Examining key quality management issues in Transnational Higher Education: how do global partnerships ensure academic credibility of programmes?

An investigation of Transnational Higher Education (TNE) partnerships; a case study of a Post-92 West Midlands University and its Overseas Educational Partners in Sri Lanka and Singapore.

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Abstract

This thesis has explored practices of quality management for transnational higher education (TNE) across a University's partnerships in Singapore, Sri Lanka and the UK. The need for this research was identified as I observed that colleagues in diverse regions at partnerships viewed quality management of programmes differently. These differences in opinion demanded further investigation to examine quality management practices in differing regions and were complemented using literature. Quality management practices were separated out into seven themes for investigation. These practice-led, literature-based themes were (1) strategy, (2) managing partnership expectations, (3) TNE development, (4) TNE challenges, (5) quality assurance practices, (6) culture and (7) postcolonialism. This inquiry of quality management development and practices has been conducted through literature and by interviewing regional colleagues as TNE academic practitioners.

Three interviews were conducted in each country: Singapore, Sri Lanka and the UK; at strategic, tactical and operational levels respectively. These hierarchical, semi-structured interviews enabled data collection from a purposive sample of nine practitioners. Academic leaders were interviewed for strategic level considerations, programme leaders for the tactical level and operations managers for the operational level. Semi-structured interview questions were developed from the seven themes, supported by findings in the literature.

Using keyword analysis, significant findings within each theme were identified as 'units of quality' management. These units have been organised into a framework. The framework provides a mechanism through which expectations and perceptions can be better managed and shaped for TNE. The framework can be used by TNE practitioners in any region, at any hierarchical level and at any given time in the partnership. This affords an opportunity to revise and revisit current quality management practices of TNE, with respect to time, growth and maturity of partnerships, to ensure academic programme credibility.

In Remembrance

This doctorate is in memory of my loving father who taught me to work hard and persevere. He said never give up on my dreams and to believe in myself.

Thank you for being my wonderful Dad.

Chander Mohan

(15.12.48 – 26.09.18)

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Bill and children Ashwyn and Jaya for their endless love, support and encouragement.

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Contents

List of Tables & Figures

List of Abbreviations & Acronyms

AEI	Australian Education International
AOR	Aggregate Offshore Record
ASIIN	Accreditation Agency Specialised in accrediting degree programmes in Engineering, Informatics, the Natural Sciences and Mathematics
BERA	British Educational Research Associations
BIS	(Department for) Business, Innovation & Skills
BUILA	British Universities International Liaison Association
CEBE	(Faculty of) Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment
CPE	Committee for Private Education (Singapore)
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
EAIE	European Association for International Education
EQUIS	European Quality Improvement System
ESRC	Economic and Social Council of Britain
EU	European Union
FIBAA	Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEPs	Higher Education Providers
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Councils for England
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HM Government	Her Majesty's Government
IIE	Institute of International Education
IT	Information Technology
IU	UK HE International Unit
LFHE	Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
NUS	National Union of Students
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PMIs	Prime Minister's Initiatives
PSRBs	Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies
QA	Quality Assurance

QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
SING	Singapore
SL	Sri Lanka
SLC	Student Loans Company
THES	Times Higher Education Supplement
TNE	Transnational Education
TtC	Transforming the Curriculum
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UK	United Kingdom
UKCISA	UK Council on International Student Affairs
UKTI	UK Trade and Industry
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UUK	Universities UK
WTO	World Trade Organization

Key for Primary Data Collection

Regions:

UK = the University

Sing = Singapore

SL = Sri Lanka

Hierarchical Levels:

S = Strategic Level (Dean or CEO)

T = Tactical level (Programme Lead)

O = Operational Level (Operations Manager)

Chapter 1: Introduction

There has been a growing demand worldwide for Transnational Higher Education. Higher Education programmes can be provided and accessed for a fee in different places, anywhere at any time. This has increased the provision of programmes offered across borders by UK higher education institutions (HEIs). These HEIs are forming partnerships with organisations abroad, offering programmes offshore or in country. Overseas institutions are seeking UK undergraduate and postgraduate degrees driven by local demand, at a fee commensurate with local conditions. The market place for delivery of such programmes is not yet saturated; demand and supply have not yet reached a state of equilibrium.

Such programme delivery has been termed as Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) or cross-border higher education. However, I noted in practice within universities and the higher education sector, the terminology commonly used is Transnational Education (TNE) and not TNHE. Fellow practitioners in HE understands that TNE encompasses the term 'Higher' as delivery takes place within higher education institutions as opposed to primary and secondary education. For consistency and to avoid confusion, the term used hereon will be TNE as this work is practice-based in a UK HEI. A further justification for using the term TNE has been provided by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) / Council for Europe, who define TNE as:

> …all types of higher education study programmes, sets of study courses, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a different country from the one where the awarding institution is based.
>
> *(Council for Europe, 2002)*

This definition and understanding of TNE will be used as the premise for this research.

The increase in demand has resulted in an increase of UK HEIs providing TNE programmes. Commentators have raised concerns about quality and managing TNE as early as 1993 where Yorke noted that there was virtually no public information regarding franchising to private institutions within the UK and to organisations beyond the UK. More recently, managing TNE was also at the heart of the University Alliance Report (2014) where it questioned what kind of quality assurance system would be fit for a more complex new world of expanding higher education. The outcome included nine recommendations for the future of quality assurance in England. For this research, quality assurance will be addressed as one of seven themes under investigation for quality management, for TNE programme delivery.

Effective quality management of programmes requires aligning and managing expectations of both stakeholders – those offering and those delivering the provision. This research noted that colleagues at respective partnerships did indeed have different perceptions and expectations of what quality management was and how it impacted on transnational delivery of programmes. Examining these differences in regional opinion has contributed to a mutual understanding of quality management of TNE programmes and delivery. This awareness has provided new knowledge and understanding for TNE programme quality management for the UK HEI concerned, its overseas partnerships in Singapore and Sri Lanka and more importantly, for the HE sector. A common framework has been developed for enhanced quality management and quality assurance practices for TNE programmes and delivery.

These differences in opinion about quality management for TNE programmes and delivery are a critical issue for HEIs and the sector. For the UK HEI under consideration here and other institutions, their reputation and credibility are at stake as sole providers of these programmes. There is the risk of tarnishing the brand and image of institutions, which would jeopardise any future strategic relationships or partnerships at home and abroad.

1.1. Research Question Aims and Objectives.

Research Question

How do TNE partnerships ensure quality management of programmes for sustainable academic credibility?

Enquiry

To investigate regional opinions about quality management of Transnational Education partnerships in a Post-92 West Midlands University and its Overseas Educational Partners in Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Aim

1) To investigate if differences in regional and cultural opinions can be harmonised for effective quality management for TNE programmes and their delivery.

2) To provide a TNE framework to improve the management of quality related practices, thereby improving communication and reporting structures for current TNE agreements across the University's faculties, global partnerships and for application in the sector.

Objectives

1. To identify theoretical norms and issues currently underpinning TNE growth and development.
2. To explore characteristics of quality management as a result of the rapid expansion of the education 'market'.
3. To explore the extent to which cultural variations (East v West) may shape Transnational Higher Educational strategy.
4. To investigate postcolonial discourses and if exporter countries, previously ruled by imperial powers, still experience power-based relationships.

Origins of Research

The trigger for the research began when I experienced differences in my own partnerships for understanding and managing TNE. There were not only differences in the meaning of quality but also practice, staff engagement, delivery, expectations and variations in regional opinion and interpretation. Within each institution, there were differences noted in opinions amongst senior and junior staff members. These significant differences in TNE practitioner involvement, led the research to consider and examine these subtle differences in opinion, not only by region, but hierarchy too. I sought to find a single TNE delivery model (both in practice and literature) for quality standards and programme management but was unsuccessful and could not find any *one model* that could address the differences or appreciate cross-border variations. A model, proposing how differences could be harmonised for managing and maintaining programme credibility, did not exist. These issues needed to be addressed and could not be overlooked as such differences would lead to misunderstanding and misrepresentation of information, thereby compromising the quality of my partnerships. The risk was far too great for me to discount.

I needed, for my own practice, to understand how I could manage my partnerships more effectively and improve my own understanding, whilst maintaining academic credibility through efficient quality management. This led the research to question if a framework could be developed for institutions to use and adopt which could ensure academic credibility of programmes, through harmonisation of these differences.

The research is important and unique because it not only considers regional differences but also hierarchical variation and has compared and contrasted findings. The work has explored TNE implications for practitioners, policy makers and theorists, offering new evidence for managing the TNE process. The point of the research has been to establish good practice, understand shared norms and values, whilst appreciating culture and in some instances postcolonial debates. What binds the thesis is thoughtful consideration and appreciation of regional differences and subtleties, influenced by globalisation which are constantly changing and evolving. Understanding these differences has helped to propose a bench marking framework for quality management of partnerships and harmonisation.

As an academic, I have noted a change in my own discourse. The way I respond to others or listen has changed, as well as a greater understanding of the ways in which language can be a barrier or obstacle to communication. As a practitioner, I have noted an increase in confidence in my use of language to persuade, change, argue a case or challenge assumptions and to listen critically to others. My tone and practice are now more authoritative. This has been recognised by senior management and I have recently been given the role of Director of TNE for a centre in the faculty. My personal development has grown in parallel to my professional knowledge. I am now more scholarly, more aware, more emancipated. My professional skills and practice have enhanced as a result of this journey. The process has been both an opportunity and a privilege.

A surprise along this journey has been the change in my positionality as a researcher. Before joining the EdD programme, I had my own biases about conducting research as I was steeped in engineering practice. I presumed objective positivism was the only viable and trustworthy theoretical perspective for data analysis and interpretation. The methods I assumed which underpinned these were experimentation and quantitative empirical research. However, the research question here demanded a change in perspective to constructed realism, which did not arise naturally for me. I realised a change in the theoretical perspective from positivism to interpretivism was required as the research was attempting to explain human and social reality, rather that experimentation. The methodological position of the research warranted a subjective viewpoint for using interpretivism. Culturally derived, historic opinions, situational analysis needed investigating and this all fell in the realm of qualitative social research and not engineering. These epistemological changes, theoretical considerations required a change in the methods to be adopted. Therefore, semi structured interviews were selected as phenomenological research underpinned the work and this method would probe thoughts, values, perceptions, views and feelings.

This change or addition to my positionality has helped my practice in HE. I can now appreciate and acknowledge other research perspectives. Without relinquishing my engineering background, I have been able to step into social research and learn the nuances of another field, maintaining high quality research. This has aided conversation with non-engineering staff and staff overseas where their research is steeped in social realism. I now recognise qualitative interpretive research, underpinned by subjectivity, can be accepted as experiences are built on the individual's own reality. My own research findings have helped to develop a theory based on a pattern of meanings whilst respecting the differences in people. People have been treated as 'participants' and not 'objects' as previously done under objective positivism. There is merit in all theoretical perspectives underpinning research – these are determined by the assumptions being made and purpose of the study.

Research Gap

There is little existing research on TNE and more specifically, TNE and quality management. Supporting evidence for differences in regional or provincial variations for TNE quality management practices appear insignificant. In addition, opinions of staff within the hierarchical structures of universities and partner institutions have not been debated. Neither is it evident that a review of management strategy has been discussed either theoretically or empirically. This study has been conducted to fill these existing gaps in the literature and focus on cross-border variations. This research examines current awareness in practice for quality management from regional and institutional hierarchical perspectives.

Given the gaps noted above, there is no single transnational delivery model that can be used in practice for managing cross-border quality management in higher education partnerships. This has been supported by the British Council (2013) who state that TNE is often associated with branch campuses in new countries, but it can take many different forms and can be delivered through a variety of modes.

Differences in regional and national education systems exist which are varied and constantly evolving, and the same is true for individual institutions themselves. Marginson & Mollis (2000) state that whilst all national education systems should be transparent to external scrutiny, there is also the right to self-determining identity and the cultivation of expression for national or regional differences.

Noting these theoretical gaps and differences and experiencing them in practice caught my interest in the field when I became overseas Link Tutor for partnerships in a UK HEI, for programmes based in Singapore and Sri Lanka. As stated above, the problem I noticed was even though the UK HEI had been managing such partnerships, there was no standard quality assurance / management delivery model for TNE partnerships available for Link Tutors to use. Every TNE partnership seemed to begin anew, with its own set of nuances.

I anticipated that there would be differences in regional and hierarchical opinion and understanding of quality assurance / management and procedures but was surprised at the nature of these differences in practice. These differences ranged from practitioners believing culture as significant and others believing culture not as significant, as education should not be laden with such a label and can hinder success. Differences were noted in opinions of students and their learning styles – again opinions ranged from being significant to not being significant for individual success. Certainly, some individuals felt there was a hangover from colonialism leading to power hierarchies whilst others felt that the British leaving their country had not been as advantageous for national growth and development. These variations were convincing enough and a cause for concern, as there was a potential risk to the UK HEI's institutional reputation if not managed and understood appropriately. To mitigate this risk, I began this research to explore the problem of these discrepancies in practice. The investigation considered if a common framework could be developed to encompass and level out the peaks and troughs in regional variations, as there is no standard model or framework currently available to practitioners.

These regional differences and subtleties, though not specific to quality management, have been noted in a study commissioned by the European Parliament titled - *Internationalisation of Higher Education,* Prutsch (2015) suggests internationalisation of higher education has been influenced by the globalisation of our economies and societies and the increased importance of knowledge. It is driven by a dynamic and constantly evolving combination of political, economic, socio-cultural and academic rationales. These drivers and their rationales can take different forms and dimensions in the different regions and countries, and in institutions and their programmes.

1.2. Rationale and Scope of the study

The study was conducted in one of four faculties at a Post-92 West Midlands University. I am employed at this University as an Associate Professor, with responsibility for MSc programmes and as overseas Link Tutor (now Director of TNE). The reason for choosing this faculty was because it is where my TNE partnerships were based. In addition, in terms of growth compared to other faculties in the University, this faculty has witnessed the greatest emergence and development of TNE activity in recent years, compared to its counterparts (Proverbs, 2017).

Off Campus	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Faculty A	605	912	1,082	1,167	1,172
Faculty B	1,528	1,742	1,802	1,840	1,861
Faculty C	921	1,214	1,392	1,485	1,505
Faculty D	24	24	24	24	24
TOTAL	**3,078**	**3,892**	**4,300**	**4,516**	**4,562**

Table 1.1. *Anticipated growth by Faculty – Permission received from the Associate Dean –International (Proverbs, 2017).*

As Programme Leader, I am responsible for Masters' of Science programmes in Faculty B. These programmes have been franchised abroad in Singapore and Sri Lanka under the TNE provision and in line with the University's internationalisation strategy. As Overseas Link Tutor for the school, I manage the partnerships and coordinate enrolment of partner students in the UK, employing the University's E-Systems. I also travel at least three times a year to respective locations in order to facilitate quality management and quality assurance practices of the programmes and maintain academic standards. This is to ensure the University's quality systems are being adhered to. In addition, student induction, staff training, and guest lectures are also provided in-house, in-country.

The fundamental driver for the thesis was my involvement in delivering the University's strategy for transnational educational development in Singapore and Sri Lanka. The regional and institutional hierarchical variations in opinion, practice and differences in interpretation of the University's TNE strategy, delivery, expectations for quality and development needed further investigation. These differences have necessitated inquiry and a review of the provision as quality and worthiness are now debatable, both at home and abroad. This situation could have potential catastrophic consequences for the University's global reputation, brand image and future partnership development. The questions raised in practice have framed the underpinning exploratory work for this thesis. For innovative developments to take place, a practice-led, regional and institutional hierarchical inquiry has been insisted upon. It is anticipated findings from the thesis will further develop current practices for TNE and its quality management across the University, its faculties and for the wider HE sector.

Firstly, it is important to understand the mode of delivery for these partnerships as many modes exist. There are five popular modes widely used in TNE. They are: (a) branch campus, (b) franchising or partnership, (c) articulation or twinning, (d) distance or virtual education, and (e) study abroad (Alam et.al 2013). For this investigation, only category (b) will be discussed further for issues relating to quality management, as this is the main mode of transnational education currently operating in Faculty B.

Secondly, my role as Overseas Link Tutor provided an ideal setting for conducting the research as I have been working in the field and had access to colleagues, data and sources of vital information. In addition, some partnerships have been through a few annual cycles of MSc programme delivery, thereby providing current examples of practice and quality management perceptions of the programme, through to student completion. This insight and access have been advantageous in conducting the research and presenting significant findings.

The research presented in this thesis adds to the existing body of knowledge in relation to the delivery, execution and quality management of TNE programmes in HE. It should be of interest to those leading on the development of partnerships between HE and overseas institutions, as well as those already delivering and supporting TNE in HE and those setting strategic goals and policies. In addition, this work is essential to those managing international partnerships, as it provides an opportunity for innovation - to reconsider, reposition and influence current educational practices within the University, where faculty Link Tutors like myself, are involved in delivery and quality management practices. The findings and implications are relevant and of value as they can further strengthen current practice and quality management of TNE programmes and provide an opportunity to think critically about internationalisation and its long-term implications towards sustainability of the programmes and maintaining the University's brand and reputation.

The work is important for several reasons as internationalisation is not straight forward and can be problematic. The qualitative study began by examining the literature as this needed to underpin the study and provide a setting for primary research considerations at the University and its partners. Themes were drawn out from the literature, through secondary research - current perceptions, practices, debates and opinions were noted. These themes from the literature, noted in practice, helped develop the questions used in primary research. The thesis has investigated regional norms, values and perceptions of quality management from colleagues involved in TNE at Faculty B and two of its partnerships in Singapore and Sri Lanka respectively. These partnerships were selected as they are the ones I am primarily involved in and have access to. The work has considered three different regions and, within each region, colleagues with differing responsibilities and rank have been interviewed for hierarchical differences in perceptions and opinions. The reason for this became apparent whilst abroad on Link Tutor trips, where discussions with colleagues identified differences in opinion when discussing quality management, depending on their role / rank / responsibility or position in their institutions. Three hierarchical positions have been examined – *Strategic*, such as Associate Deans (International) and CEOs; *Tactical* – such as Programme Leaders and *Operational* – such as Programme Operations.

The first contribution from this research is from the data collection through primary and secondary means; identifying the difference and commonalities for regional and institutional hierarchical opinions. Using key word analysis for this data, a further contribution in the form of a classification framework has been developed, offering an opportunity for all stakeholders to revisit internationalisation in its complexity. As quality management in transnational higher education is a problematic notion, the framework provides a chance to rethink and reorder practices. Good practice indicators and quality management benchmarks have been suggested in the findings, whilst considering harmonisation and greater appreciation of cross-cultural practice. Application of findings for practice will require identifying an effective route to disseminate the information both at home and abroad. In addition, working closely with the

University's Academic Registry and respective Faculty Offices, findings will likely influence best practice for Link Tutors, programme administrators, whilst keeping in mind the strategic level goals, values and expectations of senior management.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

“More and more students across the world are choosing to study international higher education programmes without having to travel to the country awarding the qualification/providing the academic oversight to study the entire programme” (British Council, 2014, p4). This increasing phenomenon is facilitated by higher education institutions and the programmes they deliver, crossing international borders to reach the students demanding these programmes. In most host countries, however, TNE represents a small but increasingly important alternative to traditional international student mobility and domestic higher education for local students. This review builds on these developments and investigates if quality management has kept pace with this growth.

2.2. Addressing research Objectives

This literature review has been separated into the four areas as identified in the research objectives. These areas are not separate but inter-linked; a common thread of inquiry exists in the form of their individual relationships within TNE. To reiterate, the 4 literature review areas and objectives are given below:

(1) Transnational Education

To identify theoretical norms and issues currently underpinning TNE growth and development.

(2) Quality

To explore characteristics of quality management as a result of the rapid expansion of the education ‘market’.

(3) Culture

To explore the extent to which cultural variations (East v West) may shape Transnational Higher Educational strategy.

(4) Postcolonialism

To investigate postcolonial discourses and if exporter countries, previously ruled by imperial powers, still experience power-based relationships.

The literature review for these four areas/objectives has identified seven core themes in the research on TNE. Each of the themes complement the investigation for quality management of TNE programmes for sustainable academic credibility, which is central to the research question. The themes drawn out from each objective are explained below.

The seven core themes have been drawn and selected from the literature. These themes aid to address quality management of TNE provision. Literature relating to the first objective for TNE has provided the first four themes: (1) TNE Strategy (2) Managing TNE partnership expectations (3) TNE development and (4) Challenges and perspectives for TNE. The second objective, Quality, has provided the fifth theme (5) Quality assurance in TNE. The third objective Culture has provided the sixth theme (6) the role of culture in managing TNE partnerships. The fourth objective Postcolonialism has provided the seventh theme (7) is there a new form of colonialism in TNE? Each of the four areas will be addressed separately in the literature review and the themes will be identified and explained sequentially as they appear.

The following diagram demonstrates the relationships between objectives and seven themes as drawn from the literature.

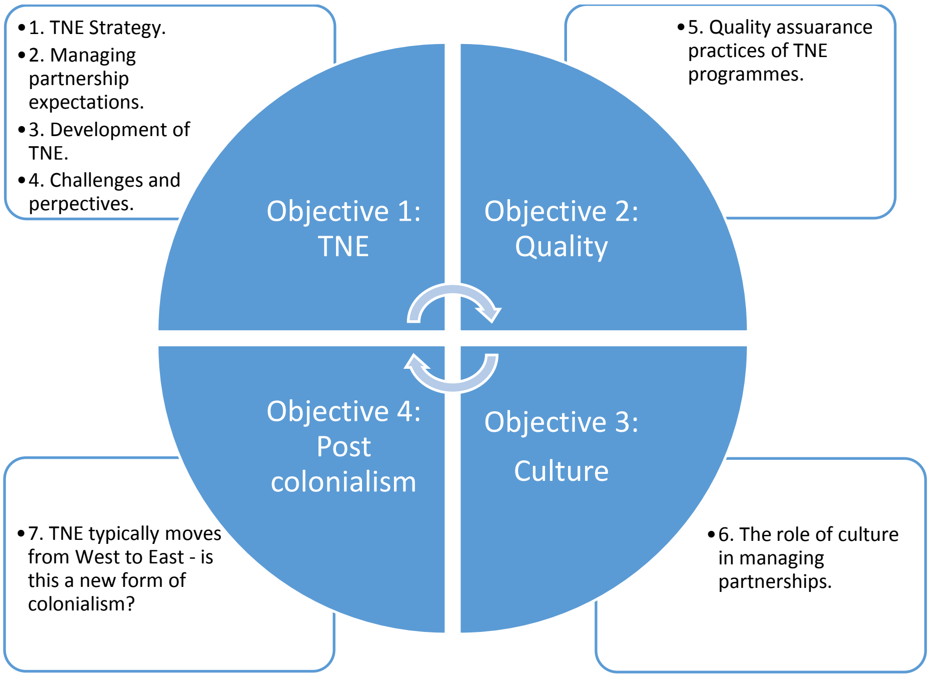


Fig. 1.1. *Literature Review areas of investigation and respective themes.*

Subsequently, the themes have been highlighted within the review and supported by searching questions from the literature as informed by related gaps in practice. These questions have been used for primary data collection later using semi-structured interviews. The themes have been subjected to institutional hierarchical and regional investigation through the interviews and will be discussed later in the methodology chapter. All seven themes have been drawn from the literature and underpin the primary research conducted at the respective partnerships.

All literature has been collated and collected from online bibliographic databases. Key words were used in order to search for journal articles: ‘Transnational’ + ‘Education’, ‘Overseas’ + ‘Education’, ‘Culture’ + ‘Education’ and ‘Quality + Education’, to name a few search categories. In addition, online websites were browsed for specific information and updates from organisations such as UNESCO, OECD, British Council and Universities Alliance, as these organisations present current developments and research in the areas of TNE and quality management.

2.3. Objective 1 - TNE

This first objective requires an evaluation of theoretical norms and issues currently underpinning TNE growth and development. Although TNE has been widely researched and debated, it still requires defining and context. TNE is a nuanced field, not helped by the fact that it has grown in importance rapidly since early 2000s. However, there appears to be limited research on the understanding of regional quality management in TNE, what it means internationally, and subsequent cultural impacts in the context of partnership and programme management. Some ideas of wide-ranging research on TNE have been shared by Lim & Bentley et.al. (2016), who note that the study of quality assurance (Henderson and Pearce, 2011; Lim, 2010), internationalisation of the curriculum (Leask & Bridge, 2013; Bentley et al., 2012, Ziguras, 2008), offshore student learning styles and issues (Henderson and Whitelaw, 2013; Wang and Moore, 2007), and preparedness of academics for their offshore visits to deliver programmes (Smith 2010; Paige and Goode, 2009, McBurnie and Ziguras, 2007), have already been addressed. However, little existing research has compared the understanding of quality management or assurance, at a local level, for international partnerships.

TNE involves students studying for the award of a foreign University while remaining in their home country. Such education is considered to be borderless, non-official higher education which offers all forms of higher education activities operating in parallel to and outside the official higher education system of the host country. The transnational education in the context of globalisation has become a market driven activity to promote multicultural, diverse and internationalised outlooks among students (Varghese, 2009).

Nuances in terminology exist for TNE. Internationalisation, particularly of education, is a term that means different things to different people (Knight, 2012b). The importance of the international dimension of higher education in the last two or three decades has led to ‘internationalisation’ becoming a catch-all phrase now used to describe anything and everything remotely linked to worldwide, intercultural, global or international. However, the working definition for transnational education has periodically evolved. Even Jane Knight, as a leading authority on TNE has, herself has adapted it with time (see footnote). For this research, TNE means franchising programmes overseas to be delivered by a partner institution whom we have deemed fit to deliver.

Modes of transnational education and their respective definitions attempt to provide some clarity within the vast array of terminologies present but fail to do so. The literature itself also utilises alternative phrases for ‘transnational’ education as ‘cross-border’ education, amongst other terms. These terms of reference can be disconcerting but, as suggested in the literature, this is one of the major concerns for researchers in this field of study. For this study, it will be assumed that transnational and cross-border are sister-terms - used in practice to mean the same concept. Wilkins (2016), warns that, being a relatively new field of research, a proliferation of terms and definitions have emerged in response to the new actors, new partnerships, new modes of delivery, and new regulations that have appeared, which has caused a degree of confusion among researchers. Kosmützky and Putty (2016) and Knight (2016) both note that researchers often use the terms transnational, offshore, cross-border, and borderless higher education interchangeably, even though there are important differences in meaning among these terms.

Knight, (2004): Internationalisation is the process of integrating international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the goals, primary functions and delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels.

Knight, (2012b): For some people, it means a series of international activities, such as academic mobility for students and teachers; international networks, partnerships and projects, new international academic programmes and research initiatives. For others it means delivering education to other countries through new types of arrangements, such as branch campuses, franchises using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques. To many it means including an international, intercultural or global dimension into the curriculum and teaching-learning process.

Knight, (2015): Internationalisation at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education.

TNE, also known as franchised provision, offshore education, international collaborative provision or cross-border education, plays an important role in contemporary higher education (Huang, 2007; Naidoo, 2009). In the international expansion of universities, the branch campus, also known as the ‘franchise campus’ and the ‘joint venture campus’, is perhaps the most intrusive yet least monitored form of cross-border educational provision. Generally designed as an offshore satellite of a Western University, branch campuses are located in an ever-increasing number of countries (Coleman, 2003). While the cross-border movement of staff and students is not new (van Damme, 2001; Stella, 2006), the mass movement of programmes and institutions is a relatively new occurrence (Stella 2006).

The global market for higher education has grown dramatically over the last 30 years, from approximately 50 million enrolments in 1980 (UNESCO, 1998) to 183 million by 2011 (UNESCO, n.d. cited in Healey and Michael, 2014). Higher education has been widely seen by national governments as a way of raising economic productivity and encouraging technological innovation (Stevens and Weale, 2003; McMahon, 2004; Gürüz, 2010; BIS Department, 2011, 2013). For students, higher education is a passport to a successful career in the global knowledge economy and significantly enhanced lifetime earnings (Mincer, 1974; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2002; Moretti, 2004; OECD, 2013). A dominant driver of this growth has been the mismatch at national level between supply and demand in the developing world, with growth in demand outstripping supply by the domestic higher education sector, forcing increasing numbers of (mainly the most affluent) students overseas to study (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Bennell and Pearce, 2003; Altbach and Knight, 2007; Li and Bray, 2007; Zheng, 2014 in Healey and Michael, 2014).

Stimulated by free trade, TNE activities have increased over the past two decades. The World Trade Organization (WTO) provides a regulatory framework to encourage international trade in education as part of negotiating the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Trade in education under the GATS framework takes place in four modes: (1) cross-border supply of the service (where consumers [students] remain within the country); (2) consumption abroad (where consumers cross the border); (3) commercial presence of the provider in another country (institutional mobility); (4) presence of persons in another country (staff mobility) (Tilak, 2011). Two most important and visible forms of trade in education are the cross-border mobility of students and cross-border institutional mobility.

Healey (2013) has provided some definitions and terminology which can be adapted for use in this study. He has four categories or modes of cross-border trade in services, depending on the location of the supplier and the consumer at the time the service is traded. These definitions have been adapted to incorporate TNE activities at the University:

Mode 1 – Cross border trade	Online or Distance Learning provision (no physical resources in the country of the consumer)
Mode 2 – Consumption abroad	Recruiting and attracting foreign student to study on campus at the University
Mode 3 – Commercial presence	Delivering programmes abroad i.e. where the degree is delivered by a private college but awarded by the University (either franchised or validated)
Mode 4 – Presence of natural persons	Presence of staff in the foreign country – commonly known referred to as Flying Faculty.

Table 1.2. *Categories and cross-border services at the University, (Adapted from WTO, Healey, 2013).*

For this research, only Mode 3 will be investigated for franchised provisions. Under this mode of delivery, a provider from the offering country authorises a provider (once deemed fit) or a partner in the host country to deliver its courses or programmes. The qualification is awarded by the host country's institution.

The programmes being considered in this study fall under the franchise mode of delivery but how are students represented and accounted for within this mode? There has been no differentiation considered between international and foreign students thus far in the literature. This consideration is important as accountability of data and statistics are imperative and again, this has been identified as falling short in practice. Naidoo (2009) noted that TNE has been growing, although because few governments record the number of enrolments of TNE students by their home universities, reliable data are scarce (except for UK and Australia).

International students are seen as those who have crossed borders. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the OECD and Eurostat define international students as those who are not residents of their country of study or those who received their prior education in another country. When data on international students are not available, data on foreign students are used. Foreign students are defined according to their citizenship. International students are thus a subset of foreign students (OECD, 2013).

International students are different to TNE students. International students receive their foreign education abroad whilst TNE students receive their foreign education at home. The number of students seeking HE outside their own countries has been predicted to rise. The fast growing young population in the emerging economies of Southeast Asia, South Asia, North Asia, South America, Middle East, South and Central Africa is putting pressure on domestic education systems (Alam et. al 2013). By 2020, around 3 million students from the developing nations will seek their higher education outside of their own countries to major English-speaking countries of UK, Australia, Canada, USA and New Zealand (Purves, 2007). While the demand for students coming to the UK, Australia, USA and other English-speaking destinations to study conventional courses at traditional educational institutions would increase, this can be outstripped by the demand for education through the transnational education (Alam et. al 2013). This prediction for 2020 is only two years away and affords a commercial opportunity for UK HEIs.

The scale and growth of this market has attracted less attention in existing research because it is so hard to regulate and measure (Healey, 2013). Martin (2007) noted in a study for UNESCO that in many countries, data on transnational provision was not readily available and needed to be collected from advertisements and the Internet. In most cases, information on the number of students enrolled in TNE is recorded by neither the country of the higher education institution nor the country of the student. This is an important point as it demonstrates a change in the characteristics of quality and assurance as a result of the rapid expansion of the education 'market', leading to a deficiency in statistical data and its reliability as a means of measuring TNE activity. Healey (2013) states that data for UK higher education institutions, for example, has only been collected by HESA since 2008-09, with previous estimates of the size of the market using proxies, such as the number of overseas examinations invigilated by the British Council on behalf of UK higher education institutions (e.g. Kemp, 1994). This problem of limited availability of current data for TNE will be overcome by using historic data made available by organisations such as OECD and HESA. This data will be used to understand the scope of TNE development for this literature review. There is no direct impact of this limitation on the outcomes of this research.

Internationalisation of higher education is not a new phenomenon in Asia. As early as the latter part of the 19th century, many countries in Asia had already made various endeavours to establish modern higher education systems by dispatching students and members of the faculty abroad for advanced studies or research. The higher education systems adopted by these countries conformed to foreign academic patterns, notably those Western models provided by Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the United States (Huang, 2007). However, it is not apparent that quality management models or systems developed alongside the higher education systems. This research focuses on partnership agreements from South Asia and South-East Asia. These regions have previously shown the greatest growth in student mobility as recorded by the OECD. Statistics from OECD (2013) showing origin of foreign students, by regions in 2011 suggested that the Asian group is followed by Europeans (23%), particularly citizens from European Union (EU) countries that are also members of the OECD (EU21) (14%). Students from Africa account for 12% of all international students, while those from the rest of the world account for only 12%.

It is important to note when records for TNE data actually began. The HESA Aggregate offshore record has been collected since 2007/08 from subscribing higher education providers (HEPs) in the devolved administrations of the United Kingdom, a year earlier than the claim by Healey (2013) who noted above that records began in 2008/09. The Aggregate offshore record is collected in respect of students studying (to date) wholly outside the UK who are either registered with the reporting provider or who are studying for an award of the reporting provider. This will include all students active at any point in the reporting period, including students becoming dormant part way through the year, and those withdrawing from courses (HESA, 2016).

TNE global trends should be noted to account for numbers and trends in the provision. The maps below from 2013/2014 represent findings from HESA (Data from the HESA- Aggregate Offshore Record) showing the nature of TNE abroad from two perspectives; Figure 1.2 shows the number of students registered with a UK HE provider wholly overseas and Figure 1.3 shows the number of students studying with a UK HE provider wholly overseas.

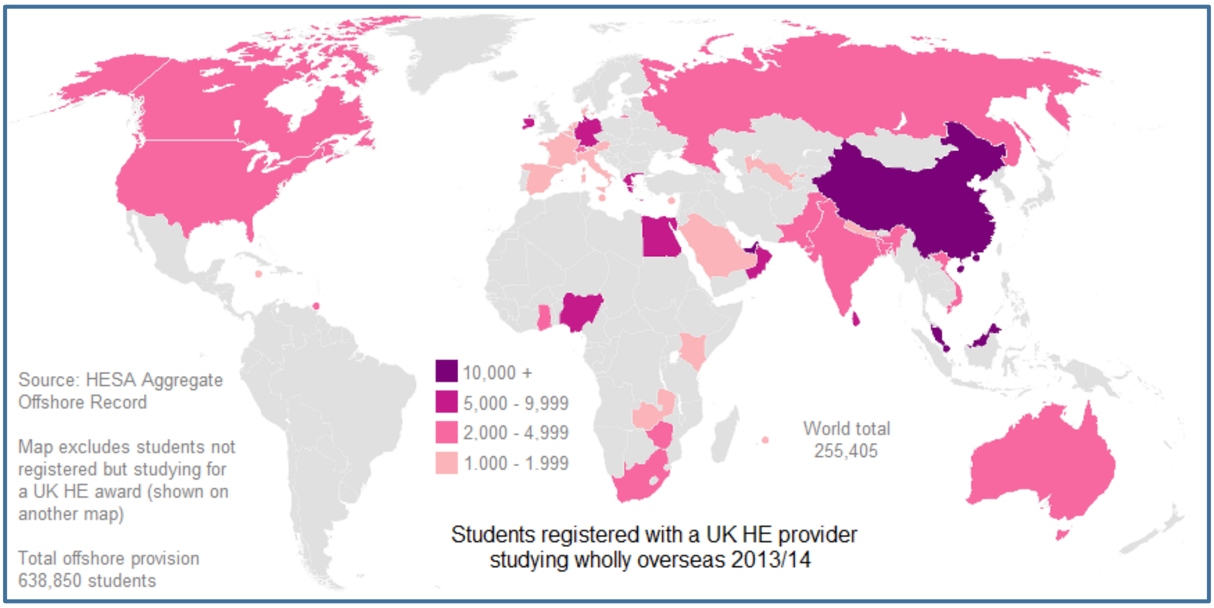


Figure 1.2. *Students registered with a UK HE provider studying wholly overseas 2013/14. (HESA, 2015).*

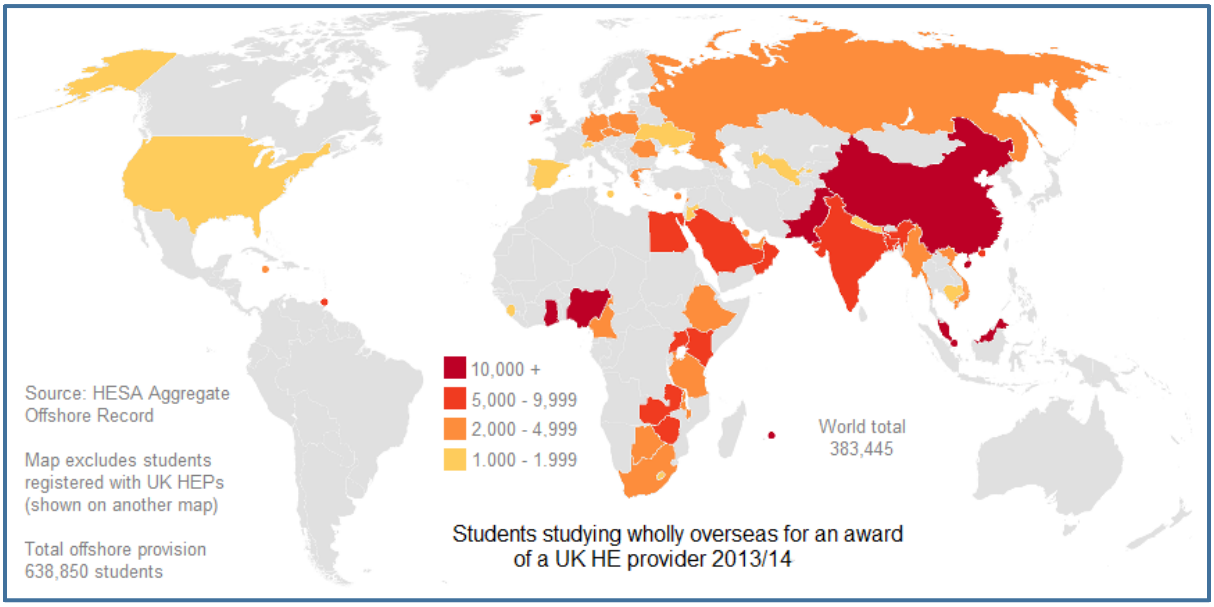


Figure 1.3. *Students studying wholly overseas for an award of a UK HE provider 2013/14. (HESA, 2015).*

There needs to be some distinction between what it means to be *registered* or *studying* for an award. According to HESA (2015), the activity of 'registered' includes those students who are at an overseas campus such as a branch campus of the parent provider, studying by distance or flexible learning or any other collaborative provision. The activity called 'studying' includes being at an overseas partner organisation, not necessarily as a branch campus, but studying for an award as in the case for a franchise or other arrangement. The terminology provided by HESA (2015) is confusing as exact differences are not apparent – do they mean 'studying' on franchised UK awarded programmes compared to 'registering' with an overseas campus? The actual definitions are provided here to demonstrate the problem with terminology:

Students registered at a UK higher education provider:

Overseas campus of reporting provider includes those studying at a campus set up as a branch campus of the parent provider, and as such it is seen as no different from any other campus of the provider.

Students studying for an award of a UK higher education provider:

Students studying for an award of a UK HEI are not registered students of the reporting provider but are studying for an award of the reporting provider, and are registered at an **Overseas partner organisation** or via some **Other arrangement**.

(HESA Website, 2015)

It can be seen from the two maps above that students registered wholly overseas compared to those studying for UK qualifications, can be mapped to practically the same region for Asia for the greatest number of students. The region of East Asia – namely China has the greatest numbers for both categories. In addition, for the time period, there were fewer students registered to study wholly overseas compared to those studying wholly overseas – assumed to be at an overseas partnership. For this time period, the mode of transnational higher education surpassed any other form of delivery for the number of students attaining a UK qualification.

The combined figure of students wholly overseas – either registered or studying – for 2013/14 from above was 638,850 students. This can be compared to combined data for 2012/13 which was of 598,925 students. This represents an increase of 4.9% over the equivalent figure for 2011/12 of 571,010 students. Almost half of these transnational students were based in Asia, with Malaysia and Singapore accounting for almost 20% of the total (HESA Aggregate Offshore Record, 2014).

In addition, HESA have also produced a table for the 20 countries showing provision and level of study 2013/14:

	Level of provision				
	Postgraduate (research)	Postgraduate (taught)	First degree	Other undergraduate	**Total**
China	340	3810	44935	595	**49680**
Egypt	65	1245	13365	35	**14710**
Ghana	25	2605	14315	185	**17130**
Greece	140	3040	9200	835	**13220**
Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China)	280	3745	24065	290	**28385**
India	65	3040	9365	280	**12750**
Ireland	175	2940	10175	350	**13640**
Kenya	45	1210	9785	40	**11085**
Malaysia	370	4595	68315	3320	**76600**
Mauritius	35	745	11965	105	**12845**
Nigeria	185	4585	23630	55	**28455**
Oman	35	1600	13740	115	**15490**
Pakistan	25	410	42290	675	**43400**
Russia	5	2475	6635	320	**9435**
Saudi Arabia	90	1470	6515	35	**8110**
Singapore	110	4770	43940	1245	**50070**
	10	3965	9015	625	**13615**
Trinidad and Tobago	90	3060	9045	620	**12815**
United Arab Emirates	205	5895	8655	130	**14885**
Zambia	45	1035	7060	20	**8160**
Total top 20 countries	**2345**	**56245**	**386010**	**9890**	**454490**

Table 1.3. *HE Students studying wholly overseas by location and level of provision 2013/14. (HESA, 2015)*

HESA have produced the following map as a 'World Total' for 2014/15:

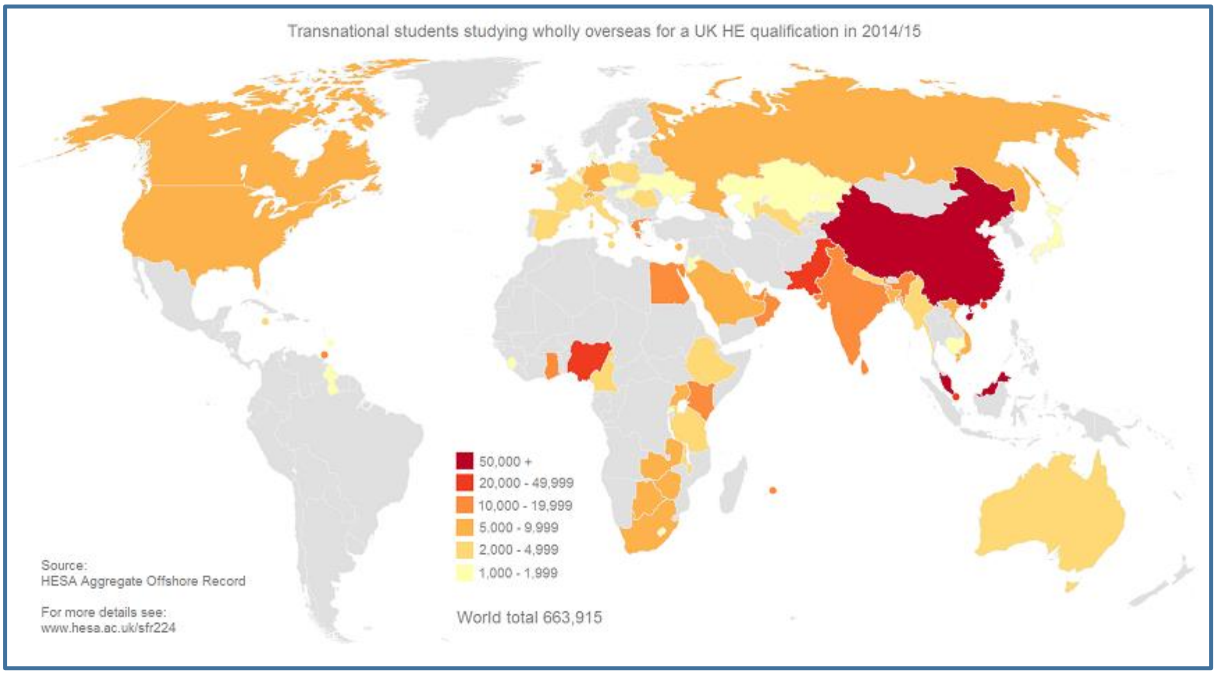


Figure 1.4. *Transnational students studying wholly overseas for a UK qualification 2014/15. (HESA, 2015).*

Figure 1.4 presents the most recent data available from HESA, showing another increase in the combined data for students wholly registered or wholly studying for an award abroad. Historic data does not appear in one place from HESA for direct comparisons to be made. For this purpose, the data has been captured from different records and placed in Table 1.4 below. The percentage change, year on year, has been calculated for ease of comparison.

HESA Aggregate Offshore Year	World Total Number of Students	Percentage increase
2011 – 2012	571,010	No data for 2010 – 2011
2012 – 2013	598,925	4.9%
2013 – 2014	638,850	6.7%
2014 – 2015	663,915	3.9%
2015 - 2016	701,010	5.6%
2016 - 2017	707,915	<1% (0.98%)

Table 1.4. *Students studying wholly overseas for a UK qualification, year on year percentage comparison.*

Although a year-on-year increase has been noted in the number of students studying off-shore, there is no positive correlation in place for time against percentage increase. By 2013/14, there had been a clear increase in the world total number of students engaging in study for a UK qualification. However, after 2016, there has been a drop in the world total number of students. No explanation has been provided to support this decrease. The literature suggests and predicts growth by the year 2020 to reach 3 million students seeking education outside their home countries. It is difficult to say if these numbers will ever be realised as the data analysed here is based solely on UK statistics and appears neither encouraging, nor discouraging.

With the advent of the internet and the development of franchise-based partnership models in the early 1990s, a new form of international mobility emerged in the shape of TNE or cross-border education, in which foreign courses, faculty and even University campuses travel abroad, rather than students (Knight, 2005, 2007, 2012a; Drew et al., 2006; Doobar and Bateman, 2008; Naidoo, 2009; British Council, 2012, 2013 in Healey and Michael, 2014). The growth of TNE has profound implications for policy makers in both home and host countries.

It has the potential to rebalance the global higher education market, allowing more students to study in their own countries and reducing costs to developing countries in terms of foreign exchange (British Council, 2013).

Until late in the twentieth century, higher education was generally considered a public good, but since the 1980s many universities and governments developed Western countries seem to have adopted a view that higher education is a tradable commodity to be sold for commercial gain (Altbach, 2004). Clearly, commercial gain is evident given the growth seen in recent statistics but there is no evidence to suggest that quality management has matured in parallel alongside this increase.

TNE opens a massive potential market for higher education (Healey and Michael, 2014). As it is generally much cheaper for students to study in their own countries, TNE makes higher education accessible to a new group of students who are either unable (for financial or visa reasons) or unwilling (for family or cultural reasons) to travel overseas to study. TNE holds out the promise of a new market for universities prepared to offer courses overseas. For host countries, it increases the absorptive capacity of local higher education markets and, through greater competition (and collaboration), may spur improvements in the quality of incumbent domestic institutions (Vincent-Lancrin, 2007; British Council, 2013). The argument advocates that TNE students can remain in their own country but study at an overseas University. This is a crucial factor and has been drawn from the literature and supported by the demographic information already presented.

Rapid expansion of transnational education has raised high expectations about its potential but comes with its own set of challenges. First, its close association with the globalisation process has led to education being viewed as a commodity with a price, subject to the laws of demand and supply (Simpson, 2011; Teichler, 2004; van der Wende, 1996). This commodification has blurred the lines between education as social capital and, as what is now referred to as human capital. Second, the rapid expansion of the education 'market' is proving a strain on the issues of quality and assurance (Bennett et al., 2010). At the same time, an increasing preoccupation with quality has elevated to prominence international comparative ranking such as those of the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (THES). Transnational education permits students of one country to acquire a qualification of a second country in a third country (Hill et al., 2013). Even if the qualification is of comparable quality to that of the conferring country, it is most likely the student experience is not. There is a danger, Hill et al., (2013) note that transnational education constituting solely an award-granting exercise rather than a learning experience.

International education becoming a commodity introduces a new complexity of financial sustainability. Partnerships exist in many organisational guises (Drew et al., 2008; Knight, 2005), they are underpinned crucially by financial sustainability. Yet, it is not solely restricted to the financial arena but also to the question of academic credibility and institutional direction. When entering into an international partnership – a necessary factor of the multiculturalism of higher education - several factors must be taken into account. As a consequence, there must be an element of trust; both sides must be prepared for compromise, to a point, and for mutual interaction. One-sided approaches can lead to misunderstanding and eventual resentment. What may seem attractive on the onset, namely, the introduction and partnership of a Western or international University can be viewed as an obstacle for real development if not properly managed (Hill et al., 2013).

The management of the international partnerships demands the need for strategy and its development at the strategic level. Wilkins and Huisman (2012) have discussed motivations of universities to engage (or not) with TNE and found that University managements' considerations can be explained by the concepts of legitimacy, status, institutional distance, risk-taking, risk-avoidance and the desire to secure new sources of revenue. They further argue that universities should avoid decisions that are based largely on a single dimension, such as legitimacy, but rather consider a broad spectrum of motivations and characteristics.

The responses of HEI's senior management to the globalisation process can be seen as a cause for concern if the primary objective is to secure new income sources. Motivations of senior management to seek partnerships abroad must be investigated further to see how they fit into the overall international strategy. These responses of University management to the internationalisation of higher education and the growth in transnational provision can be seen as institutional responses to globalisation (Marginson and Van der Wende, 2007; Maringe and Gibbs (2009) in Wilkins and Huisman, 2012). In their search for legitimacy, universities have tended to adopt isomorphic strategies, and as a result universities across different countries and continents increasingly have similar curricula, teaching methods, administrative practices, financial objectives and management systems (Meyer et. al., 2007; Donn and Al Manthri, (2010) in Wilkins and Huisman, 2012).

According to Healey (2013), some commentators have taken a wider view and emphasised that, apart from financial goals, there may be reputational, or academic objectives for franchising (e.g. McBurnie and Ziguras, 2009). A significant motivation for some universities establishing offshore campuses is to broaden their portfolio including prestige and brand name by extending to foreign markets (Shams and Huisman, 2012).

Healey and Michael (2014), argue viewing all franchises as being the same in terms of say, reputational risk, is unfounded given the range of motivations of both the University and the partner. If the University is purely motivated by commercial considerations and the private partner has a short-term, profit-maximising objective, then the risk of quality being degraded is high. But if the University has a long-term goal to aid the development of higher-education in the country, perhaps supported financially by an international aid agency, and the partner is a public college, then the risk profile is significantly different. This argument provides the first of the seven themes as the norms and issues drawn from the literature above comprise of regional growth and the strategic motivations of senior management to seek partnerships abroad.

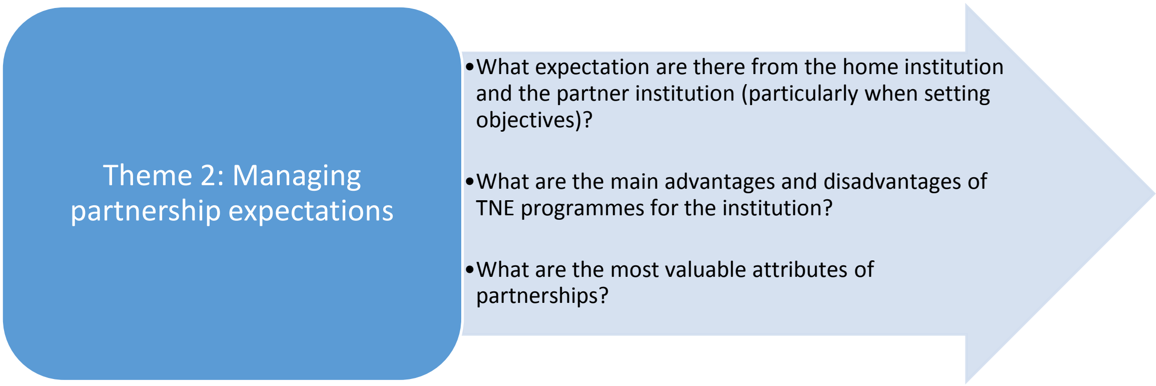
From the review, the first theme for consideration has been identified with a supporting sub-question.

Theme 1: Strategy

- Why are particular regions chosen for partnerships and what objectives and motives influence the decision to seek partnerships abroad?

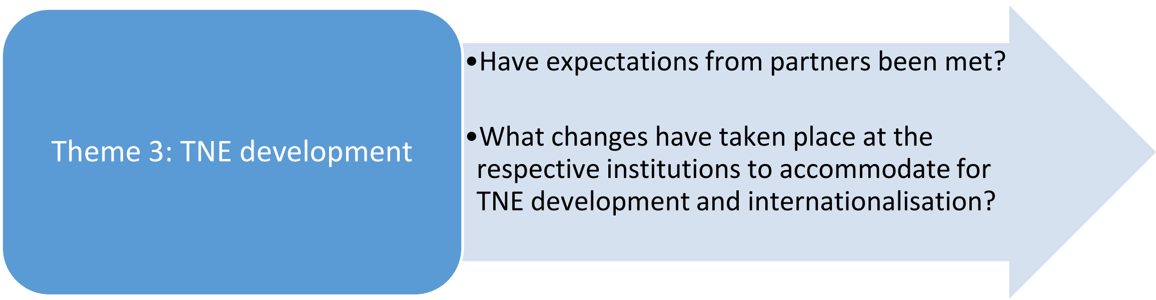
Whilst maintaining strategic motivations, tensions are part and parcel of any collaboration when trying to manage stakeholder expectations; transnational education is no different. Collaborations endure, if these tensions, especially between the parties to the collaboration, can be managed effectively. Hill et al., (2013) warn, where these tensions cannot be managed, perhaps because priorities change, collaborations are terminated. Divergent objectives of different collaborating parties are at the heart of these tensions, but tensions also exist within institutions such as between government policies and their implementation, as well as among stakeholders within the educational institution. The most important of all tensions is that relating to the substance of that collaboration, with the management of the respective collaborating institutions each interpreting that collaboration from a self-interested perspective. Since fee-setting, student management, staff management, academic management, curriculum management and quality assurance are key dimensions of collaboration, they are sources of tension (Hill et al., 2013).

The second theme from the literature has been drawn with supporting sub-questions.



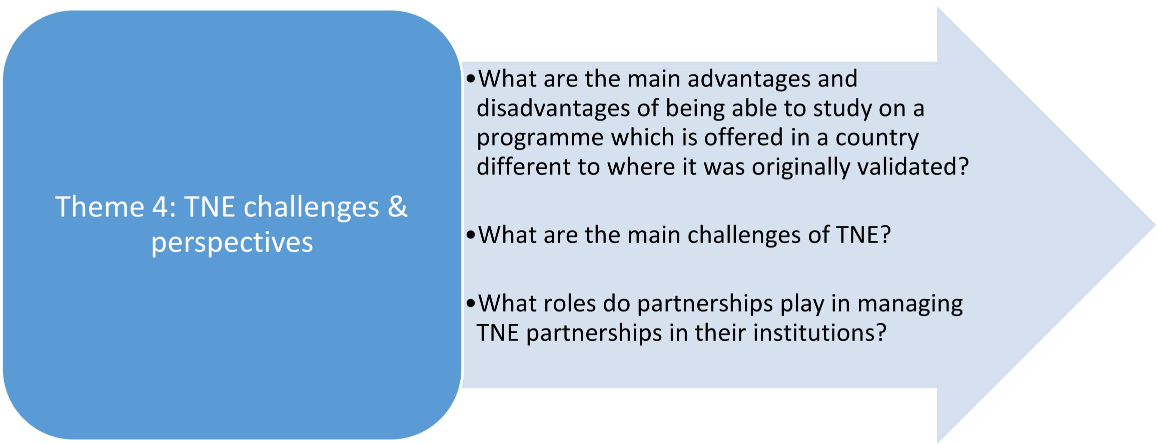
Currently, one of the leading rationales Knight (2012) states is that at the institutional level for internationalisation is it makes graduates more internationally knowledgeable and inter-culturally skilled and prepares them to live and work in more culturally diverse communities. However, institutions must ask how an increased emphasis on the ‘buying and selling’ of education across borders will affect the nature and priority given to academic, social and cultural rationales of non-profit international education activities (Altbach & Knight, 2007). These are critical questions that can and should be addressed by comparative education researchers.

The third theme from the literature has been drawn with supporting sub-questions.



Finally, under the first objective, Wilkins (2016) states transnational higher education has evolved rapidly during the last two decades and no one can know for sure how the sector will develop or change during the next 20 years. A survey conducted by the European Association for International Education (EAIE) in 2015 found that opening new international branch campuses is now the lowest internationalization priority among European universities, behind things such as strategic partnerships and student mobility. This led some commentators to immediately conclude that international branch campus development has become unfashionable and that it is now past its peak. However, it might just be that the existing markets are currently saturated, and as social, economic, and regulatory conditions change globally, branch campus development might again accelerate, but in new countries and regions such as India, Africa, and Latin America. Furthermore, we do not know how MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) will change and whether they will gain popularity to the extent that they affect physical enrolments. One thing is certain: There will be plenty of changes in transnational higher education over the next 20 years to keep researchers busy.

A fourth theme from the literature has been drawn with supporting sub-questions.



An evaluation of literature for theoretical norms and issues currently underpinning TNE growth and development has taken place, and four out of seven themes have been drawn for further analysis using primary research. The next section moves onto objective 2, Quality, for TNE considerations.

2.4. Objective 2– Quality and TNE

In practice at my institution, I have recognised that there are regional, 'culture-led tensions' that exist when considering quality assurance practices. I have noted these differences in colloquial understanding of what quality means, how it is measured and how quality and quality standards are implemented by colleagues – not just for quality sake. This has been identified in the literature too and provides a further justification for this research; supported by Tadaki and Tremewan who identify (cited in Lim, 2016), between 'convergence' – systematic similarities in functions and forms of social life and 'divergence' – being a product of a geographically, historically, institutionally and culturally located set of pursuits – is applicable to transnational quality assurance.

Throughout the world there has been a move to mass higher education, cross border education involving greater diversity of programmes. This expansion of higher education has prompted the rise of a variety of modes of delivery hence posing challenges for the efficacy of institutional quality controls (Nordin, Alias and Siraj, 2013).

The driving forces, policies and practices concerning internationalisation of higher education in individual nations are not only affected by their national policy, character and identity, but also are influenced by calls and pressures from international, regional or global organisations. In recent years, policies and strategies concerning TNE have gained increased attention and visibility, especially in many regions and specific countries in Asia (Huang, 2007).

Quality of transnational provision and has been discussed as an important policy issue, as a focus of practice and as a concern for study in higher education research (Blanco Ramirez and Berger, 2013). Literature on the internationalisation of higher education shows a revitalised interest in quality practices including rankings and accreditation (Deem et al., 2008; Huisman, 2008; Marginson and van der Wende, 2007; Salmi and Altbach, 2011). A closer examination of quality assurance policies reveals, however, many of these practices fail to theorise what quality means (Harvey and Newton, 2004, 2007). While quality-orientated practices have become more frequently and intentionally pursued in the new national contexts, conceptualisations of quality have not advanced at the same rate (Harvey and Newton, 2004, 2007).

In an educational context, internationalisation involves creation of an “open, tolerant and cosmopolitan University experience” (Kalantzis and Cope, 2000) extending over international, national, institutional and personal issues based on reciprocal relationships, and a “flow of knowledge and cultures across national boundaries” (Slethaug, 2007). This combined definition from two sources certainly epitomises the breadth of internationalisation in education but again there is no recognition of managing TNE quality within these reciprocal relationships.

A crucial part of the shifting nature is the commodification of TNE and hence its quality has become a significant evaluative factor. Higher education systems are expanding rapidly around the globe in order to satisfy the greater need and demand for access. Increased access to higher education enhances both individual opportunity and national economic development and competitiveness in an increase globalised world. Despite these developments, Blanco Ramirez and Berger (2013) state, there are on-going and perhaps ever-increasing concerns about inequities and shortcomings in access to, quality of, relevance of, and investment in higher education. In this changing context, quality and accountability have received increasing attention from policy makers and higher education leaders. For instance, since the 1990s, almost every country in the world has developed quality assurance mechanisms, many of which take their cues directly from a handful of developed nations (Kells, 1999).

Although differences in the size and stage of development of their higher education sectors, many governments have found traditional academic controls inadequate for facing today’s challenges. Organisations such as the OECD have made calls for new structures and approaches to quality assurance. Nordin, Alias and Siraj (2013) add that the rapid expansion of higher education systems and globalisation have placed demands on effective mechanisms for professional recognition of higher education credentials.

But what is understood by TNE quality assurance? According to Zwanikken et al., (2013), the definition of quality assurance in HE has evolved in the last ten years. Woodhouse back in 1999, referred to quality assurance as relating “to the policies, attitudes, actions and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced”. Harvey (2012), has commented, “Assurance of quality in higher education is a process of establishing stake-holder confidence that provision (input, process and outcomes) fulfils expectations or measures up to threshold minimum requirements”. Considering stakeholders, of which there are many, UNESCO (2005) state, the following stakeholders in higher education can be distinguished: governments; higher education institutions/providers including academic staff; student bodies; quality assurance and accreditation bodies; academic recognition and professional bodies.

The key challenges for universities, regulators and policy makers with TNE is quality assurance (Castle and Kelly, 2004; Craft, 2004; Stella, 2006; Edwards et al. 2010). The reputations of individual universities and national higher education systems are, in large part, based on the perceived quality of their academic awards. Providing education across borders exposes the UK universities to varying degrees of reputational risk. Healey (2014) provides examples; distance learning courses may be compromised by on-line fraud (e.g. learners using friends to complete assessments). Maintaining quality control in international branch campuses may be more difficult because managers and staff operate in an alien culture far from the home campus. Partnership arrangements maybe undermined by the ‘principal-agent’ problem, the partners being the ‘agent’ having different objectives (e.g. profit maximisation rather than academic quality) from the awarding UK universities (principals)(Healey, 2014).

More recently, University heads are seeking accountability from their TNE management groups with respect to quality, such as spending, value for money, added value and direct external impacts on research and reputation. This has been supported by Nordin, Alias and Siraj (2013) who state that traditionally, academia has largely been left independent; this is in the interests of freedom to provide the environment for scholarship in research and writing. But times are changing. The external pressures for change in universities are increasing. Public funds are being reduced in many systems, competition is up, students are becoming more forthright about getting value for money, government scrutiny is increasing and external quality audits are more common.

However, globalisation has introduced concerns for the efficacy of international strategies that target quality assurance and international competitiveness in Asian higher education, for both universities and countries (Hou, 2014). In this context, the internationalisation of higher education often implies the pursuit of an international image of quality and prestige, in order to make the selected top institutions more globally competitive (Deem, Mok and Lucas 2008).

There are risks to quality when pursuing prestige and the greater potential of income generation. The belief that franchising offers a route to easy profits also underpins a long-standing concern that some universities may be tempted to trade off quality against higher revenue, for example by admitting weaker students to their overseas programmes or operating from more basic premises abroad. As early as 1997, the QAA was charged with auditing UK universities' overseas franchises to mitigate this perceived risk (Healey, 2013).

In order to protect against substandard transnational education provision, quality assurance resources have been developed at international, national and institutional levels (McBurnie, 2008). UNESCO, for example, has developed Guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education (Stella, 2006 and Zwanikken, 2013). However, these guidelines are voluntary as Stella (2006) highlights but provide a framework for cooperation. The guidelines recommend responsibilities for both partners in transnational collaborations and aim to encourage quality of provision.

There are very few studies that have sought to investigate the reasons why universities engage in franchising Healey (2013). As early as 1993, Yorke argued that although there is extensive literature on franchising in the business world, there is little on franchising of education. He added that no public information was available for franchising education with private institutions and suggested this was not surprising due to the sensitivity surrounding commercial information and interest in the capacity of income generation. This is still relevant today and there has been some significant progress and debate on the quality, benefits, purpose and pitfalls of educational franchising. In addition, organisations like OECD have shown an interest and have been recording commercial information on global student numbers and engagement. However, terminology has remained an issue for categorisation and clarification of terms.

Some significant contribution has been provided for straightforward categorisation for the type of cross-border quality assurances practices. The World Bank (2007) (cited in Hou, 2014) identified four major types of cross-border quality assurance, including (1) accreditation in the receiving country, (2) accreditation in the sending country, (3) regional accreditation and (4) cross-border quality assurance. Different regions may adopt different types of cross-border quality assurance based on the national quality assurance systems (Hou, 2014). Currently, in Faculty B, all TNE programmes fall under the fourth type - cross-border quality assurance. While the precise nomenclature around the world varies, this basic typology is widely used in TNE literature (e.g., Knight, 2007; Drew et al 2006, 2008; Ziguras and McBurnie, 2008; Middlehurst et al. 2009; Naidoo, 2009). Healey (2014) adds in the UK, the QAA further uses a typology that distinguishes between three main types of TNE and two sub-types: (1) distance learning, (2) international branch campuses, (3) partnerships, which are sub-divided into (3a) franchises and, (3b) validated centres. This typology provides a useful framework for quality assurance, as the degree of control is transferred to a local partner significantly increases as universities move from distance-learning towards validation, raising the risk of reputational damage. The typology used in this thesis falls primarily under partnerships (3a) – franchises.

Healey (2014) notes that as the control over academic quality is increasingly transferred to the foreign partner, the risk of reputational damage to the home University is likely to increase.

This has been represented below:

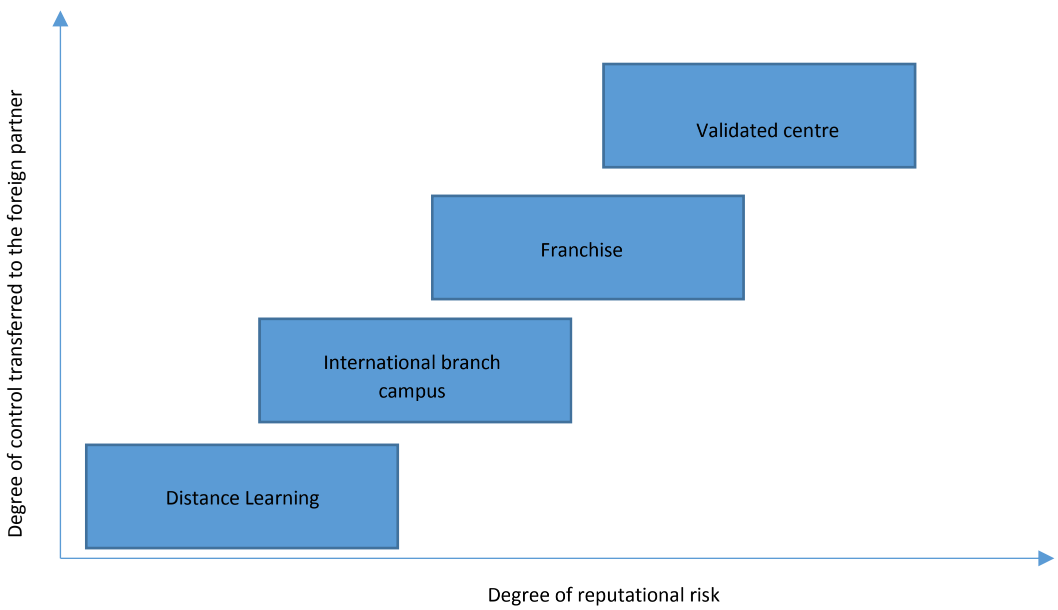


Fig 1.5. *Reputation risk versus transfer of control (Healey, 2014).*

The role of trust and power asymmetry in inter-University partnerships is an important consideration for this work as the research question aims to address academic credibility of programmes across global partnerships. Kinser and Green (2009), for example, argue that sustainable partnerships must be based on a spirit of cooperation and trust. Others, according to Healey (2014), e.g., Maselli et.al. 2006; Bradley, 2007; Olsson, 2008, suggest that asymmetric power relations, seen most commonly in research partnerships between universities, will tend to lead to the breakdown of the partnership over time. Organisational theory suggests this may be because ‘power-based control’ is an ineffective way of encouraging the subordinate partner to share tacit knowledge and expertise (Inkpen and Beamish, 1997).

Managing these relationships is clearly the main issue here, yet no quality assurance framework is in place for key roles, responsibilities, issues, risk management alongside time. Zwanikken et al., (2013) have found that literature from the 1990s onwards, increasing international mobility, and therefore international comparability, became an important issue, especially in Europe and the USA (Smith, 2010; Woodhouse, 1996). Stella (2006), states that national frameworks for quality assurance of cross-border education are not well developed. Bolton (2010), argues that existing quality assurance frameworks often do not allow accommodation of manageable risks associated with innovation, flexibility and experimentation in new market places. Billing (2004) suggested, especially in Europe, a ‘general’ model of quality assurance developing. To date, there is no obvious model in place in the UK (apart from the QAA framework).

Differences between the peer based quality assurance system of the UK and the government controlled one in, for example, China (Mok and Xu, 2008), have also resulted in considerable frustrations amongst all stake holders of the Sino-UK TNE provision in China, including academic, programme managers, students and their parents alike (Leon, 2000).

As the regulation in any jurisdiction determines the quality standards required of an educational program independent of quality standards in other jurisdictions for transnational education, there is both convergence in a common understanding of quality standards at a high level and divergence in the local interpretation and application of such standards (Tadaki & Tremewan, 2013).This gives rise to potential conflict, competition and confusion where more than one set of standards is applicable (Lim, 2010). It is therefore timely to analyse how quality assurance mechanisms apply across borders and how this might impact practically on both staff and outcomes for students (Lim and Bentley, 2016).

In response to global trends, Hou (2014) states national accreditors are supposed to be the gate-keepers of cross-border education. However, most quality assurance agencies in Asian countries in the category of ‘cross-border quality assurance’ are still confined to national contexts and have no capacity to evaluate cross-border academic programmes at home or abroad. Hou (2014) asks that in these circumstances: who should be responsible for the quality of cross-border higher education and student rights? As van der Wende and Westerheijden (2001) earlier noted that higher education has been internationalising at such speed and size, while quality assurance systems and responsibilities are still largely based at the national level, creates major tensions and challenges. They suggest larger parts of higher education provisions escape or bypass national quality assurance systems, with consequent questions about the responsibility for quality assurance and consumer protection. Questionable progress appears to have been made since these comments were made in 2001. The literature does state the benefits and pitfalls and what should be or needs to be done, but there appears little or no empirical evidence to support what is being recommended, compared what is actually happening in practice (UK and abroad).

As highlighted by Healey (2013), it is hard to see the reputational and academic gains from franchising degrees to small, private colleges in developing countries. The case of the University of Wales, which was effectively closed in October 2011 after it was revealed that poor quality assurance practices meant that its degrees were being offered by dubious foreign partners, provides an extreme example of the reputational risks of franchising. At its peak, the University of Wales had 20,000 students studying in 130 foreign partner colleges. It was brought down by a series of scandals, including the revelation that the director of one college in Malaysia had fake qualifications and that Accademia Italiana in Bangkok had been operating illegally (Healey, 2013).

The benefits of these twinning and franchise arrangements to students, host institutions as well as the foreign providers are many and varied. However, issues related to quality of teaching, relevance of course content, admission requirements, testing and evaluation, and qualifications of teaching staff have emerged as major concerns (Knight, 2012). National quality assurance and accreditation bodies of receiving and sending countries recognise the need to maintain the quality and sustainability of these programs, and the fact that they need to be closely monitored. However, only a handful of countries have the capacity or political will to oversee and evaluate twinning and franchise programs, thereby causing ongoing concern about the quality of the programs and the legitimacy of the qualifications.

However, politically, the UK has seen some encouragement from policy makers to engage in TNE due to the business opportunities for expansion and growth. This view that transnational education is big business was shared in a speech in April 2012, where the UK's Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts, urged universities to seize the global opportunities available and make TNE one of the 'great growth industries of the future' (Healey, 2013). In the speech, Willetts proposed that emerging economies want to educate their students at home, and the United Kingdom – a global pioneer in developing educational facilities - was well placed to provide this. He added the UK does not only have strengths in teaching and research but in design and construction of universities, mobilising finance, curriculum development qualification accreditation and quality assurance.

However, Knight (2012) states the growing complexity of the internationalisation landscape, especially student mobility, is raising new questions and issues regarding the granting and recognition of qualifications. For students taking full degree programmes abroad, the challenge of ensuring that the awarded qualification is recognised by institutions and employers in other countries cannot be ignored.

Businesses are critical not only about the skills and knowledge of graduates but about how universities and colleges operate. They feel that faculty have an outmoded view of teaching that has failed to keep up with advancing understanding of effective teaching. What business leaders say is needed most is assessment of learning as a first step. This led to the development of a more uniform and systematic approach towards quality assurance in both private and public institutions of higher learning (Nordin, Alias and Siraj, 2013).

Hill et al., (2013) state, while the reality is that the role of the foreign institution is to validate the degree rather than to provide the hands-on-teaching role, there has been no real separation in the colloquial understanding of what this means in terms of quality. In addition, Huang noted in 2007, that no Asian country had currently established centres of excellence in its own academic system that were universally recognised or maintained a quality of higher learning that could have exerted academic influence at an international or global level. Even today, in 2018, there is little evidence to suggest an importing institution in Asia as having achieved this level of quality.

It should be emphasised that enhancements of competitiveness and academic quality in the context of a globalising economy are two common factors affecting countries and areas seeking the provision or importation of TNE activities. Huang (2007) states, the major concerns regarding TNE.....such as those concerning how TNE can be assured and how national identity and character can be maintained, are shared by many countries.

The need for robust quality assurance systems is great. Students deserve high-quality educational experiences, and importer countries want to ensure that graduates from these programmes fulfil the ‘nation-building’ requirements that initially led them to welcome international education providers into their country. Due to the geographical distance of transnational higher education programmes from the home campus, there are tensions between academic and commercial priorities, and opportunities for slippery academic standards (McBurnie, 2008).

Results from the first phase of a survey conducted by Healey and Michael (2014), show that quality assurance bodies on TNE has had an impact, as has increasing attention to international ranking systems. There are increasing pressures on exporting institutions to maintain high quality in overseas programmes, in order not to damage the University's global brand, but the costs of doing so are high. Healey and Michael (2014) add that quality assurance processes additionally require constant review of curricula and student support systems, while there is a steady drive towards cost effectiveness as the partnership becomes embedded. Quality assurance costs may encourage institutions to extract greater value form selected existing partnerships and reduce the overall number.

At the beginning of transnational education (Alam et.al, 2013), many programmes were delivered not at the source level of their country. However, thanks to stiff competition among foreign universities and steps taken by the host countries, the quality of most programmes has significantly been improved. Various professional bodies of source and host countries regularly undertake audits and provide accreditations ensuring the minimal level of standard required for a particular programme. This has helped to overcome some of the challenges initially faced by TNE.

Nordin, Alias and Siraj (2013), note most countries recognise the importance of quality assurance for both their HEIs and their respective programmes. Consequently, many of these countries have enacted policies on HEI quality assurance and drawn clear frameworks for guidelines to be prepared and enforced. In Great Britain, the QAA's academic infrastructure consists of a series documents covering the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), Subject Benchmarks, the Code of Practice, the use of Programme Specifications and Progress Files. Although there may not be a requirement for HEIs to conform, the infrastructure provides useful guidelines on what needs to be done to ensure that standards and the quality of the student learning experience are maintained and enhanced. HEIs are responsible for setting their own curricula but these benchmark statements are used at subject level to inform course design, delivery and review. Essentially, the framework employed covers two parts, quality assurance of the respective HEIs and quality assurance of their programmes.

To support this increase in attention, Knight (2012) noted that it is encouraging to see the number of agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, who have expanded their mandate and improved their expertise in the assessment of qualifications. But there are still many countries in the world that do not have this capacity, which puts some students at risk. The regional UNESCO Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications are instruments which encourage countries to ensure that foreign and domestic education credentials are bona fide and recognised.

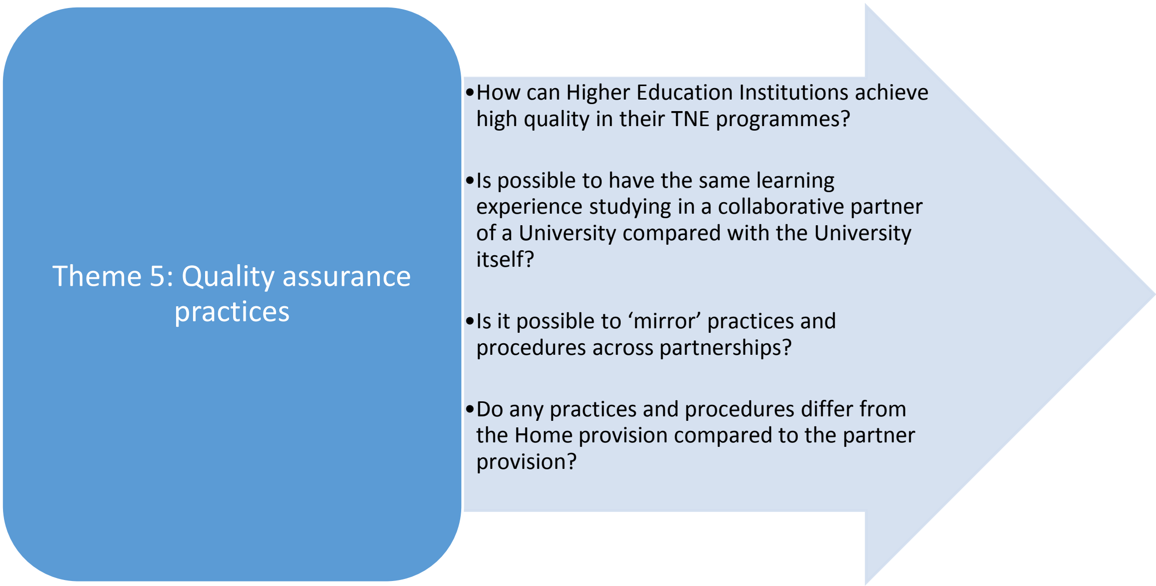
For instance, the growth of foreign degree mills (selling 'parchment-only' degrees), accreditation mills (selling bogus accreditations for programmes or institutions) and rogue for-profit providers (not recognised by national authorities) is a reality that students, parents, employer, and the academic community now need to contend with (Garrett, 2005).

Franchising of degrees has been something of a shadowy business over the last two decades (Healey, 2013). QAA did not begin to examine the quality of franchise provision until 1997, but only has the capacity to audit a subset of universities, investigating provision in one country each year (China in 2012, Singapore in 2011). HESA only began collecting data in 2007-08 and this is still not available publicly at institutional level.

Ensuring that the quality of cross-border education meets both local and international standards has become a challenge in many nations, particularly in most Asian nations which only developed their quality assurance in the early twenty-first century. This points to the need to build capacity - particularly in the internationalisation dimension – for national quality assurance agencies which can evaluate cross-border education by foreign educational providers, or jointly by both local and foreign institutions (Hou, 2014). As cross-border education continues to grow rapidly, there will be more and more international quality review activities throughout the world. Assurance that institutions can receive equal treatment and good quality services from both local and international accreditors is now becoming a common global issue.

Many of the earlier issues on quality assurance implementation relate to the lack of trust among key players in the system (Nordin, Alias and Siraj, 2013). It is often mentioned in literature that in order for academics to accept and implement changes, they must trust and own the process of problem definition and solution design. This is certainly the case in any quality assurance exercise. Only if the academics accept quality assurance as their own activity, will the system be successful (Newton, 2002).

At this point, a fifth theme for consideration has been identified with supporting sub-questions for general quality assurance practices for managing TNE:



The next section moves onto objective 3 for TNE and cultural considerations.

2.5. Objective 3 - Culture and TNE

The third area in the review introduces cultural considerations for transnational education, as the partnerships under consideration in this study are based in Singapore and Sri Lanka. Transnational education, primarily at the tertiary level, has been growing rapidly, bringing with it high hopes and expectations of benefits to institutions in the countries of origin and destination (Hill et al., 2013). The largest source countries of international branch campuses globally (where the parent institutions are based) are the USA, Australia and the UK (Becker, 2009). It has been estimated that by 2025 transnational education will account for 44% of the total demand for international education (Bohm et al., 2002). However, they warn that these potential benefits come with a set of challenges which must be overcome. These challenges include the need to reconcile the often-conflicting objectives of the stakeholders involved, bridge learning traditions/styles and cultural divides, and harmonise cross-national standards.

The consideration for culture within this research arose from the differences in quality perceptions for TNE as noted in practice, by region. These practice-led findings warranted an evaluation of existing literature to seek views and contestations to support further analysis and investigation.

Researchers have introduced a number of definitions for culture. According to Heffernan et al., (2010), as far back as 1952, Kroeber and Kluckholn (1952) identified 164 definitions of culture in the literature. Inherent is almost all definitions is that culture is a pattern of thinking, feeling and acting that is rooted in common values and conventions of particular societies (Cushman & King, 1985; Jusdanis, 1995; Schudson, 1994; Wallace, 1970).

Defined as ‘the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another’ (Hofstede, 1997) culture differentiates one nation from another. Managing cultural differences is thus central to the success of any international business (Shi and Chen, 2009). Language as a fundamental component of culture (Terpstra and Sarathy, 2000; Henderson, 2005) and the importance of overcoming language barriers in managing international business are well understood (Harming and Feely, 2008 in Zhuang and Tang, 2012).

When considering quality in transnational education, an important starting point is to examine differences between the student cohorts that might exist due to cultural differences (Heffernan et al., 2010). Li-Hua (2007) warned that cultural differences or false assumptions could lead to failures in TNE operations. Having reviewed the ten-year Chinese TNE history of UK HEIs, Zhuang (2009) pointed out that cultural differences in educational tradition, communication style and organisational practices were among the factors affecting Sino-UK TNE partnerships. Moreover, the inability of many independent expatriates to adopt to local cultures was one of the major factors in their frequent change of jobs (Zhuang, 2010).This presents one such example of the East-West cultural divide and the challenges facing TNE.

An important characteristic and indicator is the learning style of the student cohort. Learning styles are often defined as ‘characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment’ (Ladd and Ruby, 1999). The rationale for identifying learning styles is that a ‘one size fits all’ teaching style is inherently exclusionary and inhibits efficient and effective learning (Wynd and Bozman, 1996). Recognition of students’ learning styles is regarded by many educators as a vital part of an effective teaching strategy (Heffernan et al., 2010). “Moreover, understanding students’ learning styles has been a concern to many educators because of research findings that have demonstrated that when teaching styles are compatible with student learning styles, students retain information longer, apply it more effectively, have a more positive attitude to their subjects and are greater achievers."(Boles, Pillay and Raj, 1999, p372).

However, Heffernan et al., (2010) warn that it should also be noted that not all researchers ascribe to this perspective because there is a lack of evidence to support the view that matching teaching and learning styles is educationally significant (Robotham, 1999)……students can be trained to develop a versatile learning style (Smith, 2001).This polarisation of views in itself is sufficient to warrant further research and development in the field of delivering transnational education and to compare these opinions in practice.

UK HEI's managers need to appreciate the cultures and business practices in the regions where they would like to operate. In countries such as China, Korea and Singapore, the Confucian model moulds higher education systems. Although foreign HEIs might benefit from high levels of family commitment to invest in higher education, they need to be aware that governments retain tight control over policy, planning and funding (Marginson, 2011). In many countries worldwide, finding a local partner or intermediaries with good connections and a strong knowledge of local business practice is often the first step for foreign HEIs intending to establish operations (Wilkins and Huisman, 2012). The University of Reading explained that its decision to open a campus in Malaysia was driven by the University's existing links in the country, particularly its association with a local institution (Cunnane, 2011).

A further example of East-West cultural divides in TNE relations has been identified. The disassociation of the Sino-UK TNE from the Chinese cultural context offers no consolation to the students in China who have to try and grapple with the differences between Western (UK) academic culture and the one they have been used to in China (Fazackerley and Worthington, 2007). The Chinese educational system is widely recognised as cramming in knowledge with great emphasis on knowledge accumulation rather than its application (Zhuang, 2009). As such, students are nurtured in a general culture of rote learning (Leon, 2000). Moreover, the Chinese examination system has trained students to accurately reproduce the transmitted textual knowledge on demand from the tests (Paine, 1992; Rao, 1996).

Many observers are sympathetic to the situation. They argue that it would be unrealistic for market-driven TNE providers to invest the time and resources to ensure the courses respect cultural traditions and include relevant local content (Knight, 2006).

However, these cultural differences within regions and partnerships cannot be ignored or relinquished, whilst trying to compromise on equality and quality primarily for the pursuit of monetary benefit. Djerasimovic (2014) supports that there are further concerns with intercultural contact that is at the heart of a TNE arrangement and with the Western teachers' preparedness to engage with a potentially dramatically different cultural and educational settings are justified if the motivation for entering into a TNE agreement is seen as primarily economic on both sides. This unpreparedness for the new cultural and educational situation could be attributed to the exporter institutions' concern with establishing partnerships primarily as the means of generating revenue or gaining an international profile, neglecting in the process the sustainability quality and equality of the partnership.

Culture is steeped in the history of nations. These differences need to be noted and accepted as the norms and values particular to that society. It is what makes them who they are. Hutchings and Weir (2006) argue, (cited in Wilkins and Huisman, 2012) that business systems of China and the Arab World are an amalgamation of institutions and culture. In China, business practice has been shaped by over five decades of communism and in the Arab world business practices are often moulded by the influences of Islam and the rulers of individual states. Hutchings and Weir (2006) observe that it is often difficult to recognise the boundaries of institutional and cultural differences as they overlap and reinforce each other.

Tensions between these culturally-rooted perceptions/practices and recent educational approaches that promote student-centeredness, flexible reading and strategies, constant exposure to large quantities of novel materials and critical transformation of knowledge, are commonly felt, for example, by Chinese students on TNE programmes (Hu, 2003). Fazackerly and Worthington (2007) add that ultimately, the Chinese learning style induces conflicts with the Western HE values of personal stance versus plagiarism and of autonomy and individual growth versus individual competitiveness.

Local teaching methods, traditions and language barriers have been commented on by many authors when considering western education. Southworth (1999), (cited in Zhuang and Tang, 2012), note that the traditional Chinese teaching methods and traditions were inappropriate in Western style management education which has been dominated with the use of the English language. Moreover, language barriers are not as easy to overcome as they may seem, given that language expressions are fundamentally affected by cultural values (Courtney and Anderson, 2009).

The literature suggests that despite proliferation of TNE in certain regions, little systematic research has been found focussing on culture and language barriers facing students, academic staff and the management of TNE programmes delivered in English to overseas locations where English is not necessarily a first language.

Rizvi and Walsh (1998) & Gough (1999) (cited in Clifford, 2014), suggest opening up opportunities for debate on the possibilities of global values and interpretations that go beyond the culture and the concepts of current language may be a first step in developing ‘global imaginaries’ that are needed to create new curricula and pedagogy. Singh and Schresta (2008) particularly saw as problematic the hegemony of Western universities, that privilege certain forms of knowledge and learning, in relation to the universities of the developing world, especially when the latter are involved in transnational educational arrangements with Western universities (Reid and Hellsten, 2008).

Nevertheless, whether authors express a more functionalist concern with standards and quality assurance (McBurnie, 2008; Chan, 2011) or a concern with the quality of the intercultural meeting (Osman, 2010; Chapman and Pyvis, 2013), most studies in the field tend to explore the experiences of students and teachers with a view to improving cross-cultural communication, and to ensuring that the 'exporter' University does not simply impose its values and practices, but adapts them to the host context (Dunn and Wallace, 2006; Chapman, 2008; Leask, 2008; Clifford, Henderson and Montgomery 2013; Slethaug and Manjula, 2013).

Worldwide demand for higher education is growing at an exponential rate, driven by economic progress of developing nations, demographic trends and increased globalisation of economies and societies (UNESCO, 2009). The global demand, according to Alam et.al (2013), for education training and research propels the unprecedented worldwide mobility of peoples for a variety of reasons including migration, political and economic security, trade and business, employment, tourism, study and research. This mass movement of people is transforming social institutions, cultural practices and sense of identity and belongingness (Purves, 2007). These changes have resulted in multiple new cross-national, cross-cultural flows and networks defining the global world of the 21st century (Urry, 2000).

The literature also suggests that benefits of transnational education are that it helps develop local skills, reduce capital outflow, brain drain, and pressure on local education systems. It offers a choice for students, opportunity for competition development among foreign and local institutions hence quality improvement. As students can get their education without leaving their home country or region, it can reduce the brain drain from developing countries. Thanks to financial might and competition from transnational education, universities of many host nations have emerged as strong international competitors in the race for talent hunts, research and innovation (Alam et. al, 2013). Transnational education provides an opportunity for working professionals to upgrade their qualifications while working fulltime as they have limited scope through local education systems. It allows obtaining qualifications without leaving the home country and employment.

To concur, TNE may reduce brain drain, since students who travel to live in foreign countries for study are more likely to develop the language skills, cultural competencies and social capital to remain and work overseas after graduation (Knight, 2012b; Tsiligiris, 2010, in Healey and Michael, 2014). This effect may however be partially offset by the increased international mobility of TNE graduates who would otherwise have been unable to gain an overseas degree (Lien, 2008).

Further agreement can be found in Knight (2012) where the idea of twinning programs soon became commercialized into a ‘franchise’ model where a home institution would partner with a foreign provider and host the partner’s programme and credential. Once again, the student does not move, and the program is delivered to them in their own country. Franchised programs are seen as a way to provide programmes that are not usually offered in the country, to make foreign education more affordable and accessible, and to diminish the chance of brain drain by having the student take a foreign degree at home. It is also touted as a way to increase local access, but to date there is no convincing enrolment data to substantiate this claim.

In contrast to the benefits outlined above, Mok (2008) identified some challenges. TNE can have a negative impact too; embracing internationalisation among higher education systems in Asia has clearly suggested that Asian countries are very keen to become more international. Some researchers have expressed concerns about over westernisation of Asian unique cultures, languages, traditions and heritage. In order to avoid over westernisation, Asian universities need to rediscover Asian scholarship, unique values, traditions and cultures through academic exchange and international research collaboration within Asia.

Others contend that these same forces are eroding national cultural identities and leading to cultural homogenisation, most often in the form of westernisation. Knight (2012) suggests that debates on the impact of new forms of international academic mobility or cultural diversity often provoke strong positions and sentiments. Some take a positive view of the ways that modern information and communication technologies and the movement of people, ideas, and culture across national boundaries promote the fusion and hybridisation of culture. Alam et.al (2013), provide a stark warning; there is a danger that if host countries do not formulate a long term higher education policy in accordance with their sustainable economic and development programmes, an e-elite class will emerge in many emerging and developing countries changing the social fabric.

Internationalisation of higher education was originally conceived in terms of exchange and sharing of ideas, cultures, knowledge, and values (Knight 2012). Formalised academic relations between countries were normally expressed in bilateral cultural and scientific agreements. Today, the agreements often must take trade, economic, and political factors into account, representing a significant shift from the original idea of academic exchange.

Appreciating the shift from the original idea, it is still however appropriate to attempt to understand the differences in culture and learning of new student cohorts. This will allow for the development of more appropriate educational products, which are tailored to the needs of the students (Heffernan et al., 2010). Furthermore, by understanding these differences, academics and administrators at both institutions will forge stronger and more knowledgeable relationships and thus reduce the chance of the partnership deteriorating (Heffernan and Poole, 2004).

To conclude this section, the level of anticipated threat of cultural shifts should be addressed. It is unclear whether cultures are being diluted thereby changing social fabrics or if westernisation is hindering the development of Asian scholarship. Knight (2012) states there are two factors at play here: one is the potential for cultural homogenisation, which may be perceived as threatening, and the second is the weakening of the cultural exchange component of internationalization in favour of relationships based more on economic and political concerns. This investigation seeks to explore these notions by Knight further using primary research.

A sixth theme for consideration has been identified with a supporting sub-question for cultural considerations within TNE management.

Theme 6: Culture

- Does culture play a role in managing TNE partnerships?

The next section moves onto objective 4 for TNE and postcolonial considerations.

2.6. Objective 4 – Postcolonialism and TNE

The final part of the review considers postcolonial reflections. During discussions at the 9R research proposal phase, it transpired that TNE typically moves from the west to the east, unintentionally and unconsciously perhaps, into countries which were former British colonies. This is certainly true for the University where this research is being conducted. The panel suggested that this important notion should be included as a part of the research. It was suggested this was a natural phase to complement existing notions being investigated.

The regions involved in this study were both former British colonies so it is important to investigate this concept and any resemblance it may have on managing existing partnerships within the University. Rizvi, (2007) states the contemporary processes of globalization are often described in ahistorical terms, whereas much of recent literature on postcolonialism is reduced largely to apolitical analyses of literary texts, disconnected from issues of current and shifting configurations of power. There is the need to understand global processes in education historically and suggests that intellectual postcolonial resources of postcolonialism can be most helpful, but only if postcolonialism is viewed as a political intervention.

There is little agreement on the ways in which globalisation relates to educational policy and practices. However, educational scholars have agreed that education is deeply implicated in the process of contemporary globalisation. Rizvi (2007) advises of a better approach where educational scholars have taken up the task of understanding its [postcolonialism] various forms and effects on education. This is a fundamentally misguided way of theorising the relationship between globalisation and education. A better way needs to focus on the politics of naming globalisation and on understanding its salience in its specific historical and political contexts. In addition, he adds there is a sense of false universalism of globalisation from imposition of imperial structures of power.

Formal schooling, for example, was among the most significant of the cultural exports of colonial powers, leading to sustained (if unequal) cultural links between colonial and postcolonial nations and the widespread institutionalisation of educational systems as part of common apparatus of the nation state. The period after World War II saw the proliferation of international organisations and agreements that helped to define shared norms about educational rights and educational development. The activities of a host of international actors fed the institutionalisation of rather similar looking systems of public education.

Many Asian countries and areas were colonised by Western countries: countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines (Huang, 2007). The colonial impact expresses itself in important issues such as the language of instruction, the lack of attention to science, and the importance of expatriates among academic staff (Altbach & Selvaratnam, 1989).

The history of capitalism ran parallel to the history of knowledge, which informs the current geopolitics of knowledge as Mignolo (2003) states, Asia, Africa, and Latin America became the providers of 'natural' resources to be possessed in the countries in which the Industrial Revolution took place and prospered. These continents provided information and culture, but not knowledge.

Huang, (2007) suggests it is appropriate to classify TNE in Asian countries as one of three types: (1) Import Type, (2) Import and Export Type or (3) Transitional Type. To be more precise, it is Western models and institutions that provide the foreign imports, a pattern that has continued from the colonial era into the contemporary period. A growing number of countries are still influenced by the English-language products that they use, though there are considerable variations. In most Asian countries, internationalisation of higher education, including TNE, still maintains a basic character of a process of catching up with advanced countries and approaching the levels and provisions of the current centres of learning, mostly identified with the English-speaking countries in Europe and the United States. This phenomenon seems to have a significant link to the extent of national economic growth, the political system, and the stage of higher education development.

Initially designed for the elite, Anderson (1991), (cited in Mundy and Manion, 2014), notes by the early twentieth century schooling in the west (at least at the primary level) was increasingly being offered to all citizens, typically in systems run and funded by nation-states....by the middle of the twentieth century the international community promised to uphold a 'universal' right to education, first through the creation of UNESCO in 1944, and secondly through Article

26, of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all based on merit.” *(UN General Assembly, n.d.).* The first and largest international regime to emerge from this post – WWII commitment to education focussed on educational development in postcolonial societies (Mundy, 2006, 2010).

Could it be possible that there is a new form of colonialism emerging as western HEIs return with an offering of ‘knowledge and education’? Clifford (2014), questions if interwoven into previous discussion was a concern that the discourses on internationalising the curriculum and global citizenship (typical examples...) were being generated by western pedagogues and that they were just inventing a new form of colonialism where, ‘humanistic discourses...sit un-problematically beside historically embedded colonialist assumptions about difference’ (Pashby, 2011).

Supported earlier by Walter Mignolo’s (2005, 2011), (cited in in Shahjahan and Morgan, 2016) geopolitics of knowledge – a subset of coloniality – highlights how all knowledge systems (here, HE) originate in geographic and social contexts, and are situated within power relations that are historically and transnationally constituted. Mignolo notes that ‘local histories are everywhere but … only some local histories are in a position of imagining and implementing global designs’. In this sense, HE reproduces coloniality (Grosfoguel 2013; Mignolo 2003). Grosfoguel (2013) emphasises that after 500 years of coloniality of knowledge there is no cultural nor epistemic tradition in an absolute sense outside to Eurocentered modernity. All were affected by Eurocentered modernity and even aspects of Eurocentrism were also internalised in many of these epistemologies.

Eurocentricity has been debated by Andreotti (2011a), (cited in Clifford, 2014) who argued that the global citizenship debate is heavily Eurocentric, even the ideas of planetary citizenship having Europe at its centre. Andreotti cites Spivak (1999) who 'calls us ...to be attentive to our privilege and complicities in the political economies of knowledge production'. She argued that colonialism is a part of a Eurocentric expansion of modes of knowing, that claim universality, so positioning other knowledge as inferior. Similarly, Kumar (2004) stated that knowledge is defined by the social reality of a particular period and locale and the ease with which the disassociation between curriculum and a student's immediate socio-cultural and physical milieu is accepted. This form of epistemic racism makes a political philosophy of inclusion difficult.

Whilst considering developing countries, Rizvi (2007) notes that the hegemonic nature of the idea of the global context becomes even more evident. Samoff (1999) has shown how through the global diffusion of western ideas, thinking about education has become almost universal, dominated by a set of imperial assumptions concerning economic progress, with notions of human capital development becoming part of a broader discourse of capitalist triumphalism. In policy discourses – borrowed by or imposed on developing countries – the broader process of economic, cultural, and political globalisation are interpreted in similar ways, tending to steer national education policies in the same neoliberal direction. Samoff (1999) maintains (cited in Rizvi, 2007) that with few exceptions, the direction of influence is from European core to southern periphery. Institutional arrangements, disciplinary definitions and hierarchies, legitimising publications, and institutional authority reside mostly with the core, with the periphery left simply to mimic the core's dominant discourses and practices.

Expanding on this, global competition in HE reflects a desire to adopt tools and templates from enterprising, globally competitive HEIs that act as benchmarks, reproducing competitive geopolitics of knowledge (Mignolo, 2003). These tools include institutional, curricular, and pedagogical templates. For instance, many countries including Thailand, China, Qatar, and

India are mimicking US versions of community colleges (Raby and Valeau, 2012). China is increasingly adopting American curricula templates to reorient its liberal arts learning agendas toward the knowledge economy (Fischer, 2012), and active learning pedagogical templates have migrated to the Middle East (Jordan et al. 2014).

In HE, the enterprising, globally competitive institutional model has taken root across the globe, and its reach is extended through the export of English language, curriculum, global rankings and so on (Grosfoguel 2013; Marginson and Wende 2009; Mignolo 2003, 2005). As Mignolo (2003) notes (cited in Shahjahan and Morgan, 2016), a new facet of coloniality manifests itself in the turn that higher education is taking in both developed and emerging countries. Historically, Italy and the Iberian Peninsula provided the model of the Renaissance University, while Germany and France provided the model of the Enlightenment University, in the tradition of Immanuel Kant and Alexander von Hunboldt. Today, it is the United States that is mainly leading the way in the transformation of the latter model into that of the corporate University.

As transnational higher education often flows from more developed to less developed nations (Naidoo, 2009), the establishment of international branch campuses can be regarded as a new form of colonialism (Welch, 2011) (cited in Wilkins and Huisman, 2012). Even though universities generally aim to maximise both revenues and prestige (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997), criticisms of transnational education might lead some institutions to emphasise their contributions to social and economic development and play down their economic motives and those relating to achieving global recognition and influence. Institutions can even change their declared objectives (Wilkins and Huisman, 2012).

These arguments have often centred on education and its traditional role as a vehicle of acculturation, at times focusing on the specifics of curriculum content, language of instruction (particularly the increase in English) and the teaching-learning process in international education (Sehoole, 2008). Research has long focused on the impact of historic forms of colonisation on education, but the place of internationalisation in contemporary processes of cultural change has not been sufficiently studied (Knight, 2012).

One of the major insights of postcolonial theory, has been its understanding of the dialectic relationship between the colonisers and the colonised Rizvi (2007). Scholars such as Said (1979) and Bhabha (1994) have shown persuasively how colonisers not only shape the culture and identity of the colonised but are in turn shaped by their encounter in a range of interesting and complex ways. Nor can the colonised people be regarded simply as innocent bystanders in theory encounters with the hegemonic process of colonisation.

HE actors (e.g. policy-makers, HEIs, academics and students) should be wary of wholesale borrowing from foreign templates and knowledge systems in response to the seductive competition fetish. Uncritical adoption of such tools reproduces coloniality and the geopolitics of knowledge, and endangers a kind of epistemic suicide (Grosfoguel, 2013). In addition, one of the major achievements of postcolonialism has been its insistence on the cultural dimensions of imperialism and colonialism. It is argued that, far from being secondary to the economics of colonialism, culture must be seen essential to the production and maintenance of colonial relations. If this is so, then, new analytical strategies are needed to help us understand the economics and cultural politics of colonial legacies without reducing one to the other. Without such strategies, it may not be possible to fully describe various continuities and discontinuities between colonialism and globalisation (Rizvi, 2007).

Although these issues can be seen as contributing to the view of TNE as a form of cultural imperialism (Pyvis, 2011), or, more cynically, as a profit-making business thriving in new markets (Feast and Bretag, 2005), TNE arrangements have also been noted for bringing about intercultural learning, and enabling personal growth on both sides (Knight 2011; Löscher, 2011). This characteristic of TNE has led authors in the field to examine teachers' and students' experiences and offer some solutions to the problem of maintaining the standards of exporter institutions, ensuring that both the programme and teaching are sufficiently adapted to the new cultural contexts (Davidson and Scudamore, 2008; Jelfs, 2008; Wang, 2008).

The seventh and final theme for consideration has been identified with a supporting sub-question based on the notion of postcolonialism.

Theme 7: Postcolonialism

- As TNE typically moves from more developed to less developed nations, could this be regarded as a new form of colonialism?

This chapter has reviewed current literature and presented debates and issues relating to the sudden rise in quality and transnational education. Relevant themes have been drawn out for further discussion and investigation using primary research. The following chapter outlines the research methodology undertaken for this research. A theoretical framework will be proposed alongside justifications for selecting the research tools as demanded by the research question.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The research question posed in this thesis has demanded that a qualitative approach be considered for investigation purposes, as it is based on opinions and practice in the field. This chapter outlines the research philosophy, approaches and theoretical perspectives underpinning the qualitative methodology of this thesis. Methods selected for collection of primary data, based on themes drawn above from the literature, have also been noted.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Before embarking on any social research, Crotty (1998) suggested an initial framework for guidance. Its aim is to provide researchers with a sense of stability and direction as they move towards understanding and expounding the research process after their own fashion in forms that suit their research purposes. The table below has been adapted from Crotty. The elements highlighted in bold and yellow underpin the theoretical framework for this study.

Epistemology	Theoretical Perspective	Methodology	Methods
Objectivism Constructionism **Subjectivism**	Positivism and Post-positivism **Interpretivism** • Symbolic Interactionism • **Phenomenology** • Hermeneutics Critical Inquiry Feminism Postmodernism etc.	Experimental research Survey research Ethnography **Phenomenological research** Grounded Theory Heuristic Enquiry Action Research Discourse Analysis Feminist standpoint research Etc.	Sampling measurement & scaling Questionnaire Observation • Participant • Non-participant **Interview** Focus Group Case study Life History Narrative Visual ethnographic methods Statistical Analysis Data reduction **Theme identification** Comparative analysis Document analysis **Content analysis** Etc.

Table1.5. Research Framework: Adapted from Crotty,1993.

Justification for each heading follows. Please note, Crotty (1993), has not included ontology in the framework but it will be included here for completeness.

3.1.1. Ontology

The ontological position for this research falls under relativism – where interpretations of reality are co-existing and being 'sought' to understand related opinion. Reality is being measured subjectively, as there are real world situations that can be tested to establish facts; which adopts qualitative measures to establish opinions and behaviour about quality in TNE. Ontological assumptions therefore need to be reconcilable with epistemological assumptions because any theory of knowledge asserts a symbolic truth and undertakes a struggle for legitimacy (Grenfell, 2008).

3.1.2 Epistemology

This research is influenced by subjectivism, where meaning will be imported from the literature as structures and themes, then primary research will used to systematically reach an interpretation of those themes from the object – i.e. participants. Meaning will be imposed on the object under investigation by the subject. The knowledge gained will be purely subjective, based on my interpretations as the researcher. This will then lead to the theoretical perspective of interpretivism which will be the philosophical stance used to help understand and explain findings.

3.1.3 Theoretical Perspective

Several assumptions are made when deciding and choosing a methodology. These assumptions need to be stated and appreciated and this is done by elaborating on the theoretical perspective.

Theoretical perspectives include Positivism, Constructionism and Interpretivism. This research falls under the interpretivism paradigm as it attempts to understand and explain human and social reality. As Schwandt (1994) suggested, interpretivism was conceived in reaction to the effort to develop a natural science of the social. Its foil was largely empiricist methodology and the bid to apply the framework to human inquiry.

A positivist approach would follow the methods of the natural sciences and, by way an allegedly value-free, detached observation, seek to identify universal features of human-hood, society and history that offer explanation and hence control and predictability. The interpretivist approach, to the contrary, looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world (Crotty, 1998). These culturally situated interpretations are being investigated in this research as I am seeking views, opinions and understanding of themes from colleagues in practice, their interpretation and expectations of what quality means to them for TNE.

This use of interpretivism to understand and investigate opinions, has been discussed and supported in theory. Interpretivism is often linked to the thought of Max Weber (1864-1920), who suggests that in the human sciences we are concerned with *Verstehen* (understanding). This has been taken to mean that Weber is contrasting the interpretive approach (*Verstehen,* understanding) needed in the human and social sciences with the explicative approach (*Erklären,* explaining), focussed on causality, that is found in the natural sciences. Both these approaches underpin this research as the enquiry considers the understanding of opinions and the explanation of those opinions. Using the interpretivist approach, the research looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world (see 3.11 for conduct of interviews and natural settings).

Interpretivists believe that knowledge is gained through a strategy that “respects the differences between people and the objects of natural science and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman, in Grix, 2004). Interpretivists do not generally begin with a theory, rather they “generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings” (Creswell, 2007) throughout the research process. They treat people as research participants and not as objects. This research has captured themes from the literature and looked at the phenomena from participant views in three regions and three hierarchies. Triangulation has taken place by region and hierarchy (see 3.5.3).

It has been permissible for this research to be conducted in ‘natural settings’. This means that primary research has taken place within institutions, in-country. Interpretive researchers implement a methodology that allows the researcher to conduct a study in its natural setting. Thus, they can utilize a case study, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology and life history (Tuli, 2010). This approach has allowed me to obtain personal contact with the participants in the study in order to attain an insider’s view. Having such a view can lead to deeper understanding into the phenomenon under study (Riyami, 2015).

The method selected under interpretivism to collect qualitative data, has been semi-structured interviews. According to Wellington & Szczerbinski (2007), the most popular method of interactive approach is the interview because interviewing allows a researcher to investigate and prompt things that we cannot observe. We can probe an interviewee’s thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives.

All research requires an element of quality to the inquiry. Considering quality standards which must not be confused with QAA as mentioned in the literature review, the standards here are referring to those that govern good research. Since the interpretivist paradigm seeks the understanding of meaning construction in social contexts which involve the subjectivity of the researchers, the quality standards in this research paradigm are authenticity and trustworthiness. It consists of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Credibility, which is the equivalent of internal validity, can be assured by utilizing member checking (Merriam, 1989, cited in Cohen, Manion & Marison, 2011). Regarding transferability, Guba and Lincoln (1994) define it as a term that refers to the generalisation of research findings, which can be applicable in different contexts. Transferability can be achieved by providing rich data and detailed descriptions. Dependability concerns the stability of data over time whereas, conformability refers to the process of assuring data, interpretation and outcomes are rooted in the contexts and persons concerned.

In view of limitations, although the interpretive paradigm has its strength in exploring a given phenomenon and providing valuable information, it has some limitations. One of these limitations is that it has gone too far in leaving out the scientific procedures of verification. Thus, findings cannot be generalised to other people or other contexts (Cohen, Manion & Marison, 2011). Many positivists question the ultimate usefulness of interpretive research.

Riyami (2015), responds to this criticism that an interpretive research of a high quality can be transferred to other contexts and teachers can benefit from it. For example, much case study research about individual students or teachers has revealed valuable information about classroom life that has inspired teachers and positively affected their practices. This research will provide a framework which can be adopted by institutions for implementation and used within their own settings. The framework has been generalised for applicability.

Another criticism of interpretivism is that its ontological assumption is subjective rather than objective (Mack, 2010). The results are more easily affected by the researcher's personal biases. However, I believe that if you acknowledge these methodological biases, then the ontological assumption is justified. Positivists deceive themselves by thinking that their research is totally objective and value-free. This is because throughout the research process, researchers make plenty of decisions that are value laden, such as selection of variables, actions to be observed, and interpretation of findings (Salomon, 1991).

At best, outcomes in this research will be suggestive rather than conclusive. They will be plausible, perhaps even convincing ways of seeing things, helpful ways of seeing things – but certainly not any ‘one true way’ of seeing things. The process of human enquiry needs to be defended as a process that should be taken seriously. Findings from the research will suggest a framework for managing the TNE process.

3.1.4 Methodological approaches

As indicated above in Table 1.5, the theoretical perspective adopted for this research is Phenomenology. The phenomenological movement emerged around the twentieth century. Of this movement Franz Brantano was the precursor, Edmund Husserl the founder, and Martin Heidegger an eminent exponent.

This research is being pursued to find what and how participants understand and construct the meaning of quality and TNE. It is understood that phenomenology is the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories of their causal explanations or their objective reality; in essence it seeks to understand how people [the participants] construct meaning.

Phenomenological sampling is generally small, probably no more than 10 participants. In this study, there are nine participants in total. Data collection methods normally used include interviews, diaries, observations etc. The advantages of phenomenology include an in-depth understanding of individual phenomena and the opportunity to gather rich data from participants. However, there are some disadvantages, such as subjectivity affecting reliability and validity, accounting for researcher bias and the risk that phenomenology may not produce generalisable data. These disadvantages have been addressed and are discussed later in this chapter. For this research, I feel that the advantages are worth pursuing as rich data and an in-depth understanding of phenomena can be achieved.

To take a fresh look at phenomena is, of course, to call into question the current meanings we attribute to phenomena. Phenomenology, it is often said, calls into question what is taken for granted. It is critique and grounds a critical methodology. This has been said many times over from the very beginning of the phenomenological movement for example, Husserl (1970) stated the science having the unique function of affecting the criticism of all others and, at the same time, of itself is none other than phenomenology. Heidegger (1962) reflected his lifetime's focus on ontology, the study of being. For him, philosophy is ontology. Heidegger adopted phenomenology as the way into ontology. There is, as he sees it, no other way. If, for Heidegger philosophy is ontology, ontology therefore must be phenomenology.

3.1.5. Methods

Subjective meanings are important in people's lives. These meanings need to be drawn from the participants in this study who are the key people in setting up and delivering TNE provision. This study focussed on investigating the views of participants in comparison to the phenomena identified from the literature; so, the analysis was based solely on qualitative data gathered using semi-structured interviews as the preferred tool.

A definition for qualitative research has been provided by Denzin and Lincoln (2003), who state qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible…. they turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs recordings, and memos to the self.

Qualitative researchers study things in their own settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Becker, 1986). Qualitative research will give an insight into various perspectives on a phenomenon, on behaviours and feelings, and it allows a deep exploration of different experiences (Holloway & Brown, 2012). Richards & Morse (2007) give an overview of the type of questions that require a qualitative approach – for instance, seeking knowledge in an area where little is known, where you wish to explore participants' understanding in depth, when you are generating a theory or theoretical ideas.

For this research, my own setting for the study was the university. The issues facing me included those which all insiders face (see 3.2 below), as being an outsider does not present you with the same ethical conundrums associated with the workplace. There are personal interactions with colleagues which need to be appreciated as once the research is complete, I must still work or relate to these individuals.

Managing these relationships can prove tricky as information cannot be unheard. For me, asking questions of the Dean could have had ramifications for my future involvement at the faculty. In addition, being the Dean (manager), it was always possible that he may not directly report anything. However, this was also true of the other participants – the programme lead and operations officer. I could not assume that these colleagues would be willing to share information openly about the institution we all work in and represent. As a part of the selection process where participants were hand-picked, I had to ensure that ethically, none of the participants felt pressured to answer any of the questions but equally, would be individuals who could provide rich data for analysis.

Another consideration for me was my deeper knowledge of the organisation I was going to be researching, which may have affected my research as it could have suffered from (possibly tacit) interview bias. Where personal expectation could have changed questions, responses and analysis. My biases have been considered in section 3.2 below where gate-keepers of information have been discussed.

There may have been moments where my interviewees were trying to save face – being colleagues and having to work together in the future. This is where the insider's knowledge helps to 'dig deeper' to ascertain facts as much as viably possible, without unduly pressuring the participant. But this brings into question how much insider knowledge can influence the research.

As a practitioner, I am actively involved in the organisation, but as a researcher I needed to dispassionately observe. It would have been very difficult for me if I had discovered something which was detrimental to the organisation. What if it had been told to me in confidence? I had to make my dual responsibilities clear to my participants/colleagues. I recognised the potential for conflict of interest but as this did not occur, I did not seek advice on this.

Anonymity was always going to be difficult because the research engaged with a small number of people from a pre-determined grouping. I acknowledged it would always be more difficult to maintain anonymity for both the participants and the organisation. However, neither the organisation nor the participants have been named in the study. At the time, it was difficult to predict how the interviews would go, but there were no contentious issues or difficult conversations with colleagues at the institution.

3.1.5.1 Essential Features of this Research

Holloway and Brown (2012) suggest that there are essential features of qualitative research which should be covered before beginning data collection. Their approach had been adapted for this research as outlined in the table below:

Aim	**To explore participants' experiences working in TNE across three regions.**
Approach	An approach using triangulation of sources has been used (see below 3.5.3) – participants based in three different locations and from three different hierarchical positions were interviewed. These multiple sources helped to provide verification and validity of the research whilst complementing similar data across regions.
Sampling	**<u>Sample Units:</u>** **1. Locations/Place** UK Singapore and Sri Lanka **2. Hierarchies** Strategic Level - Deans/CEOs Tactical Level - Heads of Programmes and Operations Level - Head of Operations **3. Time** Participants located in Singapore and Sri Lanka were interviewed during a scheduled Link Tutor visit. Participants at the University were interviewed on-site at the faculty after the visits abroad. **4. Concepts** Themes from literature *(*see below 3.10.) Theoretical sampling took place as categories and phenomena being considered had been drawn from the literature. The sampling was somewhat flexible and could have developed further during the research e.g. people and other sampling units could have been added but this was not required.

	Note: the sample was selected to be representative across three regions.
Data Collection	In-depth, non-standardised semi-structured interviews were selected as the method for research. It was envisaged this method would allow for conversations and discussions to flow, thereby not limiting the responses given by participants which could be the case if structured interviews were used. All interviews were recorded as permission had been given. Field notes and post-interview observations were made thereby providing an opportunity for further document analysis and demonstrate the use of rich data.
Analysis	Interviews were transcribed (see Appendix A) verbatim and coded for sub themes related to key informants' perceptions. Codes were identified by region and hierarchy. Comparative analysis (see Appendix B) has been conducted based on the responses received by region and hierarchical level of the participants within their organisation. Any thematic considerations have been noted and interpreted. Latent/textual content analysis has provided in-depth interpretations, drawing expressions from the field notes and post-interview observations.
Outcome relationships	A theory or story has emerged from the findings, relating primary and secondary data together. Research relationships from the data have been uncovered, providing an in-depth understanding of participants' points of view, thoughts, perspectives and understanding of the phenomena being researched, as patterns for discussion. Once these patterns were deciphered using key word analysis, thematic analysis took place.
Rigour	Rigour has been demonstrated through techniques such as thick description in the results and discussion section. Thick description is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a way of achieving a type of external validity, as mentioned earlier for authenticity and trustworthiness. By describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail one

	can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people. This will help to demonstrate – Trustworthiness, Authenticity, Transferability and Validity.

Table 1.6. *Essential Features (adapted from Holloway and Brown 2012)*

3.1.5.2 Considerations for the Research Context

All enquiries need contextualising, and this is achieved once the meaning emerges through the context and setting. All participants, including me, were steeped in our cultural and social context, and this context would have influenced our beliefs and behaviours. The findings too therefore are context-specific – hence the difficulty sometimes of generalising from a qualitative study.

To achieve contextualisation in its entirety, there needs to be a certain amount of sensitivity and intelligence. Holloway & Brown (2012) suggest researchers should be aware not only of the wider context but also the specific circumstances and conditions that influence or even determine the research, such as the background of the participants; the locations in which they live, work and play; and even the physical setting of the inquiry and the researchers' own assumptions.

Holloway & Brown (2012) suggest thinking and asking the following questions:

- What time does an event occur?
- What is the setting in which the research takes place?
- Would the research be different in a different time and place?

These particular questions were pertinent to this research as it primarily focused on different locations, time zones and hierarchies. Timing of the semi-structured views was determined by the participants, alongside the place/venue. During the planning stage, it was assumed that if the semi-structured interviews were to have taken place in say Hong Kong or Dubai (other

University partners), the research conducted would not have been any different, as the same circumstances and conditions would have existed.

It is accepted and appreciated that certain influences have determined the research and its outcomes. One such influence to note at this point is the relationship which currently exists between me, the researcher and the partner institutions participating in the research. I may have been viewed in an elite position as a representative of the awarding institution for the programmes (see later: Elite Interviews 3.7 and Positionality 3.13). The franchised partners could have been seen as the more junior member in the partnership. This creates a hierarchical structure between me and the participants. This can be unhealthy and may have influenced the responses received by the participants at the partner institutions. A reverse or variation from this may have been experienced at the home institution as some of the participants held senior positions to me.

3.2 Insider's perspective

Insider's perspective helps researchers to attempt to understand and describe people's subjective experience; there is much talk of *'putting oneself in the place of the other'*. This is sometimes styled, according to Crotty (1998), as the great phenomenological principle. Even so, the emphasis typically remains on common understandings and meanings of common practices, so that phenomenological research of this kind emerges as an exploration, via personal experiences, of prevailing cultural understandings.

The insider view is necessary for qualitative researchers to gain an understanding of the participants' culture and setting and the sense they make of it. Harris states (1976, p336) states: "the way to get inside people's heads is to talk with them, to ask questions about what they think and feel, and this is what the qualitative researcher does".

I have visited the partnerships on many occasions and have therefore been *in the field* or *participant's world* and I am not seen nor feel alien to their environments. All interviews have taken place in local environments familiar to the interviewees and chosen by them. According to Holloway and Brown (2012), to be able to give a holistic picture, researchers need to spend as much time as possible in the field, to immerse themselves in the participants' world, to have prolonged engagement with it, and to observe closely. It is the description of *being there*, as (Madden, 2010, p159), which will make the portray faithful to the participants' motivations and intentions as well as to the context (Holloway and Brown, 2012).

3.3 Subjectivity

Subjectivity is at the heart of this research. The values held by me, the themes drawn from the literature, the selection of participants and the questions asked are all subjective. This can be justified – I share values, norms and physical environments with the subject matter and objects – participants in this case – there is a common understanding which underpins the conditions of the research. This is the common thread of inquiry.

Researchers use their subjectivity as a resource. Drawing on their own values and background to understand the participants and the meaning these participants give to their experience, rather than relying on established instruments, which the quantitative researcher often does. The researcher's pre-existing knowledge becomes an integral part of the research (Holloway and Brown, 2012). Hence, qualitative writers emphasise 'inter-subjectivity', which refers to a state between subjectivity and objectivity. Whereby understanding between participant and researcher is increased owing to shared experiences and values. Scheff (2007) states that the world of an individual is always partially shared with others, hence subjectivity and inter-subjectivity sensitise researchers to the knowledge and conditions they share with participants.

My impact may be questioned as being too strong an influence on the research, but this again would be difficult to measure as how much influence is too much or not enough? This bias can be justified as my own values have been shaped within TNE practice at the University and my background in HE, which stand me in good stead for conducting this inquiry. This self-awareness of my own subjectivity only adds to the rigour of this inquiry.

3.4 Reflexivity

It is important to acknowledge and appreciate that personal reflexivity is at the core of the research being conducted as I am steeped deep in the TNE process at the University. Assumptions, boundaries and the way the research has been conducted have all been directly influenced by my personal reflexivity. Subjectivity can be directly related to reflexivity, which is one of the most important concepts in qualitative research. Willig (2008), (cited in Holloway and Brown, 2012) differentiates between *personal* reflexivity and *epistemological* reflexivity. Personal reflexivity means the researchers' own beliefs, values, and interests affect the inquiry. Epistemological reflexivity refers to the research itself and its knowledge base as well as the researchers' involvement with their own experience in the process of the study and the building of the dissertation. For this research, both personal and epistemological reflexivity exist as I have recognised my own influences and boundaries and have built them into the design and problems under investigation.

3.5 Research Approach

3.5.1 Background

The goal of this research was to describe a *phenomenon* as it manifested itself into consciousness; it needed to describe the essential structure of experience – the essence. Participant's experiences were evaluated and analysed using the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews.

There are four main approaches to qualitative methods namely: Ethnography, Phenomenology, Grounded Theory and Narrative Research.

The chosen approach for this research was Phenomenology. Phenomenological research aims to describe and interpret the meanings of people's experiences and their life-world, as described by Crotty (1998) earlier in this chapter; both at individual unique and at a general level. This research had considered the interpretative approach in phenomenology in order to prioritise understanding and interpret the lived experiences of participants. The approach insisted of focusing on everyday 'lived' experience, seeking to elicit from the participants a concrete detailed description of their experiences (Giorgi, 1997) in interviews which start with a request that they fully describe a relevant experience linked to a particular phenomenon.

3.5.2 Choosing participants and semi-structured interviews

The study was concerned with individual perspectives on how TNE arrangements work in practice. This fell under the category of the interpretive-constructivist paradigm with a phenomenological approach. This was because findings were to be based on academic views, opinions and perceptions within TNE. Qualitative methods were used to gain an understanding of people's experiences. Although the methods available to qualitative researchers are wide-ranging and constantly expanding, Ritchie et al, (2013) believed that the ability to design and conduct high-quality interview-based studies remained a core part of the qualitative research skill set. Seeking the views of and experiences of those affected by policy remains essential and interviewing remains a key tool for doing this (Ritchie et al., 2013). Additionally, these methods focused attention on the meanings that participants gave to their environment, and properly executed qualitative research is a skilled craft that brings unique understanding of people's lives, yet built within an appropriate orientation (Ritchie et al., 2013). The primary research conducted used these qualitative methods to examine experiences and perceptions of individuals influenced by TNE.

Semi-structured interviewing was selected as it can be operated with a degree of precision, which produces openness in the range of responses from the interviewee. One of the strengths of having used semi-structured interviews was that it facilitated a strong element of discovery, while its structured focus allowed an analysis in terms thematic observation. These themes set the basis for the interview – an interview script with key questions was produced, and to compliment this, a list of notes were kept (as in the Pilot study), to support the discussion as useful 'prompts'. These notes and pointers for discussion were taken directly from findings in the literature for discussion in primary research. Now all these elements – questions and prompts – together shaped the 'narrative' and structured a framework for the semi-structured interviews.

It was important to ensure that the narrative for discussion 'flowed' easily from one area or point of discussion to the next. The subject matter had to be drawn out from the literature for discussion, and questions were arranged and adapted accordingly. These questions endeavoured to measure rhetoric against reality, based on perceptions and experiences of individuals. Also, the areas for discussion were pre-selected, so that a natural 'lead-in' to the next topic linked the subject matter together and provided a stimulus for further discussion. The prompts used supported the interviews and related practical experiences and perceptions back to the debates in the literature. Interviewees were asked to consider what they perceived as happening, compared to what the literature and theory state. This provided a basis for further discussion and analysis.

For this research, purposive sampling has been used, which is a sample of participants hand-picked for the research. The individuals interviewed were deliberately selected because they were instances that were likely to produce the most viable data for the study. The sample was representative and typical, selected on purpose as they were relevant to the topic being investigated. It is only ever possible to use the best sample, available within the limits of the resources and possibilities for research.

The sample itself consisted of nine individuals. The justification for this is that there were three hierarchies being investigated in each of the three institutions (strategic, tactical and operational) and a representative was sought from each. A sample of nine seemed perfect for this study and in line with phenomenological sampling (see 3.1.4 above). Three Deans/CEOs, three programme leads and three operations officers respectively from each region (institution).

At the strategic level, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants involved in the development of the TNE strategy, such as the Associate Deans for international development at Faculty B and CEOs in Singapore and Sri Lanka. Depending on the issues that arose during discussion, sub-questions were introduced accordingly, and participants were probed further. Local, cultural attitudes could impact on the way in which the data was solicited from the differing regions. An example of this was with CEOs in Sri Lanka and Singapore where they could elaborate within the questions on local colloquial understanding, practices and interpretations – this provided an opportunity to examine what it means to develop and achieve a TNE strategy, from individuals in regional management.

At the tactical level, respective Programme Leaders were interviewed within the University and partnerships abroad. Culture induced challenges were discussed and investigated at this level. These challenges included those of language barriers, as language forms a fundamental component of culture. As Li-Hua (2007), (cited in Zhuang and Tang, 2012) warn, cultural differences or false assumptions could lead to failures in TNE operations. Moreover, language barriers are not as easy to overcome as they may seem given that language expressions are fundamentally affected by cultural values (Courtnery and Anderson, 2009). This provided an opportunity for discussion of any barriers which may or may not have impeded quality management.

At the operational level, issues such as standardisation and local practice needed investigating. This revealed commonality as well as gaps in practice. The University's programme Operations and their equivalents abroad have been interviewed to identify current practices and if there was any scope for harmonisation of common policy and procedures.

3.5.3 Triangulation

Triangulation has occurred naturally in this research due to the sampling methods adopted. As analysis had taken place across three regions using three hierarchies, triangulation has occurred twice.

Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) identify four types of triangulation, (1) Methods triangulation, (2) Triangulation of sources, (3) Analyst triangulation and (4)Theory/perspective Triangulation.

For this study, the second method of triangulation incorporates the sampling methods selected i.e. – *Triangulation of Sources*. This is because the research has examined the consistency of different data sources from within the same method. For example, comparing people with different viewpoints. Different sources of data (regional and hierarchical) have being sought which were underpinned by the literature. Using the method of semi-structured interviews, similar hierarchical positions in three different regions were compared for the same phenomena in question.

Regional and hierarchical triangulation has been shown diagrammatically below:

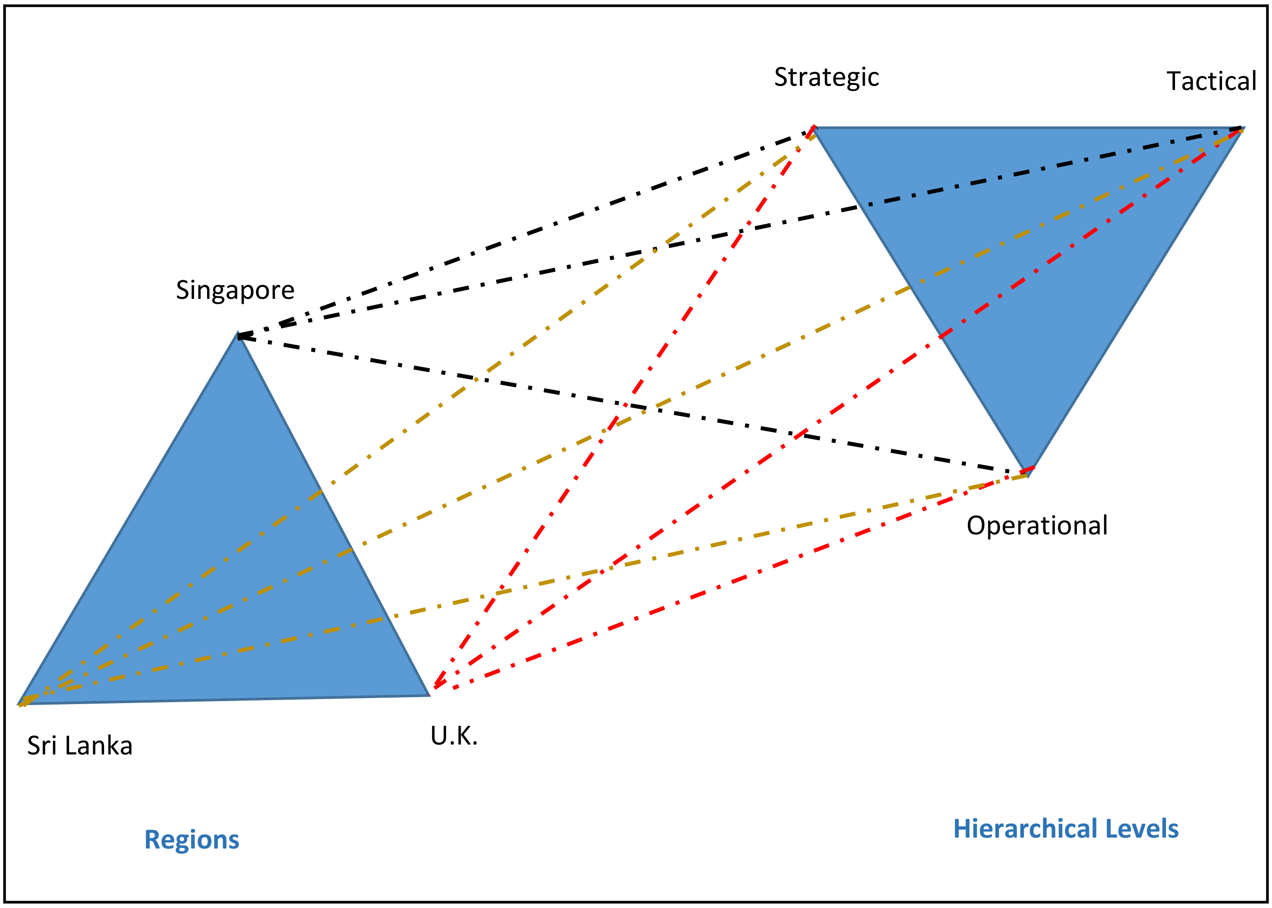


Fig 1.6. *Diagram depicting Triangulation by Region and Hierarchy.*

3.6 Consideration of Bias

I was aware that whilst conducting the interviews, there was an ongoing concern regarding elitism and individuals 'towing the party line'. This has brought into question the authenticity of responses as it would always be difficult to separate value-laden answers from genuine responses. These individuals are gate-keepers of the information needing to be obtained. The responses were recorded and transcribed as received, taken as true and significant in the manner in which they were received. None of the responses have been ignored or dismissed

– even those where the participant was unsure or declined to respond, have been analysed in the results for consistency. This has negated participant bias as much as possible.

Drew (2014) states the problem may be further compounded if the organizational elites to be interviewed are from diverse cultural backgrounds, leading to issues including cross-cultural differences and language barriers. This issue has been addressed further in section 3.7.1 as barriers to interviews and overcoming them.

3.7 Elite Interviews

This semi-structured interview approach can be further described as an 'elite' interview because some of the intended respondents were from senior management and in addition, my position could be considered as elite by the partner institutions.

Gillham (2005), has explored elite interviews. The term elite can make people feel uncomfortable, carrying with it overtones of moral, social, intellectual and political superiority which are unacceptable. However, the term 'elite interviewing' provides a useful short-hand for a kind of interviewing which has a distinctive value. It involves talking to people who are especially knowledgeable about a particular area of research or about the context within which the research is being carried out. These individuals are commonly in positions of authority or power by virtue of their experience and understanding. Relatedly, they are also part of a network – of other people and institutions – and may control (facilitate) access to these.

Where 'elite' interviewees have provided detailed information about existing research or practice that is unpublished, Gillham (2005) adds that the convention of simply reporting a 'literature review' becomes inadequate. This is true, but a literature review should be about informing research. The account of existing knowledge has to include direct quotation from those authoritative sources and the role these data have played in carrying the project further. It may be that what they provide goes beyond what is known as a *contextual review,* to form part of the substantive empirical focus of the research, which is a matter of judgement. (Gillham, 2005).

The positives for using interviews include rich sources of information from each interview, provides direction for the research and access to information which has not been gathered previously and remains unpublished and unavailable in the public domain. In contrast, the negatives include a controlling element of the review process and hidden agendas of both interviewers and interviewees.

3.7.1 Barriers to interviewing and overcoming them

Welch et al. (2002), (cited in Drew, 2014), posit that academic researchers possess an advantage in elite interviews because of their knowledge about the sector, its policies and practices. This may be welcomed by senior managers who cherish the opportunity to discuss organisational problems with an informed third party, as well as a chance to familiarise themselves with new developments in their field. The researcher becomes a vehicle for the discussion and clarification of ideas managers might have for the organisation and this endows the researcher with a greater insider status. In other words, the researcher becomes a critical friend. However, Welch et al. (2002) also recommend that the interviewer exerts caution, as being too well-informed carries a risk of managers feeling threatened and, consequently, reluctant to reveal information in case it leads to their organisation being reported in a negative light. The researcher, therefore, becomes an outsider once more.

Whilst interviewing seniors and managers for this research, I did assume the position of someone seeking knowledge and expertise from a senior representative. The questions asked were investigating expertise of these managers in the field and I avoided any feeling of them being undermined or threatened during the interviews. I remained an insider to the process by seeking clarification of ideas from these senior representatives, not positioning myself as a subject matter expert as this would have undermined their positions and been detrimental to the data gathering process. Regardless of where the power is held, the researcher must engage in what Morris (2009) (cited in Drew, 2014) refers to as 'duplicitous' strategies in order to uncover the real story.

Qualitative interviewing provides an effective method of collecting data from (business) elites because it allows for rich, in-depth conversations (Welch et. al, 2002; Yeung, 1995). In senior management interviews, this level of detail can be useful, for example, because it allows for a consideration of how management perspectives have shaped the organisation, particularly if management interviews are followed up by interviews with other organisation members (Drew, 2014) as this research has clearly done. Yet, Drew (2014) also states that elite interviews present challenges in the form of barriers to access, imbalances in the power relationship between the researcher and the researched and reluctance on the part of the respondent to speak openly.

Interviewers should be aware of the risk of dominating the interview and leading the respondent to answer in a particular way that does not necessarily correspond to their true feelings. The *social desirability effect* may cause respondents to provide answers which, instead of reflecting the interviewee's true perspective, relate to what they think the interviewer would want to hear and/or would place them in a positive light (Bryman & Bell, 2003).

Despite being able to overcome any language barriers, linguistic competence on the part of the researcher cannot compensate for a lack of familiarity with the communicative norms of society (Briggs, 1986), which are underpinned by cultural differences. Researchers need to be aware of other forms of communication norms within interviews, including non-verbal communication, which may differ between cultures (Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Samover et al., 2011), and interviewing practices which may not be appropriate within cultures other than the interviewer's own (Briggs, 1986). To remove or minimise cultural bias, interviews should be conducted neutrally (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995).

There were no language barriers to overcome as our partnerships are running their institutions using English as the language of instruction. Cultural differences were however noted, but of course not for the UK Dean as his approach and conduct in the interview followed the norms we are used to for conducting interviews at the University. The Sri Lankan CEO suggested we conduct the interview in a staff office, in the presence of another colleague. This did not impact in anyway on the conduct of the interview as there was no interjection by the staff member, but I think that it made the manager feel more at ease and in her element with a subordinate present - perhaps a position of power and authority? In Singapore, the CEO suggested the interview should be conducted in his father's office – as this was the best office in terms of décor and appealing artefacts. He entered the room and switched on water features and said that these help create a calming and peaceful setting for events such as interviews. I think he was expecting a challenging and difficult situation, but the interview went very well.

3.7.2 Gaps in current literature for Elite Interviews

Developments in global business have led to an increase in cross-border research (Welch and Piekkari, 2006), and, at the same time, there has been a gradual internationalisation of higher education, with a substantial increase in the number of international students conducting postgraduate and doctoral research outside their home countries (Altbach and Knight, 2007). Drew, (2012) suggests that with this plethora of interest in international research, it may be argued there is a need for more literature which deals explicitly with the challenges of interviewing international business elites and how to overcome these. This is an on-going dilemma for further consideration.

3.8 Ethical considerations

3.8.1 Ethics and Appropriateness

It is essential that a framework for research ethics be adopted for any social enquiry. This research has ensured the key principles in the framework have been adhered to. The Framework for Research Ethics of the Economic and Social Council of Britain (ESRC, 2010, p3) established six key principles, concerned with:

- Ensuring 'integrity, quality and transparency'
- Supplying full information about the aim and uses of the research
- Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity
- Organising voluntary participation free from coercion
- Avoiding harm to participants
- Guaranteeing the independence of the research and the researcher

These essential guidelines apply to all research (Holloway & Brown, 2012). In addition, in order to protect oneself and participants the researcher will become familiar with the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) ethical guidelines for educational research (2004). These guidelines embody the key points of some data protection laws and human rights legislation as well as trying to establish a standard of conduct that is both moral and professional.

3.8.2 Ethics and the University.

The University has ethical procedures and guidelines which must be adhered to. Ethical committees have the responsibility for reviewing and approving the ethical standards of the research to be conducted – and especially so if human subjects are involved. An ethics form pertaining to this research was submitted and accepted under 'Category A' before embarking on the research.

According to Gillham (2005), a corollary of agreeing to take part in research is that people are giving personal information. For legal, as well as ethical reasons, they need to agree and understand how this information is stored and used. This needs to be made explicit.

The key points are listed below and their respective application during the proposed primary research highlighted by the researcher in italics:

- Confidentiality: making clear that there are restrictions on who has access to this information and for what purposes.

  Primary Research: the interviewees understood the purpose and reason for conducting the interview, and the fact that it would SOLELY be used for this study on the EdD programme.

- Anonymity*:* this was not an issue. The data was not intimate or sensitive in nature but participants' identity has been kept anonymous for consistency and data protection.

  Primary Research: all participants have been kept completely anonymous, no names have been used. Data protection requirements have been adhered to.

- Security*:* paper information to be kept in a locked filing cabinet; computer information access controlled by a secure password, avoiding modes of transmission which are easily intercepted: all of these precautions are more relevant if the data are highly personal or sensitive.

  Primary Research: the data will be shared in the form of transcripts of the interviews. There will be nothing sensitive about the data.

- Publication*:* most people will understand that research is published or, if unpublished as in a thesis, is otherwise accessible. Whatever the kind of output, it should be specified to participants.

  Primary Research: This has been outlined and agreed beforehand that the thesis will be made available in the public domain.

There are other points to be appreciated such as, summary publicity, and exceptional issues and data lifetime. In addition, I have had to identify myself as a researcher to the participants, identified the purpose of the research and what was expected from those taking part. In addition, all interviewees were offered copies of the transcripts if required.

There were no gender, racial and social class issues or any issues surrounding vulnerable or dependent groups. Ensuring the safety and well-being of research subjects and protecting identity information was adhered to for all participants.

3.8.3 Ethics in Interviews

In this research, all participants have been given full anonymity, as will their respective organisations. In addition, after the interviews, all participants were asked to confirm that they were content for the whole of their interview to be transcribed and used for analysis. In informal and unstructured interviews (or semi-structured as is the case here), participants tend to disclose more than they wish but are not aware of having done so. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) in Holloway and Brown (2012) state that the interview situation is sometimes seductive and intimate; because participants might regret disclosure later, ongoing consent is essential. Fear of disclosure of what they have said to their peers or senior staff is possible especially if they have criticised the organisation and its management. This is why it is important to ask for permission after the event as well as before.

3.8.4 Ethics and Reflexivity

This research has endeavoured to adopt reflexivity with ethical considerations. This has been achieved by considering the implications of my own background, culture, experience, biases and assumptions. My own background and experiences have been discussed earlier as a practitioner working in TNE at a UK HEI. My own cultural experiences have been formed and remain deeply rooted in Indian surroundings and I consider myself to be a British Indian. My own biases and assumptions are drawn out in my practice for TNE execution at the University;

these have influenced the themes selected from the literature and the line of questioning in the semi-structured interviews.

3.9 Mitigation of Health and Safety

The research participants were based in their own environment and I travelled abroad to conduct the semi-structured interviews. There were no health and safety risks to note, except those concerned with long haul travel. This was not an unusual occurrence or a first-time event. I am the Link Tutor for the partnerships abroad, so the data collection took place during one of these pre-scheduled trips (March 2016). It was important that the participants were comfortable and in familiar surroundings. This also empowered the interviewee to choose the location for the interviews (room, facility, time) – familiar territory limited further barriers and provided a sense of control for the interviewees.

3.10 Core questions for semi-structured interviews

Core questions used in the interviews are listed below for each theme being investigated. The questions created under each theme were developed to compare findings from literature to interviews i.e. theory relating to practice. Each core question was followed up by a range of secondary questions (in the true spirit of semi-structured interviews) which were introduced during each interview, depending on the initial responses received from the interviewee. Question under each theme were selected according to the hierarchical standing of participants. For example, the theme relating to strategy was only applicable to senior management (Deans and CEOs).

Strategic Level: *Deans/CEOs*

Qu. No	Question	Category/theme/phenomena from Literature

1	*Why did you choose the particular region for TNE partnerships?*	Strategy [Theme 1]
2	*What were the factors (objectives and motives) that influenced your decision to seek partnerships abroad?*	Strategy [Theme 1]
3	*Tell me what expectations you have of the partner institution?*	Managing partnership expectations [Theme 2]
4	*Tell me if these expectations have been met or changed – why?*	TNE development [Theme 3]
5	*What do you think are the main advantages and disadvantages of being able to study on a programme which is offered in a country different to where it was originally validated?*	TNE challenges and perspectives [Theme 4]
6	*How can a Higher Education Institution achieve high quality in its programmes?*	Quality assurance practices [Theme 5]

Tactical Level: *Programme Leads*

Qu. No	Question	Category/theme/phenomena from Literature
1	*What do you think are the main advantages and disadvantages of being able to study on a programme which is offered in a country different to where it was originally validated?*	TNE challenges and perspectives [Theme 4]
2	*Is possible to have the same learning experience studying in a collaborative partner of a University compared with the University itself?*	Quality assurance practices [Theme 5]
3	*Is it possible to 'mirror' practices and procedures across partnerships?*	Quality assurance practices [Theme 5]
4	*Do you feel culture plays a role in managing TNE partnerships abroad?*	Culture [Theme 6]
5	TNE typically moves from more developed to less developed nations;do you think this could be regarded as a new form of colonialism?	Managing partnership expectations [Theme 2] Postcolonialism [Theme 7]
6	*How can a Higher Education Institution achieve high quality in its programmes?*	Quality assurance practices [Theme 5]

Operational level: *Programme Operations*

Qu. No	Question	Category/theme/phenomena from Literature
1	*Compared to 'Home' programmes, have any practices and procedures changed at the operations level to adapt for TNE?*	Quality assurance practices [Theme 5] TNE development [Theme 3]

2	*Is it possible to 'mirror' practices and procedures across partnerships?*	Quality assurance practices [Theme 5]
3	*Do you feel culture plays a role in managing TNE partnerships abroad?*	Culture [Theme 6] TNE challenges and perspectives [Theme 4]
4	*What do you think are the main advantages and disadvantages of TNE programmes and operations?*	Managing partnership expectations [Theme 2]
5	*What do you think are going to be the most valuable attributes of partnerships for managing programme operations?*	Managing partnership expectations [Theme 2]
6	*How can a Higher Education Institution achieve high quality in its programmes and respective operations?*	Quality assurance practices [Theme 5]

3.10.1 Display of results by region and hierarchy

My background is within Engineering and I considered that a practical, efficient and logical framework was best for displaying the interview results. These were initially placed within the main body of this thesis as this seemed the most obvious and sensible way of presenting results in a tabular format. This articulation of results helped provide me with transparency, visualisation of responses and clarity from well-organised, like-for-like responses. This structure of presentation for the results had been selected over continuous prose, however, it was recommended by my supervisors that the results were unclear as it appeared there were boxes of never-ending quotes. The results have now been presented in paragraphs, using continuous prose, allowing single, important clauses to be represented at any one time for comparison and discussion.

The original results, showing like-for-like comparison and analysis have been given as an example in Appendix B. All results were displayed by region, theme and question. In addition, this original, laborious format of organising responses allowed for direct, parallel comparisons to be made and for any surprises that evolved to be noted in the form of sub themes, aiding further analysis. The results were tabulated in Appendix B using this format:

Qu.	*Singapore* Strategic/ Tactical / Operational	*Sri Lanka* Strategic/ Tactical / Operational	*UK* Strategic/ Tactical / Operational
1			
2			
2			
4			
5			
6			

3.10.2 Structure of the report

The structure of the report has been influenced and chosen by my background in engineering (as mentioned earlier). Most science-based projects/experiments will have section headings such as: introduction, method, risk assessment, hypotheses, results and conclusion. I have stayed true to this format but included those sections we expect our MSc dissertations which follow introduction, literature review, methodology, results and analysis, conclusion and recommendations. This, to me, seems a logical structure for such a study and has incorporated the inclusion of interpretivism into a positivist style of presentation.

The pre-determined structure did not have any direct impact on the participants or institutions during the interviews conducted but, the interviews were designed deliberately to include pocketed themes of information for analysis later. These themes were purposely used from the literature and 'boxed' into sections for ease of analysis and initial comparison and presentation of results. This helped me to dissect the interview by question and relate the findings by each theme to the associated regional and hierarchy. This regional, hierarchical analysis was intentionally considered and conducted at the start of primary research data collection.

3.11 <u>Conduct of the interviews</u>

An Initial email was sent on 05.02.16 to partner institutions to request dates and times for the conduct of semi-structured interviews as a Link Tutor trip scheduled had been scheduled for March 2016.

The actual conduct of the interviews did not pose too many issues. Once the dates for my visit had been confirmed, it was fairly easy for individuals to provide a suitable day, time and place as their convenience. The most fascinating aspect of the interviews was the choice of rooms (as noted in 3.7.1 above). At the strategic level, all three heads chose either their own office or a similar small meeting room. In Singapore, the CEO even had a small water fountain in his office, creating a cool and harmonious setting! At the tactical level, each of the programme leads chose to be in a classroom which they felt was most suitable. Operations selected the most varied of settings – in the UK, it was the student canteen; in Singapore, it was the student lounge and in Sri Lanka, it was the Boss's office! Although in Sri Lanka the Operation's manager chose the boss's office, she sat on a very low sofa and I had to sit in the boss's chair – this clearly created an environment where I was in an elite position and she perhaps felt less significant – almost superior and inferior positions. This interview lasted for the shortest period of time and the individual was so uncomfortable with the whole arrangement, there seemed little point in prolonging the discomfort she was clearly experiencing. None-the-less, the minimal responses received have still been included and added to the analysis as they are valid. This is discussed further below (3.13: Positionality).

Is should be noted that ALL three individuals in Operations in each of the regions have since left their current posts and taken positions elsewhere in other institutions. It is difficult to link or correlate their departure with the findings of this research – managing TNE operations only formed a small part of their overall duties.

3.12 Themed analysis

Thematic analysis has been chosen as the underpinning standpoint for this research. Defined by Braun and Clarke (2006), as a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns [themes] within data. It minimally organises and describes the data set in [rich] detail.

The themes in this research have captured the main debates, arguments and gaps in the literature. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set Braun and Clarke, (2006). These themes, from the literature, then underpinned the primary research questions collected by region and hierarchy.

The interviews have been transcribed (see Appendix A) and key word analysis has been conducted (see Appendix B). The questions were all informed by the respective themes. This is not grounded theory but application of literature-led themes. I was checking whether themes and issues identified in the literature are evident in stakeholders' perceptions of quality and TNE. From the key word analysis, themes have been supported by rich responses collated from the interviews as further sub themes. The following phases were recommended by Braun and Clarke, (2006) for conducting such thematic analysis:

1. Becoming familiar with the data.
2. Generating initial codes.
3. Searching for themes.
4. Reviewing themes.
5. Defining and naming themes.

6. Producing the report.

This format has been used in this thesis for results, analysis, discussion and drawing conclusions.

3.13 Positionality: Role of the Researcher

In this study, I have been the primary means of data collection, interpretation and analysis. Qualitative research assumes that the researcher is an integral part of the research process, as opposed to research conducted in the positivist paradigm where the researcher is separated from the phenomenon being studied. The researcher in the phenomenological interpretivist paradigm interacts with the participants to understand their social constructions (Chagger, 2013).

I am an Associate Professor and Team Leader within the University, in the Centre of Engineering. I am also the main point of contact and Link Tutor for the overseas partners taking part in this research. This could have influenced the nature of the data that has emerged. When questioning about policy and practice, some participants felt awkward or defensive especially when they were asked about what help and guidance, they have received from me or the awarding faculty. There is a possibility that interviewees may have supplied answers which they feel fitted in with what I was expecting from them – particularly in the role as their University Link Tutor – towing the party line as discussed earlier. This was very much the case with Sri Lanka Operations. The quality of the data may have suffered because of this. The very positions of how our seats were arranged and the respective heights of them, contributed to this experience. My intentions were always to remain objective and neutral, and assuming the role of the researcher, distancing myself and remaining concerned only with the subject of the study. This is a dilemma facing all researchers who are practitioners in their field of study.

This chapter has outlined the research and its methodological considerations which underpin the position of the research and its philosophical stance. The following chapter provides results, analysis of findings drawn out from the interview transcripts and compared to the literature.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Results & Discussion

In this chapter, the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews has been analysed and presented, whilst contrasting against the literature. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed, and an example can be found in Appendix A. The results have been analysed and displayed systematically by three regions and three hierarchies, and an example can be found in Appendix B. The process involved identifying and extracting the initial themes and categories from the literature for discussion in the semi-structured interviews (as identified in section 3.10 above). Six questions were asked during each interview; key responses have been extracted and given below, by theme.

Each interviewee was asked to reflect on a major question, and depending on the response, sub-questions were introduced in the true spirit of semi-structured interviewing. Due to differences in culture for the regions and hierarchical positions of respondents, variations in the conduct - such as more time to answer, moving to other sub-topics, pausing or distractions from an interruption - were accommodated effectively, demonstrating transparency of the data collection.

The information and results were displayed verbatim; extracted and represented thematically by the interviewee's responses to the original themes, including any sub themes revealed through discussion during data collection. This extensive and in-depth accumulation of results took a few months to gather, assemble and organise.

The way in which the results were organised was warranted. The format of recording responses (as shown in Appendix B) allowed for direct, parallel comparisons to be made and for any surprises that evolved, noted in the form of sub themes, aiding further analysis. Also, results could be viewed easily by region, hierarchy and topic. As mentioned earlier, the structure of presentation for the results had been selected over continuous prose, but this section now adheres to this format as recommended. The method of triangulation has compared the phenomenological data with ideas emerging from literature.

4.1 Summary of Findings

This section analyses and discusses the findings using comparative-thematic analysis, leading to critical evaluation of data. Provided in this chapter is an evaluation, analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from primary sources, by region and hierarchy, and a discussion of these findings compared to secondary sources in the literature.

Many sub themes have emerged during the interviews when asking questions within each theme. A summary table has been presented below, which illustrates each theme and respective sub themes which emerged from the semi-structured interviews.

Theme 1: Strategy								
Justification	Preference for a region	Local conditions	Commonality	Push Factors	Pull Factors	Student motivations	Competition	Reputation

Themes 2 & 3: Managing Partnership Expectations & TNE Development						
Partnership qualities	Partnership expectations	Realisation	Student expectations	Local opinion	Advantages	Disadvantages
Local changes	Challenges	Improvements	Communication	Ownership/trust/ Integrity	Quality	Other issues

Theme 4: TNE Challenges & Perspectives							
Advantages	Disadvantages	Brain-drain	Home situation	Challenges	Strategies for coping	Improvements	Other

Theme 5: Quality Assurance Practices						
Partnership qualities	Attributes of both parties	QA Practices	Sharing best practice	Student perspectives	Measures & managing	Possibility of like-for-like
Degree or experience	Possibilities of mirroring	Practice	Commonality	Ensuring Quality	Defining Quality	Communication/ collaboration
Staff development	Student opinion	Reasons for foreign studies	Brain-drain	Local changes	Student expectations	Similarities
Commercialisa tion	Physical presence	Current processes	Future	Other		

Theme 6: Culture						
Defining culture	Differences	Challenges	Practice	Role of culture	Managing expectations	Overcoming challenges

Theme 7: Postcolonialism				
Agree	Disagree	Local opinion	Student Viewpoint	Britishness

Table 1.7. *Summary Table of Findings: Themes and sub themes*

4.2 Theme 1: Strategy

This section considers the main motivations at the strategic level for regional partnership selection and formation. Nine sub themes emerged from the conversations. However, for ease of analysis and conciseness, only key examples have been included for each sub theme.

Justification for Embarking on TNE

The literature within this theme suggests that there are various motivations for institutions to engage with TNE. The three strategic leads were asked why and how they selected particular regions in search of strategic partnerships for programme delivery. The justification provided from Singapore CEO was that the UK was the most logical choice as there were similar significant affinities with the UK due to the commonwealth. To concur, the Sri Lanka CEO felt there was a certain preference amongst local students for a British education and degree and that 'British programmes are still the best'. The UK Dean felt that existing links and connections were the reasons behind justifying locations – it appears they did not actively seek specific locations.

Historical Link

The discussions highlighted a colonial link between the partnerships as they were both previous British colonies. As noted in the literature, postcolonial nations and the institutionalisation of education systems are still seen and accepted as a norm for the state. A growing number of countries are still influenced by the English-language products that they use. Global diffusion of western ideas, thinking about education has become almost universal, dominated by a set of imperial assumptions concerning economic progress, with notions of human capital development becoming part of a broader discourse of capitalist triumphalism. For Singapore, this was apparent in the appearance of old colonial building and 'all things British' which seem to be deep rooted in Singaporean psyche. British heritage had been embraced and Singaporean's felt that good foundations had been realised whilst they were a British Colony.

The literature states how colonisers not only shape the culture and identity of the colonised but are in turn shaped by their encounter in a range of interesting and complex ways. A significant link has been noted to the extent of national economic growth (in the colony), the political system, and the stage of higher education development. The Sri Lankan CEO voiced a stronger but related opinion, had the British not left Sri Lanka, would the country now be a better place? Would they be a Hong Kong rather than a Sri Lanka right now?

This is an interesting point. There is a sense in which there are postcolonial ties that are very strong, and perceptions of Britain remain positive. In addition, in Sri Lanka the historic link has been evidenced by 'what the British did' such as the building of road networks and railways. This is seen as a positive attribute of the British legacy.

Preference for Region

In the UK, the Dean did not state why regions were chosen but that existing demand and relationships had been developed to further mutual benefit. Existing links within the University (staff) were followed up as initial leads who had identified demand in those regions. Particularly in Sri Lanka where a large population of several million people with quite a small public University provision demonstrated quite a demand for transnational education. This justification provided for an increase in demand can be compared to the literature, where it is noted a fast-growing young population in the emerging economies of South Asia and South East Asia is putting pressure on domestic education systems.

Within the theme on strategy, preference for regions was noted particularly by Singapore where students preferred UK degrees to the US, suggesting a hang-over from colonialism.

This notion was mentioned by the Sri Lankan CEO who felt that there was still a colonial mind-set in play.

In the UK, the Dean noted that financial gain has driven international activities and had been the main motivation. The literature suggests international education has become a commodity which introduces a new complexity of financial sustainability. Partnerships are underpinned crucially by financial sustainability.

This preference and mind-set for regions – both from the Singaporean and Sri Lankan perspective and the UK, has been alluded to in the literature where there remains a preference for western models and institutions that provide the foreign imports, a pattern that has continued from the colonial era into the contemporary period. Local histories are everywhere but … only some local histories are in a position of imagining and implementing global designs. Still, after 500 years of coloniality of knowledge, there is no cultural tradition in an absolute sense outside to Eurocentered modernity.

Local Conditions

During discussions, it became apparent there were regional differences which were strategically significant. The literature suggests the driving forces, policies and practices concerning internationalisation of higher education in individual nations are not only affected by their national policy, character and identity, but also are influenced by calls and pressures from international, regional or global organisations.

These regional pressures were felt by the Singaporean CEO as he felt they had to survive as a private educational institution as the Singaporean government universities do not provide enough opportunities for all students. The Sri Lankan CEO echoed the same sector level pressures for master's level programmes. She stated that in Sri Lanka they have about 20,000 graduates and only about 2000 of them move onto master's programmes. Out of which about

800 to 1000 are catered for in the state sector, which means, the balance of 1000 is studying in the private sector. The UK Dean felt that conditions in the UK HE market in the last few years had changed to an 'open market' - giving rise to recent growth in UK international activities. He suggested there had been a renewed interest in international activity. It seemed to plateaux for a few years but now we are in a competitive market.

Commonality

Within the strategy theme, some commonality with the UK education systems was mentioned by both Sri Lanka and Singapore. For example, as noted in the literature, formal schooling was among the most significant of the cultural exports of colonial powers. The first and largest international regime to emerge from this post – WWII commitment to education focussed on educational development in postcolonial societies. The Sri Lankan CEO appreciated existing affinities and in addition, the presence of the British Council in Sri Lanka was very strong, again seen as influencing the mind-set for everything British. The Singaporean CEO noted affinities with the UK earlier.

Push & Pull Factors

Within discussions on strategy, the three leads were then asked which factors influenced their decisions to seek partnerships. The terms - Push and Pull factors – were first used in an interview by the Singaporean CEO and then in the other interviews. Push factors were those not benefitting the partnership and pull factors the opposite. Push factors for Singapore included disregarding universities from US and Australia due to their regulatory systems and conditions in-house in host countries. The Sri Lankan CEO also disregarded US curricula, as it did not suit with local market requirements of the country. Push factors for Singapore included the fact that sometimes the curriculum was not suitable for the market; curriculum was very British or American.

In contrast, the UK Dean thought that there was a historic push or influence from the British Empire which has spread its influence and seeking mutual benefit from transnational activities, such as student and staff mobility. This could be viewed as mutual agreement in considering the UK – the partners discuss current pull factors in play for seeking UK partnerships and the UK lead feels a historic push.

Pull factors for the Singapore CEO have included the programmes being a good fit with the cultural mind-set giving a rise to self-liberality and that students have a preference for the UK approach to programme delivery. The Sri Lankan CEO stated that pull factors included their organisation's mission statement which suggests that they are looking for affordable, world class quality education – they felt that the University provided all of these.

Interestingly, from the UK Dean, it was felt that both push and pull factors have been influenced by the British Empire spreading its own influence into territories (past and present). This confidence in British education has been address in the literature as 'stakeholder confidence' where assurance of quality in higher education is a process of establishing stake-holder confidence that provision (input, process and outcomes) fulfils expectations or measures up to threshold minimum requirements. This sureness can be delivered and measured as quality assurance practices in UK HEIs where frameworks for guidelines have been prepared and enforced (although not mandatory to follow); the QAA's academic infrastructure consists of a series of documents covering the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), Subject Benchmarks, the Code of Practice, the use of Programme Specifications and Progress Files. While HEIs are not required to conform to each element, the infrastructure provides useful guidelines on what needs to be done to ensure that standards and the quality of the student learning experience are maintained and enhanced.

Student motivations

Strategic decisions have also considered student motivations as a driving factor for international growth of TNE. Currently, the literature suggests that the mode of TNE (now) has surpassed any other form of delivery for the number of students attaining a UK qualification. In Singapore, it was noted that students felt that gaining a British qualification via TNE, would help them become subject matter experts in their own areas. In Sri Lanka, it was suggested that students felt they needed to be able to state the fact they are studying a UK programme which is the same one delivered to students studying in the UK. The students in Sri Lanka are seeking programme credibility which mirrors delivery in the UK. The UK Dean felt that in Sri Lanka, students may be motivated to achieve their degrees to help them move to other regions whereas in Singapore, it is difficult to say what motivates the students as the country and educational environment are highly developed.

Competition & Reputation

In addition to the above sub themes, the Singapore and Sri Lankan CEOs noted two further categories – Competition and Reputation respectively. In Singapore it was felt they were not competing with the top local universities as these covered very broad and deep learning – the type of student undergraduate their institution deals with does not fit into this type of 'deep learning' offered by universities. When stating 'segment', the Singaporean CEO was referring to the education Tier one below universities i.e. Private colleges like his institution. In Sri Lanka it was suggested that having a British degree ensured that it had been tried and tested and held its own reputation in the market place without them having to do anything themselves to market further.

The theme for strategy has divulged that students do prefer British education, and this is likely to be influenced from a historic link with the UK. Regional preferences were noted again choosing the UK over other countries due to the similarities for example in curricula. However, the UK noted that financial consideration was indeed a motivation when seeking regions for

TNE delivery. In addition, push and pull factors were discussed and the search for quality education was noted.

4.3 Themes 2 & 3: Managing Partnership Expectations & TNE Development

These two areas have been combined for ease of recording and analysing the results, as similarities in the data have been noted. The reason for this is the first question asks what the expectations of the partner institution were and the second asks if those expectations have been met.

Fourteen sub themes emerged from the conversations. However, for ease of analysis and conciseness, only key examples have been included for each sub theme.

Partnership Qualities & Expectations

The first topic of interest to emerge at the strategic level were specific qualities of partners. The Singapore CEO was expecting support in the first instance and then autonomy. From a business and commercial sense, they were hoping fees would taper off at some point too. Another expectation was that some UK universities would merge together to form some sort of joint venture partnership. Rather than discussing qualities, the conversation with the Singapore CEO moved straight to expectations.

Autonomy is a subjective notion. It cannot really be measured as it is experienced perhaps as a sliding scale. If we agree that the University has resisted to provide an increase in autonomy, then reasons to support this can be found in the literature. Although the partner wants to increase the degree of control, the University is reluctant to do this as once the degree of control is transferred to a local partner, this significantly increases the risk of reputational damage. In the spirit of cooperation and trust, it does not necessarily mean that autonomy will never be given, but expectations need to be managed and partnership maturity is also a crucial factor for increasing the control to the partner. The role of trust and power asymmetry in inter-University partnership is an important consideration.

Within this sub theme the Sri Lankan CEO was looking solely for programme quality. She was interested in ideas and evidence of how much effort went into the programmes, how often they were updated and how current the knowledge was.

The UK Dean suggested that questions should be asked as soon as there appears to be potential for a partnership forming, for example, is the partner actually someone you can work with? Are they ethical and financially sound? He noted it was important to meet the need of the local market, not just the partner's financial interests. The UK Dean also believed that TNE is an important activity for partners to be seen working with a British institution and is also driven by local regional business cases.

This sentiment of expectations and high hopes has been discussed in the literature. TNE, primarily at the tertiary level, has been growing rapidly, bringing with it high hopes and expectations of benefits to institutions in the countries of origin and destination.

Whilst discussing qualities of a partner and then expectations, the Singaporean CEO reiterated the need for support and autonomy. He went as far to say that he did have and still has an expectation that the University would hand over ready-made modules for them to run as they wish. The word support was mentioned a few times but when probed further, there was an inclination to back-track somewhat and say he meant 'autonomy' - to do things themselves. The Sri Lankan CEO was also expecting content 'wholesale'; they would like to replicate the programmes as much as possible to the way they run in the UK.

The UK Dean had very different expectations of partners. He suggested that he would like to see partners engaging more with local employers in the region, developing employer-led forums and increasing their research capabilities.

It appears there is an imbalance in opinion here; the overseas partners, at the strategic level, are very much concerned with the day-to-day running of the programmes which in the UK are viewed as operational issues rather that strategic. Whereas the awarding institution, in this case the UK HEI, is more inclined to see partners developing external links and research - developing themselves strategically in the HE field.

Realisation

Once the partnerships have been established, the interviewees explained that realisation sets in. When questioned about this, the Singaporean CEO felt that right from the start there are higher and lower roles present within the partnership. The literature has alluded to this imbalance in partnership relationships. On an institutional level, the frequently used term 'partnership', which implies a degree of equality, often hides a power hierarchy constructed by both sides, a lack of respect reported by host academics. This lack of respect was noted with an example from the Singaporean CEO revealed the fact that he feels support has been lacking from the University. He concluded that autonomy is still at zero even after a year and a half into the partnership. His institution was still bound by the University's practices and policies and 'free rein' has not been afforded, noting an imbalance in the relationship.

A realisation noted by the Sri Lankan CEO after the first year, was that it was simply impossible to create the same atmosphere as at the University (the partner had visited the UK several times before the programmes began). She felt this was down to the sheer size of the operations at the University and impossible to replicate at a private institution. However, expectations from the partner institution have not really changed.

The UK Dean understands that some of these partners are still in their infancy regarding programme development, student recruitments etc., and that overtime, as they mature, then quality, links with employers, staff development and joint research can begin. Interestingly, he also indicated that there may be a mind-set and mentality from the partners that we (the University) have a level of arrogance and sometimes this is an expectation. But he would like to think that this is a genuine partnership. This statement from a UK awarding institution poses a different view from the strategic heads abroad. Both Singapore and Sri Lanka CEOs viewed British HE as a public good, but the UK Dean suggested that we may be seen as having a level of arrogance. The findings suggest a power imbalance but there is no data to suggest that the overseas partners see the UK HEI as an arrogant partner. This inevitability or tension underpinning partnerships needs to be overcome by effective management. Tensions are noted in the literature as part and parcel of any collaboration, transnational education is no different. Collaborations endure, if these tensions, especially between the parties to the collaboration, can be managed effectively.

Student Expectations

When asking about being partners and managing student expectations, the Singaporean CEO was very firm and stated no, they are just a franchisee and do what they are told to do and partners is a polite term that is used. In addition, they are beholden to CPE (Council for Private Education, Singapore) as they have their demands on the institution. Regarding students and their expectations, he bitterly stated students view themselves as the University's graduates and not graduates of the private institution with whom they have studied.

Local Opinion

Other issues which arose at the strategic level interviews were about local perceptions. These opinions included Singapore seeing themselves only as middle-men – of no real value and significance (the analogy of a waiter was used). The Sri Lankan CEO wanted to know more about how we run our tutorials and seminars as this could be included (replicated) in delivery to enhance the programme in Sri Lanka. Interestingly, during the staff development and induction sessions in-country in Sri Lanka, delivery mechanisms have been discussed at the tactical level (with the programme lead) but what appears to have transpired here, is that the CEO in Sri Lanka is completely unaware of those discussions and developments ever having taken place.

The UK Dean drew on his concerns about managing expectations of local staff and Link Tutors. He felt that the new international strategy [not yet delivered by the University] should help to better communicate and ensure understanding of TNE development within the faculty but at the tactical (programme) level too. He commented on responsiveness too of partners despite differences in time.

Advantages & Disadvantages

At the operational level, four separate sub themes emerged from the discussion under this theme. The question asked what the main advantages and disadvantages for operations involved in TNE delivery. The sub themes included advantages, disadvantages, challenges and improvements. The Singaporean operation's officer noted that the advantages are that students do not have to travel to the UK to gain a British degree. The literature agrees with this as more and more students across the world are choosing to study international higher education programmes without having to travel to the country awarding. TNE makes higher education accessible to a new group of students who are either unable (for financial or visa reasons) or unwilling (for family or cultural reasons) to travel overseas to study. For students, higher education is a passport to a successful career in the global knowledge economy and significantly enhanced lifetime earnings. Insight to UK educational structures was also considered an advantage.

Whereas the Sri Lankan operation's officer seemed to have been put in a difficult position as the interview was very short and there were many pauses and uncomfortable silences. She felt that I needed to hear that operations were doing perfectly well and that there were no issues – very much towing the party line. In addition, there was a sense of elitism on my part; I sat at the table on a high arm chair and she was given a low sofa to sit on; the situation was not ideal as we didn't start off as equals. This has affected the results. She attempted to say the institution has lots of advantages and no real disadvantages, thereby confusing herself. Limited data transpired from this interview. An example of this has been extracted from the interview script.

> Yes, we can deliver the best, quality programme to our students...
>
> Operations...we have a lot of advantages because [long pause, struggling, uncomfortable] ...
>
> Disadvantages of course, no like, I mean, in operations the documentary thing you all are sending through to us, what we have to do is we have to just go through that and fill it and send it back...
>
> (Questioned if advantage or disadvantage)
>
> Yes [referring to advantage].
>
> [SL – O]

The UK operation's officer noted that the advantages are internationalisation of the University's brand and new revenue streams – considering this was operations, this was indeed a very strategic response! The literature warns though, TNE is not solely restricted to the financial arena but also to the question of academic credibility and institutional direction.

Disadvantages from the Singaporean operation's officer included (though not from the University concerned but their other UK University partnerships), that there is a communication problem. The literature also pointed out that cultural differences in educational tradition, communication style and organisational practices were among the factors affecting Sino-UK TNE partnerships. This presents one such example of the East-West cultural divide and the challenges facing TNE. The example of communication problems for exam board marks was mentioned – some other partner institutions did not communicate changes to marks or the outcomes from exam boards. The partner would be informed by the students about these changes which had taken place at the awarding institution.

Disadvantages noted by the UK operation's officer included problems communicating with counterparts, it proved difficult via email and also time wise. So, distance wasn't seen as fruitful to managing the relationship for effective communication to take place.

This has been discussed further in the literature. The most commonly raised issues across the TNE literature being the experience and the effectiveness of cross-cultural teaching and learning, especially where this involves teachers with little experience of the new cultural context. Tied in with this issue is the often-debated general appropriateness and adaptability of educational programmes, or the assurance of standards of the 'exporter' institution in sometimes quite radically different contexts with different expectations, learning trends, cultures of communication and assessment styles. Cultural differences or false assumptions could lead to failures in TNE operations. Cultural differences in educational tradition, communication style and organisational practices were among the factors affecting Sino-UK TNE partnerships.

This presents one such example of the East-West cultural divide and the challenges facing TNE, due to the distances of partnerships and time variations. These and other challenges were discussed as a further sub theme as the Singaporeans operation's officer noted that a lot of preparation had to be done by both parties otherwise the partnership would face difficulties.

Challenges & Improvements

Discussion on advantages and disadvantages led to how improvements could be made. Managing these partnership expectations were also discussed at the tactical alongside the operational levels. At the tactical level, programme leaders were asked if they could think of any issues regarding expectations. Only the UK programme lead commented on this area; he felt that the partnership arrangements were too open and that they don't tell you what to do. An example he shared was about contextualisation of material, if not done properly, then this could jeopardise the learning experience and programme quality.

Improvements were discussed on the back of challenges at the operations level. The Singaporean operation's officer thanked the University for their Support and for inviting them to the exam boards. This came as a surprise as exam board attendance is viewed as a basic requirement at the awarding UK HEI.

The UK operation's officer noted that there was much room for improvement at the local level where module coordinators should be made fully aware of modules running abroad as well as in the UK. It is unfair to ask the University's tutors to do marking and verification if we don't manage their expectations locally. The literature shares maintaining quality control in international branch campuses may be more difficult because managers and staff operate in an alien culture far from the home campus. The data here suggests this to be true for TNE franchise partnerships too. Due to the geographical distance of transnational higher education programmes from the home campus, there are tensions between academic and commercial priorities, and opportunities for slippery academic standards.

Communication

Continuing within the same theme of managing partnership expectations, the next question at the operational level sought opinion about what was considered to be the most valuable attributes of partnerships for managing programme operations. The Singaporean operation's officer responded with some hilarity as she said 'communication', as it had featured multiple times during the discussion. The Sri Lankan operation's officer added that the main problems faced by students were IT related ones. She suggested intensive, further Moodle training for all staff and students. The UK operation's officer noted that it all came down to the management of operations. He reflected that perhaps a trip to the partner institution by operations would be useful to understand who is in charge of finance, who deals with recruitment and so on. Putting names to faces would be helpful. Closer working relationships would ensure everyone understanding which modules are being delivered, when and marks are due in etc. which would enhance the process.

Ownership, Trust & Integrity

Other unexpected but interesting areas from the Singaporean and UK operation's officers were ownership/trust/integrity which were seen as positive attributes needed for successful partnerships. Singapore emphasised that the University may not be aware how things are running at the operational level at the partner institution but must develop trust which she states is quite important to the institution. The literature agrees that trust among key players in the system is important and academics must accept and implement changes, they must trust and own the process of problem definition and solution design with integrity. The UK operations noted that individuals in the operations team need to take ownership of the partnership they are given.

This has been shared further in the literature regarding the role of trust and power asymmetry in inter-University partnerships. The literature argues that sustainable partnerships must be based on a spirit of cooperation and trust. Both sides must be prepared for compromise, to a point, and for mutual interaction. One-sided approaches can lead to misunderstanding and eventual resentment.

Quality for Managing Partnerships

The last attribute from the discussions considered quality for managing effective programme operations. The Singaporean operation's officer felt that the University should not worry about quality as their institution is audited by CPE every two years. CPE ensure that private education providers are following standards and procedures.

The Sri Lankan operation's officer noted that quality was compromised when students were not happy with IT (information technology). Clearly, programme quality and student experience were being considered as a function of and being measured by how well IT is working. Poor student experience is considered to compromise programme quality. This has been noted in the literature where even if the qualification is of comparable quality to that of the conferring country, it is most likely the student experience is not. There is a danger, that transnational education constituting solely an award-granting exercise rather than a learning experience.

The UK operation's officer suggested what the QAA would typically like to see if and when they visited the University for TNE operations. In reality, he felt replication in practice is important for TNE operations. For example, pass rates, progression and marks for comparative analysis on home and TNE programmes.

Local Changes

The Singaporean operation's officer noted the only change really was the time taken to release results. Once second marking had been done, their institution had to wait for our verification processes and exam boards to take place, but this was understandable. For the Sri Lankan operation's officer, traditionally everything was paper based but now they must adapt electronically. The UK operation's officer noted changes compared to traditional campus-based programmes. The main change noted was the way in which marks are received from partners and the difficulty of people having the same surname – so some cultural significance was appreciated and accepted.

This section has demonstrated the differences in perception of how partnerships are managed. The experiences of individuals have been noted and regional variations in opinion do exist and hierarchical differences have been drawn out. Yet, in some instances, commonality has also been noted. For example, all operation's officers have noted the need for improved communication – this has not been influenced by their regional or cultural biases but realised through practice and process. At the strategic level, commercial consideration, support, autonomy, quality to mirror practices and mutual respect were noted. A cultural difference between Singapore and the UK was noted; in the Singaporean context, they felt that equality was not present as implied by the term 'partner', and the UK noted that perhaps being the British provider, ensued a level of arrogance.

4.4 Theme 4: TNE Challenges & Perspectives

All three regions, strategic and tactical hierarchies were asked to consider questions relating to this theme. Eight sub themes emerged from the conversations. However, for ease of analysis and conciseness, only key examples have been included for each sub theme.

Advantages & Disadvantages

Interviewees were asked what the main advantages and disadvantages were of studying on a programme being offered in a country different to where it was originally validated. At the strategic level, the Singaporean CEO stated that the main advantages were cost and reliability. It's a cost saving as it is cheaper to study in Singapore than the UK and there is a notion of reliability too. In addition, he noted an even bigger advantage in having an internationally recognised degree. He suggested Singapore has a reputation of being a well-engineered system – you press the button and it goes and that's kind of the way CPE has them working.

The Sri Lankan CEO stated that for local students, it would be culturally easier for them to do the degree at home and when it came to support, students feel far more comfortable asking staff at the institution rather than asking the University directly. The literature notes that for TNE, an important characteristic and indicator is the learning style of the student cohort. Learning styles are often defined as ‘characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment’. Cultural differences in student learning styles were noted as below. In addition, she noted familiarity with tutors and how much peer-support they would have staying at home.

The UK Dean noted that since the problems with UK visas and work permits no longer being offered, students have an advantage of staying at home or going elsewhere to gain a UK qualification. Another advantage is that the cost of study for TNE is going to be considerably less that coming to the UK to study. He also added that it is not just about ‘Britishness’, it’s about the advantage of having some level of international exposure different to your own country. He felt this was a strong advantage in this increasingly global world.

The idea of paying reduced fees and costs implications have been discussed in the literature. The growth of TNE is allowing more students to study in their own countries and reducing costs to developing countries in terms of foreign exchange. It is generally much cheaper for students to study in their own countries. There is a steady drive towards cost effectiveness.

This change in visa status for international students coming to the UK has also been noted as income from onshore fee-paying international students is now falling as a consequence. This decrease in income has been noted since changes were previously introduced by the then coalition government. Universities have started to offer their education to international students in their home countries.

Disadvantages noted from the Singaporean CEO included students having to explain at a job interview later how they studied in Singapore to get a British qualification. However, he did not see this as a hindrance when competing against local graduates. Other disadvantages were noted such as student experience compared to studying at a traditional university; students would have access to more facilities and time to build non-academic skills aiding social, cultural and communication skills which cannot be provided at a private run institution.

Student experience and cultural divides being a downfall of TNE has been argued in the literature. Potential benefits come with a set of challenges which must be overcome. These challenges include the need to reconcile the often-conflicting objectives of the stakeholders involved, bridge learning traditions/styles and cultural divides, and harmonise cross-national standards.

The same disadvantage from above was given by the Sri Lankan CEO who claimed only being able to offer up to 90% of the overall student experience. In addition, networking opportunities were not really afforded in-country to the students compared to students on the programmes in the UK. In addition, the University is viewed as an alien entity – completely foreign in the true sense of the word.

The UK Dean only really suggested one disadvantage – the syllabus and content have been borne from the UK and not contextualised for overseas provision. This need for contextualisation has been addressed earlier by the tactical programme leader in the UK, under the heading of managing partnerships.

This idea of shared or similar curricula has been discussed in the literature. In their search for legitimacy, universities have tended to adopt isomorphic strategies. As a result, universities across different countries and continents increasingly have similar curricula, teaching methods, administrative practices, financial objectives and management systems.

Discussing advantages and disadvantages at the tactical level, the Singaporean programme lead stated that studying for a degree is seen as value-added to students as it provides them with great future prospects and job opportunities. For example, she added international students [those travelling from Myanmar to Singapore] have a different study experience 'back home' and Singapore provides 'value-added' education. In addition, this form of education affords them with better prospects for the future and greater job opportunities. She [represented an analogy where these students bloom - from an ugly duckling they become a beautiful swan!].

The Sri Lankan programme lead felt that local people are looking west-ward for a prosperous future. He suggested students see a distinctive difference between what is on offer in Sri Lanka, as opposed to what they could possibly achieve from the western world. He added the reason for this was because with direct time and technology, students know there is a vast difference – overall, he felt there are more advantages than disadvantages. He added that even within the local industry in Sri Lanka, a person who has a foreign degree or a degree from a foreign University, is considered over and above someone who has a local degree.

The UK programme lead stated that he himself is a Sri Lankan and perceives the two regions as being 'worlds apart'. This is interesting as he has an 'insider's perspective' to the mind-set and understands local conditions yet resides on the outside. He believes, by listening and talking to people in Sri Lanka, he can relate to their side of the story and think outside the box. He refers to this as 'international exposure' for Sri Lankans. He felt that TNE affords partners accessibility to these electronic resources - basically accessibility to new knowledge. Both the Sri Lankan and UK programme leads have focused their arguments on technological advancements available to students as enrolees on UK TNE programmes. These are the main advantages they have highlighted.

More disadvantages have been noted in the tactical level than the strategic level. The Singaporean programme lead referred mainly to Myanmar students coming to Singapore to study. She felt that the disadvantages include these students having to adapt to a new culture as Singapore is very diverse – but earlier suggested the value-added nature of study. In contrast, she didn't mention how culture impacted on TNE arrangement from one country to another. She emphasised that these students have their own culture and ways of working and thinking. Some of these students have never come across teamwork, for example, and this appears to cause some difficulties with group assignments. She viewed this as an advantage and disadvantage but eventually, she noted, their students do eventually bond and become a team.

Disadvantages from the Sri Lankan programme lead included those who attain a foreign qualification, look for a route out of Sri Lanka. In addition, those who have a foreign degree compared to a local one, widen the gap in living standards. This is evident through their expectations from life and their values.

This brings into question the idea that TNE is beneficial with in-country benefits and for making a meaningful contribution to society. If, as the Sri Lankan programme lead states, there is an ever-increasing gap in living standards, then is the very essence and social make-up of the state being altered by TNE? A stark warning regarding this phenomenon occurring was given in the literature where there is a danger that if host countries do not formulate a long-term higher education policy in accordance with their sustainable economic and development programmes, an e-elite class will emerge in many developing countries, changing the social fabric.

Disadvantages for the UK programme lead included the amount of money that must be spent gaining an education. He questioned if there was a possibility that the market place could adversely view the degrees from abroad, unlike the Singaporean and Sri Lankan programme leads who both saw foreign qualifications as being advantageous and superior for future employment.

Brain Drain

Further discussions revealed brain drain as another notion. The Singaporean CEO questioned if they were causing a brain drain in Myanmar as this is primarily where students are travelling from to Singapore. He felt that brain drain would happen as it is a natural to the process and then it would slow down – this he viewed as an accepted norm for advancing societies. Once Myanmar develops further, he felt that there would be a flow-back of student to Myanmar just as there appears to be with Sri Lanka at the moment (our partner institution in Singapore has a vested interest in Sri Lanka as they have a campus there too). However, the literature suggests that benefits of transnational education are that it helps develop local skills, reduce capital outflow, brain drain, and pressure on local education systems. As students can get their education without leaving their home country or region, it can reduce the brain drain from developing countries. There is a peculiarity here, or rather a subtle difference – the literature states TNE means students do not have to leave home, but in the case of the TNE programmes being delivered in Singapore, students are still leaving home (Myanmar) to study via TNE. Therefore, TNE may reduce brain drain, but students who travel to live in foreign countries for study are more likely to develop the language skills, cultural competencies and social capital to remain and work overseas after graduation, rather than return home.

The Sri Lankan CEO felt that where there was once war there is now peace (referring to civil war in Sri Lanka). Previously, she suggested, people just wanted to get out of Sri Lanka. She noted that by the time students do master's level study, they're pretty much set in their ways in Sri Lanka. Their 'tentacles are too deep' she said, to uproot themselves.

One last point made by the UK Dean was that the qualifications lend themselves to a British curriculum, but partners should then ask their own subject matter experts to contextualise and add their own flavour.

At the programme level, this question produced several sub themes and categories, some similar to those drawn out above such as brain drain and have been included. The sub themes will be discussed in the order they appeared.

The Singaporean programme lead felt that brain drain was not a risk but a wakeup call for these countries who need to understand that it is time to up-lift and up-grade themselves. Brain drain is evident she felt as foreign students do end up staying in Singapore for jobs. The students begin to think about themselves and not their whole society back at home, she felt this was quite common and accepted.

The Sri Lankan programme lead agreed that locals do see an opportunity when considering the job market to leave Sri Lanka. He felt that this migration issue was due to the fact people love to move out to other parts of the world because of lifestyles that they [abroad] portray.

The UK programme lead suggested that brain drain used to happen but now globalisation has helped to move away from that idealistic way of thinking, as you can now work anywhere you want. This UK viewpoint differs from the host institutions where the notion of brain drain is still apparent, evident and accepted.

Home Situation & Challenges

The home situation seemed like a relevant place to begin regarding any advantages and disadvantages of being able to study on a programme, which is offered in a country different to where it was originally validated. The Singaporean programme lead felt that their institution was providing a real opportunity for individuals to upgrade themselves. She saw this as a second chance for some students. The Sri Lankan programme lead felt that current education systems in the country were inward looking rather that outward especially for resources and global market considerations. Therefore, there appears to be a gap between what is offered in country and expectations globally. One of the reasons he felt was the absence of national policy in Sri Lanka for education and how the education system in Sri Lanka not being structured, thereby limiting options available for students. The UK programme lead felt that the students studying for a UK degree in their home country should actually feel that are getting more than attending a local institution, getting a local degree.

This perception of studying a local degree compared to an international one, brings into question what the students are comparing. The results from this conversation with all three programme leads suggest, students feel an international degree offers programmes with higher standards and are of better quality compared to local degrees.

Standards have been alluded to in the literature. As the regulation in any jurisdiction determines the quality standards required of an educational program independent of quality standards in other jurisdictions for transnational education, there is both convergence in a common understanding of quality standards at a high level and divergence in the local interpretation and application of such standards. Conversely, this gives rise to potential conflict, competition and confusion where more than one set of standards is applicable. It is therefore timely to analyse how quality assurance mechanisms apply across borders and how this might impact practically on both staff and outcomes for students.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies were discussed in Singapore and the UK. The Singaporean programme lead has initiated class discussions in her seminars for group work activities and has had to ‘teach’ the students how to interact – this is however questionable as students all have different personalities and traits – can interaction really be taught? She ‘tells’ the students how they should respond in certain situations – again this is something which is not evident in teaching in the UK on masters' level programmes, and certainly not encouraged as good practice. This cultural difference is worth noting. On other occasions, during my visits, the Singaporean programme lead has suggested that in the East, there is 'mothering' of the students which takes place. I think the equivalent terminology to this in the UK is 'spoon-feeding' or 'hand-holding'. At level 7 (masters), UK HEIs anticipate students demonstrating independent learning and thinking.

The UK programme lead has said that he has promoted 'higher ways of thinking' to his foreign partners as he feels in Asian countries and their education system can be very operational. This is an interesting view point. The UK programme lead himself is a Sri Lankan, admits to understanding the psyche of Sri Lankan staff and students, yet is approaching this problem from a UK perspective. This included, he said, providing exposure to partners of new or cutting-edge ideas.

A clear distinction was made in this interview between quality assurance and quality standards. The UK programme lead felt that there was a tendency for academia to assume that the two mean the same thing, when in-fact they are completely separate. He has emphasised on many occasions that quality assurance is a process ensuring practices are being adhered to whereas quality standards, are set to achieve a prescribed level.

Finally, under this theme, the Sri Lankan programme lead added that it is always an advantage if you have someone who can communicate or argue well in English. It's not so much the content of the programme but the ability to follow a foreign degree – this afforded the distinctive difference.

The UK programme lead added, that a local problem could be faced whereby the University could increase the number of graduates leaving with a particular degree and flood the market.

This could result in reducing the impact on the job market and skills could go down. Perhaps deskilling the workforce?

Very little transpired form the operational level on this theme. Under managing operations staff expectations at the University and abroad, the UK operation's officer noted that it is very difficult to communicate via email and meanings of messages are lost in translation. He also stated the need to develop closer links with operations abroad. A suggestion of using a medium such as Skype could be used to overcome this challenge.

Under this theme the main advantages and disadvantages were noted. Cost and reliability were noted as the main advantages alongside being able to study at home – although this was not the case for Myanmar students studying in Singapore for a British degree. Both Singapore and Sri Lanka noted that due to cultural differences, students found that the local environment suited their learning styles better, as their needs were considered (Asian students remaining in Asia). In Singapore, the CEO pointed out the fact that students will still have to explain to a future employer about the type of programme they have done as TNE is still considered a new phenomenon for employers in Singapore. In Sri Lanka it was noted that as a private institution, they would not be able to provide a 'whole' student experience as the students would get if they were actually studying at the University. Finally, the UK lead felt that the onus to contextualise material was put onto the partners abroad and perhaps we need to look within the University and see how we support the contextualisation process. TNE was generally viewed as an opportunity and ideas such as brain drain were not given much credence from a UK perspective.

4.5 Theme 5: Quality Assurance Practices

All three hierarchical levels were asked about this theme. At the strategic level, the question asked how a HEI can achieve high quality in its programmes. The sub themes and topics that transpired from the interviews were vast and covered much breadth as quality management was the main focus of the study. Twenty-six sub themes emerged from the conversations. However, for ease of analysis and conciseness, only a selection will be discussed here.

Partnership Qualities

The Singaporean CEO began with partnership qualities by stating for high quality programmes, good students are needed. The analogy used was 'we can't turn rock into gold'. The quality of students he said depends on the student's motivation levels and not their academic ability. He added it is the students who have the grades, but who are not motivated, that cause the problem as they are probably studying for a degree because of their parents.

In Sri Lanka, the CEO noted my visits and the visits from Faculty X are important because as Link Tutors, we can view practice in place. This improves understanding between partnerships as face-to-face is important. She did say that perhaps it would be better if Link Tutors took a step back and allowed individual module tutors at the University to take over the ownership. In an ideal world this would be the case. Currently, certainly in the Faculty B, module coordinators feel that they are somewhat already over-burdened with local work and are unwilling to participate in such 'invisible' activities. Therefore, it is the Link Tutors who continue to manage the process.

This idea that University Link Tutors should step back and allow University tutors to takeover is an interesting one because there has been much debate at the University regarding 'taking ownership' of the modules and students by respective module coordinators. However, there is a conflict of interest. Individual module tutors at the University do not feel these students are their students – as they have quite often stated in meetings that they are burdened with TNE for no extra reward or gain. There are no fancy flights or hotels for them to stay in. No chance to visit these exotic locations so why should they bother? Whereas Link Tutors get to travel and meet with individuals who are engaged in this activity and therefore have a sense that the right is theirs. A consequence of this is that local module coordinators feel it is the Link Tutors who should carry the extra work loads, not them. Therefore, in the managing expectations section, the UK Dean noted earlier that expectations of Link Tutors and others need to be managed better. There is little reason to support giving tutors at the University work to mark and verify for invisible cohorts of students, even though they are the module coordinators for these modules in the UK.

Attributes of Both Parties

Both Sri Lankan and UK strategic leads discussed attributes of both parties. The Sri Lankan CEO stated that regular contact is important that emails don't necessarily convey the entire essence of the message. With Faculty X, she noted they have 15-minute Skype session every two weeks where issues and problems can be sorted swiftly. The UK Dean noted that good working relationships are important, and the students overseas must feel that they are the University's students.

This notion of culture and western tutor reluctance has been discussed in the literature. There are further concerns with intercultural contact that is at the heart of a TNE arrangement. Western teachers' preparedness to engage with a potentially dramatically different cultural and educational settings are justified if the motivation for entering into a TNE agreement is seen as primarily economic on both sides. This unpreparedness for the new cultural and educational situation could be attributed to the exporter institutions' concern with establishing partnerships primarily as the means of generating revenue or gaining an international profile, neglecting in the process the sustainability of quality and equality of the partnership.

Quality Assurance Practices

The next questions considered QA practices. The Singaporean CEO noted that quality in programmes can only be measured and achieved if they are employment focussed and students can demonstrate that they do what the paper says they can. He added, the education becomes the quality check, the final verification. The Sri Lankan CEO stated that at her level, she was accountable to the board for numbers and quality and if needs be, she would be prepared to compromise on numbers, but not on quality. The UK Dean stated that he felt good progress had been made driving QA practices and standards.

The UK's reputation for QA has been noted in the literature where national quality assurance policy has supported the UK's strong international reputation for the quality of its HE system, whilst recent policy on immigration has provided challenges for international student recruitment and damaged the UK HE sector's reputation overseas. HEIs offering UK degrees must meet strict criteria to be awarded the title 'University', a process controlled by the QAA on behalf of the Privy Council. Some non-UK HEIs operate in the UK, but they cannot offer UK qualifications without partnering with a UK HEI.

Sharing Best Practice

Asking about sharing best practice, the Sri Lankan programme lead suggested that as the programmes are running across three regions, Sri Lanka, Singapore and the UK, we should be talking to one another. She suggested that she would like her staff to visit us in the UK a few times a year to experience how things work at ground level. This suggestion has been presented to the Senior Leadership Team at the university and will be implemented. The UK Dean also suggested that partners should feel they are able to 'pick and choose' aspects of practice from the UK.

Student Perspectives

When asking about student's perspectives, the Singaporean CEO noted that one in two students have a degree in Singapore. Employers in Singapore are now looking for what graduates can actually do in practice, rather than just the piece of paper.

The Sri Lankan CEO revealed that the teaching team discovered recently that students did not require help with subject matter, but how to structure assignments and how to reference properly. Therefore, they have had to recruit someone specifically for academic writing and support where staff can also come up to speed.

The UK Dean noted that the students abroad needed to have a student voice which is equally important as at the home provision.

This support for students has been stated in the literature…. two government-funded Prime Minister's Initiatives (PMIs) for international education focused on growing international student numbers, and helping HEIs develop overseas partnership activities along with support services for students. The HEA has produced publications and resources to support those working with international students. More recently its Internationalisation Frameworks designed to support wider internationalisation of the curriculum for all students by preparing 'all graduates to live in, and contribute responsibly to, a globally interconnected society'.

Measures & Managing

Discussion followed regarding measures and managing quality. The Singaporean CEO said that they would like their students to be portfolio centric; this will help differentiate them from others who also have the same degree. He was referring to measures and managing student outputs. He suggested there appears to be a cultural shift – now that everyone appears to have a degree, it is a question about what you can do. What abilities you have? How will you demonstrate those abilities?

Whereas, the Sri Lankan spoke about programme level responsibility. She felt that she needed people within programme management who would be responsible for quality and quality alone. This has been achieved she feels by recruiting a programme head who looks solely after quality assurance and quality of delivery.

The UK Dean stated that there was now an established TNE group based at the faculty where ideas and best practice for TNE were being shared. He felt issues can now be addressed collectively thereby sharing ideas. He also added, where there may be weaknesses in processes at the moment, annual monitoring will help to review progress year on year. He suggested the process as iterative for developing indicators of quality.

The Sri Lankan CEO suggested, looking in form the outside, it appears at their end that the University and the faculties have an idea of what TNE is and they not filtering this down to other faculty members. She feels there is a tendency of non-cooperation and a lack of understanding of problems faced at the partner institute by the University.

The UK Dean agreed with this somewhat as he said that for module tutors the franchise arrangement did not provide a reasonable staff experience. He questions if we can actually resource this activity efficiently and effectively? He warned, when we are talking about managing partnership expectations, its managing in-house expectations as well.

The efficacy of international strategies, staff relations and QA relating to the comments made above, have been discussed in the literature and has been mentioned earlier. Globalisation has introduced concerns about quality assurance and international competitiveness in Asian higher education, for both universities and countries. Partnership arrangements maybe undermined. Ensuring that the quality of cross-border education meets both local and international standards has become a challenge in many nations, particularly in most Asian nations which only developed their quality assurance in the early twenty-first century. This points to the need to build capacity - particularly in the internationalisation dimension – for national quality assurance agencies which can evaluate cross-border education by foreign educational providers, or jointly by both local and foreign institutions.

Possibility of like-for-like

To begin with, at the tactical level, the first question under this theme asked programme leaders if it was possible to have the same learning experience studying at a collaborative partner of a University compared with the University itself. The Singaporean programme lead stated definitely not 100% for like-for-like. She suggested that student studying with them were 'guided' and were not fully independent. She felt this was not in line with what the University wanted from the student body as the teaching style was one of guidance. This was seen as being normal for the region and culturally appropriate.

In Sri Lanka, the programme lead felt the answer was both yes and no. He emphasised it was the conditions under which the programme was being delivered in Sri Lanka and the UK. In Sri Lanka he suggested, there could be a difference in infrastructure, library facilities etc which differ. Another, he suggested, was exposure to 'subject gurus' as UK Universities tend to invite subject matter experts from industry to share latest developments and knowledge in the field. There is no opportunity for local students to ask questions directly or to learn from these individuals – these elements are missing from the whole experience he felt.

The UK programme lead felt that it was impossible to have the same learning experience, but it is almost impossible to achieve it as well. In reality, he noted that some of the buildings where our partners are based are like office blocks, they don't feel or even look like campuses. These building, he felt, mimicked training centres and not education establishments.

Degree or Experience

Discussion led to reasons for doing a foreign degree. This was commented on only by Singapore and the UK. The Singaporean programme lead felt that if students were looking for the exact same learning experience then they should consider going to the UK. She stated, that the blatant fact that Myanmar students came to Singapore instead of the UK, which shows that students knew from the outset what they wanted and what they were looking for. She felt the Asian context suited these students, so they avoided the UK. This is debateable - students could have selected Singapore instead of the UK for a number of reasons such as cost and distance from home. The preference for Singapore is not clearly significant.

The UK programme lead conversely added, that the students are definitely looking for foreign exposure and are seeking that alternative experience, looking for something different.

The conversation moved onto student perspectives as the next sub theme. Again, only Singapore and the UK commented on this. The Singaporean programme lead vehemently stated that we should not assume the students cannot come to the UK for study, but generally it could be that expats or those on spouse visas have taken up the programme in Singapore. At this point it was felt that the programme lead needed to justify the reason for students studying in Singapore rather than the UK and was quite defensive.

The UK programme lead thought that it was difficult to say what the students wanted; it's likely that the students don't actually know what they want and it's their parents who want them to pursue it and fund it. A sentiment shared earlier by the Singaporean CEO.

Finally, under this question, the sub theme regarded what is actually being promoted – is it the degree or the experience? The Singaporean programme lead noted that their institution is only seeking Asian markets for marketing the programme, so they are encouraging the Asian context or learning experience. She gave examples of new markets such as India, China, Vietnam and Korea. She added only ‘Asian context’ countries will be sought due to the teaching and learning styles appreciated in these locations.

The Sri Lankan programme lead suggested their institution lacked resources to provide students with a wholesome learning experience. He suggested their institution was only able to provide students with links to the internet and books compared to other electronic resources. This, he felt, compared to other parts of the world, provided a substantial gap in resources thereby limiting the student experience.

The UK programme lead was very adamant that the partners were not buying the learning experience, and neither were they stating that they would provide the same experience. In fact, he strongly felt that they are selling the degree and really, there is no way they can match the experience.

Mirrored Practice

Another question put to the programme leads at the tactical asked if it was possible to ‘mirror’ practices and procedures across partnerships? In Singapore, the programme lead felt quite strongly about this – she said they could probably delivery what the University wants but certainly not ‘mimic’. She emphasised that each of the tutors have their own experience, capabilities and exposure and won’t be repeating the same as the University. This is in contrast to the CEO of the organisation as he stated they would have liked the whole package sent to them for direct delivery to students. In Sri Lanka the programme lead noted that practices have been mirrored but not completely formalised.

In the UK, the programme lead suggested it is possible, however, not everyone in all institutions are capable of replication. Some institutions are quite small, and he felt it was not really right to completely mirror practices.

The question here was concerned with trying to maximise common practice for procedures. The differing views suggest that perhaps to mirror does not automatically imply that quality assurance is guaranteed; in fact, from the statement above, to mirror has implied a copy-cat approach which gives a sense of inferiority and perhaps undermining the partner's own capabilities.

The same question was asked of the operation's leads – is it possible to mirror practices and procedures? Very brief answers were given here, and these featured under the sub theme of similarities. The Singaporean operation's officer felt that a lot of the practices are already quite similar for operations because of the nature of what they do and the expectation of the institution from CPE, just as we have QAA in the UK. No real differences were noted.

In Sri Lanka, the operation's officer noted that the practice of marking and second marking was being adhered to and they were trying their best, beyond this she struggled to add anything else.

The UK operation's officer stated that what they require remains exactly the same – be it a home or TNE programme. Really, he felt there were no major differences in operations which agrees with the opinion in Singapore about operations being procedurally the same.

Practice

This led conversations onto what actually happens in practice with policy and procedures. The Singaporean programme lead suggested that communication between partnerships is frequent and prompt, so they are fully informed regarding requirements.

But, the Sri Lankan programme lead felt that something was missing with understanding policy and procedures certainly for their tutors. He gave an example of the use of Moodle. Procedurally, he said it was difficult to adhere to all practices followed by UK tutors.

The UK programme lead suggested that in terms of procedures, there are some practical issues regarding first and second marking at partner institutes. The reason he suggested was that institutions abroad have fewer full-time staff and rely more on visiting lectures compared to the University. This sentiment concurs with Sri Lanka where they too employ visiting lectures who don't have the time to spend populating Moodle. Procedure and practice therefore are seen as add-ons, an inconvenience in some respects.

Commonality

Commonality featured earlier in strategy and was briefly mentioned under this theme. The Singaporean programme lead stated that they strictly adhere to all policy and procedures set out by the University. This towing of the party line suggested no ownership of the programme but rather a tick-box exercise. In Sri Lanka, the programme lead suggested that currently staff have their own ways of thinking how things should to be done compared to how they ought to be done. Again, this reiterates the inconvenience of practice and procedure. The UK programme lead stated that although we are making sure quality assurance is adhered to within partnerships, he wasn't so sure about quality standards though.

Ensuring Quality

Under this question for ensuring quality, tactical level programme leads discussed their perceptions of ensuring quality. In Singapore, it was noted that quality and standards are followed. They attempt to contextualise all content which is delivered for students. The institution in Singapore has an internal pass rate which must be achieved of 90% but, the programme lead states that this can only be achieved as it depends on the quality of the students.

The Sri Lankan programme lead added that that they struggle to put quality assurance in place as they do not yet have a formalised process. He suggested if five lectures were asked about the quality process, you would get five different responses.

In the UK, the programme lead thought that similar standards have been achieved, it is just a question of monitoring them now. He would be happy to place certain modules in the front of the QAA, not all of them though. This programme lead added another dimension – as he himself is a Sri Lankan, he said that he can understand the Asian mentality of working. He feels that Asians have a very structured way of working (a generalised opinion) and if told to follow a process, then they will adhere to it. They want operational guidance he added.

Quality assurance practices have been noted in the literature as key challenges for universities, regulators and policy makers with TNE is quality assurance. Despite these developments, there are on-going and perhaps ever-increasing concerns about inequities and shortcomings in access to, quality of, relevance of, and investment in higher education. A closer examination of quality assurance policies reveals, however, many of these practices fail to theorise what quality means.

In addition, the UK operation's officer stated that to ensure better controls of marks, the partnerships should take over the master spreadsheets instead of UK module coordinators managing them, and enter the marks themselves. Currently, there is a reluctance from the University to hand over these documents to partners as some Link Tutors, including me, who believe that these are University documents and presently used as our internal auditing tools. Once the overseas work has been verified by the University, only then do respective Link Tutors confirm and enter the marks and final sign-off takes place. By removing this layer of 'security', we are leaving the documents open to misinterpretation and misuse. It is not to say that all partners or University module coordinators will act inappropriately; why leave the temptation thereby providing an opportunity for malice? Yes, there indeed needs to be an element of trust and after a period of time, once this trust has been developed, this practice can be arranged. From my personal experience, some partnership which have been running for over two years now, appear mature enough to take on this practice as I have developed good professional working relationships with individuals. These select individuals have strived for quality and demonstrated it as an integrated practice at the partnership. In addition, these few people have a long-standing employment record at the institutions and are employed full-time.

Defining Quality

The last question at the tactical level under this theme, asked about how a HEI can achieve high quality in its programmes? Many sub themes developed during this question. The first was defining quality. The Singaporean programme lead asked how you would know if quality has been attained? What is quality in the first place? She felt that quality is not fixed to one word or one perception. She felt that practice-based quality was very easy – rather dismissively she suggested that this was a simple case of delivering modules in the time span required by the university. The difficulty she added was from their end where they had to find practical activities within the classroom to ensure the module learning outcomes were being met.

In Sri Lanka, the programme lead felt that their institution should be working with the University as one collective team – not disparate. For example, he wanted to know more about University operations, how often programme teams meet and an opportunity for comparing ideas. He said that partnerships should not be working as multiple teams, but rather as one big team across the three regions.

The UK programme lead suggested that we need to define quality – one is quality assurance and the other is standard of provision. He felt that quality was open to varying interpretations as currently in HE, the FHEQ (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications), has been written very openly and is not explicit. However, he added, when it comes to TNE, we are the awarding body for our partners. So therefore, the quality that we are expecting should be at least the quality of our University.

Interviewees have suggested it is difficult to define quality, measure or manage it. In addition, opinions in the literature have differed somewhat amongst authors where TNE and quality are concerned. The time line (2008 – 2015) demonstrates a shift from negative opinions to positive. For example, comments such as *thinking has moved from the internationalisation of higher education often implies the pursuit of an international image of quality and prestige, in order to make the selected top institutions more globally competitive*; to, *TNE is a success story for the UK and is evolving and growing to include most UK universities. It contributes to capacity building and access to HE worldwide through providing quality assured routes to UK qualifications.* This shift in thinking provides a renewed sense of optimism where TNE does not solely exist for global competitiveness but quality assured access to HE.

Communication & Collaboration

Discussions led to effective communication & collaboration for partnership success. In Singapore, the programme lead suggested quality of communication could be increased for the students' experience; not through formal lectures though, but through interaction using 'facilitation'. She had to explain what this actually meant. She stated lecturing is one way of communication, facilitation is interaction. This implication is interesting. In the UK, we do interact whilst lecturing, whereas facilitation here sounds as if it is the activity which takes place in our tutorial sessions.

The Sri Lankan programme lead noted that more alignment was required and quality will improve within the collaboration if the University send more staff over for staff training and development sessions. The University should also provide opportunities for Sri Lankan tutors to give lectures to students at the University. Interaction is key and should be maximised.

In the UK, the programme lead felt that communication is important, but we need to collaborate more by bringing the two parties together. This ties in with what both Singapore and Sri Lanka have suggested. He advised that from the onset of the partnership, module coordinators from each region should be communicating together. He said that both parties can learn from each other.

The concept of learning styles has been debated widely in the literature. The rationale for identifying learning styles is that a 'one size fits all' teaching style is inherently exclusionary and inhibits efficient and effective learning. Recognition of students' learning styles is regarded by many educators as a vital part of an effective teaching strategy.

Staff Development

Considering staff development opportunities, the Singaporean programme lead felt that although we are collaborators, there needs to be unity in academic quality and standards and that can only be achieved if staff training is provided by the University. She suggested there needed to be a 'oneness' – sharing learning amongst UK and Singaporean tutors. She added this didn't need to be face-to-face but online media could be used.

The Sri Lankan programme lead agreed fully, in-house training and development programmes are a must and need to be provided for tutors at their institution.

In the UK, the programme lead agreed with both Singapore and Sri Lanka. He said we need to communicate and educate staff at partnerships. He mentioned something called an 'educative strategy' and implied there is a need for this. He suggested that the lecturers abroad needed a 'continuing learning process' and that issues arise year on year and if not resolved, then the same mistakes will reoccur.

Staff concerns at host institutions have been alluded to in the literature. The benefits of these twinning and franchise arrangements to students, host institutions as well as the foreign providers are many and varied. However, issues related to quality of teaching, relevance of course content, admission requirements, testing and evaluation, and qualifications of teaching staff have emerged as major concerns in the literature and have been addressed in the findings above.

Student Opinion

Next, discussions moved onto what students regarded as programme quality. The Singaporean programme lead felt that students are expecting more interactive learning rather than traditional lectures and tutorials. A stark difference was noted in delivery of modules. The Singaporean programme lead said that they deliver lectures for three hours and a tutorial for one hour – not leaving enough time to answer questions etc. The same modules delivered in UK follow a different method of delivery – one-hour lecture and a two-hour corresponding tutorial (within a three-hour timetabled slot). This difference suggests that in Singapore, far too much time was given to theoretical delivery compared to practical, hands on tutorial time (or facilitation as she called it earlier). Although she suggested they should move away from this type of delivery, she felt there was a restriction as only a certain amount of time was allowed for interactive, or hands on teaching and learning.

The Sri Lankan programme lead suggested as far as students are concerned, there should be complete alignment between what is taught in the UK and abroad. The example he gave was that if a student in Sri Lanka were to phone a module tutor at the University, would they get to hear the same response?

In the UK, the programme lead suggested that the delivery needs to be more customer (student) focussed. He emphasised that at the strategic level we are told that we need to deliver what the students want. However, he warns that students are still developing and maturing, and they don’t really know what they want, and we need to ensure what we decide to provide will help them to move on.

Commercialisation

The UK programme lead raised a concern under commercialisation. He warned that sometimes HE is seen as a business and students as customers and felt that this was the wrong kind of ‘mentality’ to have. He didn't agree with this notion but felt that it was the direction HE was travelling. He added, that TNE was a complex thing. If, he said, the provider was socially responsible, then they are looking to help a country move forward, rather than purely a financial or commercial benefit. However, he felt that universities are more business orientated so they may treat TNEs as cash cows – after three years or so, it will be time to move onto the next partnership and so on. Some of these concerns can be found in the literature. UK HEIs are complex, often with devolved management, so there can be a significant gap between corporate strategy and implementation at local levels. Many faculties, especially business schools, have their own approaches to internationalisation. It appears there is no common or standard approach in place. In addition, rapid expansion of transnational education has raised high expectations about its potential but comes with its own set of challenges. Its close association with the globalisation process has led to education being viewed as a commodity with a price, subject to the laws of demand and supply.

The operation’s officers were asked three questions regarding quality assurance practices. The first question asked if anything had to be changed at home for the partnerships (note: local changes have been noted earlier under section 4.3). It is clear to see form the discussion below that no responses were recorded from Sri Lanka. The interviewee struggled to respond and couldn’t answer what were perhaps seen as challenging and intrusive questions.

The first sub theme noted was local changes. The Singaporean operation's officer suggested that the main change noted was that students had to do an online enrolment – an alien practice till now.

The UK operation's officer noted that managing the student records was different – he gave the example of having students from Hong Kong where 12 out of 150 students had the same surname – Chan. There was also a cultural tradition where first names are not necessarily used so this 'proved tricky'. In addition, he noted that it was critical to operations that an agreed delivery schedule was made available as soon as possible so that operations would know which modules were expected in for exam board preparation.

Student Expectations

Expectations of students were considered. The Singaporean operation's officer felt that they had to play the middle man's role when errors were found during the online enrolment system. From the UK perspective, UK operation's officer noted that certificates and transcripts are normally sent straight to students for students on traditional University home programmes. But for TNE partnerships, these documents had to be posted out to the partnership for distribution. Also, delays in student graduations have occurred due to non-tracking of resits.

Similarities

Some similarities were noted; the Singaporean operation's officer found that they and the University's operations were functioning in a very similar way when considering processes. The UK operation's officer noted that relationships with operations in other regions could do with tightening up and working more closely. This will help to confirm exact dates rather than just months for deadlines.

Finally, under this question, the UK operation's officer suggested that in the future, operations should be smoother as more responsibility will be given to module coordinators overseas.

Currently, the Link Tutors manage all the mark sheets etc. and marks are transferred from Moodle directly to the mark sheets. He stated that stated that mark sheets will be given to the partnership to populate and send back. This will remove one layer of complexity and reduce another area for possible errors to occur.

The last question asked under this theme was how can a HEI achieve quality in its programmes and respective operations (home and abroad)?

Physical Presence

The first sub theme to emerge from this question was physical presence. The Singaporean operation's officer felt that the visits from the University where we met face-to-face with colleagues and students on campus, were helpful and aided understanding of the programmes and how they should run. She stated that it all comes down to effective communication and email doesn't always convey the message correctly. In addition, having a university presence is beneficial for students as it provides some reassurance and confidence in the programme. The Sri Lankan operation's officer mentioned a slightly different opinion; she agreed the only way is through good communication, emails, Skype etc., not just physical presence. The UK operation's officer noted that sometimes the partners can be seen as invisible people. Students in the UK can contact Faculty office or physically visit the front desk, it's the face-to-face entity he felt which was missing and this is the main difference under physical presence.

Current Processes

The next sub theme covered current processes. The Singaporean operation's officer felt that their operations for the University were running very smoothly and there were no immediate concerns. In Sri Lanka, the operation's officer was unable to comment. Whilst in the UK, the operation's officer suggested further transparency was the main issue regarding quality. He alluded to how sure can we be that due process has been followed for final marks? Is there a verification process which can be evidenced? Here, he also noted a reputational risk as the University must ‘rubber stamp’ the final certificates.

This concern regarding quality assurance as the control over academic quality is increasingly transferred to the foreign partner, has been mentioned in the literature. The risk of reputational damage to the home University is likely to increase. This ties in with the UK operation’s officer who recommends handing final mark sheets over to partner institutions. This transfer could potentially provide an increased opportunity for distortion of student results thereby compromising quality standards.

The UK operation’s officer added that different external examiners are receiving different experiences at exam boards. Some have commented that there is very little or no work for them to review whilst others have had full module boxes on Share Point (internal repository for documents at the University). The reason for this is that he felt module coordinators in the UK were not engaging or supporting the TNE process as they felt they were being ‘dumped’ with extra work. He added that external examiners are reviewing the TNE provision from a quality assurance perspective just like the QAA would do. The concept of TNE he suggested is fantastic – but we all need to get it right.

This theme, due to the nature of the research, has provided the greatest number of sub themes for consideration. The most salient points from the findings include defining and ensuring quality – what it is and how it is measured. Seeking high quality education has been stated and this can be achieved by having good working relations across TNE – primarily through increasing communication. To achieve this, taking full responsibility for the delivery of the quality were noted though sharing best practice, having effective programme management and some mirrored practice. Finally, it was alluded to that student opinions desired fully aligned programmes and a more customer focussed approach.

4.6 *Theme 6: Culture*

The tactical level programme teams were asked to comment if they felt culture played a role in managing TNE partnerships abroad. The reason for only asking questions from the tactical level is because they deal directly and primarily with students and programmes from differing regions. Seven sub themes emerged from the conversations. However, for ease of analysis and conciseness, only key examples have been included for each sub theme.

Defining Culture

The Singapore programme lead felt that there were different perspectives to consider when attempting to define culture. She suggested that if we are considering one's behaviour and beliefs, then yes there is a role. She added that the University's culture was one of authoritative, autocratic and that the partner's culture was more submissive. She felt quite strongly that their own value systems are not considered important and neither do we in the UK, take into account what their education system is in the first place.

The need to explain what was meant by 'culture' was needed here during the discussion. This is interesting as it shows that the word culture is interpreted differently by different cultures and regions. This, in itself, can cause misunderstanding and confusion without actually claiming that cultural differences exist in the first place. The Singaporean programme lead continued the conversation based on her own interpretation of what culture is. This shows transparency as there was no hidden agenda and words were not 'put into her mouth' so to speak, as no pre-determined definition for culture was given.

These suggestions made in practice are supported by findings in the literature as it mentions power hierarchies and the west being autocratic.

The Sri Lankan programme lead felt that there was no room for culture and dismissed it. He felt technology has surpassed these boundaries. Culture, he felt, only really had a place at home. Delivery is done in the British way so they are forced to understand otherwise they will be left behind. In Sri Lanka he noted that this impetus from the West is what people actually want and culture in no way is a barrier to this.

The UK programme lead (himself a Sri Lankan) felt quite strongly that culture definitely needed to be understood as if we didn't, then it would be impossible to deliver TNE. He suggested that culture should be appreciated the moment an agreement is being discussed between the partnerships. For example, he suggested if we are partnering with an institution where corruption is part and parcel of how they operate, then it is important for us to understand the underlying norms of that society. This view differs significantly from the viewpoint and stance of the Sri Lankan programme lead where the UK programme lead – also a Sri Lankan – feels quite the opposite and suggests culture does have a place.

The remaining categories were not discussed by the Sri Lankan programme lead as he did not give much value to culture and its existence, therefore no associated implications were given, as the discussion was limited. This demonstrated a difference of opinion in regions regarding culture. UK and Singaporean Tactical level colleagues agreed that culture existed and should be accounted for whereas in Sri Lanka, it was not given a chance to be discussed as a topic in its own right. This shows that perceptions and opinions about culture, at a local level, are not generalisable.

Differences

Considering differences in culture, the Singaporean programme lead felt that there were definitely differences. She suggested that words can be misinterpreted and understood differently whereas face-to-face expressions and body language can be clearer. She suggested that the institution feels that they are unable to communicate their belief systems to the University, as the University may be offended. She felt that somehow the University would interpret this as damage to standards and quality and the partners abroad are solely responsible for these. Just because the programmes have been written for a British audience, should the University imply that they are generic enough for everyone in all regions? Interestingly, she also referred to ‘old British standards’ still being in existence.

The UK programme lead felt that there were educational differences relating to culture which had to be noted. He suggested, these differences were similar to the way we consider higher orders of learning (referring to Bloom’s taxonomy). He mentioned a stark example where after the tsunami in Sri Lanka, whilst working with a disaster management team, funding had been made available to rebuild houses from a donor funded scheme. Houses were built as complexes, but no one wanted to occupy them. The reason was that every house looked the same and houses in Sri Lanka are unique as you typically self-build in rural areas. Because individuals were given these houses as a part of the scheme, they accepted them but gave them away.

Challenges

Challenges too have been stated. The Singaporean programme lead suggested that cultural perceptions may not be the same in UK and Singapore. But, they are bound by what the University wants, and this can be challenging. This is where there can be a breakdown in communication she added. This has been the case with some other universities she stated, where there has been misinterpretation and the partner has ended something completely different and this has then escalated. She was clearly very passionate at this point and things became quite personal about herself. She suggested that she is fully qualified and understands how students should be assessed – she should not be questioned about being too lenient or strict.

The UK programme lead felt that individuals in partner regions think differently, due to their culture. He suggested it's not that they don't understand education, their perceptions are different and if need be, the UK can educate them (alluding to there is a need to educate them as he himself has adapted to western ways of thinking as a Sri Lankan himself). He felt behaviours can only be understood when you see the manner in which a person is acting. To achieve this, he felt there should be opportunities to come together such as during the summer.

Practice

Finally under culture, the Singaporean programme lead discussed what actually happens in practice. She understood that their institution had to adapt their practice and academic standards to deliver to the University's standards. This being the case, she felt they still have their own culture and belief system and sometimes these can clash between the UK and Singapore. There is no room for negotiation she felt as the University is the degree awarding body. She felt that the institution had no real value and that they are the hidden partner. She added, sadly, that Singapore had to be submissive for things to work.

The UK programme lead felt that there is a need to understand, educate and to learn from each other. The structures in the UK are quite different to other parts of the world therefore the complexities need to be discussed. The partnerships are by no means equal he felt – it's just an agreement. This is an interesting point, both the Singaporean programme lead and the UK programme lead who is a Sri Lankan felt that there isn't equality in the partnerships. These issues need to be addressed as these sentiments can cause resentment and be seen as 'hierarchical submissiveness' for the host institution.

The operations team were also asked if they felt culture played a role in managing TNE partnerships. Three sub themes emerged – culture does/does not play a role, managing students and staff expectations and overcoming challenges. Again, very little input was received from the Sri Lankan operation's officer.

Role of Culture

The Singaporean operation's officer that culture does play a role as students from different backgrounds are used to studying in different ways. In addition, she felt that culture was not really a major issue as they have lecturers working in their institution who are not from Singapore and able to adapt to the requirements set out. In addition, she felt there were no language barriers as for most people, English was their first language. An interesting point has been made here. This lady felt that any differences or variations in culture are reduced or negated, if you all speak a common language – in this case English.

The UK operation's officer agreed that culture did play a role and gave an example about plagiarism being an issue in Hong Kong as this was done to a simple fact that students (and staff) didn't understand what we in UK class as plagiarism. Out of the 150 cases perhaps only a handful were actual cases (deliberate). These differences in understanding he felt, could be put down to culture.

The Sri Lanka operation's officer suggested too that culture did not matter as this was education. People do have different teaching styles and the cultures may be different, but the education, learning outcomes and everything else is basically the same.

This interviewee demonstrated much trepidation and wanted to present the 'right' answer. There was definitely a power struggle in the room with me as the interviewer and she as the respondent. A very uncomfortable setting.

Culture, and its consideration for partnerships has been mentioned in the literature as inherent is almost all definitions is that culture is a pattern of thinking, feeling and acting that is rooted in common values and conventions of particular societies. In addition, HEI's managers need to understand the cultures and business practices in the regions where they would like to operate. In countries such as China, Korea and Singapore, the Confucian model moulds higher education systems. In any educational context, internationalisation involves creation of an open, tolerant and cosmopolitan University experience extending over international, national, institutional and personal issues. Consideration ought to be given to normative and accepted behaviours – such as routines, procedures, conventions, roles, strategies, codes, cultures, beliefs and organisational forms. These form part of social obligations on behalf of the HEIs.

Managing Expectations

Whilst discussing managing expectations, the Singaporean operation's officer noted that programmes from the UK expect students to apply and not just repeat text. This is where she felt students had to be managed as language barriers certainly existed (different from what she suggested earlier as English being a common language), but the lectures still try their best to teach the student the right way of doing their assessments. Also, there has been a need identified on how to write academically.

The UK operation's officer felt that communication was the biggest challenge between staff at the University and at partnerships. It's really differences in location and not really in culture. His personal experience has shown that the people abroad have been incredibly polite and willing to help to get things right.

Overcoming Challenges

Finally, over-coming some of these challenges the Singaporean operation's officer suggested that there is always an orientation programme with the students so that they fully understand what the standards and expectations of the programme are. The University's induction helps very much to explain clearly what the University is offering and what the requirements of the programme are. The students do need to understand, she felt, exactly what is right and wrong.

The Sri Lankan operation's officer felt that the programmes have only started recently and therefore, their institution is still learning how to adapt to the University's systems and procedures.

The UK operation's officer noted that some challenges have only been resolved by tutors physically visiting the partners abroad and speaking to staff and students about local issues. It is not always possible to resolve issues at a distance.

This theme began with the Singapore programme lead attempting to define what culture actually was, before giving her opinion about it. In addition, she felt that the University was the authority on matters and local opinion counted for very little – in fact, was dismissed. She felt that culture definitely had a role to play. This is in contrast to the Sri Lanka programme lead who felt that there was no 'place' for culture in HE, as technology had surpassed any problems that culture may have caused (indirectly accepting the existence of culture). The UK programme lead felt that if culture was not accommodated for, then TNE would be a disaster and destined to fail. At the operational level, the Singaporean participant felt that students had to adapt to learning in new ways as they were used to methods such as rote learning. The UK operations felt that communication and understanding what is actually meant by plagiarism, for example, needed addressing. He felt that these differences in understanding arose from the distance of the partnerships and not necessarily culture.

4.7 *Theme 7: Postcolonialism*

Topics such as the colonial mind-set and the colonial era have already been addressed above in other themes. However, a specific question asking about the potential existence of a new form of colonialism was asked at the tactical level. Five sub themes emerged from the conversations. However, for ease of analysis and conciseness, only key examples have been included for each sub theme.

Agreement

Out of the three regions, only the UK programme lead (himself a Sri Lankan) stated that he agreed these TNE relations may be viewed as a new form of colonialism. The UK, he felt, is certainly in a better position to exploit due to the link from history. But he said he wouldn't call it colonialism, but rather capital exploitation.

Disagreement

Both the Singaporean and Sri Lankan programme leads disagreed that there was a new form of colonialism. However, the Singaporean programme lead appreciated that it may seem as if it is colonialism due the number and presence of British Universities, but it was not the case and just an opportunity for students. The Sri Lankan programme lead agreed that the concept of colonialism does not come into play yet there may be extremists in Sri Lanka who don't want anything to do with the West.

Colonial relationships have been discussed in the literature suggesting how colonisers not only shape the culture and identity of the colonised but are in turn shaped by their encounter in a range of interesting and complex ways. Nor can the colonised people be regarded simply as innocent bystanders, which is why extreme views of a minority in Sri Lanka continue to oppose anything western.

Local Opinion

Under local opinion, the Sri Lankan programme lead noted that you do get locals who whilst they are in their student unions they are anti the West but once they graduate, they are some of the first people to seek out a UK master's programme. Local education in Sri Lankan universities is free, therefore when they study for a UK qualification it is seen as purchasing or buying the degree.

Considering local opinions, the UK programme lead noted that it is very difficult for locals to understand and interpret something like learning outcomes. Learning outcomes can be simple or vague – you could focus on social (local) concerns or purely on procedures and processes. The content may be the same for the UK and partners but is up to the local module coordinator what exactly they are trying to promote – this perhaps comes down to individual interpretation. He didn't know how you would explain or convey what a local module leader should know.

Student Viewpoint

From the students and their viewpoints on colonialism, the Singapore programme lead noted that the students understand they are only taking the qualification away and nothing else, they still maintain their own culture, values and belief systems. The Sri Lankan programme lead suggested that there is a demand for such programmes from the young generation – it is what they want, and the demand is huge. The UK programme lead suggested that students are very much driven by assessments, nothing else.

Britishness

The final sub theme noted by Singapore and the UK was Britishness. The Singapore programme lead noted that although the education programmes they deliver are supposed to be delivered in a 'British way', most graduates, like herself apply teaching in a Singaporean way. The UK programme lead said that he had to ensure that the overseas partners deliver quality assurance our way – the 'British way'. If the partner wants the same quality of programme then they too have to ensue QA is done correctly. The partnership has to share QA practices. In addition, he added, very few Asians would challenge the status quo and neither do they feel that the programme is theirs – the programme belongs to the University.

This final theme has found that none of the participants felt that there really was a new form of colonialism. Local conditions were seen important and the ‘British way’ was not seen as being the best way to manage the programmes at a local level but remained a requirement.

This chapter has compared all primary findings with secondary literature. The next chapter will present conclusions drawn from this analysis and discussion, thereby aiding recommendations and considerations for further work.

Chapter 5: Conclusions & Recommendations

This chapter begins by reflecting on the research undertaken and the EdD journey. The chapter also revisits aims and objectives in turn and examines if they have been met. In addition, it states contribution to existing knowledge from the thesis.

This research truly has lived through TNE development at the University and its partners in Singapore and Sri Lanka. Its efforts have included trying to un-pick the meaning and practices of quality, both culturally and for long-distance partnerships. As Link Tutor, the role afforded rare opportunities for me, gaining access to individuals in their places of work, providing unique insight into factors which promote or hinder quality assurance practices and development in regional workplaces.

The general findings of the investigation have identified the expectations of senior management teams are not always translated, entertained or welcomed by programme leaders at the tactical level. These middle-managers then have expectations from respective operations teams to ensure that quality is managed. The findings also illustrate the limitations of communication due to the relative distance of the partnerships.

Findings indicate the limited role the QAA plays in shaping practice across regions: how it is implemented and measured. In conclusion, there is evidence to suggest that senior managers need to translate the University's strategic vision and policy into localised practice, managing expectation of the 'home TNE provision' to ensure quality does not suffer the brunt of disgruntled colleagues. This has answered the initial question. It is possible to ensure academic credibility of TNE programmes in line with quality assurance standards set by the University. This is a reality and proposals for implementation will be discussed below.

5.1 Reflections

The research process evolved over the period of taking the EdD. During the taught elements of the programme, it was clear to me that that cross-cultural teaching and learning, alongside quality and its measures caused me much interest. This, by chance or luck, then translated into MSc Project Management being franchised abroad to first Singapore and then Sri Lanka. This opportunity guided the research to investigate further into how academic credibility can be achieved across borders, whilst trying to maintain a single source of quality assurance. As a Link Tutor, appreciating the unique and regional understanding of colleagues and local practice, highlighted some cause for concern, thereby instigating this study.

An initial semi-structured interview conducted during the pilot study helped to shape and provide some order amongst the chaos and plethora of the existing body of knowledge. The 9R panel further supported the ideas, broadening the scope of the research proposed. Initially, TNE, Quality and Culture were the main constructs of the research. Discussions during the 9R aided the inclusion of policy, practice and postcolonialism.

The literature in chapter 2 provided insight from scholars, authors and studies already conducted in the field. Published work which inspired this work, and which can be seen as close to this study, can now be appreciated.

My work was first influenced by a pilot study conducted by the British Council in 2013 in conjunction with DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service). The pilot study noted that there was a real need to understand local impact of TNE in host countries as this had already been done extensively for providers, but not receivers. The study recommended that further understanding from regional practitioners was required as very little work had been done on host institutions and their viewpoints. This formed the basis for this work and has been the underlying principle for investigation.

In addition, the University Alliance Report in 2014 questioned what kind of quality assurance system would be fit for a more complex new world of expanding higher education? The outcome included nine recommendations for the future:

1. Single body of QAA
2. Risk based quality system
3. Risk assessment and responses
4. Parity of information
5. Student access to complaints
6. Institute programme failure management
7. Fairer admissions – impose entry requirements
8. Improve retention
9. Quality of cost compared to student opportunity

This study considered point 4 – parity of information.

Therefore, taking on board the need to understanding regional practitioner viewpoints at host institutions as stated by the British Council (2013) above, and then recommendation 4 from the University Alliance Report (2014), I have been able to assimilate the research and associated findings into one study.

Also, in the literature, there is a regulatory framework which Healey (2013) presented from WTO and GATS, where they have encouraged international trade. However, the framework notes four modes of education but does not state how these should be managed for quality of standards. Nevertheless, this study has focussed on the third mode of delivery as defined by the framework – Commercial presence, where is states delivering programmes abroad by a private college but awarded by the University (either franchised or validated).

There are other, direct comparisons of research findings to the literature, which can be found in chapter 4. Here, I have related key points in the literature which have directly influenced the study and findings. The three influences noted above were then further enhanced by seven key themes which transpired from the literature. These became the crux of the primary research.

5.2 Phases of the research Journey

Classification of regions and hierarchies constituted the first phase of the research. Individuals were hand-picked and the questions were targeted to maximise thematic discussion during semi-structured interviews. The issue of elite interviewing and power hierarchies were lessened but were not diminished by arranging and organising the interviews when and where the participants chose.

Although a small-scale sample of nine interviews, with varying length of recording time, the transcriptions took weeks to capture and classify. The time taken, although arduous, provided an opportunity to be close to the data and understand the narrative being replayed and listened to. From the transcriptions, distilling the essence even further for the results section, demanded sub theme formation as these categories materialised from the discussions. It would have been remiss and unjustified to disregard the comments made and discussed, as these were sources of rich data.

The sub themes aided analysis and discussion of findings, presented in the results section above. Where findings from the interviews complied with literature, these were drawn out in the analysis and discussion chapter, noting any contestations too.

5.3 Key findings of the Research

Key findings will be summarised with respect to the aims and four objectives of the research.

The aims proposed originally for this study were:

1) To investigate if differences in regional and cultural opinions can be harmonised for effective quality management for TNE programmes and their delivery.
2) To provide a TNE framework to improve the management of quality related practices, thereby improving communication and reporting structures for current TNE agreements across the University's faculties, global partnerships and for application in the sector.

Both these aims have been fulfilled through this study by discussing regional variations and proposing the framework which will be presented below.

Objective 1: To identify theoretical norms and issues currently underpinning TNE growth and development.

The main findings began with a review of terminology and working definitions for TNE. The vast provision and its intricacies were noted and adapted for activities at the University. A distinction between foreign and international students was made and supported by OECD claims and statistics for growth. The development of Asian markets was considered with an emphasis of foreign academic patterns being adopted – namely from the west. The sudden growth has highlighted concerns from some authors about regulation and keeping track of the scale and growth of TNE activities. In addition, the actual collection of data and statistics for TNE growth and development is a relatively new activity – not even ten years have passed since the first audit by HESA. The main norm identified indicated that there are now more international students registered for the awards from English HEIs that are studying wholly offshore then on universities' home campuses. These staggering statistics have been supported by tables and maps. The main issue which has emerged with this rapid growth of TNE is the profound implications for policy makers in both home and host countries. In addition, the globalisation process has led education to be viewed as a commodity with a price – subject to the laws of demand and supply. This idea of commodification and commercial gain has blurred the lines between social and human capital, benefit of one as opposed to benefit of many or society as a whole. Other issue noted were to do with quality and assurance of provision due to the rapid expansion of the education market. This raised the question of TNE being a rubber-stamping exercise and certificate producing mill rather than providing a quality learning experience.

Another issue suggested a lack of consideration for norms with the multiculturalism of education. One sided approaches can lead to resentment, this has been supported in the primary findings. In addition, the primary data suggested there are tensions and challenges which exist, as noted in the literature, but these tensions would exist in any collaborative provision. One of the last issues to note was the risk of TNE programme quality being degraded and the reputational risk to UK HEIs.

Objective 2: To explore characteristics of quality management as a result of the rapid expansion of the education 'market'.

Changes to TNE education due to the student growth of the provision have been noted and discussed in quality and TNE. The section begins with recognition that many governments have found traditional academic measures and controls to be inadequate given the sudden expansion of the TNE arena. Quality should ensure stakeholder confidence and fulfil expectations or measures for maintaining minimum thresholds and benchmarks. This is now becoming more difficult to measure and gauge using existing practices and external pressures on universities are increasing such as competition, government scrutiny and external quality auditing. The globalisation of education implies that the home and host institutions will be in constant pursuit to maintain an image of quality and prestige, to ensure sustainable competitive advantage.

A key change noted for University and policy regulators has been the increased risk to reputation of individual HEI based purely on 'perceived' quality of their programmes. Maintaining a degree of control for quality proves virtually impossible as local host staff operate in an 'alien culture' away from the awarding home HEI. The absence of face-to face or regional visits has driven this change and challenge. A change in the characteristics of some HEI has been noted as easy profits could tempt them to trade-off quality against the potential of higher revenue. As control is increasingly afforded to the host institution, this correlates to the increase in reputational risk for home HEIs. However, the QAA do audit overseas franchised provisions in order to mitigate such risk, but much damage can be done since QAA visits are not done on an annual basis. To ensure the University minimises this potential risk, regular visits, quality audits, collaboration through communication and sharing best practice with partners is essential. It doesn't have to be the 'British way' as highlighted in the primary data. There can be a degree of control given to the partner institution, to manage and deliver quality measures and standards as they see fit for local interpretation. This should ensure agreeing mechanisms early on in the partnership to ultimately feed into the University's quality requirements for QAA. This should reduce local frustration, potential conflict, misinterpretation of quality measures and an agreement on 'one set of standards' for an effective quality management system; thereby reducing tensions and challenges to do with quality. However, this does not detract away from the responsibility of the University to still maintain close monitoring of these mechanisms through local visits – this cannot be achieved at a distance. There needs to be a degree of mutual understanding and trust – on both sides.

Objective 3: To explore the extent to which cultural variations (East v West) may shape Transnational Higher Educational strategy.

Cultural variations were noted for differences in the literature and in practice. There are warnings presented where cultural differences could lead to false assumptions, leading to failures of TNE operations. These cultural differences were shared in the primary data where differences, challenges, managing expectations and culture in practice were noted. Learning styles of students have been mentioned in both the literature and the primary data collected. However, the primary data also noted staff teaching styles can vary to accommodate local learning styles. This correlation is very important. The University must understand there are differences in culture, and we need to engage with the partners to ensure they have a clear understanding of the students' learning styles and are able to adapt teaching styles accordingly. This does not mean that the programme or module learning outcomes will not be met; conversely, we must trust, that the partner institutions who have already been assessed pre-franchising, are fit for purpose. The University's degrees in the past have certainly been written for British audiences but having recently undergone an exercise called 'Transforming the Curriculum (TtC)'. One of the five key principles to be demonstrated under TtC is internationalisation – both within the curriculum and for TNE delivery.

The East-West cultural divide has been noted in the literature but was also a key component of discussion in the interviews. For example, the literature stated that typical Chinese based educational systems – such as those in Singapore – tend to cram knowledge for knowledge accumulation rather than application or evaluation. The primary data agreed that there were differences in academic culture, but local tutors are aware of these differences and have local knowledge and practice to deal with this – still delivering the requirements of the University. In addition, it was noted that when overseas partners are seeking new markets and regions to attract students, they will only seek students in Asian markets as the teaching and learning styles, educational systems and academic cultures were similar to their own region. There appears an affinity amongst certain parts of the world.

For the University, there would be merit in spending time and resources to ensure contextualisation of local content in line with cultural traditions, but this would be at the expense of the institution and onerous for multiple partnerships in various regions. However, there does need to be a conversation had about culturally-rooted perceptions and practices and how these influence student-centeredness especially when in conflict with Western values and norms. There is an agreement amongst authors that improving cross-cultural communication can only really be achieved if the home institution does not impose its values and practices but adapts and moulds to the host institution.

Objective 4: To investigate postcolonial discourses and if exporter countries, previously ruled by imperial powers, still experience power-based relationships.

Much has been commented upon from a postcolonial viewpoint in the literature. From a historical note, colonial powers have been responsible somewhat for the widespread institutionalisation of education systems in postcolonial nations. Some of these developments helped to define shared norms regarding educational rights and educational development. The literature argues that in most Asian countries, TNE is a process of catching up with advanced countries. There is another sub-set of coloniality which is the geopolitics of knowledge – power relations that are historically and transnationally constituted. The literature states that TNE generally flows from more developed to less developed nation and this specific point was targeted in the interviews. The interviewees did not consider western universities entering their markets and delivering HE as a return of colonialism, yet they did feel there were power hierarchies. This was evident when we discussed the word partnership. A partnership implies equal footing, but this was not seen as being so in reality. The University was seen as the superior and the partnerships were considered inferior. Some of this stemmed from the fact that the partners felt they were not given autonomy or control over the programmes being delivered and that there was a feeling that everything had to be done the 'British way' otherwise it just wasn't good enough. This could be a realisation of what some authors have called the dialectic relationship between colonisers and colonised – where encounters can be shaped by colonisers. The interviewees at the partnerships were really stating that they should be recognised for who they are as academics in their own right, as subject matter experts. Participants felt the University should at least afford this respect to them.

To summarise, as a researcher, my understanding of my practice changed as has the practice itself. The study has enabled me to view the processes from an outsider's perspective, providing further evidence that current practice is unsuitable and there is an opportunity to change. Challenges faced during the journey have included facing difficult discussions, particularly relating to the 'British way' of doing things or having colonial power – I'd call it baggage - as I too am from the west.

5.4 Limitations of the Research

Research undertaken to question phenomena in practice with human norms and values, is going to come with its own set of challenges. These limitations should be appreciated to avoid issues relating to reliability and validity of any future work undertaken in this area.

The main limitation is the small sample size of nine. Nonetheless, the rich data generated from the interviews has been immense and allowed for diverse opinion and a range of responses to be recorded, transcribed and analysed. Although participants were cross-regional and cross-hierarchical, they only represent a modest fraction of those working in universities and respective partnerships; there may be additional factors in other contexts which could impinge on quality and TNE success. However, if we consider one faculty in the University, then these nine participants are a representative sample in relation to the number of existing partnerships. All individuals involved were key players within the TNE set-up in the faculty and have been involved from the very beginning. This ensured they were relevant and held key information to help aid discussions. This was true for 89% of the participants interviewed but not for the Sri Lankan operation's officer as already highlighted in the discussion chapter above, for whom the interview proved difficult. The method of data collection gave the sample a voice. In addition, the semi-structured interviews also afforded extensive opportunity to discuss cross-border TNE partnerships, where little or no opportunity had been made available in the past and have provided generalisable findings.

Perhaps the study could have been enhanced further by comparing student views, experience and opinions for the programmes running in the University, Singapore and Sri Lanka. Initially, this was in the 9R proposal but due to the breadth of the task already being undertaken, it was advised that perhaps the focus should not be drawn towards students as this would be an enormous task in itself and may become unmanageable, detracting from the intended outcomes of the research.

5.5 Future research Opportunities

Research opportunities for TNE research are limitless. This research and its investigations could be conducted and compared with other regional Post-92 universities in the Midlands or bordering regions. This would provide additional qualitative data and factors, which could then influence current conventions of quality assurance and enhance shared ways of working. This would suggest improvements for cross-cultural communication and understanding multiculturalism of education, from a UK perspective of neighbouring universities.

A separate project could consider the student experience. Do students abroad really get a valuable learning experience? What benefits do they perceive? What are employers looking for? A longitudinal study could also be conducted on current cohorts of students abroad after a few years of achieving their TNE qualification. This would then provide a comparison of current perceptions versus student destinations and if TNE is meeting individual countries' educational goals, culture, priorities and policies.

5.6 Original Contribution to Knowledge in the field

New knowledge has been presented below as a conceptual framework for focussing on managing the TNE process before, during and after a partnership begins. The proposed framework can be used as a new way of managing quality and cross-border relationships. It can be adapted and shaped by both sides of the partnership to establish best practice at each level – Strategic, Tactical and Operational.

The contribution includes relevant, practical knowledge for new audiences like the layers of an onion. Both in the UK and internationally, the framework is useful as it can be adopted by anyone involved in the delivery of HE, even if they are new players. Internal organisational benefits of the framework are that it can used at the three hierarchical levels, by link tutors, CEOs, those involved in TNE strategy, tutors and other members of partnership institutions. External organisational benefits include the use the framework by Overseas partners, HE actors, other HEI institutions, the British Council and so on. This is a unique contribution of knew knowledge to the field of TNE.

This work is now of interest to JISC UK. Dr Esther Wilkinson who is Head of International at JISC UK is responsible for driving the development and delivery of JISC UK's international strategy, coordinating and providing a leadership role for international activities across the JISC UK's portfolio, and positioning these within JISC UK's vision and overall strategy. A key part of her role includes the strategic and business development of JISC UK's transnational education support programme. Having had an initial meeting via Skype with Esther's team, they would like to know more about how the framework works and could be implemented using technology. As one of the main contributions and findings from the study suggest communication is the route to enhancing success and reducing barriers – JISC UK would like to use technology as the medium by which to achieve this. Ongoing development will now follow as an output from this research.

I was also invited by JISC UK to join the TNE-Hub. This hub is a growing community of researchers and practitioners in transnational education, the TNE-Hub helps facilitate the exchange of good practice and research evidence to support the development of efficient and effective TNE strategies and activities. By transcending institutional boundaries and geographical distances, the TNE-Hub will enable joint research projects in the field of TNE and international higher education using technology to bring together the very best combination of researchers and practitioners worldwide. This has been the most valuable attribute from this research as there is now an avenue to disseminate the findings amongst likeminded research groups and organisations.

5.7 The Framework & Application

The framework has been modelled on findings from chapter 4, an authoritative analysis of primary and secondary findings. The driver for primary research came from the literature. There were gaps and suggested areas for research in the literature as noted above, and these formed the basis for primary research investigation.

A review of sub themes within each major theme has shaped each of the areas for further consideration. First, the comparative material was dissected by region and hierarchy. For example, at the strategic level (see Appendix B), each question from the interview was scrutinised for individual thoughts and opinions which were received as responses to the question. Secondly, these opinions were compared and tabulated, and sub themes drawn out using key word analysis. Sub themes or topics were created depending on the occurrence and frequency noted in data. If it was noted that certain topics were mentioned repeatedly, then these constituted a sub theme as seen as an important noteworthy point. This meant that these comments or ideas being recorded were significant as they occurred again and again – constituting a sub theme. This analysis was followed through for all 18 questions – six in each hierarchy.

Next, the sub themes were given the practical title of ‘units of quality’. This was important as the framework can only be applied if there are measurable outputs from the data which can be implemented in practice. All these units of quality can be measured and have been sorted by time into groups with respect to the maturity of the partnership – pre-launch, during and ongoing. These time-based groups have then had a colour coded system added to them. The colours indicate the importance of the groupings. Red indicates factors which must be examined ahead of launching a partnership. Green indicates factors which should be identified during partnership maturity. Yellow indicates factors which could be explored once the partnership is up and running. In addition, the red units indicate essential practices, these cannot be ignored and are critical to partnership success and quality management of programmes. Green units indicate continued best practice for the duration of the partnership and yellow units are additional ongoing indicators of success.

The units do not precede each other and do not take preference over one another within their colour schemes but must remain in their hierarchical groups. These units are not fixed but can be inter-changeable depending on the partnerships, their maturity and life-span. They can be re-arranged and ordered for priority – as agreed by both parties but keeping within their groupings and hierarchies.

These units of quality are critical success factors which must be noted, applied and measured to ensure academic credibility of transnational programmes. The framework provides guidance and a route to help HEIs, partnerships and other stakeholders with units of quality as indicators which must be overcome for the duration of the partnership. The framework is timely, hierarchically relevant and applicable.

A new and unique way of thinking about quality management of TNE partnerships has been proposed with the framework. Rather than a restrictive, regional based viewpoint, the proposed framework encourages collaborative practices across regions and for institutions. In addition, the framework provides an opportunity for hierarchical, institutional conversations to take place, improving communication internally and externally for the organisation. This will then improve reporting structures and provide transparency across the institution.

The practical nature of the framework ensures it can be used at any point during the partnership – either at the point of launch, during the partnership or for ongoing collaboration. The framework is multi-functioning and useful as it is accessible to all TNE practitioners, both sides of the partnership – surpassing regional boundaries, time-zone limitations, hierarchical barriers for a more considered harmonised approach.

The framework can be used by overseas partnerships when seeking to collaborate with HEIs overseas. The framework is not restrictive nor culturally dependent; it can be used by any institution seeking TNE, in any region of the world. The advantage of the framework for overseas partners is that colleagues will not have to second guess requirements for partnership collaboration from the provider institution (either the UK or elsewhere). The framework has provided units of quality for partnership success and a platform for discussions to take place with new HEIs pre-launch. The guess work has been removed.

The framework can also be used and applied by other UK HEIs, especially at the pre-launch phase. This will empower the HEI as consideration of each unit of quality, at each level, will help aid internal discussions and apply practical measures, with measurable outputs to aid success. These HEI's will avoid some of the pitfalls my HEI has experienced and can move forward at a quicker pace – leaving behind some of the ground work they would normally have been required to do (this does not include due diligence). The framework can be trusted and used as a guiding tool for partnership formation. It also has the capability of being adapted to suit each institution, taking into account nuances or peculiarities as you can add or remove units of quality, keeping in line with time and maturity of the partnership. UK HEIs can also use the model if they are already immersed in a partnership for continued best practice.

For my HEI, we now have a working TNE framework. This is my contribution back to my institution for supporting me through the EdD. As the framework can be applied pre-launch, during and ongoing in partnerships, I will meet with the VCO, share my findings, and recommend I take a TNE partnership at a time and apply the model to ensure academic credibility is being maintained. The VCO can also communicate with other HEIs to share the model for the common good in the HE sector.

The proposed framework should be considered alongside existing due diligence and QA practices which currently operate at the University, before and during partnership agreements. The framework has not been designed to replace or nullify existing practices – but in fact to compliment them further and to ensure academic credibility of programmes is maintained. The units of quality do not require any extra resources such as funding but will require time and effort to use as internal indicators for monitoring and progress purposes. The framework offers a realistic and practical approach to managing quality and TNE in-house. The framework can provide practical indicators for TNE practitioners – in any region and rank in educational institutions, their partners and fellow TNE practitioners in HE.

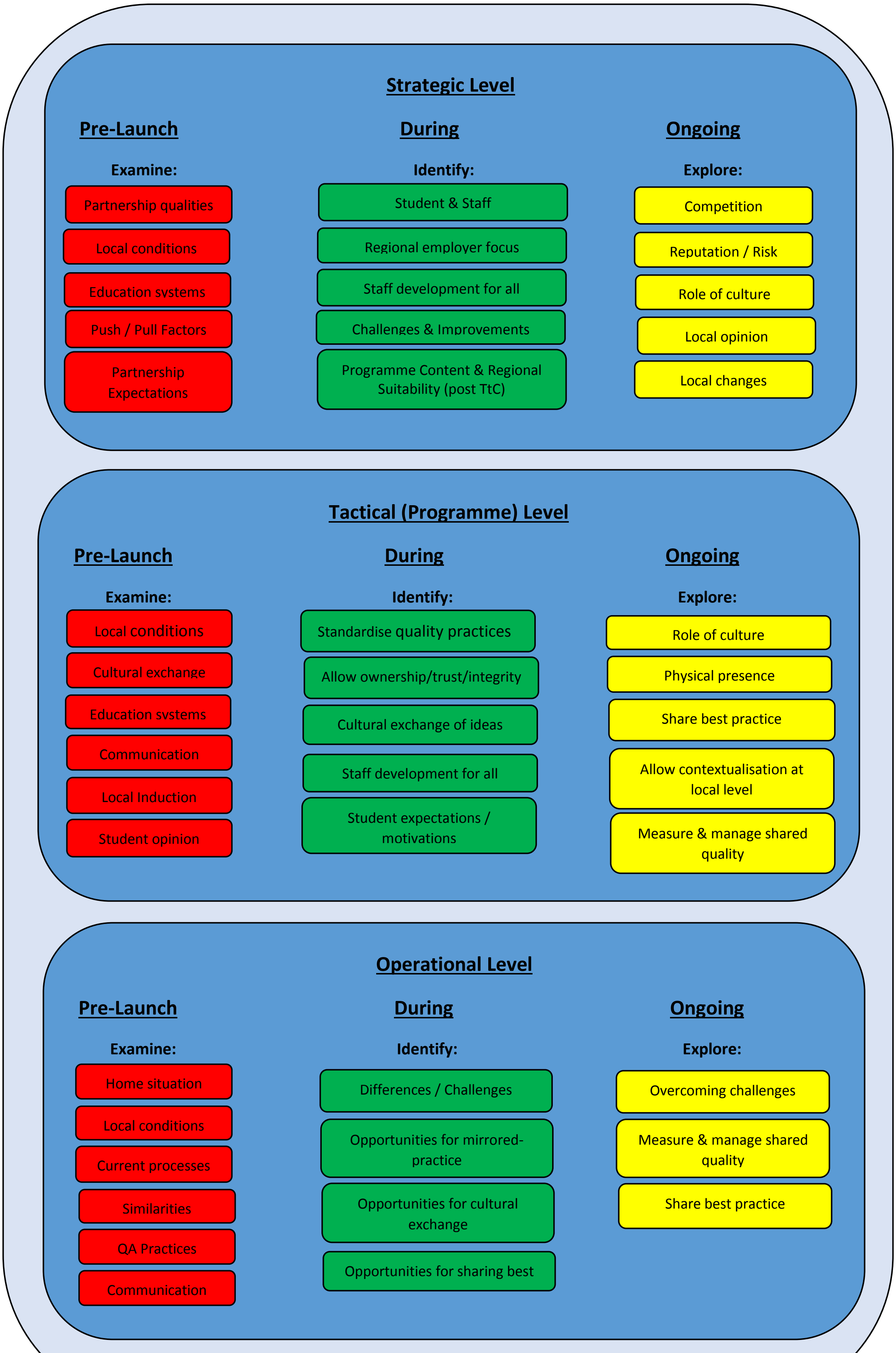


Fig 1.7. *Framework for Managing Quality of TNE programmes.*

5.8 Research Outputs

In addition to the proposed framework above, there are two key outputs which are desirable from this research:

1) Establishing a tactical/programme level 'Collaborative TNE Forum'. A need for sharing good practice arose in the discussions with partners where they felt that we should be working as one programme unit – not three separate entities. With this in mind, it was proposed at TtC panels that this ambitious task would involve Link Tutors creating an online forum which would be programme, subject and context specific. Tutors from the UK and partnerships would be able to share resources, case studies, discuss ideas and module level challenges, ideas for cultural exchange, good practice and most of all aid much needed communication. This forum would be made available to all those involved in TNE programme delivery and the University and its international partnerships. In essence, collaborating and practicing as one entity and providing an opportunity for collaborative research to take place, through shared ideas. The panels commended this new and innovative proposal (TtC panels held in 2016 and 2018).

2) The findings presented from this research have already been presented at HE level. Early findings from the research were presented at various conference days held at Derby, Cambridge and Birmingham universities respectively. More recently, the completed framework has been well received at the Going Global 2017 conference held in London by the British Council 2017 (see Appendix C). Here, I had the opportunity to discuss my findings with one of the eminent thinkers in the field, Dr Jane Knight, who was very encouraging and requested a copy of the final thesis once it has been defended. This has been a highlight of this journey. The research has also been presented at the 39th EAIR Forum (European Association for Institutional Research – Linking Research, Policy & Practice) conference held at Porto University (September

2017). The forum theme was: *'Under pressure? Higher Education Institutions coping with multiple challenges.'* Through networking, I have made contact with several European universities whom would like to collaborate with my institution to use the framework and for joint research opportunities.

5.9 Concluding Remarks

Knight (2017) re-iterated that it is disappointing to find so few PhD dissertations, as these researchers are critical to the future analysis of TNE…….TNE studies would benefit from more PhD students, especially in host countries, doing their research on the different modes and dimensions of TNE.

TNE is still a relatively young sector and certainly an under researched one. However, a first key step is to develop a "Common TNE Classification Framework," with terms and definitions which are robust enough to differentiate the major modes of TNE (Knight, 2017). This research has contributed towards an advancement for a common TNE Classification Framework, not entirely for classification of terms and definitions as indicated by Knight, but exclusively for quality management of TNE, whilst appreciating the distinctions in TNE terminology within this work.

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Appendix A – Interview transcription

Interview transcript from Singapore CEO (example)

Region	Singapore
Level	Strategic – CEO
Date	9th March 2016
Time Taken	[41.24]
Code	Sing–S

Poonam	Thank you very much first of all for agreeing to do this interview. This is now Singapore, Strategic level interview. You've been involved in this business for a while now, and BCU are not your only partner, so you have an overview of what's going on. So based on your strategy, why did you choose particular regions, for example the UK?
Sing - S	We chose the UK, it wasn't a cognisant decision made when we first got into the business, but subsequently when we have made our expansion plans there was a logic behind it.Singapore's worked well because there is a significant similar affinities to the UK because of the commonwealth. We didn't know that at first, but then we went over to Sri Lanka, looked around and when we first went in, there were a couple of UK universities and a lot of American universities running sort of other programmes out there [Sri Lanka]. We realised that, in commonwealth countries there seems to be a lot of affinity to the UK, when you go around former commonwealth countries you'll find lots of colonial buildings, stuff that looks sort of old English style and it sits deep within the people. So some people may not appreciate it.
Poonam	So, deep rooted?
Sing - S	Yes, and sometimes it's almost subliminal. They don't know that its there. So when we launched the UK quality programme, when you ask students 'Would you prefer to study in the UK or the US', in common wealth countries they will say to us the UK. But there is an interest for the US but I think that's for other reasons; it looks exciting and fun, respect goes with the UK. So that's why.
Poonam	Ok. Something that came out from the other interviews and it's not a direct question here; certainly at the tactical level, there is a question: 'Do you think this could be regarded as a new form of postcolonialism'? These British universities are being attracted – and vice versa, so you have the provider who is the UK and the receivers are these other countries in the East, do you think it is a form of post colonialism? You use and interesting work, subliminal?
Sing - S	Possibly. There's always that thought that the West is always ahead but this is starting to change because of China and all that stuff but let's leave all that out. But, you don't see Chinese universities coming out here to franchise for thousands of students, it's mostly UK, US and Australia; universities which are largely western based.

Poonam	What I think I am trying to ask is if an insider was looking at Singapore, would they say or could they justifiably say there is a new form of colonialism going on or do you think that is sort of a very negative way of looking at it?
Sing - S	It depends on the country you look at. I think if you went to Singapore, they embraced the heritage, our time as a British colony actually gave us good foundations, x, y, z. Ultimately we became independent, we love to sing songs, wave the flag and all that stuff. Realistically we think that was a good basis. If the British never came, where would we be today? But, if you went to another place which I guess had less post colonial say for example Sri Lanka, it's kind of been there then it kind of didn't, then it was then it wasn't, what they say about colonialism and they may see it as oppression I guess, it may be seen as that? I guess of you look at colonialism as an enforced thing, where, in this situation, British universities come out and say you must take our programmes because your national systems are not good enough...
Poonam	That's not really the case.
Sing - S	That's not the case – it's mostly people saying that. In the case of Singapore, our government universities don't give enough of the cohort an opportunity at higher education and in Sri Lanka, our national universities don't give us the space at all. So no, it can't be colonialism.
Poonam	Ok. Not for Singapore but perhaps for Sri Lanka?
Sing - S	Perhaps...
Poonam	Because you also have a foot in there.
Sing - S	Yes.
Poonam	Ok. Number two then – I think we've covered some of this, objectives and motives then; that you felt influenced you to go and seek programmes from the UK. So, what has been the attraction for you for overseas?
Sing - S	Specifically the UK?
Poonam	Yes.
Sing - S	When we look for partners, at one point we were looking at Australia universities, and the danger with Australian universities their university charters are quite different from the UK. As in, they have the power and the right to set up private limited companies, hop across to Singapore and set up their own campus.
Poonam	Right.

Sing - S	As a commercial organisation. That's quite scary because your principal may just come over and say we're taking over your operation. And that's sort of why we dropped Australian universities off the map. US universities aren't allowed to franchise out here, they must run the entire operation themselves and there is a lot of danger for them doing that.
Poonam	So no opportunity there.
Sing - S	So, but I guess those are the push factors, the pull factors will be that the UK is seen as... the programmes kind of fit with the cultural mind-set; so there is this rise self-liberocity [think means liberality], I want to be an Engineer and I'm supposed to study arts and humanities and literature and geography ....what that got to do with anything [student voice]! It's taken off , I suppose, in the slightly more posh segments of society, who think that it's nice but aristocratic and know all this stuff, in other segments of society - I just need a good paid job, I need a job that pays me well, how do I get there? They prefer the UK approach – which is let's trim all the fat, let's get straight to what we need...
Poonam	Lean!
Sing - S	It's leaner and I'll be a subject matter expert, I will have nothing to talk about at dinner at conversations! But I'll be an expert in my own area. I think that fits nicely within Engineering and that's precisely within the Singapore context.
Poonam	So your motivations have been more student-driven and what they have wanted. And you think that wouldn't be offered here, it's not offered locally?
Sing - S	No, in the national universities they tend to be very broad, subject specific, but very very board – deep in some areas and shallow in others. And it's a lot to take in for an undergraduate, but really that's not really our competition.
Poonam	It's a different sector isn't it?
Sing - S	Yes, we're talking about the next segment down.
Poonam	Three then – what expectations – so one area that came out from the literature is managing partnership expectations. But not only partnership expectations, stakeholder expectations too – you have the student, you have [name of institution] Singapore, you have BCU, you have your tutors, you have yourselves as in the key decision makers, the operations staff – so what are your expectations that you've set out stating this is what we hope BCU will do? Partnership terms etc..
Sing - S	Given our current state, I think that we would like support but in the same time a certain degree of autonomy. So, I guess to put it into operational terms, it would be great if the university sent us – here you go here are all the modules , you need to do this, this is how you run it, when you start we

	don't really care just let us know what you intend to do. The autonomy would be that we have agreed to the entry criteria and you guys go ahead and recruit all the students [BCU saying to partner], and put them in and we'll figure it out later on. Obviously, that would be the ideal state that we reference from all the collaborations that we have, but we have to bear in mind those collaborations were running for 12 years, they've got tons of data. I guess, it's the start, not so realistic but maybe in a couple of years of where we'd like to get to. Partnering in terms of support and autonomy, I guess in a very commercial consideration – fees that fees would taper-off at some point. It depends on how we plan the future of the organisation. One of them would be that ultimately universities merge - some sort of joint venture partnership – which has happened at another college here. But, it really depends on the comfort level and where things are at.
Poonam	If we come back to your level, because you went to the operations level, your expectations as a partner – do you see yourself – ok one's a provider and ones a receiver – do you see the partnership as being equal?
Sing - S	No, 'partners' is a polite term for it. I think in reality we are a franchisee and we do what the franchiser tells us to do. That's the way CPE want it, that's the way the students want it, they don't see themselves as [name of institution] graduates, they see themselves as BCU graduates.
Poonam	How does that make you feel?
Sing - S	A bit used [laughs]; it's the way things have been.
Poonam	So the word partnership doesn't really.....as the literature states, you assume that partnership means...
Sing - S	It's equal footing right?
Poonam	But in reality...
Sing - S	In reality, we franchise programmes. But its, some people may view it as rude – oh you want to franchise our programmes ...so right from the start the roles are sort of higher and lower. To us, as the business owners, that's the way it works.
Poonam	Its part and parcel of what you do, it's the package you're providing. The package has someone's stamp on it, you're sort of delivering it.
Sing - S	We're kind of like middle-men.
Poonam	Alright, number 4. Has anything changed from what you thought was going to happen to what is now a reality?
Sing - S	We're over and about a year and a half into the programme; it's been what I expected. Although, without shooting anyone [uncomfortable], in some

	circumstances support has been lacking in terms of ...we thought that support would start off heavy and then taper off...and then autonomy would start at zero and then slowly we'd earn that. But after a year and a half, the support is kind of at the same level as it used to be and autonomy it is still kind of near zero but maybe it's improved slightly in terms of delivery, but not so much as in other areas.
Poonam	What do you think the reason is? Why do you think support isn't where it should be or why you haven't been given autonomy?
Sing - S	I'm not entirely sure why support hasn't improved. In Sri Lanka I know we've done nicely and in Singapore although the numbers are picking up, and in Sri Lanka we ran the first graduation and I thought that was pretty fun – but interestingly support didn't follow with that.
Poonam	What do you define as 'support'?
Sing - S	Sorry not support [changes tack] autonomy. I thought evidence after the first graduation and the quality of the programme, that autonomy would have increased slightly but it did not. I guess universities are being cautious these days, HEFCE and QAA swinging big sticks, everyone is trying to keep it light.
Poonam	You're aware of the pressures then as you're showing an appreciation of them. I really appreciate that – thank you. Number 5 then – this is a long-winded question; what do you thank are the main advantages and disadvantages first of all - you may say there are none of one or the other – of being able to study in a programme being offered in a country different to where it was validated. Now you have a third dimension, you don't just have a BCU programme being delivered in Singapore, you actually have other students coming to Singapore – you have a third level. So what are the advantages and disadvantages that you see – from any perspective?
Sing - S	I think it's easiest to start from the student perspective; it's mainly cost and reliability. So Singapore has kind of got this reputation of being a well engineered system – you press the button and it goes and that's kind of the way CPE has us all working as well – we work as a well oiled machine. So for students coming here it is reliable. The second thing is, it's a cost saving, compared to the UK it's cheaper to study in Singapore. The reality is I think it's a balance of those two things – reliability and cost – because really you could get it even cheaper like from Malaysia, but, are you prepared to take that kind of potential instability and risk.
Poonam	So those are advantages from the student perspective, any disadvantages or would you like to switch to staff now?
Sing - S	I think from the students point of view there is one other thing – premium. To say that you got your degree in Singapore is ....mmmm.
Poonam	Like perception or image?

Sing - S	Yes, to say you studied in Singapore, they kind of put you in that box of Singapore graduate. At some point, the hiring manager will click – how did you get a UK degree in Singapore? – Then you'll have to explain. But they can't understand that these are the surroundings you are in for 2 years. If we ask 'What is your idea of a good transport system?' – you would reference Singapore. If we ask you 'What is your idea of sustainable public housing?' – you would reference Singapore.
Poonam	So it's not just the qualification, it's the student experience as well which is part of the premium package isn't it?
Sing - S	Disadvantage – would also be student experience.
Poonam	For these students coming over to Singapore?
Sing - S	Well, for any of our students. Because the reality is if you took a programme in a university - first of all no one is going to pressure as hard to finish it in the timeframes that we finish. You have a lot more facilities you spend a lot more time building non-academic skills, social, cultural, communication that generally don't happen when you are in a 'high speed train' education. We try and build that in but students take up on it ...they're not interested in that sort of stuff.
Poonam	I don't know...from what I've seen here, on campus, I do think that the tutors appreciate the cultural side and they try and get the communication side going. Socially, I think it's hard but I do think they have an opportunity here though to mix with people from other regions. Perhaps some of it I think is a disadvantage to their experience.
Sing - S	Their interest in other cultures is not all there yet, give them a few years.
Poonam	Any other advantages or disadvantages from your side...perhaps the local provision for home students?
Sing - S	Advantages for me or for them?
Poonam	Either...
Sing - S	We do have an international programme, so if you think of it in competitive terms, if you are going for a local degree you would have to choose among the top five or the new sixth university, and the sixth university is like a catch all. No minimum entry requirements. But when you add an international dimension, you're not even playing the same game, it's a different thing altogether. So that's a big advantage.
Poonam	An advantage from a competitive stance.
Sing - S	Disadvantages I think, we never really get to market our own brand or our own product. We're like a trading warehouse [laughs]...
Poonam	Oh, it sounds so sad!

Sing - S	'You're stall is E1'! [Laughs] and then at the end of the day you clear it out and next week you have a different stall.
Poonam	Oh that's such a shame. Do you really feel like that?
Sing - S	Unfortunately yes. We've got used to it. At one point we said let's brand [name of institution], get lots of reputation and at the end of the day...
Poonam	So the rubber stamp doesn't say [name of institution] on it when they leave here.
Sing - S	You could say we end up in a role where we have to do thank-less work. On the basis that we do the work for the teaching with students and we guide them and we coach them all that stuff. Put up with the regulations and the financial strain and all that stuff – and at the end of the day the students don't see oh wow look at [name of institution] did for me, I'm a graduate from.....
Poonam	It's a piggy-in-the-middle situation then isn't it?
Sing - S	We are the waiters in the restaurant...
Poonam	Yes, in the middle...
Sing - S	We don't cook the food, we just put it on the table and if something goes wrong, we handle it.
Poonam	That's a really good analogy! One thing I wanted to ask on the back of this which came out in Sri Lanka. Brain Drain; do you think there is a chance that you could end up influencing people to get these sorts of qualifications to leave their home to go elsewhere to seek opportunities.
Sing - S	So that happens a lot in Sri Lanka but never happens here, never (Singapore). In Sri Lanka, a lot of people earn UK qualifications to go out to transfer to Qatar, Fiji wherever.
Poonam	So they move away.
Sing - S	Do we think we are contributing to that? Not as much as other providers. Because we are a foreign investor, we don't have a base for telling people to go find a better life elsewhere. So we don't.
Poonam	Let's talk about your students and Singapore for the moment. You have them here from Myanmar coming to Singapore. Is that because Singapore is attractive?
Sing - S	Singapore is attractive but I think there is a lot of protectionism that's going on. Are we causing a brain drain in Myanmar, I think that would happen on its own, naturally and it will continue the flow for a couple of years, and then it will slow. Then as Myanmar improves, people will start to flow back

	into the country just like Sri Lanka is experiencing now.As things get a bit more stable, bit more developed the more people want to go back. In Singapore, what's interesting is the type of students that we attract are typically families in business or have fore-sight, so they're not coming here just for the education or the qualification. The families could run construction companies, shipping companies, little trading companies and they want their children to come to Singapore, get the qualification but look at how that works, and bring that system back.
Poonam	So, it the experience and the exposure to Singapore that they are looking for.
Sing - S	Some of them obviously stay in Singapore for jobs, but when you ask them why – 'if you're family runs a shipping company, why would you work for another shipping company in Sinagpore? I want to know how Singapore works – give me a couple of years and I'll bring it back' (to own country). Which I guess brain drain yes and no, but I guess there are economic opportunities. So I tell the people from the business federation – hire our graduates as most of them come from well to do families that are in business and one day, when you want to expand to Myanmar, these people will come in handy.
Poonam	So economic development for where they come from.
Sing - S	For them as well as for us. If we wanted to expand to Myanmar, we wouldn't know who to talk to. But we could send an email out to all our students and say 'who's interested'? So we have instant connections.
Poonam	So networking too. Ok, just to wrap up then; I see your institution as an HEI – higher education institution – if you were asked that here's a box and put everything in here such as your QA practices to have a successful programme, what would you put inside that box?
Sing - S	So, if we, it depends on the direction of the organisation. We are an HEI but slanted towards employment, we don't care too much for research, quality for us is making sure students get good employment and that good employment means that our programmes need to be industry relevant, and the quality behind that would be having lots of industry participation. At a higher level to get input from industry, I don't know what you would call it – but say you are teaching model X but we don't do that anymore because its not cost effective....
Poonam	So is it your looking to be current?
Sing - S	Yes, to be current and think that's one. Also in terms of QA and how do we achieve that quality, I like the programmes to be lots of hands-on and evidence of learning – considering that we are employment focused.Academic programmes full of theoretical stuff doesn't really get me very far. In theory, if that's what you are going up against, the national universities are so good at theory stuff.

Poonam	Theory is ok you're saying but you want the practical hands-on.
Sing - S	We try to get our students to be portfolio centric. If you graduate and you go out to someone and this is my degree and they'll say that's fine it's the same degree that we see everyone else is having; what's special about you? And if they have a portfolio of work to demonstrate, it takes the conversation in a different dimension, its demonstration of ability instead of relying on a qualification. For high quality in our programmes, we also need students who are good. We can't turn rock into gold. Not yet as we're still working on the formula [Laughs]. The quality of students is in the student's motivation levels, not in their academic ability. Because if they are willing to do the work, I am sure they will get somewhere. It's the guys who don't have the motivation, even if they have fantastic....they're here because their parents have asked them to study and do a degree.
Poonam	So well-motivated, willing to put in the effort.
Sing - S	We don't want to be seen as the last stop on the line - we're here because we couldn't get elsewhere. We want people to come here because - I want to be here I know there are likeminded people etc
Poonam	Anything else you'd like to add from the strategic level – anything that we can improve what we do or change with what we do, any after thoughts? [Long pause]
Sing - S	Cultural.....
Poonam	Do you think culture plays a role?
Sing - S	Not on a conscious level, but sub-conscious maybe.
Poonam	Do you think people keep it inside or if it manifests itself outside?
Sing - S	This is interesting...with the passing of Lee Kwan Yew last year, cultural levels in Singapore have shot up. People are becoming a lot more aware of what our culture is. Before that, I don't know what the link with his death has to do with culture; what has the passing of our founding father have to do....but a lot of people are now becoming more gracious and more understanding. There are segments of society which are inefficient, understanding they are inefficient and finding ways to improve it. It a bit of a shift in the whole thinking of who we are in Singapore, and that's still being developed.
Poonam	Is that because people have held him in such high esteem and now that he's gone, they want to keep the legacy going?
Sing - S	Possibly, but that would be the older generation. The younger generation kind of don't really know who that guy is. So how does that link back to the education thing, I think people are now understand that look, in the past, for the last 50 years, we've said only the top 5 to 10% go to university and

	the rest of you guys take instructions from them. With his sort of passing, people are saying well he's not going to do the plans for us and we've got to do it ourselves – now what do we do? And so now people are saying we have to make it happen for ourselves and what do we do to make this happen? I think education is one of them; the focus has kind of changed, of where culturally it used to be – you need to have a degree and if you do then you are considered as you made it, now everyone has a degree – people are now saying what can you do? Show me your abilities? And that's kind of where the Singapore government is pushing everyone as well.
Poonam	So you have the piece of paper but what else can you do?
Sing - S	Yes, now everyone has that piece of paper, the numbers in Singapore are one in two.
Poonam	So it used to be 5 to 10%...are we talking about 30 or 40 years ago?
Sing - S	The university system was made for the top 10% of each cohort. That expanded recently to about 15% and then the next year it went to 20% and they've just announced 40%, and that's just government universities doing 40% of each cohort – 4 out of 10 go into the state universities. And that means, the current state that we are in now, where there are 5 in 10 who have a degree, one came from the state university, maybe two; right now that means that the other 3 or 4 graduates are being produced by the private sector. People like us. Which means, that in about 3 to 4 years, when we do the projections, what's going to happen is that the state university is going to be producing 4 in 10, and we are going to be producing 3 or 4 in 10. That means 8 in 10 are going to have degrees.
Poonam	You think that's a realistic prediction?
Sing - S	Yes, I think so. Everyone will have some sort of degree. So what the American system did was quite clever. Everyone wants a degree, sure we'll have associate degrees and community colleges...
Poonam	Many different levels...
Sing - S	If everyone's going to have a primary level certificate let grade them and have some better ones and some worse ones and have an idea of how students are doing. I don't think that's a good system...I think you do need your generals and your managers and your working group. I think there is nothing wrong with being in the working group. Look at engineering now, everyone wants to be in an air-con office signing plans – whose going to do the work? Too many chiefs and not enough Indians! [Laughs]
Poonam	But it's interesting that you notice this cultural shift in education and the fact that everyone wants to be educated and so on. Do you think there are different cultures across education systems and across nations? For example, comparing Singapore against the UK – do you think there is anything cultural or is education just education wherever you go?

Sing - S	Oh no I think if you think of it as a building block, there are certain passages and routes that you have to go through. I think they are pretty much the same. I think people just categorise them differently. In Singapore there is primary and then there is secondary and if you do well, you go for A levels and if you don't do well, you go for vocational school. And then the A level guys, halve of them get selected for university and that's your top 10%. In Sri Lanka there is a similar structure; everyone goes through A levels, but the sorting happens not at the O level but at A level. You do well, you go to a state university, if you don't do well...
Poonam	Yes, same in UK. A levels decide where you end up.
Sing - S	In Singapore the sorting happens at the O levels. But there is that stage at sorting, your first vocational qualification whether it's at university or in a polytechnic. Everywhere kind of has the same thing. In Australia they have TAFEs, the UK has NVQs ...I bet if we take a look at Myanmar they'll have an entire system too...I think they do and they're called AGTIs???It's kind of a similar structure and everybody needs some sort of qualification.
Poonam	So the culture of education is the same?
Sing - S	It's the same. What I do think is going to happen though is education is going to shift back to being employment focussed. Meaning, if we go way back to the dark ages and if you say – 'I want to be a blacksmith. Teach me and then I can be a blacksmith.' There's no certification that this guy can do that. As education qualifications get, I guess more wide spread to everyone, people are going to say look these paper don't mean very much to us anymore, I need to know what you can do in employment.
Poonam	So vocational degree! [Both laugh].
Sing - S	Yes – vocational degrees. And Sri Lanka has already got a university for vocational something...I said that's a very weird name for a university – The University of Vocational Education [laughs].
Poonam	Maybe their programmes are very hands-on? In the UK there has been a buzz-word term that's been around for a few years called the 'flipped curriculum'. And flipped curricula is where you 'do' first and then you link to the theory. So it being turned around as we have traditionally had lectures and tutorials, doing the theory and then doing some task. Now it's being said that do the task first and then we'll go and see why the theory links.
Sing - S	And get it wrong...
Poonam	It's called flipped curricula and I think that's what you mean when you say there is a shift in education where it is employment focussed and perhaps the other way around. I do think theory will always have its place...
Sing - S	Of course.
	But it's no longer the primary focus.

Poonam	
Sing - S	If you look at what the Singapore universities are publishing now, it’s about employment income – what are fresh graduates earning. For example, is anybody checking if this accountant is any good at balancing his books? No. They’re asking about income and income is employment centric. So people are going to say this guy is good at his job – don’t look at his papers, he can do it – get him in. I think that’s kind of where things are heading.
Poonam	Would you say its accountability?
Sing - S	Yes, education then becomes the quality check, the verification that these people can do what they say can do. Because if it really was just about learning the skill, on-line would have wiped everybody out years ago. And it’s on YouTube it’s on Coursera[on-line courses from universities]. People for sure know and will learn from the internet anyway. If I say to someone I have done 3000 hours on Coursera and I go to somebody and say look, I finished 3000 hours on Coursera, they’re going to say I don’t really know if you did that work. Only the people who do it face-to-face and have the reliability of assessing the students and saying yes this guy can really do what it says he can do. And that becomes sort of the sad end to education.
Poonam	So what you are saying is its verification through education, but all practice based. To demonstrate that you can actually do it.
Sing - S	Which is kind of where education first started...
Poonam	Yes, it’s going full circle.
Sing - S	I don’t have time to manage all these blacksmith and apprentices – you guys go over to that school over there, you pay him and he’ll teach you, and then come back and show me.
Poonam	That’s really interesting. Thank you very much.
Sing - S	That’s my guess...9 out of 10 will have degrees ...maybe in business management...good grief...how do you tell the difference between 9 business management students?
Poonam	Very true. If there is anything else I’ll drop you an email or give you a ring if that’s ok.
Sing – S	Sure
Poonam	Thank you.

Appendix B – Results by theme, region and hierarchy

Comparative Analysis (example) – Strategic Level: Deans / CEOs

Qu. No	Question	Category/theme/phenomena from Literature
1	*Why did you choose the particular region for TNE partnerships?*	Strategy

	Singapore	***Sri Lanka***	***UK***
Justification	We chose the UK, it wasn't a cognisant decision made when we first got into the business, but subsequently when we have made our expansion plans there was a logic behind it.	I think, in Sri Lanka, there is a preference for British Education, and although when it comes to people study, Australia, Canada, US is considered. When it comes to programme being delivered here, there is a perception that British programmes are still the best.	When I think about our main TNE activities, I think they are in Sri Lanka, China and Hong Kong. using the international activity to fund investment in other activities within the institution
Historic Link	We realised that, in commonwealth countries there seems to be a lot of affinity to the UK, when you go around former commonwealth countries you'll find lots of colonial buildings, stuff that looks sort of old English style and it sits deep within the people. I think if you went to Singapore, they embraced the heritage, our time as a British colony actually gave us good foundations, x, y, z.	We actually turn around and think had the Brits not gone, would we be in a better place? Would we be a Hong Kong rather than a Sri Lanka right now? I think in that sense we kind of, whatever is British is better. if you look at the country and the real development which has happened, form the railways to the road network, it's what the British did, and that's what we see, and there is a lot of legacy which has been left behind whether we want to see it or not.	connections and some existing relationships with key people in those regions which I think helps develop the partnership activity and there is willingness form both partners to engage in this activity, you know a mutual benefit towards it.
Preference for region.	So when we launched the UK quality programme, when you ask students 'Would you prefer to study in the UK or the US', in common wealth countries they will say to us the UK.	Maybe a colonial mind-set, maybe...I don't know.	I think the finance is probably quite a strong motivation for our international activities.
Local conditions	In the case of Singapore, our government universities	At master's level because if you look at our state sector,	clearly there was a demand in those regions, particularly

	don't give enough of the cohort an opportunity at higher education and in Sri Lanka, our national universities don't give us the space at all. So no, it can't be colonialism.	we have about 20,000 graduates that come out here, across all fields, and only about 2000 of them move onto masters. Out of which about 800 is catered to in the state sector – 800 to a 1000 at the most. Which means the balance thousand was studying in the private sector.	in Sri Lanka – a large, several million people population in Sri Lanka, quite a small public university provision, and therefore quite a demand for transnational education. I think especially in the current, UK higher education landscape and the level of change that we have had and the open market that we have. So what seems to have happened as a consequence of all this change in UK higher education than we have experienced over the last 3 – 5 years, has actually renewed interest in international activity which has obviously been with us for some time; it seemed to plateaux a few years ago, and then in light of this open market now, a very competitive market that we are in.
Commonality	Singapore's worked well because there is a significant similar affinities to the UK because of the commonwealth.	Now if you take A levels, there's quite a number of people who have London A levels or British A levels, the whole system changes when it's US, I think that's one reason. Australia again there is a little bit of ambiguity about their secondary school system and how they move into universities, so that might be one reason. It's just that the British education system's presence is strong here; the British Council is very present here.	-

Qu. No	Question	Category/theme/phenomena from Literature
2	*What were the factors (objectives and motives) that influenced your decision to seek partnerships abroad?*	Strategy

	Singapore	***Sri Lanka***	***UK***
Push factors	at one point we were looking at Australia universities, and the danger with Australian universities their university charters are quite different from the UK. As in, they have the power and the right to set up private limited companies, hop across to Singapore and set up their own campus. US universities aren't allowed to franchise out here, they must run the entire operation themselves and there is a lot of danger for them doing that.	...right partnership.... So sometimes the curriculum was not suitable, curriculum was very British or American and it did not suit the market here.	I suppose, in some ways there is the British empire spreading its influence and you know going into territories. I think there is some mutual benefit to these kind of activities and I think the is an openness from our universities perspective that we also want to learn something from our local partners and regions that we are working in and trying to develop students and staff mobility for our students and staff to go out and develop an international experience and international perspective which I think is equally important.
Pull Factors	the pull factors will be that the UK is seen as... the programmes kind of fit with the cultural mind-set; so there is this rise self-liberocity [think means liberality] They (students) prefer the UK approach – which is let's trim all the fat, let's get straight to what we need...	I think, in our mission statement we actually say that we want to bring world class education, at affordable prices. So when we actually, we have turned down a couple of partnerships before we actually went with the university, reasons means we were not happy with the standing of the university or their pedigree. It's the quality. We just market the university for us so, that was one.	I suppose, in some ways there is the British empire spreading its influence and you know going into territories.

Student Motivations	It's (the programme) leaner and I'll be a subject matter expert, I will have nothing to talk about at dinner at conversations! But I'll be an expert in my own area. I think that fits nicely within Engineering and that's precisely within the Singapore context.	From a student's perspective we felt that the students need to be able to say that we are studying the same programme, as a student is studying in the UK.	I know in Sri Lanka a lot of the students will be going into other regions once they've graduated and that seems to be the market if you like. Whereas in Singapore, which is sophisticated, highly developed, sort of a higher education environment, I supposed well served with a strong public university provision. So it's difficult to, I suppose it does depend on the region to some extent how evident that may be (students leaving their home country).
Competition	No, in the national universities they tend to be very broad, subject specific, but very very board – deep in some areas and shallow in others. And it's a lot to take in for an undergraduate, but really that's not really our competition. Yes, we're talking about the next segment down.		
Reputation		Yes, I think proven and tested is one, recognition in the market is another but when you say a British university or a British degree, we don't have to market the product per se,	

Qu. No	Question	Category/theme/phenomena from Literature
3	*Tell me what expectations you have of the partner institution?*	Managing partnership expectations

Qu. No	Question	Category/theme/phenomena from Literature
4	*Tell me if these expectations have been met or changed – why?*	TNE development

	Singapore	***Sri Lanka***	***UK***
Specific qualities of a partner	Partnering in terms of support and autonomy, I guess in a very commercial consideration – fees that fees would taper-off at some point. It depends on how we plan the future of the organisation. One of them would be that ultimately universities merge - some sort of joint venture partnership – which has happened at another college here. But, it really depends on the comfort level and where things are at.	I think when we looked for partner we wanted somebody whose programme quality mattered to us. How much of effort went into the programmes, how often it was updated, how current the knowledge was so all those things mattered to us.	I suppose in the first instance the conversation starts with the relationship, have you got a partner that you can work with. Is there mutual respect to work together and then obviously for the technical side there is the due diligence side; make sure they are an ethical and reasonable organisation to work with, financially sound and all that side of stuff. I think, one is to support their ambitions, in terms of financial interests into their activity, and also, I suppose meet the needs of the demand for that local market. This is seen as a very important activity for them , again a lot of it is driven by the business case if you like as they see this as a quite a strong...if they can be seen to be working with a British university that is good for them.
Expectations of a partner	I think that we would like support but in the same time	in terms of expectations what we certainly expected was content from them, in terms	I suppose what I would like to see some of our transnational partners

	a certain degree of autonomy. I guess to put it into operational terms, it would be great if the university sent us – here you go here are all the modules , you need to do this, this is how you run it, when you start we don't really care just let us know what you intend to do. The autonomy would be that we have agreed to the entry criteria and you guys go ahead and recruit all the students [the university saying to partner], and put them in and we'll figure it out later on. Sorry not support [changes tack] autonomy. I thought evidence after the first graduation and the quality of the programme, that autonomy would have increased slightly but it did not. I guess universities are being cautious these days, HEFCE and QAA swinging big sticks, everyone is trying to keep it light.	of...because end of the day what we are trying to create here is not run our own programme, rather replicate the experience in UK, or being able to study for a degree. …mirror as much as possible…	developing into, is more develop their link with employers; maybe there are things they can learn from what we do with employer engagement activity and developing their own employer forum, employer engagement committee. And then equally, in terms of their research, then to be developing their own research capability, I know there is an appetite from them.
Realisation	In reality, we franchise programmes. But its, some people may view it as rude – oh you want to franchise our programmes ...so right from the start the roles are sort of higher and lower. To us, as the business owners, that's the way it works. We're over and about a year and a half into the programme; it's been what I expected. Although, without shooting anyone [uncomfortable], in some circumstances support has been lacking in terms of ...we	Yes, I think after about a year, we realised that creating the same atmosphere, giving the same experience is not sometimes easy, because of the sheer size and the operation at that end, and what we do here, there are certain areas where we don't really fully understand what happens at the university. There are some grey areas, I think overtime maybe we'll figure it out, but there are some grey areas. But overall, I guess the expectations are pretty much the same.	A lot of our partners are sort of new institution who are private and they have come into this business and start obviously where the main opportunity is in terms of programmes and student recruitment, and as they begin to mature, they get all the quality issues sorted out and that then starts to build in the links with employers and start to recognise the need for staff development and building up research capabilities in staff and equally can then start

	thought that support would start off heavy and then taper off...and then autonomy would start at zero and then slowly we'd earn that. But after a year and a half, the support is kind of at the same level as it used to be and autonomy it is still kind of near zero but maybe it's improved slightly in terms of delivery, but not so much as in other areas.		developing some joint research. In some ways we need each other because we couldn't do the activity without working together. Then I suppose there is also the mindset mentality that we have a level of arrogance... And equally they have an expectation that we are going to be arrogant to some extent – I don't know. I certainly like to think that it is a genuine partnership.
Student expectations	No, 'partners' is a polite term for it. I think in reality we are a franchisee and we do what the franchiser tells us to do. That's the way CPE want it, that's the way the students want it, they don't see themselves as [name of institution] graduates, they see themselves as the university's graduates.	From a student's perspective we felt that the students need to be able to say that we are studying the same programme, as a student is studying in the UK. X 2	
Other issues	We're kind of like middle-men. We are the waiters in the restaurant... We don't cook the food, we just put it on the table and if something goes wrong, we handle it.	We get the content from the tutor but is there any support seminars, we know it happens but what happens? As to what's happening because if we know about it, we can try and replicate it. But if we don't know about it, it's a bit of an issue.	I suppose another thing we could do is manage the expectation of our staff - linktutors, and we have an international strategy now and we may be able to do more to communicate that strategy and getting people to understand. This is where we are heading so that they can understand the bigger picture. Whilst we are doing some great work at the moment with our course provision, we don't want to stop there, we want to build on that into other activities. Yes there is a time zone difference but they are very responsive and that is generally the picture for most of our partners.

Qu. No	Question	Category/theme/phenomena from Literature
5	*What do you think are the main advantages and disadvantages of being able to study on a programme which is offered in a country different to where it was originally validated?*	TNE challenges and perspectives

	Singapore	***Sri Lanka***	***UK***
Advantages	It's mainly cost and reliability… Singapore has kind of got this reputation of being a well engineered system – you press the button and it goes and that's kind of the way CPE has us all working as well – we work as a well oiled machine So for students coming here it is reliable. It's a cost saving, compared to the UK it's cheaper to study in Singapore. We do have an international programme, so if you think of it in competitive terms, if you are going for a local degree you would have to choose among the top five or the new sixth university, and the sixth university is like a catch all. No minimum entry requirements. But when you add an international dimension, you're not even playing the same game, it's a different thing altogether. So that's a big advantage.	advantages as opposed to studying in the UK I would think one, culturally it would be easier for them to handle and second thing is additional support because they might be more comfortable coming to us as opposed to being in the university and asking the university directly. …familiarity and then again how much peer support they would have … in their work place, their superiors can add to their whole experience I think in terms of what we offer as content, I think that's one of the things looking important for us, content and how update is the content? We bring in first world knowledge.	One of the advantages is with the visa issues that we had when students wished to come into the country, if it means they can go somewhere else and gain the same qualification... Or stay at home, that is an advantage. The other advantage is the cost of study is clearly going to be less in that sort of TNE model than it would if they would actually come here, with living costs and obviously international student fees and so forth. I personally think developing some international exposure is a strong advantage in this increasingly global world isn't it. But, it's not necessarily about the Britishness, the question is about the advantage of having some level of international exposure different to your own country wherever that may be. I think we could be doing more to get the university's students

			to have that opportunity as well.
Disadvantages	Yes, to say you studied in Singapore, they kind of put you in that box of Singapore graduate. At some point, the hiring manager will click – how did you get a UK degree in Singapore? – Then you'll have to explain. Disadvantage – would also be student experience. Because the reality is if you took a programme in a university - first of all no one is going to pressure as hard to finish it in the timeframes that we finish. You have a lot more facilities you spend a lot more time building non-academic skills, social, cultural, communication that generally don't happen when you are in a 'high speed train' education. We try and build that in but students take up on it ...they're not interested in that sort of stuff. I think, we never really get to market our own brand or our own product. We're like a trading warehouse [laughs]... We've got used to it. At one point we said let's brand[name of institution] , get lots of reputation and at the end of the day...	I don't think as much as we try to give them a very similar experience, I think what we are in reality giving them is 80 – 90%. We do a pretty decent job with the delivery, but the overall experience and networking opportunities all those things I think there is a bit of a lag there. Second thing is the whole university system is a little alien to them…	I suppose the syllabus, the content is borne from here, equally, you could turn that question around and say how are we contextualising for the provision?
Brain-drain	Singapore is attractive but I think there is a lot of protectionism that's going on. Are we causing a brain drain in Myanmar, I think that would happen on its own, naturally and it will continue the flow for a	…there's peace when there was war. People just wanted to get out. Now again, economic instability people might want to but I think especially when you come to master's level, you've pretty much set your life here. Your	

	couple of years, and then it will slow. Then as Myanmar improves, people will start to flow back into the country just like Sri Lanka is experiencing now. As things get a bit more stable, bit more developed the more people want to go back. Some of them (from Myanmar) obviously stay in Singapore for jobs, but when you ask them why – 'if you're family runs a shipping company, why would you work for another shipping company in Sinagpore? I want to know how Singapore works – give me a couple of years and I'll bring it back' (to own country). Which I guess brain drain yes and no, but I guess there are economic opportunities. So I tell the people from the business federation – hire our graduates as most of them come from well to do families that are in business and one day, when you want to expand to Myanmar, these people will come in handy.	tentacles are too deep to uproot yourself…	
Other			To a certain degree, the qualification lend itself to a British curriculum , but I think the partners do then contextualise it because they have their subject matter experts who have to deliver it, so their own flavour has to be added.

Qu. No	Question	Category/theme/phenomena from Literature

6	*How can a Higher Education Institution achieve high quality in its programmes?*	Quality assurance practices

	Singapore	***Sri Lanka***	***UK***
Partnership qualities	For high quality in our programmes, we also need students who are good. We can't turn rock into gold. Not yet as we're still working on the formula [Laughs]. The quality of students is in the student's motivation levels, not in their academic ability. Because if they are willing to do the work, I am sure they will get somewhere. It's the guys who don't have the motivation, even if they have fantastic....they're here because their parents have asked them to study and do a degree.	I think your visits, [name from BLSS] visits are important for us because at the end of the day, you understand ground reality we understand your problems when you sit across the table and kind of understand each other. Yes, face-to-face is important. It sometimes easy to miss-understand email, miss-interpret. I think for a partnership to work, it's important that the Link Tutors can step back but the respective tutors have the conversation...	I suppose in the first instance it is at the institutional level, and making sure – is this partner, a quality partner? Not only in terms of the due diligence part stuff and level of assessment, but have they got good ethical standards and can we actually work with these people. Having that mutual respect and just having that personality that you can work with.
Both parties		I think regular contact is important. I think sometimes emails don't convey the entire sense. I just started a practise with the business school where we thought ok every other week we take a 15 minute Skype session. We see each other and across the table discussing difficulties that we have. Yes. Sometimes we found that things are a bit difficult because it could be miss-communication it could be culture because we have so many people who are not full academics; even if they say something [the university], my people here might misinterpret it.	Good working relationships are important. In terms of one is making them (students) feel more like a the university's students and equally trying to again maybe enable them to have an influence on how we do this in the same way our home student influence how we deliver the programmes here.

		You see at the end of the day whether we like to admit it or not, even these students who are sitting in this class are a part of the university. Sometimes we feel with some of the tutors that they don't have that feeling, they don't see these students as the university's students, so it doesn't happen with you and [Business School name], because you all are part of this whole thing, you all have met with the students...	
QA Practices	Also in terms of QA and how do we achieve that quality, I like the programmes to be lots of hands-on and evidence of learning – considering that we are employment focused. Yes, education then becomes the quality check, the verification that these people can do what they say can do. Because if it really was just about learning the skill, on-line would have wiped everybody out years ago.	At my level yes. Because at the end of the day, I always tell this to my board, if I am responsible for numbers and I am responsible for programme quality, there might be a times that for numbers I compromise on the quality or the delivery.	Driving down into QA practices and the standards and so forth, I think we've made good progress around that. Equally, I think some of the approval events we have had in China, there is actually recognition or an openness to try and learn from us in terms of our quality management and our quality assurance procedures. May be not copy them, but understand them.
Sharing best practice		I think what we wanted to do, even with our lecturers, from this year onwards, 2 or 3 at different times, send them over to the university. Yes, different regions, and then they experience the ground reality all over. Maybe Singapore can learn from us, maybe we can learn from Singapore... …same programmes…. It's right across the board. So maybe my guys might find something different than	Yes, but if they can understand what we do and know what we do, they can decide if they want to take some of it, the lot of it or leave it alone. There is something about the internationalisation of our quality assurance procedures and we could also be a bit more open to receive.

		what UK is doing, maybe UK could learn from us.	
Student perspectives	Academic programmes full of theoretical stuff doesn't really get me very far. In theory, if that's what you are going up against, the national universities are so good at theory stuff. Yes, now everyone has that piece of paper, the numbers in Singapore are one in two. If you look at what the Singapore universities are publishing now, it's about employment income – what are fresh graduates earning. For example, is anybody checking if this accountant is any good at balancing his books? No. They're asking about income and income is employment centric. So people are going to say this guy is good at his job – don't look at his papers, he can do it – get him in. I think that's kind of where things are heading.	Last week with the university's results coming in, we realised that sometimes these students need not support in the subject content but they need support in the other areas – the structures of the assignments, how do you do Harvard referencing? So we brought in somebody for academic support who can do that. So we also learn as we go along how to do that.	Another point here is trying to position a student voice; in the process as equally important as it is for our home provision to be putting the students at the heart of the process, it should be the same for our international TNE activities making sure our TNE students feel like they are being listened to making sure any feedback they are giving to us is being responded to and is also helping us improve.
Measures& managing	We try to get our students to be portfolio centric. If you graduate and you go out to someone and this is my degree and they'll say that's fine it's the same degree that we see everyone else is having; what's special about you? And if they have a portfolio of work to demonstrate, it takes the conversation in a different dimension, its demonstration of ability instead of relying on a qualification	I think we need independent people within the programme management system who are responsible for quality and quality alone. I think that's where we agreed that we bring in a programme head who is independent of me but reports to the board that's where [name] came in and we are now looking for a replacement for him. He manages the programmes, independent of the rest of the operation and the quality assurance angle and the quality delivery angle.	I suppose, we have our international TNE group where we are sharing ideas, sharing good things and addressing issues as a collective. We have obviously the annual monitoring processes and that's obviously an opportunity to identify and action plan if you like, going forward. May be there are some weaknesses in that process at the moment and how we are actually monitoring what we set out to do from last year and how

		they're (staff) are fully aware of what we want to maintain in terms of quality angle and where we aspire to be in terms of delivery and what we put out to the market. The final end results – the graduates that we put out to market.	we are actually doing against that and reviewing that It's an iterative process of developing these indicators of quality.
Other	I think education is one of them; the focus has kind of changed, of where culturally it used to be – you need to have a degree and if you do then you are considered as you made it, now everyone has a degree – people are now saying what can you do? Show me your abilities? And that's kind of where the Singapore government is pushing everyone as well. The university system was made for the top 10% of each cohort. That expanded recently to about 15% and then the next year it went to 20% and they've just announced 40%, and that's just government universities doing 40% of each cohort – 4 out of 10 go into the state universities. And that means, the current state that we are in now, where there are 5 in 10 who have a degree, one came from the state university, maybe two; right now that means that the other 3 or 4 graduates are being produced by the private sector. People like us. Which means, that in about 3 to 4 years, when we do the projections, what's going to happen is that the	I think one of the things that I'd like to add which I have seen, is sometimes the (the university) faculty or the school has an idea in mind when they do a TNE, but sometimes it doesn't really filter down to other faculty members who are not a part of that whole thing. So there is a bit of a, what can we say, a tendency to not cooperate and not understand the problems that we are facing at this end.	Under this franchise model, other than the Link Tutors for which it is a reasonable experience, for the module tutors (the university) it's not a great staff experience at all. It's all a part of the overall international strategy that you have spoken about, the resources on the ground, can we actually resource this and resource it efficiently and effectively? Remember we were talking about managing partnership expectations, its managing in-house expectations as well.

	state university is going to be producing 4 in 10, and we are going to be producing 3 or 4 in 10. That means 8 in 10 are going to have degrees. That's my guess...9 out of 10 will have degrees ...maybe in business management...good grief...how do you tell the difference between 9 business management students?		

Appendix C – Conference Proceedings

1) Going Global 2017 – Poster

Research and Innovation

Examining key quality assurance issues in Transnational Higher Education: How do global partnerships ensure academic credibility of programmes?

1. CONTEXT

The purpose of this research has been to investigate key quality assurance issues relating to the sudden and rapid development of Transnational Higher Education (TNE). There has already been some interesting research conducted in this area, particularly by Jane Knight (2005) who reflects that while the Observatory of Borderless Higher Education in the UK tracks recent developments and reports on them, there is still a real need to ensure that 'cross-border education reflects and helps to meet individual countries' educational goals, culture, priorities and policies'.

2. RATIONALE

The qualitative study will examine current perceptions, practices and procedure across the School of Engineering at the University and two of its partners in Singapore and Sri Lanka. Secondly, the research will consider three different regions and, within each region, colleagues with differing responsibilities and rank will be interviewed for hierarchical differences in perceptions and opinions. Three hierarchical positions will be examined – Strategic, such as Associate Deans and CEOs; Tactical – such as Programme Leaders; and Operational – such as Programme Operations.

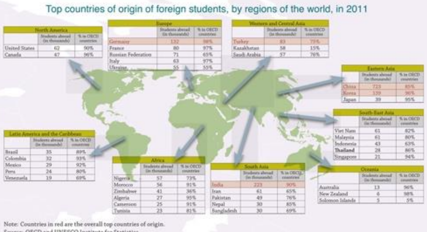
3. JUSTIFICATION

According to the British Council (2014), more and more students across the world are choosing to study international higher education programmes without having to travel to the country awarding the qualification/providing the academic oversight to study the entire programme. This increasing phenomenon is facilitated by higher education institutions and the programmes they deliver, crossing international borders to reach the students demanding these programmes. There are a number of terms used to describe this international mobility according to the British Council (2014), the most common for providers and programmers being 'transnational education'. While this particular facet of the internationalisation of higher education is certainly not new, it does appear to have accelerated in recent years to such an extent that it now constitutes a significant component of the higher education system in a number of developing countries. In most host countries, however, TNE represents a small but increasingly important alternative to traditional international student mobility and domestic higher education for local students.

4. LITERATURE

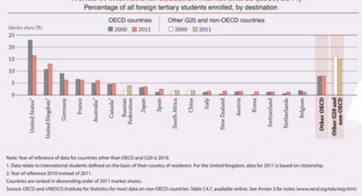
Statistics from OECD (2013) showing origin of foreign students by region in 2011 suggest that the Asian group is followed by Europeans (23%), particularly citizens from European Union (EU) countries that are also members of the OECD (EU21) (14%). Students from Africa account for 12% of all international students, while those from the rest of the world account for only 12%. The following tables summarise OECD's (2013) findings for top countries by origin:

Top countries of origin of foreign students, by regions of the world, in 2011

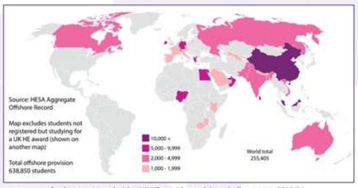


Note: Countries in red are the overall top countries of origin.
Source: OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

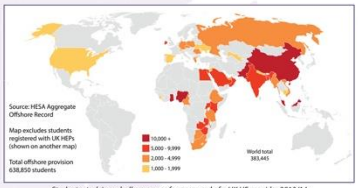
Trends in international education market shares (2000, 2011)
Percentage of all foreign tertiary students enrolled, by destination



More recently, new players have emerged on the international market. An example of this has been presented by OECD (2013) where significant numbers of foreign students were enrolled in Canada (5%), Japan (4%), the Russian Federation (4%) and Spain (2%). This increase has had a noted impact on the market share held by other countries such as the United States, whose market share dropped from 23% to 17% between 2000 and 2011. In addition, the OECD (2013) noted the number of foreign students in Korea had increased over 17-fold during this period.



Students registered with a UK HE provider studying wholly overseas 2013/14. (HESA, 2015). (see above)



Students studying wholly overseas for an award of a UK HE provider 2013/14. (HESA, 2015). (see above)

The number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship has risen dramatically over the past decades, with Asian students making up 53% of the total in 2011. New players are entering the education market as a result of broader policies to attract and retain highly skilled migrants, a source of short- and long-term revenues for countries (OECD, 2013).

To support the findings presented by OECD, the diagrams below represent findings from HESA (Data from the HESA- Aggregate Offshore Record) showing the nature of TNE abroad from two perspectives: firstly, the number of students registered with a UK HE provider wholly overseas and secondly, the number of students studying with a UK HE provider wholly overseas.

5. METHODOLOGY

ONTOLOGY	Relativism: Ontology is subjective
EPISTEMOLOGY	Subjectivism: Making meaning out of something
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	Interpretivism: A positivistic approach to research in a natural setting using: Phenomenology
METHODOLOGY	Phenomenological research: In-depth understanding of individual phenomena providing rich data
METHODS	Interviews Identifying themes Content and discourse analysis

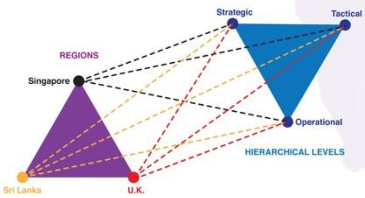


Diagram depicting Triangulation by Region and Hierarchy. Aulak, (2016). (see above)

Triangulation:

For this study, Triangulation of Sources has been adopted. Different sources of data from different regions and different hierarchical positions have been sought. Using the method of semi-structured interviews, the method has compared similar hierarchical positions in three different regions and their viewpoints on the same phenomena in question.

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6. SUMMARY OF RESULTS & FINDINGS

THEME 1: STRATEGY								
Justification	Preference for a region	Local Conditions	Commonality	Push Factors	Pull Factors	Student Motivations	Competition	Reputation

THEMES 2 & 3: MANAGING PARTNERSHIP EXPECTATIONS & TNE DEVELOPMENT						
Partnership Qualities	Partnership Expectations	Realisation	Student Expectations	Local Opinion	Advantages	Disadvantages
Local Changes	Challenges	Improvements	Communication	Ownership/Trust /Integrity	Quality	Other Issues

THEME 4: TNE CHALLENGES & PERSPECTIVES							
Advantages	Disadvantages	Brain -Drain	Home Situation	Challenges	Strategies For Coping	Improvements	Other

THEME 5: QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES						
Partnership Qualities	Attributes Of Both Parties	QA Practices	Sharing Best Practice	Student Perspectives	Measures & Managing	Possibility Of Like-For-Like
Degree Or Experience	Possibilities Of Mirroring	Practice	Commonality	Ensuring Quality	Defining Quality	Communication /Collaboration
Staff Development	Student Opinion	Reasons For Foreign Studies	Brain-Drain	Local Changes	Student Expectations	Similarities
Commercialisation	Physical Presence	Current Processes	Future	Other		

THEME 6: CULTURE						
Defining Culture	Differences	Challenges	Practice	Role of culture	Managing Expectations	Overcoming Challenges

THEME 7: POST COLONIALISM				
Agree	Disagree	Local Opinion	Student Viewpoint	Britishness

7. ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

STRATEGIC LEVEL		
Pre-Launch Examine:	**During** Identify:	**On-Going** Explore:
Partnership qualities	Student & Staff	Competition
Local conditions	Regional employer focus	Reputation / Risk
Education systems	Staff development for all	Role of culture
Push / Pull Factors	Challenges & Improvements	Local opinion
Partnership Expectations	Programme Content & RegionalSuitability (post TtC)	Local changes

TACTICAL (PROGRAMME) LEVEL		
Pre-Launch Examine:	**During** Identify:	**On-Going** Explore:
Local conditions	Standardise quality practices	Role of culture
Cultural exchange	Allow ownership/ trust/ integrity	Physical presence
Education systems	Cultural exchange of ideas	Share best practice
Communication	Staff development for all	Allow contextualisation at local level
Local Induction	Student expectations / motivations	Measure & manage shared quality
Student opinion		

OPERATIONAL LEVEL		
Pre-Launch Examine:	**During** Identify:	**On-Going** Explore:
Home situation	Differences / Challenges	Overcoming challenges
Local conditions	Opportunities for mirrored-practice	Measure & manage shared quality
Current processes	Opportunities for cultural exchange	Share best practice
Similarities	Opportunities for sharing best practice	
QA Practices		
Communication		

Proposed Template for Managing Quality of TNE programmes. Aulak, (2016).

2) EAIR Porto University Paper

How do Transnational Higher Education Partnerships ensure academic credibility of programmes?

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Abstract

How do Transnational Higher Education Partnerships ensure academic credibility of programmes?

This research has investigated key quality assurance issues relating to the sudden and rapid development of Transnational Higher Education (TNE). The study used thematic analysis led by the literature. First, an extensive literature review was conducted featuring research from eminent authors in the field. Secondly, using qualitative approaches for primary research, data was collected by semi-structured interviews conducted in Singapore, Sri Lanka and the UK. Seven themes were represented from literature and scrutinised in practice. The phenomenological findings were then examined and the study found that it is possible to harmonise these differences and proposes a practical framework for practice.

Presentation

How do Transnational Higher Education Partnerships ensure academic credibility of programmes?

Background

The development of international education as a business perspective in the UK can be traced back to 1980 when full fees for international students were introduced (Woodfield and Jones, 2015). However, by the 2000s, two government-funded Prime Minister's Initiatives (PMIs) for international education focused on growing international student numbers, and helping HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) develop overseas partnership activities along with support services for students. More recently, government funding has reduced as the sector has become increasingly self-sufficient and successful, facilitated in part by sector-wide organisations. These include the British Universities International Liaison Association (BUILA, n.d.), which supports the work of university international offices (largely focused on recruiting non-EU students), and the UK Council on International Student Affairs (UKCISA, n.d.). UKCISA is an important lobby group in international education. It also provides information to international students about studying in the UK, supports institutions in understanding governmental regulations related to international student recruitment (e.g. immigration and visas) and protects the interests of international students (Woodfield and Jones, 2015).

TNE is a success story. Her Majesty's Government (2013) state that international education has taken on growing importance as a service industry in response to the global financial crisis and, as one of 13 key sectors identified as drivers of economic growth, was a central part of the then Coalition Government's 'industrial' strategy. HM Government (2013) also suggest that this positioned the UK, from a government perspective, as focusing on competitiveness and trade as far as international education was concerned. The strategy covered all levels of education and, in addition to promoting increased international student recruitment to the UK and offshore through TNE arrangements (including wholly online), also focuses on supporting international collaboration (education and research, promoting outward mobility of UK students, and export of educational services to other countries (HM Government, 2013b)).

At the institutional level, the UK HE sector is highly diverse and it is difficult to make general statements about institutional policies, since much is anecdotal. There is no requirement for HEIs to have international strategies or to share them (Woodfield and Jones, 2015). However, the institution under consideration here, has an internationalisation strategy for TNE and home curricula and this has been endorsed and communicated via the institution's 2020 strategic development plan. Advice from Marginson (2017) suggests more than ever, universities have a vital role to play in working across borders, in sharing each other's spaces, in building collaboration and understanding, and in applying dispassionate human intelligence to solving the many problems before us. Brexit makes it harder, but will not stop UK and European universities from working together.

The study has taken place in an institution which has witnessed a great emergence and development of TNE activity in recent years, compared to its counterparts. The programmes under consideration are all at postgraduate level.

The work is important from a number of perspectives as internationalisation is not straight forward and can be problematic when measuring quality. This qualitative study has firstly examined, through secondary research, current perceptions, practices, debates and opinion across relevant literature. Drawing on themes from the literature and in practice, then using primary research, it has investigated regional norms, values and perceptions of colleagues involved in TNE in the UK, Singapore and Sri Lanka. The work has considered three different regions and, within each region, colleagues with differing responsibilities and rank have been interviewed for any hierarchical differences in perceptions and opinions. Three hierarchical positions have been examined – Strategic, such as Associate Deans / CEOs; Tactical – such as Programme Leaders and Operational – such as Programme Operations.

Literature Review

There has already been some interesting research conducted in this area, particularly by Jane Knight (2005, p3), who reflects, that "while the Observatory of Borderless Higher Education in the UK tracks recent developments and reports on them, there is still a real need to ensure that 'cross-border education reflects and helps to meet individual countries' educational goals, culture, priorities and policies'." This increasing phenomenon is facilitated by higher education institutions crossing international borders to reach the students demanding these programmes.

Nordin, Alias and Siraj (2013) state that the rapid expansion of higher education systems and globalisation have placed demands on effective mechanisms for professional recognition of higher education credentials. Despite differences in the size and stage of development of their higher education sectors, many governments have found traditional academic controls inadequate for facing today's challenges. Organisations such as the OECD have made calls for new structures and approaches to quality assurance.

However, globalisation has introduced concerns for the efficacy of international strategies that target quality assurance and international competitiveness in Asian higher education, for both universities and countries (Hou, 2014). In this context, the internationalisation of higher education often implies the pursuit of an international image of quality and prestige, in order to make the selected top institutions more globally competitive (Deem, Mok and Lucas, 2008).

In order to protect against substandard transnational education provision, quality assurance resources have been developed at international, national and institutional levels (McBurnie, 2008). UNESCO, for example, has developed Guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education (Stella, 2006 and Zwanikken, 2013). However, these guidelines are voluntary. Stella (2006) agrees, the Guidelines are voluntary but provide a framework for cooperation. They recommend responsibilities for both partners in transnational collaborations and aim to encourage quality of provision.

Throughout the world there has been a move to mass higher education, the cross border education involving greater diversity of programmes. This expansion of higher education has prompted the rise of a variety of modes of delivery hence posing challenges for the efficacy of institutional quality controls (Nordin, Alias and Siraj, 2013).

Differences between the peer based quality assurance system of the UK and the government controlled one in, for example, China (Mok and Xu, 2008), have also resulted in considerable frustrations amongst all stake holders of the Sino-UK TNE provision in China, including academic, programme managers, students and their parents alike (Leon, 2000).

In response to global trends, Hou (2014) states national accreditors are supposed to be the gate-keepers of cross-border education. However, most quality assurance agencies in Asian countries in the category of 'cross-border quality assurance' are still confined to national contexts, and have no capacity to evaluate cross-border academic programmes at home or abroad.

Knight (2012) warns the growing complexity of the internationalisation landscape, especially student mobility, is raising new questions and issues regarding the granting and recognition of qualifications. For students taking full degree programmes abroad, the challenge of ensuring that the awarded qualification is recognised by institutions and employers in other countries cannot be ignored.

Results from the first phase of a survey conducted by Healey and Michael (2014), show that quality assurance bodies on TNE has had an impact, as has increasing attention to international ranking systems. There are increasing pressures on exporting institutions to maintain high quality in overseas programmes, in order not to damage the university's global brand, but the costs of doing so are high.

Ensuring that the quality of cross-border education meets both local and international standards has become a challenge in many nations, particularly in most Asian nations which only developed their quality assurance in the early twenty-first century. This points to the need to build capacity - particularly in the internationalisation dimension – for national quality assurance agencies which can evaluate cross-border education by foreign educational providers, or jointly by both local and foreign institutions (Hou, 2014). As cross-border education continues to grow rapidly, there will be more and more international quality review activities throughout the world. Assurance that institutions can receive equal treatment and good quality services from both local and international accreditors is now becoming a common global issue.

Many of the earlier issues on quality assurance implementation relate to the lack of trust among key players in the system (Nordin, Alias and Siraj, 2013). It is often mentioned in literature that in order for academicians to accept and implement changes, they must trust and own the process of problem definition and solution design. This is certainly the case in any quality assurance exercise. Only if the academicians accept quality assurance as their own activity, will the system be successful.

Research Methodology

The study was concerned with individual perspectives on how TNE arrangements work in practice for quality. This research falls under the category of the interpretive-constructivist paradigm with a phenomenological approach. This occurred as findings were to be based on academic views, opinions and perceptions within TNE. Qualitative methods were used to gain an understanding of people's experiences. Although the methods available to qualitative researchers are wide-ranging and constantly expanding, Ritchie et al, (2013) believed that the ability to design and conduct high-quality interview-based studies remained a core part of the qualitative research skill set. Seeking the views of and experiences of those affected by policy remains essential and interviewing remains a key tool for doing this (Ritchie et al., 2013). Additionally, these methods focused attention on the meanings that participants gave to their environment, and properly executed qualitative research is a skilled craft that brings unique understanding of people's lives, yet built within an appropriate orientation (Ritchie et al., 2013). The primary research conducted used these qualitative methods to examine experiences and perceptions of individuals influenced by quality in TNE.

In this research, semi-structured interviews were used as the research method in order to obtain fuller reasons and understanding of phenomena pertaining to quality in TNE. Semi-structured interviewing was not a preliminary method: it had a developed focus on which it operated with a degree of precision, which none the less produced open-ness in the level and range of responses from the interviewee. The setting of the focus – wide-angle or the obverse – is one of the main decisions the researcher has to make: a stage that comes before the topic and question development (Gillham, 2005). The setting here used a wide-angle approach.

The method developed into triangulation – more specifically – Triangulation of Sources. Different sources of data; from different regions and differing hierarchical positions have being sought, underpinned by the literature. Using the method of semi-structured interviews, a comparison of responses from similar hierarchical positions in three different regions has been collected, for the same phenomena in question.

Core questions used in the semi-structured interviews were drawn from the literature. For this paper, only some of the results pertaining to one of the seven themes will be presented – namely Quality Assurance Practices. Some analysis will be presented from three regions and three hierarchies.

Results & Findings

From the major theme of Quality Assurance Practices, many sub themes emerged. A summary table has been presented below, which illustrates the findings of this theme and respective sub themes from the semi-structured interviews, after analysis of the primary data collected. This table of results presents ALL findings under the Theme of Quality Assurance Practices.

Theme: Quality Assurance Practices						
Partnership qualities	Attributes of both parties	QA Practices	Sharing best practice	Student perspectives	Measures & managing	Possibility of like-for-like
Degree or experience	Possibilities of mirroring	Practice	Commonality	Ensuring Quality	Defining Quality	Communication/ collaboration
Staff development	Student opinion	Reasons for foreign studies	Brain-drain	Local changes	Student expectations	Similarities
Commercialisa tion	Physical presence	Current processes	Future	Other		

For this paper, only the sub themes highlighted in yellow will be discussed further due to the constraints and boundaries of the requirements for the EAIR track, Quality Management.

1. Quality Assurance Practices

The Singapore Strategic level noted that quality in programmes can only be measured and achieved if they are employment focused and students can demonstrate that they do what the paper says they can.

> "Also in terms of QA and how do we achieve that quality, I like the programmes to be lots of hands-on and evidence of learning – considering that we are employment focused."

“Yes, education then becomes the quality check, the verification that these people can do what they say can do. Because if it really was just about learning the skill, on-line would have wiped everybody out years ago.”

[Sing – S]

Whereas Sri Lanka Strategic level noted that at her level, she was accountable to the board for numbers and quality – she said she would compromise on numbers but never on quality and delivery.

“At my level yes. Because at the end of the day, I always tell this to my board, if I am responsible for numbers and I am responsible for programme quality, there might be a times that for numbers I compromise on the quality or the delivery.”

[SL – S]

The UK Strategic level stated that he felt good progress had been made driving QA practices and standards. He said, that at some recent approval events in China, there was some recognition that the overseas partner would try and learn quality management and quality assurance procedure from the University – not copy, but understand them.

“Driving down into QA practices and the standards and so forth, I think we’ve made good progress around that. Equally, I think some of the approval events we have had in China, there is actually recognition or an openness to try and learn from us in terms of our quality management and our quality assurance procedures. May be not copy them, but understand them.”

[UK – S]

The UK’s reputation for QA has been noted in the literature too as:

“To date, national quality assurance policy has supported the UK’s strong international reputation for the quality of its HE system, whilst recent policy on immigration has provided challenges for international student recruitment and damaged the UK HE sector’s reputation overseas.”

(Woodfield and Jones, 2015 in Prutsch, 2015)

“HEIs offering UK degrees must meet strict criteria to be awarded the title 'university', a process controlled by the QAA on behalf of the Privy Council. Some non-UK HEIs operate in the UK but they cannot offer UK qualifications without partnering with a UK HEI.”

(Woodfield and Jones, 2015)

2. Practices

This led the conversations onto what actually happens in practice with policy and procedures. Singapore Tactical level felt that communication between partnerships is frequent and prompt so they are fully informed regarding requirements.

> "…because I think we were told and trained and we are following up exactly and the communication and interaction is very frequent and prompt."
>
> [Sing – T]

Sri Lanka Tactical noted that he felt something was missing with understanding policy and procedures certainly for their tutors (in country). He insisted that the tutors need to hear from University staff the importance of engaging with Moodle for example.

> "I feel that that is something which is missing. Let me say we need to have a session on … you need someone to actually be physically be here to train the tutors in the first place."
>
> "A classic example is access to Moodle. You have to enforce that and say all the lectures have to be here, and it is compulsory, on a particular day, you need to fly somebody here, training. So that I think is extremely important. This area I feel things are a little bit ad hoc."
>
> [SL – T]

The UK Tactical level suggested that in terms of procedures, there are some practical issues regarding first and second marking at partner institutes. The reason he suggested was that institutions abroad have fewer full time staff and rely more on visiting lectures compared to the University. Initially, he felt that a lot of time had to be spent at the beginning of the partnership helping them to understand marking rubrics and procedures; things have now settled down.

> "First and second marker marking I think there are some practical issue. Because I don't think they employ staff as we do. We have a smaller percentage of Visiting Lectures compared to the full time staff, and there it is the other way around. There are some practical difficulties in doing it."
>
> "I found I had to put a lot of effort in the beginning of the partnership to make they understand how to do it and do it every time the way that I want them to do it. If I hadn't put that for that module, I wouldn't put that one in front of the external examiner. But now I find I have to go

through and even increase the marks, they are being quite harsh as they have found I have been harsh."

[UK – T]

3. Ensuring Quality

Under this question for the tactical level, individuals discussed how they ensured quality. The Singapore Tactical noted that quality and standards are followed. They attempt to contextualise all content which is delivered for students. The institution in Singapore has an internal pass rate which must be achieved of 90% but, the programme lead states that this can only be achieved as it depends on the quality of the students. She added cautiously, just because they are striving for a high first time pass rate, it does not necessarily mean that they will be lenient or have not adhered to quality and standards.

"….follow the standard and quality required. And, we try to contextualise and deliver the content."

"Pass rate is of course ...our KPIs for pass rate is actually 90%. But attaining 90% depends on the quality of students that we have. I think 80% is more reasonable. But 90% means we are actually trying to be more lenient – but being lenient does not mean we haven't adhered to the quality and standards. We need to watch out there."

[Sing – T]

The Sri Lanka Tactical added that that they struggle to put quality assurance in place as they do not yet have a formalised process. He said that if we were to ask five lectures at the institution about quality assurance on the programme, we would probably receive varying responses.

"Quality assurance in some areas it has impacted. But of course we struggle to sort of put that in place, but then the absence of a formalised process. If you were to ask 5 lecturers regarding the quality process of a programme, all 5 will actually have 5 different answers."

[SL – T]

The UK Tactical level feels that similar standards have been achieved, it is just a question of monitoring them now. He would be happy to place certain modules in the front of the QAA, not all of them though. This programme lead added another dimension – as he himself is a Sri Lankan, he said that he can understand the Asian mentality of working. He feels that Asians have a very structured way of working and if told to follow a process, then they will adhere to it. Operational guidance is fine but when you introduce some complexity, as in the way we appear to do in the UK, then he feels they do not understand. For example, if you say that we need to improve quality, then this not something tangible and can cause obstacles.

> "I think similar standards are now achieved and I just need to monitor. If QAA come now I would put that module in – its partner to partner, not every partner will do it."

> "Being a Sri Lankan I understand to a certain extent how Asian mentality works. We are very structured, we see the world in a very structured manner. If someone tells them how to do it in a process way, they do understand. If you put it in a complex way like we do here, we talk about improving quality and what does that mean' they don't understand. They want operational guidance."

[UK – T]

Quality assurance practices have been noted in the literature as:

> "The key challenges for universities, regulators and policy makers with TNE is quality assurance."

(Castle and Kelly, 2004; Craft, 2004; Stella, 2006; Edwards et al. 2010)

> "Despite these developments, Blanco Ramirez and Berger (2013) state, there are on-going and perhaps ever increasing concerns about inequities and shortcomings in access to, quality of, relevance of, and investment in higher education. In this changing context, quality and accountability have received increasing attention from policy makers and higher education leaders. For instance, since the 1990s, almost every country in the world has developed quality assurance mechanisms, many of which take their cues directly from a handful of developed nations."

(Kells, 1999)

> "A closer examination of quality assurance policies reveals, however, many of these practices fail to theorize what quality means (Harvey and Newton, 2004, 2007). While quality-orientated practices have become more frequently and intentionally pursued in the new national contexts, conceptualisations of quality have not advanced at the same rate."

(Harvey and Newton, 2004, 2007)

> "The most important of all tensions is that relating to the substance of that collaboration, with the management of the respective collaborating institutions each interpreting that

collaboration from a self-interested perspective. Since fee-setting, student management, staff management, academic management, curriculum management and quality assurance are key dimensions of collaboration, they are sources of tension."

(Hill et al., 2013)

"Organisations such as the OECD have made calls for new structures and approaches to quality assurance."

"Woodhouse (1999), referred to quality assurance as relating 'to the policies, attitudes, actions and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced'."

(Woodhouse,1999)

In addition, UK Operations stated that to ensure better controls of marks, the partnerships should take over the master spreadsheets instead of UK module coordinators managing them, and enter the marks themselves.

"What we are finding is, we have mark sheets for on-campus courses and we give these to the module coordinator. But I think, having experienced the way TNE operates across different partners – I think there are 7 or 8 – I think going forward we are going to send the mark sheets directly to the partner (as opposed to the equivalent module coordinator at the university). Get the partner to fill in the marks. Get those (then) sent to the module coordinator here at the university and then receive the marks from the module coordinator that way. So it's a slightly different way; it goes straight to the partnership and then the module coordinator, then triangulates back if you like to the programme admin team."

"Much better than trying to interpret their mark sheets so I think that is something that we are going to change going forward."

[UK – O]

Currently, there is a reluctance from the university to hand over these documents to partners as some link tutors, including myself, believe that these are university documents and presently used as our internal auditing tools. Once the overseas work has been verified by the university, only then do respective link tutors confirm and enter the marks and final sign-off takes place. By removing this layer of 'security', we are leaving the documents open to misinterpretation and misuse. It is not to say that all partners or university module coordinators will act inappropriately; why leave the temptation thereby providing an opportunity for malice? Yes, there indeed needs to be an element of trust and after a period of time, once this trust has been developed, this practice can be arranged. From my personal experience, some partnerships which have been running for over two years now, appear mature enough to take on this practice as good professional working relationships with individuals have developed. These select individuals have strived for quality and demonstrated it as an integrated practice at the partnership. In addition, these few individuals have a long-standing employment record at the institutions, where normally high staff turnover is seen as a norm.

4. Measuring and Managing

Under the last sub theme of measures and managing quality, Singapore Strategic level said that they would like their students to be portfolio centric; this will help differentiate them from others who also have the same degree. It will show they stand out and have something different. He felt the portfolio will help demonstrate ability and take conversations into different directions – not solely relying on the qualification alone, thereby demonstrating quality.

> "We try to get our students to be portfolio centric. If you graduate and you go out to someone and this is my degree and they'll say that's fine it's the same degree that we see everyone else is having; what's special about you? And if they have a portfolio of work to demonstrate, it takes the conversation in a different dimension, its demonstration of ability instead of relying on a qualification."
>
> [Sing – S]

Sri Lanka Strategic felt that she needed people within programme management who would be responsible for quality and quality alone. This has been achieved she feels by recruiting a programme head who looks solely after quality assurance and quality of delivery. She emphasised that the staff at the organisation were ware that QA was important as it transpired through the graduates going into the market place.

> "I think we need independent people within the programme management system who are responsible for quality and quality alone."
>
> "I think that's where we agreed that we bring in a programme head who is independent of me but reports to the board that's where [name] came in and we are now looking for a replacement for him. He manages the programmes, independent of the rest of the operation and the quality assurance angle and the quality delivery angle."
>
> "…they're (staff) are fully aware of what we want to maintain in terms of quality angle and where we aspire to be in terms of delivery and what we put out to the market. The final end results – the graduates that we put out to market."
>
> [SL – S]

UK Strategic level stated that there was now an established TNE group based at the faculty and this where sharing ideas, best practice and TNE issues can be addressed as a collective. In addition, he said there is an annual monitoring process which provides an opportunity to identify action plans going forward. These iterative processes are developing indicators of quality.

> “I suppose, we have our international TNE group where we are sharing ideas, sharing good things and addressing issues as a collective.”
>
> “We have obviously the annual monitoring processes and that’s obviously an opportunity to identify and action plan if you like, going forward. May be there are some weaknesses in that process at the moment and how we are actually monitoring what we set out to do from last year and how we are actually doing against that and reviewing that.”
>
> “It’s an iterative process of developing these indicators of quality.”

[UK – S]

Other interesting areas which transpired under this theme have been captured. The Singapore Strategic added that there appears to be a cultural shift – now that everyone appears to have a degree, it is a question about what you can do. What abilities you have? How will you demonstrate those abilities? This is what the Singapore government appears to be pushing too.

> “I think education is one of them; the focus has kind of changed, of where culturally it used to be – you need to have a degree and if you do then you are considered as you made it, now everyone has a degree – people are now saying what can you do? Show me your abilities? And that’s kind of where the Singapore government is pushing everyone as well.”
>
> “The university system was made for the top 10% of each cohort. That expanded recently to about 15% and then the next year it went to 20% and they’ve just announced 40%, and that’s just government universities doing 40% of each cohort – 4 out of 10 go into the state universities. And that means, the current state that we are in now, where there are 5 in 10 who have a degree, one came from the state university, maybe two; right now that means that the other 3 or 4 graduates are being produced by the private sector. People like us. Which means, that in about 3 to 4 years, when we do the projections, what’s going to happen is that the state university is going to be producing 4 in 10, and we are going to be producing 3 or 4 in 10. That means 8 in 10 are going to have degrees.”
>
> “That’s my guess...9 out of 10 will have degrees ...maybe in business management...good grief...how do you tell the difference between 9 business management students?”

[Sing – S]

Sri Lanka Strategic noted that it appears at their end that the University and the faculties have an idea of what TNE is but they are not filtering this down to other faculty members. So she feels there is a tendency of non-cooperation and a lack of understanding of problems faced at the partner institute by the University.

> "I think one of the things that I'd like to add which I have seen, is sometimes the (the university) faculty or the school has an idea in mind when they do a TNE, but sometimes it doesn't really filter down to other faculty members who are not a part of that whole thing. So there is a bit of a, what can we say, a tendency to not cooperate and not understand the problems that we are facing at this end."

[SL – S]

UK - S agreed with this somewhat as he said that for module tutors the franchise arrangement did not provides a reasonable staff experience. He questions if we can actually resource this activity efficiently and effectively? Finally, he end by saying it is about managing partnership expectations but it is also about managing in-house expectations.

> "Under this franchise model, other than the link tutors for which it is a reasonable experience, for the module tutors (the university) it's not a great staff experience at all."

> "It's all a part of the overall international strategy that you have spoken about, the resources on the ground, can we actually resource this and resource it efficiently and effectively?"

> "Remember we were talking about managing partnership expectations, its managing in-house expectations as well."

[UK – S]

The efficacy of international strategies, staff relations and QA relating to the comments made above, has been discussed in the literature:

> "However, globalisation has introduced concerns for the efficacy of international strategies that target quality assurance and international competitiveness in Asian higher education, for both universities and countries."

(Hou, 2014)

"Maintaining quality control in international branch campuses may be more difficult because managers and staff operate in an alien culture far from the home campus. Partnership arrangements maybe undermined by the 'principal-agent'."

(Healey, 2014)

"Ensuring that the quality of cross-border education meets both local and international standards has become a challenge in many nations, particularly in most Asian nations which only developed their quality assurance in the early twenty-first century. This points to the need to build capacity - particularly in the internationalisation dimension – for national quality assurance agencies which can evaluate cross-border education by foreign educational providers, or jointly by both local and foreign institutions."

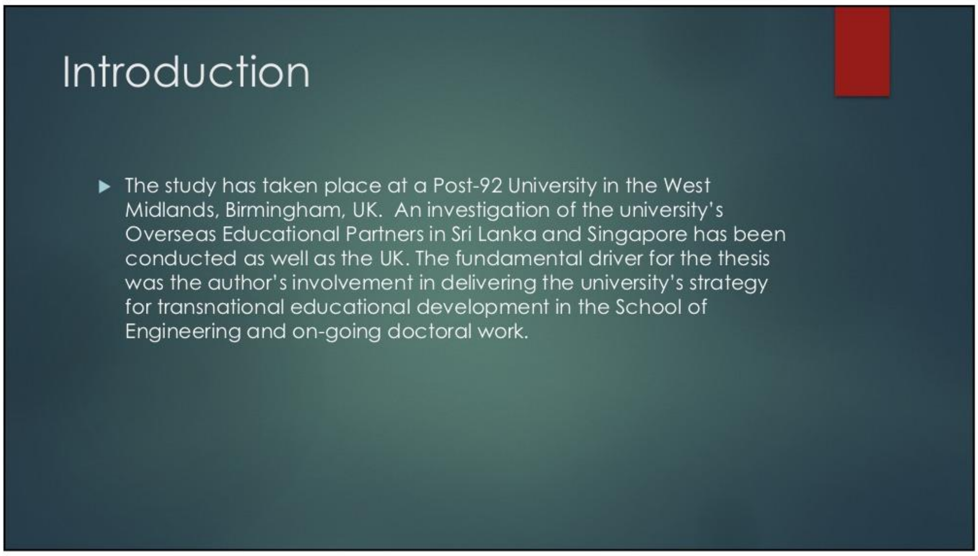
(Hou, 2014)

These findings and sub themes from the research have been called innovative 'units of quality'. These internal indicators or measures can be used as practical approaches to managing TNE activities in-house and within the HE sector; with particular emphasis on strategic, tactical and operational level management. These units of quality are adaptable and appropriate as global mechanisms for quality assurance of a TNE provision. It is recommended that the framework and its responsibilities are adopted by both partners in transnational collaborations and it aims to encourage quality and management of provision.

Conclusion

The following framework has been proposed as an output from the doctoral level study, conducted on all seven themes. This framework has already been presented at the Going Global Conference held in London by the British Council (2017). Considerable interest has been received from academics and TNE leaders in international institutions as it is practical tool which can be used for implementation and managing TNE with immediate effect. The framework is presented below:

3) EAIR Porto University Presentation



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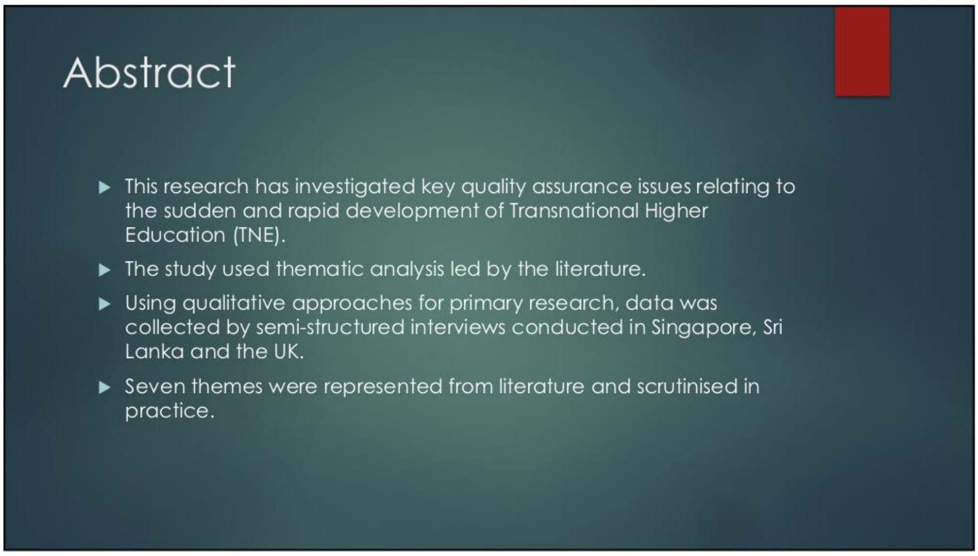
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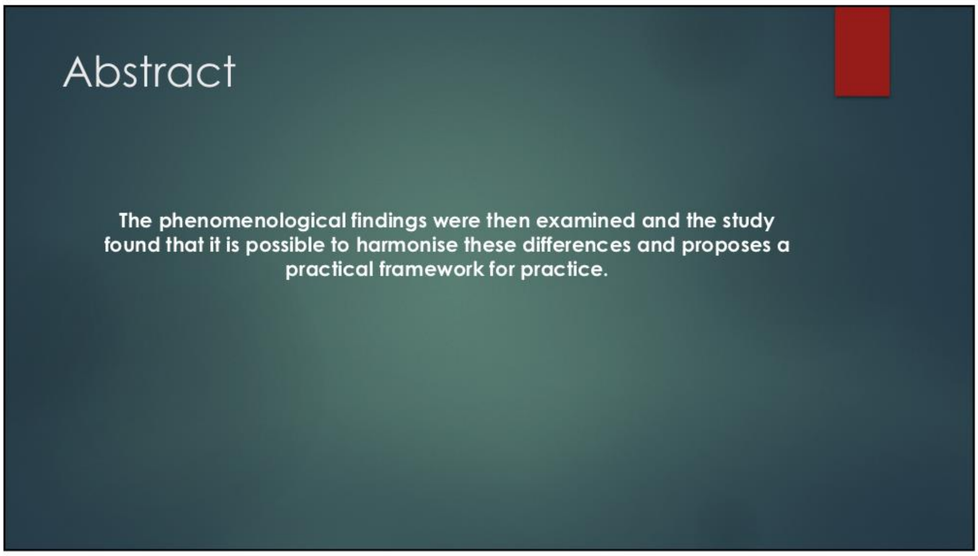
Seven themes were represented from literature and scrutinised in practice.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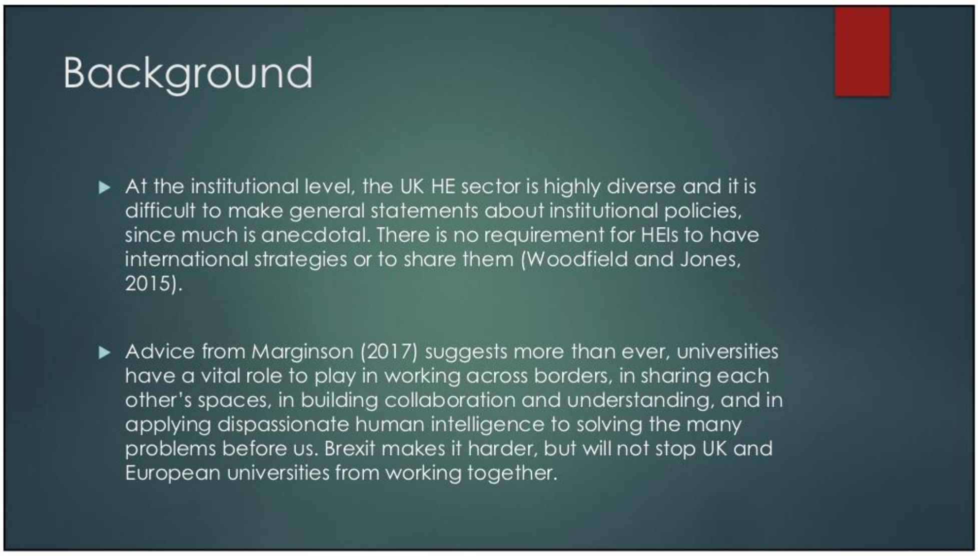
Background

- The development of international education as a business perspective in the UK can be traced back to 1980 when full fees for international students were introduced (Woodfield and Jones, 2015).
- However, by the 2000s, two government-funded Prime Minister's Initiatives (PMIs) for international education focused on growing international student numbers, and helping HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) develop overseas partnership activities along with support services for students.
- More recently, government funding has reduced as the sector has become increasingly self-sufficient and successful, facilitated in part by sector-wide organisations.

Background

- TNE is a success story.
- Her Majesty's Government (2013) state that international education has taken on growing importance as a service industry in response to the global financial crisis and, as one of 13 key sectors identified as drivers of economic growth, was a central part of the then Coalition Government's 'industrial' strategy.
- The strategy covered all levels of education and, in addition to promoting increased international student recruitment to the UK and offshore through TNE arrangements (including wholly online), also focuses on supporting international collaboration (education and research, promoting outward mobility of UK students, and export of educational services to other countries (HM Government, 2013b)).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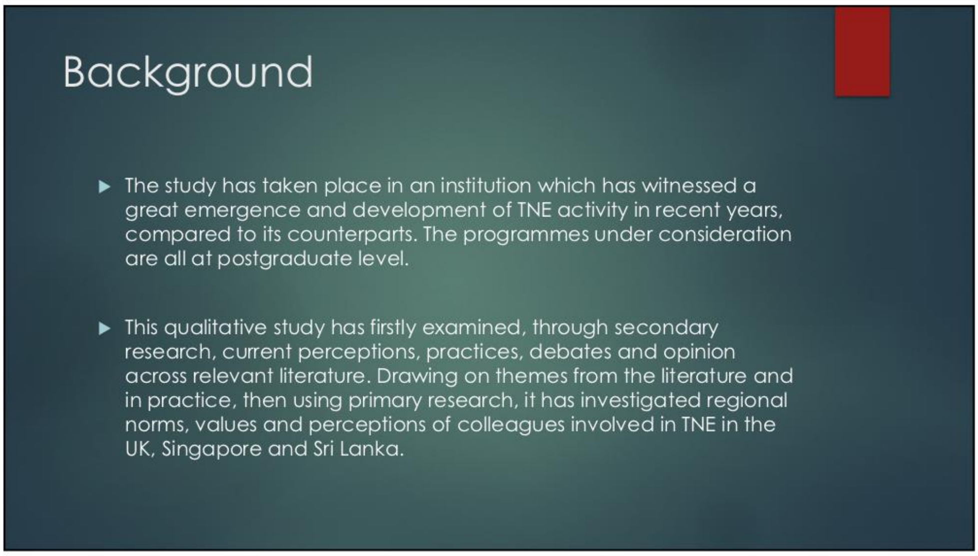
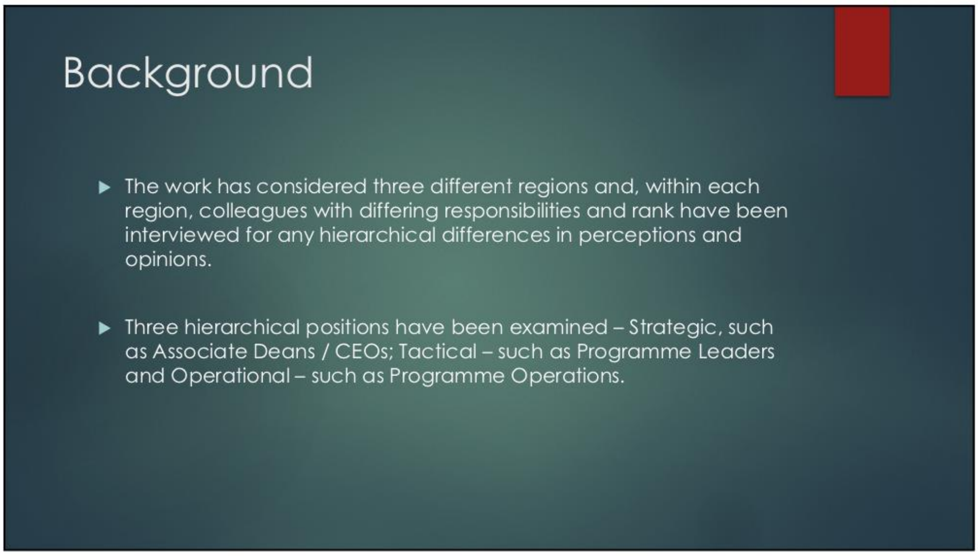
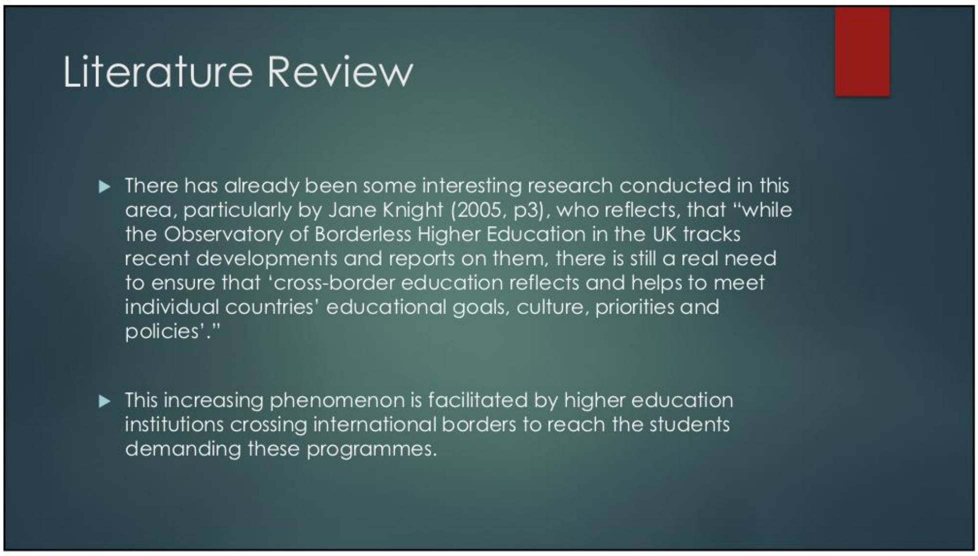
At the institutional level, the UK HE sector is highly diverse and it is difficult to make general statements about institutional policies, since much is anecdotal. There is no requirement for HEIs to have international strategies or to share them (Woodfield and Jones, 2015).
Advice from Marginson (2017) suggests more than ever, universities have a vital role to play in working across borders, in sharing each other's spaces, in building collaboration and understanding, and in applying dispassionate human intelligence to solving the many problems before us. Brexit makes it harder, but will not stop UK and European universities from working together.


Background
The study has taken place in an institution which has witnessed a great emergence and development of TNE activity in recent years, compared to its counterparts. The programmes under consideration are all at postgraduate level.
This qualitative study has firstly examined, through secondary research, current perceptions, practices, debates and opinion across relevant literature. Drawing on themes from the literature and in practice, then using primary research, it has investigated regional norms, values and perceptions of colleagues involved in TNE in the UK, Singapore and Sri Lanka.


Background
The work has considered three different regions and, within each region, colleagues with differing responsibilities and rank have been interviewed for any hierarchical differences in perceptions and opinions.
Three hierarchical positions have been examined – Strategic, such as Associate Deans / CEOs; Tactical – such as Programme Leaders and Operational – such as Programme Operations.


Literature Review
There has already been some interesting research conducted in this area, particularly by Jane Knight (2005, p3), who reflects, that "while the Observatory of Borderless Higher Education in the UK tracks recent developments and reports on them, there is still a real need to ensure that 'cross-border education reflects and helps to meet individual countries' educational goals, culture, priorities and policies'."
This increasing phenomenon is facilitated by higher education institutions crossing international borders to reach the students demanding these programmes.

5

Literature Review

- However, globalisation has introduced concerns for the efficacy of international strategies that target quality assurance and international competitiveness in Asian higher education, for both universities and countries (Hou, 2014).

- In this context, the internationalisation of higher education often implies the pursuit of an international image of quality and prestige, in order to make the selected top institutions more globally competitive (Deem, Mok and Lucas, 2008).

Literature Review

- In order to protect against substandard transnational education provision, quality assurance resources have been developed at international, national and institutional levels (McBurnie, 2008). UNESCO, for example, has developed Guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education (Stella, 2006 and Zwanikken, 2013).

- However, these guidelines are voluntary. Stella (2006) agrees, the Guidelines are voluntary but provide a framework for cooperation. They recommend responsibilities for both partners in transnational collaborations and aim to encourage quality of provision.

Literature Review

- Differences between the peer based quality assurance system of the UK and the government controlled one in, for example, China (Mok and Xu, 2008), have also resulted in considerable frustrations amongst all stake holders of the Sino-UK TNE provision in China, including academic, programme managers, students and their parents alike (Leon, 2000).

Literature Review

- Ensuring that the quality of cross-border education meets both local and international standards has become a challenge in many nations, particularly in most Asian nations which only developed their quality assurance in the early twenty-first century. This points to the need to build capacity - particularly in the internationalisation dimension – for national quality assurance agencies which can evaluate cross-border education by foreign educational providers, or jointly by both local and foreign institutions (Hou, 2014).
- As cross-border education continues to grow rapidly, there will be more and more international quality review activities throughout the world. Assurance that institutions can receive equal treatment and good quality services from both local and international accreditors is now becoming a common global issue.

Methodology

- The study was concerned with individual perspectives on how TNE arrangements work in practice for quality. This research falls under the category of the interpretive-constructivist paradigm with a phenomenological approach. This occurred as findings were to be based on academic views, opinions and perceptions within TNE.

- Qualitative methods were used to gain an understanding of people's experiences.

Methodology

- In this research, semi-structured interviews were used as the research method in order to obtain fuller reasons and understanding of phenomena pertaining to quality in TNE. Semi-structured interviewing was not a preliminary method: it had a developed focus on which it operated with a degree of precision, which none the less produced open-ness in the level and range of responses from the interviewee.

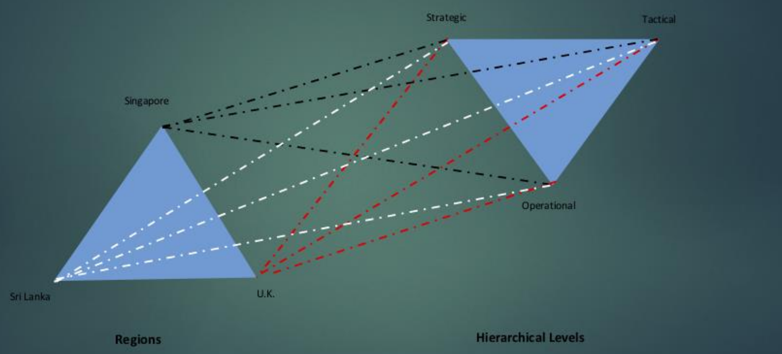
- The setting of the focus – wide-angle or the obverse – is one of the main decisions the researcher has to make: a stage that comes before the topic and question development (Gillham, 2005). The setting here used a wide-angle approach.

Methodology

Ontology	Relativism – ontology is subjective
Epistemology	Subjectivism – making meaning out of something
Theoretical perspective	Interpretivism – A positivistic approach to research in a natural setting using: Phenomenology
Methodology	Phenomenological research – in-depth understanding of individual phenomena providing rich data
Methods	Interviews Identifying themes Content and discourse analysis

P Aulak (2017)

Methodology - triangulation



P Aulak (2017)

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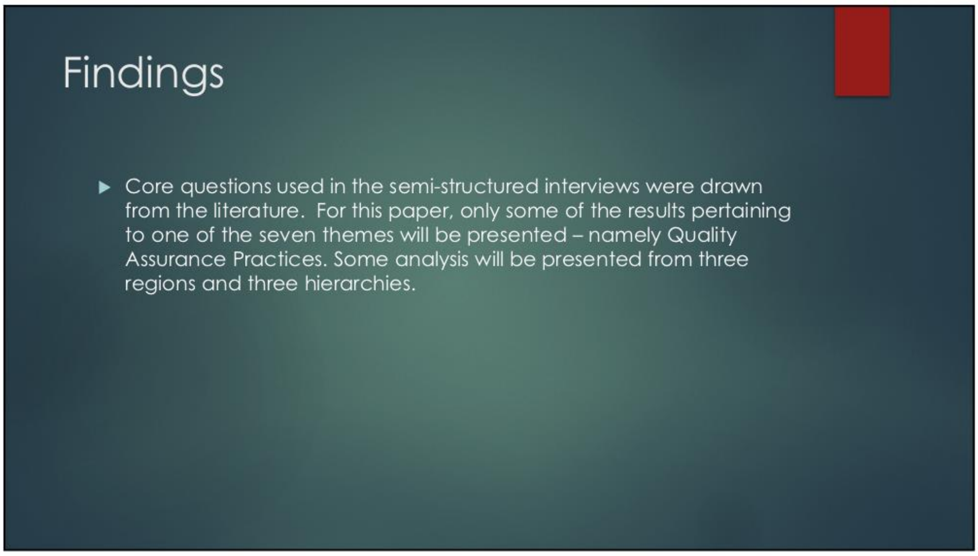
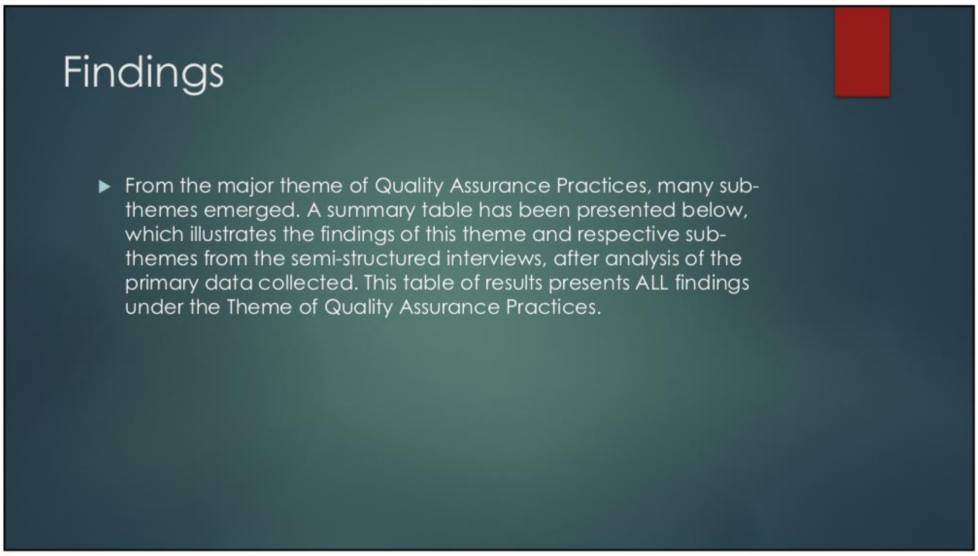
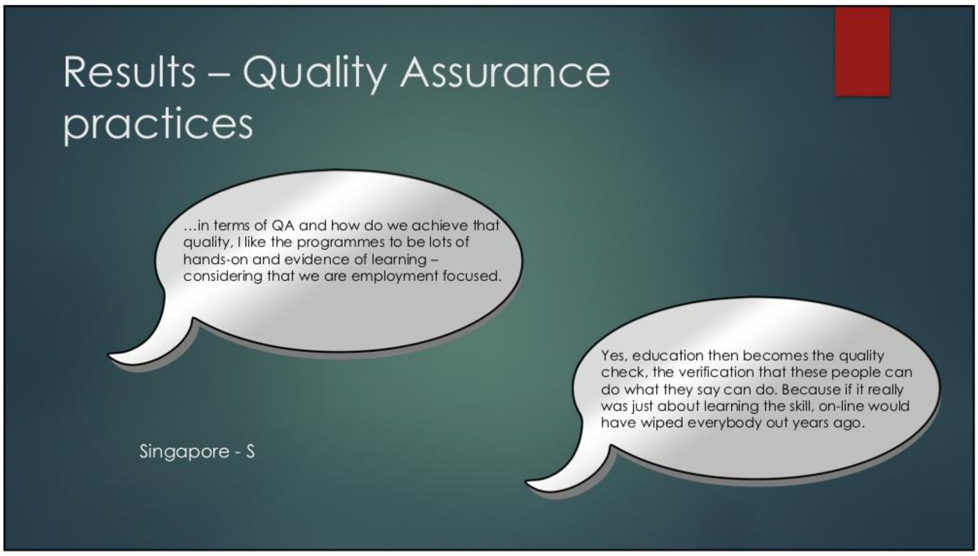

Findings
Core questions used in the semi-structured interviews were drawn from the literature. For this paper, only some of the results pertaining to one of the seven themes will be presented – namely Quality Assurance Practices. Some analysis will be presented from three regions and three hierarchies.


Findings
From the major theme of Quality Assurance Practices, many sub-themes emerged. A summary table has been presented below, which illustrates the findings of this theme and respective sub-themes from the semi-structured interviews, after analysis of the primary data collected. This table of results presents ALL findings under the Theme of Quality Assurance Practices.

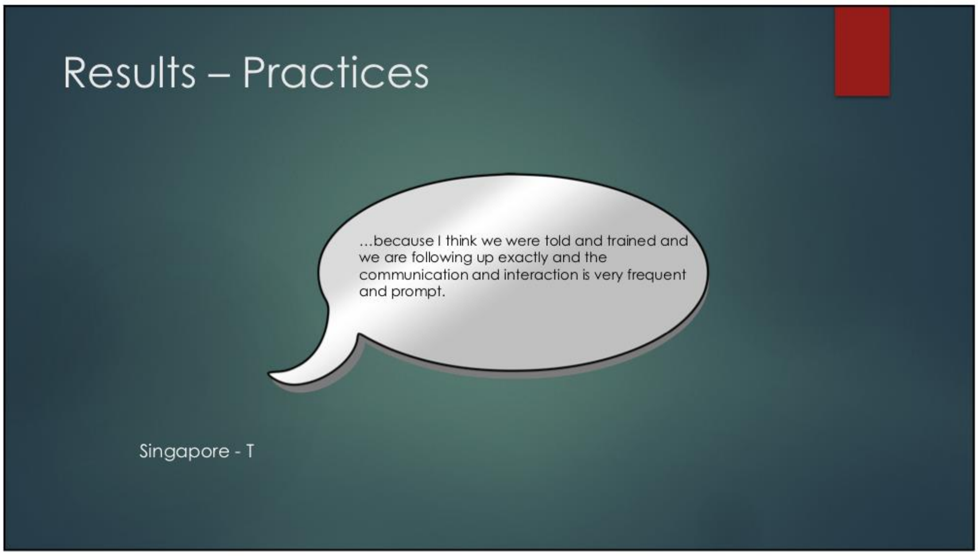
Theme: Quality Assurance Practices						
Partnership qualities	Attributes of both parties	QA Practices	Sharing best practice	Student perspectives	Measures & managing	Possibility of like-for-like
Degree or experience	Possibilities of mirroring	Practice	Commonality	Ensuring Quality	Defining Quality	Communication/collaboration
Staff development	Student opinion	Reasons for foreign studies	Brain-drain	Local changes	Student expectations	Similarities
Commercialisation	Physical presence	Current processes	Future	Other		

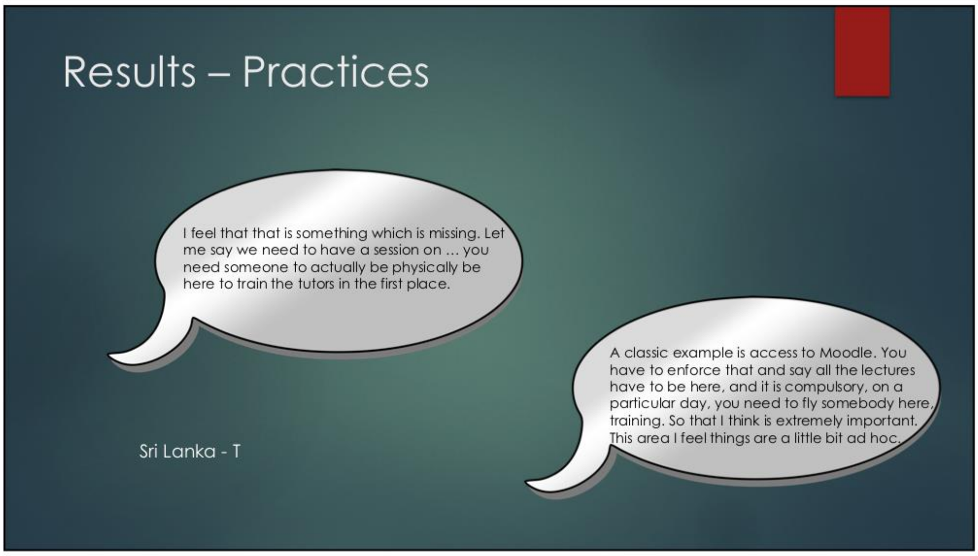


11

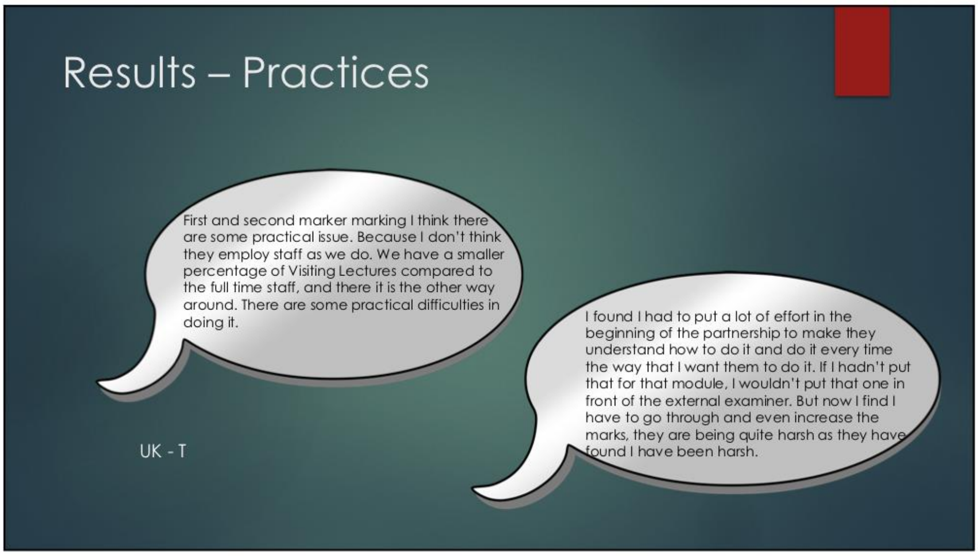

Results – Quality Assurance practices
At my level yes. Because at the end of the day, I always tell this to my board, if I am responsible for numbers and I am responsible for programme quality, there might be a times that for numbers I compromise on the quality or the delivery.
Sri Lanka - S

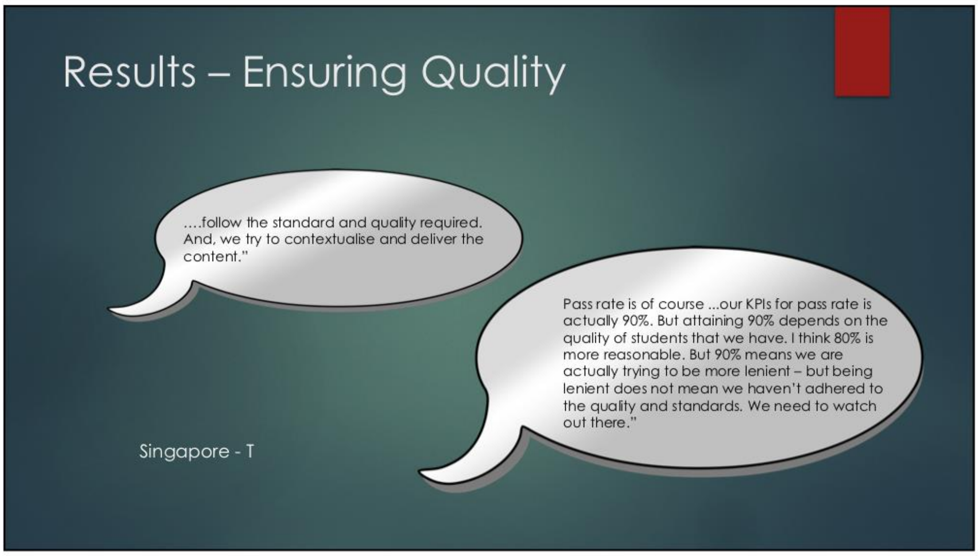

Results – Quality Assurance practices
Driving down into QA practices and the standards and so forth, I think we've made good progress around that. Equally, I think some of the approval events we have had in China, there is actually recognition or an openness to try and learn from us in terms of our quality management and our quality assurance procedures. May be not copy them, but understand them.
UK - S

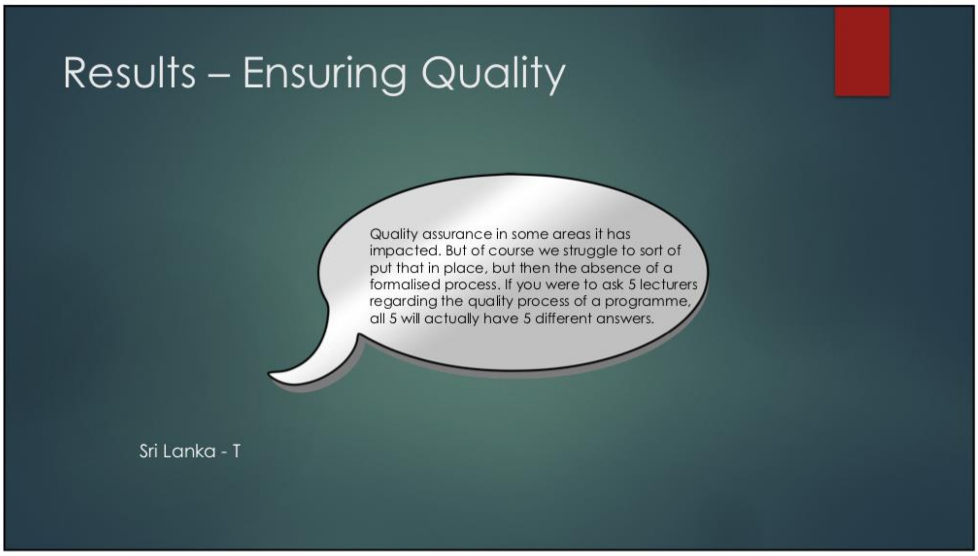

Results – Practices
…because I think we were told and trained and we are following up exactly and the communication and interaction is very frequent and prompt.
Singapore - T

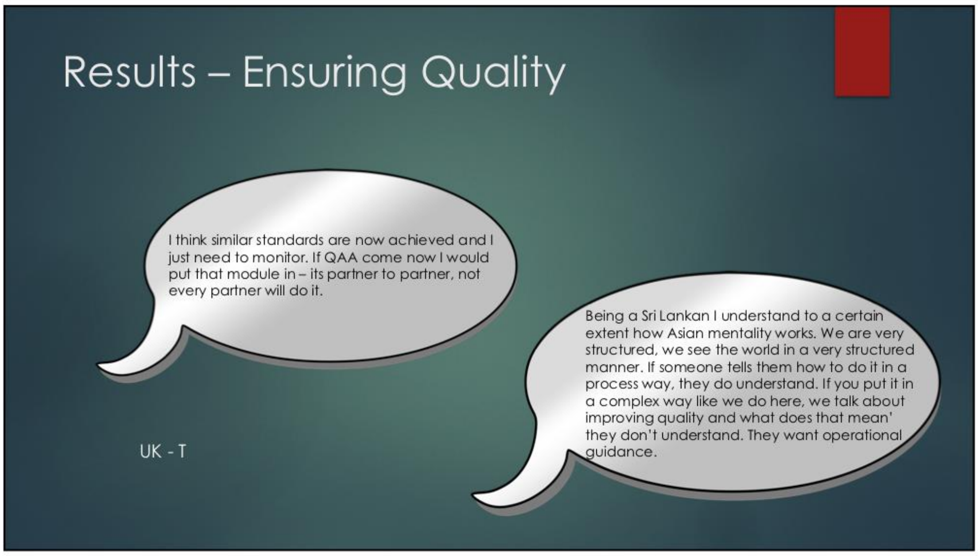

Results – Practices
I feel that that is something which is missing. Let me say we need to have a session on … you need someone to actually be physically be here to train the tutors in the first place.
A classic example is access to Moodle. You have to enforce that and say all the lectures have to be here, and it is compulsory, on a particular day, you need to fly somebody here, training. So that I think is extremely important. This area I feel things are a little bit ad hoc.
Sri Lanka - T

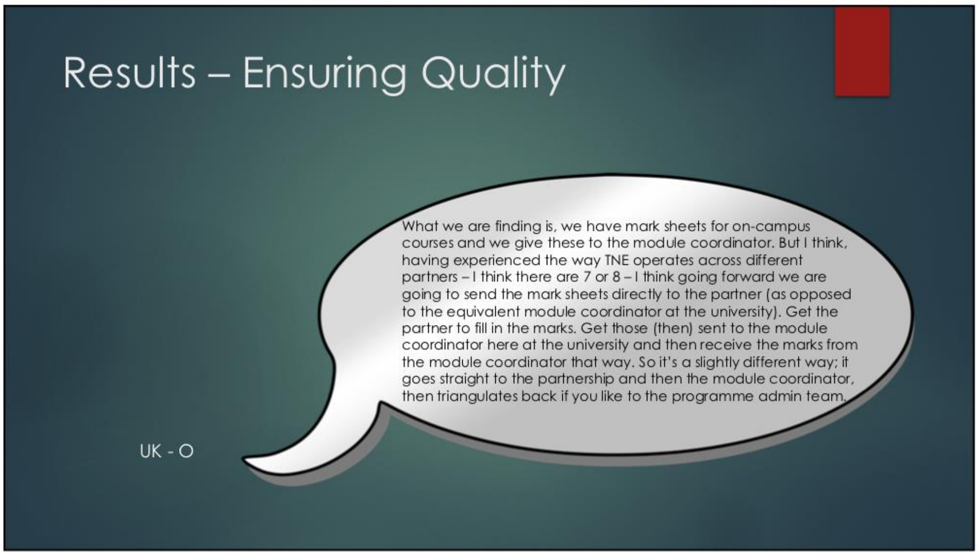
13

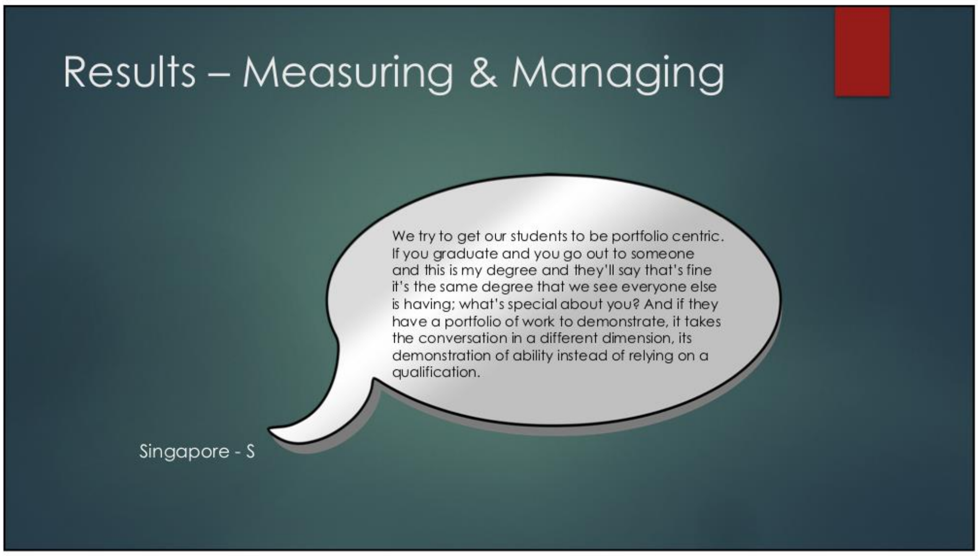

Results – Practices
First and second marker marking I think there are some practical issue. Because I don't think they employ staff as we do. We have a smaller percentage of Visiting Lectures compared to the full time staff, and there it is the other way around. There are some practical difficulties in doing it.
I found I had to put a lot of effort in the beginning of the partnership to make they understand how to do it and do it every time the way that I want them to do it. If I hadn't put that for that module, I wouldn't put that one in front of the external examiner. But now I find I have to go through and even increase the marks, they are being quite harsh as they have found I have been harsh.
UK - T


Results – Ensuring Quality
….follow the standard and quality required. And, we try to contextualise and deliver the content."
Pass rate is of course …our KPIs for pass rate is actually 90%. But attaining 90% depends on the quality of students that we have. I think 80% is more reasonable. But 90% means we are actually trying to be more lenient – but being lenient does not mean we haven't adhered to the quality and standards. We need to watch out there."
Singapore - T

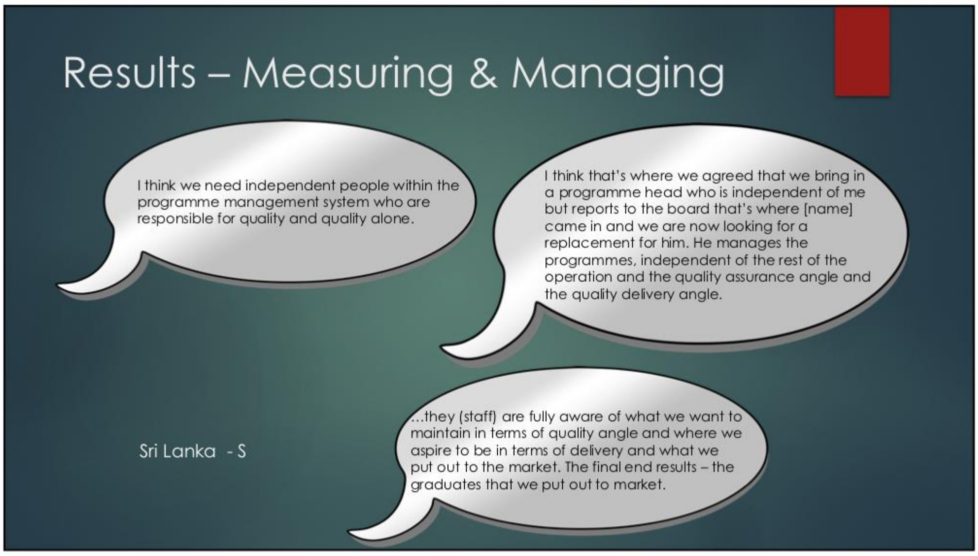

Results – Ensuring Quality
Quality assurance in some areas it has impacted. But of course we struggle to sort of put that in place, but then the absence of a formalised process. If you were to ask 5 lecturers regarding the quality process of a programme, all 5 will actually have 5 different answers.
Sri Lanka - T

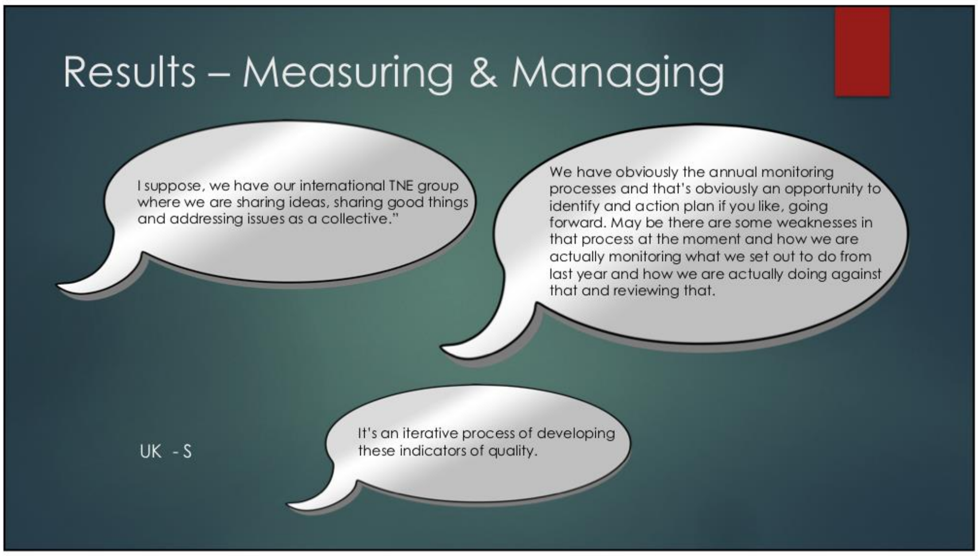

Results – Ensuring Quality
I think similar standards are now achieved and I just need to monitor. If QAA come now I would put that module in – its partner to partner, not every partner will do it.
Being a Sri Lankan I understand to a certain extent how Asian mentality works. We are very structured, we see the world in a very structured manner. If someone tells them how to do it in a process way, they do understand. If you put it in a complex way like we do here, we talk about improving quality and what does that mean' they don't understand. They want operational guidance.
UK - T


Results – Ensuring Quality
What we are finding is, we have mark sheets for on-campus courses and we give these to the module coordinator. But I think, having experienced the way TNE operates across different partners – I think there are 7 or 8 – I think going forward we are going to send the mark sheets directly to the partner (as opposed to the equivalent module coordinator at the university). Get the partner to fill in the marks. Get those (then) sent to the module coordinator here at the university and then receive the marks from the module coordinator that way. So it's a slightly different way; it goes straight to the partnership and then the module coordinator, then triangulates back if you like to the programme admin team.
UK - O


Results – Measuring & Managing
We try to get our students to be portfolio centric. If you graduate and you go out to someone and this is my degree and they'll say that's fine it's the same degree that we see everyone else is having; what's special about you? And if they have a portfolio of work to demonstrate, it takes the conversation in a different dimension, its demonstration of ability instead of relying on a qualification.
Singapore - S

16


Results – Measuring & Managing
I think we need independent people within the programme management system who are responsible for quality and quality alone.
I think that's where we agreed that we bring in a programme head who is independent of me but reports to the board that's where [name] came in and we are now looking for a replacement for him. He manages the programmes, independent of the rest of the operation and the quality assurance angle and the quality delivery angle.
…they (staff) are fully aware of what we want to maintain in terms of quality angle and where we aspire to be in terms of delivery and what we put out to the market. The final end results – the graduates that we put out to market.
Sri Lanka - S


Results – Measuring & Managing
I suppose, we have our international TNE group where we are sharing ideas, sharing good things and addressing issues as a collective."
We have obviously the annual monitoring processes and that's obviously an opportunity to identify and action plan if you like, going forward. May be there are some weaknesses in that process at the moment and how we are actually monitoring what we set out to do from last year and how we are actually doing against that and reviewing that.
It's an iterative process of developing these indicators of quality.
UK - S

17

Discussion

The UK's reputation for QA has been noted in the literature as:

- "To date, national quality assurance policy has supported the UK's strong international reputation for the quality of its HE system, whilst recent policy on immigration has provided challenges for international student recruitment and damaged the UK HE sector's reputation overseas."

  (Woodfield and Jones, 2015 in Prutsch, 2015)

- "HEIs offering UK degrees must meet strict criteria to be awarded the title 'university', a process controlled by the QAA on behalf of the Privy Council. Some non-UK HEIs operate in the UK but they cannot offer UK qualifications without partnering with a UK HEI."

  (Woodfield and Jones, 2015)

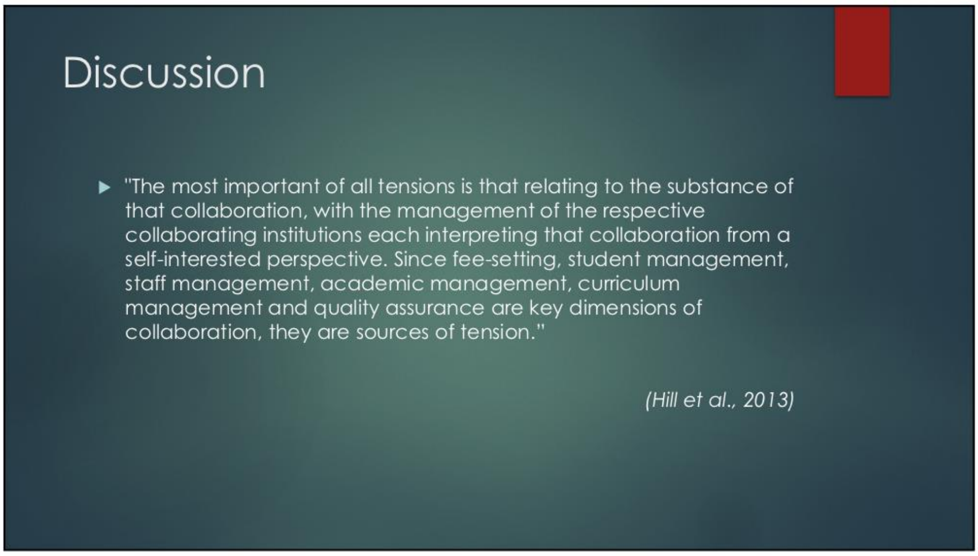
Discussion

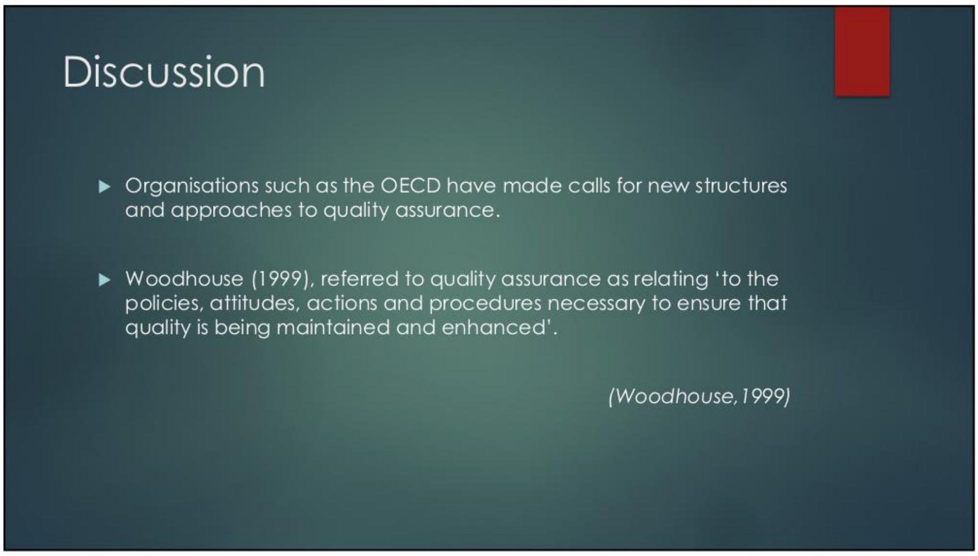
- "The key challenges for universities, regulators and policy makers with TNE is quality assurance."

  (Castle and Kelly, 2004; Craft, 2004; Stella, 2006; Edwards et al. 2010)

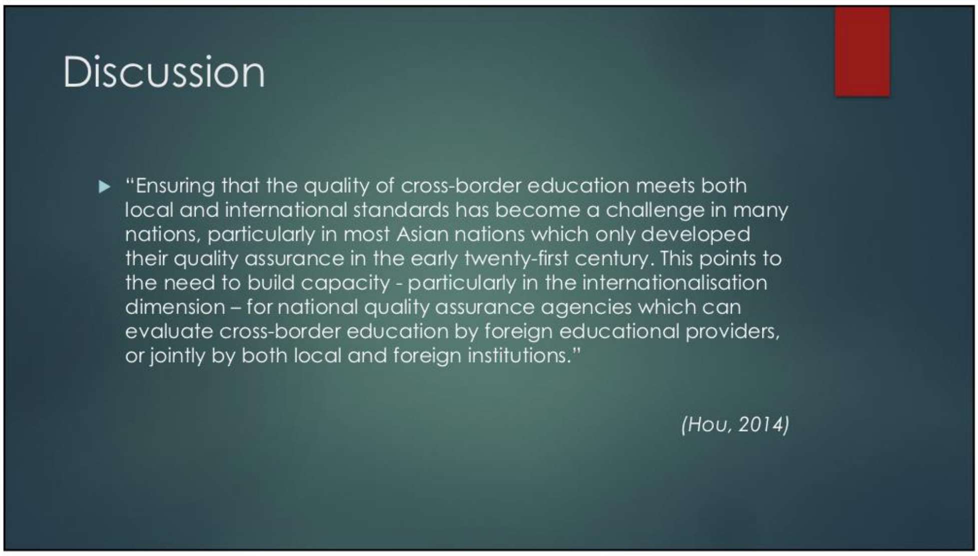
- "Despite these developments, Blanco Ramirez and Berger (2013) state, there are on-going and perhaps ever increasing concerns about inequities and shortcomings in access to, quality of, relevance of, and investment in higher education. In this changing context, quality and accountability have received increasing attention from policy makers and higher education leaders. For instance, since the 1990s, almost every country in the world has developed quality assurance mechanisms, many of which take their cues directly from a handful of developed nations."

  (Kells, 1999)


Discussion
"The most important of all tensions is that relating to the substance of that collaboration, with the management of the respective collaborating institutions each interpreting that collaboration from a self-interested perspective. Since fee-setting, student management, staff management, academic management, curriculum management and quality assurance are key dimensions of collaboration, they are sources of tension."
(Hill et al., 2013)


Discussion
Organisations such as the OECD have made calls for new structures and approaches to quality assurance.
Woodhouse (1999), referred to quality assurance as relating 'to the policies, attitudes, actions and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced'.
(Woodhouse,1999)


Discussion
The efficacy of international strategies, staff relations and QA relating to the comments made above, has been discussed in the literature:
"However, globalisation has introduced concerns for the efficacy of international strategies that target quality assurance and international competitiveness in Asian higher education, for both universities and countries."
(Hou, 2014)
"Maintaining quality control in international branch campuses may be more difficult because managers and staff operate in an alien culture far from the home campus. Partnership arrangements maybe undermined by the 'principal-agent'."
(Healey, 2014)


Discussion
"Ensuring that the quality of cross-border education meets both local and international standards has become a challenge in many nations, particularly in most Asian nations which only developed their quality assurance in the early twenty-first century. This points to the need to build capacity - particularly in the internationalisation dimension – for national quality assurance agencies which can evaluate cross-border education by foreign educational providers, or jointly by both local and foreign institutions."
(Hou, 2014)

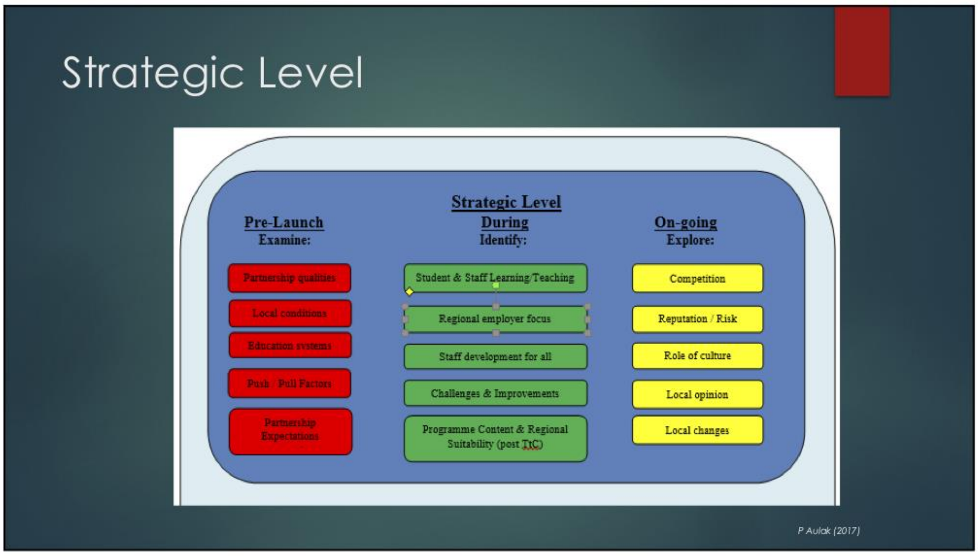
Concluding remarks…

- Many of the earlier issues on quality assurance implementation relate to the lack of trust among key players in the system (Nordin, Alias and Siraj, 2013). It is often mentioned in literature that in order for academicians to accept and implement changes, they must trust and own the process of problem definition and solution design. This is certainly the case in any quality assurance exercise. Only if the academicians accept quality assurance as their own activity, will the system be successful.

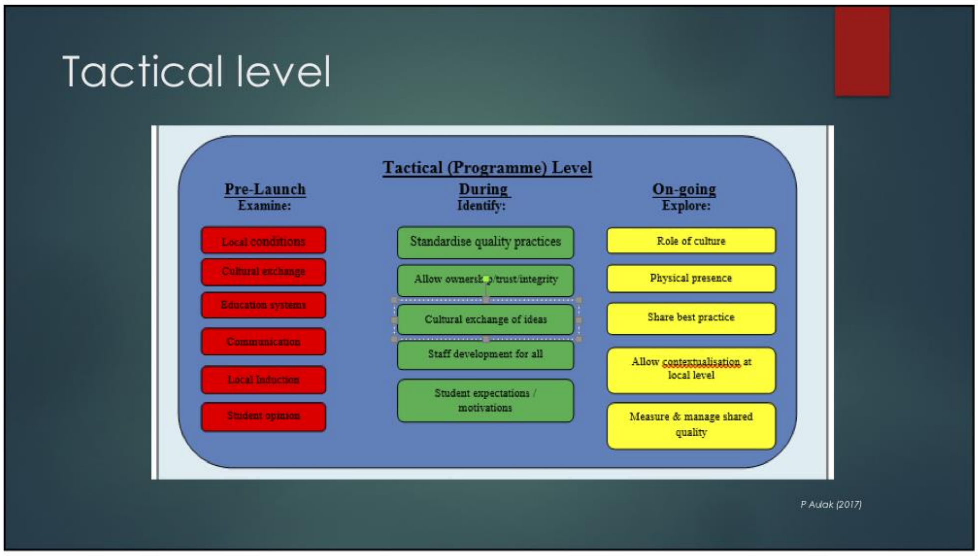
Proposed Framework

- The following framework has been proposed as an output from the doctoral level study, conducted on all seven themes. This framework has already been presented at the Going Global Conference held in London by the British Council (2017).

- Considerable interest has been received from academics and TNE leaders in international institutions as it is practical tool which can be used for implementation and managing TNE with immediate effect.



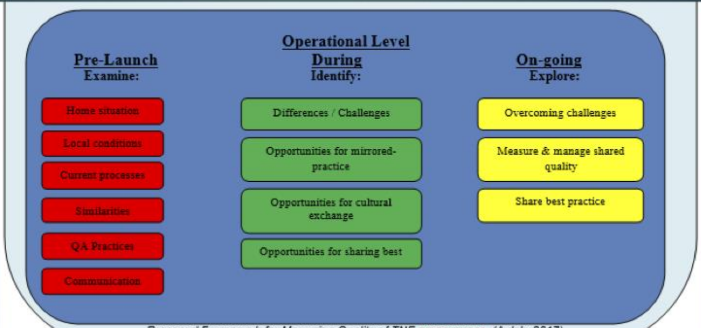
Strategic Level
Strategic Level
Pre-Launch
Examine:
Partnership qualities
Local conditions
Education systems
Push / Pull Factors
Partnership Expectations
During
Identify:
Student & Staff Learning/Teaching
Regional employer focus
Staff development for all
Challenges & Improvements
Programme Content & Regional Suitability (post TtC)
On-going
Explore:
Competition
Reputation / Risk
Role of culture
Local opinion
Local changes
P Aulak (2017)



Tactical level
Tactical (Programme) Level
Pre-Launch
Examine:
Local conditions
Cultural exchange
Education systems
Communication
Local Induction
Student opinion
During
Identify:
Standardise quality practices
Allow ownersh p/trust/integrity
Cultural exchange of ideas
Staff development for all
Student expectations / motivations
On-going
Explore:
Role of culture
Physical presence
Share best practice
Allow contextualisation at local level
Measure & manage shared quality
P Aulak (2017)

22

Operational Level



Proposed Framework for Managing Quality of TNE programmes. (Aulak, 2017).

P Aulak (2017)

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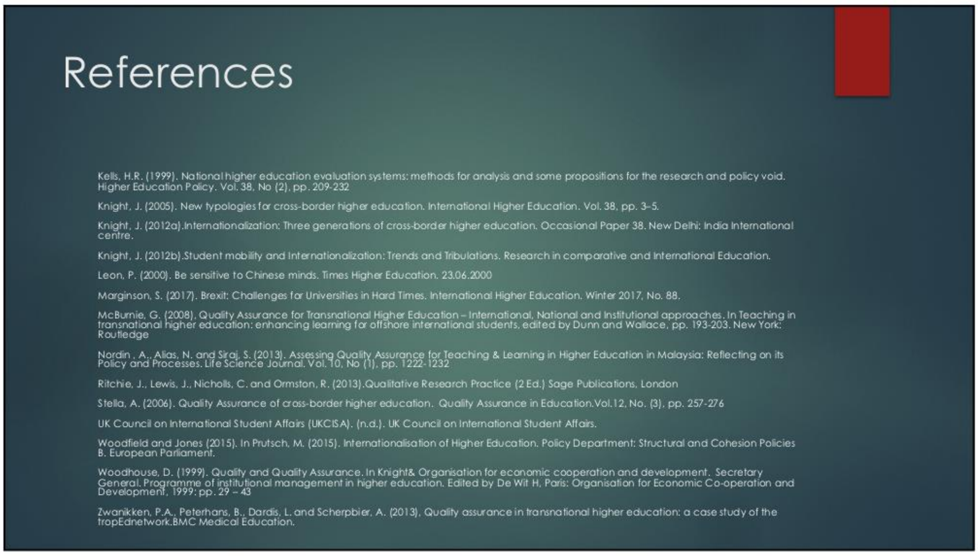
23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24