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Investigating How Sino-British TNE Partnership Activities affects the Development of Social Capital

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Rationale for Research

- Global changes stimulated by world polity have prompted higher education institutions to reconsider their attitudes towards internationalisation (Knight, 2013, 2014).

- One method for realising international opportunities afforded by neo-liberal policies is to develop international partnerships.

- HE Institutions seek alliances in which to develop the critical mass needed to ensure their survival (Bennell & Pearce, 2002).
Rationale for Research

• Naidoo (2009) argues with student mobility likely to slump, transnational education represents a key growth area, with demand from Asia likely to grow (British Council, 2013).

• Understanding what generates sustainable and valuable partnerships is arguably of critical importance to the business of contemporary higher education.
• A lacuna exists in transnational discourse as to how partnerships, once initiated by the strategic level are operated by faculty members in order to create sustainable and valuable partnerships (Spencer-Oatey, 2012, Keays et al., 2014).

• Study aims to facilitate understanding of: how activities, undertaken by faculty members at the operational stage of Sino-British transnational ‘joint programmes’, affects the development of social and partnership capital (Eddy, 2010).
Research Aims

1. To explore how transnational faculty member activities affects the development of social and subsequent partnership capital (Eddy, 2010).

2. To establish how internal and external structural factors such as partnership objectives, resourcing, regulation, communities and management of activities, hinder or assist faculty in the development of social and partnership capital (Eddy, 2010).

3. To advance theory by creating a model that can assist in explicating faculty activities and the social and partnership capital (Eddy, 2010) potential inherent within them.
Partnership Literature

- Partnership considered an evolutionary process (J.E Austin 2000, Gray, 1989, Wohlsetter et al., 2005).
- The strategic level is important in the initial phase of partnership development (Kanter, 1994).

![Diagram showing the partnership cycle: Initiation, Operation, Evaluation, with the equation Organisational + Social Capital = Partnership Capital (Eddy, 2010).]
Partnership Theoretical Frameworks

• 3rd Generation CHAT (Engeström 2001).
• Managerial/ organisational tool to improve capacity for working across boundaries (Daniels & Edwards, 2010).
• Object$^3$ zone of partner interpretation and meaning.
Social Capital Literature

- A resource, available to an agent through social relationships (Coleman, 1994).
- Social capital represents the resources accrued by an individual or group through a network of relationships based upon mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).
- ‘Resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions’ (Yin, 2001, p. 29).
- The concept of reciprocation and its effect on the building of trust (Putnam, 1993).
- Field (2008) argues trust is only a consequence of social capital.
- What resources? Which faculty activities utilise which type of resource? How does this inhibit/promote resource growth? (interpret meanings of actions) What conditions (outputs) does this create?
Social Capital Theoretical Frameworks

• Interpreting the meaning behind social action.
• Rational and empathetic intelligibility.
• Motives for behaviour- why we do what we do.
• Perception of action and associated meaning.
• How resources hinder/ promote human action.
Philosophical Position


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- Partnerships are experienced and perceived by faculty (subjective), but events and mechanisms that underpin them may not be experienced (objective) (Collier, 1994).
Philosophical Position

• Investigation switches from the empirical - the consequences of human action to the *conditions that make action possible* (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000).

• By becoming aware of the mechanisms and events that underpin our partnerships we have the potential to reflect and *transform* our partnerships.
Methodology

- Employing a multiple-case study design of 4 Sino-British partnerships (Yin, 2014, p. 50)
- Each case therefore represents a unique partnership (activity) system as the unit of analysis (Yin, 2014).
- Point of interest in case (Yin, 2014) - faculty experience.
- Sample: UK and China based faculty – 2 from each side = Total 16.
Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 2007).
- Coding: Template Analysis (King, 2012).
- Templates developed from initial analysis of two transcripts. Developed and reconfigured through multiple application.
- Templates- flexible technique enabling changes in thinking to be documented.
Initial Data Collection

- 8 interviews conducted in China (March 2014).
- Field notes suggest social capital as a resource is **knowledge** and **support**.
- It is dependent on:
  - **Purpose.** Must all understand purpose of activities.
  - **Expectation.** Clear purpose *central* to expectation.
  - **Perception.** Partner relations *differ* depending on faculty role/position.
  - **Competency.** Qualified PhD. No *reason* to doubt.
  - **Knowledge transfer.** *Sharing* information critical.
  - **Support.** You *back me up*.
  - **Physical familiarity.** *Stronger* the relationship.
Initial Data Collection

• What depletes social capital?
  – *Conflicting purposes.* Multiple voices. Hidden agendas?
  – *Assumption.* You should know this!
  – *Restrictive governance structures.* No negotiation.
  – *Rule changing* with no prior explanation.

• *Effects on partnership capital?* (Eddy, 2010)
  – *Motivation*—why bother? Affects commitment level.
  – *Academic identity*—who am I?
  – *Resource allocation*—access denied.
  – Creates feelings of procrastination.
  – Creates defensiveness—information flow controlled.
  – Perception of partner affected.
  – Support and knowledge transfer stops.
So we can Discuss…

• The student experience of TNE.
• Student identity in TNE.
• Trade in TNE.
• Quality assurance in TNE.

• But they are all affected by the quality and success of the partnership (relationship) that underpins them.
References


