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**How do the Activities of
Faculty Members affect Relationships
and Partnership Developments in
Transnational Higher Education
Contexts?**

**A Study of two Sino-British Transnational
Higher Education Partnerships**

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

January 2016

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Signed:

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I dedicate this PhD to both myself and to my parents. During the writing of this thesis, I lost my father to cancer. I am deeply grateful Dad for *everything you have done for me*. I hope this doctorate goes some way to giving you something back, and *I know you are watching me now, proud of me for undertaking this challenge*.

When I completed my undergraduate degree in 2000, I knew that someday I would return to higher education in order to achieve a doctorate. Since 2000, life took me on a journey that made me think this was an impossible dream.

I cannot believe how fortunate I am to have joined the academic community in 2009 and completed my life-long ambition. I feel honoured and humbled by the experience. I have proven to myself that I am capable of achieving great things. I have a newfound confidence and pride in myself I never thought possible.

Abstract

For too long, transnational higher education (TNE) has been linked to discourse predominately focused upon strategic implementation, quality assurance and pedagogy. Whilst these are important when designing and managing cross-border programmes, there is a lack of research which focuses on the way in which social interactions influence the pace, and development of TNE partnerships. How faculty members engage with each other across borders and interpret each other's actions and associate meanings are arguably critical to the way international partnerships develop. The research presented aims to positively contribute towards an understanding of how activity undertaken by faculty members at the operational stage of TNE 'joint' partnerships, affect the development of social capital, and the effect this has on a partnership's overall transformation.

Embedded within a critical realist paradigm, representing a stratified and transformational ontology, appreciative of both the objective and subjective dimensions of reality (Bhaskar, 2008) a multiple-case study design comprising of two Sino-British 'joint' partnerships provides the method in which to analyse the operational practices of faculty members. Drawing upon data taken from interviews conducted in China and the UK, data is analysed using various theoretical frameworks, including third generation cultural historical activity theory (CHAT)(Engeström 2001), transformational model of social action (TMSA) (Archer, 1995) and elements of social action theory (Weber, 1978).

This research concludes, that for Sino-British 'joint' partnerships to positively progress and become institutionalised (Eddy, 2010) over time, those tasked with initiating international alliances should consider the development of relationships between operational faculty members. Partnership design and construction is critical in enabling these relationships to develop. Findings suggest that three underlying mechanisms, time, historicity (legacies), culture and motive, influence the activities of faculty members. Structures and systems that develop over time must consider these dimensions, so that faculty member communication and emotional responses remain positive, thereby encouraging the access and mobilisation of resources embedded in the partnership network. Moreover, the consequences of such social interactions are to produce affective regard, respect, trust and confidence amongst operational employees. Faculty member relationships are fundamental in ensuring Sino-British partnerships positively transform, and strengthen over time.

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List of Abbreviations

BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BNIM	Biographical, Narrative, Interpretive Method
CHAT	Third Generation Cultural, Historical, Activity Theory
CHC	Confucian-heritage Culture
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EAIE	European Association for International Education
FDL	Flexible Distance Learning
FE	Further Education
FIFO	Fly-in-fly-out Faculty
GATS	General Agreement of Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
HE	Higher Education
Hefce	Higher Education Funding Council England
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEIs	Higher Education Institutes
HESA	Higher Education Statistical Agency
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NCUK	Northern Consortium UK
OECD	Organisation Education Co-operation and Development
PMI	Prime Ministers Initiative (for International Education)
RTA	Relational Transactional Analysis
SC	Social capital

SNA	Social Network Analysis
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (Australian Government)
T&L	Teaching and Learning
TMSA	Transformational Model of Social Action
TNE	Transnational Higher Education
TSA	Theory of Social Action
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UUK	Universities UK
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Appendix Information

The appendices are located in a separately bound document, making it easier for the reader to engage with additional documentation whilst reading the main thesis.

Appendix 1 Research Overview (Provided to all participants)

Appendix 2 Voluntary Informed Consent (BERA, 2011)

Appendix 3 Participants' Semi-structured Interview Questions.

Appendix 4 Field Notes: Reflective Remarks

Appendix 5 The Pilot Study (23rd January 2014)

Appendix 6 Data Analysis and Template Development

Appendix 7 Reflecting on the Experience of Coding Data

Appendix 8 My Final Thoughts: Reflections on my Research Journey

Preface and Significance of Study

The aim of this research study is to create a platform in which to launch a discussion of the role academic faculty members play in the management and development of transnational higher education (TNE) 'joint' partnerships. Inspired by my own experiences of working on a Sino-British programme since 2009, I found myself curious and intrigued, wanting to understand the phenomenon further. I have witnessed first-hand the challenges and opportunities created by these types of international partnerships.

At times frustrated by a lack of institutional support and recognition, and at times excited by the opportunities provided by our 'joint' partnership, I wanted to know how other faculty members were experiencing TNE arrangements. I wanted to know how other partner groups were engaging and interacting with each other in order to develop long-term sustainable partnerships. How do faculty members manage and deliver their partnership? How do their interactions and interplay affect how they feel about each other? Moreover, what influence do external and internal forces have on the development of TNE programmes, and more importantly, what are these forces? How do these forces affect relationships between collaborating faculty members? It is this interest, which caused me to launch an empirical investigation into faculty members' activities, their relationships, and associated partnership developments.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. **Chapter one** provides an overview of the complex, networked, global environment in which today's higher education (HE) operates. Furthermore, the chapter emphasises the significance and value of cross-border relationships to contemporary higher education institutions (HEIs). As alliances grow in complexity, involving wider sets of stakeholders (Bolton & Nie, 2010), activities and goals (Naidoo, 2009), which continuously fall under the watchful eye of multiple political and regulatory systems (Chapman & Sakamoto, 2011), international partnerships are becoming harder to sustain for long periods of time (Eddy, 2007). This suggests to fully understand how educational collaborations function, it is important to look beyond the 'value added rhetoric' found in most calls for educational alliances, and to ask questions that examine the management of the operational phase of partnerships (Amey, Eddy, & Campbell, 2010, p. 335). Understanding what generates sustainable and valuable TNE partnerships is arguably of critical importance to the survival of contemporary HE.

Chapter two provides a specific Sino-British context in which to examine TNE partnerships. Sino-British transnational education operates in a complicated and intricate political, economic, and social environment, which influences partner behaviours, motivations and conditions. The chapter therefore explicates the complex and dynamic environment in which this empirical research is situated. Predicted to be one of the world's largest importers of higher education by 2015 and beyond (Bohm, 2003), China provides a relevant, contemporary platform in which to build a study of current TNE 'joint' partnership developments.

Chapter three explores the concept of *partnership*. By synthesizing and analysing existing sources from the literature, the terms *partnership*, *social capital* and *partnership capital* (Eddy, 2010) are analysed and defined for the purpose of empirical research. The chapter engages with existing TNE discourse in order to identify gaps in our current understanding of TNE. Although the strategic level is important in the initial phase of partnership development (Kanter, 1994), a lacuna exists in the TNE literature as to how these inter-institutional relationships operate once initiated (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). For TNE to operate effectively, faculty members¹ must integrate, no longer seeing themselves as having separate identities (Hudson, Exworthy, & Peckham, 1998). Common understandings need to be built by faculty members from their differing perspectives in order to build the partnership and generate service user value (J. E. Austin, 2000; Gray, 1989). An analysis of operational relationships is only now coming to the fore, with academics such as Selmer, Jonasson, and Lauring (2014), K. Smith (2014), Keevers et al. (2014) and Keay, May, and O' Mahony (2014) actively researching the working environments of faculty members in order to investigate how TNE educational communities are progressing.

Each partner group involved in a Sino-British TNE partnership therefore has to take responsibility for generating the social capital required to facilitate the generation of outputs such as trust, negotiation, open communication, shared vision and meaning for ideas (Carnwell & Carson, 2009; Coleman, 1988; Desivilya & Palgi, 2011; Eddy, 2010; Hutchinson & Campbell, 1998). The creation of these outputs is important if partnerships are to become institutionalised over time (Amey et al., 2010). This requires faculty members to engage in a series of actions and activities focused on the achievement of specific goals or objectives (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). These goals are often dynamic and subject to change at any time depending on internal and external pressures.

¹ For information on what defines a faculty member in the context of this study, see chapter four, section 4.4.2.1 *Sample: Identifying Sino and UK Partners*.

Furthermore, individual partners may have different reasons for being involved in TNE. It is this difference which can create a breakdown in collaborative understandings at the implementation level (Amey et al., 2010). Faculty members therefore need to be aware of how their macro environment affects their micro environment, as well as how their interactions affect their relationships. Chapter three, therefore identifies and examines theoretical frameworks, which can assist in understanding faculty member relationships and subsequent partnership developments.

Chapter four offers a detailed analysis of the philosophical tradition underpinning the research methodology and method. Grounded in a critical realist paradigm, and utilising a multiple case study design of two Sino-British 'joint' partnerships, this study utilises qualitative interviews to explore the empirical (subjective) domains of its participants, in an attempt to offer explanations of the structures, forces and mechanisms, which underpin TNE partnerships.

Chapters five and six provide a detailed analysis of both partnership A and partnership B respectively. Each chapter starts by exploring and analysing each individual faculty member, before merging the findings in order to analyse underpinning patterns and relationships.

Chapter seven revisits the academic aims of this investigation and comments upon whether the objectives have been met. Conclusions drawn are evaluated in light of current TNE discourse emulating from events such as *Going Global 2015*, and recommendations for future research are made based upon the study's empirical findings.

This research therefore aims to make a positive contribution to current knowledge by investigating:

How activities, undertaken by faculty members at the operational phase of transnational 'joint' partnerships, affect the development of social relationships and the subsequent effect this has on partnership development

Academic Aims

1. To explore how the activities of faculty members operating TNE 'joint' partnerships affect social capital and subsequent partner relations
2. To discover which forces and features have the biggest influence on operational relationships between faculty members working on TNE 'joint' partnerships, and the subsequent effect of these on partnership sustainability
3. To utilise existing theoretical frameworks in order to model TNE 'joint' partnerships, in order to understand the affect operational activities have on social relationships and the effect they have on partnership developments over time

Research Questions

In order to facilitate in meeting the aims above, five research questions are considered:

1. How is the researcher defining "activities", "social relationships", and "partnership development"?
2. What affect do the outcomes of operational activities have on "social relationships", and subsequent faculty member interactions?
3. Are there underlying forces which influence faculty member activities, and if so, what are they and how do they affect the development of "social relationships" between faculty members?
4. Is it possible for faculty members, through their activities, to expand and transform their partnerships in order to improve them over time?

5. Is it possible to model the operational phase of TNE 'joint' partnerships, and provide insights into more effective ways to construct these type of partnerships in order to improve faculty member "social relationships"?

Contribution to Knowledge

Overall, this research claims to make an original and unique contribution in three ways:

1. Substantive Claim

Currently, a lacuna exists in TNE discourse as to how TNE 'joint' partnerships, once initiated at the strategic level, are operated by faculty members in order to create sustainable and valuable partnerships. This study applies organisational and managerial partnership literature to existing TNE research in order to highlight this gap and its importance as an area for investigation. By deconstructing the concept of *partnership*, and analysing its core facets and dominant paradigms, new insights and conceptual understandings of the phenomena emerge. This research therefore aims to consider the relationship between faculty members, operational activities, social relationships and partnership development in a unique and original way.

2. Theoretical Claim

As Robinson, Hewitt, and Harriss (2000) suggest, practice is often more complicated than theory suggests. By examining existing literature and theory, and considering it in relation to my own *a posteriori* knowledge of operating a TNE 'joint' partnership, an initial theoretical framework is developed from which to postulate the operational phase of a TNE 'joint' partnership². This primary model therefore represents a 'thinking tool' (Grenfell, 2008, p. 219), providing the foundation for an investigation into the relationship between faculty member activities, operational activities, social relationships and partnership development.

Moreover, this research aims to challenge and refine theory based upon its findings. Theories are therefore utilised throughout this research as thinking tools through which to contemplate, but not direct, the data analysis. Analysis may require the

² Please see chapter four for further clarification as to the meaning of 'joint' partnership.

reconfiguration of theory in line with what has been uncovered during the research process.

3. Methodological Claim

By dissecting managerial and organisational literature which focuses on partnership, key paradigmatic positions, prevalent in partnership discourse are analysed in detail, and considered in relation to existing TNE partnership research. This research does not lay claim to a new research method. However, it recognises the value in applying *critical* paradigms in an analysis of partnerships, which until now have been lacking in general partnership and TNE partnership research.

Chapter One

Globalisation, Internationalisation and the Development of Transnational Higher Education

'I feel as if I were a piece in a game of chess, when my opponent says of it: that piece cannot be moved' (Søren Kierkegaard, 1813-1855)

Introduction

Research on globalisation and its impact on HE is not a new phenomenon. Over the years, academics have tried to deconstruct the forces of globalisation in order to explore its effects on education and devise appropriate responses to it (Henry, Lingard, Rizvi, & Taylor, 1999). The values that national systems now promote through educational policy are no longer determined wholly by policy actors within the nation state, but are forged through complex processes that occur in transnational and globally networked spaces (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). These policy moves have enhanced the space for international co-operation and competition in HE (Marginson, 2006b). Universities and colleges are now encouraged by global change to develop world-wide initiatives (Ayoubi & Al-Habaibeh, 2006) in order to meet the challenges of new open information environments. Internationalisation strategies in contemporary HE range in form and content, and can include collaborative research and joint programme partnerships, mobility programmes for staff and students, student recruitment, funding initiatives and the pursuit of excellence (Knight, 2013).

This chapter aims to explore the phenomena of globalisation and internationalisation and discuss their effects on international HE management and practice. Furthermore, the chapter evidences the rise in TNE as an HE internationalisation strategy (Healey & Bordogna, 2014). Moreover, it seeks to explain why institutions who choose to operate these strategies must carefully consider their business processes (Bowen, 2000; Chan, 2004) if strategies such as TNE partnerships are to be successful and sustainable over time.

1.1 The Meaning of Globalisation

Globalisation as a concept is multifaceted and contested, with no neat definition of its salient content and features (Kellner, 1998; Vaira, 2004). It refers to a diverse process embracing political, social, cultural and economic change (Clarke, 1997) making it hard to define. Amin (1997) suggests the more 'we read about globalisation from the mounting literature on the topic, the less clear we seem to be about what it means and what it implies'

(1997, p. 123). Certainly, a proliferation in research on the subject has created methodological difficulties for any assessment of its connections with HE. Held and McGrew (2000) concur, arguing that debates around globalisation present difficulties, since there are no definitive or fixed lines of contestation. Instead, multiple conversations coexist which do not afford a coherent or definitive characterisation. No shared tradition of social enquiry has acquired the status of orthodoxy.

One way to work through globalisation literature is to identify the conversations which dominate discourse. By identifying ideological traditions, differences in interpretations, and approaches to globalisation, themes become identifiable. This is not to suggest that research traditions such as conservatism, liberalism or socialism find consensus on competing issues. Indeed, globalisation often disrupts paradigms and fragments understanding. However, by identifying key conversations this section seeks to understand first the key philosophical traditions adopted by academics who focus on globalisation and the assumptions that underpin such approaches, and secondly whether current literature illuminates any recurrent themes that assist in furthering our understanding of globalisation.

Therefore, before discussing the relationship between HE and globalisation, an investigation into globalisation discourse is required. Any research wishing to add to the body of knowledge, which exists in the area of global HE must be aware of paradigm variance and the assumptions underpinning them. Moreover, these differences in perspectives and iterations in terms of content influence the way international educational research is analysed and evaluated.

1.2 What is Globalisation?

1.2.1 Paradigmatic Responses

Considered to be of seminal importance in the area of globalisation, Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, and Perraton (1999) attempted to define globalisation and remove it from a purely economic sphere of understanding. They argued that ‘the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness’ is occurring ‘in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual’ (1999, p. 2).

In presenting this definition, Held et al. (1999) differentiated themselves from other writers by first attempting a definition, and secondly identifying three distinct schools of thought surrounding the globalisation debate. The schools identified include the

hyperglobalizers, the *sceptics* and the *transformalists* (Held et al., 1999). Much of the debate generated by the differing schools of thought on globalisation focus on the degree to which individuals witness a transformation in dominant patterns of socio-economic organisation in terms of territories and power (Held & McGrew, 2000).

Moreover, depending on the paradigmatic position adopted by academics, the internationalisation strategies of HE can be evaluated from different perspectives (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). This may go some-way to explaining why there is variance in the evaluation of HE internationalisation strategies by academic communities.

1.2.2 Literary Responses

Vaira (2004) and Dodds (2008) suggest thematic reviews of literary sources enable key components associated with globalisation to be identified. Thomas and Meyer (1980) describe globalisation as a meta-myth, arguing smaller, rationalised myths are easier to identify. These thematic reviews can be synthesised into three main categories:

1.2.2.1 Globalisation as *Global Flows*

The first theme revolves around globalisation as a set of global flows and/or pressures. This aligns the concept of globalisation with flows of people, information, capital and culture (Scholte, 2005), with globalisation having assisted in facilitating action, through instantaneous global communication and mass transportation (Giddens, 1994). The idea of people and information moving along a global highway is evident in the definition of globalisation espoused by Knight and de Wit (1997), 'the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values [and] ideas...across borders. Globalisation affects each country in a different way due to a nation's individual history, traditions, culture and priorities' (1997, p. 6).

Rizvi (2005) argues increased links in communication between individuals have led to the development of a 'new cultural space' whereby 'social identities are no longer tied unambiguously to territories' (2005, p. 337). However, whilst cultural exchange may lead to growth in terms of opportunity, it can also lead to a decoupling from national aspirations and identity. Globalisation, whilst reshaping both the form and content of HE policy, is now challenging the academic community within nation states to think about how they represent their global environment and yet maintain a sense of national identity (Enders & De Weert, 2004).

As new technologies and international trade have emerged, the earth has decreased in size, creating a new pattern of relationships between societies across the globe. These relationships have led to nation states being reliant on resources from outside their own boundaries. Businesses now operate global strategies in which assets are co-ordinated worldwide and operations are strategically located to take advantage of labour pools and natural materials. Co-ordination of worldwide operations requires flexibility and an ability to seek new opportunities as external environments change (Gray, 1989).

Clearly, literature focused on “global flows” and interconnectedness fits into the transformational paradigm of Held et al., (1999). Academic research communities, who consider globalisation as a flow of connected relations, often promote the value of internationalisation in HE. Moreover, internationalisation strategies, such as TNE partnerships evidence the rise in international co-operation and knowledge transfer (Knight, 2013). However, TNE partnerships will only continue to represent these ideals if the HEIs involved continue to evaluate and reconfigure their management practices.

1.2.2.2 Globalisation as *Trends*

One particular trend frequently associated with globalisation is the extension of market-based principles to govern formerly public services and neo-liberal policies. Vaira (2004) suggests neoliberalism is not only a political rhetoric or ideology but ‘a wide project to change the institutional structure of societies at a global level’ (2004, p. 487). This institutional structure at the global level is often described as world polity (Thomas & Meyer, 1980). Welsh (2002) argues globalisation promotes capitalist ideologies, supports the extension of worldwide markets and supports neoliberal politics, including a preference for the market over the state. This commercial preference, coupled with notions of neo-colonialism and the uneven distribution of the benefits of globalisation (Usher, 2002), have created challenges for all types of industry and business, including the management and regulation of HE (Garret-Jones & Turpin, 2012). Financial markets now ‘dominate and decide which are the right policies to implement, and which are not’ (Rizvi & Lingard, 2000, p. 423), defining the parameters of politics and influencing policy.

Popkewitz (1996) agrees that at times within contemporary political discourse, globalisation is simply associated with neoliberal policies, which promote the market over the state. This desire to “thin out” state structures and control has created new forms of governmentality, which favour and promote the entrepreneurial self and emergent forms of self-governance (B. Clark, 1998; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) in order to cope with the

challenges new environments have created. The impact of this is a change in the way HE operates in terms of policy, production, process, and practice.

As countries search for ways to compete and increase their share of the global export market, all possibilities are considered in an attempt to seek out business opportunities, grow profits and dominate market share (Ball, Gerringer, Minor, & McNett, 2012). New providers from a host of business backgrounds are now operating in the education sector (Knight, 2005) evidencing the ease at which business without any form of educational background, training or jurisdiction can provide educational services.

Marginson (2006b) argues growth in educational providers stems predominately from the ease in which trade in education is possible. This is problematic for those wishing to engage in TNE. Unlike private goods in the trading economy, information and knowledge are highly mobile and hard to regulate in a time where expanding internet connections make monitoring information flows difficult (Castells, 1996). Finding trustworthy overseas partners, who prioritise students and quality education over revenue, therefore becomes the awarding HEIs highest priority.

1.2.2.3 Globalisation as *Ideology*

An ideology is a contested theoretical construct, based upon ideas that may have no basis in fact or empirical reality. R. Cohen and Kennedy (2007) refer to this phenomenon as 'globalism' (2007, p. 58). They argue globalisation is predominately associated with objective changes that are partly outside of us, whereby globalism refers to the way these changes affect our emotions and ways of thinking about everyday life. Globalisation does not just exist outside of thought and is not a pre-given thing with its own developmental logic (M. P. Smith, 2001). The way in which people experience globalisation and develop a sense of global interconnectivity is often overlooked.

Arguments about whether globalisation is good or bad takes place within the dimension of *ideology*. The dominant *hyperglobalist* paradigm (Held et al., 1999) runs the risk of treating global processes as inevitable. This inevitability promotes globalisation as a process that people and nations must accommodate, creating policies that seem logical based upon the inevitable trajectory of people and nations. Ontologically the market becomes what we believe, and who we are. This means the principles of free trade, deregulation and flexible forms of governance become the norm. These norms are then

used by governments and international organisations as a way of promoting their own objectives by justifying change in accordance with globalising forces (Mok & Tan, 2004).

Neoliberal views of globalisation, whilst dominant, relegate social welfare concerns as secondary (Peck & Tickell, 2002). Thus HE, whilst being pushed by the neoliberal ideology towards marketisation and massification, at the same time must consider its social status in terms of its role, reputation (Bennell & Pearce, 2002) and its promotion of equity and knowledge transfer.

Globalisation therefore stimulates questions as to the position HE should adopt in a globalising world. Whether or not economic factors should be influencing educational decision-making and processes, or whether HE should be protected and funded in order to promote co-operation and collaboration over competition (Education International, 2004) is clearly widely debated. Certainly, depending on how one feels about globalisation, different interpretations exist. This creates challenges for academic communities, who are left to make choices about how they manage the effects of globalisation, in terms of their institutional structures and systems.

1.3 Globalisation: The Impact on Higher Education

Clearly, globalisation has created a rapid expansion in the global HE market (Knight, 2004; Marginson, 2006b; Rizvi & Lingard, 2000). This change is principally economically motivated and commercial, fuelled by the same neo-liberal economic paradigm which has dominated the last half of the twentieth century (Yang, 2002). As Torres and Morrow (2000) comment 'perhaps no place has been more subject to these processes of internationalisation and globalisation than university' (2000, p. 44).

HE is now placed within a consumer paradigm placing education on a 'user-pay basis' (Yang, 2002, p. 61). Currie (1998) argues university leaders too often believe survival and prosperity in a rapidly changing world requires a shift towards customer-focused business enterprises. Therefore, globalisation, whilst creating new opportunities is also affecting HEIs' organisational structures and social legitimacy. Yet these changes are not occurring as a mechanical process, but are promoted and produced by supra-national agencies that define, translate and disseminate these ideas worldwide, acting as supranational institutional carriers (W. R. Scott, 1995).

Social and political agencies such as UNESCO, OECD, IMF, World Bank, WTO and associations such as the EU have a dual role. Their agency involves translating, legitimising and disseminating the above notions of global flows, trends and ideologies. This creates a framework of policies which education, business and industry alike have to operate within. They therefore assist in the regulation of what is appropriate and legitimate for HE sectors and institutions in a global age (Vaira, 2004). The most obvious account of this in Western Europe is the Sorbonne-Bologna-Prague process, and the establishment of the European Higher Education Area.

1.3.1 Europeanization: The Development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

Once seen as a sensitive area in terms of co-operation, education in Europe now plays a crucial role in establishing the new global knowledge economy (Coulby, 2002). The symbolic rise of the importance of education in unifying nations was highlighted by the creation of the *European Higher Education Area* (EHEA) in 1999. A year earlier, the Sorbonne Declaration sought to revolutionise the outdated segmentation of European HE by creating a common frame of reference. This was ratified in 1999, when the Bologna Declaration unified thirty countries in a voluntary process to create the EHEA (Van der Wende, 1999).

The overarching aim of the Bologna Process was to create an educational space to promote mobility, attract students and staff from across Europe (as well as from other parts of the world) and be globally competitive (EHEA, 2007). An important characteristic of the EHEA and a key to its success, is the close co-operation that occurs between governments, students, staff, quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions. The Bologna Process set out to increase the international competitiveness of the European HE system by making European education attractive to a worldwide audience (EHEA, 2007). Currently the EHEA has forty-nine members, with nineteen non-EU countries having signed up to follow its objectives.

International co-operation in the field of HE has an important role to play in developing and maintaining cohesive, sustainable and open societies. HE is seen as a key contributor to the development of democracy, human rights protection and sustainable growth necessary for global recovery from economic crises (Education International, 2004; EHEA, 2007). Supranational associations such as the EU therefore create agendas and legitimate action in the context of globalisation (Thomas & Meyer, 1980). Depending on the

perspective adopted, these associations and agendas can be associated with both positive and negative education outputs, and clearly affect the way in which HE sectors and institutions in Western Europe are making strategic decisions.

1.3.2 The WTO: Opportunities and Challenges for Higher Education

An institution that has been critical of the changes apparent in HE is the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Underpinned by neoliberal ideologies, the WTO seeks to mediate and negotiate with its members in an attempt to liberalise and develop strong and prosperous trading systems (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Rikowski, 2003). The agency creates the ground rules for international commerce, guaranteeing member countries trade rights and binding governments to keep to their agreed trade policies (WTO, n.d).

In 1995, the first multilateral trade agreement to cover trade in services was established. The creation of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) was essentially inspired by the same objectives as its counterpart in merchandise trade (GATTS). The primary objectives of the GATS is to create a credible and reliable system of international trade rules 'ensuring fair and equitable treatment of all participants...stimulating economic activity and promoting trade and development through progressive liberalisation' (WTO, n.d.). The GATS applies in principle to all service sectors.

The GATS distinguishes between four modes of supplying services: cross-border trade, consumption abroad, commercial presence and the presence of natural persons. Table 1 outlines these modes and is particularly relevant to HE, assisting in shaping and defining international education agendas (Healey, 2013; Knight, 2011; Rikowski, 2003; Sauv , 2002). Certainly, changes directed by *world polity* have created a rise in international trade in educational services (Bennell & Pearce, 2002; CVCP, 2000; Knight, 2013; Sauv , 2002). The GATS has enabled international strategies to develop by opening up channels for cross-border provisions (Healey & Bordogna, 2014).

Although contested, Sauv  (2002) suggests the four modes indicate the way in which cross-border trade and investment in education takes place today. However, while the GATS represents an achievement in the sense it has provided a generic framework applicable to all world service trade, it has limited the provision of education to four main categories, which do not capture or reflect the fullness of cross-border HE activities (Knight, 2011).

Mode of Supply according to GATS	GATS Definition	Educational Example
Mode 1 Cross-border supply	The supply of a service: From the territory of one member into the territory of any other member The service travels (comparable to the export of a good)	Distance Education E-learning Programme mobility
Mode 2 Consumption abroad	The supply of a service: In the territory of one member to the service consumer of any other member Comparable to tourism or business travel by the consumer	Study abroad for a course. Student mobility
Mode 3 Commercial presence	The supply of service: By a service supplier of one member through a commercial presence in the territory of another member Foreign direct investment	Branch campus Language training companies Private training companies Institutional mobility
Mode 4 Movement of natural persons	The supply of service: By a service supplier of one member, through presence of natural persons of a member in the territory of any other member	Professors, teachers or researchers working abroad on a temporary basis. Staff mobility

Table 1: GATS modes of supply and education (Adapted from Sauvé, 2002, p. 7-8; Knight, 2011, p. 20-21; Healey, 2013, p. 1-2)

Hyperglobalist sympathisers would argue the WTO represents a shift towards the global, promulgating neoliberal ideologies. Academics who adopt a liberalist position argue in favour of liberalisation in trade for HE, believing it to be beneficial in terms of academic choice and freedom. By increasing competition, neoliberal approaches promise improved educational services. Ross (2009) argues that with large supranational institutional carriers promoting liberalisation in the trade of services, of which HE services are a highly prized component, Anglophone institutions especially have moved quickly to establish their names in international locations. Thus, rather than fighting marketisation, institutional life is now distinguished more by the rate of change than by the observance of custom and tradition.

The WTO, whilst clearly playing a major role in defining and promulgating particular strategies and recipes for HE policy, also provides a platform for critique in terms of how education as a tradable private and public good is monitored and regulated.

1.3.2.1 Critiques of Free Trade

However, not all academics promote liberalisation (Rikowski 2007). Opponents of liberalisation argue that 'higher education cannot and should not be subject to the same kind

of free trade agreements applied to commercial goods' (Ross 2009, p.30). The United Nations Development Program (1999) and Tencati and Zsolnai (2009) concur, arguing that a focus on monetary results and short-term shareholder value prevalent in competitive models of business is 'detrimental for nature, society, business and future generations' (Tencati & Zsolnai, 2009, p. 367).

Knight (2013) suggests the era of globalisation has changed internationalisation from what was traditionally a process based upon partnership and exchange to one increasingly characterised by 'competition, commercialisation, self-interest and status building', which has created a shift towards the 'dark side' (2013, p. 89) of the globalisation agenda. Values relating to economic and political status now supersede the values related to academic and social-cultural purposes and benefits. Narsee (2005) agrees, stating globalisation has enabled policies to be created that have led to the 'erosion of human values' (2005, p. 342). Furthermore, it is believed that trade in education has enabled a form of cultural dominance to espouse (Egege & Kutieleh, 2008). Globalisation is therefore blamed for allowing 'the expansion of European cultures across the world...displaying great power over 'other' cultures' (Waters, 1995, p. 3).

Yang (2003) and Hill, Cheong, Leong, and Fernandez-Chung (2013) evidence the concerns host countries have about foreign providers developing educational provision in their countries. Their research, conducted separately in Asian Pacific countries, highlights the negative impact of globalisation in the homogenisation of national identities and cultures. According to Rizvi and Lingard (2000) globalisation is simply another word for 'cultural homogenisation', leading to new forms of colonialism whereby the 'West reigns supreme in imposing cultural tastes, attitudes and values' (2000, p. 420). However, Braudel (1980) argues it is 'childish' to assume globalisation could lead to the loss of historic cultures that have existed for thousands of years (1980, pp. 212-213). In reality, nations are often quick to impose strategic regulation to ensure 'cultural homogenisation' and subjugation to neo-colonial processes do not occur³.

Shattock (2007) argues if Britain particularly, did not have a colonial past, then individuals would not be so sensitive about Western institutions operating in foreign countries. He suggests to overcome criticism, universities should work towards establishing partnerships with institutions, rather than simply setting up campuses solely dedicated to 'University X' (2007, p. 19). This approach is evident in the work of the Melbourne-based University Monash, who has offshore campuses in South Africa, India, Malaysia and Italy.

³ For a detailed discussion on neo-colonialism in the context of Sino-British relations, see chapter two, section 2.2.

Vice-chancellor Ed Byrne, speaking in 2011 suggested “colonialism does not work”. Creating an offshoot of the “mother ship” is a limited model, which adds little to the higher education environment in which it was established. Offshore campuses should “work to enhance the overseas country’s university experience” through “partnerships with local institutions, governments and other local entities and not simply provide revenue for the awarding institution back home” (University World News, 2011).

This type of joint venture not only shows a desire to work with the host country, but also means risk and financial responsibilities are shared between collaborating partners. Pilsbury (2007) concurs, arguing foreign providers should seek to establish relationships based upon ‘peer-to-peer communication not imperial models and gatekeepers’ (2007, p. 10). The underlying assumption being that if HE is to be a success in a globalising world, mutual working and co-operation is required, not simple exploitation of ‘the other’ in an attempt to ‘race to the top’ (2007, p. 10).

Clearly it would be wrong to suggest globalisation is all bad (Marcuse, 1995) or is totally disadvantaging and devaluing HE provision. To ensure HEIs are protected against claims of cultural dominance (Egege & Kutieleh, 2008), the HE sector, along with governments, must consider how they position, manage and promote their internationalisation strategies, in order to benefit themselves in the long-term.

1.4 The Relationship between Globalisation and Internationalisation

According to Knight (2004) globalisation and internationalisation are ‘very different but related processes’ (2004, p. 8). She argues that internationalisation refers to the relations between nations, while globalisation has a wider dimension. Globalisation therefore seeks the enhancement of worldwide and pan-European spheres of action (Marginson, 2006b) and is external to nations, almost beyond policy control, and has more transformative effects (Luijten-Lub, Van der Wende, & Huisman, 2005). Globalisation thus refers to denationalised transactions, whereas internationalisation refers to transactions between countries (Smeby & Trondal, 2005). In other words, internationalisation represents the individual strategies and political interventions developed at the national, sectorial and institutional level (Knight, 2004) that contribute to the forging of global alliances.

Knight (2004) states internationalisation is a term that will never have universal understanding, with different interpretations made depending on the countries and stakeholders. This results in a wide variety of policies and practices employed by institutions,

with critics arguing about the gap this creates in internationalisation rhetoric and reality (Gacel-Avila, 2005). Whilst definitions are temporal depending on time and place, internationalisation strategies are defined as a series of activities relating to the requirements and challenges promoted by globalisation (Van der Wende, 1997). Van Vught, Van der Wende, and Westerheijden (2002) argue internationalisation could be 'interpreted as the policy-based internal response to globalisation' (2002, p. 106). Therefore, internationalisation resides in the corporate strategies adopted by HEIs in the face of globalisation (Ayoubi & Al-Habaibeh, 2006).

1.4.1 Internationalisation: At Home and Abroad

Internationalisation strategies consist of two streams: internationalisation at home and abroad (Knight, 2004). Educational institutions can develop their international portfolios by engaging in overseas strategies, which include study abroad programmes such as ERASMUS, student exchanges, international student recruitment, international collaborative research and international partnerships. Home strategies could include internationalised curricula and the creation of campus-based activities, which promote and support intercultural understandings.

The overseas internationalisation strategy, which forms the bedrock of this empirical research study is TNE. TNE programmes are complex, affected by changing political, social and economic tides. They require two or more cross-border educational institutions to establish a partnership, based on shared visions, trust, cooperation and negotiation. This is imperative if TNE strategies are to survive turbulent global environments (Naidoo, 2009).

1.5 Transnational Education: A Strategic Approach to Internationalisation

In the process of internationalising, institutions have restructured and reformed their strategies in response to changing global political networks (Rizvi & Lingard, 2000) placing competitiveness at their core (Wing Ng, 2012). To compete globally, institutions often commit to the development and promotion of their HE services to overseas markets. The process of establishing cross-border programmes is complex, influenced by a myriad of international, national, sectorial (Knight, 2005) and institutional factors, which require careful monitoring for the purposes of quality and value. However, regardless of the complexities, TNE represents a 'relatively new, but rapidly growing phenomenon' (Keay et al., 2014, p. 251).

De Vita and Case (2003) contend TNE is a product of the marketisation of HE and the 'competitive rush for international' students and their money (2003, p.384). This view is supported by academics such as Dobson (1998), Marginson (2003) and Enslin and Hedge (2008) who infer that financial motives provide the key rationale for TNE, with the pursuit of profit being cited as a key motivating factor (Feast & Bretag, 2005). However, cross-border relationships, which transpire out of a desire to satisfy monetary results, can be problematic, not just for the development of society and future generations (Tencati & Zsolnai, 2009), but also for academic communities who manage these relationships (K. Smith, 2014).

As evidenced in the research of Feast and Bretag (2005), institutions who adopt transnational strategies put increasing pressures upon staff members to deliver 'value for money' for the 'client' (2005, p. 75). 'Excessive requests' (2005, p. 75) can compromise academic standards and put the TNE programme at risk, by placing commercial considerations ahead of academic issues (K. Smith, 2014). To ensure an overseas provision's quality and longevity, management therefore need to manage a series of complex factors (Adam, 2001), which extends beyond a 'focus on money' (K. Smith, 2014, p. 129). As Feast and Bretag (2005) suggest, a multitude of potential factors can undermine the delivery of an international programme, thus creating losses in income and reputational damage. In a time of heightened global awareness and competitiveness, this is an unacceptable possibility (International Education Advisory Council, 2013).

1.5.1 Defining Transnational Higher Education and Transnational Arrangements

Although many national definitions of TNE exist (British Council, 2013), in order to stop conceptual confusion within this study, the ubiquitous definition universally accepted and cited in TNE research from UNESCO and the Council of Europe (2002) is preferred.

They define *transnational higher education* in their Code of Good Practice as:

All types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the education system of a state different from the state in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national education system.

They further define a *transnational arrangement* as:

An educational, legal, financial or other arrangement leading to the establishment of (a) collaborative arrangements, such as franchising, twinning, joint degrees, whereby study programmes or parts of a course of study, or other educational services of the awarding institution are provided by another partner institution; (b) non-collaborative arrangements, such as branch campuses, off-shore institutions, corporate or international institutions, whereby study programmes, or parts of a course of study, or other educational services are provided directly by an awarding institution.

Transnational arrangements are therefore complex, enabling awarding institutions that reside outside of a host nation to provide a variety of educational provisions to international students who may not have the means or motivations to travel abroad (Hénard, Diamond, & Roseveare, 2012). Furthermore, as trade in HE develops, so will TNE, therefore increasing the likelihood that programme and institutional mobility will eclipse student mobility in the future (Adam, 2001; Bone, 2008; Naidoo, 2009). Moreover, a study which can contribute towards a better understanding of TNE affords opportunities for HEIs considering it as an internationalisation strategy.

1.5.2 Transnational Arrangements: Assessing Types of Provision and Methods of Working

The definitions provided by UNESCO and the Council of Europe (2002) on the surface provide a logical and coherent way in which to classify TNE activities. However, due to the GATS, educational arrangements can fuse multiple modes of trade into one service, whereby programme, staff and student mobility (GATS modes 1, 2 and 4) can run concurrently in one arrangement (Healey & Bordogna, 2014). Knight (2011) suggests this complexity means GATS does not capture or reflect the fullness of cross-border activities, arguing a trade framework in which to categorise educational activity is too limited. This creates discrepancies in the way programmes are reported and classified, creating a dearth of comprehensive statistics on transnational activities (P.G. Altbach, 2007; Naidoo, 2009).

Drew et al. (2008) argue discrepancies exist as the UNESCO and the Council of Europe Code of Good Practice (2002) does not consider all the different types of contractual arrangements which can exist between international students and educational providers. They claim ten models of TNE provision exist, with each one requiring different forms of validation and management, as well as necessitating different learning and teaching

methods. These ten arrangements supersede the list provided by the Code of Good Practice (2002, p. 3) and split into two forms of inter-organisational working.

First, depending on the institution with which the students have a contract, the type of provision will vary. Student contracts with local partners include six types of provision including validation, articulation, joint awards, partial credit, dual awards and franchise (Drew et al., 2008). Secondly, contracts directly with an awarding institute create four other types of provision, including fly-in-fly-out faculty (K. Smith, 2014), distance learning, blended delivery and on-campus provision overseas (Drew et al., 2008). Chapman and Sakamoto (2011) claim there is not one dominant model of cross-border partnership in HE as they all reflect different initiatives and rationales. They argue that variety in TNE arrangements highlights the flexibility of HE and its creative potential in designing and delivering education in a variety of different contexts, meeting a variety of different needs.

Regardless of the different types of arrangements available, TNE can only develop if a local university and an overseas counterpart agree to cooperate in joint activities (Saffu & Mamman, 1999). TNE and the arrangements it generates therefore create multiple inter-organisational possibilities, depending on the management approaches and the requirement of each interaction (Sorenson, Folker, & Brigham, 2008).

As partnership configuration varies depending on providers, programmes, disciplines, stakeholders and national boundaries, synthesizing what is known and finding common ground in which to communicate becomes problematic (Pannan & Gribble, 2005). Relationships are therefore not static, but dynamic, changing with the requirements and choices available to the partners, and making TNE complex with no consistency in terms of message and measurement (Adam, 2001; Drew et al., 2008). This makes data collection difficult (P.G. Altbach, 2007), as observed in the variety of different sources that seek to measure TNE activity (Baskerville, MacLeod, & Saunders, 2011; HESA, n.d; International Unit, 2011/12).

1.5.3 Opportunities for Developing TNE: China and the UK

It is beyond the scope of this research to explore all forms of TNE. I have therefore chosen to situate my research in Sino-British TNE. In 2013, the British Council identified Malaysia, China, Singapore, Hong Kong and Pakistan as being the UK's top partners for TNE programmes. Moreover, the UK ranked top, above other countries such as Australia,

France, Canada and Germany in terms of countries exporting TNE across the globe (British Council, 2013).

In regard to countries receiving TNE provision, China is ranked top, with China recording 730 'cooperative education programmes' and 55 'cooperative education institutions' (British Council, 2013, p. 17) delivered in conjunction with the USA (ranked number one in terms of destination), UK, Russia, Australia and Canada. According to HESA data, a population of 598,925 students were studying wholly overseas for a UK qualification in 2012/13. Of the total 598,925 offshore students, 457,170 study via some form of collaborative provision between a UK HEI and a local delivery partner institution. The figure of 598,925 represents a 4.9% increase on 2011/12 numbers (571,010), with Asia (China, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Pakistan) accounting for more than 20% of the total (281,775).

In an analysis of *Global Student Mobility 2025*, Bohm (2003) claims international student numbers will increase from 'over 2 million in 2003 to 7.6 million in 2025' (2003, p. 3). A recent study conducted by Project Atlas® on student mobility confirmed these predictions, documenting a rise in international students from 2.1 million in 2001 to 4.5m in 2014 (Project Atlas®, 2014). Furthermore, Bohm (2003) suggests 'Asia will again be the dominant source region increasing its share of global demand from 79% in 2003, to 93.7% in 2025' (2003, p. 4). The International Education Advisory Council (2013) of Australia concurs with this sentiment, suggesting that the growing middle class in China continue to place great emphasis on higher education. Therefore, whilst China is directing resources to improve its own HE capacity, demand will continue to outstrip domestic supply, creating opportunities for developed nations to cultivate transnational educational relationships with China.

Currently, China ranks top in terms of countries hosting global TNE programmes. It therefore seems an investigation into Sino-British TNE partnerships could advance knowledge in the field. By unearthing the challenges and opportunities afforded by China's higher educational demands, the aim of this study is to offer new insights into ways in which TNE partnerships can be enhanced between China and the UK.

1.6 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to provide an overview of the complex and dynamic global environment in which higher education operates (Naidoo, 2009). These global changes, prompted and controlled by continuous political interventions, do not show signs of

fatigue, enabling greater opportunities for HE providers across the globe to form strategic alliances (Bowen, 2000; Chan, 2004) and trade in educational services (Chiang, 2012; Sauv , 2002). Globalisation and internationalisation have therefore caused dramatic changes to the character and function of HE in most countries around the world (Wing Ng, 2012).

This paradigm shift is now evident in the way traditional educational establishments are integrating international strategies into their working practices (Knight, 2004). A method for realising international opportunities afforded by globalisation is to develop international partnerships. These partnerships, if correctly identified and designed, can generate a competitive advantage and assist in safeguarding an institution in turbulent times, by increasing student numbers and revenue streams.

Representing one approach to internationalisation, TNE offers a unique way in which to satisfy commercial objectives (Dunn & Wallace, 2008), whilst assisting in the development of global citizenship (Brookes & Becket, 2011) and knowledge transfer (Karran, 1998). Yet beneath this veneer lies a complex and contested phenomenon (Adam, 2001), requiring careful management and delivery if all parties are to have their strategic objectives met.

With no signs of slowing down (Bone, 2008; Drew et al., 2008) an inquiry into transnational partnerships seems essential if HEIs pursuing a transnational strategy are to be successful in a growing competitive global market (Burnapp & Boteju, 2011; Chan, 2004; Healey, 2013; Karran, 1998; Knight, 2005; Marginson, 2006a; Wing Ng, 2012).

Chapter Two

The Research Context: An Assessment of the Educational Developments in Transnational Higher Education Between the UK and China

"All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual"
(Albert Einstein, 1879-1955)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how globalisation has affected trade in HE between the UK and China. The UK is currently the second largest provider of TNE in China, after the USA (British Council, 2013). Merging UK and Chinese education systems is a complex and convoluted process (Halper, 2007), requiring partners on both sides to be aware of the dynamic political and socio-economic systems in which they operate. Partnerships formed between Anglophone countries and China require detailed planning and structuring before licences to operate are granted by the Chinese Ministry of Education (Yang, 2008).

The chapter therefore aims to provide the reader with an overview of Sino-British relations. A research study which seeks to explore faculty member practices in the development of Sino-British partnerships, requires an appreciation of this complicated macro-level environment, as well as the rhetoric surrounding the management of East and West relationships (Fazackerley, 2007).

2.1 Globalisation and Internationalisation: The Changing Face of UK Higher Education

As the UK government develops its international profile on the world stage, the UK education sector is afforded opportunities to attract revenue and investments from overseas, therefore contributing to the UK economy (Bennell & Pearce, 2002). Conlon, Litchfield, and Sadler (2011) claim the UK's international profile is important to HE, arguing that in 2008/09 the value of HE and FE exports to the UK economy was £14.1 billion (2011, p. 10). Working with this as the current baseline, the authors suggest the value of education-related exports might be approximately £21.5 billion in 2020 and £26.6 billion in 2025 (based on 2008/09 prices). Conlon et al. (2011) contend tertiary education is unlikely to slow down over the next twelve years, unless the political landscapes controlling such interactions e.g. WTO, IMF or the World Bank halt progress.

Whilst the research undertaken by Conlon et al. (2011) and more recently Universities UK (2014), provides a quantitative understanding of the value of UK educational exports, no insight is provided as to the challenges these exports generate for educational institutions in terms of operational management. This is not to suggest that research undertaken into the economic value of educational exports is insignificant. These reports enable national and sectorial decision makers to assess the progress and value of trade in education. However, institutions engaged in exporting educational services such as TNE often face policies and procedures that are 'bureaucratically challenging' (Gao, Feng, & Henderson, 2012, p. 299). As Gao et al. (2012) argue, 'administering the business', regardless of the 'goodwill by all parties' is 'extraordinarily complex' (2012, p. 299). This interpretation suggests, to ensure the likely continued success of educational exports, an analysis of individual institutions is critical (Knight, 2004).

Any analysis of internationalisation in educational services therefore requires an appreciation of the dynamic relationships between the bottom-up (institutional) approach and the top-down (national-sector) approach (Knight, 2004). Yet, these dynamic factors can cause disruption at any moment. Whilst a strong UK educational reputation (Zhuang & Tang, 2012) has ensured, in terms of international student recruitment, the UK remains near the top of the table (International Unit, 2011/12), the dominant neoliberal doctrine of globalisation continues to put pressure on the strategic level of UK HEIs to consider their financial position.

Concurrently, the UK and other countries have seen their public funding per tertiary-level student fall (Enslin & Hedge, 2008), making international markets an attractive income generating proposition (Hodson & Thomas, 2001). This reduction in funding, now passed onto domestic students in the form of increased tuition fees in England (Browne Report, 2010), means international customers often represent the only way to ensure economic survival. Yet as Altbach (1999) highlights, to 'permit *caveat emptor* to dominate in higher education' (1999, p. 5 original emphasis) is dangerous, and should not solely control the strategic thinking of UK HEIs. To ensure their survival, institutions require forethought, innovation and careful strategic management.

2.1.2 The Internationalisation of UK Higher Education: A Survival Necessity?

According to Middlehurst and Woodfield (2007) UK HE has always regarded itself as “international” in terms of its outlook. Representing a traditional internationalisation strategy (Fielden, 2008), the recruitment of international students remains a high priority at national, sectorial and institutional levels.

This is evidenced by the former Prime Minister’s Initiative for International Education (PMI) Phase I 1999-2005, which provided funding to HEIs in an attempt to recruit 50,000 more international students into British HE (OBHE, 2006). PMI Phase 2 (2006-2011), represented a five year strategy to secure the UK’s position as a leader in international education (DTZ, 2011). Both schemes highlighted the important role of the national level in providing clarity over the direction of policy and the roles and responsibilities of organisations involved (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2007). Certainly a coordinated approach is required if partnerships are to develop, and the UK’s future in the international educational market is to be defined, moving us beyond internationalisation as a mere recruitment strategy.

In 2011, the OECD registered the UK with having 13% of the total international student market, second only to the USA which registered 16.5% (OECD, 2013). Whilst initially this seems positive when compared with the 2009 figure of 9.9% (OECD, 2011) it represents no increase on 2010 figures. Although other countries have witnessed negative and static shifts in their own totals, the stabilisation of the UK total sends a clear signal to all national, sectorial and institutional agents involved in the production of UK HE, namely that in order to stimulate international audiences, new initiatives are required (Fazackerley, 2007; S. Smith, 2007). Since international student choice is influenced by programme quality, language of instruction, immigration policies and tuition fees (OECD, 2013), it seems logical to conclude initiatives that assist in satisfying international customers concerns about country accessibility, affordability and future prospects are more likely to drive market share. The changes made to UK immigration rules in July 2015, aimed at reducing immigration abuse, while reassuring international students as to the support provided and benefits of studying for a degree in the UK (Gov.uk, n.d).

As Bone (2008) suggests, one way is through partnership development, whereby international audiences can access UK tertiary education through multiple channels, therefore alleviating certain customer concerns (Wagner & Leydesdorff, 2005).

Stimulated by globalisation, the development of international relationships with overseas institutions not only ensures the flow of students, but also lays the foundations for other international strategies (Fielden, 2008). S. Smith (2007) and Copland (2007) identify how scholarships, partnerships and strategic restructuring undertaken by UK institutions have helped engage and enhance international relationships. However, underpinning these projects are various political, economic and social push and pull factors (Ennew & Yang, 2009) providing both barriers and opportunities for developing partnerships.

Whilst the above paints a vibrant image of the current state of internationalisation in the UK, Robson and Turner (2009) suggest internationalisation is unpopular with academics at the local level, with institutions struggling to engage faculty members (Coelen, 2015; Hyland, Trahar, Anderson, & Dickens, 2008). Stohl (2007) concurs arguing unless faculty members are inspired by the concept of internationalisation, then strategies may not provide the learning, discovery and engagement internationalisation seeks to address. Moreover, since certain internationalisation strategies often require some form of international partnership (Rudzki, 2000), which in turn emphasises the need for trust, shared purpose and commitment (Mohr & Spekman, 1994) a dichotomy is observed. Clearly academic staff members are crucial in the success of internationalisation, but unless they are willing to cooperate, develop trust and negotiate with it each other, it may mean certain internationalisation partnerships may struggle to survive in the long term (Brookes & Becket, 2011).

Furthermore, questions start to arise about the impact internationalisation agendas have on staff motivation and morale (D. Watson, 2002). This stimulates further questions about how faculty members motivate themselves productively in the pursuit of international objectives, which they may find contradictory or conflicted. These questions require an answer if internationalisation strategies are to continue to develop successfully and sustainably.

2.1.3 The Growth of Sino-British Transnational Education Partnerships

The importance of China to UK HE is evident in the comments made by Professor Colin Riordan, who stated “almost every higher education institution in the UK engages with China in different ways, and the quality and diversity of the UK higher education sector enables it to meet the interests of a wide range of Chinese partners” (International Unit, 2013). Whilst British institutions can operate with Chinese establishments through multiple channels, what is evident is that managing and sustaining these relationships is not only of

institutional, but of national importance. In order to initiate, operate and evaluate Sino-British educational partnerships, careful management is required at both the strategic and operational level.

Healey (2013) acknowledges the importance of China to the UK in terms of TNE. Although not as high yielding as Malaysia and Singapore, China provides an opportunity for UK institutions to develop transnational agendas and capture valuable revenue (International Unit, 2011; Mok & Xu, 2008). Agendas vary, with some UK universities cementing the cultural exchange between China and the UK by setting up campuses and subsidiaries in China itself. Nottingham and Liverpool, by forming alliances with Chinese partners, have established branch campuses (Shattock, 2007), whereby the Chinese partner pays the venture's capital costs and owns the infrastructure, while the UK institution teaches and awards degrees (Feng, 2013).

Other key developments, made possible by the PMI2 initiative, have enabled UK HEIs to develop alliances with Chinese providers. The *China-UK Collaborative Partnerships in Entrepreneurship and Employability* made funding available for UK HEIs to develop partnerships with Chinese institutions in the area of employability and entrepreneurship (British Council, n.d). This funding has enabled relationships to develop between the University of Northampton and Shaoguan University, London College of Fashion and Beijing Institute of Fashion and Technology, and Bolton University and Tongji University, Shanghai (British Council, n.d). Whilst these examples only offer an introductory account of the activities operating between the UK and China, they clearly evidence the importance both countries place on educational collaboration.

2.1.3.1 Consortia Relationships

Whilst not all UK HEIs use a consortium to assist in the development of their internationalisation strategies, certain institutions prefer the benefits collaborative effort generates. Burley, Gnam, Newman, Straker, and Babies (2012) identify the value of working in consortia, particularly when faced with challenging socio-economic environments. As academic institutions respond to dynamic environments stimulated by an increasingly globalised world, consortia offer supportive environments in which to share risk and improve overseas operational efficiency (Boyce, 2003). The consortium therefore represents a 'voluntary collective of institutions...that have formed a formal relationship to collaborate on one or more joint venture' (Burley et al., 2012, p. 274).

The Northern Consortium UK (NCUK) is the largest HE consortium that exists in the UK. Consisting of 11 UK leading universities, NCUK enables international students to access UK HE through the completion of a one-year international foundation year, yielding a NCUK diploma, which is recognised by all partner institutions involved in the consortia (NCUK, n.d). Moreover, the consortia operates with a further six UK institutions that do not directly have a role within the consortium, but are recognised as affiliates by the 11 UK partner institutions. NCUK operates at a multitude of local delivery centres across the world. Yet its role in China is important, enabling its 11 partners to recruit Chinese students, who have participated in a recognised programme at an accredited delivery college.

The role of NCUK is important in the context of this research. NCUK represent a stakeholder in the Sino-British partnerships utilised in this study. Therefore, all the partners in this study have to consider the consortia in terms of their processes and actions. Consortia, whilst enabling institutions to undertake exciting challenges also carry disadvantages (Fuller, 1988). Such disadvantages may range from partners having decreased levels of autonomy, or having to compromise on strategic agendas, as well as the continued possibility of reputational ruin by association with poor consortia management decisions (Lang, 1975).

Therefore, it seems logical to suggest partnerships, managed through a consortium, may be constrained in terms of the power individual institutions have over their management processes. Teams operating international partnerships at both the strategic and operational levels of an institution may have to consider the effects their managerial processes may have on a much wider stakeholder group (Bolton & Nie, 2010). Moreover, there are further power relationships requiring analysis. Whilst NCUK can operate as a group, it also has to balance the individual requirements of its 11 UK partners, as well as its Chinese stakeholders. This creates a myriad of challenges that all have the potential to affect partnership implementation and operational management processes.

2.2 Globalisation and Internationalisation: The Development of Chinese Policy and Higher Education Opportunities

The points raised above provide an initial framework for understanding *why* Sino-British relationships have become increasingly critical to UK HE. Traditionally, HE in China was disengaged from the international arena (Ennew & Yang, 2009). It was not until the early 1980s, with the open-door policies instigated by Deng Xiaoping that reform in higher education began to occur (J. Wang, 2009; Yang, 2002). TNE or '*Zhongwai Hezuo Banxue*'

(Chinese equivalent to transnational education) has developed as a result of China's overall policy changes during recent decades of reform (Huang, 2003).

China now represents a significant player in the field of TNE. Its considerable size means it has the potential to 'dwarf all traditional international markets' (Yang, 2008, p. 273), and requires considerable analysis in terms of its approach to foreign educational intervention, if overseas providers, seeking to profit from China, are to yield successful outputs.

2.2.1 China: National Legislation and Policy: 1990-2000

By the early 1990s Chinese internationalisation strategies were being influenced by various factors such as economic reform, the transition from a planned economy to a market economy and globalisation (Huang, 2003; J. Wang, 2009). During this time, China facilitated the pace of change to a market economy (Ennew & Yang, 2009), and the concept of competition with an international perspective was introduced into the development of China's HE system (Yang, 2002).

Consequently, many Chinese HEIs began to undertake various collaborative programmes with foreign partners. Huang (2003) suggests this increase in activity prompted central government to regulate joint ventures through national legislation and policy. In 1993, the State Board of Education regulated the domains and categories of joint collaborative ventures with foreign partners, marking the legitimisation of cooperative agreements through the *Notice on Cooperation with Foreign Institutions and Individuals in Running Schools in China* (Gao et al., 2012). As the market gained more significance in China, more substantial reform policies were introduced.

In 1995, the State Education Commission created the most important piece of national legislation that would impact on transnational education: *The Education Act of the People's Republic of China* (Mok & Xu, 2008; Yang, 2002). This Act actively encouraged co-operation with foreign providers (Yang, 2008). Although engaging with foreign providers was legitimised, the act contained fundamental clauses regulating the structure of TNE arrangements (SEC, 1995). Moreover, the Act made it necessary for all foreign providers to be associated with a Chinese institution (Huang, 2003) and that transnational programmes had to be validated and accredited by the state (SEC, 1995). Garrett (2004) suggests by allowing overseas universities to collaborate with local institutions in the joint development of

academic programmes, Chinese institutions were quickly able to build up their own capacity and status.

Yang (2008) argues China was attempting to access the world's most advanced education systems in order to boost its own HE capacity, and accelerate its process of building human capital and ultimately economic development. However, Ennew and Yang (2009) argue China, whilst keen to learn from the West, regulated their involvement, in an attempt to protect the distinct character of Chinese HE. The debate around China's objectives in accessing foreign education systems was further highlighted in 2007, when the Agora discussion paper published works offering advice on the position that Western HEIs wishing to partner with China should adopt in order to protect Western interests as we 'feed a major competitor' (I. Gow, 2007, p. 8)⁴.

Although various acts were promulgated in the latter half of the 1990s, such as the 1997 *Notice on Strengthening the Management of Degree-granting in Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools*, a common theme amongst all reforms seems to be encouragement coupled with control (Huang, 2003). Cooperation with foreign providers therefore seemed to be encouraged as an important complementary component of Chinese HE, but equally regarded with caution and suspicion (Mok & Xu, 2008).

This implies China, as early as the 1990s, was acutely aware of the need to limit the power held by foreign HE providers in China. By adopting an accreditation scheme, whereby all foreign providers need approval in accordance with the same criteria used to judge Chinese educational institutions, the Ministry for Education was - and still is- able to supervise all foreign providers. Moreover, foreign providers need to work in partnership with a Chinese partner. Accreditation schemes dictate:

1. The Chinese partner must have more than half of the total board membership
2. The Chinese partner must hold the post of president or leader of a Chinese- foreign institution and be a Chinese citizen living in China (Huang, 2003)

Critics of neoliberal politics who proclaim globalisation promulgates neo-colonialism in education (Waters, 1995) therefore need to be cautious when applying this thinking to Sino-British HE. Claims of cultural dominance and uniformity, whilst sounding plausible,

⁴ Ian Gow refers to the notion that China is increasing its HE capacity and desire to attract international students to study in China, making it a future "destination of choice" to rival countries such as the US, Australia and the UK. He argues the more we provide to China in terms of knowledge, the more we are in essence feeding a future competitor.

must allow each international relationship to be analysed within its own framework of engagement (Egege & Kutieleh, 2008). China, although benefiting from Western educational interventions is *careful in regulating what, who and how Western HE operates in China*.

2.2.2 China: The Progress of Transnational Education: 2001- Present

In 2001, China joined the World Trade Organisation, further stimulating Chinese-foreign provision in China (Chung Ong & Chan, 2012). TNE was further mobilised under the international legal framework created by the GATS. In response, the Chinese Communist Party created the 2003 *Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* (Gao et al., 2012), which simply updated the 1995 Notice, and further regulated foreign providers.

However, as Halper (2007) argues, China, regardless of its regulations, is 'much more open now than it was' (2007, p. 14). Although he maintains China is still 'paternalistic' in its approach (2007, p. 14); regulation and control is not unusual within Chinese governance. Whilst the West may view regulation as an intrusion by the authorities, the Chinese view it as part of a long-standing, traditional approach to governance. This means a core characteristic of HE in China is that the government is always present in educational issues (Halper, 2007).

This affects foreign providers who may wish to assert their legal rights. Negotiation and discussion are the best way to tackle legal issues, particularly in a system dominated by socialist ideologies and traditional forms of governance (Halper, 2007). Yet to create negotiation and discussion, partners need to have *healthy dialogic interactions and strong relational bonds*.

2.3 'The Reality Beyond the Rhetoric': Developing Sino-British Higher Education Partnerships

Evidently, the changes that have occurred in China over the last 15 years have helped create a 'dynamic, vibrant and chaotic' (Chung Ong & Chan, 2012, p. 153) transnational environment. This international educational space, emulating from two educational paradigms, Chinese and British, and stimulated by global agencies, such as the WTO, has created a technically challenging environment (Zhuang, 2009).

Certain academics have sought to investigate the differences between the rhetoric and reality of managing Sino-British partnerships, whether from a pedagogical (Zhuang & Tang, 2012) or quality perspective (K. Smith, 2010). However, regardless of the context, one theme is clear, that the reality of managing international programmes is extremely complex (de Burgh, 2007).

Underpinning the realities of daily partnership management are *motives*. Although not always made explicit, motives produce challenging partnership environments. Previous research suggests Chinese and British educational institutions seek to collaborate for a variety of different reasons. These reasons underpin international partnerships, creating complex and dynamic operational environments. By seeking to *understand these motives*, we may be able to explain *why* TNE operational faculty members act and interpret actions in different ways.

2.3.1 UK Motives

Although internationalisation in HE is often posited as being ‘almost altruistic, and primordially good’ (Ozerdem, 2006, p. 1), Zheng (2009) and Olcott (2009) imply that rhetoric cannot disguise the fact that economic benefit is the main motivation for British institutions to engage in internationalisation. Clearly there are other benefits for institutions, such as: internationalisation of the curriculum, preparing students for a global society, research, and multicultural campuses. Yet dependence on the Chinese market has predominately occurred because the overall level of public funding for higher education has become increasingly inadequate, as the government has repeatedly cut public funding of higher education (Hou, Montgomery, & McDowell, 2014). It is this focus on recruitment and revenue, which causes the most conflict with the Chinese government, who wish to control tuition fees and enrolment standards in order to maintain student satisfaction and programme quality (Hou et al., 2014).

Moreover, approaches to TNE are different depending on the type of university involved. Research-orientated universities (Russell Group) differ in their motivations to teaching-orientated universities (University Alliance, Million+), whereby research orientated universities have sought to maximise international recruitment by encouraging international students to study at the home campus, rather than court the risk involved in overseas collaborations (Hou et al., 2014).

2.3.2 Chinese Motives

The motivations for the currently developing situation in TNE in China can be characterised in three ways. First, the rapid development of the Chinese economy since 1978, and its accession to the WTO in 2001, has increased the pace of change in Chinese HE, whereby institutions are expected to be more responsive to the market and to society (Huang, 2005). One way of rapidly boosting the capacity of Chinese universities' is by encouraging them to 'access the world's most advanced education systems' thereby 'accelerating the process of building human capital' (Yang, 2008, p. 274). However, the stress on instant economic benefit has arguably created an educational system that focuses on education as a means to an end, rather than a means within itself. As Yang (2000) states, Chinese institutions must balance the needs of their social and economic environments. Institutions should promote lifelong learning and inquiry, rather than be run as businesses focused on one educational methodology and financial return (Gopinathan, 1997).

In addition, by developing international partnerships, the Chinese government is able to stimulate the massification of HE in China. Zheng (2009) highlights the important role of transnational provision in the education of non-state planned students. Growth in the non-government sector and cooperation with foreign partners (Huang, 2005) has therefore enabled more Chinese students to access higher education. Non-state planned students, who fall outside of the Chinese national quota system, (due to low national entry examination results) rely on foreign providers. TNE is therefore 'convenient' (Zheng, 2009, p. 37) to both UK institutions and Chinese institutions, from a financial and social perspective.

Other motives for China to engage in Western educational programmes include the optimisation of Chinese curricula, the improvement of Chinese educational methods, access to award winning academics, and access to educational resources and funding (Xiang, 1999). Moreover, as Chinese HE develops, through accessing Western educational resources, the need to travel overseas to access quality education will arguably become obsolete (de Burgh, 2007), creating vulnerability in the UK HE system.

2.3.3 Managing Sino-British TNE Partnerships

Clearly, the management of international programmes is the responsibility of a variety of officials and academic faculty members working within educational institutions. Transparency, accountability and equity must permeate the whole partnership if positive

working relationships are to develop. Faculty members engaged in the delivery of Sino-British partnerships must therefore be aware of the role they play in its continuous operation.

Clearly, operational faculty members face more than just managerial and administrative challenges. They also have to deal with the cultural challenges of teaching Chinese students. For example, differences in the styles of social training and educational upbringing, mean there are distinct differences in the way Chinese students think and respond in the classroom (Bond, 1991; Gu, 2010). A common explanation for what makes Chinese students “different” to Western students in terms of teaching and learning is that of Confucianism (R. Clark & Gieve, 2006; Hou, Montgomery, & McDowell, 2011).

In the CHC (Confucian-heritage culture), memorisation (often considered the same as rote learning) understanding, reflecting and questioning are considered essential to learning (Wing On, 1996). Respect of ones superior’s (teachers), shown through silence and obedience in class, didactic delivery of teaching materials, coupled with large numbers of students in a single classroom (50+), are often considered key attributes of the Chinese education system (Biggs, 1996; Bond, 1991). Whilst this seemingly contradicts UK educational ideas, whereby a variety of teaching methods, smaller classrooms, and meaningful delivery of content make the teaching environment different (Biggs, 1996); it is a misconception to assume the Chinese approach to education produces students who use low-level, rote-based strategies. Certainly, an understanding of CHC can provide academics with a deeper level of understanding about Chinese student ‘cultures of learning’, and the frameworks they use in interpreting the actions of others. However, faculty members must be aware of changes that have occurred within the Chinese education system, that have created patterns of both cultural change and continuity (J. Ryan, 2011).

Significant changes occurring inside China’s education system is creating shifts in academic values and students’ perceptions of education (J. Ryan, 2015). There is clearly a shift evident amongst Chinese students in terms of their preferred modes of teaching and learning, whereby Chinese students now expect more from their teachers in terms of teaching methods and learning objectives, as well as a preference for more reflective and enquiry-based learning (J. J. Wang, 2013).

As more Chinese students engage in TNE, either studying wholly overseas, or as part of an 2+2, 2+1+1 or 3+0 exchange programme, it is important operational faculty members are not blinded by ‘outmoded and unhelpful stereotypes’ (J. Ryan, 2015, p. 3). There seems to be a tendency for academic staff, whilst welcoming international students, to focus on the ‘problems’ that these students bring, rather than recognition of the ‘cultural

capital' (2015, p. 4) that they provide for local learners and academics. Faculty members who are involved in teaching overseas as part of a TNE partnership, therefore need to understand how 'cultural capital' can be used to enhance pedagogical practice. Clearly, classroom based, pedagogical activities have the potential to enhance teaching and learning when all participating TNE faculty members are able to appreciate the different cultural learning environments of "the other". Yet this appreciation cannot occur without a willingness to learn and participate in social activities with people from different cultures (Jin, 1989). Understanding the cultural values that create the operational environments in which faculty members work is important in that it facilitates each team member's ability to properly interpret and respond to differences in thinking and acting (Dong & Liu, 2010). Moreover, faculty who are engaged in the delivery of TNE programmes are likely to find teaching and learning activities form the bedrock of their interactions with each other. Therefore, how faculty members relate and understand each other's cultural climate is arguably critical in the production and delivery of successful teaching and learning activities, thereby encouraging positive behaviours and feelings to manifest over time.

Furthermore, cross-cultural management and leadership is a key factor in TNE partnerships. If lead and managed well, cultural difference can have a positive impact on alliance performance (Shenkar, 2001). This is important if TNE partnerships are to survive in the long-term. By appreciating the challenges facing each faculty group operating Sino-British TNE 'joint' programme partnerships, members are arguably able to devise strategies to deal with cultural problems that may arise (X. Li, Roberts, Yan, & Tan, 2014b). Moreover, leaders and managers should be concerned with developing management norms and behavioural styles that promote cross-cultural communication, sensitivity, risk taking and knowledge transfer (Chen, Jin, & Jiang, 2004).

Certainly cultural difference may lead to misunderstandings, miscommunications and conflict, particularly where HEI's may demonstrate distinctiveness in managerial behaviours such as in decision-making processes and leadership styles (X. Li et al., 2014b). As Dong and Liu (2010, p. 234) suggest 'cross-cultural conflicts pose the biggest challenge for international business in any country, and China is no exception.' It is therefore important when engaging in TNE partnerships for both senior management and operational faculty members to recognise cultural complexities.

China's culturally complexities are important to understand and in essence comprises of three competing ideologies. These include the traditional culture from the ancient past based upon the principles of Confucianism which emphasises hierarchical interpersonal relationships and Lao Zi, who promotes a sense of harmonious living and respect for

tradition. These ancient ideologies are coupled with those from China's communist/ socialist era and the new ideologies of market socialism (Granrose, Huang, & Reigadas, 2000). These ideologies often mean the Chinese are expected to follow the decisions of leadership strictly, whereby the Chinese Communist Party intervenes in business operations to ensure that 'work is done according to the central plan, as well as performing a social control function' (Dong & Liu, 2010, p. 229). As M. Gow (2014) states, all universities in China are under the jurisdiction of either the Ministry of Education or the Provincial/ Municipal Education Bureau. Moreover, China recognises the social function of the university, whereby China emphasises the central importance of HE to national, social, economic, cultural and political development. All Chinese universities work to deliver research which contributes to national, provincial and local government development goals as laid out in the five year plans at various different levels of government (M. Gow, 2014). Therefore, in Chinese organisations, whether they be industry or education focused, interventions by Chinese authorities creates a continuous feeling of being controlled externally (Goodman, 1995).

This complex culture can be further analysed by categorising it in terms of power distance, individualism and long/short term orientation (Hofstede, 2001, 2007). By relating Hofstede's dimensions to Sino-British TNE partnerships, it becomes possible to identify some of the challenges partners may face when trying to establish and deliver UK HE in a China. For example, power distance relates to the inequality in decision-making styles. In China, where there is a high correlation between distance and power, power and authority are prioritised (Dong & Liu, 2010), whereby in the UK power distance is low, loyalty and responsibility are given priority. Individuals are therefore more powerful in the decision-making process (Hofstede, 2001). Moreover, the collectivist nature of the Chinese often means the Chinese people always sacrifice personal interests for the benefit of society. Although disputed by academics such as Hsieh (2011), who argues it is not collectivism that determines the functioning of Chinese interpersonal relations and communication patterns, but 'manners of orders' (2011, p. 287); in the UK, individualism implies relationships focus on problem solving, freedom of choice and competition. These differences greatly affect the mode and method of communication, whereby the UK are often seen as direct and explicit, with the Chinese method emphasising the need for more implicit and indirect forms of communication. An understanding and appreciation of these types of differences is therefore important if interacting faculty members and senior management are to decode successfully each other's actions and responses when delivering Sino-British TNE partnerships.

Communication between operational faculty teams is clearly of vital importance in cross-border partnerships. Communication via technology increases the difficulties when

trying to engage in TNE operational activities. Technology, not only makes the interpretation of messages more challenging, but also increases the difficulties of resolving cultural conflicts between partners, particularly between partners in non-equity alliances (X. Li, Roberts, Yan, & Tan, 2014a). Since virtual communication is vital in the dissemination and transference of information in TNE contexts, alternative forms of communication, such as face-to-face contact need to be considered and embedded into the operational processes- for example fly-in-fly-out faculty (FIFO). Furthermore, J. Li and Hambrick (2005) argue that people assigned to implement the partnership can assist in resolving problems that originate from cultural differences. Faculty members, who have experience both Chinese and British cultures or had similar experiences in other cultures, may well be able to assist in the management on both sides of the partnership by acting as a knowledge broker and translator (X. Li et al., 2014b).

It is easy to assume when studying academic research on TNE that positive rhetoric equals the positive management of international programmes. Yet few investigations have analysed the experiences of faculty members who operationalise international partnerships. Little research exists which explores the way complex macro and microenvironments affect their working relationships. As Pilsbury (2007) accurately summarises:

[W]e need to recognise that the 21st century is the century for relationships. It is about peer-to-peer communication not imperial models and gatekeepers...it is about mutual working and cooperation not simple exploitation, the race to the top has to be about long-term value creation for all the parties (2007, p. 10).

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed account of the rationale for Chinese and UK HE collaboration. It also evidenced the complex and dynamic environment in which this empirical research study is situated. Predicted to be one of the world's largest importers of HE by 2015 and beyond (Bohm, 2003), China provides a relevant, contemporary platform in which to launch a study into TNE partnership development. Moreover, as this research progresses, these conditions may help explain why Sino-British relationships and partnerships operate in particular ways and the challenges these create.

Chapter Three

What is *Partnership*? Developing a Conceptual and Theoretical Framework for Empirical Research

“Friendship is essentially a partnership” (Aristotle, 384-322 BC)

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive analysis of organisational and management literature in order to explore how academic research communities interpret the concept of *partnership*. Moreover, it aims to provide a working definition of the term for the purposes of this empirical research. The chapter identifies a lacuna in the existing TNE partnership research, whereby an overemphasis on the use of paradigms which assist in the macro-level analysis of partnerships, preclude the provision of fine-grained empirical insights being discovered at the micro-level (M. J. Robson, Skarmeas, & Spyropoulou, 2006). Arguably, there is an empirical need to balance more interpretivist and humanistic paradigms with objective paradigms, in order to investigate partnership, moving us beyond research, which predominately focuses on structure and systems, towards an approach that also considers the role of faculty in the development of partnerships.

Furthermore, the chapter deconstructs and analyses “social relationships” and “partnership developments” defining them for the purposes of research as social capital and *partnership capital* (Eddy, 2010), before identifying specific theoretical frameworks, which can be used as “thinking tools” (Grenfell, 2008, p. 219) in order to analyse empirically collected data.

3.1 Developing a Conceptual Understanding of a Phenomenon

By identifying conceptual and theoretical similarities and differences that exist between research communities investigating *partnership*, partnership discourse is analysed from multiple perspectives, enabling a conceptual understanding of *partnership* to form. However, since paradigms and contexts change and develop, so does the knowledge used to create understandings of phenomena (Walker & Avant, 1983). It is therefore important when analysing past and present literature to be aware of paradigmatic shifts, which have influenced the conceptual development of *partnership* over time.

3.1.1 Transnational Higher Education Partnerships: Current Understandings

In TNE research, *partnership* as a concept is under-researched and subsequently under-theorised. Whilst conducting an analysis of TNE literature, O'Mahony (2014) identified 'globalisation, trade (TNE as marketplace), student experiences of TNE, student identity, student mobility and quality' (2014, p. 13) as the most frequently occurring research themes. *Partnership*, although acknowledged, did not feature as a predominant area of research. Researchers focusing specifically on TNE therefore seem to view *partnership* as a means to an end, rather than as something worth studying for its own sake.

Yet partnerships are arguably the foundation stone on which to build strong and effective TNE programmes. A lack of partnership research means therefore that to understand the concept of *partnership*, researchers need to move beyond TNE sources, and search within other disciplines, such as organisational, health, education, public sector and business management. By engaging with other disciplines, multiple theoretical positions used in the construction of *partnership* emerge.

According to Child and Faulkner (1998) *partnership* can be analysed through a variety of lenses, from economic theories such as transactional cost economics and game theory, through to organisational theories such as the resource based view. Differences in the underlying frames of reference adopted by theorists therefore generate quite different concepts and analytical understandings. In addition, this makes conducting an analysis of the literature problematic, creating debate in the way *partnership* as a concept should be defined for the purposes of TNE research.

3.1.2 Systematically Analysing Partnership Discourse

Burrell and Morgan (1979) in their seminal text, *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis*, offer a conceptual tool through which to consider various paradigmatic positions and their effects on conceptual meanings and research agendas.

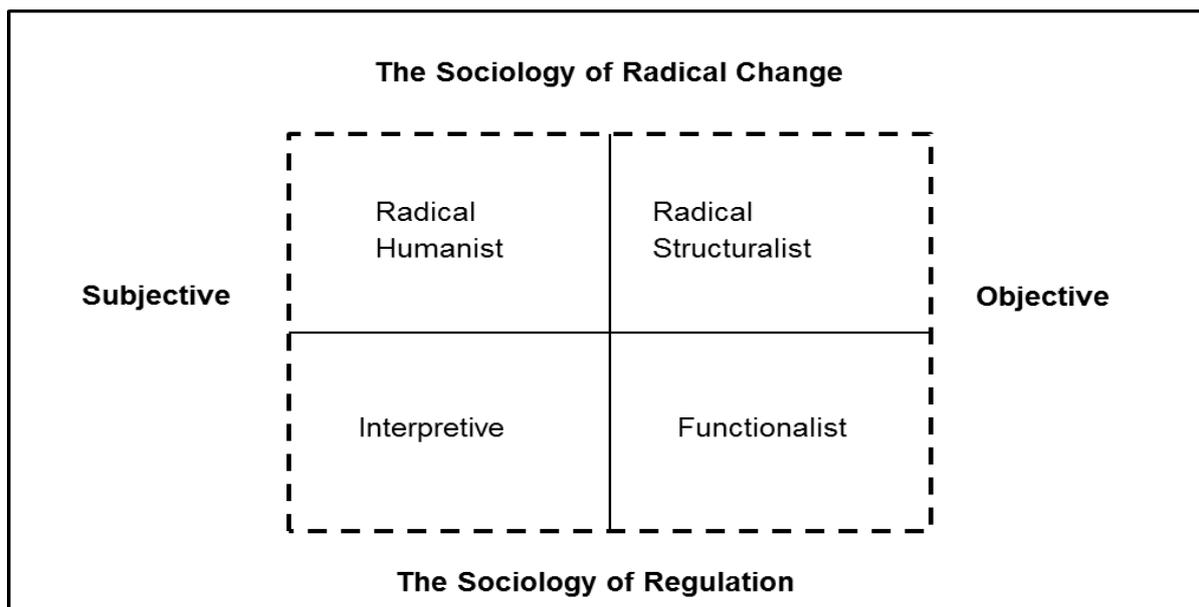


Figure 1: Four paradigms for the analysis of social theory (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 22)

The ‘four paradigms for the analysis of social theory’ (1979, p. 22) (figure 1) allow literary sources to be deconstructed, enabling researchers to identify common sets of features intended to emphasise the commonality of perspective which binds the work of a group of theorists together. Furthermore, Burrell and Morgan (1979) claim that to be located in a particular paradigm is to view the world in a particular way, with each representing similar meta-theoretical assumptions about the world. The framework therefore provides a map for negotiating a subject area, offering a convenient means of identifying the basic similarities and differences between various academic studies focused on a particular phenomenon. It assists in defining the ‘intellectual territory’ (1979, p. 24) as well as providing a tool for establishing where one is situated, and where it is still possible to explore.

Originally, the paradigmatic model was devised in an attempt to relate theories of organisation to their wider sociological context. Yet, in the course of development it became clear that the paradigms identified related to many social science disciplines and not only organisational studies. This is not to suggest other perspectives cannot be applied to a study of organisations, with Guba (1990) offering alternative paradigms such as post-positivism, constructivism, critical theory and positivism. However, since partnerships are often used as strategic tools by organisations (Johnson, Whittington, & Scholes, 2012), and often require a form of both intra and inter- organisational methods of working, in the context of this research, the use of Burrell and Morgan (1979) as a paradigmatic “‘thinking tool’” (Grenfell, 2008, p. 219) comes from its original organisational foundation.

Literature, which specifically engage with notions of *partnership*, is therefore examined under these four paradigmatic headings in an attempt to identify theories, bias, patterns and trends prevalent in existing partnership discourse. Dominant paradigms used in partnership research are analysed in an attempt to explore their impact on the direction and conceptual construction of *partnership*, particularly in relation to TNE. Certain paradigms dominating the research agenda arguably reiterate the same findings, stagnating other forms of analysis from occurring (M. J. Robson et al., 2006).

TNE partnership studies, whilst few in number, often favour a functionalist approach. This aligns *partnership* with functionality, strategic intent and economic value. By expanding beyond this paradigm into critical and interpretivist traditions, key attributes of partnerships such as trust and commitment (Huxham & Vangen, 1996; Pansiri, 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2003) emerge, as do notions of transformation and learning.

3.2 Partnership: Developing a Conceptual Understanding of the Phenomena through an Analysis of Literary Sources

This section uses the aforementioned paradigmatic model in an analysis of *partnership*, enabling a conceptual understanding of the term to be determined for the purposes of this research study. Arguably, the paradigm most dominant in the conduct of organisational research is *functionalism* (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Underpinning the functionalist paradigm are themes of regulation and objectivity (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009), categorised by a concern for providing explanations of what is, the status quo, social order and consensus (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, original emphasis). Functionalism, approaches these sociological concerns from a standpoint which tends to be realist, positivist, determinist and nomothetic. Common to this paradigm are social systems theories such as structural- functionalism and systems theory, integrative theories and objectivism (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). It is important to identify these traditions so evaluations of partnership research, can occur in light of their theoretical and philosophical foundations.

A critique of functionalism however, is its high commitment to models and methods derived from the natural sciences. Its orientation towards structural considerations means it often ignores the emergent nature of social organisation (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Nevertheless, functionalist approaches used in the exploration of *partnership* do assist in creating conceptual understandings of the phenomena.

Organisational and business research, which explores *partnership* often adopts a functionalist approach, whereby partnerships are analysed and evaluated based upon their *construction, purpose* and *value*. Partnerships are used as a way of gaining an advantage in the marketplace (Powell, 1990). Whether this affords a firm access to new technologies, the ability to provide a wider range of products or services, or simply provides access to new knowledge, partnerships serve a purpose within and between organisations (Mohr & Spekman, 1994). Partnerships established by organisations are therefore analysed in relation to the contribution they make to the maintenance and survival of the whole organisation.

Partnership is often defined in functionalist terms as an *evolutionary process* (J. E. Austin, 2000; Gray, 1989) whereby careful control and management aids in the production of ordered and valuable relationships. This evolutionary construction offers a starting point from which to investigate the nature of partnership.

3.2.1 Functionalism: The OECD Definition of Partnership

Nowhere is the functionalist approach to *partnership* more evident than in the OECD (1990) working definition, which seeks to highlight the complex, functional and evolutionary nature of partnerships. The OECD defines partnerships as:

Systems of formalised cooperation, grounded in legally binding arrangements or informal understandings, cooperative working relationships and mutually adopted plans among a number of institutions. They involve agreements on policy and programme objectives and the sharing of responsibility, resources, risks and benefits over a specified period of time (1990, p.18).

Although the OECD (1990) definition aligns *partnership* with notions of function, value, regulation and risk, it also highlights the need to establish cooperative working relationships, as well as providing joint access to resources. Moreover, it implies partnerships are not standardised, multiple types of 'systems of formalised cooperation' (1990, p. 18) can exist depending on the *context* and *purpose* for the partnership's initial creation (Johnson et al., 2012). Buchanan and Huczynski (2010) argue partnerships can take multiple forms e.g. strategic, project, joint venture and cooperation, and Child and Faulkner (1998) observe how strategic alliances can encompass joint ventures, collaborations and consortia relationships.

Regardless of the terminology used to categorise partnerships, clearly they represent complex structures, created and determined by the motives and requirements of each partner. They are formed to accomplish different functions, such as knowledge generation, promoting community resilience, expanding economic resources (Desivilya & Palgi, 2011), advancing competitive advantage (Mohr & Spekman, 1994) and promoting organisational learning (Child & Faulkner, 1998). In addition, underpinning *partnership* is the need to develop *cooperative* strategies that identify a need to work with partners in a democratic fashion (Child & Faulkner, 1998).

Furthermore, the OECD (1990) definition highlights time as a key factor in the development of partnerships. Time has the ability to change requirements. This suggests *partnership* represents a dynamic force that changes and migrates through a series of stages (J. E. Austin, 2000). Questions arise as to the nature and pace of change, as well as the effect of change over long periods. Central to the concept of *partnership*, is therefore an exploration of *partnership* in terms of progress over time and associated tasks. *Partnership* is not a static organisational function, which requires the same type and amount of resourcing over time, continuously reproducing the same value and benefits. On the contrary, it is a dynamic organism, whose construction and management is sensitive to both macro and micro level environmental changes.

3.2.2 Partnership Conceptualised as an *Evolutionary Process*

J. E. Austin (2000) referring specifically to cross-sector collaborative partnerships between non-profit and private organisations, characterises the stages of a cross-sector relationship as philanthropic, transactional and integrative, representing a 'Collaborative Continuum' (2000, p. 20). In order to appreciate how and why partnership change, partnerships need to be investigated and analysed as *relationship stages* enabling trigger points for new partnership developments to be identified. The 'Continuum' therefore offers a framework for the analysis of collaborative partnership development between different organisations working towards common objectives (figure 2).

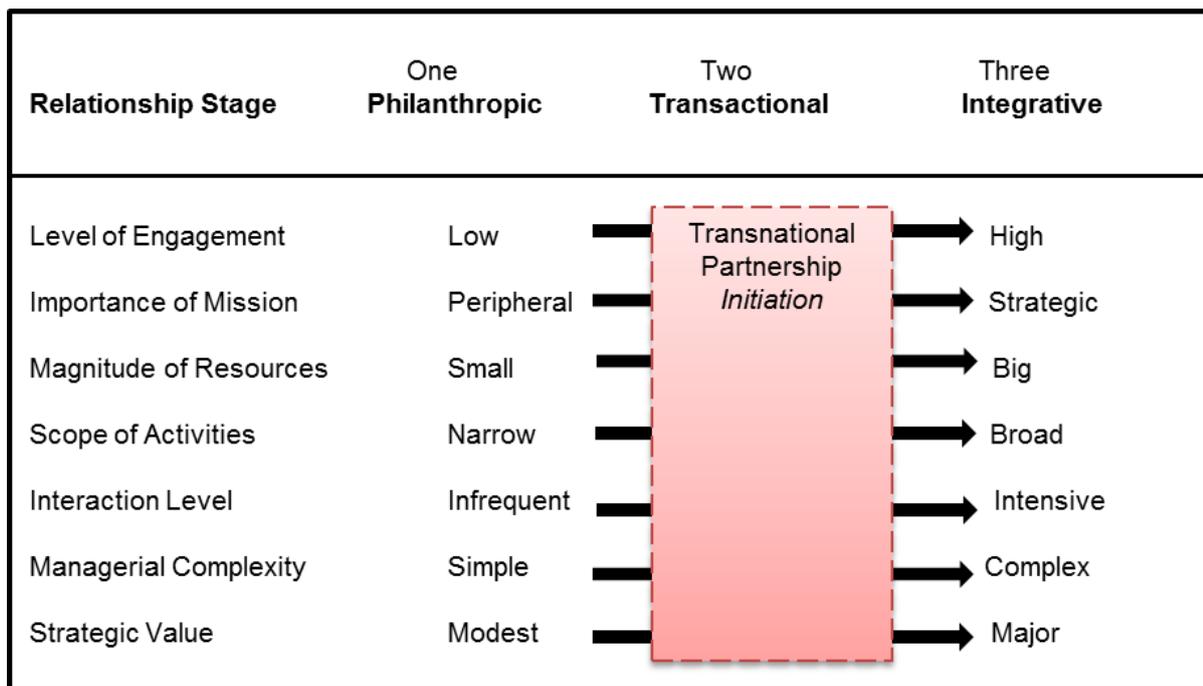


Figure 2: The collaborative continuum and the initiation of TNE (adapted from J. E. Austin, 2000, p. 35)

Clearly, TNE is not representative of a ‘philanthropic’ relationship. Although TNE seeks to promote the welfare of others (Education International, 2004), TNE partnerships do not operate for purely philanthropic reasons. TNE is often pursued in order to fulfil commercial objectives and develop a competitive advantage (Teichler, 2004), critical to an institution’s corporate strategy, and is not grounded in an ideology of charitable donation (J. E. Austin, 2000). Heffernan and Poole (2005) argue all TNE partnerships have a strategic purpose, which involves some sort of financial return, whether that be in the form of student numbers, programme expansion or league table positioning. Clearly, in the context of TNE, partnerships are therefore more likely to start at the transactional rather than the philanthropic stage, and further develop.

Transactional stages are characterised by corresponding mind-sets, increased understandings and trust, overlapping mission and values and an exchange in resources (J. E. Austin, 2000). This *relationship stage* also relies upon close personal relationships and shared learning, and these attributes should not reside at the strategic level of senior management only (Kanter, 1994). In order for alliances to be a success, organisations need to engage subordinate levels in the delivery and pursuit of partnership objectives.

However, Paul (1990) identifies how a lack of discussion with operational staff members can create ‘scepticism’ and ‘resistance’, going as far to suggest many ‘do not want to know’ (Paul, 1990, p. 148) or be involved in plans they feel they have not been consulted on. It seems fair to conclude, although it is easier to ‘agree about general principles and

grand schemes than it is to work out the details of authority...and who does all the work' (1990, p. 148), this is unacceptable, particularly if HEI senior management want their international objectives to be realised effectively, and efficiently over time.

Whilst the Continuum (figure 2) represents an overview of what level of input is required to enable relationships to progress, it fails to provide TNE partnerships with a point of initiation. Transactional and integrative stages both require medium to high levels of intensity and engagement. Since TNE often starts at the 'transactional stage', the benefits of 'relationship stage one: philanthropy' (J.E. Austin, 2000, p. 35) are lost, meaning agents operating TNE need to work harder in order to develop relationships. In addition, the complex working environments created by the *transactional stage*, arguably mean relationships become harder to forge. No prior history of working together means agents have little in the way of shared understandings prior to transactional processes being implemented. Nevertheless, the model does provide insight into the evolutionary nature of *partnership*, thereby offering managers a way to evaluate their current situation in relation to the range of possible *relationship stages* open to them (J. E. Austin, 2000).

The Continuum model (figure 2) clearly aligns *partnership* with notions of progression and transformation. *Partnership* therefore represents a system whereby joint and individual activities both transform the subject, and the environment through mediated activities (Roth et al., 2004). Dhillon (2007) provides evidence of the transformational nature of partnerships in the context of widening participation in post-16 learning. She argues environmental conditions, such as policy initiatives, influence the way in which partnerships progress. Describing a partnership as a 'pragmatic response' (2007, p. 211), she identifies *partnership* as representing a lifecycle which undergoes change depending on the courses set by the external environment. Moreover, she claims to understand why a partnership is successful, analysis must focus more on the development of relationships. Therefore, although functionalism enables researchers to understand certain aspects of *partnership*, more interpretivist approaches which seek to explore the social facets or 'social glue' (Dhillon, 2005, p. 211) which hold organisations and individuals together are equally, if not more, important.

3.2.3 The Stage Approach to Partnership

Offering an alternative approach to the work of J.E. Austin (2000) from which to explore partnership evolution, Waddock (1989) offers a three stage approach of 'initiation', 'establishment' and 'maturity' (1989, p. 87). Based on the model of Quinn and Cameron

(1983), who after reviewing nine organisational life-cycle models, concluded organisations evolve through four developmental stages, Waddock (1989) suggests how organisational life-cycle models can be utilised to interrogate and interpret partnership development. Developing the stage approach of Waddock (1989), Wohlstetter, Smith, and Malloy (2005) describe a three phase approach consisting of 'initiation', 'operation' and 'evaluation' (2005, p. 420), thereby providing a more contemporary model in which to deconstruct and analyse existing TNE partnership literature.

Moreover, Kanter writing in 1994, provided a similar model through the adoption of a marital metaphor. Starting with courtship, partnerships systematically progress through engagement, housekeeping, bridging differences and change. Other academics such as Das and Teng (1998), Bardach (1998), Mandell (1999) and Gray (1985) concur with Kanter (1994) and Wohlstetter et al. (2005), that partnerships do not represent static entities, but *evolve* over time through a series of phases, ranging in definition and number.

The following section conceptualises partnership as an evolutionary process (Wohlstetter et al., 2005, Waddock, 1989), providing a way of critically dismantling partnership into manageable sections for analytical purposes. This three stage conceptualisation houses further subjective and objective led paradigms, which are significant to a study on TNE partnerships. By contemplating *partnership* as a three stage process, it becomes easier to identify when other paradigms and conceptual definitions are/ could be relevant and why this is the case.

3.2.4 The *Initiation* Phase

Wohlstetter et al. (2005) argue how research on alliance formations has uncovered a number of specific internal conditions that facilitate initiation, e.g. a project champion (Eddy, 2010), complementary needs and assets (Mohr & Spekman, 1994), compatible goals (Hutchinson & Campbell, 1998), and trust (Mohr & Puck, 2013). Evidencing the importance of project champions, Calvert, Evans, and King (1993) discuss how personal connections can assist in the development of inter-institutional educational relationships. However, as Kanter (1994) highlights, partnership development based upon the rapport developed by senior management must be supplemented by broader stakeholder engagement.

The motivation to partner can be described as being driven not by the 'same needs but *complementary needs and assets*' (Wohlstetter et al., 2005, p. 421 original emphasis); alliances are often characterised by the unique strength each partner brings to dealing with a

problem (Weiss, 1987). The idea of partnership being born out of a need to resolve a problem or implement something new is evident in the work of Kamensky, Burlin, and Abramson (2004), Gray (1989) and Jupp (2000).

In addition, Gray (1985) argues that collaboration often emerges from the need to resolve a crisis. Gary (1985, 1989) does not suggest that crises are the only justification for collaborative work, but argues when turbulence occurs, collaboration between organisations offers a viable alternative to existing decision making processes. She suggests that 'problem domains' provide the context for joint action (1985, p. 912), whereby the domain represents the joint level of interest which is essential for understanding and problem solving. She argues since each stakeholder can only apprehend a portion of the problem, a pooling of perceptions and resources creates a greater understanding of the problem. Initiation phases are therefore critical in establishing clarity of purpose, congruency in mission, values and commitment (J. E. Austin, 2000). The core principles underpinning the establishment of an inter-organisational partnership should therefore focus on non-hierarchical mutual relationships, the cooperative social exchange of resources and, shared decision-making processes in an attempt to establish genuine partnerships, that are committed to pursuing common goals (Desivilya & Palgi, 2011).

However, academics dispute the underlying reasons for the creation of partnerships. Research highlights how problems can either be shared or vary, with alliances forming depending on the advantage each party sees in sharing resources and knowledge. White (1974) defined inter-institutional working as the opportunity to realise an organisations' selfish or altruistic goals under constraints imposed by their own organisation and that of another. His definition therefore suggests a central facet of inter-institutional working is organisational gratification.

In *Design Guidelines for Social Problem-solving Interventions*, McCann (1983) observed how inter-organisational collaboration develops through three sequential phases: problem-setting, direction-setting and structuring. He claims inter-organisational collaboration can be enhanced by studying each of these developmental phases. By analysing the dynamics at each level, he maintains relationships can be improved in order to increase the likelihood of sustained and successful collaborative relationships.

The work of McCann (1983) is evident in the phases outlined by Wohlstetter et al. (2005) and Waddock (1989), whereby problem-setting and direction- setting form a critical part of the initiation phase, with structuring forming an integral part of the implementation

stage. Structuring plays a critical part in formulating appropriate systems and frameworks which support problem-solving activities. Moreover, McCann (1983) suggests inter-institutional relationships improve when joint appreciation of an interest or problem is shared, and a regulatory framework for implementation is created. This implies that the interactions of stakeholders at the operational level (Gary 1985, 1989) are just as important as strategic level interactions (Bolton & Nie, 2010), whereby operational team members are equally important in solving problems and implementing solutions, particularly if long-term sustainable partnership structures are to be developed (Keay et al., 2014).

Depending on the nature of the problem, reasons for initiating partnerships vary. This creates a diverse array of relationship types e.g. collaborations, joint ventures, consortia, networks and strategic alliances (Burley et al., 2012; Child & Faulkner, 1998; Johnson et al., 2012). Underpinning these arrangements are preferred methods of working (Kanter, 1994), with Child and Faulkner (1998) suggesting collaboration and joint ventures are essentially all about organisational learning, and should be structured towards that end.

Harriss (2000) argues that three 'ideal types' (2000b, p. 4) or modes for structuring inter-organisational relationships exist, those being competition, coordination and cooperation. These 'ideal types' are dependent upon how an organisation's existing framework allows interactions to develop. All three modes therefore have certain characteristics, which distinguish them from each other, making them more or less suitable for tackling different types of collective problem. These methods of working therefore play a significant role in a partnership's structure, expectation and development. Questions surface as to the method of working most prevalent in TNE partnership discourse, and the affects this has on partnership development.

3.2.4.1 Transnational Education as a Form of Collaboration

More often than not, TNE is associated with the term collaboration. The QAA's Code of Practice (2010) is testament to this. It considers all forms of TNE provision such as 'validation, franchise, articulation, joint, dual/double degrees, research and workplace based learning' as representing 'collaborative' methods of working (QAA, 2010, p. 2). The QAA (2010) therefore categorises TNE arrangements as representing *collaboration*, rather than co-operation, co-ordination, facilitation, accommodation or compromise (Mulford & Rogers, 1982; Sorenson et al., 2008). Drew et al. (2008) and Saffu and Mamman (1999) concur, defining TNE ventures as collaborative in nature. This implies TNE partnerships developed to deliver specific types of overseas provision, should reflect *collaborative characteristics*.

Whilst the term collaboration may assume the same meaning as co-operation and co-ordination, the terms have fundamental differences (Gray, 1989; Mulford & Rogers, 1982; Robinson et al., 2000). Co-operative systems represent systems of 'tolerance' with an 'us/them' process model developing (Hord, 1986, p. 24). Collaboration develops a 'we' process model of 'joint force' (Hord, 1986, p. 24) whereby an understanding of social action systems (Van de Ven, 1976) becomes important. The collaborative model often represents 'a hard-nosed model' (Kraus, 1984, p. 18), which is not easy to implement, since it requires the implementation of a completely different value system.

At its core, collaboration is non-competitive and non-hierarchical. In terms of power relations, collaboration seeks to produce democracy and equity between its members, with no member placed higher in rank than the other (Gray, 1989). In international educational partnerships, the awarding body provides delivery partners access to its degree programmes, through a series of options. In these instances, it seems fair to suggest there is a dominant partner: the awarding institution. The very nature of TNE therefore grants one partner group authority over another. However, conceptually, collaboration seeks *equity* between members. Arguably, the very nature of TNE resists the establishment of equity, but this is not to suggest equity cannot develop. Depending on the rationale for the construction of the partnership, coupled with the quality of the initial relationships, TNE can develop relationships that continuously strive for democracy and equity (Amibile et al., 2001; Ayoko, Hartel, & Cullen, 2002).

Questions therefore arise as to whether international provisions should be defined as collaborative. This term represents an approach to partnership working (Harriss, 2000) which in practice is extremely difficult to maintain (Alpert, Goldman, Kilroy, & Pike, 1992; Huxham & Vangen, 2004) with Paul (1990) arguing that many collaborative ventures represent 'more fanfare than reality' (1990, p.147).

This raises further questions as to whether the QAA (2010) is right in defining TNE arrangements as collaborative. Is it fair to label all TNE partnerships as collaborative in nature? As Paul (1990) and Kanter (1994) reveal, collaborative conditions of unity, respect, trust and care are easy to establish at the strategic level between one or two senior representatives. Yet as more stakeholders are required to facilitate the collaborative arrangement, the harder it is to maintain these utopian ideals. How are TNE arrangements being designed and constructed to facilitate the development of collaborative ideals? To what extent do initiation phases engage faculty members in the design of the ventures? In

addition, is it possible when operating these overseas partnerships to facilitate the development of conditions necessary for successful collaboration?

3.2.4.2 Transnational Education Discourse and the *Initiation* Phase

The importance of the initiation stage cannot be underestimated (Heffernan & Poole, 2004), with Arino and de la Torre (1998) arguing initial conditions are imperative in the generation of successful partnerships, with no amount of relationship building being able to compensate for their mis-specification. TNE partnership research often focuses on this primary stage, with inter-institutional relationships often considered in light of their strategic significance. Literary sources therefore focus on the value of partnerships and their role in the achievement of strategic goals, competitive advantages and overall global rankings (Ayoubi & Al-Habaibeh, 2006; Chan, 2004; Heffernan & Poole, 2004; Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011; Zhuang, 2009), thereby echoing functionalist paradigms.

In addition, existing TNE research explores the wider implications of inter-institutional alliances and the conditions which help stimulate these relationships (Croom, 2011; Moran & Mugridge, 1993). Motivations for collaboration in educational contexts predominately revolve around the need for profit, recruitment and, programme expansion (Heffernan & Poole, 2005), or are simply stimulated by political pressures or societal requirements (Collins, 2011; Neil, 1981; Nomura, Natori, & Abe, 2011). Furthermore, Hill et al. (2013) reveal the effect of TNE partnerships on the wider global environment. TNE, whilst bringing aspirations and expectations of benefits to a host country, can also bring challenges. These include the need to reconcile the conflicting objectives of stakeholders, bridge cultural divides and harmonise cross-national standards. Whilst Hill et al. (2013) acknowledge the importance of implementation and operational control in partnerships, they argue measuring beneficial operational processes is 'extremely complex' (2013, p. 12). This suggests an empirical study which can examine these operational activities, is long overdue.

Whilst the functionalist paradigm is apparent in TNE partnership discourse, a focus on function can often lead to what Merton (1952, p. 365) calls the 'displacement of goals', a tendency for the means (structures and systems) to become the end in themselves, usually to the detriment of the original objectives. This is evident in current TNE discourse whereby *what* often overrides a focus on *why*. Keay et al. (2014) concur, arguing TNE predominately focuses 'on what is being delivered and by whom, that is, the product, rather than the means of achieving it' (2014, p. 256). TNE literature therefore discusses the structures and systems

required to establish international partnerships and the rationale behind such decisions (Li-Hua, 2007), but often overlooks the operational phase, which is fundamental to a partnership's development.

Heffernan and Poole (2004) provide one such example in their empirical study focused on the exploration of Australian and Southern-Asian international programmes. The research identified how inter-organisational relationships generally consist of five stages. Although acknowledging the importance of 'relationship growth' and the 'partnership phase' (2004, p. 80), the early interaction stage is highlighted as the most critical to the success of international projects. Whilst this is consistent with the substantial body of knowledge existing on educational and organisational partnership research (Berry, 1995; Dhillon, 2005; Hord, 1986; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Penrose, 2000; Pilsbury, 2007; Vangen & Huxham, 2012; Webster, 1992) the study only provides an insight into the importance of *initial* relationship management.

Clearly, strategic discussions are critical in establishing partnerships and setting the tone of engagement (Eddy, 2010). However, it is only through an appreciation of the position of upper management, that faculty members are better placed to make decisions which coordinate with the strategic objectives of the institution. Equally, Eddy (2010) confirms the importance of senior management learning 'more about partnership operations' (2010, p. 15), in particular how operational teams provide the catalyst for partnership change and progression.

Whilst an exploration of partnership initiation is important (Kanter, 1994) in providing the framework for partnership development, it does not provide insight into how trust, commitment and mutuality is being developed by stakeholders tasked with the daily management of a TNE partnership, or how international work affects them mentally and physically. Although Heffernan and Poole (2004) conclude academic programme quality is affected by relationship quality, they do not study relationship development beyond that of the initiation phase.

In an assessment of intercultural communities of practice, Dunn and Wallace (2008, p. 249) outline four key challenges facing TNE education. These include:

1. 'Arriving at common goals and expectations and negotiating relationships
2. Achieving effective communications amongst institutions, educators, staff and students

3. Designing and delivering curriculum and assessment for “localised (yet) international” content and teaching approaches
4. Supporting transnational students’

Clearly, the strategic level of a HEI will influence how each challenge is approached (Johnson et al., 2012). Nevertheless, as Hord (1986) comments, ‘whilst the organisations are the framework, the people within them do the actual work’ (1986, p. 26). This implies that to overcome the four challenges identified by Dunn and Wallace (2008), HEIs must not just engage in top-level discussion making. Vocabulary such as ‘common’, ‘amongst’ and ‘support’ clearly evidences the need for engagement and participation, which involves more than just corporate discussions. Acceptance is enhanced when those who must abide by strategic decisions are included in the design of solutions (Delbecq, 1974). Faculty members tasked with delivering partnerships can often provide vital information about the feasibility of alternative solutions. To overcome TNE strategic challenges, HEIs must therefore rally the support of both senior managers *and* operational faculty members (Johnson et al., 2012).

Evidently, senior management alone cannot maintain an alliance, particularly one that utilises collaboration as its preferred method of working, with J. E. Austin (2000) adding ‘relationships at the top of a partner organisation are necessary but not sufficient to sustain and grow a partnership’ (2000, p. 129). Gray (1989) argues ignoring those who have operational awareness in the initiation stage only serves to generate difficulties during the implementation stage. Consultations prior to formal agreements therefore enable operational faculty members to feed into the TNE partnership process, stimulating commitment and confidence in the joint enterprise (Keay et al., 2014).

TNE research, which focuses on partnership initiation, therefore positions TNE as a strategic tool, used by HEIs to address issues of revenue and expansion. TNE therefore functions to service strategic internationalisation aims and objectives (Fielden, 2008). In order for it to yield value, it is tightly regulated and controlled by multiple stakeholders (QAA, 2010a) This conceptual view, whilst offering valuable insights into the strategic rationale, establishment and value of TNE, fails to explain how partnerships, once initiated, are able to develop critical success factors such as trust, respect and teamwork (Carnwell & Carson, 2009) required for partnership longevity.

3.2.5 The *Operation Phase*

In the operational phase of partnership, an internal structure develops under which the alliance functions (Waddock, 1989). Operational management theorists argue operational phases are critical in transforming inputs such as technology, capital, energy and knowledge into beneficial and valuable outputs (S. Brown, Bessant, & Lamming, 2013; Slack & Lewis, 2008). The operational stage therefore transforms the partnership from a set of strategic initiatives into beneficial outputs (Greasley, 2009). Kanter (1994) describes this phase as 'housekeeping' (1994, p. 103), whereby the day-to-day reality of the partnership creates uncertainty and opportunities to develop procedures and activities, which stimulate various partnership conditions. Operational team members therefore play a critical role in the performance of the alliance in the long term.

Here we witness a noticeable paradigm shift. Academics who use operational contexts to investigate *partnership* often adopt an interpretivist approach (Alpert et al., 1992). In contrast to the functionalist paradigms, interpretivism and radical humanism emphasise subjectivity (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), promulgating a concern for the subjective experience of individuals (Punch, 2009). Ontologically nominalist and ideographic, these paradigms seek to study phenomena from an anti-positivist standpoint. They set out to highlight the fallacy of the prevailing functionalist paradigm. Most organisational theorists tend to treat their subject as a 'hard, concrete and tangible empirical phenomenon which exists "out there"' (Burrell & Morgan, 1979 p. 260). Interpretive theorists firmly oppose such structural absolutism, arguing that aspects of organisational life are dependent upon the subjective constructions (Guba, 1990) of individual human beings. This challenge opens up debate about the assumptions underwriting the contemporary orthodoxy in organisation theory.

The interpretivist paradigm strives to use subjectivity as a means of developing organisational theory. Underpinned by the work of the German Idealists, the approach comprises phenomenology, solipsism and hermeneutics (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). By identifying the core characteristics of these approaches, it becomes obvious that there is a shortage of interpretivist and radical humanist approaches within existing partnership discourse. Furthermore, radical humanist approaches underpinned by theoretical thinking such as anarchistic individualism, and critical theory, promulgate the liberation of individuals by highlighting how they have trapped themselves within a mode of social organisation they create and sustain through daily life (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The world therefore constrains humanity rather than develops it.

Although not a commonly used paradigm in partnership research, its underlying assumptions mean radical humanists may adopt a positive or negative stance towards TNE partnerships. With globalisation promoting the neo-liberal values of privatisation and market competition, a growth in TNE may initially represent a “win” for radical humanists. Associations, such as Education International (2004), believe the exchange of education is fundamental to the growth and development of society. Global ties, which enable knowledge transfer, are therefore considered critical in the maintenance of democratic life. However, retrospectively, radical humanists may argue, whilst vibrant democracy rests on the active participation of citizens in education, regulation and control over what constitutes education, and what is valuable in contemporary society, means TNE is anything but revolutionary. On the contrary, it therefore represents the further repression of individuals by nations, such as China, who regulate TNE in terms of choice and subject discipline, through licensing agreements (Huang, 2003).

Although the shift between functionalist and interpretivist sociology is not always clear, interpretivist approaches are favoured by academics such as M. J. Robson et al. (2006), who argue micro-level insights have been precluded from partnership research in favour of paradigms which promulgate macro-level understandings. Empirical and conceptual studies, which prefer interpretivist approaches, offer unique insights into partnership development, which functionalist paradigms often overlook (M. J. Robson et al., 2006). An overemphasis on the structural features of inter-organisational exchanges, has resulted in the neglect of important process issues which add value to a partnership's exchange (Zajak & Olsen, 1993). M. L. Smith (2005) argues more micro-level studies, which enhance understandings of the processes that facilitate the creation of successful partnerships are required. Studies focused on the development of social relationships are certainly not dominant, paving the way for an explanation of why this is the case.

Archer (2010) argues how functionalism has ‘virtually snuffed-out agency’ with the acting subject becoming increasingly lifeless, whilst structural and cultural components enjoyed ‘a life of their own’ (2010, p. 225). However, she maintains that whilst interpretative sociology may offer insight into agency, it should *not be sovereign over structure*. Action and structure according to Archer (2010) presuppose one another: ‘structural patterning is inextricably grounded in practical interaction’ (2010, p. 226). This suggests research seeking to investigate partnership development should acknowledge the important role of *both structure and agency*. Furthermore, structure can only be reproduced and transformed through individual agency whereby individuals are confronted by a social structure which constrains their actions but does not determine them (Bhaskar, 1979).

This interpretation implies interpretivist paradigms alone therefore cannot fully explain TNE partnership development. Faculty member actions are ineluctably shaped by structure and this generates unintended consequences, which form the context of the action and subsequent actions therein. As previously mentioned, partnership initiation provides the framework for interactions. Consequently, partnership relationships do not operate in isolation from the objective structure: initial design clearly influences faculty member relationships. Furthermore, structure cannot be collapsed into agency (Archer, 1995). This suggests interpretivism as a subjective philosophical approach is insufficient in dealing with the dual nature of partnership. *Partnership* requires a paradigm which acknowledges the importance of both the objective structure and the subjective agent. This renders the interpretivist philosophy problematic when trying to develop organisational theory. Nevertheless, interpretivist paradigms are observable in TNE partnership discourse, and do offer unique insights into the development of TNE arrangements.

The question therefore arises: how can subjective insights (agency) collected at the operational level, assist in transforming and enhancing our understanding of partnership relationships (structures)? In addition, does existing research on TNE partnerships, specifically focusing on the operational phase, acknowledge this dualism?

3.2.5.1 Transnational Education Discourse and the *Operation* Phase

TNE researchers who utilise the operational phases of partnerships for research purposes often implement qualitative approaches (Dobos, 2011; Leask, 2004; K. Smith, 2014; L. Smith, 2009). Often, scholars focusing on the operational phase, emphasise the importance of agency by exploring the subjective in an attempt to understand their roles in relation to quality assurance (McBurnie, 2008), pedagogy (Bell, Smith, & Vrazalic, 2008; Leask, 2008) and professional development (Leask, 2008). Research therefore tends to focus on exploring the how and why of these specific dimensions, and their effects on TNE strategies, rather than on understanding the nature of partnership transformation in TNE contexts. Whilst pedagogical, quality and professional development research helps us to understand the importance of faculty member relationships, there is a need to expand research beyond these dimensions, and use agency in order to investigate partnership development and sustainability.

Gribble and Ziguras (2003) highlight the importance of institutional investment in pre-departure training in order to ensure the maintenance of quality standards. Keevers et al.

(2014) continue this trend by employing a participatory action research framework in which to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, focused on improving academic practice. The purpose of their research is to 'articulate the professional practice development needs of transnational teaching teams' (2014, p. 233). Dominant themes emerging from their research include communication, connectedness and relationships. They conclude to improve transnational teaching, professional development should be collaboratively designed by each partner involved in delivery, to ensure suitability and sensitivity. Furthermore, they argue decontextualizing professional development into 'front-end induction workshops' (2014, p. 233), away from the practice and context is insufficient. Whilst this may assist in the acquisition of particular skills and competencies, they argue 'learning from each other, as they undertake an extended range of day-to-day practices' is 'more effective' (2014, p. 246).

Clearly, the research undertaken by Keevers et al. (2014) is fundamental in enabling TNE programme designers to consider the role of professional development in enhancing dialogic interaction, negotiation and relations. Their work evidences the need to consider learning not only as a social process, as a process that is acutely affected by context (Boud & Brew, 2013). Moreover, their work highlights the value in using every-day working practices as a tool through which to address learning and development. Working processes therefore provide opportunities for learning, with some inhibiting and some fostering learning (Boud & Brew, 2013). Furthermore, it seems academic development needs to focus on 'utilising opportunities in everyday work and finding ways of addressing the limitations of learning in the normal context of academic practice' (Boud & Brew, 2013, p. 210). It is this insight, which is critical to this research study, and it is this lacuna in current literature, which provides an opportunity to understand more about how TNE partnerships develop.

UK academics such as K. Smith (2009, 2014) champion the important role of faculty members in the delivery of TNE programmes. Her research draws our attention to issues surrounding 'flying faculty models of transnational education' (2014, p. 130). Employing a qualitative biographical, narrative, interpretive method (BNIM) for both data collection and interpretation, she explores the 'lived life' and the 'told story' of five academics involved in TNE teaching (K. Smith, 2014, p. 120). Her research offers a unique insight into the experiences of faculty members tasked with delivering international programmes. It highlights how faculty members have different motivations for their involvement in transnational teaching as well as identifying how concerns for equivalence and local acceptance pray on the minds of faculty members.

Her work raises some important issues. First, that short infrequent overseas visits are not enough to foster transformational learning. She argues short-term sojourners are not capable of generating individual or institutional transformational learning. Utilising the work of Mezirow (1995), she implies transformations of meaning schemes can only occur as a result of multiple interactions, accumulated over time. Although this may be the case, K. Smith (2014) does not identify how short visits could assist in partnership development, preferring to align the benefits of short-term visits to the professional and personal development of the fly-in fly-out faculty (FIFO) involved.

Yet this needs exploring within a wider context. Certainly, by locating short-term visits in *isolation* from other partnership activities, they seem incapable of generating transformational learning, as K. Smith (2014) suggests. However, by considering these single activities in relation to other TNE activities, such as emailing, annual evaluations, online mentoring and knowledge transfer, short-term overseas travel develops a different meaning. FIFO now represents a way of cementing learning developed during the duration of the TNE partnership. Short-term sojourners now enhance transformational learning by enabling faculty members to discuss, negotiate and evaluate old and new ideas face-to-face, free from the confines of virtual communication, such as email. Face-to-face meetings arguably force partners to question their '*habits of mind and points of view*' (1997, p. 5, original emphasis), in an attempt to develop shared meanings and points of reference. Partnership activities do not operate in a vacuum (Engeström, 2001). They represent open, relational systems, whereby individual actions and activities, such as FIFO, affect other activities within and surrounding the partnership system. They have far-reaching consequences, which have the potential to influence the partnerships ability to sustain itself in the long-term.

Clearly, the role of the awarding institution is dominant with power weighted in favour of the exporting country; K. Smith (2014) suggests the effect seems to be a general lack of motivation on the part of the local tutors tasked with delivering Western-owned TNE programmes. Whilst this hints towards colonial tendencies, such explanations tend to assume that local providers are merely foot soldiers, employed to do the bidding of senior officers. Yet is this a fair assessment? Since K. Smith (2014) does not examine "the other" in her research (her data is collected from a UK sample), and does not consider other stakeholder views in terms of the value and effect of FIFO, it seems this interpretation is slightly unfounded.

Focusing on a UK sample, the work of Keay et al. (2014) also seeks to address questions focused on current practices, challenges in delivery and support provision for TNE. By describing TNE partnerships as representing *communities of practice* (Wenger, 1998), they aim to focus on the quality of relations that reside 'between partners for the enhancement of practice' (2014, p. 252). By considering *partnership* as a fusion of 'joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire' (2014, p. 257), they suggest enhancements can be made to transnational teaching and learning.

Although this is arguably the most comprehensive account of TNE partnership development produced thus far, there are limits to their research. Employing a scaled and open-ended survey and focus group interviews, the research only engages with 'heads, leads or managers of UK HE transnational programmes' with 'sufficient seniority' in 'managing' such arrangements (Keay et al., 2014, p. 252). This implies that they perceive the most important members of a transnational community as being senior, UK agents. Yet they also identify partnership as an 'arrangement requiring both parties to work together' (2014, p. 255). This would imply, by contrast, that a transnational community represents more than British team members. Therefore, it would now be helpful to move on to analyse transitional partnerships in a way that acknowledges the whole international community involved, and explains why shared commitment, information and expertise matter. This might have a significant impact on data collection, analysis and conclusions. If these factors are critical to TNE programme quality and pedagogy, it would help to understand *what stimulates and hinders* their development.

Clearly, knowledge sharing plays an important part in improving faculty operations and student experiences (Selmer et al., 2014). Defining engagement as 'energetic and effective connection with work activities' (2014, p. 214), Selmer et al. (2014) imply that partners can stimulate positive working environments simply by being aware of each other's tasks and resource requirements. By seeking to understand and learn from each other, Selmer et al. (2014) argue positive emotions such as happiness and enthusiasm prevail. Furthermore, they suggest it improves health, whilst stimulating both job and personal resource development.

Underpinning notions of engagement is knowledge transfer. Employing a positivistic approach, Selmer et al. (2014) imply that group sharing of knowledge is critical in enhancing faculty member relations, particularly in the area of behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement. Helms (2015) concurs, arguing that engagement between partner groups can be enhanced by enabling stakeholders to access accurate information, in a timely manner.

Moreover, transparent information seems to stimulate accountability, whereby partners are able to make informed decisions about their current and future activities (Helms, 2015). Yet the extent to which TNE partnerships, particularly at the operational level, share information and the affect this has on relationship development requires research.

It seems the more faculty members exchange information the stronger relationships become over time. However, whilst knowledge may be posited as being important in generating positive engagement, Selmer et al. (2014) overlook the different types of knowledge that exist. It is unreasonable to suggest all knowledge affects engagement positively. Moreover, they do not consider how knowledge is produced, or meanings interpreted by faculty members. Knowledge acquisition and interpretation is arguably critical in understanding engagement. By positing knowledge as a resource which exists in a social network, it can be analysed in terms of its location, composition, production and value.

Academics such as Spencer-Oatey (2012), Heffernan and Poole (2005) and Shore and Groen (2009) also discuss ways in which to improve international educational partnerships. Heffernan and Poole (2005) argue for international partnerships to survive, a better understanding of their construction and management is required. They emphasise that 'effective relationships are at once among the most critical and least studied elements of international business partnerships' (2005, p. 227), suggesting it is not just in TNE contexts that partnership research is failing. They argue relations between program partners is fundamental to a partnership's overall success.

Employing an interpretivist two part methodology comprising interviews and case studies, their paper highlights the importance of practitioners and consultants in progressing international relationships. Furthermore, the findings highlight the salience of trust, commitment and effective communication in the development of international relationships.

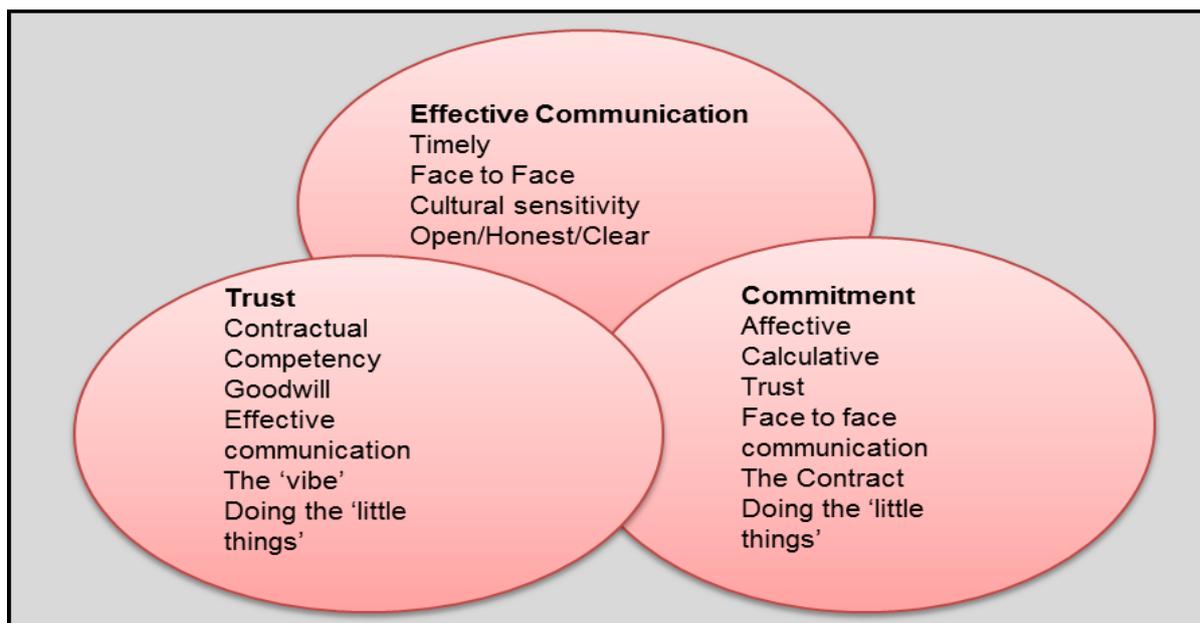


Figure 3: Key success factors for international education partnerships (Heffernan & Poole, 2005, p. 237)

Moreover, their work reveals how trust creates a partnership 'vibe' whereby 'doing the little things' (Heffernan & Poole, 2005, p. 237) can make a difference to the overall success of a partnership. Whilst the study synchronises with other partnership research, it only serves to reiterate the importance of the development of the aforementioned characteristics. Although it mentions the 'vibe' of a 'partner's operations' (2005, p. 239) as being an important factor in trust building, little empirical research exists as to *how* operational practices stimulate conditions conducive to generating this 'vibe'. Their work, although referring to operational phases, and not explicitly defining the term 'vibe', focuses predominantly on the initiation stage of partnership, and the importance of social capital between strategic executives.

In another major study, Shore and Groen (2009), through an analysis of narratives concerning the day-to-day management of an international collaboration, confirmed the importance of events which 'make things happen' (2009, p. 533). Partnerships are conceptualised as being opportunities to learn and develop. The authors reveal how international partnerships represent professional learning spaces for both practitioners and students. The study highlights how faculty members need to be motivated and engaged towards 'doing internationalisation' (2009, p. 545). Furthermore, the authors argue how international partnerships, established by senior management, have to be congruent with the meaning and purpose each faculty member subscribes to within the partnership.

They further highlight the importance of institutional and departmental support. By reviewing workloads and supporting members in administrative tasks, institutions and departments can affect faculty member motivation and levels of engagement. Formal domestic workload structures, coupled with extra international commitments, mean faculty members often demonstrate a *'what's in it for me?'* mentality (Shore & Groen, 2009, p. 545 original emphasis). This is not necessarily conducive to international development. Relationship management therefore places second, relegated to the margins of one's primary academic work (Shore & Groen, 2009).

The research, whilst revealing how important it is to create partnership conditions, which increase faculty member motivation and encourage positive inter-institutional engagement, is limited in its suggestions as to how infrastructure or practices may be reconfigured to inspire sustainable partnership development.

In their analysis of TNE partnership development, A. E. Austin and Foxcroft (2011) argue factors, which contribute to a partnership's success include the desire to mutually learn, the role of an in-house partnership champion, senior management support, and a commitment to flexibility and dynamism. They reinforce the need for trust and communication between partners, identifying faculty members as key agents in the development of partnership longevity and success.

This view is endorsed by Spencer-Oatey (2012), who illustrates the key challenges facing faculty members working in cross-cultural teams. Her work highlights the importance of building mutual trust and understanding amongst participants so that 'there is enough "glue" to hold them together' (2012, p. 257). Shared language, communication strategies and styles allude to the importance of social and *partnership capital* (Eddy, 2010), yet Spencer-Oatey (2012), similarly to A. E. Austin and Foxcroft (2011) does not explore *how* faculty members can devise operational activities to assist in the development of partnership relationships. Although Spencer-Oatey (2012) acknowledges the importance of 'inequality', 'time' and 'openness to new thinking' (2012, p. 255) in the development of international relationships, she offers no operational recommendations as to how these factors are developed, or the importance of them for long-term success. Nevertheless, the work is critical in championing the importance of faculty members in the development of international collaborative ventures.

The aforementioned operational literature highlights two important points:

1. Qualitative approaches are common practice in the work of researchers focusing on the operational stage of educational partnerships. Consistent with other organisational and business theorists who utilise operational platforms for partnership research, for example Das and Teng (1998); Gray (1985); Saxton (1997); Vangen and Huxham (2003), partnerships are no longer measured purely quantitatively.

Partnerships now represent social spaces (Marginson, 1999/2000), whereby transformational learning and relational developments occur between social groups, engaging and participating in joint (operational) activities (Keay et al., 2014; Southern, 2005). Conceptually, the operational stage of an educational alliance reflects the work of Vygotsky (1997), who suggests humans collectively devise activities in order to survive and realise themselves (1997, pp. 53-54).

2. The literature evidences that minimal studies exist which utilise faculty members in an investigation of relationship development, for the sake of understanding partnership development.

Most of the operational research focuses on the role of faculty members in the development of pedagogical practices and quality assurance. Moreover, existing research clarifies the importance of investigating beyond the strategic level. Clearly, by identifying the actions and interactions of faculty members as the unit of analysis, valuable insights can be gathered in order to understand the phenomena of TNE in more detail.

Arguably, the social interactions of faculty members and the outputs generated are fundamental to the creation of what Eddy (2010) calls social and *partnership capital*. Moreover, TNE operational literature is very apt at identifying the conditions required for positive partnership development, yet is poor at explicating how these conditions are produced. Evidently, conditions such as enhanced communication (Dobos, 2011), commitment, trust (Heffernan & Poole, 2005), openness (Spencer-Oatey, 2012), staff expertise (Keays et al., 2014), knowledge transfer and learning (Shore & Groen, 2009) are critical to the success of a partnership, but merely represent the consequences of social interaction. What is required is a study which investigates the social interactions of

operational faculty members and the effect this has on TNE partnership development. Currently little empirical research exists which seeks to address this relationship.

Academics such as Keay et al., (2014), Shore and Groen (2009) and K. Smith (2014) do highlight important activities such as **emailing, assessment and feedback, access to teaching materials, course design**, and **FIFO** as being fundamental in a partnerships progression, but no detailed research exists, which highlights how these operational activities affect relationships and subsequent partnership development.

Clearly, operationalising international arrangements is a complex affair, involving multiple stakeholder groups. These notions synchronise with partnership discourse, which suggests an understanding of what is required and why, together with an appreciation of resources and support structures available to operational members of staff is fundamental to an operational process (Amey et al., 2010). This suggests faculty members who operate TNE partnerships need to be aware of other forces (Dobos, 2011) that reside outside of their sphere of influence. This in turn may require the application of a research paradigm that is not solely functional or interpretivist in nature.

3.2.6 The *Evaluation* Phase

Evaluation is the final stage of a partnership's development (Wohlstetter et al., 2005). At this point, *partnership* is conceptualised similarly to the operational phase, as an opportunity through which to transform and learn. Evaluation can be utilised to assess the way in which a partnership develops. This phase seeks to explore the full range of impacts - both positive and negative - of an alliance. Joint ventures have both intended and unintended impacts (Rosenau, 2000; Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004), which often surface only after evaluating the goals of the partnership against the outcomes. Formative evaluation provides information about an alliance's implementation. This can then be utilised to refine the venture (Wohlstetter et al., 2005). Summative evaluation, whereby an overall judgement is made on the value and impact of the partnership, can be used to determine whether an alliance should be terminated, restructured or continued (Rossi et al., 2004). Clearly, modifications to operational practices and initial partnership goals should be commonplace in the evaluative phase (Waddock, 1989).

As previously suggested, outcomes have the power to warrant the termination or continuation of a collaborative arrangement. Partners must have similar expectations about the alliance and have confidence that their respective colleagues will deliver the agreed

objectives on time and in a professional manner (J. E. Austin, 2000). Although high mutual expectations underpin successful alliances, shifting internal and external stakeholder interests do impact the development of TNE relationships (Bolton & Nie, 2010). In addition, failure to understand different stakeholder perceptions of value may result in a failure to produce them.

However, objectives and motivations, whilst giving directionality and meaning to collective activity, are often create 'ambiguity' and require 'interpretation [and] sense making' (Engeström, 2001, p. 134). Partnership contradictions, tensions and conflicts, once evaluated, can transform initial goals and change the routine practices of faculty members, with mutual adjustment and alignment often transpiring out of difference (Barnes, 2000; Ilyenkov, 1982). Yet these transformations may not always stimulate partnership 'glue' (Paldam, 2000, p. 629). If activities do not reflect, meet or even exceed agreed partnership objectives then trust, a consequence of social capital, vital to collective learning and sharing, begins to breakdown (Hardy, Philips, & Lawrence, 2003; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). This suggests objectives and activities have a dynamic dialectical relationship, whereby both require continuous modification, if trust, respect and mutuality are to develop.

Clearly, faculty members do not operate, evaluate and reconfigure their practices in a vacuum. Other intertwining mechanisms are required, which aid in the development of collaborative partnerships, such as structure, processes and participants (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). Structure constitutes a key factor in shaping and implementing collaborative agendas, effecting process design and partner activities. Nevertheless, whilst the structure creates a framework for operating, processes also assist in shaping partnership development. Processes such as communication, resource deployment and training impact upon partnership agendas and may require structural reconfigurations to occur in order to be effective.

This interpretation suggests partnership systems are multi-voiced and contain multiple layers, rules and regulations (Engeström, 2001, 2005). Material and social structures embedded in the partnership therefore both constrain and enable the individual in the pursuit of partnership transformation (Sewell, 1992).

In theoretical terms, this ideology reflects Morphogenic Systems Theory (Buckley, 1967). Although embedded in a functionalist paradigm, the more subjectivist approach of this theory enables it to value social interactions in the *transformation* of social structures. This suggests whilst partnership structures create a framework for operating, faculty members

have the ability to exercise a directional influence. Partnership structures and processes therefore need evaluation in relation to the influence they exert on individual agents, whilst agency needs to evaluate its actions in relation to the affect these have on the transformation of structures and processes over time (Archer, 2010).

3.2.6.1 Transnational Education Discourse and the *Evaluation* Phase

There are few sources offering explicit evaluations of HEIs involved in TNE. Whilst it is easy to identify the number of institutions involved in transnational programmes (UKK, 2013), institutions are less forthcoming about their failures.

Seen as a way of gaining a competitive advantage in a fast moving global environment, it is not a surprise research of this nature is sensitive and protected. Heffernan and Poole (2004) emphasise the link between quality programmes and quality relationships. Speculation around why an HEI may decide not to share failed experiences could lie in the potential for quality assurance investigations and/ or reputational ruin (Bennell & Pearce, 2002). However, regardless of the lack of documentation around terminated partnerships, TNE is clearly increasing year on year (British Council, 2013).

An important caveat for evaluating UK TNE data is that of the *Oxford Brookes effect*. In 2008/09, Oxford Brookes University altered the way in which it reported and managed an arrangement with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants. The effect of this was that all of their online students around the world, registered as students of the University for a year, were given the added benefit of paying a nominal fee to convert their Certificate into a BSc (Hons). Since 2008/09 these students have been returned to HESA (as statistics) as students studying for an award of a UK HEI through an overseas partner, creating a dramatic increase in the number of students recorded as being involved in TNE (Healey, 2013). Although this anomaly has now been resolved, the HESA regularly identifies and updates its TNE data records as HEIs, NGOs and governments all change the way they record and report their TNE activities. The issue of irregularity in TNE data collection was central to academic discussion at the 2015 *Going Global* conference in London run by the British Council. Poor data collection is recognised as being a major challenge for all countries involved in TNE (McNamara & Knight, 2015). However, even with data continuously being adjusted, it is clear that students participating in TNE has steadily increased (HESA, n.d).

Initially, on the surface, it seems continued growth in TNE represents “successful” partnership management. However, on closer inspection, HESA data fails to identify terminated partnerships. This may in part be down to data collection, whereby poor classifications and definitions of TNE may mean certain practices are not being correctly recorded and evaluated. In 2013, the QAA conducted an evaluation of Sino-British relationships. Although it provided a series of four case studies, the project did not report on terminated ventures, or detail why Sino-British ventures could fail. Other global HE partnership failures, such as the University of New South Wales and Singapore (Forss, 2007), and Michigan State University and Dubai (Marcus, 2011) are documented, yet it was only through investigative journalism that these failures became publically known.

Therefore, whilst quantitative statistics point towards growth in TNE, important qualitative questions surrounding partnership management are left unanswered, meaning there is no evaluation of the managerial problems surrounding TNE. Qualitative studies therefore have a critical part to play in evaluation, offering potential insights, which statistical analysis shields.

3.3 Summarising Transnational Partnership Discourse

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the importance of international partnerships in the future developments of HE (Chan, 2004). Yet there is little evidence to suggest HEIs understand how TNE partnerships maintain their momentum once past the initiation phase. This is not to suggest TNE operational phases have not been investigated by academics. On the contrary, a substantial body of work focuses on the challenges faculty members face when operating TNE programmes (E. Clark & Clark, 2000; Debowski, 2003; Dobos, 2011; Frost, Akmal, & Kingrey, 2010; Keevers et al., 2014; K. Smith, 2014; L. Smith, 2009). However, this body of work prefers to focus on quality (Pyvis, 2011; K. Smith, 2010), student experiences (Gu, 2010) or pedagogical enhancement (Kim, 2009; Leask, 2004, 2008), rather than the development of relationships between operational staff. Previous studies refer to the role of faculty members in promoting institutional change and improving quality, student recruitment and pedagogy (Debowski, 2003; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Leask, 2006; Zhuang & Tang, 2012).

Only a small body of work exists which utilises operational contexts to explore partnership enhancement (Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Shore & Groen, 2009; Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Although Heffernan and Poole (2004, 2005) and Shore and Groen (2009) through their work on international partnerships do acknowledge the importance of building social

capital, paucity exists in understanding *how* faculty members operating TNE programmes are able to develop integrative bonds (Molm, Whitham, & Melamed, 2012). Currently, only Keay et al. (2014) have applied a community of practice framework (Wenger, 1998) to TNE ventures in order to explore relationship quality and practice enhancement. Furthermore, the sudden interest by the HEA in the operational processes undertaken by HEIs operating TNE provisions and the effect this has on teaching and learning (O'Mahony, 2014), points to the relevance of research focused in this specific area. By seeking to engage with the operational phase (Wohlstetter et al., 2005) of a TNE partnership, an exploration of faculty member practices and partner group relationships can occur.

3.4 “Partnership Development”: Partnership Institutionalisation and Capital

Partnership capital forms after a collaborative effort moves beyond a collection of individual party interests, to a shared sense of norms that guide the venture. (Eddy, 2010). In this sense, the development of *partnership capital* is fundamental to the survival of partnerships over time, yet as Amey et al. (2010) observe, each arrangement may not necessarily result in *partnership capital*. Operational faculty members therefore need to integrate as closely as possible by sharing and considering each other's requirements, in order for their TNE partnership to institutionalise successfully. Moreover, faculty members need to feel they are supported by surrounding structures and processes that promote the development of these integrative bonds (Molm et al., 2012).

According to Amey et al. (2010) there are two forms of capital underpinning *partnership capital*. These refer to organisational and social. Before these terms are analysed in detail, it is important to explain the term *capital*, and its meaning in relation to *partnership capital*.

3.4.1 What is Capital?

Capital often refers to accumulated wealth, especially that which is used to produce more wealth. James (2011), referring to Bourdieu, argues that capital refers to what is at stake in social spaces. For Bourdieu, all capital is symbolic. Capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: economic, cultural and social (Bourdieu, 2006). Arguably, all three forms of capital are evident in TNE partnerships. International HE partnerships often represent economic assets, however, they also represent cultural and social forms of capital, particularly by communities that perceive TNE as representing forms of cultural integration and social transformation (Education International, 2004).

Furthermore, TNE partnerships illuminate the importance of social capital, whereby networks and social obligations between groups or individuals play a critical role in the development of relationships (James, 2011). This implies partnerships are as much about the relationships between things or people as they are about the substance of those things or people themselves (Bourdieu, 2006).

Offering an alternative understanding, Lin (2001) defines capital as an 'investment of resources with expected returns in the marketplace' (2001, p. 3). Capital therefore represents resources mobilised in order to achieve a goal in a particular context. Godwin and Rennecker (2005) concur, defining the suffix 'capital' in the context of collaboration as 'the *capacity* to work effectively with others to achieve mutually beneficial goals' (2005, p. 94, original emphasis).

For the purposes of investigating relationship development between faculty members operating TNE partnerships, it seems the focus should be on how capital as a *social* phenomenon develops. Since partnerships require individuals to form networks, share values, goals (Dhillon, 2013) and exchange resources, it seems social capital is fundamentally important to TNE partnership design and management. Although acknowledged by many as being critical in a partnership's development (Dhillon, 2009, Eddy, 2010), it is first important to analyse all forms of capital which play a part in achieving sustainable partnerships.

3.4.2 Exploring *Partnership Capital*

Amey et al. (2010) argue *partnership capital* helps institutionalise a partnership and serves as a basis for sustaining the partnership over time. Figure 4 diagrammatically represents *partnership capital*.

As partners work together, they bring together different resources, power structures and intentions. The point of intersection of all the three circles is where *partnership capital* resides, which consists of 'shared norms, shared beliefs and networking' (Amey et al., 2010, p. 342). Since the individual attributes of each partner differs, the range and amount of *partnership capital* created depends on individual partners and their intentions. *Partnership capital* is evident when:

[T]here is networking, when shared beliefs regarding the focus and processes of the partnership are created, and when time is spent working as a team results in a sense

of shared norms and an alignment processes. A synergy is created at this nexus or intersection: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (2010, p. 342).

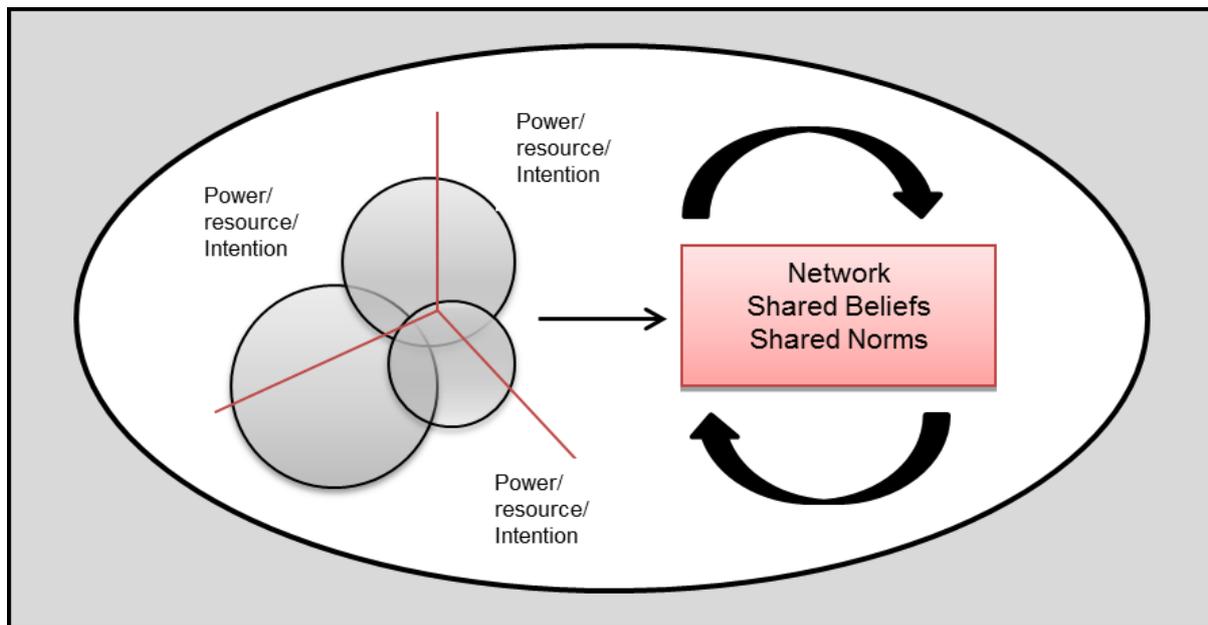


Figure 4: Detailed *partnership capital* (Amey, et al., 2010, p. 342)

By way of contrast, Beyerlein, Freedman, McGee, and Moran (2003) introduce the term *collaborative capital* as a process and relationship system representing a key asset of the organisation. The writers contend collaboration focuses on the dynamics and current action of agents, whereas the notion of *capital* suggests collaborative effort can be stored in order to pursue and establish future collaborative relationships. 'Resources and skills' developed from previous collaborations fosters the 'likelihood' of successful future collaborations (Godwin & Rennecker, 2005, p. 95), thereby strengthening an organisation's *collaborative capital* over time.

Collaborative capital therefore consists of intangible resources and skills developed through networking, coordinating and cooperating. Yet storing this type of intangible resource is problematic. A. H. Koch (2005) explains *collaborative capital* is distinct from tangible forms of capital, such as financial, land and materials. She suggests that underpinning a collaborative venture are various forms of capital (figure 5), structural, human and intellectual. Binding these three assets of enterprise is implicit and explicit knowledge, otherwise known as *collaborative capital*. The formation of the interrelations between intellectual, structural and human capital can therefore be regarded as:

[A] continuing dynamic process where different actors develop ideas independent of the organisation's knowledge base, or build on ideas residing in an organisation's existing storehouse of knowledge (2005, p. 80).

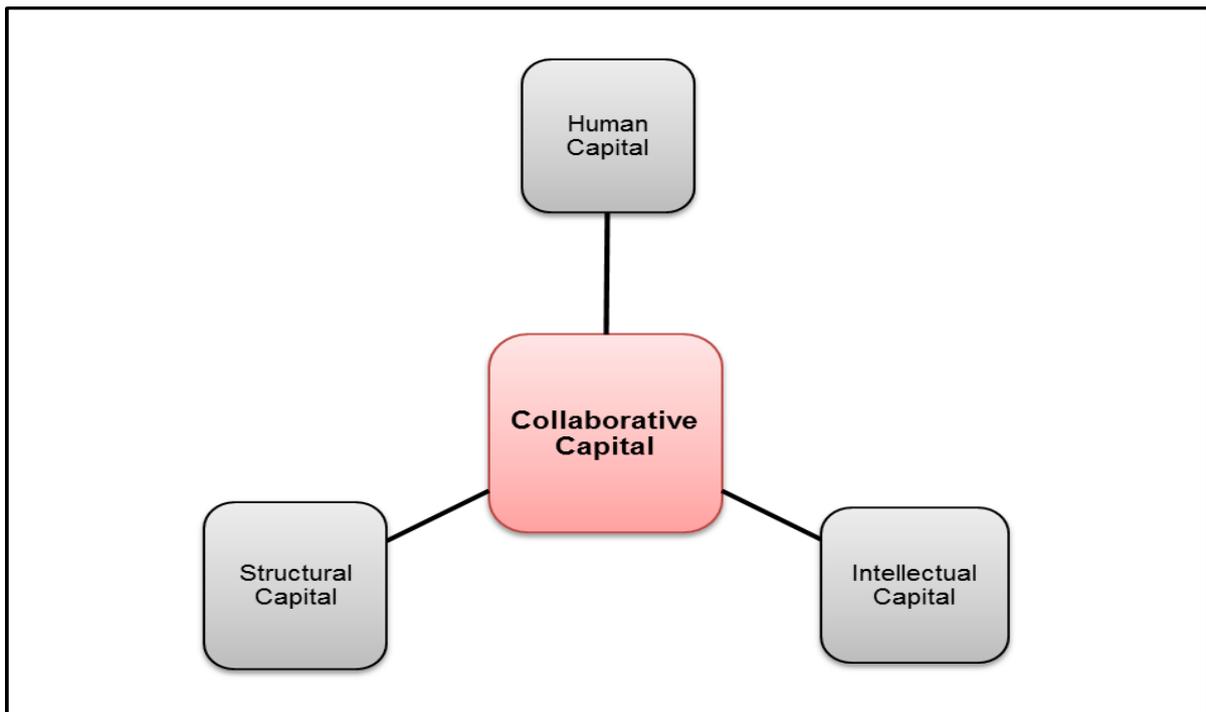


Figure 5: Propeller model: the interlinking of different capital forms (A. H. Koch, 2005, p. 81)

3.4.2.1 The Importance of Cultivating *Partnership Capital*

It seems that critical to *collaborative capital* and *partnership capital* is the need to encourage employees to shape and create new ways to share and exchange ideas and information. As A.H. Koch (2005) suggests, fundamental to this process is the creation of 'cultural space' (2005, p. 80), whereby organisations provide employees with the support and time needed to develop key collaborative work processes.

It therefore seems, to establish *partnership capital*, organisations must provide resources, but also encourage and inspire employees to stay and work within the organisation in order to keep strengthening this *capital* over time. Furthermore, it seems organisational structures, as well as individual-to-individual relationships, can affect the stability and generation of *partnership capital*. To understand how faculty members assist in the development of TNE partnerships, it is important to analyse the two facets of *partnership capital* (organisational and social capital). This should make it possible to identify partnership features (which faculty members may discuss during the empirical research process) in advance, and consider these in relation to faculty member interactions and relational developments.

3.4.2.1.1 Organisational Capital

First, organisational capital focuses upon the macro-level, and represents the institution. It often represents a tangible resource such as funding, technology, space and human resources, but can also represent time, power, money and influence used to facilitate or achieve particular partnership goals for institutions (W. R. Scott, 2003). Bolman and Deal (2008) describe 'organisational capital' as being influenced by 'organisational frames' (2010, p. 35). These frames include structural, human, political and symbolic (Bolman & Deal, 2008), with each frame built on a particular set of core beliefs that guide the organisation, and a set of practices that guide its operations. Organisations must monitor their rules and policies, nurture individuals, deal with conflict effectively and monitor the use of stories and legends, which can cause individuals to focus on past successes. How an institution works within each of these frames is crucial to the successful development of *partnership capital*. Operational teams are affected by the dynamic nature of organisational capital, whereby resource distribution and control can both suppress and stimulate operational level activities. This structure therefore provides the conditions in which a partnership operates.

Moreover, Amey et al., (2010) discuss the importance of power, resourcing and motivation in the development of *partnership capital* (figure 4). How tangible and intangible resources are managed and utilised depends on the level of power at the disposal of each partner. Faculty members may only be able to access limited resources, therefore affecting their ability to develop *partnership capital*. In the case of resource differentials, a threat of inequity evolves, whereby resource rich partners dominate over partners with fewer resources. This is particularly important in a collaborative relationship where equality and democracy should rule over dominance (J. E. Austin, 2000). How faculty members use resources in operational activities is therefore an important consideration (Bushouse, 2005) in the development of *partnership capital* (Eddy, 2010).

Eddy's (2010) work synergises with the work of A. H. Koch (2005), who describes the various dimensions of *collaborative capital* as structural, intellectual and human (figure 5). Similar to organisational capital, A. H. Koch (2005) identifies the importance of a company's processes and systems. Clearly, the work of Eddy (2010) and A. H. Koch (2005) highlights the important role an organisation plays in steering a partnership towards institutionalisation. The structure has to be able to deal with the evolutionary nature of *partnership*, and provide a flexible framework in order to support its dynamic tendencies. This suggests organisational processes have the ability to hinder partnership development, albeit unconsciously.

Moreover, these structures may affect the practices of faculty members tasked with delivering TNE programmes and the subsequent relationships they develop.

3.4.2.1.2 Social Capital

The second dimension of *partnership capital*, according to Eddy (2010) is social capital, seen as an intangible resource (Bourdieu, 2006), inherent in social structures and relationships (Lesser, 2000). Since *capital* refers to accumulated wealth, especially that used to produce more wealth, social capital represents the wealth or benefit that exists because of an individual's social relationships. Therefore, relationship structures, interpersonal dynamics, as well as shared language are critical in the generation of social capital (Lesser, 2000).

Conceptually, *partnership* according to Gallant, Beaulieu, and Carnevale (2002) represents an 'interpersonal relationship between two or more people' (2002, p. 153) in the pursuit of common objectives. By virtue of participation in a partnership, agents create a deliberate construction of sociability. This sociability creates a relational system of individuals within groups, enabling agents to mobilise themselves and access resources, benefiting themselves and their partnership over time. This creates a form of relational capital, which is specific to organisations (Sanchez, Chaminade, & Olea, 2000). The idea of relational capital goes some way to explaining why a study of partnerships between Sino-British HE organisations is not generalisable or transferable to other TNE ventures.

Eddy (2010) claims although social capital 'provides a critical ingredient in the forming and maintaining of partnerships' (2010, p. 29), its generation and value can vary. It includes components such as trust, closeness, amount of interaction between actors, personal power, respect, commitment and integrity (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Ganovetter, 1983; Paldam, 2000). Social capital therefore represents a critical component in the forming and maintaining of long-term, successful partnerships (Dhillon, 2007, 2009). As partners work to address joint problems, mutual interests, common goals and shared meaning of language occurs, this results in a combined action or outcome greater in total effect than the sum of individual actions (Prescott & Bowen, 1985; Stein, Watts, & Howell, 1990). Building social capital stimulates shared understandings, which moves the partnership beyond individual partners into a collective enterprise (Eddy, 2010).

Partnership is thus defined by its unifying and bonding properties (Aradine & Pridham, 1973) whereby emotions, practical action and reason are integral to activities

(Vygotsky, 1989), influencing the way in which relationships evolve. This human dimension is an important, but often overlooked side of enterprise (McGregor, 1960), with Appley and Winder (1977) defining partnership as a relational system underpinned by notions of care, choice, commitment and consciousness. In addition, Kanter (1994) further states 'partnerships represent living systems' which 'evolve progressively in their possibilities' (1994, p. 97). Functionalists, who seek to interpret partnerships through a positivistic and objective lens, often overlook the human side of partnership. Social capital is therefore a fundamental aspect of partnership.

The central interest of this research is to explore the elements and processes in the production and maintenance of social capital as a partnership asset. However, theories of social capital require analysis before a comprehensive, conceptual understanding of social capital can be produced for the purposes of this study.

3.5 "Social Relationships": Exploring and Analysing Social Capital

Several sociologists such as Bourdieu (2006), Coleman (1994) and Putnam (2000) have focused on the development of social capital, creating various schools of thought. This section aims to engage with conceptual understandings of social capital by analysing these theoretical ideas, in order to develop a conceptual understanding specifically for the purposes of this study.

3.5.1 The Critical View of Social Capital

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) position social capital within a much broader framework of social order, whereby social capital represents the resources, both physical and mental that are accrued by an individual or group through a network of relationships, based upon mutual acquaintance and recognition. Moreover, Bourdieu (2006) suggests social capital, whilst facilitating in the development of other forms of capital, such as cultural and financial, also restricts the progression of these forms, due to its dependence on an individuals' social network (Field, 2008). Therefore, according to Bourdieu, social capital functions as a tool that reproduces inequality (Bourdieu, 2006) and class distinctions.

Bourdieu (1980) argues in order for social capital to maintain its value, individuals must invest effort. Social capital is therefore the product of accumulated labour, whereby networks require work if they are to generate material and symbolic profits. To ensure networks maintain cohesion and momentum, Bourdieu (1980) argues '*des obligations*

durables subjectivement ressenties' ('durable obligations subjectively felt' 1980, p. 2), whereby individuals feel obligated to one another through the generation of continuous benefits. Cohesion within networks is therefore only possible because membership of these groups contains benefits.

Since evolution is fundamental to the concept of *partnership*, as is the notion of networks, it seems fair to ascribe another key facet as benefit. To keep a partnership evolving and expanding, those involved must therefore see or feel benefit. Strategic levels and operational levels within HEIs must therefore see the continued value and benefit of their TNE partnership. Critical to this understanding is, if networks, or in this case TNE partnerships, stop generating benefit, then the reason to engage in overseas ventures becomes questionable.

Moreover, strategic managers within HEIs should not simply consider the notion of benefit. On the contrary, in order to encourage faculty members to actively develop their overseas network, they must also see or feel benefit. Strategic managers who design TNE partnerships must also consider what each staff member perceives as being beneficial and work towards establishing them as shared internal goals. Faculty members who fail to see benefit from their TNE work, both personally and institutionally, arguably weaken network relations, damaging the growth and value of social capital over time.

TNE partnerships arguably represent networks of individual faculty members who operate within a deliberate construction of sociability. Between these individuals lie resources that only they are able to access through mutual sharing and interaction. Although Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) state social capital represents resources, and attribute both physical or mental forms, more analysis is required into what type of resources are needed by faculty members operating TNE partnerships. In addition, can faculty members block or enhance access to resources, and what affect does this have on the perceived benefit of the TNE network? According to Bourdieu (1980), it seems not all resources embedded in a network of relationships are evenly shared, accessed or accrued. This interpretation suggests faculty members operating TNE may generate social capital differently depending on their rank, responsibilities and personal motivations (Portes, 2000).

Finally, Bourdieu's (2006) conceptualisation suggests TNE partnerships require faculty members to be continuously aware of the benefits of their relationship in order to motivate themselves towards constant engagement. Should faculty members lose sight of

the benefits of their partnership, either through misinterpretation or miscommunication as to its purpose, possible problems could develop in the delivery of the overseas programme.

The critical view of social capital therefore postulates social capital in relation to key facets such as resources (physical and mental), position (of an individual), networks, relationships, and continuous value (benefit) over time.

3.5.2 The Rational View of Social Capital

Coleman (1994) utilised the intellectual framework of rational choice theory (Becker, 1964) in which to develop his concept of social capital (Adams, 2011). Rational choice theory argues that human behaviour results from individuals pursuing their own interests. Social interaction is therefore viewed as a *form of exchange* (Field, 2008). Coleman (1994) therefore argues that society is merely an aggregation of social systems of individual behaviours.

To understand social order, system levels must be deconstructed, shifting the focus to individual actions and preferences. Rational choice therefore 'assumes a highly individualistic model of human behaviour' (Field, 2008, p. 24), whereby individuals operate to suit their own interests regardless of the fate of others. This theory predicts individuals will follow their own best interests, even when cooperating may yield a greater return in the long term. Yet rational choice theorists find it hard to evidence how cooperation is consistent with notions of individualism (Misztal, 2000). Nevertheless, Coleman (1994) utilises social capital as a means of explaining why individuals choose to cooperate even when individual interests are best served through competition (Field, 2008).

Social capital can be described as a way in which to develop an individual's human capital (Coleman, 1988). Moreover, it can be considered a resource, which is available to an agent through their social relationships. Coleman (1988) maintains social capital 'is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of entities...with two elements in common...some aspect of social structures...and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure' (1988, p. S98). This implies social capital is not 'completely fungible' (1988, p. S98) but may be specific to certain activities. Furthermore, agents may exercise control over resources in which they have an interest, but these resources are also controlled and directed by the actions of other individuals and their outcomes (Coleman, 1994). Agents therefore interact and engage in exchanges, constantly transferring resources so that their individual gains are maximised.

These social relationships serve important functions in facilitating the actions of individual actors, and form the basis of social capital (Lin, 2001).

However, Lin (2001) maintains this functional view 'may implicate a tautology' (2001, p. 28), whereby social capital can only be identified when and if it works. Whether an individual perceives social capital as an investment depends on the return it yields for that particular individual in a specific action. Thus, the causal factor is defined by the effectual factor (Lin, 2001). Therefore, social capital represents an investment in social relations with an expected return. This implies when trying to investigate social capital, this can only happen retrospectively, whereby the outcome of the action is the judgement point as to whether the initial investment was worthwhile.

By postulating social capital within a rational choice intellectual framework, cooperation only seems to occur because it benefits the individual interests of agents. The need to cooperate, founded on individual needs, assists in the development of obligations and expectations between actors, which develops trust and information sharing. Moreover, Flap (1991) contends social capital revolves around the notion of obligation. How relationships are strengthened to ensure obligations are offered and met, as well as who is in the social network, are of critical importance. Social capital therefore bridges the gap between the individual and the collective, with Coleman (1994) describing social capital as 'a capital asset for the individual' (1994, p. 334). Burt (1992) mirrors this perspective by suggesting social capital represents a form of competitive advantage, which can assist individuals in the pursuit of individual objectives.

The rational choice framework therefore implies actors only develop social capital because it assists in fulfilling personal objectives. Individuals who seek to advance themselves use their relationships to access resources embedded in social networks to gain returns or preserve gains. This mirrors the notion of human capital in its assumption that investments made by the individual will yield a return for the individual (Becker, 1964). However, when applying this conceptual understanding to TNE partnerships careful analysis is required.

Since TNE partnerships can be conceived as restricted forms of exchange (Lévi-Strauss, 1969)⁵, faculty members who operate in these frameworks do not necessarily participate through choice, but through the terms of their employment. Although certain HEIs allow staff to choose the extent in which they engage in TNE, the majority of faculty members often find themselves having to work as part of TNE partnerships when they join their HEI (depending on the HEI/ programme in question), or find themselves later involved as their HEI pursues new internationalisation strategies.

Clearly the notion of a “closed” or “restricted” group is advantageous as it maintains trust, norms and authority (Coleman, 1990). However, although these can be described as solidifying forces that assist in the reproduction of group solidarity, TNE partnerships are not “closed” through the choice of the actors, but by formal and informal agreements established by senior managers, which create membership boundaries. This is not to suggest all faculty members who work within a partnership are forced to do so. It merely implies, if closure of a group to other members is reliant on the free choice of the individuals involved, how does social capital develop in a partnership where this choice is removed? Lin (2001) contends closure of a group is impractical. Whilst he agrees closed networks are beneficial in the preservation of resources for certain communities, access to other resources that lie outside of the group are often equally important. Bridges to external networks are important in ensuring information and influence flow (Burt, 1997).

However, in the context of TNE partnerships, the extent to which operational staff can access resources which lie outside of their partnership group, in order to increase social capital is questionable. Apart from bridging with other HEIs and stakeholders who have a vested interest in TNE, the competitive and intellectual properties embedded in international partnerships may mean seeking to obtain resources not presently possessed by partner groups may be deemed as breaching the terms and conditions of agreements. In addition, it could also be seen as sharing intellectual property that could increase reputational risk or competition, thereby representing more harm than good.

The rational view believes that social capital does not tend to distribute evenly, with individual access to resources often influencing its development (Adams, 2011). Applying this to TNE partnerships, it suggests faculty members are likely to develop social capital in different ways, depending on their ability to access and mobilise resources in the pursuit of

⁵ See section 3.6.2 *Context and Activities: The Principle of Reciprocity* for more information.

benefit. Moreover, ability may be affected by their position within the partnership's organisational structure, and therefore requires consideration.

If faculty members hold different positions e.g. course leader, module leader, programme manager within the partnership, they are therefore unlikely to all have access to the same resources. This may not be through their choice, but rather because their rank dictates the level and type of interactions they can have with other members. This suggests TNE faculty members are stratified, with some members able to be more influential in the way relationships develop (Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010).

Academics such as J. E. Austin (2000) refer to the personal relationships between individuals operating in a partnership as 'glue' (2000, p. 55), with Paldam (2000) further defining this 'glue' as 'social capital' (2000, p. 629). The more personal the relationship glue, the stronger the cohesion within the partnership. Moreover, it is this cohesion, which is central to the institutionalisation of a partnership (J. E. Austin, 2000).

However, conceptualising social capital as an individual endeavour dilutes the notion of "partnership glue". *Partnership* no longer signifies mutual and collective action, but represents a breeding ground for self-gratification, self-interest and self-fulfilment. A barrier to partnership cohesion therefore could be the relational theory view of social capital, whereby the more an individual is motivated towards the pursuit of individual goals; the more likely it is networks will develop to suit individual rather than group objectives. According to D. Cohen and Prusak (2001) social capital is what makes an organisation or any cooperative group more than a collection of individuals intent on achieving their own private purposes.

The rational strain therefore assists in defining social capital. Similar to the critical view, terms such as resourcing, social structures and benefit are commonplace. However, the rational strain expands our understanding of social capital by introducing ideas of individualism, and perceived personal gains. Furthermore, these ideas raise questions as to the intentions of faculty members who seek self-gratification in what should be a collective endeavour.

Finally, the rational strain does not explicitly explain what is meant by the term "resource". Whilst resources are considered vital in the development of human agency, evident in social structures, we are still no clearer to understanding what they are and how they are developed. Clearly important in the development of social capital, this empirical research study must consider ways in which to investigate and contribute to an

understanding of *resourcing* and how it manifests itself in the operational networks of established TNE partnerships.

3.5.3 The Democratic View of Social Capital

The final strain requiring analysis is known as the democratic view (Adams, 2011). Championed by Putnam (1993a), who initially defined social capital as 'features of social organisations, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated action' (1993a, p. 167). During the 1990s, Putnam further explored the concept through participation in bowling (in the USA), defining social capital as 'features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives' (Putnam, 1996, p. 56). Although the definition changed slightly, the focus shifted to participants as the beneficiaries of social capital. The idea of social networks connecting individuals had value. It was in these connections that norms of reciprocity and trust developed.

There are two distinctions made in the type of social capital that exists (Putnam, 2000, p. 22):

1. **Bridging social capital:** This tends to refer to networks, which link external assets as well as providing platforms for the diffusion of information. Often referred to as weak ties (Granovetter, 1973), it is these links to distant acquaintances, who operate in different circles, that generate broader identities and reciprocity which can assist in helping agents in gathering information and opportunities (de Souza Briggs, 1998).
2. **Bonding social capital:** This reinforces exclusive identities and maintains homogeneity. It is ideal for fortifying specific reciprocity and mobilising solidarity: Putnam (2000) defines it as 'a kind of sociological superglue' (2000, p. 23).

Interestingly, Burt (2002) argues that bridging capital is more likely to diminish at a faster rate than bonding capital, although there are clearly benefits to maintaining weak ties. This suggests bridging capital is dynamic and subjective, based upon an agent's perception of the possible value of a relationship. However, as previously identified, not all faculty members who operate TNE partnerships may be able to court favour with other members, or establish any form of contact.

This is particularly apparent when it comes to contact with senior management and faculty members within the UK awarding HEI. Whilst this may be down to operational practicalities, such as communication protocols, it could also be due to roles and responsibilities controlling the formation of bridging social capital between individual faculty members. These members are therefore limited in access to information and ideas that reside outside of their sphere of influence. Questions arise as to the nature of social capital in TNE partnerships:

Putnam (1993a) contends social capital and its development is of fundamental importance to both individuals and society. From an individual perspective, he argues those with higher levels of social capital are happier. From a societal perspective, strong social networks tend to foster mutual obligations between people, whereby individuals feel obliged to assist and behave morally towards those with whom they are involved (Putnam, 2000). Key to Putnam's work is the concept of reciprocation and its effect on the building of trust. Reciprocation encourages cooperative behaviour and aids in group learning (Putnam, 1993b), thereby facilitating the development of new forms of engagement and value creation (Jacobs, 1965).

3.6 Social Capital: The Basis for Effective and Sustainable Partnership Working in Organisations

Evidently, social capital is required in partnerships, whereby reciprocity and networks between agents plays a vital role (M. L. Smith, 2005). Partnership networks should encourage agents to exchange resources and share ideas. Once networks form, trust becomes a central component (Amey et al., 2010), which acts as a lubricant, facilitating further interactions between members (Putnam, 2000). Moreover, trust is needed in order to generate further critical partnership factors such as joint working, teamwork and unification (Carnwell & Carson, 2009). Trust is therefore of critical importance to a partnership (Vangen & Huxham, 2003), with cooperation based upon trust between groups lying at the heart of social capital (Fukuyama, 1995).

However, whilst trust relates to social capital conceptually and empirically (Field, 2008; Small, 2009), and is one of the most important outputs to arise from social capital, it is 'best treated as an independent factor which is generally a consequence, rather than an integral component of social capital' (Field, 2008, p. 72). Small (2009) concurs, observing how Putnam (2000) enables the consequences of social capital to be understood, but fails to bring the academic community any closer to understanding the nature of social capital. To

understand the *nature* of social capital it seems more attention should focus on the effect contexts and activities have on its generation and development.

Nevertheless, Putnam (2000) does provide a platform from which to engage with the consequences of social capital. It is these consequences, such as trust and reciprocation, which resonate with existing partnership literature (Jupp, 2000; Vangen & Huxham, 2012). By understanding these consequences in more detail, the aim is to analyse what creates them.

3.6.1 Context and Activities: The Overseas Environment

Arguably, the stronger and closer faculty member relations, the more likely it is that trust will develop between partners (Alder & Kwon, 2002). Amey et al. (2010) suggest the close relationships required to cement shared norms usually require high levels of individual interaction. However, this high level of interaction is particularly challenging for faculty members who work across international borders. Differences in time, location and culture can provide substantial challenges to globally dispersed teams (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). Whilst technological advancements may make international programme management easier, the lack of face-to-face meetings can have a detrimental effect on partnership relations (Verburg, Bosch-Sijtsema, & Vartiainen, 2013).

Furthermore, tasks undertaken by individuals operating global partnerships may prove to be more difficult due to the dispersed nature of the work. "Virtuality" (D. Cohen & Prusak, 2001) has complex social capital implications. Interactions which rely on technology eliminate the experience of sharing a work space, turning individuals into electronically linked nodes who have little understanding of each other, thus reducing social capital. Although trust is seen as a central facet of partnership working (Mohr & Puck, 2013), clearly globally dispersed work can affect how trust develops between team members (Hertel, Geister, & Konradt, 2005). Ideally, face-to-face interactions which stimulate trust (Alpert et al., 1992) need to be considered in the development of transnational partnerships. Yet this is not always possible due to resource constraints or programme arrangements. This suggests TNE environments are complex and challenging, placing pressures on academic staff to develop both collaborative and virtual management skills in order to stimulate social capital.

Dovey (2009) argues central to collaboration is a process of learning, whereby both parties actively engage in a transformative process which causes partnerships to evolve. Southern (2005) claims trust requires individuals to be 'open to learning something from

each other' (2005, p. 58), trusting we have something to offer, and something to accept. Underpinning this transformational process are activities (Engeström, 2001). These practices arguably play a dual role in stimulating social capital development whilst at the same time creating the environment for further activities to take place. A gradual expansion of mutual service is accompanied by a parallel growth in mutual trust (Blau, 1964; D. Cohen & Prusak, 2001) creating a cyclical process.

3.6.1.1 Context and Activities: Developing Trust

Vangen and Huxham (2003) confirm the importance of trust as a critical factor in the success of collaborative ventures. They reveal how 'trust building is a cyclical process' (2003, p. 8) and how positive responses to outcomes can build trust over time (figure 6).

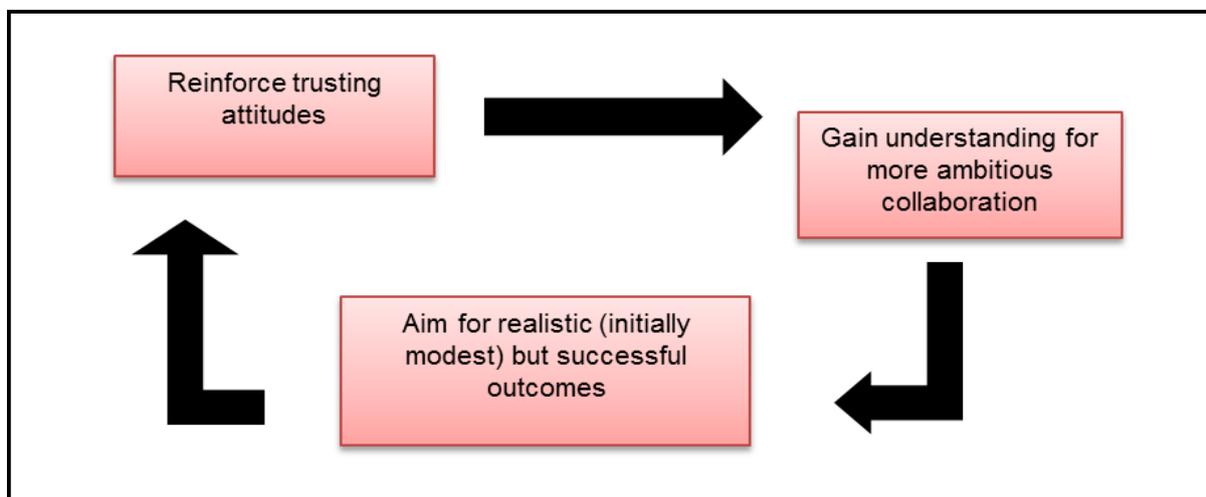


Figure 6: The cyclical trust-building loop (Vangen & Huxham , 2003, p. 12)

First, in order to stimulate trust, tasks need to be realistic and produce successful outcomes, which help reinforce attitudes of trust (Vansina, Taillieu, & Schruijer, 1998), thereby stimulating collaborative growth. Trust therefore evolves over time and is evident when operational staff are able to rely on each other. Critical to reliance and trust are honesty, openness and benevolence (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999), coupled with the notion of competency, whereby faculty members believe in each others' capabilities and expertise.

However, not all organisations create the necessary cultural conditions required for trust. Certain systems, processes and leadership styles may threaten the establishment of trust, leading to what Southern (2005) calls the 'cycle of blame' (2005, p. 42) (figure 7).

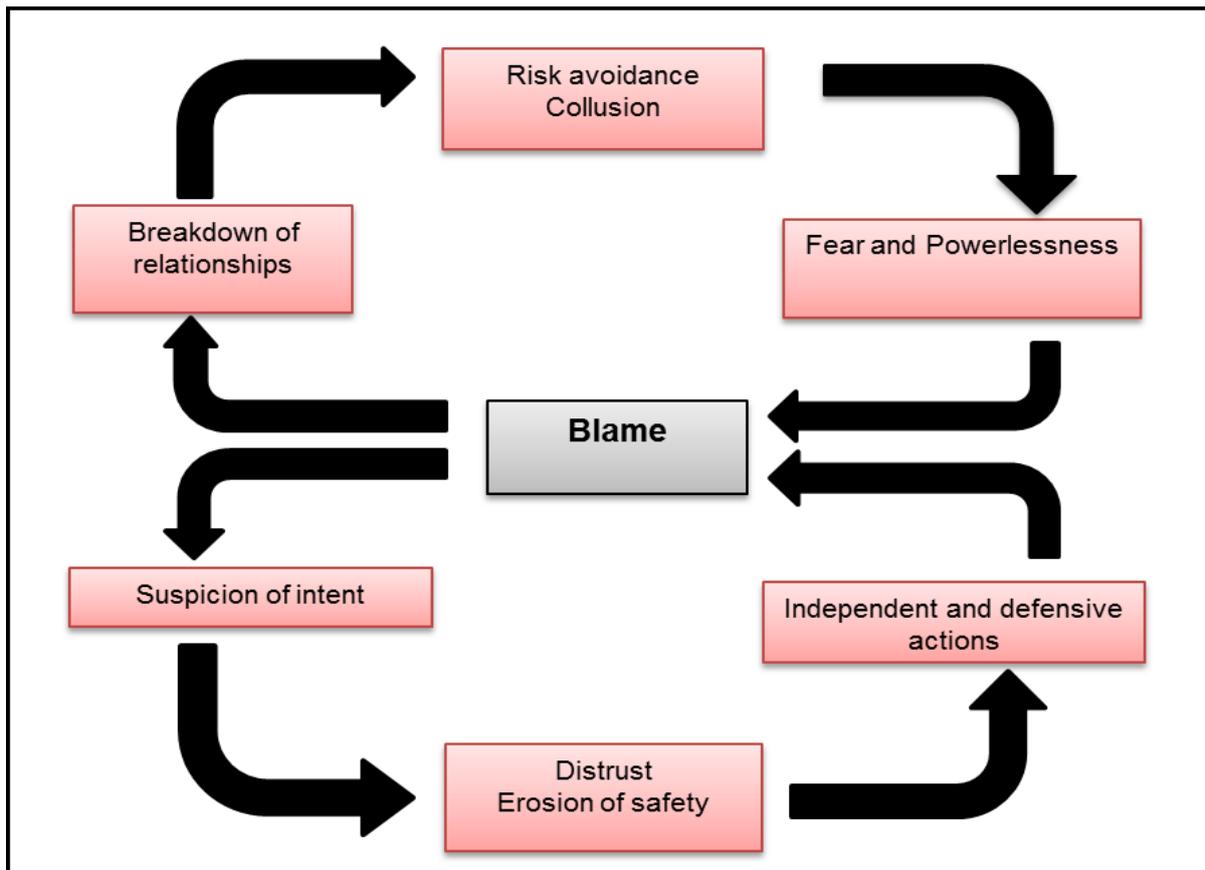


Figure 7: The cycle of blame (Southern, 2005, p. 42)

This cycle once started, erodes personal and professional relationships, as well as fostering risk avoidance and blame. Southern (2005) argues this pattern is often noticeable between competing groups, departments and/or subcultures. Once the cycle activates, trust, truthfulness and open communication cease to exist. Actions and activities undertaken by individuals cause others to question intentions and suspicion develops. As distrust grows, individuals start to work more independently and defensively, thus reinforcing the blame and continuing to damage relationships. This routine becomes a habit, inhibits learning (Argyris, 1985, 1990) and erodes the possibility of social capital. It is therefore vitally important that faculty members do not initiate the 'cycle of blame' if TNE arrangements are to survive in the long term.

3.6.1.2 Summary of Social Capital and Trust

In summary, outputs of social capital such as trust and commitment depend on social action. In order to generate trust as an outcome, activities need to be realistic, purposeful, supportive and informative. They need to encourage knowledge transfer, and support the overall objective of the project or task in order to produce positive working conditions.

Since social capital reflects resources embedded in social networks, mobilised for purposive action (Lin, 2001), it seems action and activities are tools which can either reduce resource transfer, or amplify and extend it. These resources could be either tangible, such as teaching materials, or intangible such as information. This suggests faculty member engagement has the ability, not only to nurture and cultivate resources, but also to minimise and deplete them. Clearly, faculty members engaged in TNE operational activities need to be aware of what resource they are accessing, why, and the consequence of their actions should they produce unsatisfactory outcomes. This suggests embedded resources are delicate and dynamic and do not represent a fixed phenomenon.

In a TNE partnership, actions need to be supportive and informative (J. E. Austin, 2000), whereby the more individuals engage in activities which promote knowledge transfer and support, the more support and knowledge accumulates. The output of this is the development of critical partnership success factors such as increased trust, commitment, determination and respect, which facilitate a partnership's progression (Carnwell & Carson, 2009; Hutchinson & Campbell, 1998; Huxham & Vangen, 1996; Mohr & Spekman, 1994). Yet this is not to suggest all members of a network are able to undertake the same level of activity, or that knowledge and support are the most salient embedded resources faculty members need to mobilise for purposive action (Lin, 2001). It merely implies that fundamental to social capital are activities which improve access to resources such as support and knowledge to some lesser or greater extent.

3.6.2 Context and Activities: The Principle of Reciprocity

In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, structuralist Lévi-Strauss (1969) discusses the salience of reciprocity as practiced in social exchange. He explores social exchange, defining it as either restricted or general. Molm et al. (2012) describe exchange as either 'negotiated' or 'reciprocal' (2012, p. 143), arguing all forms of exchange occur within relations of mutual dependence, in which actors depend on one another for valued outcomes. They argue 'negotiated' exchange is typically associated with binding agreements whereby the flow of benefits is bilateral between partners. Lévi-Strauss (1969) concurs, arguing restricted exchanges operate between two partners who benefit each other, but do not receive or benefit any other party outside of the system. This creates a form of bounded solidarity between workers, who find themselves thrown together in a common situation. Solidarity is therefore an emergent product, based upon a common fate (Marx, 1967 (1894)). Agents are therefore restricted. Moreover, they have to learn to identify with each other and support each other's initiatives if the exchange is to be a success.

Based upon this conceptual understanding of social exchange it is easy to affiliate TNE partnerships with restricted or negotiated exchanges, bounded by the limits of their partnership community, often involving some sort of formal contract or memorandum of understanding. Since no other parties are involved in the restricted exchange, other than those advocated, the relationship is usually marked by high degrees of accountability in each other's behaviour, with low rates of disagreement, antagonism and opinion giving (Bales & Borgatta, 1965). This isolated dyadic social exchange relationship (Ekeh, 1974) is therefore characterised by 'attempts to avoid offending the other partner' (1974, p. 52) and this an extremely important element of these forms of exchange.

Relationships, established solely on negotiated exchanges are often weaker than those which have a prior history of reciprocal forms of exchange (Molm et al., 2012). Reciprocal relationships build trust, affective bonds and solidarity (Lawler, 2001), whereby individuals make choices, allowing benefits to flow unilaterally. Relationships which encourage both negotiated and reciprocal exchanges to occur, are therefore more likely to generate feelings of trust and solidarity compared to purely negotiated exchanges.

What is clear is that the type of exchange has the 'power to set or alter the affective tone of a relationship' (Molm et al., 2012, p. 142). It is this tone which has a significant bearing on the sustainability of a TNE partnership. Relationships that embed negotiated exchange in ongoing relationships of reciprocal exchange can therefore significantly strengthen feelings of trust and solidarity. However, as previously identified, TNE partnerships carry high levels of financial and reputational risk. Therefore, many HEIs seek formal contracts and clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities before exchanges occur. Negotiated exchanges are therefore more evident in TNE contexts. Yet it seems relationships based on reciprocation have a greater chance of survival, particularly in relation to ones which are initiated by formal negotiations (Zhuang, 2009).

3.6.2.1 Social Exchanges and Psychological Phenomena

Any individual engaged in a social exchange does not create the norms and values that regulate their behaviours on their own. Individuals carry with them institutional, societal and cultural definitions of norms and values into all exchange situations. According to Ratner (2000), psychological phenomena are 'constructed from and reflect social activities and their corresponding cultural concepts' (2000, p. 8). Social activities can therefore foster particular emotional qualities (Vygotsky, 1998), whereby individuals interpret situations and make

choices about what, when, where and how an exchange occurs based upon fore-structure and 'historicality' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 424).

Reflecting upon this notion, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) term this the 'cognitive dimension' (1998, p. 244) of social capital. They argue the cognitive dimension requires an understanding of how groups share meanings and interpret situations. Moreover, they claim the cognitive element receives little attention in mainstream literature on social capital, yet represents an extremely important intangible asset. Roth (2007) highlights the important relationship between activities and emotion by suggesting activities as practical actions, generate emotional states. This feeds back into the partnership system, changing subsequent interactions over time.

Ratner (2000) explores the link between thinking and emotion, whereby thinking is synonymous with the generation of feelings. This interpretation suggests that as faculty members think about their practices, there is a subsequent emotional output. If participation in social activities (within a partnership) has the ability to generate emotional responses, then a key managerial concern should be activity design and production, and the interpretation of outputs. Critical to a partnership's survival is the way in which faculty members decode and respond to the actions of others. Viewed in this way, partnerships seem subject to the volatile nature of agency. It almost seems agency, through its interpretation of action, has the power to direct the course of the partnership, simply by responding to the activity outputs of other colleagues. Moreover, it almost gives agency prominence over structure.

However, faculty member actions and practices do not operate in isolation of other key variables. A host of other factors such as regulation, power imbalance, leadership, resources and goals (Vangen & Huxham, 2003) can affect how operational tasks are performed and understood. Exchange practices therefore may not meet partner expectations, not because of the choice of the faculty member, but because of the structure and systems manipulating the field of play.

As Ratner (2000) identifies, social structures, such as culture and education, play a part in the interpretation of action. Therefore, it seems psychological responses can be manipulated by working environments. HEIs that create cultures and climates, which encourage staff members to investigate and challenge the activities of others, are therefore more likely to develop positive emotional responses than those that suppress debate and discussion. This shifts the focus back from agency to structure.

3.6.2.2 Summary of Social Capital and Reciprocity

In summary, encouraged and constrained by structure (Burt, 1997), it is the actions of individuals which generate the bonds critical to exchange processes. Social capital outputs such as trust clearly cannot be forced or generated by means of a restricted or negotiated exchange. Whilst contracts may provide the framework guiding interaction, structures need to allow individuals the flexibility to work unilaterally as well as bilaterally in the generation of benefits.

Agents must be encouraged to form bonds with each other and share resources to enhance their relationships over time. Yet the extent to which faculty members feel incentivised to reciprocate each other's actions is debatable. When operating in a restricted exchange, such as a partnership, agents may feel no desire to engage in altruistic activities, preferring to base their participation on the rules and regulations governing the partnership. Action therefore becomes bounded by the limits of the partnership community (Portes, 2000) which agents may have no desire to develop or maintain. Agents may feel forced into participating in the partnership, generating feelings of anxiety, hostility or anger. This attitude has the potential to significantly damage TNE partnerships.

As Heffernan and Poole (2005) argue, 'practitioners should be proactive in replying to the "little things" that were promised...' (2005, p. 239). "Doing the little things" (2005, pp. 234), provides an indication of mutual commitment to the relationship, and develops trust. It seems contractual documents, whilst creating the framework for interaction, cannot generate the required level of commitment, trust and communication needed to sustain long-term partnerships.

3.6.3 Context and Activities: Conflict and Contradictions in Partnership

Partnerships, whilst trying to promote a sense of trust, mutual sharing, learning and development, unfortunately have to deal with aspects of conflict (Desivilya & Palgi, 2011), with Vangen and Huxham (2012) believing collaboration to be 'notoriously conflict ridden' (2012, p. 731). Conflict has the power to damage and destroy trust and can be attributed to a single act or activity (D. Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Therefore, how faculty members resolve conflict is important (Borys & Jemison, 1989). Conflict resolution can have either a positive or a negative effect on a relationship.

3.6.3.1 Conflict

The radical structuralist paradigm engages with conflict theory, Russian social theory and radical organisational theory (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Conflict theorists such as Marx and Engels (1849), and more recently Mills (1959), argue that social activity revolves around conflict, often created by unequal access to resources and/or differing ideologies. Conflict within partnerships mirrors this understanding, with conflict often emulating from divergent goals and/or different expectations of partners. Issues of power, either explicit or symbolic, underlie many of the conflicts in partnership, with Desivilya and Palgi (2011) and Sorenson et al. (2008) suggesting conflict is inevitable in inter-organisational relationships (DeDreu, 2006; Tjosvold, 2006).

Nevertheless, underpinning partnership discourse is a sense of equity, mutual sharing, and learning. Ideologically, collaboration relies on democratic management practices, yet the competitive nature of business (Kraus, 1984) means for collaboration to be a success, fundamental paradigm shifts need to occur. Work-based socialization processes therefore need reconfiguring to suit collaborative methods of working, whereby the organisation switches its focus from rivalry to mutuality. Conflict theorists and radical structuralists investigating partnerships therefore offer a unique insight into the phenomenon, emphasising its paradoxical nature (Sorenson et al., 2008) and ways of managing it.

Sino-British TNE partnerships, as with many other type of TNE affiliations, generate conflict (Fazackerley, 2007). Operating these overseas partnerships requires faculty members to be aware of the external and internal environments in which their partnership is situated. However, the effectiveness of many partnerships stems to a large extent from the quality of the internal relationship (Amibile et al., 2001; Ayoko et al., 2002). How partner groups deal with conflict, whether internally or externally generated, is important, because it has the power to impact upon the 'attributes of [partner] bonds' (Desivilya & Palgi, 2011, p. 3). This implies conflict, if not tackled quickly and efficiently by partners, may have a direct influence on relationships. Bonds between faculty members may be damaged by conflict left unresolved, creating tension in the cross-border partnership. Ultimately, these tensions may erode the possibility of social capital, leading to resource transfer and communication becoming subject to psychological phenomena such as suspicion and distrust.

In contrast, Dallmer (2004) discusses the positive potential of conflict. By employing an interpretivist, personal narrative of teaching within a collaborative educational partnership, she highlights the importance of conflict as a vehicle for change. Her work emphasises the

importance of faculty members in exploring problems and sharing reformational ideas. It is through these interactions that faculty members develop social capital. By sharing knowledge and supporting each other, faculty members are encouraged to facilitate new forms of action, with the expressed intention of enhancing the partnership over time (Miller, Ray, Dove, & Kenrich, 2000).

Clearly, partnerships require each partner group to be sensitive to the needs of the other, especially in identifying goals and priorities concerning the alliance (Bovaird, 2006). Faculty members tasked with delivering TNE partnerships must therefore engage in conversation and compromise, which can be 'time consuming' and 'difficult' (Dallmer, 2004, p. 43). Faculty members therefore need to be afforded the time to negotiate their way through difficulties and build shared understandings, so that enough social capital is generated to hold partnerships together in times of crisis. Yet existing TNE research fails to engage with notions of time, or its effect on the development of overseas partnerships.

3.6.3.2 Contradictions

An important caveat at this stage is to distinguish between conflict and contradiction. Contradictions represent 'historically accumulating structural tensions' (Engeström, 2001, p. 137), generated by both new and old elements colliding to produce disturbances and conflicts. Yet at the same time, they also create opportunities for resolution and transformation. In addition, the 'multi-voicedness' of partnership system acts as a source of 'trouble' and 'innovation' (2001, p.136), demanding different levels of translation and negotiation. Faculty members who administer TNE programmes on a daily basis, therefore create tensions which require resolution. These tensions create opportunities to question current arrangements, resulting in expansive learning (Engeström, 2001). Moreover, this form of learning can assist in the development of new forms of knowledge and identity (Avis, 2009) as well as process changes.

This cyclical process of contradiction, questioning, learning and consolidating is symbolic of the hermeneutic cycle or 'circle of understanding' which belongs to what Heidegger (1962) calls the 'structure of meaning' (1962, p. 195). Heidegger (1962) conceived of interpretation as a circular process, whereby an individual's fore-structure of understanding is made explicit through their actions. Once the action is completed, faculty members are encouraged to reflect upon and modify their subsequent behaviours and actions based upon what they have learnt (T. Koch, 1995). This implies operational staff

interpret themselves in their everyday practices (T. Koch, 1995), dialectically interpreting their situations and developing new understandings over time.

Questioning of current practices should therefore be commonplace in a TNE partnership system, assisting in the generation of new forms of practice over time. Faculty members who operate international partnerships on a daily basis should therefore be *consistently engaged in a process of transformational learning* (Engeström, 2001). This may be reflected in a change in working practices or attitudes, or perhaps in new methods of mobilising and accessing resources.

3.6.3.3 Summary of Social Capital, Conflict and Contradictions

In summary, Amibile et al. (2001), Tjosvold (2006) and DeDreu (2006) argue individuals engaged in various kinds of conflicts and disparities constitute a crucial ingredient in the process of building and managing partnerships. Understanding what produces conflict and contradictions at the operational phase of a TNE arrangement, and how faculty members deal with such issues, can provide valuable insights into the development of international partnerships. Yet existing TNE research fails to explore how faculty members learn across borders and how this assists in the development of their partnership. Questions arise regarding the level of transformational learning evident in TNE partnerships. These questions are important if we are to uncover new insights into the way faculty learn and overcome adversity in TNE partnerships, notwithstanding the affect this has on the way partnerships progress over time.

3.7 Transnational Education Discourse and Social Capital

Gao et al. (2012) discuss Sino-British relationships and highlight some of the operational processes which they believe make TNE teaching, learning and research 'extraordinarily complex' (2012, p. 299). Elements such as differences in curriculum design, workloads, student and parental expectations, holidays, internet access, funding and teaching make operational management a complex affair. The authors highlight how operational 'barriers' (2012, p. 300), which exist between international teams, provide opportunities in which to advance understandings of how faculty members overcome difficulties and progress their relationships. The authors note the limitations placed upon faculty members, whereby structural conditions generated by the HEI, and world polity (WTO, IMF, EU), influence operational practices. This implies faculty members who wish to develop stronger ties may be unable to do so due to structural and systematic constraints.

Zhuang (2009) affirms the importance of social capital between senior managers and partnership champions. Employing a longitudinal case study methodology to a Sino-British partnership, he explores the importance of Chinese 'guanxi' (2009, p. 247) in driving forward partnerships. *Guanxi* is described as the Chinese art of relationship building which involves 'a mixture of strategic relationships and humanness, the simple honouring and respecting of others' (Southern, 2005, p. 46). It is important to understand *guanxi* if Western faculty members are interacting directly with Chinese nationals.

Although not explicitly referring to operational practices or social capital, Zhuang (2009) describes the effect partner actions and tasks can have on *Guanxi*. A simple delay in email correspondence can be enough to trigger Eastern partners to question commitment levels. This highlights the fragility of overseas partnerships, whereby two culturally different partner groups try to interpret each other's actions. In a globally competitive educational environment (Boucher, 2007; Li-Hua, 2007), delays in action between parties, and the subsequent interpretations produced, have the potential to damage relationships, challenging the viability of any international partnership. Whilst Zhuang (2009) highlights the effect activities can have on partner group relationships, more research is needed into understanding how partnership activities can be improved to decrease the number of negative interpretations being made.

Furthermore, differences between Chinese and UK cultures, such as the orientation towards collectivism over individualism (Hofstede, 2001), mean group interests prevail over those of the individual. The effect of mixing two cultures with different approaches to value therefore creates challenges for TNE partnerships. Notwithstanding the effect this has on the rate of progression within the partnership.

3.8 Defining “Partnership”, “Social Relationships” and “Partnership Development” for the Purpose of Research

Since this research engages with the concepts of *partnership*, *social relationships*, and *partnership development* conceptual definitions are required. These are explicated below for the purposes of this research.

3.8.1 Definition of “Partnership”

Depending on one's paradigmatic position, a TNE partnership can be conceptualised in multiple ways. Through an initial interrogation of functionalist and structuralist approaches, partnership represents an evolutionary process split into three main parts: initiation,

operation and evaluation (Wohlstetter et al., 2005). Further analysis of partnership literature has made it possible to interpret and define a TNE *partnership* in the following way:

A socially structured and evolutionary relationship, consisting of connecting agents who generate and participate in social activities, in order to achieve agreeable outcomes that stimulate positive relational developments over time.

This conceptual understanding posits:

- *Activities* and their *outcomes* as being central in the development of a partnership over time.
- The *complex social structure* of a partnership.
- The *evolutionary nature* of a partnership.

3.8.2 “Social Relationships”: *Social Capital*

Social capital clearly plays a central role in a partnership system (Amey, et al., 2010). However, as Paldam (2000) maintains, measuring a concept such as social capital is fraught with difficulty. As the previous sections have identified, social capital is not a robust concept, although key characteristics such as *resources*, *social action*, *networks* and *benefit* seem to resonate with all schools of thought, although differences exist between them in application, accessibility and generation.

However, as previously discussed, social action generates psychological phenomena (Ratner, 2000; Roth, 2007; Vygotsky, 1998), which Lin (2001) and other social capital theorists failed to acknowledge. Vygotsky (1998) argues how collective social relations between people affect ‘the structures of higher mental functions’ (1998, p.169-170) such as trust, respect and loyalty. Psychological phenomena therefore play an important part in generating the consequential outputs of social capital. Social capital is clearly not just concerned with *resources*, *networks*, *action* or *purpose*. Its generation requires an understanding of how agents *interpret* action, and the subsequent psychological outputs this generates.

This thesis therefore suggests social capital be defined in terms of *what, how, and why*, as well as the *perception of the action*, defining social capital as:

Resources embedded in a partnership network, which agents mobilise in order to produce and develop purposive action, thereby creating both physical and psychological outputs that further affect resource exchange, actions and interpretations over time.

3.8.3 “Partnership Development”: *Partnership Capital*

According to Eddy (2010), social capital is only one element of *partnership capital*. To understand how *partnership capital* develops it is important to have an understanding of organisational capital. This is because it is important to identify ways in which organisational capital may affect faculty activities, which in turn may affect the production of social capital. Clearly, the two facets are intrinsically linked. Yet this research aims to specifically analyse the social dimension of *partnership capital*, in order to understand how relationships develop in TNE partnerships.

However, this is not to imply organisational capital is not considered. On the contrary, exploration of organisational capital will occur, but only in relation to the thoughts and feelings of faculty engaged in daily tasks. I therefore seek to understand how faculty members perceive organisational capital in relation to their social interactions and the subsequent affect they feel this has on their cross-border relationships. Since social capital resides in social structures, it seems logical to assume it represents a dynamic phenomenon. This implies it is never static, changing on a yearly, monthly, weekly or hourly basis. This raises important questions. If social capital is a key feature of *partnership capital* (Eddy, 2010), and yet fluctuates based upon social engagements, to what extent is *partnership capital* a steady state phenomenon? Moreover, should we therefore postulate partnership capital as a utopian ideal? In fact, is it possible for TNE partnerships to achieve partnership capital without the presence of social capital?

3.9 Activity Theory, The Morphogenesis Approach and Theory of Social Action: Proposed Theoretical Frameworks for Investigating Transnational Higher Education Relationships and Partnership Development

Reflecting on existing TNE partnership literature, few engage with notions of action, activity, resources, social capital and partnership development. Theoretical frameworks are therefore hard to locate and identify, meaning this thesis cannot acknowledge the usefulness

of previously applied theories. Whilst this has both positive and negative connotations, this research aims to apply the most applicable theories in an attempt to answer its research aims in the most credible and rigorous (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) way possible. Based on the aforementioned conceptual definitions, this section critically analyses three theoretical frameworks. These frameworks arguably provide a platform from which to analyse data in relation to the areas of subject (faculty member(s)), resources, networks, social action (activities), interpretation and meaning.

1. The first theoretical framework applied is third generation cultural, historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2001). TNE partnerships are conceptualised as activity systems, whereby individuals participate in collective action across boundaries (Daniels, Edwards, Engeström, Gallagher, & Ludvigsen, 2010), generating activities and producing partnership transformations over time (Engeström, 2005). CHAT provides a framework, which encapsulates the conceptual definition of *partnership* expressed in this study. By considering this model, partnership moves from abstract theorisation, to a phenomenon with form and identifiable features. Empirical research is therefore possible, whereby faculty members (subject), activity, resources, processes and stakeholders become identifiable within the partnership system.
2. The second framework applied is the Transformation Model of Social Action (TMSA) (Archer, 1998). Elements not explicit in CHAT (such as time, feedback, reproduction and transformation) but fundamental to the conceptual definitions developed in this thesis, become visible when TMSA is applied in conjunction with CHAT. In addition, it enables the dynamic relationship between structure and agency to be analysed in relation to the effect both have on partnership progression over time.
3. Thirdly, social action theory (Weber, 1978) provides insight into the way actors interpret situations and apply meaning. Social action thus occurs when one person's behaviour is related in its meaning to the behaviour of other people. His theory therefore relates to the analysis of the behaviour of one or more individual persons. Adding psychological phenomena to the definition of social capital suggests resources, networks, action and purpose have the ability to affect psychological phenomena. By acknowledging the emotional outputs of social action, it is now possible to understand how salient activity meanings and interpretations are in the generation of social capital over time.

4. Finally, theories pertaining to social capital are analysed in relation to the findings⁶. According to Lin (2001), social capital represents a theory-generating concept and should be conceived of in a social network context as representing 'resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilised in purposive actions' (2001, p. 29). Furthermore, Lin (2001) argues this conceptual understanding has three key components which require analysis: *resources*, *social networks*, *action* and *purpose*. Moreover, Putnam's (2000) analysis of bonding and bridging social capital will be utilised to examine relationships between faculty members and the way this influences relational developments.

Figure 8 represents in diagrammatic form, the theoretical approaches applied in this study. Clearly, no model affectively deals with the research aims and questions when considered in isolation. However, by fusing together the above frameworks, the model offers an initial platform from which to launch an empirical investigation on TNE relationship and partnership development. Yet, based upon the aforementioned analysis of literature, the merged framework still carries limitations (which are analysed throughout the next section and summarised in the conclusion chapter).

Nevertheless, by identifying these theoretical frameworks and considering them in relation to one another, a series of *thinking tools* (Grenfell, 2008) emerge, which can assist in empirical data collection and analysis. The following section will outline, evaluate and validate the use of these theories in the context of this research project.

⁶ These ideas have been explored in detail throughout chapter three, and will therefore not feature in the remainder of this section.

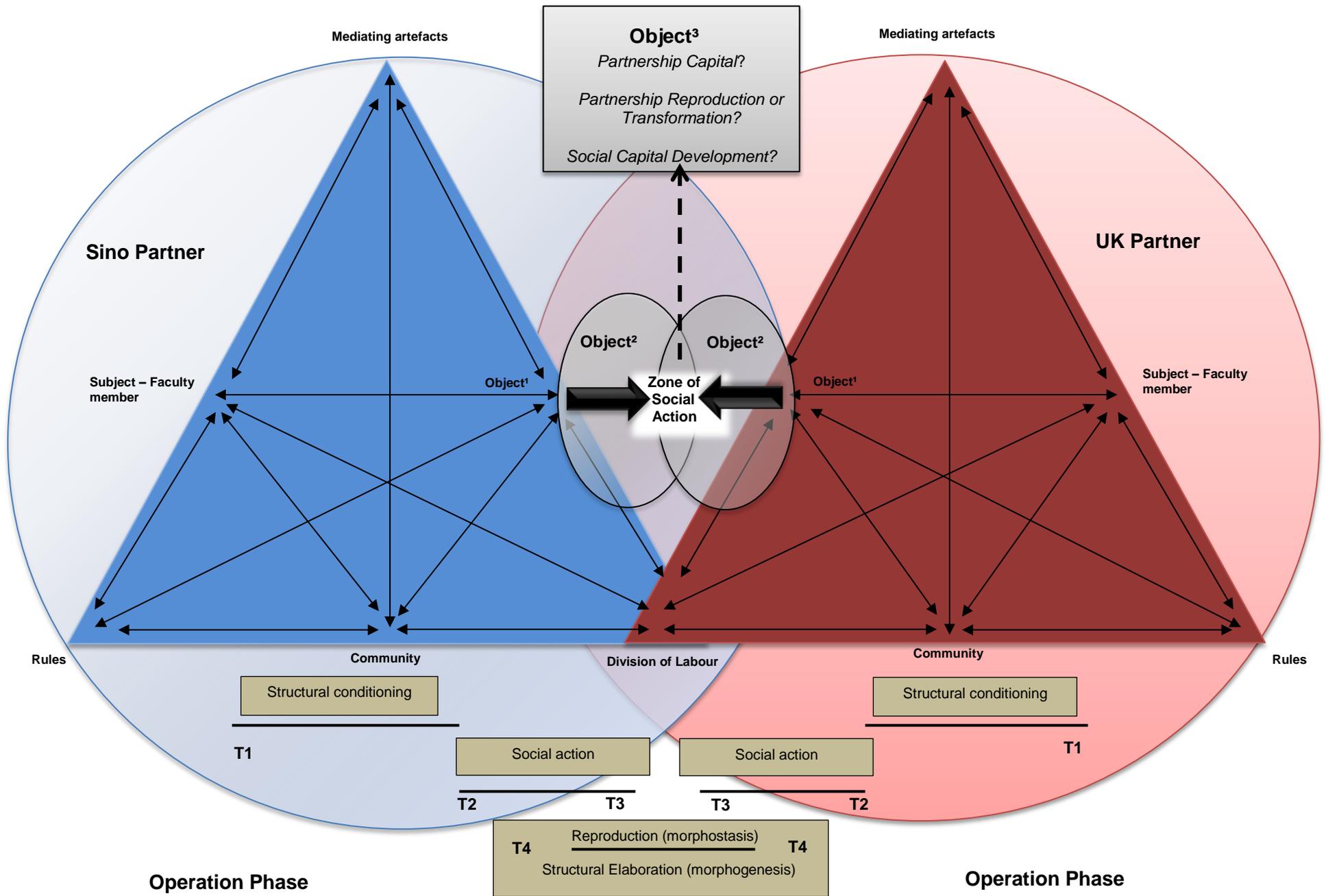


Figure 8: Operational level transnational partnership development: a fusion model (Adapted from Engeström, 2001, p. 13; Eddy, 2010, p. 50; Archer, 1995, p. 157; Wohlstetter et al., 2005, p. 420).

3.9.1 Partnership Conceptualisation: Applying Third Generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

Initiated by the founders of the cultural-historical school of Russian psychology, L. S. Vygotsky, A. N. Leont'ev and A. R. Luria (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999) this research tradition has been credited with the development of activity-theoretical frameworks. Figure 9 displays third generation CHAT mobilised for the purposes of this research.

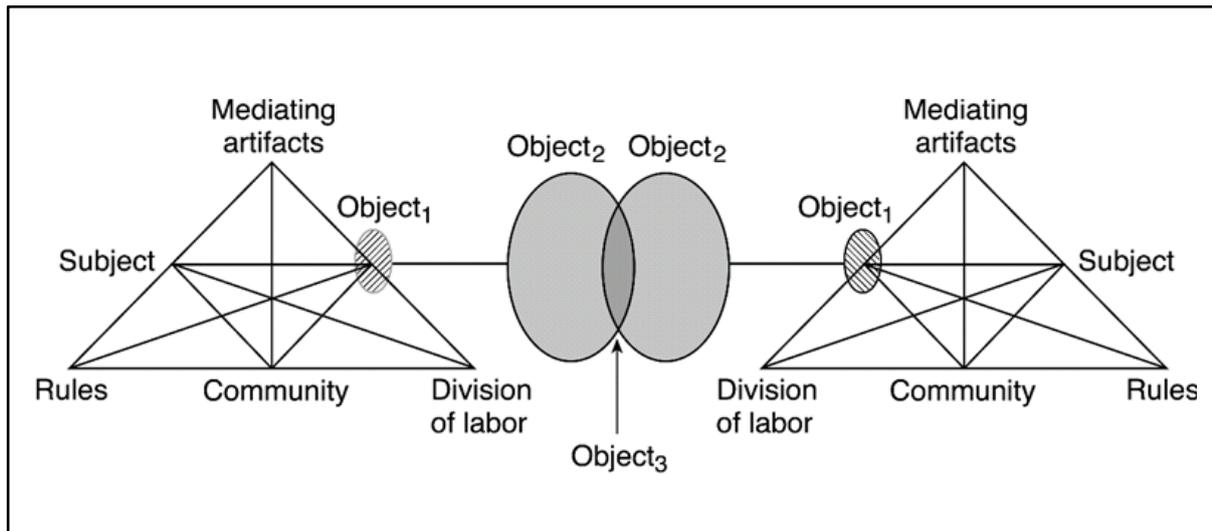


Figure 9: Third generation cultural historical activity theory (Engeström, 2001, p.136)

Activity theory in the context of this research represents a conceptual tool that postulates the relationships between social structures, agents, activities and outcomes. In addition, activity theory suits a study seeking to explore the impact of activities between groups that share common objectives across boundaries, and interact to form new meanings (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 2001). To fully appreciate CHAT, five key principles require explanation:

3.9.1.1 Principle One: Collective, Artefact-mediated Activity System

The primary reason for the application of CHAT in this particular study, is to explore how 'collective, artefact-mediated and object-oriented' (Engeström, 2001, p. 136) activity systems, work in relation to other activity systems to which they are connected. It enables individual or group actions, as well as 'operations' (2001, p. 136) to be considered as *independent units of analysis*, whilst at the same time being *interpreted against the background of the entire activity system*. Because of this, activity theory relies on both a system's view and a subject's view (Engeström, 2001). First, we explore the subjective view.

Faculty member activities are analysed in relation to their purpose (*object*¹), outcomes (*object*²), and the effect of this on the interconnected activity system (*object*³).

As a faculty member engages in a particular activity (*object*¹) they produce outputs, for example the marking of student work, produces grades (*object*²), which gives purpose to the activity, but also broader meaning to individual action. These grades (outcomes), received by the interconnecting activity system (*object*³), are then decoded and interpreted in order to produce 'new meanings' (2001, p. 136) which are potentially shared across both activity systems.

Artefacts are also critical to CHAT. Networks between activity systems provide for the movement of artefacts. These resources can be 'combined, used and transformed in novel ways' (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 8) in joint activity, extending the range of possibility. Moreover, human behaviour can be controlled "from the outside", using and creating artefacts' (Engeström, 1999a, p. 29), whereby artefacts are seen as integral and inseparable components of human functioning. Furthermore, resources are considered to be able to change the cognitive processing of agents (Norman, 1988). This implies operational faculty members involved in a TNE partnership network, have the ability to shape resource transfer and development. Moreover, it seems resources are critical to both the functioning of faculty members and the generation of behavioural traits. However, CHAT has the conceptual and methodological potential to be a pathbreaker 'in studies that help humans gain control over their own artefacts and thus over their future' (Engeström, 1999a, p. 29).

Evidently, this principle is critical to analysing the aforementioned definition of social capital, whereby resource access and use is fundamental in creating purposive action, which produces psychological outputs that may subsequently affect resource transfer and development over time.

3.9.1.2 Principle Two: Multi-voicedness

This principle relates to the 'multi-voicedness of activity systems' (Engeström, 2001, p.136). Interpretation varies as activity systems are comprised of multiple voices, views and traditions. Depending on the *division of labour*, not all faculty members in a TNE partnership have same power or authority. These different perspectives create very different positions for the participants. Each individual carries their own diverse history into the activity system, as well as the partnership (activity) system carrying its own 'multiple layers and strands of history engraved in artefacts, rules and conventions' (Engeström, 2001, p. 136) generated

over time. Due to *division of labour*, not all faculty members are able to access to resources embedded in the partnership (activity) system. This implies not all operational staff will be able to engage in high yielding social capital activities (Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010).

3.9.1.3 Principle Three: Historicity

Furthermore, Engeström (2005) argues to understand a partnership (activity) system its local history needs to be analysed in terms of the theoretical ideas and tools that have shaped it over time. Therefore, problems within a partnership (activity) system and potential solutions can only be understood against its own history. This makes it hard to generalise about TNE partnerships based upon the findings of the two unique case studies utilised in this research study.

3.9.1.4 Principle Four: Contradictions

A central facet of CHAT is how contradictions provide opportunities for change and development. As activity systems adopt new elements from the outside, it often creates contradictions and tensions (Cole & Engeström, 1993). By aggravating existing elements, disturbances appear, as do innovative attempts to change the activity. Contradictions are not just inevitable features of activity. They represent the form 'in which development is cast' (Ilyenkov, 1977, p. 330), whereby new forms of activity emerge as solutions to the contradictions of the preceding stage.

Ilyenkov (1982) argues transformation resides at the individual level, whereby individuals respond to a particular phenomenon in an exceptional way, transforming the system by deviating from accepted and codified norms. Any new improvement in TNE operational activities must therefore first emerge as a certain deviation from previously accepted and codified norms. Having first emerged as an individual exception to the rule, the new form is then adopted by the collective, becoming a '*universal norm*' (Ilyenkov, 1982, pp. 83-84, original emphasis).

3.9.1.5 Principle Five: Expansive Transformation

The final principle proclaims the possibility of expansive transformations in activity systems. Conceptually, if *partnership* represents social systems, which rely on social agents for reproduction and transformation (Bhaskar, 2011), then clearly a partnership's evolution can be traced and analysed through the social practices of agents. This implies faculty

members operating TNE partnerships should at some stage, be involved in transforming their partnership (activity) system (Engeström, 2005). Individual activities, in order to create expansive transformations, need to drive the partnership (activity) system towards radically wider horizons of possibility (Engeström, 2001). However, the extent to which faculty member activities are able to do this is open to debate and requires empirical research before conclusions are drawn.

CHAT, whilst acknowledging the possibility of expansive transformation over time, fails to explicitly acknowledge time. Furthermore, CHAT, whilst acknowledging object-orientated outcomes (*object²*), and collaboratively constructed understandings (*object³*) fails to explain how these outcomes assist in the expansive transformation of partnership (activity) systems over time.

Arguably, *object³* represents the evaluation phase of a partnership. Here, collective learnings should be shared, and fed back into the activity system, stimulating positive developments. Yet, system transformations depend on flexible structures (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991) and this is not stated in CHAT. Furthermore, transformation also depends on the interpretations of agency. As faculty members engage in collective activity, their object-orientated actions generate outcomes characterised by 'ambiguity, sense making...and interpretation' (Engeström, 2001, p.134). Depending on how individuals interpret the outcomes of their joint activities, social capital may be jeopardised.

Engeström (1993) highlights the importance of using activity theory, not as a ready-made analytical framework, but as a 'general cross-disciplinary approach, offering conceptual tools and methodological principles, which have to be concretized according to the specific nature of the object under scrutiny' (1993, p. 97). CHAT therefore offers some analytical tools. Yet it is not enough on its own to deal with the conceptual understandings generated in section 3.8. For example, by incorporating, a Transformational Model of Social Action (Archer, 1998) into the activity system, it becomes possible to contemplate time. This allows the researcher to appreciate time in relation to structural transformation, thereby adding a new dimension to CHAT.

3.9.2 The Transformational Model of Social Action (TMSA): Bridging the Structure-Agency Divide

In order to understand structure and agency in more detail, morphogenesis provides a particular lens in which to understand social change and structural elaboration. Principally

based on the work of Buckley (1967) it attempts to synthesise the functionalist paradigm of interactionism with social systems theory, whilst referencing Marxist ideology (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Paradigmatically, it focuses on the transformative effects of socio-cultural systems. Yet it is not representative of a subjectivist tradition. Buckley (1967), through morphogenesis, attempts to link the micro and macro level of analysis through the notion of the subjective role and its effect on objective systems. Interaction amongst individuals, in which information is interpreted in accordance with the meanings it holds for the actors, is a critical part of his process model. Meanings emerge from the process of interactions between individuals, dealing with the same common environment, which assist in the generation of whole systems.

Archer (1998), in developing the morphogenetic approach, takes issue with alternative structural-agency approaches such as structuration (Giddens, 1984). As structuration is essentially concerned with structural duality and not dualism (Giddens, 1979), structure is both the medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices (A. King, 2005). Society is thus a flow of conduct, with no malleable potential. Archer (2010) argues structuration 'analytically disengages continuities or transformations in the reproduction of social systems' (2010, p. 227). Structuration therefore 'treats the ligatures binding structure, practice and systems as indissoluble' (Archer, 2010, p. 228).

To Archer (1998), society consists of both objective structures and individual agents, with neither dimension being derived or reconstructed from the other. The morphogenesis approach is characterised by its ability to elaborate structure through its dualistic and sequential dialectic interplay between structure and action (figure 10).

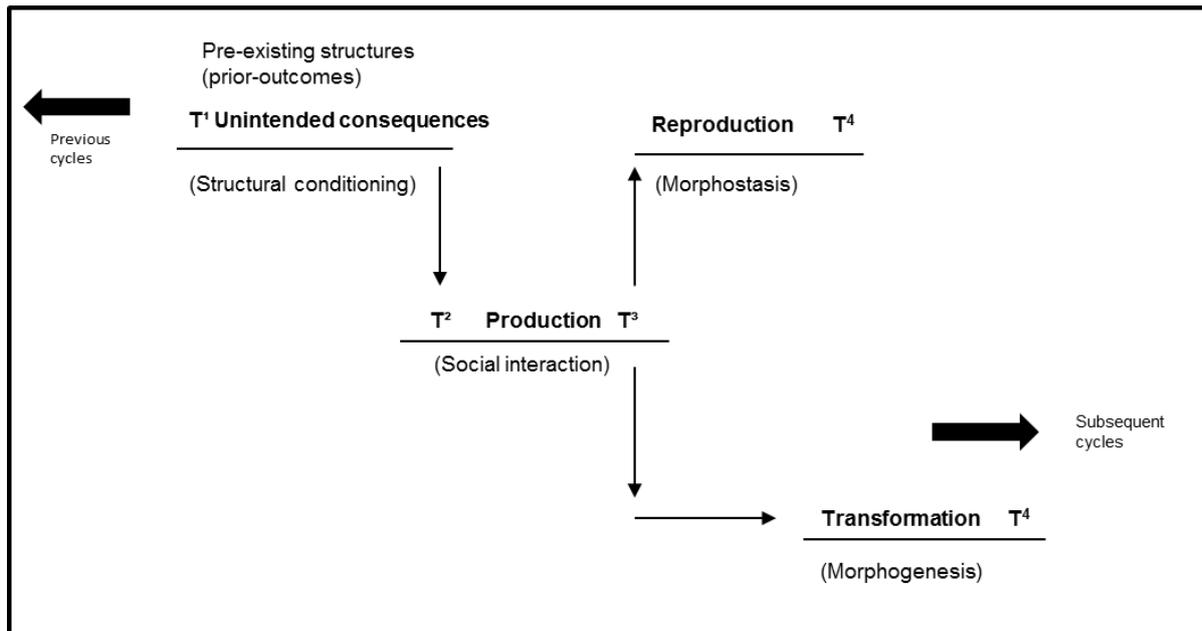


Figure 10: Superimposing the transformational model of social action and the morphogenetic/ static cycle (Archer, 1998, p. 376)

At this point, it seems fair to suggest *activities* represent *one form of social interaction*. TMSA (Archer, 1998, 2010) therefore implies faculty members, conditioned by their partnership’s initiation (which they may or may not have been party to), interact in the operational phase, producing outputs which enable them to either reproduce or transform their partnership’s structure over time.

Structure pre-exists agency, and is reproduced and transformed by everyday activities. Moreover, ‘society does not exist independently of human agency – the error of reification. The social world is reproduced and transformed in daily life’ (Bhaskar, 2011, p. 4). Agents do not create or produce structure ‘*ab initio*’ (‘from the beginning’, Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000, p. 14), rather they transform and recreate existing structures. This notion is evident in the philosophy of Heidegger (1962), who discusses the importance of co-constitution between agency and structure. He stresses the indissoluble unity between the person and the world, whereby the world is already there before analysis, and from the beginning the person is in the world.

Herein we question the value of structural reproduction (morphostasis) and transformation (morphogenesis) (Archer, 1995). For a partnership to evolve over time, social practices should reflect an ‘emancipatory spiral in which deeper understanding makes possible new forms of practice, leading to enhanced understanding’ (Bhaskar, 2011, p. 6). This implies faculty members should engage in practices, consider and evaluate their outcomes, and be able to form new practices based upon newly acquired understandings.

Yet, is transformation always positive? Bhaskar (2011) observes, due to the opaque nature of social structures, that agents may not always be conscious of their activities, generating 'unintended consequences...unconscious motivations... [and] unacknowledged conditions' (2011, p. 4). In order to understand what this means for TNE partnership development, the social processes which underpin *partnership* need to be explored and interpreted in detail, so that the effect of intended and unintended outcomes of operational practices can be understood.

The definition of *partnership* applied to this research reflects both structural and agency dimensions. Arguably, partnership systems will always regulate what faculty members are able to do, constraining them within complex systems of rules and resourcing. Yet at the same time, operating within this structure are conscious agents who are able to choose how they engage in operational practices. They are able to interpret and attribute meaning to action. Both the what (structure) and the how (agency) have implications for the development of faculty member relationships and TNE partnerships overall.

3.9.3 Understanding the Relationship between Activity and Emotion

Initially, CHAT looks promising as an analytical tool with which to explore operational activities, however Arnseth (2008) argues Engeström (1987) emphasises practice and the materiality of activity systems at the expense of the agent, thereby creating a tension in the ability of activity theory to generate meanings that expand beyond the activity itself.

Activity theory suggests actions produced by activities are not meaningful in their own right, and that individual activities are coordinated and controlled by a 'higher level of organisation than the individual or group' (Arnseth, 2008, p. 292). Although TNE partnerships require an understanding of the macro system, which regulated faculty member practices, agency cannot simply be collapsed into structure (Archer, 2010). Things come together in 'human practical object-orientated activity' in the sense that psychological phenomena are generated by 'subjective processes of activity', while activity is the 'objectified side of psychological processes' (Arnseth, 2008, p. 294).

Ontologically, Arnseth (2008) transcends the dichotomy between subjectivism and objectivism by suggesting social reality involves a dialectic relationship between consciousness and materiality. Although Daniels (2013) argues activity theory seeks to

analyse the development of 'consciousness within practical social activity settings' (2013, p. 93), emphasising the psychological impacts of organised activity and the social conditions and systems that are produced in and through such activity; its wide, macro analytical scope makes it difficult to analyse how participants themselves make sense of their situations (Arnseth, 2008).

Although CHAT seeks to explore joint activity in the transformation of activity systems and social structures (Engeström, 1999b), it is the psychological effects of joint activities that are important in the development of integrative bonds between subjects (Molm et al., 2012). Clearly, activity theory cannot answer these questions alone, with Roth (2007) referring to activity theory as an example of 'cold cognition' (2007, p. 43).

Whilst CHAT enables the subject to be located within the wider partnership (activity) system, it does not focus on the subjective experience, but seeks to situate the activities of a subject within a much larger system. Agents may be unaware of the size and scope of the whole system and subsequent systems, which encapsulate them. Therefore, whilst CHAT assists in placing the agent within the partnership system, the whole system may be beyond their comprehension and the effects of their activities may not be fully realised.

In the context of this study, CHAT has the potential to assist in data analysis and interpretation. However, the subjective, psychological impact of operational activities, and the effect of this on social capital and *partnership capital* (Eddy, 2010) cannot be analysed by applying CHAT and TMSA alone. They merely represent lenses through which to explore and interpret how social capital may be affected by agency and structure. Missing are more relational theories, which engage with issues of human behaviour and cognition.

Vygotsky (1989) explores the relationship between emotion, practical actions and reasoning, arguing that they are integral to the unit of activity and are therefore dialectically related. This suggests faculty members, through their participation in practice, have the ability to stimulate emotional states. In order to reconcile the differences between the objective activity and the subjective processes previously mentioned, a more subjective, theoretical approach requires consideration.

3.9.3.1 A Theory of Social Action (TSA)

Max Weber (1864-1920), in his theory of social action, was interested in interpreting the meaning of social action, and the effects of such action (Weber, 1978). Action, in

Weber's definition, relates to human behaviour and the extent to which agents see it subjectively as being meaningful. Such behaviour can relate to internal or external behaviours such as doing something, omitting to do something or having something done to the agent. *Social* relates to an action in which the meaning intended by the agent or agents involves a 'relation to another person's behaviour and in which that relation determines the way in which the action proceeds' (Weber, 1978, p. 7).

Fundamentally, Weber (1978) seeks to explore *the meaning behind social actions* and the way these actions are interpreted and understood by agents engaged in social situations. He suggests action requires interpretation in order to achieve a level or certainty about the action. Interpretations can take either the rational form, whereby action and meaning is grounded intellectually, or the empathetic form, whereby action is understood by an agent 're-living the action of the other in their imagination' (Weber, 1978, p. 8). Rational intelligibility, creates an immediate and unambiguous intellectual grasp of the meaning of an action, and often refers to actions that only have one logical explanation. The meanings generated by these actions are therefore highly certain.

3.9.3.1.1. Interpretation: Rational Intelligibility

Rational certainty implies the 'possibility of achieving an immediate and unambiguous intellectual grasp of meaning [and]...is to be found in its highest degree in those complexes of meaning which are related to each other in the way in which mathematical or logical propositions are' (Weber, 1978, p. 8). In a TNE partnership, rational certainty of an action arguably emanates from partnership contracts, regulations, institutional policies and procedures, whereby action complies with an understanding of regulation. This implies certain partnership actions can be rationally and intellectually understood (Weber, 1978) simply because they represent articulated procedures and processes. Faculty members therefore interpret the meanings of certain actions in a particular way because they are guided contractually and institutionally to do so.

However, as Paul (1990) suggests, contracts developed during partnership initiation periods often fail to consider operational actions and nuances. Rational certainty therefore represents the interpretations of senior strategists who assume partnerships should be rationalised in a particular way. This creates tensions at the operational level, whereby actions may be rationalised by referring to articles of agreement, but may actually be detrimental to partner relations. Although the action of operational staff may be justified and understood in relation to codified documentation, it does not necessarily mean agents feel

happy or satisfied with the outcome. It is therefore hard to ground social action in a TNE partnership in 'a logical chain of reasoning of...the 'correct' way' (Weber, 1978, p. 8). Whilst it serves a purpose, it does not necessarily improve relationships between agents.

3.9.3.1.2 Interpretation: Empathetic Intelligibility

Empathetic intelligibility is more complex. It involves prior experiences of certain situations, so that agents can get as close an approximation to the meaning of an action as possible. Weber (1978) argues, the more an agent is able to sympathise with certain actions, due to previous encounters with the emotions generated by previous actions, such as anxiety, love, jealousy, pride and enthusiasm, the more they can 're-live such emotional states' (Weber, 1978, p. 9), and empathise with the reactions that result from them. Prior experience of a given situation allows individuals to 're-live in the imagination' (Weber, 1978, p.8) the feelings experienced by the other and understand the situation better. Therefore, it seems that empathy is critical to understanding the meanings which lie behind every-day social actions (Weber, 1978).

By empathising with an individual who engages in an activity, it becomes possible to understand the meaning behind the activity and the means used to perform it. This suggests faculty members with prior experiences of working within UK or Chinese higher education systems or transnational partnerships may be able to empathise with each other more effectively than those with no previous experience. Therefore, to what extent are previous experiences of a situation/ phenomena important in the development of social relations?

Whilst rational intelligibility may create solid and unwavering understandings of a particular action, actions which require empathetic intelligibility, may create more variation and ambiguity in terms of trying to understand the rationale underpinning them. Since faculty members act in a variety of different ways, based upon their previous experiences, interpretation is never definitive. Interpretation of social action is therefore subject to change. It therefore seems logical to assume an operational activity has the potential to yield multiple forms of interpretation. It is these interpretations, which have the potential to hinder or progress social capital.

3.9.3.2 The Meaning behind an Action

Understanding the meaning behind an action is critically important, and according to Weber (1978) can occur in two ways. First, it can consist of a direct understanding of the

intended meaning of an action. Faculty members who behave in certain ways, such as teaching or marking student assignments, do so as part of the academic process; thereby their actions have direct rational understanding (Weber, 1978). Secondly, it consists of explanatory understandings. This relates to the motive for acting in a particular way at a precise moment, and in a given context. This requires the researcher to investigate why someone is engaged in a particular activity, and the meaning of the action.

Motives according to Weber (1978) 'provide meaningful grounds for behaving in certain ways' (1978, p. 14). Moreover, these motives may create contradictory and conflicting impulses, leaving faculty members uncertain as to the rationale behind decisions and actions. Ideally, in a TNE partnership, partner objects (goals) should be aligned, thereby creating mutually beneficial outcomes for all parties. Yet it is not always possible to articulate shared purposes, thereby creating ambiguity and fragmentation between partners (Engeström, 2005). Therefore, the articulation of TNE partnership goals is fundamental in giving the partnership meaning. If faculty members are unaware of the reasons and goals of their TNE partnership, this may affect behaviours, motivation and morale (Engeström, 2005).

In addition, Weber (1978) discusses the importance of events and objects, which initially may be deemed as 'meaningless' but once given intelligibility, have the ability to effect human action (1978, p. 10). To Weber (1978), every resource has a meaning. Yet this meaning is in virtue of its relationship with human action. This resonates with the *readiness-to-hand* (1962, pp. 102-103) concept of Martin Heidegger. As Heidegger (1962) observes, individuals achieve their most primordial relationship with equipment, not by some detached theoretical or intellectual study of it, but by skilfully manipulating it. Artefacts therefore become intelligible by an ongoing experience of using them.

Weber (1978) concurs, arguing resource use and application has to make sense to agents, or it appears meaningless. Heidegger (1962) claims, agents cannot know the object beyond their experience of using it. This implies faculty members engaged in operational activities can only understand their relationship with a resource if considered in the context of action. Therefore, it seems a TNE partnership (activity) system is somewhat dependent on meanings provided by resources. By removing, reducing, or reconfiguring a resource, the experience of the member changes, activity is temporarily disturbed, and the agent has to consider new ways in which to restore the activity. Heidegger (1962) highlights the need for the recalibration of activities, 'anything which is *un-ready-to-hand* in this way is disturbing to us, and enables us to see the *obstinacy* of that with which we must concern ourselves, in the first instance, before we do anything else' (1962, p. 103 original emphasis).

Resources have the potential to affect motivation levels, if they carry meanings, which Weber (1978) argues can ‘...promote or hinder human action’ (1978, p. 10). Depending on how individuals interpret the use of resources, human action becomes more or less intelligible. Therefore, how faculty members perceive the actions of each other and the meanings they associate with these actions is extremely important. In addition, the way in which they interpret the use of resources and attach meaning to actions will ultimately affect how they feel about their partner. Moreover, these feelings may not be conducive to the development of trust, cooperation and commitment (Mohr & Spekman, 1994).

Social relationships, according to Weber (1978) can be defined as being either ‘transient or more enduring’ (1978, p. 31). Therefore, as long as the relationship continues to produce outcomes, which all parties understand in terms of anticipated meanings and actual meanings, the greater the possibility the relationship will survive over time. Weber (1978) therefore stresses the importance of avoiding misconceptions by ensuring actions are understandable in terms of the context in which they are performed. Context is therefore fundamental in creating durable relationships, helping to define actions and anticipated actions of agents.

TSA therefore provides a theoretical lens through which to consider the more subjective aspects of human behaviour. By combining CHAT and TMSA (which seeks to explore macro level interferences and resourcing), with social action theory (which engages with more subjective dimensions, such as interpretation and meaning of action), TNE partnership development can be analysed from both agency and structural standpoints.

3.10 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to provide a detailed analysis of existing partnership discourse. By engaging with an array of sources from a variety of disciplines, *partnership* as a concept has come to represent a complex and dynamic social system, which transforms over time, through a series of phases. The operational phase (Wohlstetter et al., 2005) creates the space in which this research is situated, whereby operational activities are analysed. By analysing these activities, the aim is to gain a greater understanding of how they affect the development of social capital among partners in collaborative arrangements; notwithstanding the effect this has on the formation of *partnership capital* (Eddy, 2010).

By defining a TNE partnership as a combination of two interacting activity systems (Sino and UK), it becomes possible to identify and contemplate the subject (faculty member),

activity and resources, as well as structural components such as communities, rules and division of labour in relation to one another. By combining TMSA (Archer, 1995, 1998) with CHAT (Engeström, 2001), other elements (time, reproduction and transformation), not explicitly stated in CHAT, become evident, enabling a greater level of data analysis to occur. However, this chapter, whilst acknowledging the importance of structure (CHAT and TMSA) in the development of a partnership, also identified the important role of agency (social action theory). Therefore, philosophically this research needs a paradigmatic approach which can appreciate the dialectic relationship between both structure and agency.

Chapter Four

Explaining the World in Terms of Meaning: Applying Critical Realism and Multiple-Case Study Design to Transnational Partnerships

'A good decision is based on knowledge and not numbers' Plato 427-347 BC

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to identify and explain the paradigm and methodology underpinning this research study. Through an exploration of ontological and epistemological positions, critical realism and multiple-case study design emerge as the most suitable frameworks in which to conduct an empirical study of TNE partnerships.

This chapter provides justification for the use of these approaches, whilst also providing a rationale for the use of semi-structured interviews. Feeding into this approach, template analysis (N. King, 2012b) provides an established form of data analysis, which complements the philosophical and methodological approach. Woven into these discussions are issues pertaining to research ethics and researcher integrity. Moreover, the chapter documents the more practical requirements of data collection and management including sampling and scheduling, as well as outlining the challenges and choices made throughout the data coding and analytical process.

4.1 Grounding Partnership: What Ontological and Epistemological Meanings Underpin the Concept of *Partnership*?

The conceptual definition of both partnership and social capital outlined in chapter three clearly emphasise the social nature of each phenomena. Social reality is not a steady state (Pettigrew, 1997). Relationships and networks shift and change due to the open system contexts in which they operate. The term “socially real” therefore refers to ‘practices, states of affairs or entities’ (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 201), which are generated and dependent on human activity for their existence. If we define *partnership* as a social entity, then these entities become dependent on human activity for their creation and survival.

To understand social phenomena we therefore need to explain their production, affects and understand their meaning. Paradigmatically and methodologically, what is

required is an approach which appreciates the complexity of open social systems, whilst also recognising the 'need to evaluate' these systems 'critically' (Sayer, 1992, p. 5).

TNE partnerships represent business relationships (see chapters one and two). In addition, these relationships are often dynamic and complex in nature (Ford, 1980). Therefore business relationships do not operate as closed systems, or represent atomistic events, with people conceived merely as 'passive sensors of given facts' (Bhaskar, 2011 p. 51). On the contrary, faculty members actively engage in social activities, evolving their partnership structure over time (Pettigrew, 1997). The emergent nature of partnership and the co-existence of continuity and change (A. Ryan, Tähtinen, Vanharanta, & Mainela, 2012) therefore requires more than just deductive methods of theory testing and prediction advocated by a positivist tradition (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000).

4.1.1 *Partnership and Positivism*

Positivist researchers believe the science of the natural world can give a comprehensive account of human social phenomena, with Popkewitz (1984) arguing 'theory is to be universal, not bound to a specific context or to actual circumstances, in which generalisations are formulated' (1984, p. 36). However, many social scientists dismiss positivism and its ability to address social phenomena (Eisner, 1988; Jacob, 1987; Moore, 2007; Oakley, 2002; Schutz, 1989; J. K. Smith, 1988), whereby human interactions cannot be dissected and analysed using the same methods as the natural sciences.

In closed systems, scientists conducting experiments deliberately produce, and control conditions, enabling them to identify causal links between the objects of experimental investigation. If social capital is representative of social processes, and therefore exists as part of a 'social reality [that] is not a steady state...[but] is dynamic, 'occurring' rather than 'existing' (Pettigrew, 1997, p. 338), it seems illogical to apply a methodology, which solely subscribes to a 'scientific method' of investigation (Sparkes, 1992, p. 23). As Bhaskar (2011) maintains, positivism's reduction of causal laws to sequences of events and events to experiences is thus 'a denial of the social character of science' (2011, p. 52). Therefore, a nomothetic epistemological stance which implies law-like generalisations and regularities in material or social settings carries weaknesses in the context of social science research (Gage, 1989; Hammersley, 1986). If positivism is not an adequate paradigmatic position in which to explore partnership, an exploration of other paradigms becomes necessary.

4.1.2 *Partnership and Interpretivism*

Reverting to the paradigmatic typologies of Burrell and Morgan (1979), a logical approach to social phenomena would be to adopt a more interpretivist paradigm. Situated in a subjective dimension, this ideographic approach argues reality is merely a series of assumptions and inter-subjectively shared meanings. Ontologically, interpretivism is concerned with understanding the essence of the everyday world (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), with J. Smith (1983) declaring 'the study of the social world is no more than a study of ourselves' (1983, p. 35).

Epistemologically, Burrell and Morgan (1979) stress knowledge is an output of human activity, promoting knowledge as subjective and relative (Guba, 1990). Interpretivism therefore analyses phenomena based on an internalist position, whereby social reality is a construct of the mind, rebuking codification. The focus is on the idiosyncratic behaviours of the participants in the inquiry, and upon the participants' experiences and associated meanings (Eisner, 1981). Interpretivism is therefore context-bound and subjective, relying on multiple perspectives (Manke, 1996) in order to establish knowledge concerning the nature of reality.

However, whilst a purely subjective paradigm acknowledges the role of agency, it fails to appreciate that business relationships, whilst involving agency, operate within a structural framework, which influences human conduct (Pettigrew, 1992). Interpretivist paradigms such as phenomenology, solipsism or constructivism (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, Guba, 1990), whilst having a part to play in epistemic creation, arguably deny the possibility of knowing what is real and rejects the possibility of discerning causality. Although the importance of the human agent in the creation of business relations is clear, in that social life and processes require human agents to engage in action (Pettigrew, 1992), these actions occur in the context of encountered structures. Actions therefore create tensions in the structure, ultimately acting as the driver for change over time (Ilyenkov, 1982). Furthermore, whilst being socially constructed, partnerships do represent *real* entities that exist *out there*. They are more than individual mental constructs. As Fleetwood (2005) explains '...an entity is said to be *real* if it has *causal efficacy*; has *an effect on behaviour*; *makes a difference*' (2005, p. 199, original emphasis).

Although *real* is often synonymous with material entities, anything which influences action and creates events has the potential to be *real* to those involved (Fleetwood, 2005). This implies international partnerships are *real*; they have the ability to affect the behaviour

of agents (faculty members) and cause events (e.g. partnership termination) which transforms social reality over time. Partnerships are therefore posited as *real* structures, which have emergent properties which cannot be analysed purely by investigating individuals in isolation (A. Ryan et al., 2012). Business relationships cannot simply be reduced to the properties of individuals alone, as this would exclude the configurations that exist between networked members (Bhaskar, 1979).

Moreover, Fleetwood (2005) argues although social reality is dependent on human activity, it does not mean a social entity cannot exist independently of an individual's knowledge or identification of it. This implies that *partnership*, as a social entity, contains both observable and unobservable aspects, which faculty members may or may not be aware of knowing or constructing. Agents within a partnership, due to their position and/or duration of service, may be aware of certain events or activities others find unfamiliar. Indeed, to understand transformation and reproduction within a partnership, investigations need to appreciate that agents may not have complete knowledge of what they are doing or why they are doing it (Fleetwood, 2005). Assumptions made by individuals may therefore be incorrect, based upon their limited knowledge of a situation. Hence, to reduce business relationships to reductionist, objective, methodological individualism (Elder-Vass, 2005), is to bypass vital aspects of social structures that individual level explanations may ignore.

It therefore seems neither a nomothetic nor an ideographic approach is suitable in providing answers to the proposed research aims and questions. Furthermore, this arguably implies partnership research requires a research paradigm which acknowledges the dialectic relationship between both structure and agency in the creation of social reality.

4.2 Introducing Critical Realism: A Way to Approach Transnational Partnership Research

Critical realism as social theory, attempts to reconcile positivist and post positivist views of the world (D. Scott & Morrison, 2006), by recognising the existence of an external world, acting independently of our knowledge or beliefs about it (Mole, 2012).

Critical realists believe this world is, in principle, *real* but impossible for humans to truly perceive objectively (Easton, 2010). The adjective 'critical' means critical realists tend to share social realists' commitments to changing unsatisfactory realities and to self-

emancipation (Benton & Craib, 2011). Critical realism therefore considers that the surface appearance of things is potentially misleading in explaining an object's true character.

Ultimately, critical realists try to overcome the 'antagonism' which exists between 'empiricists and interpretivist viewpoints about reality and how it can be known' (D. Scott & Morrison, 2006, p. 47). Therefore, critical realists' refute claims made by positivists and interpretivists, who sit on opposite ends of the paradigm continuum. Critical realists argue that social reality does not operate as a closed system whereby laws and constants can explain social action. Conversely, they argue it is not simply a social construct. Whilst discourse is important and interpretation crucial, social reality exists in a realm beyond that expressed merely through discourse. These understandings liberate critical realism, enabling it to seek the cause of events from 'elsewhere in the ontological spectrum' (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000, p. 13).

At the heart of critical realism lies explanation (Easton, 2010). Critical realists therefore seek to examine how structures, practices, culture, language and psychological dimensions affect business relationships, whilst appreciating relationships are dependent on the activity of individual actors. As Easton (2010) contends, 'critical realists accept that our world is socially constructed, but argue that this is not entirely the case...reality kicks in at some point' (2010, p. 122). Investigations are therefore explanatory in nature, whereby researchers aim to explain, understand and interpret social phenomena (Sayer, 1992).

4.2.1 *Depth Realism: Stratified and Transformational*

In order to achieve this level of explanation, critical realism utilises a *transcendental realist* ontology. Collier (1994) refers to critical realism as a form of 'depth realism' (1994, p. 42), whereby the researcher is able to look for explanations which lie beyond daily cognition and perceptions. Mole (2012) posits critical realism as being unique in its ability to claim deeper explanations of social life. It does this by penetrating behind the surface of experiences and perceptions, looking to understand the connections which make social reality possible (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000). Critical realism utilises three exploratory domains (table 2) in which to explain social reality:

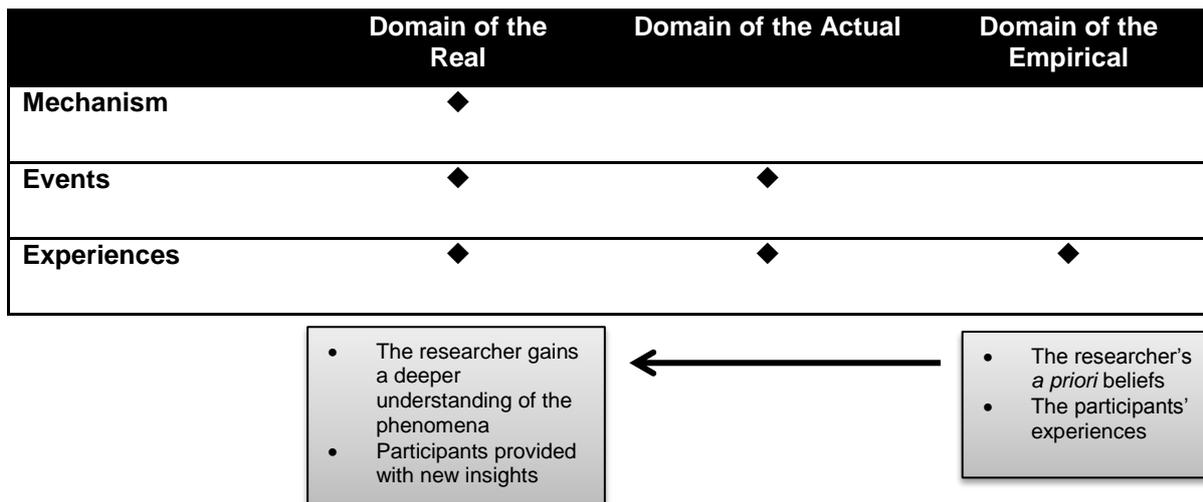


Table 2: Adaptation of the domains of critical realism (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 13)

In an open system, these domains are, typically, out of phase with one another. This is because structures and mechanisms act trans-factually (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000), whereby they continue to have an influence, even if other countervailing powers and mechanisms prevent this influence manifesting itself. As Bhaskar (2008) describes:

Structures and mechanisms then are real and distinct from patterns of events that they generate; just as events are real and distinct from the experiences in which they are apprehended. Mechanisms, events and experiences thus constitute three overlapping domains of reality, viz. the domains of the *real*, the *actual* and the *empirical* (2008, p. 56)

Since this research aims to explore *how* the operational activities of faculty members affect relational development and *partnership capital* (Eddy, 2010), it seems logical to adopt a philosophical position, which mobilises the subjective experience of operational staff. The rationale for this approach is to generate deeper levels of explanation, such as underpinning mechanisms and events, which may be influencing the development of social and *partnership capital* (Eddy, 2010), yet be unknown in the *empirical* domain of the faculty member.

4.2.1.1 The Domain of the *Empirical*

In the domain of the *empirical*, agents (in this case research participants) are able to experience and perceive the social world. This in-turn generates experiences agents can recall and share through empirical research methods such as interviews or focus groups. Things can therefore be measured, evaluated and described (Mole, 2012).

The domain of the *empirical* therefore provides a *portal* through which the researcher and the researched engage in dialogue. It is therefore fundamentally interpretivist in character (Easton, 2010), representing ‘the essential foundation for everyday circumspective interpretation’ (Heidegger, 1962, p. 191). This means everyone’s interpretations are grounded in their *fore-having, fore-sight* and *fore-conception* (Heidegger, 1962, p. 191, original emphasis). Agents cannot simply remove themselves from their *empirical* domain. However, experiences can be utilised in order to explore the deeper domains of the *actual* and the *real* (Fleetwood, 2005).

Critical realists therefore argue the *empirical* domain is not enough *in itself* to provide an explanation of social reality. At the same time, the *empirical* domain does not just signify the beliefs and experiences of the research participants. It also represents the researcher’s preconceptions, experiences and interpretations of the phenomena under investigation (Ryan et al., 2010). Based upon this understanding, critical realists therefore acknowledge that all insights are inevitably *fallible* (Ryan et al., 2012; Easton, 2010). Research fallibility is further explored in sections 4.4 and 4.5.

4.2.1.2 The Domain of the *Actual*

The second domain, known as the *actual*, suggests events and actions (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000) create experiences and perceptions. Arguably, this understanding implies activities and practices undertaken by a faculty member occur in the domain of the *actual*, with the *phenomena* of such action being experienced and perceived in the *empirical*. Yet, nothing occurs out of nothing. This implies actions and activities are produced by pre-existing structures, which agents recreate, transform or reproduce, consciously or unconsciously. Moreover, Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2000) argue human agents may not always be conscious of what part they play in reproducing social phenomena. It is therefore a mistake to reduce social reality to mere accounts and perceptions.

Beneath the *empirical* domain lie forces that need to be investigated in order for reliable knowledge about social phenomena to be collected (Sayer, 1992). Faculty members operating transnational partnerships may be hindered, limited or encouraged to take action by underpinning mechanisms, which exist in the domains of the *actual* and *real*. Furthermore, these forces may create conditions which encourage certain activities, which may be harmful or beneficial to the partnership. Faculty members may be conscious of the forces controlling their outputs, or they may be ignorant of their existence. They may be unable to explain what they are, why or how they exist.

Arguably, one would expect the consequential outputs of social capital such as: trust, commitment, respect, and loyalty (Lawler, 2001) to be described by faculty members as phenomena they experience in the *empirical* domain. However, to understand how these outputs have occurred, the researcher needs to excavate below the subjective experience. It is then possible to identify and explore how externalities such as communities, regulations, labour and resourcing (third generation CHAT) influence actions and events. The *empirical* only provides an initial starting point for the observation and interpretation of consequential outputs (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000).

By connecting the *empirical* to the *actual*, it becomes possible to see how each domain has the ability to affect the other, either consciously or unconsciously. However, as previously highlighted, what can be experienced in the *empirical* is not, in a critical realist paradigm, enough to explain social reality (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000). This creates methodological challenges, whereby it would be problematic to use a single subjective experience of a social phenomenon in order to try to understand it. In order to realise my research aims and questions, it is critical that the *empirical* domain is checked against other sources of data collection, in order to identify patterns and themes that can generate credible analytical explanations.⁷

4.2.1.3 The Domain of the *Real*

Requiring further explanation is the domain of the *real*. Herein lie powers and forces which do not have to be directly experienced for individuals to know they exist. *A priori* knowledge or *fore-structure* (Heidegger, 1962) may provide faculty members with enough information to know what something is capable of without experiencing it (Collier, 1994). Partnership structures therefore contain and generate powers, which can be analysed, and to an extent, predicted. Collier (1994) refers to this as 'a mechanism generating an event' (1994, p. 43). A mechanism does not need to be mechanical in nature, but can also represent tendencies and instincts.

Mechanisms operating in open systems are not the same as scientific laws of nature operating in closed systems, under controlled conditions. Events which occur in open systems, have multiple mechanisms operating at any one time, conjointly bringing about a series of events. A consequence of this is although individual mechanisms can be isolated in experimentally closed systems, nature represents a multiplicity of mechanisms, jointly producing a course of events.

⁷ This is discussed in more detail in section 4.6 *Modes of Qualitative Data Collection*.

To control and isolate certain mechanisms via experimentation may tell us how to *trigger* a sequence of events, but the laws of nature do not operate in this artificial way (Bhaskar, 2008). Critical realists believe experiments only show the tendencies of underlying mechanisms, which may or may not occur in regular or observable event sequences. Bhaskar (2008) describes these series of events as representing the domain of the *actual* (table 2), with the mechanisms that codetermine them representing the domain of the *real*. Underlying mechanisms are important to investigate in a study which seeks to explicate factors that affect faculty members' abilities to develop partnership bonds over time.

4.2.2 Transcending the Domains: The Importance of *Retroduction*

A critical realist tradition requires the researcher to journey between all three domains. The paradigm therefore requires the researcher to move beyond the domain of the *empirical* and penetrate behind subjective experience. This occurs through a process of 'retroduction', whereby the researcher moves backwards through the data, postulating and identifying mechanisms which are producing the subjective experiences (Sayer, 1992, p. 107).

Retroduction is a meta-process, iterative in nature (Dubois & Gadde, 2002), whereby the outcome is the identification of mechanisms that explain what caused particular events to occur. Easton (2010) claims the question underlying all critical realist research is; "what must be true in order to make this event possible?" (2010, p. 123). The process ultimately seeks to continuously ask the question "why?" (Easton, 2010). By interacting with participant's subjective experiences, new mechanisms and forces, which reside in the *actual* and the *real* – and which have not been previously considered or understood in the *empirical* domain of the researcher or the participant – may become apparent. To evidence the movement between the domains, new theoretical frameworks may be required in order to explain newly discovered phenomena (Ryan et al., 2012).

Ryan et al., (2012) maintain critical realist research is complex, presenting certain challenges:

- Researchers must cope with complex data sets, involving high levels of event details, perceptions and activities.
- Researchers need to balance their own, *a priori* views, with the primacy of the actor's own perceptions and experiences, in order to draw out explanations.

In order to assist in critical realism research, Ryan et al. (2012) offer a four stage critical realist research spiral, which aids in the application of critical realism to business relationship research (figure 11). By considering the design, investigation, analysis and explanations generated by adopting a critical realist position, they suggest ways in which critical realists can improve the rigour and credibility of their study.

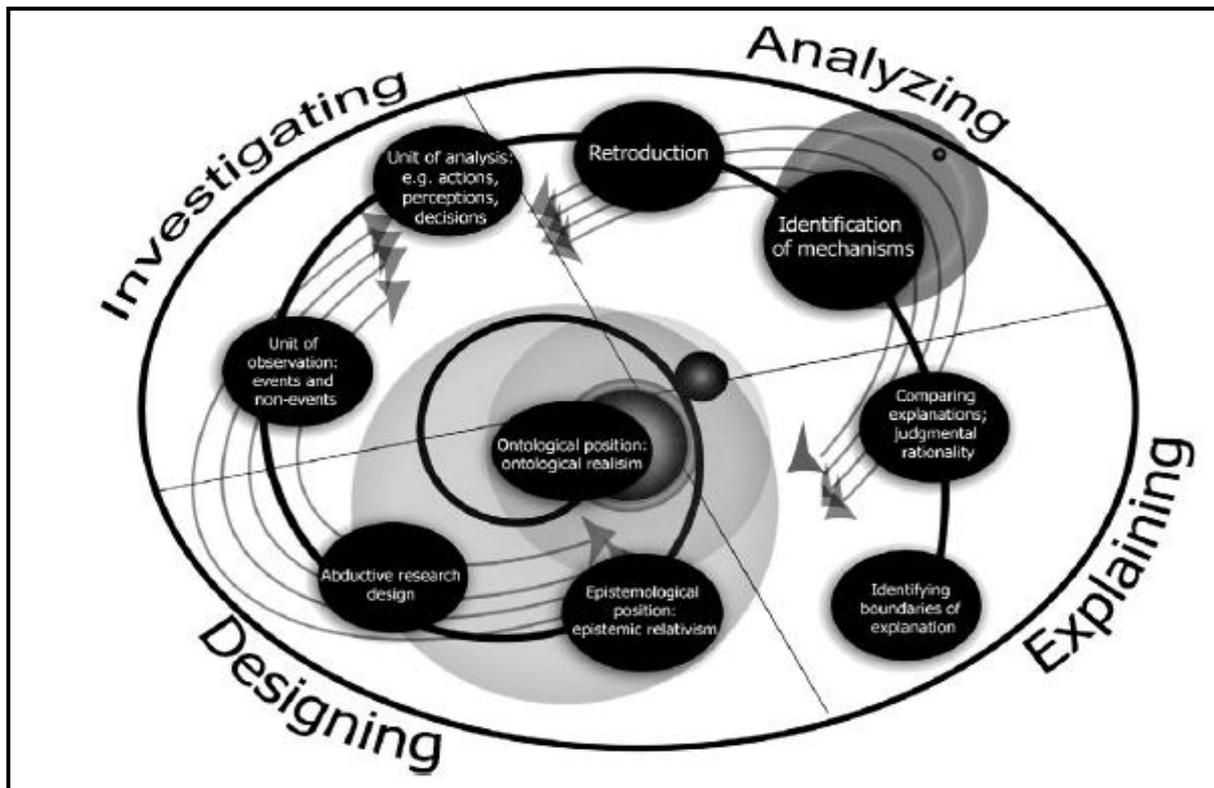


Figure 11: The critical realist research spiral (Ryan et al., 2012, p. 303)

4.3 Introducing the Methodological Approach: The Multiple-Case Study Design

From a methodological perspective, critical realism with its stratified ontology and transcendental epistemology must enable conceptual and theoretical developments which ‘connect ideas and propositions from different areas of substantive work...’ (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000, p. 22). Critical realists therefore believe any methods are, in principle, capable of explanatory power. Focus is therefore on the broader issue of research design and appropriateness (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000). Critical realists are thus concerned with using methods that are appropriate to the subject under investigation.

Philosophically, critical realism is therefore relatively tolerant of a variety of research methods (Sayer, 2000), with choice focusing on the nature of the object of the study and what one wants to learn about it. This is what ‘constitutes good practice in this model’

(Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000, p. 23). Furthermore, the emancipatory potential of critical realism is like no other paradigm. It starts with the assumption 'that what exists can be discovered...and then can be further developed through the consideration of what has been found' (2000, p. 23).

One way to approach TNE partnership research is to embed a case study approach into a critical realist paradigm. Since case study research focuses upon detailed examinations and explanations of certain phenomena, with the objective of understanding why things are as they are, Easton (2010) argues 'critical realism is particularly well suited as a companion to case research' (2010, p. 119). Unlike scientific methods such as experimentation, where the phenomenon can be deliberately separated from its context, case study research appreciates the blurred boundaries that exist between phenomena and context.

Yin (2014) argues this understanding provides case study research with the ability to cope 'with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points out' (2014, p. 17). It also relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. In this sense, case study research is not limited to data collection strategies alone, but represents a methodology (Merriam, 1998; Stoecker, 1991).

Easton (2010) offers guidance on the application of critical realism to a case study methodology (table 3). By mapping this process onto the critical realist research spiral (figure 11) it becomes easier to understand, first, if a case study is an appropriate method, and second, how it may be designed to ensure methodological rigour.

Task	Description
Bound case DESIGNING	Clearly bound complex phenomena Determine boundaries
Research questions DESIGNING	Nature of the questions – exploratory Wanting to understand “why?” and “how?”
Identify sample DESIGNING	Entities must characterise the phenomena under study
Data collection INVESTIGATING	Recorded live or exist in records of the past Case study – often qualitative semi-structured interviews Consider best way to identify causal mechanisms
Data interpretations ANALYSING EXPLAINING	Differences exist between the three domains in critical realism Double hermeneutic – problematic requiring careful coding Retroduction (Sayer, 1992) Judgemental rationality – defend explanations as good (Archer, Collier, & Porpora, 2004) Explanations both locally and theoretically generalizable

Table 3: Adaptation of critical realist case method (Easton, 2010, pp. 123-124; Ryan., et al. 2012, p. 303)

4.4 Applying the Multiple-Case Study Design: Introducing Two TNE Partnerships

In case study research, design requires careful attention (Stake, 1995). Philliber, Schwab, and Samsloss (1980) argue research design represents a blueprint, which must consider the research questions, the unit of analysis, data collection and interpretation. Focusing on the subject of the inquiry, cases must allow for *research aims and objectives to be realised* (Easton, 2010).

I therefore had to consider a research design which would enable me to answer my research questions credibly. Yin (2014) examines four basic types of case study design, representing either single-cases or multiple-cases, which contain single or multiple units of analysis. Depending on the phenomenon under study, and the nature of the research questions, researchers have choices about case configuration and number.

Based upon this information, and considering the implicit need for quality in any research process, I adopted a holistic, multiple-case design consisting of two Sino-British partnerships (figure 12).

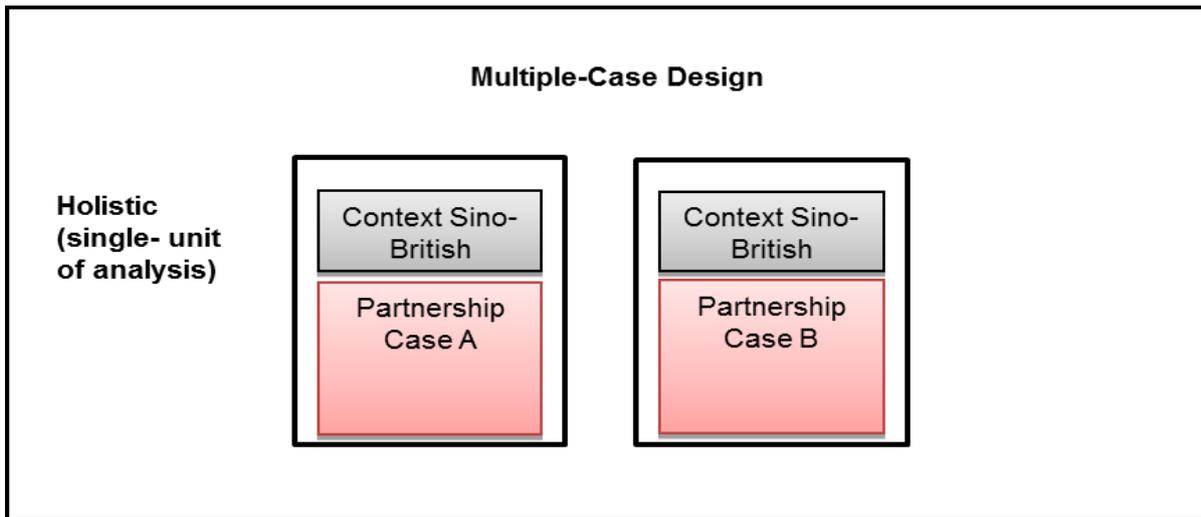


Figure 12: Design for multiple-case study (Adapted from Yin, 2014, p. 50).

4.4.1 Defining and Bounding the Cases: The Type of TNE Partnership

To ensure research credibility, I sought to identify a ‘reasonable homogeneous sample’ (J.A. Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 3). This was of critical importance. Due to the differences that exist in transnational modes of delivery (chapter one), it was important to ensure a level of consistency in terms of the provision types and delivery methods. Homogeneous sampling therefore assists in the generation of simplified and focused research (Patton, 1978).

Although each of the partnerships would contain a level of variance, it was important to consider how qualitative internal and external validity would be maintained (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

4.4.1.1 The ‘Joint’ Programme Partnership (‘Joint’ Partnership)

It is beyond the scope of this study to research the experiences of faculty members who operationalise all types of educational provision between the China and the UK. This research therefore aims to understand TNE partnership development through a *particular type* of Sino-British provision.

The ‘joint programme’ as defined by the QAA (2013) provides the partnership context for this study. In 2012, the QAA revised its 2006 review of Sino-British TNE activities. The outcome of this was a revised definition based upon its latest findings (QAA, 2013). Although multiple definitions of the ‘joint programme’ exist (British Council, 2013, Zhuang, 2009), the

QAA (2013) definition is the most applicable to this study. The QAA therefore provides the most current definition of the 'joint programme.' These programmes provide students the option of completing:

...[T]heir entire programme with the Chinese partner (although they may have an option to transfer to the UK partner). Such joint programmes vary in terms of both how they are delivered and the extent of involvement of the respective partners. A block-teaching model is often adopted so that the UK partner can teach using 'fly-in fly-out' faculty (QAA, 2013, p. 10)

Table 4 explicates the two cases utilised in this study. It is important to note at this stage, that the UK partners all operate their 'joint programmes' through a UK consortium.⁸ Moreover, all the partnerships operate at a single delivery centre in China.

By opting to focus my research on a single delivery institution, running two UK 'joint programmes', the intention was to produce data, which would enable me to comment upon convergence, divergence, themes and patterns, in relation to two similarly bound cases (Yin, 2014). The aim was to bind the cases so that the focus would be on the effect operational activities have on relationships. Although wider forces affect activities, I wanted to limit the effect of these in terms of geographic location, regional (municipal) regulation, and partnership types, making it easier to make connections between the cases and the three domains of critical realism. Furthermore, I was interested to know, by binding the cases, if a single Sino institution treated their UK partners equally, and the effects of this on operational relationships.

⁸ Section 2.1.3.1: *Consortia Relationships*.

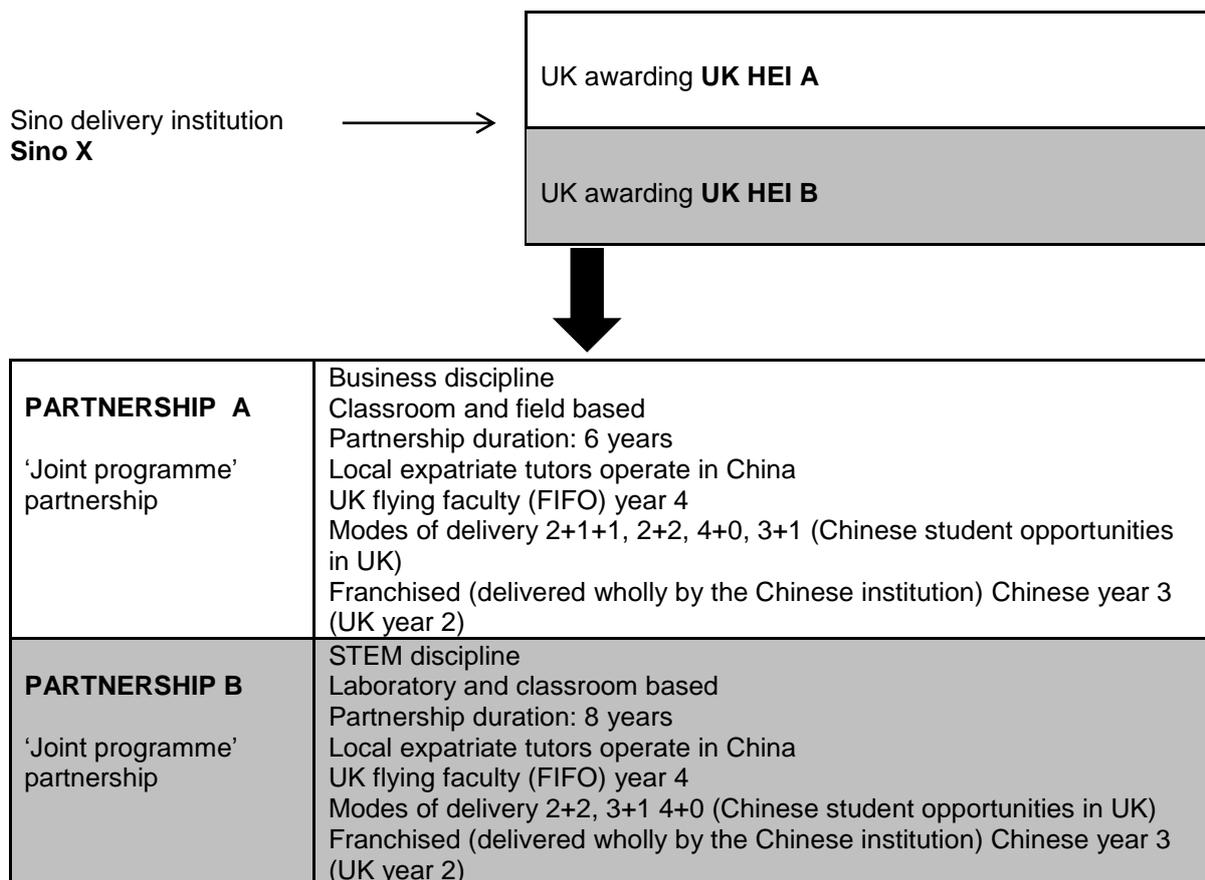


Table 4: Research sample: partner institutions and partnership configuration

4.4.2 Defining and Bounding the Cases: Sample, Size and Configuration

Yin (2014) claims once the case has been defined, decisions about what and who should be included, and not included, become pertinent. The *sample*, according to Black (1993) tends to imply a *group selected from the larger population*, which have the required characteristics. Moreover, he argues the researcher must clearly define this population and its relevance.

4.4.2.1 Sample: Identifying Sino and UK Partners

The cases used in this research represent TNE partnerships which currently operate between two UK HEIs and a single delivery partner in China. Each case therefore represents a *partnership (activity) system*.

The Sino delivery partner utilised in this research is unique. Owned in part by a consortium of 11 UK HEIs, the majority shareholder is a Chinese University, as Chinese educational legislation dictates. The delivery institution prides itself on its links with the UK,

and the opportunities it offers Chinese students who wish to undertake a British education in a British environment. This unique setup is the only one of its kind in China to date.⁹

4.4.2.2 Population: Defining and Identifying Relevant Faculty Members

Since faculty member activities provide this research with its unit of analysis (Yin, 2014) it was important to make sure the Sino and UK cases would enable the relevant data to be collected. In this research context, it was important to gain access to a *population* of faculty members who worked as part of these two Sino-British TNE arrangements.

To help create the British experience, local tutors working at the Sino institution are not native Chinese.¹⁰ This means UK faculty members work with English speaking academics who are usually expatriates. Culturally, many of the Sino faculty members are from similar Western backgrounds in terms of education, religion and language, with many familiar with UK educational procedures, having previously been educated or employed at/by a UK HEI. Native Chinese work in the institution, but in the areas of admissions, finance and student services, employed by the Chinese majority shareholder.

4.4.2.2.1 Definition of the Sample

A faculty member, for the purpose of this research is an inclusive term used to refer to ***academic members of staff, such as programme leaders, course leaders, module leaders, local tutors or academics, who work in the operational (teaching and learning) delivery of a Sino-British partnership.*** Although senior management, such as deans, departmental heads, international directors, administrators, student support and registry teams, play important parts in the operational phase of a partnership, their roles and responsibilities do not meet the aforementioned criteria.

Throughout the data analysis, the sample are referred to in three ways (see below table):

- 1. As an individual faculty member** (via their pseudonyms e.g. *Tom* or *Louise*), or
- 2. As collective faculty members (group),** or

⁹ At the time of thesis submission November 2015.

¹⁰ This is the reason the partner is referred to as 'Sino' (meaning of or connected with China) as opposed to 'Chinese' which implies the direct and undiluted implementation of Chinese practices/ cultures and traditions.

3. As institutions

SinoXa or SinoXb	<p>Refers to the collective faculty members (group) working in China on either partnership A (SinoXa) or partnership B (SinoXb)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It does not refer to the Sino institution <p>Sino X refers to the “delivery institution” and its senior management team/ strategic leaders</p>
UKa or UKb	<p>Refers to the collective faculty members (group) working in the UK on either partnership A (UKa) or partnership B (UKb)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It does not refer to the UK institutions <p>UK HEI A or UK HEI B refers to the “awarding institution” and its senior management teams/ strategic leaders</p>

Table 5: Sample configuration and identification system 1

4.4.2.2.2 Size of Sample

In order to keep uniformity in the sample size, each faculty group from either side of each partnership had to provide the same minimum number of faculty members. I was therefore working with small, purposive samples (Morse, 1989). The minimum number I sought was two faculty members from each partner group. However, my direct involvement with partnership A meant I was able to access three faculty members from each side of the partnership. Each group also needed considering within the limits of time and means, as well as in their suitability to answer my research questions. The sample were recruited through my professional relationships with faculty members working as part of partnership A. Partnership B was recruited differently, whereby I had a contact in senior management working with SinoX, who offered to help me make contact with faculty members who operated partnership B, both in China and in the UK.

4.4.2.2.3 Position/ Role of Sample

As well as size, the sample also needed to be consistent in terms of role. When applying CHAT (Engeström, 2001), the division of labour can play an important role in the production of activities and subsequent outcomes. Moreover, depending on an individual’s position within an activity (partnership) system, they may be able to influence or direct the development of social capital (Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010). Table 5 provides details of each participant involved in this study. There was only one participant *Keith*, who had experience of working in both faculty groups as part of partnership A.

Configuration	Sino Faculty	UK Faculty
PARTNERSHIP A SinoXa collective faculty group UKa collective faculty group Delivery Institution: SinoX Awarding Institution: UK HEI A	Participant: Hannah Role: Local Tutor Service: 2 years (no longer in service) Responsibility: 1 franchised year 3 module, supported on 2 others Qualification: Postgraduate degree	Participant: Keith Role: Module Leader Service: 1 year UK 1 year China Responsibility: UK module leader for 1 franchised year 3 module, 1 year 4 <i>FIFO</i> module Qualification: Postgraduate degree
	Participant: Eliza Role: Local Tutor Service: 2 years Responsibility: 1 franchised year 3 module, supports 2 year 4 <i>FIFO</i> UK modules Qualification: Postgraduate degree	Participant: Ann Role: UK Course Leader Service: 5 years Responsibility: Oversees whole programme, 1 year 4 <i>FIFO</i> module Qualification: Postgraduate degree
	Participant: Tom Role: Sino Course Leader Service: 20 months Responsibility: 2 franchised year 3 modules, supports 1 year 4 <i>FIFO</i> modules Qualification: Postgraduate degree	Participant: Louise Role: Module Leader Service: 5 years Responsibility: UK module leader for 2 franchised year 3 modules, supports <i>Ann</i> on her 1 year 4 <i>FIFO</i> module Qualification: Undergraduate degree
PARTNERSHIP B SinoXb collective faculty group UKb collective faculty group Delivery Institution: SinoX Awarding Institution: UK HEI B	Participant: Jun Role: Local Tutor Service: 18 months Responsibility: Teaching on various year 2 (other programme run by UK consortium), supports year 3 and 4 UK <i>FIFO</i> modules Qualification: Doctorate	Participant: Kevin Role: Module Leader Service: 2 years Responsibility: UK module leader for 2 year 4 <i>FIFO</i> modules Qualification: Doctorate
	Participant: Gary Role: Sino Programme Leader Service: 8 years Responsibility: Oversees UK programme operating at delivery partner (consisting of 3 degree courses), teaches on year 3 and 4 <i>FIFO</i> modules as well as own modules Qualification: Doctorate	Participant: Steve Role: Module Leader Service: 2 years Responsibility: UK module leader for 1 year 4 <i>FIFO</i> modules Qualification: Doctorate

Table 6: Sample configuration and identification system 2

4.4.3 Participant Anonymity and Protection

In order to protect the participants, ethical guidelines and practices were implemented throughout the entire study (BERA, 2011). Ethical concern is dynamic, requiring continuous monitoring throughout data collection and analysis (J.A. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

In field research, the researcher is themselves the measuring instrument (Polkinghorne, 1991) and what they research is equally as important as how they research. Data collection requires the willingness of the participants to share their experiences with the researcher. Even though researchers offer anonymity, the small samples often used in qualitative methods may mean interviews actually identify a participant (Elliot & Williams, 2001). Participants who name places, times and dates, may allow their identity to become known unwittingly. This is certainly true in the case of this research, whereby the partnerships operate in unique arrangements based at a single Chinese delivery institution. I needed to be aware of this, and develop a method for keeping interviewee identities private, whilst not contaminating the data by removing key pieces of information (Padgett, 1998).

To ensure the protection of the identities of the participants involved in this study I anonymised all names, courses and institutions (tables 4 and 5). Pseudonyms were also given to participants for the purpose of in text citations.

I ensured all participants had an information pack prior to their involvement. The pack contained detailed information about the nature of research and its anticipated outcomes (*appendix 1*). It also informed participants about the permissions I sought at each institution, and named senior executives who they could speak with in order to verify my research. These senior executives often acted as internal ambassadors for my work. This was particularly important in China, where time delays and distance meant I was personally unable to answer questions or meet participants in advance of the study. Participants also had the right to withdraw at any stage of the research and write-up. A master copy of the voluntary informed consent form is available in *appendix 2*.

4.4.4 Defining and Bounding the Cases: Can I make Generalisations?

Since this research utilises a qualitative approach, as well as very specific Sino-British cases in which to analyse TNE 'joint' partnerships, I was aware that generalisations to other transnational populations would be problematic. Moreover, because emergent

properties characterise partnerships, creating dynamic environments (J. E. Austin, 2000), empirical research conducted at a specific moment can arguably *only represent that specific moment in the partnership's life cycle*.

Findings cannot be generalised beyond that moment or used to prognosticate a partnership's future. However, case studies are generalisable to theoretical propositions, whereby the researcher aims to *expand and generalise theories* (Yin, 2014). From a critical realist perspective, causal explanations can be utilised to *develop existing theories* or provide the raw materials for the *building of new ones*. Therefore, it becomes possible to contribute to the development of theory based on a particular case, as opposed to generalising about all "TNE partnerships".

4.5 Trustworthy Research: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability

The four terms 'credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 300) are the qualitative researchers' equivalents for the conventional terms internal validity, reliability, external validity and objectivity, favoured by quantitative researchers. These terms are considered more appropriate for qualitative research, and provide alternatives that stand in a more logical and derivative relation to the naturalistic axioms. In order to create trustworthy qualitative research, these four criteria need considering in relation to research design, execution and analysis. Research needs to provide: credible findings, make transferability judgements possible, ensure the process of the inquiry and its acceptability attests to the dependability of the inquiry, and finally develop confirmability by ensuring research documentation is methodical and reflexive. Although the aforementioned criteria are important considerations in naturalistic research they 'most emphatically...are *not* prescriptions of how inquiry *must* be done...it is dubious whether "perfect" criteria will ever emerge' (1985, p. 331, original emphasis).

Other considerations for qualitative researchers are outlined in The Qualitative Legitimation Model (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 234). It details threats to internal credibility including issues such as researcher bias, observational bias, descriptive validity, illusory correlation and causal error. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest ways to reduce threats to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In relation to credibility, they argue 'prolonged engagement...member checks...peer debriefing... and persistent observation' (Guba & Lincoln, 1985 p. 328) can assist in establishing trustworthiness. They further imply 'thick description...[various types of] audit trails...and reflexive journals' can assist in creating transferability, dependability and confirmability.

The below details how I have sought to deal with credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, in the context of this study. Furthermore, the *appendix* document accompanying this thesis provides written evidence of techniques I have utilised during my study to ensure the 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301) of my research.

4.5.1 The Multiple-Case Study Design

The rationale for choosing holistic, multiple-case design is that evidence collected is 'often considered more compelling' (Yin, 2014, p. 57), with the overall study being described as being more robust (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Case studies must be carefully prepared, with comparable boundaries so replicability in the findings becomes probable. The logic underlying multiple-case studies is that each case must be selected so that it either: 'predicts similar results (literal replication) or predicts contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (theoretical replication)' (Yin, 2014, p. 59). Multiple-case study sampling strengthens precision, validity and the stability of the findings, with Yin (2014) arguing if a finding holds in one setting, and can also hold in a comparable setting, the findings are more robust. Furthermore, multiple-case studies should reflect some theoretical interest, and not just be focused on prediction that the cases be similar or different. Initial theoretical propositions can be revisited and revised depending on case findings (Yin, 2014).

4.5.2 The Researcher and the Research Process

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) emphasise the importance of the researcher in the interpretation of data sets. To defend against claims of bias and misinterpretation, they suggest documenting researcher bias and historicity throughout the entire analysis process. It is therefore important to explicate at this stage my relationship with my research.

I have been working as a lecturer as part of partnership A since its inauguration in 2010. Therefore, access to this sample has been considerably easier because of my relationship with faculty members, and my reputation in both the UK and China. However, to defend against claims of researcher bias and prejudice throughout data analysis, and in particular relation to partnership A, I contemplated the using the following techniques.

4.5.2.1 Should I Bracket?

First, one could adopt a Husserlian, phenomenological approach known as bracketing (Paley, 1997) or reduction (Giorgi, 1994). According to Jasper (1994), bracketing (epoché) requires the suspension of the researcher's own preconceived ideas about the phenomenon under analysis. Epoché therefore allows the researcher to examine their own beliefs and temporarily suspend them (Embree, 2011; B. Smith & Woodruff-Smith, 1995), removing them from the phenomenon under investigation in an attempt to defend against researcher self-interests (Paley, 1997).

However, in a critical realist paradigm, the domain of the *empirical* is the only domain that provides access to the domains of the *actual* and the *real*. In essence, it is the *empirical* domain which provides information about social reality. It is value laden, subjective and biased. If epoché requires the researcher to 'suspend their worldly attitude' (Embree, 2011, pp. 120-121) and disregard their *a priori* character, which is arguably impossible (Heidegger, 1962), then questions arise as to how the researcher can ever make sense of the *empirical* domain.

Yet this does not suggest researcher reflexivity is not important. It simply argues interpretations and understandings of phenomena often involve previous encounters or beliefs. Heidegger (1962) argues *Dasein* (everyday human existence: human being (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 13)) cannot be removed from its experiences and interpretations of a phenomenon. Understanding and meaning develops through this existential condition. Arguably, the *a priori* condition is the only way to consider a phenomenon.

It is this condition, coupled with the voice of the subject under study, which researchers need to balance in order to create new insights. It is therefore impossible to remove ourselves from our *empirical* domain of experiences and interpretations. Therefore, the *empirical* domain consisting of *fore-structure* (Heidegger, 1962), beliefs, thoughts and values plays an integral part in critical realism (Ryan et al., 2012; Easton, 2010). We exist in that domain.

Nevertheless, it provides the initial starting point for dialogue, reflection and transformation. By listening to others, and their experiences, we can *reflect* upon our own pre-conceived beliefs. We can question them and use them in order to explore deeper epistemological questions. Moreover, we can use them to question ourselves and transform the way we think about social reality.

Clearly, researcher reflexivity is extremely important. Moreover, I recognise the intimate relationship I have with my research, yet it seems impractical to adopt epoché as a method of reflexivity in a critical realist paradigm.

4.5.2.2 Should I Acknowledge my Frames of Reference?

Theory building in qualitative research is a co-constitutive process between the participant and the researcher (McAuley, 2004). By investigating the domain of the *empirical* through the application of a qualitative method, the researcher works with the participant's interpretation of the phenomena in the *empirical*, in order to interpret the domains of the *actual* and the *real*. This form of hermeneutic analysis (Gadamer, 1976) appreciates that the researcher is not value-free. They cannot objectively see things as they *really* are. Furthermore, the data collected is not independent from the person who collected it (Addison, 1989). Yet qualitative research requires a form of reflexivity in order to defend against claims of research fallibility.

However, the *empirical* domain of the researcher is problematic. Mezirow (2003) describes how problematic 'frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations' (2003, p. 58) can be. He contends such frames of reference can blind individuals towards a course of action. Taken-for-granted frames of reference include 'interpersonal relationships, cultural orientations, habits of mind, moral-ethical norms [and] psychological preferences...' (2003, p. 59). To overcome these barriers to learning, a form of communicative learning is required. Individuals must apply relevant 'skills, sensitivities and insights' and keep 'an open mind' (2003, p. 60) when assessing alternative beliefs.

Arguably, regardless of the type of qualitative research method utilised or combination, researcher interpretation is the bedrock of all forms of research (J. K. Smith, 1988). This suggests, even with multiple sources of data, the researcher still needs to interpret the information. Although numerous sources may help assist in researcher reflexivity during the process of data analysis, by offering a form of triangulation (Yin, 2014), it is risky to suggest researcher interpretations will be any more credible. Triangulation of multiple qualitative sources often seeks to verify interpretations already made. It is no guarantee that the final interpretation applied to the phenomenon is *correct* or closer to the *truth*. It merely represents an individuals' interpretation of a phenomenon.

4.5.2.3 'Judgement Rationality'

A fundamental issue in the application of critical realism is in deciding if the interpretations of causal mechanisms are “good” or not’ (Easton, 2010, p. 124). One option is to employ ‘judgement rationality’ (Archer et al., 2004, p. 2), whereby the researcher engages with existing arguments before arriving at a reasoned, yet provisional judgement about what reality is objectively like.

Although this offers one-way to address issues of research credibility and dependability, all insights are inevitably fallible (Ryan et.al, 2012). Therefore, I am aware that any analysis I produce is open to further interpretation and does not represent the definitive article.

Since I am acutely aware of my position in this research in terms of analysis, interpretation and meaning, my position must always be explicit. This research therefore requires an analytical tool, which utilises my *empirical* domain, but also assists in making my interpretations provisional, tentative and open to continuous modification (N. King, Carroll, Newton & Dornan, 2002). N. King (2012a) argues the role of the researcher can be articulated *a priori* through the generation of templates. This means researcher preconceptions are incorporated into the research process, meaning my *fore-structure* is no longer considered as a separate value-system, suspended and removed from the analytical process.

4.6 Modes of Qualitative Data Collection

Although case studies offer a platform from which to launch multiple sources of data collection (Yin, 2014), this study only employs one qualitative method. Yin (2014) argues that a case study may have a variety of interest points, which may require the researcher to utilise as many sources of evidence as possible. In the context of this research, I needed to capture data, which could help me to understand the following points of interest:

- A partnership (activity) system.
- Social processes (activities) of faculty members.
- The effects of interactions on social capital.

However, this is not to suggest I did not consider applying other methods. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) discuss a variety of research methods which can be utilised in the collection of qualitative data. However, due to the transnational nature of this research, the resource requirements (time, cost and travel), and the delicate nature of the subject matter in terms of institutional revenue and reputation (Bennell & Pearce, 2002), collecting multiple sources of qualitative data was problematic.

4.6.1 Observation

Observations of faculty members in both class and office environments was rendered impossible by a variety of constraints. These constraints consisted of time to commit to the project in terms of travel, Chinese visa restrictions and the teaching schedule of faculty members at the time of data collection. Also, to “observe” overseas relationships would require access to both sets of faculty members during the same period of time, so physical and verbal reactions to emails or phone calls could be monitored. This is physically impossible.

4.6.2 Focus Groups

Focus groups were also discounted as a potential research method. The dynamic and interactive exchange generated by focus groups (B. J. Brown, 1999) was considered impractical for two reasons. First, conducting a focus group consisting of all participants from each partner group would be impossible due to distance and resource constraints. Secondly, due to the delicate nature of my research topic, faculty members may prefer not to engage in conversation with peers, which may generate openly controversial or contradictory opinions.

4.6.3 Documentation Analysis

Documentation such as partnership contracts, employment contracts or validation documents were not accessible and/or strictly off limits. In some cases, I found out that contracts had expired or simply did not exist. Although I have not utilised these data sources, I argue this has not affected the credibility of my research.

On the contrary, by utilising other sources, it is arguably easier to remove interpretative responsibility from the researcher to those sources, which can validate particular researcher claims. In essence, by seeking validation of interpretations from sources that lie outside of the researcher, it arguably removes the need to reflect on one’s

own a *priori* condition. It is this reflexivity which enables a critical realist to move beyond surface observations. Questioning leads to deeper explanations of social reality, giving critical realism its explanatory power (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000).

Therefore, although engagement with a single data source may spark critique, interpretation, regardless of the amount of sources, happens from within my own frame of reference (Mezirow, 1997). In field research, the researcher is them self the measuring instrument (Polkinghorne, 1991) and *what* they research is just as important as *how* they do it. Therefore, regardless of data source configuration, it is the researcher's interpretations, reflection and defence of analytical choices that require logical explanation throughout the research process.

4.7 The Semi-Structured Interview

Freebody (2003) highlights interviews are commonly seen as a three-part taxonomy; structured, semi-structured and open-ended. For the purposes of this research, I decided to use a semi-structured approach. The rationale for such a decision is twofold.

First, due to the nature of my research and the potential for sensitive discussions, my participants wanted information concerning the content of the interviews. Moreover, providing information in advance was a key consideration, because I was unable to travel to meet my participants and develop rapport in advance of the research. *Appendix 3* outlines my semi-structured interview questions. Although it is naive to think this process will not influence participant behaviours, it is necessary at times to provide advance knowledge of interview questions, since they can assist in the development of researcher – participant rapport (Addison, 1989).

Secondly, the semi-structured approach, although beginning with a predetermined set of core questions, allows for some latitude in the breadth of questioning, unlike the structured approach (Freebody, 2003). Questions released in advance to my participants were subsequently embellished with further questions, in order for interpretations presented by the participant to be elaborated upon. This meant that at times my interviews explored areas I had not previously considered. This enabled me to reflect upon my *a posteriori* understandings. Finally, I transcribed each participant interview.

Table 6 documents the interview schedule across China and the UK. Kvale (2007) claims investigators who use interview methods often create their own techniques for data

analysis. However, texts generated during this research process were considered in light of a particular systematic thematic approach, called template analysis (Brooks & King, 2012; N. King, 2012b)

Sino Faculty	Date/ Location	UK Faculty	Date/ Location
Participant Hannah	March 2014 China	Participant Keith	June 2014 UK
Participant Eliza	March 2014 China	Participant Ann	June 2014 UK
Participant Tom	March 2014 China	Participant Louise	June 2014 UK
Participant Jun	March 2014 China	Participant Kevin	June 2014 UK
Participant Gary	March 2014 China	Participant Steve	July 2014 UK

Table 7: The interview schedule

4.8 Developing an Analytical Strategy: Introducing Template Analysis

In order to code the texts as accurately as possible and reflect upon my own *a posteriori*, *empirical* domain of understanding, which could generate bias, coding and analysis was styled on template analysis, originally designed by Crabtree and Miller (1999). By engaging with the template work of N. King (2012b) and Brooks and King (2012), I was able to develop a thematic *a priori* coding template. All the codes generated represent my own *empirical* domain of *fore-structure* and *historicality* (Heidegger, 1962), and represent important theoretical concepts or perspectives that have informed my methodology (Brooks & King, 2012). This initial template created a provisional and tentative platform, which was subsequently modified as data analysis progressed.

N. King (2012b) suggests template analysis does not 'describe a single, clearly delineated model, but refers to a set of techniques for thematically organising and analysing textual data' (2012b, p. 256). I therefore used template analysis as an approach to data analysis, whereby, depending on the needs of my research, I utilised certain thematic techniques as a method of generating credible and trustworthy findings.

4.8.1 Operationalising Data Analysis: Applying and Developing Templates (see Appendix 6)

In order to make sure my coding was rigorous data analysis followed a stratified process (figure 13). This process enabled me to work with each individual transcript, and then consider them as partner groups working in a partnership. Moreover, the stratified approach allowed me to engage with a critical realist paradigm, by exploring data in relation to its three domains.

Table 7 highlights my initial coding template 1, labelled "Template 1". It represents my own experiences and preconceptions, and therefore reflects my *empirical* domain before data analysis commenced.

A Priori Codes: Template 1					
Activities	Relationships	Learning opportunities	Emotions	Roles	Regulations
Responsibilities	Communities	Rules	Resources	Temporality	Conflicts
Contradictions	Objectives/goals	Motivations	Benefits	Expatriates	Sharing
Expectations	Communication	Support	Knowledge	Motives	Actions

Table 8: Initial coding template 1 (Template 1)

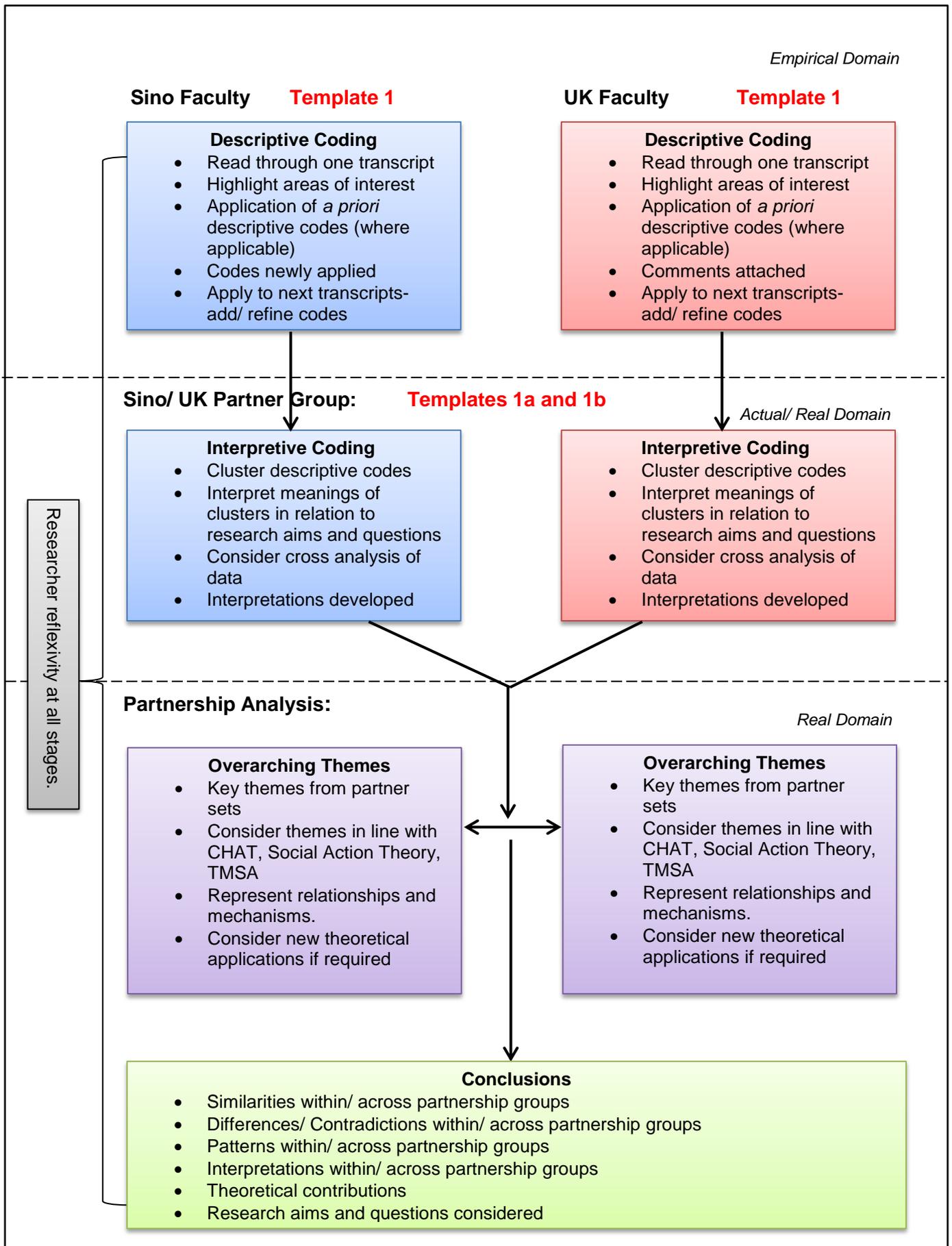


Figure 13: Stages in the process of thematic analysis (Adapted from N. King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 153)

Once I started data collection, I quickly realised the codes generated in Template 1 were far too broad, and did not consider context (Pettigrew, 1992). Many of the codes I had initially identified were intertwined, and could not easily be separated (figure 14).

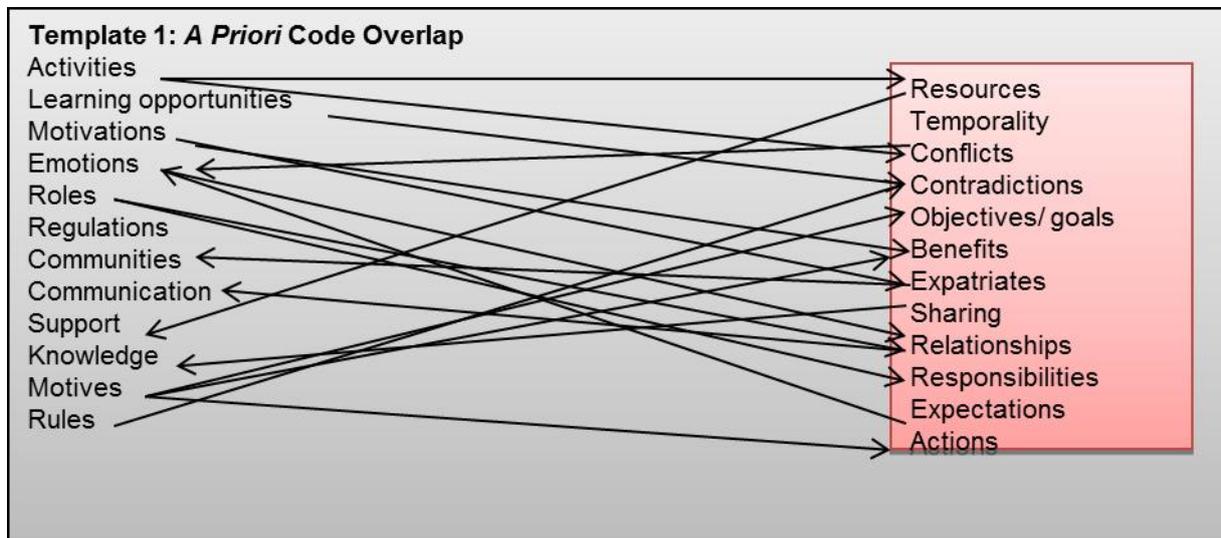


Figure 14: Template 1: A *priori* code overlap

On reflection, Template 1 did not differentiate between substantive codes or sub-codes because I did not make this distinction. It simply reflected a collection of words I thought would be identifiable in my data based upon my *a priori* understanding.

Template 1 also evidences *my naivety* in understanding the contextual factors which give meaning to people’s experiences. I initially assumed I could easily categorise segments of text, and code them as described in Template 1.

Example

‘Activities’ did not sit as a recognisable, isolated thematic area.

‘Activities’ only gained *meaning* when considered in a given context, and *usually* occurred in relation to other themes such as communication, rules, motives, goals, resourcing and emotion (as examples). Moreover, faculty engaged in different type of ‘activities’, depending on rules, schedules and daily routines. The different types therefore required clarification, as each activity had a different purpose, creating difference in interpretations, meanings and understandings.

‘Emotions’ as a code was also impossible to assign.

Each emotion was particular, generated by a certain situation, condition or event. I therefore had to consider *what* emotion was described, and then interpret *why* this was the case. This meant that ‘emotions’ needed to be broken down into types such as ‘frustration’, ‘anger’ or ‘defensiveness’ (for example), and only gained meaning when considered in a given context.

Miles and Huberman (1994) explore the problems generated by separating codes from their initial context. Codes can be rendered *meaningless* unless 'you look backwards or forwards to other words' (1994, p. 56). Although my reading of literature and theory coupled with practice did enable the identification of certain thematic codes, coding in practice was much more complicated than initially expected. For more reflections on my coding journey, please see *appendix 7*.

4.8.1.1 “*Summary of Codes*” Tables

Initially, I applied Template 1 in a descriptive manner (Brooks & King, 2012). I did this by applying Template 1 to each participant within the faculty group. For example, I applied Template 1 to *Hannah*, *Eliza*, then to *Tom*. Each time it I applied Template 1, I considered how it changed and made a note of any new codes in case these were relevant to the next participant. I did this by creating a *Summary of Codes* table. From this, I was able to spot new codes and new thematic areas. I then took the developed template (now taking the form of 1a or 1b) and applied it to the next participant within the same partner group.

During my analysis, I identified key themes, whereby I attributed a class of phenomena to a particular segment of text (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Since I used a semi-structured interview technique, every transcript engaged with the same key themes, such as 'systems and structures', 'inter and intra team relations' and 'personality of faculty.' This happened because of my interview structure, which was formulated base upon my literature review, theoretical frameworks, pilot interview and *a posteriori* knowledge.

Under these headings, I attached more information drawn from each participant transcript – mostly where context could help me interpret what was happening. Each time I applied the developing template, I referred back to the previous participant to check for consistency and difference before applying existing codes.

Each application of the template produced new codes, with some reconfiguring of old codes. This mainly occurred because a new topic discussed by one participant was not discussed by another (new code), or because a similar topic was being discussed, but on closer inspection, the context and interpretation meant an old code needed to be reconsidered in relation to all participants before it could be successfully assigned. This iterative process of moving back and forth between the data allowed for greater reflexivity and deeper levels of analysis (Benner, 1994). Although it was possible to classify segments of text under particular headings, such as 'inter-team relations', thereby creating substantive

themes, participant opinions and ideas differed as to what was important to each faculty member within these particular headings.

Example

'Old team construction' was a rather specific code. It related to the past structure of a partner group based upon past team member approaches to work.

However, as data analysis progressed, I changed it to a more generic code, 'constrained by legacy.' I found this code better described the legacies left by past faculty members in relation to decision-making processes, resource purchases, and attitudes, as well as the effect these elements had on the development of structures and systems over time.

The *Summary of Codes* tables enabled me to start my interpretive analysis. I was interested to see how each participant's voice added to or changed the emerging Template 1a and 1b as the analysis progressed, and why that was the case. After each *Summary of Codes* table, I created a brief summary of each participant transcript. I then used this to highlight how I would consider the coded transcript in relation to the next transcript. As data analysis developed:

- I generated ten *Summary of Codes* tables (one for each faculty member).
- Each table offers an overview of the *empirical* domain of the faculty member.
- It documents the *lived experiences* (Van Manen, 1997) of that faculty member, but more noticeably, it evidences the way in which they interact and rely on each other's perceptions, translations and interpretations in order to give meaning to their actions and activities.
- After each table, I produced a written summary of themes I felt were of most concern to the participant.

4.8.1.2 "Identifying Patterns and Relationship" Tables

The differences between each faculty member in terms of their perceptions and interpretations, is evident in the tables labelled *Identifying Patterns and Relationships* throughout *appendix 6*. By clustering each participant's coded summaries into one table, I was able to identify similarities, patterns and differences between individuals within the same faculty group. More importantly, this overview was critical in enabling me to interpret the meaning of clusters in relation to each individual and across the faculty group as a whole.

I was interested to know how different and similar the templates were between the individual faculty members, and what image this painted of their partner group. Moreover, I was intrigued to know how the partner groups would differ when compared to each other. As data analysis developed:

- Each Sino and UK faculty group generated its own unique *Identifying Patterns and Relationships* table.
- I generated four *Identifying Patterns and Relationships* tables (two per case study – one for Sino faculty members and one for UK faculty members).
- This enabled me to compare at a glance, individual faculty member data, whilst also providing me with a holistic overview of the faculty group.
- Furthermore, critical information and insights often came from conflicting findings, which I thought may be key in understanding TNE partnership transformation and progression.

By analysing partner group *Identifying Patterns and Relationships* tables together, I was able to identify where one agent had a possible “answer” to an issue that another participant saw as problematic. The findings highlight how the *empirical* domain represents the daily reality for most people, whereby an individual experiences social reality, but may be unable to explain how or why that experience has occurred. By exploring the experiences of others involved in the co-construction of TNE delivery, I was able to move beyond individual *empirical* domains (relativist epistemological positions), and develop findings to assist me in understanding TNE as a social reality (ontological realism) (Mingers, 2004).

This made it possible for me to explore underpinning generative mechanisms as well as reflect upon the contingent conditions (Tsoukas, 1989) that surround activity creation and interpretation. As Saldaña (2013) argues ‘when the major categories are compared with each other and consolidated in various ways, you begin to transcend the “reality” of your data and progress towards the thematic, conceptual and theoretical’ (2013, p. 12). It is this transcendental quality, which I wanted to bring to my data analysis.

Data analyses in chapters five and six therefore represent ways in which I have moved beyond the *empirical* domain, and tried to explore the data in relation to underpinning mechanisms such as structure, time and resourcing.

4.8.1.3 Considered but Declined: “Partnership Overview” Tables

Initially, I considered merging all the SinoX and UK faculty groups into two final tables entitled *Partnership Overview*, representing each of the case studies A and B. However, as I started the process, I found it was *impossible* to merge the faculty member group data sets due to the multiple voices present in each set, and the differences that resided between them. By rendering certain voices quiet, I considered myself in danger of losing the answers to the questions I was seeking to address. Please see *appendix 7* for more details.

Example

This was particularly problematic when it came to SinoXa as a partner group. Although many of the participants shared substantive thematic areas, *how* they interpreted these areas was different, depending on their division of labour, prior experiences and attitude towards UKa. Although it was impossible to represent SinoXa in a single *Partnership Overview* table, it was interesting to question *why* this was the case.

To me, it highlighted the complex relationships that operate *inside* SinoXa and the effect these different perspectives have on their internal relationships. In contrast, UKa faculty members shared the same substantive thematic areas and shared similar views. Clustering UKa into one *Overview* table would therefore have been less problematic, but at the same time, it would still have meant individual voices would have been lost in the process.

I therefore decided to keep the six *identifying patterns and relationship* tables separate, and not try to merge them. Moreover, by keeping the tables separate, I did not feel my data analysis lacked credibility, trustworthiness and dependability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I was still able to isolate and identify overarching themes.

4.8.2 Hand Code or Computer Assisted Packages?

Although I had access to Nvivo10, I decided to engage with the transcriptions and code by hand throughout the analysis process. Hand coding also means that at any time a researcher may engage in data analysis free from technological restrictions (Saldaña, 2013). Saldaña (2013) claims manipulation of qualitative data on paper and writing codes in pencil creates a form of ownership and control of the work. Furthermore, he contends ‘there is something to be said for a large area of desk or table space with each code written on its own index card...spread out and arranged into appropriate clusters to see the smaller pieces of the larger puzzle’ (2013, p. 27). Graue and Walsh (1998) agree ‘touching the data...handling the data gets additional data out of memory and into the record’ (1998, p. 145).

Being highly organised, and a visual learner (Fleming & Mills, 1992), I did not find the “manual” management of data problematic per say. It was not hard to keep transcripts organised in folders, under partnership headings and participant group. However, I did find it time consuming having to trawl through pages of transcripts to update codes, and this could have been made easier through the use of technology, whereby a search engine could have made the process easier. On reflection, I would not change how I coded my data, but possibly reconsidered the way I stored the data, making retrieval easier. I did use charts, notes, coloured paper and pens, to help me visualise my codes. I also developed my theoretical thinking as I progressed, making notes and sketches. My accompanying appendix document provides information on a range of tools I used to help me capture my data and summarise my thinking, as well as detailing my analytical (template) developments.

4.9 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to identify and explore the particular paradigmatic position adopted by the researcher for the purpose of this research. Critical realism with its ability to recognise subjective and objective interplay as well as its ability to look beyond surface observations is the researcher’s preferred philosophical framework. Furthermore, the chapter identified and validated the use of a multiple-case study design, consisting of two Sino-British partnerships.

A form of template analysis is utilised to code data collected. This flexible approach enables coding to progress through the domains of critical realism, starting with an initial template devised *a priori* from literature, personal experiences and theoretical standpoints. Evidently, the theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter three may therefore require reconfiguration. By merging and synthesising the individual *empirical* domains of faculty members, I aim to transcend their initial understandings, in order to provide new explanations as to the nature of the phenomenon under investigation (Fleetwood & Ackroyd, 2000).

Finally, the chapter highlighted the importance of researcher reflexivity. Researcher values and bias therefore play an integral part in the researcher’s *empirical* domain and cannot be separated from the research process (J. K. Smith, 1988) or bracketed (B. Smith & Woodruff-Smith, 1995). However, by clearly providing a logical approach to data analysis, and explaining interpretations and offering alternative ideas, research credibility and dependability is protected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Chapter Five

Synthesising and Analysing Partnership A: What can we Learn from Faculty Members in Case Study A about Relationship and Partnership Development?

'I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand' Confucius 551BC-479 BC

Introduction:

The aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of partnership A. It starts by exploring each faculty member working in partnership A and examines and explores the phrases, words and thoughts of each participant. It documents their individual experiences of working in their partner group in terms of their personal perceptions and interpretations of working in a Sino-British TNE partnership. The chapter seeks to utilise their *empirical* domains in an attempt to identify relationships and patterns, which can assist in taking the analysis beyond individual interpretations.

By fusing together the findings from each *empirical* domain, a discussion on *partnership* can begin. By identifying key findings that resonate across both faculty groups, the chapter aims to identify events and underpinning mechanisms which may help explain how relationships in partnership A are progressing and the effect these developments have on the partnership's overall sustainability and value.

5.1 Partnership A: Investigating Sino and UK Faculty Member *Empirical* Domains

Due to the high level of data each transcript generated, the following section only provides a glimpse into the *empirical* domain of each faculty member operationalising partnership A. After analysing their interview transcripts, I was able to identify common themes which resonated with all three participants, and these thematic areas are provided under the bullet point headings. I decided to cluster the participants under these thematic areas so their "experiences" and "voices" could be compared in relation to the topic under discussion, and to each other. The analysis starts with faculty group: 5.1.1 SinoXa and then continues with UKa in section 5.1.2.

5.1.1 Describing the *Empirical Domain*: SinoXa Faculty Members

Hannah, Eliza and Tom

- **Multiple Systems and Requirements**

Hannah describes her experiences of working in a Sino-British partnership as frustrating. She explains how her frustration is caused by the multiple systems operating at her delivery institution. Due to the nature of the institution in which she works, her team deliver on multiple educational programmes. She experiences this as a constant pressure, creating stress and exhaustion:

[T]hat – the time the UK asked us for this it was January, and January here is the worst time ever...the coursework...exam time...it's like "oh gosh" just like how really, to balance all this...we feel really exhausted...you know pressures...I'm just human, I cannot handle all this...

...[A] nightmare for me...I remember I had to follow two different programmes, I didn't feel actually that I belonged to finally anyone...I didn't feel this relationship.

The multiple responsibilities *Hannah* has, created by the multiple systems she operates within, means tasks often collide, creating problems in the way she prioritises her work. Moreover, she recognises this means there are times when she is unable to communicate with anyone:

...[S]o many periods of this pressure time...it was like impossible to communicate with anyone, and I'm not talking about with the UK, it's not even communicating with myself or with my family...that was really terrible.

Furthermore, *Hannah* describes how multiple responsibilities affect her motivation levels. She feels her senior management team offer no support to her or her team during pressurised periods:

[T]he motivation is always low...it was always low...low. Senior management they don't understand, I felt no one understands us...management they don't understand us...that we are really like, you know drifting by ourselves in this huge ocean.

Multiple responsibilities also affect *Eliza*. The fact she has to balance the needs of her own team and her employer, as well as that of UKa, means she often feels caught in the middle in terms of who takes priority. She feels her team prioritise quantity over quality, which she acknowledges causes tension with UKa. Yet getting the right "balance between the two" institutions she feels is hard. This means *Eliza* often questions herself, "what is

expected from me?” She says conflicting purposes and messages cause her “a little bit of confusion”, whereby she feels her team leader Tom tells her one thing, but her UK colleagues tell her something else.

Tom describes the confusion generated by multiple systems, but appreciates the role the UK team have in relation to his managerial choices. This is therefore at the forefront of his mind:

[T]he partner universities, they expect, they expect us- you know ours certainly...they are the ones who dictate how many hours are with students...on the projects...there is an expectation that is pretty set.

Tom suggests multiple systems created situations he “wasn’t expecting, that’s made it all more confusing for everybody, not just me”. He feels rules, which relate to different programmes, generate confusion for both his students and staff. Since *Tom* manages three faculty members who have responsibilities to teach on other TNE programmes, he expresses how he needs to be vigilant to ensure all his stakeholders’ needs are addressed:

[D]ealing with the Chinese side of the programme, because we have the dual degree, they’re always asking for information.

He describes balancing the needs of the Chinese with the UK as a form of “appeasement”, whereby he sits as the “middle man between two people that don’t necessarily agree”. He argues this requires him to be “mature” in order to empathise with what each party needs. However, having multiple responsibilities he feels can create relationship pressures, particularly with UKa. He believes information requests from his Chinese stakeholders can cause UK colleagues upset. Yet he feels he has no control over this situation. He describes how his Chinese stakeholders have “too many chefs in the pot”, and the only thing he is able to do is try to get UKa to accept his information requests:

[P]lease understand, I have to do it, I have to ask and I have to get the information.

Tom discusses how having “more than one boss” and the need to seek “approval somewhere else” for activities is hard, and that it represents a structure, which is unlikely to change. He tries to deal with this problem by ensuring “everyone has just one and only one superior”. Monitoring of duties and performance are important to *Tom*, and he mentions these on numerous occasions. He describes the whole situation as being “very difficult” to manage.

- **Staff Turnover and Inter-team Relations**

Hannah believes internal tasks relating to other programmes running at the Sino institution are not evenly distributed, meaning some team members work harder than others:

...[I]t's like sharing the tasks for example, "who's do you want? Maybe *Hannah* she has more students than another colleague"...who was teaching, how many hours, how many students...no one actually, there was a lack of team spirit...no one was asking "maybe I can help you? Maybe I can replace you for that invigilation".

Staff turnover is a problem mentioned by all members of SinoXa. *Hannah* associates the turnover of staff with a lack of institutional support from senior management, caused by their lack of understanding of teaching and learning and the time required to deliver a quality student experience. She feels "huge" workloads often create a focus on "quantity and not the quality". She acknowledges this approach is not consistent with how UKa would like their Sino partner to operate, but she says with so many conflicting tasks and time in short supply there are often no other alternatives.

Hannah recalls how new members of staff create additional frustration because she knows new team members are unable to offer her the support she needs:

...[A]ll the team is new. Everyone is new...my partner from the UK disappears no-one can help me in my team so this really is a problem.

Eliza also describes the effect of staff turnover on relations with UKa. She blames constant changes in Sino personnel as the reason UKa constantly "watch us and check on progress". She also feels distance does not help the situation because UKa "cannot really know who we are". She also blames relationship problems on the poor legacies created by previous staff. She feels UKa question "everything" and that creates a lot of "upset". She sees herself as different to those that went before her and associates past legacies with the creation of her current suffering.

Tom describes how past legacies caused by past employees create "torment" for his team. UKa **FIFO** faculty, he argues, can often bring "difficulties they have had in the past" with them, a "kind of like a prejudice". This hinders the benefit of face-to-face communication, which he thinks should be utilised to develop team "camaraderie".

Eliza thinks, to get relationships back on track, trust is needed between both parties. She claims SinoXa team members who are new to the partnership, need to prove

themselves competent, “that you are able”, but to do this you need open communication with UK colleagues. Yet, since communication is often stifled within her team, she thinks it sends a message to the UK that maybe SinoXa team members do not care, or are not concerned with improving the programme. Since she is not encouraged to question the decisions taken by UKa, she says it is hard for her to build herself a reputation based on competency and efficiency. She feels to deliver a task properly, individuals must feel they can seek clarification and ask what is meant, in essence “not be afraid to ask for help”.

Tom argues continuous staff turnover means new members face tough challenges and intense periods of planning, which impacts on the time new staff members have to build relations with UK colleagues. He uses the activity ***UK run induction in China*** to make his point. Although this induction is organised in advance, and runs each year, he says new staff start dates may mean prior arranged joint activities collide with other activities, creating tensions and outputs not originally planned.

Moreover, *Tom* discusses why he thinks people leave, blaming it on the false promises made by his institution:

[I]t’s just a nightmare...they make you feel like you are doing something wrong by signing up for money...a benefit to draw people in...it’s like the worst you can do to somebody if you ask me, give expectations and then not meet those expectations, so that was why I feel, people leave.

- **Communication and Conflict**

Communication is a theme central to all of SinoXa. *Hannah* notes how in 2013 a situation occurred whereby UKa questioned the marking undertaken by SinoXa of year three (franchised year) examinations (activity ***marking and remarking of examination papers 2013***). She describes the situation as a breakdown in communication:

...[T]he message that I received from the beginning...was everything was confirmed [the mark-scheme] was done correctly...even if it wasn’t no one told us...someone should have told us. I had conformation it was “perfect”...I felt it was really unfair someone told us too late.

Hannah claims she did not know why communication failed between UKa and her team. More importantly, she describes the failure in the task as a misinterpretation of key words in the mark- schemes; although she argues key members of her team with “big experience”, confirmed all the marks before they were sent to the UK. She feels her team were undermined, not treated equally or as “professional” academics. Therefore, when UKa

implied student marks were inflated, she associated this with a lack of trust on the side of UK colleagues.

Eliza feels critical information in her team is often poorly communicated, or withheld fully by her course leader:

...[F]or instance our boss *Tom*, he doesn't disseminate the information, so we lack that, and then we end up knowing about things very last minute...I feel we cannot go directly to the UK and get those answers, it has to go through *Tom*.

Eliza claims that a lack of information, particularly in relation to the partnership's purpose, aims and objectives, has bonded her with other team members who feel the same way.

Furthermore, *Eliza* sees *Tom* as being frightened to intervene and ask UKa for clarification on subjects she feels her team are entitled to know more about. She describes *Tom* as being "afraid of the UK", with a general lack of willingness to defend his team against UKa demands and recommendations. She claims this makes her question his faith in the team's abilities. She describes how her course leader tells the team not to "bother" UK colleagues under any circumstance. *Eliza* believes open communication enhances "trust", but since her course leader seems reluctant to interrogate UKa on certain issues, she feels she often has to engage in activities that are confusing and "nonsensical". *Eliza* describes the effect a lack of information has on her daily activities:

[C]ourse-related material, and maybe help with understanding something related to the course, then I can go directly [to UK colleagues] and I feel there is no problem...but the more important things...I feel we cannot directly go to the UK.

Eliza therefore believes she often engages in activities she cannot see the purpose in. She also notes how information is often conflicted, making tasks even more confusing:

I was told, when *Tom* came and told me, that I had to mark five coursework papers, which was not done before...they didn't ask anyone else...so I tried to understand what was the reason behind it...but then I heard that [staff development] was not the case...so I didn't get a clear answer for why...I didn't understand why I was the one being told to do it.

A lack of information as to the purpose of activities, causes *Eliza* upset. Whilst she does not wish to be considered unwilling, she feels she is ill equipped to do certain tasks. She feels conflicted information makes her feel like she is having the truth withheld from her. This makes her feel "upset" and "uncomfortable". She acknowledges how a lack of team

spirit and splits in team member allegiances, creates an “uncomfortable” working environment, where individuals cannot share information or speak openly without causing “fights and...bickering”.

One important activity identified by *Eliza* is the activity of **FIFO** faculty, whereby UK faculty arrive to teach block lectures in China. This process seems critical to her, enabling her to voice her opinions, unregulated by her course leader. However, she feels not all UK faculty are supportive when they arrive, preferring to retreat to the hotel or removing themselves from conversations.

Eliza believes the activity **marking and remarking of examination papers 2013** damaged Sino and UK relationships. *Eliza*, similarly to *Hannah* felt she had her academic integrity questioned by UKa. Moreover, *Eliza* lost a certain amount of respect for her partners, and in a sense the activity demotivated her:

I'm not sure...I don't exactly know who it was and we're not being told...and I don't think we will ever know...I lost track...I don't really understand...we just had to be like “these students need to pass”...honestly I was shocked...these students were given three resits.

Although *Eliza* knew the purpose of the activity was to pass students who had failed, she could only assume the real underlying reason was to keep failure rates low. Yet she explains she had no idea if this action was prompted by UKa, or by her own institution. She acknowledges even though the purpose of the resit exams was to give students who had failed initially the opportunity to pass again, she was not happy about the motives underpinning the activity, or its construction, as it required her to put her academic integrity on the line.

Unlike *Hannah* and *Eliza*, *Tom* does not discuss the activity **marking and remarking of examination papers 2013**. He merely comments on it as a learning experience, which has assisted in course improvements. To him all activities should be opportunities to develop the relationship, whereby they should represent a “great experience between two people”. However, he states that “nit-picking” and a closed approach can create “negative situations”.

Communication plays a salient role in *Tom's* daily job. To him the “relationship, relationship, relationship” is the most important part of running a transnational course, and how “people feel” is fundamental to the partnerships success. *Tom* feels it is critical to ensure messages sent by his team to UK colleagues are encoded properly. Short answer emails, he thinks, can cause “distain maybe”, and he emphasises the need to ensure

correspondence is constructed properly, enabling the receiver to decode the message properly. He says to ensure this happens, senders need to be given adequate time and resources “[P]roper tools to encode...time and effort, time and effort”.

Tom regards **emailing** as being one of his central activities. However, he acknowledges the weaknesses inherent in emailing. Messages can be decoded wrongly, thereby requiring time and thought in terms of the lexicon used. He stresses the importance of emails in managing long distance relationships. Yet *Tom* also mentions how communications should “not be taken personally”. He argues staff members who take things personally generate emotional problems that he tries to manage through objectively “seeking all the information”. Yet, he maintains emotional outputs may always be a managerial problem:

[I]t's just business...and if they didn't come that way [staff members] then there's not much you can do about it, if they're gonna continue to take it personally.

Central to *Tom's* communication strategy is ensuring his team always meet deadlines and produce the outcomes UKa expects. By ensuring processes are followed correctly, and by continuously updating UK colleagues with progress, he claims “understanding” is shown and “uncertainty removed”.

However, he also feels an understanding of individual tasks is not enough, and that a partnership requires an understanding of the “whole- the whole goals” so individuals can understand how their daily tasks fit into the larger partnership system. He maintains knowing why something needs to be done is extremely important. He contends that all activities have a purpose, and communication is vital to understanding this purpose. Moreover, he thinks hiding purposes can be detrimental to relationships between partners, creating a sense of deceit:

I'm saying that I'm asking you “what are our goals regarding this” and you say “I hadn't thought about it” and you had you know, then that would be, why don't you communicate it, so I'm just saying that, when you know something you shouldn't be telling your not.

Deception, he argues, can lead to “that human nature feeling of “what's the use” kind of thing”. He therefore feels a lack of information and clarity can demotivate team members, causing them to withdraw.

- **Resourcing**

Hannah acknowledges how time, as a resource, is often not available to her. She explains how she feels this affects her relationship with UKa. She explains how internal team members could better support her, enabling her to have more time to develop relations with UKa. She identifies a lack of time for communication and delays in responses from UKa as being problematic, particularly if she needs to action something straight away. She describes this as being lost, and stuck “in the middle” between students who require answers and UKa confirmation as to the correct course of action to take. She therefore cannot always meet student expectations because she is waiting for answers.

Internal regulations such as teaching hours mean *Eliza* often feels she has no time to develop her relationship with UKa, because she has contractual teaching hours set by her employer. Furthermore she claims the high level of teaching hours imposed upon her by her own internal systems, is “overwhelming”. She feels this affects her relationship with UKa:

[A] lot more time should be spend on research and...yeah, communication with the UK...It would improve...they would see us as having more time to develop the course...we don't have time to improve the course...we don't have time...its difficult.

Unlike *Hannah* and *Eliza*, *Tom* has to deal with programmes resourcing. Initially, he states, not all partners have equal access to resources, meaning one partner may rely heavily on another partner's resources. Second, he identifies money, human capital and teaching materials as being the most important resources, whereby efficiency and team morale can be improved.

He feels it is the responsibility of the institution to invest student tuition fees back into the programme to help it develop. Furthermore, he argues should a lack of resources affect faculty in professional and personal terms, environments become marred by “animosity and tension”. *Tom* explains how resource issues cause him pressure that leads to “anxiety”. Certain aspects of the programme require resources that if he is unable to access, he thinks influence team morale:

[D]emotivation, you know you go through the stages...towards a final dis-acceptance am I right?...the whole anger stages.

Tom describes a situation whereby the UK insist upon his sourcing of a certain piece of software for part of the programme:

I'm being told we gotta get it, because the UK use it, and then that's it. I mean I don't, we're doing ok without it.

He states how well his team work using alternative resources, yet he still feels "a little pressure that I'm supposed to do this", yet he has no idea where the money is coming from to buy these resources. He feels module rules need to be flexible to enable teams to source alternatives. Moreover, he maintains certain resources are dispensable, and energy should be spent focusing on more important resources such as human and teaching materials.

Human resourcing is clearly a problem for *Tom*. Whilst he describes it as the "nature of the beast of being an international college", he thinks it can hinder partnership relations.

5.1.2 Describing the *Empirical* domain: UKa Faculty Members *Keith, Ann* and *Louise*

- **Communication, Ownership and Secondment**

Keith is primarily concerned with the way the partner groups relate to one another and how this affects the tone and structure of communication. Discussing how he felt when he worked in China:

[W]hat we felt when I was on the other side in-in China what that the [UK] "this is how we do things, you're wrong"...there wasn't really a dialogue there wasn't really any training...I think that's what gives it that kind of older sibling or parent-child kind of aspect.

Keith argues communication from UKa is dictatorial and autocratic. He feels this is because SinoXa have "no identity" or "affiliation" with the UK institution or team. UKa seem unwilling to give SinoXa more responsibility. He discusses the importance of providing them with more freedom in the development of the relationship, but at the same time recognises that:

Trust, I don't think we trust them, I think it's quite as simple as that...

However, *Keith* tries to reflect on why this is the case, and acknowledges how high staff turnover in SinoXa can force UKa to adopt measures, which may seem somewhat autocratic to SinoXa:

[S]ino team consists of unstable variables if you like, who are gonna be there for as long as their partner has a job...or for them to retire...there's nothing to hinge them down...there's no ownership of the partnership there...they don't feel they have a sense of any attachment to the provision.

Keith attributes a lack of trust to the fact UKa “can't see what's happening” and that “there's no transparency”. To overcome such problems, *Keith* discusses in detail the idea of secondment. He maintains throughout his transcript that seconding a UK team member to work in China is a way to ensure “there's no communication breakdown”. Moreover, he feels secondment is the only way to ensure stability and unity between the partners:

[T]hey become an ambassador for the course, they become a beacon for the university they-they become a conduit that the other staff can tap into, and link back to the host institution, and that's missing...what's the connection to [the UK] other than the name on slides and the degree certificate? There isn't, there isn't...that's the one thing I would change.

Finally, *Keith* highlights how the perception of an activity is just as important as the activity itself. Whilst one group may think an activity is having a positive effect on partner relations, it may in fact be having the opposite effect. *Keith* uses the activity of **FIFO** to make his point. He notes how these face-to-face activities should be positive to relational development, but in fact can be detrimental. He uses his experiences of working in China to describe how the activity **FIFO** can make local tutors feel:

I think they're aware [SinoXa] that we [UKa] see it as a burden...that partly contributes to their detachment and demotivation...nobody enjoys it...for me it sends out a very clear message...why do we [UKa] fly over? there's a trust issue there...it was a little bit insulting...I'm not good enough...I'm good enough for the tutorials six hours a week where the real teaching happens...but I'm not good enough for the lectures.

Keith feels **FIFO** can actually “disengage”, “demotivate” and “undervalue” local tutors. Chinese students then view local tutors as inferior or not capable of disseminating certain pieces of information. This creates a feeling of UKa superiority, which in turn, “causes quite a lot of tension and break ups”.

Ann believes the activity **marking and remarking of examination papers 2013** seriously affected inter-team communication. She explains how SinoXa, once they got “rumbled” (found out), became “incredibly defensive”. *Ann* reflects on the way this activity damaged communication between her and SinoXa, whereby:

[I]t was completely and utterly, met with so much defensiveness that it was impossible to communicate any more, you could not send, you know I didn't send a

single email for three months, four months something like that...rip it to shreds...turned into another argument...I couldn't win, I couldn't do anything.

During this time, *Ann* recalls how she relied on the rest of her UK team to rebuild the relationship because she was unable to send any communication to SinoXa.

Ann feels her relationship with *Tom* is akin to a parent engaging with a child. She feels she constantly has to “bark” and “shout” at *Tom*:

[T]here's very very rarely the adult-adult transactions- transactional happenings but it's difficult to work out why that is, when- when you're only emailing people, and you're talking to people that you've never met.

One of the reasons *Ann* thinks this parent-child relationship occurs is because of the way SinoXa communicate with UKa. She describes SinoXa as a “fair-weathered friend”, who only makes contact when they have a problem, or when a problem is exposed. She therefore feels it is hard to pre-empt any problems, or think of ways to tackle them in advance. She explains if SinoXa took more responsibility for the programme, these problems might not occur so readily. She feels SinoXa are always quick to blame UKa, “that happened because of you [UK] and you didn't do that”, which she feels is:

[G]oing back to the nursery analogy, they come running back to us with a bruised knee, or a cut finger and we have to fix it, and that is not a partnership to me.

Louise also believes communication with SinoXa can be problematic. She describes feeling “more disinterested” in the partnership as it progresses, explaining how she feels she has “not gained or been enriched by anything”. Fundamentally, she believes SinoXa “pick up upon that negativity” making, it impossible to hide the “frustration” she feels. *Louise* describes “the feelings behind that email” and finds it hard not to show her true feelings in the way she communicates with SinoXa. To compensate for her lack of enthusiasm, she explains how her communication may come across as phoney or fake:

[I] would try and be as engaging as possible, and possible try and make it yeah, I suppose that you maybe enter into the more patronising thing because I'm trying to be that much more enthusiastic and a bit more you know, explain...so I'm trying to sell it to them more I suppose, for you know (laughs), sell them is the word.

Louise believes her communication with SinoXa, although maybe seen as “patronising”, is necessary due to their lack of “experience or knowledge” of teaching in higher education. She feels since she has “considerably more industry expertise and

knowledge than the guys out there”, she should offer support, but feels it is perceived as “questioning what they’re doing, which is not the way it was supposed to be at all”.

Louise reflects upon the history of the activity system, blaming past attitudes and approaches now embedded in the operational culture of SinoXa, as being one of the main problems for the negative feelings she has towards the Sino team. Past activities such as the **marking and remarking of examination papers 2013**, she believes make SinoXa:

[V]ery sceptical and seeing it almost like we’re almost trying to catch them out I think, it’s not about supporting them, they see it as a negative experience, that we’re trying to expose their weaknesses...so they come at it from a very negative point of view...it’s about exposing them, rather than supporting them...so something we see positively is actually, seen very negatively.

- **Opposing Ideologies**

Keith, Ann and *Louise* all talk about how hard it is to manage a single degree programme in two different countries.

Keith feels that a misalignment in values creates misaligned management. He acknowledges how SinoXa do try to take ownership of the programme, but often change UK processes to suit their needs. This means processes are manipulated and knowledge, which is shared, is used to satisfy other agendas. *Keith* feels the Sino course leader creates conflicts in the relationships that exist between UK module and Sino local tutors:

I’ve asked my local tutor to do things...I used to work with that person, get on really well...they haven’t done work to a good standard, I asked why?, the appointed course leader [at X] has said to do it that way, which contradicts how we’re doing things here, so that’s a breakdown already.

Keith feels SinoXa follow their own agendas, engaging in tasks not in keeping with UK processes. To him, this is because SinoXa do not “identify with the UK” or see themselves as part of “our [UK] institution”. He believes this provides the catalyst for his UK team to employ further control measures, fostering “the need to dictate a bit more...then it’s a cyclical effect” creating further animosity and resentment between team members. However, he does empathise with the Sino team when he discusses the complexities of working in China. He describes a Sino team who are constantly confused by “conflicts of interest”. He affirms the “massive, massive problem” multiple voices at the Sino institute have on the prioritisation of tasks:

[W]ho is your boss? Is it the course leader [at Sino X], is it your module leader in the UK, is it the course leader in the UK? Who –who do you listen to?

He describes how differences in approaches to tasks can “cause a bit of conflict”. Due to differences in the partnership systems, *Keith* feels there is misalignment between the two groups. He describes this as “stressful, very stressful...nothing seems to be aligned, it doesn’t function”. Moreover, he clearly recognises how differences in agendas and values mean activities may not meet the expectations of either partner group, hindering the development of the relationship over time.

Furthermore, he discusses how UK HEI A wide policies do not take into consideration the operational requirements of overseas delivery institutions. For example, *Keith* describes **marking 170 Year 3 student coursework assignments in 3 weeks**, as being unrealistic considering the size of the overseas provision and the other responsibilities of Sino faculty members. He feels this “demotivates” and “demoralises” and “tires” Sino staff out:

[W]ell it detaches you, you want to do the best job that you can, but to the same extent, you’ve got three weeks to turn around 170 papers and you’ve got a whole list of other responsibilities , it then becomes a task on a list...I think in the end it took seven weeks for them to get their work back, because its physically impossible to get 170, three thousand word assignments marked, feedback typed up, plus everything else.

Ann explains how she inherited the partnership from her departmental head once she left the UK institution. She believes she inherited a system that was reliant on domination, whereby she had no other alternative but to continue to manage the partnership in the same way. She identifies cultural differences as one of the main reasons she feels the need to continue the dominant approach:

[C]ompletely different sets of standards, expectations...that’s where the variables come in because of the level of expectation that we have, we expect China to behave in a certain way and they don’t, China expect us as a leading institution to behave in a particular way and we don’t.

Furthermore, she explains these ideological differences create challenging partnership conditions. This creates complicated managerial choices, whereby she has to make decisions about how she deals with SinoXa. She therefore runs the partnership with an iron-fist, “I think the iron-fist is the way to do it”. Moreover, she describes the relationship as a “dictatorship”, although she freely admits she does not like operating in such a

authoritarian manner, and would prefer to “work in a collaborative manner”. However, she explains why she feels she needs to run the partnership the way she does:

[B]ecause every time I’ve taken the iron-fist away, somebody’s taken the piss...if you take your eye off the ball, for a week, two weeks, something will happen...it sometimes feels a little bit like looking after a nursery.

She therefore describes SinoXa as a team who require constant attention, and she openly admits this makes her feel “no, it’s not sad, I despair...I just utterly despair and I start doubting myself”. She blames this on factors such as ideological differences between the UK and China, as well as “coercive power structures” which create problems for the Sino team:

[F]ear that if boxes aren’t ticked, and- and their performance is- you know everything is very measured over there...in a quantitative way...which is completely different to what we have here...if the boxes aren’t ticked the tutor hasn’t performed well.

Ann also feels SinoXa are not passionate about the subject they teach. This creates in her eyes, a misalignment in motivations. She believes the transient nature of expatriates in China means staff members are not necessarily motivated by the job in itself, but rather as a means to an ends for a certain period. These differences in individual and institutional motivations, she argues, have caused her challenges, often making her feel “scared...and that’s not healthy at all”. Moreover, these differences have caused her “to nearly have a bloody breakdown”.

To highlight these difficulties, she recalls a specific event between UKa and SinoXa, which nearly caused the partnership to come “crashing down”. The ***marking and remarking of examination papers 2013***, she describes as having “basically broken me, completely and utterly broken me”. She explains how this single activity caused her to “expose” SinoXa. She describes the way in which the activity highlighted the ideological differences between the two institutions:

[M]y perception that the student marks were inflated in certain areas because they wanted the students to get a good grade, but we knew these students were not capable...it might be a quick fix for the student, but in the bigger picture it wasn’t...what we did is we put the brakes on.

She links this activity back to the pressures placed upon SinoXa by coercive internal management structures, often referring to “fear”, “very coercive”, “hairdryer treatment” as a way to describe her perception of SinoXa and their working environment.

The overall effect of the partnership on *Ann* is to make her question its purpose and value. She struggles to motivate herself at times to see the benefits of the partnership. She feels the majority of her daily activities do not benefit her UK programme, causing her more problems than possibilities:

[I] get a bit like Eeyore, I just resign myself to it...“tail’s fallen off, I’ll stick that back on later”, and then move on to the next thing, the impact it has on the UK staff...for example, I was thinking, this would be good for the UK course this change in course structure, but its two weeks work, changing paper work, the red tape...doing the mapping for the QAA...so yes, it doesn’t make me resent the partnership...it just makes me, go, huhh::::: (laughs).

Louise also feels certain activities illuminate ideological and managerial differences. She feels the **marking and remarking of examination papers 2013** clearly highlighted the different approaches taken by SinoXa over UKa:

[T]hey were trying to create a table of statistics, they were trying to create statistics that they had been told to produce...the students we had couldn’t achieve those statistics, so that’s where the issue came...they’ve got to meet the statistics, but you can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear... you can’t throw it all out of the window, and go “oh well, I’ll tell you what, we’ll give them that mark anyway, f*** it”, you can’t do that and that’s why, because we’re coming at it from two different perspectives...there was a gap.

According to *Louise*, the difference in motives created a “stalemate” which highlighted the different approaches and needs of both UK and Chinese education systems. However, *Louise* maintains certain activities produce outputs, which are non-negotiable:

[T]o maintain the actual credibility of the course in the UK, we can’t do that, you know we can’t just shift things up to fit in with your statistics, it’s got to be credible.

[W]e have standards don’t we? So that wasn’t the standard we expected...so ahhhh, how do you negotiate on something that’s non-negotiable?

Moreover, *Louise* feels these differences create conflicted situations that influence communication cycles and the ability of faculty to operationalise and sustain the partnership going forward.

- **Learning and Transformation**

Ann’s experience of the **marking and remarking of examination papers 2013** left her feeling that she had “no advocate, nobody over there in [SinoXa] fighting my corner”. She openly admits the choices she made in relation to the examinations caused her to:

[A]void, I have learnt to, if I know something, or get a feeling that something is going to cause a conflict or tension, I don't do it, and that's been through experience. If I feel strongly about something...or because there's something blatant...then obviously I'll jump straight on it...but from a developmental point of view I certainly am hindered in my approach.

Ann describes herself as being "...in a coma...slightly comatose", with the whole experience leaving her feeling "really annoyed". However, she feels the activity and its outputs created an opportunity to reflect upon the partnership and her own management style. Furthermore, she explains that the biggest challenge from the fallout of such an event was rebuilding the relationship.

Louise empathises with SinoXa, in understanding the pressures they face operating at the Chinese delivery institution. She identifies the problems of employing "people who want to tour around" and acknowledges the "very long hours" faculty work in China. This coupled with "short-term contracts" means she perceives staff in China as being "insecure". She explains how that affects her experiences of working in the partnership:

[W]ell it's continually staring at the beginning with somebody, you know, you're continually back at square one and having to go through the regulations, the processes for marking, moderation.

Louise feels "we do all the giving" and she explains how this affects the way she feels about the partnership:

[W]ell it's, it's tiring isn't it? You don't really develop a relationship, you start to develop a relationship and then they move on...and you're back at the beginning you know, you go through the same stuff time after time after time.

Moreover, constant change in SinoXa creates a constant repetition of tasks, which *Louise* describes as going "back over old ground". *Louise* explains how the constant change in personnel means the partnership continuously starts back at the beginning. She describes how a "period of learning" takes a "year to go through", but since the team in China change so quickly she feels all learning is lost. She believes this hinders the way she engages with SinoXa, and the way she feels about the whole partnership. She explains how "it becomes more and more exhausting", using the metaphor of a "hamster wheel" to describe the monotonous process of working in the partnership.

- **Sino Intra-team Relations**

Keith, Ann and Louise all comment on the internal management of staff at the Sino institution. *Ann* perceives *Tom* as a poor communicator, someone who provides his team with poor guidance and support. She considers *Tom* lazy, ultimately undermining the hard work she puts into producing joint resources:

[I] was so frustrated by Tom's lack of support...just look at the [partnership] handbook I spent three weeks of my life last year writing, that you have not referred to once.

Moreover, *Tom's* lack of communication with his own Sino team often means that *Ann* is left:

[I] dunno, I guess (laughs) I just, I'm banging my head against a brick wall, it's incredibly frustrating.

Ann acknowledges how *Tom* often does his own thing, regardless of what she has told him. She therefore highlights the importance of emailing as an activity to ensure there are records of conversations, describing these records as being important in providing evidence of her communication with him. Moreover, she identifies the importance of emailing due to the distance between the two partners, but implies this means she never stops working:

[T]he first thing I do is wake up in the morning and I check my emails...that is probably around seven o'clock, I then don't actually get into work until half ten, because I'm sat in bed thinking their day is going to be over by the time I get to work...I stay up you know, sometimes until three, four in the morning.

Ann feels she is "chasing it's that constant chasing"; she explains how time delays mean she is often behind SinoXa and often has to deal with a situation after it has occurred, "I mean you're just one step behind the problem rather than in front of it". Furthermore, she explains the whole partnership:

[R]ules my bloody life, so it's hardly surprising I get a little bit negative about it!

Throughout her transcript, *Louise* describes the problems she faces when working with SinoXa. The effect of this:

[M]akes you feel negativity towards them, because you know, you're doing your best for them...and you get this wave of negativity coming back...and this year's been so

much better than last year...but it's still negative...nothing positive and we never really get any positive from it.

Louise describes a Sino team that seem very “dysfunctional”; she feels they spend little time collaborating or sharing, operating very separately, “I don't feel there's much interaction between them really”. She attributes this lack of unity to two factors. First, that they are usually new staff and secondly, that they usually “have a huge amount of teaching and huge numbers”. She appreciates this creates multiple pressures, meaning “they haven't got a chance to develop anything”. However, this means that the partnership is “very one-way”.

- **Qualified and Competent Faculty Members**

According to *Louise*, the lack of experience evident in SinoXa, means UKa lacks confidence in them:

[I] think we would have more confidence in them if you- you knew they actually had the skills to teach those particular modules...there's a result of what you see in terms of, erm course work and exams, err it does make you wonder.

She explains how she thinks this lack of experience in the Sino team often translates into apathy towards the UK team, with the Sino course leader often showing “absolutely no interest” in listening or engaging with her:

[I] was trying to be helpful, supportive, explain to him, because we'd had a few issues around one of the assessments...so I went through that with him, tried to explain...there was clearly no interest.

Louise explains how the course leader's lack of interest causes her to feel “exasperated” thereby creating “a very negative view of him”, changing the tone and way she engages with him in all her tasks:

I've tried being supportive...but it has no effect, and I get no response from that so I suppose I've had to go down the direct route, to get the response I actually needed to get...so yeah...I come over as a patronising person because that's the only way I actually get the information I need.

Louise believes this affects the way she engages with *Tom*, who operates two of her UK modules in China. She discusses the way he “puts his own spin on things”, keeping information to himself, rather than sharing it with other team members. *Louise* is aware of how this affects group dynamics, whereby she thinks the course leader hides information as

“sharing it exposes his weaknesses”. More importantly, the fact “he keeps everything to himself”, she thinks means learnings are not disseminated to all members of SinoXa, meaning the “same issues come up” in a “much smaller way”.

5.2 Partnership A: Exploring the Domains of the *Actual* and the *Real*

The objective of this section is to move beyond individual interpretations and explore the events, contingent conditions and generative mechanisms effecting partnership A. Due to the co-constructed nature of relationships (Lapworth & Sills, 2012), it is only by merging the *empirical* domains of SinoXa and UKa that it becomes possible to understand relational processes, which influence the functionality of the partnership. This section therefore tries to explain what is happening underneath the *empirical* domain.¹¹

In order to engage with the domains of the *actual* and the *real*, I read my transcripts and coding manuscripts multiple times. From this position, I was able to note common and conflicting themes, as well as differences in attitudes and behaviours towards similar/different elements of the partnership. I was then able to identify mechanisms I considered fundamental for explaining what was creating the lived experiences of the staff members.

Finally, this section concludes by offering:

1. A model of TNE partnership A: In order to explain how the construction of the partnership (activity) system affects the production and maintenance of faculty relationships.
2. A model of social capital in TNE partnership A: In order to investigate how social capital is enabled/encouraged/ hindered by the partnership (activity) system and the effect this seems to have on the partnership’s sustainability and strength.

1. Structures and Systems

Partnership by its very nature demands a high level of reciprocity, sharing, teamwork and commitment. Therefore, HEIs that establish partnerships should be aiming to stimulate

¹¹ As Ryan et al., (2012) explain all analysis is **fallible** due to its reliance on epistemic relativism. Therefore, this section **does not** claim what can be ‘known’ through this approach is the truth about the domain of the *actual* and the *real*, but rather seeks to build explanatory knowledge based on the identification of intricate details.

these characteristics. Should infrastructure be imposed from above, without considering the routines and interaction patterns of agents on the 'shop floor' (Engeström, 2008, p. 174), or hinder idea generation from below, it is unlikely social capital will develop effectively.

Ideally, infrastructure needs to facilitate in the production of successful activities, whereby the structure must allow the object of the activity to be effectively and efficiently delivered, thereby generating positive outcomes for all parties involved (Engeström, 2008).

For example, should faculty members feel their partnership structure allows for the development of bottom up initiatives, and should they feel empowered to make decisions about how they produce their activities, the more likely faculty members will feel a sense of commitment to the TNE venture over time. Moreover, structures need to encourage the distribution and exchange of resources, whereby faculty members are able to access and mobilise both tangible and intangible elements in order to improve their working environment.

1.1 Infrastructure Surrounding Partnership A

Partnership A highlights the problems created by infrastructures, which try to span international boundaries. Operating across borders requires two different and complex sets of infrastructures to work together. Infrastructures, generated by Chinese and UK stakeholder communities, regulations, resource availability and division of labour, therefore create the frameworks in which social interaction occurs.

Interestingly, these frameworks may limit the choices faculty members have in complex situations, particularly if reconfiguring, replacing or removing operational processes is not an option. Questions therefore start to arise as to the relationship between structure and agency in partnership A, and the effect this has on social capital.

If structures and systems mean there are no alternative operating methods available to faculty members delivering partnership A, then clearly structure has a part to play in the development of social capital. To encourage social capital, structures need an element of flexibility (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991). This arguably would encourage faculty members to identify and implement new practices which bridge environmental divides, thereby enhancing relationships over time.

1.1.1 Opposing Ideologies

A major theme throughout the transcripts of UKa is *Opposing Ideologies*. Chinese and British socio-cultural differences create deep-rooted histories, which generate conditions that affect the production and outputs of TNE activities. Faculty members working in partnership A are clearly trying to span and reconcile cultural, social, psychological, political and economic divides, whilst at the same time searching for common ground on which to establish shared meanings.¹²

UKa findings suggest the structures and systems surrounding partnership A seem to accentuate these environmental differences, making it hard for faculty members (at times) to connect with each other and agree on joint processes and outcomes. This implies structures and systems operating in partnership A, such as rules, regulations, community groups and resources, may actually be accentuating the difference witnessed by faculty groups.

UKa describe how operating a Sino-British partnership enables them to witness cultural differences first-hand. By evaluating SinoXa activity production and outcomes, UKa perceive and identify Chinese HE as representing a “quantitative” approach to HE management, whilst describing themselves as being “qualitative”, in line with UK approaches to HE management. These interpretations affect the way faculty members in partnership A relate and respond to each other.

1.1.1.1 Activity and Conflict

UKa imply certain activities such as **assessment and feedback** often highlight fundamental cultural differences between China and the UK. Codes such as “death”, “arguments”, “protests” and “no negotiation” show how UKa are unable to overcome what they consider as irreconcilable ideological differences. Likewise, SinoXa also feel frustrated by structures and systems they feel create bad feelings between colleagues. This implies CHAT *object*³ in partnership A, depending on the activity, can at times be fraught with conflict and divergence.

CHAT, through its fifth principle, proclaims the possibility of expansive transformations (Engetröm, 2001). As activity systems interact, contradictions enable activity systems to develop by adopting new elements, thereby reconfiguring established processes.

¹² Chapter two discusses how Chinese HE in the past has been critiqued for its focus on output (numbers/ capacity/ monitoring of results) arguably undermining the intrinsic value of education.

However, as Engeström (2001) argues, contradictions 'are not the same as problems and conflicts' (2001, p.137).

Conflict, unlike contradiction, is harder to overcome. Whilst contradictions do not represent incompatibility in terms of content, for reasons of space and place, ideas or solutions may be incompatible for a specific period. Conflict however, arises as individuals or groups try to simultaneously actualise motives that are diametrically opposed (Vasilyuk, 1991).

Whilst it may be possible for two activity systems to over-come contradictions (Engeström, 2001, 2005), it seems conflict, created by colliding internal value systems (Horney, 2001), is harder or impossible to negotiate. Furthermore, Engeström and Kerosuo (2007) acknowledge, 'collaboration...does not guarantee that the object of joint activity is transformed in a productive way' (2007, p. 337). Depending on the activity, negotiation may not lead to the positive transformation of existing operational practices.

1.1.1.1 Activity: *Marking and Remarking of Examination Papers 2013.*

UKa highlight how conflicting value systems can adversely affect TNE relationships, through the activity: ***marking and remarking of examination papers 2013***. This activity illuminates the fundamental differences in the approach of SinoXa and UKa with regard to student assessment and feedback, with UKa refusing to accept the grades awarded for year three franchised modules.

As SinoXa engaged in the activity of marking, they produced grades UKa deemed statistically impossible, considering the ability of the year three student cohort. UKa seemed to blame this on the "quantitative" approach to higher education in China. UKa discuss how SinoXa are encouraged to achieve certain statistical attainment profiles and how they feel this influences the operational activities of SinoXa. UKa therefore *use this point of difference to justify* the remarking of the year three examinations, reducing marks across the whole of the year three cohort by 10%. The activity highlights a number of issues.

- **Compromised Value-systems**

The fallout of this activity seeks to highlight the conflicted nature of the relationship between SinoXa and UKa. According to Horney (2001), conflict arises when an individual's

internal world and value-system is compromised. Since UKa fundamentally disagree with the outcome of the marking activity undertaken by SinoXa, they are unable to find a compromise that satisfies both partner groups.

Moreover, it seems *Ann* and *Louise* are *not willing to compromise*. They consider the value system of SinoXa to be diametrically opposed to that of UKa. Moreover, *Hannah* and *Eliza* (SinoXa) acknowledge they were encouraged to be generous with their marks, even though they knew students did not always achieve the standard required. Although some SinoXa staff are expatriates who have been educated in the same Western educational value-system as UKa, it seems powerful structures can persuade agents to change their usual value-systems and/or conform to the value system of surrounding cultures.

- **Hidden Agendas**

Although partnerships, through their mutually defined aims and objectives, *should* provide activities with directionality and meaning (Engeström, 2005), multiple stakeholder agendas may actually mean the purpose and motives underpinning activities actually increase. This makes activity production extremely hard, whereby the activity is now required to produce outcomes that satisfy multiple agendas, thereby creating the possibility of no single stakeholder being satisfied with the outcome.

The activity ***marking and remarking of examination papers 2013*** was problematic because UKa perceived it as being manipulated to satisfy the needs of external community groups (Huxham & Vangen, 1996). Conflict therefore seemingly arose because of the differences in the activity's original purpose, (the production of valid and reliable student marks through rigorous processes), and its new purpose seemingly driven by stakeholders with separate agendas.

SinoXa and UKa findings suggest these new purposes were more concerned with statistical profiling, job security, recruitment and revenue, rather than the awarding of grades based on quality work, procedural rigour and integrity. Findings suggest UKa found it hard to understand the motives underpinning SinoXa actions during this particular activity. This is analysed further in the section: *Understanding the Meaning of the Activity*.

This is clearly not conducive to cross-functional team effectiveness (Alder & Kwon, 2002), and shows the power of certain communities to manipulate activities to suit their own agendas. The effect of such is to reduce bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000), whereby

faculty members start to be suspicious as to the motives of others, thereby restricting access to resources embedded in the partnership network.

Interestingly, it seems it is not necessarily the physical activity of the faculty member that directly causes conflict. It seems it depends on the interpretation of the activity by other faculty members, in relation to their institution's political agenda, which causes problems to arise at the operational level.

This causes a rift between operational members, particularly if institutional agendas are misaligned, or not transparent to the other partner group. The effect of this is to block communication channels and slow down the rate of resource transfer across operational teams.

- **Reducing Resource Transfer**

In terms of division of labour, *Ann*, as the course leader, has the most power and authority within UKa. Referring to the ***marking and remarking of examination papers 2013*** activity, she describes the aftermath of the event making her feel "paralysed" and "unconscious", referring at one stage to being in a "coma".

As she withdraws from the relationship through fear and frustration, she stops interacting with SinoXa, and relies on *Louise* and *Keith* to recover the relationship. This seems to change relationship dynamics in UKa as well as with SinoXa. *Ann* now relies on lower ranked members of UKa, who are not privy to the same knowledge and information as her (due to division of labour), to rebuild relationships with SinoXa.

As *Ann* withdraws and stops communicating, access to her tangible and intangible resources is affected. Although *Keith* and *Louise* seem able to access these resources due to their good internal bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000), pressure increases in UKa as remaining team members try to develop the relationship with SinoXa with limited access to *Ann's* resources.

It seems activities that highlight conflict can thus halt the transfer of resources, simply because the activity and its outcomes (CHAT *object*³) make an individual feel a certain way. Questions arise as to how TNE partnerships can overcome conflict, and whether it exists in all cases, or whether it can be "designed-out" in the process of partnership initiation.

1.1.1.1.2 Understanding the Meaning of the Activity

As Weber (1978) suggests, understanding the meaning of a social action can be done in two ways: direct (rational) and explanatory. According to *Hannah, Eliza*, (SinoXa) and *Ann*, and *Louise* (UKa), there was no direct rational understanding for the actions of either party in the activity ***marking and remarking of examination papers 2013***.

It seems neither party could rationally explain and understand the actions of the other during this specific activity. *Ann* and *Louise* (UKa) sought their own explanations, based upon their *perceptions of the* situation and their knowledge of cultural difference, as did *Hannah* and *Eliza* (SinoXa). Speculation was therefore high during this period. Both groups therefore tried to explain the underlying motives of the other, ‘the meanings for [their] actions’ and ‘to grasp the complex meanings into which [their] action fits...’ (Weber 1978, p. 12), but were unable to do so. The effect of this was to create suspicion and anxiety in both camps, whereby neither could understand the motives of the other’s actions.

Both SinoXa and UKa findings evidence an increase in suspicion and distrust both during and after this activity. Moreover, both groups speculate in their accounts as to the underlying reason for discord generated by the activity, but key agents such as *Tom* (SinoXa) refused to engage in his interview about this activity and its outcome.

1.1.1.1.3 Recovering from Conflicted Activities: Focusing on the *Little Things*

It seems, in conflicted situations, both SinoXa and UKa retreat and support the agendas of their educational institutions over the partnership’s “collective” agenda (Eddy, 2010). Conflict therefore seems to reinforce the exclusive identities of SinoXa and UKa, which further highlights the differences between the partner groups. External bonds are weakened by a reduction in communication and reciprocation. To reverse the situation, UKa utilise small functional tasks as a way of creating new platforms in which to build new connections.

It seems UKa, after activities which highlight discord, seek to re-engage their Sino colleagues by engaging in less controversial functional tasks. These activities, such as ***assessment design, teaching schedules, workshop design, module handbooks, field trips, module evaluations***, and ***FIFO*** organisation, at their core, seek to circumvent conflict.

In this sense, localised activities between faculty members are used as tools to mend relationships that have been damaged by more antagonistic activities (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007). Uncontroversial, simple tasks seek to realign the teams, by stripping out the possibility of misinterpretation. This enables them to rebuild confidence in each other, by showing them that they do (as individuals) share the same ethos and values, although institutionally differences may reside.

Furthermore, these tasks seem to reconnect SinoXa and UKa, which assists in the rebuilding of bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000). Faculty members start to reengage and share small pieces of information they feel comfortable in sharing. This knowledge transfer seems to ignite the rebuilding of trust and respect across the network.

Although smaller activities between UKa and SinoXa faculty members, such as changes to a lecture programme, enable two previously agitated systems time to repair and recover, the impact of previous events clearly resonates in both individual and institutional memory. UKa refer to the effects of previous activities on their morale and motivation. Whilst they try to maintain a positive outlook, their transcripts evidence how previous interactions change the way they interpret and respond to further interactions.

2. Time

Partnerships evolve over time (J.E. Austin, 2000) as, shared norms get established through 'negotiation, time together...shared knowledge and meaning for ideas' (Eddy, 2010, p. 50). In the case of partnership A, time seems to be a resource that is controlled and regulated by the infrastructures surrounding SinoXa and UKa.

Although time is important in developing shared understandings across the partner groups (Baus & Ramsbottom, 1999), it seems SinoXa and UKa have problems in controlling and managing this particular resource. Conversely, this affects the quality of the relationships they develop with each other. The data highlight three factors which require analysis in order to understand what is happening in partnership A. These are:

1. Distance and time delay.
2. Multiple stakeholders and the effect on time.
3. Time and transformation.

2.1 Distance and Time Delay

Ann describes a key part of her job is to retrospectively analyse the production and implications of the activities of SinoXa. Due to the distance between the partners, she explains how time delays affect the way she manages the course. Activities undertaken by SinoXa occur eight hours ahead of UKa. Activities between the UK and China therefore do not occur simultaneously, but rather happen asynchronously, whereby SinoXa engages in activities, which generate outputs that UKa receive and decode eight hours later.

Discussions around *distance and time delay* are common across all Sino and UK participant transcripts. All participants acknowledge how time delay slows the exchange of information. Instant responses to activities such as **emails** asking for help or advice cannot be actioned at times that suit the needs of either SinoXa or UKa. Furthermore, activities such as the **production of year 3 exam questions/mark-schemes**, also highlight how the production of activities may not suit the timescales of both partner groups, creating tensions in operational relationships.

The biggest challenge to SinoXa is their inability to gain access to resources embedded in the UK network whilst the UK institution and UKa are not at work. The implications of time delay therefore seem twofold:

1. Unless SinoXa scenario plan, the potential outcomes of their actions in advance of their occurrence, then they are unlikely to be able to identify the resources they may need from UKa in advance, to either stop or promote an outcome occurring.
2. Unless UKa know in advance what SinoXa are likely to need prior to engaging in activity production, then they cannot identify or provide access to suitable resources, which either may stop the outcome of their actions, or at least minimise its affects.

Mapping the effects of time delay onto CHAT (Engeström, 2001), changes the nature of *object*³. This zone of interplay does not represent a collective space, inhabited by two partners, but a space occupied by a single partner at any given time. With UKa offline, it seems internal communication within SinoXa becomes paramount if existing resources are to be identified and mobilised efficiently in order to ensure faculty members can continue to work productively.

Should resources not be available to SinoXa, their activities become poorly focused (*object¹*); thereby producing outputs (*object²*) that are not fit for purpose. However, UKa do not receive and decode these outputs (*object³*) until eight hours later. UKa then deal with the new conditions, whilst SinoXa are dormant. CHAT *object³* therefore does not operate as a collective space where both partners negotiate and evaluate outcomes at the same time. A critique of CHAT in its current format is therefore its inability to effectively reflect and evaluate partner relationships that require negotiation and sense making across different time zones. By reconfiguring CHAT to suit partnership A, new insights and explanations may become apparent.

From a social capital perspective, the inability of SinoXa to access resources when required means they often have to wait before engaging in certain tasks. SinoXa discuss throughout their transcripts the need for UKa advice, knowledge, ideas or support in order to help them make decisions about the best way to deliver the programme. Whilst codified, stored knowledge such as handbooks and regulations can often be accessed immediately via online systems, tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1991), residing in the UK team, is subject to access only when the UK institution is operational. However, this does not imply explicit knowledge does not require clarification before it can be of value to SinoXa. On the contrary, SinoXa clearly identify problems in interpreting codified knowledge. In these situations UKa are required to provide clarification before certain Sino activities can commence. Both explicit and tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1991) are therefore critical to SinoXa, helping them make appropriate decisions, which generate productive activities.

Findings from partnership A, suggest time delay affects academic identity, whereby SinoXa feel powerless to provide students with the information they perceive a good academic should be able to. Furthermore, it seems time delay also hinders SinoXa in the production of certain tasks. The activity mentioned by *Hannah* in relation to informing her referred students as to procedures for coursework resubmissions is a case in point. One could argue that SinoXa should try to consider their resource needs in advance of the activity, to overcome the issue of time delay. However, it seems other systematic conditions render this impossible (see below).

Moreover, it seems from participant transcripts, both SinoXa and UKa are frustrated by the retrospective nature of their partnership (activity) system. This affects their morale

and motivation; they all seem to feel unable to service and provide each other with relevant information when needed.

2.2 Multiple Stakeholders and the Effect on Time

UKa findings imply SinoXa do not often communicate with UKa. Initially, this could be interpreted as ambivalence on the side of SinoXa, towards UKa. However, a closer inspection suggests SinoXa are unable to make contact with or respond effectively and efficiently to UKa due to a complex web of competing communities.

Community groups are evident in CHAT (Engeström, 2001); these stakeholders have the power to influence faculty member activities depending on their age, position, authority and power. SinoXa discuss a range of stakeholders who influence their working environment and explain in detail how this makes them feel.

2.2.1 A Lack of Time

As a partner group, SinoXa feel they should be sharing their insights into the teaching of Chinese students by engaging in activities such as the ***sharing of teaching materials and innovative pedagogies*** with UKa. Yet because of “multiple requirements” and “multiple voices” they feel time to do this is limited. SinoXa therefore consider UKa as one stakeholder group, who exist within a complex web of other stakeholders. This affects the amount of time SinoXa have to work with UKa. This creates pressures, whereby too many tasks mean outputs are adversely affected.

2.2.1.1 Activity: *Marking 170 Year 3 Student Coursework Assignments in 3 Weeks*

The activity ***marking 170 year 3 student coursework assignments in 3 weeks*** highlights how particular activities can have a detrimental effect on activity output and Sino staff motivation and morale. The three-week turnaround of assessments, an institution wide policy at UK HEI A, affects SinoXa because it does not consider any teaching and learning operational contexts other than its own. The policy’s lack of consideration for collaborative arrangements, mean assessment and feedback tasks place additional stress on both SinoXa and UKa faculty members, thereby affecting their working relationships.

- **Time, Cost and Quality**

To ensure activities meet UK assessment regulations, SinoXa feel they must compromise on other aspects, such as quality. The operational balancing act suggests that three primary forces require consideration in the delivery of a project: time, cost and quality (Baccarini, 1999). Project success therefore has three key components. However, in the case of partnership A, it seems UK HEI A measure tasks and assess them in relation to meeting a particular schedule. The effect of such is to compromise on the quality of the output (Slack & Lewis, 2008) and the cost in terms of staff morale.

Certain institution wide policies set by stakeholders who operate outside of the partnership's operational environment, therefore have the ability to restrict operational faculty members in being able to negotiate the terms of their activities. Faculty members are no longer able to negotiate task production, creating pressures within operational teams. Policies that reduce time arbitrarily, without considering the merits of individual tasks mean faculty members are unable to negotiate or compromise on certain tasks. Focus now shifts from the quality of the task in terms of its output, to the amount of available time in which to complete the task. This generates tension in CHAT *object*³, whereby large student numbers in SinoXa coupled with a lack of time, cause tensions in what UKa expect in relation to task quality, versus what SinoXa can produce in accordance with time available. Reducing the time to produce an activity, yet still expecting it to produce quality outputs, dramatically increases the probability that tasks will fail to meet expected outcomes.

Activities such as ***marking 170 year 3 student coursework assignments in 3 weeks*** or the expected use of online resources, such as marking systems, at the Sino institution point to UK institutional policies that do not consider the capabilities of the overseas partner. This can increase the risk, uncertainty and vulnerability of activities, by creating tasks that are set to fail before they have even begun. Therefore, time has the ability to affect the output of a task, and needs consideration if tasks are to meet partner group expectations and assist in the development of positive operational relationships.

It seems time is a critical partnership resource (Alpert et al., 1992; Baus & Ramsbottom, 1999; Eddy, 2010; Frost et al., 2010), whereby agents need time to solve emerging problems, build trust (Eddy, 2010) and show commitment to their partnership

(Huxham & Vangen, 1996). Yet faculty members operating partnership A seem to have little direct control over its generation and allocation.

Therefore, it seems time as a critical partnership resource is not easily accessed or mobilised for purposive action (Lin, 2001). In addition, SinoXa, who require more of this resource to service their TNE partnership, cannot simply ask UKa to provide it. Although workloads can arguably be reduced to create more time, the way that time is utilised is still a critical component in the production of successful activities. Whilst having time to produce an activity is one aspect, knowing what to do in that time and how to use it effectively is what makes the difference. Yet it seems workloads, and resource transfer and access are not necessarily under the direct control of all participating faculty members.

Partnership A evidences how external forces surrounding faculty members can influence access to time. Moreover, it seems this resource, although playing a critical role in the development of both bonding and bridging social capital, is not under the direct control of faculty. The question arises as to whether faculty members can have any influence over this critical resource. If time is required in order to build cross-border relationships, then faculty members need to be able to access it, influence it and mobilise it. Yet partnership A evidences how this critical resource is subject to multiple forces that compress and unevenly distribute it across the partnership network. The effect of such in partnership A is to produce conditions, which strip out key collaborative attributes such as reciprocity (Gray, 1989), whereby faculty members have no time to share information across the partnership network.

2.3 Time and Transformation

Although partnership A has been in operation for just over six years, data suggests it is yet to evolve beyond a collection of individual partners' interests (Eddy, 2010). Over time, 'shared norms, shared beliefs and networking' (Amey et al. 2010, p. 341) guide the partnership towards institutionalisation. However, partnership A evidences conflicting ideologies, differing expectations, and limited resource access. Although tension and conflict is common in all stages of burgeoning partnerships, partnership A seems to struggle to develop shared visions, favouring individual agendas. This implies time in relation to age does not necessarily correlate with time in relation to maturity.

Partnerships evolve because of relational changes that occur between partners (J. E. Austin, 2000). By continuously reviewing partnership decisions, partners are able to create new forms of engagement, thereby developing their relationship over time. Transformation

therefore assists in maturation; new experiences help faculty members to interpret, understand and negotiate new situations.

According to Archer (2010) transformation is not merely the 'eradication of a prior structural property...it is the structural elaboration of a host of new social possibilities' (2010, pp. 240-241). This process strengthens the partnership as new visions and shared norms develop between partners (Eddy, 2010). Although transformation of this sort takes time, it seems fair to argue partnership A, after six years, does not evidence any form of structural elaboration. The question is why is this?

For new practices to be implemented, partnership design and management must be flexible enough to *enable* transformation to occur, with flexibility representing the 'hallmark of successful alliances' (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991, p. 131). It enables partners to resolve tensions by adapting their working practices to suit the changing needs of each partner. Herein we witness a problem with partnership A.

According to the TMSA (Archer, 2010, pp. 239-241), for transformation to occur in a partnership, two factors require consideration:

1. Pre-existing structures that govern subsequent social interactions need a history of positive progressive development

Archer (2010) argues the more agents are willing to participate in an activity, the more 'enthusiasm' and 'commitment' they generate (2010, p. 240). The effect of this is to eliminate negative prior structural influences quicker. However, she also argues how actions initiated by agents 'can delay the process [of transformation] and damage the project' (2010, p. 240). This implies faculty members, although constrained by partnership structure can influence the speed and direction of a partnership's structural transformation over time. However, themes common across the transcripts of all SinoXa and UKa participants pertain to a lack of overarching partnership progression and transformation. Whilst some transformation is evident between faculty members, who share learnings based upon their collective working practices (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007), data findings do not refer to any form of organisational learning or transformation.

The *empirical* domains of SinoXa and UKa constantly refer to low motivation, demoralisation and frustration; it seems neither group are advocates of the partnership. Although contractually bound to work together, this 'lack of willingness to participate and

learn...can delay the process of transformation' (Archer, 2010, p. 240). SinoXa and UKa findings suggest a lack of willingness to engage and learn has something to do with the history of partnership A (Engeström, 2001).

- **Legacy**

CHAT (Engeström, 2005) emphasises the importance of history in the development of activity systems. In order to understand the attitudes of faculty members who operate partnership A, one must refer to its history.

According to Homans (1982) social behaviour can be learnt. As faculty members engage in activities, other members of the team respond to the outputs their activities create. Depending on the responses, faculty members may decide to change their behaviours. For example, should a faculty member quickly and efficiently respond to emails, over time if the behaviour is not reciprocated by other team members, the likelihood is the 'rate of emission will tend to fall off, though a long time may pass before it stops altogether, before it is extinguished' (Homans, 1982, p. 598). Moreover, as faculty members try to balance multiple emissions in order to satisfy a range of stakeholders, agents may suffer 'aversive simulation...or "cost"' (Homans, 1982, p. 598), which can also affect their rate of emission. Fatigue is one example of cost and is evident in the transcripts of *Hannah, Ann* and *Louise*.

If extinction, satiation or cost, develop in social situations, they have the potential to affect the rate of emission of particular kinds of behaviours (Homans, 1982). Therefore, operational activities, which produce these types of conditions, need to be eliminated. Should partnership A wish to cultivate positive behaviours, such as respect, compassion, appreciation and trust, faculty member activities which evidence these behaviours must be recognised and reinforced by other operational members, as well as senior management. Should this not occur, Homans (1982) argues positive behaviours can quickly be replaced, rendering more 'probable the emission of some other kind of behaviour, including doing nothing at all' (1982, p. 598).

Furthermore, learned behaviours generate "emotional behaviour" (1982, p. 598), which is among the unconditional responses that may be reinforced in operant conditioning. Reinforcement of positive behaviours therefore generates emotional outputs such as motivation, enjoyment and commitment. Conditions such as extinction, satiation and cost have a negative effect, producing behaviours that reflect demotivation, fatigue and

disengagement. These behaviours create emotional outputs such as sadness, upset hurt and fear.

Findings suggest partnership A may be suffering from a legacy of extinction. It seems certain faculty members feel other team members have not reciprocated their positive attitudes towards the partnership. Although they try to think positively about the partnership, it seems faculty members such as *Hannah*, *Eliza* (SinoXa), *Ann* and *Louise* (UKa) feel fatigued, with *Hannah* having left altogether. The effect of such is to create relationships tainted by animosity and resentment.

SinoXa data suggests past colleagues and their decisions have fuelled this situation. SinoXa refer to prejudices they feel are evident in the attitudes and behaviours of certain members of UKa. To SinoXa, the activity of **FIFO** highlights these prejudices, whereby the Sino team seem to feel ostracised by members of UKa when they arrive to teach in China. Data analysis reveals how SinoXa and UKa feel past legacies of the partnership (activity) system have created conditions, which are impossible to escape. Therefore, it seems history has a part to play (Engeström, 2005) in the development of relationships amongst current faculty members.

Legacy has therefore created a fall in the emission of positive behaviours, replacing them with negative behaviours such as fatigue and inertia (Huxham & Vangen, 2004). Moreover, these negative states do not correlate with those of trust, respect and commitment, which are required to make a partnership a success (Carnwell & Carson, 2009). A key theme throughout data analysis is the constant change in personnel at the Sino institution. All faculty members identify this as being problematic for the partnership and the development of integrative bonds between them (Molm et al., 2012).

- **Staff Turnover**

Findings suggest that the high turnover of staff at the Sino institution affects SinoXa and UKa relationships. Baus and Ramsbottom (1999) and Eddy (2010) highlight the importance of having continuity in partnership personnel. As individuals leave SinoXa, resources such as tacit knowledge accrued over a period of time decrease. *Hannah* explains how she feels constant changes in personal mean she is unable to seek support from her internal team because no one has the experience to guide or support her (Döös, 2007).

This perception of value dramatically affects the level of effort faculty members put into being sociable with one another. Faculty members therefore cease to exchange resources within their partnership group, thereby decreasing their networks durability and value over time (Döös, 2007). This seemingly decreases the level of bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000) operating in SinoXa. This issue, coupled with a perceived lack of internal communication within SinoXa creates problems in the team dynamic. More established members tend to operate as autonomous individuals, sharing information on an ad hoc basis between themselves, leaving newer members to cope on their own.

It is clear to see why the emission of positive behaviour has dropped in SinoXa (Homans, 1982). It seems there is little in the way of reciprocation within the partner group. Moreover, because SinoXa has a high level of staff turnover, it is imperative communication between internal team members remains high. New recruits need to access the resources within the partnership network to make sense of their surroundings. This understanding is critical in providing a context for actions and their meaning (Weber, 1978).

The effect of high staff turnover at SinoXa means each year, UKa have to repeat operational tasks, taking the partnership back to an embryonic stage. This monotony means UKa feel unable to develop their programme because of instability and inconsistency in Sino staffing. Moreover, since staff turnover at the Sino institution is common-place, UKa feel resigned to it, and this attitude permeates their operational processes. UKa findings suggest they feel they will never develop the relationships required to transform and progress their partnership. This resignation affects the way UKa perceive SinoXa, and SinoXa acknowledge how continuous staff turnover affects their relationship with UKa. It seems constant changes in Sino personnel have created a legacy of resentment within the partnership (activity) system. Furthermore, resentment does not assist in the production of social capital, required to make a partnership function effectively (Eddy, 2010).

As new members join SinoXa, it seems they are unable to remove themselves from the legacies of their predecessors. Notwithstanding the fact they seem unable to form their own identities based upon their current practices. Partnership A therefore seems constrained by historic activities (Engeström, 2005), which creates tensions between the partner groups. SinoXa imply tensions manifest themselves in the way UKa communicate with them, both virtually and during **FIFO** visits. Staff turnover therefore clearly influences the way in which the partnership (activity) system is able to transform and progress.

Regardless of the poor relations between existing Sino and UK staff, SinoXa attribute staff turnover to poor internal management and support. A lack of empathy on behalf of the senior management team was a key reason why individuals leave the Sino institution. It seems a lack of internal understanding and communication regarding programme delivery causes many to feel isolated, unsupported and demotivated. This will be analysed further under the section: *Resources*.

The second factor requiring consideration in relation to time and transformation is:

2. Pre-existing structures must enable and encourage transformation

Partnerships need to be flexible enough to evolve beyond their initial design in order to survive in the long-term (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991). In order to evolve, transformations in procedures and processes need to occur. Since partnership A struggles to cope with its historicity, it seems it is more constrained by its pre-existing structures than enabled by them (Fleetwood, 2005). Therefore, if not evolving and yet surviving, the structure and systems surrounding partnership A require further investigation.

• The Reproduction of Tasks

Archer (1995) through her TMSA argues the reproduction and transformation of structures can occur *at the same time*. However, in partnership A, it seems reproduction is more favourable for three reasons:

1. As identified previously, microscopic changes, which reproduce familiarity and circumvent conflict assist in keeping relationships stable.
2. *Tom* (SinoXa) and *Ann* (UKa) suggest it is complicated developing and lobbying for the implementation of a new practice. *Ann* describes red tape and policies often prevent her making changes to programme delivery in both the UK and China. This suggests the structure of partnership A is not flexible enough to enable and encourage faculty members to positively transform their partnership (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991).
3. Staff turnover at Sino X renders the notion of progression impossibly hard.

UKa findings imply they see no possibility in eradicating or eliminating prior structural properties, such as culture, time and legacy. Therefore, they feel structure prevents them from evolving their partnership. The effect of such is to create operational working conditions, whereby reproduction is easier and transformation harder. Moreover, it seems the level of effort needed to reproduce is lower than that needed to transform. Since fatigue is evident across partnership A, it seems there is little impetus to try to transform the partnership. Further questions arise as to the effect this has on the development of relationships in partnership A, as well as to the partnership's overall value and sustainability.

Whilst reproduction and microscopic change may assist in keeping operational relationships civil and stable, it is not necessarily conducive for the development of the partnership in the long-term. It therefore seems fair to argue in this context that reproductive relationships do not directly correlate with maturation and transformation, but deal more with reparation and maintenance. This may explain why partnership A is able to survive because activities focus on recovery and repair, thereby keeping the partnership "alive". Yet activities should really focus on joint learning, problem solving, negotiation, progression and change so that the partnership can mature and expand beyond its current condition.

- **Learning in Partnership A**

Reproduction and transformation raise important questions concerning the nature of learning in partnership A. What learning takes place in a partnership that retreats from conflicted situations? Moreover, how does it affect the partnership structure and systems if operational members of staff never encourage partnership transformation through healthy debate and negotiation? It seems SinoXa and UKa have learnt to avoid conflict, devising and focusing on activities that seek to circumvent conflict.

Expansive learning is a feature of CHAT, whereby learners 'are involved in constructing and implementing a radically new...concept for their activity' (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 2). This implies faculty members engaged in activities across borders should be able to resolve issues by influencing decision makers or changing their internal functions to enable the development of new objectives and/or operating methods (Engeström, 2007).

However, the SinoXa and UKa findings do not refer to any form of positive, transformational learning. There is no community of learners, actively engaged in the transformation of cultures and the formation of new paradigms (Engeström & Sannino,

2010). UKa refer to their learning as repetitive, accidental and apathetic. SinoXa refer to having no time to make changes or develop ideas. This is problematic for expansive learning because 'in expansive learning, learners learn something not yet there...learners construct a new object and concept for their collective activity' (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 2). Findings suggest this is *not the case in partnership A*.

This lack of transformational learning has implications for our theoretical understandings of CHAT *object*³. Arguably, CHAT *object*³, in this particular case, is not as positive as theory suggests. In partnership A, it seems faculty members due to the retrospective nature in which it operates, barely connects in *object*³, making analysing and responding to each other's actions much harder, before making individual and/or collective partner group choices about further action. It seems in partnership A, CHAT *object*³ does not operate as a zone of collective engagement, but rather promotes individual decision-making processes and confusion as to why certain outcomes have been generated. If the chances of agents' goals yielding success are limited, they will switch their focus to avoiding conflict or minimising loss (Roth, 2007). This type of learning constitutes defensive learning (Roth, 2007) and is evident in UKa, whereby faculty members actively avoid engaging in certain activities (*Ann*) which may lead to conflict, regardless of whether tackling these issues would lead to a more productive partnership in the long-term.

Learning in this conflicted environment is therefore not concerned with constructing a 'new object and concept for collective activity' (Engeström, 2011, p. 87). Furthermore, it is not about learning to 'design and implement a new model for activity' nor is it about 'opening up new possibilities for action and development' (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007, p. 339). Learning in partnership A seems to focus on learning to tolerate the other. SinoXa and UKa through their previous experiences have learnt what creates negative emotional valence, what to tolerate, and what to avoid engaging in completely.

Arguably, the outcomes generated by the activity ***marking and remarking of examination papers 2013***, have not assisted in the expansion of objects or the development of new collective practices. This is problematic for CHAT (Engeström, 2001), that seeks to expand the unit of analysis for learning beyond the individual to that of the organisation (Engeström, 1995). In the context of partnership A, it seems both SinoXa and UKa feel unable to reconfigure or elaborate the larger system in which they operate. UKa prefer to reproduce activities they know will produce expected outcomes, and avoid tackling activities, which they feel will aggravate conflict. Conversely, SinoXa feel powerless to

activate change, not due to avoiding conflict, but because their structure and systems limit their ability to create change.

Fundamental questions arise as to the ability of faculty members operating in partnership A to reconfigure and elaborate their existing partnership (activity) system. How can partnership A develop if faculty members consciously avoid difficult conversations? Furthermore, if the most conflicted activities pertain to assessment and feedback, questions arise as to the possible state of UK education overseas, particularly if these issues are actively or consciously being circumvented, for fear of arousing feelings of hostility and/or distrust.

Whilst time and transformation are critical to partnerships, activity theory (Engeström, 2001) does not acknowledge the flow of time or how knowledge generated through shared negotiation and learning (CHAT *object*³) feeds back into the partnership (activity) system. Partnership A evidences the issues created by distance, time delays and legacies on a partnership (activity) systems' ability to positively transform and progress over time. Moreover, these factors clearly affect the way agents engage with each other, effecting resource access and mobilisation between networked parties.

3. Resources

An analysis of partnership A suggests resources needed by all faculty members in order to deliver successful outcomes, can be categorised under two headings. Since time has already been analysed, forces affecting the exchange of other intangible resources, (knowledge and support) will be analysed herein.

1. Tangible Resources:

- Teaching materials (including internet, books, classrooms)
- Codified knowledge (including regulations, handbooks, rules, contracts)
- Human resources
- Finance

2. Intangible Resources:

- Tacit knowledge (wisdom, ideas, advice, guidance)
 - Support (help, encouragement, assistance)
 - (*Time*)
- } Ideally underpinned and enhanced by internal and external transparent communication

3.1 Tangible Resources

Although tangible resources such as **computers**, **teaching equipment** and **physical learning environments** are important in the delivery of TNE programmes, faculty members did not seem to have a direct controlling influence over their allocation.

SinoXa and UKa findings imply resources such as equipment, labour and capital, reside under the control of senior management within their institutions. This means faculty members from both sides of the partnership do not seem to associate tangible resource accessibility and mobility as being within their remit of control. SinoXa and UKa therefore do not seem to blame or associate each other with access to tangible resources, because they accept that other, more powerful stakeholder groups control the majority of these resources.

Codified knowledge such as **regulations**, **code of conduct handbooks**, and **partnership contracts** seem to transfer easily between partner groups, because they can be stored on virtual platforms. Although rules and regulations can cause tensions between faculty members, they do not seem to blame each other for these tensions. They all seem to agree rules govern the partnership, providing boundaries for action, albeit being inflexible at times.

However, SinoXa and UKa findings suggest intangible resources play a critical role in developing both bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000) between the partner groups. Resources, such as knowledge, support, ideas, information and guidance, which resides at the individual level, seem to have a greater impact on faculty relations.

3.2 Intangible Resources

Findings suggest the transference of intangible resources such as tacit knowledge and support across the partnership network, are critical in the development of faculty member relationships. However, in order to ensure these resources transfer effectively and efficiently, communication plays a pivotal role. Clearly, an understanding of *what and why* a task needs performing is important in generating understanding, engagement and motivation (Weber, 1978). However, whilst all faculty members acknowledge the value of open and honest communication, their transcripts indicate discrepancies in how this manifests itself in their own internal and external communication methods.

3.2.1 Internal Communication: The Key to Developing Bonding Social Capital in SinoXa and UKa

Depending on the division of labour (Engeström, 2001) residing in the partnership (activity) system, it seems not all faculty members are equally able to access and/or mobilise resources (Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010). Certain agents, depending on their role within the partnership, seem to wield more power (Daniels, 2013), thereby enabling them to access and regulate resources. This is particularly evident in the role of course leaders, whereby *Hannah* and *Eliza* perceive *Tom's* (SinoXa) strict control of resources as problematic. Although *Tom* feels information control is the right way to protect his team from the 'multi-voicedness' of the activity system (Engeström, 2001, p. 136), his team regard it as detrimental in the development of internal and external relationships. By regulating access to knowledge, *Tom* (SinoXa) acts as a communication blocker, rather than a communication enhancer.

Hannah and *Eliza* (SinoXa) both agree they often do not know *why* they are performing certain tasks. Their transcripts imply they often engage in activities without having access to appropriate resources that would give their actions meaning. In addition, failing to communicate the reasons for an activity makes it harder to make decisions about how to conduct the task.

It therefore becomes harder to identify resources, which can *contribute positively in the activity's overall production*. Should faculty members not know what the purpose (reason) of an activity is, then they cannot establish if the activity will generate appropriate outputs (CHAT *object*²), or meet partner expectations (CHAT *object*³) because key knowledge required to make the task a success is missing.

Interestingly, UKa do not mention their access to tangible or intangible resources as being problematic. One interpretation of this is that knowledge and information is openly accessible to the whole group. In fact, to overcome the activity ***marking and remarking of examination papers 2013***, *Ann* (UKa) actively relied on the knowledge and support within her partner group to transform the relationship, whereby she stood back and allowed the rest of her team to take over re-establishing relationships. This highlights the importance of both horizontal and vertical resource exchange in a partner group and may help explain why UKa is able to produce high levels of bonding social capital (Putman, 2000) over and above SinoXa.

Evidently, restricting access to tangible and intangible resources seems to reduce internal bonding social capital in SinoXa (Putnam, 2000). It seems fair to argue that by restricting access to resources such as knowledge and support, group solidarity and in-group loyalty is affected (Putnam, 2000).

To understand why a group feels a particular way, it is important to understand the rationale underpinning it (Weber, 1978). If faculty do not understand decision-making processes or why tasks need producing in a particular way, they cannot make sense of the situation surrounding them. Uncertainty prevails, thereby creating conditions, which are not conducive to the development of bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000).

Hannah and *Eliza* (SinoXa) evidence the negative emotions generated by engaging in an activity that seemingly lacks purpose. These findings suggest motivation and commitment decreases when agents withhold information concerning the rationale for a task from one another. Bourdieu's (2006) definition of social capital makes it clear that social relationships must enable individuals to access resources possessed by associates if benefit and value is to be generated. By withholding resources, it seems faculty members feel task efficiency and effectiveness is stifled, thereby damaging internal team relations.

3.2.2 External Communication: The Key to Developing Bridging Social Capital between SinoXa and UKa

Since SinoXa lack bonding social capital, or 'sociological superglue' (Putman, 2000, p. 23), it forces them to reach out to UKa in order to connect and access the resources that they need. Sino tutors, due to negative relationships in their team, often circumvent senior management who they feel restrict access to resources they believe to be important in their partnerships development. It therefore seems bridging social capital (Putman, 2000) offers a lifeline to members of SinoXa, enabling them to generate productive activities.

However, *due* to a lack of time, Sino faculty members only make contact when they feel it is necessary in order to understand or clarify the expectations of UKa. Moreover, due to the monitoring of information exchanges within SinoXa by *Tom*, communication is limited, focused predominately on day-to-day teaching and pedagogical exchanges.

SinoXa and UKa findings suggest communication often breaks down between them, marred by periods of silence caused by environmental differences, partner institution regulations, or by issues such as UK and Chinese academic calendars. During these

periods, SinoXa feel stress and frustration, particularly if they are reliant on UKa for information and support because these intangible resources are not available to them in their own activity system (see *Distance and Time Delays*).

Whilst codified knowledge can offer some guidance, SinoXa seems reluctant to act without the consent of UKa, citing misinterpretation of regulations as a key reason for waiting for UK confirmation. Other findings reveal it is not just a fear of the feedback from UKa, but of other stakeholders who govern the activities of SinoXa. A fear of blame, being wrong or being deemed incompetent almost cripples SinoXa in terms of engaging in their partnership, reducing their willingness to take accountability and ownership (Southern, 2005) for the degree programme. This affects the way SinoXa and UKa engage with each other.

3.2.2.1 The Value of Relational Transactional Analysis (RTA)

UKa findings suggest staff feel an immense pressure to respond and assist SinoXa, meaning they have little patience and compassion for them. Furthermore, findings highlight how high staff turnover and poor bonding social capital (Putman, 2000) in SinoXa impacts on the communicative processes of UKa, whereby they continuously refer to a communication style similar to that of a parent-child. Offering insight into such transactions, relational transactional analysis (RTA) (Lapworth & Sills, 2012) suggests how agents relate and respond to each other is critical in the development of relationships.

In order to survive, relationships require mutual respect and empathy, as well as shared agreements about direction and goals (Alpert et al., 1992). Relationships therefore require 'bi-directionality', whereby they are co-created through collaborative dialogue (Lapworth & Sills, 2012, p. 4). Fundamental to RTA are philosophical beliefs, which affect the way people consider and value each others' humanity. By considering an individual as *being OK* or *not OK* in relation to how one considers one's own position, relationships can become unequal, which is not conducive to growth and change. RTA suggests that agents who approach other agents from a position of 'I'm OK-You're OK' *create a sense of equality and respect*. Should agents approach each other from a position of 'I'm OK- you're not OK' or 'I'm not OK- You're OK' or 'I'm not OK- you're not OK' agents are coming from a position of inequality (or equal hopelessness) and this is not conducive to growth and change (2012, p.5).

UKa as the awarding institution see themselves as guardians of quality, as well as brand ambassadors. Since they seem to perceive SinoXa as being the weaker partner, UKa

approach the relationship from a position of 'I'm OK- you're not OK' (Lapworth & Sills, 2012, p.5). This approach is not conducive for growth and change, since it creates tension in their communication. Inequality and difference therefore surface in the language and tone of UKa correspondence. Implicit in this approach is the belief SinoXa are incapable, incompetent and misguided.

RTA also refers to the 'ego states' of parent, adult and child (Lapworth & Sills, 2012, p. 5). An ego state represents a state of experiencing, which involves thinking, feeling and behaving. Depending on the contingent conditions (Tsoukas, 1989) underpinning an action, an activity may be experienced by a faculty member in a particular way, generating a particular type of transactional response. Due to the constant change and lack of bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000) present in SinoXa, conditions are created, which mean UKa often feel they need to adopt a parental role. UKa and SinoXa now engage in crossed transactions, whereby UKa adopts a parental tone, treating SinoXa like a child, thereby generating childlike responses. The inequality of the partnership is therefore evident in the communicative transactions between UKa and SinoXa. Although UKa complain about the lack of ownership and accountability in SinoXa, UKa findings suggest they do not intend to relinquish their parental responsibilities.

3.2.3 The Reciprocation of Intangible Resources

For a partnership to develop the integrative bonds required for its long term survival, individuals must feel they are operating in a culture that supports reciprocal forms of exchange (Molm et al., 2012). The kinds of resources usually associated with social capital, and acquired through network ties, such as support, information and assistance, 'are most typically acquired... through reciprocal forms of exchange' (Molm, 2010, p. 126).

3.2.3.1. Reciprocal Exchange: Unilateral Exchange

Reciprocal exchange best occurs in situations that allow benefits to flow unilaterally. All actors in the network can initiate exchanges with other actors at any given time (Molm, 2010). Some initiations may be reciprocated immediately, some never, others later. Since acts of unilateral giving are reciprocated over time in the course of ongoing relations, the exchange process becomes embedded, creating feelings of 'trust, affective regard [and] solidarity' (Molm, 2010, p. 124). Clearly, the more reciprocity that exists within a partnership, the more individuals will feel a sense of integration (Molm et al., 2012).

However, the development of both internal and external *unilateral exchange* in SinoXa seems problematic. Since staff turnover at the Sino institution is high, and time is in short supply, SinoXa feel restricted by situational factors that constrain their ability to reciprocate the actions of UKa. SinoXa findings also suggest reciprocation within the team is poor. Individuals seem unwilling to support or share valuable information with each other, seemingly working in isolation in order to protect themselves from blame. This suggests that an unsupportive management structure, coupled with communication breakdowns and high staff turnover render unilateral giving problematic. It therefore seems, attributes associated with social capital, such as mutual support, resource exchange and cooperation (Putnam, 2000) enhanced through reciprocal exchange, are not happening as they should in SinoXa.

In contrast, UKa findings highlight a commitment to unilateral giving. However, UKa highlight their frustration at being involved with a partner who seems unable or unwilling to reciprocate their actions at any time. However, a lack of reciprocal exchange does not stop UKa from trying to engage in unilateral giving. UKa appreciate the need to work with SinoXa as the awarding institution. Therefore, they try and build bridging social capital by encouraging small scale work-place discussions and learning (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007) to stimulate the diffusion of information, as well as broadening the identities of each partner group (Putnam, 2000). As Molm et al. (2012) suggest 'reciprocal exchange has the power to either set or alter the affective tone of a relationship' (2012, p. 142). This implies the more benefits are able to flow unilaterally in a partnership, the better the tone of the relationship.

However, since systems and structures inherent in partnership A do not always seem to enable unilateral forms of exchange, the tone of the relationship is somewhat negative. Ideally, activities need reciprocating across the partner group(s), thereby stimulating and reinforcing trust, particularly when 'one trusting act is reciprocated by another' (2012, p. 142). This gradually builds a 'durable basis for cooperation' over time (Carlton & Lad, 1995, p. 282), which assists in the development of long-term partnership goals (Lewin, 1943) and *partnership capital* (Eddy, 2010).

3.2.4 Negotiated Exchange: Bilateral Exchange

A negotiated exchange implies benefits flow bilaterally, whereby joint agreements are negotiated, providing benefit for both parties, whether equal or unequal (Molm et al., 2012, Molm, 2010). SinoXa and UKa both outline how their respective institutions mutually benefit from their TNE partnership. Revenue, access to UK HE and recruitment, are all reasons for

being in a TNE partnership. Clearly, TNE partnerships therefore generate outputs that provide both institutions with recognisable benefits that satisfy their needs.

In order to develop social capital, individuals must feel that there are some payoffs for being in the relationship, either in the short or long term (Turner, 2002). Faculty members therefore need to feel some sort of benefit by being in a partnership in order for social capital to develop (M. L. Smith, 2005). Although UKa highlight some perceived personal benefits of TNE, such as travel and exposure to different cultural practices, these benefits emanate from the partnership contract (negotiated), rather than individual (reciprocal) actions. This interpretation implies partnership A predominately relies on bilateral exchange rather than unilateral exchange; this is problematic for the development of integrative bonds, which stimulate social capital (Molm, 2010; Molm et al., 2012). Moreover, bilateral exchanges may affect the operational practices of faculty members, by blocking the flow of unilateral reciprocal exchanges. By encouraging faculty members to engage in negotiated tasks that have mutually beneficial outcomes, general exchanges of goodwill may become restricted. Tasks now focus on negotiation and value rather than on providing support and strengthening affective regard (Molm, et al., 2012).

Activities such as the ***marking and remarking of examination papers 2013***, clearly evidence how hard it is to produce outcomes that satisfy both partner groups at any one time. Arguably, these activities highlight how mutually beneficial outcomes (in certain circumstances) are impossible to negotiate. In this situation, negotiated exchanges fail, and the weaker partner loses out to the other stronger partner (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991), creating feelings of animosity. Whilst not impossible to develop social capital through negotiated forms of exchange, it seems partnerships benefit more from social capital developed by reciprocal forms of exchange.

Although Molm et al. (2012) suggest 'embedding negotiated exchanges' into an 'ongoing relationship of reciprocal exchange significantly strengthens feelings of trust, affective regard and solidarity' (2012, p. 142), this clearly is not happening in partnership A. Moreover, it seems in the case of partnership A, operating negotiated exchanges is equally as problematic as operating reciprocal exchanges. This may help explain why trust, affective bonds and solidarity seem weak in partnership A.

3.2.5 An Observation Concerning Resources

Whilst TNE is often described as collaborative (QAA, 2012), it seems the infrastructures encapsulating partnership A are designed to process the need for both collaboration and control. However, partnership A seems to struggle to balance the two forces.

Certainly in partnership A there are activities which promote the idea of collaborative work and ownership, such as **FIFO, video conferencing, shared teaching materials, inductions, franchised modules** and **online mentoring**. Yet conversely, other activities such as **moderation of assessments, module specifications, inputting of student grades into administrative systems** and **course assessment board meetings** emphasise the need for one party to control the other.

Therefore, depending on the purpose of the activity and the circumstances surrounding it, activities and their outputs may escalate, halt, or limit the transfer of further tangible and intangible resources between partner groups. This means faculty members oscillate between two diametrically opposed forces, whereby certain activities promote equity and sharing, whilst others promote subordination and mastery. This *constant fluctuation*, inherent in the partnership's structure and systems, clearly affects the way relationships develop between faculty members.

Arguably, it seems embedded in a partnership are activities which both positively and negatively affect the continuous development of social capital. Partnership A evidences how creating sustainable relationships over time is a challenge for faculty members, whereby their relationships seem to fluctuate depending on the production of operational tasks and outcomes.

4. Emotion and Feeling

Different types of emotions are evident throughout the transcripts of SinoXa and UKa. Emotion plays an integral role in activity (Leont'ev, 1978), which has the ability to affect motivation and identity at work (Roth, 2007). Moreover, emotion is not only individual, but also collective (Roth, 2007), and this collective emotion is particularly evident in UKa. Codes such as "frustration" and "disengagement" are common across both partner groups. Since both parties seem to feel this way, it seems logical to investigate these negative emotions in more detail.

4.1 Frustration and Withdrawal

A common code in all the transcripts of UKa is that of “frustration”, which seems to produce low motivation, detachment and negativity. Hilgard and Atkinson (1967) define frustration as occurring ‘when progress towards a desired goal is blocked or delayed’ (1967, p. 417), with Vasilyuk (1991) defining it as ‘the combination of strong motivation to attain a given goal and obstacles barring the path to it...’ (1991, p. 39). Responses to frustration can be learnt over time, whereby faculty members who receive no help or guidance in dealing with frustrating circumstances, may well resort to apathy and withdrawal when confronted with subsequent frustrating situations (Hilgard & Atkinson, 1967). A common response to frustration is therefore apathy or withdrawal, as is aggression or regression (Hilgard & Atkinson, 1967).

Whilst UKa data offers no signs of ‘aggression’ or ‘regression’, codes such as “negativity”, “disengagement” and “exhaustion”, paint a picture of a partner group who feel apathetic towards their Sino partner. Whilst codes such as “frustration”, “low motivation” and “isolation” are also evident in SinoXa, they do not seem to blame UKa for these feelings as much as UKa seem to blame SinoXa.

The above points raise interesting questions about the origins and causes of “frustration”. At what point does frustration arise within partnership A? What is blocking faculty members from achieving their desired goals? In addition, it also raises important questions about the nature of *learning* in partnership A.¹³ One way of describing frustration is ‘behaviour without a goal’ (Maier, 1956, pp. 370-371), where behaviours manifest because they are ‘provoked by frustration’ rather than ‘provoked by’ realistic and measureable goals (Maier, 1956, pp. 370-371). The effect of such is to stimulate behaviours, which are disorganised and chaotic (Goldstein, 1995).

4.1.1. UKa

Keith, Ann and *Louise* seem to blame poor communication within SinoXa as one reason why SinoXa activity seems disorganised. UKa feel information provided to SinoXa is either contradicted or withheld by senior management, or poorly disseminated. This means operational tasks undertaken by SinoXa often lack focus and structure. This creates “frustration” in SinoXa because the *purpose of the action is blocked*, meaning faculty members *cannot understand the reasons for undertaking particular tasks* and “utter chaos”

¹³ Section 2.3: Time and Transformation. Learning in Partnership A. Learning to withdraw and avoid – defensive learning.

(Ann) prevails. Behaviour is no longer 'provoked by' realistic goals, but 'provoked by frustration' (Maier, 1956 pp. 370-371). Furthermore, it creates frustration in UKa because they cannot understand the processes, actions or outcomes of SinoXa activities. SinoXa tasks therefore seem convoluted and nonsensical. After the **marking and remarking of examination papers 2013**, UKa seem to question the purpose and value of their partnership. They no longer seem sure as to why they are engaged in a TNE partnership (other than being contractual obliged). UKa arguably no longer understand the purpose or goal of their partnership.

In the case of partnership A, it seems operational activities highlight the problems of trying to work across Chinese and UK cultural systems. Frustration and withdrawal therefore hamper faculty member relations by eroding the possibility of resource sharing and increasing the likelihood of power struggles between each group (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Such circumstances do not assist in the generation of collective trust and commitment, but effectively generate feelings of ambivalence, isolation and loss.

UKa findings clearly evidence the frustration they feel in being unable to develop a mature, professional relationship, which delivers a quality TNE educational service. UKa blame the origin of their frustration on three factors:

1. UKa imply SinoXa have internal issues in terms of working conditions and senior management. UKa perceive this as being a major factor in the turnover of staff at the Sino institute. They also highlight the poor level of staff development available to SinoXa. A lack of training of, and stability in personnel creates obstacles in the partnership (activity) system, which UKa interpret as a barrier to positive relationship development.
2. UKa imply poor communication within SinoXa means their tasks lose focus, creating outcomes, which are not expected when received by UKa (CHAT *object*³), thereby stimulating the possible response of disengagement.
3. Barriers to partnership development may be physical, psychological or socio-cultural in nature (Vasilyuk, 1991), and UKa imply socio-cultural differences between the UK and China create problems in the delivery of goals. Therefore, it seems fair to argue that rules, division of labour, communities and resources do create barriers in the achievement of particular tasks (Engeström, 2001).

Findings suggest certain members of UKa cope with frustrating circumstances by detaching, withdrawing or disengaging from the operational process. However, not all of UKa cope by withdrawing all of the time. This means contact remains constant between the two partner groups, albeit through different people at different times. However, this shift in contact points, as evidenced earlier in *Ann's* withdrawal after the activity **marking and remarking of examination papers 2013**, does affect the flow of resources available in the partnership network. This is worth considering when we realise that a main cause of frustration is 'when progress towards a desired goal is blocked or delayed' (Hilgard & Atkinson, 1967, p. 417). As UKa disengage, SinoXa seem unable to access certain resources, which they need to provide their activities with purpose. Whilst UKa may feel withdrawing is a way for them to protect themselves, they inadvertently seem to add further obstacles to an already obstructed system. Clearly, reducing transference of key operational resources does not assist in developing conditions that stimulate support, trust and cooperation (Putnam, 2000).

In UKa transcriptions, the code "frustration" and "disengagement" are most frequent in three substantive thematic areas, *Roles and Responsibilities* (perceptions of Sino course leader), *Inter-team Relations and Structures*, and *Learning and Learning Resources*. UKa findings therefore suggest three things:

1. Working with SinoXa (*Roles and Responsibilities, Inter-team Relations and Structures*) makes UKa feel frustrated, and they seem to blame SinoXa mismanagement for this, rather than reflecting on the effects their own actions have in conjunction with those of SinoXa.
2. Frustration seems to cause certain members of UKa to disengage from SinoXa at various times and for various reasons (*Roles and Responsibilities, Inter-team Relations and Structures*).
3. UKa seem to learn to disengage as a way to cope with the situations created by the actions of SinoXa.

4.1.2 SinoXa

Although certain collective activities such as the **marking and remarking of examination papers 2013** and **FIFO** do affect the way SinoXa feel about UKa, the origins of

their frustration generally seem to emulate from a lack of internal management and communication, as well as situational factors such as time delay.

4.1.3 Emotions, Feelings and Their Effect on Relationships

Constantly withdrawing from a situation that creates conflict or because of frustration is problematic in the development of social capital and partnership longevity. Withdrawal does not promote solidarity, affective regard or trust (Molm, 2010) and these are important factors in the development of positive partner relations. The more obstacles which hinder the production of purposive activities, the more improbable the chances are of those activities yielding successful outcomes, thereby producing higher levels of frustration and disengagement. It is therefore important to remove blockages by considering the whole infrastructure surrounding TNE partnerships, including structures, systems, motives and resources if social capital is to develop across borders.

UKa findings highlight how a poor or negative attitude, displayed by one member of SinoXa can influence the way other members within the activity system feel. As actors engage in activities they make emotional states and emotions available to others, who in turn respond to those through their own actions, producing or re-producing 'the same or similar emotions, leading to...the production of collective emotion' (Roth, 2007, p. 46). This clearly evidences the delicate nature of CHAT *object*³. Faculty members therefore experience and interpret each other's actions, generating emotions that feedback into the UK and Sino partnership (activity) systems, influencing the next round of activity production.

Weber (1978) argues the more individuals experience the conditions or situations of others, the more they can try to understand them, by re-living their experiences in their imagination. By considering the emotional states others may face, Weber (1978) implies agents are able to understand and appreciate the actions and choices of others.

SinoXa express how a lack of empathy from their own senior management team causes them anxiety and pressures. They also acknowledge how empathy about their situation may help the UK understand them better. It seems there is little empathetic intelligibility evident in either SinoXa or UKa and this appears to affect their ability to develop positive, effective regard for each other.

5.3 Concluding Case Study A: Modelling Partnership A as an Activity System and Explaining the Development of Social Capital:

The following table offers a summary of the above analysis. The tabular layout below does not imply that underpinning mechanisms and their sub categories represent discrete areas of activity. On the contrary, the aforementioned analysis has evidenced overlap between the thematic areas. Partnership A highlights the complex nature of social reality, whereby it is impossible to strip thematic areas and understand them out of the wider socio-cultural, political and economic environments in which they operate.

It highlights how underpinning faculty member activities, are a series of mechanisms, events and conditions that are not always visible or easy to understand. As these mechanisms collide and combine, they create conditions, which make individual and collective activities harder or easier for other faculty members to interpret and understand. This can affect the way in which agents react and subsequently respond to each other. Depending on how these mechanisms are manipulated through infrastructure, systems can be developed that can make conditions easier to manipulate and manage over time.

Substantive Theme	Sub-themes	Explanation	Activities
Structures & Systems	1.1 Infrastructure surrounding Partnership A	Socio- cultural differences Political, economic differences Different motives for TNE Complex frameworks govern and control interactions	
	1.1.1 Opposing Ideologies	Differences in ideologies Conflicted situations Accentuating difference Quantitative versus qualitative approaches to HE management	
	1.1.1.1 Activity and Conflict	Activities that highlight and exacerbate conflict Colliding cultural, institutional and individual value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and feedback

		systems	activities
	<p>1.1.1.1.1 Activity: <i>Marking and remarking of examination papers 2013</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compromised value- systems • Hidden Agendas • Reducing Resource Transfer 	<hr/> Values diametrically opposed Changing purposes/ hidden agendas Activity manipulation – original agendas versus (hidden) agendas Resource transfer halted Emotions generated – feelings hurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marking and remarking of examination papers 2013
	<p>1.1.1.1.2 Understanding the Meaning of the Activity</p>	<hr/> No rational explanations for actions No empathetic understandings No shared understandings Anxiety Suspicion Distrust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment design/ teaching schedules/ workshop design/ module handbooks/ field trips etc.
	<p>1.1.1.1.3 Recovering from Conflicted Activities: Focusing on the <i>Little Things</i></p>	<hr/> Refer to the “institution” for support Utilising smaller activities to repair damage Small functional tasks used to repair relationships Rebuild bridging social capital	
Time	2.1 Distance and Time Delay	Slows the exchange of explicit and tacit knowledge Access to resources slow, equals waiting Powerless to act or initiate a task Lack of academic identity – reliant on the awarding partner for information Resource requirements – not/known in advance Retrospective Low motivation and morale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails • Production of year 3 exam questions/ mark-schemes
	2.2 Multiple Stakeholders and the Effect on Time	<hr/> Multiple requirements Multiple voices	

<p>2.2.2 A Lack of Time</p> <p>2.2.2.1 Activity: Marking 170 Year 3 Student Coursework Assignments in 3 Weeks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time, Cost and Quality <p>2.3 Time and Transformation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legacy • Staff Turnover • The Reproduction of Tasks • Learning in Partnership A 	<p>Limited time Controlled by institution wide policies</p> <hr/> <p>Output of activity – poor quality No consideration of needs of other partner Effects of rules and division of labour on time Expectations affected No compromise Time – a critical resource Not under direct control of faculty members Critical in the development of social capital Lacking a legacy of positive progressive development Negative learnt behaviours</p> <hr/> <p>High staff turnover in China Lack of stored tacit knowledge Segregation of workforce Reproduction over transformation (elaboration) of structure Circumvent conflict Partnership structure inflexible – preventing change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of teaching materials and innovative pedagogies • Marking 170 year 3 student coursework assignments in 3 weeks
<p>Resources 3.1 Tangible Resources</p>	<p>Computers Teaching equipment Physical learning environments Funding Staff Not under direct control of faculty members Tangible resources blamed on senior management Codified knowledge- handbooks, contracts, information easy to store</p>	

3.2 Intangible Resources	<p>Tacit knowledge Support Poor communication of the purpose of a task Division of labour – the ability to access and mobilise resources others cannot Communication blockers Segregation of workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marking and remarking of examination papers 2013
3.2.1 Internal Communication: The Key to Developing Bonding Capital between SinoXa and UKa	<hr/> <p>Direct communication with UK – lifeline Access resources needed for purposive action Seeking UK confirmation when necessary</p>	
3.2.2 External Communication: The Key to Developing Bridging Capital between SinoXa and UKa	<hr/> <p>Parent-child communication “I’m OK (UKa), you’re not OK (SinoXa)” Non-complementary transactions</p>	
3.2.3 Reciprocation of Intangible Resources 3.2.3.1 Reciprocal Exchange: Unilateral Exchange	<hr/> <p>Poor unilateral exchange –restricted by competing forces Intangible resource exchange – social capital not developing through reciprocal exchange Negative tone to relationship</p>	
3.2.4 Negotiated Exchange: Bilateral Exchange	<hr/> <p>Institutions satisfied by recognisable benefits Partnership A provides institutional not individual benefits Partnership A utilises bilateral not reciprocal forms of exchange Tasks focus on negotiation and value Social capital breaks down</p>	
3.2.5 An Observation Concerning Resources	<hr/> <p>Activities promoting collaboration: FIFO, video conferencing, shared teaching materials, inductions, franchised modules, online mentoring Activities promoting control: Moderation of assessments, module</p>	

		<p>specifications, course assessment boards Activities can both promote and hinder the transference of resources required to develop outputs such as trust and commitment</p>	
Emotion and Feeling	<p>4.1 Frustration and Withdrawal</p> <p>4.1.1 UKa</p> <p>4.1.2 SinoXa</p> <p>4.1.3 Emotions, Feelings and Their Effect on Relationship</p>	<p>Progress towards goals blocked or delayed Learnt responses – apathy, withdrawal, aggression or repression Inter-team relations marred by frustration Multiple forces block progress Reasons for activities not communicated Behaviour disorganised</p> <hr/> <p>UKa perceptions: SinoXa poor communication, staff turnover, poor internal management, conflicting ideologies</p> <hr/> <p>SinoXa perceptions: Own internal management Time delay Detachment, a way of coping with a situation Faculty member withdrawal depending on circumstances and situations Restricts flow of resources- adding further obstacles Depletes social capital</p> <hr/> <p>Constant withdrawal does not promote solidarity More obstacles = greater probability of negative emotions Focus on goal construction and activation Withdrawal does not promote solidarity, affective regard or trust Positive relational development is adversely affected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marking and remarking of examination papers 2013 • FIFO • Marking and remarking of examination papers 2013

Table 9: Summary of Partnership A

5.3.1 Modelling Partnership A as an Interacting Partnership (Activity) System

Based on the aforementioned analysis, I have reconfigured CHAT (Engeström, 2001) to represent my interpretation of the operational phase (Wohlstetter et al., 2005) of partnership A (figure 15). The points below explain how partnership A appears to operate:

- SinoXa and UKa are committed to each other through a negotiated exchange (contract). This seems to be the force keeping the partnership together. It seems contractual obligations are the only reason this partnership survives, because it has to, not because agents want it to.
- It seems both SinoXa and UKa blame time delay for the breakdown in relations between group members. Whilst one group engages in an activity and produces outcomes, the other group subsequently interpret and assign meaning to that activity without any feedback or explanation eight hours later. Time therefore seems to affect Partnership A, whereby SinoXa and UKa do not seem to meet as a collective group in CHAT *object*³. It seems in partnership A, *object*³ operates as a space inhabited by a group of individuals rather than a space inhabited by a collective group with a shared vision and mind-set. This appears to be one of the reasons why there is constant misinterpretation, volatility and emotional distress in CHAT *object*³. *Object*³ does not represent a zone in which discussions and collectively meaningful objects are constructed (Engeström, 2001). Arguably, time delay offers a convenient excuse for members of partnership A to shield themselves from other realities such as institutional distrust, suspicion of motives and a lack of respect amongst faculty members.
- Activities need clear communication in terms of purpose, objectives, resource needs and timings if outcomes are to be achieved that meet partner expectations. Limiting access to resources, both physical and mental, due to poor communication can affect activity production and damage relationships by stimulating responses such as frustration and withdrawal that are contrary to the development of social capital.
- Rules, communities and division of labour seem to affect the stability of the Sino team, whereby regulations and restrictions affect internal Sino team relationships. This directly affects relations with the UK. This creates breakdown in exchanges, whereby tasks often fail to meet partner expectations creating feelings of negativity.

- Partnership A seems to reproduce rather than transform. Previous legacies and pre-existing structures do not seem to promote positive progressive development or enable and encourage transformation. It seems partnership A is more reactive than it is proactive.
- Communities in SinoXa seem to consist of multiple stakeholders who have the power to manipulate agendas to suit their own needs. This means SinoXa struggle to focus on the UK programme, meaning they have to manage multiple agendas and tasks at any given time. This seems to affect the way the Sino team communicates with the UK or/and approach certain tasks, because activities may not produce outputs that favour the UK partner. This creates suspicion and animosity amongst faculty members.
- The effect of history and culture is evident in partnership A, whereby differences in Chinese systems and structures become clear in rules, communities and division of labour. This seems to create conflict between the two activity systems.
- Learning seems to be focused on learning to tolerate *the other*, as well as avoiding situations, which may produce conflict and highlight ideological differences.
- The division of labour affects access to resources that may help faculty members understand their partnership and their roles more clearly. Unless there is transparency and open access to information, faculty members struggle to see the purpose of their activities and roles and how these fit into the bigger partnership picture.
- Poor communication seems to affect the success of the partnership (activity) system. Without clear guidance and access to resources such as information, knowledge and ideas, faculty members seem to struggle to produce purposive activities. Activities need to represent faculty ability, whilst also being beneficial and valuable. Without clear guidance and explanation as to the purpose of an activity, faculty members seem to lose morale, motivation and confidence. These emotions are not conducive to the development of social capital.
- A lack of empathy and an inability or unwillingness to try to understand *the other* and their needs, can damage relations. An ability to understand the environment in

which faculty operate seems key to developing the empathy needed to improve cross-border relationships.

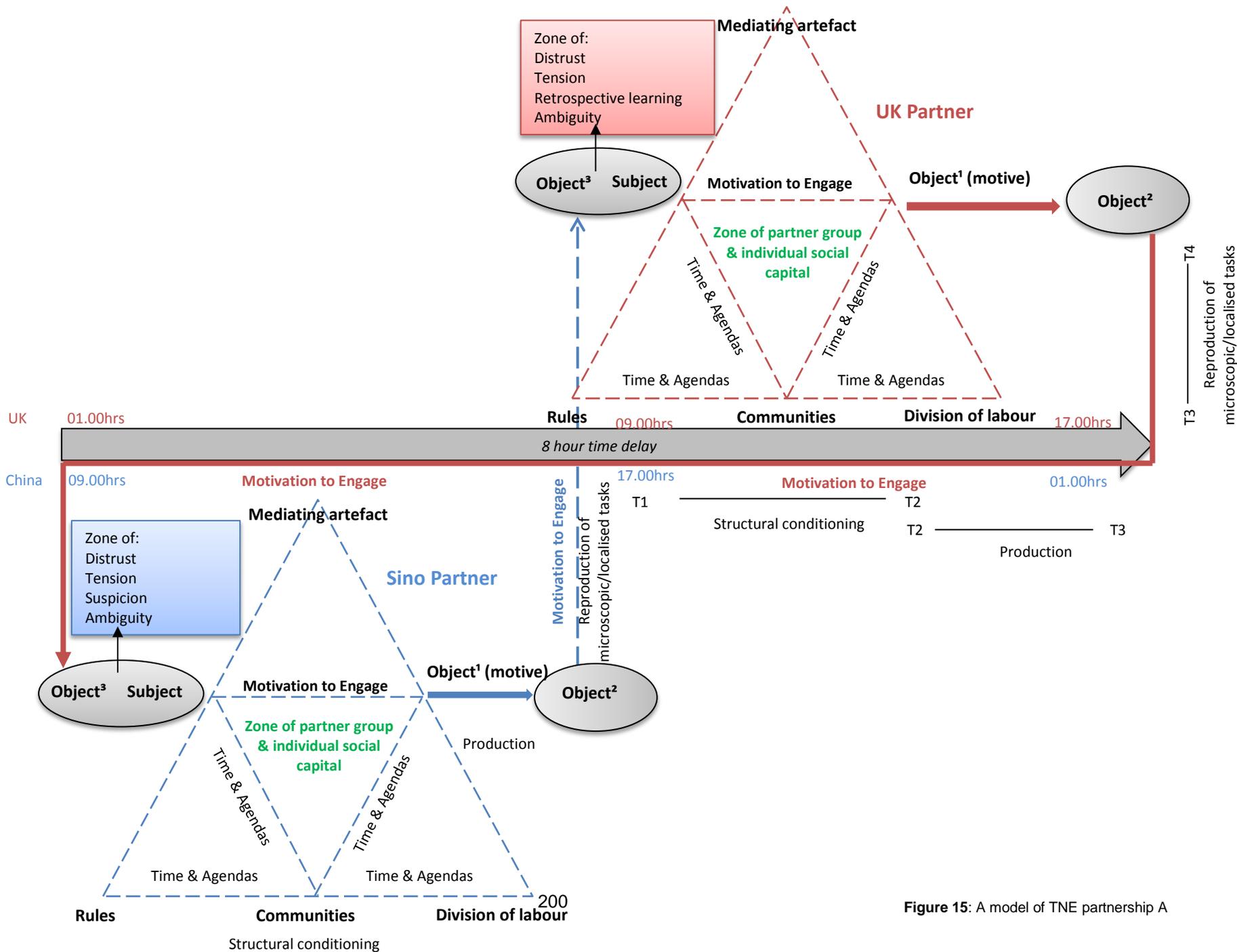


Figure 15: A model of TNE partnership A

5.3.2 Is There Evidence of *Partnership Capital* in Partnership A?

As discussed in chapter three, *partnership capital* consists of both *organisational capital* and *social capital* (Amey, et al., 2010). Although the range and amount of *partnership capital* created depends on individual partners and their intentions (Amey et al., 2010), it seems partners operating partnership A have not been able to successfully manage their differences in order to create *partnership capital* at the time this research was conducted (2014/15). The question arises as to why this is the case.

The transcripts of SinoXa and UKa show how organisational capital (space, technology, funding or human resources), does affect the way they interact with each other. Clearly, educational organisations operate in different ways, with some holding certain elements of an operation more central than others (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Central to these differences are four frames of reference, political, symbolic, human and structural. Each frame is built upon a core set of beliefs that guide the organisation, and a set of practices that are central to its operations (Eddy, 2010).

Within CHAT (Engeström, 2001, p. 136), it becomes possible to allocate these frames of reference to particular headings. Structural (rules, policies, organisational structure) is evident in 'rules', 'division of labour', 'resources' and 'communities.' Political (conflicting agendas, competing interests, power) is evident in 'rules', 'communities', and 'division of labour.' Human resource (relationships, nurturing, co-beneficial) is evident in the 'subject' and 'division of labour', with symbolic frames (culture and climate) evident throughout the activity system, albeit to differing degrees.

Findings suggest SinoXa and UKa struggle to resolve problems created by these four organisational frames of reference and this appears to be the source of tension and anxiety. The Sino and UK institutions and operational teams appear to approach these four frames of reference differently. Therefore, there is no synergy between the frames in terms of shared meanings or universal language. This appears to create tension between operational faculty members, affecting the way they interact with and respond to each other.

It would therefore be inaccurate to suggest faculty members alone are responsible for the state and direction of their operational relationships. Organisational frames of reference, which reside outside of the direct control of operational teams, have the ability to influence operational exchanges.

Findings suggest both SinoXa and UKa feel pressured by their institutions to interpret and respond to certain activities in certain ways. Therefore, although able to interpret the outputs of operational activities at an individual level, they are also aware of interpreting these outcomes in relation to the needs of their educational institution. Organisational forces such as structure, culture, climate and leadership have the ability to influence faculty member interpretations, changing subsequent behaviours and responses to activities. It is therefore misleading to suggest faculty members respond to activity outputs *without* considering their specific organisation's frames of operating (Bolman & Deal, 2008). It is therefore important for initiators of TNE partnerships to carefully consider the systems and processes surrounding operational activity production (figure 15) and the effects these can/could have on partner relations.

5.3.3 Explaining Social Capital in Partnership A

Figure 16 highlights how I have sought to model social capital in partnership A based upon my understanding of the partnership (figure 15). It suggests social capital operates on multiple levels and is not uniform across the faculty groups, within each group, or between individual faculty members:

SinoXa

- **SinoXa seems to have LOW internal team (bonding) social capital**

Problems in the activity system of SinoXa such as coercive management structures, poor internal communication and multiple stakeholder agendas, mean SinoXa often feel under pressure, isolated and frustrated.

High staff turnover affects the amount of tacit knowledge stored within the group. This affects the amount and likelihood of resource exchange within the partner group.

Individuals who have access to intangible resources (due to their position and authority), but do not share them with other team members, cause problems in SinoXa. This blocks the flow of information around the group, thereby stimulating suspicion and low levels of motivation.

- **SinoXa seems to have LOW individual (bridging) social capital with individual faculty members in UKa**

Although UKa play a central role in providing many intangible and tangible resources, SinoXa are equally responsible for developing these resources, by providing feedback, ideas and advice to UKa.

Time coupled with poor internal management means SinoXa struggle to communicate with UKa or offer any form of reciprocal exchange.

Although SinoXa local tutors communicate with UKa module leaders, it seems communication focuses on finding out answers to pedagogical questions and module delivery.

Communication seems to be rather infrequent, with content focused on a retrospective analysis of situations or reactive problem solving. SinoXa communication is therefore demanding, and not based upon rapport building or shared insights.

- **SinoXa seems to have LOW partner group (bridging) social capital**

Activities such as the *marking and remarking of examination papers 2013* have the ability to reduce bridging capital between partner groups. Where an activity highlights cultural and/or institutional differences, partner group communication often reverts to senior management to resolve differences

UKa

- **UKa seems to have HIGH internal team (bonding) social capital**

UKa describe themselves as experienced and passionate individuals.

UKa do seem to empathise with each other about the situations they often face. Furthermore, the course leader provides examples of times she has been able to use her team to facilitate in the recovery of negative situations.

Additionally, as the awarding party they have direct access to key UK resources, and are therefore not concerned with having to wait for access to information or materials.

There is also little mention of how division of labour, communities or rules influence the accessibility and flow of these resources.

UKa seemingly discuss situations which arise in the running of their partnership, thereby keeping transparency high.

Finally, they also seem to understand how each member feels about the partnership, therefore it becomes possible for them to understand how each influences (either positively or negatively) the relationship they have with SinoXa.

- **UKa tries to have HIGH individual bridging social capital with individual faculty members in SinoXa**

To control the programme and monitor its quality, UKa provide a constant stream of communication with SinoXa.

UKa try to engage their local tutors in China, providing them with course materials, assessments and where needed, the provision of **FIFO**.

UKa as the awarding body are aware of the importance of sharing resources with SinoXa.

Since modules are the responsibility of UKa, they continuously try to engage their local tutors by sharing pedagogical materials via email and the virtual learning environment.

A lack of acknowledgement and feedback from SinoXa creates uncertainty in UKa as to the motives and commitment of SinoXa.

- **UKa tries to have HIGH partner group (bridging) social capital with SinoXa**

Activities such as the **marking and remarking of examination papers 2013** have the ability to reduce bridging capital between partner groups. Where an activity

highlights cultural and/or institutional differences, partner group communication often reverts to senior management to resolve differences.

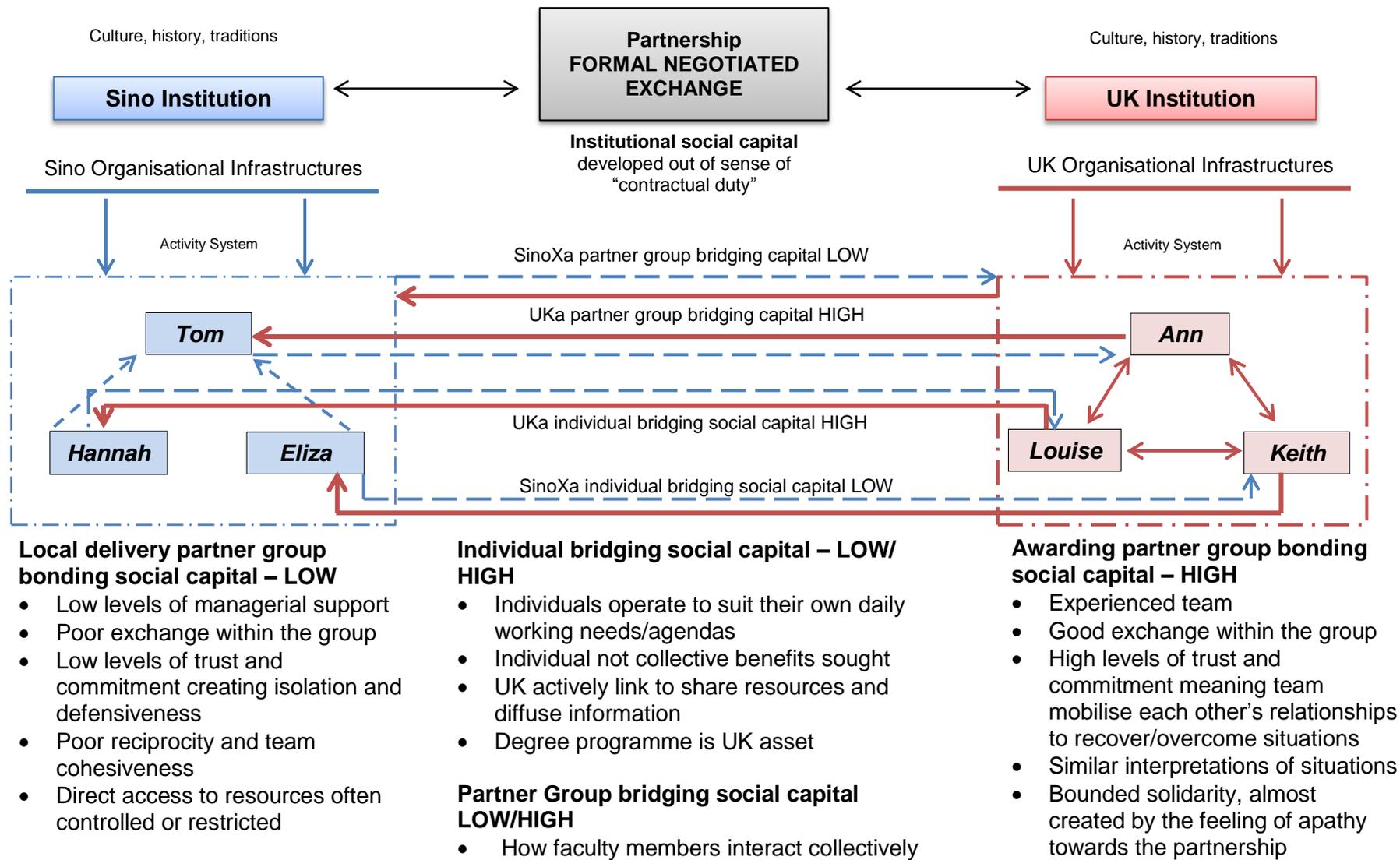


Figure 16: Partnership A: zone of faculty collective and individual social capital

Chapter Six

Synthesising and Analysing Partnership B: What Can We Learn from Faculty Members in Case Study B about Relationship and Partnership Development?

'Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards' (Søren Kierkegaard, 1813-1855)

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of partnership B. It therefore follows the same format as chapter five in its approach and layout.

6.1 Partnership B: Investigating Sino and UK Faculty *Empirical* Domains

Due to the high level of data each transcript generated, the below only provides a brief glimpse into the *empirical* domain of my participants. After analysing their interview transcripts, I was able to identify common themes which resonated with all three participants, and these thematic areas are provided under the bullet point headings. I decided to cluster the participants under these thematic areas so their “experiences” and “voices” could be compared in relation to the topic under discussion, and to each other. The analysis starts with faculty group: 6.1.1 SinoXb and then continues with UKb in section 6.1.2.

6.1.1 Describing the *Empirical* Domain: SinoXb Faculty Members *Jun* and *Gary*

- **Communication**

Jun expresses how important communication is between the faculty groups. He feels positive communication emanates from three key areas: UK faculty who travel to China, Sino faculty who travel to England and secondment.

The first activity that *Jun* comments upon is **FIFO**. He discusses the critical importance of activities which promote face-to-face communication. Whilst he believes his team in China need experience of UK HE, he also believes that the UK need experience of China:

[Y]es, and at the same time those who are working in the UK, they have to understand or at least have some experience what it is like teaching in the Chinese environment...so fly-ins always tend to be a bit opened...ah I mean yeah, UKs lecturers sometime erm doesn't know why, what are the problems that we face because they have not been here.

Jun explains how the activity of **FIFO** helps the UK be more “open to solutions” because they have witnessed issues the Sino team face first hand. By “experiencing it for themselves”, they can “see for themselves” and *Jun* believes this helps them to “have a very open-mind” and significantly strengthens UKb and SinoXb relationships. Moreover, *Jun* expresses how **FIFO** assists in the developing of “good rapport” with the UK team by shortening the period of time it takes to “get to know each other and understand each other”.

Gary expresses how trust develops between his team based upon “honesty between the faculty members at a teaching level” which he believes creates a better working environment. Moreover, *Gary* believes honesty between the “two institutions about where-you know how we see each other, and how you know, what we perceive each other’s roles to be and things like that” are critically important. He also believes trust can only develop by “having strong relationships on a personal level”, which he feels “makes people feel happier” and that can only be “a good thing”.

Jun feels emails can be perceived in different ways, due to “different styles of writing” and this can create “barriers” or “misconceptions”. This is why he feels “once you met the person you can think “this is such a nice guy!, Why does he write such strong emails?””, and this is one reason why “fly-ins are so important”.

Jun explains how members of SinoXb travel to the UK, “we do have lecturers going to [UK HEI B] every year as well, it’s not just one-sided”. *Jun* explains how this keeps his team up to date with the latest developments in UK higher education:

[I]t keeps you (sighs) it keeps you intact or what is- sometimes when you’re in a place for too long you-you tend to lose practices and stuff so going back there or going to the UK partners...keeping in check, how it should be run, sometimes you lose a bit, or sense in the- the cross-cultural kind of environment very easily.

Furthermore, *Jun* believes this gives the UK a “very strong sense of commitment”, whereby Sino staff show their willingness to travel and learn about their UK partner. For *Jun*, showing and evidencing commitment is very important:

[I] think it does give them a very strong sense that we are committed as you are and that's why we are willing to come together work this out and carry on this relationship, I think it's very important, one of the key factors as well.

- **Secondment**

Gary is employed to work in China by UK HEI B, and he feels this has a direct impact on the success of the programme:

I just stayed (short laugh)...they could see the advantage of having a permanent member of staff based over [here] permanently, which I'm not sure they knew it at the time, but I think it has made the programmes much more successful.

As a seconded member of staff working in China, Gary oversees the interests of the UK institution. His role is to:

[R]eally ensure, you know that [UK HEI B] standards are upheld...done the right way.

He sees this as being extremely important. The UK as the awarding body "have the final call, because they are the awarding institution, that's how it is, and that's how it needs to be". He therefore makes sure no one forgets he is "representing the [UK HEI B] university".

Gary describes secondment as critical to the flow of communication between his UK institution and the Sino delivery partner. He considers himself as a "link" and as a "conduit of information between the two institutions". He acknowledges that it would be "almost too easy for them [UK HEI B] to forget about us over here" because "it's so far away", but sees his secondment as being critical in keeping "it right in their [UK HEI B] face all the time":

[F]or me it's almost like it really solidifies it, you know...you'd have the team here almost not caring that much about a university they've never been to, six thousand miles away and equally over in England, I think it would be the same.

Gary feels it would be far too easy for UK standards to "get lost because no one has experience directly with the UK". Gary is aware of the fact his team in China do not "know" UK HEI B, or its systems as they are "not employed by them". He also acknowledges they have no need to know UK HEI B because they have no direct affinity with them so "why- why would they care?" Gary therefore describes his role as being critical to the success of the partnership, whereby he is able to maintain the quality of the UK programme because he:

[C]are[s], you know what I mean because it's- it's my job and it's- it's you know- it's what I should be doing it wouldn't be anyone else's job because they don't work for the [UK HEI B] and why would they want a position like my position?...why would that person know anything about [UK HEI B] procedures? I mean they could open a document and read it...but when there's a change and nobody is emailed to tell them...and you don't know who to talk to back at [UK HEI B], I just don't think it would be as effective.

Jun also feels *Gary* assists in the development of inter-and intra-team relations:

[O]ne key role I think that might be interest for your research is having our chairman is [*Gary*] that is very strong, I would say one of the factors that keeps the rapport, the good rapport, the good communication...I think that having him here, would be one of the key factors.

Jun explains how *Gary* represents a “permanent fly-in”. According to *Jun*, *Gary* represents a “rock”. *Gary* is able to balance the relationship should it tip and make the relationship unbalanced. Moreover, *Jun* discusses how *Gary*, having worked for UK HEI B, knows the UK system so “he fully understands the requirements”. *Gary* is therefore able to assist the Sino faculty by explaining important UK procedures, such as reports for QAA:

[P]utting this across to us, explaining to us, we need this, emails is still limited...I mean the emails there still is the limitation of trying to explain stuff, how I mean do you try to explain the QAA to somebody? You can't do this on emails...what's the purpose for, and what is the significance for us, so that's *Gary's* role.

Jun expresses how important it is to have “somebody from that side (UK)” assisting the Sino team in “understanding the reasons, or the importance, or the level of importance that we need to get it done”. To *Jun*, *Gary* is critical in helping SinoXb understand the reasons behind certain UK procedures. *Jun* believes anyone can engage in a task, but to complete it properly and learn from it, and not create further problems, a clear explanation of the task is required.

Jun therefore describes how secondment helps to create an “easier” working environment whereby activities are clearly explained by *Gary*. *Jun* feels this benefits SinoXb because they feel “properly informed” making staff more “mindful about what needs to be done next time”. He believes this helps staff to undertake similar tasks “better” the next time round.

- **Staff Stability**

Jun also acknowledges how his team creates an environment, which supports new members of staff. Advice is freely transmitted between individuals and learning about the partnership systems is accepted as a “genuine problem...that everyone will face regardless”. He notes how his team have “very low turnover”, which helps them develop stronger bonds with UK colleagues. This is because he feels:

[H]igh turnover means you have very short term memory, you lose the procedures as well as the rapport that you built up, or trying to build up through the years and that would bring us back to step zero again...so we encourage new members of staff to stay with us.

Moreover, he explains how having low staff turnover improves his team’s relationship with the UK:

[Y]ou are like “all right, he has taught for five years, he knows what to do”, so that will really keep the rapport going and the competence level as well.

[T]his trust coming in that we are able to deliver the course confidently, and assuring the quality as well, yeah we are looking to expand it actually, and getting more new staff coming in.

He also feels the positive relationship his team have with UKb is one of the reasons UK HEI B have decided to “expand” the programme by starting a “Master’s course” in China. *Jun* interprets this as a sign of the trust and confidence UK HEI B have in the ability of SinoXb.

The only resource issue *Gary* mentions is staffing, whereby “it’s a little bit more difficult”. Since his suite of degree courses relies on highly qualified staff, he finds staffing can be “incredibly difficult” because he needs highly qualified staff members to keep up the standards UK HEI B have come to expect, “they [UK HEI B] can see, you know our skilled teaching staff...we are the highest qualified department”. Moreover, *Gary*’s department does not have high staff turnover. Whilst members of his team do leave, his core team is stable:

[A]gain it’s a good thing, surely a good thing ‘cause you know they, staff stability mean that they are much more aware of the [UK HEI B] systems and procedures and they understand what kinds of levels we’re trying to hit academically for each year...so obviously they see it as a positive.

- **Qualified and Competent Faculty Members**

Jun feels qualified and competent staff helps in the development of trust between UKb and his team. To *Jun*, qualifications are critical, and he repeats the need for qualified staff repeatedly throughout his transcript. First, he notes how his experience of UK higher education helps him understand UK managed degree programmes:

[H]ow did I get brought in? (laughs) err, I think, oh, again it would be the affiliation with the UK universities, I still have very strong links with the UK universities...so that would give me a boost if that's the word...I understand their needs, so that put me in a good position.

Secondly, he feels UK education is unique, and requires staff members who are qualified and experienced:

[S]o I would say it's the qualification, the experience of the teaching staff are very important.

Jun describes how a lack of experience and qualifications could create problems with UKb. He feels relationships with the UK team are strengthened by having people who are experienced in teaching and research. Failing this, he feels:

[I]t will operate on a very doubtful basis that everything you try to do would be like (sharp intake of breath) err "are they qualified to do it? Do they have the right knowledge of how to operate?...so it would cast a lot of doubts and that would down bring the confidence level and that would definitely create a problem.

Moreover, *Jun* feels having faculty who are experienced in working in UK higher education, often means that his team approach and resolve problems in the same way as UKb. However, *Jun* acknowledges that if his team and his UK colleagues ever do have different opinions, it is not a negative, but simply requires a change in approach:

[T]here's always a way around...there's always ways of working around that problems, it's just erm the approach (1) which approach is appropriate, who should we approach?

Jun explains how he feels his team show their ability through the activities in which they engage. To *Jun*, "smaller activities" such as **marking**, **assessments** and **report writing** show UKb "the commitment we have, the commitment and skill". Activities he is involved with, such as changing the "syllabus" or developing "coursework" are essential in maintaining the standards and quality of the UK programme, and he feels these activities are

essential in developing “trust” and “building confidence” with UKb. By continuously updating the UK and asking for feedback, he feels he shows his commitment and ability.

Jun explains how having experience and being qualified, also helps reduce the effect of time delays. Whilst he acknowledges there is a distance between the two institutions geographically, he does not see this as a problem. Since he feels his team are academically well qualified, with experience of international teaching, he feels many problems can be sorted internally, without the need to wait for UK intervention.

- **Tensions and Resolutions**

Jun believes the success of his partnership is down to an “open-minded...open channel” that keeps his partnership from becoming a “closed system”, which “stops sharing” and causes “everything to be stopped”. *Jun* explains how a solid relationship, based on transparency, openness, and a willingness to jointly solve problems, is crucial in developing healthy relationships. He never once mentions blame or criticises UKb. *Jun* throughout his transcript prefers to focus on the positives:

[I] think all this problem can be solved if you are going into a partnership with very open-mindedness about stuff...I think we can make this work, whatever the problem is, I think we can make it work, as long as they are open, we are open about it, willing to engage with talk, work out the solution that meets both side’s requirements or both partner’s requirements.

Having worked for UK HEI B prior to his move to China, *Gary* feels this has strengthened his knowledge of UK processes and policies. He expresses the importance of this through a series of activities he feels would not have been successfully resolved without his personal connection with UK HEI B.

The first activity he mentions is the activity: **year 3 academic misconduct criminal investigation**. Although all issues of academic misconduct, legally, must be sent back to UK HEI B, in certain circumstances, *Gary* describes situations where certain cases transcend UK written policies “it just wasn’t in the framework, it was just beyond it”. In this particular case, *Gary* explains how he was “trusted to handle it”, and that this trust was made easier because “I’m here working for [UK HEI B] directly”.

Gary feels that since he worked at UK HEI B and still works for them, trust was established much quicker:

[O]bviously, you know at the programme leader level, my relationship with the [HEI B] is pretty much set up anyway because of my circumstances of being here.

Moreover, Gary is able to engage senior officials within UK HEI B at a moment's notice and communicate with other members of the UKb team quickly. This is evidenced in the second activity: *the "96 credit" student*, whereby students who had not gained the full amount of credits for an honours degree were not eligible for an ordinary degree or any other form of accreditation. Gary explains how this situation placed him under immense pressure from senior Sino officials. Gary explains how he used his personal relationship with UKb and more senior UK HEI B officials to make the issue "the highest priority".

Gary discusses how his relationship with UK HEI B enabled him to speak directly to senior management, who operate above UKb:

I got on the phone to [X] and said "look, this is how it is" and explained it to him and he said "actually, I think you are right".

Gary believes the help and support he gets from UK HEI B is due to the fact "I've worked for them there and I'm still working for them". To Gary, this "makes all the difference... I think it makes a huge difference actually". Having worked at the UK institution, Gary claims that if UK HEI B had said nothing could be done for these students:

I don't think I would have believed them...I don't think I would have believed them if they tried to pull that one over on me...no I wouldn't .

Gary explains how he consulted his Sino faculty before approaching UK HEI B about the *"96 credit" student* problem. He explains how:

[T]his was quite a big one and we solved it...a lot of communication with the UK, but also a lot of discussion within the team [SinoXb] about how to best approach it.

Gary never mentions blame once during his entire transcript. He simply describes the situation as an oversight:

[I]t was the programme documentation- the programme document thing it just didn't put that in, it was an oversight, and that could be changed at the school level [UK HEI B], so that was ok.

Furthermore, Gary describes how this led to document changes which sought to "make sure that in the future these students, below a hundred credits could proceed to a fall

back award". Moreover, he explains how this caused changes "back in the UK", thereby creating changes in *all* programme documentation:

[I] think it's made- certainly made them [UK HEI B] aware that this can happen...I know they are sensitive to it now and it came up again...and I actually brought it up and said "can I just confirm (short laugh) that students who are on ninety-six credits or a hundred...can be offered a full back up award..." and they confirmed "yeah that's the case"

- **Inter-team Relations**

Gary talks about the importance of intra and inter team relations. He identifies how activities such as **FIFO**, locally developed **student assessments**, and the **sharing of teaching materials** help SinoXb develop relations with UKb. He explains how he uses his position to encourage the two teams to communicate and develop "good, I mean good personal relationships within the team...but also across between the two institutions".

Gary sees the development of **student assessments** as a key activity, whereby his team can show academic skill and integrity. By providing UKb with "quality assessments" to moderate, Gary feels this:

[H]elps to build trust, it helps to build trust if you do the bread and butter stuff right, if you get that right then that builds trust...also things like power-point tutorial questions and these type of things you know, they all go in the module box and will be viewed by external examiners...we get positive feedback, and yeah this- this helps, this helps build in [UK HEI B] eyes, us up as a genuine group of people doing a genuine job.

Furthermore, Gary actively encourages his team to directly communicate with their UK module leaders. Though he works for UK HEI B, he feels individual team members should not solely rely on him:

[I]'ve tried to encourage over the years, that if you're looking after a module here, you're got a fly –in lecturer you'll hold a good relationship with them, email them directly and not have to go through me.

He sees this as being important, whereby UK **FIFO** faculty members are made to feel welcome and "look forward to coming out here each year because it's an intense week". Gary explains how there is "quite a lot of banter between the two sets of lectures", which he sees as positive in the development of intra-team relations. Although Gary's team are highly qualified, UK HEI B partnership regulations state SinoXb cannot take full responsibility for leading course modules. Yet Gary explains his Sino faculty understand why this is the case:

[T]hey get it...they know err how it works and that's just how it is...I don't think it's a problem, occasionally you might hear you know why don't they [UKb] trust us or something like that- but that's not the reason, it's not about trust, I think at the teaching level, the programme team level...it's perhaps a lack of trust at the [UK HEI B] institutional level...that's out of anyone's control...and I think they understand that.

However, Gary does feel he has multiple responsibilities, and although the UK programme is his highest priority, he cannot forget he is working in China at a Sino institution, managed by a Chinese HE majority shareholder and a UK consortium group. He states this can make him "very confused- you can get very mixed up, personally I sort of like which one am I today?" He describes how he feels he works "for four academic institutions, who all want something!" He expresses the difficulties in working for four stakeholder groups and uses the activity of **class timetabling** as a common area of conflict:

[I]t is very difficult, I can think of one example that's come up recently with hours for times enough for staff timetabling, and you know I, you've got X [Chinese majority stakeholder] who want a description of-of you know the number of hours per week for tutorials, lectures, but the modules were designed over a ten week semester and we do fourteen weeks...so that messes up the timetables...you'll have X [Chinese majority stakeholder] come up with a number, for total hours and your timetable will say it's something else...ah I bang my head against the wall.

Gary explains how UK teaching models often do not satisfy Chinese stakeholders who require academics to work certain teaching hours weekly. Weekly hours are therefore considered more important than the teaching hours directed by the module syllabus. This creates problems for Gary, as he tries to explain to Chinese stakeholders the difference between UK education and Chinese workload models:

I bang my head against the wall trying to explain what's happened, and it can come across as being manipulative...underhand that something's going on type of thing.

To make life easier for UK HEI B, Gary does not allow the Chinese HE stakeholder to deal directly with them or vice versa. He feels he is in the "best position to do that because I've got the knowledge of the [Chinese HE stakeholder], back at [UK HEI B] they have no idea". He therefore deals directly with the Chinese HE stakeholder, by supplying them with the information they need to keep them satisfied, whilst always "enforcing the [UK HEI B] way of doing things...because they are the awarding body".

6.1.2 Describing the *Empirical Domain*: UKb Faculty Members *Kevin* and *Steve*

- **Communication and Inter-team Relations**

Kevin comments on the importance of his relationship with his “number two” in China. Although he mentions working with the programme leader, *Gary*, the majority of *Kevin*’s time is spent communicating with his local tutor; “yeah it’s pretty much just my academic [staff member]”. *Kevin*’s transnational world centres on the relationship with his local counterpart, he seems to feel a great connection with them:

[Y]ou know we’re friends now (short laugh) really, really good friends, so it works, it works very, very well.

Kevin describes how valuable the activity of **FIFO** is to the development of his relationship with his local counterpart. This activity is critical in “building up trust” and developing “closer relations with the people who are out there”. Whilst he explains emails are important in maintaining contact in an overseas partnership, he feels “you can’t build a relationship that way”. He acknowledges how important it is to “be out there” and how valuable this is to “establishing working relationships”. He believes seeing and hearing people is critical in developing “confidence” and “trust” amongst colleagues.

With regard to external communication with his Sino colleague, *Steve* feels he has a good working relationship, developed through the activity **FIFO**, but also because he discusses and involves his local tutor, engaging him and asking for his feedback. *Steve* feels by relinquishing some control, whereby the focus is on collaboration, he is able to inspire his local tutor to take ownership of the module. Although this requires a huge amount of trust, by sharing activities such as **Sino local tutor marking coursework**, he feels trust and respect can be nurtured.

Slow responses to SinoXb requests can make UKb seem “disorganised” and “not bothered”, particularly when distance means you cannot speak to someone face to face. Yet *Steve* acknowledges how responding to promises and delivering on time is critical in the development of long-distance relationships:

[T]he most important thing in the world is what people need to do, he [local tutor], needed to do this and if I’m not supporting him to get those things done, he’s got a problem, and so he’s gonna lose that trust in me.

Moreover, *Steve* feels by keeping promises and delivering on those promises, "...if you say "I'm going to", then you've gotta make sure you do it", honesty and trust can be further enhanced. However, *Steve* does provide evidence of an activity, ***UKb (Steve) to provide Sino local tutor with mark sheet for coursework***, whereby he failed to deliver what he promised, thereby causing his local tutor more work, which may have "detracted away from his feeling of trust". *Steve* blames high workloads and a lack of time for his failure to deliver on what he promised. More work and greater open communication is then required to get the overseas relationship back on track.

- **Qualified and Competent Faculty**

Kevin explains how the ability of the local tutor – or academic as he prefers to label them -is fundamental in building confidence and trust. He believes his local academic to be equal, if not superior in terms of education to himself, "He's got two PhDs (laughs)" and like the rest of the Sino team, has been in "academia for quite a while".

Kevin therefore describes how this makes him feel "very happy" and confident that activities such as ***Sino local tutor marking coursework*** are being undertaken correctly and with equal vigour as that of any UK academic.

Kevin feels his trust in the ability of his "number two" benefits his relationship, whereby the work of *Kevin* is reciprocated by his local academic in terms of activities such as *pre-teaching* prior to *Kevin's* block lectures, as well as the *marking of the coursework*. This saves *Kevin* time when in China and back in the UK:

[T]he person who works with me actually marks the coursework...which I think is brilliant...that's a lot of time.

Unlike his colleague, *Steve* does not think qualifications are enough to provide students with the practical knowhow to succeed in his module. Although *Steve* describes his local tutor as "very helpful", "very supportive" and "very kind", *Steve* feels his tutor's background means he is unable to provide the students with the kind of experience and examples he feels are required to deliver his module effectively. He does not doubt the ability of the tutors in China "they are good teachers, they are good tutors", but feels "capability wise, I think it is more to do with the interest and drive in that particular subject area, so the subject-specific knowledge" that is lacking. Based upon this belief, *Steve* feels the programme could not operate in China "without the fly-in faculty" support. However, as *Steve* points out, this is only based on his perception "I don't know this for certain".

- **Secondment**

Although *Steve* talks about secondment, he does not talk about it in detail. He mentions how the secondment of an individual from one institution to another “can diminish” a partnership. Having researched the value of secondment during his PhD, he notes how “communication” can “still be dreadful, despite the fact that we’ve got a person there all the time”.

Steve thinks the secondment from UK HEI B, makes his institution and UKb “feel like we’ve done everything we need to do”. Yet he believes making one person responsible for communication and unification of an overseas partnership means others take less responsibility and ownership of problems. He also feels it reduces knowledge transfer:

[S]hould we be empowering everybody to say right “have you spoken to all those different people?” it’s your responsibility not just to go out and do just this list of ten things of your particular module, you need to also think about how you can improve it and how you can drive it forwards...its more effort.

Steve mostly deals with his local tutor, and has little contact with other colleagues in China. He feels he has very little need to speak with *Gary* and works closely with his local tutor in the delivery of his programme. He also discusses how he spends little time with other members of the SinoXb team:

I’ve not met with that many of the staff from [SinoXb], predominantly the-the people that I meet when I’m out there are [local tutor], in their own office there, I spend time in the office with, so I –I don’t get too much of a view from their point of view.

- **Communication and Intra-team Relations**

Kevin believes he lacks knowledge on the state of his transnational programme. He blames this on his department’s poor internal communication:

I think that’s a deficiency of the department in which I work because I don’t get that overview here...I know a little bit about what I’m doing, and maybe the next person...bits and pieces, but I don’t get that overall, you know “we’re doing this and it relates to you”...I don’t really get that...I think it would be good to have a more holistic view of everything.

He also feels he lacks information which could help him and others, particularly in being prepared for international travel, whereby faculty could see how their work “links into some other stuff” making sure there is “no repetition or anything like that”. *Kevin* explains

how he felt when initially told he was teaching in China. He describes feeling “anxious” and “worried” due to a lack of information:

[N]o-one really gave me much, gave me any background to the partnership, what’s going on, they just said “you’re off to teach this”...I wasn’t well informed.

Moreover, *Kevin* feels he has little insight into his partnership. He comments on how he is familiar with other colleagues who teach before him or after him. “I know a little bit about the module that’s going on before mine after mine”, but when it comes to an overview of other faculty, and their teaching he admits he doesn’t know “too much about what the other all the guys do”. *Kevin* feels this is a disadvantage because he is unable to see how his work fits in with the work of others, and how the partnership is progressing overall:

I don’t, - I- ough to be honest I don’t know enough about the other relations-relationships that are going on and whether there’s any that are not going very well, and if they are effecting the programme...

Steve shares the same concerns. He talks in considerable detail throughout his transcript about internal communication. Within UKb, *Steve* feels communication is poor. He acknowledges how he is:

[N]ot even a hundred percent on the actual programme, that’s how bad it is, I’m embarrassed to say, I don’t even know the programme that well to know where it should link up, and that’s exactly the kind of thing I should be doing and bringing in.

Without the knowledge of what is going on, *Steve* feels:

[C]oncerned, because I’m not seeing everything else that’s going on in terms of prep work...that’s only because I’m a worrier and organiser and try hard- I need to know myself to kind of gather my- that information.

This is a problem for *Steve*, who feels he should have a greater overview of his programme, and more contact with other UK lecturers who teach in China. He feels this would lead to a greater and more powerful programme, whereby “regular updates” and the development of a “collaborative workspace” could improve internal knowledge transfer, thereby improving and transforming the current programme.

Steve discusses the need for “transparent communication” and “empowerment, it can kind of bring people into it”. The effect when there is not “an awful lot of transparency” is “you’re given a task to do pretty much within a box”. *Steve* believes this means individuals:

[D]o not go beyond that, you're not gonna try and join up what you're doing, it means that you're very much limited to completing that set of tasks that you've been given, and you're doing your job, erm whereas if you actually empower people to say "right, here's an opportunity"...lay it open...open it out and say "right, who else can I engage with? What else can I do with this?"...you can go above and beyond what you're just doing.

Whilst "delivering set tasks" seemingly makes it easier and more manageable for faculty members, few improvements can be made because everyone is isolated and focused solely on delivering their own objectives. By opening up communication in UKb, *Steve* believes it would become possible to see where things "overlap" enabling staff to "look for opportunities, for those kind of things". This would create "new avenues you can go down". Moreover, *Steve* feels UKb communication:

[C]ould be better frankly, in terms of who's doing what, how's it all going, what the programme structure is, how does it all fit together, where are we up to with certain things, what are our aims and objectives, what's the long term plan? What other activities are going on.

Steve feels he has little insight into who else in the UK teaches in China on the same programme, "I would struggle to remember who the other fly-in faculty are". He discusses the use of "novel techniques to actually kind of get people to engage in what they're working on". He believes "team briefings", "forums" or "networking devices" would "be nice to set up" but feels in reality maybe this is too resource-intensive, with staff unable to "commit the time to it". *Steve* thinks communication is a "resourcing issue in terms of putting in effort and time". Yet he feels it would certainly help improve both internal and external relationships.

Moreover, *Steve* feels communication needs to be a "priority", whereby everyone is informed of the "long-term strategic view" so staff can see how they can make a difference and "actually drive towards getting the best out of this particular relationship".

• **Intra-team Relations**

Kevin describes how a lack of institutional support within UK HEI B makes it harder for him to undertake international teaching. He comments on how helpful it would be if his institution offered "a bit more support" for those "who are travelling". Instead, *Kevin* describes how he constantly has to seek out colleagues who can help him manage his UK workload whilst he is teaching overseas:

[I]t's a bit tricky this, because when you go there it's difficult to get someone to stand in for you for a week or two.

[I]t's always a headache and you've got to be asking for favours you know... it's all a bit "can you do me a favour?"...you know, the first person they come to is- is me sort of asking for a return of a favour, "yeah ok" you know you have to sort of, even if you're really stuck for time you have to say yeah because that next time, you're after the favour.

He describes the situation as a "headache" and feels faculty "need to be encouraged to get out there", but the lack of support from senior management means faculty are left to sort out their own workloads. Moreover, *Kevin* describes how there is "no formal recognition" for assisting travelling faculty or any form of "paid over time", which makes it harder for him to inspire his colleagues to help him.

Like *Kevin*, *Steve* feels he has had little support in the UK. He describes being asked to teach in China as being a "short turnaround" with little in the way of a hand over. He feels it would have been:

[U]seful to have a sit down and kind of a bit of reflection on what's been working well and what could be improved and we didn't get any of that...unfortunately is not an ideal situation to be in but that's- that's the brutal honest truth, it's a case of make of this what you will.

Steve describes how working overseas "does become problematic in terms of balancing your UK workload" as well as making sure "you've got the time and everything's in place to- to make sure that you can go out there". Part of the preparation process is ensuring his UK teaching is covered. To *Steve* this is "very problematic". He describes how other UK faculty have "turned me down flat" when asking for help in covering his UK teaching. He explains how this can be "a bit tough to take" and how "you sometimes...end up working with difficult characters". However, *Steve* feels international programmes place pressures on all faculty members, including those who service the overseas programme as well as those left in the UK to cover workloads:

[I] don't think he had an axe to grind with me, I think he'd been put into a position where he needed to cover some more modules and he didn't like that, and I think this was his way of getting back at the faculty. I didn't take it personally, it's just one of those kinda things, but it doesn't make it any easier for me to kind of manage.

[W]e're stretched very, very thin in terms of staff now and as a consequence we've got a very, very bad ratio at the moment.

Furthermore, *Steve* feels his UK team should work closer together to "make everyone's life easier and restructure it and say right, actually how do we make this work better". He feels by engaging all members of the faculty and sharing information, everyone

would get “sight of the other things that are going on”. However, as *Steve* explains he has not seen any evidence of this type of engagement since he joined the partnership “at least two years” ago. *Steve* feels faculty delivering transnational programmes “don’t get to see much of the actual business plan”, describing the role of faculty as being the “thin end of the wedge in terms of dealing with the hassle and disruption”.

- **Resourcing**

Kevin notes how resourcing differs between the UK and China, meaning access to certain resources is often limited or constrained:

[T]here was a software for example which I use in my course here...we don’t have the software [in China]...I asked if we could get it and more or less the answer is you know, no, or it’s a little bit difficult to implement it there.

Resource constraints affect the way *Kevin* feels he is able to interact with SinoXb. He describes how he “played down” access to the software for fear of causing problems in his relationship, “I would be the cause of a problem? I didn’t want to be the cause of a problem”. He therefore approached the software issue in a relaxed manner, as being a “nice to have”, telling SinoXb “don’t worry about it”, with the aim of creating as little stress and worry for his Sino colleagues as possible.

Kevin acknowledges how a lack of resources means he has to reconfigure his approach and think of ways of “getting around” the problem so that neither students nor SinoXb feel they are losing out. *Kevin* blames this on the continuous focus on “money” at the expense of teaching resources, which would assist in giving his Chinese students “that practical experience”. He feels a programme as large as his could afford to invest in the software:

[T]hat software...it wasn’t something too expensive it’s you know three grand, four grand something like that.

He also comments on the need to reconfigure his module reading lists, claiming access to certain textbooks in China is problematic:

[A]lso they don’t have some of the textbooks that we have here...that can be a bit tricky...we try and find a textbook they do have and stick it on the reading list even though it may not be your first choice...you’ve got to put something there, they’ve got...things that are available to everyone.

By approaching the issue of resourcing with care and a willingness to negotiate on module structure and delivery, *Kevin* is able to maintain a healthy relationship with his Sino colleagues. Since he communicates with his local academic on the subject of resources, he often tries to take a relaxed approach to prevent any strains arising in their relationship. He tries to prevent resource issues becoming a problem by finding alternatives, so that module activities can still achieve equivalence, regardless of whether undertaken in China or the UK.

Steve thinks both support and time are missing from his transnational programme. He feels he's "not got enough time" in which to accomplish change and improve his practices. He therefore considers reconfiguring his practices, but feels since time is in short supply, he prefers to run things as usual with little disruption:

[T]here's nothing to stop me doing that [change] I don't think, if I actually organised that and got it sorted out, I don't think there'd be a problem with it, again it's just down to the time.

Steve acknowledges how he is able to make changes to his own specific module. He comments on how he worked closely with his local tutor to change the coursework on his module: **changes to Sino student coursework** and "bring it up to date". However, he is concerned about the effect his changes may have on the overall programme. Since he has no "idea on... the actual programme structure" he finds it hard to see how his tasks are helping the partnership move to an "improved position".

Furthermore, *Steve* feels increased workloads mean even "with the best will in the world" he is not always able to deliver everything on time:

[I]'ve got an amount of modules which are difficult to manage at the best of times anyway, and I'm trying to pack in more research on top of that and so unfortunately, there are always gonna be things that kind of miss out.

Finally, *Steve* discusses how long-distance relationships often require technological support. Information technology and access to online resources, he feels, is critical to the success of the partnership, but he does not blame irregular internet access on the partnership:

[I]t is a problem, but it's not something which I can actually kind of call the partnership out on, it's just one of those kind of things.

The effect of poor internet access means *Steve* often has to think about how he uses information technology to support his teaching, particularly the VLE which he often has "no

access to the: shared- err, Blackboard for whatever reason”. He says resources, such as information technology, can hinder the development of trust, whereby faculty and students start to question if the resources were ever made available in the first place. Furthermore, unless staff and students are able to access key information, they may be unable to complete tasks effectively:

[W]hen I say in class, “right this is gonna go up on Blackboard so you can see it” I need to know it’s gonna go up and I’ve had students come back and say to me, “I’ve not seen it, I’ve not seen it for a fortnight after you left” that’s no good, they need to be able to access it at the time otherwise its only good for revision, that makes me go back to [local tutor]...and it comes back to trust.

6.2 Partnership B: Exploring the Domains of the *Actual* and the *Real*

Similarly to the analysis of partnership A, the objective of this section is to move beyond individual interpretations, and explore the events, contingent conditions and generative mechanisms affecting partnership B.

Even though similarities exist between partnerships A and B in terms of substantive and sub-thematic areas, such as *Structure and Systems*, *Resourcing*, *Communication* and *Inter-and Intra-team Relations*, surrounding contexts, organisations and interpretations meant these dimensions warranted a separate analysis.

Finally, this section concludes by offering:

1. A model of partnership B as an activity system, based upon the empirical findings, in order to explain how the partnership’s construction affects its ability to produce and maintain faculty relations.
2. A model of social capital in partnership B, based upon the empirical findings in order to investigate how faculty members seem to be interacting and developing their relationships across the partnership network.

1. Structure and Systems

One of the most noticeable features of partnership B is how its structure and systems differ from partnership A. Although operating at the same delivery institution, in the same

country and through the same consortium, the management and organisation of these two TNE partnerships is completely different. Moreover, the structure and systems operating across partnership B appear to create a very different operational environment to that of partnership A. Through a detailed analysis of SinoXb and UKb transcripts, it starts to become apparent as to *what potentially creates these differences, and how this seemingly affects faculty member relationships*.

The first noticeable difference between SinoXa and SinoXb is in the tone of their accounts. SinoXb do not focus on internal disputes or discrepancies. On the contrary, SinoXb findings suggest they feel empowered and supported by their home institution and their awarding UK HEI. The question therefore arises: *what is it that creates this different outlook?*

- Why is it that SinoXb do not discuss the same ideological differences as SinoXa, even though they are operating in the same Chinese tradition?
- Why does partnership B, operating at the same delivery institution, with the same senior management, structure and internal processes, evidence through their tasks, reciprocation and integration as opposed to conflict, frustration and isolation?

It seems the answer lies in the structure and systems which create the partnership. The structure of partnership B and its subsequent systems seem to affect the behaviours and attitudes of the operational teams, as well as senior management. The effect of such seemingly produces affective regard (Molm et al., 2010), trust and cooperation (Putnam, 2000) amongst operational team members. Since partnership B delivers a STEM based degree programme, faculty members are highly qualified and therefore respected as being competent and skilled by all networked members.¹⁴ The effect of such seemingly generates mutual regard and respect amongst operational team members.

1.1 Structure: Secondment, Uniting Teams and Spanning Boundaries

A critical feature of partnership B is the secondment of *Gary* from UK HEI B to the Sino institution. Findings suggest *Jun* and *Gary* (SinoXb) and *Kevin* (UKb) consider secondment as a critical facet of their partnership.

¹⁴ Partnership A: SinoXa deliver a business related subject and are not considered as being as experienced or as qualified by UKa or UK HEI A as those working as part of SinoXb. This seemingly affects the way UKa respond and act towards them.

Allen, Butler-Mader, and Smith (2010) argue, whilst structures can assist in the development of communication channels between partners, success depends on how individuals, within the partnership develop relationships. One way to develop these relationships is to utilise individuals who can ‘span the boundaries between disparate entities and champion the goals of the partnership in multiple settings’ (Luce, 2005, p. 26), thereby establishing healthy patterns of communication as well as expressed commitment to common goals (X. Li et al., 2014b).

Organisational theorists have long recognised the need for boundary spanners. The ‘boundary spanner’ is considered to be an individual, who has a dedicated job role or responsibility to work in a collaborative environment. They coordinate, facilitate and service ‘the processes of collaboration between a diverse set of interests and agencies’ (Williams, 2013, p. 19). These individuals operate as brokers and gatekeepers, and manage the interface between organisations and their environments (Katz & Kahn, 1966). They also assist in information processing, which includes filtering and facilitating, resource acquisition and ensuring the legitimacy of certain practices. Furthermore, their role is important in providing innovation and structural change (Aldrich & Herker, 1977).

Certainly, SinoXb and UKb findings suggest faculty members perceive secondment as benefiting their cross-border relationship. It seems to shorten response times, whilst increasing the transfer of resources between the partner groups. Furthermore, SinoXb and UKb acknowledge how it improves the focus and accuracy of their correspondence with each other.

1.1.1 An Observation Concerning Secondment

An important caveat to note at this stage is how secondment, whilst initially representing something wholly positive, may also represent something slightly less favourable. It is not necessarily the case that secondment occurs because each institution sees the value in embedding a shared resource. On the contrary, secondment may occur so that one partner can monitor the actions of another partner, in order to safeguard their interests, particularly if they feel they have more to lose in the long term.

Gary evidences this in his transcript when he refers to his secondment being more about a lack of “institutional trust” than about developing “trust between faculty members”. Whilst it is possible to interpret the secondment of *Gary* as being positive in the enhancement of relationships in partnership B, one could also interpret it as a way of

controlling the actions and activities of overseas stakeholders, thereby preserving the interests of the UK institution and the quality of the provision. Clearly, secondment is beneficial, assisting in the building of trust across partner groups. Yet, at the same time, secondment arguably serves to remind institutions and individuals engaged in TNE of the perceived lack of trust, which can preside over contemporary TNE arrangements.

1.1.2 Secondment and Internal Communication: The Key in Developing Bonding Social Capital in SinoXb

As previously highlighted in chapter five, infrastructure needs to facilitate the production of successful activities, whereby the structure must allow systems to develop that enable the object of the activity to be effectively and efficiently delivered, thereby generating positive outcomes for all parties involved (Engeström, 2008).

SinoXb transcripts suggest secondment assists them in the production of successful activities. *Gary* in essence is a resource, or “tool”, which helps breach physical distance and aligns the different paradigms present in UK HEI B and Sino X. Furthermore, this seems to positively affect both intra- and inter-team relationships.

By having a UK trained and educated faculty member at the Sino institution, SinoXb are able to benefit from expert knowledge about UK policies and procedures (Budgen & Gamroth, 2008). The recruitment of staff ‘with the right academic and administrative expertise’ who are ‘able to reflect the quality ethos of the parent institution, whilst adapting to working in a non-UK environment’ is not always easy to accomplish (Salt & Wood, 2014, p. 89). The effect of such is to make UK HEIs more reliant on local labour markets, whereby inducting new faculty becomes paramount in replicating the “home campus” ethos (Salt & Wood, 2014). Secondment assists UK HEIs establish a “home campus” ethos, as well as ensuring the induction of local tutors happens efficiently and effectively.

SinoXb findings suggest that through *Gary*, SinoXb are able to better understand the ethos of UK HEI B and its degree programme. This understanding seemingly comes from the way *Gary* is able to interpret UK policies and procedures and translate them to suit his Sino audience (Tidd & Bessant, 2009). The effect of such is to produce a team whose behaviours and attitudes seem energised and highly motivated.

1.1.2.1 Knowledge Broker and Knowledge Translator

The sharing of knowledge between networked partners can be prevented by the distinctiveness of different knowledge bases, as well as a 'lack of common knowledge, goals, assumptions and interpretive frameworks' (Tidd & Bessant, 2009, p. 549). These differences significantly increase the difficulty not just of sharing knowledge between communities, but appreciating the knowledge of another community.

By seconding *Gary* to work in China, UK HEI B provided partnership B with a knowledge broker who is familiar with both communities and able to mediate between them (Tidd & Bessant, 2009). This means *Gary* is able to deliberate situations before deciding whether UK intervention is required, notwithstanding his ability to utilise frames of reference UK HEI B and UKb understand (Williams, 2013). This appears to increase the speed and accuracy of his correspondence with UK senior officials and faculty members. *Gary* therefore acts as both a knowledge broker and knowledge translator. As an interpreter, *Gary* is able to express the interests of UK HEI B in terms his Sino institution understands, and vice versa (Williams, 2013). *Jun* evidences this when he speaks about the challenges members of SinoXb face when trying to understand QAA policies and procedures.

Furthermore, *Gary* explains the importance of translation and brokering, when he describes the activities ***year 3 academic misconduct criminal investigation, transcription error in UK generated transcript*** and ***"96 credit" students***. Since *Gary* is able to articulate the challenges and problems caused by these activities in a language both partners can understand, he is able to effectively mediate and negotiate outcomes that meet the needs of both his Chinese and UK stakeholders.

Clearly, it seems an important part of a *knowledge translator's* role is that both communities they represent trust them (Hudson, 2004). It seems that successful boundary spanners are able to foster and sustain effective inter-personal relationships mediated through trust. Competencies required to be a successful boundary spanner include the ability to communicate, listen, empathise, negotiate, resolve tensions and build consensus (Wilson & Charleton, 1997) and these competencies are reflected in SinoXb and UKb data. Furthermore, due to *Gary's* relationship with UK HEI B, SinoXb feel they are able to access and mobilise resources embedded in the partnership network more efficiently and effectively.

1.1.3 Secondment and External Communication: The Key in Developing Bridging Social Capital Between SinoXb and UKb

Although SinoXb have a seconded member of staff from UK HEI B working with them, Gary actively encourages members of SinoXb to form their own communication channels with UKb. It seems secondment is not a substitute for direct faculty-to-faculty interaction. Jun (SinoXb) and the UKb team therefore focus on their collective, localised, work-place activities, while Gary discusses activities that he perceives require his personal intervention to alleviate potential conflict.

Unlike partnership A, the lexicon of partnership B does not reflect “conflict”, “blame cultures” or “frustration”. On the contrary, when discussing challenges and issues, SinoXb and UKb use words such as “tension” and “resolution”. Although the same stakeholder groups regulate SinoXa and SinoXb, SinoXb appear able to reconcile their differences with UKb by means of “negotiation”, “open dialogue” and “reassurance”. SinoXb and UKb findings suggest there are two factors, as well as secondment, which are critical in achieving these different attitudinal approaches.

1.1.3.1 Qualified and Competent Faculty Members

A key thematic area across both SinoXb and UKb is that of being qualified and competent. Helms (2015) argues the importance of ensuring staff possess the ‘knowledge, skills, academic degrees and/or personal certifications needed to perform the work required by their positions’ (2015, p. 11). SinoXb and UKb findings suggest that teaching and industry experience, as well as academic qualifications, can build confidence across and within faculty teams. Faculty members across partnership B are therefore valued equally for their knowledge, qualifications and research records (Bottomley, 1993). Furthermore, it seems SinoXb and UKb, because of their similar academic and industry standing, are like-minded in their approach to the delivery of their partnership (Calvert et al., 1993). This creates a synergy amongst the partners, whereby they seem to respect each other’s opinions and judgements.

Moreover, SinoXb and UKb transcripts highlight how academic qualifications generate equity and respect amongst staff members (Döös, 2007). This assists in the development of trust, whereby UKb seem to feel “comfortable” in allowing SinoXb to take “ownership” of certain parts of modules. This is evident in the activities, *preparing lecture*

notes and assessments, Sino colleague assists in teaching and preparing PowerPoint slides and tutorial questions.

SinoXb appear to perceive activities as opportunities for them to display their capabilities and commitment to the partnership. To SinoXb, activity production represents a key communication tool, whereby activities are able to communicate to UKb the dedication and sincerity present in their team. For example, by doing activities such as **preparing PowerPoint slides and tutorial questions**, which result in positive feedback from UKb module leaders and external examiners, SinoXb seek to cultivate positive social behaviours (Homans, 1982). These positive behaviours, when coupled with the secondment of Gary, benefit partnership B by increasing the level of trust between operational faculty members. The effect of such is to generate a 'cyclical trust-building loop' (Vangen & Huxham, 2003, p. 12), which is critical in the development of social capital. The elevation in trust is evident in the way UKb allows SinoXb to participate in other, more significant activities, such as **Sino local tutor marking coursework.**

Paul (1990) argues how central staff (in this case, staff at the awarding institution), need to be sensitive to the concerns and pressures of regional staff. Faculty operating in foreign climates must be afforded the leeway to respond to local needs should a deviation from normal UK procedures be required. It seems UK HEI B and UKb provide this leeway to SinoXb because:

- Secondment acts as the guardian of UK policies and procedures, reassuring UK HEI B and UKb that other stakeholder agendas will not jeopardise the interests of the awarding body (Katz & Kahn, 1966)
- Strong individual SinoXb and UKb relations reinforce trust between faculty members increasing the belief in good intentions (Vangen & Huxham, 2003)
- Qualified staff with shared mind-sets operate the partnership (Calvert et al., 1993; Helms, 2015), thereby creating a sense of comfort and reassurance
- Stable staffing has enabled tacit knowledge to accumulate in SinoXb (Döös, 2007; Eddy, 2010), meaning UKb feel they are capable of making appropriate decisions

By allowing SinoXb to decide upon suitable courses of action (activity: **year 3 academic misconduct criminal investigation**), or question existing UK procedures

(activity: **“96 credit” students**), UK HEI B and UKb inspire a sense of ownership of the programme within the Sino team. Although still within the operating framework of UK HEI B, sensitivity to the needs of SinoXb suggests partnership B operates within Weber’s (1978) empathetic zone of interpretation.

- **Developing Empathetic Intelligibility**

Empathetic intelligibility emanates from the ability to sympathise with the actions of others, due to prior experiences and encounters (Weber, 1978). In TNE arrangements, a lack of face-to-face contact and time differences can render empathetic understandings problematic. Although activities such as **emailing** are helpful in the transfer of text-based information (Verburg et al., 2013), a lack of face-to-face contact can make globally dispersed teams vulnerable to process losses and performance problems (Gibson & Cohen, 2003). All participants operating within partnership B evidence the importance of meeting with their partners face-to-face throughout the academic year (K. Smith, 2014).

Activities such as **FIFO** are therefore *considered central to the development of faculty member relationships*. These meetings allow team members to experience each other’s working environments and daily realities. Although team members mentioned engaging in activities such as **video conferencing** and/or **phoning**, these were not considered as effective as face-to-face activities (Oertig & Buergi, 2006). By experiencing the working environment of the other partner, SinoXb and UKb both feel they are able to better understand and empathise with each other. Unlike partnership A, partnership B engages in a reciprocal exchange, whereby Sino colleagues travel to UK HEI B to learn from and experience UK higher education first hand. It seems by experiencing the working environment of the other partner, faculty members are able to better understand the meaning behind activities, and the means used to perform them (Weber, 1978).

Furthermore, it seems activities such as **FIFO** and **Sino faculty travel to UK for staff development** strengthen bonds between SinoXb and UKb, whereby they provide opportunities for rapport building. Rapport, coupled with an understanding of partner working environments, means faculty members are able to interpret and evaluate operational activities in two ways:

1. Faculty members are able to evaluate activities in relation to the context in which they occurred

2. Faculty members are able to evaluate activities in relation to the knowledge they have of the individual who performed the activity

Since object-orientated actions generate outcomes that require interpretation and sense making (Engeström, 2001), it appears the more faculty members understand each other, the greater the chance outcomes will be positively interpreted. Since empathetic intelligibility is high in partnership B, there is “sensitivity” across the partnership (activity) system, which “promotes understanding”, “open dialogue”, “reassurance” and “joint problem solving”. These attributes clearly assist in the development of bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000), enabling faculty members to access and mobilise resources, and seek out new opportunities to broaden their operational horizons.

- **The Value of Relational Transactional Analysis (RTA)**

Since faculty members operating partnership B are more understanding and trusting of each other, they relate to each other differently from the faculty members delivering partnership A. The use of collaborative dialogue suggests SinoXb and UKb value and respect each other, thereby regarding each other as ‘being OK’ (Lapworth & Sills, 2002, p. 5). The effect is a change in the structure and tone of communication within partnership B. Communication between SinoXb and UKb therefore represents a ‘complementary transaction’, whereby the ‘ego state to which the transaction is directed is the one which responds back to the original ego state’ (Lapworth & Sills, 2002, p. 39).

In this instance, the ego state adopted by both parties is that of the *adult*. Unlike partnership A, which reflects parent-child transactions, partnership B engages in adult transactions build upon social behaviours and attitudes that are ‘evaluative, objective, precise, creative and practical’ in nature (Lapworth & Sills, 2002, p. 55). This complementary transactional behaviour seeks to encourage the transfer of resources across the partnership network. The consequences of such, is to enhance trust, cooperation and commitment between faculty members.

1.1.3.2 Safeguarding UK Interests in China

Throughout his transcript, Gary refers to his role as that of a “guardian” and “ambassador”. He perceives his role to be important in protecting the reputation of UK HEI B, the quality of the education delivered at the Sino institution, and the future of the partnership (Eddy, 2010).

As the UK's representative in China, Gary protects the programme from adverse behaviour, such as the hijacking of the programme by stakeholders who may have ulterior motives. In addition, he believes without his "care" and "concern", the programme would not be as successful as it is. He feels there is no incentive for other members of his Sino team to be concerned with UK policies and procedures, when their loyalties lie with the Sino institution that pays them (Eddy, 2010). Since Gary is employed directly by UK HEI B, he feels he is able to raise objections other members of SinoXb may try to avoid.

Arguably, Gary acts as a *partnership champion*, whereby he advocates for the development of the partnership, uniting others to engage in the programme (J. S. Watson, 2007). It seems Gary, through this role, is able to unite collaborating members, as well as orchestrating the operational processes of his Sino team (Cele, 2005). It therefore appears that secondment allows UK HEI B direct access to its overseas programme. By having a champion working in China, UK HEI B is able to play a significant role in steering transformation. Moreover, the champion acts as a role model to other members of the team, influencing behaviours (Kelman, 1961) and aligning internal value systems, through a process of knowledge brokering and translating (Tidd & Bessant, 2009).

The partnership champion therefore plays a critical role in the formation of a partnership (Eddy, 2010). Trust and respect builds between members because the champion is able to negotiate and direct tasks in ways that satisfy the needs of all stakeholder groups. Gary, whilst protecting the interests of the UK, is also able to appreciate the situations facing his Sino colleagues. It appears Gary, because of his relationship with UKb and UK HEI B, is able to resolve activities such as the **"96 credit" students**, and **transcription error in UK generated transcript**, because he can deliver outcomes that suit all parties. It therefore seems the UK team trust Gary to make informed decisions which protect their interests. Unlike Tom (SinoXa) in partnership A, there seems to be no doubt in the UK team as to the motives behind Gary's decisions. This makes it easier for faculty members and senior management to engage in adult conversations (Lapworth & Sills, 2002). Communication between the two partner groups is therefore more respectful and less confrontational.

Certainly, this approach to inter-team relations and communication assists when situations become more complex. The activity **year 3 academic misconduct criminal investigation** evidences how TNE activities can create complex situations that require the service of an overseas UK representative. This activity involved academic misconduct by a student, but also was criminal in nature. It therefore sat outside of the usual programme

regulatory framework for simple academic integrity cases. In this instance, the outcome of the activity (CHAT *object*), was translated by Gary, before being relayed to UKb and UK HEI B. This translation involved explaining the situation and the potential ramifications for both Sino X and UK HEI B should the problem be left unresolved. This helped make correspondence more efficient and direct. Problems are now structured and articulated in ways UKb and the UK HEI B understand. This arguably made the decision-making processes of UK HEI B easier, whereby they decided to leave Gary to deal with the situation. This activity provides an example of how problems and challenges can be positively resolved through the implementation of secondment.

1.1.4 An Observation Concerning the Discipline (subject) Underpinning the Partnership

An important observation is that partnership B operates a STEM degree programme in China. Since STEM subjects in China represent the top choice of study for the majority of entrants into HE (J. Wang, 2009; Wu & Zheng, 2008), one could argue partnership B is almost afforded a leniency that partnership A is not. Due to the high value Chinese communities place on STEM subjects, and the academic competencies surrounding these disciplines, it appears SinoXb are respected by Sino X senior management and their Chinese stakeholders in ways that faculty members in partnership A are not.

However, this does not mean SinoXb are not subject to the same institutional demands as SinoXa (activity: ***organising Sino teaching timetables to match UK module requirements***). Yet SinoXb findings suggest they do not feel regulated or manipulated by stakeholders in the same way as SinoXa. A lack of stakeholder interference seemingly reduces the stresses felt by SinoXb, giving them more time to deliver their undergraduate programme, conduct research, and maintain their cross-border relationships with UKb.

1.1.5 Summary: Secondment, Uniting Teams and Spanning Boundaries

Secondment in partnership B appears to:

1. Facilitate the flow of knowledge between institutions (Katz & Kahn, 1966).
2. Help articulate the frames of reference of many different actors, as well as the interpretation of those frames in the context of collective action (Williams, 2011).
3. Improve the rate in which resources transfer across the partner groups.

4. Affect activity production by facilitating access to resources, which ultimately has a bearing on the productiveness of those activities (Engeström, 2001, Lin, 2001).
5. Facilitate the production of tasks, by providing tasks with purpose and direction (Engeström, 2005).
6. Assist in the development of psychological outputs such as trust (Hudson, 2004) and affective regard (Molm et al., 2010) between institutions and team members. The consequence of such a partnership structure is to generate outcomes in CHAT *object*¹, *object*² and *object*³ (Engeström, 2001), which make sense to both interconnected activity systems.
7. Act as a barrier to stakeholders with ulterior motives, protecting the programme from manipulative and/or hidden agendas (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

Although secondment is clearly an asset, lubricating relationships between faculty members and senior management, personal relationships need to develop between colleagues who work on delivering teaching and learning. Activities such as ***UKb (Steve) to provide Sino local tutor with mark sheet for coursework*** and ***UKb (Steve) creation and setting of referral exam for Sino student***, evidence how important it is for faculty members to deliver on promises and meet the expectations of colleagues (M. L. Smith, 2005).

To maintain social capital, individuals must work to maintain the value of their relationships. Integrative bonds must be established between all faculty members operating the partnership. Social capital cannot be the sole responsibility of one team member. Individual knowledge, skills and abilities are important in building the level of confidence between members, thereby enhancing the flow of resources, such as knowledge, support and ideas. Furthermore, this contributes to the development of both bridging and bonding forms of social capital (Putnam, 2000).

2. Time

Paul (1990) argues how too many partners and institutional distance can inhibit collaboration. However, this implies distance can have an effect on success. Whilst this may be true to a certain extent, partnership B highlights how it is *not necessarily distance*, which determines success. However, it does seem that collaboration generally proceeds more easily when distance is removed and more physical contact is observed (Calvert et al., 1993).

In the context of partnership B, secondment appears to have a twofold effect on time and distance. SinoXb findings suggest it shortens response times, whilst also aligning value systems through its ability to broker and translate knowledge. Since the latter was analysed in section 1.1 *Secondment*, the rest of this section focuses on analysing secondment in relation to distance and time.

2.1 Minimising Distance and Time: Shortening the Gap Between Time and Activity

In TNE contexts, distance and time make it physically impossible for both parties to engage in and negotiate the outcomes of activities at the same time, unless partner groups change their working patterns to coincide with one another. Therefore, a system which tries to *bridge the gap* between globally dispersed teams, may involve operating 24hrs a day, five or seven days a week, requiring shift work. Yet in the context of TNE this is impossible to organise and service. UK teams cannot service their UK students and work shifts on the premise that overseas teams may require immediate access to information or support.

Although all faculty members operating partnership B mention time and the challenges time creates for TNE delivery, no participant feels time negatively affects their cross-border relationships. There seems to be a difference in the perception of distance and time in partnership B, with SinoXb and UKb perceiving time differently to faculty members operating partnership A. Although operating in the same time zones, different structures and systems mean perceptions of time differ.

Usher (2002) argues how space and time can be influenced by changing the relationship between the two dimensions. The most common way in which the relationship between space and time can change is through the introduction of electronic technology. Information technology, and computer-mediated communication, associated with cyberspace have helped construct new and different relationships between space and time (Usher, 2002). Clearly, TNE partnerships across the globe benefit from these technological forms of interaction which operate without territorial boundaries. However, whilst email sending can occur at any time, this is not enough to ensure relationships between faculty members remain positive. It is therefore not the frequency of the correspondence that is necessarily important, but rather the content and response time.

In the case of partnership B, although participants do acknowledge the limitations of email as a communication tool (such as misinterpretation), they seem to perceive email as

an extension of their working relationships. They do not consider **emailing** as the basis for developing their working relationships. They perceive this as coming from their face-to-face meetings, in either the UK or China.

In addition, Hinckfuss (1975) argues time is not something that flows and is absolute, but rather exists in relation to other things, such as events and activities. By making changes, such as shortening the distance between these markers, time appears to compress and quicken. Therefore, by reducing the time it takes an activity to elicit a response, as well as the time it takes for an activity to occur, it appears possible to alter perceptions of time. A key reason why partnership B is able to shorten the gap between activity production and response time appears to be secondment.

2.1.1 Secondment and its Relationship with Time

As previously discussed, secondment means resources such as tacit knowledge are not bound by working hours. Access to intangible resources, critical in the production of social capital (Molm, 2010), are now mobilised by SinoXb whenever they require. Activity production therefore benefits from this constant access to resources. Moreover, the effect of such is to produce goal-orientated activities (*object¹*) that produce outputs (*object²*), which are interpreted by other agents (*object³*) as being fit for purpose (Engeström, 2005). This improves the working relationships between operational faculty members. Furthermore, should the activities of SinoXb require access to other resources not otherwise available, then Gary provides them with immediate access to senior management in UK HEI B.

The benefit of continuous resource access at the Sino institution is to produce a partnership that is the antitheses of partnership A. SinoXb faculty members do not mention “waiting” or a loss of “academic identity” just because their UK team are offline. More importantly, when activities do create outcomes which require immediate attention, such as the **year 3 academic misconduct criminal investigation**, or **“96” credit students**, Gary is able to utilise his relationship with the UK team in order to minimise response times and resolve situations quickly.

2.2 Time and Transformation

Partnership B has been in operation for eight years, with SinoXb and UKb findings evidencing how ‘shared norms, shared beliefs and networking’ (Amey et al. 2010, p. 341)

are helping guide the partnership towards institutionalisation. In this instance, it appears time in relation to age does correlate with time in relation to maturity.

Chapter five highlighted how transformation assists in partnership maturation (Buck-Sutton, 2010). For a partnership to evolve, relational changes between partners need to occur. This leads to new forms of practice and shared visions over time (Eddy, 2010; Sutton, 2010). Faculty members need to be willing to individually and collectively negotiate, and design new solutions to emerging problems created by their TNE partnerships. By doing this partnerships mature, and *partnership capital* develops (Eddy, 2010). For transformation to occur, two factors require consideration (Archer, 2010, pp. 239-241). Initially applied in chapter five to partnership A, when analysed in relation to partnership B, it seems clear why partnership B is able to positively expand and transform more effectively than partnership A.

The first factor requiring consideration is that:

1. Pre-existing structures that govern subsequent social interactions need a history of positive progressive development

Archer (2010) suggests individuals who have a willingness to participate and learn are more likely to speed-up the elimination of prior structural influences. This implies that to instigate change, agents must retain positive attitudes. It also suggests any lack of enthusiasm can delay the process of transformation. Findings demonstrate how SinoXb and UKb seem committed to improving their relationship. They both show a commitment to developing and learning new practices and forms of communication (Archer, 2010). SinoXb and UKb do not talk about past events as casting shadows on current actions and activities. Although activities such as ***UKb (Steve) creation and setting of referral exam for Sino student*** and ***UKb (Steve) to provide Sino local tutor with mark sheet for coursework*** evidence moments when relationships between SinoXb and UKb are strained, a positive approach, coupled with trust in each other's professional competency, means tensions are quickly eradicated.

Faculty members therefore use a history of positive progressive development in order to improve their operational environment. SinoXb and UKb findings therefore imply pre-existing structures enhance and encourage positive progressive development. In addition, these structures have assisted in the creation of the following condition, which has made partnership B more open to transformation.

- **Legacy and Staff Stability**

Staff turnover is not evident in the transcripts of SinoXb or UKb. Since SinoXb feel respected by UK HEI B, UKb and Sino X, the turnover of staff in China is relatively low. The effect of such is to enhance the level of tacit knowledge accrued over time by SinoXb. Tacit knowledge builds self-assurance and self-confidence within SinoXb, providing a platform for better forms of communication and action (Baus & Ramsbottom, 1999; Döös, 2007).

All participants evidence a willingness to work for the partnership. *Gary* and *Jun* (SinoXb), throughout their transcripts, evidence their desire to be part of the programme and contribute towards its success. Codes such as “ownership”, “joint problem solving”, “genuine people” and “permanent” show how they positively interpret working in their partnership. Notwithstanding *Kevin* and *Steve* (UKb), who generate codes such as “rapport”, “positive message” and “committed”, when referring to SinoXb. This positive attitude is evident through collegial activities, such as ***Sino local tutor marking coursework, changes to Sino student coursework, FIFO*** and ***Sino colleague assists in teaching***. Unlike partnership A, the consistency in personnel and the positive attitude and behaviours developed over time between qualified and experienced faculty members has produced a legacy grounded in positive regard.

Over time, partnership B has cultivated a series of positive behaviours (Homans, 1982), thereby inspiring positive “emotional behaviour” (1982, p. 598) at both the individual and institutional level. Positive emotional behaviour, such as respect, empathy, tolerance and commitment are critical in encouraging faculty members and senior management to share resources. Moreover, this process is critical in developing inter-and intra-team trust and cooperation (Field, 2008) within and across the partnership network.

The second factor requiring consideration in relation to time and transformation is:

2. Pre-existing structures must enable and encourage transformation

Clearly, certain structures surrounding partnership B have assisted in generating conditions which favour transformation. For example, secondment has clearly enhanced communication and trust between SinoXb and UKb, thereby increasing the flow of resources between networked partners. The effect is to encourage dialogue between the collaborating partners around new forms of activity. However, who, why and what is being discussed, and

the balance of power in terms of activating change, is a common thread throughout the transcripts.

In the case of SinoXb, they discuss how eight years of working with UKb and UK HEI B has led to conversations about a new postgraduate programme. Furthermore, they discuss how positive relations have enabled the reconfiguring of codified, contractual partnership policies. UKb explain how they perceive systems operating inside UK HEI B limit their ability to transform their TNE partnership. They feel UK communication systems do not enable them to contribute effectively to their partnership's development. Therefore, whilst certain structures seem to encourage transformation in partnership B, certain ones seem to hinder it.

- **Enabling New Operational Practices: PGR Provision and Contractual Changes**

Talk of a postgraduate programme evidences the way in which partnership B has moved beyond its original offering of an undergraduate degree. Moreover, it implies partnership B is maturing and therefore transforming positively over time. *Jun* (SinoXb) believes the postgraduate provision is testament to the good working relations established between his team and UKb. It seems in order to advance operating frameworks and transform TNE partnerships over time, faculty member relationships are of paramount importance. This suggests strong relationships based on trust, mutual support and cooperation (Putnam, 2000) play an important part in evolving partnerships. However, a key ingredient in transformation is also flexible structures (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991). To create change, the partnership structure must produce conditions which inspire change.

- **“Flexible” Partnerships**

This raises an important question about the nature of flexibility in a partnership context (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991). Who decides how flexible the partnership can become, and more importantly how flexible it should be? It seems from analysing SinoXb and UKb transcripts, flexibility requires the belief of one group (in this case UK HEI B and UKb), in the capability and motives of another (Sino X and SinoXb). In short, the choice of how flexible and why one group should be flexible, seems predicated on one group proving to another they can be trusted, and are able to deliver on their promises. In the case of partnership B, it seems flexibility amongst faculty members and senior management is equally important, yet not equally distributed (CHAT: division of labour).

Although faculty members develop trust amongst themselves, and evidence flexibility in their working practices, such as **assessment design**, it seems they do not have the power to authorise “structural flex”, whereby the structure shifts to embrace radical innovations. This interpretation may help explain why partnership A is unable to transform its partnership. Simply put, the flexibility required to enable change is lacking because UKa and UK HEI A do not trust the abilities and motives of SinoXa and Sino X. The extent to which the partnership structure is able to flex to accommodate innovation is therefore tightly controlled by the UK. This means flexibility, a key ingredient in the maintenance of successful collaborations (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991), is continuously regulated, affecting the possibility of transformation over time.

In the case of partnership B, Gary and qualified Sino staff seem to reassure UK HEI B and UKb that they can be trusted and they do deliver on their promises. Gary describes how he uses this to get UK HEI B to make changes to the partnership contract. The “96” **credit students** activity highlights how institutional and operational flexibility can assist in the resolution of current problems, whilst preventing future ones, but only if relationships have created the right contingent conditions. It therefore appears partner groups who value each other are more likely to be flexible and overcome their problems, strengthen relationships and evolve much quicker (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991).

- **UKb: The Effect Internal Communication has on Partnership Transformation**

Whilst the thematic area of *Inter-team Relations* demonstrates the positive relationship between SinoXb and UKb, the story is very different when it comes to internal relationships (*Intra-team Relations*) at UK HEI B. This requires analysis because it has the potential to damage the way in which existing members of UKb and potential new members feel about the TNE partnership.

The fifth principle of activity theory argues for the ‘possibility of expansive transformations in activity systems’ (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). This principle requires the object and motive of activities to be reconceptualised to embrace radically wider horizons of possibilities than in the previous mode of activity. However, transformation requires collaborative vision and a ‘deliberate collective change effort’ (2001, p. 137). The theory of expansive learning implies individuals engaged in activities will question the existing order and logic of their activities (Engeström, 2011). In addition, by encouraging faculty members to share new ideas with other actors, ‘collaborative analysis and modelling’ (2011, p. 91) is

initiated and carried out. Eventually, this collective learning effort leads to new models of implementation and the activity system becomes transformed (Daniels, 2010).

Certainly, *Steve* (UKb) questions his existing practices in relation to his partnerships development. He talks about producing “tasks within a box”, with no insight into how these tasks relate to other tasks. Although *Kevin* and *Steve* question their working practices, and make incremental changes when appropriate, they both seem to feel isolated and ostracised by poor internal communication within UK HEI B. *Steve* believes a lack of strategic insight; transparent communication; collective analysis and evaluation means opportunities to improve their TNE partnership are overlooked.

The effect of such is that UKb feel their ability to contribute towards new forms of practice are significantly weakened. This does not correlate with what Engeström (2001, 2005) and Daniels (2010) suggest is required to promote expansive learning. Moreover, this interpretation suggests, structures within UK HEI B obstruct and limit the potential of UKb to participate in expansive transformation. However, this interpretation raises an interesting dichotomy.

- **An Observation Concerning Transformation and Stakeholder Groups**

Clearly, SinoXb and UKb findings evidence transformation is occurring within partnership B. Yet the question arises as to whether these transformations really require the input, support and acceptance of all operational stakeholders. It seems evolution of a partnership can occur simply by faculty members reproducing localised operational tasks. Archer (1995, 2010) concurs, suggesting through TMSA that reproduction over time can lead to transformation. A little like flexibility, the question arises as to “*who or what decides*” when reproduction is enough to instigate structural change?

Whilst *Steve* (UKb) feels he needs strategic insight in order to assist in transforming his partnership, it seems the partnership can – and does – change without this level of insight. Therefore, it seems fair to argue transformation may not be solely down to all individuals collectively analysing and initiating new forms of practice. It seems in the case of partnership B, transformation occurs when key stakeholders confirm relationships are strong enough to instigate and cope with change. It appears *Steve*, although feeling unable to contribute to macro level transformation, is actually contributing to change by developing constructive relations with SinoXb. It seems, without question, change in TNE partnerships

requires validation from senior officials, regarding whether faculty members have insights into their strategic intentions or not.

This interpretation suggests localised changes between operational staff can lead to structural transformation, but only if these changes are **perceived** as having created the **right conditions** in which evolution can be justified by key stakeholders.¹⁵ The question arises as to whether operating faculty members need to know about the “bigger picture” as Steve (UKb) suggests, or whether just by engaging in the reproduction of localised tasks (micro), this is enough to assist in the creation of conditions which support structural transformations over time (Archer, 1995). Although this interpretation may initially appear to give credence to structure over agency, it seems in partnership B agency plays a critical part in transforming partnership structures over time (A. King, 2005).

However, it does seem insights into the objectives of a partnership (activity) system can assist in motivating and shaping the individual activities of agents. For Steve, the issue may not be about strategic insight, so much as feeling respected and appreciated for his continued work on the overseas programme. As Engeström (2005) argues, organisational goals enable practitioners to ‘construct a connection between the goals of their ongoing actions’ and the ‘more durable goals of the collective partnership system’ (2005, p. 312). It appears this lack of connection is what UKb allude to when they say they feel “uninformed” and “unadvised” working in their partnership (activity) system. It is this lack of support which UKb seem to feel is problematic, because it demotivates, devalues and isolates participating team members.

3. Resources

Similarly to partnership A, resources can be categorised in the same way, but the findings mean interpretations of resourcing differ between the partnerships. This affects the way relationships develop between faculty members. As time has been analysed previously, it will not feature as part of this section.

¹⁵ Please refer to figure 17 ‘*the extent of possibility*’.

1. Tangible Resources:

- Teaching materials (including internet, books, classrooms)
- Codified knowledge (including regulations, handbooks, rules, contracts)
- Human resource
- Finance

2. Intangible Resources:

- Tacit knowledge (wisdom, ideas, advice, guidance)
 - Support (help, encouragement, assistance)
 - *(Time)*
- } Ideally underpinned and enhanced by internal and external transparent communication

3.1 Tangible Resources

Gary (SinoXb), *Steve* and *Kevin* (UKb), mention the importance of tangible resources. Their transcripts highlight how important tangible resources such as **teaching materials, books, computer software packages, internet connectivity, physical learning environments, funding** and **staffing**, are in the delivery of TNE programmes. Yet, it seems at Sino B there are problems in accessing some of these critical resources. However, similar to partnership A, none of the participants blames or associates each other with a lack of access to tangible resources.

Due to his senior position (CHAT: division of labour), it seems *Gary* is able to influence stakeholders more than other members of SinoXb and UKb. Should a resource be integral in the delivery of the UK programme in China, *Gary* describes having to mediate between Sino X and UK HEI B to establish who pays for the resource. Conversely, he explains how in certain circumstances he is able to use his seniority to circumvent the need for senior management involvement, by authorising simple resource requests himself. This is something not all members of SinoXb or UKb are able to do, highlighting how different roles can influence the way activity systems and social capital evolve over time (Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010).

Kevin in UKb mentions how he feels UK HEI B actively seek ways not to invest in the Sino programme. Although he acknowledges how small numbers in China may mean investment is different from that of the UK, he feels no investment is problematic. Since *Kevin* cannot provide access to **computer software packages** and **books** for his Chinese

students, he has to rethink how he delivers his module in China (activity: **redesigning UK module for Chinese context**).

3.1.1 Reconfiguring Activities: Maintaining Faculty Member Relations

A lack of access to tangible resources at Sino X, means UKb have to explore new ways of making the learning outcomes taught in the UK, available to those students studying overseas (K. Smith, 2010). This equivalence in course design and delivery is particularly important. The QAA (2010) highlight that rather than checking overseas students have the same physical resources as each other, it is better to investigate if one group of students are being disadvantaged by a lack of access to resources or not. Clearly, *Kevin* (UKb) feels his Chinese students are being disadvantaged because they are not able to experience the same computer simulations as his UK students. Whilst it is possible to achieve the same learning outcomes, it seems the experience of learning and how students learn is what matters most to *Kevin*. Furthermore, he feels a lack of access to physical resources creates challenges in the way he devises his operational activities.

CHAT principle one, argues how object-orientated activities are mediated by artefacts (Engeström, 2001). Should these artefacts not be available, then it seems likely the object (goal) of the activity will require reconfiguring. Resource-heavy UK modules therefore need redesigning in order to accommodate educational environments which do not have the same level of access to tangible resources. Activities like **redesigning UK module for Chinese context** and **changes to Sino student coursework**, demonstrate how UK faculty must be aware of the needs of their Sino counterparts. This arguably places more pressure on the UK operational team, with Chinese policies and regulation rendering access to certain resources, such as Western based social internet websites like Youtube and Twitter, impossible. Changes to UK programmes therefore require constant monitoring in relation to the effect they may have on Chinese operational processes.

Gary (SinoXb), *Steve* and *Kevin* (UKb) all seem aware of the effect access to physical resources has on the student experience. In addition, *Gary* and *Kevin* demonstrate how tangible resourcing affects faculty member relationships. SinoXb and UKb findings suggest discussions around physical resources require sensitivity and propriety. UKb codes such as “downplay” and “alternatives” highlight the awareness of *Kevin* about the delicate nature of physical resourcing. Moreover, this sensitivity implies activities – which require certain amounts/ types of tangible resources, could strain operational relationships if not dealt with correctly.

Unlike partnership A, whereby it seems intangible resources have a greater impact on faculty relations, in partnership B, because it is a STEM degree programme, it seems restrictions to tangible resources are equally likely to cause operational disturbances over time. Although not under the direct control of operational members of staff, it seems physical resources have the potential to affect the development of social capital across teams. By restricting access to physical resources, senior management seemingly make it harder for operational faculty to negotiate and deliver TNE programmes, creating tensions in relationships.

Restriction of access to physical resources therefore has the potential to increase stress between faculty members as they continuously review their activities in light of available resources. Faculty members now seek to keep their operational relationships alive through a series of constant negotiations and compromises. “Open dialogue”, coupled with secondment, keeps trust and cooperation high in partnership B, whereby both parties show a commitment to overcoming operational challenges.

3.2 Intangible Resources

Analysed data suggest SinoXb and UKb have high levels of bridging social capital. Secondment appears to aid this by strengthening relationships between the two institutions, Sino X and UK HEI B, as well as between the operational teams. SinoXb also seem like a team who work well together, with findings suggesting the team have high levels of bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000). Consequently, these bonds all help increase the flow of intangible resources (tacit knowledge, advice and support) around the partnership network. However, it appears whilst SinoXb bonding social capital remains high, bonding social capital in UKb is a source of tension. This requires analysis as it has a profound effect on the way UKb perceive their partnership and its potential for future development.

3.2.1 UKb: The Effect of Internal Communication on Their Bonding Social Capital

Due to the size and design of the UK programme underpinning partnership B, *not all members of the UK HEI B STEM department work on the TNE programme*. This means UKb operate as a team of participating colleagues (UKb), within a group of other non-participating UK colleagues. *Kevin* and *Steve* represent only two participants who work as part of UKb. The thematic area of *Intra-team Relations (appendix 6)* highlights how participating in the overseas programme causes *Kevin* and *Steve* tension in their relationships with other non-

participating UK colleagues. Moreover, senior management at UK HEI B have to balance the needs of both participating and non-participating UK colleagues. Analysed data suggests UKb appear to represent an isolated and marginalised group working within the UK HEI B STEM department.

3.2.1.1 A Lack of Internal Support and Communication

Kevin and *Steve* portray UKb as being isolated within their STEM department, left to cope with the challenges of international delivery on their own. This interpretation emanates from the fact both participants discuss a lack of internal communication about the strategic intention of the partnership, poor organisation of the FIFO timetable, and poor visibility about who delivers what and why. This leaves *Kevin* and *Steve* feeling “ignorant”, “embarrassed” and “uninformed”. The feelings they have towards their non-participating UK colleagues and their senior management do not appear to create conditions that one would automatically associate with bonding social capital, such as trust and cooperation (Putnam, 2000).

3.2.1.2 A Lack of Reciprocation Between UK Colleagues

As Granovetter (1973) argues ‘the strength of a tie is a combination of the amount of time, emotional intensity, intimacy and reciprocal services’ which characterise the tie (1973, p. 1361). Based upon this definition, it seems logical to assume all participating UKb colleagues at UK HEI B would represent a strong tie, due to their continued work on the TNE partnership promoting solidarity and reciprocation amongst them. However, data collected and analysed suggests this is an inaccurate assumption. *Kevin* and *Steve* (UKb), discuss how little they know about other UK participating members. Whilst they are familiar with each other, they talk about being “ignorant” as to who else works on the programme, what they teach, how they teach and when they travel.

It therefore appears that not all members of UKb are well connected, even though one would assume working on the partnership would unite them. Furthermore, the lack of support and communication they receive from senior management concerning their programme, means *Kevin* and *Steve* feel continuously marginalised (Granovetter, 1973), forced to rely on each other for support. They describe feeling “burdened” and “overworked” because of the lack of help they receive from other members or senior management.

Moreover, *Kevin* and *Steve* seem to spend a considerable amount of time negotiating with non-participating UK colleagues, as well as between themselves, in order to ensure cover for their UK workloads, whilst they are overseas. Codes such as “pleading”, and

“headache”, provide insight into the type of relationships that exist between *Kevin* and *Steve*, and other non-participating UK colleagues.

3.2.1.2.1 A Focus on Negotiated Exchange, not Reciprocal Exchange

It appears senior management within UK HEI B do not support participating members in the delivery of their TNE programme. Since *Kevin* and *Steve* receive little support from senior managers in terms of organising cover for their UK modules when they are in China, they primarily rely on each other or other non-participating UK colleagues with whom they can negotiate deals. Within the STEM department of UK HEI B, it seems *Kevin* and *Steve* develop networks to support their overseas work. These networks appear to operate and manifest in two ways:

1. By supporting each other, *Kevin* and *Steve* appear to increase their workloads, whilst isolating themselves even more, as they share the responsibilities of the overseas programme between themselves.
2. Relationships developed between *Kevin* and *Steve* and other non-participating UK colleagues increase their workloads, as more time is needed to network and accrue favours from these colleagues.

An analysis of the transcripts of *Kevin* and *Steve* imply that negotiated forms of exchange operate between them and other non-participating UK colleagues. This is problematic because negotiated exchange implies benefits flow bilaterally, whereby joint agreements are negotiated, providing benefit for both parties, whether equal or unequal (Molm et al., 2012, Molm, 2010). Since UKb need the support of other non-participating UK colleagues, they seem powerless to control the exchange process. Although *Kevin* and *Steve* benefit from negotiated exchange to a certain extent, they are unable to dictate the terms of the exchange. This may help to explain why *Kevin* and *Steve* feel marginalised and burdened by high workloads.

As previously highlighted in Partnership A, social capital develops when *individuals* feel there are some payoffs for being in a relationship (Turner, 2002; Bourdieu, 2006). In the case of *Kevin* and *Steve*, it seems they perceive benefit as coming from their relationship with SinoXb, which is in stark contrast to UKa. They describe their relationships with SinoXb as giving them insights into Chinese educational processes, student learning styles and

cultural practices. In fact, *Kevin* and *Steve* appear to enjoy spending time cultivating their relationships with SinoXb more than with their non-participating UK colleagues and senior management. In this case, one could argue, what in effect should represent a weak tie between SinoXb and UKb, actually represents a strong tie. It therefore appears strong bridging capital between SinoXb and UKb is what makes working as part of partnership B pleasurable for *Kevin* and *Steve*. This is a stark contrast to partnership A. Reciprocation between SinoXb and UKb seems easy and natural, whereby faculty members can see value in their relationships.

It therefore appears that if bonding social capital is lacking between participating members, non-participating UK members and senior management at the awarding institution, this does not necessarily have a negative effect on relationships developed between Sino and UK participating faculty members.

3.2.1.2.2 An Observation Concerning Bonding Social Capital in UKb

In UK HEI B and amongst non-participating UK colleagues, there seems a total lack of empathetic and rational intelligibility (Weber, 1978), whereby no one seems to appreciate the workloads of UKb. *Kevin* describes how he feels a lack of understanding about the TNE programme in his department, could mean non-participating UK colleagues may reject joining the programme should the need arise. He feels this places pressure on those already delivering the programme. In addition, this lack of shared understanding and desire to join the programme could inadvertently render the continuation of the programme problematic, affecting the sustainability of the partnership over time.

It appears UK HEI B and senior management in the STEM department do not purposefully develop interest amongst non-participating UK colleagues to become part of the TNE programme. Neither do they seem to encourage the involvement of UKb in programme discussions. It seems as long as the programme functions on a daily basis, senior management are not concerned with human resourcing and legacy planning. *Kevin* and *Steve* seem to feel UK officials suffer from myopia and short-termism, evidenced through a lack of transparent communication and strategic insight. However, this short-termism is not enough to drive UKb to consider leaving the partnership, with both *Kevin* and *Steve* discussing how they enjoy working as part of the TNE programme because of their relationships with SinoXb.

It seems there is a dichotomy in play in UK HEI B. The short-termist view apparent in the attitude of UK HEI B's departmental management seems to contradict the long-term transformational developments that appear to be occurring. Discussion of a PGR provision suggests senior officials are comfortable with the relationships apparent in the TNE partnership. Yet it would seem they are only evaluating their relationships based on the bridging and bonding social capital developed with and by SinoXb. This raises a question, how can an awarding institution consider the long-term future of its TNE programme without considering its internal resource requirements and the state of its internal affairs?

As previously highlighted, one could argue that the PGR provision does not necessarily require the "buy-in" of UK faculty members, and that transformation is dependent on the decisions of senior management and their perceptions of situations. However, it seems logical to assume, as the partnership transforms, more resources will be required in order to facilitate its development. It seems that unless senior management try to change perceptions of the TNE partnership in terms of workloads, communication and support, partnerships could collapse as faculty members reject the idea of working on the TNE programme.

This interpretation suggests that unless there is a paradigm shift within partnership B, senior management may need to make working on the partnership obligatory. This shift in the recruitment process, which currently operates on a voluntary basis, could mean social capital is forced to develop – and the question is: can social capital be forced to develop between operational faculty members? In partnership A, the whole of the UK team have to engage with SinoXa because everyone in the UK team delivers on the TNE programme. There is **no choice** about participation, creating an element of resentment evident in the transcripts of UKa.

It appears one of the reasons SinoXb and UKb are able to develop good relationships is because UKb are currently not forced to work on the TNE programme. They represent a group of individuals who see the value and benefit of working in the partnership. However, should they feel their institution does not value or support them, or should they feel the costs outweigh the benefits, they may retract from the partnership. Forcing faculty members to work together may actually harm social capital. Arguably, unless faculty members are able to see the value and benefit in their connections, then they are unlikely to invest effort (Bourdieu, 1980), share resources or cooperate over time. Therefore, should working on a partnership become a mandatory requirement, UK HEI B are potentially in danger of undermining the key aspects that make social capital possible.

4. Emotion and Feeling

Similarly to partnership A, by asking SinoXb and UKb about their experiences of working in their TNE partnership, it became clear emotion plays an integral role in activity (Edwards, 2010), consciousness and personality (Leont'ev, 1978). How faculty members feel is important because it is these emotional states, which mediate their involvement in daily activities and their decision-making processes (Damasio, 1999).

High emotional valence is noticeable when SinoXb and UKb describe their relationship with each other. Codes such as “reassurance”, “confidence”, “upbeat”, “engaged”, “committed” and “comfortable”, point towards an environment that promotes feelings of enjoyment, gratitude and empathy. Roth (2007) argues that positive emotional feedback is often associated with successful activity production. Should this be the case, one could argue that the positive emotions felt across SinoXb and UKb are partially due to the productiveness of their activities. However, when UKb discuss their feelings in relation to their UK institution, the codes instantly change. “Obstructive”, “nervous”, “hassle”, “difficult”, “disengagement”, “isolation” and “headache” paint a picture of a UK environment marred by resentment, anxiety, ignorance and anger. Clearly, these emotional differences require analysis.

4.1 Historicity: Shared Practices, Concepts, Values and Their Effect on Emotion

Lazarus and Lazarus (1994) argue, for an emotion to have a long-term effect, the overall conditions surrounding the emotion is important. The profound principle here is that the background or mood, and the conditions that brought it about, are of fundamental importance in how agents react to foreground events. Partnership (activity) systems, which evidence a history of consistent, positive relational developments, therefore provide a solid foundation that means negative events can often be overcome without causing too much emotional distress (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994).

It therefore seems the legacy of the partnership (activity) system is crucial in influencing emotional responses, whereby the capacity of an event to induce emotional states is enhanced, or muted, by the overall history of the system. This theoretical understanding arguably helps explain why SinoXb and UKb are able to deal with their emotional states better than SinoXa and UKa. Activities undertaken by SinoXb and UKb seemingly occur against an eight year (duration of partnership to date) backdrop of

continuous positive engagement. Certainly, secondment helps create these conditions, whereby intervention from *Gary* appears to help both SinoXb and UKb achieve their goals. The effect of such is to create positive emotions, created by all parties getting, and having, what is needed (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994).

4.2 High Emotional Valence: Exploring Motivation and Belongingness

Favourable emotions such as happiness and pride (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994) emulate from activity systems that favour the attainment of goals. Moreover, as individuals engage in activities which produce successful outcomes, this feeds back making it more interesting 'and enjoyable to engage in, thereby producing and reproducing emotion, enjoyment and motivation' (Roth, 2007, p. 43). Although "motivation" as a code is not explicit in the interviews of SinoXb or UKb, the use of words such as "engaged", "upbeat", "open dialogue" and "committed" suggests both teams are enthused by their interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

SinoXb and UKb findings imply both teams feel a sense of belonging to their partnership, and this idea of belonging is of fundamental importance to human motivation. Many of the strongest emotions, positive and negative, are linked to belongingness. A feeling of inclusion and acceptance therefore leads to a variety of positive emotions, exclusion and rejection does not.

Faculty members across partnership B appear to have a sense of purpose and pride. Frequent, pleasant interactions, taking place in the context of a 'stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other's welfare' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497) assists in *creating belongingness*. *Gary* demonstrates how activities such as the **"96" credit students, transcription error in UK generated transcript and year 3 academic misconduct criminal investigation** require sensitivity and care in order to achieve mutually agreeable outcomes. Codes across SinoXb and UKb such as "kind", "comfortable", "sensitivity" and "care" suggest both teams respect each other's needs and situations.

In contrast, interactions between constantly changing personal are often less satisfactory, as are interactions that are unrequited. This leads to 'a lack of belongingness' that can cause 'severe deprivation and cause a variety of ill effects' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497) as witnessed between faculty members in partnership A.

Activities such as **UKb (Steve) to provide Sino local tutor with mark sheet for coursework, Sino local tutor marking coursework, Sino colleague assists in teaching,**

and **preparing lecture notes and assessments** evidence a dialectical exchange, whereby SinoXb and UKb seem aware of the effect their interactions have on the formation of social bonds. The attachment that results from considering the needs of the others creates a 'kind of glue' between collaborating team members (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 506). As UKb identify, relations at the home institution are somewhat strained. A lack of empathy and support from non-participating UK colleagues and senior management leave UKb feeling dejected and isolated. It therefore seems there is little *glue* holding members of UKb or other non-participating UK colleagues together, because there is little internal collaboration. The majority of collaborative work takes place across borders rather than within them.

4.3 High Emotional Valence: Exploring the Empathetic Emotions

A final consideration is the role played by empathic emotions, which are clearly present between SinoXb and UKb. Lazarus & Lazarus (1994) suggest there are three emotions which play an important role in our daily lives: gratitude, compassion and those aroused by aesthetic experiences. Gratitude is apparent throughout SinoXb and UKb transcripts, although in this context it takes the form of appreciation (Lazarus, 2006).

Relationships have important implications for the diverse feelings aroused during the acts of giving and receiving. The way in which a gift is given, why it is given, and who gives it is important in the creation of emotional responses. Weber (1978) argues how empathetic intelligibility is critical in helping individuals to understand other people's actions. In a TNE context, where physical contact between individuals is minimal, it is vitally important agents understand each other and each other's motives to ensure actions are decoded correctly.

If actions or gifts are perceived as being given for personal gain, or without sufficient sensitivity, it is possible the recipient may feel resentful or even patronised (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994). Activities such as **FIFO** and **Sino faculty travel to UK for staff development** therefore seek to enhance and develop empathetic intelligibility between staff, by encouraging them to experience and explore each other's working environments (Weber, 1978). In the case of partnership B, it seems faculty members recognise the importance of understanding each other's situations, and use certain activities as a way of exploring the lived experience of the other.

Appreciation is clear when *Kevin* discusses the activities **Sino local tutor marking coursework** and **Sino colleague assists in teaching**. *Gary* demonstrates his appreciation of UK HEI B when he discusses the activities **year 3 academic misconduct criminal**

investigation, “96 credit” students and transcription error in UK generated transcript. Jun appreciates the help Gary provides him in understanding QAA regulations. Steve describes working closely with his local tutor to develop **changes to Sino student coursework.**

All these examples evidence how SinoXb and UKb seem able to work together based on a mutual understanding that they need to respect and support each other. An understanding of each other’s situations, coupled with trust, means faculty members seem willing to help each other when required. As Lazarus (2006) argues, giving willingly creates positive feelings. It seems in the case of partnership B, faculty willingly reciprocate and support each other, thereby stimulating thankfulness, appreciation and respect which permeates the partnership network.

4.4 Emotion: The Bedrock of Social Capital

The general sense of commitment and comfort UKb feel towards SinoXb implies emotion is critical in the production of social capital. The positive emotions each faculty member associates with the other provides the bedrock for the continued production, dissemination and exploitation of resources. How an agent feels is critical in providing access to resources. It also dictates how the resource is mobilised, and what type of purposive action is generated (Lin, 2001). It is inaccurate to suggest all purposive action is positive. It depends on the motive underpinning the activity, and its point of origin. Motives may not necessarily favour the partnership, but rather the partner or agent in question. It is therefore important to try to create an environment whereby faculty members openly discuss their feelings. By understanding how an agent feels about a situation or person, it arguably becomes possible to understand the motives underpinning particular actions.

Arguably, the style and tone of communication between faculty operating partnership B means they seem comfortable sharing their thoughts, idea and feelings with each other. This openness leaves little room for misinterpretation between faculty members as to the motives underpinning their actions. Faculty members seemingly operate for the good of the partnership, rather than for the good of themselves or their institutions agendas, which is arguably in stark contrast to partnership A. Motives appear indeterminate in partnership A, but seem apparent in partnership B.

Understanding motive creates a feedback loop, whereby activities can be coordinated to achieve or surpass expected returns, thereby generating positive emotions

(Roth, 2007). This fuels further exchange and reciprocation across the operational teams. Moreover, subsequent activities are directly and indirectly affected by the high emotional valence present across and within operational teams. Past and present operational conditions therefore seem positively charged between SinoXb and UKb, meaning 'negative events... might pass without generating the slightest distress' (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994, p. 91).

6.3 Concluding Case Study B: Modelling Partnership B as an Activity System and Explaining the Development of Social Capital

The following table offers a summary of the above analysis. The tabular layout below does not imply that underpinning mechanisms and their sub categories represent discrete areas of activity. On the contrary, the aforementioned analysis has evidenced overlap between thematic areas, such as the effect poor internal communication has on partnership transformation as well as bonding social capital at UK HEI B. The table therefore seeks to provide an overview of the main points identified in the aforementioned analysis.

It highlights how underpinning faculty member activities, are a series of mechanisms, events and conditions that are not always visible or easy to understand. As these mechanisms collide and combine, they create conditions, which make individual and collective activities harder or easier for other faculty members to interpret and understand. This can affect the way in which agents react and subsequently respond to each other. Depending on how these mechanisms are manipulated through infrastructure, systems can be developed that can make conditions easier to manipulate and manage over time.

Substantive Themes	Sub-themes	Explanation	Activities
Structure & Systems	1.1 Secondment: Uniting Teams and Spanning Boundaries	Establish healthy patterns of communication Boundary spanning Increasing transfer of resources Underpinning paradigm: control, collaboration or both?	
	1.1.2 Secondment and Internal Communication: The Key in Developing Bonding Capital in SinoXb	Access to UK resources not restricted by time "Home campus" ethos Brokering and gatekeeping	
	1.1.2.1 Knowledge Broker and Knowledge Translator	Mediation between communities Interpreting Negotiating Increased speed of correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year 3 academic misconduct criminal

	Increased accuracy of correspondence Alleviating potential conflict		<i>investigation</i> • “96 credit” students • Transcription error in UK generated transcript.
1.1.3 Secondment and External Communication: The Key in Developing Bridging Social Capital between SinoXb and UKb	Secondment – to encourage individual faculty relationships Relationships not reduced to a single person Focusing localised activities – aligning purposes		
1.1.3.1 Qualified and Competent Faculty Members	Qualified Equitable Respected Trusted Activities –display capabilities and commitment Cultivates positive behaviours Leeway provided Ownership encouraged Sensitivity displayed		• Preparing lecture notes and assessments • Sino colleague assists in teaching • Preparing PowerPoint slides and tutorial questions • Sino local tutor marking of coursework.
• Developing Empathetic Intelligibility	Experiencing the working environment of other colleagues Understanding meaning behind action Rapport building Evaluation in relation to context Evaluation in relation to individual		
• The Value of Relational Transactional Analysis (RTA)	Adult transactions: “I’m OK, you’re OK” Complementary transactions Encouraging respectful communication		
1.1.3.2 The Safeguarding of UK Interests in China	Partnership champions Protect overseas awarding institution from adverse behaviour/ hidden agendas of other communities UK HEI have direct access to overseas operation Role model for overseas staff Resolve tensions caused by offshore activities, different environments		• 96 credit” students • Transcription error in UK generated transcript • Organising Sino teaching timetables to match UK

	<p>1.1.4 An Observation Concerning the Discipline (subject) Underpinning the Partnership</p> <p>1.1.5 Summary: Secondment, Uniting Teams and Spanning Boundaries</p>	<p>STEM subjects – top choice for many Chinese students Respected and required discipline Fewer stakeholder group interventions Reduced stress</p> <hr/> <p>Facilitates the flow of knowledge Articulate different needs of various actors Increase rate of resource transfer across partner groups Improve productiveness of activities Purpose and direction Psychological affects –sense making, reduced ambiguity Protect from unwanted interventions</p>	<p>module requirements</p>
Time	<p>2.1 Minimising Distance and Time: Shortening the Gap Between Time and Activity</p> <p>2.1.1 Secondment and its Relationship with Time</p> <p>2.2 Time and Transformation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legacy and Staff Stability • Enabling New Operational Practices: PGR Provision and Contractual Changes 	<p>Changing perceptions of time Space and time relationship shifted Response times reduced Activity production rate increases</p> <hr/> <p>Constant access to resources Goal orientated action Fit for purpose Immediate attention Access to senior management</p> <hr/> <p>Age correlates with maturity Transformation = partnership maturation Positive history = progressive developments Building confidence across partners Enhancing tacit knowledge Building self-confidence Better forms of communication Consistency in personnel Flexible structures –requires trust in partner ability and motives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emailing • Year 3 academic misconduct criminal investigation • “96 credit” students • Sino local tutor marking of coursework. • Changes to Sino student coursework • Sino colleague assists in teaching • “96 credit”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UKb: The Effect Internal Communication has on Partnership Transformation • An Observation Concerning Transformation and Stakeholder Groups 	<p>Operational stakeholders may not be involved in sanctioning transformation Strategic stakeholders authorise change Perception of right conditions Reproduction of tasks facilitates transformation</p>	students
Resources	<p>3.1 Tangible Resources</p> <p>3.1.1 Reconfiguring Activities: Maintaining Faculty Relations</p> <p>3.2 Intangible Resources</p> <p>3.2.1 UKb: The Effect of Internal Communication on Their Bonding Social Capital</p> <p>3.2.1.1 A Lack of Internal Support and Communication</p>	<p>Computer Software Packages Books Teaching materials Funding Staffing Physical learning environment</p> <hr/> <p>Lack of access to tangible resources in China Restricted access Pressure on operational processes Equitable and equivalent learning-challenge Operational stress Affect development of social capital</p> <hr/> <p>Tacit knowledge Advice Support Guidance Ideas</p> <hr/> <p>Internal isolation Segregated</p> <hr/> <p>Poor insights into strategic intentions Poor visibility about the goals/purpose/vision of the partnership Uniformed faculty members Embarrassed faculty members</p>	

	<p>3.2.1.2 A Lack of Reciprocation Between UK Colleagues</p> <p>3.2.1.2.1 A Focus on Negotiated Exchange, not Reciprocal Exchange</p> <p>3.2.1.2.2 An Observation Concerning Bonding Social Capital in UKb</p>	<p>Poor internal connections “Weak ties” Overworked and burdened</p> <hr/> <p>Participating colleagues support each other Isolation from rest of UK team Time spent negotiating and accruing favours Lack of power to control exchange process Marginalised staff Poor internal bonds between UK colleagues Positive Sino/UK bonds</p> <hr/> <p>Lack of senior management willingness to inspire non-participating UK colleagues Lack of transparent communication Lack of strategic insight Poor consideration of internal resource needs Need to change perceptions to ensure sustainability of partnership</p>	
<p>Emotion and Feeling</p>	<p>4.1 Historicity: Shared Practices, Concepts, Values and Their Effect on Emotion</p> <p>4.2 High Emotional Valence: Exploring Motivation and Belongingness</p>	<p>Forcing partnership work= <i>undermining social capital?</i> Conditions surrounding emotion- important Activities set tone in which to interpret motives and commitments Legacy creates foundation for subsequent interpretations and interactions Activity outcomes = both parties satisfied</p> <hr/> <p>Activity systems – favour attainment of goals Enjoyable and motivating <i>Belonging</i> to partnership Sensitive to needs of the other Dialectical exchange Stronger links between SinoXb and UKb than between UKb and other UK colleagues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Year 3 academic misconduct criminal investigation</i> • <i>“96 credit” students</i> • <i>Transcription error in UK generated transcript</i> • <i>FIFO</i> • <i>Sino faculty travel to UK for staff development</i> • <i>Sino local tutor marking coursework</i>

4.3 High Emotional Valence: Exploring the Empathetic Emotions	Appreciation Understanding the situation of others Empathetic intelligibility develops Willingness to support each other – stimulates appreciation and respect Integrative bond develop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sino colleague assists in teaching</i> • <i>Year 3 academic misconduct criminal investigation</i> • <i>“96 credit” students</i> • <i>Transcription error in UK generated transcript</i> • <i>Changes to Sino student coursework</i>
4.4 Emotion: The Bedrock of Social Capital	<hr/> Belonging – positive emotions Positive emotions effect continued sharing and dissemination of information Successful outcomes reaffirm positive emotional states, thereby affecting subsequent activity production	

Table 10: Summary of Partnership B

6.3.1 Modelling Partnership B as an Interacting Partnership (Activity) System

Based on the aforementioned analysis, I have reconfigured CHAT (Engeström, 2001) to represent my interpretation of the operational phase (Wohlstetter et al., 2005) of partnership B (figure 17). The points below explain how partnership B *appears to operate*:

- SinoXb and UKb seem committed to each other. Although they are contractually obliged to deliver the partnership, it appears faculty members genuinely value each other, and benefit from working in the partnership.
- The secondment of a UK member of staff to work in China means that Sino faculty members have immediate access to someone who is experienced in delivering UK HE. This access means SinoXb are able to gain immediate access to tacit and codified knowledge, such as advice, support and codified information. Whilst SinoXb are encouraged to communicate with their UK counterparts, secondment provides additional support and guidance to SinoXb in task production.
- Secondment appears to shorten the *perception of time*. This affects activity production by decreasing waiting times, and increasing the speed and rate of Sino activities. Moreover, secondment provides access to senior management in UK HEI B. Correspondence from the seconded member is quickly processed, escalated, and discussed providing responses that facilitate the quick resolution of problems.
- Secondment appears to assist in the explanation of activities that may make sense to one community but not another. For example, UK quality assurance procedures (documentation, audits, appeals processes, academic conduct cases) are required to satisfy UK operational processes or administrative process (timetabling, internal audits), not to fulfil Chinese institutional demands. The clear explanation of activities integral to UK or Chinese educational authorities, promotes shared understandings across the operational groups. This appears to improve the productiveness of the tasks across CHAT *object*¹, *object*² and *object*³ (Engeström, 2001).

- Knowledge translating and brokering assists in ensuring all stakeholders understand the rules governing the partnership (activity) system. This provides a synergy across the activity system, whereby all parties are familiar with each other's legislation and governance practices. Moreover, should a rule change be required, secondment seems to assist in explaining the rationale for change and the proposal of new forms of regulation.
- Intervention by stakeholder groups, such as Chinese political and social authorities who may wish to manipulate or change the operational focus of Sino faculty members is seemingly reduced by the importance of the discipline to the host country, as well as by the academic qualifications and competencies of the faculty members. A lack of constant intervention creates less stress, particularly on the Sino faculty members. This provides them with more time to respond to the needs of their UK stakeholder. UKb seem to benefit from the professionalism apparent in the Sino team. UKb therefore seem more willing to share resources and provide opportunities for SinoXb to make decisions around teaching and learning related matters.
- Partnership B evidences eight years of high levels of positive regard, and little evidence of conflict. Whilst certain activities (described by participants) do evidence tension, faculty members appear to use a legacy of positive regard to discuss and negotiate mutually agreeable outcomes. In the case of partnership B, cultural differences do not seem to create conflict between the partner groups. On the contrary, it seems a willingness to negotiate, coupled with open communication, prevents feelings of suspicion and malice developing within the partner groups.
- It seems small, localised tasks, incrementally improved and reproduced by operational staff keep relationships healthy. Mutual respect and shared values between faculty members mean transactions are often complementary. These tasks, such as assessment design and marking, create positive conditions, which assist senior management in making decisions about macro-level transformation. Although strategic insight into the goals of the organisation can help faculty members in the production of appropriate tasks, it seems operational staff assist in transforming their partnership structure, simply by incrementally improving the same tasks. As long as localised tasks continue to produce healthy working

relationships, it seems strategic management is more likely to sanction structural and systematic transformation when they perceive the time to be right.

- Qualified and competent staff help keep faculty transactions equitable and respectful. Transactions between staff are therefore complementary. This affects the tone of communication, whereby adult conversations are able to occur between equally able practitioners.
- Division of labour in partnership B transcends territorial boundaries. In this instance, the seconded member has equal standing within his own Sino institution and his UK institution. He is therefore able to influence the decision-making processes of two senior management teams at the same time. Whilst he is clearly an influential and critical member of staff, he actively encourages his Sino team to develop relations with UK HEI B senior management. This promotes further integration, and strengthens bonds amongst agents operating the partnership.
- The tone of partnership B appears to be one of appreciation, empathy, sensitivity and compassion across the partner groups. Faculty members seem to use their personal understandings of each other, as well as their knowledge of their working environments, to empathise and make decisions based on concern for the welfare of the other. CHAT *object*³ therefore represents a zone in which jointly constructed objects are developed (Engeström, 2001).

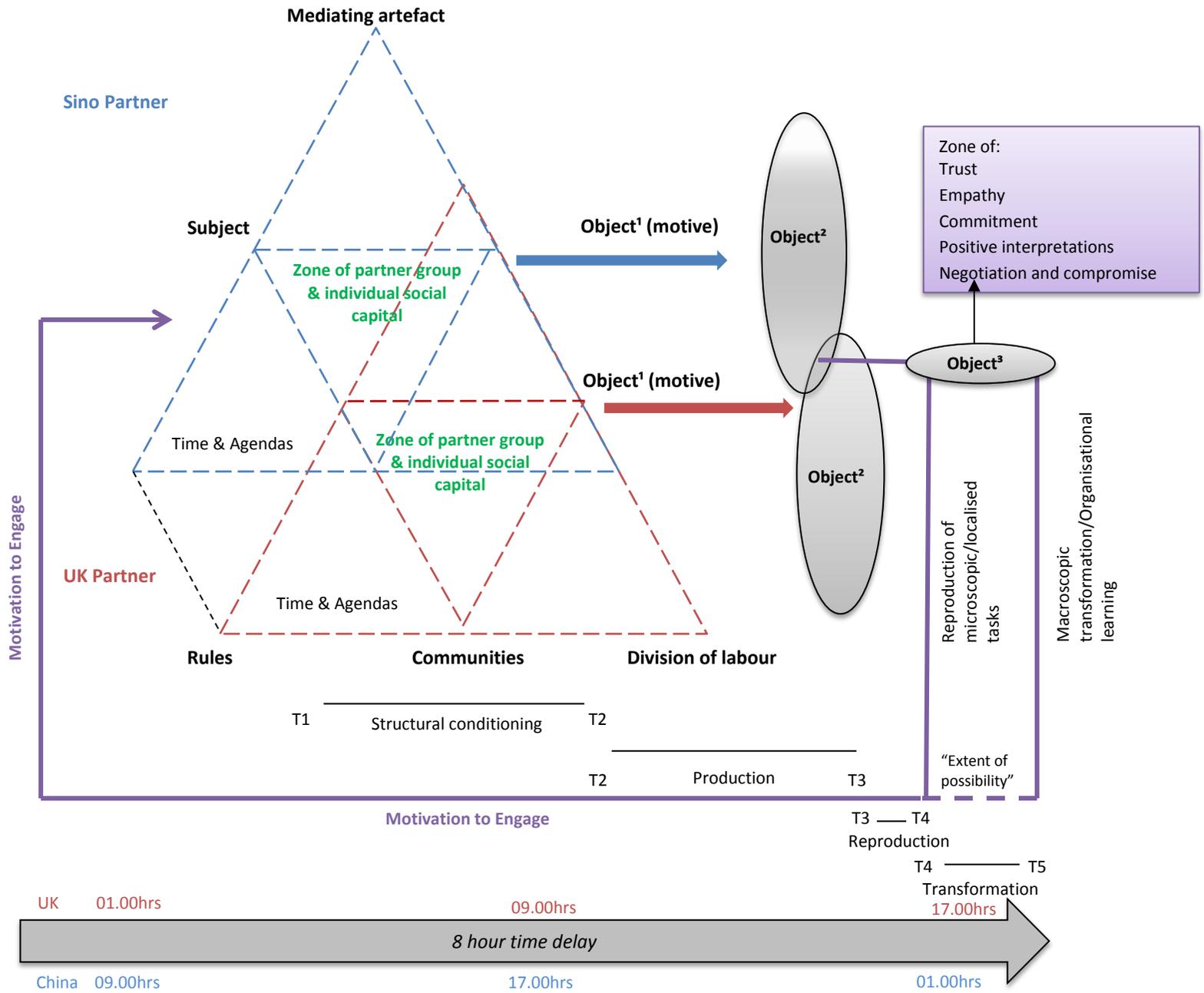


Figure 17: A model of TNE partnership B

6.3.2 Is there Evidence of *Partnership Capital* in Partnership B?

As discussed in chapter three, *partnership capital* consists of both *organisational capital* and *social capital* (Amey, et al., 2010), with the range and amount of *partnership capital* created dependent on individual partners and their intentions (Amey et al., 2010).

From an analysis of partnership B data, it seems fair to suggest that Sino X, UK HEI B, SinoXb and UKb are committed to their partnership. Although each community has individual needs, they seem able to reconcile differences and develop common goals and shared norms, through a process of negotiation and time spent together (Eddy, 2010).

This process encourages knowledge transfer between the parties, thereby facilitating in the development of trust. *Partnership capital* (Eddy, 2010) is therefore evident in the way the collaborating institutions and operational staff have managed to develop mutual interests, common goals and shared meaning of language. Moreover, by paying attention to, and prioritising these details, the partnership is more likely to sustain itself over time.

Analysed data evidences how organisational capital (space, technology, funding or human resource), does affect the way SinoXb and UKb interact with each other. However, in the context of partnership B, it seems faculty members are able to overcome organisational resource issues through a process of negotiation and/or the reconfiguring of operational practices.

Moreover, it seems secondment is able to reconcile operational differences between Sino X, UK HEI B, SinoXb and UKb. By offering a knowledge brokering and translating service (Tidd & Bessant, 2009), it seems secondment is able to mediate between the four organisational frames of reference (political, symbolic, human and structural) (Bolman & Deal, 2008), that guide both organisations and their operational practices (Eddy, 2010). This mediation and fusion in terms of partnership vision appears to change the nature of the relationship between Sino X and UK HEI B, as well as the operational staff, seemingly creating more unity and understanding between the collaborating members.

Similarly to partnership A, it would be wrong to suggest faculty members alone are responsible for the state and direction of their operational relationships. However, in the case of partnership B, it seems it is possible to reconcile any differences that exist between frames of reference utilised by collaborating organisations. In this case, it appears 'division

of labour', has the potential to synchronise organisational frames of reference, thereby creating healthier operational environments.

Clearly, organisational forces such as structure, culture, climate, resourcing and leadership do influence faculty member interpretations, changing subsequent behaviours and responses to activities. It is therefore misleading to suggest faculty members respond to activity outputs *without* considering their specific organisation's frames of operating (Bolman & Deal, 2008). However, in the case of partnership B, it does seem that a synergy between organisational frames of reference assists in reducing tension and ambiguity across the operational teams, and their activities.

6.3.3 Explaining Social Capital in Partnership B

Figure 18 highlights how I have sought to model social capital in partnership B based upon my understanding of the partnership (figure 17). It suggests social capital operates on multiple levels and seems stable across the two operational teams:

SinoXb

- **SinoXb seems to have HIGH internal team (bonding) social capital**

Secondment enables SinoXb access to a host of tangible and intangible resources. It appears to shorten time, protects the faculty group from external stakeholder interference, and provides the team with direction and purpose.

Finally, secondment through its knowledge brokering and translation service helps to keep misinterpretation and ambiguity to a minimum.

Staff turnover is low, thereby retaining tacit knowledge within the partner group.

Faculty members engage in reciprocal activities and support each other in accessing the resources needed to make operational activities a success.

The team are committed to the partnership, willing to learn from and negotiate with each other.

- **SinoXb seems to have HIGH individual (bridging) social capital with individual faculty members in UKb**

Communication between SinoXb and UKb faculty members seems high, with intangible resource exchange a common occurrence. Faculty members discuss tasks and seem to respect and trust each other.

Qualifications from and experience of UK HE mean UKb consider SinoXb as equals. This changes the nature of their communication, which consists of complementary transactions. SinoXb deliver outcomes that meet the expectations of UKb, thereby increasing the level of confidence and trust residing between individuals in the partnership.

Faculty members respect each other's abilities and experiences. They are able to negotiate and resolve differences through mutual respect, coupled with an appreciation (empathetic understanding) of the working environment of the other.

The use of overseas travel assists in the development of personal bonds. Faculty members consider themselves as friends and not just colleagues.

- **SinoXb seems to have HIGH partner group (bridging) social capital**

Analysis of SinoXb transcripts suggests they collectively work well with senior officials in UK HEI B and with UKb, in the pursuit of outcomes that suit the needs of both parties. Secondment seems to unite SinoXb in the delivery of the TNE programme, providing them with focus and purpose.

SinoXb seem willing to expand their programme, evidencing their commitment and dedication, by welcoming discussions around new PGR provisions.

SinoXb seem to respect UKb and appreciate their role in governing and regulating the UK programme. SinoXb seem positive towards UKb and UK HEI B.

UKb

- **UKb seems to have LOW internal team (bonding) social capital**

UKb seem to operate as an isolated group within a department where not all colleagues work on the TNE programme. *Kevin* and *Steve* seem unaware of who else works on the programme, what they teach, and when they travel. There seems to be little reciprocation between members of UKb.

Senior management do not seem to support UKb, leaving them to sort out their own cover for their UK workloads. UKb are therefore left to negotiate deals with non-participating UK members. This increases their workloads as they try to meet their international requirements, whilst also undertaking tasks for colleagues in order to accrue favours.

Senior management do not promote or inspire other non-participating UK colleagues to join the programme.

There seems to be poor internal communication, whereby senior management provide no strategic insight into the future of the partnership, proposed objectives or ambitions.

- **UKb has HIGH individual (bridging) social capital with individual faculty members in SinoXb**

UKb seem to get a sense of satisfaction and value from working closely with their overseas colleagues.

UKb seem to respect the abilities and experience residing in SinoXb, whereby UKb share their ideas with SinoXb, encouraging them to take ownership of the programme. It seems UKb trust SinoXb to deliver their requirements because they share the same meanings, values and language.

Communication between individuals seems transparent and bipartisan.

UKb consider members of SinoXb as friends, not just work colleagues and they feel this is critical in developing strong relationships.

Overseas travel provides UKb with opportunities to spend time with their academic partners, getting to know them personally as well as professionally. This understanding assists in the development of empathetic intelligibility.

- **UKb seems to have HIGH partner group (bridging) social capital**

Although not all UK members who work on the TNE programme are familiar with each other, the transcripts of *Kevin* and *Steve* suggest that relations with SinoXb are good across the whole of UKb. Both members discuss how they value their Sino colleagues and work hard to ensure they have what they need to deliver the programme overseas. They consider this vital to the quality of the education delivered in China.

Kevin and *Steve* imply that even though they are unfamiliar with other members who participate on their TNE programme, they feel they must share the same values and ethos. This is because they all volunteer to work on the TNE programme, whilst receiving little internal support, but do so because they feel they are able to benefit both personally and professionally.

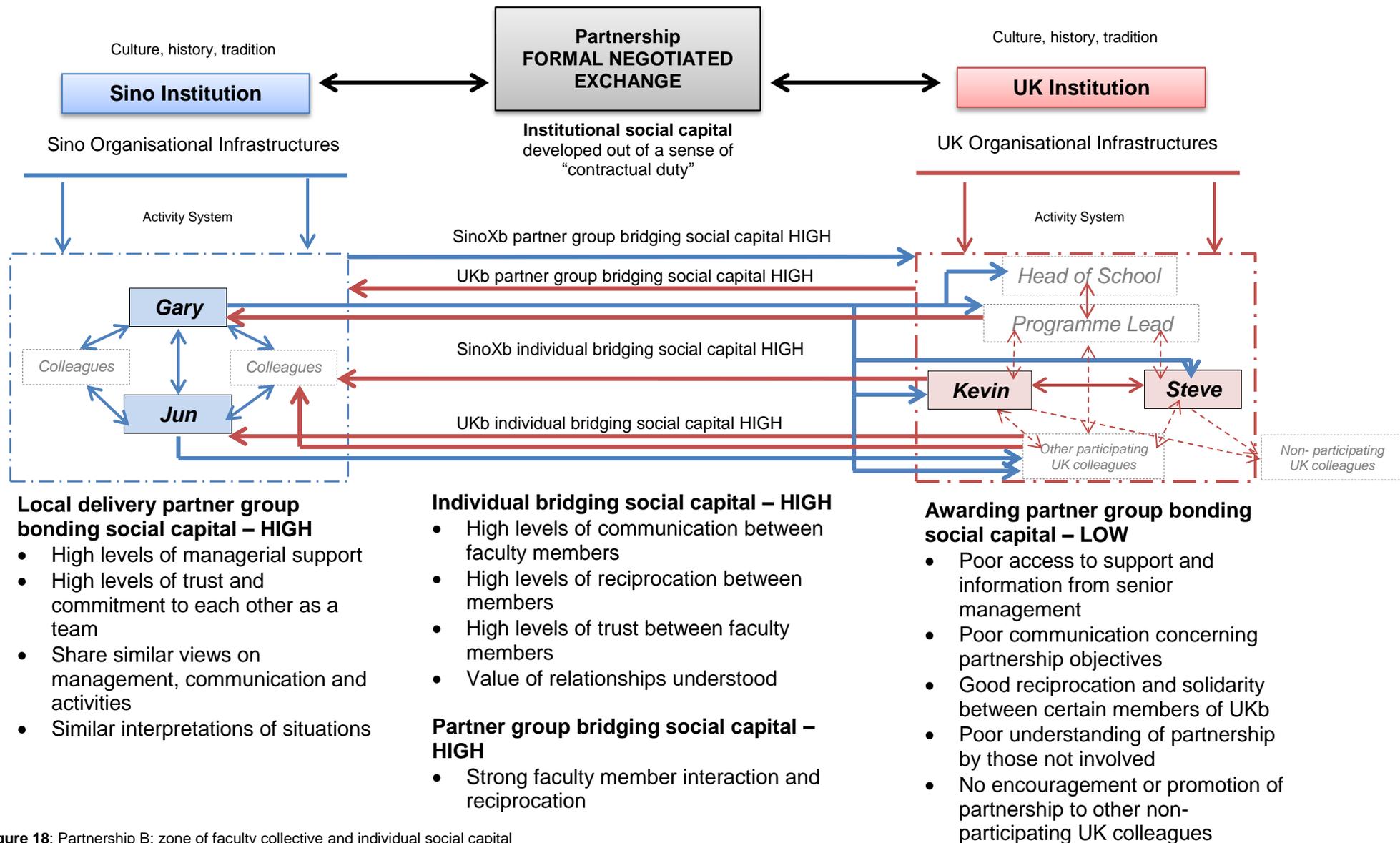


Figure 18: Partnership B: zone of faculty collective and individual social capital

Chapter Seven

Advancing Transnational Partnership Discourse: What can we Learn about Partnerships from Analysing the Practices of Faculty Engaged in Sino-British ‘Joint’ Partnerships?

'I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel' (Maya Angelou, 1928-2014)

Introduction

This chapter provides a series of conclusions drawn from the analysis of partnerships A and B. I do not suggest the conclusions presented are generalizable to other Sino-British TNE partnerships, or representative of other international partnerships. I therefore acknowledge that my work is bounded and relational. However, I believe the analysis presented in this thesis has identified a series of *key features*, common across both TNE partnerships A and B. Moreover, I feel these characteristics have the *potential to influence* the sustainability and value of other types of international partnerships, such as validation, franchise, articulation and branch campuses, albeit in different ways, and to different degrees. In addition, this chapter contains a series of conceptual tools with which to consider TNE partnership construction and infrastructure, in relation to social capital and partnership sustainability.

Clearly, the process of globalisation has pushed 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement, turning higher education into a global business (Altbach & Knight, 2007). This chapter therefore situates my research in relation to this discourse, and makes recommendations for further research. To cope with the growing demand for access to higher education, international cooperation is becoming a key feature, with universities in different countries forging alliances to compete in the global and mass higher education market (Chan, 2004). I argue that for international alliances to survive and expand, senior officials, and strategic players, at both the institutional and sectorial level, need to pay careful attention to the way infrastructure, motives and cultural differences affect the operational phase of partnerships.

7.1 Academic Aims Revisited

This research study sought to address three academic aims, expressed initially in the section: *Preface and Significance of Study*. I therefore offer my concluding thoughts on these three aims, drawn from my data analysis.

1. To explore how the activities of faculty members operating Sino-British TNE 'joint' partnerships affects social capital and subsequent partner relations

- ***This research has evidenced that operational activities do affect the way relationships develop between faculty members.***

Faculty members have an important part to play in keeping TNE 'joint' partnerships functioning. This research has shown how faculty member interactions, such as ***FIFO, assessment and feedback***, or ***academic misconduct*** tasks, can significantly affect how one individual or partner group (multiple faculty members) responds to the other. How individuals experience and interpret the operational practices of the other is critical in the way their relationships develop over time.

Underpinning activities and subsequent responses, are issues of resource accessibility, effective and efficient communication, and transparency in terms of motives. Activity production is therefore dependent on a series of *shared processes and understandings*. Since activities are the tools by which faculty members seemingly judge the commitment and motivations of their overseas partner, should these processes and understandings fail to materialise or be inadequately executed, faculty member relationships may inadvertently suffer. *Infrastructures which facilitate operational teams in developing these processes and shared understandings, are therefore more likely to produce trusting and cooperative partnerships.*

This research has discovered that the design, structure and resourcing of a TNE 'joint' partnership (activity) system clearly influences the development of social capital. Strategic managers need to give careful thought to the construction of the partnership (activity) system, investing time, not just in contractual proceedings, but also in operational planning. Strategic managers should consider allowing contractual negotiations (such as changes to administrative processes or timeframes) to occur throughout the term of their partnership, particularly if contractual terms create disturbances at the operational level. By

enabling a greater degree of flexibility, but still within guidelines, senior management can arguably encourage faculty members to resolve operational problems and create new methods of working that can be captured in new policy documents. Policy documents can therefore be continuously updated in line with the changing operational landscape.

It seems fair to argue, structures and systems, which encourage operational level communication, knowledge transfer, and seemingly shorten distance, positively affect the development of social capital. Intangible resource transfer in the shape of ideas, guidance, advice, and experience greatly assist faculty members in the creation of productive activities. The effect is to increase trust, stimulate further discussion and idea exchange across the partnership (activity) system.

- ***This research has evidenced that social capital is a dynamic force, which operates on multiple levels***

What is evident from this research is that social capital is dynamic, and subject to change. It also operates on multiple levels, across and within partner institutions and faculty groups. It is not simply individual faculty member relationships which require access to resources embedded in the partnership network in order to produce purposive action (Lin, 2001). Partner groups (faculty members as a whole group), senior management teams, other internal stakeholders and external stakeholders require access to resources as well. The multi-faceted nature of TNE relationships means structures and systems need designing in relation to a whole host of possible relationship needs and activity outcomes.

An activity which may enhance individual faculty member relationships, could damage partner group, senior management, and external relationships, and vice versa. For example, **FIFO** as a mode of delivery may enhance individual faculty member relationships. This may lead to increased communication and intangible resource exchange between these academics. Conversely, faculty members at the host institution may interpret the activity as undermining their abilities as lecturers. Faculty members based at the awarding institution may regard **FIFO** as an additional stress. This may create feelings of resentment or frustration, affecting the way they interact with their overseas colleagues. An activity such as **emailing** undertaken by one faculty member may undermine weeks of relationship building done by another. Moreover, institutional policies (host or awarding), communicated by one operational team member to another, may have no relevance or be dismissed if not explained or considered properly. This could damage future communications, thereby restricting the transfer of resources across the partnership.

I therefore suggest initiators of TNE consider how a process deemed significant to them, may be interpreted and subsequently implemented by other stakeholders. Initiators of TNE 'joint' partnerships need to consider how their partnership requirements may be received and interpreted by their partner, and what reactions are likely to ensue based upon them. How could these reactions affect group dynamics/ social interactions going forward, and what is the likely effect of these reactions on the TNE programme they are trying to operate?

TNE 'joint' partnerships do not rely on one type of relationship going well. They are multi-faceted, and require a host of relationship considerations, before one can theorise as to the possible longevity of the partnership. I have tried to theorise as to what could happen to a TNE 'joint' partnership if this multiplicity is not considered. The list below is not exhaustive. I recognise there are other potential relationships, which could exist between stakeholder groups, thereby affecting the duration of the partnership. I also acknowledge there are other variables, not just social capital, which have the ability to influence the durability of a TNE 'joint' partnership.

However, since the focus of this research is on the relationships between operational faculty members, social capital and their importance in developing TNE 'joint' partnerships, relationships have been categorised in the following way:

- I. Local delivery partner group (all faculty members) bonding social capital
- II. Local delivery partner group (all faculty members) bridging social capital
- III. Local delivery individual faculty member bridging social capital
- IV. Awarding partner group (all faculty members) bonding social capital
- V. Awarding partner group (all faculty members) bridging social capital
- VI. Awarding individual faculty member bridging social capital

The conclusions drawn from partnerships A and B have enabled me to *speculate* as to the possible futures of TNE partnerships. Table 11 is merely a *thinking tool*. The table therefore offers a theorisation as to the *potential outcome, rather than the actual outcome* of

TNE 'joint' partnerships which do not recognise the multiple relationships operating within them:¹⁶

- Theoretically, it seems the bonding social capital between faculty members at the delivery (host) institution is critical if the partnership is to survive. Although information communication technology (ICT) has made the task of communicating between globally dispersed teams easier and quicker (DeSanctis & Jiang, 2005), *what is communicated* requires awarding teams to carefully communicate amongst themselves prior to interaction. This ensures the correct information and support is provided, at the correct time. Prior to the launch of a TNE programme, awarding HEIs should ideally identify faculty members who work well together, understand the institution's policies and procedures, understand each other's operational strengths and weaknesses, and are organised.
- Theoretically, awarding HEI faculty teams, with seemingly poor internal bonding social capital, may be able to overcome feelings of marginalisation and isolation by increasing levels of interaction and correspondence with the academics at the delivery institution. However, reliance on local academics to provide information for awarding faculty members is arguably counter-intuitive, as well as dangerous, placing considerable power in the hands of the delivery institution. Senior management at awarding HEIs should arguably improve their internal communication and support systems. They must provide awarding faculty members with transparent and relevant information, and not force faculty members to become reliant on the back channelling of information. Although relationships between faculty members may improve, the rationale for such interactions should not be due to inadequate support and communication systems at the awarding HEI. Host institutions may view the management of the awarding institution as inadequate, potentially sparking apprehension to surface within their senior management.
- Theoretically, it seems TNE 'joint' partnerships can survive when the bonding and bridging social capital at the delivery institution is low, as long as the awarding institution's bonding and bridging social capital is high. The awarding institution may be able to compensate for poor intra-team relations at the delivery

¹⁶ An important caveat to note: just because a partnership has been running for a long period, does not mean the partnership has relationships which make it progressive, or transformational, or mean it is achieving its objectives (see next section).

institution, by providing a continuous flow of resources. However, senior management at the awarding institution must be aware of possible fatigue, frustration and lack of progress, which may occur in partnerships operating in this manner.

- Arguably, TNE 'joint' partnerships cannot progress easily overseas if UK partners are slow to respond and provide resources. Where the bonding and bridging social capital is high at the delivery (host) institution, but low at the awarding institution, there is a potential for failure. Whilst delivery institutions may have strong, capable academic teams, if they cannot access UK resources due to poor bonding and bridging social capital of faculty members at the awarding institution, they may get frustrated waiting for the answers and/or information required to give their actions purpose. Senior management at delivery institutions should be aware of how a lack of transfer in resources from their awarding partners may affect the educational experience of their students. Moreover, awarding institutions should note the possible damage to reputations if overseas student experiences are poor.
- Theoretically, where no partner group is interested in sharing, transferring, exploiting, progressing or disseminating resources, or where no group offers a suitable environment in which to engage in TNE, senior managers should see little reason to establish any form of partnership.

Local Delivery Partner Group Bonding Social Capital	Local Delivery Individual Faculty Bridging Social Capital	Awarding Partner Group Bonding Social Capital	Awarding Individual Faculty Bridging Social Capital	Predicted Result of TNE 'Joint' Partnership	Evidence for Prediction	Student Experience?
HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Partnership capital</i> (Eddy, 2010) (institutionalisation is evident) • Resources both tangible and intangible are accessed, mobilised and utilised in order to generate productive activities • Reciprocation between groups is high and equitable • Trust, commitment and team work high • Shared vision and sense of ownership and accountability • All partners seen as a united "us" – solidarity and common cause • Transformation and progress evident in partnership • Potential risk of failure: EXTREMELY LOW 	THEORISATION No data collected and analysed satisfies this criteria	<i>Effect on the educational experience of international students?</i> <i>Partner relations raises serious questions about the effect TNE has on international student experiences (see section:7.3 Recommendations for Further TNE Partnership Research)</i>
HIGH	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual relationships keep partnership alive • Individual relationships mean resources embedded in the awarding institution's network are usually accessible and mobilised by relevant team members in order to generate productive activities • Reciprocation between individuals is high and equitable • Trust, commitment and team work generated by individuals • Awarding body not openly communicating the partnership strategy, but is providing 	Partnership B	

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> relevant information when requested by individuals • HEIs willing to work together • Transformation and progress evident in partnership • Potential risk of failure: LOW 	
LOW	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual relationships keep partnership alive • Individual relationships mean resources embedded in the awarding institution's network are usually accessible and mobilised by relevant team members in order to generate productive activities • Reciprocation between individuals is high and equitable • Trust, commitment and team work generated by individuals • Delivery partner not openly sharing resources or communicating with its operational staff, but are providing relevant information when requested by individuals • Transformation and progress evident in partnership • Potential risk of failure: LOW 	<p>THEORISATION No data collected and analysed satisfies this criteria</p>
HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local delivery partner unable to access the resources embedded in the awarding partner's network due to a potential unwillingness or inability of faculty members to share resources • Awarding HEI faculty members seem ambivalent • Communication and relations seemingly good within each faculty group, but not necessarily between the operational teams • Delivery institution faculty member activities can lose purpose and focus • HEIs willing to work together 	<p>THEORISATION No data collected and analysed satisfies this criteria</p>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformation and progress possible within partnership Potential risk of failure: MODERATE/LOW 	
LOW	LOW	HIGH	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unequal relational development Awarding body supply constant access to their network so resources can be mobilised for purposive action Awarding body have good intra team communication and management to assist and support delivery partner Awarding HEI faculty tired, fatigued and frustrated Delivery partner faculty tired, fatigued and frustrated Communication is poor and intermittent from delivery partner Trust, commitment and mutual respect low Transformation and progress not evident in partnership Transformation and progress not evident in partnership Potential risk of failure: MODERATE/HIGH 	Partnership A
HIGH	HIGH	LOW	LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local delivery partner unable to access the resources embedded in the awarding HEIs network due to their poor intra-team exchange, communication and management Local delivery partner unable to mobilise resources to create purposive actions Teams seen as disparate with no common ground or ability to connect with each other Trust, commitment and team work high in delivery HEI but low in awarding HEI Transformation and progress not evident in partnership 	THEORISATION No data collected and analysed satisfies this criteria

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential risk of failure: HIGH 					
HIGH	LOW	LOW	LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local delivery partner unable to access the resources embedded in the awarding HEIs network due to their poor intra-team exchange, communication and management • Local delivery partner unable to mobilise resources to create purposive actions • Teams seen as disparate with no common ground or ability to connect with each other or willingness to interact • Trust, commitment and team work poor across the partners • Transformation and progress not evident in partnership • Potential risk of failure: HIGH 	<p>THEORISATION No data collected and analysed satisfies this criteria</p>
LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hidden agendas may fuel initial partnership, but a lack of focus and commitment likely to cause early partnership collapse • No relationship is able to develop – conflict of interests or a lack of willingness to cooperate • No exchange of resources possible • Poor communication, no mutual understandings developed • Unfocused activities • Partnership transformation and progress impossible • Potential risk of failure: EXTREMELY HIGH 	<p>THEORISATION No data collected and analysed satisfies this criteria</p>

Table 11: A model of social capital development in TNE 'joint' partnerships

7.1.1 Can we Encourage the Development of Social Capital at the Operational Level, by Changing Structures and Systems?

Figure 19 represents a thinking tool (Grenfell, 2008), whereby the relationship between age and maturity of 'joint' partnerships can be scrutinised. The findings of this research, clearly show partnerships do not necessarily age and mature in equal measure. The model assumes all 'joint' partnerships (regardless of context) start with initial discussions/ scoping exercises, before development begins. During this stage, social capital, communication and rapport building is in the early stages of development. I have labelled this phase as *Embryonic (newly formed)*. From this phase, figure 19 implies a 'joint' programme partnership can develop in three ways. Once initiated, depending on the structure and subsequent systems implemented, it seems the partnership can become:

1. *Incremental* with very little change evident (other than in personal, student numbers, or pedagogical updates), with poor relationships between members unable to progress the partnership beyond individual partner interests (Eddy, 2010). It thus ages but never matures to become institutionalised.
2. *Transformational*, whereby trust, confidence and respect between collaborating members guides the partnership towards transformation and maturity.
3. Finally, *Transformational* may lead to the *Developmental* phase, whereby partners may increase their institution's portfolio of work, based on prior relationships forged through already successfully established ventures.

I argue that the initial design of the partnership clearly affects the path the partnership follows. Although not all 'joint' partnerships may have long-term ambitions or survive due to licensing (China) or recruitment challenges (staff and students), HEIs who initiate any form of TNE partnership should still aim to develop strategic, equitable partnerships, based on shared understandings, trust and transparency for the duration of the partnership. Whilst secondment (hatched) is not necessarily required or undertaken by those activating 'joint' programme partnerships (as evidenced by partnership A), it offers a noticeable difference. Its adoption by partnership B has clearly assisted in the maturation and sustainability of the partnership, assisting in its transformation over time.

Social capital is facilitated by infrastructures that are preconditioned to assist in the positive production of activities. The more stakeholders connect infrastructure to positive and productive objects of activity, the more likely that the infrastructure will be seen to nurture and inspire social capital (Engeström, 2001). Secondment is one way to do this. It essentially produces a boundary-spanner (Williams, 2011), an agent who is able to translate and broker knowledge between connected parties. Secondment helps articulate problems or challenges in language all parties can understand. It heightens resource transfer between institutions and assists in the dissemination and allocation of resources. Secondment assists in steering the partnership, helping to build trust and confidence between globally dispersed operational and senior management teams.

However, I am not suggesting secondment alone is the only reason why social capital and transformation is evident in partnership B. Respect between the sending and hosting countries (Green & Gerber, 1997) and the partner institutions seems equally important, as is the discipline under offer, and the qualifications of staff who deliver the programme (Helms, 2015). Although the rationale for a secondment strategy may be a lack of trust between institutions (data partnership B), what is clear from the data analysed, is that faculty members perceive it positively, using it as a tool with which to improve their relationship and partnership sustainability over time.

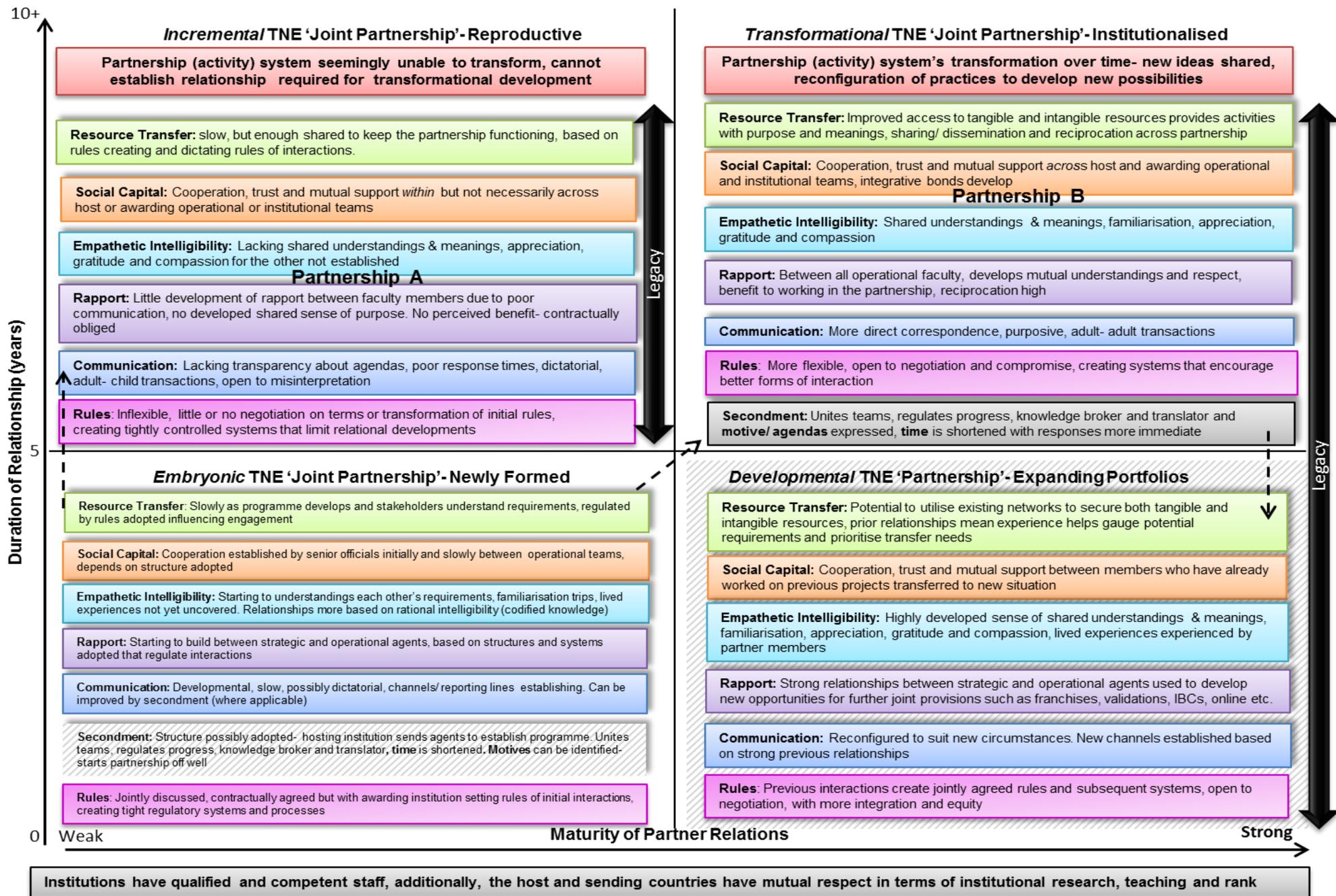


Figure 19: Developing a partnership: the relationship between age and maturity

4. To discover which forces and features have the biggest influence on operational relationships between faculty members working on TNE 'joint' partnerships, and the subsequent effect of these on partnership sustainability

CHAT (Engeström, 2001), TMSA (Archer, 1995, 1998) and Social Action Theory (Weber, 1978) have enabled me to identify and analyse a series of forces and features which affect activity production and outcome. I identify the features of a partnership as resourcing, rules, communities, activities, psychological outputs, communication, and agency. Whilst all these play a part in the creation of successful relationships, the findings of this research have highlighted the importance of three features in particular, which link activities and social capital: communication, resources and psychological outputs.

My analysis of partnerships A and B suggests that underpinning the aforementioned features are a series of underlying mechanisms. I identify these as *forces, which are able to manipulate and modify partnership features*. These forces are: **time, historicity (legacies), and culture and motive**. These forces are not always explicit, and seem to influence the way faculty members interpret and respond to activities, and communicate and share resources within their partnership.

I. Time

Time is arguably the most critical aspect of a TNE 'joint' partnership. Whilst time zones and passing time are important and integral to any empirical investigation into TNE partnerships, it seems there are techniques which can help in the management of time. It seems time needs managing, or it can arguably dominate and damage a TNE 'joint' partnership. Since time influences communication, service levels, response times and motivation, it has the ability to either enhance or damage faculty member relationships, potentially affecting the stability of the partnership.

Figures 15 and 17 identify how partnership systems A and B differ in their construction. One of the main reasons for this difference is the way time operates within the partnership (activity) systems. It seems time can either dominate a partnership, as in partnership A, or it can be harnessed and managed, as in partnership B. Depending on the infrastructure adopted by TNE partners, it seems time can be manipulated (Hinckfuss, 1975; Lawn, 2001). This changes what is perceived as being possible within the partnership.

Faculty need to be encouraged to develop ideas, disseminate and evaluate solutions, and the perception of 'having time' encourages this to happen. Without access to time, it seems idea generation, dissemination and communication is stifled. Perception of time is clearly one reason why partnerships A and B operate differently.

Faculty members in partnership A perceive time as being in short supply. They feel external forces (geography and time zones), internal stakeholders, and rules affect their workloads, meaning they are unable to find the time to develop relationships with each other. Faculty members in partnership A seem to regard time as something they are unable to control. Time is not regarded as a malleable resource, open to manipulation, in order to enhance working relationships. Faculty members therefore position themselves as "victims of time", unable to engage in transformational work or engage in meaningful transactions which promote social capital (Buck-Sutton, 2010). Time, and the perceived lack of it, almost serves as an excuse for poor social interactions between faculty members operating partnership A.

Figure 15 highlights how faculty members in partnership A, feel they are always ahead or behind time, unable to respond to activity production and outcomes when required. In effect, time influences the way faculty members interact, interpret and respond to each other. Yet there is seemingly no attempt by faculty members or senior management to try and 'manipulate' time, to 'increase' it or 'shorten' it, or give it more 'value' to improve operational relationships.

In contrast, partners in partnership B seem to regard *time as a vital resource*, which is open to manipulation. By implementing certain structures and systems, senior management and operational academics are able to change perceptions of time. Secondment not only shortens time, by speeding up response times between Sino and UK partners, but it also gives time "more value". Sino faculty members are able to access instant information and support, which helps them make the best use of their time, improving their motivation and commitment to the programme. TNE 'joint' partners therefore not only need time to enable relationships to develop (Beck-Sutton, 2010), they also need to consider how to promote intangible and tangible resource transfer, so that the time provided has purpose and direction.

Time certainly makes the difference in a partnerships ability to transform itself. As Buck-Sutton (2010) states, transformational partnerships are 'expansive, ever-growing, and relationship-orientated' (2010, p. 61), whereby time is considered integral to the building of

relationships. Time is a key resource in the development of integrative bonds, which may require irregular working patterns, international travel and cultural/ language training. Shared understandings, language and empathetic intelligibility all take time to develop. Should partnership (activity) systems impose too much in terms of regulation, workloads, or provide inadequate ICT or operate multiple agendas, time becomes scarce.

Management need to provide those engaged in international programmes with time – time to jointly explain and understand the purpose of tasks, the best methods of production and expected outcomes. Management should also consider secondment or other such methods, whereby the delivery institution has immediate access to resources such as tacit knowledge, ideas, knowledge brokering and translation. This arguably improves the rate at which resources are exchanged and mobilised for purposive action (Lin, 2001), thus affecting outcomes produced and feelings generated.

II. Historicity (Legacies)

A theme throughout partnership A and B is the effect of previous events on faculty member interactions. In the case of CHAT (Engeström, 2001), historicity tells us to ‘explore the successive and intersecting developmental layers, including the emergent new ones, in the activities under scrutiny’ (Engeström, 2008, p. 215). Previous interactions between faculty members, within the partnership (activity) system, therefore affect current and future activity production. Activities therefore need analysing in relation to the historical context in which they occurred.

Partnership B findings suggest partnership (activity) systems which work together to overcome problems caused by activity generation, are more likely to overcome future challenges. These partnership (activity) systems therefore evidence a series of transactions, which emphasise negotiation and reconfiguration. Moreover, these transactions demonstrate the partnership’s ability to transform and deviate from established norms. TNE ‘joint’ partnerships which have a history grounded in negotiation and ‘collaborative envisioning’ (Engeström, 2001, p. 137) are more likely to accomplish transformation by providing a strong base for deliberate collective change. Although transformation is seemingly under the control of senior officials within the partner HEIs, it seems a legacy of productive engagement between faculty members is critical in ensuring partnerships mature over time.

It seems fair to argue that TNE ‘joint’ partnerships should be designed and constructed to enable faculty members not only to think through the process of their

interactions, but also to provide them with the authority necessary to implement change when required. Although this requires a high level of trust by employers in their workforce, it appears by implementing structures and systems, which facilitate and monitor these processes, partnership (activity) systems, can produce a series of positive social encounters. A history of positive interactions between partners feeds back into the system, whereby the tone is set for present and future engagements.

III. Culture and Motive

Whilst it is arguably easier to standardise motives and cultural terms and values across one team who operate in one country, it is not as easy when two or more different cultural teams work together. It then becomes harder to create a standard sequence of steps that makes sense to both teams (Engeström, 2008). It seems in TNE the cultural differences and educational traditions of the awarding and host countries may create different opinions about how educational programmes should operate. This may create tensions that are seemingly felt by those who operate TNE programmes, with partnership A being testament to this. Conflict between partners in terms of their goals can create impossible situations (Vasilyuk, 1991).

A major problem with conflict is the inability to find compromise, meaning partners may seek to pursue their own agendas under a false veneer of mutual agreement. Motives underpinning operational activities therefore become confused. **Assessment and feedback** activities for one partner group may require a certain number of students to pass or require a certain level of attainment. The activity of **quality assurance auditing**, or general auditing undertaken by Chinese stakeholders, may require one partner to engage in activities and satisfy objectives not required by the other. Hidden agendas and diametrically opposed value systems are therefore evident in the activities of operational faculty members. This leads them to question each other and themselves as they try to uncover the meanings behind the outcomes of certain activities.

Whilst partnership A evidences how cultural differences and subsequent motives, can (if left), produce uncomfortable working environments; partnership B highlights how culture is not necessarily about incompatibility, but about moments of strain that require immediate attention. In order to deal with problems and challenges effectively and efficiently, partnerships require good cross-cultural leadership, transparency and honesty. Faculty members need to know that when problems arise, they can ask probing questions about activity production, supported by both their institution and their colleagues. Moreover, if

partners agree upon the same objectives, such as the creation of meaningful learning experiences for both the educational institutions and students, probing questions should not create animosity or distress, but provide platforms for relevant, complementary adult transactions (Lapworth & Sills, 2012). TNE 'joint' programme partnerships are about groups working together to produce an educational service that is acceptable and applicable to all concerned, discussed in a transparent manner, open to negotiation and under constant review.

This research has implications for inter-cultural understandings, whereby an appreciation of Chinese and British cultures is clearly important when delivering Sino-British TNE. These cultures create the context in which faculty members and participating HEIs operate. Faculty members must become aware of their own cultural identities, and develop a more relativist rather than ethnocentric view of culture. However, this awareness may require faculty members to participate in professional development prior to working on a TNE programme. Participating HEIs should encourage and support professional development by offering cross-cultural training and knowledge exchanges across schools and departments. Cross-cultural training can include things such as 'personal space, terminology/ language...body language/ gestures...as well as physical dress and how and when to provide feedback' (Dong & Liu, 2010 p. 235). Moreover, HEIs should also consider the style of management and leadership required to make cross-cultural ventures a success. Programme leaders and/or course leaders should act as role models, encouraging the development of cultural sensitivity, patience and understanding across and within operational teams (Jin, 1989). As Chen et al., (2004) suggest cross-cultural conflicts prevail in management norms and behavioural styles, whereby a lack of respect and focus on cultural awareness and integration can lead to the long-term damage of an international partnership. The leadership and management of partnership A is arguably testament to this.

By promoting an awareness of other cultures, through opportunities such as **FIFO and Sino faculty travel to UK for staff development** (partnership B), it may be easier to resolve cultural tensions, whereby faculty members are able to develop empathy and better understand each other. Moreover, this awareness has the potential to stimulate debates and discussions around operational problems and potential solutions. The ability of partnership B to develop empathetic intelligibility (Weber, 1978) through social interactions, over partnership A, is arguably a key differentiator between B being a progressive partnership, and A being a reproductive one. As Ryan (2015) states '...contact not only leads just to *tolerance*, but can also lead to *change* amongst both groups, if they are open to learning from each other' (2015, p. 8, original emphasis). By seeing cultural difference as an

opportunity to learn from each other, faculty members are arguably able to develop a shared managerial competence and complementary skill set. Evidenced in partnership B, cultural difference is a chance for faculty members to positively evolve their TNE partnership. By employing a boundary spanner (Williams, 2013), who is able to integrate the two cultures, active learning and development become possible (X. Li et al., 2014b). However, partnership structures and systems must be flexible enough to take advantage of operational learning bytes, actively encouraging them to become part of the partnerships *modus operandi* over time. Transformation requires senior management at participating HEIs to assess their regulations and institutional policies in light of the needs of their overseas partners. This means cultural awareness is not simply a task assigned to operational staff. Senior management also need to take ownership and develop their cultural awareness.

Finally, an awareness of the contexts and conditions that surround faculty members operating international alliances, can lead to a more focused exchange in tangible and intangible resources. By seeking to understand working environments, faculty members are arguably better equipped to deal with operational challenges, whereby resource exchange may dramatically enhance or limit the activity, its purpose and outcome.

The above arguably represent three key mechanisms which can influence TNE 'joint' partnership (activity) systems. However, these mechanisms can clearly be 'manipulated' through structural and systematic changes, in order to improve faculty member relationships. This research has demonstrated how these mechanisms have the potential to influence communication, resources and psychological outputs. Since these features are critical in the development of social capital, it is important to analyse and conclude these particular findings in more detail:

I. Communication

Fundamental to the success of any partnership is communication. There are numerous variables which influence communication content, style and tone. Findings suggest legacy, staff turnover, rules/policies, managerial support, motives, the interpretation of activities, and time, all affect the way communication develops between collaborating faculty members. Moreover, whom the communication is between is equally as important.

Internal communication (intra-team) may not be the same as external communication (inter-team), with each having the potential to affect the way relationships develop between operational faculty members. Data analysed in this research highlight how communication is not simply about individual choice. Individuals within a partner group may feel pressured by their institution to respond to their partner in certain ways or withhold information. Competing stakeholder interests may also render certain responses problematic. It therefore seems communication between faculty members, whilst critical in the development of relationships is not simply a matter of individual choice and preference.

This research has shown how the division of labour and internal management systems influence communication between colleagues. First, not all faculty members are able to access information. It depends on their rank and position in the operational team (Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010). This is not to suggest operational faculty members should operate in a matrix structure (Tidd & Bessant, 2009), whereby everyone has equal access to information, it merely suggests more attention needs to be given to how and what information is distributed through the partnership network (Engeström, 2008). Initiators of partnerships need to consider how infrastructure can best support knowledge transfer between agents.

Whilst not all information needs to be shared amongst faculty members operating 'joint' partnerships in order for work-place learning, reproductions or transformations to occur, operational teams need to be kept abreast of things that could impact on their daily practices. Senior management and course leaders need to know what constitutes relevant information and disseminate accordingly, otherwise activities may lose focus and meaning. Since activities are subject to multiple interpretations, with context playing an important role in the formation of subsequent decisions and actions (Weber, 1978), it is vital agents are given information that gives their tasks meaning.

Furthermore, senior management should consider keeping faculty members updated with changes in strategic direction. It seems senior management who disregard or fail to communicate the vision of the partnership with operational staff, may creating feelings of isolation and anxiety. Transparent and honest communication between senior officials about the direction of the TNE 'joint' programme partnership is one way of generating ownership and accountability amongst team members.

II. Resources

This research has highlighted the importance of intangible resources in the development of faculty member relationships. Posited as critical in the development of social capital (Molm et al., 2012), it is intangible resources, such as tacit knowledge and support, which must be enhanced and transferred in order to strengthen operational team relationships. However, depending on how faculty members interpret each other's actions, emotions are generated which arguably have the ability to either slow, increase, block or halt the further transfer of intangible resources. A lack of intangible resource generation, dissemination and exploitation means faculty members are no longer able to access or mobilise these resources towards purposive action (Lin, 2001). Activities may start to lose focus, produce unintended outcomes, and produce frustrating working environments. The emotional output created by activities will be analysed in more detail in III (below).

Certain operational tasks, although governed by reporting structures, audits, monitoring and policies, should still enable faculty members to negotiate new forms of practice, so relationships can develop without undermining the quality of the educational product. For example, **programme resources, such as teaching materials, core texts, software packages, and learning environments** need considering in relation to the host country. A restriction, or blanket imposition of tangible resources by an awarding institution can add stress to faculty members who are trying to deliver equitable and equivalent educational experiences abroad. Certain resources may be required so pedagogical activities make sense to those receiving the education overseas. Should tangible resources be withheld, faculty members may find themselves trying to maintain the education experience without adequate materials. Certain academic activities may lose purpose, or require major reconfigurations. Furthermore, conversations between faculty members as to the availability of tangible resources, may be strained by a lack of transparency, whereby one or all parties may regard the situation with suspicion. The feelings this generates may have consequences for relationships going forwards.

III. Psychological Outputs

Whilst activities can build and strengthen the amount of intangible resources flowing through a network, they can also reduce and/ or deplete them. Since emotion is integral to action (Damasio, 1999), how an actor performs at work is mediated by how they feel, whether they are conscious of how they are feeling and can articulate it or not (Roth, 2007). Since positive emotions such as happiness, optimism, empathy and appreciation provide the

bedrock for the continued sharing, dissemination and exploitation of intangible resources, it is important senior management consider ways in which to foster these particular types of emotions.

Faculty members who feel poorly supported and frustrated by their partnerships, may well resort to apathy or withdrawal as a way of coping with the situation. This may erode the possibility of resource sharing, whereby faculty members may start to demonstrate emotions which are not conducive to social capital. Being good, respected, or praised for doing a task feeds back, thereby producing and reproducing positive emotions (Roth, 2007) such as enjoyment and optimism. Being respected as equally qualified and competent also enhances the way faculty feel about their work and each other. Senior management responsible for the recruitment of TNE faculty members should therefore strive to employ qualified and competent staff on both sides of the partnership (Helms, 2015).

Infrastructures which encourage faculty members to spend time together, for example, *FIFO*, *peer observation of teaching* or *Sino faculty travel to UK for staff development* can strengthen relationships between collaborating faculty members. Empathetic emotions such as gratitude, compassion and appreciation (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994) are critical in helping individuals understand each other's contexts and actions (Weber, 1978). Collaborating academics who have experienced each other's working environments are therefore more likely to appreciate each other's situations and choices, although this is not to suggest these decisions will be widely accepted by all partners.

Whilst it is not always possible to negotiate outcomes to suit all parties, international partnerships clearly benefit from having faculty members who are empathetic to the situations of others. This seems to keep communication channels open, which is critical if resources are to continue to permeate the partnership (activity) system.

5. To utilise existing theoretical frameworks in order to model Sino-British TNE 'joint' partnerships, in order to understand the effect operational activities, have on social capital and partnership development over time

To help me make sense of this research topic, I utilised CHAT (Engeström, 2001), TMSA (Archer, 1995, 1998), social capital theories (Putnam, 2000; Coleman, 1994, 1996; Bourdieu, 2006; Lin, 2001) and Social Action Theory (Weber, 1978). I conclude that no theory on its own is enough to explain the operational phase of a TNE 'joint' partnership, with

figures 16 and 17 evidencing the need to fuse the theories to make sense of the phenomena.

Although I feel the theories utilised have helped me understand TNE 'joint' partnerships, operational activities, and their effect on social capital, they all have their strengths and weaknesses. The below table highlights some of the strengths and weaknesses of these theories, in a study of TNE 'joint' programme partnerships.

Theory	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Third Generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2001)</p>	<p>Has enabled me to identify the subject 'faculty member' in relation to a number of other complex forces</p> <p>Helpful in understanding the interdependency of structure and agency</p> <p>Has been a useful tool in enabling me to identify the multiple forces, which underpin partnership (activity) systems</p> <p>Has allowed me to consider the relationships between forces which seem to interact and collide, producing challenging operational working conditions</p> <p>Has helped me to look beneath the <i>empirical</i> domain and consider the domains of the <i>actual</i> and the <i>real</i> (Bhaskar, 2008)</p> <p>Has enabled me to visually construct and identify the key features of a partnership (activity) system, and postulate the relationship between these dimensions, as well as their effects on activity production and subsequent interactions therein</p> <p>Has helped me to understand how historicity affects partnership (activity) system development</p>	<p>Seems to consider activities as happening in a linear process between partners who engage in activity production as the same time, thereby producing outcomes at the same time e.g. student and teacher engaged in a classroom activity</p> <p>Time requires greater expression and analysis, current format not suitable for analysing the influence of time-zones</p> <p>How ideas and debate generated in <i>object</i>³ feed back into the partnership (activity) system is not made explicit and how they affect communities, rules, resources, division of labour and subsequent future activities</p> <p>How partnership (activity) systems transform or reproduce – how do 'rules', 'resources', 'communities' and 'division of labour' hinder or enable these processes?</p> <p>Although CHAT seeks to explore joint activity in the transformation of activity systems and social structures (Engeström, 1999b), it is the psychological effects of joint activities that are important in the development of integrative bonds between subjects</p>

Transformational Model of Social Action (TMSA)
(Archer, 1995, 1998)

TMSA provides an element of time, whereby it is possible to map time (T1-T4) onto the partnership (activity) system, thereby highlighting how time assists a partnership (activity) system to reproduce and/or transform

Identifies fundamental process, such as 'pre-existing structures' that influence 'social interaction'. It suggests these interactions govern the reproduction and transformation of social structures over time. Although pre-existing structures are acknowledged in CHAT through 'Principle Three: Historicity', TMSA enables a greater level of analysis to be conducted in relation to 'social interaction', 'reproduction' and 'transformation'

Allows for a greater understanding of structure and agency in relation to time

Does not explain how 'social interaction- production' reproduce or transform systems

Does not allow the 'subject' to be identified in relation to complex social structures

TMSA does not explicitly identify possible external and internal influencing factors, which may affect social interactions

TMSA suggests T3-T4 'reproduction time' and 'transformational time' are the same – but it seems transformation takes longer, even though it relies on reproduction.

Should the model consider transformation as an extension of T4 and define 'transformation time' as T3-T4-T5? Transformation seems to be the combined output of a *series* of reproductions T3-T4, which produce conditions which favour change, but clearly this process takes longer?

Reproduction it seems cannot determine the type, form or likelihood of transformation. The decision to transform a partnership seems to rely on a series of players, who decide when transformation is possible, and when it is not

Social Capital Theory
(Lin, 2001; Coleman, 1994, 1996; Bourdieu, 2006; Putnam, 2000)

Identifies social capital as resources, accessed and mobilised between individuals in the pursuit of outcomes – clearly evident in CHAT

Individuals must invest effort, there must be an awareness of benefits – doing something for a purpose (either individual need or collective need e.g. rational choice theory)

Different modes and methods for developing social capital become apparent. All have common features, such as benefit, networks, resources,

Whilst identifying key attributes such as networks, resources and benefits, the theory does not suggest what these could represent in TNE partnership contexts

Theories do not explicitly consider the psychological effects of accessing and mobilising resources, or the way these feelings affect subsequent interactions and why

Psychological phenomena and interpretation of actions not

	action and social relationships	considered in detail
	Reciprocal forms of exchange and negotiated forms of exchange considered, thanks to an analysis of the democratic strain of social capital	
Theory of Social Action (TSA) (Weber, 1978)	Provides a theoretical lens through which to consider the more subjective aspects of human behaviour	Does not explicitly identify possible influencing factors that may affect social interactions
	Allows for activities to be considered in relation to their meaning, and the effect of this on subsequent human interaction	Gives credence to agency over structure
	Helped me to explore how operational activities are understood by participating agents, and how they understand the meanings behind them	
	Helps to explain how faculty member relationships are able to develop key attributes such as empathy, gratitude and compassion required for partnership longevity	

Table 12: Strengths and weaknesses of applied theories

The synthesis of conceptual tools has helped me to understand my empirical data by enabling me to investigate deeper levels of social interaction, not always apparent in the *empirical* domain of each faculty member. By exploring the lived experiences of the participants through semi-structured interviews, I have been able to contemplate their daily realities and consider them in relation to features evident in the theoretical frames. Theory has therefore created a platform in which I have been able to make links between the different dimensions, allowing me to postulate and contemplate how mechanisms, events and actions are influencing the lives of operational faculty members.

As previously identified, underpinning mechanisms and events may not be immediately apparent to participants, and their effects may never fully be understood unless investigated. For example, an activity or actions of one participant that creates negative effects may influence subsequent social interactions (production) (Archer, 1995) of other faculty members. Yet, unless these interactions are identified and shared, other participants

may remain ignorant to the new social environment that surrounds them. Arguably, the smaller the faculty teams, the easier it is to disseminate and share this information. However, as teams grow in number, the harder it is to know about every member, every interaction and the subsequent outcomes generated (as evidenced in partnership B). A further example is how the choices of one group of faculty members is often dictated by the culture and traditions of the country and institution in which they serve. The theoretical frames have enabled me to postulate the effects these decisions and allegiances have on faculty interactions, by considering the way in which they link and influence subsequent resource exchanges, community engagements, rule changes and activity production. Moreover, it has been possible to see how these cultural differences, by influencing resources, community groups, rules and activities, affect faculty behaviours and the direction of the partnership over time. Certainly, the theories identified and applied in this research study have enabled me to delve beneath the *empirical* domain of faulty members. This has allowed me to explore phenomena that reside in the domains of the *actual* and the *real*, and that are often not apparent to faculty members in their daily working lives.

7.2 Going Global 2015: Implications of Research Findings on Current and Ongoing TNE Research

In June 2015, I attended *Going Global 2015* at the QEII Centre, London. A report commissioned by the European Parliament's committee on Culture and Education, led by the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, in conjunction with the European Association for International Education (EAIE) and the International Association for Universities (IAU), was launched at the conference. It scrutinises internationalisation strategies currently operating in higher education at an institutional, national, European and global level. In addition to reviewing different approaches to internationalisation, the report offers normative insights by examining what internationalisation should strive for, as well as making recommendations for policy makers.

The report suggests internationalisation in higher education will rise across Europe and the rest of the world, with 10 key trends identified, such as the effects of globalisation (driving engagement), insufficient funding, increasing privatisation, growing competition, rising numbers and insufficient data collection likely to affect those involved in its development. Moreover, the conclusions drawn from the project make it clear that internationalisation is not a choice, but a *survival necessity*. It recommends nations and institutions develop a more strategic and systematic approach in order to compete in the race for talent, student numbers and position in global rankings.

Professor Robert Coelen from Stenden University of Applied Science (presenting at the conference), argued partnerships will play a key role in progressing international agendas (Coelen, 2015). Furthermore, he argued that 'general staff' are central in establishing international partnerships. 'General staff', he stated, can operate as both 'blockers' and 'enablers' of internationalisation strategies at the institutional level (Coelen, 2015). Whilst 'general staff' are not the only blockers or enablers ('economic considerations', and 'leadership' feature significantly), Coelen (2015) argues 'general staff' present the biggest challenge. Whilst he suggests that to understand the effects of internationalisation, more research needs to focus on 'equity of access', 'diversity in the classroom' and 'mobility enhancement', he also argues more research is required on faculty member skills, experiences and ideologies. Finally, he contends more research needs to focus on the progression and development of 'institutional partnerships.'

TNE was a common feature of *Going Global 2015*. Considered as being a key internationalisation strategy, employed by many institutions in some form or other (twinning, franchise, validation, articulation, joint programmes, distance learning, international branch campuses), TNE initiation was discussed in detail. Issues such as TNE data collection (McNamara & Knight, 2015), programme evaluation, quality assurance, cultural challenges (Gale, 2015; Van Cauter & Fernandez-Chung, 2015) and the development of equitable partnerships were discussed across multiple parallel sessions. Higher education institutions, particularly in Asia are increasingly utilising TNE more strategically to grow their capacity, develop their competitive advantage, and improve opportunities for their students, with Malaysia being the most strategic in terms of integrating TNE into its national strategies to drive economic growth.

Although the British Council markets *Going Global* towards strategic leaders (Vice-Chancellors, Pro-VCs, presidents of institutions, policy makers, directors etc.) involved in the design and initiation of TNE across borders, it became increasingly apparent that the British Council was trying to encourage strategic leaders to look beyond memorandums of understanding, by holding conference sessions focused on the implementation of TNE partnerships. As Paul (1990) clearly articulates, it is easier to 'agree about general principles and grand schemes than it is to work out the details of who has authority and who does all the work' (1990, p. 148). I believe this requires forethought and planning; senior management need to understand how TNE construction can affect operational delivery. I feel my work can contribute to this strategic discussion.

I feel it is short sighted of the higher education sector and its strategic leaders to think issues pertaining to quality and student experience are exclusive to senior management discussions. Although the British Council is acutely aware of the importance of delivery and implementation, *Going Global* is marketed as ‘a conference for leaders of international education to debate the future of further and higher education’ (British Council, n.d). Research presented highlighted to me the growing gap between initiators and implementers, whereby paradigmatically, these two worlds seem far apart. The question is *should they be?* Considering the affect this may have on the pace and development of internationalisation (particularly within HEIs) in the future, should they continue to drift apart? Should there not be a greater strategic alignment and dialogue between the two groups? Whilst thanks go to academics such as Debowski (2003); Heffernan and Poole (2004, 2005), K. Smith (2009, 2014), O’Mahony (2014), Spencer-Oatey (2012), Keay et al., (2014) and Helms (2015) for their work on TNE implementation, it is not assured that this work is being read and appreciated by senior and strategic leaders within UK HEIs.

I am not suggesting *Going Global* is the only conference platform from which to discuss the implementation of internationalisation strategies, nor do I imply everyone should be involved in strategic planning. I simply argue that since operational staff members play an important part in delivering internationalisation strategies, of which TNE is one such approach, I believe initiators and implementers should not be segregated or isolated, but united in order to develop processes, which productively assist the internationalisation of higher education.

Regardless of the international strategy adopted by HEIs, I argue, to be successful, operational staff members need to be informed, advised and consulted if they are to enable, rather than block, internationalisation strategies (Coelen, 2015). One way to start this process is to consider the operational needs of, and circumstances surrounding, operational faculty members, so they can be better supported in delivering all types of internationalisation strategies going forwards. The hard work was therefore not this PhD, but the work now required to disseminate and promote my research to a global audience, in order to shift TNE paradigms and improve practice.

7.3 Recommendations for Further TNE Partnership Research

Following on from this research, I encourage academic communities interested in TNE partnerships and their development, to consider conducting the following empirical investigations:

- Consider conducting ethnographic studies of partners to understand if operational environments are influencing the educational experiences of overseas students.
 - i. Are overseas students adversely affected by operational faculty member relationships?
 - ii. Can students sense when relationships are “not good” or “going well” between their local tutors and UK colleagues?
 - iii. Do students feel they are experiencing the best of UK education by studying on a TNE programme in their home country?
 - iv. What is the relationship between operational faculty member interactions and the overseas student experience?
- An action research-based project that aims to embed and evaluate the findings of this study.
 - i. Is it possible to embed some of these findings into a particular partnership in order to measure if they can improve TNE delivery?
 - ii. Can we then evaluate again and make further recommendations?
- A similar investigation of another Sino-British partnership, whereby Chinese faculty members play a more central role in the delivery of the TNE provision, over expatriates or seconded UK academics.
- Consider applying CHAT, TMSA and Social Action Theory to TNE ‘joint’ partnerships based in other countries such as India or the UAE.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

This work is not generalisable or representative of all Sino-British, ‘joint programme’ partnerships or all TNE partnerships. It is temporal, relational and representing a particular situation within a particular context. By the time you read this work, situations, personnel and services will have changed, and in some circumstances, hopefully for the better. This study is therefore limited in the following ways:

1. By the limited number of partnerships used as case studies in which to conduct this research. This has constrained the findings of this research, however, this could be addressed by exploring other partnerships operating at the same delivery institution or by investigating the current cases in more depth. This could include interviewing other operational faculty members involved in the cases or by conducting a longitudinal investigation of the current cases to assess activity production and relationship developments over a longer period, enabling an assessment of

partnership progression to be analysed in line with “real-time” operational interactions.

2. By the fact, both cases operate at the same delivery institution in China. Whilst this was helpful in binding the cases for research purposes, geographical variations may influence Sino-British partnership operations. A sample of current TNE ‘joint’ programme partnerships from across China, from a variety of programme disciplines may enable the further verification of these research findings.
3. Finally, my research is limited by its adoption of the ‘joint’ programme partnership as opposed to other forms of TNE partnerships in which to base my research. For example, those developed to deliver articulation, validated or distance learning programmes. The type of programme operated will arguably influence partner requirements, thus creating different types of faculty member interactions. It would be interesting to analyse whether the theoretical frames applied in this study would offer any insights into partnerships developed to deliver very different types of programme partnerships.

I believe my work enhances the field of transnational education research and practice because currently, little research has focused on the operational phase of TNE ‘joint’ programme partnerships, and the way in which associated operational activities affect faculty member relationships and subsequent partnership development. I hope my work has provided the reader with an understanding of the complexities surrounding Sino-British TNE ‘joint’ partnerships, as well as providing some useful insights into how HEIs can best design and implement their TNE ‘joint’ partnerships in order to create better working environments, which better promote and enhance cross-border relationships (Sutton, 2010).

Although HEIs from across the World, who decide to engage in TNE partnerships, may differ in terms of culture, traditions and heritage, I have learnt that with careful cross-cultural management these differences can represent opportunities for learning, leading to the transformation of existing partnership structures and systems (partnership B). By considering the implementation not just of secondment as a way of enhancing cross-cultural management and communication (partnership B), but also considering cross-cultural training programmes for faculty, overseas trips to host/ awarding institutions it seems empathetic intelligibility can grow and enhance faculty member understandings of each other and their operational environments. However, these management practices can only be implemented if supported by the HEI in terms of resourcing and authorisation. I therefore recommend

senior management take time to understand the needs of operational faculty and provide structural flexibility when required in order to enhance cross-cultural relations.

Moreover, there is evidence that common ground and common aspirations are developing between Chinese and Western education systems, as radical reforms of China's education system over the past decade and a half continues (J. Ryan, 2011). There is also evidence of the gap between academic values narrowing (Hou et al., 2011). Arguably, these changes will influence future TNE operational relationships, whereby partners will be able to share similar views and approaches to TNE managerial and teaching and learning based activities. Yet this is not to suggest all values will be shared across the different cultural groups. On the contrary, individual agency and diversity will still exist amongst partners (Yuan & Xie, 2013), yet it is hoped closer aligned values may increase the possibilities of improved negotiation and compromise amongst participating parties.

During the production, and submission of this thesis, I have continued to monitor new academic studies, which have transpired in the area of TNE and internationalisation. *Going Global 2015*, as well as new publications by Knight (2015), Caruana and Montgomery (2015) and Helms (2015), have enabled me reflect on the continued importance of international partnership management as an area for continued research. New work by Caruana and Montgomery (2015) suggests research surrounding TNE is now 'opening up', with more research focused on 'grass-root issues' such as pedagogy, quality, motivation and management (2015, p. 10). Furthermore, Knight (2015), perhaps the most seminal writer in the field of internationalisation, argues that TNE creates complex operational environments in which academic staff members face challenges around classroom management, plagiarism, workloads and negotiation for grades. Furthermore, she maintains that operational phases do require strategic forethought, but are 'often neglected until a problem occurs' (2015, p. 118). To rectify this issue, she suggests:

[M]ore attention to these issues is required to ensure that culturally diverse classrooms, campuses and faculty/management teams provide benefits not problems (2015, p. 118).

I consider new publications and international conferences focusing on internationalisation strategies symbolise the growing importance of transnational education in the development of contemporary higher education. Transnational education has expanded exponentially in terms of absolute growth in student numbers (Caruana &

Montgomery, 2015), and my research has a part to play in improving this particular internationalisation strategy.

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