

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/138250> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Lamers-Reeuwijk, A.M.

Title: Teaching and professional development in transnational education in Oman

Issue date: 2020-11-24

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.

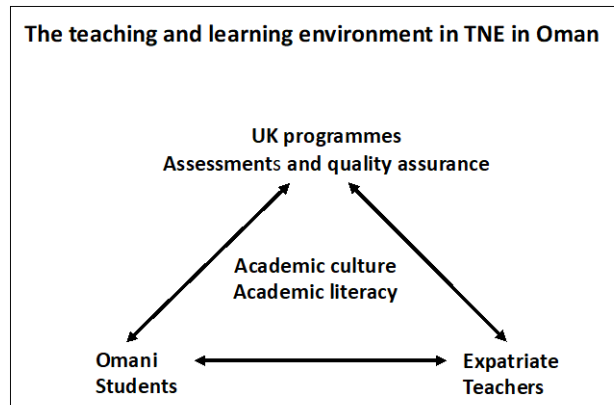


Figure 1.1 The teaching and learning environment in TNE in Oman

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, & Mazonod, 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.