of the concept among the focus group members has not changed, and one makes up one’s own idea what quality really means, but there are external tendencies and pressure to change and distort it. This pressure makes teachers adjust their understanding of quality to the requirements from the outside, but the concepts are seldom discussed - what quality really stands for, and how teachers understand it.

The focus group exemplified the new speech with such expressions as Quality Reform, which in reality just as well could have been called *Effectiveness Reform*, as one of the interviewees said (interviewee F). This, due to the fact that, for example, the time to study
for a Bachelor degree was reduced to three years while it had previously been four years. The group also agreed that quality was in opposition to quantity.

The discussion was then extended to the necessity of measuring quality and how it can be done, or examples in terms of usefulness or results of a course. The interviewees agreed that measuring quality can be fairly easy when measuring quality of a material, its durability or resistance, but measuring of learning is difficult. The usefulness of teaching could again be very subjective, and measuring quality was conceived as problematic.
7. Conceptualizing Competence at the ISS

The next main research question (nr.2) which has guided me through my research and I intend to answer is the following:

2. What are the similarities and differences in understanding of the concept of competence between and/or within all the groups?

7.1 Summing Up – The Management

The perception of continuity and change

The historical change that the management staff relates to took place in 1958 when the school no longer was solely for American students, but became The International Summer School. This fact meant a more international student body, but did not change the school’s goals and purpose of pursuing its academic profile and peace supporting mission. The management underlines their already practiced extra-curricular and social activities which are still preserved and popular in the school’s practice. The management divides changes into the external and the internal changes. The external changes refer to internationalization, globalization and student mobility in the world and have an influence on the internal changes within the school. The change triggers more reflection and improvement of competencies needed to handle a larger volume of students from many different cultures, digitalization and technical skills, as well as fulfilment of both the related students’ and the teachers’ expectations.

The conceptualizing process

The management’s primary and in many ways outstanding understanding of competence in the summer school context, is the awareness of the school’s mission and focus on the goals of “six weeks of academic achievement and international good will”. Competence for the management implies ownership of what people at the summer school do, and how they do it, which sometimes is a part of tacit knowledge of the organization, but also its history and artifacts (Wenger 1998).

The management also understands the concept of competence as a background and experience enabling them to perform the job, to gain experience, and to strive to improve
their abilities continuously in participation and interaction with those they work with, and
within the larger educational context of the school. They underline the concept’s strong
relationship with its multi-cultural context, understanding of diversity in learning and
teaching, and students’ points of reference. Competence that the management relates to is
understood as the high-level academic competence. Academic competence, knowledge and
the human formation and cultivation (Westbury 2000, pp. 15-54) are important and
underlined aspects of the management’s understanding.

The managements’ interpretation of competence involves several competencies, and as one
of the interviewees says, it is “a double-edged sword”, and a complex concept which they
conceive as related to knowledge and quality, but also to various kinds of competencies such
as technical and non-technical skills and tools in multi-cultural communication, service-
orientation, pedagogical and psychological insight or competence in teaching and conveying
of knowledge in the school’s very specific context. It is also perceived in terms of
engagement, enthusiasm, desire, commitment or even a talent for the purpose of envisioning
the mission of the summer school. The concept’s understanding is also perceived as
documentation, a diploma or a proof showing that someone has a background to perform a
specific kind of job.

What characterizes the management’s understanding of competence is a strong and clear role
awareness and vision of all that is needed for a successful learning and teaching experience.
Competence in management and leadership of the school consists among others, of an
indispensable awareness of the management and the administrative staff’s roles in adjusting
and preparing all that enables and facilitates optimal learning and teaching conditions for the
students and teachers, and a right and necessary focus on knowledge to be conveyed by the
pedagogical staff. The concept of competence, in this respect consists of ability in
differentiating and prioritizing of the issues of primary importance and relevance, and
secondary issues of the summer school. The management at the summer school characterizes
it as “keeping the basic tune” all the time, while Blumberg in Departmental Leadership in
higher education (Knight & Trowler 2001, p. 43) refers to the basic rhythm that the leader
communicates through his or her strategies, that is important. Further on, competence in the
ISS, consists of knowledge - a substantial content which is looked upon not only as facts or
information, but contains the comparative aspect as a tool for broadening students’ horizons
and their reflective space to extrapolate the validity of obtained knowledge in students’ own
cultures or in other contexts. From the constructivist point of view Piaget (1958), and Vygotsky’s theory on learning, knowledge is perceived as social, mediated and continuously accumulated (Vygotsky 1978), and can be compared to everlasting "scaffolding construction" (ibid.), a basis and already possessed experience, used for further building of one’s competence. *Competence* in the meaning of “knowledge possession” is distributed among staff members, like teachers for example. Their competence can be regarded as expertise in particular subjects or areas and not necessarily the same knowledge as possessed by the management. In this sense the concept of competence in the organization means awareness and respect for the distributive division of competencies among people who possess the right knowledge without neglecting the knowledge that the school shares and is a part of their history and experience.

The management includes quality as a part of the concept. It consists of many of the already above-mentioned characteristics, in addition to communicative skills, abilities, service, cooperation and teamwork. The ISS’s concept of competence in terms of quality includes “the open-door policy” practices, a service-minded attitude and two types of quality - the measurable one (in terms of results), and the non-measurable. Competence in relation to quality means continuous both formal and informal assessment, and is a process which enables the school to improve its practices, to undertake changes, and to predict difficulties or problems. Although highly important in the school’s practice, the management shows a reflective attitude towards evaluation and emphasizes the total and holistic perception of competence of the staff.

The conceptualization of the concept of competence within the management shows itself to be cohesive and homogenous in many ways, with a clear and distinctive awareness of the characteristics of the goals and the local, as well as the global context in which it functions. The management’s understanding of competence includes similar interpretations concerning the kind of characteristics, actions, attitudes, tools, abilities or skills the concept involves. The management in unison refers to the same qualities and understandings of competence needed and practiced in The International Summer School. Their descriptions show the complexity of the concept and a variety of meanings, descriptions, metaphors and terms, which often lack any clear meaning boundaries and are interrelated and/or overlapping, and “local” for the ISS community of practice. The concept as conceptualized by the management includes concepts of quality and knowledge, as well as context-related abilities
in cross-cultural communication (both formal and informal), service-orientation and assessment on all levels of the organization (Appendix 2, Figure 1).

7.2 Summing Up – The Administrative Staff

The perception of continuity and change

The awareness of change among the administrative staff is expressed in different ways, and is less clear than among management interviewees. Change in understanding of the concept includes enrichment of the already possessed competence, and is related to a different type of competence than otherwise – the relational type of competence. The ability to look upon the organization from a holistic point of view is important to be able to improve. The concept itself, according to one of the staff (interviewee D) has not changed, but the interviewee has from the start of his career realized a need of several other types of competencies necessary for the job in the summer school. The changes which the administrative staff refers to, are external changes like changes in university structures, and not so much within the school itself. The content of the school’s profile has not been affected from the outside, and indicates a strong identity of belonging and pride of having been able to practice and preserve the competence of its own organization, success, and a pioneer, (now a “veteran” organization), in the reforms that have taken place lately. The administrative staff has not reflected upon changes in the concepts of knowledge and quality. Nevertheless, the interviewees are aware of the change in ability to interact with students representing different cultures. As in the case of competence, knowledge needed in the ISS context is conceived as a different kind of knowledge than in other work places. Knowledge constitutes a large part of the concept of competence. It is understanding, with abilities and skills strongly related to the dynamic summer school context and its practices. Knowledge is history of the summer school, its artifacts, experience, and “knowing what the school is about” (interviewee B), including both the past and the present (Wenger 1998, pp. 96-97). One might assume that the concept involves explicit knowledge and tacit assumptions (Knight & Trowler 2001, p. 45) that require experience to be developed. Much of the practice is unconscious and domesticated thus forming a part of the concept of competence at the ISS.

In relation to quality, the noticeable changes that the administrative staff refers to, are first of all the external changes or reforms undertaken by the policy makers on a more global scale.
These include among others the Quality Reform, Quality Assurance, and new accreditation system advocated by the OECD and Bologna Declaration which have had a positive influence on the summer school’s work, and are regarded as additional tools in improving their own practice.

**Conceptualizing competence**

The conceptualized concept of competence among the administrative staff can be illustrated by metaphors used by the group like “multi-tasking”, “having feelers”, “herding cats” or “overbooking”, which show the complexity and plurality of the concept. They refer to narrow-context (internal context) and position related logistical knowledge and skills in “embracing” the activities of the summer school and its environment; in other words the holistic view also present in the policy documents (Rychen & Salganik 2003, pp. 41-62).

In relation to quality, the concept of competence is viewed both as a product and a process. The ISS as a good quality product consists of a group of different competencies and characteristics such as professional quality, professional teachers and teaching methods, skills in social interaction and well being, and a total successful experience. As a process, the concept involves several tools in the broad sense of the word, such as evaluation on all levels - verification and improvement along the way, professionalism in subjects taught at the ISS, and social interaction.

The administrative staff regards the concept of competence as far from easy to describe, and admits that it has not been discussed or even consciously thought about, but such features as quality, academic knowledge, administrative service and overall student satisfaction with good results, as well as communicative abilities, are regarded as important signs of competence.

According to the staff, competence is acquired or learned, and can even be innate, which makes a person capable of performing a task. This distinction of innate competence refers to a primary cognitive ability which according to Weinert in *Defining and Selecting Competencies* (Rychen & Salganik 2001, pp. 59-60) should be distinguished from the learned ones. Further on, the concept is comprised of several different competencies and is also perceived as professional academic knowledge, cross-cultural knowledge, which includes geography, political orientation and cultural differences etc., and social competence. The administrative staff relates the concept very closely to their own work and tasks at the
summer school, which again points back to the importance of the context that both Wenger, Trowler and OECD’ documents refer to (Wenger 1998; Trowler 2008; Rychen & Salganik 2003). Rychen says that “individuals need not only respond to complex situations, but create the tools” and be able to cope with innovation and continuity (Rychen & Salganik 2003, p. 75). Structure- and detail- orientation combined with some creative and inventive abilities in order to coordinate the administrative tasks, sometimes similar to grazing cats (interviewee D), are characteristics of competence needed in the summer school context. The logistical competence that the interviewees relate to, involves various details and facts in multiple smaller and larger contexts or circumstances, both within the ISS structures and in combination with the external structures or influences. In relation to that, yet another important competence that the staff mentions, is the ability to have a total overview and administrative control of the organization (Appendix 2, Figure 2).

7.3 Summing Up – The Pedagogical Staff

The perception of continuity and change

The perception of continuity and change among the pedagogical staff varies in their awareness of the changes taking place. Some of the interviewees found it difficult to give an exact answer to the question. The changes the group describes can be divided into those that take place outside (external) the summer school, those inside the school (internal), and individual – role and position related changes among the teachers.

The pedagogical staff speaks mostly of changes taking place on their own individual basis rather than from a holistic perspective, where the reason might be their temporary and short presence at the school every summer session. Those who refer to individual changes in their own competence perceive them in terms of “building up their competence”, “enrichment”, gaining experience, more profound knowledge and deeper insight into their work. Seen through the constructivist perspective again (Piaget 1958), building competence is a continuous process, and a development of one’s own abilities and skills needed in the context of the summer school work. The change involves new pedagogical as well as methodological practices, and becoming more knowledgeable. According to one interviewee (interviewee G), there has been a change in the content of the person’s own competence
which, along with enrichment, makes it possible to predict many situations in teaching and attain goals of the course.

The teachers do not seem to have noticed any great changes within the summer school practice, but refer to the external change in perception of the concept of quality and knowledge, but not their own perception, nor within the school.

The pedagogical staff is of the opinion that the word “quality” has become a fashion word or a label put on things that do not represent quality, and is used for the purpose of gaining profit (Becher & Trowler 2001, p.8; Trowler 2008, university lecture). It has been distorted “out there in the world outside” (interviewee F) in both private and public institutions, but the staff is in unison that understanding of the concept of quality has neither changed among themselves nor among scholars in general. The interviewees refer to improvement in quality of their own teaching practices through new experiences, situations or students, and by introducing small changes every year, and thus becoming more knowledgeable and effective.

Change in reference to knowledge is perceived as a difference in how the students today use the knowledge they learn. The staff refers to a distance and change in the attitude between academic teachers and students, which resembles a customer-provider relationship involving more attention and follow-up on the part of the teachers.

*Conceptualizing competence*

The concept of competence among the pedagogical staff varies to a large extent, not necessarily due to differences in perception of the concept, but rather because of the vast amount of possible interpretations, which either complement each other or are interrelated and overlap in meaning. Thus differentiating or separating the concept of competence from the concepts of knowledge or quality is difficult, and still impossible “to catch” in clear and exact terms (Lycke 2008).

One pedagogical staff member defines competence as “*a synthesis of knowledge and skills, and the ability to transform it into practice*” (interviewee F). Others look upon the concept of competence as a deeper professional knowledge of the subject that enables them to do their job well. It also provides an explanation for challenging issues in the classroom such as cross-cultural orientation and an ability to perform different roles. Having several other competencies, such as a human-relations orientation, psychological and pedagogical insight
are included in this concept of competence. All those characteristics come in addition to knowledge of how to teach the subject and the ability to convey what is to be taught.

Academic, factual and professional subject-specific knowledge is regarded as an important part of competence, as a background, a tool and a value in transmitting further reflection to be used in other contexts. Knowledge is seen as a sample of various ways of thinking, interpretations or attitudes that are important in reflecting upon other issues.

The pedagogical staff at the ISS conceptualizes competence primarily in relation to their immediate context of language teaching. The concept of knowledge in the summer school context, and even narrower context of their specific subject related position as language or literature teachers is conceived as an ability to convey grammar, language specific issues or literature in such a way that the students understand it and learn to make use of it in practice.

The concept of quality, similarly to competence, entails many different conceptions and is perceived as “something substantial that functions well, is good and follows the rules of scientific clarity and ethical values” (interviewee F). It is a feature that one strives to improve all the time by means of continuous assessment. Another definition of quality mentioned in the summer school context is - “a balance between preserving the old identity with following of new directions and finding new niches for the school” (interviewee F).

(Appendix 2, Figure 3).

7.4 Summing Up – The Focus Group

The focus group was represented by the pedagogical staff only, except one person who represented the management, a fact that might have influenced the outcome of the conceptualization process of competence by this group, and where understanding of competence could have been influenced by the pedagogical staff.

The results show that the focus group conceives the concept in similar ways, but an exact definition or description of the concept seems impossible. The interviewees are in agreement that the concepts of quality and knowledge overlap with the concept of competence in many ways, but conceive it as dominant in relation to the other two concepts. The group’s conceptualization shows an agreement that a large part of competence entails knowledge, not only context-related knowledge which is connected with the subject to be taught, but also
psychological, pedagogical and social knowledge in general, also very much related to the international environment of the school and its students. Competence includes different abilities and skills combined together with the ability to convey knowledge to the learners, something that the interviewees regarded as crucial. The concept, as interpreted by the group, includes all these different competencies, but generally speaking, the group is in agreement that attaining competence takes time to build up and requires experience. The focus group interview depicted several characteristic features of the concept where a clear distinction of meaning between the concept of competence and the other concepts was blurred, and could equally apply to the other concepts as well. The results of the conceptualizing process show presence of some tacit knowledge and unconscious practices, in other words, an “ownership attitude” present in both Wenger’s and Trowler’s theories (Wenger 1998; Knight & Trowler 2001; Trowler 2008 university lecture).

The concept of quality which the interviewees conceive related to competence is, as they said “not that hard to define as to obtain” (focus group). Interviewees share their view that they associate the concept with something good, for example a good product, which previously in particular, one related to a lot of effort which was put into making of a product. Though in terms of for example good teaching, the group is in agreement that measuring quality of something like teaching and learning, which is not a product or a physical object, is problematic and very subjective, although it is usually measured in terms of results.

Finally and equally to the focus group’s other shared views, the interviewees express a similar feeling of the concepts’ distortion in the society, related to changes in understanding/definition of the concepts caused by external pressure or for profit-bringing purposes. The group’s negative reflections on “new speech” tendencies or fashion, distort the concepts’ true meaning among people, but not so much among the pedagogical group members themselves, the academics and the summer school (Appendix 2, Figure 4).
8. General Summary and Outcome of the Analysis

In the following section of my analysis I summarize and present the similarities and differences I have found in my research in conceiving the concept of competence and its related concepts of quality and knowledge among the groups.

8.1 Similarities

The process of conceptualization of competence among the management, the administrative, and the pedagogical staff, as well as the focus group, shows many similarities in the way the interviewees in all groups conceive it. The main similarities are:

- the concept of competence is closely related to concepts of quality and knowledge

- the concept encompasses several competencies, involves plurality and is related to cross-cultural knowledge and other context-specific knowledge, experience, continuous assessment and improvement, communication, psychological and pedagogical insight, “extra-service”, cooperation and more

- the summer school goals and mission provide the basis and direction for the objectives in the ISS’s practices

- understanding of the concept is related to the internal and external (global) context of the school

- academic knowledge constitutes a significant and important part of competence; it is a tool for further reflection

- competence implies an ability to convey knowledge

- the concept of competence is characterized as: a dynamic, interactive process of constant development; consists of abilities, skills, tools, efficiency; is situated, mediated and distributed in a coherent, integral and interrelated environment of social participation in the summer school life on all levels

- the concept of competence at the ISS “hides” a number of tacit assumptions and knowledge shared within and across the groups
• the concept of competence is difficult to “catch”, but its characteristics are to a large extent connected with the goals of the summer school, and its immediate and global context.

Descriptions and understandings of the concept of competence among the interviewed groups show many similarities, but the concept of competence as perceived by the groups is far from easy to describe in exact terms, and most of the interviewees have not discussed or reflected upon the concepts before. This might indicate tacit assumptions or ownership of practices that the interviewees take for granted and regard as “their own water” (Trowler, university lecture 2008) - their own competence and everyday practice.

Many descriptions refer to the same shared views among interviewees, but are illustrated by various examples, metaphors or synonymous expressions that a semantic and linguistic interpretation can offer. Some understandings of competence are expressed indirectly and have emerged as themes during the interview process and/or later along the analysis process of the presented research. The interviewees themselves provide a number of definitions which point towards variants of possible descriptions and understandings that they intuitively connect with the concept of competence at the summer school. The richness of descriptions is illustrated in the figures enclosed in appendix 2 at the end of the thesis.

8.2 Differences or Distinctions

The analysis of the conceptualization process of the concept of competence also shows some differences and/or distinctions between the groups, which are illustrated in the figures. Some distinctions are important position/role-specific characteristics due to distributive competence characteristics. These should rather be treated as additional features (sometimes more outstanding or significant for a particular group), abilities or skills included in the concept of competence of the summer school. The main distinctions are as follows:

8.2.1 The administrative staff

One of the interviewees among the administrative staff looks upon the concept of competence as a quality product and a process (interviewee D). The quality product includes characteristics such as quality in teaching, teaching methods, the curriculum, social interaction etc., which considered together make the ISS into a positive and successful
experience. Competence as a process is understood in relation to formative assessment and to continuous improvement (Black & Wiliam 1998). The second interviewee (D) from the administrative staff talks about “knowing the job”, relates it to quality, academic knowledge, service and students’ satisfaction; as well as to the ability to communicate and to present good results. In general, the concept is described as an acquired, learned or even innate/inherited characteristic that makes a person capable of performing certain tasks.

8.2.2 The management and the focus group

Since both the management and the focus group make a distinction between measurable and non-measurable competence, it is reasonable to treat them together. Both groups conceptualize competence in terms of evaluations and assessment, but the management makes a distinction between measurable (in terms of results) and non-measurable, but observable evaluation, and stresses that evaluations should not be the only means of assessment. This distinction is also present in the focus group. Rychen and Salganik refer to the complexity of the concept of competence and its inseparability from context, which has important implications for assessment. They underline that competence cannot be directly measured or observed, but must be inferred from observing performance in a number of settings (2003 p. 55). Although “performance-based”, the results are only approximations of the demands of what people face in real life. A number of strategies from real life has to be applied to validate assessment results by showing that they predict successful outcomes apart from the assessment (Weinert 2001 in Salganik & Rychen).

The focus group, which consisted of teachers mainly showed concern over dilemmas in measuring of learning outcomes of the students. The members of the group express their view that learning is not a product and therefore difficult to measure objectively, although in everyday life it is measured by the results.

In relation to competence in terms of communication, the management makes a distinction between different purposes of communication with a distinction of formal and informal communication similar to the other groups, but also as communication with a specific, hidden agenda on the one hand, and purposeful content-filled communication, on the other.
8.2.3 Shared understandings and distinctions among some groups

The management and the pedagogical staff who were individually interviewed, as well as the focus group, share several interpretations, or sometimes stress the same competencies, more than the administrative staff does. The human formation and cultivation aspect (Westbury 2000, pp. 15-54), knowledge and ability to convey knowledge, are such distinctive and important characteristics shared by those groups.

These groups also make a distinction between the internal and the external changes which influence understandings of the concept of competence, quality, and knowledge. To some extent they also tend to show more awareness of the external influences on the concept of competence and quality, but the groups are of the opinion that their own understanding has not been affected by the external tendencies. Only the management refers to the necessity of competence improvement within the summer school as a result of external changes and expectations from the students, teachers and formal authoritative policy documents. The management shows thus a more reflective and total view of the ISS’ position in the local and the global context.

8.2.4 The management and the administrative staff - team

Although some understandings might differ between the management and the administrative staff, these two groups show close cooperation, and task and work distribution between the groups seems to be overlapping in many ways, so they are difficult to separate in terms of functions related to their formal positions in the organization. The management and the administrative staff both share a more holistic view of the concept of competence in the summer school, and refer to details which the pedagogical staff and the focus group do not mention. This fact might indicate an implicit attitude taken for granted on the part of the pedagogical staff, where details and characteristics are tacit assumptions (Trowler & al. 2005, p. 436) of the ISS as a whole. On the other hand, this group is the one that works in the summer school on the temporary basis, present only during the the summer session courses, and has a different role in comparison to the other groups. Moreover, the management and the administration staff stress the importance of adjusting all work for the students and teachers, to enable them to focus on the issues of primary importance related to “conveying of knowledge”, their job and goals. The management expresses it as a prerequisite or an
important condition to be able to act successfully to fulfill students’ expectations and the ISS’ goals.

8.2.5 Shared and distributed competence of the summer school

The results from the conceptualization process of competence show mostly shared views of the concept of competence and its related concepts of quality and knowledge. The same attitude is also expressed by the focus group which refers to “letting the experts do their jobs”, and problematizes “distortions” of the concepts of competence and quality from the outside, where understandings of the concepts differ between those who define them and those who use them in practice. Competence at the summer school is also distributed, in the respect the management, the administrative, and the pedagogical staff, both share and collaborate in their practices and show respect for each groups’ competencies and expertise in their own work fields. Their attitudes imply a trust of each other’s competencies necessary in the context of the school.
9. Leadership of the ISS and its Challenges

My final research question is:

3. What are the implications of similarities and/or differences in conceptualization of competence in regard to leadership of the summer school?

“The mapping of the collective mind” (Bowden 2000, p. 2) at the International Summer School presents a multiplicity of understandings of the concept of competence. However, the conceptualization resulting from this analysis indicates that there is a uniformity and homogeneity within those multiple understandings in the summer school. This also sheds some light on the challenges the summer school’s leadership (management) has to deal with in a context of an ever-changing global and dynamic world. Possible leadership perspectives on management of the summer school are several, seldom appearing alone. For example, good leadership of an international organization similar to the ISS can imply possessing a range of skills and abilities necessary to conduct it successfully, including cross-cultural knowledge as well as other specific knowledge. Leadership at the summer school can be seen as a “set of behaviors that can be learned and what a leader does” (Craig & Trowler 2003, p. 4), such as creating a suitable environment which enables people to build close and satisfying group relationships, work together to attain mutual goals. These traits and behavioral approaches to leadership include innate and affective characteristics such as predilection, vision and desire, also mentioned by the interviewees, as well as acquired skills and abilities, values, attitudes and “mindsets” which allow a leader to understand and deal with what happens inside and outside an organization (Morgan 1997, p.11). Other important factors that would be appropriate for the summer school are tacit knowledge (Wenger 1998, p. 69), often obvious or taken for granted, the routines or tools which mediate how people practice and shape interactions between leaders and followers (Spillane 2006, pp.17-18) or the mutual trust present at the ISS, which is a part of knowledge of a leader’s competence and involves engagement in “reflection-in-action” and mobilizing “knowledge-in-action” (Schön 1987). The perspectives related to how good leadership

10 Leadership, leaders: as used here, the names refer to the management group in the interviews
should look like are many, and none of them alone would probably be sufficient or accurate enough to cover and define all the needs required to lead an international organization like The International Summer School. Looking from Spillane’s distributive perspective, the leadership of the ISS possesses characteristics which involve a range of individuals and is collective; people interact within and across their multi-cultural context or particular situation using different tools such as student assessments, routines such as summer school’s continuous evaluation on all levels, and structures as, for example, formal and informal meetings, outdoor activities and social arrangements. The school’s daily performances create practices which generate knowledge about and for leadership of the organization. The routines and tools at the summer school are “bundles of possibilities” which shape and reshape leadership practice and create a favorable environment (Rychen & Salganik 2003, pp. 59-60), enabling a positive experience; they are made and remade, and reappropriated for the purposes of the summer school (Spillane 2006, p.20). Reappropriated, or as Trowler says “domesticated”, which means changed to some extent and balanced between something old and something new and context-relevant (ibid. p. 21). The ISS practice preserves continuity and allows for change at the same time, all of which again can be found in Wenger’s communities of practice and the social aspect of the theory (Wenger 1998).

Leadership at the summer school is distributed over “an interactive web of people and situations” which includes both those with and without formal leadership positions. The school’s leadership practices can be viewed as a product defined by the situation and the peoples’ participation and interactions, reciprocal dependency, each contributing to the definition of leadership practice (Spillane 2006, pp. 2-3). Møller in one of her recent periodical articles in Bedre skole (Better School) concerning leadership research, also refers to the importance of role distribution and the focus on context-specific strategies, taking into account the historical background of a school, and the leaders’ knowledge, skills and strategies in order to motivate and promote good leadership practice (Møller 2009, p.15).

Bearing leadership practice and its challenges in mind, and looking back at the descriptions from the conceptualizing process of competence and its related concepts of knowledge and quality, the results from this examination can be regarded as a product of the summer school’s leadership practice - “an interaction between leaders, its followers, and their situations” (Spillane 2006, p. 26). The results also reflect indirectly how leadership is practiced in The International Summer School, and what values and qualities distinguish this
organization from other organizations (see figures, appendix 2). The leaders’ understandings, (called “the management” in the interview process), and the results from this examination, show attitudes, content and practices according to the social perspective of situated cognition (Lave & Wenger 1991). These are appropriate to the school’s own context and useful within a much larger global and changing context as well. Leading an organization in times of change is not an easy task due to the unavoidable influences of global changes in higher education, and the local changes within smaller institutions of the university, like the ISS. Changes such as growth in the number of students, more nationalities and cultures represented, technical developments, new policies with focus on outcomes and control, can cause instability and chaos, and require visionary and reflective leadership, but one that preserves its basic rhythm. Good leadership in higher education today faces challenges to succeed, as Trowler postulates, in adapting to the changes imposed from the policy makers, and adjusting reform to appropriate circumstances and according to their own needs (Trowler 2008, university lecture). Wenger says that change includes continuity and discontinuity and refers to the identity of an organization with differing opinions and views, but common rhythms as well (Wenger 1998, p. 96), which are very much present at the summer school. The International Summer School’s understanding of competence includes both similarities and differences, but nevertheless represents strong and important unified values, common goals, identity and direction that both unite its members and challenge them and its leadership, due to the dynamics of the changes taking place in its internal and external contexts. Constant evaluation of the summer school practices, reflection and long experience, both differences and similarities, reflect an attitude characteristic for a community of practice. Change is a process which requires balance and coherence between the organizations’ own identity and the selection of what is worth pursuing and what is not, in their own context. Leaders have to have their own “situated rationality”, which depends on their professional ethics, on culture, and other locally relevant features (Levine in Knight & Trowler 2001, p. 4). The leadership of the summer school seems to possess these qualities as it succeeds in pursuing the ISS goals. The summer school’s vision is put into social practice through context-dependent activities. These practices show the conceptualization process of the concept of competence, as well as the ISS leadership practice and their learning and knowledge. The meaning and strong identity of the organization are preserved in the basic tune along the way, both dependent and independent of the changes imposed from the outside and the multiplicity of understandings of competence within the ISS, and
are not *captured* by the discourse of the market enterprise ideology (Trowler 2008, university lecture).

The interviewees share both explicit and implicit views on how each conducts their own part of distributed leadership and the common mission and direction given by the formal leader of the summer school. The distribution of power at the school is invisible and is woven into informal social relations, activities – at the front stage and the back stage, and formal and informal communication marked by mutual respect (Foucault 1997, p.13). The distributive characteristics of power, particularly among the management and the administrative staff of the school are not always clear, due to the school’s small size and overlapping task management. Distribution and collaborative practices imply both individual leadership and a collective, collegial one (Fullan 1993, p.21), which both complement one another and are issue-dependent. Distribution of knowledge and expertise, not only power in various areas, whether it be among pedagogical, administrative or other staff, helps to meet some of the challenges the leadership of the ISS faces.

Successful leadership of the summer school implies not only the presented shared understandings of what the concept of competence involves; it has to be “*helped*” by the contagious effect of motivation and quality, giving priority to motivated students, teachers and staff (Trowler 2008, university lecture).

The similarities in the way the concept of competence at the ISS is perceived imply integrity within the organization, and shared views on how learning and teaching processes at the ISS should be conducted and lead. The distinctions that emerged in interpreting the concept do not necessarily imply clear differences in interpretation. They rather show the plurality of the concept, and can be position/role and situation-dependent characteristics, or simply show a more reflective attitude towards the concept. In the light of global change and internationalization and the challenges that face the leadership of the ISS, similarities in conceptualizing the concept of competence and its related concepts of quality and knowledge imply a successful, dynamic and well-matched team and leadership of The International Summer School, worth pursuing by other similar organizations.
Final comment

Currently, there is much attention for the concept of competence in higher education and a number of leadership approaches is being used in order to embrace the “globalism”, enhance quality and the desired results. The distributed leadership perspective is one of the dominating ones in Scandinavian approaches to school leadership today (Møller 2008), but returning back to Wenger’s social theory on learning (Wenger 1998) and Trowler’s theories on change, tacit assumptions, domestication and appropriateness (Trowler & al. 2005), one should not forget the contexts these approaches take place. Although internationalization and exchange of experiences on leadership practices are valuable, the local national cultures should not be neglected and be taken into consideration as history and artefacts representing unique identity and meaning of a national culture of each country.
10. Conclusion

The results from the conceptualization process of competence at The International Summer School show that the social and situated learning and teaching theories of Lave and Wenger, and Trowler’s theories on low-rezolution proposals on change are reflected in The International Summer School’s everyday practices. Changes at the ISS imply smaller modifications and improvement as a result of a continuous process of assessment on all levels practiced by the school. The International Summer School pursues its ideologies, referred to by Trowler (Trowler 2008, university lecture) such as the importance of knowledge as a tool for further reflection, mutual formal and informal activities where learning takes place, and the mission of Academic Achievement and International Good Will. Changes that take place in the summer school are context-related in the narrow sense of the word on the one hand, i.e. the immediate context of the ISS (teachers and students and their situation), and also related to the context of global changes that take place on a world basis, including policy documents issued on the Bologna Process initiatives. Changes in the ISS are appropriate and “domesticated” or “translated” into the summer school’s needs, and teachers’ and students’ expectations, but firmly based on the school’s long international and cross-cultural experience and constant low-rezolution modifications and improvement through assessment.

The conceptualization of competence in this research presents not only how competence and its related concepts are understood by the interviewee groups representing the management, the administrative, and the pedagogical staff at the summer school. It presents how and what people at the summer school do, and how they understand their practice (Spillane 2006, pp. 5-7). The conceptualization process shows a leadership practice and an alternative way of conducting successful distributed leadership through learning and knowledge distribution necessary for the school, by mutual trust and respect of others’ knowledge and participative and team-based engagement (Spillane 2006). The summer school practice can be regarded as one of possible figures of how leadership can be practiced in an international setting in the light of the changing and dynamic world today.

The school’s practice also confirms and legitimates in many ways the content of the documents issued as a result of the initiatives undertaken by the OECD and Bologna Declaration, together with its related guidelines concerning competence, quality and
knowledge. The summer school’s practice is a confirmation of its solid and experience-based long tradition of good leadership practice, founded on the school’s internal and external context. The school’s practice is the ISS’ competence composed of both the cognitive and the affective domain, important in the process of change (Trowler 2008, university lecture). It can also be regarded as an informal quality assurance that has been practiced long before the content of official policy documents was formalized. The policy documents of today have reconfirmed and legitimized the summer school’s understanding of leadership practice, but the school’s strong conviction of the importance of academic knowledge as a tool for further reflection is prevailing and more dominant than in the policy documents presented in this thesis.

Nevertheless it would be wrong not to mention the summer school’s specific situation and characteristics, which both imply advantages as well as disadvantages for its leadership in the present globalized situation of academic institutions of today. The International Summer School is unique in many ways – it is small, transparent, and quite autonomous, and has a long international and cross-cultural experience. Due to its size, many of its practices, particularly concerning communication, are informal and team-based, with probably less bureaucratic procedures than in larger institutions. The “light” structure of the ISS makes it easier for the leadership to conduct leadership in a more flexible way, introduce small changes, and to have a total overview of the organization. Structurally, it is a part of the University of Oslo, but its distinctive program and way of organizing six weeks’ long summer courses which combine both social formal and informal outdoor activities and academic learning, can make it difficult to compare the summer school with other larger academic institutions.

On the other hand, being small and different can imply both economic (not taken into account in this thesis), and organizational challenges, similar to “herding cats” (interviewee D), which depend upon a limited number of permanent mutually dependent staff members in the organization. The International Summer School represents a powerful learning and teaching academic organization which values its academic competence, quality and knowledge, and can be regarded as a worthy example for other academic international institutions. The school’s positive social interaction between students, faculty, staff and administration, and its focus on communication that functions in a multicultural setting were
some of the reasons that earned the ISS the University of Oslo Prize for Best Learning Environment this year (2009).

The school represents a community of practice; its social and situated learning includes the school’s own internal cross-cultural context and the external context to which the school has to tune at all times in order to fulfill the students’ expectations and keep pace with the changes taking place in the world today. The school’s identity consists of a dynamic interaction with its environment and a combination of long experience, history, artifacts and language with its many metaphors (quoted in this thesis) which all together make it a community of practice.

Finally, The International Summer School possesses an invaluable and unique advantage in dealing with change – it has at the outset been based on international cooperation and development towards a more global perspective, and has been forced to integrate and relate to external influences, requirements and pressure factors long before it became a natural aspect of other national learning and teaching academic organizations. From the very start the ISS had to follow American requirements concerning quality of its courses (Vannebo 1996, p.12). From the beginning the competence and quality of the school was formally approved by accreditation of the courses by American universities, similar to those present in recent policy documents like Qualification Framework and accreditation system, but on a more global basis today. The International Summer School is an organization where change has been an integral part of its everyday practices, at the same time it has remained true to its original mission, striving for constant improvement, in order to pursue its goals, while keeping the right balance between external influences, pressures and expectations since the first session of 1947.
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Appendix 1

List of interview guides

Interview guide 1 – Management, Norwegian version
Interview guide 2 – Management, English version
Interview guide 3 – Administrative Staff, Norwegian version
Interview guide 4 – Administrative Staff, English version
Interview guide 5 – Pedagogical Staff, Norwegian version
Interview guide 6 – Pedagogical Staff, English version
Appendix 1: Interview guide 1 – Management, Norwegian version

Intervjuguide for gjennomføring av intervjuer blant ansatte på Den Internasjonale Sommerskole ved Universitetet i Oslo

Ledelsen
norsk versjon
* (bruk av navn i intervjuet: International Summer School (ISS) eller sommerskolen)

Innledning
Presentasjon og innledende hilsen
Hensikten med undersøkelsen og informasjon om bakgrunnen
Intervjuets lengde og struktur
Valg av språket for intervjuet (engelsk, norsk)
Noen retningslinjer med hensyn til temaer for intervjuet
Anonymitet og tillatelse for opptak
Transkribering og deltakervalidering

Oppvarming
Når begynte du å jobbe på sommerskolen?
Hvordan fikk du kjennskap til ISS?
Hva var grunnen til alt du valgte den type jobb?
Hva er dine viktigste arbeidsoppgaver på ISS?

Sommerskolens bakgrunn
Hva er sommerskolens mål?
Hvem samarbeider du mest med på sommerskolen og utenfor sommerskolen?
Kan du fortelle noe om den historiske bakgrunnen til skolen?

Begrepsavklaring: kompetanse, kunnskap og kvalitet

Kompetanse
Hvordan forstår du ordet kompetanse?
Har din forståelse av kompetanse forandret seg siden du startet å arbeide på sommerskolen?
Hvis ja, kan du fortelle hvordan og gi noen eksempler?
Synes du at forståelsen om det man skal lære til seg og fra seg har forandret seg med hensyn til den nye oppfatningen om læring og undervisningskompetanse?
Synes du det finnes en felles oppfatning av begrepet på sommerskolen eller er det ulike forståelser?

Kunnskap
Hvordan forstår du ordet kunnskap med tanke på ISS?
Kan du beskrive hva slags kunnskap du synes har størst betydning for ditt arbeid på sommerskolen?
Kan du gi noen eksempler?
Mener du at begrepsforståelsen har forandret seg siden du begynte å jobbe her? Hvis ja, kan du fortelle hvordan? Kan du gi noen eksempler?
Synes du at det finnes en felles oppfatning av begrepet på sommerskolen eller er det ulike oppfatninger?

**Kvalitet**
Hvordan forstår du ordet *kvalitet* med hensyn til utvikling på ISS?
Hvordan forstår du ordet *kvalitet* med hensyn til det som blir evaluert på ISS?
Hva slags kvaliteter mener du er viktige med tanke på ditt eget arbeid på sommerskolen?
På hvilken måte har utviklingen av kvalitet forandret det du gjør på ISS?
Hva betyr det i forhold til ditt arbeid på ISS?
Mener du at oppfatningen av begrepet har forandret seg de siste årene?
Hvis ja, på hvilken måte?

**Ledelseskultur**

**Ledelse/management av sommerskolen**
Hvordan organiserer du arbeidet på sommerskolen?
Finnes det noen veiledende prinsipper som du synes er viktige i ledelsen av sommerskolen?
Hvilken verdi har skolens historie her på ISS til daglig?

**Kommunikasjon**
Hvordan kommuniserer og samarbeider du med resten av de ansatte – lærere og andre?
Hva slags formelle og uformelle arrangementer i sommerskolens regi deltar du i?
Hvilken betydning har formelle og uformelle begivenheter ved sommerskolen for deg?
Hvordan opplever du sommerskolens tilknytning til Universitetet i Oslo?

**Utfordringer**
Kan du fortelle om noen utfordringer i ledelsen av sommerskolen?
Hvordan takler/taklet du dem?
Hva kan være grunnen til utfordringene/dilemmaene eller til og med konfliktene?
Hvordan skal god ledelse se ut i følge deg?

Noen ville sammenlikne ledelse av en organisasjon med ”å spille ulike spill” (”playing different games” eller ”balancing different balls”)
Opplever du at disse metaforene dekker også det arbeidet du utfører eller synes du man kunne beskrive det på en annen måte?
Kan du beskrive hvordan du foretar avgjørelser som gjelder sommerskolen?
- i forhold til staben
- i forhold til din egen jobb

**Rekruttering**
Hva slags egenskaper og ferdigheter/kvaliteter er viktige når man ansetter nye medarbeidere?
- det administrative faste personalet
- midlertidig ansatte
- lærere

**Oppfølgingsspørsmål**

**Språk og ulike begrepsforståelser**

Sommerskolen er et norsk-amerikansk foretak, staben er veldig internasjonal og mesteparten av informasjonen er gitt både på norsk og engelsk. Hvis du skulle sammenlikne begrepene
kompetanse på norsk og competence på engelsk ville du påstå at det er forskjell i forståelsen av begrepene blant dem du jobber med på sommerskolen? Hvis ja, på hvilken måte? Kan du gi noen eksempler? Hva kan grunnen være?

Tenker du at det er forskjell i forståelsen som skyldes ulik konnotasjon i de to språkene? Hvis ja, på hvilken måte? Kan du gi noen eksempler og beskrive hvordan den er forskjellig?

Tusen takk for intervjuet!
Appendix 1: Interview guide 2 – Management, English version

Interview guide for conducting interviews among the International Summer School staff at the University of Oslo

The Management

English version

*(Name usage in the interview: International Summer School (ISS) or summer school)*

Introduction
- presentation and initial greeting of the person
- the purpose of the research and some background information
- the interview’s length and structure
- choice of the language used during the interview (English, Norwegian)
- some leading guidelines in relation to themes of the interview
- anonymity and permission to record the interviews
- transcription of the interview, validation of the interview’s content

Warming up

When did you start working at the ISS?
How were you introduced to the summer school?
Why did you choose this kind of job?
What are your main tasks at the summer school?

The ISS background

What are the objectives of the ISS?
Who do you mostly work with at the ISS?
Can you tell something about the historical background of the summer school?
What makes you work at the ISS?

Clarifying understandings of the concepts of competence, knowledge and quality

Competence

How do you understand the word competence?
Has your understanding of the word competence changed since you started working at the summer school?
If so, can you tell how? Can you give some examples?
Do you think understanding of the meaning of what to teach and how to teach changed according to new concepts of learning/teaching competences?
Is there a common understanding of the word competence at the summer school do you think, or are there different understandings?

Knowledge

How do you understand the word knowledge (kunnskap) in relation to ISS?
Can you describe which knowledge you find of most importance in relation to your work at the summer school?
Can you present some examples?
Has your understanding of the word knowledge (kunnskap) changed since you started working at the summer school?
If so, can you tell how? Can you give some examples?
Is there a common understanding of the word knowledge at the summer school do you think or are there different understandings?

Quality
How do you understand quality in terms of development at the summer school?
How do you understand quality in terms of what is evaluated at the summer school?
What kind of quality/qualities do you regard as crucial in relation to your own work at the summer school?
In what way might development of quality have changed what you do at the summer school?
What does it mean to your job at the summer school?
Have you changed your way of understanding the concept during the last years?
If so, why and in what way?

Management and leadership culture
Running/organizing the ISS
How do you organize your work at the summer school?
Are there any guiding principles which you think are important in running the summer school?
What value does history of the ISS have in everyday work here do you think?

Communication
How do you communicate and cooperate with the rest of the staff – teachers and other personnel?
What kind of formal and informal events arranged by the ISS do you participate in?
What value do the formal and informal events at the ISS have for you?
How and in what way do you experience the ISS` connection with the University of Oslo?

Challenges
Have you met any challenges while the ISS?
How do/did you deal with them?
What might be the source of challenges/dilemmas or even conflicts?
What is appropriate leadership according to your opinion?

Some people say that management of an organization is like “playing different games” or “balancing different balls” (complexity of performing different tasks).
Do you feel that these metaphors cover what you are doing in your work as well, or are there other ways of characterizing management at the ISS?
Can you describe how you take charge of decision-making - among the staff
Staff recruitment
What sort of abilities or qualities do you think are important when recruiting new staff?
- administrative permanent staff
- temporary staff members
- the teachers

Follow-up questions and probes

Language and concept differences
How do you understand the words competence and competences?
Do you think there is a difference in understanding of the concepts concepts?
If so, what is the difference according to you?

The ISS is a Norwegian-American cooperative venture, the staff is very international and most of the information is given in Norwegian and English. If you were to compare the notions of competence vs kompetanse in English and Norwegian, do you think there would be a difference in understanding of the words among people you are working with at the summer school?

If so, in what way?
Can you exemplify it?
Can you think of any possible reasons for that?
Do you think there is a difference related to the language connotation between the two languages? If so, can you describe in what way is it different?

Thank you for the interview!
Appendix 1: Interview guide 3 – Administrative Staff, Norwegian version

Intervjuguide for gjennomføring av intervjuer blant ansatte på Den Internasjonale Sommerskole ved Universitetet i Oslo

**Administrasjon**
norsk versjon
* (bruk av navn i intervjuet: International Summer School (ISS) eller sommerskolen)

**Innledning**
Presentasjon og innledende hilsen
Hensikten med undersøkelsen og informasjon om bakgrunnen
Intervjuets lengde og struktur
Valg av språket for intervjuet (engelsk, norsk)
Noen retningslinjer med hensyn til temaer
Anonymitet og tillatelse for opptak
Transkribering og deltakervalidering

**Oppvarming**
Når begynte du å jobbe på sommerskolen?
Hvordan fikk du kjenne til ISS?
Hva var grunnen til alt du valgte den type jobb?
Hva er dine viktigste arbeidsoppgaver på ISS?

Sommerskolens bakgrunn
Hva er sommerskolens mål?
Hvem samarbeider du mest med på sommerskolen og utenfor sommerskolen?
Kan du fortelle noe om den historiske bakgrunnen til skolen?

**Begrepsavklaring: kompetanse, kunnskap og kvalitet**

**Kompetanse**
Hvordan forstår du ordet *kompetanse*?
Har din forståelse av *kompetanse* forandret seg siden du startet å arbeide på sommerskolen?
Hvis ja, kan du fortelle hvordan og gi noen eksempler?
Synes du at forståelsen om det man skal lære til seg og fra seg har forandret seg med hensyn til den nye oppfatningen om læring og undervisningskompetanse?
Synes du det finnes en felles oppfatning av begrepet på sommerskolen eller er det ulike forståelser?

**Kunnskap**
Hvordan forstår du ordet *kunnskap* med tanke på ISS?
Kan du beskrive hva slags *kunnskap* du synes har størst betydning for ditt arbeid på sommerskolen? Kan du gi noen eksempler?
Mener du at begrepsforståelsen har forandret seg siden du begynte å jobbe her? Hvis ja, kan du fortelle hvordan? Kan du gi noen eksempler?
Synes du at det finnes en felles oppfatning av begrepet på sommerskolen eller er det ulike oppfatninger?

**Kvalitet**
Hvordan forstår du ordet *kvalitet* med hensyn til utvikling på ISS?
Hvordan forstår du ordet kvalitet med hensyn til det som blir evaluert på ISS?
Hva slags kvaliteter mener du er viktige med tanke på ditt eget arbeid på sommerskolen?
På hvilken måte har utviklingen av kvalitet forandret det du gjør på ISS?
Hva betyr det i forhold til ditt arbeid på ISS?
Mener du at oppfatningen av begrepet har forandret seg de siste årene?
Hvis ja, på hvilken måte?

Ledelseskultur

Ledelse/management av sommerskolen
Hvordan organiserer du arbeidet på sommerskolen?
Finnes det noen veiledende prinsipper som du synes er viktige i ledelsen av sommerskolen?
Hvilken verdi har skolens historie her på ISS til daglig?

Kommunikasjon
Hvordan kommuniserer og samarbeider du med resten av de ansatte – lærere og andre?
Hva slags formelle og uformelle arrangementer i sommerskolens regi deltar du i?
Hvilken betydning har formelle og uformelle begivenheter ved sommerskolen for deg?
Hvordan opplever du sommerskolens tilknytning til Universitetet i Oslo?

Utfordringer
Kan du fortelle om noen utfordringer i arbeidet ved sommerskolen?
Hvordan takler/taklet du dem?
Hva kan være grunnen til utfordringene/dilemmene eller til og med konfliktene?
Hvordan skal god ledelse se ut i følge deg?
Noen ville sammenlikne ledelse av en organisasjon med ”å spille ulike spill” (”playing different games” eller ”balancing different balls”)
Opplever du at disse metaforene dekker også det arbeidet du utfører eller synes du man kunne beskrive det på en annen måte?
Kan du beskrive hvordan du foretar avgjørelser som gjelder sommerskolen?
- i forhold til staben
- i forhold til din egen jobb

Rekruttering
Hva slags egenskaper og ferdigheter/kvaliteter er viktige når man ansetter nye medarbeidere?
- det administrative faste personalet
- midlertidig ansatte
- lærere

Oppfølgingsspørsmål

Språk og ulike begrepsforståelser

Sommerskolen er et norsk-amerikansk foretak, staben er veldig internasjonalt og mesteparten av informasjonen er gitt både på norsk og engelsk. Hvis du skulle sammenlikne begrepene kompetanse på norsk og competence på engelsk ville du påstå at det er forskjell i forståelsen av begrepene blant dem du jobber med på sommerskolen?
Hvis ja, på hvilken måte? Kan du gi noen eksempler?
Hva kan grunnen være?
Tenker du at det er forskjell i forståelsen som skyldes ulik konnotasjon i de to språkene? Hvis ja, på hvilken måte? Kan du gi noen eksempler og beskrive hvordan den er forskjellig?

Tusen takk for intervjuet!
Appendix 1: Interview guide 4 – Administrative Staff, English version

Interview guide for conducting interviews among the International Summer School staff at the University of Oslo

The Administrative Staff

English version

* (Name usage in the interview: International Summer School (ISS) or summer school)

Introduction
- presentation and initial greeting of the person
- the purpose of the research and some background information
- the interview’s length and structure
- choice of the language used during the interview (English, Norwegian)
- some leading guidelines in relation to themes of the interview
- anonymity and permission to record the interviews
- transcription of the interview, validation of the interview’s content

Warming up

When did you start working at the ISS?
How were you introduced to the summer school?
Why did you choose this kind of job?
What are your main tasks at the summer school?

The ISS background

What are the objectives of the ISS?
Who do you mostly work with at the ISS?
Can you tell something about the historical background of the summer school?
What makes you work at the ISS?

Clarifying understandings of the concepts of competence, knowledge and quality

Competence

How do you understand the word competence?
Has your understanding of the word competence changed since you started working at the summer school?
If so, can you tell how? Can you give some examples?
Is there a common understanding of the word competence at the summer school do you think, or are there different understandings?

Knowledge

How do you understand the word knowledge (kunnskap) in relation to the ISS?
Can you describe which knowledge you find of most importance in relation to your work at the summer school?
Can you present some examples?
Has your understanding of the word knowledge (kunnskap) changed since you started working at the summer school?
If so, can you tell how? Can you give some examples?
Is there a common understanding of the word knowledge at the summer school do you think or are there different understandings?

**Quality**

How do you understand quality (kvalitet) in terms of development at the summer school?  
How do you understand quality (kvalitet) in terms of what is evaluated at the summer school?  
What kind of quality/qualities do you regard as crucial in relation to your own work at the summer school?

In what way might development of quality have changed what you do at the summer school?  
What does it mean to your job at the summer school?

Have you changed your way of understanding the concept during the last years?  
If so, why and in what way?

**Management and leadership culture**

Running/organizing the ISS  
How do you organize your work at the summer school?  
Are there any guiding principles which you think are important in running the summer school?  
What value does history of the ISS have in everyday work here do you think?

**Communication**

How do you communicate and cooperate with the rest of the staff – teachers and other personnel?  
What kind of formal and informal events arranged by the ISS do you participate in?  
What value do the formal and informal events at the ISS have for you?  
How and in what way do you experience the ISS`connection with the University of Oslo?

**Challenges**

Have you met any challenges in your work at the ISS?  
How do/did you deal with them?  
What might be the source of challenges/dilemmas or even conflicts?  
What is appropriate leadership according to your opinion?

Some people say that management of an organization is like “playing different games” or “balancing different balls” (complexity of performing different tasks).  
Do you feel that these metaphors cover what you are doing in your work as well, or are there other ways of characterizing management at the ISS?  
Can you describe how you take charge of decision-making, individually for yourself?

**Staff recruitment**

What sort of abilities or qualities do you think are important when recruiting new staff?  
- administrative permanent staff
Follow-up questions and probes

Language and concept differences
How do you understand the words competence and competencies?
Do you think there is a difference in understanding of the concepts?
If so, what is the difference according to you?

The ISS is a Norwegian-American cooperative venture, the staff is very international and most of the information is given in Norwegian and English. If you were to compare the notions of competence vs kompetanse in English and Norwegian, do you think there would be a difference in understanding of the words among people you are working with at the summer school?

If so, in what way?
Can you exemplify it?
Can you think of any possible reasons for that?

Do you think there is a difference related to the language connotation between the two languages? If so, can you describe in what way is it different?

Thank you for the interview!
**Appendix 1: Interview guide 5 – Pedagogical Staff, Norwegian version**

Intervjuguide for gjennomføring av intervjuer blant ansatte på Den Internasjonale Sommerskole ved Universitetet i Oslo

**Lærere**

norsk versjon

* (bruk av navn i intervjuet: International Summer School (ISS) eller sommerskolen)

**Innledning**

Presentasjon og innledende hilsen
Hensikten med undersøkelsen og informasjon om bakgrunnen
Intervjuets lengde og struktur
Valg av språket for intervjuet (engelsk, norsk)
Noen retningslinjer med hensyn til temaer for intervjuet
Anonymitet og tillatelse for opptak
Transkribering og deltakervalidering

**Oppvarming**

Når begynte du å jobbe på sommerskolen?
HVordan fikk du kjennskap til ISS?
Hva var grunnen til alt du valgte den type jobb?
Hva er dine viktigste arbeidsoppgaver på ISS?

**Sommerskolens bakgrunn**

Hva er sommerskolens mål?
Hvem samarbeider du mest med på sommerskolen og utenfor sommerskolen?
Kan du fortelle noe om den historiske bakgrunnen til skolen?

**Begrepsavklaring: kompetanse, kunnskap og kvalitet**

**Kompetanse**

Hvordan forstår du ordet *kompetanse*?
Har din forståelse av *kompetanse* forandret seg siden du startet å arbeide på sommerskolen?
Hvis ja, kan du fortelle hvordan og gi noen eksempler?
Synes du at forståelsaen om det man skal *läre till seg* og fra seg har forandret seg med hensyn til den nye oppfatningen om læring og undervisningskompetanse?
Synes du det finnes en felles oppfatning av begrepet på sommerskolen eller er det ulike forståelser?

**Kunnskap**

Hvordan forstår du ordet *kunnskap* med tanke på ISS?
Kan du beskrive hva slags *kunnskap* du synes har størst betydning for ditt arbeid på sommerskolen? Kan du gi noen eksempler?
Mener du at begrepsforståelsen har forandret seg siden du begynte å jobbe her? Hvis ja, kan du fortelle hvordan? Kan du gi noen eksempler?
Synes du at det finnes en felles oppfatning av begrepet på sommerskolen eller er det ulike oppfatninger?

**Kvalitet**

Hvordan forstår du ordet *kvalitet* med hensyn til utvikling på ISS?
Hvordan forstår du ordet *kvalitet* med hensyn til det som blir evaluert på ISS?
Hva slags kvaliteter mener du er viktige med tanke på ditt eget arbeid på sommerskolen?
På hvilken måte har utviklingen av kvalitet forandret det du gjør på ISS?
Hva betyr det i forhold til ditt arbeid på ISS?
Mener du at oppfatningen av begrepet har forandret seg de siste årene?
Hvis ja, på hvilken måte?

**Ledelseskultur**

**Ledelse/management av sommerskolen**
Hvordan organiserer du arbeidet på sommerskolen?
Finnes det noen veiledende prinsipper som du synes er viktige i ledelsen av sommerskolen?
Hvilken verdi har skolens historie her på ISS til daglig?

**Kommunikasjon**
Hvordan kommuniserer og samarbeider du med resten av de ansatte – lærere og andre?
Hva slags formelle og uformelle arrangementer i sommerskolens regi deltar du i?
Hvilken betydning har formelle og uformelle begivenheter ved sommerskolen for deg?
Hvordan opplever du sommerskolens tilknytning til Universitetet i Oslo?

**Utfordringer**
Kan du fortelle om noen av dine utfordringer på sommerskolen?
Hvorfor takler/taklet du dem?
Hva kan være grunnen til utfordringene/dilemmaene eller til og med konfliktene?

**Hvordan skal god ledelse se ut i følge deg?**
Noen ville sammenlikne ledelse av en organisasjon med ”*å spille ulike spill*” (”playing different games” eller ”balancing different balls”)
Opplever du at disse metaforene dekker også det arbeidet du utfører eller synes du man kunne beskrive det på en annen måte?

**Rekruttering**
Hva slags egenskaper og ferdigheter/kvaliteter er viktige synes du når man ansetter nye medarbeidere på sommerskolen?
- det administrative faste personalet
- middlertidig ansatte
- lærere

**Oppfølgingsspørsmål**

**Språk og ulike begrepsforståelser**
Sommerskolen er et norsk-amerikansk foretak, staben er veldig internasjonal og mesteparten av informasjonen er gitt både på norsk og engelsk. Hvis du skulle sammenlikne begrepene *kompetanse* på norsk og *competence* på engelsk ville du påstå at det er forskjell i forståelsen av begrepene blant dem du jobber med på sommerskolen?
Hvis ja, på hvilken måte? Kan du gi noen eksempler?
Hva kan grunnen være?
Tenker du at det er forskjell i forståelsen som skyldes ulik konnotasjon i de to språkene?
Hvis ja, på hvilken måte? Kan du gi noen eksempler og beskrive hvordan den er forskjellig?

Tusen takk for intervjuet!
Appendix 1: Interview guide 6 –Pedagogical Staff, English version

Interview guide for conducting interviews among the International Summer School staff at the University of Oslo
The Teachers
English version
* (Name usage in the interview: International Summer School (ISS) or summer school)

Introduction
- presentation and initial greeting of the person/s
- the purpose of the research and some background information
- the interview’s length and structure
- choice of the language used during the interview (English, Norwegian)
- some leading guidelines in relation to themes of the interview
- anonymity and permission to record the interviews
- transcription of the interview, validation of the interview’s content

Warming up
When did you start working at the ISS?
How were you introduced to the summer school?
Why did you choose this kind of job?
What are your main tasks at the summer school?

The ISS background
What are the objectives of the ISS?
Who do you mostly work with at the ISS?
Can you tell something about the historical background of the summer school?
What makes you work at the ISS?

Clarifying understandings of the concepts of competence, knowledge and quality

Competence
How do you understand the word competence?
Has your understanding of the word competence changed since you started working at the summer school?
If so, can you tell how? Can you give some examples?
Do you think understanding of the meaning of what to teach and how to teach changed according to new concepts of learning/teaching competences?
Is there a common understanding of the word competence at the summer school do you think, or are there different understandings?
Knowledge
How do you understand the word knowledge (kunnskap) in relation to ISS? 
Can you describe which knowledge you find of most importance in relation to your work at 
the summer school? 
Can you present some examples? 
Has your understanding of the word knowledge (kunnskap) changed since you started 
working at the summer school? 
If so, can you tell how? Can you give some examples? 
Is there a common understanding of the word knowledge at the summer school do you think 
or are there different understandings?

Quality
How do you understand quality (kvalitet) in terms of development at the summer school? 
How do you understand quality (kvalitet) in terms of what is evaluated at the summer school? 
What kind of quality/qualities do you regard as crucial in relation to your own work at the 
summer school? 
In what way might development of quality have changed what you do at the summer school? 
What does it mean to your job at the summer school? 
Have you changed your way of understanding the concept during the last years? 
If so, why and in what way?

Management and leadership culture
Running/organizing the ISS
How do you organize your work at the summer school? 
Are there any guiding principles which you think are important in running the summer 
school? 
What value does history of the ISS have in everyday work here do you think?

Communication
How do you communicate and cooperate with the rest of the staff – teachers and other 
personnel? 
What kind of formal and informal events arranged by the ISS do you participate in? 
What value do the formal and informal events at the ISS have for you? 
How and in what way do you experience the ISS`connection with the University of Oslo?

Challenges
Have you met any challenges in your work at the ISS? 
How do/did you deal with them? 
What might be the source of challenges/dilemmas or even conflicts? 
What is appropriate leadership according to your opinion?

Some people say that management of an organization is like “playing different games” or “ 
balancing different balls” (complexity of performing different tasks). 
Do you feel that these metaphors cover what you are doing in your work as well, or are there 
other ways of characterizing management at the ISS?
**Staff recruitment**

What sort of abilities or qualities do you think are important when recruiting new staff?
- administrative permanent staff
- temporary staff members
- the teachers

**Follow-up questions and probes**

Language and concept differences
How do you understand the words competence and competences?
Do you think there is a difference in understanding of the concepts?
If so, what is the difference according to you?

The ISS is a Norwegian-American cooperative venture, the staff is very international and most of the information is given in Norwegian and English. If you were to compare the notions of competence vs kompetanse in English and Norwegian, do you think there would be a difference in understanding of the words among people you are working with at the summer school?

If so, in what way?
Can you exemplify it?
Can you think of any possible reasons for that?

Do you think there is a difference related to the language connotation between the two languages? If so, can you describe in what way is it different?

Thank you for the interview!
Appendix 2

List of figures

Main Figure: *Deconstructing Competence*
Figure 1 Conceptualizing Competence - Management
Figure 2 Conceptualizing Competence - Administrative Staff
Figure 3 Conceptualizing Competence - Pedagogical Staff
Figure 4 Conceptualizing Competence - Focus Group
Main figure: Deconstructing Competence
Figure 1: Conceptualizing competence at the International Summer School (ISS). Management

ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION
- Assessment on all levels - a tool for improvement, prediction, avoiding problems and change
- "Looking backward and forward at the same time"
- Measurable and non-measurable (*2*)
- Formative and summative (2)
- Reflective attitude to assessment
- The comparative perspective
- Formal and informal

GOALS/MISSON
- Respect for the ISS’ values
  - Practice
  - Right direction
  - Goal-awareness

QUALITY
- Reliability
- Experience
- Engagement
- Predictability
- Commitment
- Result-orientation
- Context-orientation
- Pedagogical insight
- Service-orientation
- Dynamic/interactive*
- Continuous improvement*
- Multi-cultural orientation*
- "Ownership" of the school*
- Formal ECTS accreditation*
- Contagious aspect of quality*
- Goal awareness and right focus
- Respect for academic knowledge*
- Context-awareness when planning*
- Preserving human formative aspect*
- Creative abilities and adjustment in learning and teaching
- Prioritizing (right priorities in mediation and acquisition of knowledge)
- Conveying knowledge to trigger reflection and make use of it in other contexts*
- Context-related and processual ability to combine improvement with interaction*
- Respect for professional knowledge and expertise of others* (*Letting the professionals/experts do their job*)

SERVICE-ORIENTATION
- Genuine desire to give good service
  - "Open-door policy" at all times
  - "Giving a little bit extra"
  - Engagement

MANAGEMENT
themes and distinctions

CONTEXT

KNOWLEDGE
- Deeper knowledge insight and broadening the reflective space of understanding*
- Conveying knowledge to trigger reflection and make use of it in other contexts*
- Experience - a tool for improvement and development
- "Scaffolding to build a house"**
- "Building to build a house"**
- The comparative perspective
- Multi-cultural knowledge
- Psychological orientation
- Pedagogical orientation
- Academic knowledge*
- Contextual knowledge
- Tacit knowledge*

COMMUNICATION
- Clarity*
- Support*
- Tolerance*
- Availability
- Teamwork*
- Commitment
- Participation
- "Open-door policy"
- "Being noticeable/present"
- Informal and informal (2)
- Cross-cultural communication
- Involvement in decision making
- Spontaneity in communication
- Dialogue-based communication based on the ISS’ values

COMPETENCE
- Dynamic interaction with the context
- Mobilization and motivation
- Higher digital and technical skills
- Cross-cultural communication
- Formal documentation, proof
  - "Double-edged sword"
  - "Basic tune"
  - Teamwork*
- Background
- Motivation
- Skills
- Tools
- Dual purpose of communication: "hidden agenda" and "specific agenda"**
ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION
- Assessment on all levels - a tool for improvement, prediction, avoiding problems and change
  - "Looking backward and forward at the same time"
- One of the tools for continuous improvement
  - Reflective attitude to assessment*
  - Formative and summative (2)
  - Formal and informal

SERVICE - ORIENTATION
- Genuine desire to give good service
  - "Open-door policy" at all times
  - "Giving a little bit extra"
  - Engagement

GOALS/MISSION
- Respect for the ISS’ values
- Practicing the values
- Goal-awareness
- Right direction

QUALITY
- Reliability
- Experience
- Prioritizing*
- Engagement
- Commitment
- Predictability*
- Result-orientation
- Context-orientation
- Pedagogical insight
- Prossessional attitude*
- Professional quality*
- Administrative service*
- Feeling of “ownership”
- Cross-cultural orientation
- Continuous improvement*
- Formal ECTS accreditation*
- Mediative teaching abilities*
- Being ahead* (competition)*
- Simplicity and transparency*
- Dynamic/interactive/interactive*
- Goal awareness and right focus
- Context-awareness when planning*
- Logistic knowledge "multi-tasking***
- Total satisfaction of everyone on all levels*

PRODUCT / PROCESS
ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF
themes and distinctions

KNOWLEDGE
- Deeper knowledge insight and broadening the reflective space of understanding*
  - Experience - a tool for improvement and development
  - The comparative perspective
  - Multi-cultural knowledge*
  - Psychological orientation
  - Pedagogical orientation
  - Academic knowledge*
  - Contextual knowledge*

COMMUNICATION
- Clarity
- Support
- Respect
- Tolerance
- Availability
- Teamwork*
- Cooperation
- Participating
- Commitment
- “Having feelers”
- “Open-door policy”*
- Informal and formal (2)*
- Being noticeable/present
- Cross-cultural communication
- Involvement in decision making
- “Important messages to the right people”
- “Being tuned in when it’s relevant” (updated)
- Purposeful and content-filled communication*
- Dialogue-based communication reflecting the ISS’ values*

COMPETENCE
Compete: division into - product and process*
Many competencies related to the ISS
- Human relation type of competence at the ISS
- Learned/acquired ability or quality*
  - Higher digital and technical skills
  - Preserving the ISS identity
    - "Grazing cuts"
    - Motivation
    - Prediction
    - Abilities
    - Skills
    - Tools

133
Figure 3: Conceptualizing competence at the International Summer School (ISS). Pedagogical Staff

**ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION**
- One of the tools for continuous improvement
- Reflective attitude to assessment
- Formative and summative (*2)*
- Reflection on all levels
- Prediction
- Communication
- Self-criticism

**QUALITY**
- Efficiency
- Engagement
- Reflection
- Reliability
- Experience
- "Ownership"*
- Predictability
- Well functioning
- Result-orientation
- Service-orientation
- Context-orientation
- Pedagogical insight
- "Building a house"
- Dynamic/interactive*
- Conveying knowledge*
- Professional expertise*
- Consist of several pieces
- Something you strive for
- Continuous improvement*
- Multi-cultural orientation
- Preserving the old identity
- Commitment - meaningful
- Preserving human formative aspect*
- Balance between "new and old"*
- Strong goal awareness and right focus*
- Being observant to needs of the group*
- Respect for high level academic knowledge*
- Creative abilities and adjustment in learning and teaching
- Prioritizing (right priorities in mediation and acquisition of knowledge)
- Homogeneity in understanding the context and goals
- Something substantially good in accordance with scientific, ethical and human values*
- Respect for professional knowledge and expertise of others ("Letting professionals/experts do their job")*

**GOALS/MISSION**
- Respect for the ISS’ values
- Broader and more narrow context-related goals (context within context)*
- Strong result-orientation*
- Strong goal-awareness*
- Right direction

**KNOWLEDGE**
- Homogeneity in understanding the context, "being on the same planet", "tuned on the same channel"*
- Deep knowledge insight and broadening the reflective space of understanding*
- Human formation and cultivation*
- Triggering reflection and making use of it in other contexts*
- Academic professional knowledge*
- The comparative perspective
- Cross-cultural knowledge*
- Psychological orientation
- Practical and theoretical
- Contextual knowledge*
- Pedagogical orientation
- Tacit knowledge*
- Experience
- Wisdom*
- Facts

**SERVICE-ORIENTATION**
- Genuine desire to give good service
- "Giving a little bit extra"
- Engagement
- Availability

**COMPETENCE**
- Transformation of theoretical knowledge into practice
- Homogeneity in understanding how to teach ("shared practices")
- Abilities (as a part of mobilization and motivation)
- Knowledge, skills, abilities in practice
- Synthesis of knowledge & skills
- Formal documentation, proof
- Motivation
- Capability
- Skills
- Tools

**COMMUNICATION**
- Support
- Tolerance
- Evaluation
- Cooperation
- "Ownership" attitude
- Informal and informal (2)
- Commitment/involved
- Openness and mutual respect
- Cross-cultural communication
- Sensitivity to students’ needs*
- Involvement in decision making

**PEDAGOGICAL STAFF**
themes and distinctions

- Show respect for others’ professional knowledge
**Figure 4:** Conceptualizing competence at the International Summer School (ISS). Focus Group

**Assessment/Evaluation**
- One of the tools for continuous improvement
- Reflective attitude to assessment
- Formative and summative (2)\(^*\)
- Reflection on all levels
- Prediction

**Goals/Mission**
- Respect for the ISS' values
- Strong goal-awareness\(^*\)
- Right direction

**Quality**
- Reflection
- Reliability
- Experience
- Engagement
- "Ownership"\(^*\)
- Commitment
- Predictability
- Context related
- Result-orientation
- Service-orientation
- Continuous improvement
- Pedagogical insight
- Dynamic/interactive\(^*\)
- Professional expertise\(^*\)
- Conveying knowledge\(^*\)
- Multi-cultural orientation
- Continuous improvement\(^*\)
- Difficult to attain in practice
- Difficult to measure objectively
- Fulfilling expectations and requirements
- Preserving human formative aspect\(^*\)
- Good teaching combined with good results
- Respect for high level academic knowledge\(^*\)
- Creative abilities and adjustment in learning and teaching
- Prioritizing (right prioritises in mediation and acquisition of knowledge)\(^*\)
- Homogeneity in understanding of the context and goals ("shared practices")\(^*\)
- Something substantially good in accordance with scientific, ethical and human values\(^*\)
- Respect for professional knowledge and expertise of others\(^*\) ("Letting professionals/experts do their job")

**Knowledge**
- Homogeneity in understanding the context, "being on the same planet", "tuned on the same channel"\(^*\)
- Human formation and cultivation (mediating and acquiring of knowledge)\(^*\)
- Triggering reflection and making use of it in other contexts\(^*\)
- Competence and knowledge-overlapping concepts
- Academic professional knowledge\(^*\)
- The comparative perspective
- Cross-cultural knowledge\(^*\)
- Psychological orientation
- Theoretical knowledge
- Pedagogical orientation
- Contextual knowledge
- Knowing the subject
- Tacit knowledge\(^*\)
- Information
- Experience
- Facts

**Service/Orientation**
- Genuine desire to give good service
- "Giving a little bit extra"
- Engagement
- Availability

**Focus Group**
themes and distinctions
shared understandings
*(consisting mainly of pedagogical staff)*

**Communication**
- Cross-cultural communication
- Informal and informal (2)
- Sensitivity to students' needs\(^*\)
- Openness and mutual respect
- Cooperation
- Tolerance
- Show respect for others' professional knowledge
- "Ownership" attitude
- Commitment/involvement
- Involvement in decision making
- Support

**Competence**
- Context-related
- Tacit knowledge
- Social competence
- Experience dependent
- Mediating competence
- Takes time to build up
- Pedagogical competence
- Psychological competence
- Functionality of knowledge
- Methodological competence
- Knowledge constitutes a large part
- A matter of semantic interpretation
- Combination of several competencies
- Subject related knowledge: language, grammar etc.
- Broad and complex meaning including knowledge\(^*\)
- Combination of knowledge, skills and ability to mediate them
- "Ownership" of the skills, capabilities etc. which become automatized