European transnational education in the Middle East: Conceptual highs, lows, and recommendations

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Abstract

Keywords:

Background to the Study

Transnational education (TNE), 'the provision of education qualifications from institutions in one country to students in another' (Lawton & Jensen, 2015, p. 3), offers exciting opportunities for institutions and students around the world. For institutions, it provides them with an opportunity to expand beyond their physical boundaries, to new markets, with relatively little costs (Alam et al., 2013; Rottleb & Kleibert, 2022). For students, they can receive international, world-renowned education in their own country, with less psychological or monetary costs (Alam et al., 2013).

According to Lawton and Jensen (2015, p. 15) , the most popular method of implementing such programmes in UK universities was either by through UK lecturers using video conferencing to teach, or local lecturers teaching material hosted by the UK. These two were closely followed by the creation of branch campuses and flying faculty out from the UK. The Office for Students (2022)reported as full-time equivalence (FTE estimates that 84% of UK universities offer such TNE programmes, catering to almost double the number of international students actually studying in the UK.

Despite the benefits TNE can offer, there are also several issues that can arise, unless the programme is carefully implemented. These issues could range from operational issues such as system access to more fundamental concerns, such as pedagogical differences between the home campus and their partner. It is important that such issues are considered and, where possible, controlled. This becomes increasingly important given the extensive number of TNE programmes running or being planned.

While the Middle East is a popular location for setting up such TNE programmes, little discussion has taken place regarding the creation of such programmes in this geography. To offer further insight into this area, this paper provides a conceptual discussion on the advantages of such programmes, considerations that should be taken into account – supported by reflective descriptions of one such programme (see Smith, 2009), and recommendations for the successful operation of TNE programmes.

The paper starts with a review of TNE programmes and some of the general considerations that need to be considered, before considering the pedagogical principles at play. The next section looks how a TNE programme has been developed and operates from the perspective of a UK university, before

taking the perspective of a collaborative partner based in the Middle East involved in delivery of a suite of UG/PG programmes from the same university. The final section of the paper looks to draw meaningful insights to recommend other higher-education providers already offering or planning to develop a TNE programme.

Transnational Education (TNE) and concepts of education

The rise of TNE is the result of growing economies globally and subsequent demand for international skills and competencies but the catalyst for the major exporting countries (including the UK, US and Australia) was the inclusion of the higher education sector provision in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in the 1990s (Pimpa & Heffernan, 2020).

Today, the UK is considered one of the global leaders amongst the USA, Russia, France, India and Germany, in terms of the percentage of international enrolments in HE through 'international branch campuses (IBC)' largely in Asia and the Middle East (Healey, 2018)"insider researcher" methodology'. It uses a sample set of eight mangers who operate from the home university and 13 "in-country" managers who are seconded to head up the overseas TNE partnerships. The samples are all drawn from UK universities to standardise for other variables (e.g. legislative framework. This is also an increasingly popular option for students in the host and surrounding countries as they can benefit from a foreign educational experience without leaving their home countries (Pyvis and Chapman, 2007, as cited in Munday, 2021, p. 122)little attention has been paid to students who attend foreign universities in their own countries and their adjustment to the new learning environment. This study aims to examine some of the adaptations freshmen students have to undergo while studying at an American university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The students in international education often experience acculturative stress, or 'stress related to transitioning and adapting to a new environment' (Ahmed et al., 2011, p. 182), with some common stressors such as language barriers, lack of familiarity with culturally different academic rules and systems, loss of one's family and surroundings, as well as cultural differences (Munday, 2021)little attention has been paid to students who attend foreign universities in their own countries and their adjustment to the new learning environment. This study aims to examine some of the adaptations freshmen

students have to undergo while studying at an American university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

In the TNE environment, the same may apply to the home (awarding) institutions as they operate in a foreign environment and often under very different legal, financial, and social systems. Thus, it is important that they acknowledge the difference in the environment. The existing assumptions about higher education can be shaken and teachers may have to question the fundamentals of their teaching, learning and assessment practices (Smith, 2009).

Consequently, there are several prevalent concerns for both the home and the branch campus which need to be addressed for a successful business relationship, student experience, and learning environment to be created. With the proliferation of such programmes, it is imperative that they are run appropriately. Therefore, the purpose of this research is, through a case study of a UK university, to identify areas of best practice and challenge when developing transnational education partnerships. Given the extensive nature of TNE programmes in the UK alone, the outcomes of this paper will have notable benefits to similar programmes around the world.

Home Institution Perspective

The University of Derby (UOD) for the academic year 21/22 currently has 40 active collaborative partners with whom they operate, with a total of 5,459 students enrolled from them, 3,115 of these students enrolled in overseas partners.

The Office for Students (2022) reported as full-time equivalence (FTE show the current enrolment for the University of Derby on the 21/22 academic year as 16,201 students on record. This means 33.7% of all students come from collaborative partners, highlighting the impact they play in the overall enrolment and impact to the business.

From the data above we can see that 57% of all collaborative partners come from overseas partners however 19.2% of the whole number of enrolled students come from the overseas collaborative partners (Office for Students, 2022) reported as full-time equivalence (FTE. This highlights the potential cultural impact on planned module pedagogy and the importance of developing scheme of work and techniques to make the learning environment as welcoming and as inclusive as possible.

With this said, the collaborative partners are encouraged to contextualise materials and schedules of work to suit the needs of their clients/students studying on the franchised UOD programmes.

Middle East Perspective

Traditionally, Qatar and the wider Middle East region, teacher-focussed approaches, where the teacher is the source of information and knowledge (Hofstede et al., 2010). In such settings, students are expected to listen to the teacher in a more traditional lecture-style classroom and wait to be called upon by the teacher to answer questions.

In several Gulf nations, such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, exposure to large numbers of expatriates, international media, and international businesses, has exposed younger generations to alternative approaches (Hillman et al., 2019) which are, currently, focussing on more inclusive, pedagogical approaches, and encouraging greater hauntological practices. Such approaches expect students to be more independent, self-driven learners, who engage with and take charge of their education (Blaschke, 2012). Consequently, rapid transitions are occurring –where younger generations are being exposed to more hauntological pedagogies focussing on their independence in their pre-university education due to the proliferation of international schools. Since destinations such as Qatar and the UAE have specific laws in place to facilitate and ease the create of TNE within the borders (Alam et al., 2013; Hillman et al., 2019; Rottleb & Kleibert, 2022), the distinction in pedagogies brought about these transitions could become more apparent.

Local universities are beginning to focus on such approaches but still require time to transition. Furthermore, many students, their parents, and sponsors have either not been exposed to such approaches (see Hillman et al., 2019) or have only been partially exposed. Consequently, students' understanding of being independent learners is inconsistent. The problem is exacerbated by the larger mix of nationalities, international secondary schools, and the greater involvement of sponsors and parents. The resulting mix means that most students have had some exposure to being more independent learners, but still expect more supportive and involved teachers. As more institutions move towards developing greater student independence, the implementation of hauntological approaches will become more prominent, but does vary from one cohort to another as the class make-up and backgrounds vary. It

is important, therefore, to understand the pedagogical nuances that exist in different geographies so as to ensure an appropriate learning experience to students.

Anthropology of Pedagogy

To understand the variations in pedagogy globally, it is first important to appreciate some of the background philosophies underpinning modern pedagogy. There was a discourse of dissatisfaction with the existing anthropological approaches to teaching in the 70s & 80s. They postulated that it is embedded within cultures and had differing ideologies and meanings. These symbolic anthropologists highlighted a particular dictate and/or ritual and analyse it in its own terms as well as within the context of culture. Levi-Strauss, (1966) suggested that cognitive ability and consumption are based upon tribal knowledge and examination on cultural habits such as behaviour and the way people think, classification patterns and their knowledge is a reflection of their collective experiences. This knowledge is an accumulation of past experiences which is influencing current thinking (individual) problem solving and processing.

Bamossy, (1994) describes culture as ideas constructed from within a society, in fact, a shared system of meaning for groups of people, and not a 'thing' that can be experienced directly through the senses. Similarly, culture is described by Clarke & Chen (2007) as being the 'lens' through which we view the world. Clarke & Chen (2007) describe culture as being neither static nor fixed, but as a set of beliefs that are developed from childhood and throughout our lives, with some values becoming relatively fixed whilst others being more changeable. This shared set of meanings can be viewed as being central to what we see, how we make sense of what we see and how we express ourselves.

Anthropology of Pedagogy within the classroom.

A general understanding of anthropology and exchanges that exist in anthropological dictates, but to compare this with any, 'deeper cultural perceptions' which may exist to various members of society (Johnston et al., 2012).

An important point to consider is the recognition that these previously published works primarily focused on the constitutive aspects, which veered

towards lists instead of analysis. (Herrmann & Gruneberg, 1993; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 1997; Wagner, 2003, 2003).

Many practitioners have examined the ways in which education has maintained grand philosophies of power whilst holding unbalanced relationships of subordination and hegemony. Previously, scholars have sought to understand the association with gender specific images and ideals whilst trying to preserve those ideals. For people to have a shared system of meaning, they must have effective, stable and meaningful interactions with other people in their social group and build trust in each other and in the organisation. Trust can be built in a number of different ways, and can mean different things to different cultures, therefore building trust is critical when creating and developing a diverse workforce (Bamossy, 1994).

Any research conducted into anthropology of pedagogy is as diverse and sometimes as ambiguous as the anthropological researcher. It is easy to associate 'teaching' with practically anything in this world. It is what we do with it and how we perceive those connections in our everyday lives. Identifying anthropological pedagogy as an investigative topic provides a 'double-edged sword' approach, allowing a deeper understanding of the sociological, cultural, biological and commercial factors which affects classroom interaction and learning.

Pedagogy often competes with muted intrinsic factors such as cognitive and neuropsychological processes (Allan, 2007, p. 62) or economic factors such as wealth (De Pelsmacker et al., 2005, p. 364). Anthropology of pedagogy studies the phenomenon from the conflict of these areas and the simultaneous influence of personal and communal cultural traits.

Representations of cultures are also identified in the hermeneutics of its text (Tresidder, 2011), interpreted in several ways based on an individual's ethnocentrism and experiences. Hermeneutic validity is also apparent as a tool for teaching accountability. The argument which the author provides here is the premise that if teaching/pedagogy issues are aspects of anthropology and semiotics this may be used as an idiom of pedagogical anthropology at the expense of ethical validity and expectation from the wider community (Tresidder, 2011). Some may argue that this premise is flawed if the individualistic views of others (the wider community) accept the notion that we must understand and adopt localised thinking and acceptance to enhance and digest classroom anthropology.

When making generic consumption decisions, potential consumers first evaluate semiotic meanings, external environment factors and consensus constructs before evaluating their self-identity and resulting negotiation or interpretation of the 'message' behind the product. This premise is shared by several authors (Ewing et al., 2012) which have investigated the influence of semiotics within branding using empirical consumption studies, but have not pressed further to understand the perception that consumers have with the overall ethics and its validity to their ethical motivations.

Recorded ethical practices in Western societies relate back to the days of ancient Greece. A derivative of religious teachings, meta-ethics is concerned with the epistemology of ethics and man's understanding of the situational context, of which, what practice is defined to be 'right' or 'wrong' (Downs & Swienton, 2012). Many authors such as Downs and Swieton (2012, p. 1) insist that "Morality is a relative feature of the individual — which no pre-set code applies to all people in all circumstances".

In other words, Western cultures have strong opinions on what is right and wrong and ethical standards are usually seen as subjective to the individual and the context, whilst in many Middle Eastern cultures the decision on what is ethical and unethical is determined predominantly by religion; religion provides appropriate guidance for all actions, therefore, it is necessary to recognise the role of religion in shaping ethical thought in order to understand views on ethics (Varner & Beamer, 2011).

What can be proven is the role of one's culture in the decision and judgment of teaching anthropology. Hofstede (2010, p. 5) states that "The sources of one's mental programs lie within the social environments in which one grew up and collected one's life experiences".

This premise is the basis of which to judge the formation of muted anthropology to social causes. 'Culture' in this context can even be acknowledged to make significant interventions as to what one deems to be important even influencing physiological processes.

In today's society, it may be argued that consumers are being more affluent and are moving away from satisfying their basic physiological needs to fulfilling social and psychological needs (Maslow's hierarchical model). This is directly influenced by the nation and sub-culture to which they belong. This fits with Moscovici (2000, as cited in Chryssochoou, 2004) who sought

to address social psychology in understanding how people are transformed by society and they in turn transform society.

> *The field of social psychology consists of social subjects, that is, groups and individuals, who create their social reality, control each other and create their bonds of solidarity as well their differences. Ideologies are their products, communication is their means of exchange and consumption and language is their currency* (ibid)

As an interpretive glance on this matter (Scott, 2011) relays the idea that in the bigger concept of the matter, societies in which people live ultimately have the impact on the motivations and perceptions of anthropology of teaching as this is the ultimate form of culture. Western societies as suggested by Hofstede (2011, p. 23) as 'individualistic', allow the individual to pursue their personal exploits in a number of social as opposed to an Eastern 'collectivist' system. Western freedom changes the perception of the individuals place in society as part of a group community of practice, to that of an individual feeling or individualistic community of practice (an inherent paradox). This goes some way to examining the psycho-cognitive function why humans can apply the situational context to the application of anthropological pedagogy.

In terms of psychological consumption this is specific to internal (guest) causal factors (abilities, emotions and motivation) and external (behaviour of others (host), demands, physical aspects). This is a functional way of viewing attribution process. Heider (1958) suggested that the lay person or non-psychologist is "Someone who actively tries to make sense of the world, in particular the social world, the world of behaviour."

It is fair to suggest that this is an element of Heider's attribution theory to everyday psychology of which for the purposes of this section there are two:
- Dispositional or personal (internal) and
- Situational or environmental (external).

Heider suggested that the fundamental feature of common-sense psychology is the underlying belief system that underlies peoples' overt behaviour are causes and that it is these causal patterns and NOT the way in which an activity is performed that represents the 'real' meaning of what people do.

Drawing on the above discussions on formation of values and behaviours as well as Hofstede's work, the educational and pedagogical differences between

Western societies and the Middle East, can be summarised that many of Middle Eastern countries score high in Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance, and low in Individualism whilst the UK scores the opposite (Hofstede et al., 2010).

These differences are often evident in the educational setting, illustrated as below (Hofstede et al., 2010):

In the Middle East

The purpose of education is to learn how to do things to participate in society and achievement of educational qualifications elevates the status of the holder; therefore, learning is often seen as a onetime process and students tend to attribute their achievement to circumstances or luck.

The educational process is led by the teacher who outlines the intellectual path to be followed, and what is taught is seen as the teacher's personal wisdom, rather than an impersonal 'truth' — this also leads to the general perception that the older the teacher is, the higher the value of wisdom, hence the older teachers are more respected. Teachers are expected to have all answers and use cryptic academic language.

Students expect the learning situations to be structured and have correct answers. And accuracy is highly rewarded. The teacher initiates communication in the class and students rarely publicly challenge the teacher. With the collectivist mindset, students consider speaking up in the large classroom breaches the virtues of harmony unless they are tasked to represent the group to present the group answers. Students and teachers treat their in-group members better than others — it is immoral not to do so.

In the UK (and many Western countries) (Hofstede et al., 2010):

The purpose of education is to know how to learn, based on the concept of lifelong learning. The achievement is attributed to the students' abilities.

The educational process is student-centred, and students are expected to find their own intellectual path. Students are encouraged to ask questions, argue with teachers, and express disagreement and criticism in front of the teachers because teachers and students are treated as equals. Therefore, it is acceptable for teachers to say, 'I don't know'. The younger teachers tend to be more liked than older ones since they are more equal to the students and those teachers who use plain language to explain difficult issues are more

respected. Students tend to despise a rigid structure in learning, and open-ended learning situations are favoured and originality is valued and rewarded.

Teachers tend to complain when students do not speak up even when the teacher puts a question to the class. Students are treated equally as individuals, regardless of their background, hence groups can be formed to complete tasks on an ad-hoc basis.

A reflection on the delivery, management, and pedagogy in the home and collaborative partners' Hospitality programme from a link tutors' perspective.

The pleasure that comes from the role of a link tutor is to see the varied pedagogy that takes place across the home and collaborative provision. In terms of improving quality within your own institution and practice, there are so many opportunities that can be seized when working with another educational establishment. This collaborative journey can result in the validation of new programmes for the partner to delivery but in many cases, existing programmes are franchised to the institution, so they run side by side with the home delivery of the modules.

Of course, with this style of model, this opens the question to the credibility and viability of the resources and pedagogy in general as a standardised module is set to be delivered across different cultures and learning environments which can span across a country but also to the far reaches of the world.

A study by Healey (2013, p. 15) highlights a benefit of staff development in the franchise model claiming his sample found it 'had amazingly enriching experiences'. This supports the above around the contextualisation of curriculum to reach the wider audience to help consolidate the knowledge that is given. However, for this enriching experience to take place, the contextualised information and approach to pedagogy must be shared between all parties so this can be learning experience for all stakeholders partaking in the module. Unless this innovative practice is shared, reflection cannot take place for one's own pedagogy however it is important that the correct attitude is adopted by the teaching practitioners to be receptive to new ideas and not shackled by tradition and routine. As with many aspects of the wider world, cultural diffusion has had influence on the world over time, it is time that we embrace this also in teaching practice to ensure that our student clients are happy and achieve their best possible achievements.

This can only be done however if the teaching practitioners get it right to give access to the learning styles of their cohort.

A key and critical observation that is mirrored across cultures is the preferred or perhaps expected didactic teaching and learning style that happens from the tutor. Unfortunately, barriers can exist if we fail to set expectations or meet the needs of that current cohort.

Gourlay and Oliver (2016, pp. 73-88) explored a viewpoint that teaching happens only within the walls of the institution suggesting that students fail to recognise other spaces as tangible learning environments. It may surmise that considering aspects of scaffolding be considered (Caruana, 2012). This suggests the importance of building relationships with students and delivering on expectations and standards from the start no matter what the teaching materials are saying. Breaking down cultures into elements of power distance shows that 'collectivist societies will only speak up if called upon by the teacher', requiring the teacher to initiate communication, and students will rarely contradict the teacher (Hofstede, 1986, pp. 312-313). This theory offers insight to the generalisation of cultures, but could this be debunked with a sound rapport with a carefully planned and developed pedagogy by the teaching practitioner. This will clearly be barriers to learning in any learning environment whether these are cultural or down to learning difficulties, but a good practitioner should be able to recognise these barriers and attempt to widen access for the learning by breaking down these barriers. A key part to any teacher's role should be to monitor the progress of the learning from the students by building on and reflecting on prior knowledge. Clearly a practitioner should not assume that one size fits all when developing their scheme of work and learning materials and should look to have a range of activities that can widen access to the learning for all. It is therefore necessary for teachers to consider, but not solely depend upon students' cultural background to better assess students' progress and support their learning.

Individual cultural and sub-cultural perspectives on learning has a major impact on the learning environment. Ideally as a lecturer, we want our tutees to have a level of self-regulation in the class. Self-regulated learning is the ability to understand the learning environment and control their own behaviour in how they interact with the learning. Self-regulation has assets such as goal setting, self-monitoring, self-instruction, and self-reinforcement

(Harris & Graham, 1999; Schraw et al., 2006; Schunk, 1996)and then address the theoretical and pedagogical groundings of our research in Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD). With an improvement in this area we would hopefully see an openness to the varied learning environments explored above by Gourlay and Oliver (2016) above. Of course, paired with the cultural dimensions above and the possible barriers, this could prove problematic, but perhaps this is where self-regulation is not in full force. A recent study by Thomas and Qunilan (2021)we briefly describe our conceptualisation\n of culturally sensitive curricula and the tool we have developed to support curricular enhancement. We report on emerging evidence of the impact of culturally sensitive curricula on students' engagement and suggest how such curricula could lead to impact on educational outcomes.","container-title":"Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning","DOI":"10.5456/WPLL.23.3.37","ISSN":"1466-6529","issue":"3","journalAbbreviation":"wide particip lifelong learn","language":"en","page":"37-47","source":"DOI.org (Crossref around ethnicity and engagement with course materials against the status quo highlights where problems could occur in delivery and engagement across various collaborative partners; but a lot can be said around the teaching practitioner's inclusive techniques around learning styles and rapport from the start of the module or year of study. Although a dated theory like Hofstede's, we can draw on Kolb's Learning styles to ensure our teaching practice fits the desired (in many cases franchised) model as a learning environment suitable and accessible for all. Manolis et al (2013) highlights the varied styles and need for a teaching approach that can access the four styles outlined by Kolb to create an exciting and experiential learning environment providing access to learning for all stakeholders. A cultural observation of our students from academic partners links to Hofstede above as many see the role of the teacher as the source of knowledge, and the expectation that the student should sit and listen with very little interaction. Sometimes alternative teaching techniques such as a flipped classroom approach may be unwelcomed by the students as this goes against the grain of this traditional approach and expectation of these students. This highlights the importance of adapting students to be self-regulated and setting expectation from the beginning of the year. Having a clear induction session for the course and the information readily available in the programme and module documents is essential.

A reflection on the delivery, management, and pedagogy in the collaborative partners' programme − a Programme Leader's perspective.

In terms of course delivery, specific cultural nuances need to be considered depending on the specific country where the programme is being implemented (Hillman, 2022). Two simple examples, specific to hospitality education, relate to time management and perceptions of staffing. The Middle East is considered a polychronic culture, where time is considered to be more flexible (Worrall, 2021). In wider society, attitudes towards time are considered more loosely, meaning that individuals do not expect others to always arrive at a specific time. As a result, attending class at a specific time can clash with more traditional cultural attitudes towards time which are evident in other parts of society. Again, however, this is changing with a large number of expatriates residing in Gulf countries (Dutt & Ninov, 2017; Hillman, 2022; Rottleb & Kleibert, 2022), and a large number of international businesses. The resulting mix of different nationalities and attitudes towards time means that more emphasis is needed on arriving at a collectively agreed-upon standard.

In the second example, attitudes towards staffing hospitality business differ in the Middle East compared to other parts of the World, meaning that some of the theories and content being taught to students require localisation (Hillman, 2022; Rottleb & Kleibert, 2022). Given the lower costs of labour and service quality expectations demanding more staff in service establishments, there is often an expectation to have more staff than may be expected in, for example, Western settings. This is notable when discussing the adoption of new technology, such as Artificial Intelligence. It is generally felt that luxury properties in the Middle East will be laggards in the adopting of AI, partially because the market prefers to see high staff numbers (see Nam et al., 2021). Therefore, content which focusses on the impact of such developments as AI on staffing requires greater localisation to better reflect local trends and place such content in perspective to avoid students dismissing the knowledge as overly theoretical or unrelated to their situations.

When addressing the management of collaborative programmes, consideration needs to be given towards adherence towards local regulations and flexibility of times. For the collaborative partner, it is necessary to follow the local regulations from the pertinent governing body when running the programme (Rottleb & Kleibert, 2022). If, for example, 3-year degrees are not recognised

by some education authorities, when a programme is designed to be a 3-year degree, then additional components will need to be added to fulfil the local requirements. From the home-campus perspective, such flexibility is also needed when considering the admission of students, certifying appropriate faculty, class timings, and school holidays.

In some jurisdictions, there are restrictions placed upon who can teach in a university to include only those with terminal degrees, regardless of their industry experience or subjects being taught. In terms of class hours, a notable adjustment may be required during the holy month of Ramadan when, frequently, working hours are reduced throughout a country. In Qatar, for example, the Ministry of Labour reduced the maximum number of working hours per week from 48 hours to 36 during Ramadan (The Peninsula, 2022). This adjustment means that university working hours for staff, faculty, and students, are required to change. Anecdotally, from experience delivering post-graduate courses during Ramadan, one programme asked to move their classes (usually scheduled from 1700 hrs - 2000 hrs) to be later in the day (2200 hrs - 0030 hrs) and another asked to move class earlier (1430 hrs - 1700 hrs). These adjustments allowed the students to find a time which best suited their personal needs and be able to join their families for Iftar when their fast would be broken. In a similar scenario, international partners may be required to operate online classes for longer than the home campus to accommodate local regulations. In Qatar, for example, regulations around COVID-19 were stricter than in the UK and meant that online classes had to be made available more frequently than at the home campus. Such an action will likely be repeated, although for a more positive reason, as Qatar hosts the FIFA World Cup. Such an approach partially follows a request from local authorities to ease congestion during the tournament, and partially to provide students with the opportunity to gain some hands-on experience by working during the event. Usually, efforts should be made for partners to follow the home campus to ensure students receive a similar education experience and benefit from the same pedagogical experience. However, some degree of flexibility is needed. Firstly, adherence to local regulations must take precedence here, otherwise it may jeopardise the partner's ability to operate (Hillman, 2022). Secondly, flexibility provides the partner with the ability to make small adjustments in the best interests of students learning and experience (see Reynolds, 2021). The challenge that arises for institutions planning on implementing TNE is what constitutes

flexibility rather than substantive deviations from the home campus. A suggested checklist to help address uncertainty would call for minimal adjustment to content, adherence to established learning outcomes, and adherence to set class hours. This could be supplemented by a qualitative assessment of student learning experience − if students' learning experiences are the same as the home campus or improved, this could be considered an acceptable adjustment. There is also the possibility that by facilitating a greater degree of flexibility, the home campus can learn from their partners regarding alternative, and possible, better practices to be implemented.

While there are several challenges that can be raised from a collaborative partner's perspective when adopting international programmes, there are numerous benefits. These can include students' exposure to strongly developed academic programmes and access to world-class resources. One of the greatest advantages that such collaborative programmes can offer is through the creation of collaborative seminars or international learning experiences, sometimes called COILs (Collaborative Online International Learning). Such activities can either afford students the opportunity to learn the same content they would normally cover from different faculty or can combine this with group assessments with students from different partner schools (see Kunjuthamby et al., 2021).

Such programmes benefit all students, regardless of whether they are in a partner school or the home campus. All students are able to benefit from learning experiences from a variety of different faculty, are able to work on assignments with different peers, extend their professional and social networks, and are able to learn some notable skills. Chief among these skills is those related to international collaboration and team work (Zhang & Pearlman, 2018).

Recommendations – Where do we go next?

To help such collaborative programmes succeed, there are three key components to deliver. Firstly, both home institution and collaborative partners should recognise the cultural differences between them and agree on the level of adaptation and accommodation in teaching, learning and assessment strategies. Based on this agreement, upon arrival of students, the collaborative partner must set students' expectations early. From the beginning of a students' experience with the partner, they need to be informed about the educational structure, expectations, approaches, and the

reason for these, which may include the purpose and values of educations in the home institution's cultural context. This will help to address the issues that arise relating to varied pedagogical expectations, and content delivery.

Flexibility from the partner and the home campus is needed to accommodate differences between the partner and home campus in terms of faculty qualifications, timings, and local regulations. Both parties need flexibility in their approaches to ensure what is being delivered is appropriate and legal and may need to renegotiate the initial agreement on the level of adaptation and accommodation of teaching, learning and assessment strategies. Flexibility from the home campus can also help to ensure that the content being delivered is deemed industry relevant in the collaborative partner's context. Finally, greater usage of collaborative learnings and COILs will help to exploit the benefits that such partnerships offer. Such an open and flexible approach is also needed when merging different, possibly conflicting pedagogical approaches. When an environment is more homogeneous in its pedagogical experience, adjustments could occur more holistically. For example, in an environment where most students have experienced a didactic pedagogy, class-wide activities and shifts can be made to move to a more independent pedagogy, if that is deemed appropriate. However, when there is a more heterogeneous mix of pedagogical experiences, this change becomes harder. For example, if an institution is moving from a didactic to a heutagogical approach, students with most experience of the didactic approach may feel lost and left behind if the shift to a heutagogical approach is made too quickly. Conversely, students with a background in heutagogy may feel the class is not engaging enough if the change is too slow. It is this mix of student experiences which can cause the greatest challenges for institutions, particularly those with large international or expatriate populations. In such environments, it should be up to the partner institution and individual faculty to identify classes or cohorts where such a mix is likely to occur, so as to redesign their delivery style to provide a smoother transition for students. This could be through introducing a more didactic class to more independent learning activities in the classroom to transition them into becoming more independent learners.

Where the cultural or regulatory differences are so vast that the level of flexibility required is perceived too high, the home institutions may wish to consider validating the programme tailored for the partner institutions. Examples can be breaking down a 20-credit module into two 10-credit ones

and/or increased contact hours if the students are mostly from high uncertainty avoidance culture. Although the approach of adapting and contextualising materials and teaching styles to the suit the needs of the student is critical, a lot can be said about the rapport and responsiveness of the practitioner so they can nurture a positive learning environment and monitor the accessibility of the learning from their current cohort. With all the potential barriers that can occur, recognition of these barriers is the first stepping-stone to overcoming them. A lot has to be said about having a passionate and committed teaching team in your institution. It is fair to say that everyone would except something that will be beneficial to their experience in whatever situation they are in therefore providing an interesting and challenging learning environment for students should be the foundation of the teacher's practice in whatever institution they are working.

These recommendations are grounded in literature and partially supported by the reflective experience of one such programme in the Middle East. As such, it would be beneficial to pursue further empirical research to offer more generalisable and replicable insights for other such programmes and in other geographies.

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