Higher Education Offshoring as an Innovative Response to Global Learning Challenges

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The wide implementation of service offshoring strategies worldwide has been visible and studied mainly in such business domains as information technology, accounting, human resource management and customer care centres. Nonetheless, transferring processes to offshore locations has also been implemented in the higher education sector. Responding to demographic, social and globalization challenges, renowned universities seek for innovative solutions that shall enhance quality and attractiveness of their operations, while strengthening their competitive advantage. The paper examines the case of an American university that conducts degree programmes in European offshore locations, in the light of differences between higher education and standard business offshoring.

Keywords: offshoring, innovation, quality, globalization, education

Introduction

The rapidly growing globalization impacts almost every domain of human life (Potrafke, 2014) and transforms educational services by overcoming former accessibility constraints and enhancing knowledge exchange (Carter, 2005). It is claimed to bring positive impact not only on income, employment, trade balances and inflows of capital, but also on the advancement of skillset or innovation (Balestrini, 2012). Population declines, demanding competition, and funding reductions are forcing higher education institutions (HEIs) to constantly go for assessments in numerous rankings, despite their primary mission and focus (Shin, Toutkoushian, & Teichler 2011, p. 2). Such changes impact communities and states involved (Kedziora,

Karri, Kraslawski, & Halasa, 2017), and require insights into relations between higher education, global society and the economy (Allais, 2017). In this situation, the key challenge every organization needs to address is how to make use of the best managerial practices to develop optimised operational models that would allow for further functional improvements and expansion opportunities. One possible option can be international sourcing and considering some foreign locations where operations can be transferred in order to be delivered by an external partner. In the past few years, business process offshoring has widely been implemented in such business sectors as accounting, information technology (IT), human resource management (HRM) and customer contact centres (CCC) (The Shared Services and Outsourcing Network, 2017). Such transformations may bring multiple benefits not only to both parties (investor and service vendor) involved, but also to local communities and to the global economic turnover.

The study conducted in this paper describes the case of an American university that runs degree programmes in Poland, in the light of a globalised learning environment. The results aid in understanding the nature and conditions of such ventures, and in identifying the differences among offshore investments in higher education, compared to the widely implemented offshoring of IT, HRM and CCC. The core aim of this paper is to briefly present the operational model and key aspects governing higher education offshoring ventures, enhancing innovative and qualitative features of international knowledge exchange. The following research questions shall be addressed:

1. How can the operational model of remote education services be designed?
2. What are the key motivators and challenges in the higher education offshoring?
3. What are similarities and differences behind higher education and standard business offshoring ventures?

Theoretical Background

Transnational education refers to the situation where students are based in a different country than the awarding institution, which has mainly been observed in the past decade due to the formation of international branch campuses (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). An international branch campus (IBC) can be defined as an offshore unit of a HEI that is managed by the mother institution or through a joint venture in which this institution acts as a partner, and awards the degree upon the successful completion of a programme in an offshore location (Becker, 2009, p. 2). The HEI often engages in some face-to-face teaching and provides its offshore students access to the entire

academic virtual resources (Cross-Border Education Research Team 2014). There is already more than 200 IBCs in the world (Lawton & Katsomitros, 2012) and most of such investments happen from more developed to less developed countries (Naidoo, 2009). It has recently been one of the most noticeable developments in globalised higher education (Healey, 2015), as research universities have increasingly been encouraged by federal and state governments to focus on their economic roles at the policy level (Warshaw, 2014). The targeted allocation of research funding and global need for growing science and technology professionals has been perceived as a key trigger of the so-called 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Cantwell & Kauppinen, 2014). In some countries, such as the UK, US and Australia, the state funding has increasingly failed to satisfy the operational and investment needs of HEIs, which forced many of them to search for alternative revenue sources (Welch, 2011).

HEIs assume multiple strategies to the coexisting demands of society and industry's institutional logics (Upton & Warshaw, 2017), but they tend to evolve rather slowly and most often by means of a piecemeal engineering (Meyer, Ramirez, Frank, & Schofer, 2007). Piecemeal social engineering refers to challenging the status quo in small steps, to avoid violent social changes (as opposed to the utopian engineering, aiming at the revolutionary changes that shall lead to the achievement of a predetermined ideal status) (Popper, 2011).

The way public HEIs have been transforming themselves into market-focused, industry-like organisations has been questioned by many researchers (Bozeman & Boardman, 2013) and, in many aspects, European academics have been remaining resistant, or at least critical, to the new directions in which research policies are heading (Matos, 2013). Publication productivity remains a key focus of many researchers stipulated by motivational, demographic and institutional characteristics (Bentley, 2015). In the 21st century, modern universities have been subject to such an internationalization that has triggered significant changes and has introduced a new education paradigm (Taylor, 2004; Gacel-Avila, 2005). Such internationalisation, embracing various domains of higher education (Haigh, 2002), forces many universities to tackle multiple challenges in the areas of knowledge society demands, information and communication technology (ICT) developments, and globalization (de Jong & Teekens, 2003). The internationalisation of HEIs and the observed growth in transnational provisions may be seen as an institutional response to globalisation (Marginson and Van der Wende, 2007; Maringe & Gibbs, 2009).

Offshoring can be understood as shifting part of business to some foreign country and it originates from David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage (Butler & Soontiens, 2014). The word outsourcing is created

from the words 'outside,' 'use' and 'resources,' and it refers to the passing of some business functions to an external company (Allweyer, Besthorn, & Schaaf, 2004). It has mostly been stipulated by such factors as cost reduction and access to broad workforce capabilities in some other location (Fielding, 2006). Even though labour expense differences between countries may become smaller as time passes (Rost, 2006, p. 35), there are other aspects that impact such changes in the short-term and mid-term, such as productivity and quality enhancement, building core capabilities and learning new competencies (King & Malhotra, 2000). The stable growth of service offshoring can be observed globally and the range of processes transferred to remote locations becomes wider over time (Thelen, Honeycutt, & Murphy, 2010). Organisational project management can be defined as a sphere of management where dynamic structures in the firm are articulated as means to implement organizational objectives through projects in order to maximize value (Aubry, Hobbs, & Thuillier, 2007). A business transition project is a process of transferring knowledge, systems and operating capabilities to some other unit (Charter BPO Solutions, 2006) that builds and deploys new or somehow modified services (ITIL, 2011). Managers involved in the implementation of transition projects constantly need to struggle with various challenges (Kedziora, Karri, & Kraslawski, 2016), as managing complex transitions requires specialised and efficient resources from both the service buyer and vendor's side (Karimi, Somers, & Bhattacherjee, 2007).

The ability to use the information from different sources in order to create some unique solutions to problems is called innovation, and it can be divided into two basic types: evolutionary and disruptive (Proctor 2005, p. 18). Open innovation is to be understood as the use of outflows and inflows of knowledge to enhance internal innovation and expand for its external usage (Chesbrough, 2003). One of the key characteristics of open innovation is the involvement of external partners in the process (Cheng & Huizingh, 2014) and in the last few years, we can observe the intensive shift from the traditional 'closed' model to the open innovation, with a focus on internal operations and resources (Gassmann, 2006; Lichtenthaler, 2011). It often leads to an increase in the company's profitability and performance quality (Chiang & Hung, 2010). Qualitative content analysis is a text analysis approach used to quantify research content in terms of predefined categories, in a replicable and systematic manner (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

The emergence of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) is perceived as one of the most remarkable developments in qualitative research in the past few decades (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 291). There are multiple programmes that can be used for coding empirical data

available on the market. Fundamentally, the process of a multiple case analysis differs from a single one, as it is not necessary to define all the features of the cases in detail (Yin, 2003). CAQDAS packages enable the incorporation of quantitative data for assuming quantitative approaches to qualitative analysis (Lewins & Silver, 2009). The empiric data can be coded based on the concepts from various sources, but the analyst may also be taking into account new concepts emerging from the data during the analysis, as the data shall be coded, retrieved and interpreted by the analyst (Creswell, 2013).

Offshored services can nowadays correspond to multiple business lines and forms, such as captive (in-house) offshoring, Information Technology Outsourcing (ITO), Business Process Outsourcing (BPO). Alsudairi and Dwivedi (2010) have defined its 42 variations, but the broadest expression, covering such operations, commonly referred to in many reports (Association of Business Service Leaders, 2016) is 'modern business services.'

Educational Services in a Global Context

Nowadays, university students are constantly reminded about the need to prepare themselves for global market competition (Durbin, 2006). It has a direct impact on the branding of higher education institutions, which has become an important subject observed globally in the past few years (Stensaker, 2007). In branding studies, the core of a brand forms its identity, conceptualised as its culture and vision (Suomi, 2014), and HEIs normally conform to standard values, such as 'commitment,' 'quality,' 'critical attitude,' 'diversity,' and 'openness/transparency' (Sataøen, 2015). As students still tend to choose higher education institutions based on their reputation rather than on teaching quality or tuition costs (*The Guardian,* 2012), many HEIs engage in numerous global rankings that have been widely affecting the behaviours of prospective students (Marginson, 2014). Nonetheless, university rankings may deliver misleading information that can result in negative consequences in terms of fruitless and unrewarding efforts by governments, university administrators, and students (Goglio, 2016). Thus, ranking providers should regularly review and modify their services to enhance and refine their judgements (Soh, 2015). The prestige is often associated with the cost, as presented in the cost comparison of selected universities below.

Whereas the public universities in Poland are free of charge for all EU citizens, the tuition fee in the private institutions is still lower than in the top American and British schools. Thus, only those students able to cover funding and living costs can apply to these schools. Let us present the estimated monthly costs in the selected countries in Table 2.

From the universities' perspective, the commonly observed demographic

**Table 1**   Costs of Studying in Selected Countries (in thousands PLN)

Country	Higher education institutions	Annual fee
The United Kingdom	University of Cambridge	45.4
	University of Oxford	45.4
	University College London	45.4
The United States of America	Harvard University	179.7
	Stanford University	183
	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	184.9
Poland (private universities)	University of Social Sciences in Lodz	4.0–7.5
	Kozminski University in Warsaw	10.4–22
	SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw	7.6–18.5
	Polish-Japanese Academy Of Information Technology in Warsaw	7–14.3

Notes   Authors' own work based on data from AEGON (www.aegon.pl).

Table 2   Estimated Monthly Costs of Studying Abroad (in thousands PLN)

Country	Study-related costs	Costs of living	Total
The United Kingdom	5	4.2–6	9.2–11.4
The United States	16.2–21.6	8.9–10.7	25.1–32.3
Germany	0.1–0.3	3.6–3.9	3.7–4.2

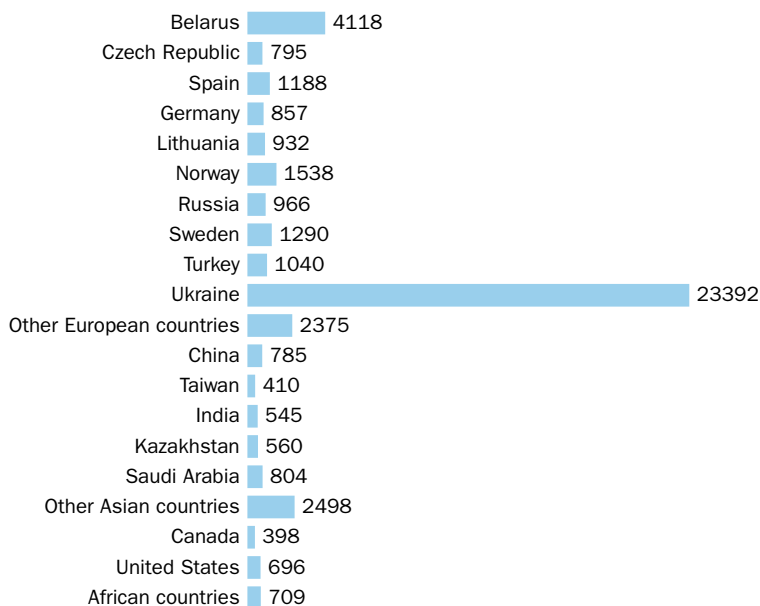**Notes**   Authors' own work based on data from AEGON (www.aegon.pl).
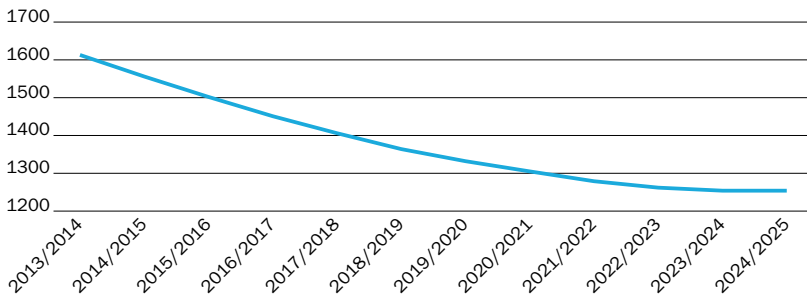
Figure 1   Forecasted Number of Students in 2013–2025 (in thousands, based on Klamut, 2016)

decline in Poland (*Financial Times,* 2015) shall impact the number of students in the country, which has been systematically decreasing for the past years and shall continue in the future, as presented in Figure 1.

What is interesting is the number of foreign students in Poland has been steadily growing in the past few years, and in 2014/2015 it has reached 46,100 persons, compared to 4,300 in 1990/1991 (Central Statistical Office of Poland, 2015). The majority of those originate from Ukraine, as well as from other European countries, as presented in Figure 2.

There are twelve international branch campuses in Poland, among which

Belarus	4118
Czech Republic	795
Spain	1188
Germany	857
Lithuania	932
Norway	1538
Russia	966
Sweden	1290
Turkey	1040
Ukraine	23392
Other European countries	2375
China	785
Taiwan	410
India	545
Kazakhstan	560
Saudi Arabia	804
Other Asian countries	2498
Canada	398
United States	696
African countries	709

Figure 2   Origin of Foreign Students in Poland in 2014/2015 (based on Klamut, 2016)

the widest activity is conducted by the WSB University. While most of the Polish IBCs are offered by private schools, there are three public universities offering MBA programmes. The below list presented in Figure 3 reflects their geographical location.

1. MBA + Master programme of Clark University in Worchester, USA offered by the Cracow School of Business at Cracow University of Economics (CSB CUE)

2. MBA + Master programme of Clark University in Worchester, USA offered by the University of Social Sciences in Lodz

3. Executive MBA programme of National Louis University in Chicago, USA offered by the Higher School of Business – National Louis University in Nowy Sacz

4. Canadian Executive MBA ESG University of Quebec at Montreal UQAM, Canada offered by the Warsaw School of Economics SGH

5. Poznan-Atlanta MBA programme Of Georgia State University in Atlanta, Canada offered by the Poznan University of Economics

6. MBA programme of Franklin University in Columbus, USA offered by the WSB University in Wroclaw

7. MBA programme of Franklin University in Columbus, USA offered by the WSB University in Bydgoszcz

Figure 3
Locations of Selected
International Branch
Campuses in Poland

8. MBA programme of Franklin University in Columbus, USA offered by the WSB University in Chorzow

9. MBA programme of Franklin University in Columbus, USA offered by the WSB University in Opole

10. MBA programme of Franklin University in Columbus, USA offered by the WSB University in Torun

11. MBA programme of Northampton University, USA offered by the WSB University in Gdansk

12. Aalto Executive MBA of Aalto University (former Helsinki School of Economics) offered by the WSB University in Poznan

The presence of the Finnish IBC in Poznan indicates the growing interest of Scandinavian organisations in exploring offshore markets in order to access wider student pools. In fact, there are already examples of Scandinavian activity in the area of international branch campuses, like the Estonian Business School in Helsinki, Stockholm School of Economics Russia and ESMOD Oslo, Moteskolen AS.

The Offshored Education Operational Model
of an American University in Poland

American universities seek to assume global perspective in education and emphasise the study-abroad programs growth (Parey & Waldinger, 2010). The American university addressed in this study has taken advantage from the offshore outsourcing model where the external partner (Polish university) conducts American Master studies. As of 2004/2005, according to the agreement concluded between the two partner universities, degree programs include a Master of Science to Master of Business Administration
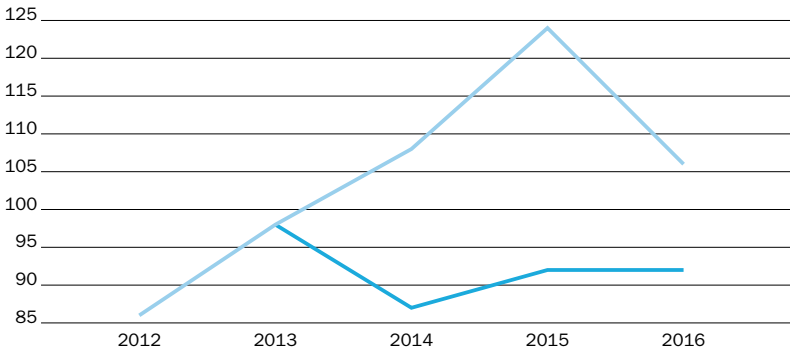
Figure 4   Number of Students Starting Studies and Graduating in 2012–2016
(based on data from the American University)

with English as a language of instruction, mainly in the areas of Business, Management, Information Technology (IT), Marketing and Communications, and Human Resources Management (HRM). Since then, over 800 students have graduated with American diplomas. Detailed data from the last 5 years are presented in Figure 4.

In order to successfully manage the IBC's operations, managers need to clearly define the roles of all the parties involved. Different stakeholders may have different expectations, as well as perception of the success or failure of outsourcing arrangements (Alborz et. al, 2003). In Table 3, the key roles and responsibilities in the project shall be depicted with a clearly defined division between service buyer and vendor, where the vendor company's site is divided into two units (the American Unit at the Polish University is further supervised and supported by the Core Authorities of the Polish University responsible for the overall management of the institution).

Qualitative Analysis of Interviews

The interviews with both parties involved in the offshore operations of the American University in Poland were conducted in the beginning of 2017, by means of personal interviews, web-conference calls and email communication. Data was collected from 6 managers leading the programmes and was transcribed and thematically analysed with the use of the software NVIVO v. 11, designed to explore and code qualitative material. The interviewees were inquired regarding the aspects below related to the presence of the Polish IBC:

- factors impacting the decision of transferring operations abroad and reasons for considering such initiative,
- important factors for the organisations while choosing target partner and location,

Table 3   Key Stakeholders of University Partnerships

Stakeholder	Role	Description
American University	Dean of Graduate Studies, Associate Provost	Key decision maker in the cooperation committee, member of the American University Board of Trustees responsible for negotiating contracts and overall cooperation governance. Acting as a final escalation point, resolving conflicts and issues, providing sign offs & approvals. Strategic level partner of cooperation.
	Associate Dean of Professional Studies	Part of the cooperation committee who reports directly to the American University Board of Trustees. Planning of new educational services to be on-boarded and transferred to partners. Participating in reviews and audits together with the partner's Executive Team. Tactical level partner of cooperation.
	Dean of International Programs	Leading the overall operations and coordination for international programs at the American University. Ensuring execution, timely escalations to the Board of Trustees, regular monthly status reporting to the Executive Team. Monitoring, tracking and controlling budgets. Operational level partner of cooperation.
Polish University	Rector of the University	Key decision maker in the cooperation committee, member of the Polish University authorities responsible for negotiating contracts and overall cooperation governance. Acting as a final escalation point, resolving conflicts and issues, providing sign offs & approvals. Strategic level partner of cooperation.
	Dean of the Faculty, Associate Provost	Part of the cooperation committee that reports directly to the Polish University authorities. Planning and managing of new educational services to be on-boarded at the Polish University. Participating in reviews and audits together with the partner's Executive Team. Tactical level partner of cooperation.
	Department of International Cooperation	Overall coordination of international programs at the Polish University. Plays an important role in the initial phase of the project as cooperation orchestrator and as responsible for project paperwork and overall coordination. Operational level partner of cooperation.

Continued on the next page

- key challenges during the execution of transition project that set up the investment abroad,
- the most important features of offshore services in the location and ways the organisation ensures such important factors are being properly addressed and delivered,
- key challenges for remote operations and ways of responding to such (initiatives that have been undertaken),
- future steps and plans for this offshore investment.

The replies were abstracted and labelled with codes, while the categories

Table 3 *Continued from the previous page*

Stakeholder	Role	Description
Unit of the American University at the Polish University	Program Director	The Program Director has a leading role in the program at the Polish University. He is a key decision maker in the cooperation committee and represents the Polish University at the American University Board of Trustees. He is responsible for negotiating contracts and facilitating relations with the American University. The Program Director acts as a final escalation point, resolving conflicts and issues, providing sign offs & approvals.
	Program Manager	The Program Manager has an operational role in the program at the Polish University. He is responsible for the overall operation of the American University Branch in Poland, which includes preparing plans and documentation, ensuring smooth transition execution and timely escalations to the Executive team (e.g. to the Program Director and/or to Dean of International Programs at the American University). The Program Manager places special emphasis on maintaining high quality of educational standards, as expected by the American University.
	Lecturers	Lecturers are responsible for the educational service execution and delivery to end users (students). They must meet high quality standards required by the American University. Lecturers play a key role in the success of a project as they are 'faces' of the American University on local market.
	Administration Staff	Business as usual: administration activities including, but not limited to, daily coordination, support for students, support for lecturers and faculty, courses registration, courses planning, quality and key performance indicator (KPI) reporting.

reliability, logical structure and in-depth text grounding were constantly rearranged and refined (Patton, 2002). The relationships between the main concepts were semantically examined with the use of data-mining software. The qualitative content analysis followed the Graneheim and Lundman (2004) approach, based on open-ended questions, addressed with latent content analysis. The relationships between nodes were examined with the semantic analysis, structured in several steps, following a comprehensive reading and understanding of the text subdivided into few meaningful units, each of them containing more than one concise sentence. The dataset composed from single words represented separate summary points rather than continued text.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis conducted with the use of NVIVO revealed that the substance was composed from four dominant nodes, covering nearly 60% of the material. The core concepts identified were: 'quality,' 'partnership,' 'innovation'

and 'expansion.' Based on that, the concept map was developed with the use of data mining software. The overall results confirmed that the perception behind the partnership settlement was slightly different on both sides, as briefly summarised below.

The American organisation already had many relationships with organisations abroad, but Poland was interesting because it was a new market, mostly untapped by US universities. For the Polish organisation, the idea to start a partnership with the American university and to offer master programmes had one primary reason: to offer an innovative product, something that no other Polish university had, both in terms of content and teaching style. It was very beneficial in marketing/advertising activities and it has significantly strengthened this organisation's competitive advantage. Regarding the important factors while choosing a target location, the American side was claiming that securing the appropriate partner was very important to them and it needed to be an organisation that they could trust and work closely with. The Polish side was also claiming that reliability is key to a successful offshore presence and it resulted from some personal contacts within the faculty. Moreover, it was one of the few American universities to have overseas campuses. Participants from the American side reported that the key challenges during the execution of transition project that set up the investment abroad was dealing with the cultural and regulatory differences. Moreover, it took considerable time and travel to negotiate the terms of the contract. This could be quite expensive and needed to be included in the budgeting process. Similarly, the Polish university mentioned the financial issues during the contract negotiations, as well as the time needed to build an atmosphere of trust between the partners.

As far as the most important features of the offshore operations are concerned, the American side emphasised that the quality of the programme delivered overseas and the preservation of a close and collegial relationship with the partner is extremely important. The same for the Polish side: keeping the quality of service at the appropriate level is a critical factor. Satisfied students become satisfied graduates, keeping their Alma Mater in mind and recommending it to their colleagues/collaborators in their future careers. To check the level of satisfaction, evaluation surveys are regularly conducted regarding the content of the courses or the delivery of the classes. Moreover, having a good working contact with the foreign partner was important, and various communication tools were being used for that purpose (email, calls, web-conferences, travels).

As for the key challenges for the offshore operations, the American side again mentioned maintaining the programme quality, mostly due to staff turnover on site. Having the right staff on the ground is critical to ensuring that the business is run the way it should be and that the organisation's best interests are being represented. Visits to Poland are organised at least

twice a year and constant communication with the staff is kept, which has already proved to be key in the current success. For the Polish side, the key challenge was to attract enough students so that the programs earn profit for the University. It was difficult in a competitive market, especially in times of demographic decline. To respond to this challenge, the University tried to adjust its study offer in order to become more up-to-date and to meet market requirements, in cooperation with agents to attract students from other parts of the world.

The final statements from the Polish side, regarding future steps and plans for this cooperation, concerned the new programmes to be offered next academic year. Moreover, new campuses of the American university will be opened in other European countries, for which the Polish campus would act as a coordination hub. The American side has confirmed the consideration of expanding to different markets. The Polish partner is strong and offers opportunities to expand in other Eastern European countries, but it is important to do extensive research to determine which markets are most suited for the American university and offer the best promises for future financial and reputational gains. The researchers advised the interviewees that further consideration of such initiatives could be linked to the current trend of developing an 'ideopolis,' understood as 'a sustainable knowledge intensive city that drives growth in the wider city-region' (Jones, Williams, Lee, Coats, & Cowling, 2006, p. 5), acting as a democratic 'agora,' where teachers and students would gather to talk and exchange ideas (Badley, 2009). The managers from both the Polish and American side reacted positively to such idea, and assured that such opportunities would be assessed in the future.

The nodes and keywords from this text were used to generate a concept map to enable visual representation of how the concepts semantically relate to one another, and in order to identify the most frequently occurring concepts in relation to the four main NVIVO nodes. The larger dots on the map indicate more prominent concepts, with the most prominent being 'quality,' 'partnership,' 'innovation' and 'expansion.' The concept usage statistics vary in the size of the dots based on frequency across all main nodes. These findings indicate that prominent concepts such as 'quality,' 'partnership,' 'innovation' and 'expansion' are considered by the involved parties to be central to conducting offshore services.

Based on Figure 5, we can infer that higher education offshoring is being triggered by slightly different factors than other widely implemented offshoring of business domains, such as information technology, accounting, human resource management and customer care centres. The standard business offshoring is mainly focused on reducing operational expenses, by taking advantage of more cost-efficient locations (Karpaty & Tingvall, 2014). Moreover, standard business services offshoring aims for the opti-
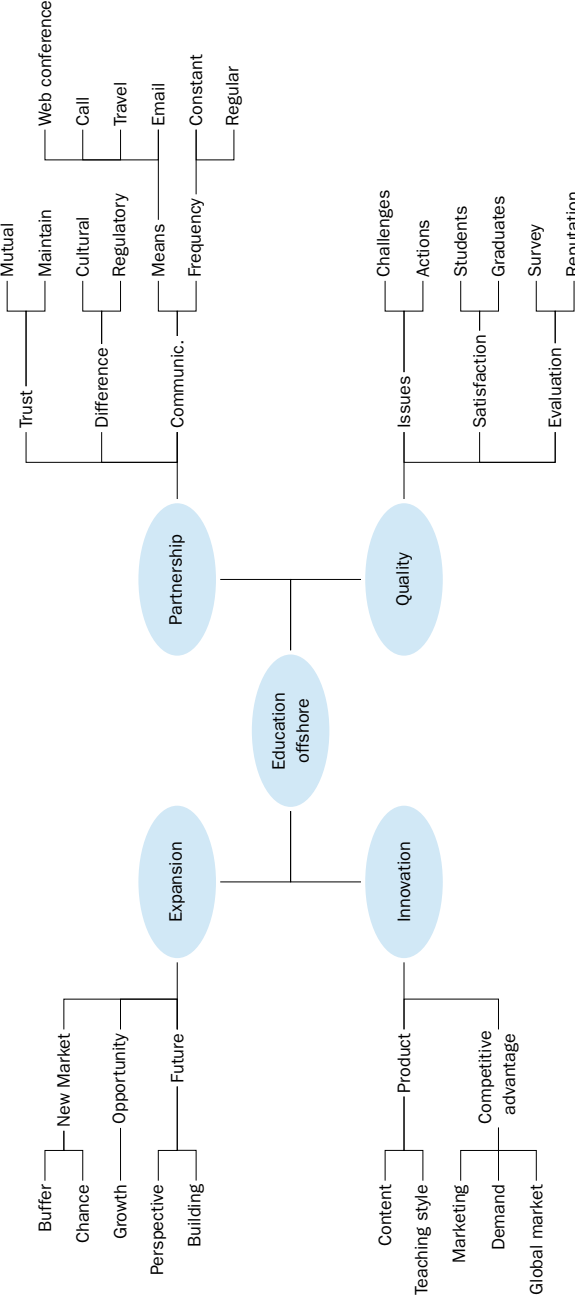
Figure 5   Semantic Representation of the Key Concepts in Higher Education Offshoring

Table 4 Key Features of Standard Business Offshoring and Higher Education Offshoring

Standard business offshoring	Higher education offshoring
• Cost reduction	• New markets expansion
• Process improvement and optimization	• Partnership with responsible HEI
• Productivity enhancement	• Service quality maintenance
• Taking advantage of external talent resources	• Innovative product
	• Strenghtening competitive advantage
• Taking advantage of partner's expetise	• Enhancing student satisfaction

Notes Based on Karpaty and Tingvall (2014), Mihalache et al. (2012), Cha et al. (2008), Kedia and Mukherjee (2009), Aksin and Masini (2008), and Di Gregorio et al. (2009).

misation of business processes, associated with business process reengineering and innovative performance improvement (Mihalache, Jansen, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2012), resulting many times from the access to the provide's expertise (Cha, Pingry, & Thatcher, 2008). Another factor is associated with taking advantage of the large talent pools in offshore locations, overcoming at the same time retirement challenges in the incumbent location (Kedia & Mukherjee, 2009). Moreover, it enables companies to build on their core activities, by locating non-core processes abroad (Aksin & Masini, 2008), and it allows for a quicker response to the rapid demand changes (Di Gregorio, Musteen, & Thomas, 2009). In case of HEIs offshoring, we can speak of product innovativeness associated with the expansion to a new destination as the key unique motivator. Wilkins and Huisman (2012) divided factors facilitating IBCs ventures onto 4 pillars: regulative (public funding, regulatory forces and constrains), normative (quality and internationalisation), cultural-cognitive (culture and language) and institutional (distance and uncertainty), and indicated that the decision-makers are sometimes simultaneously influenced by different mechanisms that pull them into isomorphic, opposite directions. Setting up an IBC should not merely be treated as a product strategy, as the programmes offered are often hard to replicate in a different country, in terms of degree curriculum, physical surroundings, human resources, equipment, recreational and social offerings (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). Such investments need to be treated as an innovative response to the challenges higher institutions face in the globalised educational environment, and HEIs can minimise the risks associated with entering into the host country, which may involve funding provision or academic freedom and operational autonomy assurances (Sidhu, Ho, & Yeoh, 2011). Let us summarize the comparison of key features of standard business offshoring and higher education offshoring in Table 4.

Conclusions

In the paper, the concept of higher education offshoring has been addressed, in the context of establishing international branch campus (IBC) in

a different country. Despite its wide implementation and research in other business sectors, the authors identified the need for addressing the international transfers of higher education functions, which are increasingly being considered by universities worldwide. The dynamic changes in the globalised education environment forced many schools to look for expansion opportunities abroad. The case described in this study addresses the presence of an American university in Poland that takes advantage of a Polish private university to deliver offshore operations, by running American degree programmes in Poland. The researchers studied the global environment of educational services in order to find that the key causes of higher education offshoring is the constant decrease in the number of students, significant differences in the values of annual university fees in different countries, and students' strive for prestige associated with top quality education. The operational model of the American university running educational services in Poland has been presented, with its key features and roles of stakeholders. Moreover, the interviews with American and Polish managers involved in the offshore venture have been conducted and investigated with a qualitative research method, using the NVIVO software.

It has been found that the statements of the interviewees mainly concentrated around four concepts: 'quality,' 'partnership,' 'innovation' and 'expansion.' Although the understanding and approach towards the universities' cooperation was slightly different on both sides, it overlapped in the most important aspects. From the Polish side, the core reason for establishing such cooperation was to offer an innovative product, by means of teaching style and content. The American university wanted to expand and gain global reputation in offering top-quality programmes. For both organisations, trust and open communication was critical in daily cooperation, being the most challenging part the cultural and regulatory differences, as well as the financial negotiations. Another feature emphasised by both sides was the quality of operations, which is the most important part impacting reputation and future success of the investment. Moreover, based on the success of the current operations, further expansions are planned that shall use the Polish unit as a regional coordination hub. In general, it was discovered that higher education offshoring is triggered and governed by slightly different factors than those in standard business process offshoring in such sectors as accounting, IT, HRM, or CCC. Whereas standard business offshoring focuses on cost reduction, access to broad talent pools, taking advantage of partner's expertise, process optimization and focusing on core capabilities, higher education offshoring aims at developing innovative programmes that can strengthen the competitive advantage of the HEI investor and that can allow its expansion to new markets, achieved through open communication and close cooperation with an offshore partner. Among the several shared

aspects, we can list the common strive for operations enhancement and organisational structure improvement, by ensuring top quality of services that shall translate into high customer/student satisfaction.

As for the limitations, the authors studied only one example of the higher education activities offshoring that concerned American-Polish cooperation of these two universities. Moreover, not all of the internal materials and documents could be accessed, due to their confidentiality. Nonetheless, the researchers believe that the future growth of IBCs across the world shall become an increasing important topic of scientific research, and that the need for similar analyses will probably grow. The observed interest of Scandinavian universities in the wide student pools of Central and Eastern Europe may result in consecutive investments in the forthcoming years, which could become an interesting topic for further studies that the authors would like to address.

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