The experiences of tutors teaching and assessing in UK/Chinese transnational higher education partnership programmes

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Declaration

I, Zorka Besevic, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

The broad aim of the study was to investigate the experiences of TNE (transnational education) tutors teaching in partnership programmes between the UK and China. Tutors are most closely involved on a daily basis in the delivery of partnership programmes and their work which is largely invisible.

The thesis builds upon the work of Bordogna on transnational partnership programmes and the work of Holliday on intercultural communication to gain a better understanding of tutors' experiences of teaching and assessing. In order to realise this aim, past and present TNE tutors located in the UK and China from three higher education partnership programmes were interviewed. Responses were analysed using Holliday's conceptual model of intercultural communication, a Grammar of Culture. The findings of the study were analysed thematically to identify the main themes that characterise tutors' experiences: building and maintaining working relationships and differences in pedagogic practices.

The thesis concludes firstly, that tutors' experiences of working with staff in the other location are complex and varied dependent on many factors. In partnership programmes, tutors need to pay greater attention to relationship building with staff in the other location. Building and maintaining productive working relationships is challenging for tutors. Secondly, that improved knowledge, understanding and application of assessment practices is an area that requires urgent attention by tutors in both locations of the partnership programmes.

This study makes an important contribution to transnational education by adding to the limited body of existing research on the work of those members of staff most closely involved in the delivery of transnational educational programmes: tutors. The study presents the experiences of tutors teaching and assessing transnationally in both locations of partnership programmes, providing rich and detailed insights into the realities of the tutors' work with staff in the location.

Impact Statement

The main impact of the thesis has been the realisation of the complexity of TNE staff relationships particularly around assessment. This academic year I will be teaching and assessing with a tutor in China on a transnational programme. I intend to put into practice my own recommendation on establishing relationships, as this is a new working relationship. I will start a conversation on assessment early on in the year. It will be an excellent opportunity to see how and if what I do is effective from both our perspectives. I am hoping to add some detail to the other recommendations and use this experience to influence practice in my own institution and a future professional framework.

In my own institution, I will be sharing the findings with the programme leader and the educational developer. I intend to push for early action on the recommendations particularly with the audit of assessment issues. The research has already had an impact on my colleagues. It has raised their awareness of particular aspects of the role such as relationship building, resolving disagreements and the perspectives of staff in the other location. I will also share the findings with the tutors from the other institutions who participated.

I have reported some preliminary findings prior to completing the final interviews. I have yet to present the findings of the study internally. I have discussed my research at various teaching and learning events with delegates nationally such as the 'Transnational Education: Innovations in Practice' 2nd TNE-Hub Symposium 2018, however I have not presented my findings at a conference. In the future, I intend to publish a journal article to disseminate the findings and present at a conference.

I believe that the findings can inform current and future transnational programmes. The recommendations are practical and programme leaders can implement them with a minimum of disruption but maximum benefit in both locations. The findings can contribute to the induction/preparation of academic staff on transnational programmes and a professional framework for teaching transnationally in the form of vignettes or scenarios that staff are likely to face and specific areas such as agreeing grades in assessment.

However, in the meantime, the findings can contribute to PGCEs in higher education, which many higher education institutions now run in-house.

Looking to the future, there are already signs of growth in TNE in Europe with UK institutions. It would be erroneous to think that running these programmes will be straightforward or easier. The TNE programmes might be equally challenging because of unrealistic staff expectations of greater commonality between organisations and practices. Reliance on the English language competence of staff in the other location does not lead to effective intercultural communication.

Finally, this study has raised my awareness as a practitioner of the complexities of intercultural communication. In addition, I have a better understanding of the perspectives of the stakeholders in transnational programmes.

Reflective Statement

Studying for a professional doctorate has mostly been a thoroughly enjoyable experience. When I started the EdD, I had little idea to what extent studying for a professional doctorate would benefit my practice and professional development. Prior to starting the course, some of my colleagues questioned the point of studying for a doctorate at such a late stage in my teaching career. It has however benefitted me professionally and personally, through the study and the connections I have made on the course. I would also suggest that it has benefitted my colleagues and has without doubt enhanced my practice. It has made me reflect on own experience of education over the years in different settings.

The Foundations of Professionalism module took me back over 30 years to when I started my teaching practice in Birmingham. It was at the first time I had thought about my own education up to that point. I realised that to find myself on that course I had cleared many obstacles the key one being the Eleven Plus. This opened the door to university. During the PGCE, we had to complete teaching practices in primary, secondary and further education to understand the transitions of students from one stage of education to the next and to gain an overview of the educational system that we were about to enter as practitioners. In schools, I witnessed extreme poverty and practices for children whose first language was not English that today would not be politically acceptable. I completed my final teaching practice in Spain in a college of further education. In the intervening years I have worked in Community college, a Sixth form college and finally in higher education. When I started working in these educational settings, they were undergoing a change in direction and/or implementing new educational policies: the end of O levels and CSEs, the start of the new A level syllabuses and widening participation. The Foundations of Professionalism module also reminded me that I had first-hand experience of three different educational systems in Spain, Finland and China as a student and teacher. I reflected on this ‘apprenticeship’. I also wondered whether my dedicated primary school teachers would recognise this new world of targets and league tables. The module shifted my thinking not only to the changes I had personally

experienced over the years but also to the wider context of education, policy and role of professionals more generally in education. This has continued throughout the EdD programme.

Methods of Enquiry 1 and 2 led to interesting discussions on philosophy, the validity or trustworthiness of data, the value of research, the importance of procedure and process, and ethical considerations. It was during MoE 2 that I started to consider the direction of my thesis. Throughout my teaching career, I have taught languages and been involved in the assessment of languages including international language qualifications. In the last twenty years, I have had roles in which I have worked closely with international students teaching and supporting them in their studies. For Methods of enquiry 1, I decided to focus on students having taught UK based and international students. I had observed many classes with international students and UK based students in two groups and found that there was little connection between these groups of students except for when they were about to go their separate ways at the end of their undergraduate courses. When I talked to students individually particularly with the international students, they invariably said that they regretted having little contact with UK based students. Some of the difficulties students experienced in making connections were systemic – the way classes were organised and the opportunities students had to work together. There was little point in making friends with somebody if you were never going to see them again and yet, in the literature integration between these students was presented as problematic. The Foundations of professionalism module was also interesting for this reason as it mirrored what I had often observed in classes. Following the first session, my colleagues whose roles spanned all education settings grouped themselves by sector, with colleagues from overseas forming another group. This also reminded me of my primary school experience, children from the UK streamed by ability and on another table the ‘foreign’ children myself included.

Rather than focussing on student integration directly in the Institution Focussed Study (IFS), I researched the student transitions into the final year of the undergraduate course – UK based students returning from placements and international students on a transnational programme in China arriving in

the UK to complete their final year. As I suspected there were several reasons for the lack of integration. The students were transitioning into the final year from different places, on different paths with an important year of study ahead. Both groups of students wanted to have more interaction. I was surprised when I interviewed students and then went to observe them in class. I found that what I observed was at odds to what they had told me. This made me reflect on the discussions we had in Methods of enquiry 1 and 2, what knowledge is and if I had used a different research method such as a survey whether the data would have been more 'valid'.

The idea for my thesis built on the IFS and my interest in the transnational programme with China in my institution. I started to consider the role that my colleagues could play in facilitating interaction between students. In my language classes, I encouraged students from different courses and backgrounds to get to know each other through classroom activities. Students develop a sense of belonging and engagement through interactions inside and outside the classroom and across disciplines. This is more likely to happen if students are required to complete tasks together or get to know each other. Sometimes lecturers forego this important step for the sake of covering course content and do not dedicate adequate time to facilitate this process. I concluded that lecturers might have a useful role to play in facilitating interaction. I thought that lecturers who may be best positioned to facilitate the connections that students wanted were those lecturers who themselves have experience of connecting with individuals with educational and cultural backgrounds different to their own. Therefore, I turned my attention to staff teaching on transnational programmes and their experiences of working with staff in China teaching and assessing.

This research area combined my personal experience, my interest in education and different cultures – I enjoy teaching and I am interested in different national cultures and language study. Transnational education is an integral part of many internationalisation strategies yet although staff may be aware of the existence transnational programmes in their institutions it is in some ways a niche area. When I started my thesis, my views on transnational programmes were based on my own positive experiences of working with staff and students, but over the years, I could see that other

staff had experienced teaching on transitional programmes differently partly because of the levels of support available.

Transnational education generally evokes strong emotions in staff ranging from excitement to indifference. During studying for the thesis, my views on transnational education have changed. Unlike Erasmus exchange programmes, I think that many transnational arrangements are unethical and may not be sustainable particularly if a professional framework is not developed. This is even though I have seen many students and staff benefit greatly from studying on or being involved in these programmes. In many ways, they are business arrangements or marriages of convenience, which without the adequate and appropriate staff resourcing at programme level are doomed to failure. Interestingly this may change due to the financial implications of Covid-19, which might lead some institutions to understand the true value of these transnational programmes not only to those closely involved but also to UK based students and staff.

Throughout the research process, I have been aware of need of careful planning. I did not anticipate some of the difficulties I encountered. A good example is accessing research participants. I naively thought that through purposive sampling, I would be able to access potential participants and that it would be relatively straightforward process. Establishing access and contacting potential participants was challenging; a long, time consuming and complicated process. Firstly, it was difficult to find information on TNE partnerships between UK and Chinese universities that were operational. The British Council in the UK was unable to provide this information while Universities UK International (UUK) universities did not have this information. The British Council in Beijing did have a list of all co-operation programmes worldwide on their website albeit in Chinese mandarin. Over a period of two months, I contacted all the relevant UK universities on the list. In universities where I had an acquaintance, I was able to make contact directly with a member of staff who could potentially help establish contact. I searched university websites and telephoned universities. The gatekeepers would not or were not able to give me the name of the appropriate member of staff.
I have discovered that transnational education is in some respects an underworld that unlike other activities in higher education is rarely in the

spotlight and difficult to access. I thought that researchers (past and present) in this area and academic staff from institutions involved in TNE partnerships in China would be willing to participate. I now realize that in some cases, the reluctance to participate arises from the fact that TNE programmes are business ventures and as such, there is a level of protectionism and possibly suspicion.

Perseverance is an important and necessary quality in all stages of the research process. In the first year of the EdD I had the privilege of meeting Ron Barnett whose advice was, 'Keep going'. I proceeded to contact members listed on the TNE research hub. I questioned how I had phrased my invitation to institutions to participate in the research. Maybe the reason was simply due to heavy staff workloads and bad timing. In pursuit of additional research sites, I contacted researchers in the UK who had published articles on TNE in the last five years for assistance. I attended events to speak to these researchers. They were encouraging but unable to help. Interestingly, in the case of the two main researchers although they listed TNE in their research interests, their careers had moved into other directions. With hindsight, I should have considered issues concerning access more thoroughly at the research design stage and I should have started contacting potential participants immediately following upgrade.

The EdD programme has contributed to my professional development and knowledge in many ways. I believe I am a better practitioner because of studying for the doctorate. I have read more widely and have become more knowledgeable in many areas. Professionally, I have found the articles by Bruce Macfarlane on the changes in the role of the university teacher over time insightful. In the writing of the thesis, Adrian Holliday's research on culture and intercultural communication has been a major source of influence. In addition, writing about assessment in the UK and China and talking to colleagues has made me question assessment practices and think about different assessment practices in other countries in Europe. As practitioners, we know little about assessment practices in other locations. I have also reflected on my own practice, on the purposes of feedback and

particularly internal feedback - how we monitor our internal feedback and use it to act.

I have to admit that I have found writing this reflective statement difficult. The feedback I received from the first assignment on Foundations of professionalism, the IFS and the Upgrade was that I could have made more links to my own practice. I hope that I have provided more of an insight into my professional background in this statement and the thesis. Finally, as I approach the end of my career, I intend to encourage and support my colleagues to pursue their interests through study, to improve their practice and make a difference to teaching and learning.

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Glossary of terms

BIS – Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

CFCRS - China-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools

COVID – Coronavirus disease

HE – Higher education

HEA – Higher Education Academy

HEI – Higher Education Institution

HEEDC - Higher Education Evaluation Centre

HESA - Higher Education Statistics Agency

IHEF - International Higher Education Forum

CHAT - Cultural-historical activity theory

CoP - Communities of practice

MOE - The Ministry of Education

PSK - UK Professional Standards Framework

SAT - Social action theory

SCL - student centered learning

TNE - transnational education

TMSA - Transformational Model of social action

QAA – The Quality Assurance Agency

UK - United Kingdom

UUK - Universities UK – represents 137 universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

UUKi – Universities UK international

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Rationale

Transnational education (TNE) refers to ‘All types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the education system of a State different from the State in which it operates, or may operate independently of any National education system’ (Council of Europe, 2002). TNE has grown rapidly in the UK since the 1990s as part of university internationalisation strategies. Transnational education is also known as offshore, cross-border and borderless education. There are three main types of provision in the UK: distance learning, International Branch Campuses (IBCs) and collaborative provision (Boe, 2018, Healey, 2018). The boundaries between different types of provision are not always clear. Distance learning refers to a learning experience, which has little or no face-to-face contact. International Branch Campuses (IBCs) involve institutions setting up a campus on another site. The IBC has responsibility for programme delivery and academic matters. Collaborative provision refers to TNE programmes provided in partnership with an overseas partner institution such as a joint or double degree programme, where students study both overseas (Mellors-Bourne, et al., 2014). Internationalisation strategies have led to some universities opening branch campuses overseas while others have developed degree programmes specifically catering for international students.

Over time transnational education has become an integral part of internationalization in higher education in the UK, more tutors undertake either long-term or short-term transnational teaching duties (Healey, 2018). International students constitute an important and growing proportion of higher education students worldwide. Over 80 % of all UK degree awarding bodies are now involved in some form of transnational education (UUKi, 2018). It is therefore, undeniable that TNE is an important stream of revenue in the UK. It is estimated that transnational education activities contributed

£1.8 billion to the UK economy (HM Government, 2019). This was an increase of 73% since 2010. The interest in TNE in the UK has been influenced by changes in the economic and political landscape (British Council, 2016). This was evidenced in a government publication on the wider benefits of TNE (Mellors-Bourne, 2017) and an educational toolkit in recognition of staff development needs on TNE programmes (Smith, 2013, Smith, 2017). More recently, prior to the COVID pandemic (2019), Professor Sir Steve Smith chair of the International Policy Network at Universities UK told Universities UK's International Higher Education Forum (IHEF) 2020 that 'Transnational education is already a success, but I predict it will become more important as universities think about diversifying the way they reach international students' (Mitchell, 2020). However, higher education is increasingly competitive, and changes in the market environment are complicating the delivery and viability of TNE programmes. It has been claimed that TNE in the UK has peaked and is in decline (Healey, 2020). However, the COVID-2019 may force providers to reconsider their TNE programmes within the constraints of their contractual arrangements. This may lead to strengthening of existing arrangements and/or the pursuit of arrangements in other locations. In the UK, there has been an increase in TNE activity in Europe (UUK, 2019a). This growth may further increase depending on the outcome of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union.

There are many tutors in the UK and worldwide who find themselves involved in the delivery of TNE. More in-depth and contemporary research is required into TNE and the experiences working transnationally which has now become more mainstream (Wilkins, 2018). Healey (2017, p.251) has commented more generally on the paucity of TNE research which 'gets inside the box' while Ding (2018, p. 270) has claimed that the teaching and learning experiences of TNE tutors and students are 'a black box'. To start to redress this lack of research into the experiences of teachers and their experiences of teaching and assessing in partnership programmes between the UK and China are the focus of this study. We know relatively little about the experiences of teachers working on programmes with staff in the other location. Existing literature on teaching and learning in TNE tends to be

mainly concerned with tutors' experiences in the classroom rather than what takes place outside the classroom setting behind the scenes (O'Mahony, 2014). Moreover, examples of good practice in TNE have tended to focus on the resulting student outcomes rather than the work of TNE tutors. The experiences of tutors working transnationally building relationships and managing modules that enable these outcomes to be achieved have received far less attention (O'Mahony, 2014). For this reason, teachers are the focus of this study. Teaching staff are crucial to successful delivery of TNE programmes (Heffernan and Poole, 2004, Debowski, 2008, O'Mahony, 2014). One difficulty in researching the experiences of teaching staff in TNE is that, even though it is claimed that the roles of teaching staff are comparable across TNE provision, there is lack of consistency in the use of terminology (Knight and Liu, 2017, Killick, 2017). Indeed, TNE tutors may have a narrower or wider remit depending on their responsibilities, the size of the institution and the transnational programme.

Collaborative TNE provision is defined as programmes in which 'a foreign HEI/provider and host country HEI/provider work together on the design, delivery and/or external quality assurance of the academic programmes' (Knight and McNamara, 2017 p. 14). Partnership arrangements, a type of collaborative provision, are a common model for TNE. In some institutions, collaborative programmes in TNE are known as alliances, in others, as articulation programmes in others, partnerships. The term 'partnership', although it implies a degree of equality, is best understood as an arrangement between two institutions in which students typically spend three years in the country of origin and the final year in the UK. This model of TNE provided the context of this research study and specifically, partnerships between the UK and China. China has been chosen as it is among the top five countries involved in TNE with the UK (HEGlobal, 2016). The additional benefit of limiting the study to one type of provision located in the UK and China was that different countries' higher education environments did not detract from the focus of the study: the experiences of tutors working transnationally building relationships and managing modules.

Another gap that this study sought to redress was the absence of the experiences of tutors from both locations in transnational education

programmes. I use the word ‘tutor’ in preference to ‘teacher’ as a synonym rather than a distinction because the experiences of teachers might lead the reader to think that this study manly concerns teaching and student learning. It is a shortened form of ‘module tutor’ and in TNE provision the role of module tutors may differ. Tutors’ experiences in both locations of TNE partnership programmes rarely feature in the same study. Most studies on TNE programmes focus on staff based in one location and if they do include staff from both locations they are expatriates (Bordogna, 2019). There might be valid reasons for not including tutors from both locations such as access.

Furthermore, while there have been many studies on tutors’ experiences of teaching, there have been far fewer studies which investigate tutors’ experiences of the delivery of modules in TNE programmes for which tutors are jointly responsible: what takes place outside the classroom setting behind the scenes such as assessment. This is an important area because tutors’ work with staff in the other location contributes significantly to the successful delivery of programmes and this important work is all too often taken for granted and unseen.

1.2 Professional Interest

This area of study connects with my professional and personal interest in teaching and supporting international students. I have been closely involved in TNE partnership programmes with China for over a decade in various roles. Therefore, the research aim and questions are as follows:

1.3 Research Aim

What are the experiences of tutors teaching and assessing in UK/Chinese TNE (transnational education) partnerships?

1.4 Research Questions

- What are tutors’ experiences of relationship building with staff in the other location?

- What are tutors' experiences of working transnationally (teaching and assessing) and the challenges they encounter?

1.5 Structure of Thesis

The introductory chapter provides the rationale for the study and presents the research aim.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature providing an overview of transnational education in the UK and China and explaining the importance of building working relationships, culture influences and understanding differences in pedagogic practices with a focus on assessment processes and practices for tutors teaching and assessing on TNE partnership programmes. I discuss Bordogna's theoretical approach to transnational partnerships (2018) and its relevance to this study. I introduce the conceptual model that I use to interpret and bring meaning to the study's findings. I discuss the merits of Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2016) in investigating TNE tutors' experiences.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the epistemological and ontological position and methodology. I explain the research design, ethical considerations and the rationale for the chosen method of data generation. Following this I explain the stages of data anaylsis. Finally, I discuss trustworthiness, practitioner research, and the limitations of methodological approach.

Chapter 4 begins with a review of the research questions that the study seeks to answer. I report how the tutors describe their experiences of teaching and assessing. I present the findings under the two main themes working relationships between tutors and differing views of pedagogic practices, specifically the moderation of assessment.

In Chapter 5, I use Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2016) to analyse the experiences of tutors in TNE partnerships. I discuss the dynamic nature of tutors' realities navigating the familiar and the strange world of TNE partnerships and present the key findings.

In Chapter 6, I conclude by identifying and summarising the contribution to transnational education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature that informed the research questions addressed in this study. The literature review is presented in three sections. Firstly, I provide an overview of transnational education in the UK and China. I conclude this section with a focus on the literature on collaborative provision. Secondly, I present themes in the literature relating to the experiences of tutors working transnationally.

I then review the main areas of interest in this study, which relate to those aspects of working transnationally undertaken outside the classroom setting. These areas are building working relationships with staff in the other location, cultural influences and the understanding of differences in pedagogic practices with a focus on assessment processes and practices. I discuss Bordogna and Holliday's conceptual models and their relevance to understanding tutors' experiences of working transnationally.

2.1 Transnational education in the UK and China

Transnational higher education has expanded rapidly in the past 20 years (Tsiligiris and Lawton, 2018). The UK is a leading provider of transnational programmes, which have become a key component in many internationalisation policies. Internationalisation is beneficial in enhancing institutional reputation and competitiveness, preparing graduates to become global citizens, generating revenue and enhancing the research profile. In the UK, TNE programmes contribute to most of these aspects, but mainly to income generation. In 2017-18, 139 universities worldwide reported TNE activity. There were 693,695 students studying on UK TNE programmes. The majority of TNE education (87%) is delivered outside the European Union (Universities UK, 2016, Boe, 2018). Transnational education includes education programmes at all levels up to and including PhD (Mellors-Bourne, Jones and Woodfield, 2014). At undergraduate level, the majority of the courses are in business, administration, engineering, mathematics, and computer sciences.

China is a key country for UK transnational education: the third largest host country for UK TNE after Malaysia and Singapore 2015-16 and from 2010 the fastest growing host country (QAA, 2017, UUK, 2018). In the period 2017-18, China has become the largest hosting country with an increase of 8.7% over Malaysia (UUK, 2019b). Partnership arrangements with China: one of several types of programme delivery at undergraduate level with the largest hosting country, are therefore, important to study. TNE is making an important contribution to the internationalization of Chinese higher education. The key policy driver for China has been the aim to improve the quality and international reputation of education and research through cooperation with higher education institutions overseas. China's aim is to be a world-leading higher education power by 2050. In the 1990s, TNE programmes were introduced to satisfy growing demand for higher education and modernize their higher education provision. Since 2015, China has become an exporter of TNE programmes, most recently in some of the Belt and Road countries: more than 60 countries in Asia, Middle East, North Africa and Europe (QAA, 2017, O'Malley, 2019). As part of its internationalization strategy, China is actively supporting collaboration with foreign higher education institutions in the regions listed.

2.2 Terminology used in TNE

Transnational education is a broad term encompassing many different educational arrangements subject to different country regulations (Mellors-Bourne, 2017). The terminology used in TNE poses a difficulty for researchers. It is unclear and confusing (Knight and McNamara, 2017, Ding, 2018). The confusion arises from difficulties in classifying the different types of provision and from variations within arrangements such as in collaborative provision. The regulatatory environment of the country determines whether the collaborative provision is single, joint, double, multiple or a twinning arrangement (Knight and McNamara, 2017). In collaborative provision there are two distinct models of curriculum design: a joint model where both institutions design the curriculum and an import/export model where the curriculum of one institution is adpoted by the other institution (Knight,

2016). This example illustrates the difficulties in classifying different types of TNE provision and capturing the differences within the classification.

2.2.1 Terminology and modes of delivery

The growth of TNE has made it difficult to differentiate between the modes of transnational education. The modes of delivery vary to meet the needs of specific programmes. In China for example, central government and provincial government strictly control TNE programmes (Huang, 2003, Hu, Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2019). This is in contrast to Malaysia where the regulatory environment for TNE is more stable and accepting of a wider range of TNE arrangements (Tsiligiris, 2018). Knight and McNamara (2017, p.1) have attempted to clarify 'the terminology chaos' through the production of a classification framework (Table 1).

Table 1: Six categories of modes of transnational programme

Acitivity	Independent	Collaborative
	Mode of delivery	Mode of delivery
1	Franchise programmes	Partnership programmes
2	International branch campus	Joint universities/colleges
3	Self-study distance education	Distance education with local academic partner

Source: Knight and McNamara (2017, p.2)

Knight and McNamara (2017) used two organising principles in their framework. The first organising principle is whether the TNE activity is an independent activity such as a franchising programme in which the programme is the responsibility of the foreign providing university or whether the activity is collaborative. Independent TNE activities mean that the local higher education, is not involved in the design and delivery of the programme whereas collaborative activities such as partnership programmes are delivered jointly by a local university and a university in another country. An

example would be a university in the UK and a university in China, where the programme is delivered. The second organising principle is the mode of delivery. The TNE branch campus is the most visible of the six modes or types of programme.

Another example is the number of different terms used to describe TNE programmes. O'Mahony (2014) in her study of 32 HEIs in the UK found 21 different terms. TNE is defined as 'the mobility of higher education programmes and institutions/providers across international borders'(Knight and McNamara, 2017 p. 2). Providers, are also known as the home or foreign country, whereas the institution in which the degree is untaken is referred to as the host or local institution (Dunn and Wallace, 2008). This terminology with reference to collaboratve provision where students receive dual awards one from each institution is confusing.

In China, the term used for transnational education is 'foreign co-operation'. Transnational education in China has been growing rapidly in the last four decades years since the mid-1980s. TNE in China has grown due to an increased demand for higher education, China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and China's push to internationalize education (Huang, 2003). There are two modes or types of TNE provision in China: joint institutions and joint programmes (Ding, 2018, Hu, Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2019). Joint programmes are the main mode of partnership with foreign universities at undergraduate level known as China-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) or higher education institutions (Huang, 2007). These Chinese-foreign cooperation programmes which are officially approved by the Ministry of Education(MOE) require the overseas HEI partner to deliver one-third of the teaching

There are two main modes of delivery: students either spend the entire four-year undergraduate programme in China 4+0 with or without a year spent in the UK or 3+1 in which the first three are spent in China with the final year spent at the partner institutions (Gu et al., 2019). The is also a 2+2 model (two years spent in the country of origin and two years in the UK). The MoE's preferred models are 4+0 and 3+1 programmes (QAA, 2017). 3+1 is the most common mode of delivery between Chinese and UK universities at

undergraduate level with 57% of the 188 programmes (Venture Education, 2020).

National bodies use different classifications of transnational provision. The higher education statistics agency (HESA) in the UK classifies the type of provision based on the relationship of the student with the higher education institute providing the programme:overseas campus, distance, flexible or distributed learning; collaborative provision; registered at the overseas partner institution, and other arrangement (UUK, 2019b). Healey and Michael (2015) have proposed using a spectrum tool with which to classify TNE partnership programmes based on the student population, the type of degree and whether the partnership is research-led or teacher-led. This unlike the classification of modes of delivery provides more detail on the nature of the partnership. However, the confusion in terminology will remain as TNE programmes develop and adapt to changes in the higher education environment. Indeed the blurring of modes or types of provision previously noted (Healey and Michael, 2015) is also likely to continue.

2.2.2 Terminology and the roles of TNE academic staff

The confusing terminology extends beyond differences between the types of TNE activity to the roles of academic staff. A common title associated with TNE referring to tutors is ‘flying faculty’ or ‘visiting faculty’, which refers to staff who fly out to or visit partner institutions to deliver short intensive blocks of teaching. In China they have the less glamourous title of ‘come-and-go teachers (Hu, Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2019). Similarly, staff roles may have different titles. Some of the variation in the use of titles is attributable to the type of provision; for example, the title ‘link tutor’. This title is common in collaborative programmes such as local delivery partnership programmes. ‘Link tutor’ often implies and emphasizes a relational role in which there is no involvement in teaching (Smith, 2017). The role of link tutor is more closely associated with the management and the development of TNE programmes, and yet tutors without this remit are sometimes known as ‘link tutors’ linking with a tutor in the other institution in a local delivery partnership. Moreover, the role may be an additional teaching activity or responsibility assigned to a

permanent member of staff, staff on part-time contracts or teaching only contracts.

The roles of tutors in the other institution do not necessarily mirror each other. There are also instances where the job titles are identical, but the responsibilities of the role differ which adds to the confusion surrounding terminology. Tutors in different locations may not be aware of the variance in their respective roles and job specifications. There are members of staff in the UK undertaking the role of tutor who are 'blended professionals' with roles extend over professional and academic domains (Whitchurch, 2008). In China, TNE tutors are recruited on the basis of their foreign language proficiency and on their international experience and teaching ability (Ding, 2019). They have a minimum two years' teaching experience (Yang, 2008). There are job specifications for tutors working transnationally. In Australia, for example, there is a profile of skills for Australian academic staff and local tutors working transnationally (Leask et al., 2005). This is contrast to the UK where only recently in 2017 did the Higher Education Academy (HEA) commission an educational toolkit for Transnational Education whose target audience was mainly flying faculty teachers (Smith, 2017). There are however, many more tutors involved in TNE who are not mobile. Therefore, the terminology used to define modes of delivery and job titles and roles in TNE programmes is not uniform within and between countries. From a research perspective, this can be problematic.

2.3 TNE collaborative provision in the UK and China

This study focuses on tutors working in TNE collaborative provision in the UK and China. Partnership arrangements are a common model for TNE in which students typically spend three years in the country of origin and the final year in the UK known as 3+1 programmes. The 3+1 and the 2+2 models of TNE provided the context of this research study. Williams defines collaboration as 'a means to an end or an end in itself' (Williams, 2012 p.15). In the UK, TNE programmes in collaborative provision are often referred to as partnership programmes. Collaborative TNE provision is defined as programmes in which 'a foreign HEI/provider and host country HEI/provider work together on the design, delivery and/or external quality assurance of the academic

programmes' (Knight and McNamara, 2017 p. 14). In the UK, the majority of TNE students (44%) are studying through collaborative provision (Boe, 2018). An example of this type of provision is a joint degree partnership. In 2017, there were 254 approved joint TNE programmes between China and the UK, which include collaborative provision involving 21 institutions affiliated to Chinese higher education institutions (QAA, 2017). 80% of the programmes are at undergraduate level with the majority of students studying Business and Management (HEGlobal, 2016). TNE partnership programmes are also known as double/multiple degree programmes and twinning programmes (Knight and McNamara, 2017). In the period 2017-18 more than half the students on TNE programmes (162,905) were in 32 countries in Asia. Less than half of the students (44.3%) were studying on collaborative programmes (UUK, 2019b). (Hu and Willis, 2017). In June 2020, there were 206 joint programmes approved by the Ministry of Education (MoE) between Chinese and UK universities with thirteen joint programmes starting (Venture Education, 2020)

In the last decade, transnational education has satisfied the increased demand for higher education and foreign qualifications. China is the main sending country in the UK (Universities, UK, 2019). In China, an important difference between TNE joint programmes in the UK is that the TNE programmes are private (Yang, 2008). Chinese public universities establish programmes through the Ministry of Education (MOE). Compared to mainstream programmes in Chinese higher education, TNE programmes and institutions are thought to be academically weaker (Ding, 2019). This viewpoint extends to the quality of the staff delivering the programmes. The promotion prospects for TNE tutors in China are limited by the lack of opportunities to build a research profile due to significantly heavier teaching workloads. Ding (2019) also suggests being a TNE tutor is a second choice for academic staff that have been rejected from mainstream positions that would include a research remit. In the UK and China, the most important areas of working transnationally in partnership programmes are building working relationships with staff in the other location, and understanding the differences in pedagogic practices.

2.4 Tutors building working relationships with staff in the other location

Collaborative provision in practice is difficult to deliver and there are many challenges (Williams, 2012). One of the challenges in TNE is building working relationships across geographically separated institutions. The importance of relationships and establishing relationships with staff in the other location at institutional level, are mentioned frequently at the initial stages of partnership development and in particular at senior level (Willis, 2006, Taylor, 2016). At programme level, I would argue that relationships are equally important professionally and personally and possibly more important than at an institutional level since tutors deliver the programme and add value.

The experiences of TNE tutors have been researched in various locations, predominantly in Australia (Dunn and Wallace, 2008, Smith, 2009). Most of the research has been on flying faculty or teachers completing short intensive teaching assignments and working on offshore campuses for longer periods (Dobos, 2011, Smith, 2014). In collaborative provision such as partnership programmes, most tutors never have the opportunity to visit the partner institution. Research into effective working relationships of tutors in TNE given the importance of working relationships, is limited (Heffernan and Poole, 2005, Bordogna, 2018). The relationships of tutors who are not mobile with staff in the other location have received less attention to date than the experiences of 'flying faculty'.

Teaching delivery and teaching relationships have been explored in Hong Kong and China (Bodycott and Walker, 2000, Dunn and Wallace, 2008b, Debowski, 2005) and in the UK (Smith, 2009, O'Mahony, 2014). Bodycott and Walker (2000) explored their own teaching experiences in Hong Kong. The only reference to local staff in Hong Kong is that local staff are suspicious of 'foreigners' and are apprehensive of what they perceive to be Western influences. Admittedly, the focus of this study was teaching delivery however, it would have been interesting to learn more about the staff and local context. Similarly, in Debowski's study on the experiences of flying faculty, local staff are mentioned twice: tension over teaching content and dissatisfaction with student feedback and the limited role flying faculty have

in the assessment of students. In the collection of articles edited by Dunn and Wallace (2008b), the importance of dialogue between academic staff across institutions is stressed. There is discussion about local tutors in transnational programmes lacking in qualifications and experience and marginalized from staff in the other location due to differing contractual arrangements (Ziguras, 2008). Dunn and Wallace (2008b) conclude that successful transnational education is equitable and dependent on effective intercultural communication to foster productive working relationships between tutors based on trust and making the implicit explicit. Smith (2009) draws on her own experiences of transnational teaching to reflect on and endorse the benefits of transnational work for professional practice while O'Mahony's study (2014) focuses on the challenges and needs of UK staff. These studies suggest that there are challenges in working with staff in the other location that have not been fully explored.

One reason that there has been less research on working relationships at programme level is that relationship building is taken for granted. It is assumed that relationships will take care of themselves. Consequently, the difficulties that TNE tutors may encounter in establishing working relationships with staff in other locations are not always considered. Sennett (2012) has argued that cooperation is a craft requiring skill. In a TNE context, working together and building relationships is more challenging as it requires staff in different geographic locations preferably with an awareness and skill in intercultural communication to cooperate (Killick, 2018). Indeed, Killick (2018,) has argued that staff working in diverse contexts, need to develop cross-cultural and global perspective capabilities: the affective, behavioural and cognitive capabilities required to work with individuals from different cultural and educational backgrounds. The extent to which staff working in TNE contexts have these capabilities is debatable. Certainly, not having opportunities to develop cross-cultural capabilities would make it more difficult for staff working in international or TNE contexts.

Building working relationships to enable cooperation is not straightforward in any context and more so across geographic locations. Cross-cultural capabilities are beneficial and it cannot be denied that an individual's background affects thinking, interactions and cooperation. However, as

Sennett (2012, p.274) states ‘we frequently don’t understand what’s passing in the hearts and minds of people with whom we have to work’ and that ‘a lack of mutual understanding shouldn’t keep us from engaging with others; we want to get something done together’. In fact, it is only when working relationships in TNE contexts break down that these relationships become the focus of attention and explanations are sought. An individual’s background and their awareness and skill in intercultural communication can provide an easy explanation for a lack of more generic skills necessary for cooperation such as open-mindedness and respect. Intercultural communication here refers to communication between people with different cultural backgrounds to one’s own, which may enable or hinder interaction.

Furthermore, relationships between staff across locations take time and effort to develop. Some researchers claim that staff must want to participate in TNE programmes (Hodson and Thomas, 2001, Hughes, 2011). Yet willingness in itself is not sufficient (Sennett, 2012). Tutors may not see the value in investing more time than necessary to complete their joint activity whether that is a teaching, teaching/assessing or moderating role. The process of positive relationship building can be easily overlooked (Spencer-Oatey and Wang, 2020). In higher education, academic staff are increasingly making micro decisions or micro calculations about which activities are more valuable to them and whether to dedicate additional effort to a specific area (Whitchurch, 2020). In addition, TNE contractual arrangements in both locations may constrain tutors’ willingness to commit additional time and effort that may be necessary.

The point is that TNE programmes suffer when tutors do not establish effective working relationships. If staff choose not to invest time in TNE activity or are not able to do so due to other work commitments, the professional and personal opportunities to develop are lost. These tutors may have chosen not to invest the time and effort required to establish good working relationships, or maybe they are not skilful in cooperating with diverse individuals (Sennett, 2012). Weak cooperation may achieve the outcome of the joint activity such as moderation of a module, but may also result in less than satisfactory working relationships to the detriment of the programme. However, relationship building at programme level is rarely,

given prominence except possibly during induction programmes. Indeed, relationship building is largely, taken for granted.

2.4.1 Relationship building and boundary spanners in TNE

Some TNE programmes employ boundary spanners whose role involves managing relationships between tutors in the other location. A boundary spanner, a concept taken from management, is someone who works across organisations (Haas, 2015). TNE programmes are collaborative projects, which involve a wide range of staff with diverse individuals working across organisational and national boundaries in some respects similar to multinational companies. Boundary spanners have many different functions, which include building and maintaining relationships, communication, coordination, and information and knowledge management (Williams, 2012). Their expertise and knowledge of both organisations mean that they can help operational staff manage the challenges they face in working together. In TNE, their role would require knowledge of the higher education contexts of the UK and the Chinese institution and their practices.

Thus, the boundary spanner is a dedicated role to facilitate collaboration, which requires specific knowledge and expertise of the organisations and their practices. Williams (2010) makes a clear and useful distinction between boundary spanners and boundary spanning. In a TNE context, the day-to-day role of the boundary spanner may be that of interpreter/communicator to manage difference and communicate effectively (Williams, 2012). Tutors as practitioners, however, are involved to a certain extent in the boundary spanning activities mentioned such as establishing and maintaining relationships with staff in the other location, communication, coordination, and information and knowledge management but this is not their main role. Boundary spanners unlike tutors would have a much wider range of bespoke activities that build cohesion between all stakeholders. The role of boundary spanner crosses both hierarchical and vertical boundaries in the organisations.

Given the complexity of TNE contexts, it is unsurprising that boundary spanners perform a useful function in managing relationships across

locations in TNE programmes. Bordogna (2019) examined the role of a boundary spanner in a transnational partnership programme between the UK and China and the effect it had on the development of the partnership. In one of the transnational programmes investigated, time adversely affected the development of relationships between staff in the UK and China. It prevented staff from working as closely as they would have liked with staff in the other location. The appointment of a boundary spanner improved this situation. The boundary spanner as programme leader in China performed the boundary spanning activities of building and maintaining relationships, communication, coordination, information and knowledge management and representing and influencing. Through these activities and providing information and explanation of procedures, the boundary spanner was able to improve the levels of trust amongst staff and contribute to the development of the programme.

In contrast, in the other partnership programme in Bordogna's study, which did not have a boundary spanner, relationships between the staff were not as strong. Staff without the support of a boundary spanner in China had difficulties in dealing efficiently with problems in a timely manner. A further issue highlighted in this programme was the transient nature of staffing in both locations. This is a more general employment issue, which weakens tutors' desire for involvement in TNE programmes (Wilkins, 2018, Ding, 2019). While tutors should engage in boundary spanning activities, they do not need to be boundary spanners (Williams, 2013). When tutors leave, the remaining tutors have to start again, building working relationships with new tutors who may require significant support and guidance leading to feelings of frustration. Where there is a boundary spanner, the boundary spanner can assist in guiding and supporting the newcomer, without placing an excessive burden on other tutors. Therefore, boundary spanners as in the example given can perform a useful function in managing and strengthening relationships across locations.

2.4.2 Relationship building and Communities of Practice in TNE

Another solution to relationship building with staff in the other location has been the facilitation of communities of practice (Keay, May and O'Mahony,

2016). Communities of practice (CoPs) are groups that are self-selecting based on expertise or need (Wenger, 1998). Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015 p.1) define communities of practice as ‘groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ with three characteristics in common: joint enterprise (domain), mutual engagement (community) and shared repertoire (practice). Through joint enterprise, members work towards a common goal. Mutual engagement allows members to engage meaningfully and negotiate activity and shared repertoire refers to the resources members share and develop.

In a TNE context, the domain is the programme itself. A community assumes homogeneity and yet in a transnational context it would be made up of individuals with different skills and knowledge with different educational and cultural backgrounds (Cox, 2005). A factor hindering a community of practice approach in a TNE context might be the lack of perceived similarity or common ground on which to build working relationships (Triandis, 2003). It is more comfortable interacting with individuals with whom you have something in common such as a similar educational background. The starting point would be difference not commonality. Other important issues to consider would be a willingness to engage such as perceived benefits and the potential member’s self-efficacy to engage in community of practice, which is distant.

A community of practice in a TNE context would imply commitment through a shared repertoire of the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver a programme. Time and sustained interaction are essential to develop effective communities of practice (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Time or the perception of time has been identified as problematic in geographically distant programmes (Bordogna, 2019). In addition, communities of practice evolve and last as long as there is a need, commitment and identification (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002). This might be harder to achieve if there are frequent changes of staff in both locations. Depending on the type of TNE arrangement, tutors may interact on a need only basis. TNE tutors may not ascribe to any of the common characteristics in relation to working

transnationally. The domain is clearly relevant but, whether it is a priority for tutors where the role of TNE tutor is one many commitments is debatable (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger- Trayner, 2015). The members need to have some sort of connection or a sense of belonging resulting in a willingness to engage. Tutors would also need to believe that they have something to contribute and feel confident in their ability to contribute. For example, in a UK partnership programme, staff in the other location would need an adequate command of English language competence. If advocates of communities of practice do not address these issues, communities of practice risk creating an 'in-group' within and/or between two institutions. This adds a further complication to already transient and disparate workforce, physically distant across time zones.

Despite these critiques, this is not the first time that communities of practice have been recommended to help manage issues in transnational education (Debowski, 2008, Dunn and Wallace, 2008). Communities of practice could help overcome the challenges of communication and if all the stakeholders adopted a 'shared goal' perspective it might serve to address some of the power issues in TNE partnership programmes that are equal in name only (Keay, May and O'Mahony 2016, Killick, 2018). Stakeholders could form a community through joint activities, interaction, discussion and sharing information. However, Dunn and Wallace (2008) in recommending 'intercultural' communities of practice for quality assurance purposes acknowledged two problems. Firstly, different transnational educational arrangements would necessitate communities of practice to be built into contractual agreements and secondly, the practical and logistical challenges may limit participation and would require support. The first problem acknowledges the need for formal recognition, which necessitates additional time, while the second problem acknowledges the fact that communities of practice in this context need to be facilitated which is not an easy task. In both locations, there may be low levels of interaction and tutors for whom the domain is not a priority. A possible solution may be a cultural mediator (Spencer-Oatey, 2012a) or bespoke boundary spanner to deal with the communication challenges.

A further point to consider is that Keay, May and O'Mahony's (2016) recommendations are based entirely on the perspectives of staff in the UK. Staff in the other location may have different viewpoints based on their role and their context. Keay, May and O'Mahony did however provide examples where staff in both locations have worked together to improve their practice through information sharing and reported instances where staff wanted closer working relationships to improve practice. It should be noted that Keay, May and O'Mahony (2016) did not claim that achieving communities of practice would be easy but neither do they provide practical solutions for their formation. How would they 'foster connections', ensure 'proactive participation' and get tutors to invest their time and energy? Participation needs to be recognised and valued by members (Dunn and Wallace, 2008, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015). What is the value for staff in the other location? Moreover, how can staff achieve the benefits of involvement?

Despite the potential difficulties, Keay, May and O'Mahony's (2016) arguments for proposing communities of practice are valid. They are a solution to improve the way in which staff can work together to enhance teaching and learning in transnational programmes. This requires building relationships with staff in the other location. A boundary spanner might be a better intervention with which to prepare the groundwork for the facilitation of communities of practice (Debowski, 2008). Therefore, although in the context of TNE partnership programmes, communities of practice may be difficult to achieve, with the appropriate support it can provide a stimulus for closer cooperation, which would necessitate building good working relationships with staff in the other location. Rewarding or incentivising participation may be necessary to sustain and develop the communities of practice so that the knowledge and skills gained are not lost.

There are however, several reasons why communities of practice fail, all of which are applicable to TNE arrangements; lack of core members; lack of identification; low level of interaction; the ability and willingness to envisage and adopt new practices and difficulties in effectively communicating their practice to others (Probst and Borzillo, 2008). The core members would have to support other group members proactively. The fundamental issue for the

community of practice would be how to establish the community, make the members feel welcome and value their input. In addition, there is the possibility that the community of practice might be perceived as a means of cultural imperialism (Djerasimovic, 2014). Issues of hierarchy and power may hinder participation (Roberts, 2006, Killick, 2018). Thus, communities of practice for the reasons provided can be difficult to establish.

By contrast, it can be argued that in programmes with countries such as China, which has a strong collectivistic dimension (Hofstede, 1991), communities of practice might be easier to facilitate as a community ethos already exists (Roberts, 2006). The opposite applies to the UK, which in contrast to China has a strong individualistic dimension (Hofstede, 1991). The main issue is that the tutors working on partnership programmes are not a community or a ‘tight knit group’ whatever the word ‘partnership’ or ‘cooperation’ implies (Cox, 2005). Communities of practice develop from needs and the perceived benefits of engaging with others (Probst and Borzillo, 2008). Undoubtedly, not all communities of practice fail and where they do fail it is likely be a combination of factors some of which are unique to the community.

To summarise, building working relationships with staff in the other location requires effort and time. It is clearly beneficial to all stakeholders including tutors. Institutions can provide tutors with support as needed, employ boundary spanners, cultural mediators or facilitate of communities of practice. A more equitable and permanent solution might be to establish formal work teams built into tutors’ contractual arrangements with the aim of enhancing practice. The reason for formal work teams is that the role and responsibilities of some tutors are limited to delivery of the teaching or moderation. Beyond these activities, there may not be any time allowance for cooperation with staff in the other location. Formal work teams may not be a welcome suggestion from a managerial perspective as it implies cost. The demands on workload would need to be managed (Dunn and Wallace, 2008). However, tutors would benefit by sharing their knowledge and experience and thereby, making the connections needed to improve the quality of communication that Keay, May and O’Mahony's (2016) research

claim is necessary to enhance practice. Through formal work teams, tutors could be encouraged to invest the time and effort required to build good working relationships to the benefit of all stakeholders.

2.5 Cultural influences in teaching and assessing in transnational higher education

Expectations of cultural differences complicate the practical and logistical challenges of working transnationally and building relationships with staff in the other location. Experiencing both contexts of TNE partnership programmes, organizational cultures and understanding the cultural differences between the institutions is beneficial and desirable (Smith, 2009). While this may be possible for flying faculty, this is not an option for the majority of tutors. Tutors operate across two distinct organizational cultures: their respective higher education institutions. Tutors learn about the other organization through artefacts (policies, processes, procedures, accounts), through professional development activities such as induction and workshops, second hand anecdotally from peers, and through email communication with staff in the other location. Those tutors, who do not visit the other institution, are in a sense, blindfolded relying mainly on email communication. Even flying faculty, who have the advantage of visiting the other institution, may not fully understand what they observe and experience in relation to their own practice and organisation.

Culture is a problematic and contested concept and one that is difficult to define (Leung et al., 2005, Spencer-Oatey, 2012b, Bovill, Jordan and Watters, 2015). There are many definitions of culture, which relate to different fields of study (Schnurr and Zatyts, 2017). In TNE arrangements, cultural influences are unavoidable. There are two main approaches to culture: the essentialist view and the non-essentialist view. The essentialist view is the belief that a group of people can be categorisied according to their essential qualities. The essentialist view is that culture is static, homogeneous, holistic, determinist and bounded whereas the non-essentialist view is that culture is dynamic, heterogeneous, internally riven, changeable, and has blurred boundaries (Nathan, 2015). It is perhaps more helpful to firstly consider an influential definition of organizational culture

applicable to the context of this study, which is a professional work setting across cultural boundaries.

Organisational culture refers to the cultural characteristics of a particular organization. Schein and Schein (2016, p.6) have defined organisational culture as accumulated learning which is,' is a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness'. Their model of organizational culture has three levels of culture: artefacts, values and basic assumptions. Behaviours are driven by basic assumptions arising from individual beliefs and values. Assumptions are 'the correct way' in which a group of individuals thinks something should be done such as resolving problems or dealing with conflict. Individuals bring their beliefs and values into the workplace. Groups form the organisational culture of the workplace. Organisational culture is implicit. In relation to TNE, the extent to which tutors, who never visit staff in the other location, are aware of differences in organisational culture across institutions in TNE arrangements is arguable. Differences tend to be easier to identify than commonalities. In transnational collaborative provision, tutors are groups. Cultural influences affect everything that tutors do. Tutors' workplaces are organizational cultures with their own established practices, influenced by individual, group, organizational and national culture. However, if organizational learning depends on cultural learning as Schein (2003) claims, and is accumulated learning (Schein and Schein, 2016) establishing a TNE arrangement would appear to be an impossible endeavour: diverse groups of individuals working in different national settings. From a practitioner or a tutor's perspective dealing with cultural influences when working with staff in the other location in an organizational culture that operates differently can be challenging (Spencer-Oatey, 2012b). If tutors have an essentialist view of culture and those in the other organization, relationships may be difficult and affect programme delivery. Another difficulty is staff turnover in transnational programmes (Ding, 2019). This means that staff may not have time to build relationships, understand each other and find solutions to misunderstandings from cultural influences. Moreover, can tutors recognize and deal with cultural influences when working with staff in the other location? Tutors

would have to either be boundary spanners or have enhanced boundary-spanning skills.

2.5.1 Tutors' understanding of the organizational culture and local context of the other institution

There are differences in higher education systems between countries. These differences are likely to be more pronounced between countries such as the UK and China (Teekens, 2003). It is necessary for tutors to have some knowledge and understanding of the organisational culture of the local context as it influences the behaviour and actions of the tutors in the other location. Arguably, the 'blindfolded' tutors who never visit the other institution are at a disadvantage when compared to TNE tutors who spend short periods in the other institution as flying faculty. This does not mean that an understanding the local context is any more or less relevant to them. Unlike flying faculty, these tutors, the tutors from the receiving institution cannot experience first-hand the context in which the majority of the TNE programme is delivered. The tutors from the provider country may have limited awareness of the context for which they are preparing students. The tutors, who are not mobile, do not have the same opportunities to interact face to face with staff in the other location. For them, the TNE programme may seem remote due to the nature of partnership programmes – two organisational cultures geographically separated.

In addition, a lack of knowledge and understanding of the local context may lead to unhelpful actions, which undermine working relationships and cooperation. Cooperation is central to TNE programmes. An awareness of cultural differences is implicit in knowledge of organizational culture and an understanding of local context. Tutors with some knowledge and understanding of the organisational culture of the local context are in a better position to reflect on their own behavior when challenges arise. He and Liu (2018 p. 271) have concluded that challenges in transnational settings are '… in essence *conflicts* caused by cultural differences and the best practices to deal with such challenges is in fact *conflict handling methods*.' If this viewpoint is accepted, should tutors be trained in conflict management? Conflict understood as serious disagreement leads to a failure to agree. In

which case, conflict-handling methods may magnify difference and hinder future cooperation by creating an expectation of conflict. However, conflict understood as unmet or unrealistic expectations may be a useful approach in which conflict-handling methods function as preventive tools to manage cultural differences. Indeed, TNE tutors are all newcomers to the organisational culture of the other institution, as well as working with tutors with cultural backgrounds different from their own.

Without doubt, understanding cultural differences can minimise misunderstandings. This requires tutors to have a good understanding of their own culture and recognising how culture can impact behaviour (Killick, 2018). Culture is complex and is understood differently. Tutors' awareness of cultural influences is useful in understanding differences. The pedagogic beliefs of staff in the other location might differ from theirs. It is however, unhelpful to generalize and place too much emphasis on differences or similarities. In China for example, teaching and learning is influenced by Confucian beliefs whereas in the UK, pedagogical beliefs are influenced by Socratic tradition. However, in China as in the UK, there is a diversity of beliefs and values, which cannot be attributed solely to Confucian or Socratic beliefs.

Some tutors may have more awareness and understanding of cultural influences for example, tutors who have experienced studying or working in another country. Flying faculty working in different organisational cultures is forced to reflect on their experience. They can reflect on their assumptions and even reassess their practice which can result in improved teaching practice and professional development (Smith, 2014). However, understanding cultural differences is an ongoing process. Kotthoff and Spencer-Oatey (2009) have cautioned against attributing misunderstandings to cultural backgrounds. Misunderstandings can arise from personal conflict. Thus, there are cultural influences and however, there is a danger of simplifying a complex situation that takes place in a transnational work setting by attributing it to a difference in cultural backgrounds.

2.5.2 Research on TNE tutors' experience and culture

To date there have been few studies specifically exploring the effect of culture on tutors teaching transnationally although there is frequent reference to challenges arising from cultural issues particularly for flying faculty (O'Mahony, 2014, Smith, 2009). Hoare's case study of transnational teaching focused on the intercultural learning experiences of a group of Australian staff undertaking short-term teaching and co-ordination assignments in Singapore (Hoare, 2013). The staff all had prior international experience and yet, they were ill prepared for the differences they encountered in their new context. Hoare argued for the need for intercultural development. She claimed that valuable intercultural learning could be lost with potential negative consequences for staff, such as stress and the reinforcement of stereotypes from 'swimming in the deep end'. Similarly, and in addition, He and Liu (2018) warned of the frustration and conflict experienced by teachers in managing cultural differences in UK/China TNE programmes. They stressed the importance of understanding the influence of cultural differences in working transnationally.

Prior to these studies Bodycott and Walker's (2000) research on their experiences of teaching in Hong Kong found that the effect of hierarchy and issues of face created difficulties that they had not anticipated. They became aware of the 'hidden differences' that students brought to class and the need to examine their own views. Bodycott and Walker (2000) maintain that teachers' attitudes are the starting point for the development of intercultural understandings. Are tutors aware of the 'hidden differences' they carry? O' Mahony (2014) made several recommendations including making staff aware of the cultural adjustments that they would need to make, but without providing much detail of how this might be achieved. She recommended tailored country-specific cross-cultural training. These studies show as does O'Mahony's (2014) report on enhancing student learning and teacher development in transnational education that understanding cultural influences is necessary for staff working transnationally.

2.5.3 The influence of national culture on teaching transnationally

The influence of national culture in teaching transnationally has been explored. Two studies in transnational education have used Hofstede's

dimensions of culture of national difference (Hofstede, 2001) as a theoretical framework to explore the influence of national cultural difference in working transnationally. Culture according to Hofstede (2001, p.6) is 'the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others'. He identified five dimensions of culture: high/low power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance and short term/long term orientation in which culture is a shared system of meanings (Hofstede,1991). Oliver (2011) has argued that the Hofstede's dimensions, understood as tendencies rather than essential qualities, may be useful in understanding organisational culture.

The first study examined the experiences of eleven managers (two Thai, five Australian and four other) working on Australian/Thai transnational programmes (Eldridge and Cranston, 2009). Managers believed that the two of the areas affected by cultural difference were pedagogy and assessment. They suggested that these differences arose from Australia having small power distance and individualistic dimensions in contrast to Thailand, large power distance and collectivist dimensions. Difficulties in pedagogy between Australian and Thai nationals were attributed to cultural differences in terms of adherence to procedures and regulations, which correspond to the uncertainty avoidance dimension. Thailand is ranked as having mid-range avoidance uncertainty yet the actions of Thai staff suggested that they had different tendencies in a classroom setting (stronger) and office settings (lower). Different preferences in communication style resulted from the difference in approach: Australians preferring a more direct style of communication and the more circumvent approach considering the issue of 'face' by Thai nationals. One of the Australian managers commented on the need to avoid direct criticism of individuals in Thailand. The managers interviewed attributed the challenges they observed and experienced to national culture. Alternative explanations could be either that managers could not be bothered to find the underlying issues and used national culture as an excuse (Långstedt, 2018) or that managers held essentialist beliefs and their experiences in general confirmed these beliefs.

The second study examined transnational approaches to teaching and learning from the perspective of the three researchers who had first-hand experience of working transnationally in different settings: Iraq, Palestine, India and Ghana (Bovill, Jordan and Watters, 2015). In Iraq, all the researchers led some workshops on student centered learning (SCL). Hofstede's cultural dimensions would suggest that in Iraq, the power difference between the teacher and student would be high in contrast to the UK where it would be lower. The reality indicated that this was incorrect and in fact, what the researchers observed in the classroom following the SCL development programme was that the resistance to the SCL practices was individual and not necessarily related to an aspect of national cultural difference. Bovill, Jordan and Watters (2015) rightly claim that it would be incorrect to use culture to explain their experiences (Kotthoff and Spencer-Oatey, 2009). They conclude that 'culture is dynamic, changeable and socially constructed, and so acts as a complex influence on transnational teaching' (Bovill, Jordan and Watters, 2015, p.21). In contrast, Eldridge and Cranston (2009) maintain that national culture affects academic activities (pedagogy and assessment) as well as operational activities of transnational arrangements.

These studies do serve to highlight the ease with which national cultural dimensions can lead to comparisons. They can that ultimately prove to be counterproductive if taken at face value, and not examined carefully. In HE settings, group dimensions are not fixed, they are 'flexible, negotiated and developing' (Signorini, Wiesemes and Murphy, 2009, p.255). Culture is dynamic and more fluid than Hofstede's model suggests (McSweeney, 2002, Teekens, 2003). Hofstede based his dimensions of culture on research carried out in the 1980's on the subsidiaries of one company (IBM) when travel between countries for work and leisure was less commonplace. Hofstede's theory has been criticitsed for being implicit, core, systematically casual, territorially unique and shared (McSweeney, 2002).

However, Triandis (2004) although he acknowledges some of these criticisms made by McSweeney (2002), argues that Hofstede's dimension of individualism/collectivism is the most important dimension. He claims that this dimension can help orientate people working in another culture. For

example, knowing that in communication in collectivist cultures there is a greater focus on how something is said than what is said and that in collectivist cultures, in-group prioritization and the stability of interpersonal relationships are valued more than in individualist cultures is advantageous. Thus, while it may be possible to identify cultural influences of a specific group, there is a risk of cultural essentialism, which can lead to stereotyping (Fischer, 2011). Indeed, Cousin (2012) is justified in claiming that there is a 'seductive attraction' in using Hofstede's dimensions of culture to make sense of difference. It does not account for change, diversity in countries and nor does it deepen or enrich understanding of individuals (McSweeney, 2002, 2009). Therefore, in TNE research settings, a range of contextual factors can affect staff experiences. The influence of national culture is one. While neither of the two studies in transnational education directly concerns the experiences of tutors in TNE partnership programmes, the influence of culture in the broadest sense whether national or organisational is likely to be relevant.

2.5.4 Diversity and building working relationships in TNE contexts

The aim of this study was to investigate tutors' experiences of teaching and assessing and their experiences of relationship building with staff in the other location. However, as discussed, Hofstede's theory places too much emphasis on national culture and particularly assumptions about individuals based on knowledge of the characteristics of their cultural groups. Like Hofstede, Triandis et al's model can be accused of cultural essentialism. Holliday (2011, p.40) has criticised Triandis asserting that the collectivist/individualist descriptions of cultures are not 'neutral' and often result in Othering. By portraying the 'other' as essentially different, this can result in representations, which imply deficiency and inferiority (Dervin, 2015). Triandis et al's conceptual model is a model for the study of diversity. Triandis et al's model (1994, p.784 cited by Jain, Triandis and Wagner Weick, 2010 p.133) is informed by Hofstede's research on how values in the workplace are influenced by culture (Hofstede,1991). In their model, Triandis et al present the factors that enhance or hinder the effectiveness of

relationships in diverse work groups, which may be useful in considering TNE settings (Table 2).

Table 2: Factors that enhance or hinder the effectiveness of relationships in work groups

Perceived similarity and opportunities for positive contact	
Enhance	**Detract**
Knowledge of other culture (language competence, etc.)	History of conflict
Socio types/personality type (isomorphic attributions, sense of control, little culture shock)	Cultural distance (religion, language, economics, politics)
Equal status contact	
Intimacy and small social distance (more interaction, network overlap, little ethnic affirmations)	
Superordinate goals (pluralistic society; authorities approve of contact, rewards, positive intergroup attitudes, more interaction)	

Source: Triandis et al's model (1994, p.784 cited by Jain, Triandis and Wagner Weick, 2010 p.133)

Triandis et al's model is based on the premise that the effectiveness of working relationships within groups is facilitated by 'perceived similarity' and opportunities for positive contact (Triandis, 2003, Jain, Triandis and Weick Wagner, 2010). In the context of TNE partnerships perceived similarity can be understood as tutors' knowledge about each other and their beliefs and attitudes towards each other. In order to maximise perceived similarity individuals must have opportunities to interact (Jain, Triandis and Weick Wagner, 2010). Perceived similarity leads to opportunities for positive contact, which in turn leads to more interaction or vice versa (Heffernan & Poole, 2005, Yamagata-Lynch & Smaldino, 2007, Bordogna, 2016). Moreover, individuals are more likely to experience perceived similarity if

they have equal status or similar attributes. The model also draws attention to cultural distance (religion, language, economics, and politics) as a significant factor in understanding cultural differences and the effect these have on relationships. Cultural distance is based on Hofstede's individualism/collectivism dimension of culture (Hofstede, 1991). If the cultural distance between the two cultures is large, it affects communication and hinders the formation of effective teams (Jain, Triandis and Weick Wagner, 2010). In the context of this study, the assumption would be that the cultural distance between the UK and China is large and therefore, would negatively affect relationships between staff. This viewpoint is open to debate although it may be a significant factor in some contexts. Indeed, all TNE arrangements necessitate close contact and are susceptible to tensions and misunderstandings irrespective of cultural distance.

The factors in Triandis et al's model can assist in understanding the experiences of tutors in TNE partnerships working in different continents. A limitation of Triandis et al's model as Hofstede's dimensions of culture is that it is too deterministic as the factors that hinder effective work relationships are substantial in terms of influence such as culture. In addition, individuals do not choose their work colleagues. In TNE partnership programmes culture would appear to be main barrier whereas those factors that enhance relationships may not be applicable such as equal status or may be difficult to achieve, such as social distance particularly if tutors are not able to visit the other location and do not have many opportunities to interact. In TNE partnerships there is a further complication of cultural misunderstandings which strain on relationships (Jiang, 2001, Li et al., 2016). In addition, according to Jain, Triandis and Weick Wagner (2010) a history of conflict can have a negative effect (cf. historicity CHAT).

Triandis et al's model includes the rewards of relationships as an important factor in developing relations with culturally different 'others', which is relevant to working transnationally and this study. The ability to make isomorhphic attributions whereby individuals 'correctly' interpret the behaviour of others leads to better communication and the development of positive relationships. In turn, these relationships strengthen and sustain

partnerships. However, the TNE context is a complicated work setting. Clearly, culture is relevant to the study but this might have been at expense of other aspects of the experiences of TNE tutors teaching and their perspectives on working transnationally. Culture, which as discussed in this Chapter, is a contested construct, and using a theoretical model such as Hofstede's model would not contribute more than is already known.

2.6 Developing theoretical frameworks to examine TNE contexts

Theoretical frameworks provide systematic ways of understanding situations and behaviours. To understand the experiences of tutors in TNE partnerships, it is necessary to understand the context within which behaviours (working transnationally and building relationships with staff in the other location) occur and factors which may influence these behaviours leading to experiences. A constructivist and cosmopolitan view to culture, which moves away from the essentialist views of culture such as Hofstede's is the distinction made by Holliday (1999) between large culture and small culture. Large culture paradigm refers to 'ethnic, national and international entities', (Holliday, 1999, p.237). On the other hand, the small culture paradigm refers to 'small social groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour' (Holliday, 1999, p.237). It is a dynamic and ongoing group process (Holliday, 1999 p.248). Small culture is non-essentialist. It is a heuristic model to help understand behavior and is suited to researching diverse groupings that are typical of TNE arrangements. Tutors across locations have to interact effectively using the experience from their personal trajectories, their cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills.

There are few studies that are theoretical or conceptual and as previously stated transnational education is under researched sector (Knight and Liu, 2017). Bordogna (2018) presents a theoretical approach as an 'alternative' approach for empirical research on TNE partnerships. It differs from other approaches used in TNE. It focuses on how social interactions shape the development of TNE partnership programmes rather than the development of TNE partnerships from institutional perspectives, quality assurance or pedagogy. For this study, Bordogna's fusion model provided a

comprehensive overview of the context of the TNE partnerships, while Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2016) conceptual model of intercultural communication was used to analyse and interpret the experiences and challenges of tutors in TNE partnerships working in UK and China and in different academic cultures. The Grammar of Culture model provides a different way of conceptualizing the work of tutors' work in teaching and assessing in TNE partnership programmes which can lead to understandings that are useful to practitioners and other stakeholders.

2.6.1 Bordogna's theoretical framework: a fusion model explained

Bordogna's fusion model is a useful diagrammatic representation of TNE partnership programmes. The fusion model encompasses third generation Cultural-historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 2001, p.136), Archer's Transformational model of social action (Archer, 1998,p.376) and Social Action Theory (Weber,1978). The third generation Cultural-historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 2001, p.136) is an expanded form a single activity system to at least two interacting systems. Activity systems form the basis of Engeström's work that were used to map, explore and analyse individual and collective activities (Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamaki, 1999). The system comprises of subject, tool, objects, rules, community, distribution of labour and outcomes (Figure 1).

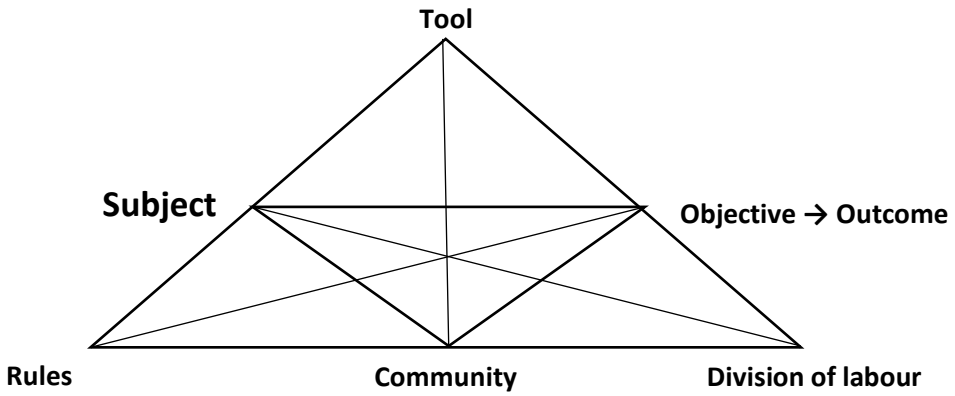

Figure 1: Activity system (Engeström, Miettinen, and Punamaki, 1999)

Subjects are the participants of the activity. In Bordogna's framework, the TNE partnership is a human activity system. The subjects are individual faculty members or faculty groups. The tools are the resources or mediating artefacts that subjects use to achieve the objective. Bordogna divides the tools into intangible (for example, support) and tangible resources (for example, books, technology). Rules are the regulations that subjects need to follow. In the context of TNE partnerships, rules amongst other regulations, include systems and procedures at an organisational level such as course requirements and for tutors, assessment and feedback practices. The community is the group that the subjects belong to which includes the institutions and stakeholders. The division of labour refers to the shared responsibilities that the community decides. The object of the activity is the outcome or outcomes. The outcomes refer to the output of the activity of the subjects. At an institutional level, these outcomes can be awarding qualifications whereas for tutors an outcome might the moderated of assessment (Figure 2).

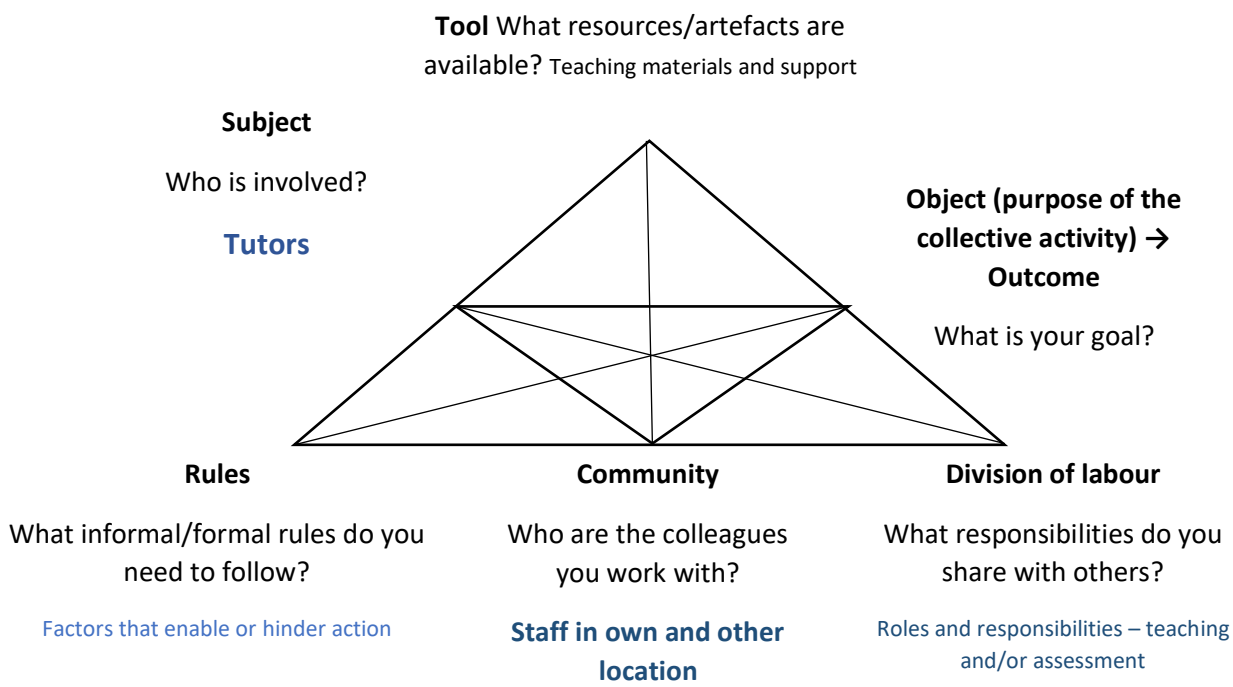

Figure 2: Adapted activity system for TNE tutors (Engeström, Miettinen, and Punamaki, 1999)

Third generation activity theory is an expanded form of Engeström's single activity system to at least two interacting systems, which in the case of

Bordogna's study comprised of two institutions from different cultures representing a community (Figure 3).

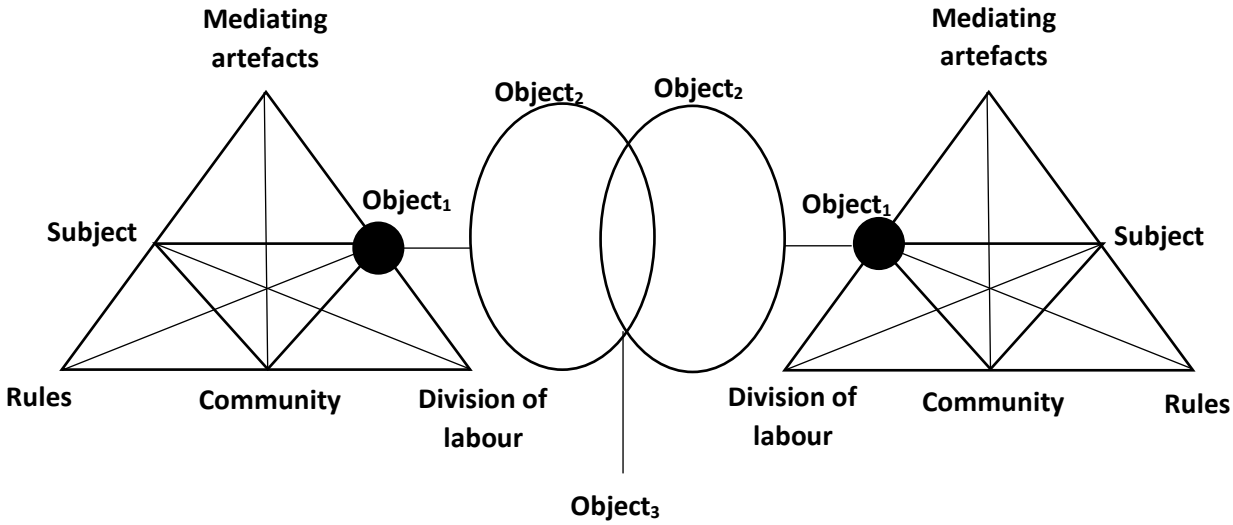

Figure 3: Third generation activity system (Engeström, Miettinen, and Punamaki, 1999).

Bordogna argues that the expanded Third generation activity theory makes it possible to consider a range of factors across the institutions in TNE partnerships: an individual faculty member; time; structure and systems; community; mediating artefacts/resources; the object of the operational activity; the output of the activity; motive and psychological output (Bordogna, 2018, Engeström, 2001, p.136). These factors can all impact how tutors experience TNE; 'the 'meaning-making, sense-making, attributional activities that shape action (or inaction)' (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2017). The key factors of this study on tutors' experiences of working transnationally and their experiences of relationship building with staff in the other location over which tutors have a degree of control, are the object of the operational activity and the psychological output. An example of the object of operational activity is assessment practice. The psychological output refers to the emotions or feelings felt by the subject (tutor) based on having engaged in and interpreted an activity (assessment/moderation) and its output, which in the case of assessment/moderation is the grade awarded (Bordogna, 2018, p.10). How tutors feel about the work that they are doing can have a significant impact on the activity, their working relationship and their overall experience of working transnationally.

Cultural-historical activity theories (CHAT) imply that individuals shape, and are shaped by their context. Bordogna (2018) proposes the third generation cultural-historical activity theory as an exploratory framework to understand how faculty members participate within the partnership, which in turn influences the pace and the development of the partnership. The first generation activity system places greater emphasis on subjects whereas in the third generation theory model there is an increased focus on the dynamics of the subject to understand dialogues, multiple perspectives and interactions within the interacting activity systems (Engeström, 1999). Learning is boundary crossing and individuals bring perspectives from different workplace settings, which lead to expansive learning. The acquisition of existing knowledge may be part of expansive learning but expansive learning is the reexamining of practice and the adoption of new practices based on the contributions of those individuals involved in the activity and their context. Bordogna's theoretical approach formed the basis for exploring and analysing of the experiences and challenges of TNE tutors working transnationally and building relationships with staff in the other locations. While it was necessary to have an overview of the activity, the partnership was not the unit of analysis in this study. If the focus of this study had been collaboration between the partner institutions over time rather than tutors' experiences of teaching and assessing, CHAT would have been a useful model to find out how the institutions influenced and shaped their activities.

In educational research, the use of activity theory has been criticised for being a descriptive tool (Yamagata-Lynch and Smaldino, 2007). In some studies, for example, CHAT has been used to identify the sources of tension but has not been used to evaluate the practical applications of the learning (Barab, Schatz and Schekler, 2004). The sequence of learning actions in Engeström's expansive learning cycle are: questioning practice to uncover contradictions or conflicts, analysis of the contradictions, designing a new model, examining the new model, implementing, reflecting on the process and consolidating the new practice (Engeström, 1999). Indeed, Bakhurst (2009, p.206) questions whether activity theory is a theory or whether it is 'a

model or schema that has minimal predictive power'. Bakhurst draws attention to the ambiguity of the terminology used such as 'contradictions' which according to Engeström (1999) are sources of change and development and the lack of detail at the points of intersection in the activity system. Nevertheless, applications of an activity systems model has been found to be an effective tool for example, in evaluating and identifying sources of conflict in partnerships (Yamagata-Lynch and Smaldino, 2007) and in exploring the academic perspective on continuing professional development in higher education(Crawford, 2008).

Bordogna (2018) in using third generation CHAT does acknowledge the limitations in relation to her research focus: the development of partnership programmes. It does not consider the effect of educational patrimony on individual actions and the emotions that result from the behaviour of individuals and how the interpretation of these actions affects subsequent activities. For these reasons, Bordogna incorporates two further theories to her framework; The Transformational Model of social action (TMSA) and Social action theory (SAT). Central to TMSA is morphogenesis (Figure 4).

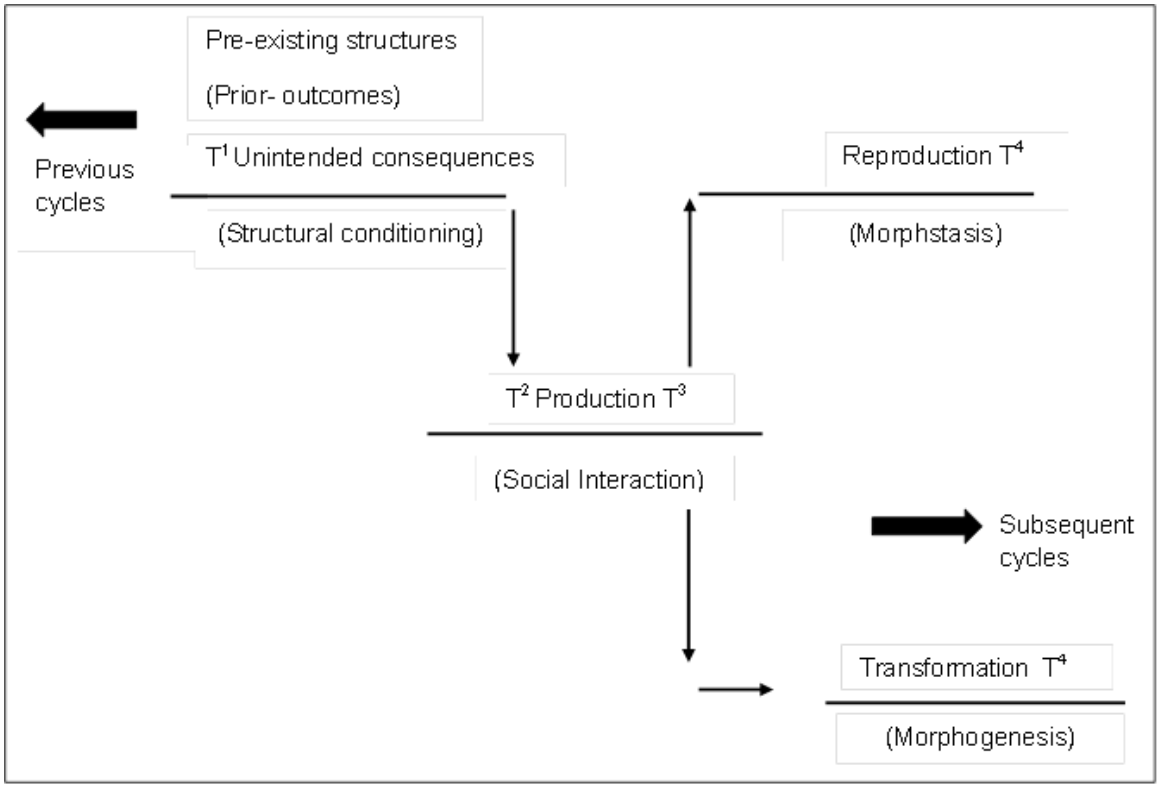

Figure 4: Superimposing the transformational model of social action and the morphogenetic/static cycle Source: Archer (1998, p.376)

Morphogenesis refers to the shape of things (morpho) and change (genesis). The process is cyclical with four transformations – T^4 Morphogenesis is the outcome in the cycle and the first T^1 Unintended consequences where agents (people) respond to the context in which they find themselves. Transformations continue (T^2 and T^3) and reproduce because action is continuous (T^4). To understand the differences in outcome it is necessary to look at the origins between the parts of the social structure and the relationships between the agents (people) and their actions, which are shaped by their interests, the context and the history of the structure (Archer, 1998). An example relevant to this study would be the experience of the UK and Chinese higher education systems. These two structures (higher education institutions) operate in very different ways. To account for these differences, it is necessary to consider how the structure has shaped past and present practices and the relationship between the structure and agents (people) over time.

Social action theory (SAT) is added to Engeström's cultural-historical activity theory and Archer's transformational Model of social action to interpret the actions of individuals from their point of view and thereby providing a third lens through which to examine the TNE partnership programmes. Bordogna (2018) recognizes the psychological impact of working transnationally on the development of the partnerships. The emotions that the interactions between those involved produces, affects working relationships which can, in turn, impact the programme. Hence the fusion model integrates three theories: Engeström's Third generation cultural-historical activity theory (Engeström, 2001, p.136), Archer's Transformational model of social action (Archer, 1998, p.376) and Social Action Theory (Weber,1978) to produce a fusion model (Figure 5).

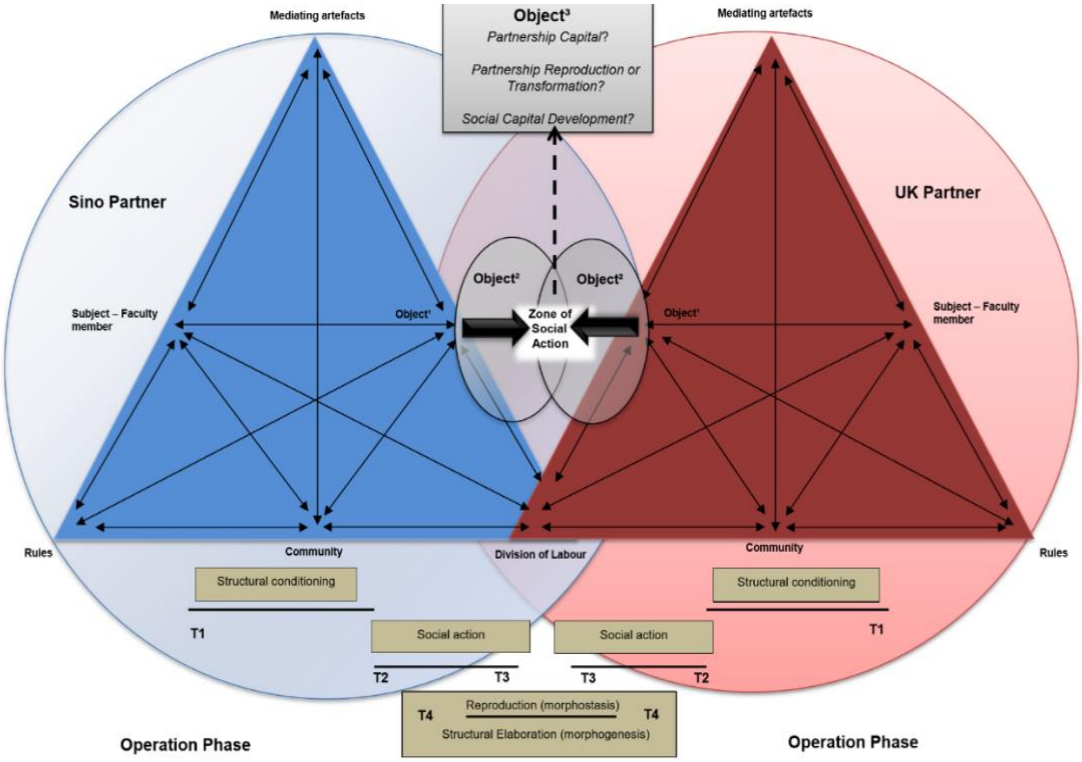

Figure 5: Operational level transnational partnership development: A fusion model (Source: Bordogna, 2018 p.15) Adapted from Engeström (2001, p.13); Archer, 1995 (p.157); Weber (1978).

2.6.2 Critique of Bordogna's fusion model

The fusion model offers a visual representation of the TNE arrangement. The representation is complicated and to a certain extent misleading. It is too perfect. The symmetry of Bordodna's model suggests equality and harmony; equilibrium between the partners that does not necessarily represent the TNE reality of partnerships or the realities as experienced by those involved on a day-to-day basis (Zhuang and Tang, 2012). TNE partnerships are collaborative but they are not equal (Djerasimovic, 2014). The solid lines in the two interacting activity systems suggest connections between five parts: community, rules, division of labour, goals and mediating artefacts. The connections that tutors may have or experience may be far more tenuous than the model suggests and the zone of social action at the centre of the diagram locates but does not convey differences in the direction and level of interaction between and amongst subjects (tutors).

The activity system of the UK institution overlaps that of the institution in China. This may suggest dominance of UK institution, which may or may not be intentional (Djerasimovic, 2014). Cultural influences are subsumed under community; they affect every aspect of TNE partnerships and are distinctive features of transnational education. At the centre of the diagram, the zone of social action is symmetrical with two arrows one from each partnership. The zone of social action is where tutors interact to complete the activity (teaching, assessing and/or moderation). The object or the purpose of tutors' activity is afforded less prominence even though the entire activity system is reliant on this object. What tutors do and how they work with staff in the other location impacts outcomes that drive the TNE arrangements and their development.

2.7 Holliday's Grammar of Culture – a conceptual model of intercultural communication

The area at the centre of the Bordodna's fusion model is where tutors' experiences of teaching and assessing in partnership programmes take place. Bordogna includes social action theory (SAT) in her fusion model so

that the actions of TNE faculty members can be examined in the context of the meanings that they assign to their actions and the relationship these actions have with the actions of others. This meaning making process is important in relationship building and in the identification of factors which enhance and hinder activities. A limitation of Bordogna's model is that I believe it does not adequately indicate the importance of the subject - faculty members, and the influence that personal trajectories and particular social and political structures can have on the teaching and assessing activities undertaken. Holliday's Grammar of Culture model of intercultural communication serves this purpose (Holliday, 2011). The model is based on Weber's social action model (Figure 6).

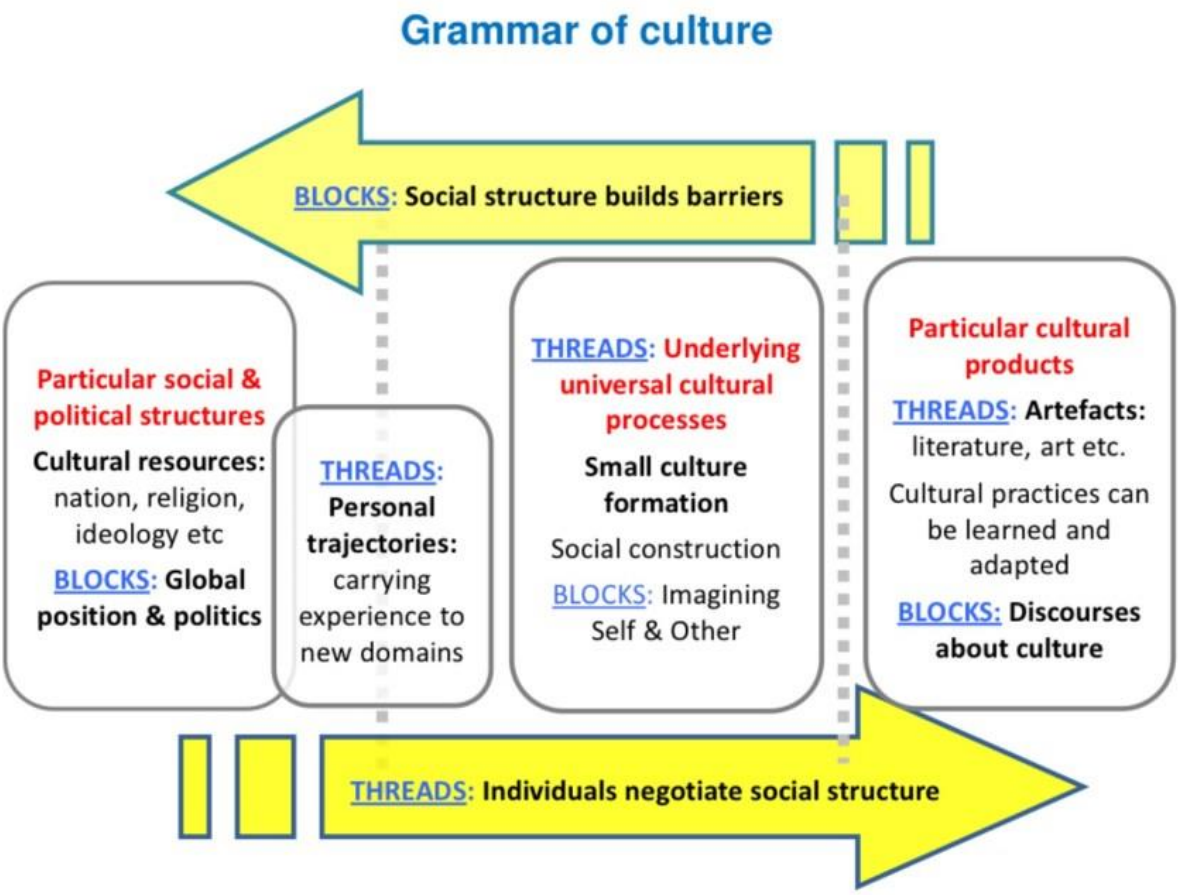

Figure 6: Holliday's Grammar of Culture (Holliday, 2016)

The Grammar of Culture model has been used to research culture and intercultural communication (Holliday, 2016). The idea behind the Grammar of Culture is to provide a framework for understanding intercultural events. Holliday (2015) defines culture as '… What is always good to realise is that everyone will see something different to what you see'. Culture is therefore,

socially constructed in small culture formation depicted to the right of personal trajectories in Figure 6. The model enables the researcher to consider the connections between social, political and cultural processes and personal trajectories. It consists of three conversational domains: underlying universal cultural processes, particular social and political structures and particular cultural products. The grammar is a conversation or dialogue between the individual and national structures as represented in these three conversational domains. Personal trajectories overlap the domain of particular social and political structures because these aspects of our background influence us all in different ways.

Small culture is a non-essentialist paradigm with which to examine social groupings (Holliday, 2013). Holliday makes a distinction between ‘small’ and ‘large’ culture, with large referring to ethnic, national and international groupings (Holliday, 1999). A small culture or grouping is ‘a cultural environment which is located in proximity to the people concerned’ such as work groups (Holliday, 2018a, p.1). This is in contrast to the essentialist paradigm of large cultures, which are ethnic, national and international groupings. Holliday (2018a, p. 1) defines small cultures as basic cultural entities. They are the activities and practices that take place when individuals in groupings interact. Individuals carry experience from their personal trajectories drawing on the domains of national structures as they negotiate their position in the grouping.

In a later study, Holliday (2016) explored the issues of cultural difference amongst university students introducing the concept of threads of cultural experience or cultural threads developed from the Grammar of Culture model (Holliday, 2016, Figure 6). Holliday (2016, p.1) explains cultural threads and cultural blocks as ‘modes of making sense and constructing culture’. Cultural ‘blocks’ unlike threads create barriers and hinder connections. Cultural threads of experience allow individuals to engage positively with the realities of individuals with different cultural backgrounds. These threads of cultural experience relate to personal trajectories influenced by small culture environments such as the workplace and wider social and political structures, which can also act as cultural blocks and hinder intercultural learning.

Individual actions are the threads whereas social structures can create barriers. The underlying universal cultural processes, which we share irrespective of location, make it possible for us to connect with each other. We interpret actions based on our personal trajectories, our experiences, and knowledge about particular social and political structures influenced by discourses of culture. In the TNE context of this study, except for short periods of time (one to two weeks) in some cases, the tutors are not located in close proximity, however, there is an expectation that they work in ways that 'will bind them together' (Holliday, 2018). The tutors are work groups or groupings in partnership programmes and thus, Holliday's Grammar of Culture model is applicable to this particular context to explore their experiences of teaching and assessing.

The model complements Bordogna's fusion model. It is a model of intercultural communication through which it is possible to examine the influence of the wider environment in which TNE operates and positions small groupings within this framework from the individual's perspective – their background, experience, beliefs values etc. Personal trajectories and the setting of social action underlying universal cultural processes feature more prominently. There are two arrows in the model; one representing action inhibited by structures which include social and political structures and statements about culture and the other moving in the opposite direction which include personal trajectories and small culture formation with its rules and relationships. These arrows represent action. Individuals in small culture environments construct and use culture to make sense of their realties. In contrast, the symmetry of Bordogna's framework and the arrows appear to represent a far more fixed reality. Her framework is a useful representation of TNE partnership programmes. Of course, models do not represent reality they are constructions. As Holliday asserts his Grammar of Culture is 'a map which can do no more than guide us, and which must not be mistaken for the real terrain which is too complex and deep to be mapped too accurately' (Holliday, 2019 p.1). Understanding how people construct and make sense of each other has a direct impact on their work in TNE arrangements. The work group in this study – TNE tutors in the UK and in China, as a location of social action is influenced by personal trajectories, underlying universal

processes, constraints arising from organisational culture and the wider social and political environment.

The everyday experiences of TNE tutors building relationships with staff in the other location and managing modules either teaching, assessing and/or moderation are dependent on multiple factors shaped by personal trajectories, organisational culture and the wider environment. The primary concern of tutors is fulfilling their role in the delivery of the module. In order for this to be achieved, tutors need to be aware of what is possible in this context and to have some understanding of the systems in place to do so effectively. Therefore, Holliday's Grammar of Culture model is useful in understanding tutors' experiences of teaching and assessing transnationally with a focus on actions stemming from personal trajectories rather than national differences (Hofstede, 2001) or perceived similarity (Triandis, Kurowski and Gelfand,1994) when seeking to understand 'how people construct and use culture to make sense of each other' (Holliday, 2016, p. 23).

2.8 Academic practice and teaching transnationally

It has been argued that academic staff teaching on transnational programmes need to become efficient intercultural learners (Killick, 2018). To be efficient intercultural learners involves acquiring intercultural communication competence; an ongoing process and arguably a lifelong process. Deardorff (2009, p. 458) defines intercultural competence as 'complex abilities that are required to perform *effectively* and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself'. Intercultural competence does not result from one international experience. Neither knowledge nor being able to speak the language spoken in the international setting, necessarily lead to intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009). Despite the claims, a single international experience can be transformative, acting as the catalyst and language study can provide an insight into cultures different from you own, which is advantageous. Indeed, tutors can and do develop their intercultural practice through interaction with

others and by adopting a critical reflective approach to their experiences (Killick, 2018). This is challenging and realistically may not be a priority for tutors.

Tutors' experiences of teaching on transnational programmes differ. Leask (2008, p.129) has used the metaphor of 'strangers in a strange land 'to describe flying faculty working on Australian offshore programmes. Australia has been at the forefront of developing professional development and on-going support framework for TNE tutors. Leask (2004, p.26) identified four types of cultural knowledge for effective transnational teaching: understanding of local culture including the political, legal and economic environment, understanding how the teachers' own culture affects the way they think feel and act; understanding of how culture affects how we interact with others; and understanding of social, cultural and educational backgrounds of students. Moreover, she claimed that effective teachers in their own setting require additional skills to function adeptly in transnational programmes (Leask, 2008). This seems reasonable for those tutors for whom working transnationally constitutes the majority of their role with the recognition that acquiring the cultural knowledge advocated is a process requiring time and support. For other tutors in partnership programmes for whom moderating a module is an 'add on' or one of many assignments or roles (Smith, 2017, Bordogna, 2019) this may be unrealistic. What is true for all tutors is that the transnational context is 'a strange land' and that tutors' starting points, their needs in terms of cultural knowledge and their experiences of working transnationally differ.

2.9 Factors that influence success of transnational work

The role of TNE tutor, depending on prior experience, is not only different from the usual teaching assignments but also more demanding in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that constitute intercultural competency. Kosmützky and Putty (2016) support this viewpoint in their systematic review of literature on teaching and learning in transnational programmes. However, Killick (2018) rightly states that intercultural practice has much in common with good practice in teaching and learning. The difference lies in an

emphasis on equitable practice to support diversity. This corresponds to the seventh principle of Chickering and Gamson's Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education to respect diverse talents and ways of learning (Chickering and Gamson, 1987, p.1). In the UK, higher education institutions support staff through generic resources on intercultural practice provided by the Higher education Academy (HEA) and bespoke professional development. These materials are aimed primarily at supporting staff to develop the intercultural competencies of students rather than tutors working transnationally. Therefore, although relevant they do not specifically cater for the needs of TNE tutors.

A key component of intercultural practice is dialogue. Intercultural dialogue is the process of exchanging views, opinions and ideas between people from different cultures to find common ground and promote understanding and interaction rather than comparing cultures, which inevitably lead to a focus on difference (European Commission, 2020). It is a complex process involving negotiation and sensitivity, which can result in greater intercultural awareness and intercultural understanding (Wang, 2008). The experiences of twenty Chinese participants on a transnational postgraduate course in leadership in an Australian university illustrate this point. Unsurprisingly, the participants experienced cultural dissonance through reflection on their assumptions and practices and their experiences of different teaching approaches. Some participants struggled to understand their course teachers' beliefs and interpretations of the concepts presented. The course triggered a degree of discomfort which led some participants to believe that their course teachers in Australia lacked understanding of their local context and culture in China. Wang's interpretation of the exchanges with the Chinese participants was resistance to the imposition to Western ideas. It is however, possible the researcher-researched relationship influenced the stance taken by some of the participants who felt the need to defend their Chinese background and culture in public. The perspectives of the teachers delivering the course were not included. This study showed the benefits of intercultural dialogue and highlighted an aspect of intercultural dialogue for which TNE tutors may not be prepared and may not expect the ability to consider others' perspectives on practices they have in common.

However, a barrier to intercultural communication is language. Language is a carrier of culture. Tutors in the UK sometimes make assumptions based on their assessment of their partner's level of English while tutors in the other location make assumptions about the adequacy of their level of English language competence and may limit their interaction accordingly. This can affect interactions positively or negatively. The perceived level of English can also influence tutors' perceptions of each other. Furthermore, the main form of communication for many tutors in TNE partnership programmes is written communication. This is problematic because written communication unlike spoken language is not immediately recoverable. In spoken language, speakers can check understanding and offer instant clarification whereas with written communication there is a greater risk that the receiver may not fully understand the information or may misinterpret the information. The intent behind the message may be lost and the receiver may be reluctant to seek further clarification or question the content. Tutors in these situations may need to develop their emotional resilience to cope with the intercultural communication they experience when misunderstandings arise and expectations are not met (Killick, 2018). The written communication may produce a negative reaction in the receiver, further complicating the interaction and possibly damaging the working relationship with staff in the other location.

The level of English language competence has been identified as a factor affecting the quality of transnational education in China (Hu, Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2019). Similarly Hu and Willis (2017) found that teaching staff lacked confidence in English language and were reluctant to enter discussions on pedagogy with staff in the other location. The issue of English language competence is compounded further by Chinese universities not having a steady supply of suitably qualified local Chinese tutors for TNE activities (Ding, 2019). In addition, Hu, Eisenchlas and Trevaskes (2019) in their analysis of the self- appraisal reports of 112 Chinese host universities submitted to Chinese Ministry of Education(MOE) in 2017 found that among other factors, there were issues with teachers' foreign language competence, pedagogical and cultural differences which were not adequately addressed by both institutions. The foreign language issue affected the Chinese tutors'

ability to collaborate effectively with the tutor in the other location. The authors do caution that the self-reports of the Chinese host universities might actually conceal a less satisfactory situation than that presented to the Chinese MOE.

Therefore, understanding of cultural differences is an important consideration for tutors in both locations of TNE programmes. For this reason, Killick (2018) stresses the importance of preparing staff in higher education to examine their own beliefs and practices critically in addition to the usual introduction to different contexts and cultures. In this way, tutors can better understand and prepare themselves for transnational work and the emotional discomfort that intercultural encounters tend to provoke. It is also important to remember that at different times, personal and situational factors influence behaviour as well as cultural factors relating to nations and peoples (Bovill, Jordan and Watters, 2015, Holliday, 2016). Tutors may be lacking in the cultural knowledge, awareness and skills to manage the cultural differences they encounter in teaching and assessing. In UK/Chinese, transnational programmes intercultural communication may be hindered by some tutors' inadequate English language competence. Tutors can find it difficult to collaborate across cultural and language differences because teaching and assessing on TNE programmes is different from the assignments tutors regularly undertake in their own institutions. These factors influence successful transnational teaching to varying degrees.

2.10 Understanding of differences in pedagogic practices: assessment procedures and practices

In TNE collaborative provision, all tutors are involved in assessment procedures and practices either as teachers and/or as moderators. Tutors need to understand differences in pedagogic practices of the staff in the other location, as assessment is fundamental to student learning There are differing approaches to assessment not only between countries but also within departments and across institutions and for students, summative assessment is high stakes affecting their progression. Much has been written on assessment but a measured perspective and one that draws attention to

the different purposes of assessment and its subjective nature is that, ‘Assessment is not a world of right or wrong ways to judge or diagnose, of standards versus improvements, of feedback versus certification. It is in reality *a human and uncertain process* (my italics) where these functions generally have to be combined in some way.’ (Ramsden, 2003, p.181). In addition, social and educational structures and policies shape assessment practices (Knight, 2006). Differences in understandings of these procedures and practices can lead to misunderstandings. In UK/China, partnership programmes the assessment processes and practices of the UK higher education institution are adopted and implemented by staff in China. Misunderstandings, disagreement or conflict give rise to ideological aspects of culture and create cultural blocks (Holliday, 2016). This requires teaching staff in China to understand the purposes of assessment and to understand how judgements are made in the UK institution. Equally, it is important for tutors in the UK to appreciate what this process entails for staff in the other location.

2.10.1 Assessment procedures and practices

In the research on TNE, assessment is discussed in relation to quality assurance, professional development and student outcomes, but not how tutors come to decide and agree on marks. This process of deciding and agreeing is rarely the focus of studies. The exception to this is a study on the external factors that influence assessment in an Australian offshore campus in United Arab Emirates (UAE). Smith (2009) reports the experiences of long-term academic staff implementing the assessment processes and practices of the Australian higher education institution. The study includes the perspectives of five members of the staff in the UEA who had never visited the Australian campus and two who had previously worked in the Australian institution. In this respect, the staff members are comparable to tutors in collaborative provisions such as UK/China partnership programmes in which the tutors in China implement the assessment processes and practices of an institution from another country. The staff in the UAE campus had limited knowledge of Australian higher education. They attended professional development activities on assessment and supported each

other in the assessment practices with one staff member describing the assessment work as ‘trial and error’ (Smith, 2009, p.476).

The title of the study, ‘Sinking in the sand?’ conveys the emotional impact on staff of working on an offshore campus with insufficient professional development and recognition for their work (Smith 2009, Killick, 2018). Interestingly and unsurprisingly, the staff members interviewed were comfortable in implementing the assessment processes of the Australian institution. The staff at the UAE campus was a diverse group with nearly half of them coming from another country. There did not appear to be an underlying tension arising from the feeling of the imposition of assessment processes that local tutors from the UAE might have experienced. One member of staff from Australia did however feel that there was little understanding by the Australian institution of the local context in UAE. For the other staff members in the UAE, it seems reasonable to suggest their focus was the implementation of assessment processes and practices as part of their role and they did not feel allegiance to the assessment processes in UAE that were being replaced. Smith (2009) attributes the willingness of the staff to implement the assessment processes of the Australian institution in her study to their diverse background and expectations that things will be different in the transnational programme. This is a different scenario from the one usual in partnership programmes. In partnership programmes, tutors often with a common educational background are required to implement an assessment process in place of their ‘own’; the one they are familiar either as students and/or educators.

However, even if tutors know that the assessment processes are different, adopting a different practice requires a shift in thinking and an acceptance of different assessment processes. In another study, four Australian managers thought that the different approaches to assessment in Thailand were influenced by Thai national culture: collectivism, large power distance and masculinity. An example cited was the reluctance of tutors to fail students due to the notion of in-group members and the existence of family pressure (Eldridge and Cranston, 2009). Tutors’ reluctance might have been due to resistance to change resulting from a lack of familiarity and understanding of the assessment procedures, rather than cultural influences. Had the students

‘failed’? Alternatively, were their differences in academic judgement due to a lack of standardisation prior to assessment? This example illustrates the difficulties in assessment and the ‘human and uncertain process’ (Ramsden, 2003, p.181) in which judgements are made.

In some respects, these TNE contexts in the UAE and Thailand have similarities with the franchised university programmes in the UK described by Ecclestone (2001) in her case study involving nine lecturers. They like the tutors in the TNE programmes discussed, had different assessment backgrounds, albeit in the UK. Despite comprehensive criteria and grade descriptors, agreeing grading amongst the franchised institutions was not straightforward. The lecturers in the UK, like the tutors in Thailand, appeared to interpret the criteria differently with some lecturers adjusting and compensating students where they felt necessary. Relevant to this study was the importance of the process of moderating in arriving at the final interpretation of grades, irrespective of the experience of lecturers in assessment. The additional benefit was closer interaction with colleagues in other locations, which the lecturers particularly valued. This approach, discussing assessment criteria with colleagues was preferable to more written guidance on assessment. These two findings are pertinent to tutors on TNE partnership programmes because the opportunities for face-to-face discussion and reflection on assessment practice may be limited by operational and practical difficulties such as availability in TNE partnership programmes. Tutors’ perceived differences may seem greater and the assessment process, particularly moderation, harder to achieve at a distance.

Furthermore, in the context of this study, the assessment practices of the partner institution in the UK are relatively new not only to the TNE students in China but also arguably to the majority of the tutors in China depending on their educational background and international experience. It is important to remember that in the UK/China TNE partnership programmes, the tutors in China are implementing the assessment practices of the UK institution. Tutors in the UK oversee and moderate the assessment processes. The tutors are likely to have a range of teaching experience and may have different assessments background either as students or as educators. The

QAA Review of UK transnational education in China 2012: Overview (QAA, 2013) advises institutions not to underestimate the challenges associated with ‘the UK approach to assessment’ and to identify ‘recurrent issues’ which are not being addressed.

2.10.2 Assessment practices in Chinese higher education

Assessment practices in the Chinese higher education are under researched (Zhou and Deneen, 2016). This is unlike numerous studies on assessment in higher education in the UK and in Australia, another important TNE destination (Shay, 2005, Royce Sadler, 2005, Royce Sadler, 2017, Yorke, 2011, Merry et al., 2013, Bloxham et al., 2016). Besides, assessment practices are dynamic and at an individual level, there is variation in the application of standards (Price, 2005). Typically, as mentioned in UK/China partnership programmes, tutors in the UK oversee and moderate assessments. Knowledge of the usual assessment practices of staff in the other location is useful and can result in better understanding between tutors. Tutors in the UK may be moderating work on partnership programmes in China with little or no knowledge of the assessment practices in Chinese higher education that can potentially lead to a lack of understanding and unnecessary conflict between tutors.

In a study of 17 award-winning English Language tutors in Chinese universities, tutors deliberately concealed standards and used a ‘high-praise and low-criticism approach’ in the classroom-based assessment (Zhou and Deneen, 2016, p.1152). Although this study is by no means representative, it is possible to compare practice between tutors in China and the expected practices in higher education institutions in the UK according to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance Assessment (QAA, 2018). Based on the findings of Zhou and Deneen’s study (2016) some similarities and differences in assessment practice can be identified. Variation amongst markers is a common feature in both locations (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison between findings in study by Zhou and Deneen (2016) and QAA (2018)

Based on study in China (Zhou and Deneen, 2016)	**Based on advice and guidance on assessment in the UK (QAA, 2018)**
Variation amongst participants	Variation amongst markers is implicit (QAA,2018) Variation in assessment - literature on assessment in higher education in the UK (Bloxham et al., 2016, Yorke, 2011)
Assessment criteria implicit	Assessment criteria explicit
Deliberate concealment of standards	Transparency of standards
Feedback - managing affect - high praise, low criticism - to encourage effort and improvement	Feedback - constructive and developmental Includes strengths and limitations
Feedback - no intent to justify	Feedback - justification of grades awarded

These differences are interesting but are to be expected. The teachers in Zhou and Deneen's study (2016) were from different institutions therefore, variation in assessment amongst teachers would be more likely (Ecclestone, 2001). Agreeing on grading within a module in one institution is not easy. A study in the UK investigating how module teams shared assessment standards found that agreeing standards, (interpretation of assessment criteria, evaluation and grading) often did not happen despite agreement amongst team members that this should happen (Price, 2005). This suggests that conversations, with colleagues, in the same institution are not commonplace. Price (2005) claims setting standards is generally not a shared practice. This would suggest that in a transnational context sharing assessment practices would be an uncommon and possibly new experience for tutors based in the UK. Moreover, different perspectives on the conception of teaching and learning influence teachers' attitudes to assessment (Merry et al., 2013, Bloxham et al., 2016). In transnational programmes, one would expect differing views on assessment practices.

It is however probable that tutors have experienced implicit/explicit criteria, hidden/transparent criteria, and different feedback practices as students at some point in their education. In the UK, assessment criteria used to be implicit and standards were not transparent (Ecclestone, 2001, O'Donovan, Price and Rust, 2004). The use of explicit criteria and the transparency of assessment standards are now expected and usual. Another difference in assessment practice appears to be feedback. There have been many discussions over what 'feedback' means and how it is understood (Boud and Falchikov, 2007, Royce Sadler, 2005 and Yorke, 2011). The differences in approach between the findings of the study in China and the UK guidance are less significant than whether feedback leads to future improvement and its impact on learning (Price et al., 2010, Boud and Molly, 2013). In the UK, the use of praise in feedback has changed over time. Praise has featured extensively in the feedback 'sandwich'. Managing affect is important because emotions are part of learning and feedback (Molloy, Borrell-Carrió and Epstein, 2013). Individual tutors' approaches may differ in the use of praise to manage affect depending on the type and form of assessment (Table 3). However, the form of praise and its fitness for purpose, students' understanding of feedback and its use resulting in reflection and above all action, is far more important than differences in approach.

A further difference is the justification of grading and feedback. Zhou and Deneen's study (2016) shows that there was no intention to justify marks in feedback. In the UK, tutors justify their decisions in awarding grades through comments and feedback to students (QAA, 2018). The feedback comments serve different purposes. They allow second markers or moderators to verify the application of the marking. Bloxham et al.,(2016 p. 479) in their study on reliability in marking, state that the time tutors spend disagreeing with each other, would be better spent reviewing the variation between each other's marks rather than pretending that there is a 'right' mark. They maintain that 'assessment decisions are so complex, intuitive and tacit that variability is inevitable.' (Bloxham et al., 2016 p. 479) which would suggest that the jusification of grading in feedback comments is necessary for moderators as well as students.

In the UK, the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) regulates assessment practices and in China, the HEEDC (Higher Education Evaluation Center). The justification of grades in transnational programmes is even more important because staff are accustomed to using different grading scales (Table 4).

Table 4: Comparison of grading scales in China and UK

Comparison of grading scales in China and UK			
China		**UK**	
85-100	Excellent	70-100	Excellent
75-84	Good	60-69	Very good
60-74	Satisfactory	50-59	Good
0-59	Fail	40-49	Pass
		0-39	Fail

Source: Adapted from Gu et al., 2019 World Education Services

The differences are more pronounced at the higher and lower end of the scales. In TNE partnerships, therefore justifications are necessary to show how the assessment criteria have been interpreted and applied by tutors. Eccelstone (2001, p.309) maintains that tutors have a 'mental model of quality' to which they succumb when adopting a new assessment procedure, which is relevant to partnership programmes. Therefore, in the context of this study, it would be reasonable to expect a greater degree of difficulty in agreeing grading where assessment beliefs and grading scales are already different. Understanding differences in pedagogic practices is essential for tutors teaching and assessing on transnational programmes.

2.11 Summary

In order to situate the experiences of tutors teaching and assessing in TNE partnership programmes I have provided an overview of transnational

education in the UK and China, and the research context of TNE collaborative provision. I have discussed the main areas that affect the experiences of tutors teaching and assessing in partnership programmes: building working relationships with staff in the other location, cultural influences, and understanding differences in pedagogic practices with a focus on assessment processes and practices.

I have argued that building working relationships with staff in the other location has received less attention than it warrants. Cultural influences are important when working across different cultures but they may mask a range of personal and contextual factors that affect staff experiences. In the literature and informally in conversations with colleagues, assessment processes and practices are common sites of tension on TNE partnership programmes. This is not surprising since in TNE partnership programmes tutors without exception are involved in assessment and/or moderation. However, literature on how tutors in both locations experience assessment processes and practices behind the scenes, besides the references to the frustration that some staff experience with grading.

I have discussed the appropriateness of theoretical frameworks such as Hofstede's dimensions of culture and Triandis et al's model for the study of diversity to investigate the experiences of tutors in TNE partnership programmes. I have argued for the relevance and potential usefulness of Bordogna's and Holliday's conceptual models in understanding tutors' experiences of teaching and assessing on TNE partnership progrogrames. Bordogna's fusion model provides an overview of the operational structure of a partnership programme while for the purposes of this study Holliday's Grammar of Culture provides a means of understanding tutors' perspectives and how they make sense of their experiences of teaching and assessing with staff in the other location.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces, and contains a discussion of the methodological approach and research design best suited to the research question and objectives as set out in Chapter 1. The qualitative design proposed to address the research question is justified. An overview of the research design follows; beginning with the epistemological and theoretical perspectives; an outline of the specific methods used; focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The validity procedures are discussed, followed by an overview and justification of the method used for data analysis. In addition, I discuss researcher bias and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with a brief overview.

3.2 Epistemological and Ontological Position

The epistemological stance adopted in this study was social constructivism based on the belief that individuals construe the realities in which they live and work (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). These multiple realities are constructed through dialogue with others (Ritchie *et al.*, 2014, Lincoln *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, 'different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon' (Crotty, 1998 p.9). Therefore, a social constructivist approach which is interested in how individuals make sense of their world: their social reality, was adopted (Robson and McCartan, 2015, Crotty, 1998). Hence, the research questions sought to generate understandings of the everyday experiences of tutors teaching and assessing on TNE partnership programmes managing modules and relationship building with staff in the other location.

3.3 Interpretive Methodology

In research adopting a qualitative approach, the focus is on how individuals interpret their experiences, construct their reality and make sense of their

experiences (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The researcher is the main instrument in data generation and analysis. The qualitative research design was an appropriate design based on the focus of the research and the research aim to gain insights into the experiences of tutors in UK/Chinese TNE partnership programmes. Tutors working transnationally are actively involved in making meaning of their context and their experiences are yet to be explored fully (Healey, 2017, Ding, 2018, Dai, 2018). The aim was to explore tutors' everyday experiences of teaching and assessing and interpret meanings.

3.4 Research Design

The research was a qualitative study to explore the experiences of TNE tutors teaching and assessing in partnership programmes by answering the following research questions:

- What are tutors' experiences of relationship building with staff in the other location?
- What are tutors' experiences of working transnationally (teaching and assessing) and the challenges they encounter?

Qualitative research generates detailed data providing insights into the perspectives of participants in a social setting. The aim of the study was to understand how tutors experience working in TNE partnerships and the meanings tutors attached to their experiences. The research questions lent themselves to qualitative interview data. While large-scale survey data provide useful information on people's backgrounds, behaviours, beliefs or attitudes, my interest lay in identifying the everyday experiences of tutors and their perspectives on teaching and assessing in a specific TNE context. Surveys, which test hypotheses, are not suited to generating in-depth opinions or perspectives on experiences (Gray, 2018). Interviews allow flexible questions and can generate perspectives not represented in survey data.

3.5 Ethical considerations - challenges and issues

Ethical practice is fundamental to good research. Researchers have responsibilities towards participants, the research community and to themselves to honour commitments. Before commencing the study, ethical approval was obtained from the UCL Institute of Education. The research was conducted following the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). Participants were provided with full information sheets and consent forms were completed (Appendix 2). An agreement to maintain confidentiality was established as a ground rule and in turn, a level of trust amongst the participants to express themselves freely. There was a debriefing session at the end of the focus group and the semi-structured interviews to allow for any further input. It was hoped that concerns or fears amongst participants were allayed with full information in advance outlining the purpose and value of the research and through diligence in the conduct before, during and after data generation. All personal data was stored and processed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA 1998). Participants were free to withdraw consent and opt not to participate at any stage. The issue of anonymity and confidentiality was discussed prior to participation. There was a possibility of anonymity being compromised because the participants are known to the Directors of International Affairs in their institutions, course managers and colleagues.

Three tutors who had agreed to be interviewed withdrew at the last minute. They were not required to explain their decision to withdraw however one of the participants cited English language competence as the reason. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions throughout the research process. Participants were anonymised in the analysis process. Audio recordings were stored securely online. Signed consent forms and notes from interviews were kept as part of fieldwork diaries in hard copy only. Personal and institutional identifiers other than location were removed from the transcripts. The audio files would be destroyed on completion of the EdD. The participants' names would not be identifiable in data storage, analysis or in research reports or publications.

Specific ethical dilemmas can arise from practitioner research and insider, and outsider research which are discussed in section 3.12.1. The identification of participants and sensitive data is a real dilemma for participants. Identification can have professional and personal repercussions on career trajectories, future involvement in research studies and working relationships with colleagues. Three participants sought further reassurance concerning confidentially and anonymity following the interviews, which I was able to provide. In addition, sharing the research with the participants and the wider research community is an important consideration. This involves considering how best to present the findings for the benefit of all the stakeholders. It simultaneously signals the end of this study (Tracy, 2010) but also the beginning of new conversation on the professional implications.

3.6 Research Context

Twenty-seven universities with TNE collaborative provision arrangements at HE institutions in the UK and China were contacted. Tutors from established TNE partnership programmes with Chinese institutions involving Chinese students travelling to the UK to complete their studies were invited to participate. Access to the sample was obtained through the researcher's network, professional bodies and direct contact with potential sites. The partnership programmes were chosen for ease of access and were not intended to be representative. The research sample consisted of 14 tutors from five higher education institutions (3 in the UK and 2 in China) working with staff in the other location assigned to the delivery of a module or course on partnership programmes.

3.7 Sampling Criteria

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants (Patton 2015, Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The basis for this selection was that partnership programmes are the most common form of TNE collaborative provision in the UK and currently an area of growth (Inge, 2018).The criterion used was to interview tutors who had more than two years' experience of teaching on TNE partnership programmes in the UK and China and who were currently

working or had recent experience. Tutors who had less than two years' experience of teaching on TNE partnership programmes were excluded. These tutors would have been adjusting to the role and their experiences might have been atypical.

3.8 Research Methods

There were two stages of data generation; exploratory focus groups followed by in-depth semi-structured interviews. Focus groups have been widely used in market research and more recently in social research and education settings (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). They widen the range of perspectives and views on common experiences through interaction. Participants can share and compare their experiences and in doing so reveal their feelings towards the topics discussed (Morgan, 1997). There are, however, challenges to facilitating and moderating focus groups not least arranging a suitable time. The group dynamics can be difficult to manage even if the participants are selected carefully.

3.8.1 Focus groups and semi-structured interviews

The purpose of the focus groups in this study was to use the data generated to inform and develop an interview guide for the second stage of data generation: semi-structured interviews. The data from the focus groups was not intended to be used as a source in its own right. Originally, the focus groups were planned to take place in both locations of the TNE partnership to generate data on tutors' experiences working transnationally. Including tutors from both locations was an important consideration. The focus groups would be useful in facilitating a discussion amongst a larger number of TNE tutors on their experiences of managing modules and their relationships with counterparts (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001). As stated previously in TNE research, there is an emphasis on one location and often the more dominant partner of the programme (Knight and Liu, 2017).

The aim of the focus groups therefore was to capture any relevant issues or factors which may have been missed or under/overstated based on the literature available. I decided not to conduct a mixed focus group with tutors from both locations. Apart from the logistical implications, some tutors might have felt inhibited sharing their experiences through a second or third language (Strickland, 1999). I assumed that tutors working in the same location would know each other, feel more comfortable in each other's company, which would facilitate discussion. Two focus group interviews with TNE module tutors were planned; one focus group located in the UK and the other in China. Six participants in each location agreed to participate (15 were invited). The ideal number is between six and 12 members (Krueger,1994). The second focus group in China was abandoned. Several attempts were made to conduct the focus group with tutors in China via videoconferencing and via a social media platform. Neither was successful due to technical issues.

Participants in the focus group in the UK were past and present tutors from a TNE partnership programme in my own institution (Table 5).

Table 5: Composition of focus group in UK institution

Focus group location – UK	
Number of participants	6 Current (4) Recent (2)
Educational background	UK (4) Non-UK (2)
More than 5 years' experience as TNE tutor	3
Less than 5 years' experience as TNE tutor	3
International experience as student and/or academic staff	
In Europe	5
In Asia	1

For the focus groups, it was not critical whether the tutors were currently involved in the programme. Most of the participants interacted at work while some also interacted socially. This was not problematic as the purpose of the focus group was exploratory and to inform the in-depth interviews. The focus group was held in a meeting room in keeping with the staged nature of focus groups. The questions were open in nature and were limited to six questions for the one-hour focus group (Krueger and Casey, 2009). None of the participants in the focus group were invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews for two reasons, firstly I wanted to avoid potential participants being influenced by the focus group discussion and I wanted to involve participants from other institutions with experience of partnership programmes.

3.8.2 Focus group interview

The first stage of the data generation was exploratory to inform the questions to be asked in the semi-structured interviews. I was seeking to probe individual and collective perspectives. The discussion was useful in generating and exploring understandings about the experiences of tutors in TNE partnerships (Cousin, 2009). The focus group allowed participants to give their own views in their own words although unlike a one to one interview, these might have been constrained by the presence of others (Hesse-Biber, 2017) and could be challenged by other participants. There was a danger that some participants dominated while others said very little or became observers. Therefore, in running the focus group I stressed at the outset that I wanted to hear a range of experiences and would invite views as necessary (Barbour, 2012). The focus groups served as a check on my own ideas and assumptions about what to probe in the semi-structured interviews.

The focus group interview guide was informed by the literature and my personal experience of TNE (Appendix 3). I was interested to find out which aspects of their experience they would prioritise and how the discussion would unfold since the group of participants located in the UK had a considerable range of experience (one to fifteen years). The participants

were invited to share their experience of TNE partnership: reflections on the experiences of working transnationally, teaching and/or assessing modules, their relationships with teaching staff in the other location and their overall experience of teaching on 3+1 and 2+2 TNE programmes. The first question was a general question inviting participants to describe their role to a newcomer followed by two open questions about successful and challenging experiences. The next question was about staff in the other location followed an invitation to reflection on how the role could be improved. In much the same way, which an interview is a '*co-operative activity'* (Gomm, 2008 p.225) the focus group conducted amongst colleagues can be viewed similarly.

The dynamics of the focus group and participants' positioning within the institution in the UK and in relation to their involvement in the partnership initially produced a measured and cautious discussion. The participants' exchanges developed and became more fluid with differing viewpoints emerging, as they became comfortable in each other's company. Representativeness and generalizability of the focus group was not an issue as the purpose was to use data to assist in developing an interview guide. The responses were particular to the focus group. The influence of the participants on each other could have affected reliability if I was seeking to find out the experiences of individuals. My aim was to access a range of experiences and for participants to share their experiences through discussion. The focus group therefore, served as a scoping exercise to generate a range of experiences in working teaching and relationship building (Robson and McCartan, 2015). Confidentiality was dependent on the research participants themselves. Anonymity was not an issue because unfortunately the recording failed.

I summarised the main points of the interview and discussed them with two of the participants to verify that the points summarised were an accurate reflection of the main areas of discussion: role and responsibilities of tutors (teaching and/or assessing), communication, working relationships, benefits of involvement in the programme and terminology (Appendix 4). Language issues were not mentioned. This was unexpected but on reflection, this seemed obvious. The TNE programme was well established and they were

comfortable with the English language competence of staff in the other location, which was not the case when the programme started.

3.8.3 Semi-structured interviews

The focus groups were followed by semi-structured interviews. Interviews involve close contact between the participants and the researcher. They allow participants to convey their experiences using their own words. Like focus groups, interviews are staged events (Kvale, 2007). They are a process of knowledge construction in which the researcher and the participants 'act in relation to each other and reciprocally influence each other' (Kvale, 2007, p.14). From a constructivist stance, the researcher is a 'traveller' rather than a 'miner'(Kvale, 1996). Whereas the 'miner' is extracting knowledge from the interviewee, the 'traveller' travels alongside the interviewee exploring his/her world co-constructing knowledge. In this sense, the nature of the knowledge produced is influenced by the researcher's positionality (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019). It is 'insider' research which is subjective and objective (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). The semi-structured interview provided structure and flexibility wherein key areas of interest were addressed and the conversation could develop and lead to related issues of importance to the interviewee. The interviewees conveyed factual information, opinions, motivations and reasoning to impart their interpretation and construction of reality (Patton, 2015). In this sense, the interview developed iteratively (Gibson and Brown, 2009), through questioning and probing the interviewees to generate data relevant to the research questions.

The participants for the semi-structured interviews were TNE tutors recruited from three partnership programmes at HE institutions in the UK and China. For the semi-structured interviews, a convenience sample of 24 TNE module tutors: an equal number based in the UK and China from four partnership programmes was planned. Unlike the participants for the focus groups all participants selected were involved in the partnership programme at the time of the interview or had recently retired. Fourteen participants from five higher education institutions were interviewed June 2018 -2019. The pilot interviews

were included in the main dataset. The face-face interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes (Table 6).

Table 6: Composition of interview participants

Tutors in UK				
Pseudonym	Educational background		Responsible for moderation	Responsible for teaching
	UK	Non-UK		
Robert +++	✓		✓	✓
Daniel +	✓		✓	
Eric +++		✓	✓	✓
Christopher +	✓		✓	
Alison +++	✓		✓	✓
Louise +++	✓		✓	
Emily +	✓		✓	
Sally +	✓		✓	
Francesca +	✓		✓	✓
Tutors in China				
Pseudonym	Educational background		Responsible for moderation	Responsible for teaching
	Chinese	Non - Chinese		
Zeming* +	✓			✓
Yutong +	✓			✓
Maidong ++	✓			✓
Anwen +		✓		✓
Xinran* ++	✓			✓

*Asynchronous interview by email

+Tutors on 3+1 programme

++ Tutors on 2+2 programme

+++ Tutors on 3+1 and 2+2 programme

The years of experience working on TNE programmes ranged from three years (Daniel) to over twenty (Louise, Luan, Yutong and Anwen).Educational background, which is more relevant for the purposes of this study, has been included, but not details of nationality. The information on nationality is not provided for two reasons, anonymity and secondly the use of nationality ignores the internal diversity that is present in all groupings (Cousin, 2009). Several tutors have experience of studying and/or working in different locations in Asia, Europe and Australasia (Appendix 5). The tutors in the UK work in a smaller specialist provider and two post 1992 higher education institutions. The tutors in the smaller specialist provider are delivering a 3+1 and a 2+2 TNE programme whereas the tutors in the post 1992 institutions are delivering 3+1 programmes. The tutors in the China work in a fourth tier university ranked 63rd and a university ranked 591st which are sometimes referred to as first division and second division institutions respectively. The tutors in the fourth tier university are delivering a 2+2 programme, whereas the other tutors are delivering a 3+1 programme.

3.9 Data generation process

The process of gaining access proved to be more difficult than anticipated. Negotiating access to tutors in China was through ‘guanxi’ relationships built on pre-existing relationships. Accessing tutors in the UK was much harder. Details about TNE partnership programmes do not feature prominently on higher education institutions’ websites. TNE programmes are often discipline specific and references to TNE programmes if present, buried in information about international activities. TNE branch campuses are far more visible in this respect (JISC, 2017). In addition, up-to-date information on TNE partnership programmes was not readily available.

Contacting potential participants was challenging. Admittedly, the pool of potential participants was narrowed by the search for tutors involved in

UK/China partnership programmes. Another explanation for the difficulty in negotiating access and the resulting limitations in the scope of the sampling could have been what Cui (2015, 2015, p.367) refers to as 'insider/outsider status position'. In this respect, I was an outsider. The competitive nature of international recruitment may account for the difficulty in locating current UK/China TNE partnership programmes.

3.9.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The second and main stage of the data generation were semi structured Interviews. The semi-structured interview guide was developed and refined following the focus group. The first part of the interview guide was structured to obtain demographic information. The interview guide was divided into three sections covering questions on teaching transnationally and to elicit views on their experiences of and suggestions for professional development (related to the second research question), working relationships (related to the first research question) and general questions on the partnership programme (Appendix 3). At the end of the interview, the participants were given an opportunity to expand on anything that we had covered and invited to make their own observations. The preferred mode of interviews was face to face and where this was not possible, interviews were conducted online via Skype or another suitable online platform. This was a practical solution agreed by the tutors. Two synchronous online interviews were conducted and two asynchronous interviews by email. For the asynchronous interviews, the interview questions were adapted, and emailed. On receipt of the responses, some follow-up questions were sent to gain more detail (Appendix 3). The main disadvantage of interview by email is meaning can be lost as the opportunity to probe and prompt during the interview is not available (Hesse-Biber, 2017). On the other hand, the responses may be more considered, and interview by e-mail may even welcomed by participants whose first language is not English and if these participants feel more confident in their writing ability.

3.9.2 Pilot interviews and interview guide development

The second phase of the study commenced with three pilot interviews (one tutor working in China and two in UK), to review the interview guide and to evaluate the interviewing technique (Robson and McCartan, 2015). After each interview, I made some changes to questions; for example, in the first interview with the tutor working in China I reviewed all the questions and shortened them. During the interview, the tutor checked her understanding of a question. I could not rely on other interviewees to ask for help as they might avoid doing so, not to lose face. After the interview, we discussed the questions and the length of the questions. She talked about the practice of gift giving in China and reflected on occasions where tutors both the giver and receiver had misinterpreted this practice and how this had affected their relationships. In this exchange, I noticed that the tutor used the third person to discuss this face-threatening topic (Cortazzi et al., 2011).
The tutors in the UK talked about the commitment of the staff in the other location and the impact of contractual arrangements on their work together. Therefore, the interpretation of gift giving was included in the revised interview guide. The issue of commitment and by implication, a sense of belonging to the partnership was probed through questions related to the question on how tutors thought that working transnationally has influenced their professional practice.

The interviews also prompted changes in interview technique. In the first interview, I adhered too closely to the interview guide almost using it as a script. This resulted in missed opportunities to probe. Some questions were too long and, on a few occasions, they were misunderstood. My concern for following the guide was mistaken and I realised that it was more likely that interviewees would discuss aspects in a different order and my role was first and foremost to listen, respond and probe while ensuring coverage of the key areas (Ritchie *et al.*, 2014). I was conscious that I spoke less in the final interview and asked for more examples resulting in richer information. Listening and flexibility were important. Moreover, by the third interview I was familiar with the areas that I wanted to cover. I needed to banish any desire to make connections and lead the interviewees to confirm my hunches

however well-founded (Mason, 2018). According to Seidman (2013) there are three levels of listening. Firstly, listening carefully to monitor the detail of the conversation and secondly listening to the inner voice. For the second level of listening, Seidman provides the example of the word ‘challenge’, which the interviewee may use. Behind this word, there is a difficult experience, which the interviewer needs to probe further. In the pilot interview, a word that was used frequently was ‘culture’ therefore, it was important to notice and question the language choices made by interviewees and probe for examples. Finally, the third level which refers to the progress of the interview in terms of timing, content and responding to both verbal and nonverbal cues.

After concluding the final pilot interview I realised that during the planning of the interviews I had not considered the emotional effect on interviewees in recounting their experiences and how I would respond as an insider (Mercer, 2007). My professional relationship with the interviewees had influenced the interviews. The tutor working in China was a former student while one of the UK tutors was a longstanding colleague with considerable experience. In subsequent interviews I consciously started to build up rapport with the interviewees through my first contact and immediately prior to the interview. The week before the scheduled interviews, the participants were contacted by e-mail and informed of the general areas of discussion such as their experiences of working transnationally, and relationship building. The advantage of this approach was that it focussed participants on relevant aspects of the topic and allowed them to consider what they felt was most important to relate. The aim was to hear and understand tutors’ perspectives. Questions were also included on additional points that emerged from the focus group discussion. The participants in the focus group agreed that working with two differing academic calendars was problematic and that in their opinion it was a major barrier in working transnationally and building relationships.

A further consideration was the language in which to conduct the interviews. Cross-cultural research brings particular challenges. The research was conducted in English, which had the potential to pose difficulties in data

generation and analysis. In research contexts it has been found that participants using a second language in interviews usually need more time to think and respond (Cortazzi et al., 2011). The input of staff in China was important and necessary as there is a lack of research from the perspective of staff in the other location (Hu and Willis, 2017). For this reason, the length of the interviews varied and I was careful to allow more time for responses. At the end of the interview with staff whose first language was not English I discussed the language choice with the participants for their perspectives (Cortazzi, Pilcher and Jin, 2011). It was not possible for me to conduct the interviews in the participants' first language. If somebody else had conducted the interviews, this would have added another layer of interpretation.

In addition, it is acknowledged that the data generated through second language interviews may be qualitatively different from first language interviews (Cortazzi, Pilcher and Jin, 2011). Nevertheless, it was important to present this data and outline the measures taken to minimise potential problems in the generation and analysis. Examples of the intended measures included allowing for more time, using third person reference to issues, which will not result in loss of face or miàn zi (面子), and allowing the use of translation devices on phones where a Chinese mandarin speaker was not be present to assist. It was to check interpretations with a Chinese mandarin speaker to ensure that what was said in English was not given greater prominence than it afforded leading to misinterpretation. I was aware and sensitive to this type of scenario as a linguist and as a bilingual speaker with experience of different cultural contexts, although I am not a Chinese mandarin speaker.

3.10 Data Analysis Process and thematic coding

The data analysis was conducted alongside the data generation. The asynchronous interviews by email were treated in the same way as the face-to face interviews. Following each interview prior to the transcription of the interviews a summary of the key points was made. The recorded interviews were transcribed manually. This allowed me to immerse myself thoroughly in the data. The analysis began during the data generation and continued

throughout the research process. Following transcription the data from the interviews was organised using thematic analysis by coding the transcribed text on paper.

Thematic analysis has its origin in the positivist tradition and Howard Becker. Themes are ‘are recurrent and distinctive features of participants’ accounts, characterising particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question’ (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019, p.200). In addition, a theme ‘may be identified at the manifest level (directly observable in the information) or at a latent level(underlying the phenomenon)’(Boyatzis, 1998, p.vii). A code is a category that is used to describe the commonality within a data set (Gibson and Brown, 2009). A three-stage process, descriptive coding, interpretative coding and defining overarching themes resulting in a diagram representing relationships between levels of coding in the analysis was used to analyse the insights into module tutors’ experiences (Table 7).

Table 7: adapted from Stages in the process of thematic analysis (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019, p.204)

Stage 1: Descrptive coding Read through transcript. Highlight relevant material and add brief comments. Define descriptive codes. Read each transcript and refine descriptive codes.
Stage 2: Interpretative coding Cluster descriptive codes - code family or representative code. Interpret meaning of clusters in relation to research question. Apply interpretive codes to full data set.
Stage 3: Overarching themes Select key themes from data set and relate to literature. Draw diagram to represent relationships between levels of coding in the analysis.

These stages correspond to examining commonality, differences and relationships (Gibson and Brown, 2009). The approach was inductive. The

empirical codes were generated from the data and informed by the literature and the theoretical models discussed in Chapter 2: academic work, working relationships and communication. Although the process of thematic analysis is presented as a linear process, the data analysis was recursive (Braun and Clarke, 2006). An example of the descriptive and interpretative codes early in the data coding process were organizational culture, academic staff, staff in the other location, academic work, relationships, perceptions and feelings (Table 8).

Table 8: Example of initial coding process leading to themes

Stage 1 **Descriptive coding**	**Stage 2** **Interpretative coding**	**Stage 3** **Theme**
Communication Methods of contact Quality and quantity Academic calendar Time zones Contractual arrangements Lack of face to face meetings Little professional and personal information shared Frequent face to face meetings Shared research interests	Barriers to communication Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with communication Impoverished relationships Enhanced relationships	**Relationship building**
Assessment Gift giving English language competency Quality and quantity Academic calendar Time zones	Assignment, feedback, moderation, grading Misunderstandings arising from cultural differences and language Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with communication Effect on experiences of	**Experiences and challenges**

Contractual arrangements Tutor roles Organizational culture	completing responsibilities Differing expectations of roles Differences in organizational culture and impact on experience	

These codes were interpreted in relation to the research questions for example, what are tutors' experiences of relationship building with staff in the other location? (Figure 7) and what are tutors' experiences of working transnationally and the challenges they encounter? (Figure 8).

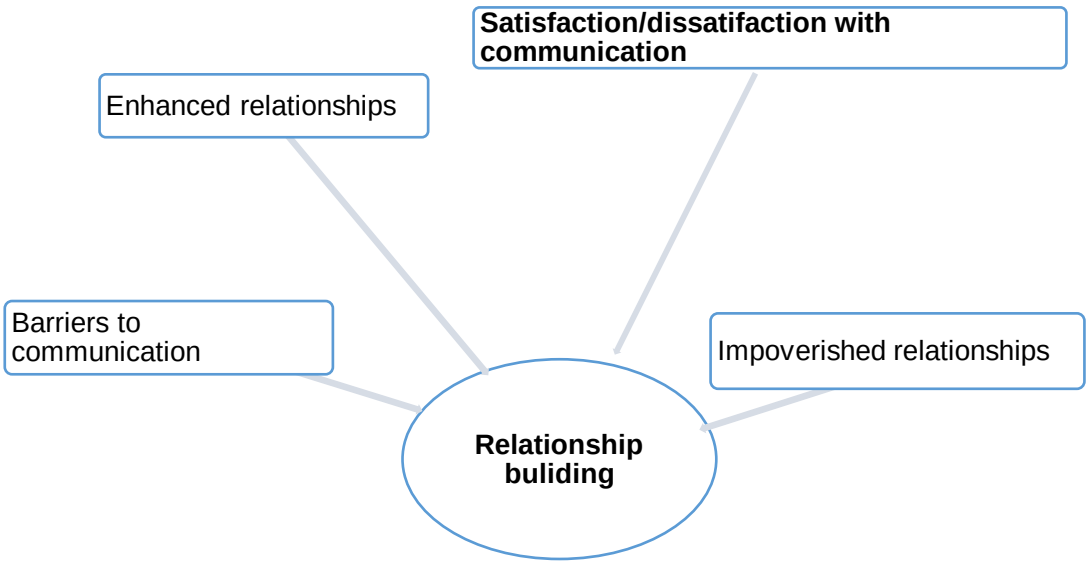

Figure 7: Example of codes in relation to the first research question

Figure 8: Example of codes in relation to the second research question

During the data analysis, notes or memos were written documenting ideas and reflections on the data and the ongoing analysis (Table 9). The themes were reviewed in relation to the coded extracts and the data set to arrive at clear definitions for each theme.

Table 9: Example of the development of codes – theme with quotations and commentary linked to the first and second research question

Building working relationships with staff in the other location	**Quotations**
Link to relationship building	The situation has driven me **crazy** at times and I've really not enjoyed it but I think that's partly not kind of embracing it if you like and saying that this is something that can actually be for me. Its turning it around. Compares the programme to knowledge of other partnerships in which they have greater control and feels that students are disadvantaged because tutor in China is not updating material. I'm trying and I suppose my role in going out there is trying to bridge the gap a little bit, a lot of it is out of date. **It never changes from year to year** (P1, page 25)
Establishing working relationship with tutor	You are sent an e-mail with your link tutor (module tutor in China). You've already been told in the workload plan by the team here.
Tutors in China expecting more support	Nothing at all (about who you are working with). Introduced herself – no information about counterpart (P3, page 3).
Desire for improved cooperation - reference to pond suggests that relationships are far from ideal	Sometimes people **are not so happy** with their link tutor (module tutor in the UK) and maybe the tutor (in the UK) not give enough support or something like that.(P1,page 26)
Working relationship with tutor	Talking about request for closer collaboration between tutors. We (tutors in China) are far too busy to do these sorts of things. So if that comes from X **on that side of the pond** - what can we do as a module leader here? They've got to want to do it (P2, page 29).
Negative effect on relationship	Yes, it is one way because you're(module tutor in UK) giving and trying your best but they(tutors in China) are not giving anything back in return and you think to yourself – here we go again. I've got to chase for an exam paper (P3, page 32).
Cannot see a way forward in their relationship	Talking about the start of term. **You're (tutor in UK) banging your head against brick walls**. **All you can do is try**
Awareness of what happens in the other	

location and tutor's role	(P3, page,8) I think sometimes it is not obvious to us (tutors in China) what is being done over there (in China).
Difficulties in carrying out responsibilities	But I don't think he (tutor in China) truly understands what the process is because and it's not we are the ones that get all the forms submission. it's not him submitting the forms really the exams forms its me as a link tutor so all he's got to do is get an exam paper to me and then not think about the rest of it.
Tutor's attempt to support tutor in China	So I have tried to explain the process in situations but its sometimes it is just a case of I just need to get you to submit an exam. Sometimes I end up I mean this year he refused to change a question and eventually
How tutor in China prefers to discuss issues	I mean I gave him (tutor in China) a lot of feedback because I mean if you saw some of the emails. Some of the emails, mini dissertations they were very long but to give him information about how to do things (P3, page 6). In the Chinese way sometimes we will have a lunch meeting and we sit around the table and we can talk about some issues in the programme during eating (P2, page 32)
Perspective on working relationship	I mean I gave him (tutor in China) a lot of feedback because I mean if you saw some of the emails. Some of the emails, mini dissertations they were very long but to give him information about how to do things. It's not a priority and I(tutor in China) get that he's employed by another university then he has lots of other commitments…..so I see this as being kind of further down the pecking order but generally speaking I'm the one that makes contact to make sure that things are in place or to chase about exams …… I don't think my the person (tutor based in

Face to face meeting	China) I interact with directly in that module. I think it's sort of I'll do what I need to do and I'm not going to put any effort into making any changes to it and I think it needs to updated(P3, page 6).
Misunderstandings? Cultural? Differing views on pedagogy?	UK tutor has been to China twice. Asked if it had made a difference to their working relationship. Yes, in some ways but I think that from a personal level we do actually get on very well. But, does it change the way that he works in the module? I don't think that it has made a difference at all (P1, page 9).
Professional and personal information about staff in other location	Talks about her experience in other parts of the world. Our staff (tutors in China) need to be trained about how English staff think and also the English lecturers not so understand what the features of the Chinese culture and the feature of the Chinese students so we(tutors in China) need to explain what they like (P2, page 35).
Language issue? Misunderstanding of process	Talking about personal information. But I never asked because I was never 100% sure because of the culture they would feel that I was being intrusive into their lives (P3, page 3).
Impact of time on what needs to be done	Understanding e-mail correspondence. Yes, he(module tutor in China) definitely misinterprets comments I make on things like exam papers because we invariably have a lot of back and forth on the exams and I will make a comment and I am quite careful how I phrase things in terms of the way, the approach that I take but sometimes even in doing that you make a statement if he doesn't understand then it becomes a bit of an argument about what you mean – a total misinterpretation of what I have said and then it becomes a defensive comment so again its challenging (P1, page 18)

	Talking about time to discuss issues. No particularly not if most of your time is spent chasing for things and trying to edit exams and you know there isn't a lot of time and to actually have meaningful conversations about the why – why have I given this back to you (P1, page 22).

Experiences and challenges of teaching and/or moderating with staff in the other location	**Quotations**
Grading difficulties	I think the **biggest challenge** for me has been the marking and the allocation of marks to pieces of work and getting the module leader to mark at an appropriate level. Situation where students had same input in terms of explanation of the criteria and tutorials and yet, 'the marks were unbelievably high' (P1, page4).
Perspectives of tutors in China on assessment	The assignment and maybe we (tutors in China) do not agree on the format, the assignment our partner (tutor in UK) suggests or maybe after marking of students they(tutors in the UK) not agree with marks or something like that. They (tutors in China) have their way of marking and teaching and something like assessment design and it's very difficult for them to understand the programme. They (tutors in China) can read the criteria.
Differing views on assessment	They (tutors in China) may have different thoughts and this is why there are some discrepancies, differences between the

Difficulties with grading **Perspectives of tutors in UK on assessment**	marks and this is a huge problem (P2, page, 30-33). We (with the tutor in the UK) will have a discussion and communication and normally they (tutor in the UK) will understand and we will get agreed mark. Maybe I put up a little bit or draw down a little bit or something like that but for some staff they send their results over and the staff here not also agree and our staff say I have reasons for that and not listen to that and not agree with that idea and something like that. They (tutors in the UK) never agree on the marks so they are looking for the third marker to remark all the pieces of work (P2, page34). I sit and I look at it and I think how did you(tutor in China) get this mark but sometimes you see I'm convinced that they mark the wrong things. But it's hard to work out how they (tutors in China) have achieved the marks (P3, page 19). Talking about feedback on assignments. Yes, I think there is a lack of understanding of the process. There's a I've got to get these marks and get them back because there is a deadline (P1, page, 19). I would have loved in 8 years to have seen a lecturer (tutor in China) somewhere over there give feedback (P3, page 18).

The factors that contributed to positive and negative experiences in working relationships were identified through this process. I considered these factors in relation to the literature and conceptual models. Similarly, I reflected on the factors contributing to experiences and challenges of tutors teaching and/or assessing.

3.11 Ensuring trustworthiness in the study

There has been much discussion on how to ensure trustworthiness or validity in qualitative studies. Qualitative research is subjective from the research proposal to decisions made in the research design, how the research was conducted through to the presentation of the findings, which are, constructed realities based on the perspectives of the participants. In constructivist

research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that trustworthiness is established through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. However, Tracy (2010) contends that these criteria are not sufficiently flexible to accommodate the range of studies that adopt qualitative approaches, and that the end goal of studies should be included. She proposes eight criteria for quality in qualitative research: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical and meaningful coherence. I understand sincerity to correspond to authenticity in the analysis and interpretation of the data (Gray, 2017). As argued by Tracy (2010, p.849) being 'truthful with ourselves and our readers' is essential to quality in qualitative research resulting in research integrity (Dörnyei, 2007). Thus, the researcher as the research instrument generates trustworthiness through rigour in the research process. To ensure trustworthiness I kept an audit trail and provided sufficient detail to contextualize the study. I member checked following the focus group discussion, I discussed my summary with two of the semi-structured interviewees and invited other interviewees to comment on the discussion and any other issues. I sought clarification on some details in the interviews and asked further questions and examples where necessary. I identified potential researcher bias (section 3.12). In addition, I discussed the interpretations of findings informally with colleagues to check my understandings.

3.12 Practitioner research and reflexivity

Validity or authencity of interpretations is part of reflexivity and is an important consideration in qualitative research. My understanding of reflexivity is an ongoing critical and thoughtful questioning of my actions as a researcher. This relates to my positionality and the way in which I interpret the data. An example from the data analysis illustrates this point clearly. This was Alison's response to a question about prior international experience:

> I think the biggest challenge is understanding the differences in culture and I don't think that is something I had a lot of experience with specifically about China. I've worked with lots of people from other countries ….. Everybody is from somewhere else. Had I known a bit more about culture in China maybe things might have been different.

Alison talks about ‘differences in culture’ in the first sentence and ‘culture’ in the final sentence. If I take ‘differences in culture’ and ‘understanding the differences in culture’ – even in the context of this exchange which was talking about the tutor’s role in partnership programmes does not help. There are two difficulties when analysing this, firstly, the meaning of ‘culture’ and secondly, is there a difference in the ‘culture’ in the first and final sentence. My interpretation on reading this excerpt was that when she said ‘understanding the difference in culture’ she was referring to the differences relating to pedagogy whereas ‘culture in China’ was ‘culture’ in general. Therefore, data analysis is not straightforward. Eric also mentioned ‘culture’:

> It is very important that tutors (in UK) understand the culture of the country we are collaborating with and the students and the staff (in China) because some things that seem normal to us in Europe they are very weird in China or the opposite.

On this occasion I was able to confirm what he meant by culture: behaviour, values, and assumptions. This is not always possible. Interpretations vary and the intended emphasis may not be understood by the researcher.

Mason (2018) advocates active reflexivity throughout the research process as the mark of good qualitative research. Participants were invited to share their experiences of working as TNE tutors. It is not possible to separate ourselves from who we are, what we know and how we understand the world (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). My heritage is East European and my educational background is British. My professional background is mainly in foreign language study. I have been directly involved in partnership programmes for more than 15 years. This understanding of the context, on the one hand, enhanced my awareness of the challenges faced by tutors, while on the other hand, demanded meticulousness in the generation and interpretation of tutors’ accounts of their experiences. Throughout the research study, I reflected on and examined how my biases, values and personal background shaped my interpretations of the tutors’ experiences. I noted my reflections during the research process as an audit trail not only to record my decision-making but also to understand my own thought processes and perceptions.

One of the research sites was my own institution. An unavoidable feature of insider/practitioner research is that it affects the process of data generation

and analysis (Mercer, 2007, Drake, 2010). My personal relations with the participants and my professional experience of the issues and expectations of the findings would result in insider role conflict. Furthermore, participants might have tempered their viewpoints and even withheld information depending on the perceptions and understandings of their contexts and in response to my role as the researcher. Indeed, one of the participants confirmed that they had withheld information. I was surprised by this admission as I experienced the interview as being frank and open. I reflected on the interviews and their limitations not only in terms of selecting and withholding information but also in downplaying and overemphasising aspects of the tutors' experiences.

3.12.1 Insider and Outsider Research

In the case of the focus group in my own institution, I believe that my professional relationship with my colleagues was beneficial. It allowed me to recruit willing participants at short notice when work commitments prevented other colleagues from participating. The participants were colleagues and this relationship therefore affected the interactions. As an insider, in the focus group at my own institution I had an awareness of the formal and informal hierarchies that may affect groups (Krueger, 1994). I discussed this with other colleagues prior to recruiting participants. My concern was justified but unavoidable since the positionality of participants and the researcher influence the research process (Drake, 2010). Mercer (2007 p.7) recognises the strengths of involving colleagues in research and raises what she refers to as 'delicate dilemmas' of insider research namely informant bias, interview reciprocity and research ethics. These dilemmas can be problematic. The participants in the focus group undoubtedly had a view on my stance. During the discussion, one participant asked for my thoughts about an issue and the exchanges between participants, which initially felt more like a formalised version of an everyday discussion on pedagogy, became a free-flowing conversation with occasional probes. The focus group prompted discussion and drew attention to differing experiences. Their experiences were illuminating for example 'frustrating', no mention of language issues, 'hospitality' 'able to discuss issues openly' 'relationship built over years'. My

interest was in exploring the experiences with examples, focussing on working relationships and in this respect the focus group was successful.

However, the real danger with insider research is that familiarity with the context can lead to making false assumptions, relating the experiences of participants to one's own experiences and misinterpreting data. This is precisely where reflexivity and the ongoing inner conversation are important to guard against making assumptions that cannot be justified and introducing bias.

3.13 Possible limitations of methodological approach

All methodological approaches have limitations. In this study, the advantages outweigh the limitations. Interviews can provide detailed accounts; however, transcription is a form of representation of the interview in text and is not neutral (Gibson and Brown, 2009). Returning to Kvale's metaphor of the 'traveller' who travels alongside the interviewee exploring his/her world co-constructing knowledge (Kvale, 1996) the traveller's account of the experience is subjective. Subjectivity is a resource but without reflexivity can result in misinterpretation or over interpretation. The transcription is a research construct, transformed from one medium to another (Jenks, 2018). The accounts of experiences are versions of somebody else's version of reality. It is the positionality of the researcher and thoroughness in data generation as understood by the reader that validates the representation made by the researcher as a credible account of the interviewees' reality.

3.14 Summary

To summarise, this chapter has explored the methodological approach adopted in this study and justified why a qualitative social constructivist stance was considered the most appropriate for this exploratory study. I have discussed trustworthiness and explained the rationale for the research design and choice of sample. Despite the existence of 254 programmes between the UK and China (2017), identifying participants was more challenging than anticipated and required compromises.

I have discussed the ethical considerations, the research process, data anaylsis, and practitioner research and reflexivity. Insider research on balance is advantageous. I made sure that the experiences of staff in the other location were included and where it was not possible to conduct asynchronous interviews, the participants agreed to email interviews.

I ensured that the participants whose first language was not English had adequate opportunities to seek clarification and equally I arranged to contact them again to check that I had understood correctly. Finally, I discussed the limitations of the methodological approach. The following chapter presents the findings under two main themes: working relationships with staff in the other location and differing views of pedagogic views.

Chapter 4: Building working relationships with staff in the other location

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of two findings chapters discussing the responses made in the interviews. The focus of this study was to gain insights into the experiences of tutors teaching and assessing in TNE partnership programmes in the UK and China:

- tutors' experiences of relationship building with staff in the other location
- tutors' experiences of teaching and assessing and the challenges tutors encounter

The data provided detailed accounts of how tutors in both locations experience transnational work. Working relationships with tutors in the other location is discussed in this chapter. The two main themes working relationships between tutors and differing views of pedagogic practices themes overlap to some extent with the quality of communication acting as an enabler and a barrier to the development of positive experiences of teaching and dealing with challenges arising from differing views of pedagogic practices.

Tutors have a tendency to cite different educational and cultural backgrounds, organizational culture and national culture when challenging situations arise or where tutors experience unsatisfactory working relationships. It appears that those tutors who have experience of international study or work are better able to build good working relationships. This does not mean that they do not experience disagreements and conflict; however, they appear to be better able to resolve issues amicably and find acceptable solutions.

The quality of communication with staff in the other location and tutors' skills in negotiating intercultural communication are important (Killick, 2018). As discussed in chapter two, Holliday defines small culture formation as, 'the

everyday business of engaging with and creating culture'(Holliday, 2013, p.13) defines culture as 'whatever you see around you wherever you look…..when you draw a conceptual line around what you see' (Holliday, 2015). In small culture formation, tutors who were able to negotiate intercultural communication were able to make connections through threads of experience that they created over time through their interactions. They were able to work through issues. Other tutors struggled to draw on threads of experience to connect with staff in the other location. These tutors experienced blocks and tended to attribute their difficulties to staff in the other location, organizational culture and/or national culture.

Conflict and disagreements are common to working relationships. The trigger may be a personality or cultural clash but disagreements can be caused by a range of factors such as different working styles, past issues, unequal relationships and unmet expectations. Some tutors appear not to anticipate or be prepared to deal with the challenges they are likely to encounter such as agreeing grading within a module. The findings suggest that investing time in getting to know staff in the other location is particularly helpful in not only managing disagreements constructively, but also more importantly in building good working relationships, which sustain partnership programmes.

4.1.1 Tutors' contractual arrangements and activities

Before discussing the themes, it is useful to provide some information about the participants, their contractual arrangements, where this is known, and their responsibilities. As discussed in chapter 3, fourteen tutors from five universities (three in the UK and two in China) were interviewed using the discussion guide in (Appendix 3). The names of the participants are pseudonyms (Table 10).

Table 10: Tutors' contractual arrangements and activities

Tutors in UK					
		Tutor in other location:		Responsible for:	
Pseudonym	Fulltime	fulltime	paid by hour	moderation	teaching
Robert	✓		✓	✓	✓
Daniel	✓	*		✓	
Eric	✓		✓	✓	✓
Christopher	✓		✓	✓	
Alison	✓		✓	✓	✓
Louise	✓		✓	✓	
Emily	✓	*		✓	
Sally	✓	*		✓	
Francesca	✓	✓		✓	✓
Tutors in China					
Zeming	Part time		✓		✓
Yutong	✓	✓			✓
Maidong	✓	✓			✓
Anwen	✓	✓			✓
Xinran	✓	✓			✓

*Tutor is unaware of tutor's contractual arrangement in China

The tutors are fulltime except for one (Zeming), while six of the tutors' partners in China are on hourly paid teaching contracts. Four of the tutors in the UK teach and moderate while the tutors in China teach but do not have a moderating role. Eleven tutors had experience of working with more than one tutor in the other location. This was because the tutor in the other location had left or they had been assigned to a different module. Three tutors had only experienced' working with one tutor in the other location. Two tutors are

not nationals of the country in which they are working (Eric in the UK and Anwen in China) and two other tutors have not visited staff in the other location (Daniel in the UK and Xinran in China). Several tutors had experience of studying and/or working in different locations in Asia, Europe and Australasia (Appendix 5).

In the TNE 3+1 and 2+2 partnership programmes, tutors are responsible for the teaching, assessment and moderation of modules in China during the first two or three years of the programme. This requires tutors in the UK and China to work together for a minimum period of one year. The tutors interviewed had between two and fifteen years ‘experience working transnationally. They are working at a distance with other staff in higher education institutions that differ from their own and are paired with tutors whose contractual arrangements differ. It is important to bear in mind that the tutors interviewed are not representative of other tutors working on partnership programmes in the UK or China. In TNE partnership programmes, there are differences in the educational and cultural background and experience of tutors undertaking this work depending on the TNE arrangement.

TNE partnership programmes are a type of collaborative provision. In the interviews when the tutors talk about their ‘partner’ they are referring to the member of staff with whom they work most closely in the other location either in the UK or in China. The word ‘partner’ usually means engaged in the same activity. This is correct with reference to the delivery of a specific module. The responsibilities of the partner tutors differ (Table 9). The tutors were asked a range of questions to describe and reflect on their working relationship with the staff in the other location: their experiences of working transnationally, teaching and/or assessing modules and the challenges they experienced and their views on professional development.

4.1.2 Research questions and theoretical perspectives

The aim of the research therefore was to investigate the experiences of tutors working transnationally in partnership programmes between the UK and China: tutors’ experiences of relationship building, teaching and

assessing, and the implications for professional development of staff working transnationally through answering the research questions (Chapter 1, p.22). In order to answer the first two research questions, I draw on the theoretical perspectives of Bordogna's fusion model (2018) and Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2015). The implications for professional development are discussed in Chapter 6 based on the discussions on tutors' experiences of building relationships and teaching and assessing in chapters four and five. I begin by explaining how the theoretical perspectives of Bordogna's fusion model (2018) and Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2015) assist in researching the experiences of TNE tutors and addressing the research questions. I use Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2016), a later version, to analyse the experiences of tutors teaching in TNE partnerships.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Bordogna's fusion model provides an overview of the operational structure of a partnership programme and is a good reference point to locate the activity of TNE tutors. Even though Bordogna's fusion model (Chapter 2) comprises of two interacting activity systems I have chosen to add a summary of the key findings to one activity system for the sake of simplicity (Figure 9).

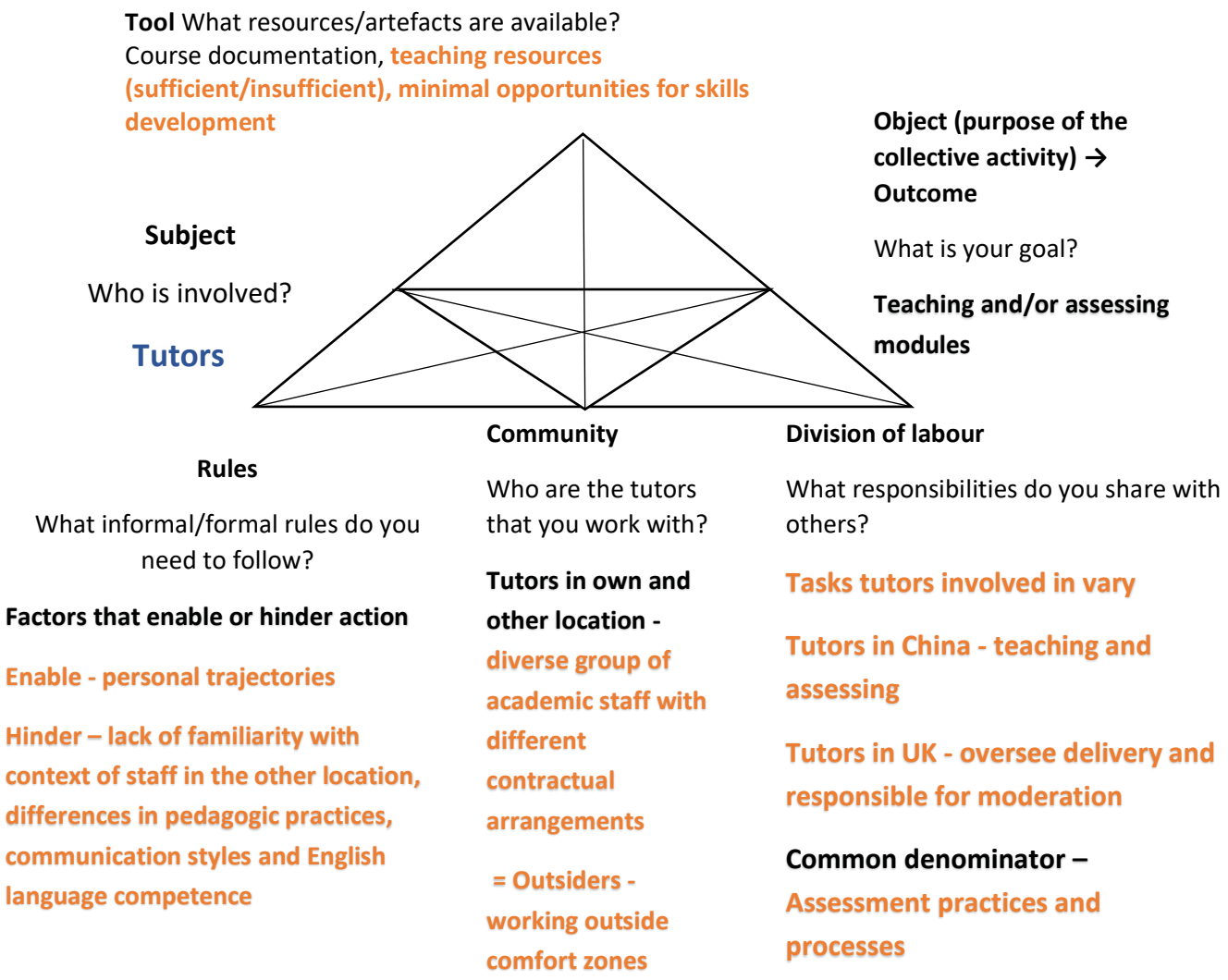

Figure 9: TNE tutors' activity adapted from Activity system (Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamaki, 1999)

In Bordogna's fusion model (2018), the two activity systems would overlap with the dominant partner uppermost and larger in size. It is useful, as staff not involved in transnational work teaching and/or assessing modules, may not understand how 3+1 2+2 partnerships operate at programme level. Representations sacrifice detail however, this is an acceptable starting point and assists readers in understanding this specific context of TNE as there are different modes of delivery (Appendix 1). In the UK, there may be little if any visibility within higher education institutions beyond the presentation of grades at Subject Boards and documentation relating to International strategies. The activity is complicated by TNE tutors in China being a transient workforce (Wilkins, 2018, Ding, 2018). Tutors have different

contractual arrangements with many tutors in China having short-term teaching only contracts. Tutors in the UK tend to be assigned to this role on a needs basis often as an additional role rather than through choice (Smith, 2017, Bordogna, 2018). The contractual arrangements and the roles and responsibilities that tutors have in their own institutions do not mirror those of staff in the other location and in most cases are not comparable.

Holliday states his Grammar of Culture 'represents loose relationships … in which individuals have the potential to act and negotiate the structures of their societies' (Holliday, 2014, p.1). The Grammar of Culture provides a means of making sense of the experiences of TNE tutors and their work with staff in the other location. It acknowledges not only the immediate context of the TNE programme as represented in Bordogna's fusion model (2018), but also the influence of the wider context of society and its particular social and political structures as tutors experience and negotiate intercultural communication. The theoretical perspective of Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2016) was helpful in understanding the range of experiences discussed by the tutors in both locations. I have not used the other two theoretical frameworks from Bordogna's fusion model namely CHAT and SAT choosing to apply Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2016) instead. CHAT would have been useful if I was conducting a longitudinal study of partnership programmes. I have not completely rejected SAT; instead, I have chosen another conceptual model, which is based on SAT. Holliday's Grammar of Culture conceptual model of intercultural communication adds a different dimension to the zone of social action that is represented in the centre of Bordogna's fusion model in Chapter 2 p. 56 (Bordogna, 2018). I believe Holliday's conceptual model to be more appropriate since it is closely aligned to a non-essentialist view of culture.

TNE tutors' interactions are intercultural events or encounters. These events characterise the work of tutors outside the classroom behind the scenes. However, Holliday's Grammar of Culture is about locations of social actions rather than the place or setting. It is the work group as a location of social action rather than the fact that the social action takes place in the UK or China. The Grammar of Culture is an invention, an imagined map and not a

true representation of a particular setting (Holliday, 2018b). Holliday affirms that individuals are constantly negotiating social structures and managing who they are. In this respect, I would argue that TNE tutors, whether they visit staff in the other location or not, are intercultural travellers making sense of each other's realities in the course of their work of teaching and/or assessing through intercultural communication. I use the domains of underlying universal cultural processes, particular social and political structures, and particular cultural products from the Grammar of Culture to interpret TNE tutors' experiences of working transnationally, teaching and /or assessing modules with staff in the other location.

It is important to stress that Holliday firmly rejects the application of the idea of small culture formation for educational ends rather it enables us to 'cautiously read intercultural events'(Holliday, 2018a, p.2). Moreover, he distances himself from the idea of Communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Holliday's argument is that small culture formation is everywhere and that it is transient and full of conflict as explained in chapter two. The TNE tutors in this study although they have a shared goal in the delivery and management of modules through teaching and/or assessing , do not function as communities of practice. I would argue that based on the interviews, the encounters between tutors, have more in common with small cultures: individuals who interact than communities of practice in which many individuals interact and learn together (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Tutors are trying to work out how to act consciously or unconsciously to complete the tasks for which they are responsible.

TNE tutors are a diverse group of individuals thrown together making sense of what is happening, trying to work out why the staff in the other location are behaving in a particular way and how they should respond. The encounters they have ,whether face-to face or virtual, fit Holliday's definition of small culture formation, 'the everyday business of engaging with and creating culture'(Holliday, 2013, p.13). Tutors' encounters or intercultural events which are part of daily work activities including small cultures such as family and all other groups and institutions in which individuals interact. Therefore, in order to answer the research questions, I used Holliday's Grammar of

Culture to gain insights into tutors' experiences of relationship building and teaching and assessing. In this respect, this Holliday's Grammar of Culture provided a useful theoretical lens. Following data analysis, I have adapted the model to produce a simplified version based on the experiences of the tutors in this study (Figure 10).

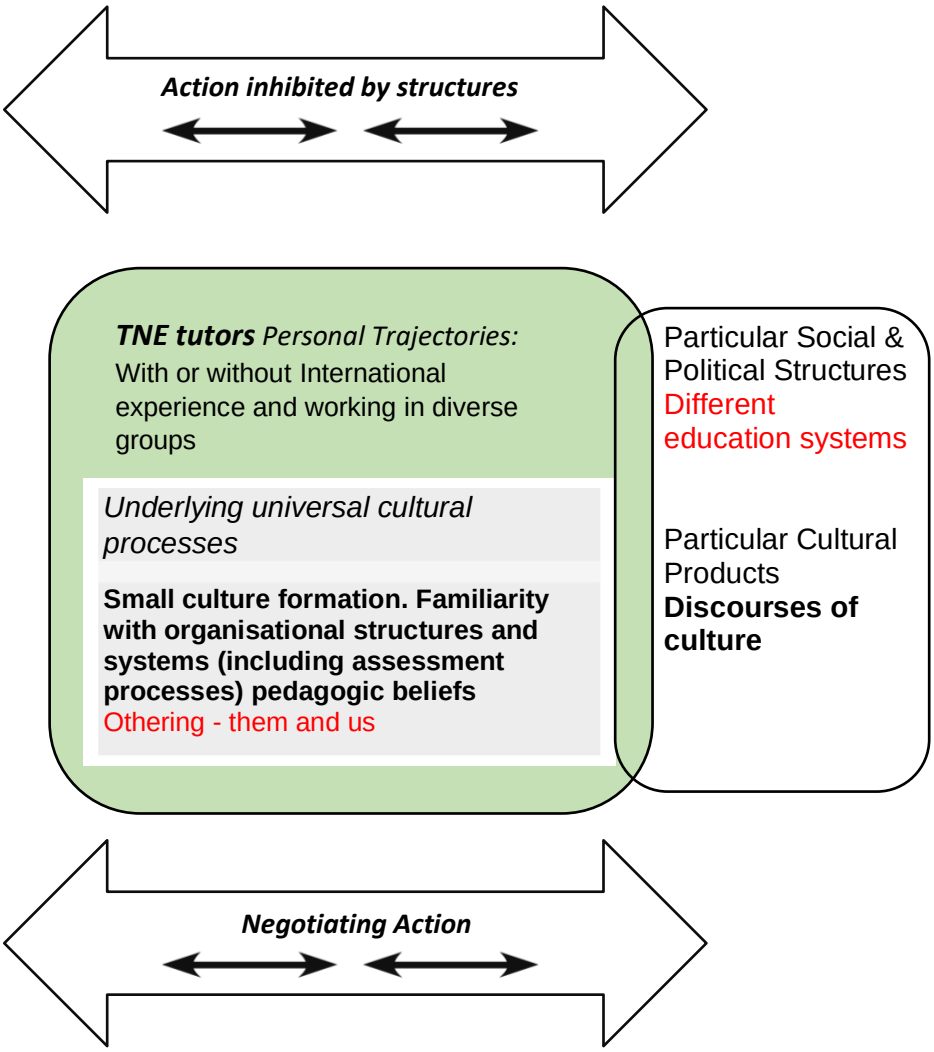

Figure 10: The Grammar of Culture (Holliday, 2016) adapted for TNE tutors in partnership programmes based on the findings

Like Holliday's iterations of Grammar of Culture model, this is an invention and is not representative of a location. TNE tutors' local contexts vary considerably as do the working relationships they develop with staff in the other location. The arrows on Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2015) suggest

that the process between the domains of conversations move in one direction either drawing individuals together and/or pulling them apart. The reality of the experiences of TNE tutors is represented by double-headed arrows to show the backward and forward movement in negotiating working relationships through negotiating intercultural communication. Personal trajectories are placed within the domain of underlying universal cultural processes because this is where tutors interact and come to understand how to behave to achieve the purpose of their interaction. The two other domains of particular social and political structures and particular cultural products have been combined and reduced in size. They do influence what takes place in the activity of tutors although this is not easy to identify and infer. Tutors mention culture and othering whereby tutors classify the tutors in the other location as 'not one of us' (Dervin,2015). Louise says:

> It is difficult to understand because you think why are they (tutors in China) like that. But they must think that of us (tutors in UK) – so it's a two-way street.

These domains of conversation (particular social and political structures and particular cultural products) are however more important than the size indicates. They exert a significant influence that permeates all levels of the partnership programme affecting tutors' experiences and their perspectives. Different educational backgrounds influence practice which can be linked to the familiarity and understanding of the education systems of the other location in partnership programme.

In all settings, interactions involve disagreement and require negotiation (Holliday, 2018). Tutors have different starting points in terms of personal trajectories particularly professional experience. They receive general information about the partnership programme through inductions and build on this through interaction in small culture formation, which can result in clashes of pedagogic beliefs and values. Understanding organizational structures and systems requires having an awareness of culture, being patient and working through issues (Eric, Robert). Robert says you have to be 'resilient, flexible and prepared for anything' and the best advice that he was given by a former colleague was, 'don't worry about the students, worry about the staff – hold your nerve with them'. He goes on to explain how

useful this advice has been in his interactions with staff in China and that in his experience:

> The things that go wrong are very minor, easily corrected and sometimes it is just a misunderstanding over rules and regulations, students or just mistakes or things that are easily corrected.

Alison, on the other hand despairs with the tutor in China:

> I don't think he (tutor in China) gets it (assessment practices and processes) or maybe he's been told but he doesn't take it on board.

This challenging situation, which Alison experiences, could be attributed to a number of factors: different academic culture, lack of familiarity with the local context (tutor in UK) and higher education context in the UK (tutor in China), which can be linked to the domains of particular social and political structures, and particular cultural products in Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2016). The situation could be resistance by tutors in China. They have to change the way they work according to the agreed TNE arrangement or even the imbalance of power wherein the Chinese tutor adopts the assessment practices of the UK institution (Djerasimovic, 2014). The question for Alison is, does her experience result from different academic cultures, a lack of familiarity with the local context, a lack of understanding or unwillingness on her tutor's part. There are several possible explanations. She recognizes 'a block' in their relationship that is causing tension. The problem is she does not know how best to manage this situation and turn this 'block' into a 'thread'. Indeed, the tutor in China might not think that there is an issue. This situation illustrates the complex nature of working relationships and the difficulties tutors may experience in small culture formation (Holliday, 2018b).

From the findings, it is possible to conclude that it is difficult to determine precisely which factors enable and hinder action. Working relationships are unique and Djerasimovic (2014) argues against assuming imposition in TNE partnership programmes and advocates conceptualising the relationship of actors (for example, tutors) in transnational arrangments as more fluid, one which is not represented as a form of cultural or ideological imperalism but as transformation. Robert clams that, 'There is still a little bit of traditional

reluctance in terms of assessment methodology and doing something different'. Maybe this is causing the tension in Alison's relationship with the tutor in China or could it be a systematic problem where '… change is just done slightly differently and there are different factors are at play over in China' (Robert). A lack of familiarity with local and higher education contexts may affect working relationships between tutors in different ways. These examples illustrate the usefulness of applying a Holliday's conceptual model but also show how difficult it is to interpret what might be happening, and the need for caution as Holliday rightly recommends.

4. 2 Working relationships with staff in the other location

Effective intercultural communication plays an important role in fostering good working relationships and supporting TNE tutors in the delivery and management of modules at a distance (Heffernan and Poole, 2005). Tutors experience their working relationships positively or negatively depending in part on individual expectations and previous international experience. Working transnationally and getting to know each other, exchanging professional and personal information can be difficult for several reasons not least of all opportunities to communicate at a distance (Dunn and Wallace, 2006, Hall and Scholz, 2018). Activities such as exchanging professional and personal information relate to Holliday's small cultures. These activities result in positive outcomes such as building trust and commitment and positive feelings about transnational work. Tutors bring their own personal trajectories to every encounter and then negotiate to arrive at an understanding and the desired outcome. As related by the TNE tutors interviewed, the process can be smooth and at times conflictual. The factors that contributed to positive and negative experiences have been summarised in Table 11.

Table 11: Working relationships between tutors: positive and negative experiences.

Working relationships between tutors	
Positive experiences	**Negative experiences**
Communication - frequency and type of contact Visits to other institution and meeting with staff in other location	Sporadic communication and few opportunities to communicate Infrequent or non-existent communication between TNE tutors in own institution
Information about staff in other location – exchange of professional and personal information	Little/no exchange of professional and personal information with staff in the location
Perceived similarity Disciplinary expertise	
Motivation – commitment to student learning Commitment to partnership programme	Perceived lack of commitment to partnership -'poor' attitude of staff in other location Mismatched expectations Insufficient guidance
Prior international work and/or study experience	English language competence and resulting lack of confidence
	Cultural misunderstandings Differing academic calendars and not meeting deadlines Contractual arrangements
	Understanding of organizational environment (structure and systems) Management of programme
Serendipity – fortune, luck	
Tutors negotiating action through communication	

The positive and negative experiences, actions and behaviours are dependent on communication which takes place in small culture formation. The quality of communication enables and hinders the development of

working relationships. In the next sections, I discuss the tutors' experiences referring to Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2016).

4.2.1 Tutors' personal trajectories and communication

Communication was possibly the first challenge that most TNE tutors faced. Heffernan and Poole (2005) maintain that where tutors are located in Asia, face-to-face meetings are essential to establish productive working relationships. In this study Maidong attributed her good working relationship to the face-to-face meeting in which she has got to know the tutor in the UK:

> The tutor(from UK) had a chance to visit my university (in China). I took her around and then we became friends.

It was, in the cases of nine tutors, possible to identify where personal trajectories (family, ancestry, peers and profession) were a significant factor in tutors' approach to working transnationally. This is an important finding. Tutors who had something in common such as family, age or perceived similarity, were likely to make connections more readily with staff in the other location (Holliday, 2016, Triandis, 2003). In addition, experiences of communication were markedly different for tutors who had the same educational background (two tutors) or had other international experience (nine tutors). The number of years of experience working on transnational programmes or working in another international context also appeared to influence the nature of the relationship that tutors develop with staff in the other location and their perspectives on working transnationally managing modules (Appendix 5). Those tutors who had first-hand experience of the UK and Chinese academic culture as students, lecturers or working on other TNE programmes or had lived or spent time abroad appeared to be more comfortable with working transnationally and developing good working relationships:

> I learnt my x knowledge using English textbooks so for me it's very natural to teach this course and actually, it's awkward for me to teach this type of x course in Chinese. I learnt every concept and the terminology in this field in English so it's not difficult to teach on this cooperative programme. Maidong

In line with the literature, the findings of this study confirm that international experience of living, studying or working overseas is advantageous in working transnationally (Leask et al., 2005, Dunford, Muir and Teran, 2015, Smith, 2017). Six of the tutors interviewed had international experience and in addition, three of the tutors in China had international experience. Maidong was currently working with a tutor in the UK who had completed her tertiary education in China. Anwen and Eric had experienced different educational backgrounds in Europe and had experience of teaching overseas. These experiences suggest that a degree of commonality and opportunities to develop understanding of culture, language, and academic traditions overseas positively influences tutors' interactions in small culture formation.

Tutors with work experience in international contexts were also more likely to be sensitive to the effects of local culture (social, political, legal and economic environment) and to develop dispositions to openness (Leask *et al.*, 2005, Killick, 2018).

> I'm afraid that if I hadn't had the five years' experience (TNE experience not with China) I might have had some difficulties… I think it was easy for me. Eric

Likewise, this applied to tutors educated in a country other than their current location (Anwen) or having a diverse family background (Sally). These tutors appeared to be more comfortable and understanding of communication issues. They were able to draw on the cultural threads they shared and make connections with staff in the other location carrying experience to the TNE environment through intercultural communication in small culture formation. Figure 11 summarises the cultural threads and blocks identified from the interviews relating to personal trajectories affecting working relationships.

Personal trajectories: carrying experience to new domains - tutors' experiences

THREADS: similar educational background, educated in countries other than where they work, experience studying overseas, discipline, research interests, age and family, curiosity, interest in pedagogy, task completion, serendipity

BLOCKS: actions that contribute to blocks include little/ no information (professional and/or personal) exchanged about staff in the other location, expectation gaps, perceptions about commitment and different professional backgrounds, confidence, time

Figure 11: TNE tutors' personal trajectories adapted from Holliday's Grammar of Culture (Holliday, 2016)

Cultural threads are modes of thinking or 'making sense of and constructing culture' (Holliday, 2016, p.1).The concept of threads refers to threads of cultural experience - with culture defined as 'whatever you see around you wherever you look…..when you draw a conceptual line around what you see' (Holliday, 2015). The underlying universal processes, which tutors share irrespective of location, made difficult for some tutors to connect due to a number of factors (Figure 12). It is important to note that the threads or connections identified are not exclusive. The threads enabled productive working relationships. Tutors who did not mention any of the listed threads or blocks or had limited experience of international settings were nevertheless successful in negotiating intercultural communication (Robert, Emily). This difference is attributable in part to their motivation and interest in pedagogy:

> Yes. It (transnational work) probably got me more interested in pedagogy. Robert

In Holliday's Grammar of Culture, pedagogy is located in the domain of particular cultural products however since this conceptual model is being applied to tutors it could be reasonably assumed that tutors have an interest in pedagogy to varying degrees. Pedagogy would, thus naturally have its place in personal trajectories

Tutors working relationships suffered when they formed blocks in response to the unexpected behaviour or actions of the staff in the other location. Some tutors struggled with the communication style of their partners (Louise, Alison, Daniel, Xinran). Xinran was unhappy with the 'Hi-Bye' nature of her relationship with her partner in the UK echoing the experiences of international students in the UK of being 'Hi-Bye' friends (Sovic, 2009):

> Actually, we (tutors in China) don't have much contact. We only communicate at the beginning of X just to say 'hi' about four times per semester.

Likewise, tutors were dissatisfied with the other extreme; a volume of e-mails that they found unsustainable and ineffective (Louise, Alison). Therefore, the difficulty arises from tutors making assumptions based on their professional experience and expectations regarding communication. These assumptions acted as blocks. It appears that tutors do not share their expectations regarding communication explicitly and are not proactive in reviewing their communication practice to accommodate their respective expectations. These expectations come from tutors' observations and professional experience based on the higher education setting with which they are familiar. Therefore, the domain of a particular social structure may be acting as a barrier for tutors.

Often where cultural blocks developed besides differences in expectations, there were few if any cultural threads. Tutors had not invested time in getting to know each other and exchanging professional and personal information (Spencer-Oatey and Wang, 2020). Tutors with professional backgrounds outside education, or tutors with negligible international experience, had exchanged little professional and personal information beyond contact details (Daniel, Emily). It is also possible that the unequal nature of the relationship inhibited the less confident tutors in China from engaging openly with their partner (Keevers et al., 2014). Christopher who had worked with several tutors in China sensed a lack of confidence:

> I think in the beginning they (tutors in China) they are a bit reticent because I feel that they are frightened. They are frightened that they are not quite up to grade sometimes…... Once you get into an exchange then they tend to open up.

In Triandis et al's model for the study of diversity, perceived similarity including factors such as equal status or similar attributes enhance the effectiveness of working relationships (Triandis, 2003, Jain, Triandis and Weick Wagner, 2010). Alison suggests that status might be hindering her relationship with the tutor in China:

> I can see there being a problem with somebody like me (tutor in the UK) challenging a professor in a university in China.

Therefore, a number of factors, including personal attributes, can influence working with staff in the location.

An interesting and unexpected finding was that several tutors attributed their positive working relationships to serendipity rather than personal trajectories (Maidong/Eric, Robert/Zeming):

> I (tutor in UK) think I've been very fortunate…I think I've had an easy ride simply because the individual I am tutor with (tutor in China). Robert

Besides his luck or good fortune, Robert claims that he had had an 'easy ride' because of the tutor in China. This is in comparison to other tutors in the UK on the TNE programme who he knows have had difficulties. Robert adds that he has found resolving issues with the tutor in China relatively easy. This again could be in comparison to the experience of other tutors and the fact that he had established a good working relationship with the tutor in China:

> I've been very lucky again from a relationship point of view with (tutor in China) and any discrepancies that (tutor in China) and I have come across we've been able to resolve all very easily. Robert

The tutors, who had positive experiences, downplayed the examples of cooperation and proactivity that they described in teaching and assessing and their commitment to the partnership programme:

> I think that I've been very fortunate with the colleague that I'm link tutor with over in China, in that they have been very, very responsive and asked for help quite a lot as well and realised that we can assist them. Robert

These tutors have obviously developed rapport, listening to and addressing each other's needs and concerns. The tutors specifically mention the fact

that they are able to resolve any issues promptly and from their comments, there is a strong commitment to the TNE partnership and student learning:

> We try to address them (minor issues) very quickly. I'm very happy. Eric

> I think it's a question of trust in our relationship. I think that we were able to trust each other. We weren't going to create problems for each other. We were there for each other's benefit and ultimately the smooth running of the course that led to student learning and student satisfaction. Robert

In fact, there is far more to the success of their working relationship than luck or good fortune. They mention disagreement, troubles and minor issues yet at the heart of their relationship is a strong commitment to students. This commitment appears to be the key driver to the positive experiences of working relationships between tutors. It could be attributed to their 'perceived similarity' (Triandis, 2003, Jain, Triandis and Weick Wagner, 2010) rather than good fortune or luck. In the case of Maidong and Eric, they were similar in age, had experience of studying overseas, had shared discipline and research interests. Their working relationship was not without disagreement. Their similarities or cultural threads of experience from the domain of underlying universal cultural processes and the resulting compatibility sustained their working relationships yet they attributed their successful relationship to serendipity (Holliday, 2016). Serendipity was the thread that enabled action for these tutors and resulted in good working relationships.

Finally, in relation to personal trajectories, experience teaching on transnational programmes or working in another international context appeared to influence the nature of the relationship that tutors developed with the staff in the other location and their perspectives on managing modules (Keevers et al., 2014). In the majority of cases, the more positive experiences were the result of tutors' openness to difference and willingness to work cooperatively to achieve a shared goal (Killick, 2018). Tutors' experiences were distinctive and varied. The next section discusses small culture formation the domain of underlying universal cultural processes where tutors develop working relationships leading to cohesive behaviour (Holliday, 1999,).

4.2.2 How tutors make connections and build working relationships in small culture formation

Tutors through their interactions are making sense of the underlying universal cultural processes that we take part in daily as we interact with peers. They bring their personal trajectories into small cultures or work groups (Holliday, 2016). The work that TNE tutors perform teaching and assessing across two locations can be understood as a small culture formation on the go (Holliday, 2018). Holliday added 'on the go' to small culture formation as' the continuous process of constructing and dealing with cultural realities, every day, everywhere, with whoever we meet or even think about'(Holliday, 2018a, p.2). TNE tutors negotiate blocks and threads between cultural environments: their local contexts. They are a group of 'cultural travellers', even though they do not work in close physical proximity and some of the tutors never visit their partner institution (nine out of the fourteen tutors in this study). Threads and blocks that enabled and hindered the ongoing process of small culture formation are summarised below (Figure 12).

Underlying universal cultural processes
Small culture formation- tutors' experiences

THREADS carried from personal trajectories familiarity with organisational structures and systems (including assessment processes)

Social construction through communication

BLOCKS from particular social and political structures: different academic culture, lack of familiarity with organisational structures and systems (including assessment processes), time constraints

Figure 12: TNE tutors' small culture formation adapted from Holliday's Grammar of Culture (Holliday, 2016)

Another consideration is that some tutors in the UK do not choose to work on TNE partnerships (Smith, 2017, Bordogna, 2018). Four of the tutors did not choose to be involved and felt ill prepared, which may have influenced their

interactions negatively and created blocks. This is similar to tutors whose expectations were at odds with their experience (Louise, Xinran). Louise when asked about her role says:

> I think also when things don't go so well as you think they were going to you realise that there is a lot more to it (being a TNE tutor) than what you expected when you only have a small allocation of time……. But certainly, when I went into this as a new tutor (on the TNE programme) really, I didn't know what I was getting myself into.

4.2.3 Time constraints on working relationships and small culture formation

Time constraints emerged as a significant factor in effective intercultural communication in small culture formation affecting tutors' working relationships. Time can have a disruptive influence on small culture formation and thereby communication. The challenge of intercultural communication is not new to TNE partnerships (Bordogna, 2019, Hall and Scholz, 2018) or indeed any international collaborations (Spencer-Oatey, 2012a, Keay, May and O'Mahony, 2014). Spencer-Oatey (2012a) has argued that senior management and academic staff pay insufficient attention to facilitating interaction in international collaborative projects. Her research based on staff experiences of interaction in e-projects between China and the UK concluded that senior management and academic staff involved in international collaborations tend to underestimate the time needed to work with others in a cooperative way. Spencer-Oatey's findings are relevant to this study as only four of the tutors interviewed were satisfied with time available to communicate with their counterparts (Robert, Sally, Maidong, Eric). Robert and Zeming had invested additional time and effort with opportunities for face-to-face meeting in China to manage the module for which they were jointly responsible. Other tutors were not able to do this.

Most of the tutors interviewed were dissatisfied with some aspect of the quality and quantity of communication. The underlying universal cultural processes as depicted in Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2015) constrained opportunities and negatively affected expectations of communication contributing to the creation of cultural blocks as in the case of Louise and Eric. Louise was particularly annoyed by the programme management's lack of awareness of the time constraints:

> We (tutors in the UK) can play email ping-pong for three weeks and then you get an assignment brief and you're thinking…. Where has this come from? What are we going to do? …..I gave a lot of feedback because if you saw some of the emails well some of the emails were mini dissertations – they were very long.

Eric recounted his experience with a tutor in China that he had worked with previously. He explained how he resolved a work-related issue:

> I explained the process to him (tutor in China) through emails. We started to send fifty, sixty emails in order to understand… I had the problem at the beginning. After that, whenever we had some issues we had one or two Skype meetings explaining the issue.

An increased volume of email communication led to frustration for Louise and Eric (tutors in the UK). In Eric's case the issue might have been the tutor's lack of familiarity with organisational structures and systems in particular assessment (see Chapter 5) compounded by the tutor's limited availability. It could have been a different perception of time and a more relaxed approach to deadlines (Levitt, 2016). Eric and Louise invested considerable time and effort to help the tutors in China. In these examples, the tutors achieved the desired outcome although not as efficiently as they might have liked.

It is possible to speculate that the effect that these exchanges had on the tutors in China might have been, not only frustrating as indicated by the quotation above about the volume of emails but also detrimental to the tutors' self-esteem. Therefore, in this study, more time as recommended by Spencer-Oatey (2012a) does not always lead to better outcomes and/or satisfactory interaction as experienced by tutors. Underlying issues might have been English language competency, differing communication styles, issues of face and misinterpretations of actions. Small culture formation is therefore challenging for other reasons. Time zones and misaligned academic calendars appeared to create more problems in the UK than in China. What is evident is that time emerged as a significant factor in intercultural communication between tutors warranting further consideration at both programme level and institutional level. Managing issues with time is part of the solution for dealing with the quality of communication (Keay, May and O'Mahony, 2014). The other part of the solution is examining tutors'

actions in small culture formation: how they make connections with threads of cultural experience and avoid creating blocks focusing on the processes of positive relationship building (Spencer- Oatey and Wang, 2020). In addition, as mentioned earlier, being able to correctly identify the source of misunderstands is crucial.

4.2.4 The role of boundary spanners in small culture formation

The influence of time is not a new factor in working transnationally. Bordogna (2018) stated that time is one of the three key areas that require attention by TNE programme managers. Building and maintaining relationships with staff in the other location are boundary-spanning activities, which are disrupted by the time available, and time zones. Bordogna advocates the use of boundary spanners (Bordogna, 2016). The reliance on the boundary spanner as an intermediator from a managerial and organisational point of view is both efficient and beneficial to partnerships (Heffernan and Poole, 2005). In the case of the tutors interviewed, boundary spanners could reduce the time spent explaining matters related to assessment and the quantity of 'ineffective' e-mails. Boundary spanners for example, through their intervention could prevent the creation of unnecessary blocks resulting from time pressures and meeting deadlines. However, ideally, in established partnership programmes, tutors should have sufficient experience and time to communicate and resolve issues themselves. If tutors become reliant on boundary spanners or cultural mediators (Spencer-Oatey, 2012a), the opportunities for the development of intercultural practice may be lost. Tutors would thereby be disadvantaged through the loss of opportunities to negotiate intercultural communication and develop their working relationships in small culture formation. Besides, most of the tutors interviewed were keen to improve their practice, particularly intercultural communication. An assumption that boundary spanners are the answer to dealing with issues in partnership programmes is not necessarily, what is needed.

The tutors in both locations expressed a desire for more and better communication to learn from each other and to resolve issues collaboratively. Daniel states that tutors are 'metaphorically and physically

distant'. He suggested establishing a communication protocol as a solution to the difficulties that he had experienced to achieve a 'satisfactory level' of communication. Having a communication protocol might seem overly prescriptive but it would support communication and manage what might be differing expectations amongst tutors. Part of the problem lies in tutors not understanding why they do things a certain way; the informal/formal rules that they need to be followed (Adapted activity system p.103). Some tutors may find small culture formation demanding: 'learning to do' or learning through interaction, an essential component of intercultural competence (UNESCO, 2013, p.9), can be impeded by personal trajectories and factors from the other domains of conversation. The communication protocol could be part of an explicit psychological contract between two TNE tutors (Smith, 2017). It would be beneficial for those tutors who do not visit staff in the other location (Daniel, Sally, Xinran, Emily) and who are dissatisfied with the quantity and quality of communication(Daniel, Xinran). However, the existence of a communication protocol does not guarantee quality of communication nor good working relationships. Therefore, communication in the small culture of TNE partnership programmes amongst diverse staff geographically separated, poses its own difficulties despite the availability of improved channels of communication and personal trajectories indicating appropriate experience. Sufficient time though necessary, is not the only factor that affects communication and thereby working relationships, in small culture formation.

4.3 The influence of culture on working relationships: similarities and differences

The main similarity amongst tutors is that they do not appear to know much about each other as discussed in the previous section. This similarity extends to understandings of the influence of culture and cultural practices on their working relationships. Taking Holliday's definition of culture as 'whatever you see around you wherever you look…..when you draw a conceptual line around what you see', the influence of culture on working relationships is undeniable. However, it is usually when tutors experience cultural misunderstandings or bumps that the influence of culture is most evident. Tutors are nudged into reflecting on what might be at the root of the

behaviour they experience (Archer and Nickson, 2012). These 'cultural bumps' can be better understood with reference to Holliday's Grammar of Culture the two domains of conversation: particular social and political structures and particular cultural products (Chapter 2, Figure 6, p. 58). The domains of particular social and political structures and cultural products shape how we think and behave, how we differentiate ourselves, and our actions from others. Global position and politics influence how we see ourselves in relation to countries (Holliday, 2018a). I have combined Holliday's two domains of conversation: particular social and political structures and particular cultural products to reflect the experiences of TNE tutors to show the factors that affected the tutors' negotiation and intercultural communication in the course of their work (Figure 13).

Particular social and political structures and particular cultural products
Cultural resources: nation, culture, education, language etc. - findings – tutors' experiences

THREADS: Artefacts: resources including documents related to teaching and learning – schemes of work, written assessment criteria etc.

BLOCKS: Global position and politics, imagining Self and Other (us and them), sense of belonging, feelings about programme

Figure13: The influence of particular social and political structures and particular cultural products on TNE tutors' experiences adapted from Holliday's Grammar of Culture (Holliday, 2016)

The two combined domains can make it difficult for tutors who experience misunderstandings, to find something that can help them connect with each other more easily, and maintain good working relationships. I discuss the influence of differing education systems between the UK and China, assessment practices and in the next section.

4.3.1 Tutors' understanding and experience of the educational context of the other institution

Differing education systems were a significant factor in the challenges tutors faced. Familiarity with educational contexts can positively affect cultural distance (Chapter 2, p. 50). However, familiarity with the educational system and international experience may not be sufficient for tutors to connect and enable action. In the case of Louise and Zeming, their expectations of their roles and responsibilities in the programme were at odds. The issue was the understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities and being able to fulfill them rather than an understanding of educational contexts. Louise had experience of working with international students (mainly from China) while Zeming had international experience of studying in the UK. Their personal trajectories also led them to misjudge each other's capability and the demands of the role. Consequently, they experienced misunderstandings or blocks. Louise expected to oversee the assessment process and moderate the module for which she was responsible jointly with the tutor in China, Zeming. He expected far more input and support in terms of guidance and materials for classroom delivery than Louise had anticipated. Therefore, familiarity with the higher education contexts or systems was not the issue. Their expectations were unrealistic and a deeper understanding of each other's contexts and their roles rather than familiarity with the respective education systems may have been more beneficial. The connection or thread of international experience drew these tutors closer whereas understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities in the partnership programme caused tension and pulled them apart affecting their working relationship negatively (as represented by the double- headed arrows in the Grammar of Culture (Holliday, 2016) adapted for TNE tutors in partnership programmes, p.106).

Tutors' lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities in partnership programmes extends to their lack of appreciation of each other's' context. Anwen (experienced tutor in China but not a Chinese national) strongly expressed this viewpoint, convinced that tutors in the UK are simply unaware of the day-to-day reality of tutors in China:

> I think that it's really necessary for any tutor (in UK) to spend time there (in China) because it is very difficult, *pretty much impossible to guide somebody or mentor somebody when you don't know what they* (tutors in China) *are experiencing.* (Author's italics)

It is interesting to consider why Anwen's sympathies lie firmly with tutors located in China:

> I don't think that it's so important for the Chinese tutors to come. I think it would be nice for them (tutors in China) to be able to do that, but if their other half (tutor in UK) is going and they understand. I think that might just be enough. I don't think all of the Chinese (tutors) need to come (to the UK).

On the one hand, this viewpoint implies that the lack of awareness or ignorance lies with tutors in the UK. Her viewpoint reveals a pragmatic response, which may result from a better understanding of the tutors' context in China and to some extent address cultural distance. This solution seems obvious albeit impractical since students and tutors are located in China for either the first two or three years of 2+2 or 3+1 TNE partnership programmes.

Tutors do need to consider each other's actions and decide how to react because they are obliged to achieve their outcome of teaching and moderating modules. When tutors in this study experienced 'cultural bumps' or misunderstandings of any kind, they tended to focus on difference rather than similarity drawing on personal trajectories, and social and political structures. They often located the problems they experienced beyond their control such as perceptions about the commitment of the staff in the other location or what they interpreted as their tutor's unwillingness to engage in discussions about pedagogy. Alison for example, was frequently exasperated with the tutor in China:

> He (tutor in China) definitely misinterprets the comments I make on things like exam papers…I am quite careful how I phrase things …but sometimes even in doing that you make a statement and if he doesn't understand then it becomes a bit of an argument – a total misinterpretation of what I have said and then it becomes a defensive comment. So again, it's challenging.

She attributed her difficulties to the tutors' commitment:

> It's not a priority …. He's employed by another university and then he's got a lot of other commitments.

In addition, when she visits China, Alison says that:

> I feel there's a reluctance on his part (tutor in China) to get to it (discuss teaching and assessment issues).

Killick (2018, p.123) argues that a working environment involving effective intercultural communication requires individuals to examine and reflect on their own actions. Alison appears to be doing the opposite. The quotations above point to possible cultural and personal conflict stemming from differences in communication style, power struggles, perceptions about commitment, contractual arrangements and interest in discussing pedagogy. Of course, these quotations only provide the perspectives of the tutor in the UK, not those of the tutor in China. What is interesting is that Alison and other tutors who were aware of differing education systems and local contexts of staff in the other location, did not directly associate the challenges they experienced to themselves, their context or their understanding of the educational context of the other institution. They located the source of their difficulties in the other location and with the tutor in China.

There was a more general lack of familiarity with the higher education systems in the other location amongst tutors besides the lack of familiarity and appreciation of the local context for example, the type or category of higher education institution in the UK or China or details about the curriculum and the origanisation of its delivery. This was particularly evident amongst those tutors who had not visited the other institution, had no or limited international experience (Daniel, Emily, Xinran). Pyvis (2011) in his study of an Australia/China partnership programme found a similar situation with academic staff from Australia having a poor understanding of Confucian pedagogy. Some tutors in the UK admitted to knowing 'absolutely nothing' about Chinese higher education (Daniel). Christopher recounted his first visit to the partner institution. He had assumed that, 'It was all lectures just telling students the information and that was it', which he said, was confirmed because he did not see any tutorials during his visit. This is a common assumption about the 'Chinese learner' found in literature (Clark and Gieve, 2006, Jin and Cortazzi, 2006, Wang, 2013, Ryan, 2016) and a viewpoint still prevalent in the UK but more open to challenge. It reflects a reductionist or essentialist view of the 'Chinese learner' and the Chinese higher education system. More recently, in the UK through teacher training courses there has

been a shift towards more student centred learning and teaching, although the evidence is scant (Gunn and Fisk, 2013). Nevertheless, recognising difference is a first step to identifying assumptions. Robert had not made any specific assumptions about teaching practice in China and the realisation of difference on his first visit came as a surprise.

> I had not given that a lot of consideration that maybe they (tutors in China) had expected me to know that there is this idea of Confucianism and that the teacher gives knowledge and you take it down and learn it in a rote style and that not being my teaching style whatsoever I'd not prepared for it so, I think they were probably more shocked by me.

Robert was completely unaware of Confucian pedagogy. His teaching style was Socratic or a more dialogical approach to encourage interaction and contributions from the students.

Christopher and Robert's experiences are interesting. Christopher's experience of a different context, as a 'cultural outsider' visiting the tutor in China, was instrumental in uncovering his assumptions. His first visit had the effect of polarisation, confirming his inaccurate assumption whereas Robert's visit resulted in a learning experience (Smith, 2013). Their subsequent views of the 'Chinese learner' and Confucian pedagogy changed through their involvement in the partnership programme. In this respect, Anwen's stance that tutors in the UK, need to visit China is justified. Leask (2008, p. 129) describes transnational teachers as 'strangers in a strange land'. Differing education systems and a lack of familiarity with the local context can lead to misunderstandings, focusing on difference and leading to blocks. Christopher and Robert expected what they observed and experienced inside and outside the classroom to resemble their own working environment in the UK.

In addition, tutors in the UK may not even consider that for the tutors in China, the partnership programmes are dissimilar to other programmes in their universities with which some of the tutors might be more familiar (Yang, 2008). They too are 'strangers in a strange land' (Leask 2008, p. 129):

> It (the partnership programme) is very different from other higher education in China. For example, the teaching arrangement, achievement composition, evaluation method, teaching management mode. Zeming

Their physical environment remains unchanged but the teaching-learning activities differ to what they are accustomed in mainstream higher education in China. With reference to Holliday's Grammar of Culture, the environment makes negotiating action in small culture formation more disorientating for these tutors in China. They are pulled in three directions, the Chinese higher education system they are familiar with, a familiar setting operating in a different way and a programme from the UK higher education system. The tutor in China has to adapt to a different style of delivery and assessment procedure while adhering to the regulations of the establishment in which they work. The informal and formal rules and the regulations have changed. They are responsible for classroom delivery through the medium of English collaborating with a tutor in the UK who is overseeing and moderating their module that they are delivering. The tutor in the UK may be oblivious to the low institutional status of TNE programmes and as in the case of two of the tutors in the UK the contractual arrangements of the staff in China. These differences and tutors' awareness of the impact that they may have on tutors' actions can lead to tensions and modes of thinking that result in blocks (Holliday, 2016).

Awareness of the local context in China, differing teaching practices and uncovering assumptions is necessary for all tutors to make connections and develop productive working relationships. Therefore, understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of tutors in partnership programmes, the education systems in the UK and China, the different local contexts, as experienced by the tutors, require tutors to move out of their comfort zones and as intercultural travellers make sense of each other's realities in teaching and assessing.

4.3.2 The influences of national culture on working relationships

In the interviews, there was a tendency to refer to tutors working in the UK or China as homogeneous groups British or Chinese, despite there being different cultures of learning, academic cultural and general cultural differences relating to the local context amongst tutors. In Holliday's Grammar of Culture discourses of culture refer to conversations about 'large'

culture which refer to ethnic, national or international groups (Holliday, 1999). The terminology tutors used ‘British/UK’ and ‘Chinese’, hides the diversity that exists and points to differences rather than commonalities: blocks rather than threads. One of the four types of cultural knowledge for effective transnational teaching identified by Leask (2004, p.26) was an understanding of local culture including the political, legal and economic environment. In the UK, tutors did refer to the political environment and large culture in relation to challenges they faced (Figure 14). Tutors shared their views on ‘large’ culture, although I did not ask them specific questions about the political, legal and economic environment.

Tutors often presented differences that they encountered in terms of ‘them’ and ‘us or even nation states when making general statements based on their experiences. In some cases, culture was used as a means of explaining difference (Bovill, Jordan and Watters, 2015). The discourses on culture tended to highlight, and in some cases, exaggerate difference (Welikala, 2011). The use of ‘them’, ‘us’ and ‘we’ was more noticeable during the focus group held in the UK and in the interviews with tutors in the UK. Tutors in China were referred to as ‘the Chinese tutors’, distinctions were made between the tutors in the UK, the in-group (us) and the tutors in China, the outgroup (them). The use of ‘us’ and ‘them’ was more surprising in individual interviews and was more pronounced where tutors had experienced difficulties in their working relationships.

Some of the tutors in the UK claimed to know very little, if anything about the tutor in China yet readily offered opinions on ‘us’ and ‘them’. Where tutors in the UK experienced a problem in the course of their work, they perceived the problem to lie either with the tutor in the other location, the other institution or at a national level but rarely in their own behaviour or attitude. Some tutors in the UK expressed dissatisfaction with the partnership programme. They felt that they were contributing more than tutors in China were and that the partnership was unequal in this respect,

> ‘We (tutors in the UK) just give, they (tutors in China) don’t give you anything’. Louise

In all of these examples, the tutors had not effectively made connections with their partners through small culture formation and resorted to magnifying and justifying their perceived differences through references to ‘large culture’ ‘them’ and ‘us’ (Dervin, 2015).

Christopher recounted what happened when he went to the staff room in the institution in China on his first visit:

> A lot of them (tutors in China) got up and walked out. The reason for that was that they (tutors in China) didn’t know quite how to relate and that they were probably a bit perturbed by a stranger in their midst, because they (tutors in China) don’t know who you are, where you’ve come from and it is dangerous to talk to this person.

Christopher’s interpretation of what happened fits neatly into his assumptions about the political environment in China. A less sinister and possibly more credible explanation might have been that the tutors left the staffroom for perfectly valid reasons such as the start of lectures. It is possible that they did not to talk to him for cultural reasons expecting an introduction or for fear of exposing their level of English amongst their peers. To suggest that the tutors in China may have put themselves in danger by entering into conversation with him in this context seems extreme. This incident, which was memorable enough for Christopher to recount, illustrates how he uses his knowledge about the particular political and social structures in China to make sense of an unexpected situation in a ‘familiar’ setting. In this example the tutor experienced a block rather than a connection with those members of staff who left the staffroom; differences between ‘them’ and ‘us’ (Holliday, 2018b). The staff in China did not respond in the way that he expected. Christopher’s understanding was that the tutors were afraid to talk to him. The tutors who left the staffroom would have probably been unaware of this interpretation. Christopher was looking to make a connection with staff but this was thwarted by the actions of some of the staff leaving the staffroom and he was left to interact with the remaining staff to negotiate his position in the grouping and create ‘threads’. This is a good example of small culture formation on the go: a continuous on-going process where the tutors are making sense of their experiences (Figure 11, p.107).

Knowledge of the political, legal and economic environment if incomplete or inaccurate is therefore unhelpful in making connections. In addition, if as Leask (2004) maintains that an understanding of local culture including the political, legal and economic environment is necessary for effective transnational teaching, what, or, who would be the source of this information? Background knowledge can be useful and can lead to a better understanding of a local context encountered by the 'cultural traveller' or the 'other' as in the case of 'flying faculty'. Likewise, it can serve as a block inhibiting connections and effective intercultural communication where behaviour is interpreted correctly. Another example, which illustrates how discourses about culture affect working relationships, was a challenging situation involving academic malpractice that Louise and her partner tutor experienced. Louise felt that the situation could not be resolved without serious consequences. She attributed the inability and unwillingness to resolve the issue to the political environment in China and contrasted this to the situation in the UK:

> You (tutor in China) have to be a brave person to put your head above the parapet. But, we (in the UK) can in our society. But, can you do it in theirs (in China)? What are the ramifications for you, for your family, your job, your future, your career?

As in the previous example, the tutor in the UK based her assumptions and perceived differences on political understandings and beliefs. She was frustrated with the situation that she found herself in yet her comments do show empathy for the tutor in China. The problem Louise encountered was more likely to be institutional, one of professional development due to misunderstandings of academic integrity rather than as she suggested having its origins in the Chinese political environment. Again, the point is that individuals construct their realties; they make sense of the situations they find themselves in by drawing on their personal trajectories, the underlying cultural processes and particular social and political structures in small culture formation. In these two examples, Christopher and Louise's perspectives on the political environment in China created barriers or blocks by focusing on difference and arguably misreading the situations. Blocks affected how tutors related to each other when challenges arose, their

subsequent cooperation, how they felt about the partnership programme and their involvement as TNE tutors.

Indeed, the domains of Holliday's Grammar of Culture assist in the interpretation of these examples. An awareness of the logic of one's own interpretations and sensitivity to the tutors in the other location is important and necessary for tutors to maintain good working relationships. Tutors can damage working relationship unnecessarily and unknowingly. However, training in conflict -handling training may not necessarily be the solution (He and Liu, 2017). Conflict in relationships is commonplace, a natural feature of social interaction. Finding the source of the conflict or disagreement is the difficult part. This understanding adds to the literature on the experiences of tutors and is yet to be explored fully.

4.3.3 The influences of cultural practices on working relationships

Tutors in the UK frequently referred to culture in discussions about pedagogic practices particularly assessment practices and processes which are discussed in Chapter 5. Several tutors commented on rote learning and differences in teaching practice. For example, Christopher explained:

> Whereas, of course, ours (teaching in the UK) is interactive. Students are encouraged to ask questions and we (in the UK) can question the basic philosophy of what we are doing, whereas of course, Chinese education is learn by rote, *do as I do* (my italics).

He subsequently acknowledged that he had observed changes in teaching practice in the last decade of involvement in a 3+1 partnership programme (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006). However, Christopher's comments imply that in the UK, there is freedom to question and students are independent learners in contrast to students' behaviour in China. A binary opposite, which feeds into the deficit model of East Asian students and education in China (Ryan, 2011).

Other tutors did appear to have a greater awareness of culture, differences and how everyday practices are taken for granted. Xinran, for example states that she is careful to monitor her communication with the tutor on the other location. Her previous experience of working transnationally on a partnership

programme with another country, led her to believe that culture, specifically differences in communication style, is a barrier to collaboration.

> I once worked in a team with people from (country). I feel like cultural difference is the biggest barrier. I have to be very careful with wording in dialogue and emails just to avoid misunderstandings due to different cultural background.

It is possible that she is referring to a language issue depending on what she means by cultural differences. Nevertheless, the question is whether an awareness of culture: communication style, as in Xinran's case, helps tutors make connections through their interaction or whether it has the opposite effect and creates blocks when a tutor does not respond in the way that is expected. In which case, it is not culture per se that creates blocks but unmet expectations based on our understandings of all aspects of culture, 'small' and 'large', whether accurate or erroneous. The way a written exchange or a face-to-face encounter unfolds can affect subsequent interactions. Xinran's previous experience and reflection on this experience increased her awareness and she changed her approach. Despite wanting more opportunities to interact, she has had a more productive relationship with the tutor in the UK describing her experience as 'great' and that she had benefitted professionally:

> I can get to know how my partner (tutor in the UK) teaches the same lessons from his perspective. Since we have different cultural backgrounds, sometimes his classes can give me some inspiration about teaching.

This is an example of small culture formation in action leading to cohesive behaviour (Holliday, 2018a).

Knowledge of specific behaviour in different cultures can be useful in avoiding awkward situations that may hinder interaction and affect working relationships. However, knowledge of difference does not lead to knowing how to act and respond appropriately as Zhuang (2009) rightly claims with reference to 'guanxi' when setting up partnerships. Robert was initially unaware of the concept of face:

> It was something new and novel to me. Something that we don't kind of think about here in the UK.

Another example of cultural practices which can cause conflict in working relationships is gift giving. Gift giving also led to cultural misunderstandings or bumps (Archer and Nickson, 2012). In China as in the UK, gifts are a way of showing respect, gratitude or hospitality. However, in China there is an expectation of reciprocity at some point and as a way of maintaining relationships. Tutors in China discussed their experiences of exchanging gifts with tutors in the UK. The problem arose with the interpretation of this gift giving behaviour particularly if the gift was expensive. When tutors in the UK declined to accept these gifts, some tutors in China interpreted this behaviour as rude. Yutong has to explain her colleagues in China:

> English staff will say, 'I cannot accept that'. I cannot accept that does not mean they (tutors in the UK) don't like you or they are rude. It only means it is not the correct situation …. to receive this kind of gift. It is nothing wrong just thinking in a different way.

Rather than strengthening their relationship, the experience of gift-giving served to weaken the relationship by hurting the feelings of the tutors in China. The tutors in the UK might have interpreted the gifts as a form of bribery and felt compelled not to accept them possibly due to their value, whereas the tutors in China would have lost face. Thus, a positive action by the tutors in China became a negative action creating a distancing if both tutors misunderstood the intent behind each other's' action and the cultural significance of gift giving in China.

Therefore, it is apparent that discourses of culture influence the way tutors act and react and that tutors use discourses of culture to explain and justify their actions. In doing so, they create threads or blocks of experience, which influence collaboration and working relationships. Interestingly, in the examples provided both tutors may not have been aware of each other's interpretations of their actions and the effect on their relationship. The purpose of using these examples was to illustrate this point. We make sense of situations using what we have at our disposal be that previous experience, academic culture, knowledge about cultural practices or perspectives on political environments as in Holliday's Grammar of Culture. Working

relationships are complex. In some cases, interactions lead to altering perspectives where tutors create threads of experience. In other interactions, tutors are inhibited by the social and political structures of their location or with which they are most familiar. They use these to justify their actions and potentially create barriers in subsequent interactions.

4.4 Working relationships and perceived value of working transnationally

Tutor's interactions involve making cultural threads and cultural blocks as they make sense of what they are experiencing (Holliday, 2016). The findings concerning working relationships need to be interpreted carefully. Many factors influence working relationships. There is no single problem or issue for TNE relationships but there are threads and blocks that are different for each tutor. Threads and blocks that tutors make through their interactions characterise tutors' relationships and define their experiences of working transnationally. Some of the tutors had not made any meaningful connections with tutors on a personal or professional level. They had made the little or no effort to maintain and extend the working relationship beyond task completion (Sally). Other tutors had developed their research interests leading to publication and conference presentations (Eric and Maidong). The experience of working transnationally teaching and assessing had led to personal growth (for example, Robert, Zeming) even when interaction was via a third party (Emily).

The motivations for investing in the partnerships vary. Willis(2006) identified perception of commitment as significant factor between Chinese and foreign universities' educational alliances claiming that at programme level there should be a 'reasonable' level of commitment of relationship formation and maintenance. Tutors may have little interest in developing working relationships beyond task completion for reasons ranging from contractual arrangements to perceived value and recognition of work transnationally(Jais, Smyrnios and Hoare, 2015). Maidong says, 'Most of my colleagues do not even know who the tutor (in UK) is'. The effort required to develop and sustain working relationships may not be justified on any level yet establishing and maintaining relationships is fundamental to the long term

success of partnership programmes. Some tutors viewed working on partnership programmes as short-term activities, ‘I don’t need a relationship’ (Sally). Working transnationally did not necessarily assist in career progression: ‘You must be joking!’ (Christopher). Tutors, who made connections, were proactive in developing and extending relationships through their interest in pedagogy (Robert, Zeming, Yutong, Xinran) or research (Eric, Maidong) and furthering their careers (Robert, Eric).

Cultural threads as modes of thinking or making sense of and constructing culture are fluid. Those tutors who experienced blocks tended to view their working relationships negatively. The difficulties the tutors experienced became blocks, which affected how they perceived and interpreted their interactions (Alison, Louise). In some cases, the blocks led to tutors adjusting their expectations. They found value in working transnationally (Xinran, learning about teaching practice in the UK and Christopher, through mentoring the tutor in China).

The next section discusses assessment practices and processes, a challenge for tutors that tests their working relationship and spans all four domains of conversation in Holliday’s Grammar of Culture. The recommendations for professional development will be discussed in chapter six.

Chapter 5: Differing views of pedagogic practices: assessment procedures and practices

This chapter addresses the second research question about tutors' experiences of working transnationally and the challenges they encounter, which are closely linked to working relationships with the staff in the other location. Tutors' experience different pedagogic practices and differing views on pedagogic practices are, which is to be expected in transnational partnership programmes. The tutors' experiences of teaching and assessing add to the literature on transnational education, which is limited mainly to the experiences of flying faculty and staff from one location (Dobos, 2011, Smith, 2014, O'Mahony, 2014). Tutors' backgrounds (not only educational and cultural) and communication with staff in the other location are significant factors in how tutors experience teaching and/or assessing in partnership programmes.

In this study, assessment, as discussed in chapter two, was the main challenge that the tutors experienced. Other challenges mentioned were related to unmet expectations; for example, more support and guidance in teaching from tutors in the UK. Assessment however, is a specific challenge that is problematic in TNE 3+1 and 2+2 programmes. Tutors experienced challenges with assessment, even when the tutors who were aware of the differences in their respective contexts:

> They (tutors in China) can read the criteria. They (tutors in China) may have different thoughts, and this is why there are some discrepancies, differences between the marks and this is a huge problem. Yutong

> I think the biggest challenge for me has been the marking and the allocation of marks to pieces of work and getting the module leader (in China) to mark at an appropriate level. Alison

Assessment processes posed challenges and blocks for tutors creating tension. Differences in assessment and difficulties associated with assessment are not unique to TNE contexts (Yorke, 2011). It is however, more complicated for a diverse group of staff with different educational backgrounds, to carry out tasks associated with assessment.

5.1 Assessment processes and practices as sites of tension

Assessment practices are cultural practices arising from particular social and political structures (Holliday, 2018, Trahar and Hyland, 2011). Tutors are influenced by the underlying universal cultural processes in small culture formation, which create barriers to understanding between tutors. The lack of familiarity with respective assessment processes and the influence of established cultural practices in their own educational systems lead to blocks. Tutors' action can be inhibited by structures (Figure 14).

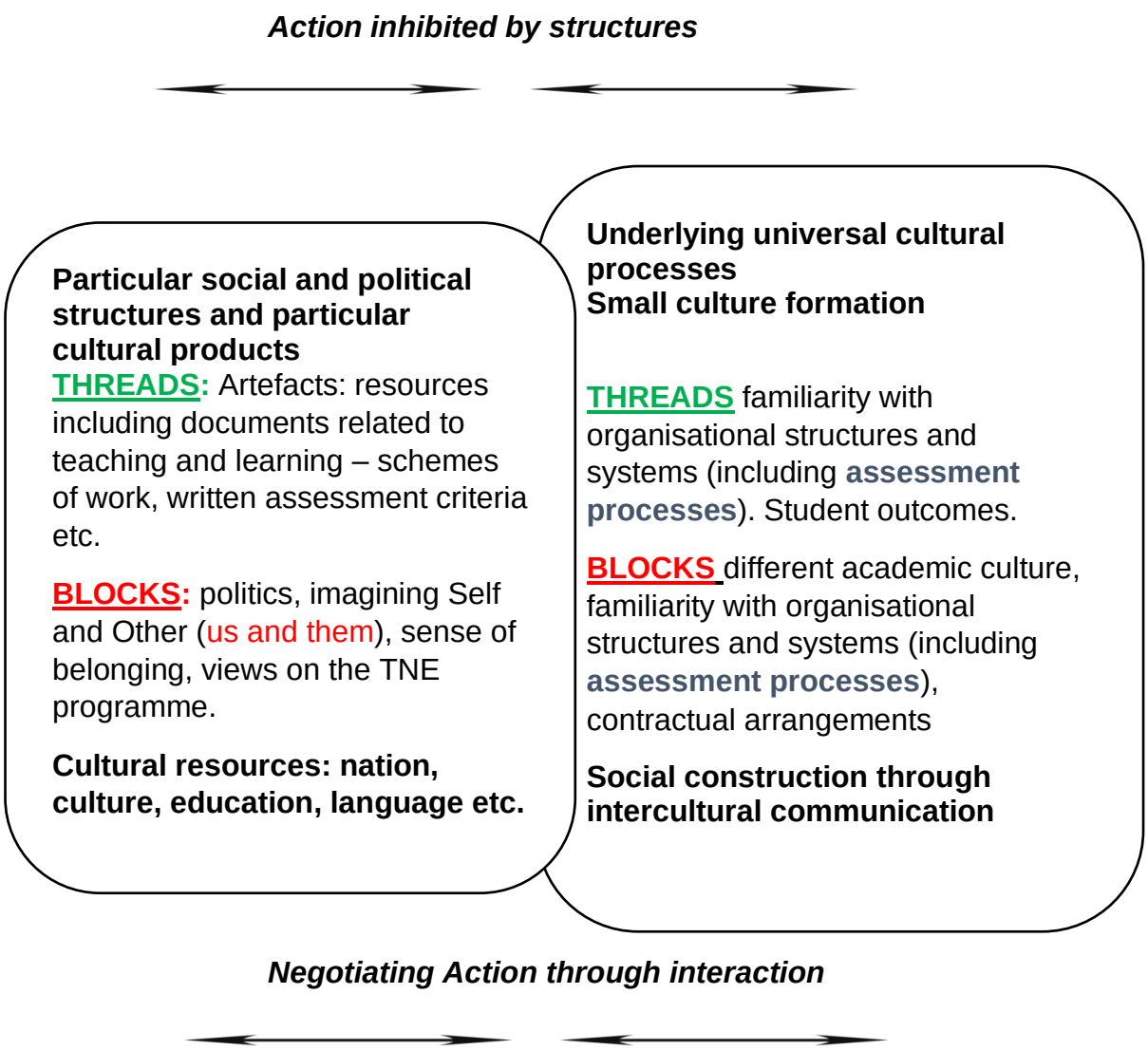

Figure 14: Wider influences on tutors'assessment practices adapted from Holliday's Grammar of Culture (Holliday, 2016)

In discussing assessment, tutors talked about marking at ‘an appropriate level’, marking the wrong things, ‘having different thoughts’ and never agreeing.

> They (tutors in UK and China) never agree on the marks so they are looking for the third marker to remark all the pieces of work. Yutong

Anwen referred to assessment as ‘the biggest problem between the two institutions whereas Robert referred to assessment as ‘the elephant in the room’. From his experience, assessment was when tutors were most likely to come into conflict with staff in the other location. Alison said:

> I think the biggest challenge for me has been the marking and the allocation of marks to pieces of work and getting the module leader (tutor in China) to mark at an appropriate level.

Yutong explained her experience of disagreements on assessment:

> We (with the tutor in the UK) will have a discussion and communication and normally, they (tutor in the UK) will understand and we will get an agreed mark. Maybe, I put up the marks up a little bit or draw them down a little bit or something like that but for some staff(in China) they send their results over and the staff here (in UK) do not a agree and our staff say I have reasons for that.

Tutors in the UK (Louise and Robert) suggested that tutors were marking the ‘wrong thing’ and are considered to be marking ‘wrongly’.

> I sit and I look at it and I think how did you (tutor in China) get this mark but sometimes I’m convinced that they (tutors in China) mark the wrong things. Louise

According to Robert, this is the ‘nature of the beast’ and that tutors should expect this:

> I think someone
> (tutor in China) is going to say you’ve marked this wrongly at some point and to not take it personally.

Tutors struggle to grasp that assessment is not a world of right or wrong ways’ but rather as exemplified in Ramsden’s view of assessment as an ‘a human and uncertain process (Ramsden, 2003, p.181). Assessment is a routine practice; which tutors do not necessarily consider until faced with an approach different to which they are accustomed. Indeed, familiarity with academic practices in other countries as either a student or member of staff

did not appear to make assessment processes smoother. The impact of contractual arrangements on assessment practices, the understanding and implementation of differences in their practices, the interpretation of criteria and moderation, and the justification of grading of feedback influenced tutors' actions and their working relationships to a greater or lesser extent.

5.1.1 Factors affecting assessment processes and practices

Different contractual arrangements for TNE tutors appeared to influence tutors' commitment to assessment work such as moderation. Assessment constitutes a major part of TNE tutors' responsibilities. The roles of tutors in the two institutions in respect to assessment differ in the partnership programmes. Robert when asked about the role of TNE tutor compared with the other work he does in the UK explained that it is different:

> It is because effectively you are almost module leader by proxy even though the majority of what is being done, and developed and taught is being done by somebody else (tutor in China).

Robert expands on his role:

> It is acting as a vicarious module leader. You know - which means that lots of it is going to be *advisory* or sometimes almost like an *auditor*. Sometimes things have to be checked to check that procedures have been followed properly and that things have been marked……..There'll be some difficulty that requires you to act as *arbitrator*, *negotiator* or *facilitator* to make sure that there is fairness and parity across both institutions (my italics).

He in common with other tutors interviewed is in effect performing several roles at the heart of which sits assessment and the role of overseeing the quality assurance process at module level. TNE tutors' roles are not equal. This is supported in the literature on partnership programmes (Keevers *et al.*, 2014). Neither do the roles of tutors correspond entirely to the meaning of 'partnership' as in a partnership of equals. There is a power hierarchy (Strickland, 1999, Smith, 2010,Djerasimovic, 2014). Xinran a tutor in China bemoans the fact that as module leader she does not have any 'grading autonomy'. It is certainly interesting to consider the degree of autonomy any tutor has in the partnership programme. With reference to Holliday's Grammar of Culture (Figure 15), there are constraints or blocks on the actions of tutors. The threads that draw tutors together are student outcomes

and the desire to reward achievement positively. While there might be some degree of autonomy in assessment practices in truth, nobody has autonomy. This is an inevitable but uncomfortable reality as expressed by Xinran.

The contractual arrangements for TNE tutors in the UK and China meant that there were differences in approach to assessment work. Tutors' commitment and priorities may be different depending on the tasks they are required to undertake and the contractual arrangements in each location (Chapter 4, Table 9). In some cases, the tutors were completely unaware of the contractual arrangements of the tutor in the other location (Daniel, Emily and Sally).Two of the tutors located in China on 2+2 partnership programmes (Maidong and Xinran) had full time contracts. Their institution gave them a double time allowance compared to the time allowance for modules they taught in China. In contrast, much of the assessment work of those tutors on 3+1 partnership programmes fell outside contractual hours for Zeming and for the five tutors in China with whom the tutors in the UK were teaching and/or assessing. This could potentially act undermine their relationship over time, preventing them from engaging in discussion about assessment practices in small culture formation.

Workload rather contractual arrangements were a more pressing issue for some tutors in the UK. Surprisingly, even though some of the tutors were dissatisfied with their own time allocation, 'You only have (20 hours) a small allocation of time' (Alison) the tutors in the UK were for the most part sympathetic to their partners in China with regards to contractual arrangements:

> …what I (tutor in UK) was asking them to do was something that they (tutors in China) are actually not paid to do. So, therefore, I understand their reluctance to do it. Louise

Linked to this point, a further consideration is how much time a tutor in China is likely to dedicate beyond their contractual hours when only being paid for stand up delivery. Alison is convinced that this affects their working relationship acting as a block and hindering small culture formation and opportunities to discuss assessment practices:

> So I see this(TNE role on this programme) as being kind of further down the pecking order but generally speaking I'm the one (tutor in UK) that makes contact to make sure that things are in place or to chase about exams.

It seems reasonable to suggest that tutors, who will be teaching the students from China as flying faculty, or when they complete their degree programme in the UK in their final year or final two years of 3+1 or 2+2 TNE programmes, are likely to have a far greater investment. This is in contrast to tutors in the UK solely with a moderating role who have no direct contact with students on the programmes. The contractual arrangements of tutors therefore, led to tensions around work relating to assessment and perceptions about commitment to assessment practices. These tensions were played out in small culture formation but arguably had their source in personal trajectories, particular social structures and cultural products (Holliday, 2016).

In China, there were other tensions surrounding assessment practices. These tensions were attributable to the partnership programme and the requirements of the institution in China:

> They (in China) told me to change my exam questions (from assessment format in the UK) because they did not follow the rules of Chinese, follow the rules of my university. So I have all the questions according to our (university in China) rules. Maidong

Therefore, these factors, contractual arrangements and perceptions about commitment and social structures were likely to affect the motivation and attitude of tutors towards their roles and the partnership programme in which assessment is essential to student outcomes and thereby, the success of TNE programmes.

5.1.3 Tutors' understanding of assessment practices

Assessment is a social practice and as such is negotiated (Shay, 2005). Discourses about culture which construct realties and shape experiences can influence how tutors act and react when jointly exercising their professional judgement in marking, moderating and providing feedback on student work (Djerasimovic, 2014).There is a difference in the assessment

procedures and practices between the UK and Chinese higher education systems as explained in chapter two. Difficulties in all aspects of assessment practices and the resulting tensions negatively affected working relationships (Daniel). For example, tutors located in China found the approach to the preparation of tasks for assessment, assessment and moderation in the UK strange. In pairings where the tutors had been able to make connections through personal trajectories these tensions, although they existed, did not negatively influence the working relationship (Maidong). The threads overrode the blocks resulting in compromise rather than intransigence. For other tutors, discussion about assessment practices and processes was challenging as experienced by Maidong and Alison:

> *I don't get a feeling that there is an understanding* of the way we (in the UK) work here in terms of assessment, learning outcomes, how assessment of an exam is done versus a final exam. What the kind of levels of attainment are – different standards what is appropriate at different levels. *I don't think any of that, certainly not in the conversations I have had with my tutor* (my italics). Alison

The negotiation needed to arrive at a shared understanding of assessment practice and an agreed outcome was not straightforward. There was conflict and disagreement. Alison was not sure what to attribute the tutor's 'block' in understanding assessment practices and processes. The conversations with the tutor in China on assessment had not led to meaningful connections and understanding. It can be difficult for tutors in the UK to pinpoint what might be influencing these situations involving assessment practices, without an in-depth knowledge of assessment practices in higher education in China. It might be that there were not enough connections between Alison and the tutor in the other location. It could be that their personal trajectories, the influence from cultural practices and different education systems from the domains of particular social structures and cultural products made it difficult to arrive at an understanding through negotiating action.

It is important to bear in mind that in 3+1 and 2+2 TNE partnership programmes, the tutors in China are implementing the assessment practices of the UK institution (cf. Ecclestone, 2001). Yutong is aware of her colleagues' difficulties in understanding the different assessment practices in the partnership programme:

> They (tutors in China) have their way of marking and teaching and something like assessment design and it is very difficult for them (tutors in China) to understand.

Indeed the assessment practices of the institution in the UK are relatively new to both TNE students and to the tutors in China depending on their educational background and international experience.

A difference in assessment practice that may not be apparent to tutors in both locations is the use of feedback (Zhou and Deneen, 2016, p.1152). Daniel in his moderating role is satisfied with the overall assessment by the tutor in China but is unhappy with the several aspects of the feedback:

> I am in the process this week of feeding back to a tutor (in China) about what I believe was a poor standard of marking but specifically quantity, quality, legibility of feedback and where broadly speaking the marking seemed OK.

If, as Zhou and Deneen (2016) found, there are fundamental differences in the purpose of feedback, there will be dissatisfaction between tutors, which can cause tension in small culture formation. In terms of quality, Daniel might be expecting feedback that is constructive and developmental whereas the tutor in the China might have been deliberately limiting critical comments in order not to discourage students. It is possible that this approach was aligned with the students' perceived needs and expectations as in Thailand (Eldridge and Cranston, 2009). Daniel might be completely unaware of this difference in approach and vice versa. Other tutors in the UK also commented on the general lack of feedback:

> I would have loved in 8 years to have seen a lecturer somewhere over there (in China) give feedback that says the full stop is in the wrong place or anything. Louise

Pyvis (2011) similarly claimed that the feedback provided by tutors in China did not satisfy the need to make academic standards transparent for quality assurance and neither did it adequately support students in their learning. This is where small culture formation has a role to play. It is through communication that tutors can deal with issues and understandings about feedback. The issue maybe unrelated to the domains of conversation as depicted in Hollidays' model of intercultural communication. The standard of

written feedback provided by tutors in China could be due to their English language competency and familiarity with the type of commentary typically used in written feedback. There is evidence to suggest that the English language competency of some tutors on TNE programmes may be unsatisfactory (Hu and Willis, 2017, Ding, 2019).

The application of assessment criteria was another point of difference. Tutors in the UK frequently commented on the grading of tutors in China and not being able to work out how the tutor in China had applied the assessment criteria and subsequently questioning the judgement of the tutor in China. This raises the question of whether tutors in China have understood the assessment criteria, applied it and deliberately concealed the standards (Zhou and Deneen, 2016) or have not understood the assessment criteria, as evidenced in the marking that the tutor in the UK believes to be unsatisfactory. Perhaps tutors firstly need to improve their skill in dialectic conversations to identify and understand where the difference that is blocking action lies (Sennett, 2012). Are tutors' personal trajectories, the small culture formation within the partnership, or the particular social and political structures directly or indirectly influencing their approach to assessment practices? Clearly, some tutors had managed to come to terms with these issues in assessment (Yutong, Christopher, Eric) and had found ways of managing issues amicably.

Feedback practice created further tension amongst tutors. Robert mentioned the fact that some of feedback was on English language competence rather than the technical content of the material. This feedback serves a different purpose and one that might not have been discussed. Robert suggests that feedback is more a reflection of the language ability of students and importance of improving levels of English language:

> I think that some of their feedback (tutors in China) can be orientated towards the language rather than to the technical content of the material that they are teaching and assessing.

However, Robert was careful to point out that he had witnessed this scenario where language rather than knowledge and understanding appeared to influence the mark given to students in the UK. It was not a criticism of tutors in China but an observation and reflection comparing practices.

There might be two issues here, firstly, if as the study by Zhou and Deneen (2016) suggests, the purpose of feedback is to manage affect and encourage effort and improvement, tutors may not be inclined to comment on or criticise content. Tutors might feel that it is more important to make students aware of their use of English language particularly if they perceive this to be a more pressing issue for students on partnership programmes who will be completing their studies in the UK. Secondly, as discussed, tutors in China may be unfamiliar with the type of commentary and language used in written feedback. Also and perhaps, more crucially, they may be unaware of the difference between the expectations of TNE students and the expectations of UK tutors such as Daniel who was disappointed by the quantity, quality and legibility of feedback. Tutors need to consider the expectations of all stakeholders and this is where tension or conflict typical of small culture formation appears as a block (arising from particular social and political structures and cultural products) in the interactions with staff in the other location (Holliday, 2016).

The application of assessment standards is another point of difference between assessment practices in China and the UK, that affects tutors working transnationally (Zhou and Deneen, 2016). Agreeing standards, (interpretation of assessment criteria, evaluation and grading) often did not happen despite agreement amongst tutors that this should happen. This would suggest that conversations, with colleagues, in the same institution are not commonplace. Setting standards is generally not a shared practice (Price, 2005). Moreover, different perspectives on the conception of teaching and learning influence teachers' attitudes to assessment (Merry *et al.*, 2013, Bloxham *et al.*, 2016). In the UK, the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) regulates assessment practices and in China, the HEEDC (Higher Education Evaluation Center). Therefore, is not surprising that the findings of this study show that TNE tutors in the UK are unprepared for and may not expect to have on-going conversations about assessment practices including assessment standards with the tutors in China. Assessment including the preparation of assessment materials, grading and moderating was challenging for all tutors. There were three main areas of disagreement: interpretation of assessment criteria, evaluation and grading, and

justification, which I discuss in the next sections with reference to Holliday's Grammar of Culture (Holliday, 2016).

5.1.4 Tutors' interpretation of assessment criteria and moderation

In the UK, marking schemes use explicit criteria. The tutors located in the UK assumed that the tutors in China were familiar with or had attended professional development training events in assessment procedures. Therefore, in some cases TNE tutors in the UK did not anticipate issues, even though disagreements with their own colleagues in the UK about assessment practices are common (Bloxham *et al.*, 2016). There was genuine concern about the difficulties in preparing assessment material that tutors in China were experiencing and a willingness by tutors in the UK to support them. Daniel says:

> I am in the process of feeding back to a tutor (in China) who I have not met about what I believe was a poor standard of marking……It's a challenging issue anyway for a moderator to deal with …….to communicate the supportive intent of the criticism.

The challenge that tutors faced was therefore, how to deal with differing viewpoints on assessment sensitively. Daniel wanted to support and guide the tutor in China to develop his practice rather than create a block that might be unproductive and potentially damage their working relationship. This is an example of a tutor thinking about negotiating intercultural communication (Holliday, 2018b). Daniel might not have been fully aware of differences in assessment practices in China. His focus was on the activity of completing the moderation task rather than understanding how the tutor had assessed the assignments.

The attribution of assessment practices to national culture or large culture created misunderstandings, which hindered understanding and occasionally cooperation. Eric rightly states:

> It is very important that tutors (in UK) understand the culture of the country we are collaborating with and the students and the staff (in China) because some things that seem normal to us in Europe they are very weird in China or the opposite.

However, this openness to difference and acceptance of difference was troublesome for some tutors in both locations. For example, tutors located in China found the approach to the preparation of tasks for assessment, assessment and moderation in the UK alien even after training, explanations and discussion. Yutong:

> There are many discussions and disagreements (about assessment) ……..and also the assignment and maybe we do not agree on the format, the assignment our partner suggests or maybe after marking of students they not agree with marks or something like that.

Tutors in China at times resisted the attempts of tutors in the UK to guide them in the design of appropriate assessment materials and the satisfactory application of criteria to ensure academic standards (Yutong) due to the influence of particular social structures and cultural products with which they were familiar. Similarly, in the UK, there was tension around the appropriateness of examination questions set by tutors in China on which neither tutor was prepared to compromise based on firmly held beliefs.

> It was to do with the fact that I (tutor in the UK) felt that it was totally inappropriate and students would not be able to answer it (exam question). And, I was correct because the average for the question was 0.7 out of 10. Alison

A further complication is that academic calendars in the UK and China are misaligned. The deadlines for tutors to complete and moderate assessment materials impose an additional time pressure and often crossover into public holidays when tutors are not available. Discussions about assessment between tutors, which might have taken place, did not always happen adding to the frustration felt by tutors in the UK strengthening the existing blocks between tutors. The real issue of interpretation of assessment criteria and moderation was overshadowed by the attribution of difficulties to cultural groups - ‘us and them’ in Holliday’s domain of conversation about particular social and political structures.

5.1.5 Tutors’ evaluation and grading of assessed work

Evaluation and grading of assignments and examinations are another point of potential conflict and tension (Dobos, 2011, Bordogna, 2019). Zhuang

(2009, p.249) identified grading as a persistent ‘source of confusion’ in UK/China TNE partnership progammes. Furthermore, the argument that tutors can mark consistently is flawed (Bloxham et al., 2016). If tutors in China are viewed as novice markers because they are new to the assessment practices of their UK institution then there is no reason to suppose that they cannot apply standards as consistently as their experienced partners can (Price, 2005). Tutors in the focus group had mixed experiences of agreeing marks with their partners. One tutor cited the example of a tutor in China with a non - Chinese background mostly awarding 85% and never a mark below 70%. The fact that the tutor in the UK did not understand this behaviour is revealing. Other tutors in China, despite being aware of the differences in their respective marking systems persisted in awarding ‘unbelievably high marks’ (Alison). A possible explanation for this is that tutors’ professional practice based on their beliefs and values created blocks (Chapter 4, Table 11). Tutors in China simply struggled to understand the assessment practices.

> I mean the rules for grading here (in China) are very different from your rules (in the UK). Maidong

Maidong explains that in China, a student who scores 90 marks is a good student rather than one that scores 70. The pass mark is 60 rather than 40 in the UK (Chapter 2, p. 72).

The tutors in China are ‘serving two masters’ (Dobos, 2011). It is possible that tutors in China are reluctant to award a mark that they and the student would perceive as a low mark. The low mark would indicate that the teacher as the expert has failed the student or that the student is a bad student based on a common perception of the difference between Chinese and Western education systems (Szkornik, 2017). Therefore, the effect of receiving what students and tutors perceive to be a bad mark can be discouraging and damaging to student and tutor alike. Maidong talked about the feeling of dissonance she experienced when using the grading criteria from the UK institution, even though she had personally experienced assessment in another country. This experience of assessment overseas did not act as a thread or connection, it continued to jarr with her beliefs and values on the assessment practices that she was accustomed to in her

country of origin. Christopher also observed this reluctance by tutors in China to follow grading criteria and to satisfy students:

> Initially, I found that the scoring was always at the top end. They (tutors in China) seemed to want to please their students by awarding high marks.

Christopher then explained how he resolved disagreements with his partner in China when students had failed saying:

> I think that they (tutors in China) can accept that (students will fail) from here (in the UK). I think that there (in China) there is an expectation that they have to pass their students. Once they (tutors in China) got backing (from tutor in UK), they were happy to accept. Now it's standard practice and I rarely get an issue with that now.

This finding is consistent with other transnational programmes where the explanation for higher than expected grades was to please stakeholders such as students and parents (Bordogna, 2019, Eldridge and Cranston, 2009). Christopher adjusted his approach and shielded the tutor China from dissatisfaction from his students (Zhuang, 2009). He protected and maintained the threads that connected him and the tutor in China from their personal trajectories and thereby, maintained their good working relationship.

In other situations, described by tutors in the UK, the tutors in China awarded marks according to the marking system in China. They left tutors in UK to resolve their disagreement through the moderation process. In relation to Holliday's Grammar of Culture, these tutors created blocks by not discussing the marks awarded. Although the blocks strained tutors' working relationships, they did not necessarily damage relationships. Maidong and Christopher both experienced blocks. Maidong had much in common with the tutor in the UK. There were threads in their personal trajectories and connections that they had subsequently made through research collaboration. Christopher in comparison had less in common with the tutor in China. He deliberately prevented their differences in assessment creating blocks and damaging the relationship of the tutor in China with his students. Through negotiating action, they found a satisfactory outcome instead of pushing each other apart and locating their difficulties in Holliday's domains of conversation (Figure 5).

5.1.6 Tutors' justification of grading and feedback

In the UK, tutors, justify their decisions in awarding grades through comments and feedback to students (QAA, 2018). Two issues arise, firstly tensions from the process of assessment (Chapter 2, Table 4) and secondly from tensions about the quantity and the quality of the feedback. The tutors in the UK second marked assignments and examinations. The most frequent comment from the interviews was that tutors in China had marked the 'wrong things '(cf. Ramsden, 2003). Bloxham et al (2016 p. 479) in their study on reliability in marking, state that the time tutors spend disagreeing with each other would be better spent reviewing the variation between each other's marks rather than pretending that there is a 'right' mark. They maintain that 'assessment decisions are so complex, intuitive and tacit that variability is inevitable.' (Bloxham et al., 2016 p. 479). This viewpoint is supported by Robert's experience and his view that tutors have to accept the criticism of their decisions:

> This(disagreement) is going to happen because it is part of improving quality or trying to deal with this thing that maybe being able to calibrate this as judges, assessors or markers is a challenging thing and just made more challenging by many thousands of miles of distance, things like cultural distance and language distance and all these things.

This shows understanding of negotiation, of the need for action following discussion to arrive at a win-win situation through 'cohesive' behavior (Holliday, 2018a).Tutors in the UK and China spoke about the opportunities to discuss marks and compromise even though sometimes tutors had to send assessed work to third markers. Xinran, a tutor in China, felt that she had 'no grading autonomy'. She did however, discuss grading with her partner in the UK in contrast to arrangements in other partnership programmes (Dobos, 2011). The mention of the imbalance of power or equity in assessment by Xinran was interesting since two tutors in the UK were more concerned about control in relation to their role and their institution:

> Normally as module leader, you would have quite a lot of control over what was happening (teaching and assessment) whereas you (tutor in UK) have less control. Robert

> It is challenging because we (in UK) don't own the programme…. (other institutions in the UK) have better control over what happens… it's a real challenge. Alison

The tutors in the UK felt that they needed more control when their institution was clearly the dominant partner and particularly in assessment practices.

Tutors can learn and adapt cultural processes or practices such as assessment (Holliday, 2013) but this requires tutors to examine their own practice and shift their positions to accommodate each other and maintain standards in 3+1 and 2+2 TNE arrangements with China, where tutors in the UK are in control. For some tutors on these partnership programmes in China the adjustments will be much easier than for others. This may depend on their personal trajectories and whether through the underlying universal cultural processes in small culture formation, these tutors can draw on their threads of cultural experience and manage their working relationships.. The challenges of assessment practices and the tensions that arise in assessment practices are widely experienced in higher education as documented in the literature. In TNE partnerships, these challenges are exacerbated by differences in assessment practices, the impact of contractual arrangements and perceived imbalances of power between institutions and tutors in the partnerships.

Agreement requires negotiation and shifts in practice (Bloxham et al., 2016) in which conflict or disagreement is to be expected. It is quite contentious, influenced by particular social and political structures and personal trajectories (Knight, 2006, Yorke, 2011, Holliday, 2018b). It tests working relationships and does not only apply to TNE contexts. In TNE relationships, there is perhaps a greater probability of disagreements over assessment and discussing standards is even more important (Price, 2005). Tutors in both locations in TNE programmes are moving into an environment, which is both familiar and unfamiliar. Tutors need to be 'resilient, flexible and prepared for anything' (Robert). Tutors in both locations dislike and disagree with some aspects of the organisational structures and systems of the partnership programme such as assessment practices. The reasons vary. It possible to draw on Holliday's domains of conversation to understand where the

possible influences lie for tutors' experience of assessment practices. Therefore, even if there was feedback in terms of quantity and quality to satisfy the tutors in the UK who are second marking and moderating work, it is unlikely that tutors in both locations would agree since their practices are influenced by their personal trajectories, social and political structures and cultural practices

In summary, the theoretical frameworks used, Bordogna's fusion model and Holliday's Grammar of Culture were useful in explaining and bringing meaning to tutors' experiences of TNE. Holliday's Grammar of Culture was valuable in identifying specific areas that affect tutors' relationships positively such as individual expectations and previous international experience or negatively such as tutors' expectations and differing views on assessment practices. Assessment practices and processes are the main source of misunderstandings and tension between tutors. How tutors make sense of their experiences through intercultural communication is important. Positive experiences reflect tutors' attitude to difference and their willingness to be flexible. The expectations of tutors differed, as did their professional development needs. This may not necessarily be obvious at institutional and programme level when tutors invariably achieve the purpose of their collective activity: the teaching and/or assessing. The reality for some tutors was miserable when expectations were unmet and completion of tasks were challenging. This situation may be attributed to frequent changes in tutors (Wilkins, 2018) and tutors moving on, using their TNE experience as a stepping-stone to other more fulfilling work. For other tutors, teaching and assessing is a rewarding experience professionally and personally. This can in part be attributed to the ability of these tutors to build and maintain satisfactory working relationships with staff in the other location.

The findings of this study show that there are many factors, which influence the experiences of tutors in TNE partnerships. Ding (2018) has referred to the teaching and learning processes of TNE as a 'black box' in which the experiences of teachers are hidden and unexamined. Moreover, the experiences of TNE tutors outside the classroom environment behind the scenes have been mostly overlooked (O'Mahony, 2014). The work of Bordogna (2018) on TNE partnership programmes and the work of Holliday

(2016) on intercultural communication have been useful in explaining and interpreting what goes on in the ‘black box’ of TNE tutors on 3+1 and 2+2 partnership programmes. The conclusions, the implications for professional practice relate to institutional policy, tutor development and support, and recommendations for individual tutors based on the first-hand experiences and perspectives of tutors, are presented in chapter six.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and implications for professional practice

The aim of the study was to investigate the experiences of tutors teaching on UK/Chinese TNE partnership programmes. Holliday's Grammar of Culture (2016) conceptual model of intercultural communication provided a useful lens with which to interpret tutors' rich and detailed accounts. Indeed, a different way of conceptualizing tutors' experiences of teaching and assessing can lead to new understandings and perspectives that are useful to practitioners and other stakeholders. TNE is at once a familiar and strange context, which requires awareness, knowledge and skill (Leask, 2008). Tutors need awareness of their own actions and how these actions influence professional relationships, knowledge of the specific context and the skill to achieve the purpose of the activity (Killick, 2018).

The findings have provided an insight into the realities of tutors in the UK and China showing that there is a range of experiences dependent on many factors. There is not a common TNE tutor experience. These factors include personal trajectories and attributes (especially international experience and skills in intercultural communication), understanding of respective roles and responsibilities, time constraints, cultural influences, educational and local contexts, English language competence and perceived value of teaching transnationally.
To recap, the research questions were:

- What are tutors' experiences of relationship building with staff in the other location?
- What are tutors' experiences of working transnationally (teaching and assessing) and the challenges they encounter?

Tutors' experiences of building working relationships with staff in the other location vary. The tutors interviewed generally enjoyed their role benefitting professionally and personally. Most tutors however, felt inadequately prepared for teaching transnationally and the main challenge they experienced with staff in the other location were assessment procedures and processes. There are implications for professional development based on

this study. There is a need for a more structured and responsive professional development framework for tutors involved in this type of work than is currently available (Smith, 2017). Institutions should tailor training and interventions to needs identified by tutors rather than relying on generic induction programmes. The challenges that tutors experience, mainly result from a mismatch of expectations and beliefs about practice. There is a need to have meaningful discussions about expectations across and within institutions between tutors and other stakeholders.

Tutors who experienced positive working relationships had found common ground with staff in the other location. They were satisfied with the frequency and type of contact and often had met with staff in the other location. In most cases, tutors shared disciplinary expertise and enjoyed working with each other. The way tutors thought, felt and behaved positively affected their work. Those tutors who experienced challenges more acutely, felt constrained by the organisation of the programme and contractual arrangements. In addition, in some cases, these tutors lacked knowledge and understanding of the local context. They sometimes did not know who else was involved in the TNE programme in their own institution and neither had they met the tutor in the other location. They had fewer opportunities to share views on assessment practices with other tutors, and work through disagreements with staff in the other location. These tutors questioned many aspects of the partnership programme drawing on national, institutional and individual differences, even the commitment of the staff in the other location. The recommendations tutors made in relation to their own experiences focused on preparation for the role and professional development organised at an institutional level rather than changes that they could make themselves.

6.1 Implications for professional practice

The study offers valuable insights for university policy makers and practitioners. TNE might be considered a niche area, but it is likely be more mainstream with increased collaboration with European institutions post-Brexit (UUK, 2019a). The challenges experienced by tutors may resonate

with other modes of transnational delivery and indeed educational collaborations more generally. To foster truly collaborative relationships particular attention needs to paid to what happens at programme level and how tutors in TNE collaborative provision arrangements work with staff in the other location and in their own institution: firstly, to build and maintain good working relationships and secondly, to share their experiences and practice with others specifically on assessment procedures and practices.

The implications for professional practice relate to institutional policy, tutor development and support, and recommendations for individual tutors. The implications and recommendations for individual tutors are summarised below:

Institutional policy

- Audit of assessment issues in both locations
- Inclusion of mentoring role in job descriptors
- Recognition for promotion, awards and grants for TNE tutors

Tutor development and support

- Annual introduction to tutors on transnational programme with guidance on managing expectations
- Support in establishing relationships with staff in the other location
- Ongoing support in English language competency for tutors whose first language is not English
- A peer review process to encourage reflection, sharing of practice and to inform programme managers and educational developers of professional development needs

Recommendations for individual tutors

- Focus on building working relationships with staff in the other location
- Increase knowledge and understanding of assessment practices in the other location
- Take ownership of professional development

These implications and recommendations for individual tutors are discussed in the following sections.

6.1.1 Implications for institutional policy

Institutions are responsible for improving and maintaining the quality of academic programmes through their quality assurance frameworks. Since assessment procedures and practices are the main source of misunderstandings or ‘blocks’ between and amongst tutors in both locations, institutions in collaborative provision arrangements need to identify and address the issues (QAA, 2013). As a first step to improve issues concerning grading and feedback, programme managers can conduct an audit of the assessment issues that tutors experience across both locations. Indeed, it is possible that tension surrounding assessment practices are a manifestation of more fundamental problems such as poor working relationships or lack of commitment to the partnership programme rather than assessment procedures and practices per se.

Dissatisfaction with the application of marking criteria and feedback is common. Awareness of differing assumptions about assessment practices is often lacking which leads to unnecessary misunderstandings. However, although this study shows that there are discussions about assessment practices, there is a lack of meaningful discussions with staff in the other location. It is evident from the findings in this study that communication acts as an enabler and a barrier to the development of positive experiences of teaching and dealing with challenges arising from different views of pedagogic practices. Communication protocols as mentioned earlier may be helpful in facilitating regular opportunities for discussion on assessment practices. Tutors in TNE programmes are groupings or small cultures into which tutors carry experience from their own personal trajectories drawing on domains of national structures (Holliday, 2018a). The small culture formation, which results from interaction between tutors, is experienced differently. Tutors therefore, need to discuss pedagogic practices such as assessment to understand each other’s practice.

Assessment procedures and practices regularly feature in professional development programmes in higher education in the UK (HEA, 2018). The challenges in assessment in TNE are cited in the literature usually in the

context of quality assurance (Keevers et al., 2014). However, professional development invariably focuses on the student experience of assessment rather than the challenges faced by practitioners and are not specific to TNE contexts. In TNE partnership programmes, assessment is an area that requires action and an area where institutional policy leading to strategies can result in improvements. Institutions can address the challenges that TNE tutors face through institution-wide or individual professional development whichever is more appropriate. This study found that some tutors discussed assessment practices as a group in their own institution (in China) but that these discussions tended to reinforce difference. Tutors in the UK did not mention group discussions in the UK and those tutors who experienced difficulties in grading, more often than not resorted to third marking. Therefore, the 'blocks' remained and potential opportunities to create threads of experience between tutors in the other location were lost.

Institutions therefore, have a role to play in facilitating and supporting professional development because pedagogic practices such as assessment are the main cause of misunderstandings and tension between tutors in both locations. The discussions about assessment need to take place regularly between tutors across institutions in joint professional development activities. Tutors need to share strategies that have worked which lead to fewer disagreements over assessment practices creating threads of experience that sustain working relationships. Institutions through professional development can organise and facilitate opportunities for sessions. These can have the additional benefit of improving working relationships that may have been fraught with disagreements over assessment turning 'blocks' into 'threads'. The challenges stem from the application of marking criteria. The discontent and exasperation that some tutors reported wasted time and energy that could have been used more constructively to agree and set standards (Price, 2015) and to understand the implicit rules and expectations for what is required to attain high marks (Yorke, 2011). It is evident that discussions can be challenging and where dissatisfaction persists amongst tutors the working relationships between tutors become strained, blocks are created and small culture formation is hindered.

Institutions may also consider the inclusion of a mentoring role in job descriptors for tutors working on partnership programmes. This would be beneficial as a means of addressing challenges associated with assessment. The change in job descriptors with the inclusion of a mentoring role would however require institutions to review and modify the contractual arrangements of tutors. Nearly two decades ago Gribble and Ziguras (2003) writing about induction for staff stressed the importance of staff with a teaching remit to have an understanding of the cultural political economic and legal contexts of their partner's country. Besides information about the country and general information about teaching Gribble and Ziguras(2003) identified a need for a system to enable staff to support each other and share information. They proposed a blend of formal and informal professional development with the incorporation of a mentoring role in job descriptors. They also proposed implementing guided reflection on teaching issues with reflections captured through tutors' annual professional development review process. Gribble and Ziguras' main concern and purpose was quality assurance, however, the use of a mentoring system may encourage a focus on relationship building. Tutors' mentoring roles in turn could enable and facilitate discussion around challenges such as assessment processes and practice.

In addition, mentoring relationships could facilitate discussion around teaching practices more generally and guidance on what tutors in China refer to as Western pedagogy which some tutors in China expect and thereby enable and support closer collaboration. Therefore, an audit of assessment issues in both locations and the inclusion of a mentoring role in job descriptors would go some way in 'unblocking' and smoothing intercultural communication in small culture formation. Some tutors have successfully resolved challenges that they have experienced with assessment while other tutors have not. An audit would identify these issues. Institutions would then be in a position to formulate and evaluate strategies to overcome these issues. Tutors with a mentoring role included in their job descriptors would have opportunities to build rapport using the 'threads' of experience that they share. Moreover, tutors could have mentoring roles within their own institution not only across institutions to support less experienced tutors. This

would be beneficial for tutors in the UK and China, who do not have the opportunity to visit the other institution.

Finally, institutions in both locations should consider the nature of working transnationally, the skills required and the need for recognition of excellence in this area. Teaching and/or assessing in TNE programmes is challenging work and should be recognised for promotion, awards and grants and to encourage wider sharing of good practice (Keevers et al., 2014). The benefits of working with individuals with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds should not be overstated. Although there is some disagreement between tutors in this study about whether working transnationally should be viewed differently from the other work that they undertake, recognition for promotion, awards and grants for TNE tutors is needed and would be advantageous to institutions and tutors.

Teaching transnationally is less visible than mainstream teaching and is often more challenging; a view shared by the majority of tutors interviewed. However, teaching remains ‘a Cinderella activity’ (Macfarlane, 2011, p.71) and in the UK, although there has been progress in career pathways for staff who specialise in transnational work, tutors know that working transnationally in teaching/moderating or moderating roles, is unlikely to lead to promotion. In addition, this work may be harder to evidence. Nevertheless, some tutors in the UK have used their experience as case studies in applications for the UK Professional Standards Framework (PSF). Ultimately, tutors will decide on whether their involvement in TNE activities, teaching and/or assessing warrants additional effort and adds value to their career aspirations (Whitchurch, 2020). In China on the other hand, there is evidence that involvement in TNE programmes is perceived to be lower status (Hu, Eisenchlas and Trevaskes , 2019). The combination of the factors discussed may explain to a certain extent, the perspectives of those tutors for whom working transnationally is frustrating.

6.1.2 Implications for tutor development and support

Working transnationally should be supported through dedicated professional development in and across locations. This finding reinforces existing research which states that in the UK professional development for TNE tutors is not uniform (Smith, 2013, Keevers et al., 2014). In China, based on this study, there is a need and/or desire for professional development amongst tutors. The tutors interviewed claim that professional development, where it is available, is harder to access due to nature of the contractual arrangements. The professional needs of tutors vary therefore; induction programmes and on-going support requires regular evaluation and review.

The clarification of tutor's expectations with staff in the other location is an important step in building working relationships. Based on this study, specific areas that require attention and increased input in both institutions of the TNE partnership programmes are information about the local context including academic calendars and administrative arrangements. At the start of each academic year, programme managers should arrange introductions for tutors and their specific responsibilities with guidance on managing expectations.

The findings have shown that tutors were generally unaware of their differing expectations and lacked experience in intercultural communication. Tutors are at different career stages and some may lack confidence in aspects of teaching and assessing on transnational programmes. Staff in the other location may misinterpret tutors' actions as disinterest or incompetence leading to 'blocks' rather than 'threads' in small culture formation. Tutors need to be encouraged to discuss issues relating to pedagogic practice. Some tutors might find it useful to make their expectations explicit in the form of a psychological contract with staff in the other location as proposed by Smith (2017) which may or may not include a communication protocol.

A further issue is the English Language competency of tutors. The quality of communication acts as an enabler and a barrier to dealing with challenges

arising from differing views of pedagogic practices. The quality of communication can be affected negatively by the English language competence of tutors. Tutors' level of English language competence and tutors' perception of their English language competence may limit their interaction (Hu, Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2019, Hu and Willis, 2017). This study has found that there is need to provide ongoing support in English language competency for tutors whose first language is not English.

Interestingly, the tutors in the UK tended to downplay the role of English language competency. These tutors were generally sympathetic to the level of English of staff in the other location comparing it favourably to their own command of foreign languages. Indeed, these tutors in the UK may be unaware of the extent to which English language competence and/or confidence in language ability may be limiting their interactions with staff in the other location. The 'blocks' may result in part from language competency and tutors' inability to create threads of experience in small culture formation. English language competency could be addressed at institutional level. The findings of this study however, suggest that a more targeted approach based on individual need would suffice. There was evidence of good levels of English language competence particularly but not exclusively amongst those tutors who have experience of studying and/or teaching in English speaking countries.

In addition, tutors need to feel comfortable in communicating and sharing practice with each other. Institutions need to help facilitate sufficient opportunities for communication between tutors to build relationships, to share their practices and how best to deal with conflict (He and Liu, 2018). This may require generic or targeted professional development. Positive experiences in collaborative provision arrangements lead to good working relationships. These experiences can result in research collaboration and career progression as in Eric and Maidong's case. In this study, some tutors had exchanged little or no professional and personal information. The reasons tutors mentioned included work pressure, status, lack of confidence, absentmindedness, fear, and English language competence. These specific

barriers to exchanging professional information require attention and tutors may overcome these more effectively through peer support.

In situations where tutors struggle or are unable to identify what might be causing misunderstandings and difficulties Gribble and Ziguras 's (2003) suggestion of implementing guided reflection on teaching issues in the annual professional development review process might be useful. However, rather than embedding reflection in the review process, it could be part of an ongoing peer review process to encourage reflection and sharing of practice or as part of their mentoring roles. Structured conversations with educational developers to support tutors have also been recommended (Smith (2009). These would have the additional benefit of discouraging tutors from holding onto what they might perceive as negative experiences or ‘blocks’ and allowing these ‘blocks’ to affect their working relationships long-term. The annual professional development review process and/or structured conversations could inform programme managers and educational developers of tutors’ professional development needs and feed into institutional strategies.

This study shows that currently TNE tutors in collaborative provision arrangements have few if any dedicated professional development opportunities apart from a limited initial induction. Tutors have to be completely self-reliant in building working relationships with staff in the other location. Working at a distance, tutors do not have and possibly miss the informal conversations and interactions that are a normal feature of workplaces. Maidong suggested joint activities to improve collaboration, but did not specify the type of activity. To encourage ‘cohesive behaviour’, characteristic of small culture formation (Holliday.1999, p.237), focused activities on professional practice could be interspersed with virtual tea/coffee or breakfast/lunch dates or similar events that facilitate interaction. These activities besides enabling the exchange of professional and personal information could potentially prevent or at least help tutors deal with ‘blocks’ which often lead to dissatisfaction. Through creating threads of experience, the focus on difference that can and does lead to conflict is minimised.. Tutors can turn ‘blocks’ into ‘threads’ and would feel more connected and

work better together. The activities suggested could improve the relationships between tutors who never meet face-to face, but should not replace regular opportunities for joint professional development across locations and targeted provision for tutors as necessary.

6.1.3 Recommendations for individual tutors

From the outset tutors need to build working relationships proactively, making connections and creating threads of experience with staff in the other location. Tutors have the knowledge and expertise to make practical and sustainable suggestions to enhance professional practice. They need to be flexible, patient and practice empathy in TNE collaborative provision such as partnership programmes (Killick, 2018). The ongoing needs of tutors should inform programme managers and educational developers on professional development requirements. The experiences of tutors teaching on transnational partnership programmes discussed in this study indicate that tutors do not regularly share their experiences informally or formally.

Improved levels of communication as well as the quality of communication can strengthen working relationships. Building satisfactory working relationships is a neglected but important skill in establishing professional relations in international partnerships (Spencer-Oatey and Wang, 2020). These relationships between tutors matter. Institutions take establishing and maintaining relationships by tutors for granted. Working relationships require time, effort and care. The experiences of the tutors interviewed indicate that the type of contact and the frequency of contact varies considerably as reported in other studies (Bordogna, 2019).

Effective working relationships are based on trust and collegiality. Tutors build relationships through regular opportunities to interact despite time zones and variance in academic calendars. Communication protocols as suggested by Daniel might be effective in establishing regular interaction (Smith, 2017). Often tutors make assumptions about communication practices with staff in the other location and yet rarely dedicate time to

discuss expectations about communication and managing relations. Through the process of building and maintaining relationships, tutors become more engaged and committed to the TNE programmes. Communication creates the threads that unite and lessens the blocks, which complicate intercultural communication and working relationships (Holliday, 2016). In the literature, the importance of building relationships is a common theme yet few if any practical suggestions are offered (O'Mahony, 2014, Keevers et al., 2014, Smith, 2017). In addition, there is reference to a general lack of awareness of communication styles and the effect of differing communication styles on working relationships. There is limited discussion on tutors' experiences and what works well and the strategies that tutors use.

In relation to assessment procedures and practices as discussed earlier in implications for institutional policy and for tutor development and support, tutors clearly have an important role to play. Tutors' knowledge and understanding of assessment practices in the other location is at best generic and often incomplete. In partnership programmes, tutors despite differing contractual arrangements, are directly involved in assessment and/or moderation. This behoves tutors to familiarise themselves with these procedures and practices formally and informally to carry out their tasks with knowledge and understanding. This familiarisation applies to tutors in both locations.

Educational backgrounds have a strong influence on practices, arguably stronger than tutors are prepared to admit. The 'mental model of quality' (Ecclestone, 2001, p. 309), which stems from educational backgrounds and practice, results in feelings of cognitive dissonance in both locations. The adoption of the assessment procedures and practices by one institution is an agreed feature of 3+1 and 2+1 programmes in collaborative provision. Adjusting to, and adopting practices requires knowledge and a shift in thinking as does introducing tutors in the other location to practices with which are unfamiliar. Tutors need to be prepared to come into conflict over assessment procedures and practices. In one sense, the difficulty that tutors experience with assessment is a ready-made 'block' deeply rooted in

personal trajectories, their small culture environment: the higher education setting they work in, and wider social and political structures.

Tutors have to manage this ‘block’ in small culture formation while preserving their working relationship with staff in the other location. They do not necessarily need more information on assessment procedures and practices (Ecclestone, 2001). They need support and practical help in the form of discussion and relevant annotated examples of assessed work for example to make sense of each other and their practices (Holliday, 2019). Tutors therefore, should focus on completing assessment tasks in a professional manner, which neither disadvantages student outcomes nor damages the working relationships with staff in the other location: a focus on threads rather than blocks that create barriers. This is part of the meaning making process of small culture formation requires tutors to take ownership of their professional development needs whether they are related to assessment procedures and practices or not.

In conclusion, tutor experiences in TNE partnernship programmes vary depending on a range of factors. Tutors need to take action and use the support available. Where professional development and the support available do not meet their needs, tutors need to communicate this information to programme managers.

6.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes an important contribution to transnational education by investigating the experiences of tutors teaching on transnational partnership programmes. Through this study, I wanted to contribute to a better understanding of what it is like to teach on these programmes with staff in the other location. Using Holliday’s Grammar of Culture (2016) as a conceptual model to guide this study, I have tried to move the focus away from essentialist assumptions of culture, which tend to privilege national culture and ignore other contextual factors that affect tutors’ experiences in TNE. The study focused attention on the experiences of tutors, past and

present, to highlight their work. Tutors' experiences of working with staff in the other location are complex and varied. Building and maintaining productive working relationships is challenging for tutors. Improved knowledge, understanding and application of assessment practices are areas that require urgent attention by tutors. Institutions may be unaware or lack understanding of the nature of teaching/moderating or moderating roles in TNE collaborative provision such as partnership programmes. Studies such as this one can provide useful insights. One distinguishing feature of this study in contrast to the majority of previous studies is the inclusion of the experiences of tutors from the sending institutions of TNE partnership programmes alongside those of the receiving institution.

6.3 Strengths and Limitations

There is much to be learnt from reflecting on the experiences of tutors in collaborative provision such as 3+1 and 2+2 TNE programmes. These tutors are most closely involved in the delivery of the programmes. The study is based on self-reports. Indeed, there are likely to be differences between what tutors say, their actions, and how they interpret these actions. Furthermore, the tutors' experiences were selected, and interpreted. They are, however presented from the perspective of an insider with current involvement in TNE partnership programmes. The interviews were conducted in English. Some of tutors might have preferred the use of their first language, which was not an option in this study. The findings may not be representative of tutors' perspectives teaching on similar partnership programmes. Professional working relationship vary, yet it is possible that they resonate with the experiences of tutors in other transnational arrangements and more widely amongst those members of staff working internationally, in diverse teams or in other locations experiencing and negotiating intercultural communication.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

There will be continued growth in TNE in higher education and it is likely that in the future, there will be more virtual collaboration and possibly less face-to-face contact for tutors in TNE arrangements. Building and maintaining

satisfactory working relationships are critical to TNE collaborative provision.There is limited research on the experiences of tutors particularly those tutors located in the sending institutions. More research into the experiences of tutors working transnationally whether in teaching and/or assessing roles is necessary with tutors in both locations of collaborative provision to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences. If possible, researchers should conduct interviews in the first language of the tutors in order to able to delve more deeply into their experiences and to give voice to tutors whose English language competence restricts their full engagement with staff in the other location.

A longitudinal study would be of value to evaluate the efficacy of training and interventions that are provided for TNE tutors and whether they are still fit for purpose. Research into how tutors would structure a professional framework for working transnationally based on their experiences would be useful for programme managers and educational developers to understand the challenges of working transnationally from the perspective of tutors.

More research needs to be done in how the tutors' experiences of intercultural learning through working on transnational programmes is utilsed or can be utilised in the home institution for the benefit of staff and students alike. This study also revealed discomfort relating to issues of equity between tutors, and in the partnership programmes. Institutions cannot achieve equitable collaborative provision without first understanding the expectations of all stakeholders. In this respect, tutors' perspectives warrant investigation.

6.5 Conclusion

This study presents findings that bring new knowledge to the understanding of the experiences of TNE tutors working in partnership programmes and to the field of transnational education. The findings illustrate the experiences of TNE tutors in the UK and in China. Currently there appears to be little awareness of what goes on behind the scenes when teaching and assessing on transnational partnership programmes and how tutors negotiate intercultural communication in their teaching/moderating or moderating roles.

The findings reveal tutors' experiences of making connections and negotiating intercultural communication to fulfil their responsibilities. These tutors add value to partnership programmes and their contribution behind the scenes; developing productive working relationships leading to good outcomes for students can be easily taken for granted by institutions. The experiences, which formed the basis of this study, are varied and generally positive. Eric who has worked with three tutors in China says:

> I enjoy working with them (tutors in China). I feel very confident working with the tutors there. I have a very positive experience.

It is time for higher education institutions to turn their attention to TNE tutors' realities, recognise the value they add to successful transnational programmes and address their professional needs for the benefit of all stakeholders. This is more pressing in a post-pandemic transnational higher education in which international mobility may be restricted. Tutors are well aware of challenges involved in teaching and/or assessing at a distance. It is imperative for all stakeholders to recognise, and not underestimate the importance of building positive working relationships with staff in the other location.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Descriptions of the main TNE delivery modes

(Source: British Council, 2012. p. 69)

International higher education definitions

Distance learning

The term distance learning is used differently depending on the context in which it is used. Traditionally distance learning is used to describe a learning experience which has little or no face-to-face contact. Students are able to study at their own pace and have limited interaction with other students or tutors on their course. In recent years, many distance learning programmes have developed to incorporate face-to-face teaching support. These programmes are often described as ‘supported distance learning’. International students often see these programmes as ‘part-time study’ rather than distance learning. The teaching may be delivered by UK academics travelling overseas to teach part of the course; or through local tutors/academics; or a mix of the two.

In-country delivery/ collaborative provision/ partnerships

In-country delivery is used to describe programmes where the delivery mode is predominantly face-to-face (for the whole of a course or part of it).Teaching is usually delivered through a local partner institution or through a branch campus. Most of the teaching will be delivered through locally based tutors. The level of input into the programme and delivery from origin institutions can vary.

Models of in-country delivery include:

Branch campus: The origin institution creates a campus on another site. Staff may be recruited locally or brought from the origin institution, but they are staff of the provider. The origin institution is solely responsible for course delivery and all academic matters. The costs involved in the development and management of branch campuses is prohibitive to the majority of institutions.

Twinning programme: This is where the origin institution has a local partner. The local partner teaches part of the origin institution’s course, using their own staff. Students transfer to the origin institution’s own campus to complete the course.

Typical combinations are:

1+2 – the first year of the degree programme is delivered overseas followed by two years in the origin institution.

2+2 – foundation and first year degree is delivered overseas and the final two years of the programme in the origin institution.

3+0 – are delivered entirely by the partner institution and do not involve any period of study in the origin country. The origin institution will provide the course material to the local partner, or agree to accept the partner's own course as an alternative. The local partner is responsible for course delivery. The origin institution is responsible for monitoring academic standards.

Dual/joint award: The origin institution and local partner provide programmes leading to separate awards of both or all of them (dual award) or to a single award made jointly by both (joint award).

Franchising: The origin institution licences a local institution to teach some or its entire course, so that students can receive the award of the origin institution without attending the origin campus. The local institution is responsible for delivery of the course. The origin institution makes the final award and has overall responsibility for content, delivery, assessment and quality assurance.

Validation: The course is developed and delivered by the local institution. The origin institution judges whether it is of appropriate quality to lead to its award. The origin institution determines the extent to which it exerts direct control over quality assurance aspects.

A related term (not specific to in-country delivery) is articulation.

Articulation: A transfer arrangement between an origin and local institution. The origin institution agrees to recognise and grant specific credit and advanced standing to applicants from a named programme of study pursued in the local institution

Appendix 2: Participant consent form and information sheet

The research for this study was submitted for ethics consideration under reference number Z6364106/2018/09/01 and was approved under the procedures of UCL Institute of Education's Ethics Committee on 01/09/2018.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project title: Exploring the experiences of module tutors in UK/Chinese TNE (transnational education) partnerships.

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete this consent form and return to **Zorka Besevic** in person or at the address below.

I have read and understood the information leaflet about the research.

I understand that if any of my words are used in reports or presentations they will not be attributed to me.

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, and that if I choose to do this, any data I have contributed will not be used.

I understand that I can contact Zorka Besevic at any time and request for my data to be removed from the project database.

I understand that the results will be shared in research publications and/or presentations.

I agree for the data I provide to be archived at the UK Data Service. I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

Name _____Signed _____

Date _____

Researcher's name: Zorka Besevic
UCL Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way London WC1H 0AL
Zorka.besevic.14 @ucl.ac.uk

Information Sheet

Project Title

Exploring the experiences of module tutors in UK/Chinese TNE (transnational education) partnerships.
7th May 2018 – 15th June 2019
Information sheet for module tutors in TNE (transnational education) partnerships
Who is conducting the research?
My name is Zorka Besevic and I am inviting you to take in part in my research project, 'Exploring the experiences of module tutors in UK/Chinese TNE (transnational education) partnerships in managing modules and relationship building'. This project is part of my Doctor of Education (EdD) studies at UCL's Institute of Education. The Institute of Education is the world's leading centre in the field of education and social science. My professional interest lies in internationalisation and I have been involved in a TNE joint degree partnership programme with a Chinese university for over a decade
I am hoping to explore the experiences of module tutors in UK/Chinese TNE (transnational education) partnerships in managing modules and relationship building.I very much hope that you would like to take part. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.
Why are we doing this research?
This research study aims to explore the experiences of transnational module tutors in the both UK and Chinese partner institutions. There is relatively little research on

the experiences of module tutors working with their counterparts managing modules and relationship building. Over 80 % of all UK degree awarding bodies are now involved in some form of transnational education (QAA, 2016). Staff perspectives from both institutions are important not
least because of the growth in joint degrees, which require close collaboration and greater understanding of working transnationally.
Research aim
What are the experiences of module tutors working transnationally in UK/Chinese TNE joint degree partnerships with their counterparts?
Research Objectives/Questions

- What are module tutor's experiences of managing modules transnationally and how do module tutors address challenges that arise?
- What are module tutor's experiences of relationship building and how can relationships be developed and sustained between module tutors and their counterparts in TNE partnership programmes?
- What are the implications for professional development of academic staff working transnationally at programme level?

Why am I being invited to take part?
You have been invited because I am interested in your experience. It is up to you to decide to take part. I will describe the study and go through the information sheet, which I will give you. I will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.
What will happen if I choose to take part?
The interviews will take place 15th June 2018 – 15th June 2019) lasting approximately45 minutes and no more than one hour. The interviews will be recorded. You will be invited to share your experience of TNE partnership: reflections on your experiences in managing modules, your relationships with partner teaching staff and your overall experience of TNE.
Will anyone know I have been involved?
All personal data will be stored and processed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA 1998). Your name will not be identified or identifiable in data storage, analysis or in research reports or publications.
What will happen to the results of the research?
The findings from the interviews will be presented internally to colleagues and they will be shared amongst the participating institutions. At a later stage, the findings will be presented at a relevant conference on TNE (transnational education).
I cannot promise that the study will help you personally but the information gathered from the study will help to increase the understanding of module tutors 'experiences of managing modules and relationship building and may lead to improvements in professional development and support systems for module tutors involved in TNE.
Do I have to take part?
It is entirely up to you whether or not you choose to take part. We hope that if you do choose to be involved then you will find it a valuable experience.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.
If you would like to be involved, please could you confirm your interest by emailing zbesevic@harper-adams.ac.uk before 15th June 2019.

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at zbesevic@harper-adams.ac.uk .

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee
Z6364106/2018/09/01.

Appendix 3: Focus group and Interview schedules

Interview guides – sample questions

Focus groups

During the interview, the participants will be invited to share their experience of TNE partnership: reflections on the experiences they have had in managing modules, their relationships with partner teaching staff and their overall experience of TNE.

Can you share with us some of the successful experiences you have had in your role of module tutor on the partnership?

Can you tell me about your experience of managing the module?

Can you share with us some of the challenges or issues that you have experienced? How you dealt with them?

Discuss their perceptions of academic cultural similarities and differences

How would you describe your overall experience of teaching transnationally?

Semi- structured interviews

Start by asking participants to provide some information about themselves and their background

Questions about teaching transnationally and managing the modules

How were you selected for the role of module tutor?

When you took on your role of module tutor, do you feel that you were adequately prepared?

Do you feel in the same way now?

Did you have a mentor? (formal/informal)

Do you have access to ongoing professional development for teaching transnationally?

How would you describe your role to someone new to this role?

What advice, if any, would you give them?

Within your institution, do you interact/meet up with other module tutors on the partnership programme? Programme leader?

Is your contribution to teaching transnationally recognised in promotional processes or remuneration/pay?

Can you share a successful experience in managing modules transnationally?

Can you share a challenge or issue that you have experienced and how you dealt with it?

How would you describe this aspect (teaching transnationally) of your job role?

Is there one single factor that would improve the managing of modules?

Was the experience of teaching transnationally what you expected it to be?

Questions about working relationships

Have your met your partner tutor?

Can you tell me about the way you communicate with each other? (when, how, why etc.)

What do you know about your partner tutor and what they do?

How have you experienced relationship building with your partner?

How would rate your interpersonal communication skills?

Do you collaborate to develop teaching resources or research?

Did you have previous experience of working in a diverse team or in another country?

Who do you turn to for support?

General questions about the partnership
Can you describe/tell me what you know about the partnership?
Do you feel well informed about the partnership past and present?
How do you think that teaching transnationally has influenced your professional practice?

Interview Guide – emailed to tutors in China
I'd like to know more about your experience of working as a module leader on the co-operation programme.
How long have you been a module tutor on the programme?
Are you responsible for one or more than one module?
How did you become involved?
Did you apply for the role?
Do you think being module tutor on this co-operation programme is 'different' in some way (from the other work that you do at your university in China)? In what way?
Your expectations when you became a module tutor on the cooperation programme
Please can you give examples
What did you expect your role to be?
What didn't you expect?
What has changed?
Did your expectations change? If so why?
Can you describe your induction/preparation for the role?
Do you feel that you were prepared when you started?
Do you feel in the same way now?
What would you have liked to be different about your induction and your first/initial experiences of working on the programme?
Can you tell me about any training for working transnationally you have participated in?
Did you have anybody in your university who guides and supports you? (formal/informal)
Can you tell me about a problem or a challenge you have had in this working transnationally?
How did you find a solution?
What is the best thing about working transnationally with your partner in the UK?
Can you share a good experience you have had?
What is the worst thing about working transnationally with your partner in the UK?
If you had to describe your role in the co-operation programme (what you have to do – duties and responsibilities) to new member of staff, what would you tell them?
What advice would you give to a new member of staff about this work- being a module tutor on a transnational cooperation programme?
Part 2
I'd like to ask you some questions about the module tutor you work with now or you have worked with in the past.
How long have you been jointly responsible for the module?
Have your met your partner tutor face to face? (when, where etc.)
How would you describe your relationship with your partner tutor?

Can you tell me how you communicate with your partner? (when, reason, how often)
What do you know about your partner tutor? Do you know what he/she teaches in UK? (any other information)
Can you tell me about any problems you have had working with your partner?
Can you tell me about any successes you have had working with your partner?
Apart from the responsibility for the module do you develop teaching resources or research?
Training/professional development
Please can you give examples
Do you have opportunities to improve your skills? Skills that would help you work with your partner.
From your experience of working in a cooperation programme what ideas can you offer to improve working transnationally with partner tutors? (For example, managing module delivery, relationship building
Module tutors in the UK say that dialogue with partners in China is sometimes a problem. What could be done to improve dialogue between module tutors in partner institution?
Module tutors in China say that the amount of support from their partner is insufficient. What could be done to improve this situation?
Can you tell me whether you have previous experience of working in a diverse team(staff with different educational backgrounds to your own for example) or in another country?
Can you tell me about any behaviour/practice that you have observed or noticed when meeting your partner face to face for the first time?
Have you used your experience to further your career – improve your career prospects?
From your experience of working in a co operation programme, can you tell me what it is like for you?
Is there anything else would you like to talk about that I have not covered or that you would like to add?
Is there anything else would you like to add about working transnationally or co-operation programmes more generally?
Thank you very much.

Examples of follow –up questions sent to e-mail interviewees
Can you give me an example of the type of activities that you say can strengthen communication between tutors?
Do all tutors who teach on the partnership programme have meetings? Can you give me an example of the type of meetings?

Appendix 4: Summary of Focus group discussion

Focus group interview in UK

Role of link tutors
Make sure that they deliver module
Title link tutor does not adequately describe the work required to fulfil this role
Workload – last thing to be time tabled

Hours do not reflect time needed to carry out role
Challenges disagreements with marks
Don't know whether tutors male/female haven't found out
Professional background – similar to own staff with a mixture from industry. Can identify with them

Communication

Academic calendars different timetable not able to contact their counterparts at key times during the year. Start teaching in September etc. Ten weeks when contact is problematic
Methods of contact WeChat preferred method to contact by Chinese do not answer emails can lead to delays involving
Language issues not mentioned because we are used to it

Relationships

Not equal partnerships – purely functional worked well together job done Relationship
Not equal partnership doing more than them and us and them narrative
Do not want relationship purely functional worked well together job done Relationship different at beginning
Trust situation has improved our 12 years have built a relationship where can deal with issues as arise slow process
Visits build relationships with tutors through visits understand tutors and students understand their reality better staff in China appear to have a different relationship with staff staff delegate tasks to students sometimes staff when they visit never see counterparts
Visit takes us out of our comfort zone – we can understand their behaviour from observation

Benefits

Positive have used it as case studies for HEA applications
Inclusion of new materials to modules
Has also led to reflection on curriculum in UK – its narrowness

Terminology

Discussion about terminology – did not know what the title of their role is
Another partnership mentioned – no idea what is happening they do not know who we are not responding to e-mails - frustrating

Appendix 5: Semi- structured interviewees' details: additional information

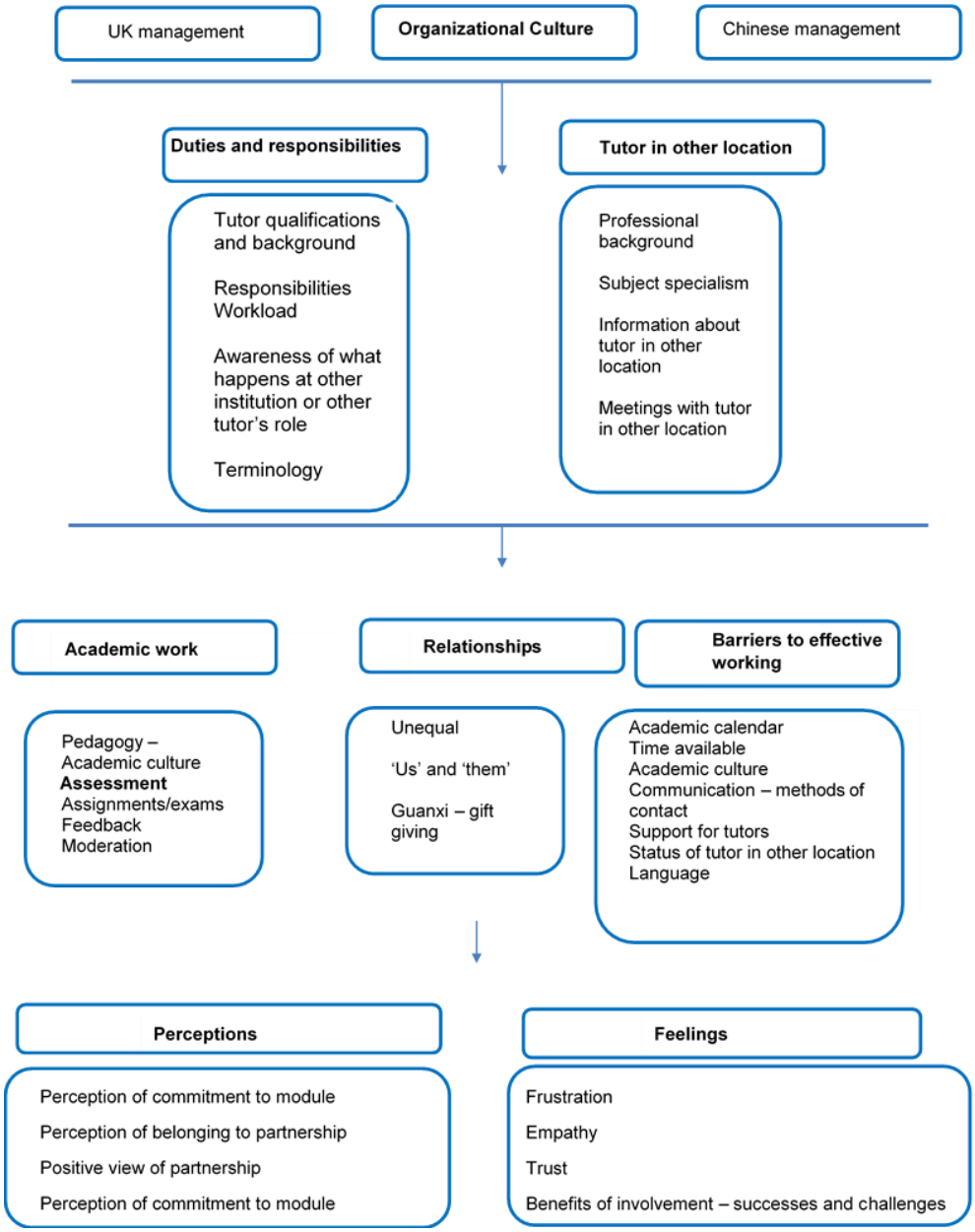
Experience of international work and/or study	**No of academic staff (14)**
With one TNE tutor	3
More than one TNE tutor	11
International experience as student or academic staff	

In Asia, Europe and Australasia	4
No experience of working outside current location	10
International experience as student	
Studying as undergraduate and/or postgraduate in another country	7
Visits to partner institution in the UK or China	
Tutors from China who have visited or taught in partner institution	3
Tutors from UK who have visited or taught in partner institution	6
Tutors who have not visited partner institution	5

Pseudonym	International experience		Visited partner	Knows something about partner
	Tutors in the UK			
Robert	✓		✓	✓
Daniel				x
Eric	✓		✓	✓
Christopher			✓(one visit)	✓
Alison	✓		✓	✓
Louise			✓(one visit)	✓
Emily				x
Sally			✓	✓
Francesca	✓		✓	✓
	Tutors in China			
Zeming	✓			✓
Yutong	✓		✓	✓
Maidong	✓			✓
Anwen	✓		✓(one visit)	✓
Xinran	✓			x

Appendix 6: Preliminary analysis - grouping of codes

During the process of coding, data were revisited and the codes were reviewed.



Diagrams as shown in the example were used to refine thinking on the emerging data and to consider the next step in the process of coding. This was done throughout on completion of each interview.