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Antonia M. Lamers-Reeuwijk

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Teaching and professional development in transnational education in Oman

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Offering transnational education (TNE) is one of the strategies of internationalisation that universities employ to expand their activities. The main players worldwide are the UK, Australia, Germany, and to a lesser extent the United States (Knight & McNamara, 2016). TNE can take several forms and these countries all use different terminology; hence TNE is concomitantly defined in many ways. What they all have in common, however, is that the students are based in a different country to the awarding institution (British Council, 2013). In the context of this dissertation, TNE is defined as the provision of education to students in a country other than where the provider is located (Knight & McNamara, 2016), while the following additional key elements are applicable: the local higher education institution's (HEI) teaching staff provide academic support; teaching staff are expatriate academics resident in the host country or nationals of the host country; and the distance HEI provides the programmes, qualification, and quality assurance (Knight, 2016). Additionally, in accordance with the term used by the HEI where the studies presented in this dissertation were conducted, the provider university is here referred to as the partner university. Generally, the language in which TNE programmes are offered, including those provided by German universities, is English which has become the lingua franca in international higher education (Wilkins & Urbanovič, 2014). When both the teaching staff and students come from non-Anglophone countries the English language proficiency may not always be of a high standard, which raises concerns about the quality of the teaching and learning environment (Hughes, 2008).

In the wake of the proliferation of TNE worldwide over the past two decades, research into TNE has been shifting from the providers' point of view to the host institutions' point of view. The dominant themes in the literature were globalisation, policy, quality, trade and regulation, whereas the themes of teaching and learning were less well covered (O'Mahony, 2014). The research conducted for this dissertation started at a time when the research focus had been shifting towards the teaching and learning environment (Dobos, 2011; Hoare, 2013; Smith, L., 2009; Yao & Collins, 2018), and it aims to contribute to the discussion on how to create a TNE teaching and learning environment that is in line with the expectations of the British programmes so that students can succeed academically. This cannot be seen separately from the theme of quality, not so much in terms of quality assurance as in terms of quality improvement and enhancement of the teaching and learning environment. In turn, this theme is inextricably linked to TNE pedagogy and what is considered to be best practice. To-date, research in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region and the Gulf Region has been limited (Bovill, Jordan & Watters, 2015; Jordan, Bovill, Othman, Saleh, Shabila & Watters, 2013; Almarghani & Milatova, 2017), although at more than 85,000 the number of TNE students here is quite substantial, particularly those enrolled in British programmes (Universities UK international, 2018). Given that the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have the majority of TNE students, the research that has taken place in the MENA region was understandably conducted in those countries: studies by Lemke-Westcott & Johnson (2013) and by Prowse & Goddard (2010) were conducted in Qatar, and studies by Wilkins, Stephens Balakrishnan & Huisman (2012) and by Wilkins, Butt & Annabi, (2017) in the UAE, while Oman has received scant attention although more than 20,000 Omani students are registered in British programmes offered transnationally (HESA, 2019).

Due to the nature of the local labour markets and the relatively recent emergence and development of higher education, it is common practice in the Gulf Region to hire expatriate non-Anglophone

academics to teach local students in higher education and particularly those in TNE (Wilkins & Neri, 2018; Chapman, Austin, Farah, Wilson, & Ridge, 2014). These academics usually come from India, Pakistan, the Philippines or countries in the MENA region, which means that for practically all of them the environment in which they teach is academically, culturally and sometimes also linguistically new to them. The same holds for the students as the vast majority come from the local government schools where Arabic is the medium of instruction in both primary and secondary school, and the British academic system is new to them (World Bank, 2013). Considering this complexity of the TNE teaching and learning environment, the aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the knowledge base of how to create a TNE teaching and learning environment that is in line with the expectations of the British programmes so that students can succeed academically, and how to support academics who teach on these programmes in their professional practice towards creating such an environment. It does so by investigating the teaching practice employed by expatriate academics teaching in a private HEI in Oman, by considering the challenges that both teachers and students face in this environment, and the role that academic development has played over the years in supporting teachers' professionalism.

1.2 Context: TNE in Oman

In 2013, the World Bank published a report about education in Oman at the invitation of the Ministry of Education and it described the development from 1970 onwards when there were but three primary schools in Oman, all for boys (World Bank, 2013). Since then, Oman has seen one of the fastest developments in building free education for all, mainly financed by its oil and gas revenues. For decades, primary and secondary school teachers came from other Arabic speaking countries, such as Egypt and Sudan, till Oman could train its own teachers. In all those years the emphasis was on quantity: building more and more schools, providing primary and secondary education to ever-growing numbers of pupils, and at a later stage training their own teachers. However, when the government realised there were persistent issues concerning student achievement in this teaching and learning environment, it invited the World Bank to collaborate with the Ministry of Education in its drive for quality. One of the report's main criticisms pertinent to this dissertation was that students entering higher education come from a system in which curricula and assessments in primary and secondary schools "allow success through memorisation" (World Bank, 2013).

A similar shift from an initial focus on quantity to a more recent focus on quality took place in higher education, but it was not until 2001 that the Oman Accreditation Council was established, 15 years after the first university was founded (Carroll, Razvi, Goodliffe & Al-Habsi, 2009). This was later (in 2010) replaced by the Oman Academic Accreditation Agency, an independent body charged with the building of a quality culture in higher education by means of quality audits of all 59 HEIs, both public and private, conducted between 2009 and 2018. The quality audit reports, which are published on the website of the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority, revealed, amongst other things, that teaching quality, professional development and staff induction were areas for concern in the majority of the private HEIs.

In the mid 1990s the higher education sector was opened up to private investors, as the public sector could no longer absorb the number of incoming students (Carroll et al., 2009). For these private HEIs it is mandatory to be affiliated with an accredited and approved university abroad, and UK universities

are the main providers of such transnational education in Oman (Universities UK International, 2017). The Ministry of Higher Education actively encourages quality assured higher education in the private sector as it increases access for local students, both those with a secondary school diploma and mature students who are already in paid employment, to higher education. In Oman, non-Anglophone expatriate academics who teach in transnational education outnumber Omani academic staff by about 4:1 (National Centre for Statistics & Information). The curricula vitae of these expatriate academics need to be approved by both the Ministry of Higher Education and the UK partner universities. Teachers need to have either a Master's or a PhD degree in a relevant discipline, plus a minimum of three years' teaching experience in higher education. In addition, a new requirement was introduced in 2017, namely that the English proficiency of staff teaching Bachelor's programmes minimally needs to be at IELTS level 6.0 or equivalent. Combined, these factors have led to a diverse teaching and learning environment in private HEIs: the students are predominantly Omani; the programmes they are enrolled in come from the UK or another foreign country; the academics teaching them are usually non-Anglophone expatriates who rarely have any previous experience with the British higher education system.

This cultural, academical, and linguistical complexity brings with it quality issues for the teaching and learning environment. It is linguistically complex because the vast majority of Omani students come from an Arabic-medium educational system, and the language of instruction at tertiary level is English, yet used by non-native speakers. Moreover, one would assume that when most teachers had also been educated in English at their universities – as those from the Philippines, India and Pakistan usually were – that their own English proficiency was sufficient to support the Omani students in their development of academic literacy within their discipline. Yet fewer than half of them managed to meet the requirement of an IELTS 6.0 score at their first attempt. Hence, this TNE teaching and learning environment was linguistically challenging for both students and teachers.

Academically and culturally speaking it is complex because of the different expectations of the British programmes, those of the Omani students, and those of the expatriate teachers. The British programmes expect a dialogue between teachers and students, students and the subject materials, and students among themselves (Quality Assurance Agency), while Omani students come from a school system where assessments allow success through memorisation (World Bank, 2013) and expatriate teachers often come from countries where information transmission is the norm in higher education (Bovill, Jordan and Watters, 2014; Dobos, 2011). Furthermore, the non-Anglophone expatriates who come to teach in TNE in Oman are not aware of the Bologna process and usually have quite an academic culture shock when they start teaching British programmes and come to realise that it requires a refocusing from teaching content to achieving learning outcomes, just as Jordan et al. found in Iraq (2014). In Europe, the 1999 Bologna Declaration marked a watershed in higher education, as programmes were no longer described in terms of content to be learned but in terms of learning outcomes to be achieved. It had a profound influence on how programmes were structured, and consequently on teaching and learning (Lindblom-Ylänne, & Hämmäläinen, 2004). In addition, these differences in academic expectations also meant that when new TNE teachers constructed assessments they were often initially not approved by the verifiers of the partner university and/or the external examiners (which come from a different UK university), as their assessments did not align with the intended learning outcomes of the programmes which focus on higher order thinking skills. Figure 1.1 illustrates the complexity of the teaching and learning environment in TNE in Oman.

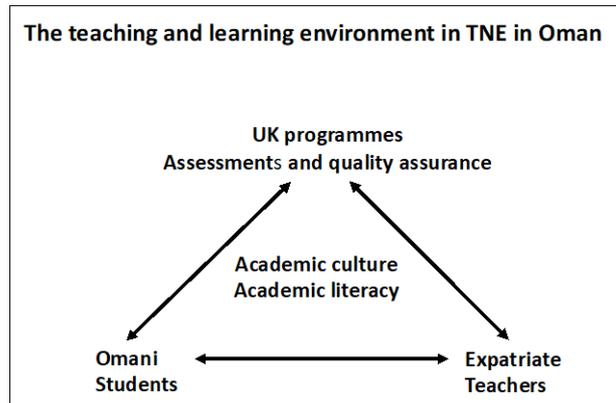


Figure 1.1 The teaching and learning environment in TNE in Oman

The studies reported on in this dissertation were conducted between 2014 and 2019 in one such private college, affiliated with two UK universities, one of which since 2004. Several factors could have worked to the college’s advantage: its long history with a British partner university; the rigorous quality assurance of the assessments by the British partner university; and the fact that the academic staff already have teaching experience in higher education prior to being hired in Oman. All these potentially beneficial factors, however, did not automatically create an optimum teaching and learning environment and there were several factors that may have inhibited this. The fact that the partner university only made a set of slides available for every weekly session of the modules confirmed the expatriate academics in their own expectations that they had to deliver a lecture by presenting all the slides. Learning activities or questions for discussion were not included in the materials provided by the partner university. On the part of the Omani students, this might also have reinforced their expectations, based on their previous school experience, that they had to memorise all the slides in order to pass. Memorisation may work to a certain extent in the beginning as the lower levels (year 1 and 2) are mainly about knowledge and understanding, but not in levels 5 and 6 (years 3 and 4) which are broadly defined in terms of applying theory to practice and critical evaluation. Particularly in the higher levels these different expectations resulted in generally low pass and progression rates, since students often did not even know the meaning of these assessment verbs let alone that they were able to demonstrate them.

The TNE context such as the one described here is not unusual in Oman, since the quality audits conducted between 2009 and 2018 raised serious concerns about teaching quality, induction of new staff and professional development in the majority of private HEIs. For this particular college, one of the recommendations was to develop and implement a clear pedagogical framework, teaching guidelines and academic leadership in order to support its intentions to provide a high quality teaching and learning environment. Neither the existing UK requirements and quality assurance, nor the ministry requirements for teaching staff seemed to be sufficient to ensure a quality teaching and

learning environment. This highlights the need for academic development within each private HEI, and therefore in TNE.

There is neither a national requirement in Oman nor a UK partner requirement for academic staff to hold formal teaching qualifications for higher education, such as the UK Post Graduate Certificate, or to have gained recognition for professional standards through the Higher Education Academy (HEA), Fellowship scheme. To-date there are no national initiatives in Oman towards such a requirement. On the UK part, while according to the Quality Code set out by the Quality Assurance Agency the provider is ultimately responsible for the quality of the teaching and learning environment, support for staff by either partner university had been minimal all these years and focused solely on the quality assurance processes of assessments rather than on professional development. This is only now about to change, with the announcement by one of the partners at the beginning of 2019, and soon from all UK universities offering TNE, that all staff teaching on their programmes transnationally (so also countries other than Oman) will be required to gain recognition of their professional practice as a Fellow in the HEA, now called Advance HE. This can be done by providing evidence of professional practice in three domains: Core Activities, Core Knowledge and Professional Values as set out in the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). Two criteria are essential in the assessment of an application for Fellowship: first, a focus on students and their learning, and second, a reflection on one's academic practice, incorporating relevant subject and pedagogical research (HEA guidance notes, n.d.; Smart, Asghar, Campbell & Huxham, 2019; Spowart, Winter, Turner, Burden, Botham, Muneer, van der Sluis, Burden & Huet, 2019; Thornton, 2017).

1.3 Conceptualising effective teaching practice in TNE

Effective teaching practice in TNE integrates what is considered in the literature to be effective teaching in higher education according to socio-constructivist ideas of teaching and learning in general, teaching across cultures, teaching international students and learning in a second language. Presented below is a synthesis of the key literature from these fields, and what an effective teaching and learning environment in TNE should include.

1.3.1 Socio-constructivist ideas in general

Traditionally, in Oman nor in the countries where the expatriate academics come from, academics teaching in higher education did not need a teaching qualification. For decades, it was sufficient for them to be experts in their fields who would transmit their knowledge to the students by means of a lecture, and at the end of the semester test them on this knowledge. However, in their review of the literature, Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek (2006) established that a large body of research points to the effectiveness of a learning-centred approach. Yet adopting a more student-centred approach is precisely what teachers who come from a culture where lecturing is the norm in higher education find challenging (Arenas, 2009; Dobos, 2011). Teachers' beliefs about what constitutes teaching in higher education matter because these beliefs influence the teaching approach that they take (Trigwell, Prosser & Ginns, 2005). The few studies that highlight teaching approaches in TNE identified that most teachers in a study in Iraq took a transfer of knowledge approach to teaching (Bovill, Jordan & Watters, 2015), similar to what Dobos (2011) found in Malaysia. UK programmes presume a

learning-centred approach focusing on the learning process and requiring high student participation levels, be it with other students or the lecturer (Quality Assurance Agency, 2011; Quan, 2013).

Samuelowicz & Bain (2001) demonstrated that there are fundamental differences between the teaching-centred and learning-centred belief orientations that academics in higher education hold, with clearly specified boundaries between the two. Imparting information, transmitting structured knowledge, facilitating student understanding are all part of a teaching-centred approach, whereas in the learning-centred approach an important part of effective teaching centres on its relationship with learning, around knowledge construction and the negotiation of meaning by students. One of the variations in approaches to teaching that take student learning as their starting point was identified by Trigwell et al. (2005) as a learning-focused approach emphasising conceptual development or conceptual change. In this approach there is a place for elements of knowledge transmission, but it is not the sole approach. Reviewing the literature on teaching, Maclellan (2015) concluded that teaching which is informed by constructivist views appears to trigger epistemic growth and to improve achievement; and that mere explanations of the content can have little positive impact on learning outcomes when students' prior knowledge is not taken into account. Within a teaching-centred approach, the effects of prior knowledge are well hidden from a teacher's view (Hattie & Yates, 2014).

Within the learning-centred approach, another important element of effective teaching is the concept of constructive alignment, introduced by Biggs (2012), in which teaching and learning activities are designed by the teacher in such a way that students are given the opportunity to practise the intended learning outcomes of a programme; the assessments are then used to judge to what extent students have achieved these. Actively engaging students in learning activities involves high levels of teacher-student and student-student interaction in class, with teachers monitoring those learning activities and giving constructive formative feedback. This active learning has been found to contribute to student success in various student populations and in different disciplines (e.g. Kuh et al., 2006).

1.3.2 Teaching across cultures

When teaching across cultures it is also important for academics to be efficient intercultural learners. This was the one theme that makes teaching in TNE different, as Leask's interviews (2005) with Australian staff teaching abroad revealed. The other three attributes of what academics teaching offshore (i.e. in TNE) need are: to be experts in their fields; to be skilled teachers and managers of the learning environment; and to demonstrate particular personal attitudes (e.g. being approachable). She argued that the latter three apply to teachers anywhere, yet being intercultural learners is what makes TNE teaching challenging. The fundamental difference is the intercultural space in which TNE occurs, and teaching staff need to have the ability to adapt their established teaching practice in response to the programmes and students being taught (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013; Prowse & Goddard, 2010; L. Smith, 2009). Given the general lack of pre-departure preparation (Gribble & Ziguras, 2010; K. L. Smith, 2009), TNE staff are often unaware of the multitude of challenges they themselves and their students will face, and they may experience culture shock (Hoare, 2013).

1.3.3 Teaching international students and learning in a second language

Additionally, effective teaching practice in TNE shares many characteristics with teaching international students who may also come from a different school system or academic culture and who may also need to switch to a different medium of instruction. When students are non-native speakers, staff need to have a heightened awareness of the need to integrate content and language learning, tailoring the content to students with different levels of linguistic ability (Dimitrov & Haque, 2015). Teachers need to support students in understanding the new types of assessment and grading systems (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Pyvis, 2011; Williams, 2005). They need to give a high level of support to students outside class (Picton, 2018); to support students in writing assignments (Skyrme, 2018) with their concomitant need for proper paraphrasing and referencing so that students are able to reduce plagiarism (Divan, Bowman, & Seabourne, 2015; Palmer, Pegrum, & Oakley, 2019); and to support students in developing academic literacy (Evans, 2011; Murray, 2012), a characteristic that may equally well apply to native speakers in their transition into higher education (Lea & Street, 2006), but will be even more essential for TNE students.

1.3.4 Professional development

Supporting lecturers in integrating all these characteristics that are conducive to an effective teaching and learning environment in TNE calls for professional development initiatives. In addition, opportunities to discuss and share teaching and learning issues with colleagues need to be deliberately created (Keevers, Lefoe, Leask, Sultan, Ganesharatnam, Loh & Lim, 2014; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009). Basing professional development on issues raised by participants themselves appears to increase the acceptance of such programmes (Kember, 2009; Locke, Whitchurch & Smith, 2016).

What is explicitly challenging for academics who are used to being 'experts' in their fields is to accept the role of novice in TNE (Hoare, 2013). At its core lies teachers' willingness to continuously learn from previous experiences, student and peer feedback, professional development activities and research, and to revise their teaching practice if the evidence points to ineffectiveness. Yet if one is not aware of one's practice, improvement in teaching practice will not ensue (Postareff, Lindblom-Yllänne, & Nevgi, 2008). Teachers first need to notice an issue (Mason, 2009) before they can act on it either immediately or later by evaluating their own professional practice through reflection in the domains of instructional, pedagogic and curricular knowledge (Kreber, 2004). However, the level of reflection is of importance as well for it to lead to a change in effectiveness of one's professional practice. In this respect, the tool that Larrivee (2008) developed is useful here as it identifies four different levels of reflection. She defined teachers at the *pre-reflection* level as reacting to students and classroom situations automatically; at the *surface* reflection level as focusing on strategies and methods that work to reach predetermined goals; at the *pedagogical* reflection level as applying the field's knowledge base and current beliefs about what represents quality practices; and at the *critical* reflection level as reflecting on moral and ethical implications and consequences of their classroom practices on students.

Reflection is often seen as the hallmark of professionalism and a first step towards achieving standards that more and more countries have been setting for professionalising teaching in higher education. Two examples are the HEA Fellowships in the UK and the UTQ (University Teaching Qualification) in

the Netherlands. HEA Fellowships are awarded to reflective practitioners. Reflection, however, will not automatically lead to improved practice and Mälkki and Lindblom-Ylänne (2012) found that there are various barriers between teachers' thoughts and actions, such as emotions, motivation, the institutional context or the curriculum, an aspect which teachers do not always have an influence on, and certainly not in TNE. Other barriers to reflection and improved practice may be lack of time and an intensive workload (Bailey, 2013; Botham, 2018; Fanghanel, 2007; Griggs, Holden, Lawless & Rae, 2018; Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009; Kreber, 2004; Locke, Whitchurch, Smith, & Mazenod, 2014; Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). Yet it takes time to engage with the research and develop and change one's teaching practice (Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009), and Botham's interviews (2018) revealed that not all academics are familiar with the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Two main components of SoTL that are pertinent to gaining recognition as a Fellow include reflection on and application of the work of educational researchers; and reflection on practice and research on teaching in one's discipline (Kreber and Cranton, 2000). Engaging in SoTL is important as Brew and Ginns (2008) demonstrated a significant relationship between academics engaging in SoTL and changes in students' course experiences. Both reflection and engaging with relevant subject and pedagogical research are essential in Fellowship applications. When non-Anglophone academics apply for Fellowship they may encounter other barriers still, namely the lack of familiarity with reflective writing as a genre and the lack of the meta-awareness of the textual structures, grammar and vocabulary (Ryan, 2011).

1.4 Research aims

This dissertation seeks to contribute to expanding the knowledge base as to what constitutes a TNE teaching and learning environment that is congruent with the expectations of the British programmes so that students can succeed academically in Oman and in the MENA region, where, although the number of students enrolled in TNE is quite large, the body of research is relatively small.

Based on the assumption that the teaching and learning environment plays an important role in students achieving the learning outcomes of the programme, the approach taken in this research was to investigate this environment from different perspectives, i.e. the researcher's perspective as an observer and the teachers' perspectives on the usefulness of CPD elements, (Chapter 2), those of the teachers (Chapter 3), those of the students (Chapter 4), and how these different perspectives informed a long-term continuing professional development (CPD) programme (initiated in Chapter 2) eventually leading towards preparation for the recognition of teachers' professionalism (Chapter 5). This holistic approach is intended to answer the overarching research questions of how to create a TNE teaching and learning environment that is in line with the expectations of the British programmes so that students can succeed academically; and how academics teaching on these British programmes can be supported in their professional practice towards creating such an environment. It resulted in the following four studies:

1. A longitudinal observational study into the teaching practice of a group of lecturers, together with a survey aimed at investigating which elements of the CPD programme teachers considered to be most useful.
2. A survey study seeking to identify the challenges the non-Anglophone expatriate academics face in teaching transnationally in Oman; followed up by an interview study with a selected group of lecturers.

3. A survey study aimed at identifying the challenges that Omani students face when studying in TNE; followed up by an interview study with a selected group of Omani students.
4. An evaluation study of the quality of the evidence submitted against the UK Professional Standards Framework in the form of personal professional development portfolios by TNE staff in preparation for an application for Fellowship.

1.5 Overview of the dissertation

The chapters of this dissertation are organised in the same order as the studies outlined above in section 1.4 and these studies can subsequently be found in Chapters 2 to 5. Collectively, they contribute to the dual aims of the dissertation, i.e. how to create a TNE teaching and learning environment that is in line with the expectations of the British programmes so that students can succeed academically, and how academics who teach on these programmes can be supported in their professional practice towards creating such an environment.

Chapter 2 first presents the outcomes of a three-year long observational study from the perspective of the author as observer in a TNE college in Oman that offers six British programmes in Business & Management Studies and five British programmes in Computer & Computing Sciences; and secondly, the teachers' perspective on the usefulness of CPD elements that were employed during this time. As the British programmes are described and assessed in terms of learning outcomes rather than in content to be covered, the underlying assumption is that academics take a learning-centred approach. Initial observations in 2013 had shown incongruity between observed teaching practice, with the majority of teachers taking an information transmission approach, and the learning outcomes of the UK programmes. In addition, given that academic staff originated from 17 different non-Western countries, there was a perceived need to harmonise their teaching practice, so that students would get a similar experience. The observation tool in use at the time was solely based on presentation skills. To investigate these academics' teaching practice a new observation tool was designed, initially based on (good) practice already present and subsequently supplemented by characteristics of effective teaching in the literature. This observation tool allowed a detailed investigation into how the teaching practice of a group of 44 expatriate, non-Anglophone, academics developed as a result of engaging with the CPD framework that was partially informed by those observations. The research questions that guided the study were driven by the researcher's perspective as an observer and the teachers' perspectives on the usefulness of CPD elements: (1) 'What might a new, more descriptive and context-sensitive evaluation tool suitable for TNE look like—one that might capture more teaching approaches than only information transmission?'; (2) 'How did the quality of teaching practice subsequently develop over a three-year CPD programme?'; and (3) 'Which elements of this CPD framework did academics find most useful?'. Descriptive statistics and qualitative interpretations were used to analyse the data.

Chapter 3 reports on the teachers' perspectives on the challenges of teaching transnationally in Oman as experienced by the non-Anglophone expatriate academics from an academic point of view. To investigate these challenges a survey was designed, piloted, and subsequently completed by 37 academics in 2015. The same survey was repeated in 2018 for the new academic staff and completed by 34 academics. In order to gain a more fine-grained understanding of the challenges semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 academic staff members, proportionally representing their

countries of origin. Together these data allowed for a detailed investigation of the following research questions: (1) 'What are the specific challenges experienced by the expatriate teaching staff?' and (2) 'To what extent do these challenges impact on the quality of the TNE teaching and learning environment?'. In order to analyse the survey data the study used descriptive and inferential statistics, and qualitative interpretations of the interview transcripts.

Chapter 4 reports on the Omani students' perspectives on the academic challenges that they face studying on transnational programmes. This study moved deliberately beyond the initial transition phase into TNE by also including students in levels 5 and 6, as the issues associated with transition into the first year of higher education (level 4) may be more accentuated in TNE but occur globally and are not specific to TNE. The study used a mixed-methods research approach with a survey, completed by 744 Omani students and 11 students originating from the Gulf and MENA region; the survey was followed up by interviews with twelve Omani students in order to gain a deeper insight into the student perspective. Combined, these data allowed for a detailed examination of the following research questions: (1) 'What challenges do TNE students face in this environment?'; and, (2) 'What type of support do students need as a first step towards creating an appropriate teaching and learning environment in which they can succeed academically?'. To analyse the survey data descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis were used, and qualitative interpretations of the interview transcripts.

Chapter 5 reports on the professional development perspective and presents the outcomes of an evaluation of 42 teachers' professional development portfolios in relation to the UK Professional Standards Framework. The UKPSF was designed by and for the higher education sector in the UK, with the main intention to set standards for and improve teaching and supporting learning. Gaining recognition as a Fellow has become mandatory for academics in many universities in the UK. This requirement looks set to be extended to all academics who teach on UK programmes, thus including staff in TNE, with the aim to provide quality teaching and an equivalent learning experience for the students. With substantial numbers of UK TNE students, this will have far-reaching implications for a great many teachers. In the light of this future requirement for TNE staff to gain recognition as Fellows, the study focused on the following research questions: (1) 'What is the level of reflective practice as shown in the portfolios of TNE academics?'; (2) 'What is their teaching philosophy?'; and, (3) 'What are their professional development needs in relation to an application for Fellow?'. To assess academics' level of reflection on professional practice, the study used a tool developed by Larrivee (2008), in combination with a content analysis of the teaching philosophy statements.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the findings of each study, together with a general discussion of the studies reported in Chapters 2 to 5 and a reflection on how they support the main aims of the dissertation. As there are different, and possibly conflicting, expectations on the parts of the British programmes, those of the expatriate academics teaching on them, and the Omani students studying on them, the overarching aims of this dissertation are to contribute to the knowledge base of how to create a TNE teaching and learning environment that is in line with the expectations of the British programmes so that students can succeed academically, and how academics who teach on these programmes can be supported in their professional practice towards creating such an environment. It concludes with a discussion of implications for practice and for future research.

Remark about terminology

There are several terms used in this dissertation for the same staff who teach in TNE. In Chapter 2 the term *lecturer* is used in line with terminology used in this college. At that time all of them were *expatriate academics*, the term used in Chapter 3. From 2016 onwards a few Omani academics had started teaching on the TNE programmes as well, but as there were so few of them and the turnover was large, they were not included in the studies. As the expatriate academics were solely hired to teach they are also referred to as *teaching staff*, and practically all students referred to them as *teachers*, this is the term used in Chapters 4 and 5; those who conducted any research did so in their free time.

Chapter 2

Moving out of their comfort zones: enhancing teaching practice in transnational education

Abstract: This paper investigates the development of teaching practice of the expatriate staff delivering UK programmes in a higher education institution in Oman hosting these programmes. It presents a tool to evaluate the teaching practice, and points to those elements of an academic development framework that were found to be most useful in supporting lecturers in moving towards a student-centred, learning-focused teaching approach. The majority of the lecturers made this shift. We therefore conclude by arguing for long-term CPD aimed at enhancing teaching quality to be part and parcel of a partnership.

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2.1 Introduction and theoretical framework

In her overview of the research literature on transnational education (TNE), O'Mahony (2014) shows that the theme of teaching is not covered as extensively as the themes relating to globalisation, policy, quality, trade, and the student experience (in this order of frequency). As this paper deals with the development of effective teaching practice and a staff development programme aimed at harmonising and standardising the teaching skills of staff in TNE, it draws on the literature around conceptions of effective teaching and staff development in higher education, while paying attention to aspects pertaining to TNE in particular.

2.1.1 Conceptions of effective teaching

Academics' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education are related to their approach to teaching (Trigwell, Prosser, & Ginns, 2005). In essence, the literature conveys a wide spectrum of teachers' conceptions of what constitutes effective teaching, with a teaching-centred approach focusing on knowledge transmission at one end, and a learning-centred approach at the other (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004). While Samuelowicz & Bain (2001) proposed seven categories of belief orientations that academics have about teaching and learning, they came to the conclusion that there are clearly specified boundaries between the teaching-centred and learning-centred orientations at the two extremes. To move from one to the other seems to require a mental switch.

In the teaching-centred approach, lecturers consider it their only responsibility to be experts in their fields and to expound the subject content clearly to the students in a well-organised way, usually by means of lecturing (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Aspects of this approach would include four of the seven conceptions that Samuelowicz and Bain (2001) put forward: imparting information; transmitting knowledge which is structured by the lecturer; providing and facilitating understanding; and helping students develop expertise which they may need later in their jobs. McMahon et al. (2007) maintain that this is actually the easier way of teaching, as students are expected passively to take in the information the lecturer offers in a presentation; according to Maclellan (2014), this traditional approach to teaching is still widespread. Despite the large body of research pointing to the effectiveness of a learning-centred approach, lectures still tend to be common in higher education (Kember, 2009).

The shift in focus from what the lecturer does to what the student does is described by Biggs and Tang (2011). In this approach, teachers' conceptions about the relationship between learning and teaching take a central place. Earlier, Trigwell et al. (2005) identified three variations in approaches to teaching which take student learning as the starting point: student-teacher interaction, concept acquisition, and student-focused conceptual development or conceptual change (SFCC). In this way of thinking, lecturers see it as their role to prevent misunderstandings, to create for their students a learning environment within which to negotiate meaning, and to encourage knowledge creation (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001). Within the SFCC approach there are elements of information transmission, but this is not the sole approach. The lecturer designs teaching/learning activities (TLAs) aligned with the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the programme, specifying not only what is to be learned (the topic) but also how it is to be learned (what type of TLAs), and to what standard (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Lecturers who take this approach, which Biggs calls 'constructive alignment', actively engage the

students by providing opportunities for them to practise the ILOs specified in terms of verbs such as *discuss* or *analyse* and subsequently tested in the assessment at the end of each semester. Academics who have made those changes in their teaching practices assume that these will lead to changes in the quality of student learning (Trigwell et al., 2005).

2.1.2 Staff development programmes

Supporting lecturers in making this shift towards constructive alignment and taking a learning-centred approach calls for academic development initiatives. The attitude of lecturers towards such continuing professional development appears, however, to be linked to their conceptions of teaching and learning. The interviews conducted by Samuelowicz and Bain (2001) show that academics whose orientation is teaching-centred do not stress continuing professional development, whereas in a learning-centred orientation teaching staff do consider it important. Similarly, Åkerlind (2007) argues that when academics' approaches to developing as teachers are based solely on gaining better content knowledge and more practical experience, they see no purpose in continuing professional development courses and are therefore constrained in their potential for development. It is only when academics' approaches ultimately progress towards understanding what does, or does not work for the students, that an emphasis on professional development and reflection upon their own teaching would be valued by them.

While teaching in TNE is in some ways similar to teaching in the context of the home country, research shows that academics teaching abroad require an additional set of skills and specific abilities in that they need to be efficient intercultural learners (Leask, 2005); be aware of the issue of teaching and learning in a non-native language (Teekens, 2003); and have an awareness of the need to integrate content and language learning as they deal with students for whom the medium of instruction (often English) is not the first language of the students (Murray, 2012). In the case of the United Arab Emirates, the location of the programme studied here, English is often not the first language of the lecturers, either (Wilkins, Stephens Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012). Furthermore, Robson (2011) argues that international staff will need to examine their 'habitual practices' of teaching and that a critical stance towards their pedagogy needs to be nurtured through self-reflection.

Reflection is often seen as the starting point for development: if one is not aware of one's approach to teaching and learning and one's practice in the classroom, improvement in teaching practices will not ensue (Postareff, Lindblom-Yllanne, & Nevgi, 2008). During their staff development programme in Iraq, Bovill, Jordan, & Watters (2014) found that lecturers' inexperience in reflecting on their own teaching practice, together with a reluctance to change, were barriers to transforming teacher-centred approaches into learner-centred approaches. They argue in favour of a staff development programme that supports academics in reflecting on their day-to-day teaching experiences, together with the trainers modelling best practice.

Basing continuing professional development on problems raised by participating academics (Kember, 2009) and on questionnaires asking what kind of development staff need (Locke, Whitchurch, & Smith, 2016) appears to increase the acceptance of the programme and therefore the eventual implementation in the classroom. Staff development programmes for academics teaching in TNE need

to address the issues described above together with supporting a shift towards a constructive alignment approach.

2.2 Research context

In the majority of Bachelor's programmes in higher education in Oman, English is the medium of instruction. The college in this dissertation is a medium-sized private higher education institution and has been affiliated with the British partner university for more than ten years.

The Bachelor's programmes are delivered in a highly international and intercultural mix: the curricula in the two faculties are provided by the British partner university, the nationality of the students is predominantly Omani, while staff are recruited from 15 different countries. All programmes and modules are described in detail with specified intended learning outcomes per level, i.e. the first, second and third year of the Bachelor's programmes. Indicative content per module is described in detail and lecture slides and notes are provided for each weekly session, together with a list of required reading for each module. Lecturers are expected to localise and contextualise the subject matter of each module in their teaching and also in the assessment. All assessments are subject to a rigorous quality assurance process with front-end training of the staff delivering the programmes focusing on these quality assurance processes.

However, with all the teaching staff coming from different parts of the world with different educational systems there was a perceived need to harmonise the teaching practice of the staff so that students would get a similar experience (Boud & Brew, 2013). A Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme started in the spring of 2014 based on the aggregate needs of all the 55 lecturers to address the incongruity between observed teaching practice and the intended learning outcomes of the British programmes. There seemed to be little or no awareness amongst the lecturers of the Bologna Declaration with its adoption across Europe, and therefore also in the British programmes delivered in this college, of how learning outcomes are inherently linked to certain teaching and learning methods in order to achieve those outcomes (Lindblom-Ylänne & Hämäläinen, 2004). As the British programmes are described and assessed in terms of learning outcomes rather than in content to be covered, the underlying assumption is that lecturers take a learning-centred approach.

2.3 Aims of this study

This study set out to investigate one of the most challenging aspects of TNE, which is related to teaching styles and training (O'Mahony, 2014). Prior to this study, until 2013 the lecturers had been evaluated annually on their teaching as part of their performance appraisal using an instrument containing eleven criteria to be rated. This evaluation tool took a teacher-centred information transmission approach, with the tacit assumption that the lecturer is a presenter.

The study aimed first of all to investigate what a new, more descriptive and context-sensitive evaluation tool suitable for TNE might look like—one that might capture more teaching approaches than only information transmission; secondly, how the quality of teaching practice subsequently developed over a three-year CPD programme; and thirdly, which elements of this CPD framework academics found most useful.

2.4 Method

2.4.1 Participants

There were three nationalities which together formed 76 per cent of the teaching staff: those from India (23), the Philippines (12), and Pakistan (7), whereas the other 13 came from five different countries in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, and none of them had studied or taught in a British programme prior to arrival. Out of the 55 lecturers who were observed in 2014, 44 were still teaching during the third year of this study.

2.4.2 Data collection

In 2014 each lecturer was formally observed for approximately one hour as part of the college's annual lecturer evaluation. These observations were also conducted in 2015 and 2016, and totalled 154 hours. Although these observations were originally conducted for summative purposes as they form part of the lecturers' evaluation, the data collected were subsequently used for feedforward purposes to improve teaching practice and to inform the elements of the CPD programme.

2.4.3 Procedure

Being fully aware that there is no perfect evaluation tool of something as complex as teaching and learning, the first author decided nevertheless to develop a new tool, taking existing teaching practice as a starting point. A combination of a descriptive approach together with a semi-structured observation sheet was used to capture the teaching practice of the lecturers, and the participation of the students in class. Observable behaviour of both teaching staff and students was noted down in detail for approximately one hour per session. After the observation, the lecturer had to fill in a self-evaluation sheet. These data were analysed and certain patterns began to emerge. The main conclusions were presented to all staff in January 2014, consisting of two main points: there was too much variability among the lecturers in their approaches to teaching, and at the same time too little variety in their interaction with the students, with very few or no learning activities for them to engage actively with the subject content.

A small sample of literature was initially consulted to generate criteria for evaluation and indicators for different levels. The development of the teaching practice table by the researcher followed grounded theory methods consisting of simultaneous data collection and analysis, with each informing the other (Dobos, 2011; Drew & Klopper, 2014). The analysis fed into the academic development programme.

At the initial stage in 2014 the table contained mostly descriptors of the lecturers' observed practice. Thus, the tool that emerged was originally more of a norm-referenced one as it situated the lecturers' teaching skills relative to those of other lecturers (Cohen, 2011), yet it subsequently developed in a more criterion-referenced direction and literature-derived criteria of best practice replaced some of the original terminology (e.g. *teacher talking time is high with a focus on teaching*). The revised version of the table used terminology in the literature and set the highest level that was around at the time (i.e. Level 3) as the standard to be achieved (Trigwell et al. 2005, Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001). This

approach to teaching was in line with the learning outcomes of the British programmes, and congruent with international standards of effective teaching.

2.5 Results

Below we will describe our findings concerning the three research questions. We use descriptive statistics and qualitative interpretations to analyse the data.

2.5.1 Description of teaching practice

Table 2.1 presents descriptors of the observed features of the lecturers teaching in this college. This table is the extended version used in 2015 and 2016.

Table 2.1 Observed teaching practice of TNE lecturers

Level #	Descriptors
1 In need of improvement	Is teacher-centred with a focus on information transmission with very little or no interaction. Mostly answers his / her own questions. Contents are not always presented in a well-organised way, may lack focus, or may not always be pitched at a content level students can cope with. Whiteboard work is not always well-organised. <i>Frequently repeats his or her own sentences. Does not allow students enough time to answer. Uses advanced, discipline specific vocabulary and does not explain nor paraphrase.</i>
2 Close to standard	Is becoming aware of the effect of their teaching. Elicits some answers from students. Refers to previous lectures. Engages students in an activity or two, and sometimes sets up pair work. Monitors students during task. Contents are presented in a well-organised way. Clearly organises information on whiteboard. Uses the teaching materials effectively. <i>Occasionally repeats his or her sentences. Often allows students enough time to answer questions. Explains key vocabulary.</i>
3 Effective	Focuses on the learning process and understanding of concepts. States learning objectives at the beginning, and summarises the lesson at the end. Checks students' previous knowledge and understanding. Engages students in various activities requiring both lower and higher order thinking skills, and is able to set up pair, group and individual work taking alignment with ILOs into account. Actively monitors during tasks and gives individual feedback. Asks comprehension questions, and responds to students' answers. Encourages questions from students. Gives clear instructions. Establishes good rapport with students, and uses their names. Evaluates own teaching through reflection. <i>Explicitly supports students in acquiring key vocabulary. Examples used are contextualised. Explicitly tells students to take notes, and gives them time for this. Assists students in acquiring the requisite vocabulary, and paraphrases. Allows students enough time to answer, and scaffolding is used more frequently to help students formulate an answer.</i>
4 Highly effective	Focuses on the learning process and development of concepts. Clarifies the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and structures teaching and learning activities along lines of relevant knowledge, knowledge construction and problem-solving techniques. Learning activities concentrate on higher order thinking skills. Selects a wide range of appropriate materials, and offers a wide range of teaching and learning activities. Actively monitors during tasks and gives both individual and whole class feedback, indicating common problems. Supports students in developing generic attributes. Responds to previous exam results and adapts how they teach the curriculum accordingly. Reflects critically on own teaching. <i>Explicitly supports students in acquiring key vocabulary and understanding assessment verbs. Always allows students enough time to answer, and scaffolding is used very skilfully to help students formulate an answer.</i>

Level #	Descriptors
5 Excellent	Focuses on the learning process and supports learners to weigh up the merits of different theories and knowledge. Adjusts learning activities as the situation demands. Elicits from students what the ILOs are and how what they do in class relates to them. Assists learners as they design and undertake long-term investigations and projects. Contributes to promoting teaching excellence in the wider context of the faculty and / or the whole college. <i>Explicitly supports students in acquiring key vocabulary and understanding assessment verbs. Always allows students enough time to answer, and scaffolding is used very skilfully and unobtrusively to lead students towards better results.</i>

Note. Descriptors in italics in Levels 1 and 2 may be typical features of transnational education, while those in Levels 3-5 are desirable.

2.5.2 Development of teaching practice over a three-year CPD programme

Figure 2.1 shows how the teaching practice of the 2014 group developed over the three years in this study. In 2015 the sharp decline in Level 1 is noticeable while at the same time the number of lecturers in Level 3 doubles. The shift towards generally higher levels continues in 2016, with a few even reaching Level 4. In the course of 3 years, the number of lecturers in Level 1 decreased from 18 to 4, and in Level 2 from 15 to 8, while the number in Level 3 increased from 11 to 29, and Level 4 from 0 to 3.

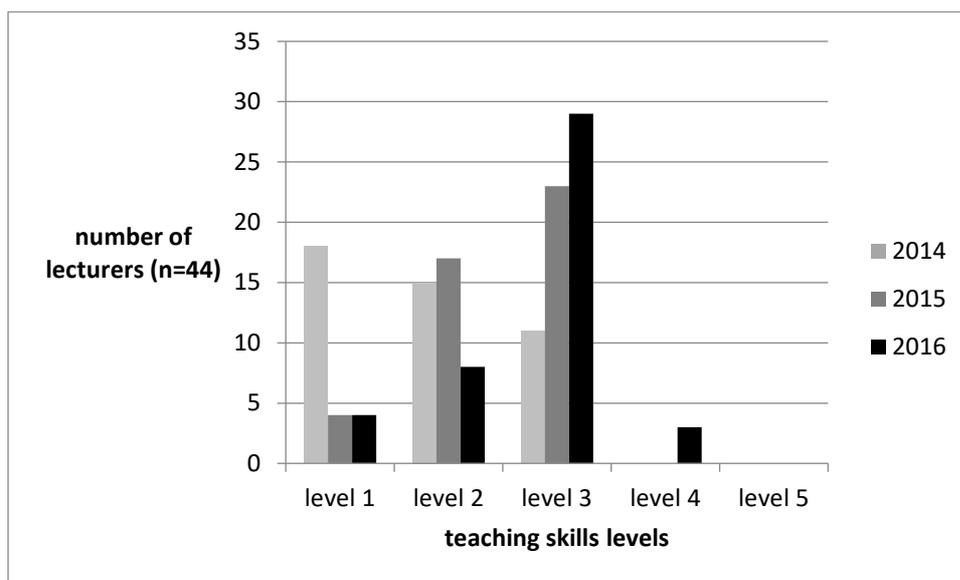


Figure 2.1 Development of the original group over three years

2.5.3 CPD questionnaire results

Table 2.2 shows the results of a questionnaire on the usefulness of the 15 different elements of the CPD programme at the end of those three years. Fifty-five lecturers returned the form (81% of the total, as some new staff had joined). Most elements were formal and deliberately introduced, while others were informal.

Table 2.2 CPD elements in order of usefulness (*n*=55)

#	Indication of usefulness of CPD elements: highest to lowest Statement	Weighted score (%)	Confidence levels at	
			95%	99%
1.	Receiving written tips on how to improve	88.89	2.35	3.09
2.	Receiving written feedback on my teaching skills	87.50	2.35	3.09
3.	The consultation session (face-to-face) after being observed	87.27	3.06	4.03
4.	Informal discussions with colleagues	85.91	3.06	4.03
5.	The observation of my teaching in itself as it heightens my awareness of what I do	84.72	3.75	4.94
6.	Reading recent literature on teaching in higher education	84.43	2.35	3.09
7.	Discussions about teaching with my mentor when I first started teaching in the college	83.02	3.43	4.52
8.	The Course Experience Questionnaire (the statements that refer to my teaching)	82.27	3.43	4.53
9.	Workshops conducted by the Programme Adviser of our affiliate university	80.66	2.35	3.09
10.	Observations and feedback by the faculty quality enhancement coordinator	80.32	4.30	5.64
11.	Peer observations (new format – focusing on learning from others)	78.70	4.50	5.93
12.	Workshops given on aspects of teaching / learning / assessment	78.18	4.80	6.31
13.	The series of workshops on teaching / lecturing we conducted ourselves in 2014	77.13	4.50	5.93
14.	Filling in the critical self-evaluation form after being observed	75.46	4.97	6.54
15.	Peer observations (old format – focusing on giving feedback to others)	75.00	4.97	6.54

2.6 Discussion

2.6.1 Observed teaching practice of TNE lecturers

At Level 1, when lecturers use advanced or discipline-specific vocabulary they presumably expect the students to know these words, as they do not explain or paraphrase them. Not allowing students enough time to answer may also be linked to assuming their language proficiency is high enough to function fully in English. As English is a second language for all the students and their levels of proficiency vary, it may take a bit of time for some students to process questions. Repeating whole sentences verbatim was based on the idea that students would understand them when heard a second time, as became apparent during the post-observation discussions. This might have been influenced by the lecturers' own education system, as this feature was only displayed by one nationality, although not by all of them.

Level 2 is a transition stage where lecturers are beginning to become aware of the effect of their teaching. However, much of what takes place in the classroom is still teaching-centred rather than learning-centred (Trigwell et al., 2005), while monitoring students usually did not mean much more than checking on the progress of the task. What may also be the case is that lecturers here are in an experimental phase and have just begun introducing learning activities, possibly because they have been encouraged to do so.

The outcomes in 2016 show that the teaching skills of four lecturers of the original group are still in Level 1, while 11 lecturers are in the transitional Level 2. Possible factors that acted as impediments to reaching the desired standard may be any one or a combination of the following factors. First of all,

lecturers may come from an educational system where they were expected to expound their knowledge to the students. Secondly, teachers are not autonomous, as the curriculum is developed by academic staff of the provider university and they are hired to deliver it (Arenas, 2009). This may lead to an inclination to do exactly that: deliver the content. Thirdly, individuals may not be motivated to act upon the advice given (Smith, 2008) and may not be willing to accept that they are novices in teaching in TNE when they have many years of experience teaching in their home country (Deaker, Stein, & Spiller, 2016). Fourthly, there may be a general lack of critical self-reflection (Bovill et al., 2014), while self-reflection is generally seen as a prerequisite for development as a teacher (Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). This became evident in the self-evaluation forms lecturers had to fill in after being observed, with most of them not showing awareness of the effect of their teaching. And finally, the rapid rise in student numbers over the three years of the study was not always keeping pace with the recruitment of new staff, leading to an increased workload and too many administrative tasks (Dobos, 2011).

Level 3 was set as the standard, reflecting good practice already present in 2013 and thereby forming a local definition of what counts as a 'good' performance (Smith, 2012). Level 3 appears to be closely linked to what is described in the literature as effective teaching, taking a learning-centred approach. There are of course elements of information transmission in Level 3, but it is not the sole approach. There is also an awareness that students are studying in a non-native language (Teekens, 2003) and need support in acquiring the necessary vocabulary to access the content (Murray, 2012). Separating listening and trying to understand the concept from writing notes is likely to be needed by the majority of students in TNE. Listening to an explanation, trying to understand, and simultaneously taking notes is an extremely complex skill, particularly given the students' language proficiency. Content and language learning need to be integrated. Considering that none of the teaching staff are Western and the number of lecturers in Level 3 or higher increased from 11 to 32, we concur with Jordan et al. (2014) that taking a student-centred approach focusing on the learning process is not inherently a Western concept.

What distinguishes Level 4 is that the teaching and learning activities are fully aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the programme level taught (Biggs & Tang, 2011); the extent to which it is student-centred; the ability of lecturers to reflect on their own performance and on feedback from external sources, and to transform this into practice (Postareff et al., 2007); and explicitly supporting students in understanding assessment verbs. This change in teaching practice may very well be needed to bridge the gap between how lecturers and students understand these verbs (Williams, 2005). All these factors make this teaching approach highly effective.

Achieving Level 5 is dependent upon students taking major responsibility for their own learning, and lecturers being able to adjust learning activities in response to the students' needs. This would require an ability to improvise on the part of the lecturer. However, this active approach to learning by students was only observed in a few individual cases, and may not be characteristic of a Bachelor's programme in general.

It is crucial to remember that a lecturer may not display all of the indicators in a particular level, and indeed sometimes showed behaviour that was indicative of more than one level. The factor that was

decisive in establishing a lecturer's level was a focus on teaching and information transmission as contrasted with a focus on learning with various learning activities to engage the students.

2.6.2 Discussion of CPD programme

In this study, a broad conception of CPD was adopted with both formal and informal elements, largely echoing Gibbs' overview of activities used to develop teaching and learning (Gibbs, 2013). All the initiatives were embedded in academics' professional practice (Boud & Brew, 2013). The lecturers were asked to indicate how useful they had found these elements for their professional development during their time in the college. These answers were weighted in order to arrive at a percentage rate of usefulness, where 100% would mean that all respondents found this element very useful. Subsequent confidence levels were calculated at 95% and 99%. With a sample size of 55 from a population of 69 lecturers in 2015 and a confidence level of 95%, this would mean that the highest scoring element (receiving written tips on how to improve) at almost 89% has a confidence interval of 2.35. This indicates that we can be certain of this result within a range of 2.35 for 95% of the time, meaning that approximately 87% to 91% of all the lecturers find this element useful or very useful.

The discussion of the main results has been clustered into four groups: feedback on observed practice, informal elements of professional development, workshops, and various other elements. Firstly, the overall results indicate that individual feedback on teaching practice, whether oral or written, is found to be most useful. Although this was time consuming on the part of the researcher, it is obviously valued by the vast majority of lecturers. Furthermore, elements which were not deliberately introduced follow closely, with informal discussions with colleagues rated highly at almost 86% followed by reading recent literature on teaching in higher education and discussions with the mentor when they first started teaching in the college at approximately 84% and 83% respectively. Thirdly, as far as the workshops are concerned, the ones given by the programme adviser of the partner university are found to be more useful than the ones on teaching and learning. This may be an indication that lecturers' identity is more closely related to their discipline than to their teaching, a conception which may indicate that they see themselves first and foremost as experts in their field, which in turn may lead to a teaching-centred approach focusing on the transmission of information. Finally, the element which scored lowest amongst the lecturers as to usefulness was filling in the critical self-evaluation form after being observed. Here the comments made by the lecturers differed most from what the researcher had observed. It might be the case that lecturers were reluctant to write down what did not go well as they felt this might negatively affect their appraisal.

2.6.3 Limitations of this study

The possible subjectivity of a single observer was counterbalanced by a longitudinal perspective, lending higher reliability.

2.7 Implications of this case study

In view of the improved teaching practice of the original group, we argue that it appears worthwhile to have an academic development unit embedded in the host institution as the programme adviser's workshops usually focused on the discipline and changes in the programme. This unit is to focus on

transforming teaching practice to a student-centred approach in line with the learning outcomes of the TNE programmes, and focusing on features that seem to typically contribute to effective teaching in TNE (see Table 2.1). However, for a significant minority (one third of the group) this time period of three years was not enough to reach the desired teaching practice level 3. What may also be needed is a more critical self-reflection on their teaching by those lecturers, something which was often lacking. Although Smith (2009) argues that transnational teaching is a novel experience that can lead to critical reflection and ultimately transformation and change of practice, with this particular group of lecturers it did not automatically seem to be the case for everyone. As the lecturers indicated that individual feedback with tips on how to improve was most useful to them, this suggests the need for academic developers to focus on these elements in a CPD programme and to treat each academic as a whole person, with individual needs, fears, strengths and weaknesses (Blackie et al., 2010). Deliberately creating opportunities for discussions and for sharing good practice with colleagues may contribute to reducing resistance to change and to transforming teaching practice.

Additionally, what may also be needed is to make lecturers aware of the change in students' learning outcomes, in line with Guskey's (2007) model of teacher change so that a change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes will ensue, which in turn might lead to them adopting a student-centred approach. There were early indications in 2016 that for the first time in the history of the college the classification of results of the students was increasing, with higher pass rates, fewer students getting a third-class degree, more a second class, and some even a first class, while the composition of the student body had remained largely the same over the previous three years. Improved teaching skills may be one of the main factors contributing to the improved quality of the students' learning outcomes. These better results took years to manifest themselves, and underline the necessity of long-term CPD programmes in TNE.

2.8 Conclusion

While a key aspect of our study has been to assess the relative value of a range of CPD elements in the context of TNE and the concurrent changes in teaching practice, this approach is likely to be of interest to a wider reach of academic developers in their quest for effective CPD. The most significant finding is that individual attention is more effective than other forms of CPD. This does not invalidate workshops, but it does mean that they need to be followed up by more sophisticated and personalised approaches that support lecturers in their shift towards a student-centred approach to teaching. One area that needs further research relates to the finding that lecturers in TNE deemed self-reflection on their practice least useful.

Although quality assurance processes in TNE are rigorous and omnipresent, that is much less the case with quality enhancement initiatives. With ever more Western universities working in partnership across different academic cultures around the world, we recommend long-term CPD programmes focusing on the quality of teaching to be part and parcel of the partnership.

Chapter 3

Expatriate academics and transnational teaching: the need for quality assurance and quality enhancement to go hand in hand

Abstract

In the past two decades transnational education has been increasing, and so has the need for staff to teach on these programmes. This study sought the views of non-Anglophone expatriate academics teaching transnationally in Oman by means of a survey and follow-up interviews. It highlights the challenges that they face in a teaching and learning environment that is academically and culturally new to them. These challenges relate mostly to the students as they need extensive structured guidance and to maintaining programme quality in meeting the learning outcomes, particularly critical thinking and writing in English. Teaching adaptation and quality assurance were less challenging. Findings indicate that for a more enhanced teaching and learning environment, both the provider and host institution need to continuously invest in face-to-face professional development addressing the challenges expatriate academics experience, and that the sole focus on quality assurance by provider universities is not sufficient to create this.

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3.1 Introduction and theoretical framework

3.1.1 Transnational education

The proliferation of transnational education (TNE) over the past twenty years of programmes delivered overseas to ever increasing student numbers (British Council, 2016) has led to a rising demand for staff teaching the TNE students. TNE is highly developed in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which consist of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, with among the highest levels of TNE enrolments of any region worldwide, mostly on Bachelor's programmes (Universities UK International, 2017). With some 20,000 TNE students in 2017/2018 the number is quite substantial in Oman, the focus of this study. In the GCC countries, it is quite common to recruit non-Anglophone expatriate staff to teach on these programmes while they rarely have prior experience in a Western university, neither as students nor as teaching staff. In Oman, expatriate academics form a considerable majority of the teaching staff in TNE. Several studies have pointed at the unique challenges for TNE teaching staff as they work in an environment that is new to them academically, culturally, and sometimes also linguistically as they may not have taught in English previously (Dobos, 2011; Hoare, 2013; Leask, 2005). Issues regarding teaching quality in TNE in Oman have been identified in the quality audits conducted by the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority between 2009 and 2018.

Similarly, but from a different point of view, teaching related challenges were identified by UK higher education leaders of TNE providers in O'Mahony's 2014 survey. The local teaching and learning experience was one of their concerns and seen as a potential risk to the UK providers' reputation and the quality of the programme delivery. There is, however, a paucity of research into the experience and views of expatriate teaching staff in TNE. Such research is not only necessary to gain an insight into the quality issues, but also to better align induction and professional development with the challenges they face in this teaching and learning environment. This study builds on O'Mahony's survey and TNE is here defined as the provision of education to students in a country other than where the provider is located (McNamara & Knight, 2016), with the following key elements applicable: the local higher education institution (HEI) teaching staff provide academic support; teaching staff are expatriates resident in the host country; and the distance HEI provides the programmes, qualification, and quality assurance (Knight, 2016).

3.1.2 Teaching quality and quality assurance in TNE

Most transnational programmes use teaching resources that are produced by the provider university in order to ensure consistency wherever they are offered. Yet what transnational students value is the quality of the teaching and learning environment with sufficient peer-contact and support given by teaching staff, far more than the reputation of the provider university or the programme per se (Ziguras, 2008a). Expatriate or local teaching staff have no or little say in the development of these curricula, and it is left to them how they contextualise these and make them relevant for students with educational and cultural backgrounds that differ from that of the provider university (Ziguras, 2008b). Although they may be skilled

teachers in their home countries, they need to transform their current practice and adapt to the local context (Leask, 2005). This transition to a new teaching and learning environment raises the question of how they can ensure that transnational programme delivery is culturally appropriate (Ziguras, 2008a) and sufficiently contextualised for students to be able to link new concepts to their society or workplace (Hoare, 2013).

Australia and the UK are the world's main providers of TNE programmes and most of the research into TNE is conducted by Australian or British academics including research into teaching skills. Leask (2005) listed 16 essential characteristics of Australian transnational teachers on Australian programmes, nine of which relate to teaching skills with one deemed to be unique to the TNE classroom: the ability to adapt learning activities in response to offshore students. Similarly, Dobos (2011) concluded that teaching practice could only be adapted in response to the needs of the transnational students. Teaching featured prominently in the survey O'Mahony (2014) conducted among senior staff of TNE providers in the UK which revealed that they perceived local teaching styles as one of the most challenging aspects of delivering their programmes overseas. The term 'local teaching styles' was not specified in O'Mahony's survey, but a notable minority of 30% reported teaching as 'worse' or 'slightly worse' compared with teaching at their HEI in the UK. There are a few TNE studies that describe the characteristics associated with local teaching styles. What Bovill, Jordan and Watters (2014) found in Iraq was that many staff members took a transfer of knowledge approach to teaching, and Dobos (2011) likewise identified that many academics (Malaysian and expat) came from a teaching-centred approach to teaching, and found it challenging to adopt a more student-centred approach.

TNE is one of the strategies of internationalisation, and themes described in the literature about TNE and internationalisation therefore overlap to some extent. Many studies recognise that academic staff, whether teaching in TNE or teaching international students at home, need to be efficient intercultural learners (Hoare, 2013; Leask, 2005). For this, they would first of all need to be aware of their own cultural identity, and accept and value cultural differences in the classroom. They can then recognise and anticipate cultural barriers that may exist for students to participate in class. Dimitrov and Haque (2016) propose a model of intercultural teaching competencies that include some components that are of particular importance to TNE. Especially when teaching students who are culturally different from the lecturer, there needs to be an awareness among lecturers that they themselves and their students may have different perceptions of power distance and of what is appropriate behaviour both inside and outside the classroom. Anglo-Saxon programmes presume a learning-centred approach focusing on the learning process and requiring high student participation levels, be it with other students or the lecturer (Quan, 2013; Ryan, 2011). Therefore teaching staff need to have the ability to adapt their established teaching practice (L. Smith, 2009; Robson, 2011) in response to the programmes and students being taught and to mentor students to what may very well be a new academic culture to them.

Lecturers in TNE also need to have particular personal attributes such as being approachable, patient and taking a non-judgemental approach to cultural differences (Dimitrov & Haque; 2016; Leask, 2005). Ryan (2011) maintains that teaching staff also need to recognise that just because

their students might be different, that this does not automatically make them deficient. For a long time, a deficit approach towards international students was taken by lecturers, describing them in terms of lacking in critical thinking skills and being passive learners. Ryan calls instead for recognition of similarities across cultures and the potential for common ground and learning. In this respect, she argues that self-reflection is a crucial competency for staff teaching in TNE to have as it “forces a rethinking of one’s own cultural knowledge, values and perspectives”.

As provider universities are mostly Anglo-Saxon the English language is the predominant medium of instruction in TNE. This poses challenges to both the lecturers and the students. Native speakers and expatriate teaching staff need to be aware that their students are learning in a second, or sometimes even third, language (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Murray, 2012) so they need to be competent in tailoring the language they use to the different levels of linguistic proficiency of the students. This may include explaining and paraphrasing new discipline-specific vocabulary to their students using contextualised examples that students can relate to, thereby ensuring students have more than one opportunity to understand the concept (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). Moreover, when teaching staff come from various countries, students are exposed to English spoken with many different accents. Using English as a medium of instruction puts certain demands on lecturers’ own language proficiency; therefore, the requirement that TNE programmes are taught and assessed in English is in itself no guarantee for quality if both the academics and students are operating in a language which is not their first; in fact, it can be a threat to those programmes (Dobos, 2011).

Generally, there seems to be a lack of pre-departure preparation and/or training for teaching in transnational education (Gribble & Ziguas, 2010; K. L. Smith, 2009) and after-arrival support seems to rely on informal networks. Participants in those studies identified a personal need for institutional support in the form of continuing professional development that is specifically directed at the new environment in which they work. Rather than individuals learning through trial and error, and teachers independently altering their pedagogy (Prowse & Goddard, 2010), more emphasis on the development of effective academic practice in transnational education is suggested by Keevers, Lefoe, Leask, Sultan, Ganesharatnam, Loh and Lim (2014) together with opportunities to discuss and share issues with colleagues.

With regards to quality a distinction needs to be made between, on the one hand, the quality of the teaching and learning environment, and on the other, the assurance of consistent academic standards (Sharp, 2017). When the provider university is the awarding body, there is a need to assure that the quality of the programme delivery in TNE is equivalent. This is of particular importance for the assessments and a rigorous regime is maintained in order to ensure that the standards that apply in the home country are also followed in the host country. Where assessments are concerned, the provider university usually functions as the sole reference point for quality (Pyvis, 2011). Yet while both Pyvis and Sharp recognise the need for robust academic standards, they argue in favour of measures of educational quality that are both context and culturally sensitive, allowing for local variations in the teaching and learning environment which are responsive to the needs and values of the students in transnational higher education. Despite repeated calls for the need for culturally and contextually appropriate international education, few quality assurance frameworks have developed indicators for assuring the

contextualisation of foreign programmes in the host country (Latchem & Ryan, 2014), and Oman is a case in point.

3.2 Aims of this study

The literature overview above indicates that there are issues specific for TNE with regards to quality assurance and quality enhancement of the teaching and learning environment. The context in which this case study took place is a medium-sized private college illustrative of TNE in Oman and also in the Gulf region. The first aim of this study was to investigate to what extent teaching quality, professional development, and staff induction are nationwide issues in institutions offering TNE in Oman. Accordingly, this study focuses on the following research questions:

- What are the specific challenges experienced by the expatriate teaching staff?
- To what extent do these challenges impact on the quality of the TNE teaching and learning environment?

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Research context

Additional desk research was conducted in order to place this study into a wider perspective. The number of transnational students studying wholly overseas for a British higher education qualification in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in 2017/ 2018 is quite substantial, as shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 TNE students in MENA region

Country	Number of students in TNE
Oman	20,645
Egypt	20,480
United Arab Emirates	18,120
Saudi Arabia	9,465
Kuwait	6,845
Bahrain	3,405
Qatar	2,530
Lebanon	2,420
Jordan	1,675

Note. Data extracted on 29 March 2019 from the Higher Education Statistics Agency:
<https://www.hesa.ac.British/data-and-analysis/students/chart-5>

Oman actively encourages quality assured higher education in the private sector as it increases access for local students, both school leavers and mature students, to higher education. For private HEIs it is mandatory to be affiliated with an accredited and approved university abroad (Universities UK international, 2017) and the UK forms the largest provider in Oman. Programmes need prior approval from the Ministry of Higher Education. Expatriate academics need to have a minimum of three years' teaching experience in higher education and a relevant degree at Master's or PhD level, and their CVs need to be approved by both the Ministry and the provider university.

In the GCC countries it is common to recruit non-Anglophone expatriate academics to teach in TNE, and in Oman they outnumber Omani academic staff by about 4:1 (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Expatriate academics teaching in private higher education institutions in Oman

Academic year	Expatriate	Omani
2012 - 2013	1581	363
2013 - 2014	1822	438
2014 - 2015	1979	462
2015 - 2016	2074	529

Note: National Centre for Statistics & Information; data extracted on 29 March 2019 from <https://www.ncsi.gov.om/Elibrary/Pages/LibraryContentView.aspx>

The vast majority of expatriate teaching staff in this study originate from non-Western countries such as India, Pakistan, and the Philippines, and some from the MENA region. From 2016 onwards a few Omani lecturers joined as well. The number of lecturers almost doubled between 2015 and 2018.

As a preliminary step towards national accreditation, which started in 2017, the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) conducted quality audits of all 59 HEIs in Oman, 21 of which are private. The quality audit reports provide formative feedback to the HEIs for nine broad areas of activities. This feedback is formulated in terms of commendations, affirmations or recommendations. OAAA's Quality Audit Manual (2008) outlines that HEIs need to ensure and evaluate teaching quality. As this study is concerned with teaching quality, and its implications for professional development and staff induction in TNE, the 21 quality audit reports of the private HEIs were analysed for these three criteria (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Quality Audits conducted between 2009 and 2018

Country of affiliation	#	Teaching quality		Professional development		Staff induction	
			#		#		#
UK	11	Commendation	3	Commendation	2	Commendation	3
USA	5	Affirmation	2	Affirmation	5	Affirmation	1
India	2	Recommendation	12	Recommendation	12	Recommendation	9
Jordan	2						
Lebanon	2						
Germany	1						
Australia	1						
		Percentage of private HEIs where issues were raised:	67%		81%		48%

Note: Some have more than 1 affiliation

Source Oman Academic Accreditation Authority; data extracted on 3 August 2018 from http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Institution.aspx#Inst_ReviewDwnld

If the recommendations and affirmations are taken together as these are issues identified by either the auditors or the institution respectively, professional development has been the biggest concern over the years (in 81% of these private HEIs), followed by teaching quality (67%), then staff induction (48%). These areas for improvement may have been identified, yet it remains unclear what the expatriate academics themselves perceive as challenges in teaching transnationally. This insight is important for both professional development and staff induction,

as the lecturers are ultimately the ones who will need to implement changes and enhance the quality in their daily work.

Most of the lecturers in this college have been part of a major drive towards quality enhancement in teaching, learning and assessments instigated early 2014 and still continuing. The elements of this academic development resemble Gibbs' (2013) overview of educational development to a large extent, from an initial focus on individual lecturers towards spreading best practice across the institution. They teach British Bachelor's programmes to predominantly Omani students (97%), mostly mature students who are already in employment, and school leavers.

This study presents the views of in total 71 questionnaire respondents who are mainly expatriate staff (96%), none of whom are native speakers of English, delivering British programmes in the faculties of Computing Studies (FCS) and of Business and Management Studies (FBMS). With the exception of two lecturers, none of the lecturers had prior experience of a British programme either as a student or a lecturer. One other lecturer did a long-distance PhD with a UK university.

3.3.2 Data collection

The research is based on two sets of primary data collected at the host institution delivering British programmes. First, a questionnaire was used in 2015 and repeated in 2018 for the new staff. Lecturers were asked, based on their experience in TNE, to rate how challenging they found 20 statements (with 1 = not challenging; 2 = slightly challenging; 3 = challenging; and 4 = very challenging). These statements were partly based on O'Mahony's 2014 survey and, following an inductive approach, supplemented by the challenges that emerged from consultation sessions which the first author held with all academics after more than 200 hours of teaching observations between 2014 and 2016 (Lamers & Admiraal, 2018). The response rates were 85% ($n = 26$ in FBMS; 11 in FCS) in 2015 and 86% ($n = 24$ in FBMS; $n = 10$ in FCS) in 2018. The respondents added no other challenges in the comments box. Secondly, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of these challenges, the first author approached 13 expatriate lecturers to participate in semi-structured interviews, one of whom turned down the invitation. They were approached based on a proportionate representation of nationalities, an equal gender distribution, and varying experience in TNE (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Profiles research participants

Nationalities: India (5), Philippines (3), Pakistan (2), MENA region (2)

Degree	Faculty:	Years of teaching experience	Years of experience in TNE
Master's	FBMS	13	4
PhD	FBMS	24	7
Master's	FBMS	21	11
PhD	FBMS	25	5
Master's	FBMS	7	3
PhD	FBMS	15	1
Master's	FBMS	8	2
Master's	FCS	12	8
Master's	FCS	9	4
Master's	FCS	6	6
Master's	FCS	7	4
PHD	FCS	17	6

The interviewer asked the remaining twelve lecturers, how they interpreted each questionnaire statement, how certain aspects are different in TNE in comparison to their home country, how they adapted, and what they found challenging aspects of supporting students. All lecturers received a transcript of their interview and were asked if it presented their views accurately and whether they wanted to add or change anything, but none of them did so.

3.3.3 Data analysis

The interviews lasted about 45 to 60 minutes each and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the first author. After reiterative reading the transcripts were analysed for what aspects lecturers found challenging and why this was the case, first per interview, then across per statement and subsequently per category with several months in between each phase. In the first phase, each transcript was coded on broad themes, then for subtopics in the second phase. The third phase included a calculation for internal reliability of each category in the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha and two items were moved to a different category. These adjustments were included in the third phase of coding the transcripts per category. In order to analyse the results we use descriptive and inferential statistics, which enable researchers to interpret what these descriptions mean and how prevalent they are; to make inferences about the wider population; and qualitative interpretations of the interviews by clustering items into categories (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

3.4 Results and discussion

The overall results between 2015 and 2018 and between the two faculties were very similar (independent samples t-tests showed no significant differences in mean scores of all 20 statements with $\alpha=0.0025$) in that the scores mostly (81%) fall in the 'challenging' bracket range of 2.50-3.25. Therefore, we discuss the findings below as an aggregate ($n = 71$). The statements are clustered around four cross-themes: challenges that are related to students, to programme quality, to teaching adaptation, and to quality assurance. The results are shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Questionnaire Results

		FBMS			FCS			
		<i>n</i> = 26	<i>n</i> =24		<i>n</i> =11	<i>n</i> =10		
		2015	2018	mean	2015	2018	mean	SD 2 faculties
Student related aspects								
3	Different student styles of learning	2.65	2.67	2.66	3.20	3.30	3.25	0.42
6	Different students' expectations of the role of the lecturer	2.52	2.58	2.55	2.82	3.10	2.96	0.29
8	The amount of support students need in the learning process	3.24	2.96	3.10	3.36	2.80	3.08	0.01
20	Getting students to utilise their independent learning hours	3.08	2.78	2.93	3.45	2.40	2.93	0.00
mean of mean				2.81			3.05	0.17
Programme quality								
9	Achieving the intended learning outcomes	2.62	2.57	2.59	3.00	3.00	3.00	0.29
10	Online access to the UK library	2.46	2.18	2.32	3.11	2.44	2.78	0.32
11	Supporting students' in developing critical thinking skills	3.08	2.96	3.02	3.27	3.00	3.14	0.08
12	Supporting students in applying theory to practice	2.92	2.92	2.92	3.27	2.80	3.04	0.08
17	Balancing teaching and research	3.32	2.61	2.96	3.18	3.10	3.14	0.12
18	Finding opportunities to give students formative feedback	2.88	2.29	2.59	2.64	2.10	2.37	0.16
mean of mean				2.73			2.91	0.12
Teaching adaptation								
2	Adapting my style of teaching	2.46	2.38	2.42	2.73	2.80	2.76	0.24
4	Tailoring module content to the Omani context	2.88	2.54	2.71	3.10	3.00	3.05	0.24
13	Teaching morning students	2.77	2.74	2.75	2.55	2.80	2.67	0.06
14	Teaching evening students	2.46	2.57	2.51	2.82	2.60	2.71	0.14
19	Finding opportunities to share best practice with colleagues in the college	2.31	2.13	2.22	2.70	2.30	2.50	0.20
mean of mean				2.52			2.74	0.15

		FBMS		FCS				
		<i>n</i> = 26 2015	<i>n</i> =24 2018	<i>n</i> =11 2015	<i>n</i> =10 2018			
Quality assurance								
1	Getting familiar with the British education system	2.58	2.67	2.62	2.20	2.60	2.40	0.16
5	External quality control by the UK university	2.65	2.75	2.70	3.00	2.50	2.75	0.03
15	Communication with the UK university	2.08	2.41	2.25	2.11	2.40	2.26	0.01
16	Reconciling what the faculty expects from me and what the UK university expects from me	2.58	2.30	2.44	2.30	2.70	2.50	0.04
mean of mean				2.50		2.48		0.02

The questionnaire responses were analysed for internal reliability of the four underlying categories using Cronbach's alpha (α) as a measure of the internal consistency amongst the items, with values above 0.70 considered to be reliable (Cohen et al., 2011). The questionnaire results show that those aspects that relate to the students were found to be the most challenging (overall mean: 2.94; SD between the two faculties 0.17; α 0.770), closely followed by maintaining the programme quality (2.83; SD 0.12; α 0.773). Teaching adaptation was found to be less of a challenge (2.63; SD 0.15; α 0.804), with quality assurance the least of a challenge (2.49; SD 0.02; α 0.843). Statement 7 (students' level of English) was deleted as it decreased the internal reliability of any one category considerably.

The order in which the categories are presented below follows the level of challenge as perceived by the respondents to the questionnaire, and the interviewees indicated how they have an impact on the quality of the teaching and learning environment. In their views, aspects related to the students and maintaining the programme quality are challenging aspects of their work. Teaching adaptation and quality assurance are less challenging. These challenges provide indications for the priorities in induction and professional development programmes aimed at quality enhancement.

3.4.1 Aspects related to the students

All interviewees said that students expect lecturers to structure and explain things well beyond the new topics in class, such as vocabulary and what to do for independent learning, to provide extensive guidelines for assignments and a list of reliable websites, and to explain how to upload assignments or how to check for plagiarism. Where students' learning styles are concerned, the two faculties' opinions varied most (standard deviation 0.42). What may account for this difference is that students do not always start their studies with the prerequisite knowledge the British programme assumes they have, an issue that was brought up by all interviewees from FCS, but much less so in FBMS. When some lecturers asked students about their previous education, they learned that students were not expected to ask questions, feeling more comfortable asking their classmates for clarification, and to memorise rather than comprehend concepts. There is a paucity of research into the learning styles of students in the Gulf region. Two such studies into the learning styles and cultural dimensions amongst Qatari students in Canadian programmes (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013; Prowse & Goddard 2010) noted that students need extensive structured guidance, an aspect observed by the academics in Oman as well. Students may be at a disadvantage when it comes to the expectations of the new learning environment and this learning style focusing on memorisation may negatively affect students' performance. As one lecturer said, 'They don't know in how many ways they can improve their own learning process'. Lecturers need to recognise both the barriers students may face in participating in class and the different student perceptions of power distance (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). For newly hired expatriate academics it can be a particularly daunting task to support students in the transition to an academic culture that is new to both parties.

3.4.2 Aspects related to maintaining programme quality

Following Sharp's distinction (2017), this category is about the quality of the teaching and learning environment. This was the aspect that the leaders of TNE providers (O'Mahony, 2014) considered a potential risk to their programmes and it is partly confirmed by the Quality Audit findings where in 67% of the private HEIs teaching quality was identified as an area for improvement. The British programmes are described in terms of learning outcomes and lecturers talked at length about the challenges of achieving these learning outcomes particularly at higher levels, e.g. in applying theory

to practice and developing critical thinking skills. All participants said specifically that they see it as their job to model this skill in class, set up learning tasks such as debates and discussions or critical reading of a passage, usually in small groups, taking a learning-centred approach because 'when you only deliver the materials, you will definitely not make them think critically at all'. However, the challenge of developing critical thinking is not restricted to transnational education, as Hammer and Green (2011) report in their case study in Australia with first year students (25% international students).

In addition, students are assessed in English, yet less than half of the lecturers stated they see it as their responsibility to address English language issues in exams. Only two of them practise writing long answers with their students in class, particularly how to organise answers. Five lecturers keep track of students' performance in exams, and provide learning tasks based on their analysis. They identified the lack of critical writing in exam answers and this is where students seem particularly disadvantaged, echoing C. Smith's (2011) findings with international students in the UK. With a Ministry requirement for academics to have an English language proficiency level equivalent to an IELTS 6.0 only, they may not even be in a position to support the development of their students' English. This lack of subject-specific language support by academic staff from non-Anglophone countries may be a potential threat to the programmes they teach (Dobos, 2011). Thus, English language proficiency becomes a double-edged sword when lecturers' own proficiency is not adequate to support students in developing academic literacy (Murray, 2012).

3.4.3 Aspects related to teaching adaptation

Five lecturers specifically stated they changed their teaching style and adopted a learning-centred approach. Another adjustment lecturers make is to speak more slowly and adjust their vocabulary when students' basic subject knowledge and subject-specific vocabulary in English are not good enough yet. As studies elsewhere, including in TNE, have shown, teaching in another culture requires changes in pedagogy (Eaves, 2011; Dimitrov & Haque, 2016; Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013). Furthermore, it is a matter for concern that four lecturers equate achieving the learning outcomes with delivering the content, which suggests they take a teaching-centred approach focusing on information transmission (Biggs, 2012; Trigwell & Prosser, 2004).

The British university supplies slides used for each module and the expectation is that lecturers tailor the module content to the local context, in this case Oman. Six lecturers recognise the importance of contextualisation for the students, reflecting Hoare's (2013) study in Singapore, with the additional requisite of the materials to be sensitive to the local culture and religion, and some specifically state that assessments need to be contextualised as well. However, there are some modules that cannot be contextualised as there may be professional standards set by global bodies (e.g. Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, or Cisco).

The rapid growth in student numbers in TNE in Oman, like elsewhere in the Gulf (L. Smith, 2009), together with an increase in new staff, places high demands on academic developers to provide continuing professional development (CPD). The Quality Audits highlight the necessity of CPD for both existing and new staff in practically all the private HEIs. This college has experienced rapid growth with staff numbers doubling in 3 years, and students arriving in new cohorts every semester. It has invested in the academic development of the teaching staff through deliberate quality enhancement activities over the past five years. As other studies have shown, the shift towards a learning-centred approach

focusing on the learning process requires time, effort and resources (Bovill et al, 2015; Dobos, 2011; Guskey, 2002; Jordan, Bovill, Othman, Saleh, Shabila, & Watters, 2013; Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001). These CPD activities included teaching observations followed by constructive, one-to-one feedback and peer discussions were facilitated, which are all seen as particularly valuable (Locke, Whitchurch, Smith, & Mazenod, 2014) and may account for why this aspect was perceived as only slightly challenging.

3.4.4 Aspects related to quality assurance

Initially, the quality assurance process, with assessment approval by the internal verifier in the partner university, second marking, the external examiners approving the marks, and the documentation required, was new to all expatriate academics and came as a shock since they had previously had complete autonomy in this respect. Yet they all realised after one or two semesters that this quality assurance was a thorough and robust system and that standards were thus maintained across the programmes. Practically all lecturers perceived external quality control by the British university (including the external examiners) as very useful and said they learned a lot in the process. Four lecturers specifically said that they learned how to align their assessments with the learning outcomes of the modules they teach. In this college, quality assurance is therefore mostly seen as an enabler rather than just red tape (Hughes & Thomas, 2017) and face-to-face communication regarding their modules and assessments with British staff is considered important for expatriate academics. With practically all of the lecturers saying they learned much from visiting partner university staff and external examiners, this quality assurance process has contributed to a transformation of their practice, particularly with regards to setting assessments and marking moderation. They regret that the boards are now conducted in a plenary session through videoconference as it deprives them of the opportunity to individually discuss their modules and assessments with British visiting staff. This indicates that, although videoconferencing may be cheaper, personal and timely communication and relationship building are vital to quality assurance leading to quality enhancement (Keay, May, & O'Mahony, 2014; Pyvis, 2011). A context such as this one, with many new expatriate or Omani academic staff, warrants the expense of regular face-to-face consultation with British staff regarding modules and assessments as an essential part of quality assurance, since this will contribute to their on-going professional development.

The centre for quality enhancement, set up in January 2015, was responsible for the quality enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment across the college, and worked independently but in close cooperation with the deputy dean for quality assurance and the academic registrar. It started supporting lecturers using the data from the academic registry office for learning analytics thereby identifying which students are at risk and which modules are at risk (low pass rate). This constant monitoring and evaluation of outcomes is essential for quality assurance of TNE programmes (Castle & Kelly, 2004).

3.5 Conclusions and recommendations

Although this study deals with one private institution, the research context described here with mostly non-Anglophone academics teaching British programmes to local students is not uncommon in Oman or in the Gulf region (Wilkins & Neri, 2018). Based on the questionnaire and the interviews in this study, the survey amongst UK providers of TNE and the OAAA quality audits, there seems to be

agreement that the quality of the teaching and learning environment in the host institution is a challenging aspect.

Considering that the survey results did not differ much between 2015 and 2018 when staff numbers had almost doubled, this underlines the need for continuous quality enhancement in the form of an extensive in-house professional development programme and good support during the induction period in the host institution. Foci for professional development are often decided upon by the UK university (quality assurance), or in response to quality audits (teaching quality), but not so much in response to the challenges perceived by the academics concerned. In such a programme more attention needs to be paid to what they consider the most challenging aspects, namely those related to students and maintaining programme quality.

The quality assurance of the whole assessment cycle of the programmes offered, whilst absolutely necessary, is in itself not sufficient for guaranteeing a teaching and learning environment which is comparable to that of the provider institution. We therefore recommend academic registry, quality assurance and quality enhancement to be an integrated team with institutional data and learning analytics continuously informing professional development needs. Thus quality enhancement at an individual level through professional development is reinforced by quality enhancement at an institutional level (Williams, 2016), thus leading to a more equivalent teaching and learning environment.

We also recommend that transnational education providers move more explicitly from providing programmes and quality assurance towards supporting quality enhancement as well. Particularly if the higher education system of the provider and its tacit assumptions of the academic culture are alien to both staff and students, support in terms of professional development and quality enhancement embedded in the host institution is essential for the quality of the teaching and learning environment, and provisions for this should be included in the contract. The Quality Assurance Agency states in their UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2011) that

.... the fundamental principle underpinning all arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others is that the degree awarding body has ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, regardless of where these opportunities are delivered and who provides them.

Echoing the British Council report (2016), in a context such as the one described here, we argue in favour of a champion of the provider university within the host institution, somebody with enough seniority, expertise and credibility to drive change and continuous quality enhancement of teaching, learning and assessments. If the ultimate aim of quality assurance by the provider university and in-country quality audits is to achieve equivalence in the learning opportunities for TNE students, there is a need for a clear contractual provision for such a champion to be embedded in the host institution with clearly defined responsibilities. A single provider cannot enforce this, so here lies a task ahead for the worldwide sector as a whole.

Chapter 4

Addressing student challenges in transnational education in Oman: the importance of student interaction with teaching staff and peers

Abstract

Transnational education is highly developed in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, with among the highest levels of TNE enrolments of any region worldwide. Approximately a third of the Omani students in higher education are registered in programmes offered transnationally, and the UK is the main provider. The principal aim of this study was to identify the challenges that Omani students face when studying in transnational education by means of a survey and follow-up interviews. The findings show that challenges relate mainly to the continual adaptation to transnational higher education and the challenges of academic writing in achieving the progressively more demanding learning outcomes, while the students indicate they address these challenges through collaborative learning. It argues in favour of widening the definition of contextualisation from simply including local examples to a pedagogical approach in TNE that supports students in dealing with academic challenges. The findings of this study may guide TNE lecturers in making well-informed decisions about their teaching practice and student support.

An adapted version of this chapter has been submitted as: Lamers-Reeuwijk, A.M., van der Rijst, R.M., & Admiraal, W.F. Addressing student challenges in transnational education in Oman: the importance of student interaction with teaching staff and peers

4.1 Introduction and theoretical framework

The past two decades have seen more and more international students studying in Europe, Canada, America and Australia and an increasing expansion of transnational education (TNE) elsewhere (British Council, 2016). TNE is here defined as the provision of education to students in a country other than where the provider is located (McNamara & Knight, 2016), with the following key elements applicable: the local higher education institution (HEI) teaching staff provide academic support; teaching staff are expatriates resident in the host country; and the distance HEI provides the programmes, qualification, and quality assurance (Knight, 2016). With these increasing numbers it is important to understand student challenges, so that they can be better supported towards academic success. This study aims to contribute to the nascent body of research into TNE in the Gulf region and investigates the challenges students experience. Given that there is scant research specifically into the student experience in TNE in Oman while the numbers are quite substantial, this paper draws on the literature on international students as they share many similar characteristics and learning needs, on research conducted into student related aspects in the Gulf and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and on TNE research elsewhere.

4.1.1 Supporting international students

In response to increasing numbers of international students in Canadian campuses, Dimitrov & Haque (2015) developed an intercultural teaching competence model to be used as a reflective tool for instructors in making their teaching more effective across cultures. Particularly their facilitation competencies such as tailoring the content to students with different levels of linguistic ability, creating opportunities for peer learning, and mentoring students' transition into a new academic culture are relevant to TNE as well. Supporting international students in learning how to write assignments in a New Zealand university was deemed necessary even after an initial writing course, and writing support within the discipline included extensive assignment instructions and individual formative feedback from staff, while some students also sought peer support (Skyrme, 2018). Successful strategies to reduce plagiarism amongst international students in a UK university also included a discipline-embedded academic writing programme, and individual feedback (Divan, Bowman, & Seabourne, 2015). The nationwide need for academic teaching staff to support international students in Australia in their English language competence development during their studies was highlighted by an Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) steering committee (DEEWR, 2009). While this committee developed a useful set of ten good practice principles to support the development of English language proficiency of international students, Murray (2012) nevertheless argues that there is no one-size-fits-all when student profiles and English language proficiency needs may vary across disciplinary contexts and curricula.

Apart from the development of international students' English proficiency, there may be additional gaps in practical subject skills and subject knowledge. Specific support in these areas feature prominently in the international foundation year described by Jones, Fleischer, McNair, & Masika (2018). However, this seems to imply that addressing the deficits will automatically lead to student success throughout their Bachelor's programmes. Yet when students are not actively supported in how to apply their language skills in their oral or written communication, progression to a higher level of English language proficiency will not automatically take place (Benzie, 2010). Lea and Street (2006) argue that not only international but also home students will benefit from the academic literacies

model that they proposed. This model connects students' learning of subject content with the discipline-specific writing requirements.

4.1.2 Transnational student experiences

There is a limited body of research into the TNE student experience in this region, covering themes such as student satisfaction, first-year integration, and the contrast between previous learning experiences and the expectations of a Western university. Wilkins et al. (2012) noted that UAE students from state schools in an international branch campus found the programmes more academically challenging as they were not accustomed to independent learning, problem solving and essay writing. Qatari students in a Canadian branch campus (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013) indicated they had needed to shift from memorisation in high school to comprehension in the university programme. Previous learning experiences were also found to impact on the first year experience and degree of academic success of medical students in Bahrain (Holden, 2018). Factors such as moving from an Arabic medium secondary school to an English language curriculum and the pedagogical-didactical disconnect were found to make this transition particularly challenging. Holden (2018) argued that for a successful academic transition students need to realise in time that their long-held self-efficacy and approach to learning may not fit the new educational context they are in and that they need to adapt.

Outside the Gulf and MENA region some recent studies have focused on TNE student perspectives on plagiarism; on contextualisation and the transfer of learning to local and regional societies; on effective teaching methods; and on developing academic literacy. Palmer et al. (2018) found that students in four universities offering Australian programmes in Singapore have inadequate awareness of what constitutes plagiarism. They therefore recommended a set of measures in order to promote academic integrity in the TNE environment, of which a compulsory unit on plagiarism seemed to be the most effective means. In another study in Singapore, Hoare (2012) concluded that TNE providers still have some way to go in designing curricula that facilitate in-class intercultural and transnational comparisons as the postgraduate interviewees had reported losing interest in class when lecturers drew on foreign case studies and Western philosophies. Students' local knowledge should be utilised in debates and discussions so that transfer of learning to the context of Singapore takes place. Similarly, Yao and Collins (2018) found that discussing topics in class with a group of classmates was perceived by students in a Vietnamese German university to be an effective learning practice, and in a context where both staff and students are non-native speakers of English, the flipped classroom and collaborative learning outside class helped them to deal with English language issues. They recommended shifting to cooperative learning with a stronger role for teaching staff facilitating student engagement through group work in class. For TNE students in Hong Kong, Evans and Morrison (2011) found that the most challenging factors in the first year include academic writing, comprehending lectures, participating in seminars, acquiring specialist vocabulary and getting familiar with new forms of assessment and grading.

Students in Oman come from a teaching-centred schooling system where curricula and examinations allow success through memorisation, and where the development of higher order thinking skills has long not been prioritised (World Bank, 2013). Contrarily, the latter is what is emphasised in British curricula in higher education (Quality Assurance Agency, 2011). The Ministry of Higher Education in Oman actively encourages quality assured higher education in the private sector, as the public sector cannot absorb the growing number of students. TNE thus increases access for local students, both

school leavers and mature students, to higher education. All private higher education institutions are required to be affiliated with an accredited university abroad, most of which are from the UK. The vast majority of the students in Oman first attend a foundation year that focuses on general English, academic study skills, mathematics, and information technology before starting on their Bachelor's programme.

4.2 Aims of this study

Hence in TNE, Omani students find themselves in a novel teaching and learning environment that is structured around the interplay between the British curriculum and non-Anglophone expatriate academics, all with their own culturally embedded assumptions of what higher education entails. These different assumptions may be disadvantageous to students' learning experience and engagement in the classroom. Therefore, this study aimed primarily to identify what specific challenges Omani TNE students face in this environment and secondly, what type of support students subsequently need as a first step towards creating an appropriate teaching and learning environment in which they can succeed academically. This study moved deliberately beyond the initial transition phase into TNE by also including students in levels 5 and 6, as the issues associated with transition into the first year of higher education (level 4) may be more accentuated in TNE but occur globally and are not specific to TNE.

4.3 Method

This study used a mixed-methods research approach with a survey, followed up by interviews with twelve students in order to interpret the data based on deeper insights gained from the students.

4.3.1 The research context

This case study was conducted in a private college in Oman. TNE is well established in this country with approximately a third of the students in higher education registered in private institutions, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Omani students registered in higher education institutions

Academic year	Private	Public / all other
2013-2014	60,294	116,691
2014-2015	68,350	138,632
2015-2016	70,294	141,790

Note. National Centre for Statistics & Information; data extracted on 29 April 2019 from <https://www.ncsi.gov.om/Elibrary/Pages/LibraryContentView.aspx>

In this college, the UK Bachelor's programmes in the Faculty of Computing Studies (FCS) and the Faculty of Business and Management Studies (FBMS) are delivered to predominantly Omani students (96%), both school leavers and mature students, by non-Anglophone academics from India, Pakistan, the Philippines, the MENA region and recently also a few from Oman. The minimum English language requirement for both students and academic staff on the programmes is an IELTS 6.0, a requirement set by the partner university and the Ministry of Higher Education respectively.

4.3.2 Participants

The aim was to get a sample of approximately 1000, distributed proportionally across the levels in each faculty, and therefore this number of hard copies was handed out in core modules across the Bachelor's programmes, which resulted in 790 students filling in the anonymous survey, a response rate of 79%. Thirty-five copies had to be rejected, as they were not completely filled in resulting in 757 valid responses, 746 of which were from Omani students and 11 from students originating from the Gulf and MENA region. The respondents made no additional comments. At the time, there were 429 students registered in FCS and 2372 students in FBMS. Table 4.2 shows the breakdown of the responses (level 6 is the final year of the Bachelor's programme).

Table 4.2 Number of responses per level (n=757)

	FBMS	FCS	Total
Level 4	196	21	217
Level 5	176	64	240
Level 6	240	60	300
Total:	612	145	757

Twelve Omani students were interviewed; eight from FBMS and four from FCS, as at this point saturation took place. Table 4.3 shows the profile of the interview participants.

Table 4.3 Profile of participants

FBMS	Gender	Level	FCS	Gender	Level
B1	M	4	C1	F	5
B2	F	4	C2	F	5
B3	M	5	C3	F	6
B4	M	5	C4	M	6
B5	M	6			
B6	M	6			
B7	F	6			
B8	F	6			

4.3.3 Data collection and procedure

The student survey was partly adapted from the teacher survey conducted in an earlier study (Lamers, Admiraal, & van der Rijst, 2020). Where necessary, statements were rephrased from the teacher to the student point of view (e.g. adapting my style of teaching – adapting to different styles of teaching). Lecturers distributed the survey to their students in class and gave a brief explanation of the purpose of the survey, emphasising its anonymity and voluntary nature.

In the survey, students were asked to indicate how challenging each aspect of studying in TNE (as formulated in the items) was on a 5-point scale from "not at all" to "very". The mid-point of the response scales was formulated as "it varies". Descriptive statistics for each item are included in Table 4.4. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was then conducted on the 20 items using SPSS 25 in order to identify clusters of interrelating variables underlying the items in the student survey. These clusters of variables were used to structure the interview data (see below). The factor analysis with direct Oblimin rotation showed adequate Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of 0.939 and resulted in two main components: continual adaptation, and achieving learning outcomes. Continual adaptation includes items that refer to students' continual adaptation throughout the years to the progressively more demanding requirements of the British Bachelor's programme the students are in. Achieving learning

outcomes includes items that refer to learning tasks and assessments. Two items formed a third component that was difficult to interpret. Three items showed low factor loadings (<0.40) and one item showed cross-loadings (>0.40). These six items were not clustered into one of the two main components and are presented under the heading of 'Other' in Table 4.4.

The follow-up interviews were piloted with three students, and twelve students were sought to participate in the follow-up interviews with the assurance that what they said would not be attributable to any individual. All students agreed to the interviews being audio recorded and used for research. They were given a hard copy of the survey items and the interviewer read each statement out aloud as they moved through the interview. She asked them to what extent they considered each one challenging and why, how they had adapted and what support they found useful. They were also asked if there was anything else they wanted to add. Interviews lasted between 25 and 39 minutes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

The transcripts were analysed and coded through reiterative reading, initially per transcript on general comments students made and on responses to the research questions, and in the second phase across each item for a more fine-grained analysis. The frequency with which certain subthemes occurred was tabulated per statement. Next, after the EFA, relations between variables within each component were identified in order to distil meaning and their implications (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Finally, the transcripts were read once more for anything that might disclaim the interpretation or conclusion, and a few minor changes were made.

4.4 Findings and discussion

Table 4.4 summarises the descriptive statistical results of the 17 remaining survey statements per component.

Table 4.4 Student survey results

		FBMS (N= 612)		FCS (N= 145)		Total (N= 757)	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Continual adaptation to TNE							
1	Getting familiar with the academic rules and regulations of the British higher education system	2.45	0.97	2.59	0.99	2.52	0.97
2	Adapting my style of studying (compared to school)	2.64	0.90	2.79	0.87	2.67	0.90
3	Adapting to different styles of teaching (compared to school)	2.60	0.92	2.72	0.94	2.62	0.93
5	Understanding how to avoid plagiarism	2.48	0.97	2.60	0.93	2.51	0.97
6	Different expectations that the lecturer has of me (compared to school)	2.61	0.93	2.83	0.86	2.66	0.92
7	The level of English required for my studies	2.52	0.95	2.65	0.99	2.55	0.96
8	Getting enough support from the lecturer inside class	2.48	0.96	2.65	0.91	2.51	0.95
9	Getting enough support from the lecturer outside class	2.59	0.93	2.75	0.93	2.62	0.94
11	Developing critical thinking skills	2.58	0.90	2.68	0.89	2.60	0.89
Achieving learning outcomes							
13	Writing long answers in exams	2.72	0.89	2.77	0.95	2.73	0.90
14	Writing assignments	2.69	0.94	2.77	0.85	2.71	0.92
15	Giving presentations	2.59	0.95	2.78	0.88	2.63	0.94
16	Working with other students in class (in pairs or in groups)	2.33	1.00	2.68	0.93	2.40	0.99
17	Speaking English in class	2.30	1.00	2.64	1.00	2.37	1.01
Other							
4	Understanding module content	2.58	0.97	2.71	0.89	2.61	0.95
10	Online access to the UK library	2.75	0.92	2.60	1.00	2.72	0.93
12	Theory to practice	2.66	0.89	2.78	0.96	2.69	0.91
18	Balancing study and work	2.64	0.87	2.77	0.96	2.66	0.88
19	Finding opportunities to study together with other students in the college	2.54	0.90	2.66	0.94	2.56	0.91
20	Study outside class	2.47	0.95	2.65	0.91	2.50	0.94

Note. Item mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), per faculty and in total.

The mean scores for the survey results lie quite closely together. The high standard deviations for each statement, however, indicate that students differ greatly in how they experience their studies in TNE possibly because their backgrounds differ (e.g. grade point average or motivation). For the two faculties combined the highest scoring challenge is writing, whether in exams or in assignments, whereas working with other students and speaking English in class were the least challenging. Independent t-test did not show any significant differences between the two faculties (with $\alpha=0.05$ and Bonferroni correction for the number of analyses). The interviews with students give a more fine-grained insight into these challenges and what kind of environment and support students find effective. In the section below, we present the three components, each starting with the survey statements that were rated as most challenging, illustrated by the students' experiences as related in the interviews and situating them in the literature.

4.4.1 Continual adaptation to TNE

The first, and largest, component may be interpreted as students' continual adaptation throughout the years to the progressively more demanding requirements of the British Bachelor's programmes the students are in.

Within this component the survey results indicate that adaptation of their own approach to studying is generally perceived as the most challenging, notably new assessment forms and no exclusive focus on exams and memorisation, and new advanced vocabulary being introduced in every module. Teacher expectations are also higher, specifically regarding independent learning, although lecturers rarely make this explicit:

Actually it's more challenging, because it is up to you. If you would like to learn here, nobody will tell you "you have to learn this" so it should come from your heart. You are learning for your study, so you are focused and you should be not like in secondary school, you just follow the teacher, you just copy it from the board. [B6].

When students come from an Arabic medium secondary school system with a traditional focus on information transmission and exam-oriented rote learning from a book (World Bank, 2013), it is a tremendous shift for students to enter into English medium British Bachelor's programmes where the focus is on the dialogical process of learning, independent learning with critical reading of several sources and critical writing.

Adapting to different styles of teaching was challenging as lecturers do not take a similar approach: some participants said that lecturers explain everything, a few others that students cannot ask any questions and lecturers do not interact with the students. A few of them state specifically that the slides help, and that attendance is related to how lecturers teach, with higher attendance particularly if students can be active in class and share ideas. When asked at the end of the interview if there was anything else they wanted to say, four students called for teaching improvement.

There were multiple interview participants who described a wide variety in teaching approaches ranging from very negative to very positive experiences, and the extent to which they had found certain aspects challenging depended on the teacher. This might be another plausible explanation for the high standard deviation in the survey. Only occasionally did it depend on the module or the

topic. This is in line with earlier research that found that academics' teaching practices can play a crucial role in supporting students' adaptation of learning behaviour (Eaves, 2011), and can have a positive influence on the quality of the learning (Bryson & Hand, 2007; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2006; Zepke & Leach, 2010). The lecturers whom the participants consider to be most supportive are those who take a learning-centred approach facilitating active learning in class so that they achieve not only the learning outcomes, but also the acquisition of discipline specific vocabulary and the necessary skills for academic writing. This finding is in accordance with what Jordan, Bovill, Othman, Saleh, Shabila and Watters (2013) and Bovill, Jordan and Watters (2015) found in a similar context in Iraq.

The development of critical thinking skills was perceived as quite a challenge and students feel that lecturers vary too much in their approaches. Critical thinking may have been an item that is difficult conceptually and participants interpreted it solely as problem solving. Three of them stated explicitly that this is not developed in class and another three said lecturers only focus on the subject. With lecturers who do set up group discussions though, four participants commented on how they enjoy these and they really need more:

We need to solve problems more often in class. The discussion style suits us, especially students like us. Even when someone is not very interesting you have to listen to the lecturer while through the discussion you can be active in the learning. [B6]

Everybody in the group helps me and I get more ideas about the scenario, so you get more solutions for the problem. [C2]

Although students appear to have an incomplete notion of critical thinking skills, they thought in-class group discussions would help. Yet they indicated that not all lecturers set up discussions and some just seem to give a lecture. It might be that lecturers assume students' English is insufficient to set up such activities in this environment or rather that it is incongruent with their own teaching approach (Arenas, 2009) i.e. transmitting information. The literature indicates that traditional lecturing is counterproductive to optimal learning (Loughran, 2013), and Virtanen and Tynjälä (2018) found that lecturing correlated negatively with the learning of generic skills such as problem solving and critical thinking, but that interaction with staff and peers was conducive to learning these skills, exactly what the interview participants indicated they needed.

Survey respondents perceive the level of English required for their studies nor getting support from their lecturers inside the classroom as that much of a challenge. More than half of the interview participants thought their English was good enough to manage in class, and said they could ask questions regarding content or vocabulary. Experiences with lecturers varied widely again as a few spoke about teachers who pro-actively support them in class to learn more English (academic) vocabulary, yet others just want to finish the slides and ignore questions. As one student answered in response to this item:

That depends on the teacher, the person. Some of them are very supportive; you just ask them, they will be more than happy. Some of them usually just want to finish, they want just proudly talking, talking, do not ask any questions. [B3]

A few students indicated here that there is a cultural issue in that some girls are too shy to ask questions in class. Nevertheless, they raised issues with English multiple times across six other statements, notably advanced discipline specific vocabulary as opposed to informal English:

There's two types, we have general English and in universities especially there's academic English. Most of our people [=students] they don't understand what's the difference. [C4]

The UK academic regulations are quite different from their school system as half of the interviewees pointed out, and take about two semesters to become familiar with although not in much detail as the use of formal English may be a barrier:

The English in general is not that strong in the GCC countries. So understanding the rules and regulations comes from understanding the language itself. [C4]

The next item, getting enough support from the lecturer outside class, is a practical challenge. Lecturers are required to schedule an extra five hours of academic advising per week, yet participants pointed to lecturers not always being available. Six students reported seeking additional explanation regarding the module content, the assignment instructions or a draft of their writing:

Clearly, they help, it depends on the timing, they are not always free and they have lots of students to deal with. [C1]

Expecting a high level of support from lecturers outside class is similar to what Prowse & Goddard (2010) found in Qatar, and some participants sought early feedback on assignments (Picton, 2018).

The least challenging, according to the students, within this component is knowing how to avoid plagiarism. Half of the interviewees reported that lecturers state explicitly and repeatedly that they should write using their own words in order to avoid plagiarism, but they said they found this difficult in the beginning, learned through trial and error, with only a few lecturers practising paraphrasing or referencing with them in class:

In the beginning it was difficult to understand, now it is a little bit easier. One assignment after the other, you will learn. You will learn to say it in your own words. I know how to avoid it [=plagiarism]. [B3]

The challenges of adapting to the expectations of the British programmes are not limited to the initial transition into TNE, and students at all levels depend heavily on the teachers for guidance and the development of higher order thinking skills.

4.4.2 Achieving learning outcomes

It is paradoxical that students do not see how the level of English needed for their studies relates to academic literacy, when they identified writing as the most challenging aspect of all. English language proficiency and academic literacy inevitably overlap and interact in complex ways (Murray, 2012). Academic literacy is generally defined as reading and writing behaviours in higher education. It is also connected to particular disciplinary domains (ibid), although Evans (2011) argued that it also includes

listening to lectures, participating in seminars, acquiring specialist vocabulary, and that writing is the most challenging aspect, which is confirmed in the survey.

The interview participants were almost unanimous in finding there was nothing as challenging as writing, apart from two students who like writing as such. First and foremost came writing long answers in exams, sometimes with requirements of up to 750 words per question. Some issues are related to task fulfilment, organisation and concision, as illustrated below:

In the exam, I like to write more, because I don't know whether this is correct or not so I write everything I know. [C2]

Another main issue they raised was time constraints in exams, which affected their spelling, neatness and accuracy in accounting, or accessing advanced vocabulary, even at level 6 (the final year of the Bachelor's programme) as one student explained:

Maybe I knew it before, but in the exam I was in such a hurry and nervous and I don't have long time, so I use simple short words that I remember at that time. [B8]

The topics themselves could also be problematic when they moved beyond what was covered in class, had not been discussed in class at all, or were long theory questions. Some stated explicitly that they were not trained in class how to write long answers.

Similarly challenging was writing assignments, which more than half of the participants said was totally new and they therefore relied heavily on the assignment instructions. Again student experiences varied from one lecturer to the next, with many students learning through trial and error:

I start by reading the assignment and see what I'm supposed to do, what is the requirement. You know, Miss, when they give us the assignments they usually tell us what they want. So I just read and follow what they ask for. [B2]

It was challenging, of course. This was the first time I had to write an assignment, here in the college. In the beginning you have to do it three or four times until we know the strategy, how we can start it. [B6]

Some teachers make us practise in class. Now I have one teacher, she comes in class and checks, we write in class, if anything not clear, you can ask.... Now I think that if all teachers are like this teacher I think all students will be fine. [B1].

Other issues students raised here were shortage of books in the library at the time of assignments; collecting data; a challenging topic; the length; proper referencing; formal register; insufficient amount of time given till deadline; and finding reliable websites. One student in his additional comments wished the teachers would give briefs, examples, and formats of how to write assignments.

Similar to what Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland and Ramia (2012) found with international students, the students here identified writing as the most challenging aspect, whether in exams or assignments, which may be closely related to critical thinking and critical writing. Artefacts consulted

for this study are the External Examiners' reports in which they repeatedly commented on the lack of critical writing in both exams and assignments, particularly in the final year (level 6) where pass rates compare unfavourably to those in the UK. Lengthy open exam questions in the final year relate to higher order thinking skills and require far more than the regurgitation of memorised facts demonstrating knowledge (C. Smith, 2011). It might also be that students are not sufficiently familiar with assessment verbs, and that there is a gap between how lecturers and students understand the meaning of these assessment verbs (Williams, 2005). A case in point is that the interview participants only talked about problem solving rather than critical thinking.

Not surprisingly, giving presentations was considered to be relatively easy by the interview participants as was speaking English although this was not always the case for their classmates, and three female participants reported feeling shy in front of the boys, as there were no mixed classes in secondary school. Working with other students in class is also relatively easy and participants said sharing ideas and explaining to each other helps them learn, although some point to the issue of mixed gender groups. A few highlighted that the class management skills of the teacher are important here. This finding corresponds to those reported by Almarghani and Mijatovic (2017) in Libya and by Yao & Collins (2018) in TNE in Vietnam.

All in all, achieving learning outcomes seems to be closely linked to academic literacy, something that applies to students worldwide but is even more accentuated in TNE in Oman and may be closely linked to disharmonious profiles in English language proficiency where reading and writing are far less well developed than speaking and listening.

4.4.3 Other

Most participants admitted that they had not tried to access the online library and that they preferred to get a book out of the library or look things up on the Internet. Yet the survey results indicate that online access is quite a challenge and this might be a matter of passwords having to be changed regularly.

More than half of the participants stated that applying theory to practice is not done in class and that it is therefore challenging. Some students said the good teachers make the link in class or give them a case study to practise making the link between theory and practice, and other students said the level of difficulty may depend on the theory itself. A few indicated that other students shared their work experience in class and could show the meaning of the theory in practice. Balancing work and study is another item that is similarly challenging but some said that with good time management they can manage.

Where understanding module content is concerned, this may be challenging depending on the difficulty of the concepts, on the vocabulary used, or a combination of the two. Half of the interview participants indicated that it depends on how the lecturer explains new content:

But others they explain to you in detail, they give you examples; they make it easy for you, not fast. So it depends on the teacher, what I noticed. [B3]

Finding opportunities to study together with other students in the college and studying outside class were not that much of a challenge. Most participants indicated that only a few lecturers tell them explicitly what they need to do outside class. An unexpected outcome of the interviews is that nine participants have been in long-term study groups throughout their Bachelor's programme. These study support groups frequently emerged unelicited in the interviews and proved to be instrumental in dealing with challenges. Participants had set these study groups up themselves and the social aspect of learning and knowledge construction seems very important:

Before I was studying in the morning and then I changed to the afternoon, but they still come to ask me "We have a problem with this, what have you taken in your class?" and we are sharing the information. We share the information they got in the morning from a different teacher, and I give them from the afternoon. It became very easy for us. [B8]

The kind of practice that these TNE students believe to be effective and particularly suitable for them is cooperative learning set up by the lecturer inside class and collaborative learning outside class, as it facilitated their learning and was a stimulus not to fall behind their friends. Peers played an important and positive role for the students interviewed, similar to what Peregrina-Kretz et al. (2018) found. Students met outside class to help each other in understanding the content and the vocabulary, a core aspect of learning communities (Brouwer & Jansen, 2019; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009), and in understanding the requirements for assignments.

4.5 Limitations

The six female interview participants presented themselves naturally, but it took considerable effort to find male volunteers. This might have been caused by the fact that the first author / interviewer is female which in this context might be culturally sensitive. A similar issue was identified by the interview participants, i.e. male and female students working separately in class, corresponding to what L. Smith (2009) described in Qatar. In the end, most male students who participated were personally introduced by their lecturers. This did not seem to affect their willingness to talk, though, as the interviews with the male students actually lasted slightly longer on average. That being said, the first author may have benefited from an outsider status as a Western researcher who was not part of the teaching staff.

There may also have been a selection bias as both the male and female interview participants felt confident enough about their spoken English to take part in the study. However, some reported that their classmates' English proficiency was not that strong. Therefore, topics that the participants described might be bigger issues for some of their peers.

4.6 Conclusions and implications

4.6.1 Practical implications for academics teaching in TNE in Oman

Based on the interviews held with students in which they gave examples of good practice employed by some of the lecturers that helped them cope with the academic demands of the British programme, we come to the conclusion that first and foremost, TNE lecturers need to be consistent in their teaching approach. The instances of good practice that the students identified as effective and the

central role they placed on teaching staff concur with Kuh et al.'s (2006) overview of the literature on effective teaching. These examples of good practice relate specifically to the development of critical thinking skills, something the Omani students were not familiarised with during primary and secondary school. Therefore, the lecturers, rather than merely assessing students on their critical thinking in exam questions or assignments, need to explicitly design learning activities such as group discussions and debates to practise these skills in class. Secondly, and even more crucially, they need to support students in how to transform ideas discussed in groups to writing these up in notes or slides for presentations followed up by formal writing for assignments, as suggested by Lea and Street (2006). Students need to be explicitly taught how to improve their writing within their discipline similar to what Ryan (2011) proposed for reflective writing. Students could be put in pairs or small groups and asked to compare good and poor answers previously written in exams, identify key linguistic features of each, assess peer work and identify how the written text can be improved, before moving to their own writing.

As some participants indicated that critical thinking was not developed in class, and some that they enjoyed class discussions, TNE students in Oman are likely to benefit from cooperative learning activities set up regularly by all lecturers, such as debates, discussions, case studies and class presentations, to support the development of higher order thinking skills. Cooperative learning can be made more effective by structured procedures stipulated by the lecturer (Davidson & Major, 2014); setting students pre-reading, guided reading and structured discussion questions in class (Cruikshank, et al., 2012); or designing worksheets (Heron, 2019).

Students in Oman may also find value in the flipped classroom just as TNE students in Vietnam reported (Yao & Collins, 2018). What may be particularly useful for students in TNE is the use of special software that makes a video recording showing the slides and records the voice of the lecturer presenting and explaining the topic for that week. Students could then be required to view the "lecture" part online before class, look up vocabulary they do not know yet, check understanding with peers in their study group, and come with follow-up questions to class. This format would free up the contact hours for learning activities that develop students' critical thinking and writing in dialogue with lecturers and peers.

4.6.2 Implications for the wider context

The context in which TNE in Oman takes place is a complex one and brings specific challenges to the teaching and learning environment. The academics teaching British programmes are expected to contextualise the modules in such a way that it facilitates learning in TNE, yet contextualisation is often understood in a narrow way as in giving local examples students can relate to, and thus making content comprehensible. What would transform learning, however, is to expand the term so as to include culturally suitable pedagogy, which in this case would mean cooperative learning and group discussions; drawing global comparisons using local and regional case studies; scaffolding dialogues and debates skilfully towards critical thinking and analysis; and actively supporting students in acquiring the academic literacy within their discipline.

The interview participants placed the teaching staff and their practice central to their experience. And although some practices were not characteristic of their school system, they were able to recognise effective teaching practice when exposed to it. They also noted that there is no consistent approach

to teaching while inconsistency impacts negatively on the quality of teaching as a whole. This is a challenge for institutions in TNE as Wilkins, Butt and Annabi (2017) found in the neighbouring United Arab Emirates, and addressing this inconsistency in their policies should be a focal point for institutions. Additionally, institutions need to actively encourage students to set up study support groups from the start since the interviewees had indicated that in response to this environment and types of assessment, collaborative learning facilitated their learning process and contributed to their academic success.

And last but not least, the benefits of a UK programme and students gaining an internationally recognised degree while studying in their home country are at risk when the profiles of academic staff are inadequate for the complexity of the teaching and learning environment in which they work as it requires a much greater awareness of the linguistic demands placed on the students. Only at levels higher than B2, described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as 'independent user', or an IELTS 6.0, are language users able to express themselves fluently on academic topics (Council of Europe, 2018), both in speaking and writing. We therefore recommend that at national level the English proficiency required for academic teaching staff be raised to a minimum of C1, described as 'proficient user', or an IELTS 7.0, so that they can competently support students in the development of academic literacy within their discipline which the progressively more demanding cognitive and linguistic skills require of the students throughout their Bachelor's programmes.

Chapter 5

The UK Professional Standards Framework in transnational education: the importance of context

Abstract

Gaining recognition as a Fellow has become mandatory for academics in many universities in the UK. This requirement looks set to be extended to academics in transnational education (TNE). This descriptive study evaluates the quality of professional portfolios against the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) and guidance notes for Fellowship applications, written by expatriate academics teaching on British programmes in Oman. Levels of reflection on professional practice and engagement with the literature were low. It is argued that a thorough understanding of contextual factors is crucial to be able to interpret the UKPSF outside the UK.

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5.1 Introduction and theoretical framework

Many universities in the UK have set targets of 75% to 100% of their teaching staff to gain any one of the four Fellowship categories with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) as recognition of their professional practice. Individual applicants need to demonstrate they fulfil professional standards as set out in the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). It is important to remember that the main intention behind the UKPSF was to set standards for and improve teaching and supporting learning. Teaching quality in TNE was one of the concerns raised by O'Mahony (2014) while the Quality Assurance Agency sets out that the "degree awarding body has ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities" (UK Quality Code for Higher Education, 2011). The logical next step seems to be that those UK universities involved in TNE set requirements for staff who teach on their transnational programmes to gain recognition as Fellows with the aim to provide quality teaching and an equivalent learning experience for the TNE students. Fellowship recognition outside the UK is gaining track as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Fellows based outside the UK

Category	Globally	Within the MENA* region
Associate Fellow	1864	180
Fellow	3629	988
Senior Fellow	1448	148
Principal Fellow	158	14
Total	7099	1330

Note. Fellowship data correct as at 3 March 2020.

*MENA (Middle East and North Africa)

Such a requirement would, however, have far-reaching implications since the UK Universities International (2018) report that, excluding the students of the three main programme providers of TNE - amongst them the Open University - 325,770 students were studying on a UK higher education programme outside the UK in 2016/2017. Numbers of how many academics teach those TNE students are not available, but are likely to be substantial. This paper presents a descriptive study of a higher education institution (HEI) in Oman hosting transnational education where one of the two British partner universities announced early 2019 that the requirement to gain recognition as a Fellow would be extended to teachers on all their programmes, so including TNE. Up until then neither British partner had provided any support for Fellowship. The following key TNE elements are applicable here: the distance HEI provides the programmes, qualification, and quality assurance; and the local HEI teaching staff provide academic support (Knight, 2016). In Oman, foreign programmes are only offered by private HEIs, which operate on a for-profit basis. It is common practice in Oman (Lamers-Reeuwijk, Admiraal, & van der Rijst, 2020) and the United Arab Emirates (Chapman, Austin, Farah, Wilson, & Ridge, 2014) to hire mostly non-Anglophone expatriate academics, who often have no or little experience with the British educational system, to teach in TNE. Expatriate academics need to have a minimum of three years' prior teaching experience in HE, and are hired, unaccompanied, on one-year teaching contracts which may, or may not be, renewed, and they sign a consent form that any of the data they produce during the course of their work may be used by the HEI, e.g. for reports, research, or accreditation purposes. In this HEI expatriate academics outnumber local Omani staff by about 15:1, but over the past two years the drive for Omanisation (hiring Omani nationals, rather than expatriates) has intensified and quotas have been set. The Ministry regulations allow students to register up to the start of the semester and to change HEI in the first two weeks; therefore final

student numbers are only available when teaching has started. If student numbers thus suddenly increase, and in this HEI they doubled in three years' time, this adds significantly to the workload of those already teaching as the visa process for expatriate academics is lengthy and may hence lead to a structural shortage of teachers. Considering the issues raised in this paper we argue that the implications of this exploratory study go beyond this particular HEI and may inform both those responsible for teaching quality and professional development across the Gulf region, and UK provider universities.

5.1.1 Reflection on academic practice

HEA Fellowships are awarded to reflective practitioners, i.e. those who can demonstrate a high level of expertise in teaching based on a process of evaluating their own professional practice through reflection in the domains of instructional, pedagogic and curricular knowledge (Kreber, 2004). While there are many studies on reflection, usually describing it in terms of a continuous cycle of planning, acting, reflecting and planning a change which is then put into practice, the level of reflection is of importance as well as it may vary from relatively superficial to in-depth critical reflection. A study that is of particular interest here is the one conducted by Larrivee (2008) who developed an assessment tool with specific descriptors. By means of an online survey, she sought the expert judgment of academics who had previously published on reflection, and, based on the responses of 40 of them, assigned the descriptors to various levels of reflection where there was a majority agreement. She defined teachers at the *pre-reflection* level as reacting to students and classroom situations automatically, without conscious consideration of alternative responses; at the *surface* reflection level as focusing on strategies and methods that work to reach predetermined goals; at the *pedagogical* reflection level as applying the field's knowledge base and current beliefs about what represents quality practices; and at the *critical* reflection level as reflecting on moral and ethical implications and consequences of their classroom practices on students. She also noted that not all teachers will become critically reflective teachers, an assumption shared by Spowart, Turner, Shenton and Kneale (2016) in their study of experienced staff engaging in Fellowship applications.

The capacity to be aware of incidents happening in the classroom, and reflecting on the complex relationship between teaching and learning may well be intricately linked to academics' beliefs about teaching. Guskey (2002) argues that when academics see evidence of improved student learning this is the crucial turning point that changes these beliefs and attitudes. Yet such student data, as Drew & Klopper (2013) remark, need to be rich enough for academics to identify the areas they need to develop.

5.1.2 Barriers to improved practice

Improved practice may thus occur in response to student data and/or as a result of reflection. Reflection, however, will not automatically lead to improved practice and Mälkki and Lindblom-Ylänne (2012) found that there are various barriers between teachers' thoughts and actions, such as emotions, motivation, the institutional context, or the curriculum, an aspect which teachers do not always have an influence on and certainly not in TNE. The barriers to reflection and to the development and change of teaching practice are manifold and the one that is omnipresent in the literature is a lack of time and an intensive workload (Bailey, 2013; Botham, 2018; Fanghanel, 2007;

Griggs, Holden, Lawless, & Rae, 2014; Kandlbinder, & Peseta, 2009; Kreber, 2004; Locke, Whitchurch, Smith, & Mazonod, 2014; Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012).

Other barriers may be resistance to academic development that focuses on pedagogy, particularly when academics perceive any problems to be related to the students, their school system, or learning styles, rather than their own teaching practice (Fanghanel, 2007; Quinn, 2012). Lack of familiarity with the scholarship of teaching and learning and with reflective writing as a genre may inhibit individual teachers writing an application for HEA Fellowship, as emerged from the interviews conducted by Botham (2018). Academic staff working in HEIs where managerialism is the dominant discourse may reduce their activities to things that 'count' which preclude them from investing time in the scholarship of teaching (Bamber, & Stefani, 2016).

5.1.3 Applications for Fellowship

According to the AdvanceHE's guidance notes, an application for Fellowship requires a reflective stance on one's professional practice, incorporating relevant subject and pedagogical research. It also needs to be evidence-based, with specific examples of one's practice and justifications for the need to make changes, for example student evaluations of teaching or student results.

Some UK universities with accredited provision for Fellowship require a teaching philosophy statement (TPS) to be written as part of the application, others a description of the context in which the applicant teaches. Where the context is already known, as would be the case with academics applying within the awarding institution, a TPS might give an additional insight into an applicant's conception of teaching and learning, as it 'provides an organising vision of a teacher's direction and a rationale that draws on a distinctive set of aims, values and beliefs' (Schönwetter, Sokal, Friesen, & Taylor, 2002).

The UKPSF was designed for and by the sector in the UK. The expectation is that discipline specialists demonstrate that they have become skilled practitioners in teaching and learning in higher education. While we recognise its potential for enhanced professionalism in teaching in HE globally, what seems to be missing in the UKPSF is how it can be interpreted in TNE where, although the programmes taught may originate from the UK, they are taught in different contexts which may bring particular challenges. In TNE in Oman, the teaching and learning environment is academically and culturally complex since UK programmes are taught by mostly Asian expatriate academics to Omani students, each with their own culturally embedded values. Analogous with Karram's (2014) conclusion for foreign programmes, this particular context, and the values and culture of those involved need to be addressed in applications and in the interpretation of the UKPSF, particularly since Professional Values is one of the three dimensions being assessed. In the light of the future requirement for TNE staff to gain recognition as Fellows, this study focuses on the following research questions:

- What is the level of reflective practice as shown in the portfolios of TNE academics?
- What is their teaching philosophy?
- What are their professional development needs in relation to an application for Fellow?

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Research context and participants

The HEI in this study is a private, teaching-intensive, college in Oman where Bachelor's programmes of two UK universities are taught in the Faculty of Business & Management Studies (FBMS) and in the Faculty of Computing Studies (FCS) to predominantly Omani students (96%). The staff-student ratio is about 3 times higher in FBMS than in FCS. Academics teach students who come from a school system in which curricula and assessments allow success through memorisation (World Bank, 2013). There was no accredited provision of professional development leading to Fellowship, unlike that available to staff of the two UK partner universities, although the TNE teachers had been engaged in a long-term in-house CPD programme in the areas of teaching, learning and assessment (Lamers & Admiraal, 2018). Table 5.2 gives an overview of the experience with the British system of the 42 participants in this study.

Table 5.2 Teaching experience in TNE

	FBMS	FCS
Taught 0-1 year	10	3
Taught 2-4 years	7	2
Taught 5 years or more	11	9

Some 30% of the participants in this study are quite new to TNE, while a majority has been teaching in TNE for two years or more. Only 7 teachers (3 from FBMS and 4 from FCS) had taught previously within the British system, and another two had experience as a student for a UK degree. Further adding to this culturally and academically complex teaching and learning environment is that almost all teachers are expatriate academics, and a profile of the participants as to their country of origin is provided in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Profile participants

Nationality	FBMS	FCS
Philippines	11	5
India	7	4
Middle East & North Africa	4	3
Pakistan	4	1
Oman	1	1
Other	1	0
Total	28	14

In 2017, the first author designed a portfolio to draw together various sources of information, including formal observations of teaching, student evaluation of teaching, results from last semester, and external examiners' comments. Together they act as formative feedback for lecturers to reflect on their performance and make evidence-based decisions on what aspects might need to be changed in order for their teaching and learning support to be more effective. After having gained Senior Fellowship herself, she also conducted a series of workshops on writing portfolios aligned with the UKPSF and writing teaching philosophy statements (TPS) as this element features in the application form of one of the partner universities (the other university requires a short context description only). Teachers were given a set of questions to discuss with colleagues and to guide them in writing the TPS based on Schönwetter et al.'s (2002) study, e.g. "What values do I wish to instil in my students?" and "How do I ensure my teaching is informed by research (both pedagogy and discipline related)?".

Relevant website links were disseminated to all academic staff, including the HEA guidance notes for applications.

5.2.2 Data

This study is based on a set of portfolios written by 42 academic TNE staff ($n = 28$ in FBMS; $n = 14$ in FCS), submitted in March 2019, as preparation for a Fellowship application through the experiential route. The portfolio format reflects to a large extent the application forms used by the UK partner universities. It includes evidence of teaching effectiveness (e.g. formal and student evaluations of teaching, external examiners' comments in module monitoring reports); areas of activities (supporting learning, teaching, assessment and feedback); a TPS; research; and self-assessed professional development needs.

5.2.3 Data analysis

In accordance with the HEA's requirement to provide evidence of good scholarly practice through critique and reflection, the text in each portfolio was analysed, pre-submission to the HEA, by the first author for their level of reflective practice, and coded for Larrivee's (2008) four reflection levels (pre-reflection, surface reflection, pedagogical reflection, and critical reflection) and respective practice indicators. Each indicator was coded to be either present or absent. Frequencies of occurrence for each indicator were recorded. In order to establish the teaching philosophies of academics teaching UK TNE programmes in Oman, the TPS in the portfolio was coded for the UKPSF statements in each of the three dimensions (5 statements for Areas of Activity, 6 for Core Knowledge, and 4 for Professional Values), plus references to scholarship. For the self-assessed CPD needs, all topics were listed, frequencies of occurrence recorded, and then clustered under the UKPSF dimensions.

5.3 Results and discussion

5.3.1 Teacher reflection

While some TNE staff may be good practitioners, this does not automatically mean they are good reflective writers. As for the level of reflective practice displayed in the portfolios, first of all, the majority of indicators is found at the pre-reflection level, followed by surface reflection as shown in Table 5.4. This table has been adapted from Larrivee's tool in that the order of the indicators has been rearranged based on the frequency with which each occurred in the set of 42 portfolios. Only those occurring twice or more are displayed.

Table 5.4 Reflective practice levels

Pre-reflection	FBMS n=28	FCS n=14
Does not thoughtfully connect teaching actions with student learning or behaviour	20	9
Does not support beliefs and assertions with evidence from experience, theory or research	19	4
Fails to consider differing needs of learners	17	1
Is preoccupied with management, control and student compliance	12	1
Attributes ownership of problems to students or others	5	2
Is willing to take things for granted without questioning	4	0
Enforces pre-set standards of operation without adapting or restructuring based on student responses	3	1
Views student and classroom circumstances as beyond the teacher's control	2	1
Surface Reflection		
Modifies teaching strategies without challenging underlying assumptions about teaching and learning	11	2
Fails to connect specific methods to underlying theory	3	5
Provides limited accommodations for students' different learning styles	4	1
Limits analysis of teaching practices to technical questions about teaching techniques	1	2
Supports beliefs only with evidence from experience	1	2
Pedagogical Reflection		
Has commitment to continuous learning and improved practice	2	7
Identifies alternative ways of representing ideas and concepts to students	2	3
Strives to enhance learning for all students	3	2
Seeks ways to connect new concepts to students' prior knowledge	0	4
Adjusts methods and strategies based on students' relative performance	1	3
Has genuine curiosity about the effectiveness of teaching practices, leading to experimentation and risk-taking	0	3
Analyses relationship between teaching practices and student learning	0	2
Analyses the impact of task structures, such as cooperative learning groups, partner, peer or other groupings, on student learning	0	2
Considers students' perspectives in decision making	0	2

In more than half of the portfolios teachers did not connect their teaching with student learning, nor did they supply any evidence for their beliefs. About a third made modifications in their teaching without challenging underlying assumptions about teaching and learning. These academics' understanding of teaching development does not seem to include finding out what works from the students' perspective, and as Åkerlind (2007) found, they may therefore not see the value of reflective practice, including portfolio writing. A selection of excerpts is presented below to illustrate the three prevalent levels of reflection, starting with the *pre-reflection level*:

As per the instructions assessments will be prepared ten weeks before the beginning of the semester. Module leader prepares the assessments considering the learning outcomes of the module in consultation with the module tutors and once it is finalised, moderator will do the moderation process. Before the set deadline assessments will be sent to the Programme leader to get it approved from the partner university. [FBMS, 2 years in TNE]

In total, there were 13 portfolio entries that mainly focused on the quality assurance processes of assessments, without reporting that, for example, outcomes from last semester inform their assessment design or without giving specific details of appropriate methods for assessing at the level of the academic programme. This strong emphasis in almost a third of the portfolios on pre-set standards of operation laid down by the partner university may be indicative of perceived power distance and suggest a culture of managerialism in TNE rather than a culture of quality enhancement. Such a culture could be a barrier to reflection (Bamber & Stefani, 2016; Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012) and thus preclude staff from reflecting on their own practice.

Typical of the *surface reflection level* is that it is declarative in nature, as the excerpt below shows:

Self-evaluation has been a part of the teaching process. I went away with positive feelings when a class went well, but rarely thought about why it had been a successful class. Likewise, I often dwelled on a less-than-satisfying class for several days. Learning to step back and reflect on teaching helped me better understand the practices that lead to successful teaching. It also allowed me to rethink a lesson I was unhappy with and apply that knowledge to future classes. [FBMS, 5> years in TNE]

This teacher stated he reflects on his teaching yet he did so without identifying his underlying assumptions about teaching and learning, or connecting his experience to the literature. Nor did he give any details about the adjustments he made in his teaching practice, which would be an actual indicator rather than a declaration of reflection (Kreber, 2004).

Another typical feature of the surface level is that analysis of teaching practice is limited to teaching techniques, shown here by another teacher:

For any particular module I am going to teach, first I will tell them the module name. Same thing I will write on the board and will display in IPTV. I will create a group with each 2 to 4 students, depends on the strength. I will tell them to discuss around 10

minutes what they know about this particular module. Once it is done, one member from each group will talk about what they have written. From this, I will know, whether the students already have some knowledge related to this module or not. [FCS, 5> years in TNE]

In contrast, the next excerpt shows reflection at the pedagogical level: the teacher noticed a specific issue students had with the assignments, responded in her behaviour, and later saw how it positively impacted on students' learning:

Observing that most of the students were poor in referencing, I demonstrated this website to them. And I have given some class tasks to students to properly refer online articles and books using this tool. Really, it improved the referencing in their assignments and I am happy to see that. [FCS, 5> years in TNE]

While a third of the indicators was found at the pedagogical reflection level, there were but five portfolios that showed these indicators solely, all in FCS where the much lower staff-student ratio and related workload may be more conducive to reflection on teaching and learning. Half of the FCS portfolios showed commitment to continuous learning and improved practice as opposed to only 7% in FBMS. The different contexts and disciplinary micro-culture in which staff work may account for these differences (Roxå and Mårtensson, 2009). Critical reflection was not apparent in the portfolios, with only a few isolated comments declaring awareness of ethical implications for society though without critical reflection on their professional practice. Based on anecdotal evidence during post-observation consultation sessions with the first author, adherence to Asian culture specific values, such as fear of loss of face and a reluctance to disclose weaknesses, may account for this finding. In an earlier study, academics in this HEI found writing a reflection after teaching observations the least useful CPD element (Lamers, & Admiraal, 2018). The second important feature of the portfolios is the general absence of what teachers' values are. This finding is, nonetheless, congruent with that of HEA assessors, in that professional values tend to get the least attention in the applications (Purcell & Lea, 2015). However, Karram (2014) argues that in a TNE environment context, culture and values are important and that those of the provider, the host country and the students need to be considered. While in Oman and the Gulf Region there are mostly expatriate academics teaching on those TNE programmes, their values and philosophies should not be ignored either.

The third finding that is of importance here is that there were many academics who did not support their beliefs and assertions with evidence from experience, theory and research, despite explicit portfolio guidelines. These teachers' beliefs and assertions are more similar to what Roxå and Mårtensson (2009) call 'personal theories'. Although there were a few who did take a more scholarly approach, their references to the literature were scant and usually drew on one to five publications. Below, an example of a teacher who did connect her reflection with literature:

I chose this pedagogical approach because it facilitates active learning which enables students to confidently apply their technical knowledge and communications skills and develop a range of new transferable skills that they can apply later on in their career

(Drake, 2012). Over the years, I noticed that this approach is effective in achieving the ILOs and improving the outcomes of the module. [FCS, 5> years in TNE].

Pelger & Larsson (2018) suggest that taking a scholarly approach in portfolio writing by reflecting on and linking experiences to the literature may lead to a more conscious and systematic way of planning teaching practice, thus supporting professional development.

With regards to conducting research, 15 academics listed recent publications in their portfolios, all discipline related except for one teacher who conducted action research on e-learning [FCS, 4 years in TNE].

5.3.2 Teaching philosophy

Content analysis of the TPS revealed an imbalance in the occurrence of the descriptors of each UKPSF dimension in the TPS (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 Teaching Philosophy Statements

UKPSF				
Professional Values	Statements	FBMS	FCS	Total
V1	Attitude / relationship with students	10	7	17
	Variety in approach depending on the students	7	3	10
Core Knowledge				
K2	Cooperative learning in class	6	6	12
	Life-long learning (students)	4	8	12
	Developing higher order thinking skills	7	3	10
K3	Active learning	4	2	6
	View of learning	3	0	3
K4	Use of learning technology	2	7	9
K5	Evidence for teaching effectiveness	1	1	2
	Quality assurance	1	1	2
Areas of Activity				
A3	Feedback to students	4	1	5
A5	References to literature on pedagogy	2	1	3
	Reflection on practice	1	2	3
Other				
	Motivation for being a teacher	12	0	12

Note. Only statements that occurred more than once are listed

Collectively, these TPS topics reflect to a large extent those that Pilkington (2019) identified as content focus for assessed dialogues, yet per individual teacher they were not covered comprehensively. Statements in the TPS were declarative in nature and what was noticeably underdeveloped in the TPS is what had influenced their teaching philosophy, such as the *literature relating to pedagogy, reflections on practice, or views of how students learn*. And although observations of teaching, student evaluations of teaching, and external examiner comments were required to be included in other sections of the portfolio, only a few teachers regarded these as elements that inform their teaching philosophy (*Evidence for teaching effectiveness* in Table 5.4). Teachers only wrote minimal responses to these sources of evidence such as ‘set up pair work’ after a teaching observation, ‘include more practical exercises’ after

student evaluations, or 'improve the module monitoring report (MMR)' after this comment from an external examiner (EE):

There is a year on year growth in the marks profile but no discussion of this in the MMR. More considered reflection upon this 'trend' is needed. [EE to a teacher from FCS > 5 years in TNE]

Such responses show compliance with, and a reliance on, feedback from externals, be they programme leaders, students or external examiners.

5.3.3 Self-assessed needs for CPD

Teachers were asked as part of their portfolio to self-assess their needs for professional development. Many teachers, especially in FBMS, did realise they need to further develop aspects of their Core Knowledge, particularly appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing, and Moodle. For academics in Computing, there is the perpetual need to keep themselves updated with the latest developments within their discipline. Some were also interested in research skills, an aspect of Areas of Activity, and a few in soft skills, an aspect of Professional Values. Other topics listed were HEA fellowship, and Word / Excel for admin purposes.

5.4 Conclusions and implications

This study is an evaluation of the quality of portfolios submitted by TNE staff against the UKPSF and the HEA requirements of adopting a reflective stance, and embedding applications in the literature. In this respect the prevalence of low levels of reflection in the portfolios is problematic. It is not that reflection is a typically Western concept, after all, a third of the indicators are found at the pedagogical reflection level. A more plausible explanation may be that the low levels of reflection are context related given that quality assurance processes and accountability are understandably rigorous in TNE.

There are several factors that may have played a role. Given that expatriate academics are on one-year contracts, some seem to strategically attach more importance to respond adequately and timely to external, visible sources of feedback on their performance, such as quality assurance processes, external examiners' comments and formal evaluations, rather than their own reflection which will go unnoticed by the powers that be. Particularly with the recent drive for Omanisation expatriate academics may fear to lose their jobs. We therefore concur with Chapman et al. (2014), who concluded that in the United Arab Emirates, where conditions are similar, job insecurity may explain why some staff are less committed to long-term professional development, whether personal or institutional.

Secondly, when student numbers increase the resulting heavy teaching load in this context may preclude teachers from reflection. Thirdly, as these portfolios were written in preparation for a Fellowship application, teachers may not have engaged in them to the best of their abilities. And finally, context was not included in the portfolios nor in the application form used by one of the

partner universities as it was assumed known to all. One of the partner university requires only a 200-word description of the teaching context, e.g. modules, levels, years of experience, and additional responsibilities. Yet a more thorough understanding of the contextual factors in which TNE staff work would be crucial for UK assessors in order to be able to interpret the UKPSF outside the UK. Application forms used by the partner universities therefore have to be adapted for TNE staff to include first of all factors that are not generally known outside the country, such as the conditions of the local labour market, registration periods, admission levels, and staff-student ratios. Secondly, they also need a more explicit focus on teaching philosophies, and what teaching adaptations academics have made in order to support students' transition from a school system based on memorisation into an academically different British programme requiring critical thinking skills. Thirdly, the influence of culture specific values of the provider university, the students and the teachers cannot be underestimated in TNE (Karram, 2014) with fear of loss of face and perceived power distance possibly causing TNE staff to feel inhibited in expressing themselves intellectually and emotionally in a portfolio.

Nevertheless, once the requirement for Fellowship is imminent, TNE academics need to be supported in two areas. First of all, taking a more scholarly approach, since both the TPS and the portfolios showed the need for them to engage with key concepts in pedagogic literature such as listed by Kandlbinder & Peseta (2009). Secondly, and inherently connected with the first, the need to engage in reflection and to develop their reflective writing. Although Ryan (2011) developed it for students, her reflective writing model might be equally useful to non-Anglophone TNE academics as it links levels of reflection with the linguistic conventions needed to achieve these.

At the TNE institutional level, the following facilitative measures in preparation for Fellowship are likely to contribute to successful applications. Although the experiential route is an individual one, we recommend staff to engage in writing applications in small, supportive groups. In order to prompt critical investigation and analysis of their professional practice, opportunities for collaborative action research, reflection and dialogue with others need to be created (Martin & Double, 1998). This could then be followed up with portfolio writing, and establishing a group of critical friends who can act as peer reviewers commenting on draft versions may be useful (Mårtensson, Roxå & Olsson, 2011).

Studies conducted in the UK by Asghar and Pilkington (2019), Botham (2018), and Spowart et al. (2019) found that mentors form crucial support for applicants. This will be even more the case in TNE as the UKPSF is new to everyone, and staff will have few shared points of reference. Particularly at the initial stage, face-to-face mentoring by the partner university staff during visits or virtually will be essential.

Where the assessment itself is concerned we recommend a combination of a written submission together with an assessed professional dialogue, as this is probably the most beneficial form for non-Anglophone academics in TNE. As TNE staff may not be thoroughly versed in reflective writing as a genre, they may be able to redress this hiatus in a professional dialogue when they are prompted to elaborate. More importantly, a professional dialogue may create the safe space needed for expatriate academics to express themselves freely. While this combination of a

portfolio and dialogue is resource intensive for the assessing panel, it is likely to form a robust quality assurance mechanism needed to maintain the integrity of the award process while giving equal opportunities to TNE academics. Similar to Karram's (2014) question about the programmes, assessors need to ask themselves whose culture, values and philosophies are prioritised when the UKPSF is transplanted to a different context.

Last but not least, UK provider universities will have to play a more important role in supporting TNE teachers with Fellowship schemes, not only because TNE teachers have few shared points of reference with the UKPSF, but also as they will have to assign UK mentors to TNE teachers. This would benefit the UK universities in two ways: they can demonstrate to the Quality Assurance Agency that they take both their responsibility for maintaining standards and for the quality of learning opportunities in TNE seriously, and individual UK Fellows can show that they remain in good standing by mentoring TNE staff.

Chapter 6

Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation has sought to contribute to the knowledge base of how to create a TNE teaching and learning environment that is congruent with the expectations of British programmes so that students can succeed academically, and how academics who teach on these programmes can be supported in their professional practice towards creating such an environment. It does so by investigating the teaching and learning environment of one such HEI offering TNE in Oman. There was a perceived need in this college, as expressed in the Quality Audit and confirmed by initial observations of classes, to set up a pedagogical framework that would harmonise the different, and often conflicting, expectations of the British programmes being offered, the expectations of the predominantly Omani students, and the expectations of the non-Anglophone expatriate academics teaching them. Based on the assumption that the teaching and learning environment plays an important role in students achieving the learning outcomes of the programmes, the research approach taken in this dissertation was to investigate this environment from different perspectives, i.e. the researcher's perspective as an observer and the teachers' perspectives on the usefulness of CPD elements, (Chapter 2), those of the teachers (Chapter 3), those of the students (Chapter 4), and how these different perspectives informed a long-term continuing professional development (CPD) programme (initiated in Chapter 2) eventually leading towards preparation for the recognition of teachers' professionalism in the form of HEA Fellowship (Chapter 5). The main findings of the four studies are summarised below as per their respective chapters, followed by a discussion of the general findings, and, finally, their implications for TNE practice and for further research.

6.2 Summary of the main findings per chapter

Chapter 2. *Moving out of their comfort zones: enhancing teaching practice in transnational education*

Both the Quality Audit report and initial observations highlighted the incongruity of teaching practice with the intended learning outcomes of the British programmes. This chapter reported the outcomes of a three-year long observational study from the perspective of the author as observer investigating how the teaching practice of a group of 44 expatriate, non-Anglophone, academics developed as a result of engaging with the CPD framework. The research questions that guided this study were driven by the researcher's perspective as an observer and the teachers' perspectives on the usefulness of CPD elements: (1) 'What might a new, more descriptive and context-sensitive evaluation tool suitable for TNE look like—one that might capture more teaching approaches than only information transmission?'; (2) 'How did the quality of teaching practice subsequently develop over a three-year CPD programme?'; and (3) 'Which elements of this CPD framework did academics find most useful?'. Descriptive statistics and qualitative interpretations were used to analyse the data.

The first version of the evaluation tool, presented in the form of a table, took existing teaching practice as the starting point. After preliminary observations, the pattern that emerged early 2014 was that there was too much variability among the lecturers in their approaches to

teaching, and at the same time too little variety in their interaction with the students, with very few or no learning activities for them to engage actively with the subject content. At the initial stage in 2014 the tool contained mostly descriptors of the lecturers' observed practice. Thus, the tool that emerged was originally more of a norm-referenced one as it situated the lecturers' teaching skills relative to those of other lecturers, yet it subsequently developed into a more criterion-referenced direction, and literature-derived criteria of best practice replaced some of the original terminology.

With regard to the second research question, over a period of three years and by engaging in the CPD programme, the majority of the lecturers made the shift from a teaching-centred approach (level 1) to a learning-centred approach (level 3 and up). The factor that was decisive in establishing a lecturer's level was a focus on teaching and information transmission as contrasted with a focus on learning with various learning activities to engage the students. In 2015 a sharp decline in level 1 was noticeable while at the same time the number of lecturers in level 3 doubled. The shift towards generally higher levels continued in 2016, with a few even reaching level 4. However, for a significant minority (one third of the group) this time period of three years was not enough to reach the desired teaching practice of focusing on the learning process (levels 3 and up).

As to the third research question, the items in the survey contained a broad conception of CPD with a total of 15 statements on both formal and informal elements of the CPD framework. Fifty-five out of the 69 lecturers rated the usefulness of these elements for their professional development during their time in the college. The main results were clustered into four groups: feedback on observed teaching practice, informal elements of professional development, workshops, and various other elements. Firstly, individual feedback on teaching practice, whether oral or written, was found to be most useful. Secondly, elements which were not deliberately introduced followed closely, with informal discussions with colleagues rated highly, followed by reading recent literature on teaching in higher education and discussions with their mentor when they first started teaching in the college. Thirdly, as far as the workshops were concerned, the ones given by the programme adviser of the partner university were found to be more useful than the ones on teaching and learning. Finally, the element which scored lowest amongst the lecturers as to usefulness was filling in the critical self-evaluation form after being observed.

In summary, chapter 2 provided insights into the teaching practice of non-Anglophone expatriate staff in TNE and how it for the most part improved over a 3-year period in which they engaged in the CPD programme that focused on the teaching and learning environment. It did so by taking into account the respective views of the observer and of the teachers themselves. The next step was to identify the challenges that non-Anglophone expatriate academics face in teaching transnationally in Oman so as to be better able to support them.

Chapter 3. *Expatriate academics and transnational teaching: the need for quality assurance and quality enhancement to go hand in hand*

In Oman it is common to hire expatriate academics to teaching in TNE, and the challenges they experience have an impact on the quality of the teaching and learning environment. Chapter 3

reported on the teachers' perspectives by means of a survey study seeking to identify the challenges that non-Anglophone expatriate academics face in teaching transnationally in Oman, followed up by interviews. Additional desk research into the quality audit reports published by the Oman Academic Accreditation Agency was conducted in order to place this case study into the wider perspective of Oman which revealed that professional development and teaching quality were major concerns in the private HEIs. To investigate the challenges that teachers face in this teaching and learning environment a survey was designed, piloted, and subsequently completed by 37 academics in 2015. The same survey was repeated in 2018 for the new teaching staff and completed by 34 academics. The respondents added no other challenges in the comments box. In order to gain a more in-depth understanding of those challenges semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve selected teachers. The research questions that guided this study were (1) 'What are the specific challenges experienced by the expatriate teaching staff?' and (2) 'To what extent do these challenges impact on the quality of the TNE teaching and learning environment?'. The survey results were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics; and the interview transcripts using qualitative content analysis.

Regarding the first research question, the challenges were clustered around four cross-themes: those related to students, to programme quality, to teaching adaptation, and to quality assurance. *Student related aspects* were found to be the most challenging, and all interviewees said that students rely heavily on their lecturers for support (new topics, vocabulary, what to do for independent learning, assignments, reliable websites, uploading assignments or checking for plagiarism). Where students' approaches to learning are concerned, FBMS and FCS lecturers' opinions as to how challenging this aspect is varied most and what might have accounted for this difference is that students in FCS often lacked the prerequisite knowledge the British programme assumes they have. Some interviewees had learned from their students that in their school system they were not expected to ask the teacher any questions so that they felt more comfortable asking their classmates for clarification, and that in school they were expected to memorise rather than comprehend concepts.

The second most challenging aspect was *maintaining the programme quality* which is closely linked to the quality of the teaching and learning environment. Interviewees talked at length about the challenges of achieving these learning outcomes particularly at higher levels, e.g. in applying theory to practice and developing critical thinking skills, and the need to take a learning-centred approach. In addition, students are assessed in English, yet fewer than half of the interviewees stated they see it as their responsibility to address English language issues, although they had identified the lack of critical writing in exam answers.

The two aspects that were perceived to be the least of a challenge were *teaching adaptation*, and *quality assurance*. Regarding *teaching adaptation* five lecturers specifically stated they had adopted a learning-centred approach. A matter for concern was that four interviewees equated achieving the learning outcomes with delivering the content, which suggests they took a teaching-centred approach focusing on information transmission. Practically all interviewees reported that, after the initial shock, they perceived external *quality assurance* by the British university as very useful and that they learned a lot in the process.

As to the second research question, quality assurance with its focus on assessment construction and marking made a valuable contribution to their professional development and teachers recognised that quality assurance was a thorough and robust system and that standards were thus maintained across the programmes. Practically all lecturers perceived this external quality control by the UK university (including the external examiners) as a positive impact on the quality of their assessments and marking. The face-to-face communication that they previously had during the boards and discussions regarding their modules and assessments with British staff was considered important by these expatriate academics. They regret that the boards are now conducted in a plenary session through videoconference. What teachers perceived as impacting negatively on the quality of the teaching and learning environment was a lack of prerequisite knowledge, particularly in Computing, and students' need for structure and support in moving from memorisation towards concept comprehension and critical thinking.

In summary, this study underlined that quality assurance by the partner university alone is not sufficient for dealing with the challenges that expatriate academics face, particularly regarding the students and maintaining programme quality, but that there is a distinct need for extensive in-house continuous quality enhancement both for new and existing staff. This is not restricted to this particular HEI, as the Quality Audits had also pointed to concerns about teaching quality, professional development and staff induction in many private HEIs in Oman.

Chapter 4. Addressing student challenges in transnational education in Oman: the importance of a contextualised, consistent pedagogy

The school system in Oman is one in which memorisation allows success and in which critical thinking has long not been prioritised. When entering higher education, this previous experience may be disadvantageous to students' learning as it is incongruous with the British programmes. This chapter reported on the Omani students' perspectives by means of a survey which was completed by 755 students in total, and aimed at identifying the challenges that the predominantly Omani students face when studying in TNE. It was followed up by interviews with a selected group of 12 Omani students. Omani students find themselves in a novel teaching and learning environment with a British curriculum and non-Anglophone expatriate academics, all with their own culturally embedded assumptions of what higher education entails. These different assumptions may be disadvantageous to students' learning experience and engagement in the classroom. Therefore, in order to gain insights into the student perspective of how a teaching and learning environment can be created in which they can succeed academically, this study was guided by the following research questions: (1) 'What challenges do TNE students face in this environment?'; and, (2) 'What type of support do students need as a first step towards creating an appropriate teaching and learning environment in which they can succeed academically?'. Descriptive statistics and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were used for the survey in order to identify clusters of interrelating variables underlying the items in the student survey, and qualitative interpretations of the interviews.

This EFA resulted in two main components: *continual adaptation*, and *achieving learning outcomes*. It also created a third factor with only two items that appeared to have nothing obvious in common. In contrast to the first two components, it showed a low Cronbach's α of 0.419 and this third factor was therefore disregarded. The mean scores for the survey

statements lay quite closely together, but the high standard deviations for each statement indicated that students differ greatly in how they perceive their studies in TNE, presumably depending on their diverse backgrounds. However, a more plausible explanation for the high standard deviation in the survey was found in the interviews, as there were multiple interview participants who described a wide variety in teaching approaches ranging from very negative to very positive experiences, and the extent to which they had found certain aspects challenging depended on the teaching approach taken by the teacher.

With regards to the first research question, the student survey revealed that the *continual adaptation* throughout the years to the progressively more demanding cognitive and linguistic skills required by the British Bachelor's programme was challenging. Particularly challenging aspects within this component were the adaptation of their own approach to studying as there is no longer an exclusive focus on memorisation that characterised their school system; new advanced vocabulary being introduced in every module; and high teacher expectations, specifically regarding independent learning. Adapting to different styles of teaching was challenging as teachers were reported to vary too much in their approaches. The extent to which understanding module content was challenging depended on support and structure offered by the teacher, more than on the difficulty of the concepts or on the vocabulary used. The development of critical thinking skills was perceived as quite a challenge because students come from a school system where this has long not been prioritised, and students feel that teachers vary too much in their support.

Where *achieving the learning outcomes* is concerned, it was paradoxical that students did not see how the English needed for their studies relates to academic literacy, when writing was the most challenging aspect identified in the survey, and this was confirmed by almost all the interviewees. First and foremost, writing long answers in exams was challenging (issues being: task fulfilment, organisation, concision, time constraints in exams, accessing advanced vocabulary), followed by writing assignments (totally new type of assessment, collecting data, referencing, length, short deadline, formal register). It might also be the case that students are not sufficiently familiar with assessment verbs used in exams and assignments. A case in point is that the interviewees only talked about problem solving rather than critical thinking.

The interviews, however, led to the unexpected finding that one item of the third factor 'Studying with other students' was particularly important for students as nine of them were in study support groups they had set up themselves.

Regarding the second research question, interviewees expected a high level of support from their teachers both inside and outside class. Inside class for setting up group discussions (problem solving), writing and referencing support, content or vocabulary explanations, or directions for independent learning. They did notice that teachers varied too much in their approach and this presented a challenge, but they appreciated the ones who took a learning-centred approach. Getting support outside class was also challenging, as teachers were not always available. Six students reported seeking additional explanation regarding the module content or the assignment instructions, or comments on a draft of their writing. The kind of practice that these TNE students believe to be effective and particularly suitable for them is

cooperative learning set up by the lecturer inside class so that they can develop their problem solving and critical thinking skills, and collaborative learning outside class.

In summary, chapter 4 provided insights into the aspects of studying in TNE that Omani students find challenging and into the kind of good practice that supported them both inside and outside class. Four interviewees called explicitly for teaching improvement, and the majority of them reported a wide variation in teaching approaches, which would be a plausible explanation for the high standard deviations in the survey. This points to the need for a consistent, context-sensitive pedagogy.

Chapter 5. *The UK Professional Standards Framework in transnational education: the importance of context*

The long-term CPD programme initiated in 2014 and reported on in Chapter 2, culminated in an evaluation of the extent to which the expatriate academics had become skilled practitioners in teaching and learning in TNE. This chapter reported on the professional development perspective and presented an evaluation study of the quality of the evidence submitted against the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) in the form of personal professional development portfolios written by 42 TNE academics in preparation for an application for Fellowship, which would soon become a requirement. The UKPSF, however, was designed for and by the sector in the UK, and this study investigated to what extent TNE academics teaching on British programmes were ready for gaining recognition for their professional practice. It therefore focused on the following research questions: (1) 'What is the level of reflective practice as shown in the portfolios of TNE academics?'; (2) 'What is their teaching philosophy?'; and (3) 'What are their professional development needs in relation to an application for Fellowship?'. To assess academics' level of reflection on professional practice, the study used a tool developed by Larrivee (2008), in combination with a content analysis of the teaching philosophy statements.

According to the guidance notes, an application for Fellowship requires a reflective stance on one's professional practice, incorporating relevant subject and pedagogical research. Hence each portfolio was analysed for its level of reflective practice, and coded for Larrivee's (2008) four reflection levels (pre-reflection, surface reflection, pedagogical reflection, and critical reflection) with their respective practice indicators. The teaching philosophies were coded for the UKPSF statements in each of the three dimensions (5 statements for Areas of Activity, 6 for Core Knowledge, and 4 for Professional Values), plus references to scholarship. Similarly, self-assessed CPD needs were clustered under the UKPSF dimensions.

Regarding the first research question about the level of reflective practice displayed in the portfolios, the majority of indicators was found at the *pre-reflection* level, closely followed by *surface reflection*. While a third of the indicators was found at the *pedagogical reflection* level, there were but five portfolios that showed these indicators solely, all in FCS. *Critical reflection* was not apparent in the portfolios. The second important feature of the portfolios was the general absence of what teachers' values are. The third finding was that many academics did not support their beliefs and assertions with evidence from experience, theory and research, despite explicit portfolio guidelines.

Where the second research question is concerned, what was noticeably underdeveloped in the teaching philosophy statements (TPS) was what had influenced their teaching philosophy, such as the *literature relating to pedagogy, reflections on practice, or views of how students learn*. Collectively, the topics covered in the TPS reflected the content focus for assessing applications, yet per individual teacher they were not covered comprehensively. Only a few teachers regarded *evidence for teaching effectiveness* as an element that informs their teaching philosophy, and teachers only wrote minimal responses to these sources of evidence.

Concerning the third research question, self-assessed CPD needs focused on further developing aspects of their Core Knowledge, particularly appropriate methods for teaching, learning, assessing, and Moodle. Some were also interested in research skills, an aspect of Areas of Activity, and a few also in soft skills, an aspect of Professional Values.

In summary, chapter 5 provided insights into the relatively low levels of reflection on the professional practice of TNE academics, and some indication as to their teaching philosophy and their professional values. The context in which these academics work might be an explanation for these findings.

6.3 Discussion of general findings

In the sections below, the general findings of the four studies are discussed in terms of their contribution to the knowledge base of how to create a TNE teaching and learning environment that is aligned with the expectations of British programmes so that students can succeed academically, and how academics who teach on these programmes can be supported in their professional practice towards creating such an environment.

The studies have contributed to the knowledge base by investigating a number of aspects that are typical for this teaching and learning environment from both the teacher and student point of view in the same institution (Chapters 3 and 4), something which in TNE has only been done in a small-scale study in Qatar by Prowse & Goddard (2010) focusing on learning styles. The combined insights gleaned from these studies show that the teachers found student related aspects the most challenging, both in 2015 and in 2018, while the students said in the interviews that the extent to which they had found their continual adaptation to the progressively more demanding learning outcomes of the British programme challenging depended on the teacher. Taking into consideration the questionnaires and the interviews in these two studies, the survey amongst UK providers of TNE (O'Mahony, 2014), the OAAA quality audits, and the longitudinal observations, there seems to be agreement that the quality of the teaching and learning environment in the host institution is a challenging aspect. Furthermore, the subsequently necessary support for TNE teachers can capitalise on those CPD elements that teachers found useful (Chapter 2), and can be extended in order to develop their professional practice (Chapter 5).

6.3.1 Aspects that impact on the quality of the teaching and learning environment

The four studies presented here confirm to a large extent that the TNE teaching and learning environment is a challenging one, as studies elsewhere have shown (Bovill et al., 2015; Hoare, 2013; Holden, 2018; Keay et al. 2014; Leask, 2006; O'Mahony, 2014; Pyvis, 2011; K. Smith, 2009). These challenges may impact negatively on the quality of the TNE teaching and learning environment. Whether the TNE environment is academically successful depends on the degree of convergence of the different, culturally embedded, expectations of the UK provider, the Omani students, and the expatriate academics.

Inconsistency in teaching approach

Particularly at the initial stage but continuing into later years, these expectations are different and potentially conflicting, and for students to succeed academically teaching practice needs to be congruent with the British programmes. It is cause for particular concern that the students here noted an inconsistent approach to teaching across their teachers, and that some students explicitly called for teaching improvement in the interviews (Chapter 4), reflecting the earlier observational study (Chapter 2) that had shown that a considerable minority did not improve their teaching practice over a three-year period. This inconsistency impacts negatively on teaching quality, which is ultimately a concern for the whole institution as well (Wilkins, Butt & Annabi, 2017) and nationally for TNE too, as the Quality Audits showed (Chapter 3).

Teaching as information transmission is an aspect of the school system that Omani students are used to (World Bank, 2013) so traditional lecturing by expatriate academics is not an approach that they will initially question. In turn, with the UK partner university only providing the slides for each session, expatriate academics may very well assume that traditional lecturing is what is expected from them. The teachers will not question this, either, if it is consistent with their own beliefs about teaching in higher education. However, the literature indicates that traditional lecturing is counterproductive to optimal learning (Loughran, 2013), and Virtanen and Tynjälä (2018) found that lecturing correlated negatively with the learning of generic skills such as problem solving and critical thinking, exactly what the British programmes expect from the students. Traditional lecturing will also confirm the student expectation that their established learning behaviour of memorisation will get them a pass, creating a false sense of self-efficacy similar to what Holden (2018) noted with TNE students in Bahrain. When there is a pedagogical-didactic disconnect between the programmes and students taught, the academic success of the TNE student in a British programme will be at risk, especially since Omani students expect extensive support from their teachers, which lecturing did not facilitate.

Challenges facing expatriate academics teaching in TNE

At the same time, the teachers found aspects related to the students and maintaining programme quality the most challenging, and there are several aspects essential for teaching in TNE: understanding the students' approach to learning and the school system they come from, and addressing students' needs and providing support so that Omani students achieve the learning outcomes of the British programme. This support requires a focus on structuring teaching and learning activities along lines of relevant skills and knowledge, knowledge

construction and comprehension; problem-solving techniques; and developing critical thinking and critical writing skills.

The majority of teachers, however, did shift to a learning-centred approach (Chapter 2), a teaching practice that the interviewed students appreciated. Moreover, in contrast to what an earlier study revealed in TNE in Malaysia (Dobos, 2011), the study presented in Chapter 3 found that most teachers did not consider this adaptation of their teaching much of a challenge. The descriptors of what constitutes effective teaching practice in TNE are found in levels 3 and up (Chapter 2): these are congruent with the expectations of the British programmes, and in line with the literature on effective teaching in higher education in general (e.g. Biggs, 2012; Kuh, et al., 2006; Maclellan, 2015; Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001; Trigwell, et al., 2005).

Assessments

Particularly the study into student challenges (Chapter 4) brought to light that writing long answers in exams and writing assignments were what students found the most challenging aspects by far. Coming from an exam-oriented school system, assignments are forms of assessment students have not previously encountered, and they take many forms that students are not familiar with (e.g. essays, reports, portfolios, online forum discussions, presentations). Although students are well acquainted with exams, these focused on the regurgitation of memorised facts, whereas the critical writing required in response to an open question is totally new to them.

In parallel, for the teachers these assignments are often new as well, and sometimes also exam questions that move beyond the regurgitation of facts. Constructing assessments that are aligned with the learning outcomes of the modules was something that the quality assurance by the British university ensured, yet this was initially a very challenging aspect for teachers and took one of two semesters to learn (Chapter 3). Additionally, constructing and using marking criteria, together with exam moderation were aspects new to most of them, too, as previously in their own HE system they had full autonomy in this regard.

Context

There are several contextual aspects that are generally not known outside the country. The nature of the contracts on which expatriate academics are hired, described in Chapter 5, may explain why some teachers are less committed to long-term professional development, whether personal or institutional. It may also explain why they strategically choose to attach more importance to responding adequately and timely to external, visible sources of feedback on their performance, such as quality assurance processes, external examiners' comments and formal evaluations, rather than their own reflection, which will go unnoticed by the powers that be. Their teaching load may suddenly increase at the beginning of the semester as well, and staff-student ratios may be high. Furthermore, there is a gap between the school system Omani TNE students come from and the British programmes in terms of expectations: rather than memorisation, it is critical thinking and problem solving that are important for academic success. Hence, for interpreting the UKPSF in TNE it is important to understand the context in which these TNE teachers work.

6.3.2 The social aspect of learning and knowledge construction

What emerged from the studies was that personal interaction with others was a valuable component of the learning process, both for the Omani students and the expatriate academics. The students (Chapter 4) pointed to cooperative learning with those teachers who set up learning activities in class, and to collaborative learning in the study groups outside class as vital support in achieving the learning outcomes. This is in line with earlier research that found that academics' teaching practices can play a crucial role in supporting students' adaptation of learning behaviour (Eaves, 2011), and can have a positive influence on the quality of the learning (Bryson & Hand, 2007; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2006; Zepke & Leach, 2010), together with peers playing a positive role (Peregrina-Kretz et al., 2018). Students meeting outside class to help each other in understanding the content and the vocabulary, is a core aspect of learning communities (Brouwer & Jansen, 2019; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009). Furthermore, interaction with staff and peers was found to be conducive to learning critical thinking and problem solving, similar to what Virtanen and Tynjälä found (2018). Hence, part of the solution of alleviating the challenge of students being overly dependent upon their teachers would seem to lie in setting up group work thus capitalising on students' preference.

The expatriate academics, too, (Chapter 3) highlighted the importance of face-to-face communication with British staff, whether the programme adviser or the external examiners, a situation when quality assurance in TNE may lead to quality enhancement (Keay, May, & O'Mahony, 2014; Pyvis, 2011; Keevers et al, 2014). In addition, they also perceived personal feedback on an observed class, as well as discussions with colleagues and their mentor as useful contributions to their on-going professional learning (Chapter 2). It therefore seems likely that for the future requirement to gain recognition for their professional practice (Chapter 5), the mentor assigned to them will play a vital role in gaining Fellowship, even more so than studies in the UK had found (Asghar & Pilkington, 2019; Botham, 2018; Spowart et al., 2019).

6.3.3 Continuing professional development

There were several aspects that contributed positively to the TNE teaching and learning environment. First of all, the emphasis placed by the British university on the quality assurance of assessments led to a steep learning curve for expatriate academics regarding assessment construction and marking. Teachers also valued face-to-face communication with British staff, corresponding to what Keevers and colleagues (2014) found with TNE staff in Malaysia. Secondly, the initial focus of the long-term in-house CPD programme on teaching practice led to improved teaching for most teachers, and they found individual feedback the most useful for their professional development followed by informal discussions with colleagues. Therefore, this requires HEIs to make available the necessary resources in terms of time and academic development specialists who deliberately create opportunities for consultation sessions and facilitate the sharing of good practice within the faculty as these activities may contribute to transforming teaching and to a consistent teaching approach. At a later stage, CPD needs to focus on aspects that both the teachers (Chapter 3) and the students (Chapter 4) found challenging. Thirdly, the close cooperation initiated by the Centre for Quality Enhancement in the college with Quality Assurance and the Academic Registrar facilitated sharing institutional

data and learning analytics. Thus, quality enhancement at an individual level is reinforced by quality enhancement at an institutional level. Yet with regard to the HEA requirements of evidence-based applications, for example student evaluations of teaching or student results, it was problematic that only a few teachers regarded *evidence for teaching effectiveness* as an element that informs their teaching philosophy.

Also, in a teaching-intensive context such as this one academic staff need to demonstrate dual professionalism: to be experts in their field and in TNE pedagogy. With regards to whether the literature on what constitutes good practice in teaching in higher education has percolated down to the expatriate academics teaching in TNE, the findings are somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, in the first study teachers indicated that they find reading recent literature on teaching in higher education useful (see table 2.2). Yet on the other hand, in the last study there are but few references to the literature in their professional development portfolios and those that were listed refer mainly to discipline-related publications.

The general lack of self-reflection accords with a TNE study (2015) in Iraq where Bovill and colleagues (2015) found that staff were inexperienced in reflecting on their own teaching experience. The paucity of self-reflection was evident from the studies presented in chapters 2 and 5: that teachers did not find it a useful CPD element may have been a precursor for the low levels of self-reflection in the portfolios. In chapter 2, *self-reflection* and *responding to student feedback and results* as descriptors of teaching practice appear only at level 4 (highly effective), and there were but a few teachers who reached this level after a period of three years. Similarly, in chapter 5, what was noticeably underdeveloped was what had influenced their teaching philosophy, such as the *literature relating to pedagogy, reflections on practice, or views of how students learn*. Many academics did not support their beliefs and assertions about teaching with evidence from their own experience, theory or research. With regards to the HEA requirements of adopting a reflective stance and embedding applications in the literature, these findings are problematic. Once the requirement for Fellowship is imminent, teachers need to be supported in two areas: taking a scholarly approach and engaging with the literature on pedagogy in HE, and developing their reflection skills and reflective writing. Since they found individual feedback and discussions with colleagues useful CPD elements (Chapter 2), the following two aspects may also support them in writing applications: feedback from a few critical friends on a draft version, and dialogue and reflection with colleagues on their professional practice.

6.4 Implications

6.4.1 Contextualisation in TNE

There are several implications emerging from these studies. To start with, few quality assurance frameworks have developed indicators for assuring the contextualisation of foreign programmes in the host country (Latchem, & Ryan, 2014), and Oman is a case in point. Teachers are simply told to contextualise the modules they teach so as to make them relevant for students with different educational and cultural backgrounds. Since in Oman these teachers are predominantly non-Anglophone expatriate academics, this raises the question of how they can ensure giving students local examples that are sufficiently contextualised for them to be able to

link new concepts to their society or workplace. Far more than is now the case, teachers need to share these examples with newcomers and/or consult with the Omani teachers for examples.

In addition, contextualisation is often understood in a narrow way as in giving local examples that students can relate to, thus making content comprehensible during teaching activities. What would transform learning, however, is to expand the term so as to include context-sensitive pedagogy, which in this case would mean alternating instruction with learning activities in order to stimulate teacher-student and student-student interaction. The instruction part includes teaching activities in which the teacher explains, models, demonstrates, and illustrates by a combination of lecture slides, video clips, mind maps, photos, worked calculations, etcetera. However, what would create a teaching and learning environment in which TNE students can succeed academically are learning activities that draw on local and regional case studies from the Gulf. These learning activities need to be in line with the intended learning outcomes of the British programmes, requiring both lower and higher order thinking skills and working in pairs or a group. Teachers need to set up this pair and group work, and can make cooperative learning in class more effective by giving clear task instructions and structured procedures, by setting students pre-reading tasks to be discussed in their study groups, by providing structured discussion questions in class, or by designing worksheets. These learning activities need to be actively monitored by the teacher, who scaffolds dialogues and debates skilfully and unobtrusively towards higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and analysis. During monitoring the teacher notices gaps in prior knowledge, adjusts activities as and when necessary, is aware of misconceptions related to content or key vocabulary, and gives timely and formative feedback on this.

Furthermore, in a TNE context such as described in this dissertation, it is of paramount importance that students are actively supported in acquiring the academic literacy within their discipline. This would include, but is not limited to, explaining and paraphrasing advanced discipline-specific vocabulary, and giving relevant examples of key terms. Even more crucially, teachers need to support students in how to transform ideas discussed in groups to writing these up in slides for student presentations or notes for assignment drafts. Again, students' preference for pair or group work could be utilised to assess peer work and identify how the written text can be improved, before moving to their own writing. And last but not least, teachers need to explicitly support students in understanding assessment verbs while ensuring that assessments are contextualised as well. Given the often-disharmonious English proficiency profile and the high orality of their society, Omani students would benefit from more opportunities to be assessed orally rather than in writing.

Universities offering TNE would do well to explicitly embed English language proficiency and academic literacy into their programmes, by including these in the learning outcomes of each programme. This would make it more likely that teachers actively pay attention to developing these in their students rather than leaving it for the students to learn through trial and error, sometimes with dire consequences for individual students. A further reason for including academic literacy and English language proficiency in the learning outcomes is that students who wish to continue on a Master's programme need to show proof of an IELTS 7.0 and they will need to be supported in attaining this.

In addition, TNE HEIs need to actively encourage students to form study groups and facilitate for them to meet. Initially, they might need to be guided by teachers, or maybe more senior students, whereas later on they can move to be more independent and teachers would only direct them to further engage with content through providing useful links on the Internet or YouTube. Study groups offer students a platform for discussions, revising, translating key vocabulary, critical reading and writing, and preparing group assignments.

An alternative way of creating a context-sensitive pedagogy that holds particular promise is the use of the flipped classroom for TNE students studying in a second language as it shifts the instruction part to recorded lectures which can be watched at home with all the technological advantages of pausing and replaying parts and being able to watch it at a convenient time; after all, in Oman, the majority of the TNE students are already in paid employment. Class time would then offer more opportunities for teacher-student and student-student interaction, focusing on the learning process with activities related to the learning outcomes of their programme and the development of academic literacy.

6.4.2 Implications for CPD

Academics teaching in TNE need to be supported in creating such a context-sensitive pedagogy in several ways. First of all, through induction, including discussions with their mentor; secondly, through in-house CPD programmes which need to be specifically developed in response to the challenges that teachers experience; and thirdly, by further developing their professionalism through discussions about teaching and supporting learning with their colleagues.

Judging by the challenges that expatriate academics face when teaching in this TNE environment, more emphasis at later stages of an in-house CPD programme needs to be given to aspects that are related to students and to maintaining programme quality, particularly at the higher levels of the programmes (Chapter 3). Although the challenge of developing critical thinking is not restricted to transnational education, given that in the students' previous education system critical thinking has long not been prioritised, this is an aspect that needs more explicit attention in TNE. Inextricably linked to this is how teachers can support their students in the aspect that they find the most challenging: academic writing (Chapter 4). It is paradoxical that most students think their level of English is good enough for their studies, when they find writing long answers in exams and writing assignments the two most challenging aspects by far. Since writing conventions are discipline specific, it requires a faculty embedded approach rather than a generic, whole institution approach.

Given that teachers found discussions with colleagues useful for professional development, small, supportive groups of teachers can play a key role in identifying issues in the programme they teach and working out a common approach. Taking a more scholarly approach to teaching and learning would be fostered by deliberately creating opportunities for collaborative action research, reflection and dialogue with others. Teachers also need to be supported in reflecting critically on their own teaching practice, responding to student questionnaires and previous exam results, and adapting how they teach the programme accordingly. They may prefer to do this together with a few trusted colleagues, rather than in large-scale workshops. Additionally,

for Fellowship applications, these discussions need to be followed up by reflective writing. Establishing a group of critical friends who can act as peer reviewers commenting on draft versions would be in line with another element that teachers found useful for their professional development, i.e. individual feedback. Together, these CPD elements contribute to promoting teaching excellence in the faculty, and in the wider context of the whole college by sharing good practice across disciplines.

6.4.3 Fellowship

For academics to further professionalise their teaching and to prepare for gaining Fellowship, they need to take a more scholarly approach and engage with the literature on key concepts in teaching, learning and assessment in higher education, while at the same time developing their reflective practice and reflective writing. The UK provider university will have an important role to play in supporting TNE teachers with Fellowship schemes, not only because TNE teachers have few shared points of reference with the UKPSF, but also as the provider university will have to assign British mentors to TNE teachers. This would benefit the UK university in two ways: it can demonstrate to the QAA that it takes its responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities in TNE seriously, and individual UK Fellows can show that they remain in good standing by mentoring TNE staff. In addition, it would be welcomed by the TNE staff who expressed a wish for more interaction with British staff since they had previously facilitated professional learning with regards to assessments.

6.4.4 At national level

At national level, Fellowship may be particularly important for TNE in Oman as academic staff are on teaching-only contracts and would then need to demonstrate professionalism in teaching. Considering the issues identified by OAAA regarding teaching quality and professional development in TNE, such a requirement would ultimately improve and enhance the TNE teaching and learning environment. Given the large number of TNE students in Oman, this would benefit not only the individual students in TNE, but also the country as a whole.

There are several other issues that could only be addressed at national level. Firstly, since TNE in Oman is privatised and operates on a for-profit basis, staff-student ratios tend to be high, particularly in Business & Management studies. Taking into consideration the extensive support that Omani students need to address the challenges that they face in British programmes, the number of staff hired is often inadequate, which is compounded by lengthy visa procedures. Private investors in TNE are reluctant to hire nationals as they need to offer them much more beneficial salaries and packages and are near-impossible to fire if student numbers should drop. Secondly, Ministry regulation allows just-in-time registration so there are no prognoses as to the student numbers every semester, and they can therefore unexpectedly rise steeply. Oman would benefit from a central registration system for higher education well ahead of the academic year or semester, so that institutions can plan properly.

Despite the fact that TNE is well-established in Oman, there remains a gap between the secondary school system and higher education. Until and unless higher order thinking skills such

as analysing, problem solving and critical thinking are fostered in the school system, this divide is likely to remain and teachers in higher education will need to actively support students in the development of these skills. Similarly, the development of English language proficiency needs to be strengthened so that students start higher education with sufficient knowledge of all the four language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking. As it is, students often enter higher education with a disharmonious profile where the latter two skills are much better developed than the former two which are essential for transnational higher education.

Furthermore, since according to the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education, UK providers are ultimately responsible not just for academic standards but also for the quality of learning opportunities (Chapter 3), there is a clear need for the provision of a champion of the UK university to be embedded in the host institution, similar to the contractual provision for quality assurance. Such a person would need to have enough seniority, expertise and credibility to drive change and continuous enhancement of teaching, learning and assessments. A single provider cannot enforce this, so here lies a task ahead for countries such as Oman to make this a requirement for TNE or for the worldwide sector as a whole.

And last but not least, current staff profiles are insufficient for teachers to competently support TNE students in the development of academic literacy, so the English proficiency for teaching staff needs to be raised to a minimum of C1 or IELTS 7.0, when they are proficient users of the language. Only at levels higher than B2 or an IELTS 6.0 are language users able to express themselves fluently on academic topics (Council of Europe, 2018), both in speaking and writing. The requirements set by the Ministry of Higher Education for Omani teaching staff are often lower than for expatriates, yet this would put the benefits of a British programme at risk, not just for the individual students but ultimately also for the nation as a whole.

6.5 Future research

The studies reported here were conducted in one HEI and, taken together, resulted in useful indicators of an effective teaching and learning environment that have contributed to improved practice over the years. The teaching and learning environment was investigated from different perspectives in order to get a holistic view. However, in order to obtain a wider consensus of what an optimal teaching and learning environment in TNE would look like, it is of key importance for future research to be expanded to include more TNE HEIs in Oman, or institutions in the UAE or wider Gulf Region where the teaching and learning environment is similar.

At the institutional level, a future area for research could be how TNE would benefit from requiring additional qualifications from teaching staff in terms of setting an IELTS 7.0 as a minimum and gaining Fellowship within a year of teaching in the British system. These measures would be within their remit and they would not have to wait for them to be set nationally. Such research could investigate how these additional requirements contribute to higher progression and retention rates in TNE, and higher classification of student results. The role that leadership plays in creating an optimal TNE teaching and learning environment was not included in this dissertation, and would be a further area worthy of more research in future.

And finally, considering that levels of reflection were relatively low in the portfolios, future research interviewing TNE staff may reveal why this is the case, and it would also be interesting to investigate how teachers move to higher levels of reflection and from reflection to improved professional practice.

6.6 Concluding remarks

With regards to the first part of the dual central aim of this dissertation of how to create a TNE teaching and learning environment that is in line with the expectations of British programmes so that students can succeed academically, its contribution to the knowledge base lies in a context-sensitive pedagogy. The results presented in Chapters 2 and 4 point to specific and effective indicators of what this entails. Where the second part of the dual central aim of this dissertation is concerned, i.e. how academics who teach on these programmes can be supported in their professional practice towards creating such an environment, the findings in Chapters 2 and 3 indicate that individual feedback on teaching practice, discussions with colleagues, in-house long-term CPD programmes, and quality assurance of the assessments by the partner university, were the main aspects that contributed positively to their professional practice. The future requirement to gain Fellowship (Chapter 5) is likely to further contribute to this.

UK universities are often approached by foreign institutions to engage in TNE based on their ranking in the league tables, either nationally or globally. However, whether TNE programmes are world class depends not so much on high rankings or the quality of the programmes that the partner university provides as on the professionalism of the academics who teach on them.

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Nederlandse samenvatting

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Introductie

Het aanbieden van *transnational education* (TNE) is één van de internationaliseringsstrategieën die universiteiten ontwikkelen om hun activiteiten uit te breiden. De grootste spelers wereldwijd zijn het Verenigd Koninkrijk (VK), Australië, Duitsland en in mindere mate de Verenigde Staten (Knight & McNamara, 2016). TNE kan verschillende vormen aannemen en deze landen bezigen allemaal verschillende terminologieën; hiermee samengaand zijn er vele manieren om TNE te definiëren. Wat ze echter allemaal gemeenschappelijk hebben is dat de studenten zich bevinden in een ander land dan waar de universiteit die de diploma's uitreikt is gevestigd (British Council, 2013). In de context van deze dissertatie wordt TNE gedefinieerd als het aanbieden van onderwijs aan studenten in een ander land dan waar de aanbiedende universiteit is gevestigd (Knight & McNamara, 2016), en aanvullend zijn de volgende essentiële elementen van toepassing: de docenten van de lokale hoger onderwijs instelling (HOI) verzorgen de academische ondersteuning; de docenten zijn academici uit het buitenland, woonachtig in het gastland, of burgers van het betreffende land; de aanbiedende universiteit verzorgt de programma's, kwalificaties en kwaliteitsborging (Knight, 2016). Tevens wordt er in deze dissertatie, overeenkomstig de term die gebruikt wordt in de HOI waar de studies zijn uitgevoerd, de term *partner universiteit* gebruikt voor de aanbiedende universiteit. In het algemeen, is de taal waarin TNE programma's worden aangeboden, inclusief die van Duitse universiteiten, het Engels hetgeen verworpen is tot lingua franca in het internationale hoger onderwijs (Wilkins & Urbanovič, 2014). Wanneer zowel de docenten als de studenten beiden uit niet-Engelstalige landen komen, dan is de Engelse taalvaardigheid wellicht niet hoog genoeg, hetgeen vragen oproept omtrent de kwaliteit van de les- en leeromgeving (Hughes, 2008).

In het kielzog van de sterke wereldwijde toename van TNE in de laatste twee decennia, is de aandacht in het onderzoek hiernaar zich aan het verschuiven van de kant van de partner universiteit naar die van de lokale HOI. De dominante thema's in de literatuur waren globalisatie, beleid, onderwijs als export product, en regulering, terwijl de thema's lesgeven en leren minder goed vertegenwoordigd waren (O'Mahony, 2014). Bij aanvang van het onderzoek uitgevoerd voor deze dissertatie had de aandacht zich verschoven naar de les- en leeromgeving (Dobos, 2011; Hoare, 2013; Smith, L., 2009; Yao & Collins, 2018). De studies in dit proefschrift streven ernaar bij te dragen aan de discussie over de manier waarop een TNE les- en leeromgeving gecreëerd kan worden die in overeenstemming is met de verwachtingen van de Britse programma's zodat de studenten die succesvol kunnen afronden. Dit kan niet los gezien worden van het thema kwaliteit, niet zozeer in termen van kwaliteitsborging als wel in termen van kwaliteitsverbetering en kwaliteitsversterking van de les- en leeromgeving. Dit laatste is onlosmakelijk verbonden met TNE pedagogiek en wat men beschouwt als beste praktijk. Tot op heden is er slechts beperkt onderzoek gedaan in de regio Midden Oosten en Noord Afrika (MONA) en de Golf regio (Bovill, Jordan & Watters, 2015; Jordan, Bovill, Othman, Saleh, Shabila & Watters, 2013; Almarghani & Milatova, 2017), hoewel het aantal TNE studenten er met zo'n 85.000 studenten toch substantieel is, met name ook het aantal dat ingeschreven staat bij Britse universiteiten (Universities UK international, 2018). Aangezien de Verenigde Arabische Emiraten (VAE) en Qatar het leeuwenaandeel van de TNE studenten hebben, is het onderzoek dat uitgevoerd werd in de MONA

regio begrijpelijkerwijs in deze landen gedaan. Er is onderzoek gedaan door Lemke-Westcott & Johnson (2013) en Prowse & Goddard (2010) in Qatar, en door Wilkins, Stephens Balakrishnan & Huisman (2012) en Wilkins, Butt & Annabi, (2017) in de VAE, terwijl Oman slechts geringe aandacht heeft gekregen alhoewel er meer dan 20.000 Omani studenten staan ingeschreven in Britse programma's die transnationaal worden aangeboden.

Vanwege de aard van de lokale arbeidsmarkt en de relatief recente opkomst en ontwikkeling van hoger onderwijs, is het in de Golf Regio gebruikelijk om buitenlandse docenten aan te nemen uit niet-Engelstalige landen om de lokale studenten in het hoger onderwijs les te geven en vooral in TNE (Wilkins & Neri, 2018; Chapman, Austin, Farah, Wilson, & Ridge, 2014). Deze academici komen meestal uit India, Pakistan, de Filippijnen of landen uit de MONA regio, hetgeen betekent dat voor praktisch iedereen de omgeving waarin ze lesgeven nieuw is in academisch, cultureel, en soms ook linguïstisch opzicht. Hetzelfde geldt voor de studenten die voornamelijk van de lokale overheidsscholen komen waar Arabisch de instructietaal is in zowel basis als voortgezet onderwijs, en het Britse academische systeem derhalve nieuw is voor hen (World bank, 2013). Gezien de complexiteit van de TNE les- en leeromgeving, is de duale doelstelling van deze dissertatie om een bijdrage te leveren aan de kennisbasis omtrent het creëren van een TNE les- en leeromgeving die overeenkomt met de verwachtingen van de Britse programma's zodat de studenten die succesvol kunnen afronden, en omtrent de ondersteuning van de buitenlandse docenten in de aanpassing van hun professionele praktijk om zo'n les-en leeromgeving te creëren.

Context: TNE in Oman

In 2013 publiceerde de World Bank, op uitnodiging van het Ministerie van Onderwijs, een rapport over het onderwijs in Oman, en het beschrijft de ontwikkeling daarvan vanaf 1970, toen er slechts drie basisscholen waren in Oman, alle drie alleen voor jongens (World Bank, 2013). Sinds 1970 heeft Oman een van de snelste ontwikkelingen laten zien in het opbouwen van gratis onderwijs voor iedereen, hetgeen voornamelijk werd gefinancierd uit de gas- en olieopbrengsten. Decennialang kwamen de leraren uit andere Arabisch-sprekende landen, zoals Egypte en Sudan, totdat Oman zijn eigen leraren kon opleiden. In al die jaren lag de nadruk op kwantiteit: steeds meer scholen bouwen, basis en voortgezet onderwijs verzorgen aan continu groeiende aantallen leerlingen, en in een latere fase Omani leraren opleiden. Echter, toen de overheid zich ervan bewust werd dat er aanhoudende problemen waren met de studieresultaten van leerlingen in deze les- en leeromgeving, nodigde zij de World Bank uit om samen te werken met het Ministerie van Onderwijs in haar streven naar kwaliteit. Eén van de belangrijkste punten van kritiek die relevant is voor deze dissertatie was dat studenten het hoger onderwijs binnenkomen vanuit een schoolsysteem waarin curricula en toetsing toelaten dat succes gebaseerd is op memorisatie (World bank, 2013).

Een vergelijkbare verschuiving van kwantiteit naar een meer recente focus op kwaliteit vond plaats in het tertiaire onderwijs, maar het duurde tot 2001 voordat de Oman Accreditation Council werd opgericht, 15 jaar nadat de eerste universiteit van start ging (Carroll, Razvi, Goodliffe & Al Habsi, 2009). Deze werd later, in 2010, vervangen door de Oman Academic Accreditation Council, een onafhankelijk instituut met de opdracht om een kwaliteitscultuur in het hoger onderwijs op te bouwen door middel van kwaliteit audits van alle 59 hoger onderwijs instellingen, zowel overheids- als private instellingen. Deze audits werden gehouden tussen 2009 en 2018. De audit rapporten, die gepubliceerd worden op

de website van de Oman Academic Accreditation Council, lieten zien dat de kwaliteit van lesgeven, professionele ontwikkeling, en inductie van nieuwe docenten te wensen overliet in het merendeel van de private hoger onderwijs instellingen.

Midden jaren 90 werd de hoger onderwijssector opengesteld voor private investeerders, omdat de publieke sector het groeiend aantal studenten niet meer kon opnemen (Carroll, et al., 2009). Het is verplicht voor deze private instellingen om geaffilieerd te zijn met een geaccrediteerde, en door het ministerie goedgekeurde, buitenlandse universiteit, en de Britse universiteiten verzorgen het meeste transnationale onderwijs in Oman (Universities UK International, 2017). Het Ministerie van Hoger Onderwijs moedigt dit hoger onderwijs in de private sector actief aan, omdat het de toegang van Omani studenten tot hoger onderwijs bevordert, zowel voor leerlingen die met een diploma van het voortgezet onderwijs afkomen als voor volwassenen die al werken. Het aantal buitenlandse, niet-Engelstalige, docenten die in TNE lesgeven, overtreft het aantal Omani academici met ongeveer 4:1 (National Centre for Statistics & Information). De cv's van deze buitenlandse academici moeten worden goedgekeurd door zowel het Ministerie van Hoger Onderwijs als de Britse partner universiteiten. Docenten moeten ofwel een Master's of een PhD hebben in een relevant vakgebied, plus een minimum van drie jaar leservaring in het hoger onderwijs. Bovendien werd er in 2017 een nieuwe vereiste ingevoerd, namelijk dat de Engelse taalvaardigheid van docenten die in de Bachelor's programma's lesgeven minimaal op het niveau van een IELTS 6.0 moet zijn. Gecombineerd, hebben deze diverse factoren geleid tot een diverse les-en leeromgeving in de private sector: de overgrote meerderheid van de studenten is Omani, de programma's waarvoor ze ingeschreven staan zijn Brits of afkomstig uit een ander land, en de academici van wie ze les krijgen zijn veelal niet-Engelstalige buitenlanders zonder eerdere ervaring met het Britse hoger onderwijs systeem, noch als docent, noch als student.

Deze culturele, academische en linguïstische complexiteit leidt tot vragen omtrent de kwaliteit van de les- en leeromgeving. Het is linguïstisch complex omdat de overgrote meerderheid van de studenten uit een schoolsysteem komt waarin Arabisch de voertaal is, terwijl dat in het hoger onderwijs Engels is, en het gesproken wordt door docenten voor wie Engels niet hun moedertaal is. Bovendien zou men verwachten dat wanneer de meeste docenten zelf ook aan hun universiteiten hebben les gekregen in het Engels - en voor degenen uit de Filippijnen, India en Pakistan was dat het geval - dat hun taalvaardigheid voldoende zou moeten zijn om de Omani studenten te helpen bij de verwerving van academische lees- en schrijfvaardigheid binnen hun vakgebied. Echter, minder dan de helft van de docenten behaalde de vereiste IELTS 6.0 bij hun eerste poging. Daarom is deze TNE les- en leeromgeving in linguïstisch opzicht een uitdaging voor zowel docenten als studenten.

In academisch en cultureel opzicht is het complex gezien de verschillende verwachtingen van het Brits curriculum, die van de Omani studenten, en die van de buitenlandse docenten. De Britse programma's gaan uit van een dialoog tussen docenten en studenten, tussen studenten en de inhoud, en tussen de studenten onderling (Quality Assurance Agency). Dit terwijl Omani studenten uit een onderwijssysteem komen waarin toetsing gebaseerd is op memorisatie (World Bank, 2013), en de buitenlandse docenten veelal uit landen komen waarin de overdracht van informatie de norm is in het hoger onderwijs (Bovill, Jordan and Watters, 2014; Dobos, 2011). Daarbij komt bovenop dat de buitenlandse docenten die in TNE lesgeven niet op de hoogte zijn van de Bologna Declaratie dat een waterscheiding vormde in het hoger onderwijs, aangezien programma's niet langer omschreven

werden in termen van vak inhoud maar van leeruitkomsten. Nieuwe TNE docenten krijgen gewoonlijk een academische cultuurschok, zoals Jordan et al. concludeerden in Iraq (2014) en Hoare in Singapore (2013), wanneer ze de Britse programma's gaan lesgeven en zich realiseren dat er een heroriëntatie nodig is van het doceren van vak inhoud naar leeruitkomsten. De Bologna Declaratie had een diepgaande invloed op hoe programma's gestructureerd zijn, en derhalve op lesgeven en leren (Lindblom-Ylänne, & Hämäläinen, 2004). Bovendien betekenden deze verschillende academische verwachtingen dat wanneer nieuwe TNE docenten toetsen hadden gemaakt, deze vaak in eerste instantie niet werden goedgekeurd door de partner universiteit of de externe examinatoren (die van een andere universiteit komen), omdat hun toetsen voor het derde en vierde jaar niet in overeenstemming waren met de leeruitkomsten van de programma's die focussen op denkvaardigheden van hogere orde.

De studies naar de kwaliteit van de les- en leeromgeving in TNE in Oman beschreven in dit proefschrift zijn uitgevoerd tussen 2014 en 2019 in een privé college, dat geaffilieerd is met twee Britse universiteiten, waarvan één sinds 2004. Meerdere factoren hadden ten voordele kunnen werken voor dit college: de lange affiliatie met een VK partner universiteit; het rigoureuze systeem van kwaliteitsborging van de toetsing door de Britse partner; en het feit dat docenten al minimaal drie jaar leservaring in het hoger onderwijs moeten hebben voordat ze in Oman mogen lesgeven. Al deze potentieel gunstige factoren leidden echter niet automatisch tot een optimale les- en leeromgeving, en er waren meerdere factoren die dit mogelijkwerwijs hebben verhinderd. Dat de partner universiteit alleen een set dia's beschikbaar stelde voor iedere lesweek bevestigde de verwachting van docenten dat ze een hoorcollege moesten geven en alle dia's moesten presenteren. Leeractiviteiten of discussie vragen waren niet inbegrepen in deze lesmaterialen. Aan de kant van de studenten bevestigde dit hun verwachting, gebaseerd op hun schoolsysteem, dat ze alle dia's uit hun hoofd moesten leren om te slagen. Memorisatie werkt misschien tot op een bepaalde hoogte, omdat in de eerste twee jaar de leeruitkomsten voornamelijk over kennis en begrip gaan, maar niet in het derde en vierde jaar, wanneer ze gedefinieerd worden in termen van toepassing van theorie op praktijk en hogere orde denkvaardigheden. Vooral in de latere jaren van de programma's resulteerden deze verschillende verwachtingen in het algemeen in lagere slagingspercentages en doorstroming, aangezien de studenten vaak niet eens de werkwoorden in de vragen begrepen (bijvoorbeeld: evalueer, analyseer), laat staan dat ze die adequaat konden beantwoorden.

De TNE context die hierboven is beschreven is niet ongebruikelijk in Oman, zoals de audits van 2009 tot 2018 lieten zien. De audit rapporten spreken serieuze zorgen uit over onderwijskwaliteit, inductie van nieuwe docenten en de professionele ontwikkeling in een ruime meerderheid van de private HOIs. Het betreffende college had een aanbeveling gekregen voor de ontwikkeling en implementatie van een duidelijk pedagogisch kader, richtlijnen voor docenten, en academisch leiderschap, om het te ondersteunen in zijn intentie om een hoogwaardige les-en leeromgeving te bieden. Noch de Britse vereisten en kwaliteitsborging, noch de vereisten aan docenten opgesteld door het ministerie, waren voldoende gebleken voor een hoogwaardige les- en leeromgeving. Dit onderstreept de noodzaak van professionele academisch ontwikkeling binnen iedere private HOI, en dus in TNE.

Er is geen landelijke vereiste in Oman, of een Britse vereiste voor een onderwijskwalificatie om les te geven in TNE, zoals bijvoorbeeld de Postgraduate Certificate in het VK of Fellowship bij de Higher Education Academy (HEA). Tot op heden zijn er geen initiatieven in Oman om dit verplicht te stellen.

Wat de Britse kant betreft, alhoewel volgens de kwaliteitscode van de Quality Assurance Agency de Britse universiteit de eindverantwoording heeft voor de kwaliteit van de les- en leeromgeving, was de ondersteuning voor TNE docenten al deze jaren beperkt tot een minimum, en eenzijdig gericht op de kwaliteitsborging van het toetsingsproces in plaats van op de professionele ontwikkeling van docenten. Dit is pas recent gaan verschuiven, toen een van de partners begin 2019 aankondigde dat zij, en spoedig ook alle andere Britse universiteiten die TNE aanbieden, het verplicht zouden stellen voor alle TNE docenten die hun programma's lesgeven (dus ook in andere landen dan Oman) om Fellowship te behalen bij de Higher Education Academy (HEA) als erkenning van hun professionele praktijk. Hiervoor moet je bewijs aanleveren in de volgende drie domeinen: Kernactiviteiten, Kennis, en Professionele Waarden zoals die beschreven zijn in de UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). Twee criteria zijn hierbij essentieel: ten eerste, een focus op studenten en hoe ze leren, en ten tweede, een reflectie op de eigen praktijk, met daarin opgenomen relevant onderzoek in de eigen discipline en vakdidactisch onderzoek (HEA guidance notes; Smart, Asghar, Campbell & Huxham, 2019; Spowart, Winter, Turner, Burden, Botham, Muneer, van der Sluis, Burden & Huet, 2019; Thornton, 2017).

Conceptualisering van effectieve lespraktijk in TNE

Effectieve lespraktijk in TNE integreert wat in de literatuur wordt beschouwd als effectieve lespraktijk in het hoger onderwijs gebaseerd op socio-constructieve ideeën over lesgeven en leren in het algemeen; lesgeven in en aan andere culturen; lesgeven aan internationale studenten; en leren in een tweede taal. Hieronder volgt een synthese van de belangrijkste literatuur over wat een effectieve lespraktijk in TNE zou moeten bevatten, en wat nodig is voor een aanvraag voor Fellowship.

Traditioneel was het voldoende voor docenten in het hoger onderwijs om experts te zijn in hun vakgebied en om kennis over te dragen aan studenten door middel van hoorcolleges en hen aan het eind van het semester te toetsen op deze kennis. In hun literatuuroverzicht stellen Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek (2006) dat een groot gedeelte van de literatuur echter wijst op de effectiviteit van een student-gerichte aanpak. De weinige studies over lesgeven in TNE stelden vast dat de aanpak van veel docenten gericht was op kennisoverdracht: Bovill, Jordan & Watters (2015) in Iraq, en Dobos (2011) in Maleisië. Het aannemen van een student-gerichte aanpak is nu precies wat docenten die uit een cultuur komen waarin hoorcolleges de norm zijn nu juist zo lastig vinden (Arenas, 2009; Dobos, 2011). Angelsaksische programma's gaan uit van een student-gerichte aanpak met een focus op het leerproces en verwachten van studenten een hoge mate van participatie, zowel met andere studenten als met de docent (Quality Assurance Agency; Quan, 2013).

Bij het lesgeven in en aan andere culturen is het belangrijk voor docenten om zelf open te staan voor intercultureel leren. Dit was precies het thema dat lesgeven in TNE anders maakt, zoals dat naar voren kwam in Leask's interviews (2005) met Australische TNE docenten. De drie andere thema's waren experts in hun vakgebied, vaardigheid in klasmanagement en leeromgeving, en persoonlijke kwaliteiten (bijv. benaderbaar). Leask beargumenteerde dat de laatste drie thema's overal gelden, maar dat intercultureel leren nu juist is wat lesgeven in TNE uitdagend maakt. Het fundamentele verschil in TNE is de interculturele ruimte waarin het plaatsvindt en docenten moeten in staat zijn om hun lespraktijk aan te passen in antwoord op de programma's en de studenten die ze lesgeven (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013; Prowse & Goddard, 2010; L. Smith, 2009). Gezien het algemene

gebrek aan voorbereiding van docenten voordat ze vertrekken (Gribble & Ziguras, 2010; K. L. Smith, 2009), zijn TNE docenten zich vaak niet bewust van de omvang van de problematiek waarmee zij en hun studenten mee te maken krijgen, en ze zouden dus cultuurschok kunnen ervaren (Hoare, 2013).

Effectieve lespraktijk in TNE heeft ook elementen gemeenschappelijk met het lesgeven aan internationale studenten die uit een ander schoolsysteem of academische cultuur kunnen komen en die eveneens moeten overschakelen naar een andere instructietaal. Bij studenten voor wie Engels een tweede taal is, dienen de docenten zich extra bewust te zijn van de noodzaak om vak inhoud te integreren met taalverwerving, en de manier waarop ze vak inhoud aanbieden aan te passen aan studenten met verschillende taal niveaus (Dimitrov & Haque, 2015). Het is voorts nodig dat docenten hun studenten ondersteunen in het begrijpen van de nieuwe vormen van toetsing en cijferbepaling (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Pyvis, 2011; Williams, 2005). Ze dienen studenten te ondersteunen in het schrijven van opdrachten (Skyrme, 2018), met de bijbehorende noodzaak om goed te parafraseren en refereren zodat studenten in staat zijn om plagiaat te verminderen (Divan, Bowman & Seabourne, 2015; Palmer, Pegrum & Oakley, 2019); om veel tijd te besteden aan begeleiding buiten de les (Picton, 2018); en om academische lees- en schrijfvaardigheid te ontwikkelen (Evans, 2011; Murray, 2012), een vaardigheid die volgens Lea & Street (2006) net zo goed van toepassing is op moedertaalsprekers bij hun transitie naar het hoger onderwijs maar die nog essentiëler is voor TNE studenten.

Het begeleiden van docenten in het integreren van al deze karakteristieken die bijdragen aan een effectieve les- en leeromgeving in TNE vraagt om initiatieven voor professionele ontwikkeling. Ook is het nodig om heel bewust gelegenheden te creëren waarbij docenten met collegae kunnen discussiëren over leerproblematiek en manieren van lesgeven (Keevers, Lefoe, Leask, Sultan, Ganesharatnam, Loh & Lim, 2014; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009). Om aversie tegen verandering bij docenten weg te nemen, blijkt de acceptatiebereidheid van deelnemers toe te nemen wanneer professionele ontwikkelingsprogramma's gebaseerd zijn op kwesties die docenten zelf hebben aangedragen (Kember, 2009; Locke, Whitchurch & Smith, 2016).

Wat expliciet moeilijk is voor docenten die eraan gewend zijn 'experts' te zijn is het accepteren van de rol van nieuweling in TNE (Hoare, 2013). Docenten moeten de bereidheid hebben om doorlopend te leren van eerdere ervaringen, van feedback van studenten en collegae, van professionele ontwikkelingsactiviteiten en onderzoek, en om hun lespraktijk te herzien indien iets wijst op ineffectiviteit. Echter, als men zich niet bewust is van de eigen lespraktijk, dan zal er geen verbetering volgen in de lespraktijk (Postareff, Lindblom-Yllänne, & Nevgi, 2008). Een kwestie moet docenten eerst opvallen (Mason, 2009) voordat ze hierop kunnen reageren, ofwel meteen ofwel later door middel van evaluatie van hun professionele praktijk door reflectie in de domeinen van didactiek, pedagogiek en kennis van het curriculum (Kreber, 2004). Het niveau van reflectie is echter ook van belang als het moet leiden tot een verandering in effectiviteit van de professionele praktijk. Wat dit betreft is een instrument dat Larrivee (2008) heeft ontwikkeld van belang omdat het verschillende niveaus identificeert. Zij definieerde docenten op het *pre-reflectie* niveau als automatisch reagerend op studenten en lessituaties; op het *oppervlakte* niveau als focussen op strategieën en methodes die werken om van tevoren bepaalde doelen te bereiken; op het *pedagogisch* reflectieniveau als het toepassen van vakkennis en heden ten daagse opvattingen over praktijkkwaliteit; en op het *kritisch* reflectieniveau als reflecterend op morele en ethische implicaties en gevolgen van hun lespraktijk op studenten.

Reflectie wordt vaak gezien als kenmerkend voor professionaliteit en als een eerste stap die nodig is om de standaard te bereiken die steeds meer landen aan het zetten zijn om lesgeven in het hoger onderwijs te professionaliseren. Twee voorbeelden hiervan zijn HEA Fellowship in het VK en de BKO en SKO (basis- en seniorkwalificatie onderwijs) in Nederland. Reflectie leidt echter niet automatisch tot een verbeterde lespraktijk, en Mälkki en Lindblom-Ylänne (2012) vonden verschillende barrières tussen de gedachten en acties van docenten, zoals emoties, motivatie, de institutionele context, of het curriculum - een aspect waar docenten niet altijd invloed op hebben, en al helemaal niet in TNE. Andere barrières voor reflectie en verbeterde praktijk kunnen een gebrek aan tijd en een intensieve werkbelasting zijn (Bailey, 2013; Botham, 2018; Fanghanel, 2007; Griggs, Holden, Lawless & Rae, 2018; Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009; Kreber, 2004; Locke, Whitchurch, Smith, & Mazenod, 2014; Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). Dit terwijl het juist tijd vergt om zich te verdiepen in onderzoek en Botham's interviews (2018) lieten zien dat niet alle academici bekend zijn met de *scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)*. Het vergt ook tijd om de eigen lespraktijk te ontwikkelen en te veranderen (Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009), en. Twee hoofdcomponenten van SoTL die belangrijk zijn voor het verkrijgen van erkenning als Fellow zijn reflectie op en het toepassen van het werk van onderwijswetenschappers; en reflectie op en onderzoek naar lesgeven in het eigen vakgebied (Kreber & Cranton, 2000). Dat docenten zich verdiepen in SoTL is belangrijk aangezien Brew en Ginns (2008) aantoonde dat er een significante relatie is tussen academici die zich bezighouden met SoTL en veranderingen in de ervaringen van studenten. Zowel reflectie als zich verdiepen in relevant vak- en pedagogisch onderzoek zijn essentieel in aanvragen voor Fellowship. Wanneer niet-Engelssprekende academici een aanvraag indienen voor Fellowship dan komen ze wellicht nog een andere barrière tegen, namelijk een gebrek aan bekendheid met reflectief schrijven als genre en het gebrek aan meta-kennis van tekstuele structuur, grammatica en vocabulaire (Ryan, 2011).

Onderzoeksdoelen

Het doel van deze dissertatie is om bij te dragen aan de kennisbasis over de les- en leeromgeving in het TNE in Oman, uitgaande van de aanname dat deze een belangrijke rol speelt bij het behalen van de leeruitkomsten door de studenten. Door de verschillende perspectieven hierop te onderzoeken, beoogt dit proefschrift te beantwoorden hoe een TNE les- en leeromgeving gecreëerd kan worden die congruent is met de verwachtingen van de Britse programma's, en hoe docenten begeleid kunnen worden in hun professionele ontwikkeling om zo'n les- en leeromgeving te creëren. Deze onderzoeksdoelen resulteerden in de volgende studies:

- 1) Een longitudinale observatie studie naar de lespraktijk van een groep docenten, tezamen met een vragenlijst over welke onderdelen van de continue professionele ontwikkeling (CPO) zij het meest nuttig vonden.
- 2) Een vragenlijst om te identificeren met welke problematiek de niet-Engelstalige, buitenlandse docenten geconfronteerd worden in TNE in Oman; opgevolgd door een interviewstudie met een geselecteerde groep docenten.
- 3) Een vragenlijst om te identificeren met welke problematiek de Omani studenten geconfronteerd worden in TNE; opgevolgd door een interviewstudie met een geselecteerde groep studenten.
- 4) Een evaluatiestudie naar de kwaliteit van de bewijsmaterialen ten opzichte van de UKPSF die in de vorm van professionele ontwikkelingsportfolio's door de TNE docenten waren aangeleverd ter voorbereiding op een aanvraag voor Fellowship.

Hoofdstuk 2

In hoofdstuk 2 worden de percepties van de onderzoeker als observator gepresenteerd en de percepties van de docenten op het nut van verscheidene CPO elementen. De onderzoeksvragen waren: (1) 'Hoe zou een nieuw, meer descriptief en context-gevoelig lesevaluatie instrument eruit zien dat geschikt is voor TNE?'; (2) 'Hoe ontwikkelde de lespraktijk zich vervolgens over een periode van drie jaar waarin het CPO programma liep?'; en, (3) 'Welke elementen van het CPO programma vonden de docenten het meest nuttig?'. Op basis van descriptieve statistiek en kwalitatieve interpretaties werden de data geanalyseerd.

Met betrekking tot de eerste onderzoeksvraag was het lesobservatie instrument in eerste instantie alleen gebaseerd op descriptoren van geobserveerd gedrag, dat later aangevuld werd met criteria van *best practice* afgeleid uit de literatuur. Het bevatte derhalve zowel descriptoren die typisch bleken te zijn voor TNE alsook descriptoren die hoogst wenselijk zijn voor doceren in het hoger onderwijs. De observaties volgden de lespraktijk van 44 niet-Engelstalige, buitenlandse docenten over de periode 2014-2016.

In antwoord op de tweede onderzoeksvraag naar de professionele ontwikkeling bleek dat de meerderheid van de TNE docenten hun oorspronkelijk voornamelijk docent-gerichte aanpak van kennisoverdracht verlegden naar een student-gerichte aanpak die focust op het leerproces door het aanbieden van leeractiviteiten die in overeenstemming waren met de leeruitkomsten van de Britse programma's. Er was echter een significante minderheid (een derde van de docenten uit deze groep) voor wie een periode van drie jaar niet genoeg bleek te zijn om de gewenste lespraktijk te bereiken.

Wat de derde onderzoeksvraag betreft, de 15 vragen op de lijst bevatten zowel formele als informele elementen van het CPO programma. Van de vier clusters waarin de resultaten uiteen vielen, werd individuele feedback, hetzij mondeling hetzij schriftelijk, op de lespraktijk gezien als het meest nuttige element. Ten tweede, informele elementen, waarvan discussies met collegae het meest werden gewaardeerd, gevolgd door het lezen van de literatuur over lesgeven in het hoger onderwijs, en discussies met de mentor toen ze net begonnen in deze HOI. Ten derde, de workshops die gegeven werden door de programma adviseur van de partner universiteit werden nuttiger gevonden dan workshops over lesgeven en leren. Ten slotte, het invullen van de zelfevaluatie na een observatie vonden docenten het minst nuttig van alle elementen.

Hoofdstuk 3

In hoofdstuk 3 wordt het perspectief van de docenten belicht op de academische problematiek zoals zij die als niet-Engelstalige, buitenlandse docenten ervaren hebben in TNE. Om dit te onderzoeken werd een vragenlijst gebruikt, eerst in 2015 en herhaald in 2018 voor de nieuwe docenten die waren gearriveerd, opgevolgd door semigestructureerde interviews met een groep docenten, die zodanig geselecteerd waren dat ze de landen van herkomst proportioneel vertegenwoordigden. De volgende onderzoeksvragen leidden deze studie: (1) 'Wat zijn de specifieke problemen die buitenlandse docenten ervaren?', en, (2) 'In welke mate hebben deze problemen een impact op de TNE les-en leeromgeving?'. Om de data uit de vragenlijst te analyseren werden descriptieve en inferentiële statistieken gebruikt en kwalitatieve interpretaties van de interviews.

Vier factoren werden geïdentificeerd die betrekking hebben op verschillende clusters van academische problematiek, waarvan student-gerelateerde aspecten het meest problematisch werden gevonden. Alle geïnterviewde docenten meldden dat studenten zwaar leunen op de docenten voor ondersteuning bij hun studie op het gebied van nieuwe onderwerpen, vocabulaire, wat ze buiten de les moeten doen, opdrachten en het online indienen daarvan, betrouwbare websites, en checken op plagiaat. Het tweede aspect, het behouden van de kwaliteit van het programma, is nauw verbonden met de kwaliteit van de les- en leeromgeving. Ze spraken uitgebreid over de problemen om de beoogde leerdoelen te behalen met hun studenten, met name in de latere jaren van het programma. Voorbeelden die ze gaven waren het toepassen van theorie op de praktijk, het ontwikkelen van kritisch nadenken, en de noodzaak voor een student-gerichte aanpak die focust op het leerproces. Ook identificeerden ze het gebrek aan academisch schrijfvaardigheid in examen antwoorden, terwijl minder dan de helft van hen het als hun verantwoordelijkheid zag om studenten daarin te ondersteunen. Twee andere aspecten waren minder problematisch: het aanpassen van de lespraktijk naar een student-gerichte aanpak, en de kwaliteitsborging door de partner universiteit alhoewel dat in het begin als een schok kwam maar later als zeer nuttig en leerzaam werden beschouwd.

Met betrekking tot de tweede onderzoeksvraag werd de kwaliteitsborging door de partner universiteit en de externe examinatoren als een zeer gedegen en robuust systeem gezien dat ervoor zorgde dat er standaarden behouden werden wat betreft toets constructie, beoordeling en cijferspreiding. Vrijwel allemaal beschouwden ze dit als een positieve impact op de toetsing, maar wat volgens hen een negatieve invloed had op de kwaliteit van de les- en leeromgeving was het gebrek aan vereiste voorkennis van de studenten, en de sterke behoefte van studenten aan structuur en begeleiding in het overschakelen van memorisatie naar begrip van theorieën en naar kritische denkvaardigheid.

Hoofdstuk 4

In hoofdstuk 4 staan de perspectieven van de studenten op de academische problematiek die zij ervaren hebben in TNE centraal. Hiervoor werd een survey gebruikt om studenten uit alle studiejaar van het Bachelor's programma te bevragen, gevolgd door interviews met Omani studenten. De onderzoeksvragen waren: (1) 'Wat zijn de specifieke problemen die de TNE studenten tegen komen in deze leeromgeving?', en, (2) 'Wat voor soort ondersteuning hebben de studenten nodig als eerste stap richting een voor hen geschikte les- en leeromgeving waarin ze hun studie succesvol kunnen volgen en afronden?'. De data uit de vragenlijst werden geanalyseerd met gebruikmaking van descriptieve statistiek en exploratieve factor analyse en met kwalitatieve interpretaties van de interviews.

Twee hoofdfactoren werden geïdentificeerd: continue aanpassing en het behalen van de leerdoelen. Er was een derde factor bestaande uit slechts twee items maar die leek in eerste instantie niet van belang. De gemiddelde scores van de antwoorden lagen heel dicht bij elkaar, maar de hoge standaard deviatie wees erop dat studenten zeer verschillen in hun ervaringen. Dit zou aan hun achtergrond kunnen liggen, maar een meer aannemelijke verklaring werd in de interviews gevonden omdat de studenten aangaven dat ze grote verschillen bemerkten in de lesaanpak van docenten, en de mate waarin ze continue aanpassing en het behalen van de leerdoelen lastig vonden was hiervan sterk afhankelijk.

Wat de eerste onderzoeksvraag betreft, was de continue aanpassing aan de steeds hogere eisen aan cognitieve en linguïstische vaardigheden een moeilijke factor, en specifiek hun eigen manier van studeren. Dit had vooral betrekking op de nieuwe vormen van toetsing, en de hoge mate van zelfstandig studeren die de docenten van hen verwachtten. De aanpassing aan de manier van lesgeven werd bemoeilijkt doordat docenten hierin zeer verschilden en dit beïnvloedde de mate waarin ze iets lastig vonden, variërend van vak inhoud tot het ontwikkelen van kritische denkvaardigheid. Wat behalen van de leerdoelen betreft, was academische schrijfvaardigheid verreweg het moeilijkst, vooral het beantwoorden van open vragen in examens (taakvolbrenging, organisatie, beknoptheid, tijdlimiet, en formele taal kunnen gebruiken), nauw gevolgd door het schrijven van opdrachten (volledig nieuwe manier van toetsing, data verzamelen, refereren naar bronnen, korte deadline, formeel taalgebruik). De interviews leidden tot een onverwachte uitkomst, namelijk dat 'studeren met andere studenten' bijzonder belangrijk was en dit was een van de items uit de derde factor. De overgrote meerderheid van de geïnterviewde studenten bleek deel te nemen aan studiegroepen, die hen veel ondersteuning boden.

Met betrekking tot de tweede onderzoeksvraag, gaven de geïnterviewde studenten aan een hoge mate van begeleiding van hun docenten te verwachten. In de les, voor het opzetten van groepsdiscussies (problemen oplossen), schrijfvaardigheid begeleiding, uitleg van vak inhoud en vocabulaire, of aanwijzingen voor wat ze buiten de les moeten doen. Buiten de les begeleiding krijgen bleek niet eenvoudig aangezien docenten niet altijd beschikbaar waren. Kortom, het type ondersteuning dat de studenten effectief en bijzonder geschikt voor zichzelf vonden is coöperatief leren in de klas zodat ze de hogere orde denkvaardigheden en schrijfvaardigheid kunnen ontwikkelen en collaboratief leren buiten de klas.

Hoofdstuk 5

In hoofdstuk 5 staat het professionele ontwikkelingsperspectief centraal en de evaluatie van de docenten portfolio's aan de hand van de UKPSF. De onderzoeksvragen die hieraan ten grondslag lagen zijn: (1) 'Wat is het niveau van reflectie die te zien is in de portfolio's van TNE docenten?'; (2) 'Wat is hun filosofie ten aanzien van lesgeven?'; en, (3) 'Wat is er nodig op het gebied van professionele ontwikkeling met betrekking tot de aanvraag voor Fellow?'. Om het reflectie niveau te beoordelen is Larrivee's (2008) instrument gebruikt, in combinatie met een inhoudsanalyse van de *teaching philosophy statement* (TPS).

Wat de eerste onderzoeksvraag betreft bleek dat het merendeel van de indicatoren gevonden werd op het niveau van pre-reflectie, op de voet gevolgd door oppervlakte niveau. Hoewel een derde van de indicatoren gevonden werd op pedagogisch reflectie niveau waren er slechts vijf portfolio's die alleen deze indicatoren bevatten. Kritische reflectie indicatoren kwamen helemaal niet voor in de portfolio's. De twee belangrijke andere bevindingen waren dat in het algemeen de waarden die docenten erop na houden afwezig waren in de portfolio's, en dat hun beweringen niet geboekstaafd werden met onderzoek, ervaring, of literatuur, ondanks expliciete richtlijnen voor de portfolio's.

Wat de tweede onderzoeksvraag betreft bleef duidelijk onderbelicht in de TPS wat de filosofie van de docenten ten aanzien van lesgeven had beïnvloed, zoals bijvoorbeeld de literatuur over pedagogiek, reflecties op eigen praktijk, of hun visie op hoe studenten leren.

Met betrekking tot de derde onderzoeksvraag gaven docenten zelf aan dat ze verdere ontwikkeling nodig hebben op het gebied van Kernactiviteiten, in het bijzonder, geschikte methodes om les te geven, leren en beoordelen. Evaluatie van de portfolio's leerde dat voor een Fellowship aanvraag het relatief lage niveau van reflectie problematisch zou zijn, evenals de afwezigheid van professionele waarden.

Discussie van algemene bevindingen

Gelet op de twee survey- en interviewstudies en de longitudinale observaties in dit proefschrift (in respectievelijk hoofdstuk 3, 4 en 2), de survey onder Britse universiteiten die TNE aanbieden (O'Mahony, 2014), en de OAAA audits, lijkt er overeenstemming te bestaan dat de kwaliteit van de les- en leeromgeving in de private hoger onderwijsinstellingen in Oman veel aandacht behoeft. Dientengevolge is begeleiding van TNE docenten noodzakelijk, gebruik makend van de CPO elementen die docenten nuttig vonden ter ondersteuning van hun professionele praktijk. Hieronder volgen verscheidene aspecten die een meer negatieve invloed hebben op de kwaliteit van de les- en leeromgeving.

Aspecten die invloed hebben op de kwaliteit van de les-en leeromgeving

De onderwijskwaliteit in TNE hangt in belangrijke mate af van de convergentie van de verwachtingen van de verschillende, cultureel ingebedde, verwachtingen van de Britse programma's, de Omani studenten, en de buitenlandse docenten. Voor studenten kunnen vooral in de beginfase, maar continuerend in de latere jaren, de verwachtingen potentieel met elkaar in conflict zijn, en voor hen is het belangrijk dat de lespraktijk in overeenstemming is met de verwachtingen van de Britse programma's. Inconsistentie in de manier van lesgeven, zoals de studenten aangaven in de interviews, is in het bijzonder een reden tot zorg omtrent de kwaliteit van de les- en leeromgeving. Deze inconsistentie zoals die ook naar voren kwam in de observatiestudie heeft een negatieve invloed op de lespraktijk hetgeen uiteindelijk ook een zorg is voor de hele HOI (Wilkins, Butt & Annabi, 2017), en op nationaal niveau voor de hele TNE sector, zoals de audits lieten zien.

Lesgeven dat stoelt op kennisoverdracht alleen is iets waar zowel de Omani studenten als de meerderheid van de docenten aan gewend zijn. De partner universiteit leverde alleen een set dia's aan voor iedere lesweek, dus docenten gingen ervan uit dat ze een hoorcollege moesten geven en studenten dat ze de dia's uit hun hoofd moesten leren en reproduceren tijdens een tentamen. Er is overeenstemming in de literatuur dat hoorcolleges contraproductief zijn voor optimaal leren (bijv. Loughran, 2013), en Virtanen en Tynjälä (2018) vonden een negatieve correlatie tussen hoorcolleges en het leren van kritische denkvaardigheid, hetgeen precies is wat de Britse programma's van studenten verwachten. Als er een pedagogisch-didactisch ontkoppeling is tussen de programma's en de studenten aan wie wordt lesgegeven, dan loopt het academisch succes van studenten gevaar. De Omani studenten konden zelf goed aangeven wat zij effectief vonden, en dit was in lijn met een focus op het leerproces.

Tegelijkertijd vonden docenten de student-gerelateerde aspecten en het behouden van de kwaliteit van het programma de meest problematische kanten van hun werk, en er zijn verscheidene aspecten essentieel voor lesgeven in TNE: kennis van het schoolsysteem en van hoe Omani studenten gewend zijn te leren, en tegemoet komen aan hun behoefte aan begeleiding. Dit laatste vergt een focus op

gestructureerde les- en leeractiviteiten die in overeenstemming zijn met relevante vaardigheden en (voor)kennis, kennisconstructie en begrip, en het ontwikkelen van kritische denkvaardigheid en schrijfvaardigheid. De descriptoren van wat effectieve lespraktijk inhoudt in TNE zijn beschreven in hoofdstuk 3; ze komen overeen met de verwachtingen van de Britse universiteit en de literatuur over doceren in het hoger onderwijs in het algemeen (e.g. Biggs, 2012; Kuh, et al., 2006; Maclellan, 2015; Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001; Trigwell, et al., 2005).

Toetsing was een ander onderdeel dat veel nieuwe aspecten bevatte, zowel voor docenten als studenten. De studie in hoofdstuk 4 bracht aan het licht dat studenten het schrijven van lange antwoorden in tentamens en voor opdrachten verreweg het moeilijkst vonden. Studenten waren niet bekend met opdrachten en de vele vormen daarvan, zoals bijvoorbeeld essays, rapporten, portfolio's, online forum discussies, en presentaties. Het kritisch schrijven in antwoord op een open tentamenvraag was ook totaal nieuw voor hen daar ze eerder alleen moesten kunnen reproduceren wat ze uit hun hoofd hadden geleerd. Parallel hieraan waren opdrachten voor de docenten vaak ook nieuw. Het maken van toetsen die congruent zijn met de leerdoelen van het programma was iets dat gecontroleerd werd door de Britse universiteit, maar in eerste instantie was dit een uitdagende taak voor nieuwe TNE docenten en het duurde wel een of twee semesters voordat ze dit geleerd hadden (Hoofdstuk 3). Bovendien waren het schrijven van beoordelingscriteria en de examenmoderatie door de Britse universiteit ook nieuw voor de meesten. Beoordeling was een gebied waarin ze eerder in hun eigen hoger onderwijssysteem totale autonomie hadden.

Verder zijn er contextuele kenmerken die invloed kunnen hebben maar buiten Oman niet algemeen bekend zijn. De aard van de contracten, beschreven in hoofdstuk 5, verklaart wellicht waarom sommige docenten minder geïnteresseerd zijn in professionele ontwikkeling en waarom ze de strategische afweging maken meer aandacht te besteden aan de meer zichtbare kanten van hun werk, zoals kwaliteitsborging, opmerkingen van de externe examinatoren en formele evaluaties, dan aan zelfreflectie, die niet opgemerkt wordt door hun leidinggevenden of de Britse universiteit. Hun lestaak omvang kan ook plotseling hoger worden, evenals de student-docent ratio. Voorts is er een hiaat tussen het schoolsysteem en de Britse universiteit, wat betreft verwachtingen omtrent voorkennis en denkvaardigheden. Om de UKPSF te kunnen interpreteren is het nodig om de context waarin deze docenten werken te begrijpen.

Het sociale aspect van leren en kennisconstructie

Zowel de Omani studenten als de buitenlandse docenten gaven aan dat persoonlijke interactie een waardevolle component van hun leerproces is. De studenten, in hoofdstuk 4, wezen op het vitale belang van coöperatief leren met die docenten die leeractiviteiten opzetten in de klas en op collaboratief leren in de studiegroepen, om de leerdoelen te bereiken. Dit is in lijn met eerder onderzoek dat benadrukt dat de lespraktijk een positieve invloed kan hebben op de leerkwaliteit (Bryson & Hand, 2007; Kuh et al., 2006; Zepke & Leach, 2010), en dat studiegenoten een positieve rol kunnen spelen (Peregrina & Kretz, 2018). Studenten die elkaar buiten de les helpen om vak inhoud en vocabulaire te begrijpen is een kernaspect van leergemeenschappen (Brouwer & Jansen, 2019; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009). Bovendien vonden de studenten dat de interactie met de docenten en studiegenoten het leren van kritische denkvaardigheid bevorderde (zie ook Virtanen en Tynjälä, 2018) . Vandaar dat een gedeeltelijke oplossing voor een verlichting van de ervaren

afhankelijkheidsdruk van docenten zou kunnen liggen in het opzetten van groepsopdrachten en zo te profiteren van de voorkeur hiervoor van studenten.

De buitenlandse docenten benadrukten ook het belang van persoonlijke communicatie met Britse staf, of dat nu de programma adviseur was of de externe examiner – een situatie waarin kwaliteitsborging kan leiden tot kwaliteitsverbetering (Keay, May & O'Mahony, 2014; Pyvis, 2011; Keevers et al., 2014). Bovendien waren in hun perceptie discussies met collegae en hun mentor, en persoonlijke feedback na een lesobservatie nuttige bijdragen aan hun professionele ontwikkeling (hoofdstuk 2). Om deze reden is het waarschijnlijk dat de mentor die ze krijgen toegewezen door de Britse universiteit voor de toekomstige eis tot het behalen van Fellowship (Hoofdstuk 5), een cruciale rol zal spelen, zelfs meer dan studies in het VK hadden aangetoond (Asghar & Pilkington, 2019; Botham, 2018; Spowart et al., 2019).

Continue professionele ontwikkeling

Er waren verscheidene aspecten die positief hebben bijgedragen aan de TNE les- en leeromgeving. Ten eerste leidde de nadruk die de Britse universiteit legt op de kwaliteitsborging van de toetsing tot een sterke leercurve bij de buitenlandse docenten op het gebied van toets constructie en beoordeling. Docenten waardeerden ook de persoonlijke communicatie met Britse staf wanneer ze in Oman kwamen, net zoals TNE docenten in Maleisië (Keevers, et al, 2014). Ten tweede, leidde de initiële focus van het lange termijn CPO programma tot verbeterde lespraktijk van de meeste docenten, en zij vonden individuele feedback en informele discussies met collegae het meest nuttig voor hun professionele praktijk. Derhalve dienen HOI de noodzakelijke middelen vrij te maken, dat wil zeggen, specialisten in academische professionele ontwikkeling die bewust tijd besteden aan individuele consultaties met docenten en die het delen van *best practice* faciliteren, aangezien deze activiteiten kunnen bijdragen aan de transformatie van de lespraktijk en een consequente aanpak van lesgeven binnen de faculteit. In een later stadium zou het CPO programma gericht moeten zijn op de aspecten die de docenten en de studenten lastig vonden, zoals beschreven in respectievelijk Hoofdstukken 3 en 4. Ten derde, de nauwe samenwerking die geïnitieerd was door het Centre for Quality Enhancement in het college met de eindverantwoordelijke voor kwaliteitsborging en de Academic Registrar, faciliteerde het delen van institutionele data en *learning analytics*. Op deze manier werd kwaliteitsverbetering op individueel niveau versterkt door kwaliteitsverbetering op institutioneel niveau. Echter, met betrekking tot de HEA vereiste om bewijs aan te leveren in de aanvraag voor Fellowship, was het problematisch dat slechts een paar docenten de resultaten van hun studenten of de evaluatie door studenten beschouwden als bewijs voor effectieve lespraktijk en als elementen die hun *teaching philosophy* beïnvloedden.

Ook is het zo dat docenten in een TNE context als deze, met alleen een lestaak, geacht worden duale professionaliteit te laten zien: om experts te zijn in hun eigen vakgebied en in TNE pedagogiek. Of de literatuur over wat goede lespraktijk is in het hoger onderwijs is doorgesijpeld naar de buitenlandse docenten laten de studies wat tegenstrijdige resultaten zien. Aan de ene kant gaven de docenten in de survey aan dat ze het lezen van recente literatuur over lesgeven in het hoger onderwijs nuttig vonden (zie tabel 2.2). Maar aan de andere kant, kwamen er in de professionele ontwikkeling portfolio's weinig referenties naar de literatuur voor, en die waren vooral gerelateerd aan hun vakgebied.

Het algemene gebrek aan reflectie is in overeenstemming met een TNE studie in Irak, waar de bevindingen van Bovill et al (2015) wezen op onervarenheid van de docenten in het reflecteren op hun eigen lespraktijk. De geringe zelfreflectie was evident in zowel hoofdstuk 2 als 5: dat docenten dit het minst nuttige van de CPO elementen vonden was misschien al een voorbode voor de lage niveaus van zelfreflectie in de portfolio's. In tabel 2.1 komen *zelfreflectie* en *reageren op feedback en cijfers van studenten* pas op niveau 4 (hoogst effectief) voor als descriptoren, en er waren slechts een handjevol docenten die dat niveau na drie jaar bereikt hadden. Wat ook zichtbaar onderontwikkeld bleek in hoofdstuk 5 was wat hun *teaching philosophy* had beïnvloed, zoals bijvoorbeeld de *pedagogiek gerelateerde literatuur, reflectie op praktijk, of visie op hoe studenten leren*. Menig docent baseerde zijn of haar visie en beweringen over onderwijs niet op bewijs uit de eigen praktijk, theorieën of onderzoek. In het licht van de HEA vereisten om een reflectieve houding aan te nemen en de aanvraag in te bedden in de literatuur, zijn deze bevindingen problematisch. Als de vereiste voor Fellowship eenmaal een feit is, dan dienen docenten op twee manieren begeleid te worden: een wetenschappelijke benadering door de literatuur te lezen over pedagogiek in het hoger onderwijs, en het ontwikkelen van reflectieve vaardigheden en reflectief schrijven. Aangezien ze individuele feedback en discussies met collegae nuttige CPO elementen vonden, zouden de volgende aspecten hen kunnen ondersteunen in het schrijven van de aanvragen: feedback van een paar kritische bevriende collegae op een concept versie, en dialoog en reflectie op de eigen professionele praktijk met collegae.

Implicaties

Contextualisatie in TNE

Uit de studies in dit proefschrift komen verscheidene implicaties duidelijk naar voren. Ten eerste zijn er weinig kwaliteitsborgingskaders die indicatoren hebben ontwikkeld voor het borgen van contextualisatie van buitenlandse programma's in het ontvangende land (Latchem & Ryan, 2014), en Oman is daar een voorbeeld van. Docenten wordt simpelweg verteld om de modules die ze lesgeven te contextualiseren, zodat ze relevant zijn voor studenten met een andere onderwijs- en culturele achtergrond. Aangezien in Oman de docenten voornamelijk buitenlandse niet-Engelstalige academici zijn, roept dit de vraag op hoe zij in staat kunnen zijn om hun studenten voorbeelden te geven die voldoende gecontextualiseerd zijn om nieuwe concepten te verbinden met hun maatschappij of werkomgeving. Veel meer dan nu het geval is, dienen docenten deze voorbeelden te delen met nieuwe collegae, of Omani docenten te consulteren voor voorbeelden.

Daarnaast wordt contextualisatie vaak alleen in deze nauwe betekenis van het woord genomen. Wat doceren echter zou transformeren is om de term uit te breiden zodat het context-sensitieve pedagogie includeert. In deze TNE context zou dat betekenen: instructie afwisselen met leeractiviteiten om de interactie tussen docent en studenten en tussen studenten onderling te stimuleren. Het instructie gedeelte omvat activiteiten waarin de docent uitlegt, modelleert, demonstreert, en illustreert door een combinatie van dia's, video clips, mind maps, foto's, uitgewerkte berekeningen, et cetera. Wat bovendien een les- en leeromgeving zou creëren waarin TNE studenten academisch succesvol kunnen zijn is het aanbieden van leeractiviteiten die gebruik maken van lokale en regionale case studies uit de Golf. Deze leeractiviteiten dienen in lijn te zijn met de leerdoelen van de Britse programma's, die lagere en hogere denkvaardigheden vergen en het werken in groepen. Docenten dienen paar- en groepswork op te zetten, en ze kunnen dit coöperatief leren effectiever

maken door duidelijke taakinstructies en gestructureerde procedures te geven, door studenten leesopdrachten te geven en te laten bediscussiëren in hun studiegroep, door gestructureerde discussievragen te geven in de les, of door werkbladen te maken. Deze leeractiviteiten dienen actief gemonitord te worden door de docent, die dialogen en debatten schraagt door ze vaardig en onopgemerkt naar hogere denkvaardigheden leiden, zoals bijvoorbeeld kritisch denken, problemen oplossen en analyseren. Tijdens het monitoren bemerkt de docent hiaten in voorkennis, past activiteiten aan indien nodig, is zich bewust van het verkeerd begrijpen van vak inhoud of vocabulaire, en geeft op tijd formatieve feedback.

Bovendien is het een TNE context zoals beschreven in deze dissertatie van het grootste belang dat studenten actief begeleid worden in de verwerving van academische lees- en schrijfvaardigheid binnen hun vakgebied. Dit includeert, maar is niet gelimiteerd tot, het uitleggen en parafraseren van formeel taalgebruik binnen het vakgebied, en het geven van relevante voorbeelden bij kernterminologie. Het is nog crucialer om studenten te ondersteunen in hoe ze de ideeën die ze bediscussiëren in hun groepen om te zetten in het schrijven van teksten voor dia's bij presentaties of het maken van aantekeningen voor opdrachten. Wederom kan er gebruik gemaakt worden van de voorkeur van studenten voor paar- en groepswork door hen werk van medestudenten te laten beoordelen en te identificeren hoe de tekst verbeterd kan worden, voordat ze verder gaan met hun eigen geschreven werk. Tenslotte dienen docenten hun studenten begrip bij te brengen van de werkwoorden die in toetsen worden gebruikt en ervoor te zorgen dat ook toetsen gecontextualiseerd zijn. Gezien de veelal disharmonische profielen in Engelse taalvaardigheid zouden Omani studenten zeer gebaat zijn bij meer gelegenheid om mondeling in plaats van schriftelijk getoetst te worden.

Universiteiten die TNE aanbieden zouden er goed aan doen om Engelse taalvaardigheid en academische lees- en schrijfvaardigheid expliciet op te nemen in de leerdoelen van ieder programma. Dit maakt het waarschijnlijker dat docenten er expliciet aandacht aan besteden zodat studenten het niet met vallen en opstaan hoeven te leren, hetgeen soms ernstige gevolgen heeft voor individuele studenten. Nog een reden om deze vaardigheden te includeren in de leerdoelen is dat de studenten die door willen stromen naar het Master's programma een IELTS score van 7.0 of het C1 niveau moeten behalen en zij zullen begeleid moeten worden om dit te bereiken.

Verder zouden hoger onderwijsinstellingen die TNE verzorgen hun studenten actief moeten aanmoedigen om studiegroepen te vormen en hun bijeenkomsten moeten faciliteren. In de beginfase kunnen ze wellicht door docenten of ouderejaars studenten worden geleid, terwijl ze later meer zelfstandig kunnen opereren en docenten zouden hen dan kunnen dirigeren naar nuttige en betrouwbare websites of YouTube video's. Studiegroepen bieden studenten een platform voor discussies, vertalen van kernbegrippen, kritisch lezen en schrijven, en voorbereiden van groepsopdrachten zoals presentaties.

Een alternatieve en veelbelovende manier om een context-sensitieve pedagogiek te creëren voor TNE studenten die in een tweede taal studeren is de *flipped classroom*, omdat het de hoorcolleges op video zet en studenten er thuis naar kunnen kijken met alle technologische voordelen van stoppen, opnieuw afspelen, en kunnen kijken op een geschikt moment. Vooral voor de volwassen studenten die al werken, en dit is de meerderheid in TNE in Oman, is dat een groot voordeel. In de klas kunnen dan meer gelegenheden worden gecreëerd voor interactie met de docent en medestudenten, met een

focus op leeractiviteiten die gerelateerd zijn aan de leerdoelen van het programma en de ontwikkeling van academische lees- en schrijfvaardigheid binnen hun vakgebied.

Implicaties voor continue professionele ontwikkeling

Om ervoor te zorgen dat TNE docenten zo'n context-sensitieve pedagogiek kunnen ontwikkelen is het belangrijk hen te begeleiden. Ten eerste door middel van gesprekken met hun mentor die ze krijgen als ze nieuw binnenkomen. Ten tweede door CPO programma's die specifiek ontwikkeld zijn in antwoord op de problematiek waarmee docenten te maken krijgen. En ten derde door het verder ontwikkelen van hun professionaliteit door middel van discussies over lesgeven en leren met hun collegae.

Afgaande op de problematiek waarmee docenten te maken krijgen wanneer ze doceren in deze TNE omgeving, dient er in latere stadia van het CPO programma aandacht geschonken te worden aan aspecten die gerelateerd zijn aan de studenten en het behouden van de kwaliteit van het programma, met name in het laatste en voorlaatste jaar van het Bachelor's programma. Alhoewel het ontwikkelen van kritische denkvaardigheid niet gelimiteerd is tot TNE, is dit een aspect dat expliciete aandacht behoeft gezien het feit dat dit in het schoolsysteem in Oman lange tijd geen prioriteit had. Onlosmakelijk hiermee verbonden is wat studenten verreweg het lastigste aspect vonden, namelijk academisch schrijven, en hoe docenten hen hierin kunnen ondersteunen. Het is paradoxaal dat studenten hun Engels goed genoeg vinden voor hun studie maar dat ze het schrijven van lange antwoorden bij open vragen en van opdrachten verreweg het meest moeilijke aspect vonden. Aangezien schrijfconventies vakgebonden zijn is er een aanpak binnen de faculteit nodig, in plaats van een generieke, institutionele aanpak.

Het inzicht dat docenten discussies met collegae nuttig vonden voor professionele ontwikkeling kan helpen om in kleine groepen problemen te identificeren in de programma's die ze lesgeven en om tot een gezamenlijke aanpak te komen. Voor het bevorderen van SoTL kan dan gelegenheid gecreëerd worden voor collaboratief actieonderzoek, reflectie en dialoog. Docenten dienen ondersteund te worden in kritisch reflecteren op hun eigen praktijk, in reageren op studenten vragenlijsten en behaalde cijfers, en in aanpassen hoe ze het programma vervolgens lesgeven. Ze prefereren het wellicht om dit met een paar vertrouwde collegae te doen dan in een workshop met velen. Voor Fellowship aanvragen zouden deze discussies opgevolgd moeten worden met reflectief schrijven, en het opzetten van een groepje kritische, bevriende collegae die dan feedback kunnen geven op concept versies zou overeenkomen met een ander element dat docenten nuttig vonden. Tezamen dragen deze elementen dan bij aan het promoten van excellentie in lesgeven in de faculteit, en door het delen van *best practice* tussen disciplines onderling ook aan de kwaliteitsverbetering in de bredere context van het hele college.

Implicaties voor Fellowship

Om hun praktijk verder te professionaliseren, en voor de Fellowship aanvraag, is het nodig dat docenten zich verdiepen in de literatuur over de belangrijkste theorieën omtrent lesgeven en leren in het hoger onderwijs. De Britse universiteit zal een cruciale rol spelen in de begeleiding van TNE docenten bij een Fellowship aanvraag, niet alleen omdat de TNE docenten weinig referentiepunten zullen hebben met de UKPSF, maar vooral bij het aanzoeken van Britse mentoren voor de TNE docenten. Hier heeft de Britse universiteit baat bij op twee manieren: het kan aantonen bij de QAA

dat ze hun verantwoordelijkheid voor de kwaliteit van de leeromgeving serieus nemen, en Britse Fellows kunnen laten zien dat ze aan de verplichting voldoen om hun professionalisering bij te houden. Het zou verwelkomd worden door TNE docenten die graag meer interactie wilden met Britse staf aangezien zij eerder het professionele leren hadden gefaciliteerd met betrekking tot de toetsing.

Implicaties op nationaal niveau

Op nationaal niveau zou Fellowship bijzonder belangrijk kunnen zijn voor TNE in Oman, omdat de buitenlands academici worden ingehuurd voor alleen een lestaak en ze dan hun professionaliteit daarin zouden kunnen aantonen. De aanbevelingen die in de OAAA audit rapporten gedaan werden omtrent onderwijskwaliteit en professionele ontwikkeling in TNE zouden dan geadresseerd worden in een vereiste tot het behalen van Fellowship, hetgeen uiteindelijk de kwaliteit van de les- en leeromgeving zou verbeteren. Met het grote aantal TNE studenten in Oman zou niet alleen de individuele student hiervan profiteren maar ook het hele land.

Voorts zijn er verscheidene andere kwesties die alleen op nationaal niveau kunnen worden geadresseerd. Ten eerste, aangezien TNE in Oman geprivatiseerd is en een winstoogmerk heeft, hebben de docent-student ratio's de neiging hoog te zijn, vooral in Business & Management studies. Wanneer de uitgebreide ondersteuning die Omani studenten nodig hebben in Britse programma's, in aanmerking wordt genomen, is het aantal docenten dat wordt ingehuurd doorgaans onvoldoende, hetgeen gecompliceerd wordt door langdurige visa procedures. Private investeerders zijn behoedzaam in het aannemen van Omani docenten aangezien zij hen veel gunstiger salarispakketten moeten bieden en het bijna onmogelijk is hen te ontslaan als de studenten aantallen teruglopen. Ten tweede staat de regulering van het ministerie toe dat studenten zich tot het begin van het academisch jaar mogen inschrijven, en ze zelfs binnen twee weken na de start mogen overstappen naar een ander college of universiteit. Het gevolg is dat er daarom geen prognoses zijn voor het aantal studenten per semester, en ze snel en onverwacht kunnen stijgen. Oman zou erbij gebaat zijn een centraal inschrijvingssysteem te ontwikkelen waar studenten zich ruim op tijd registreren, zodat hoger onderwijsinstellingen naar behoren kunnen plannen.

Ondanks het feit dat TNE sterk geïnstitutionaliseerd is in Oman, is er nog steeds een hiaat tussen het secundair onderwijsstelsel en het tertiaire onderwijs. Totdat en tenzij denkvaardigheden van hogere orde worden bevorderd in de scholen zal deze divergentie aanwezig blijven en zullen docenten in het hoger onderwijs hun studenten actief moeten begeleiden in het ontwikkelen van deze vaardigheden. Hetzelfde geldt voor de ontwikkeling van Engelse taalvaardigheid in de scholen opdat studenten voldoende vaardig zijn in alle vier de taalvaardigheden – lezen, schrijven, luisteren en spreken. Zoals het nu is beginnen studenten vaak aan hoger onderwijs met een disharmonisch profiel waarin luisteren en spreken veel beter ontwikkeld zijn dan lezen en schrijven, terwijl deze twee vaardigheden juist essentieel zijn voor TNE.

Bovendien, aangezien de Britse universiteiten niet alleen eindverantwoordelijk zijn voor het behouden van academische standaarden maar ook voor de kwaliteit van de leeromgeving, is er duidelijk een behoefte aan om iemand te stationeren in de instelling waar de Britse programma's worden lesgegeven die een voorvechter is van de kwaliteitsbewaking van deze verantwoordelijkheid, precies zoals er ook een contractuele verplichting is tot kwaliteitsborging. Zo iemand moet voldoende senioriteit, expertise en geloofwaardigheid hebben om veranderingen en continue

kwaliteitsverbetering aan te drijven. Een enkele universiteit kan dit niet afdwingen dus hier ligt een taak voor landen als Oman om dit als vereiste te stellen evenals voor de universiteiten die TNE wereldwijd aanbieden.

Tenslotte zijn de huidige profielen voor TNE docenten niet voldoende om studenten bekwaam te begeleiden in de ontwikkeling van academische lees- en schrijfvaardigheid. Derhalve zou het vereiste minimum voor Engelse taalvaardigheid verhoogd moeten worden naar een IELTS 7.0 of C1 niveau. Pas boven het niveau van een IELTS 6.0 of B2 zijn taalgebruikers in staat om zichzelf uit te drukken over academische onderwerpen, zowel in spreek- als schrijfvaardigheid (Council of Europe, 2018). De eisen die het Ministerie van Hoger Onderwijs stelt aan Omani docenten zijn vaak lager dan aan buitenlandse docenten, maar dit zou de voordelen van een Brits programma in gevaar brengen, niet alleen voor individuele studenten maar uiteindelijk ook voor het land als geheel.

Toekomstig onderzoek

De studies van dit proefschrift zijn uitgevoerd in één college in Oman en hebben geleid tot duidelijke indicatoren voor een effectieve les- en leeromgeving door welke de lespraktijk in de loop der jaren is verbeterd. Deze les- en leeromgeving is onderzocht vanuit verschillende perspectieven om een holistisch inzicht te verkrijgen. Echter, om een bredere consensus te bereiken over hoe een optimale TNE les- en leeromgeving eruit zou moeten zien is het belangrijk om onderzoek in de toekomst uit te breiden naar andere TNE instellingen in Oman of in de UAE of de Golf regio waar de omstandigheden vergelijkbaar zijn.

Op institutioneel niveau zou onderzoek zich kunnen richten op hoe TNE profiteert van hogere kwalificatie eisen aan docenten, zoals een IELTS 7.0 als minimum en het behalen van Fellowship na een jaar lesgeven binnen het Britse systeem. Het stellen van hogere eisen valt binnen de bevoegdheden van een HOI en ze zouden niet hoeven te wachten tot dit landelijk wordt vereist. Zulk onderzoek zou kunnen omvatten of deze hogere minimum eisen leiden tot hogere retentie en progressie ratio's in TNE, en hogere eindcijfers van de studenten. De rol die academisch leiderschap speelt in het creëren van een optimale TNE les- en leeromgeving was niet onderzocht als onderdeel van deze dissertatie, en zou een onderwerp zijn dat de moeite waard is voor een vervolgstudie.

Tenslotte zou een interview studie inzichtelijk kunnen maken waarom het niveau van reflectie relatief laag is bij TNE docenten, en het zou zich ook kunnen richten op hoe docenten naar een hoger reflectieniveau komen en van reflectie naar een verbeterde lespraktijk.

Slotopmerkingen

Met betrekking tot het eerste onderdeel van de duale doelstelling van deze dissertatie omtrent het creëren van een TNE les- en leeromgeving die overeenkomt met de verwachtingen van de Britse programma's zodat de studenten die succesvol kunnen afronden, ligt de contributie aan de kennisbasis in een context-sensitieve pedagogiek. De resultaten (gepresenteerd in Hoofdstukken 2 en 4) hebben specifieke en effectieve indicatoren aangetoond over wat dit dan bevat. Wat het tweede onderdeel van de duale doelstelling betreft omtrent de ondersteuning van de buitenlandse docenten in de aanpassing van hun professionele praktijk om zo'n les- en leeromgeving te creëren, hebben de

bevindingen (gepresenteerd zijn in Hoofdstukken 2 en 3) duidelijke indicatie gegeven dat individuele feedback op de lespraktijk, discussies met collegae, een lange-termijn programma voor CPO en de kwaliteitsborging van de toetsing door de Britse universiteit, de belangrijkste aspecten waren die op een positieve manier hebben bijgedragen aan de professionele praktijk. De toekomstige vereiste om Fellowship (Hoofdstuk 5) te behalen zal hier waarschijnlijk ook aan bijdragen.

Op basis van nationale of wereldwijde ranglijsten worden Britse universiteiten regelmatig benaderd door buitenlandse hoger onderwijsinstellingen om gezamenlijk TNE te gaan aanbieden. Echter, of een TNE programma van wereldklasse is hangt niet zozeer af van een hoge ranking of de kwaliteit van de programma's die de Britse universiteiten bieden, maar veeleer van de professionaliteit van de docenten die in een TNE programma lesgeven.

Curriculum Vitae

Antonia M. Lamers-Reeuwijk was born on 19 June 1962 in Haarlem, where she completed grammar school (gymnasium alpha) in 1980. After doing a Bachelor's degree in English Literature and Linguistics at the University of Amsterdam, she lived in Syria and Vietnam where she taught English to adults. She then moved to England, where she completed a Master in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching at St. Mary's College (part of the University of Surrey) in Twickenham in 1998. Next, she moved to Oman where she was a senior teacher at the British Council and became an IELTS and Cambridge examiner. She also completed the Cambridge University Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA) here in 2001. She subsequently moved to the Netherlands, and obtained a Master in English Language Teaching at Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching (ICLON) in 2005, after she had started teaching at the Mendelcollege in Haarlem where she was asked to set up a bilingual stream for VWO pupils and to train the teachers and teaching assistants, and was the TTO coordinator for five years. From 2009 onwards, she worked freelance as a Cambridge presenter, training teachers of English around the Netherlands, before relocating to Oman in 2011. In 2013 she joined a TNE College in Muscat as the Director of Quality Enhancement with responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment, and became a member of the College Academic Board early 2018. Based on her work here, she gained recognition as a Senior Fellow with the UK Higher Education Academy (now Advance HE) in 2018. She embarked on an external doctorate at Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching (ICLON) in 2015, focusing on teaching and professional development in TNE. She resigned from her work in May 2019 to work full-time on her studies and moved back to the Netherlands in 2020.

Publications

Lamers, A. M., & Admiraal, W. F. (2018). Moving out of their comfort zones: enhancing teaching practice in transnational education. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 23(2), 110-122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2017.1399133>

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