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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.

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, & Mazenod, 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 therefor 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.