Accomplishing transnational education provision: Institutional practice architectures and the enactment of policy and practices

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This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

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Abstract

Transnational education (TNE) is a complex and multidimensional project requiring contributions from many different parts of the university to achieve a satisfactory outcome. The current trend for TNE in UK research-intensive universities is towards collaborative arrangements driven by yet more complex objectives in an effort to achieve more targeted outputs and tangible returns for the institution. But how TNE is accomplished within the institution is poorly understood.

From a critical realist perspective, using practice architectures informed by social practice theory, this thesis investigates how the TNE project is conceptualised and accomplished in the research-intensive university setting. Data collected from six different universities through a series of semi-structured interviews and institutional documentation were analysed using collective case study analysis and framework method.

The findings suggest that the TNE project is enabled and constrained by pre-figured arrangements within the institution as TNE is dominated by compliance as the most significant feature shaping the project. The three arrangements that comprise the practice architecture analytic (social-political, material-economic and cultural-discursive arrangements) are foregrounded differently at various stages in the TNE project revealing a contested understanding of conceptualisation. Practice architectures highlight the tensions and threats to the TNE project within the institutional setting and these architectures need to be scrutinised, adjusted and reconfigured if the

TNE project, as it is valued by academics and higher education leaders, is to perpetuate and grow.

The research also suggests that there is a need to expand the theory of practice architectures to take account of “proto-practice reservoirs” within the institution: ideologies, symbolic structures, ways of understanding, forming the ubiquitous structural forces that condition how meaning is made locally. The proto practice reservoirs influence and shape the accomplishment of the TNE project.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines how the transnational education project is accomplished through the enactments of practices and policies within the site of the UK research-intensive university. In this introduction, the background to the research is established, defining the research problem. The chapter further sets out the research design and the research questions central to the thesis.

1.1 **Terminology used in this thesis**

In order to ensure clarity for the reader firstly I will define the three terms particularly significant to this thesis: the TNE project, the awarding institution and collaborative programme delivery.

Transnational education, according to Knight et al (2017):

> *… involves programmes and providers moving across national borders to deliver higher education programmes and credentials to students in their home or neighbouring country instead of students moving to the country of the foreign higher education institution/ provider for their … academic programme. (Knight & McNamara, 2017)*

For the purposes of this study I refer to the TNE project whereby this term is intended to capture the notion of the set of activities, artefacts, processes and policies related to the accomplishment of the TNE teaching programme contained within the boundary of the UK institution or the awarding institution, see Figure 1. The term TNE project is not necessarily a term that has been

adopted in the literature but is a term specific to this thesis. It is not timebound but is intended to capture the endeavour in its entirety as it is located within the UK university. Bordogna (2018) argues in her analysis of TNE of a necessity to separate out the phases of development within the institution, from the initiation of the project, to implementation, through ongoing operational stages and finally monitoring and evaluation phases. I will take a different view for this thesis, and whilst it is important to consider there are different sets of actors involved in each of the phases, the view taken in this thesis is to consider the accomplishment of the TNE project in its entirety. I argue that it is the TNE project, regardless of the phase of development, that is of interest if we are to establish an understanding of institutional practices and the enactment of policies and practices forming the accomplishment of the TNE project.

The second term of significance to this thesis is the awarding institution, this is used to refer to the UK university as it is their academic award that is delivered at the site of their international partner through the partnership arrangement.

The third term referred to in this thesis is collaborative programme delivery. TNE has many different modes of delivery, ranging from distance learning through to branch campus, collaborative programmes are those arrangements that include partnerships of universities working with a partner organisation, including consortia and joint award arrangements.

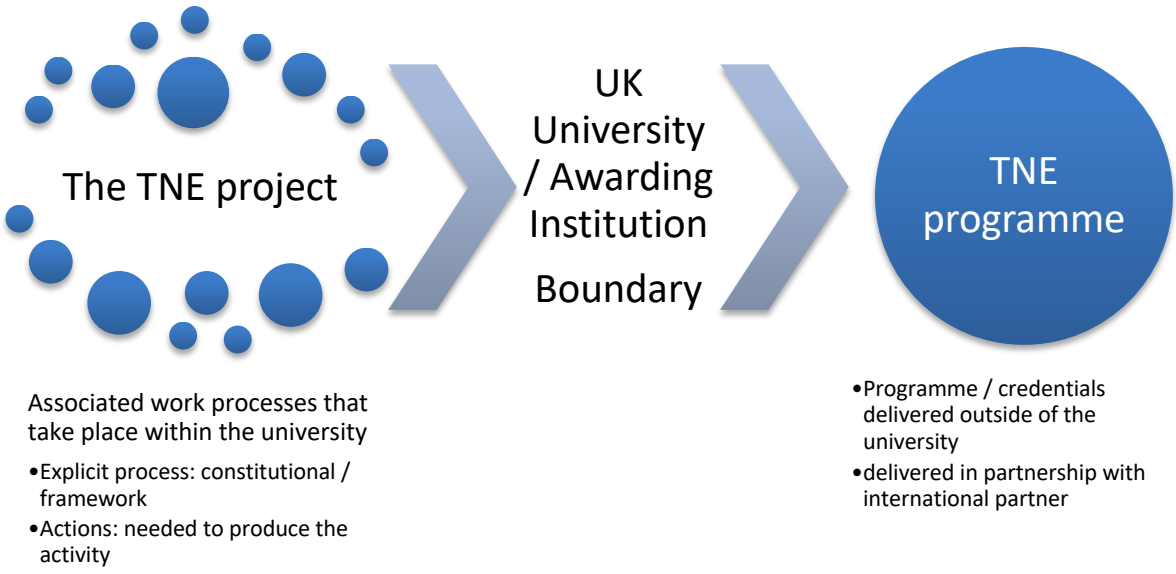

Figure 1.1 Visual representation of the location of the TNE project and the focus for this study

1.2 **Background to the research**

Transnational education has become a common feature of the UK international higher education landscape. In 2018, according to the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 139 institutions, from a total of 164, delivered some form of TNE programme. These programmes reached a total of 693,695 students in 225 different countries and territories around the world. The most frequent type of TNE for research intensive institutions is collaborative programme provision (Bennell, 2019; UUKI, 2019).

When delivered through a collaborative programme model, it is an effective endeavour that allows unique interactions for universities, academics and students to achieve aims and objectives that would otherwise remain out of reach: it can inform the development of curriculum; expose academics, professional service teams and structures to new ways of working and new

practices; reach new student audiences and build firm foundations for strategic alliances to further develop research collaborations and other joint ventures. TNE has been positioned as a solution to reach new audiences and partners, contribute towards the sustainability agenda for faculties and build strong foundations to develop world-class international research collaborations.

TNE is considered the most complex of all international higher education endeavours (Healey & Bordogna, 2014) and faculty leaders, frequently the drivers to these initiatives, are often ill-prepared to deal with the many challenges they face in their new found roles as TNE developers where many of the fundamental academic principles are challenged and must be renegotiated as part of the TNE project (Healey, 2018; Marginson, 2014). Moreover, the awarding institutions within which they operate are generally considered inward-looking, labyrinthine organisations with governance structures that embrace tradition (Shattock, 2017; Stensaker, 2015; Vincent, 2012), have been designed for domestic provision and consider this innovation as risk heavy, healthy amounts of scepticism and challenge are heaped on their development (Emery & Worton, 2014). TNE is recognised as offering commercial opportunities but universities are well aware that it is not a simple economic solution to generate income for their department or university (Fielden, 2011).

TNE is often presented in a narrative of deficit: TNE is regarded as a '*thankless task*' for the person responsible for leading the initiative within the home institution (Healey, 2018); as a volatile and risky endeavour (Shams,

2016); TNE is also considered an "*unseemly gold rush threatening to undermine the public service orientation that should be paramount in higher education institutions*" (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007). It has been characterised as the "*Trojan Horse*" or "*Invaders Triumph*" whereby strong universities usually from Western systems seek out only the profitable business in a developing country with no interest in the partner or the cultural context within which they are working p.149 (King & Bjarnason, 2003)

1.3 **TNE is at an impasse**

In order to understand these complexities, the existing literature offers very limited knowledge by way of insight into how TNE is accomplished by the awarding institution – whereby accomplishment is intended to convey the ongoing process as the TNE project is continually enacted and negotiated within the institution. There is very little empirical research in to *how* the TNE project is operationalised within the UK institution (Bordogna, 2018; Montgomery, 2010). The TNE project is in the hands of those who are able to identify potential and purpose but are then required to retrofit this highly innovative activity within a system that considers international activity as "*otherness*" (Hayes, 2016; Marginson, 1999).

Within this environment of the UK institution, the TNE project is a complex, co-constructed endeavour necessitating the support, input and direction from across the hierarchies, academic peers and professional service teams. It requires specific knowledge, skills and behaviours from the project lead and those involved, to be able to navigate the TNE project through structures and

processes, as they seek support and legitimacy to operationalise the TNE project. These demands on the UK institution are even greater when the type of arrangement with the international partner is based on a collaborative programme arrangement where the UK university award will be delivered at the location of the international partner either as a joint or dual award. There is therefore a clear challenge to improve the effectiveness of the TNE project.

The focus for this thesis is to examine those practices within the landscape of the institution and uncover the structures, systems and architectures that hold the practices together to provide an understanding of how the transnational education (TNE) project is accomplished. The TNE project encounters challenges as it is mediated through the enabling and sometimes disrupting pre-figured arrangements within the university. The objective is to improve the effectiveness of attempts to accomplish a TNE project within the setting of the higher education institution, if TNE practices are to change, then there is a need to understand and change the practice architectures that hold them together.

1.4 **Motivations for the study**

My personal motivations for this study stem from a wider personal interest in international higher education and allied cultures of internationalisation now widespread in higher education systems and institutions around the world. From my professional point of view, I have worked in the field of International Higher Education, first within a UK university setting, developing TNE programmes in East Asia, and latterly in a national organisation, British

Council, where my interests and privileged perspective gives me a panoramic view of what is happening in UK institutions with international organisations.

Transnational education programmes present an interesting object for enquiry as they are arguably the most complex mode of international collaboration; their development converges on multiple parts within the institution, they foreground interdependencies across multiple actors and teams. They pose significant challenges to the leadership and governance functions of the institution, the strategic direction, risk management, financing and resourcing. They also pose significant academic issues such as quality and standards and pedagogic design.

Critically, they are formed from social interactions within the institution and are based on practices of collaboration. They are dual facing: they look outwards from the origin institution as they interact with other international institutions and systems, and they face inwards as the learning and practices from their development are experienced within the origin institution, bringing with them exposure to cross cultural working.

TNE is an important activity for UK universities, but there is little understanding as to how the social interactions mediate the pace, development and delivery of the programme. The individuals involved bring their own histories and backstories that help to shape the TNE project, an understanding of how individuals' attitudes, behaviours and choices are conditioned by the environment in which they work will assist understanding of how the project is conceptualised and ultimately purposed by the institution.

My experience of TNE within the institution and outside the institution has been one that lacks a shared understanding by different parts of the institution, and differing aspirations and ambitions for TNE objectives. The pace of development is often slow and is challenged at many points during its journey by an opaque system of governance which often leads to the frustration of these entrepreneurial activities.

1.5 **Gap in the literature**

The academic literature on TNE is prolific. It has grown steadily over the last three decades. Since the mid-1980's, TNE, as an action for universities began to gather pace. However, the literature does not respond to the question *how* TNE is accomplished within the UK institution.

There have been a number of systematic reviews of the literature on TNE, offshore, cross-border and borderless higher education, the most recent (Kosmützky & Putty, 2016, see also Waterval et al 2014) each identify thematic clusters of TNE research, as follows: Overviews and trend analysis of TNE; quality assurance and regulation; teaching and learning; institutional and management perspectives; governance and policy, and student choice and student mobility, revealing some 1,931 publications (Kosmützky & Putty, 2016)

By far the most prolific body of work relates to the overview and trends of TNE, setting a rich narrative for a macro-level analysis of the subject. This body of work incorporates the discourse of strategy and internationalisation (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Asgary & Robbert, 2010a; Ayoubi, 2007; Bannier,

2016; Becker, 2009; Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2007; Mok & Han, 2016; Stafford & Taylor, 2016; Warwick, 2014), and TNE situated within the global trends and drivers of neo-liberalism and globalisation (Altbach et al, 2009; HE Global, 2016; Marginson, 2007; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; Van Der Wende, 2003).

Regulation and quality assurance are also the subject of analysis (Coleman, 2003; Verbik & Jokivirta, 2005; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012), and risk aspects of TNE (Healey, 2015; Henderson, et al, 2016; Lawton & Jensen, 2015).

There are also in-depth analyses of the component parts of TNE namely pedagogic aspects of curriculum design (Hoare, 2013; Leask & Carroll, 2011; Waterval et al., 2014), culture and interculturalism (Eldridge & Cranston, 2009), and student experience (Humfrey, 2009; Jones, 2003).

However, it is recognised that "*there is currently little knowledge about the implementation of the TNE programme forming part of the wider "internationalisation at home" agenda beyond the lessons learned for teaching and learning faculty*" (Montgomery, 2010, p.132). It is not sufficient to secure knowledge about the individual elements that constitute the TNE project; if TNE is to be more fully understood there is a need to analyse the project within its environment accounting for the situatedness of TNE within the local sites, the practice architectures that shape it and also the ecological relationships across the interwoven practice locales as sets of practices interlock.

As foregrounded in the managerialist informed literature, TNE literature is critiqued as a subject with a notable failure of the examination of quotidian practices located in the setting of the institution. Healey (2018) observes a very limited literature on the organisational management of TNE. He suggests "*very little TNE research … gets inside the black box*" (p.13). To address this gap, he presents an empirical study of data gathered from home university managers, adopting a qualitative 'insider researcher' methodology. The findings foreground limitations conditioned by obstructive institutional cultures, as well as overly hierarchical governance structures of the home institution (Healey, 2018). But his analysis still leaves a gap in understanding of TNE as a shared practice as data is gathered only from the perspective of the home university manager. He asserts that the TNE project depends on a whole series of inputs and negotiations from other parts of the institution, mediated through social relations; within faculties, governance structures and professional service functions (including quality, models of delivery, student experience and broader cultural implications) each able to influence and shape the TNE. TNE is not developed in isolation from the rest of the institution, it forms a part of its ecology, it exists alongside and sometimes in juxtaposition with other practices associated with, for example, international research collaborations, entrepreneurial activities and also, more fundamentally, the core domestic endeavour.

Moreover, the analytical lens of managerialism is challenged by social practice theorists pointing out the need to examine the ways in which managers determine social realities within the cultures of the organisation

(Billo & Mountz, 2015). It is this concept of 'organisational culture' that begins to shift our framework of understanding and presents a different lens of enquiry. However, 'culture' is a broad concept and too inexact to illuminate the actuality of TNE accomplishment within the university, a further granularity of conceptual framework is needed.

Analysis of the organisation in educational research has shifted between micro-level theories of agent and agency located within the spatial arrangements within the institution to macro-level structure analysis . These approaches reveal a dualism of analysis, with structure and agency conceptualised in separation. A middle way is needed to reveal the situatedness of the practices that happen within the institution that are specific to the location (Reckwitz, 2002; Trowler, 2014). Giddens (1984) introduced structuration theory, or the middle way between structure and agency and thus avoiding dualism.

Bordogna (2018), arguably the first researcher to apply a social practice theory-based approach to TNE noted the need to foreground social connections that influence the progression and development of TNE within the institution. She highlights a need to understand the relationships between faculty members within the partnership arrangement, claiming that this much needed understanding will "*significantly strengthen TNE in terms of progression and value*" (2018, p.1).

1.6 **Overview of the study**

Considering these gaps identified in the literature set against the perceived complexities of the TNE project, the aim of this research is to investigate the enactment of practices and policies as they are performed within the situated context of the university. Such an investigation requires an examination of how the TNE project is conceptualised within the university, and an understanding of the TNE practices and challenges encountered, as the project is mediated through enabling and disrupting pre-figured arrangements within the contextual dynamics of the institution.

1.6.1 Research questions and research goal

This research sought to gain insight into the practices and enactments of policy within the awarding university. The research questions for this study are:

- RQ1: What regularities exist in the ways TNE programmes are conceptualised in a sample of UK universities, and in what ways do the differences shape the accomplishment of those programmes?
- RQ2: From the experiences of the TNE programme leaders, what elements enable and constrain the TNE project?
- RQ3: To what extent do internal and external forces influence the TNE project?
- RQ4: What insights do practice architectures offer in relation to the research questions above, and in what ways does this study indicate ameliorative refinements or amendments to that conceptual framework?

The rationale for this sequence of questions is to establish understanding of the practices and policies and how they are enacted within the site ontology of the university (Schatzki, 2015). They have been constructed to move the research trajectory from the concrete and descriptive to the analytical and theoretical (Trowler, 2015). Together, these questions allow analysis of how the pre-figured arrangements shape TNE practices as they are interactionally secured within the situated context of the institution. The theoretical framework of practice architectures (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2007) foregrounds the arrangements that hold TNE practices together. A practice architecture framework illuminates our understanding of the TNE project as a co-constructed objective. The distributed practices of faculty leaders, institutional leaders, tutors and professional services shape the TNE endeavour based on their individual and shared conceptualisations of the TNE project and related policies.

The research questions have been designed with the aim of contributing to the identified gap in the literature, getting into the "*black box*" of the TNE project as noted most recently by Healey (2018 & 2019) and Bordogna (2018). Furthermore, insight into the contextual contribution from the organisation environment in which the TNE project is located will build on the existing managerialist conceptualisations. This will be established through an investigation of practices of faculty, institution leaders and professional services staff. My approach intends to uncover the understandings of a range of those involved in the design and implementation of the TNE programme,

and to address the aspects of shared understanding, or otherwise, of the TNE project.

1.6.2 Research design

My research design is based on case study research with data gathered from six discrete sites. My data set focuses on six UK research-intensive universities and their TNE collaborations with universities in China. The rationale for this selection is to provide a clear focus for the research site. This thesis is not intended to provide an exhaustive study of the UK China HE relationship. Instead, the focus of this research is the study of practices and practice architectures present in the institution as the TNE project is negotiated through the institution setting. The unit of analysis is the collaborative TNE programme, delivered in China by UK research-intensive universities. The selection provides stability and focus for the study of practices and practice architectures. The deliberate focus on this unit of analysis is intentional as it represents a highly complex arrangement that involves the input from a wide group of departments and individuals within the UK university, thus maximising the potential of this study to understand how the TNE project is accomplished.

Using a practice architectures approach (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2007), this being a theory of social practice located within the broader family of social practice theory, the research questions present the opportunity to gather ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1983) from these sites to build an understanding of how

the TNE project is co-constructed through the organisation of practices and co-construction of meaning-making within the institutional practice ecologies.

Case study research is "*the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e. a setting, a context)"* (Creswell, 2013, p. 73) and offers an in-depth understanding of a process or phenomenon in its situatedness (Yin, 2009). The approach presents the opportunity for the researcher to investigate specific and boundaried examples of an "instance in action" (Cohen et al 2012; Gomm et al 2000). The instance in this case being the TNE project.

Through a consideration of six purposefully selected case study locations, the research questions provide an opportunity to explore in-depth into each case location and illuminate practices and practice landscapes within the institution. Data is gathered from two sources from each site: firstly, through a series of semi-structured interviews and secondly documentary evidence. The semi-structured interviews commenced with the faculty leader and then through snowballing techniques to institutional leaders, professional services and tutors involved in the delivery of the TNE project at each of the six sites. Documentary evidence was gathered from the participants and through publicly available resources. This data offered rich and broad interactions with the TNE project workgroups. The data was analysed using framework analysis (Richie & Lewis, 2003, Spencer et al 2014), this being a qualitative method congruent to research that is time specific, uses consistent questions and a priori themes (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). Framework analysis, originally designed for largescale research on policy (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003),

provides a comprehensive tool to manage and analyse data. It provides a tool to index and sort data that foregrounds emergent themes and subthemes. These themes are then purposed to build a framework for the indexing of the data and its use is appropriate where emphasis on systematic approaches and transparency of process is needed (Parkinson et al, 2016).

My methodological approach is informed by my epistemological viewpoint of critical realism. As a critical realist I recognise there is a real world that exists independently from perceptions, however, my understanding of the world is a construction of these perceptions. This worldview allows for an analysis and investigation of the complexities allied to a range of influences and viewpoints in international higher education interactions that exist beyond the bounds of the TNE project but assimilate the impact of academicians and the institutions through their values and behaviours.

As already established, there is a significant gap in understanding as to how the very complex activity of the TNE project operates as a socially mediated object within the university. Through this research design, this foregrounds the nature of social interaction around the practice of the TNE project that is critical to facilitating the pace, development and ultimate delivery of the programme. An explication of the social relations within the university will facilitate a much greater understanding into this much-overlooked aspect of TNE. A deeper contextual understanding will allow TNE practitioners to examine the institutional environment in order to effectuate change.

1.6.3 Theoretical framework

The intention of this study is to analyse how pre-figured arrangements interactionally secure and mediate TNE practices as the TNE project is operationalised within the university setting. Through a social practice theory lens, this shifts the analytical focus away from the individual and refocuses attention to the situated practice, where practices are the repeated and recognised behaviour that makes up the object of investigation. Practices give regularity and a degree of predictability to actions on the ground. Since the intended focus of this thesis is to understand how TNE is accomplished within the university, a theoretical framework that allows examination of the social nature of these practices was selected for this research.

Using a practice architectures approach (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2007) as the theoretical framework, this considers the social-political, material-economic and cultural-discursive arrangements within the institutional setting that pre-figure and condition practices associated with the TNE project. Social practice theory is considered to be part of a broad grouping of theories, originating from the early works on practice theory including works by Bourdieu (1977), Foucault (1984) Giddens (1984) and more recently Schatzki (1996), and Reckwitz (2002), social practice determines people as the conveyors of routine actions, where individuals are not autonomous, nor are they servile to the system in which they work (Reckwitz, 2002). Rather, their actions are underpinned by acquired knowledge within their situated reality and the co-constructed and co-constituted meanings offer a clearer understanding of the significance of context within which they are situated. The study is informed from the faculty manager, as the TNE project lead. It is

further informed by accounts of meaning making and diversity of meaning construction of others involved in the TNE project as it is mediated through the institution.

1.6.4 Contribution to knowledge

This thesis makes a contribution to knowledge in the identified gap in the literature and getting inside the “black box” through the application of a social practice theory perspective to the TNE project. Practice architectures provided an analysis of the TNE project as it is accomplished within the university setting. This research evidences the TNE project as a complex interconnected series of practices pre-figured within the university site ontology, as analysed through the social conditions that are calibrated by complexity and uncertainty. It finds that as the TNE project is co-constructed and shaped by the structural forces from within the institution that condition how meaning is made locally. It is significantly and, in some cases, unduly challenged, reducing the projects to an exercise of compliance within the institution. Workgroups associated with accomplishing the TNE project are misaligned and there is a disconnect between academics and professional services, and between faculty and flying tutors engaged in delivering the TNE programme.

The thesis offers conceptual viewpoints for accomplishment of the TNE project through practices and policies within the university: TNE as sustainability, TNE as entrepreneurialism, TNE as positionality and TNE as internationalisation. Within the sites studied, TNE as expansive learning or

TNE as internationalisation at home was underdeveloped as a conceptual viewpoint.

Where learning and agentic development remained localised with the individual directly experiencing the TNE project, and where opportunities remain underexploited for domestic student audiences, there appeared to be a lack of shared vision and a disconnection between faculty, as they drive the project forward. Professional services, the wider institution and the tutors involved in the delivery of the project highlight the fragmented conceptualisations of the TNE project.

More importantly, this study also contributes to knowledge of how the theory of practice architectures needs to be extended to analyse the ideological and symbolic structures that exist within the institution and provide a greater permanence and organising structure to the practice architectures (RQ4). These are what Trowler (2020) refers to as the proto-practice reservoirs that flow into the development and enactment of practices which do not rely on the specific snapshot of the case studies in hand but on the broader conceptualisation which illuminates understanding of the TNE project.

The findings are a subject of interest to both the scholarly and professional communities involved within its development. The thesis offers a method of organising concepts to understand the theory of practice architectures across a number of site ontologies. It also offers a number of potential actions for the professional community working with TNE to identify pathways and prompts

for enhancement of the TNE project as it is mediated by the prefigured conditions of the institution and make sense of this very complex process.

1.6.5 Limitations and truth claims

This thesis focuses on six UK research intensive universities and takes the perspective from the TNE project lead and members of the TNE workgroup within the university. It captures these views of practices and the arrangements that hold the practices together within a specified site ontology. The essence of practice is defined by the location and environment in which they are performed and are specific to that particular site. They are part of the immediate surrounding landscape and a product of the traditions, time and space activity that further envelop the practice (Kemmis et al, 2014). The complexities of social practices within these 6 sites means that this research provides one possible interpretation. It is about practices as they happen within the research sites and is based on inductive reasoning. In order to get a more complete picture, it is necessary to also take an abductive approach adding another aspect of researcher interpretation. This specificity of situatedness raises questions of generalisability for findings from this study.

Limitations on the theoretical framework arise as practice architectures are about practices that exist and practices that can be observed. If a practice does not exist or cannot be observed, then it is difficult to be cognisant of alternative interpretations or approaches (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). In order to limit this constraint of practice architectures, and as I have worked in

TNE for a number of years. My personal professional knowledge allowed for an abductive reasoning approach throughout the research project.

1.7 **Structure of this thesis**

The thesis is structured into 6 chapters. This first chapter introduces the background and context to the research, defining the research problem and presents the research questions. Chapter 2 sets out TNE in the extant literature. Chapter 3 discusses the research design including methodologies and sampling strategies used, along with the philosophical framework. The data collected for this study is presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 is the discussion and findings. Chapter 7 provides some conclusions for the thesis, revisiting the research questions, truth claims and contribution to knowledge.

1.8 **Summary**

This introductory chapter sets out the background for the thesis, establishing the need for the research and the wider context for the research study. I have included reference to my personal motivations for the study, the proposed theoretical framework and the limitations of the research.

In this next chapter, I will review the literature, first of all setting out the contextual dynamics of the TNE project, namely globalisation and neo-

liberalism; I will then examine a number of elements of the TNE project and finally introduce the theoretical framework to be applied for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 **Introduction**

This chapter situates my thesis within the existing body of literature for transnational education (TNE) and relevant social practice theories. With this exercise, I will highlight only the dominant issues that are central to my approach in this study and present a literature review that is not intended to provide a complete account of all the issues relating to TNE, but instead a review that helps to orientate the study in hand.

I will set out the external contextual drivers considered to influence the formation and development of transnational education: neo-liberalism, globalisation, as well as the UK specific contextual drivers of government policy, and international student mobility.

Next, I will discuss the principal research elements of the TNE project at the fore with TNE research: management; leadership and governance: teaching, learning and research and aspects of quality and reputation as considerations of the TNE project. I will then focus on the theoretical frameworks used to analyse the TNE project in the extant academic literature (from a business and management perspective; from an academic tutors' perspective; from a governance perspective and finally from an innovation perspective). The literature review attempts to disentangle the connections that have been made in the existing literature to business and management theories and applications; curriculum and pedagogy. The chapter is completed with an

investigation into the application of a practice architectures analytic with social practice theory as relevant to the study.

2.2 **Globalisation and higher education**

Globalisation is a highly contested concept in the literature, it attracts a great deal of attention but has no universally accepted definition. It was first discussed as a purely economic occurrence before cultural dynamics became apparent in the process. Giddens (1994) considered globalisation as not solely an economic notion but "*the transformation of space and time*" triggered by changes in communications and transportation technologies.

Specific to the higher education domain, Knight (2004) considered globalisation as "*the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values and ideas across borders*" (Knight, 2004, p.4), whilst Altbach (2007) saw it as "*the economic, political and societal forces pushing 21st Century higher education toward greater international involvement*" (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p.290). In common with both is the suggestion of a process that happens to systems and institutions. What is not clear from these definitions is how much national systems and institutions are able to control the effects of globalisation and whether it is possible to exercise a degree of choice (Robertson, 2010). Globalisation places pressure on systems and institutions to perform in different ways through competition, new ways of working, exploitation of new technologies. Beerkens (2004) argues that this process has led to a detachment of the fundamental social justice purpose from the university role, due in large part to massification, acceleration, increased transnational flows

of people, finance and knowledge (Beerkens, 2004). Furthermore, globalisation also raises contradictions, as it introduces competition and commercialisation whilst at the same time claiming to improve social cohesion through facilitating mobility and innovations, this contradiction, Brennan et al (2018) maintain has led to stratification and diversification of universities with some social cohesion roles becoming ever more obscured for some universities (Brennan et al, 2018).

Globalisation has generated the concept of "*knowledge capitalism*" a term first used in 1999 by Burton-Jones (p.vi, 1999) in response to the discourse developed around the so-called knowledge economy, in which knowledge creation and innovation were positioned as central drivers to prosperity. This has meant that universities as knowledge generators are embedded in the processes of globalisation (Foskett & Maringe, 2010) and have been placed at the centre of national economic policy (Altbach et al. 2009; Olssen & Peters, 2005b). This instrumental role for the university has challenged the conceptualisation of knowledge as a global public good and repositioned higher education towards trading in knowledge capitalism, where knowledge capitalism becomes the currency with which the university trades on the international market (Bayenet et al. 2000; Stensaker et al. 2007). Universities have become a part of the value-producing apparatus of the economy (Degn, 2015, Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

In this globalised environment, higher education is more readily perceived as a commodity (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997), underlined by the introduction of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) by the World Trade

Organisation (1995) treating higher education as a globally tradeable service (Stromquist, 2007). This seismic shift for higher education around the world has made possible the movement of not only students but also academic mobility including programme mobility and campuses, made possible by an increasingly borderless academic world (Lane et al. 2007). Wildavsky (2010) maintains that higher education has become a '*free trade in minds'*: where students and staff are able to gain the advantages of finding '*the best goods or services at the lowest price throughout the world*' p.167 (Wildavsky, 2010). Critics of GATS maintain it has threatened the social justice value of higher education and jeopardised the preservation of educational values (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Universities, particularly in UK, have been adept in validating a globalisation discourse within university mission statements communicating their eagerness to become recognised as global leaders in research, attractors of global talent and offer globally relevant teaching programmes (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Altbach et al. 2009; Ennew, 2012; Scott, 1998). Globalisation, it is argued, has influenced the operation of the university (Harris, 2008; Marginson, 2007; Stensaker et al. 2008; Teichler, 2004). Among academic communities, there is a consensus that it has been responsible for the introduction of market-driven initiatives within the university (Beckmann & Cooper, 2004; Bottery, 2006b, 2006a; Harris, 2009). Beckmann et al further argue that "*globalisation represents the imposition of neo-liberal ideology on a transnational scale a consequence of which has been liberalisation and the rise of the new managerialism*" (Beckmann & Cooper, 2004, p. 148). The

language of globalisation in academia is the English language (Held, 2004) providing the dominant voice in knowledge production through academic journals and publications. This has a secondary impact on knowledge creation and research as the next generation of research students look towards Anglophone systems to inform the indigenous generation of knowledge production (Mohamedbhai, 2008). The interdependency between the university and the global economy has become sealed. For globalisation to happen successfully, then educated populations are needed: made up of individuals able to work, socialise and communicate in an interconnected world. Universities are "*agents of social mobility, distributors of life-chances as well as, in partnership with the rest of the educational system, enhancing the life-chances of everyone*" (Scott, 1998, p.111).

In the literature, globalisation is regarded as both a positive and a negative phenomenon. Globalisation is conceptualised as a process that favours the strong and continually encourages the transfer of knowledge, power and wealth from weaker nations (Foskett & Maringe, 2010). Whilst others believe globalisation is in fact assisting less developed nations and strengthening economies and opening new channels. The rise of the phenomenon of the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India and China) demonstrating that globalisation has the power to benefit all (Schuch, 2011). Whilst the term globalisation is used and misused in the literature to cover almost every phenomenon that happens beyond the boundary of the domestic university (Deem et al. 2007) globalisation represents a fast changing and challenging

environment for higher education affecting not only the purpose and nature of the institution but also the activities it chooses to pursue.

2.3 **Neo-liberalism and the university**

According to Tight (2019) neo-liberalism is used as a "*fright term*" to garner peer support against the flow of higher education policy and practice (Tight, 2019, p.273). Neo-liberalism is rarely used in a positive light in academic literature when referencing higher education and uses terminology such as: the consumer savvy individual (Molesworth et al. 2010); the marketisation of higher education (Hartley, 2007; Marginson, 2013; Mok et al. 2009); the belief in the market finding its own equilibrium with minimum interruption of regulations (Kelsey, 2004; King, 2010) and the opening up of education markets to free trade (Altbach, 2004; Harvey, 2007; Knight, 2003). The commonality in these tenets is that they bundle together a range of socio-political assumptions and actions that assign prominence to market value in social relations (Ball, 2012; Giroux & Searls, 2009; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Robertson, 2010). Harvey (2007) defines neo-liberalism as "*liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms*" where the role of government is to ensure institutions are capable of allowing such practices to happen (Harvey, 2007, p. 22). Whether supported or not by the academic community, neo-liberal influences have been profound and have introduced new regimes and ways of working within higher education. I will now address those neo-liberal changes that are most relevant to the arguments I develop later in this thesis.

The introduction of the student fee in the early 1970's in the UK, for international students and latterly for domestic students, has meant that universities and faculties have become dependent upon attracting fee-paying students to ensure sustainability (Harris, 2008; Humfrey, 2011; Stier, 2004; Warwick, 2014). Whilst in parallel, central government funding has decreased. The resulting funding squeeze (fAltbach, 2004; Mazzarol, 2012) has generated what Calhoun refers to as a culture of the "*pursuit of pecuniary gain*" (Calhoun, 2006, p.27) as individuals and institutions organise themselves within structures and seek to develop personal skills to broker the gap in the most effective manner.

These new funding arrangements have impacted on the ways in which universities are governed. McNay (1995) argued the emergence of four types of university governance structures including collegial, bureaucratic, enterprise and corporation had taken the place of the singularly collegial model (McNay, 1995). These governance modes have foregrounded accountability, transparency, regulation and "*productive individuals*" (Ball, 2012), and introduced what were previously considered as private sector methodologies (Lynch, 2006). Universities began to look beyond their traditional collaborating partners and began building links with business and industry to ensure market relevance and access to new funding (Mazzarol, 2012).

Competition, commercialisation and marketisation are now considered to be defining features of many higher education systems around the world (Robertson, 2010, Knight, 2013, Marginson, 2013). On this globalised playing

field, rankings have become a common feature, exposing institutions to international comparison and reinforcing competition (Altbach, 2011; Hazelkorn, 2014). League tables have become embedded within universities as they seek to improve their competitiveness on the global market, they provide a language and set of tools to promote the concept of the global university and in turn are realised in the strategies of the institution (Beerkens & Derwende, 2007; Robertson, 2010). Rankings influence student choices, as they select an institution based on rankings, reputation and tuition fees (Huang et al. 2016; Jiang, 2010; Warwick, 2014). They are used by international governments and policy-makers to base decisions for scholarship programmes and partnering initiatives (O'Connell, 2013).

Academic culture has also been affected by these neo-liberal changes. Burton Clark (1996) suggested that the university would become '*overburdened'* if they disregarded entrepreneurialism (Clark, 1996) and the responsibility rests with the institution to be supportive of this way of working (Teichler, 2010). A culture of competitiveness has become pervasive and the status universities have pursued "*vertical diversification*" of high quality research and reputation over teaching (Teichler, 2010). This has led to the rise of a culture of '*competitive individualism'* within the university (Ozga, 1998, p. 149, see also Kemmis, 2012).

Whether neo-liberalism is viewed as a negative force on higher education, or whether it is simply a term that has been over-powered by the economic imperative, it is now second nature to UK universities as each institution competes in a global marketplace for talent, knowledge and resources (van

der Wende, 2007). Neo-liberalism has become both policy and ideology within the university, it has informed systems, processes and ideologies of new ways of working. It has allowed academics, faculty and institutions to consider new possibilities of how they interact with international audiences in the complex and dynamic global playing field (Naidoo, 2008). Changes have been triggered further by the reduction in barriers to trade as well as the ability for information, ideas and people to move across borders (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2011). The dynamics of globalisation and neo-liberal policies have given space for universities to develop international partnerships (Butcher et al. 2011; Caruana, 2007; Knight, 2004; Vincent, 2012).

2.4 **What is TNE?**

Defining transnational education is in itself an issue regularly debated by researchers in the field and there are many variations in terminology (British Council, 2013) each holding currency with distinctive camps (Beerkens, 2002; Healey, 2015). At its most fundamental and universal definition, TNE involves students remaining in their home country or travelling to a third country while studying for a foreign university qualification (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007) or alternatively, TNE is understood as: *learners … located in a country different to the one where the awarding institution is* [based] (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). Whilst these definitions are succinct and signal the mobility of the programme rather than the student, they do not hint at the intricacies or multidimensionality of what lies behind a TNE project.

Transnational education or TNE, the preferred terminology for this thesis, is also referred to as cross-border, borderless or offshore education. Cross-border education is understood to include programme and provider mobility as well as capturing the notion of student mobility (UNESCO, 2002). Whilst, the term "*borderless education*" tends to focus on distance and online learning and new developments within the sphere (including Massive Open Online Courses or MOOCs). Offshore education is a well-used term, particularly with UK, USA and Australian universities however, non-island nations are not pre-disposed to empathise with this terminology. These terms are used interchangeably in the literature and are becoming more generalised, losing their original poignancy or determination (Knight & McNamara, 2017).

Whilst it is relatively straightforward to reach an understanding of the fundamentals of TNE, the issue in reaching an agreed definition of the different types or models of TNE surfaces a multiplicity of different models a university could potentially deploy, for example: joint and dual degrees; programme articulation; franchising; validation; corporate involvement; flexible and distributed learning (Baskerville et al. 2011; Drew et al. 2007). There is no single model of TNE, it is constantly evolving and universities use their own in-house terminology to capture the precise nature of the project (Universities UK, 2019b). Different arrangements reflect different initiatives and rationales, bringing into focus the potential of HE to respond creatively in delivering education programmes in different geographies and meet a range of needs (Chapman & Sakamoto, 2012). TNE depends on the development of some form of partnership or alliance with an international university or organisation

to develop joint actions (Ennew, 2012) and is becoming increasingly complex and multi-dimensional (Healey & Michael, 2015) as collaborative arrangements, they are necessarily unique to reflect organisational requirements, generate multiple possibilities (Fong & Postiglione, 2012).

It is beyond the scope of this project to investigate all forms of TNE, I have chosen to locate my research in the collaborative partnership arrangements between China and UK.

2.5 **Why do host governments facilitate international TNE ventures?**

Incoming TNE at a national system level is perceived as acting in a progressive manner as it contributes to national government agendas allowing for expansion of provision of HE places where the domestic systems are unable to meet growing domestic demand. This occurs due to changing demographics and massification agendas of HE provision (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; Robertson, 2010). TNE also contributes to the broadening of scope of available subjects for students in their home country and offers new curriculum opportunities (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Leask & Carroll, 2011; Naidoo, 2008).

International governments also take the view that TNE has the potential to retain students in-country, avoiding ‘brain-drain’ and some governments have recognised the potential to develop the domestic market as hub for other regionally mobile students, offering to host international programmes for students seeking an international qualification closer to home (Shields & Edwards 2010, Wilkins & Huisman 2011).

TNE is also seen by governments and international universities as exposing universities and university leaders to new methodologies, new ways of working and new knowledge creation as they work in collaboration with their international counterparts (British Council, 2013, Vincent-Lancrin, 2007). Exposure in leadership and governance through TNE development processes makes the development phases as important as the delivery phases as new learning takes place.

TNE is also viewed as acting in a regressive manner and is considered disruptive to local education systems. In its earlier iterations, TNE was viewed as a "*trojan horse*" capable of importing content of formed with greater relevance elsewhere whilst at the same time charging a premium to students to gain "*international currency*" (King & Bjarnason, 2003). TNE is accused of encouraging rogue providers to establish "*degree mills that make credentials available for purchase*" (Altbach et al., 2009). TNE has also been criticised as focusing on the delivery of subjects that are already well provided for in the existing national systems (Marginson, 2016) as some subjects are more easily adapted to international delivery than others, for example business studies, whilst the more technical laboratory based subjects require greater investment.

2.6 **The importance and role of international TNE to China**

According to the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency data (HESA), China is one of the most prolific partner locations for UK universities (See Figure 2) and is the top location for international TNE, including other provider countries

from USA, Australia, Canada (British Council, 2018). There are a number of studies that focus on the TNE project in China (See for example, Huang, 2006; Mok, 2015; Montgomery, 2016).

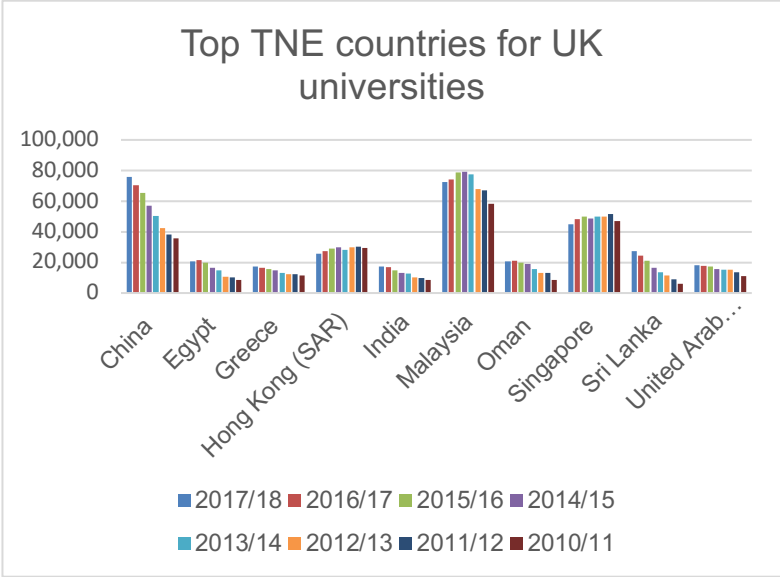

Figure 2.1 HESA data n.d. Copyright British Council

By 2012, more than 1000 programmes had received approval from the Chinese authorities. UK TNE has been used by Chinese teaching universities to increase domestic student numbers whilst for the research-intensive Chinese universities, TNE has been seen as an opportunity for students to pursue postgraduate studies (Fang, 2012).

Chinese government policy in recent years has been focused on domestic reform of the higher education sector with policies targeted at creating a series of elite universities where resourcing and development initiatives have been tailored to raise standards in research and encourage strategies to address socio-economic agendas. This series of policies includes Project 211

(Ministry of Education China, 2019)[1] (launched 1995) and the more recent Double First-Class University Plan (2015)[2] established to encourage the growth of elite strategic Chinese universities. Internationalisation of domestic universities was considered important and Project 985 was developed to specifically support internationalisation of a selected number of Chinese universities.

This approach through policy interventions is viewed as having two motivations: to broaden access to university places, to cultivate research collaboration through institutional strategic alliances (Caruana & Montgomery, 2015; F. Huang, 2006; Montgomery, 2016)

The joint venture concept is a protocol for partnership favoured by Chinese government and offers the potential to develop strategic alliances between Chinese universities and other international world-class universities. In recent years, the Ministry of Education, China has overseen the closure of many TNE international provider programmes, seeking only elite, status universities to partner with national universities.

2.7 **Why do UK universities pursue international TNE opportunities?**

[1] The Project name, 211 is an abbreviation of **1**00 universities for the **21**st Century Universities

Why do UK universities engage in long distance, time consuming, costly, risk heavy activities such as TNE? An analysis of the rationales and expectations from the collaboration contributes in some way to an understanding of the ongoing interest in the TNE project (Siegel, 2008).

2.7.1 The economic rationale

Related to my earlier discussion on the neo-liberal background to the TNE project, support for the economic motivation is pervasive in the literature (Garrett, 2004; Healey, 2013). As government funding has failed to keep pace with increasing domestic demand, universities have sought entrepreneurial ways as a bridge to new audiences and to generate income, TNE being one of those actions (McBurnie & Pollock, 2000). Wilkins et al (2018) claim that *"for many institutions … TNHE … agreements have been easily gained revenue streams that have required relatively little risk or effort*" (Wilkins & Juusola, 2018, p. 68). TNE is commonly contextualised against a backdrop of financial pressures (Molesworth et al. 2010; Naidoo, 2003). With this dominant voice, TNE is reduced to being perceived as a "cash cow" for the awarding institution. Whilst this may be the case for some TNE arrangements, this is not the critical rationale for the collaborative arrangement where a great deal of effort and resource is required (Drew et al. 2007) thus questioning the primacy of the income generating argument.

This economic rationale is further legitimised by national government discourse as TNE is conceptualised in the grey literature by policy-makers as a valuable export, making powerful contributions: "*Education generates*

billions for UK economy" (Department for Education, 2019a), citing UK revenue from education related exports including TNE activity increasing to £19.9bn in 2016, an increase of 26% since 2010 (DfE, 2019; Oxford Economics, 2017). See Figure 3

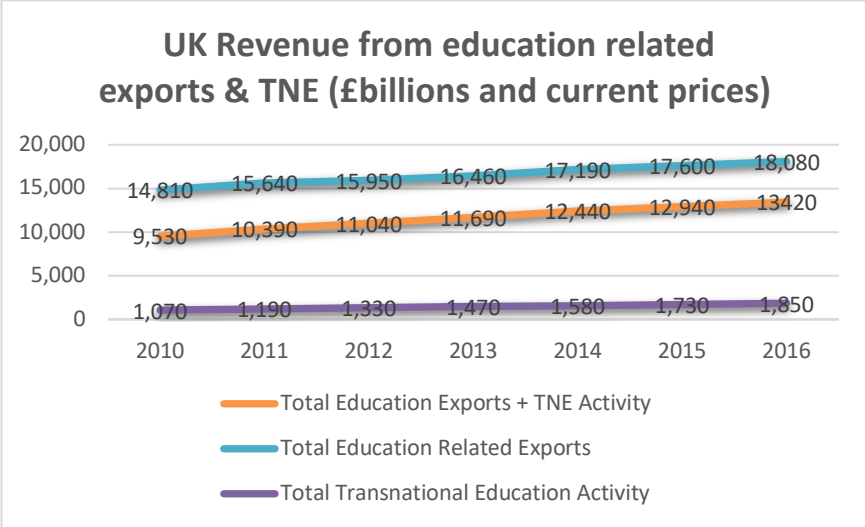

Figure 3 UK Revenue from Education Related Exports including TNE. Source: Department for Education released 24.01.2019

Policy-makers also acknowledge the gains from 'wider' benefits such as global influence, soft power and socio-cultural effects (He & Wilkins, 2019; Mellors-Bourne et al. 2014; Mellors-Bourne et al. 2013) extending the rationales beyond the basic economic argument. However, these declarations are not supported by formal policies that facilitate TNE development (Woodfield, 2018). Instead, UK government uses a model of persuasion to encourage the type of international activity they would like to see, observing institutional autonomy (Stensaker et al., 2008). The policy-maker discourse validates rationales for TNE but how universities use national policy to

influence internal TNE decision-making is not addressed in the literature, leaving a gap in our understanding.

Marginson (2015) argued the tone of UK international education activities was skewed to a business discourse, "*in which the lodestone is customer satisfaction*" (Marginson, 2015). However, international education and more specifically TNE is complex, built on trust-based relationships between international institutions (Drew et al, 2008). Universities are not purely profit-driven enterprises, they seek to maximise their prestige as they work internationally (Lane et al. 2007; Naidoo, 2006; Olds & Robertson, 2015; Waters & Leung, 2017).

2.7.2 TNE secures pathways for international student recruitment

The roots to the growth of TNE are closely linked to the recruitment of international students to the domestic institution. The market for internationally mobile students has grown remarkably since the 1990's (See Figure 4) driven by a series of factors, including the inability of governments around the world to expand domestic higher education provision in line with demand, the development of the knowledge and innovation based economy needing higher level skilled workforce and a growing middle class able to meet the cost of an international education (British Council, 2011, OECD, 2017).

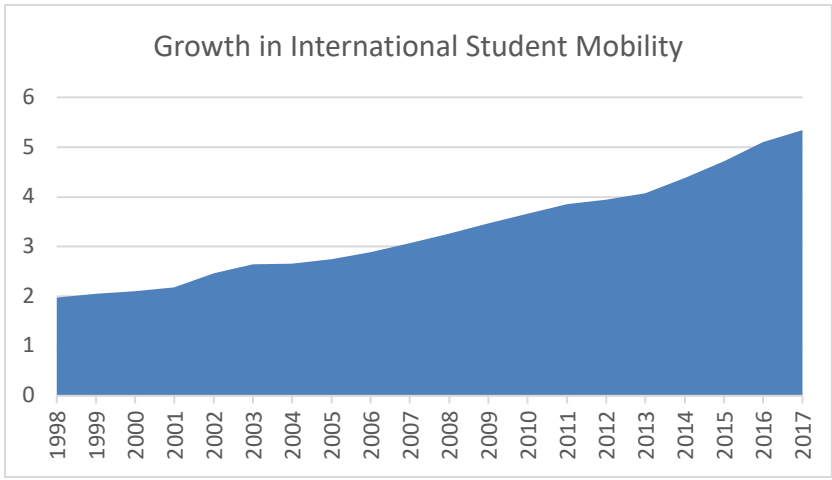

Figure 4 Growth in international and foreign enrolment in tertiary education worldwide (1998 -2017) OECD and non-OECD countries in millions. Source: OECD/UIS Eurostat 2019)

The early successes of UK universities in recruiting international students to the UK campus led to a dependency on international students to support faculties and institutions (Humfrey, 2011). This interdependency has continued to become further embedded with a growing link established between TNE and international recruitment as UK universities developed programmes delivered in China that act as 'feeder programmes' to the UK campus. "*Chinese students are the main contributor to the growth in international postgraduate taught masters. This forms part of a pattern where taught masters provision in England is heavily reliant on international recruitment*" (Ilieva, 2014, p.2) (See Figure 5)

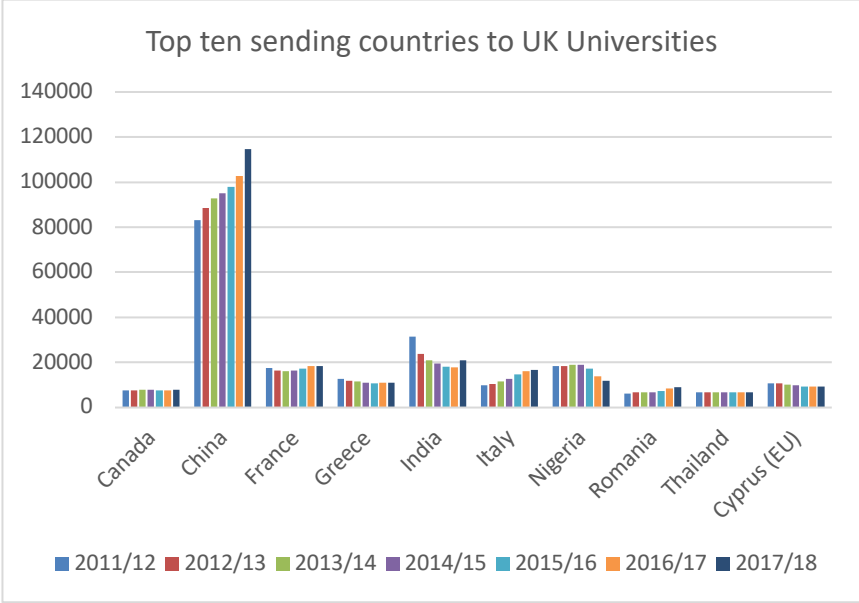

Figure 5 Source HESA student record 2011-2018 copyright British Council

It is widely argued in the literature that TNE has become an integral part of student mobility options, offering students alternative routes to pursue an international qualification entirely in their own country or as part of an arrangement whereby the student carries credit gained from the TNE programme to continue studies at the UK university (Foskett & Maringe, 2010; Knight, 2016). TNE has the potential to influence the flow of internationally mobile students, if it is able to grow at the pace required (Killick, 2016).

2.7.3 TNE leverages other international activity

Another way in which TNE is rationalised within the institution is through the internationalisation argument. As TNE is navigated through the university during its developmental phase, it has the potential to expose the university to new systems, structures and architectures and embodies new learning opportunities for academic and managerial staff (Knight, 2004, Qiang, 2003) as TNE contributes as a pillar to the internationalisation agenda.

Internationalisation in the literature is contested and differing definitions are informed by different epistemological approaches. OECD maintains that internationalisation of higher education is both a "*concept and a process of integrating an international dimension into research, teaching and service functions*" (OECD, 1999), p.3). This definition draws out the possibility of a distinction to be made between what may be considered as a notion or idea as well as a process.

Knight's definition (2003) for internationalisation is popularly cited in academic papers:

> *Internationalisation at the national, sector and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education (Knight, 2003 p.3)*

This foregrounds its processual nature. The implication from this statement is that internationalisation should be integrated into the purpose and strategy of the institution. However, this definition is limited in scope as it does not consider any of the economic, political or social dimensions of the complex systems in which the strategy must be operationalised (Marginson, 2004).

Observable in the literature on trends is the shift from a transactional international portfolio, whereby the institution manages a series of discrete international activities, usually anchored in international student recruitment to the domestic institution, to internationalisation strategies whereby the university seeks to embed international actions and process into the home

institution (Hudzik, 2015; Knight, 2004). Internationalisation is a reciprocal process, whereby all stakeholders involved benefit at least equally or in a complementary manner as internationalisation leverages cultures, identities and history (Bradford et al. 2017).

Few researchers suggest internationalisation is a negative process or something to be avoided for either higher education institutions or higher education systems around the world (Hughes-Warrington, 2012). On the contrary, internationalisation is seen as a necessary process, that universities should engage with international action has become a priority for the core functions of research and teaching in the university, and is seen as a necessary process so that research addresses global challenges (Adams, 2013; Adams et al. 2007; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Marginson, 1999; Olssen & Peters, 2005a), students gain critical skills as "*global citizens*" (Leask & Carroll, 2011; Montgomery, 2013), and universities can teach internationally relevant curriculum (Clifford, 2009; Jooste, 2015). UK universities consider themselves as having a strong international outlook (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2007). However, internationalisation attempts are regularly critiqued as commodification and commercial forays in to international markets suggesting the values of economic and political status outweigh the social-cultural purposes of internationalisation (Brandenburg & De Wit, 2015). Whilst this is a helpful description on what is foregrounded as the institution engages internationally, it reveals little about the ideological underpinning of internationalisation pursued by the university. Stier (2004) suggests three intrinsic ideologies: educationalism, idealism and instrumentalism. These

ideologies foreground a set of principles that underpin how internationalisation may be conceived within the institution, bringing the epistemic base to the fore and reaches beyond unhelpful divergent definitions of internationalisation in the literature (Stier, 2004; Stier & Börjesson, 2010).

Internationalisation at home, or the exposure of the awarding institutions domestic site to international influences (Leung & Waters, 2017; Nilsson, 2010) is often claimed as an altruistic action (Chan, 2004) whilst others suggest a binary choice is being made between altruism and the pursuit of commercial reward (van der Wende, 2007). Whether this value judgement of internationalisation of altruism is justified, the literature supports the claim that TNE brings benefit to academic staff, students and institution leaders as they are exposed to new systems, structures and architectures, and embodies new learning opportunities for academic and managerial staff (Knight, 2004, Qiang, 2003).

2.7.4 How do strategies differ for TNE and research-intensive universities?

For the research intensive universities, TNE strategies are distinctive, they deal on status and their position in the international market, their approach is shaped by their ranking and ability to select students and partners based on equality of prestige, referred to as '*status competition'* (Marginson, 2013).

According to the literature, research-intensives tend to avoid TNE as the risks are considerable (Hou et al. 2011). Whilst this may apply to large-scale TNE projects that have the intention of recruiting hundreds or perhaps thousands

of students, a recent study highlighted the growth in collaborative provision projects particularly with the “higher status” institutions in UK, attributing the growth to the evolving global engagement strategies of these universities, claiming they are seeking to establish a presence in countries such as China (Bennell, 2019). These arrangements offer additional opportunities for staff development, staff exchanges and research collaborations (Healey & Michael, 2015).

2.8 **The challenge of TNE**

The literature establishes TNE as having a role to play, valued by the research-intensive institution and capable of achieving a combination of goals in securing strategic objectives in a globalised environment. But how is the TNE project understood within the awarding institution? Whilst the literature on TNE is extensive, gaps have been identified in particular analysis to inform TNE leaders, professional services and decision-makers requiring insights into an optimal approach to accomplish TNE (Lane et al. 2004). Specific insights are needed into the ‘how’ of TNE. Currently, the literature offers insight into the elements that constitute the TNE project, this understanding does not extend to knowledge of how they fit together, how the rules and resources of the institution or the workgroups and the protocols, traditions and the strategic context on how they combine together to produce unique configurations within the institution.

In this next section I will set out the aspects of TNE that are addressed in the literature as it currently provides a deconstructed, disaggregated view of each element of TNE.

Accomplishing TNE presents significant challenges to many parts of the university: management and organisational issues; leadership and governance; teaching, learning and research capabilities; risk quality and reputation. I will set out these elements of the TNE project as they are dealt with in the extant literature.

2.8.1 Management and organisational issues

Bordogna's (2018) claim that much of the existing literature is dominated with analysis using a managerialist lens is justified as the literature has reproduced "best practice" and "lessons learned" studies on how to achieve positive TNE outcomes, see for example (Asgary & Robbert, 2010b; Healey, 2018; Heffernan et al. 2018; Hill & Thabet, 2018; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; Wilkins, 2018). The downside of such an emphasis is that lessons do not translate easily, experience of one collaboration can only be extended with caution (Chapman & Sakamoto, 2012).

Management of the TNE project is noted as presenting significant challenges for both the project leader and institutional leader as TNE introduces unfamiliar problems that do not form a part of quotidian practices (Healey, 2018). TNE project leaders are criticised for a lack of observance to a management process as they soon encounter resistance within the awarding institution, where issues arise from early discussions such as resourcing,

ongoing maintenance and commitment (Heffernan & Poole, 2004; Knight, 2015a; Shams, 2016). This lack of observance can lead to premature cessation of the TNE project, highlighting the temporality of TNE partnerships if they are mismanaged (Heffernan & Poole, 2004; Lane et al., 2007). However, 'management process' is suggested in abstract terms and assumes that the TNE manager has relevant management practices and skills to deploy, appropriate for internationally differentiated contexts. The commentary further highlights a lack of business acumen within TNE management (Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012).

There are added dimensions of complexity for the TNE project leader as they must negotiate a division of activities across two spheres: firstly, with the international partner where actions need to be shared or entrusted to the partner, such as recruitment of students, teaching and appointment of staff to deliver the programme and where on occasion local staff may not be similarly qualified as staff within the awarding institution (Urbanovič. et al. 2016). Secondly, where the project leader must negotiate contractual agreements, curriculum content and quality assurance arrangements within their awarding institution (King, 2009). This amounts to a complex series of stakeholders that need to be identified and managed (Bolton, 2018).

Whilst there have been some efforts to assess the impact of the TNE project on faculty leaders, for example the need for additional skills and aptitudes for intercultural values, the cultural dimensions of the activity and strategies should be put in place to deal with the cultural difference (Eldridge & Cranston, 2009; Knight, 2004; Teichler, 2004; Wit & Editor, 2011). Lan He &

Liu (2018) provide helpful case study analysis of three Chinese UK TNE partnerships, and suggest that it is the cross-cultural conflict that presents the most significant challenge. However, whilst helpful, this exemplifies the highly contextualised insights that exist to make it difficult to form more generalisable conclusions, suggesting there is a need to understand better the conditioning and ideological systems within the institution to open up the "*black box of TNE*" (Healey, 2018).

TNE managers are also told they must be able to communicate effectively within their own institution, and able to negotiate and mediate effectively, highlighting the need for a unique skillset embodied in the project manager (Shanahan & McParlane, 2005). There are further implications for the TNE manager around the management of teaching staff and flying faculty (Caruana & Montgomery, 2015; Leask & Carroll, 2011) and professional services staff, or third space professionals (Whitchurch, 2008 & 2019). All contributing to complex configurations of management and workgroups (Wiek et al., 2013).

These issues as they are dealt with in the literature are considered in isolation from the whole institution, re-calling Marginson's description of "otherness" whereby international activity sits like a drop of oil on top of the institutional machinery (Marginson, 2000). Whilst many suggest that universities need to re-consider institutional culture to accommodate this type of entrepreneurial activity, this brings with it the assumption that a management-focused culture is needed which some argue does not align well with prevailing academic identities and professional processes (Santiago & Carvalho, 2016). The

issues resonate with the arguments put forward in the literature on new managerialism and in order to respond to such demands, it may be possible to consider these issues through a reflexive practitioner approach rather than a technical doctrine of management suggested by TNE researchers (Bottery, 2006a; Deem et al., 2007). However, this analysis is not made in the TNE literature. New management practices are not limited to the TNE project, but also extend to cover other practices associated with internationalisation actions (Knight, 2015b; Leung & Waters, 2017; Teixeira, 2019). And indeed the argument has much deeper ramifications for the whole institution and its ability to adapt and respond to the accommodate innovations such as TNE (Clark, 1996; Dill, 1999; Sporn, 2019). Where Sporn defines adaptation as requiring:

> *… structural modifications or alterations in order to respond to changes in the external environment. There is a constant search for equilibrium between the organisation and its environment.* (Sporn, 2019)

Whilst Sporn's approach offers insight for the institution, she locates adaptation as happening principally through governance and leadership. However, TNE is an example of management-led change, whereby responsibilities reside with faculty leaders, where governance and leadership play a facilitative role. Dill (1999) sees adaptability as something slightly different and refers to the organisational structures and frameworks supporting adaptation and change within the institution, or "practice

architectures" (Dill, 1999). The TNE project manager must engage with these structures, albeit hidden, or too complex to navigate easily (Healey, 2018).

Institutional entrepreneurs often also possess a unique 'social position' within their institutional field that allows them to engage in non-conforming behaviour without significant fear of repercussions (Harris, 2009; Harrison, 2015)

2.8.2 Leadership and governance

As indicated by Sporn (2019), working internationally and through collaborative actions has implications for all levels of hierarchy within the awarding institution, from grass roots to senior leaders (Stafford & Taylor, 2016). Participation in this environment brings novel challenges to governance structures as top tier leadership roles in the university must now have the capacity and capability to address not just domestic issues, but global competition, particularly for those universities dependent on international research funding (Adams, 2013; Shattock, 2017). In order to learn these new skills, there is a call on leadership of higher education institutions to look to public sector management narratives to inform their own practices (Ferlie et al. 2008). However, the international academic context is uniquely demanding, coupled with the distinctive functions of the university, leadership requires different behaviours and competencies to be able to cope with this cosmopolitan environment (Anderson, 2016).

Vice Chancellors and Pro-Vice Chancellors must be able to communicate effectively with international audiences, work collaboratively with other global institutions and align their mission and values with other universities in the

pursuit of relevance and sustainability for their own institution. They must be able to communicate and build discursive relationships with other international governments to convince them of their value as they deliver their programmes to new audiences, and also secure much needed funding for world-class research activities (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2007). Higher education governance structures are anomalous, complex and "*aberrant*" (Shattock, 2012 p.1) and international collaboration requires a new form of "*network governance*" to maintain efficiencies, ensure sustainability and overcome obstacles and tensions as they arise (Mok et al., 2009). TNE straddles the two organisations, it differs from a contractual relationship as it is managed across the organisational hierarchy and requires connections across all levels (Lane, 2012). Leadership and governance must adapt to collaborate (Melville-Ross, 2010). Furthermore, TNE must compete openly within the institution for any newly gained leadership practices and behaviours against other forms of international collaboration such as research and industry links where priority is given to more easily calculable long-term gains (Vaidya et al. 2011).

2.8.3 Teaching, learning and research capabilities

The changing nature of teaching and learning and the implications of international work gained from TNE collaboration has produced extensive literature (See for example: Fumasoli et al. 2015; Kehm & Teichler, 2013; Probst & Goastellec, 2013; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010). International actions have now become prevalent in the domain of teaching (Caruana, 2007; Korhonen & Weil, 2015). Now, the practice of teaching with international partners in a distant location has become more common across UK

universities, whether as guest lecturer or flying faculty (Fumasoli et al., 2015; Kehm & Teichler, 2013). This aspect of the profession, including tutoring in TNE programmes particularly through the flying faculty model, requires skills in intercultural understandings (Probst & Goastellec, 2013) and some commentaries have suggested preparation for such exposures is necessary before engaging in such culturally sensitive environments (Dunn & Wallace, 2008). International teaching and learning practices require student support as well as new teaching methodologies in international environments (Connolly et al. 2007; Ryan, 2013).

TNE as it faces back into the institution can enrich and develop capacity in teaching and learning (Kehm, 2011). Academics use their international collaborations to inform their own teaching practice within the home institution, whether simply through the inclusion of international content with online collaborations or more in-depth collaborations through teaching or research capacities (Douglass & Edelstein, 2012; Hepple, 2012). TNE requires academics to combine both local and global considerations into the development of the programme and also tackle the need to embed intercultural dimensions into curriculum design (Brown, 2007; Caniglia et al., 2017; Knight, 2015a). TNE programmes provide opportunities to integrate issues of international applicability into the curriculum (Praetzel & Curcio, 1996) or shape intercultural competence for both academics and students involved (Chung & Ahmad, 2010).

Individual academics are often the instigators for international collaborations (Chapman & Sakamoto, 2012). Much of the literature identifies the faculty

leader as the most appropriate launch point for any successful collaborative venture as trust, essential to form a sound basis, is usually established through individual connections. Where links are enforced from elsewhere in the institution, this creates difficulties and tensions (Lane et al., 2007). As the UK faculty base becomes more international, the appetite for international collaborations is also growing.

Research collaborations are dependent on international collaboration (Adams, 2013; Katz & Martin, 1997; Leydesdorff & Wagner, 2008; Ponomariov & Boardman, 2010). Traditionally, academics have made connections through their disciplinary bridges for the purpose of fulfilling their research (Haustein, Tunger, Heinrichs, & Baelz, 2010; Länzel, 2001). These connections have now been extended via new exposures through teaching collaborations and other strategic alliances (Adams et al. 2012), international collaborations shape domestic research (Hird & Pfotenhauer, 2016) with both quantitative (Bozeman & Corley, 2004) and qualitative (Adams, 2013) angles.

Flying faculty models are the focus of special attention in the literature, the motivations for taking up the role as flying faculty vary and are linked to predominantly personal motivations for short term assignment to experience a different culture, but are also seen as a gateway to working in the university in the UK (Smith, 2009). Being a flying tutor presents opportunities for "transformative professional development" according to (Smith, 2013) However, management of flying faculty raises difficulties as their working environment is complicated by having to answer to two sets of management

and holding little authority to shape the partnership working (Dobos, 2011, Chapman et al, 2014).

2.8.4 Risk and quality management

Risk management and quality assurance receive significant space in the literature (See for example Coleman, 2003; Hu et al. 2014; McBurnie, 2013; Smith, 2015). The discourse chosen highlights terminology such as "*exposure to reputational and quality assurance risks"* (Lane et al., 2007)*, "damage to reputation"* (Caruana & Montgomery, 2015), "*inherent danger*" (Waterval et al., 2014). TNE has been the subject of many negative press stories, poor quality assurance reviews and reports of disenfranchised students and international institutions alike and is portrayed in the research literature and grey literature as a "risky business" (Mampaey & Huisman, 2016; Stafford & Taylor, 2016) where uptake of TNE is dependent on the institution's appetite to risk (HE Global, 2016; Huang et al., 2016; Tsiligris, 2015). The choice and location of partner is also the subject of critique particularly when the partner is located in a country or territory that may not align with similar views on academic freedom or with differing human rights stances (Wildavsky, 2010)

Tsiligris (2015) argues that current quality regime for UK higher education TNE serves as a protectionist measure "*based on a 'risk mitigation' for exporting countries and 'sameness' of quality standards between home and offshore provisions"* leading to the assumption that the exporting country, the UK, may deal in low quality thresholds and providers can be disreputable (Tsiligris, 2015, p.90). The focus of UK Quality Assurance for collaborative

provision is based on principles of adherence and measurable outcomes, as they transfer quality guidelines to the partner country location, they mask local difference, with scant regard for expectations of either the international partner or international student (Bolton, 2018; Chapman & Sakamoto, 2012). Collaborations that fail have significant repercussions on the reputation and the finances of those involved and this damage is felt across the home campus (Alajoutsijarvi et al. 2014) as well as across the sector.

Quality has become entrenched in the discourse of power dynamics, to protect the reputation of the higher education sector as a whole and the minimum required threshold standards, sustained through ideological determinants within the higher education sector (Filippakou, 2011). This approach manages to exclude other discourses of, for example, access or enhancement and reduces what 'quality' might achieve for TNE.

Furthermore, the institution is urged to put in place strategic planning processes from an early stage to ensure safe-guarding institutional reputation (McBurnie, 2013), drawing the discussion back once again into managerialist interpretations and away from teaching and learning accomplishments. The quality regime is as much about the political as it is the educational agenda as the arguments for reputation management of the institution and the sector have become intertwined with the discussions on quality. Healey offers by way of conclusion to these arguments that fear of these risks may '*limit the responsiveness of universities to TNE opportunities*" (Healey 2015 p244). Regardless, the focus on quality and reputation management in the literature seems to dominate at the cost of understanding the core aspects of TNE.

2.9 **Piecing together the TNE puzzle**

The challenges of the TNE project do not reside neatly in any one part of the university. Nor is TNE core to the universities' activities but fulfils an important expansive opportunity to bring together a series of actions that benefit the awarding institution. The literature referenced thus far provides insight into the factors that together make up the TNE project. From the contextualising dynamics of neoliberalism and globalisation that enable and shape the political and economic conditions within the institution, alongside the elements of the TNE project as they are analysed in the literature as elements of the TNE puzzle: management and organisational issues; leadership and governance; teaching, learning and research; and risk, quality and reputation.

This abstraction of analysis of the TNE elements fails to consider context and the contextualising dynamics of any social processes that may happen within the institution where the TNE project is situated. It is a situated project where the elements are jointly owned and co-constructed as the project is enacted in the local context. From this enactment, a broader narrative is produced beyond the individual and the individual elements of the TNE project. The narrative and enactment inform how the university might accomplish the TNE project within the situated environment of the institution.

Whilst the existing literature provides helpful insights into some of the enabling and constraining factors, this literature review presents a clear challenge to investigate the environment within which the TNE project 'happens' and to examine the situated enactment of TNE.

These contextualising elements, alongside the social processes of the TNE project, have been the subject of isolated and occasional research. For example, Keay et al (2014) applied a communities of practice theoretical framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to the TNE partnership. The purpose for the study was to focus on the '*quality of relations'* and communication between the partners with the objective of identifying potential improvements in practice (Keay et al. 2014). The findings foregrounded the common purpose and shared resource as members of the workgroup engaged in the activity to deliver TNE. This study built on the perception of transference and information technologies as playing an enabling role in refiguring higher education as a borderless community of practice in which people meet and exchange ideas (Leask & Carroll, 2011). However, their research is limited by the community of practice as a function of teaching and focused on the transnational aspect only of the project (Ritchie, 2007).

Bordogna (2016) argued for more focused "social interaction" based research to be conducted on TNE, taking the focus across the international collaboration as they impact on the "*pace and development*" of the TNE partnerships (Bordogna, 2016, p.300). Whilst this research brings into the spotlight the need for an understanding of the social interactions, the context focus is on the transnational dimension of the partnership and the broader workgroup within the institution setting remains unaccounted.

The TNE project as it is located in the institution requires interactions across a complexity of workgroups and networks, resourcing, knowledge, skills and

practices. There is a need to see beyond the individual and view TNE practices as enmeshed with other activities.

How the TNE project emerges as particular kinds of social structures or social relations within the institution requires more than the simple assertion that concepts, structures and capabilities matter, as is revealed in the existing body of literature (Billo & Mountz, 2015). The emergent social structures and social relations are mediated by contingencies and variation, repetition and routines and practices. The questions of "*why*" and "*what*" are well addressed in the literature. The '*how'* of the TNE project is overlooked. The challenge is to identify an analytical approach that is sufficiently informative to make a difference to how the TNE project is accomplished. Practice theories explicate 'how' to do something differently or better, 'how' to operate in a more sustainable manner, 'how' to create new opportunities.

2.10 **Investigating the TNE project as practice**

Given this challenge, it is from a sensibility to practice that provides a novel analytical lens to consider the influence of context, culture, and politics that prefigure the arrangements around the TNE project. Social practice theory seeks to consider the habitual character of behaviours, where social practices are routinised behaviours shared across groups as part of quotidian conventions (Reckwitz, 2002). Critically, an analysis of the TNE project through a practice lens holds a particular resonance as:

> *"A practice perspective re-centres and re-focuses our attention away from the individual actor on the one hand and impersonal*

> *social structures on the other, focusing instead on situated practices which are extra-individual in a number of senses."*
> (Trowler, 2014, p. 20)

And whereby practices are organised constellations with other peoples' activities (Trowler, 2014) and thereby prompting a situated analysis of the project that interrogates the interplay of the dynamic context and local tradition. There have been calls for more work to consider how TNE can become more sustainable and embedded as it is the focus of greater scrutiny both internal and external, justifications are sought for the opportunity cost of limited resources (McGettigan, 2011) and arguably there is a need to improve the practices that constitute the TNE project to make them more sustainable, more rewarding and also more transparent as opportunities for domestic based academicians and professional services to experience a more globally relevant career (Healey, 2019).

Theories of practice have a long history in the literature. Wittgenstein and Heidegger were the first to be associated with their development: Heidegger in his work *Being and Time* (1962) as he recognised practice as providing a source of meaning when interpreted through actions and reflexivity. Wittgenstein, whilst not directly facilitating an account of practice, posited the notion that "*both social order and individuality … result from practices*" (op cit in Schatzki, 1996). Both philosophers laid the foundations for practice theories to develop. Practice theories emphasise the importance of activity and are fundamentally related to process and reflect the world as routinised and

repetitive (Nicolini, 2012). Practice as defined by Reckwitz (2002) sheds further light on this conceptualisation, where practice is:

> *… a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge. (2002, p. 249)*

Reckwitz further elaborates on the importance of the context as occurring within a 'block' or 'pattern' (2002, p.250).

Although there are many theories of practice, it is a broad field, ontological and epistemological positions vary, and it is not viewed as a coherent or unified approach. These variations have implications for the research purpose. Where practices are perceived ontologically, theorists foreground its organisation, space, time and the facilitating arrangements that make practices happen. This is relevant for this study as it is the site ontology that exemplifies the "*nexus of practice*" and associated arrangements (Schatzki, 2005). This situated analytical position offers the TNE project meaningful grounds for application as Schatzki (2012) further asserts practices as offering a critique to understand the lived reality; practice theories provide a lens through which practices can be explicated through how they occur, how they are negotiated, their role and ultimately how practices along with action, organisation, rules and structure can be understood. Nicolini (2012) contends

that practice theories have a focus on the activity of practice, foregrounding how practices are enacted and how they are perpetuated in the social world. It is the learning and knowing of practice that structures the practical knowledge that is prevalent in the TNE project.

Furthermore, there is an evolution of practice, as Schatzki argued, that is dependent on whether the arrangements that prefigure "r*epetition or redirection of the doings and sayings*" prevail or change (Schatzki, 2012, p. 17). This notion of change is significant to this project as practices are bundled together and may compete or align (Schatzki, 2012). Following this argument led me to question how practices allied to TNE are "bundled" together within the institution and how they either align or compete with other practices and constellations, for example research practices, internationalisation practices.

Workgroups and networks within the institution are needed to co-construct the TNE project and faculty personnel, professional service teams and prevailing structures and prefigured conditions all shape the TNE project. A theory emphasising the relationships of practice between the individual, materialities and other elements of cultural life is appropriate for this study as an understanding of the situated reality of the TNE project along with what and how it is enabled and constrained is sought.

Like many other practice theories, a practice architectures approach dismisses dualism and holds that practices are situated and embodied. Giddens (1998) was central in moving the practice theory argument away

from structure and human agency (dualism) and their treatment in existing theories through separation or dualism (Giddens, 1998). Gidden's structuration theory proposed human activity and the social structures that surround them as being interconnected and interdependent. Whilst it is possible to account for individual action through discourse, this does not explicate the duality or recursive nature of the two concepts (Shove et al. 2012). Structures of rules and meaning are shaped and enabled by activities and in turn these structures are reproduced through action.

The operating context within the university has been conceptualised as constellations of social practice within the domain of the university (Trowler, 2014). This provides a helpful lens through which to view the environment within which the TNE project is located. These constellations or clusters of practice are inseparable and are held together by social and economic imperatives (Saunders, 2011).

Bourdieu also rejected dualism and wrote extensively about practice but in terms of "*habitus*" which he expressed as the rules and codes of conduct and practical consciousness (Bourdieu, 1977), aspects that most other practice theorists consider to be part of practices themselves. Other social cultural theorists align with practices as part of an interconnected world, that seek to understand the middle ground between agency and structure (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Martire & Lave, 2016; Schatzki, 1996; Shove et al. 2012; Trowler, 2014).

2.11 **Relevance of practice architectures – the situated practice of TNE**

Practice architectures provide a rich theoretical lens through which to study the TNE project offering a structured approach to understanding the significance of institutional location in relation to practice. Practice architectures, first conceived by Kemmis and Grootenboer (2007) has been applied as a lens to examine practice predominantly in educational settings, including higher education (Mahon, 2017; Wilkinson et al. 2010), and school education. It is a unique way of investigating practices as it shifts ontology to examine the 'politicised practice' (as opposed to the practice of politics), the 'humanised practice' as distinct from human practice and the theorising of the interconnectivity of those examined practices (Mahon et al. 2016). However, practice architectures have rarely been applied to comparative studies of multiple locations across a number of sites.

Of relevance to this study, the theory of practice architectures provokes a site ontological perspective to analyse practices through a series of concepts and arrangements that illuminate the importance of the specific university location as it shapes the "site ontologies" (Schatzki, 2003). Practice architectures motivates an analysis of practice within the physical space and time, conditions and circumstances and foregrounds the currently obscured relational aspects of the TNE project as it highlights power dynamics and inclusion / exclusion of how individuals align with other individuals (Kemmis, 2014; Kemmis et al. 2009).

Practice architectures provides a structure to identify the composition of practices as they are mediated and shaped by the arrangements within the site of practice, where a practice is understood as an action involving ways of

understanding (sayings), actions (doings) and the ways in which these relate and enmesh together (relatings). These sayings, doings and relatings hold together within a project through intersubjective spaces and provide a sense of situated co-construction of the TNE project (See Figure 6).

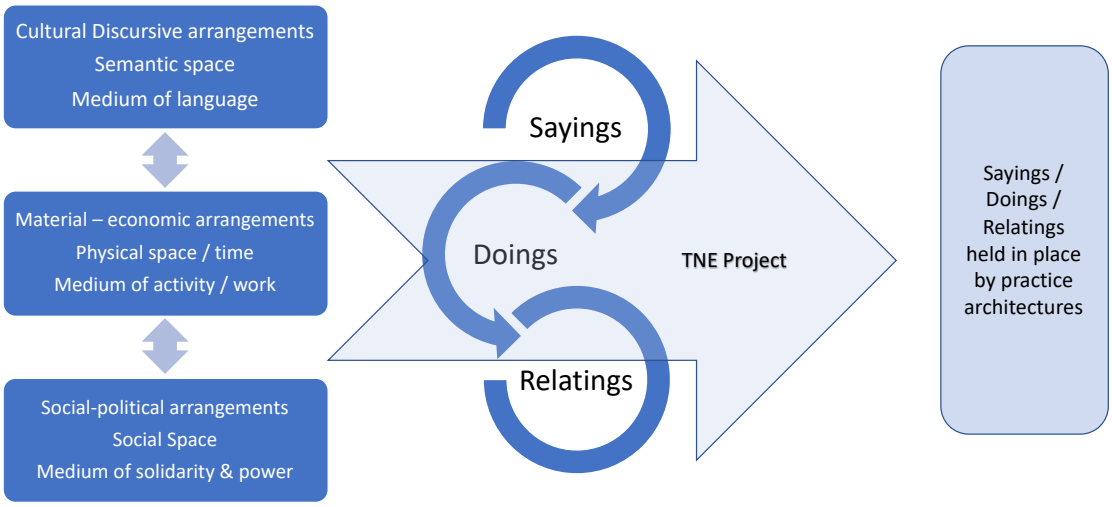

Figure 6 Practice architectures adapted from Kemmis et al (2014)

2.12 **Summary**

The existing literature provides limited insight of TNE through the lens of social practice and whilst analyses of macro theoretical structures are plentiful, similarly micro level theories provide much needed insight in to the machinations of how elements of TNE are processed and dealt with, either from the perspective of the individual, be it the academic, management or to a limited extent, professional services within the university or any of the elements that make up the TNE offer: quality, student experience or curriculum development. There is a missing meso level of analysis (Trowler, 2005), with a predominance of attention focused on the individual within the TNE endeavour and TNE as a business process, and strategic engagement.

The university is a complex institution and there is a need to expand upon this meso level in the analysis of TNE, a middle ground that provides a narrative of the spatial arrangements within the institution. Giddens structuration theory (1984) and allied discursive interventions around structure and agency provide such a middle ground analysis of the social systems that give order to daily life. However, there is a need to expand on this structured analysis, practice architectures have the potential to fill this gap.

The literature review identifies the key components and moments of the TNE project as it is situated within the university and foregrounds the orientations that influence its purposing. It suggests that little is known about how these components are joined, co-owned and socially co-constructed within the site ontology of the university. Understanding the TNE project as it is accomplished within the university, therefore, involves an investigation into this problem gap in order to identify the object of research and to use the appropriate analytical tools to investigate (Ashwin, 2011). The following chapter addresses this nexus created and explicates the research design appropriate and capable of researching how the TNE project is accomplished.

Chapter 3: Research design

3.1 **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of how practices and policies are enacted within the arrangements of the institutional setting. The purpose of this chapter is to set out the qualitative approach taken in terms of research methodology, data collection methods, including the selection strategies of participants and the analytical approach used to investigate the data. It also sets out my ontological and epistemological position and relates this stance to the research methodology. This chapter aims to highlight only the most significant issues encountered during the research study and is not intended to be an holistic overview.

3.2 **Overview**

The theoretical framework used in this study applies a practice architectures approach (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2007), and the study is organised from a critical realist perspective. Establishing and making clear the epistemological position was important to understanding the research position, how the research was conceived and how it was conducted.

Using a three-stage sampling strategy, six university sites were selected to focus the research. These sites were selected on the basis of the 'type' of university, the 'type' of TNE project being conducted and accessibility to a minimum of three participants from each site having direct involvement in the TNE project. Ethical approval was sought from the University of Lancaster prior to any research being conducted and all data has been anonymised.

Data was gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews and accompanying TNE documentation was gathered from each site to allow further investigation on how participants interpreted the literature and how this subsequently conditioned the co-construction of the TNE project. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using framework analysis, providing a systematic, and epistemologically complementary approach to the research study.

I will first of all re-assert my research questions followed by setting out my epistemological position that has framed initial thinking and subsequent decisions taken in conducting the research. I will then set out my theoretical framework for the study: practice architectures and the supporting sampling strategies that were developed. Using framework analysis, interview transcripts were interrogated in order to ensure a structured approach to the process and emergent themes and sub-themes were extracted from the data to build a framework for indexing of the data.

3.3 **Research questions**

The purpose of this research is to analyse how pre-figured conditions and practices mediate the TNE project as it is located within the higher education institution setting. I will address four research questions:

- RQ1: What regularities exist in the ways TNE programmes are conceptualised in a sample of UK universities, and in what ways do the differences shape the accomplishment of those programmes?

- RQ2: From the experiences of the TNE programme leaders, what elements enable and constrain the TNE project?
- RQ3: To what extent do internal and external forces influence the TNE project?
- RQ4: What insights do practice architectures offer in relation to the research questions above, and in what ways does this study indicate ameliorative refinements or amendments to that conceptual framework?

3.4 **Philosophical framework**

3.4.1 Critical realism

The point of indicating the epistemological position is to establish parameters for justifications of outputs and outcomes reached through the analytical process. As Crotty (1998) sets out, epistemological position implies a critical difference in how research is conducted, establishing four stages to the research process: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and finally, research methods.

I frame my research from a critical realist viewpoint and my thinking is underpinned by the epistemological assumption and understanding that the real meanings of practices are partially located below the surface, and away from immediate observation. This position was realised after reviewing the literature on TNE and informed by my personal professional background in TNE development, and the thinking that there are social realities and power relations operating within complex systems that are connected to the

institution, individuals and the wider operating environments that allow for more meaningful interpretation and explanation of rationales and social structures (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018). A critical realist world view takes causation as one of its most distinctive features. There are external dynamic forces that are influencing the shape and context of the TNE project, for example neo-liberalism, globalisation, new managerialism, commodification (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) and the arguments foregrounded as sustainability are concepts that require much deeper analysis of causation if they are to be understood fully. Not only is it impossible to ignore these social realities of the TNE project but they necessitate deeper investigation to reveal a more complete picture of the TNE project. I also maintain there is not one single truth to uncover, but as the research moves across different locations and sites, there are deeper, unseen cultural and social factors at play. My thought process, prompted by the review of the literature, enabled me to identify my critical realist perspective.

I use critical realism to understand and illuminate the TNE project and as a framework to explain why, despite the pervasive contextual dynamics, the enabling and constraining environment of the institution needs to be more fully considered and open to change if the TNE project, as it is valued by academics and HE leaders, is to perpetuate and grow.

'Realism' is based on the belief that there is a reality to be discovered of a world that exists beyond that of the researcher and that world is to be revealed through analysis and discovery (Pring, 2015). Pring goes on to say that realism raises questions about the meaning of truth and what we can

claim as the ‘nature’ of truth that can be understood about reality. Reality is ‘socially constructed’ and consequently there are as many ‘realities’ as there are socially constructed realities (Guba & Lincoln, 2009).

Bhaskar is attributed as the founder of critical realism. Bhaskar was a British philosopher (1944 - 2014) with much of his later work focusing on peace studies and the application of critical realism to the field, his earlier work concentrated on the philosophy of social science. He developed the social ontology of critical realism in an attempt to understand the social world. Partly inspired by Marx’s viewpoint of science, he held that in order to create theories that are not simply distillations of data, then analysis of the fundamental structures and mechanisms is needed to create theories and understanding of the lived reality. Critical realists also have a more progressive stance in that they are seeking not only to understand how meaning is conditioned by social reality but if it is possible to bring about change (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018).

The idea of a reality, for critical realists, consists of three distinct domains: the empirical or that which can be observed, the actual or that which transpires independently of the researcher and the real or that which is produced from different mechanisms or phenomena (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018). Causation for critical realists provokes understanding of the lived world as it distinguishes between the real world and the observed world (Bhaskar, 2006). To understand social structure, there is a need to go beyond the individual’s worldview. Social structure encompasses elements that are beyond the individual’s intent (Sayer, 2000).

This is the perspective I have taken as I have designed this research project. In an attempt to uncover actual structures, it is not sufficient to understand an individual's worldview and their account, but rather the causation and mechanisms that create their experience of the reality. Bhaskar argues that all human actions "*depend on our capacity to identify causes in open systems*" starting with a focus on human behaviour to examine the construction of the individual realities of the participants. Such a starting point aligns with my own philosophy as a researcher. My epistemological position is informed by this thinking, within a realist ontology, there is a need to understand the relationships and realities and to identify any radical departures as processes develop.

I use this worldview to interpret TNE practitioner accounts with an emphasis on exploring the regularities and differences in the conceptualisations of TNE. The experiences of participants involved in this study are subjective accounts as they interpret their actions in relation to texts and in relation to colleagues within and also outside of their institution. Alluding to the use of a qualitative approach, as I interpret the data, this will be shaped by my worldview and thus reminds me of Bhaskar's view: there is an actual and a real truth (Bhaskar, 2008).

3.4.2 Research paradigm: interpretative

I sought to investigate a complex set of situated social practices as perceived by the individuals who experienced them. I was dissatisfied reading articles on business and management conceptualisations of the TNE project or trend

analysis based on quantitative data methods, producing normative statements of TNE as internationalisation strategy or critiqued as a business process focusing on the tangible elements of the project. These accounts all ignored the social reality of the specific situated environment of the university. Social practice theory places emphasis on the context conditioning of practices through the “happenings” of sayings doings and relatings.

The research paradigm is the set of beliefs or the fundamental perspective that creates the lens through which the researcher views and interprets the world (Guba & Lincoln, 2009). The aim for this study is a focus on gaining a deep understanding and sense-making of the realities of practices, as they are located in the university. This locates this thesis within an interpretative paradigm. The interpretivist approach “*looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world*” (Crotty, 1998 p.67), where human action is meaningful and that to understand this human action, this must be approached by those already absorbed in the field (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). Social reality is not a pre-determined totality of objects, but “*it is produced and reproduced by its members*” (Giddens, 1976). On the one hand, interpretive research attempts to understand and on the other to inform social action as a result of knowing (Crotty, 1998), and that analysis needs to be placed in context, through using sense-making methodologies for example interviews or observation (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003).

In devising a research design approach consistent with these foundations, I sought a strategy that would allow access to individuals who experience the phenomenon of the TNE project in their unique practice setting.

3.5 **Conceptual framework: practice architectures**

The theory of practice architectures (Kemmis, 2014; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2007) helped to firstly identify groups of practices within the university setting as revealed by the data. Once the practices were foregrounded, the practice architectures then offered a constructive method of enquiry into researching the TNE project. Kemmis (2013) has brought into focus what Schatzki referred to as the '*nexuses of practices'* whereby practices are identified through patterns shaped over time and spatially reproduced (Schatzki, 1996, 2015)

Social practice theory covers a broad group of theories and approaches, it is possible to identify commonalities and established features to set parameters for a social practice approach to research. Reckwitz (2002) argued practice theories are centred on the "*everyday and lifeworld*" (Reckwitz 2002, p.244) and are characterised by the fundamental understanding that practices are "situated, social and relational" (Mahon et al. 2016, p.5). This approach moves us away from the individual and refocuses analytical attention onto the TNE workgroup.

Patterns of practice activity reveal geometries of human life (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2012) and these practices are influenced and constructed partly through material artefacts and arrangements thus highlighting the importance of texts and documentation. These constitute symbols of practice (Reckwitz, 2002). Giddens argued: "*the basic domain of study of the social sciences … is neither the experience of the individual actor nor the existence of any form of*

societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time" (p.2). It is this shift in focus to an extra-individualism that makes SPT and specifically practice architectures significant and relevant to being able to understand the TNE project as greater than the labour of the project leader and cannot exist in separation from the structures that allow for its accomplishment. This argument opens up the possibility for investigation of the collective nature of the workgroup, as the TNE project is co-constructed and mediated within the contextualising environment of the institution.

Dualism created through the separation of structure from agency is rejected by practice theories, seeking to find meaning in the social world through social relations (Nicolini, 2012). This is what Trowler (2005) refers to as the '*missing meso level of analysis*' within the social context (p.16). Thus, through a study of practices, it is possible to make a shift in focus away from the individual to shared practices and routines. The need to shine a light on the practice arena for the TNE project provides potential for broadening our current limited understanding of existing related practices within the university.

This is significant for this thesis as the analysis of the TNE project foregrounds challenges rooted in the organisation. If we are to consider this meso level social practice analysis of the TNE project within the context of the institution, this offers a useful lens through which to view the data: to expand our knowledge on how the TNE project can adapt and be adapted (Trowler, 2020) by those who are involved in marshalling its development through the institution. The application of practice architectures allows us to identify locations of planning and implementation issues, understand the different

conceptualisations of TNE as they exist in different environments and how these affect the development trajectory of the programme and allow us to understand with greater accuracy how they interact within the awarding institution.

It is a site ontological approach that places the focus on how practices are conducted, how they are organised and an understanding of the arrangements that make practices practicable and reveal insight into the locations where it takes place (Schatzki, 2002). This opens up possibilities for examining the conditions within the situated happening of the TNE project, focusing on enabling and constraining environments of the structures that pre-condition the TNE project. Practice architectures foreground those arrangements and this notion prompted me to think about what the structures are and how they mediate practice. A focus on practitioner level and practices precludes the conditioning nature of structures and policies. MacIntyre (1981) illuminates the importance of this juxtaposition of practice within context, indicating the institution as the carrier of practice conventions and as the site where practices are manipulated and influenced by external dynamics, arguing, over and above internal dynamics (Macintyre, 1981). However, Kemmis (2007) seeks a more holistic approach and investigates practices within the intersubjective spaces of cultural-discursive, material-economic and social political.

Figure 7 illustrates how the ‘sayings, doings and relatings’ in a project are found in: cultural discursive arrangements that shape language and communication; in material economic arrangements found in physical space-

time during the activities as they unfold; and in social political arrangements that are brought into a social space and mediated through power and solidarity. Practices are interactionally secured in 'sayings', doings and relatings and hang together in a project. The theory of practice architectures is underpinned by Marx's third theory of Feuerbach, *we are products of our circumstances*, hence the infinity symbol that sits within Figure 7.

The Individual And the TNE project	Practices are interactionally secured in	In intersubjective space and the medium of	Practice architectures: the arrangements	The Social World As the TNE project exists
Forms of understanding	People's **sayings** – and thinking	In **semantic space** – realised in the medium of language	**Cultural discursive arrangements** found in or brought to a site (e.g. language, ideas)	Individual and collective self-expression
Modes of action	People's **doings**	In **physical space – time** realised in the medium of activity and work	**Material economic arrangements** found in or brought to a site (e.g. objects, spatial arrangements)	Individual and collective self-development
Ways of relating to one another and the world	People's **relatings** (the affective)	In **social space** realised in the medium of power and solidarity	**Social political arrangements** found in or brought to a site (e.g. relationships between people)	Individual and collective self-determination
	Which are bundled together in the **projects** of practices and the **dispositions (habitus** of practitioners)		Which are bundled together in characteristic ways in **practice landscapes** and **practice traditions**	

Figure 7 The theory of practice architectures. Adapted from Kemmis et al. 2014, p.38

3.6 **Extending the conceptual frame to this study**

A critical realist worldview asserts the existence of a natural world and a social world whilst resolution is facilitated through theory and practice consistencies and alignment (Smith, 2006). A critical realist approach advocates an interconnected approach to examining the TNE project, through a series of differing but aligned research questions, and research methods to reveal the practice structures that hold the project together at a location.

The adoption of a practice architectures theoretical framework (Kemmis, 2014; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2007) to my research is congruent with a critical realist approach since the sequence of arrangements of sayings (cultural discursive), doings (material economic) and relatings (social political) that are held in place by the practice architectures consist of multiple causal mechanisms. This suggests that a social practice approach is necessary to reveal how practice arrangements enable and constrain the TNE project in those universities studied and furthermore, a social practice approach helps to illuminate the complexity of the HE environment providing rich discussion, interlaying theory with practice, to identify areas and themes for potential change (Ashwin, 2011).

Adopting such a perspective creates space to question how the theory of practice architectures can reveal if the environments are conducive to the TNE project, or if they create niches for practices to develop or what might be missing for the TNE project to be a sustainable endeavour? What might be changed or can be changed in order for the TNE project to endure and grow? If there is a possibility to change practices in order to secure a more robust future for TNE, then there is a need to understand the practice architectures

that hold TNE practices in place. With a greater comprehension of the practice architectures there exists a potential to secure the ecological relationships to change structures, processes and arrangements.

3.7 **Collective case study research**

As a qualitative study, case study research or, more specifically, collective case studies where the individual cases have been selected to analyse what may be considered as generally observable phenomena of practices in situ (Silverman, 2013) offered the opportunity to investigate in-depth into the context and situated reality. Collective case study research provides an in-depth understanding of individual cases allowing to gain a fuller picture (Stake 2005). Furthermore, Stake identified three different types of case study: intrinsic where no attempt is made to generalise beyond that specific case; instrumental, where a case or cases provide evidence to challenge a prevailing belief or collective case study where several cases are gathered to evidence a more general “happening”. The research employs a multiple site approach through case studies (Stake 2006) and focuses on the practices embedded in these sites rather than a study of individual university sites.

Stake (2006) attempts to define ‘case’ as “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 27) and furthermore case studies present the human relationships, real life complexities and dynamic unfolding interactions of events within a bounded context (Cohen et. al. 2012). In this research study, the six cases are “research intensive” institutions. Each case is bounded by the institution setting and within that, the TNE project. Each case within the collective case study focuses on the specific project. With a

defined case upon which to focus in each location, thick description of lived experiences are forthcoming from the sites of study (Geertz 1973) and these descriptions are also heuristic as they clarify our understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998).

Case study research is criticised as offering analysis specific to the particular context, is non-generalisable and also open to observer bias (Cohen et al. 2012). These criticisms are addressed extensively in the literature and the arguments are well-rehearsed by social scientists (Flyvbjerg, 2006). As Bryman argues, case study should not set out to identify cases that are simply illuminatory examples of a case with the intention of proving a point (Bryman, 2012). It is for this reason, collective or multiple case studies affords greater confidence to the findings and reinforces trustworthiness of the findings (Miles et al. 2013).

From a critical realist viewpoint, focused research can only ever be revealed through “context dependent” understandings (Flyvbjerg, 2006), collective case study research allowed me to take a view from the social reality as experienced across a number of context specific sites. Engaging with the narratives of the institutional arrangements allowed me to understand more deeply the external realities of globalisation, neoliberalism and internationalisation.

3.8 **My position as researcher**

The relationship established between the researcher and interviewees is influenced and associated with the researcher’s position. My own position as

a researcher, my current professional role, my employer and other socio-cultural aspects inevitably impact on the research process, and thus cause me to consider how I might ameliorate or acknowledge these factors in shaping the research design (Dunn, Pryor & Yates, 2005, Bryman, 2012).

My employer is British Council and I work in the Higher Education Policy Team. The British Council is the UK's organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. The organisation is an executive non-departmental public body partly funded by UK Government and works closely with several government departments including Department for Education, Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The role of the British Council is to promote friendly knowledge and understanding between people from the UK and other countries (British Council, 2019).

The subject of this research study is closely aligned with my role in the Education Policy Unit. My work includes development of TNE programmes through grant assistance and framework agreements with international governments. I have strong networks in UK universities with TNE practitioners. Prior to joining the British Council, I worked at a UK university designing and delivering TNE projects.

My role as researcher is influenced by three characteristics: personal knowledge of designing and delivering TNE projects; my role as an international higher education specialist and my employer, the British Council. Taking this into consideration, this has a bearing on my role as a researcher

and how I am perceived by the interviewees. Even though the initial approach was made through my University of Lancaster email account, I was known to some of the interviewees already. To those who did not know me, and even though I was conducting this thesis independently from British Council, when asked, I made participants aware of my job at British Council.

Flick (1998) advocates four roles the researcher may assume: detached observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participant, this can be shown along a continuum from outsider to insider (see Figure 8). Where detached observer, hidden from the interviewee and observer as participant both preserve the outsider role, while the latter extends into the institution from the insider's point of view. In the case of qualitative research, Patton (2002) suggests a balance is required between outsider and insider.

> *"… experiencing the programme as an insider to accentuate the participant part of participant observation. At the same time the inquirer remains aware of being an outsider. The challenge is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the setting as an insider while describing it to and for outsiders" (p.268).*

Although I am physically located outside of the institutions from where I am gathering the data, there is a grey area about what constitutes insider research within the literature (Carter, 2004, Hellawell, 2006, Labaree, 2002)

and reviewing my own personal backstory and history highlights this status identification issue.

Trowler, V. (2019) addresses the question of precisely who can and should identify as an ‘insider’ by reviewing three dimensions to the problem: location, time and subjectivities. Where location is not necessarily viewed as a binary issue, whether the researcher is inside or outside of the institution, but rather location should be viewed at a systemic level. Trowler draws attention to the scope of the study in question and suggests that if a system level study is the subject and the researcher has clear affiliations to that system, then ‘insider’ status would seem appropriate. Subjectivities alludes to the power relations and researchers who occupy an identifiable position, will be afforded different access privileges.

Merton (1972) argues that the researcher is rarely located at the extremity of the scale and suggests insider has a priori knowledge of the community and being an insider is not necessarily the same as being an existing member of that group.

My role may be defined along the continuum as closer to that of ‘insider’ or ‘observer as participant’. As interviewer, I aimed to be acknowledged by the interviewees as knowledgeable to the topic of TNE but my contribution in the discussion was distinctly secondary to my role as information gatherer (Merriam, 2009).

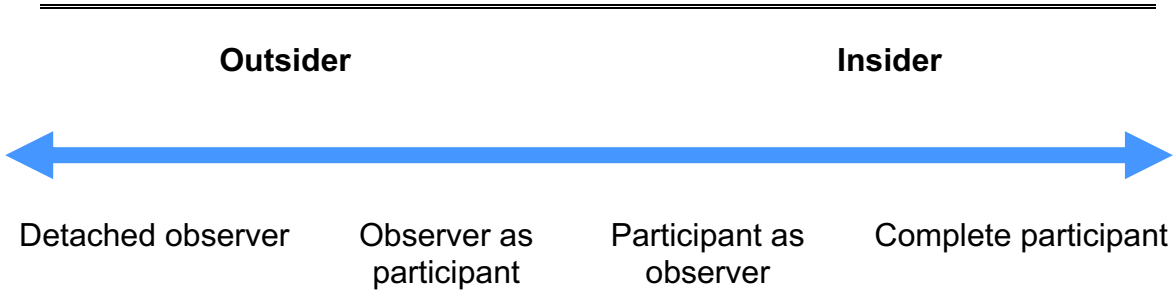

Figure 8 Source: Cohen et. al (2007, p. 179)

For the study, I investigated six different UK institutions, I was an 'outsider' to all of those institutions, however, I consider myself to be a part of the wider system, dealing on a daily basis with UK universities and policymakers. I was known to some of the participants through their involvement in British Council projects, and some British Council projects specifically related to TNE. I was aware that my position may raise issues for the data gathering in ensuring that the interviewees divulge detail or what may be considered sensitive data to an outsider. Merriam (2009) acknowledges that researchers are rarely definitively aligned to either the insider or outsider camp. I hold 'insider knowledge' to the process of TNE development as a previous practitioner in the field, I also hold 'insider knowledge' to British Council and other UK government departments' interventions and actions in international higher education and TNE. This is significant as the UK government has recently published the International Education Strategy (Department for Education, 2019b). Consequently, there was potential for "*power asymmetries*" to arise during the interviewee/interviewer dynamic as some participants knew me beyond the role of interviewer (Bryman, 2012). I tried to ameliorate the impact as much as possible by ensuring they understood the strict anonymity protocols. Aware that I may be unable to completely overcome this issue, I reflected on this point during the data analysis phases and my interpretation

of the data trying to seek out any points shared with me that may be responses the participant preferred me to hear, rather than the actuality.

3.9 **Data collection and analysis**

In this section I set out my approach to data collection, sampling strategies, semi-structured interviews, text and documentation and their analysis. I will discuss my chosen data analysis technique adopted to frame the study.

3.9.1 Sampling strategy

Where sample is the unit of enquiry (Jupp, 2006), the number of those units to be sampled is a much contested issue in the field of qualitative research (Bryman, 2012; Silverman, 2013). The literature contains many challenges to the size of sample to be studied (Creswell, 2013; Tight, 2010). Whilst many contend that large sample size is the most effective in assuring claims of validity of findings, Crouch and Mackenzie (2006) argue in favour of more focused research endeavours with in-depth studies from a limited number of sites capable of producing defendable results (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006), whilst Fyvbjerg (2006) goes further in justifying single site case as valuable in testing a generally held premise (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Fundamentally, the size of sample is dependent upon factors distinctive to the research questions and the subject of enquiry. The unit of enquiry for this study is the TNE project. I selected six case studies.

A three stage sampling strategy was used to filter the available population, in accordance with Cohen et al (2010) as they suggest a combination of

strategies assists with triangulation of data available throughout the process of analysis, and this gives the case study approach greater robustness (Silverman, 2013). A stratified random sampling is the most appropriate method to be used for this thesis as the key variables are known (type of institution; and type of TNE project) (Cohen et al. 2012; Jupp, 2006). The first key variable applied was the category or type of university where the TNE project was located; a second variable selected the six universities within this broader categorisation and a third sampling strategy was used to select the participants within those six universities.

Criterion sampling followed by random purposeful sampling appears to provide the most robust method for the first and second stage of selection of the universities (Merriam, 2009). This selection represents a purposive sample comprised of a deliberate selection through first identifying the clusters of universities representative of the UK Higher Education sector. Statistical sampling is not appropriate for naturalistic research methods (Lecompte et al. 1992). The sample chosen is not representative of the totality of 164 universities in the UK but is representative of a specific population within this wider grouping (Cohen et al. 2012). In narrowing this large field of 164 HEPs and to ensure a robust case study strategy, there are a number of observations that are revealed in the official statistics (the Higher Education Statistics Agency), and knowledge of the UK higher education sector (as will be illuminated in the following sections) that have informed the selection of those sites appropriate for further analysis. These selection criteria have not

been made sequentially but independently and together provide the sampling strategy adopted.

3.9.2 Selecting the type of university

The UK higher education sector is comprised of a highly diverse range of universities, varying in their order of magnitude and the concentration of their work (Tight, 2011). The UK sector has a broad diversity of institutions and has a greater degree of differentiation than most other national systems around the world (Huisman, et al 2007). Several studies of UK higher education have revealed series of clusters of comparable universities within the sector (Brown, 2013, King, 1970, Tight, 1996). The most recent cluster analysis study conducted by Boliver (2015) drawing on quantitative data and applying a hierarchical clustering methodology revealed four distinguishable clusters. The indicators used in this study included measures of institutional resource, budget spend across teaching and research functions, student demographics and entry criteria. The two lower tier clusters were comprised predominantly of post-92 institutions, one cluster including most pre-92 institutions (the focus of this study) and a separate cluster comprising Oxford and Cambridge.

The selection for this study was taken from the pre-92 institutions. This cluster is referred to in the study as being made up of '*higher status'* universities (Boliver, 2015). My selection of the 'higher-status' universities, following on from the rationales set out in Section 2.7, "Why do UK universities pursue international TNE opportunities", provide a particularly interesting subject for this study as these higher status universities pursue TNE for multiple

rationales and therefore are a valuable focus as the TNE project impacts more profoundly on the UK university than if the university were pursuing the TNE collaboration for purely commercial gain. TNE in the research-intensive university seeks to leverage other international collaboration practices, including research and in some cases enterprise.

This cluster is made up of 39 universities, so further selection was needed. This next decision was further informed by simple pragmatic issues of accessibility, time constraints and expense in conducting the research (Blaxter et al. 2010), as well as the type of TNE project the universities were involved in delivering. I discuss the TNE type in the next section.

3.9.3 Selecting the type of TNE project

TNE is present in 86% of UK universities. UK HE TNE is delivered across a range of academic levels of study (undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research), with the option to study either part time or full time. In 2017/18, TNE students were studying for awards in 224 countries and territories. This presents a complex and extensive landscape from which to make a selection for this study. These statistics reveal a picture of significant activity for UK Higher Education demonstrating a similarly complex picture for the modes of provision as selected by the university (Healey, 2015).

For the purposes of this study, my focus is the collaborative delivery TNE programmes. HESA defines this mode of delivery as including joint and dual award arrangements. Healey refers to this arrangement as "*whole-institution replicability*" (Healey & Michael, 2015 p. 381) whereby the partnership

arrangements allow for multi-dimensional interactions across the awarding institution and the international partner. It is the breadth and depth of engagement offered through this mode of TNE that provides this study with its focus. This multi-dimensionality brings a high degree of complexity to how the UK university accomplishes the project. Its accomplishment requires support, input and legitimacy from a range of departments and hierarchies.

I further analysed the HESA data to identify the universities within the “higher status” classification to uncover the type of TNE programme that the higher status universities pursue. According to the HESA data, “higher status” universities are predominantly involved in the collaborative provision category.

3.9.4 Selecting the geographic location of the TNE project (China)

A further decision was taken to focus on TNE projects delivered in China (See Chapter 2), this selection is significant as according to the HESA data See Figure 9, China has the largest share of UK TNE projects of any country around the world. Of significance here is that this list of countries is also important as source countries of international students travelling to UK universities, suggesting a possible link between international student recruitment and international TNE (Ilieva, 2014). A recent study conducted by Bennell (2019) highlighted the growth in collaborative provision projects particularly with the “higher status” institutions in UK. This growth was attributed to the evolving global engagement strategies of this cluster of universities, claiming that these universities are seeking to establish a presence in countries such as China (Bennell, 2019). Consequently, this

selection was further narrowed to focus on those institutions with TNE projects in China.

Top 10 TNE countries by total student numbers (2017/18)		
1.	China	75,995
2.	Malaysia	72,485
3.	Singapore	44,805
4.	Pakistan	40,210
5.	Nigeria	29,865
6.	Sri Lanka	27,450
7.	Hong Kong SAR	25,675
8.	Oman	20,645
9.	Egypt	20,480
10.	United Arab Emirates	18,120

Figure 9 Top 10 TNE countries by total student numbers. Source HESA n.d. British Council Copyright

These statistics are further tabulated to show a breakdown of the types of TNE arrangements in China, and the total number of students enrolled (See Figure 10).

Summary data for China TNE student enrolments						
	2007/08	**2009/10**	**2011/12**	**2013/14**	**2015/16**	**2017/18**
Overseas campus	**2,705**	**3,865**	**4,515**	**5,535**	**6,610**	**8,255**
Distance learning	**5,305**	**6,265**	**5,285**	**6,050**	**10,175**	**14,160**
Other collaborative arrangement including joint and dual awards	**1,095**	**1,280**	**1,820**	**1,970**	**2,175**	**2,745**

Inc. franchise arrangements - not regd at UKHEP	1,420	3,375	26,655	35,955	46,105	50,835
Other arrangement	0	0	0	725	130	0
Total	10,525	14,785	38,275	50,235	65,195	75,995

Figure 10 TNE programme delivery in China Source: HESA n.d. Copyright British Council

3.9.5 Participant selection

With a long list of universities identified from the HESA data as working in collaborative programme development with partners in China (39 universities), the next stage was to identify participants who would be willing to give their time, to share their experiences through a series of semi-structured interviews. Primary data was gathered from a series of in-depth interviews, commencing with the TNE programme manager. These individuals formed the entry point for engagement with the university. A snowball sampling technique was used (Crouse & Lowe, 2018).

The snowball method helped to gain access to 'hidden populations' or where it was more difficult to gain access to participants from cold-calling approaches (Sadler et al. 2010). However, with this technique, participants usually suggest other participants who they may have close relationships with and potentially hold similar views. In order to overcome this issue, an additional method of selection was used: that of the participant-aided network sociograms (Hogan et al. 2007). These suggest that to a TNE practitioner, such as me, it is possible to render configurations that may be broadly adhered to when a TNE project is developed within an institution.

Six UKHEP TNE lead developers were interviewed with a minimum of 2 other institution personnel associated with the TNE project. My initial route into the institution was through the programme leader, and in all six cases, this person was also the Faculty leader. The subsequent interviewees were identified by asking the programme leader for suggested participants. This approach was supplemented with my own knowledge of the institutions and internet searches. The next round of interviews always included a representative from the senior institution leadership team. All interviewees were given a reference code, see in the text of this thesis to preserve anonymity and due to risk of identification of individuals, only generic titles have been attributed (See Table 2).

UKHEP	Participant Position	Participant Codes
1	Project Leader	PL1
	Institution Leader	IL1
	Tutor	T1
2	Project Leader	PL2
	Institution Leader	IL2
	Tutor	T2
3	Project Leader	PL3
	Institution Leader	IL3
	Tutor	T3
4	Project Leader	PL4
	Institution Leader	IL4
	International Director	ID4
5	Project Leader	PL5
	Institution Leader	IL5
	International Director	ID5
	Tutor	T5
6	Project Leader	PL6
	Institution Leader	IL6
	International Partnerships Manager	IPM6
	Tutor	T6

Table 2 Participants of the study (n=20)

3.9.6 Interviews

Semi-structured interview process was used, this is a frequently used tool for data collection in qualitative studies (Cohen et al. 2012). Even though data was sought from interconnected individuals within the same institution, forming part of what may be described as a 'workgroup', focus groups were not used as this could potentially cloud individual sense-making (Bloor, 2001) and I wanted to understand if individuals as members of the same TNE project workgroup shared the same understanding of particular conceptualisations of the project, processes and objectives.

The semi-structured approach allowed for deep discussion and views shared by the participants could be described as producing thick data (Geertz). Semi structured interview was the most appropriate method as there are specific themes to be addressed during the discussion and allowed for the introduction of the interviewer's epistemological viewpoint (Galletta, 2013).

Using an approach in gathering the reflective narratives (Pennanen et al. 2016), the investigation attempts to foreground the practice arrangements that together combine to make up the practice architecture of the TNE project. The inquiry was about evidencing the practice architectures that supported the TNE projects and the interviews questions were targeted to elicit a reflective response on the situation which faced the individuals (Pennanen et al., 2016). The intention was to develop reflective narratives aimed at capturing how individual participants make sense of the TNE project or as it is appropriately named "sensemaking". Simple question and answer schematic would not elicit for example the recounting of events, to make meaning of events that the narrator or interviewee shares (Lewis-Beck, 2003). Sensemaking involves

"*turning circumstances in a situation that is comprehended explicitly into words*" (Weick et al. 2010 p.409) it is concerned with constructing an emerging picture to make sense of the actions and reflections of those involved and "*becomes more comprehensible through data collection* (Weick, 1995 p.20). From the interviews, I am looking for meaning making and diversity in meaning construction in the interviews.

In choosing congruous data collection methods that were in line with my chosen methodology and a critical realist perspective, I sought approaches that would achieve rich reflective accounts from participants that recount practices within a site ontology. In this section, I first of all account for my choice of semi-structured interviews coupled with the collection of institutionally authored documentation produced to support the TNE project within the institution.

3.9.7 Interview protocol

I would describe the rapport I developed with participants as open. I was keen to ensure they felt at ease and build confidence with the participant and thus structured my interview schematic accordingly. I started the interview with unchallenging questions about what they thought, trying to get the interview off on a relaxed 'chatty' start and then came in later with more challenging questions about what they thought *others* thought. I made sure I knew as much as possible about the participants beforehand so I did not ask questions I could find answers to online.

On several occasions, the participants wanted reassurance that their views would remain anonymous. This was usually followed by divulging a strong opinion or view about colleagues or processes.

It was important that any interruptions were limited as much as possible. This was not always straightforward; however, most participants became involved in the process and were more than happy to either divert calls or to extend the interview time slot. On several occasions, the exact question format was not followed. This often meant the participant would voluntarily cover questions that appeared later in the schedule. Sometimes, the interviews led into unpredicted areas and where I considered these to be pertinent, I allowed the participant to continue. I was conscious of timings allowed for each participant to share the narrative of their experiences.

With this form of semi-structured interview, I was treating the participants as respondents not as informants as I was interested in understanding their understanding of the ‘happenings’ as they unfolded within the institution. In order to elicit their understandings, I authored a series of provocative statements that would act as a catalyst for their responses. These allowed the participants to bounce off something as they considered and responded to the statement. I shared the same statement with each interviewee, having made the statements available to them before the interview took place. See Appendix 1.

Where possible, I travelled to the locations to conduct the interview with the TNE project lead, this decision was appropriate and consistent with the

research approach. The aim was to produce as accurate a reflection as possible of the practices as they are deployed and understood by the individuals who are involved in the TNE project, and as they are reported. The semi-structured interview technique allowed for follow up on particular points I considered to be of interest, as the participants share their experiences with me. This yielded thick description of the practices, my intention was to build a picture of a view of the lived reality. The understanding here was that this would produce a view of reality bounded within the individual's limitations. Through gathering these reflective narratives this would then build what may either be a shared or disparate vision of the TNE practices.

3.9.8 Texts and documentation

TNE can be referenced in a number of different documents and texts within the university. According to the extant literature, TNE forms part of an institution's internationalisation strategy and in turn this internationalisation strategy forms a part of the broader institutional strategy. Both documents were of interest to this study as they set out the approaches and attitudes the institution intended to portray to the outside world of their attitude and conceptualisation of the TNE project.

TNE is also reviewed as a part of the quality assurance process. In writing this thesis, the Quality Assurance Agency's remit to review transnational education was under consideration and the external QA process was likely to change (Universities UK, 2019a). However, at the time of data collection, all institutions forming part of the research considered the prevailing external

QAA process as central to their decision processes on how their TNE programmes were constructed and delivered.

As part of the semi-structured interview protocol, I requested relevant documentation from the participants, suggesting the provision of international strategies, formal TNE guidance documentation and any relevant corporate documentation. The documentation was further referenced in the interviews seeking their views on how they accessed this pool of resources and also how they contributed to the construction of versions of these documents. I wanted to understand how documentation was used or otherwise in the TNE project.

I also conducted a web search of the institution's domestic website and their partner's website and collated information referencing the TNE projects. For the international partner, these were marketing the programmes to potential students. For the domestic facing web pages, the TNE projects were referenced as part of the institutions' international portfolio. In total, this yielded 32 pieces of discrete documentation (See Table 3)

Relevant texts included: corporate institution-wide strategies and international(-isation) strategies were referenced, along with TNE specific documentation. Also, websites promoting the TNE programmes were also analysed. These documents set the tone for shaping of the TNE practices.

Data type	Total
International strategy	6
Institutional strategy	6
Domestic website (TNE reference)	6

International website (TNE reference)	6
TNE strategy	2
TNE quality assurance process documentation (internal use)	4
Total discrete items	30

Table 3 Discrete documents gathered from each institution (n=30)

3.9.9 Data analysis

Data analysis is one of the most complex stages in any qualitative research project (Miles et al. 2013, Thorne, 2000). Many qualitative researchers argue that design stages, data collection and data analysis are not necessarily separate processes (Burgess 1984). Bryman points out that there needs to be a continuous interaction between data collection and analysis (Bryman, 1994). A staged iterative process was used for data analysis. This was tackled after a pilot study was conducted. With the pilot schedule I reflected on whether I thought the respondent shared my understandings of what the questions meant and whether there were ambiguities; whether the questions elicited 'rich data' (Geertz); what elements of the research questions could be addressed by the kinds of data gathered and what other questions were needed to ensure the research questions were answered; and finally what changes I needed to make in my approach to conducting the interview. The pilot study formed part of the main study as the data was located within the sampling strategy methodology and produced thick description.

The next stage involved several close readings of the data, the interview transcripts and the documentation in order to gain a comprehensive

understanding so that any further interpretations remained rooted in the participants' accounts and their sense-making.

The qualitative data analysis literature does not offer a single set of rules or protocols for analysing data, however many analytical approaches suggest a systematic method to working through the data to reveal meaning and patterns through 'thematic analysis', whereby the data is distilled into themes and notions that together contribute to the answering of the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thematic analysis is sometimes critiqued in the literature as being overly reductive and prone to the personal subjectivity of the researcher (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Joffe & Yardley, 2004). Acknowledging these criticisms, it is important to provide a transparent process, open to scrutiny, framework analysis provided such a process (Spencer et al. 2014).

3.9.10 Framework method

The Framework method is not epistemologically or philosophically aligned, but I considered the approach as appropriate for this study as it facilitated different aspects of themes within the data to be surfaced (Spencer et al., 2014). Secondly, the approach allows for both inductive and abductive reasoning within the data and it does not delimit the development of new themes. Thirdly, the matrices provide a level of transparency of analysis, addressing earlier criticisms of qualitative data analytical approaches.

Framework analysis is a tool that was originally designed to analyse policy documents, framework analysis allows for constant comparison techniques

across a series of matrices, it's strength in data analysis allows the researcher to move back and forth allowing for cross-case analysis and in-case analysis. (Gale et al. 2013).

It is argued in the literature that the strength of the framework method lies in its ability to structure data management through a sequence of thematic matrices which allow for checking and cross-checking through different levels of conceptualisation whilst the raw data remains visible (Spencer et al., 2014). A sequence of matrices is developed, each interviewee is assigned a row and the columns are headed with the sub-themes as they emerge from the transcripts. The same process is applied to the documentation. The data is then condensed, and a summary is entered into another section of the framework document. The approach provides clear stages to follow and simultaneously provides well-ordered output of the summarised data, this is especially helpful where an overview of the data set in its totality is required (Gale et al., 2013).

The framework method is applied through a series of steps, these have been summarised in Figure 11

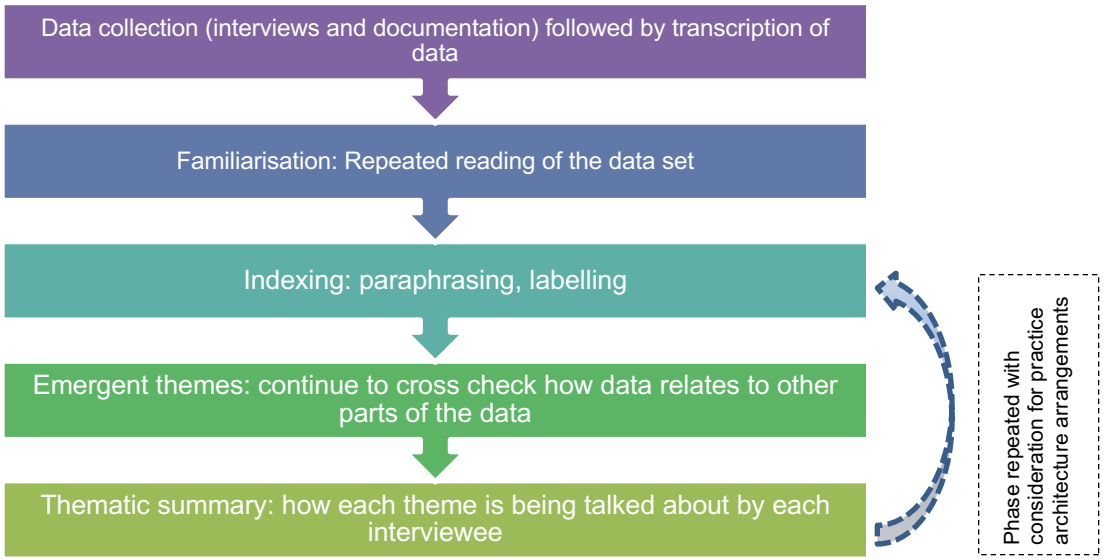

Figure 11 Adapted summary of framework method analysis process cited in Spencer et al (2014)

Framework method was originally conceived to deal with large-scale policy analyses (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). It is flexible in its application as it can deal with several different forms of data, including interview transcripts and organisational documentation. It was a time-consuming approach to data analysis as it requires consideration of generating themes and sub-themes that are then developed into the framework for further indexing using a cross case comparison whereby each university data set was analysed to gain a complete picture of each case (Gale et al., 2013). The development of themes is a common approach in qualitative research design and is one of the principal aims of qualitative research, identifying concepts from the data that can then go on to form the basis of theory as in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Framework analysis facilitates the discipline of constant comparison of in-case and cross-case analysis (Gale et al., 2013).

3.9.11 Application of framework method

After data collection and immediate transcription of the data, following on from the interviews taking place, the next stage involved immersion in the data, to grasp an overall view of the content and initial thoughts about the themes contained in the transcripts. I then repeated this process with a second reading of the text. The next step involved the paraphrasing and labelling and highlighting the text and I began to order the data into themes reflecting the narratives shared with me by the participants on their behaviours, views and experiences. The framework taking shape, displayed a number of emergent themes which I then continued to cross check back into the data to ensure my understanding was coherent with other parts of the data. The data was developed in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

From this spreadsheet, the next phase produced a summary in the form of a thematic map and as an iterative process this involved identifying categorising the themes into the practice architecture arrangements of those pertaining to material-economic arrangements, social-political and cultural discursive. This stage was particularly interesting in the process, as I was working through the data to categorise into one of the three arrangements. I was concerned about become overly constrained by the categories and having to make a simplistic choice of whether an observation or a piece of information shared with me in the interview was either social-political or material-economic. In order to address this issue, I conducted multiple scans of the matrices and referring back to the transcripts, treating the practice architecture arrangements as orienting narratives, interrogating the texts with different questions.

This process is illustrated in Appendix 2 and 3 for a summary of the coding phase and excerpts from the coding exercise. This was not an exercise of trying to fit each part of the narratives or documentation neatly into one of the prescribed categories or arrangements of practice architectures, but I ensured it was an exercise of primarily bringing practices into focus at the sites of investigation. If interpreted too literally, this generates a contradiction in the nature of practices, practices are fluid and changing (Trowler, 2014).

3.10 **Research quality**

The quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research is under greater scrutiny than ever, particularly in the UK as national impact evaluation systems have adopted a system of metrics favouring more objectivist methodologies (Twining et al. 2017) and it has been further argued that there is limited consistency with differing interpretations of approach in structures and vocabularies (Santiago-Delefosse et al. 2016); resulting in a perception that outputs from qualitative research may be at best unreliable but also confusing (Mays & Pope, 2000). Due to its diversity, standardisation of process is incompatible with qualitative research approaches, but there are steps the researcher can take to avoid such criticisms (Silverman, 2013). Silverman goes on to suggest that the qualitative research community need not be “overly defensive” but should take care in avoiding “anecdotalism” (p.286). Hammersley’s approach to validity differs and suggests “authenticity” rather than a list of criteria upon which research should be judged (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). When it comes to judgements of validity, these are often procedural criteria which have emanated from quantitative

hard-science based research (Guba & Lincoln, 2009) As this study is drawing on data obtained from interactions with individuals , a realist position advocates the importance of avoiding procedural criteria more aligned with a positivist paradigm, but quality should be measurable in the conclusions reached, cognisant of the research methods used in a specific context, and not the methods in isolation (Gomm et al., 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 2009).

In light of my research study, there is a need to consider the context for the study and the notion that my research necessarily involves subjective insight and observation (Hammersley, 1992) and thus different research methods will produce different representations (Bryman, 2012). In my view, it is critical that the researcher is as transparent as possible in setting out the selection of procedures and implementation of those procedures (Seale, 1999) so that findings can be robustly defended and evidenced throughout.

A realist ontology suggests processual criteria are not appropriate, instead quality of research should be measured as the conclusions reached through the application of a specific method applied in a specific context (Guba & Lincoln, 2009). My position as researcher as moving more towards that of outsider increased the degree of reflexivity through the systematic and iterative approach taken in the analysis, including the coding stages. Generalisability of the findings is not the intention, but what is at issue is the transferability, as the site ontology directs the narrative accounts. The emphasis is to understand the meaning as it is conditioned by the social structures and from this to understand what is different and what is similar, i.e. the regularities about the sites of this study.

3.11 **Ethics and confidentiality**

3.11.1 Ethics

A broader recognition of ethical issues and concerns is reflected in the growth of this field of its related literature (Cohen et al. 2012; Denzin, 2002; Silverman, 2013). Ransome (2013) considers ethics to be the rules of conduct adopted by individuals as they act within a social context. These codes of conduct delineate ethical behaviour from other types of rule-based actions in that they are based on foundations of moral values identifiable to a particular culture or social group (Ransome, 2013). For a social science researcher, Silverman (2013) highlights two reasons why ethical issues are foregrounded: the researcher is seeking to analyse personal perceptions and beliefs and secondly, the researcher often delves into sensitive subject matter (Silverman, 2013). The British Educational Research Association (BERA) provides guidelines specifically for the educational research domain. BERA place the onus of responsibility on the researcher to ensure that ethical principles are adhered to when engaging participants in research projects (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). They set out five principles to conducting ethical research: minimising harm, respecting autonomy, protecting privacy, offering reciprocity, and treating people equitably. Furthermore, they suggest that the researcher will apply situated judgements on the weight applied to each of these five principles. Ethical issues may arise from any stage of the research project, not just at the point of access.

3.11.2 Consent from participants

Approval was sought and received to conduct the fieldwork from the University of Lancaster Research Ethics Committee. In accordance with the guidelines issued by the university, a number of pieces of information were shared with potential participants in the form of a detailed participant information sheet, shared via email in the first instance, and then in hard copy for face to face interviews. Participants' confidentiality was assured by completion of a participants' consent form. This form, signed by both me and the participant, was completed once the accompanying participant information sheet had been shared.

The detailed participant information sheet summarised the aims of the research, the background to the project, and the uses to which the data would be put.

3.11.3 Data protection and participant anonymity

The data collected and storage protocols complied with the Data Protection Act 1998. Timescales for maintaining data were advised to the participants as part of the detailed participant information sheet. Electronic data is stored in a secure electronic file store. Access to this data is limited to the researcher. Audio recordings were taken from the interviews, these will be destroyed within 12 months of completion of this research project.

In relation to ensuring anonymity, the Ethics Research Committee considered this project to be low risk. To protect anonymity, I used a coding system in place of names and I also used generic job titles in the data presentation so as not to reveal identities of those giving of their time. This anonymising is

also extended to the institutions themselves. Commercially confidential data was shared with the researcher and if any data were to be misrepresented this could result in licences being revoked for the TNE projects in the country of delivery.

3.12 **Summary**

This chapter sets out the research design informed by my critical realist perspective, building on a realist ontology, enabling the application of theory to practice sites through a re-counting of experiences from participants identified for the study. A number of critical decisions were made in the sampling strategies, selection of the analytical framework and research methodologies

The research design used a qualitative approach involving collective case study approach, using semi-structured interviews to uncover the perceived social realities as the project is produced and re-produced by its members. The theoretical framework adopted, practice architectures, situates this study in the context of the institution as entity and affords more detailed analysis of practices as they are enacted at the local level. Practices and policy enactments are structured by documentation as well as organisational structures, therefore their inclusion is important to the analytical framework.

The data gathered from 6 sites was then analysed using a framework methodology, as this stage needed a systematic approach to the data, this method provides constant comparison of the data. The quality of research was also considered concluding with attention paid to ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 will present the data referencing the terminology and concepts of practice architectures.

Chapter 4: Data presentation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data (including both texts and interview data) from the six universities that formed this study. The practices within the site ontology of the university are considered from the perspectives of the participants and are used as a scaffolding for understanding the context of the TNE project.

The narratives illuminate the sayings, doings and relatings of the participants and the TNE project as it is co-constructed and co-constituted as individuals and groups work together. The chapter foregrounds how the TNE project is conceptualised, enabled and constrained within the institution, as presented through the narrative and textual evidence. Participant quotes build conceptualisations of the TNE project.

The chapter is framed through the concepts that became apparent through the coding phases of the data. The presentation of the data references, and is organised by, the concepts of practice architectures. All data has been anonymised.

The chapter is structured by the organising concepts of practice architectures and is set out as follows:

- Forms of understanding – foregrounding the cultural discursive arrangements

- Modes of action – foregrounding the material economic arrangements
- Ways of relating – foregrounding the social political arrangements

4.2 **Forms of understanding**

4.2.1 How the TNE project is conceptualised by different actors

The language of TNE was understood to be able to achieve many different things in each of the universities, and within the universities themselves, different people understood different purposes. This by itself is probably unsurprising, as the literature (See Chapter 2) portrays a fragmented scene with many possibilities and differentiated interpretations of purpose. Perhaps more interestingly, TNE was understood very differently within the bounds of each of the universities, and across the workgroups.

The Project Leaders across the six sites viewed TNE as an innovation, a strategic collaboration to leverage wider benefits and positioning for the future. The project leader's standpoint conceptualised TNE primarily not as a standalone teaching programme and they went to great lengths to ensure the initiative was not viewed as an income generating opportunity. TNE was articulated by the project leader as an action that brought benefits beyond a straightforward transactional exchange of a programme delivered for a fee. They perceived the activity as offering a platform to achieve greater reward for the faculty rooted in sustainability.

The TNE project was viewed as a multidimensional activity that would leverage the more valued objective of building international research

collaborations, building bridges with their partners and drawing lines of concordance across research agendas with their international partners.

> *they [our international partners] are very strong and we are very strong as an institution and particularly in this subject so that was sort of quite an easy thing to say back to my institution this was really a good way to engage in research activities the real driver was that - because the model we came up with meant this was a real opportunity to develop a strategic link (PL1)*

> *We saw the programme as something long-term and to be honest, we couldn't really see how we were going to make money from this. It was part of a wider strategy for us. (PL3)*

The TNE teaching programme was perceived as secondary for the partner relationship objectives, it had to be pursued in order to achieve other goals. TNE was expressed as forming a pillar of the wider strategy with significantly longer-term objectives. This strategy was about leveraging access to other parts of the collaboration that had yet to be established. TNE allowed the university to establish credentials with their international partner as a global university and also with international audiences: governments, academics and students.

This powerful language of reflecting a profile as a global university was used to populate the idea within their home university. The project leaders were clear to ensure the programme was perceived by their institution leaders as a strategic collaboration, with the long-term objective of building research links. It was never presented as a solus operandi of teaching (PL1, PL2, PL3, PL4, PL5, PL6) but the activity would be used to encourage the building of a relationship that would then seed the growth of research activity. The TNE partnerships were an opportunity to expose the faculty to new ways of

working, alongside equally high standing partners, and importantly allowing the UK institution to gain profile within the foreign national context for the international collaboration.

For the institution leader, the focus was placed around the safeguarding of institutional reputation, and the comprehension that delivery of a UK award on a distant campus required careful management if their university was not to become the next casualty to be exposed in a newspaper column on poor practices:

> *If the faculty is driving this, then we needed to be sure this was not going to damage the university and of course that makes sense cos with all the other faculties, the last thing we want is for this initiative to damage reputation as a whole and for them to do this badly. (IL4)*

The institution leaders' conceptualisations for TNE further grew out of the need to align the activity closely with the institution's mission, whether as an institution aiming to address global challenges through ambitious research collaborations or to be perceived as an institution with a global role in the world. The teaching programme element was not articulated as the principal conduit able to address the institution's global role on this world stage or as holding the power to build the reputation of the institution. This was left to other elements of the collaboration: the high value pursuit of research partnerships and also the status gained in the international environment through endorsement by international governments.

TNE was referenced as providing a global talent pipeline, as a feeder onto the domestic base. In some circumstances, TNE was understood as having the potential to extend an opportunity for international students to access world-

class lecturers (IL2), but this was not described as an explicit aim for the TNE projects for those institutions that formed a part of this study.

Institution reputation went hand in hand with the quality agenda, but they were keen to ensure that this was understood as the ultimate responsibility of the project leader.

> *to our credit we have really placed a lot of emphasis on quality assurance, I guess from a consumer's perspective and that is good (IL4)*
>
> *Actually I think we are on top of this – if I look at it from the UK side – usually the QAA stuff and down to the operational stuff – the Dean for Learning and Teaching then we have free flow of that information, it is all sent out to the people who are involved in quality and programme delivery (IL3)*

Sustainability of the programme was also critical to the Institution Leader's decision-making process. TNE was considered to be a long-term project, requiring careful management in the set-up phases and considerable investment of time and resourcing in the long term (IL1, IL2, IL3, IL4, IL5, IL6). Buy-in within the faculty was important – their role was to ensure that micro local structures were in place to ensure short to medium delivery of the programme. There was an acute understanding that where a travelling teaching model was deployed, then this must be negotiated and agreed within the faculty.

For the international office, the conceptualisation of TNE was probably the most sophisticated in terms of articulating potential to be derived from the TNE programme. There were clear understandings of how this activity has powerful connotations to achieve what appeared as more distant objectives:

With this programme, we are starting to secure a really interesting offer for the university. Getting it right is so important as social media and the traditional press are always keen to see a good project go wrong. (ID4)

TNE gives us the chance not only to expose faculty and teaching staff to new cultures, new ways of working, but it also offers to the chance to reflect back into the faculty to question how things can change and become more global in our thinking (ID5)

The international office recognised the need and the range of benefits attributed to their university being involved in this activity. Their appreciation for the action was articulated in terms of how the project was externalised and perceived by international stakeholder audiences and delivering TNE reflected the institutions commitment to the almost universally used concept of the global university:

We say it in our corporate texts but having the evidence to show influential people – partner universities, politicians and ministry officials is a step in the right direction. We are a university that is not only fortunate to have a deep history, be we are also looking to the future and we are innovating. (IPM6)

Interestingly, this group of respondents also articulated TNE beyond its conceptualisation within a silo of international activities and its fit with the university as a whole that this is not necessarily an isolated pursuit but should be part of the consideration of the whole university:

For me, TNE is critical. We are refreshing our international strategy and the debate for me is as a provocation to my colleagues: in an age of TEF, in an age where NSS is so important and where REF is becoming more impact driven – should we be focusing our efforts more on those domestic activities or prioritising international ones? (IL6)

It was also perceived as a positive action rooted in partnership and collaboration and also demonstrated the diversification of the universities' delivery model as a way the university was responding to changes in market

conditions and competition. Although TNE was at odds with international offices' targets to recruit international students to the domestic campus, the activity was not seen as competing with this agenda (ID5, IL6). There was an understanding that the students who chose to pursue the TNE programme were not the same students as those who chose to travel, this was a distinct audience and their value as long-term ambassadors for their UK institution was considered important.

For the tutor, the TNE programme was rooted in pedagogy and the academic pursuit of ensuring a rich student experience through relevant and culturally sensitive curriculum (T1, T2, T3, T5, T6). What was striking was that no tutor shared the same broader positive conceptualisation as the project leader, the institution leader or the international office. Their view was committed to the teaching elements of the collaboration, they acted apart from the overall activity. When asked about the purpose of the programme, responses were significantly different from those set out by the project leader, and at odds with other views:

> *We are doing this for widening participation reasons, reaching out to students who wouldn't ordinarily have the opportunity to study on our programmes (T2)*

There was a great deal of scepticism and cynicism when they were asked to consider the objectives for the TNE project and rationale as to why their institution was embarking on this work:

> *I just think of it as the university finding another way of making money quite frankly, I see that as the sole motivation (T1)*

These views were diametrically opposed to the rest of the institution and were consistently so across all of the tutors interviewed, they all held the same independent view of the programme, uninformed by any of the wider negotiations. There was a tangible sense of disgruntlement and abandonment with some tutors as having to get on with this most critical of functions:

> *In the beginning we were told it was up to us when we travel to teach. We were all a bit sceptical but it was left entirely up to us because nobody has paid any attention to it so we - the other people who teach on the course - decide when we want to go based on our other commitments and mostly we decide on what needs to be taught (T1)*

The personal experience and reward were positives and the tutors reported many positive personal aspects accrued to their involvement. Tutors expressed favourable life changing experiences from their involvement in the programme, working with international students, gaining deep cultural appreciations for distinctive learning and teaching environments. Although their participation meant that, if they were employed through the flying faculty model, then their lifestyles were significantly impacted. They also described limited opportunities to extend these positive personal learning outcomes within their domestic institution and if they wanted to get on with their career, they would have to look elsewhere beyond the faculty and even beyond the university.

4.2.2 The TNE project – A shared vision?

The respondents were asked to provide their view about whether an institutional shared vision existed for the TNE project. All claimed their

institution as the location for such a shared vision, however, the respondents all presented a different interpretation of purpose and rationale for engagement in the activity. From the fundamental beginnings of terminology, differences of opinion shed light on a fractured action. The terminology of TNE was perceived as a source of confusion and differing interpretations across the institution:

> *A lot of people confuse it with international student recruitment, they don't have a clear idea. If I use the term TNE outside a very small group of people most don't know what it is, it is not well known or well understood (ID4)*

The definition used by the tutors was grounded in a discourse that foregrounded the pedagogical element of the activity. They made no reference to partnership, co-creation or joint working in order to accomplish the TNE project. Reference was made to potential for "*cultural blending*" (T5), but this was perceived as incidental, and certainly was not understood as a part of the process.

For the project leaders, TNE was a strategic development, that would help them to realise the more valued activity of research collaborations, as well as build a sustainability to their portfolio of activities as a faculty. For the Institution leader, TNE was considered in far loftier, idealistic terms, and was understood as an activity in the toolbox of internationalisation that had the "*power to build two-way bridges*" (IL6) and allow the UK institution to work in two directions with not just movement to the UK institution of students, but also outwards for academics and researchers to the international partner

institution. Their view was also heavily rooted in the negative pitfalls that had to be avoided: reputational damage, quality and rankings.

For the IL6, their miscomprehension was more fundamental when questioned about why their university was involved:

> *That is the million-dollar question and I am glad that this interview is highly confidential (IL6)*

The return on the programme for the UK institution was considered low economic value but there was a high price to pay in the form of a hit to the university's reputation if they were to extricate themselves from the programme. This was considered a partnership so deeply interwoven across other activities and actions, other than the TNE project.

For the same programme, the International support staff alluded to a separation of the TNE programme from other activities with their partner:

> *If you are thinking about capturing how we work with the partner institution – that is very different from how we deal with the TNE programme. (IPM6)*

This lack of shared vision may not in itself be considered as problematic as many of the responses could be understood as complementary. IL3 held the view that:

> *those differing priorities are not necessarily in conflict but in other projects they can be and I don't think it's problematic for different groups in the university to be driven by different things but provided there is sufficient overlap or complementarity between those drivers. (IL3)*

However, the responses of a differentiated vision also laid bare schisms and gaps in concordance that lead to the exclusion of populations within the

domestic institution workgroup. These differences also hinted at the bumpy ride for the development of the TNE project, as I will go on to explain in the next section.

The TNE project was fundamentally different for the tutors. The project leaders and the professional services, the TNE project was about acknowledging that "*waiting for students to turn up in our lecture rooms*" (ID4) was not satisfactory. The project leaders and institutional leaders also had a strong held belief that this vision to internationalise the institution was shared across the organisation. This was evident across the upper hierarchies and leadership factions, however, the tutors involved in delivering the programme considered the primacy for engagement as income generation with very limited ambition beyond this objective. Their responses revealed lines of cynicism for the development, considering it no more than an adjunct activity, supplementary and not essential.

4.3 **Modes of action**

4.3.1 TNE workgroups

The TNE programme created newly configured spaces within the universities. These spaces were occupied by workgroups, some formal, some informal. The TNE project required new members of staff: project managers, tutors and in some cases TNE support roles within a collaborative partnerships team who brought with them new discourses and networks. And eventually, new regulations and structures came into existence. TNE diversified the faculty

and central university profile as the associated workgroups brought new networks and activities together.

The TNE workgroups are configured initially on a temporal basis in order to satisfy the development needs in the short term. Workgroups were then configured on a more permanent basis to serve the purposes of ongoing oversight for the programmes.

The workgroups associated with TNE were described as extensive in the university. They came into existence as the task presented by the TNE project requires specific resolution. Existing workgroups within the institution centred around for example, new domestic programme approval or other international activities, including student recruitment, were not able to respond to the specifics of the TNE programme, prevailing practices were stretched too far.

TNE required the combination of a different set of practices as a unique set of challenges were presented in search of a solution to a geographically distant problem. These issues were unique as they were rooted in a distinctive intercultural environment and exposed the university to new types of risk and reputational hazards, some of which required a business response:

> *we bought additional expertise from the Big 4 professional services companies, we needed to bring in knowledge from outside of the [academic] sector – to advise us on for example tax and how to move funds around. (PL2)*

The members of the workgroup specifically attempted to contain the terminology of “business” to the establishment phases of the programme. The business discourse did not seep into other parts of their explications of the

TNE project. The lines of responsibility from outside of the faculty was clearly drawn:

> *You don't want to lose money – the key thing for us as a university was to cover costs and that is the responsibility for the faculty not the university. (ID5)*

TNE workgroups provided support for the development of TNE within the institution and to give it visibility:

> *We tried to establish a project group, and with this programme, there was certainly sufficient scale to merit a focused group. We then convened a series of work-streams across the institution (IL3)*

Depending on the history within the institution and existing knowledge and structures gained from previous TNE endeavours, the TNE workgroups already existed. They were populated with some willing contributors to the activity: the international office cadre provide a crucial advocacy role.

The workgroups were also the location for tensions and challenges:

> *The biggest challenges came from the quality assurance people and the approval processes: they provisionally wanted to know quite sceptically how we were going to deliver the equivalent experience and to what extent that would be compromised (PL3)*

Some of the tensions were considered welcome challenges to the project and ensured the programme leaders addressed the more challenging elements such as the QA guidelines.

Challenges in collaborative working within the institution were also pitched at communication strategies and the need to ensure effective communications were acknowledged as critical however, no-one expressed a clear view on what effective communications might look like.

> *I don't know how things would be better if people did talk more. We all assume that if everyone talked more it would solve problems, but I don't actually know that because it just doesn't happen. (T2)*

The workgroups were not established with a broad representation from other, what were described as the "*more hidden departments*" (ID4), for example, assessment and library services. However, relationships with these other departments and expertise from within the institution was considered critical "*to make good TNE happen"* (PL2):

> *I think where it is more of a difficult proposition is selling those benefits into both the academics and the professional services because good TNE requires good QA teams good registry teams well aligned regulations you need the support of IT services, library and people like that and a lot of them don't see this activity as core to their work (ID4)*

Relationships with academic peers were considered important in order to make things happen, and these relationships also extended upwards to ensure the most senior leadership was on board.

The workgroups were populated principally by faculty and academic leaders, and senior institutional leadership (the exception of UKHEP4 and 6). The rationale given for the closed membership was the need to ensure this was an academic-owned project:

> *there were collaborators in other parts of the university but for internationalisation we have a small group that are very knowledgeable of international work and the people who support these kind of activities is very much seen as embedded in the academic areas as opposed to too top down and I think that helped – this was about the faculty and not about TNE it just happens to be delivered transnationally (PL2)*

The project leaders sought support from informal networks within their institutions. Existing experience and expertise were uncovered in other departments. Peer knowledge and capabilities were shared in informal

environments. There were occasions where the introduction of a different voice into the process either within the university or on occasion outside of the university (IPM6, ID4), this, led to a questioning of accepted processes and procedures within their own institution. In this way the TNE project opened up the space to question and lead to adaptation of existing practices:

> *We learned a very big lesson when trying to implement the joint programme – we eventually recognised it as a tool to improve our internal processes and quality procedures. This project enhanced our internal procedures and processes. It was a tool to make our thinking and internal processes line up. It highlighted the need for staff development (IL2)*

Extended networks outside of the formal frameworks provided a rich space for mutual understanding and allowed the project leader to make sense of what was happening around them and why they were being asked to complete certain tasks.

The transnational elements of the TNE project almost always remained outside of the mainstream university committee structures. The TNE projects had their own trajectory or were discussed within the international committees' structures. The meeting with partners when they visit the UK university was extended to potential researchers to discuss new research collaborations; but beyond this, there was a separation from the university. The TNE project had a proxy presence, dealt with as an additional agenda item in regular committee meetings.

4.3.2 Leadership of the TNE project

The TNE project leaders articulated the need for their own strong management and visionary perspectives for the collaboration as they presented the project to their peers and hierarchies within the university.

Peripheral to the constituted workgroups, the dominant voice was open hostility expressed as a narrative of failure. It was suggested TNE was not an activity that a research-intensive institution would or should pursue (HEPs 1, 2, 3, 4):

> *when we set this up, I have to be completely honest, there was an awful lot of scepticism at central university … of why are you doing this? Why on earth are you doing this? This is going to fail. (PL1)*
>
> *there were a lot of issues of persuading our Senate that this was this was the right thing to do, persuading colleagues that this was really not what we had done previously, but a new a much-needed model (PL3)*

Consistent across all sites of investigation for this study was concordance that the only effective method of gaining traction within the institution was to seek endorsement from the Vice-Chancellor:

> *when we were developing this, this was with a different Vice-Chancellor we have recently changed so what I want to say is there has been a big transition in viewpoint since we got the new Vice-Chancellor and we got their backing (IL1)*

This endorsement provided credibility to the action and helped to assuage organisational anxiety and ambiguities. This was also critical for relationships with Senate and made the sceptics either sit up and take note or desist.

"This was a really big deal for us to go to this level of delivery" (IL5) hinting at a chasm that had been leapt to reach the end goal. Once the Vice-Chancellor support had been secured, successful project leaders took a consultative and

collaborative approach to negotiate the TNE object through the university systems, structures, rules and artefacts.

The implications for the leadership role were significant. Support from the breadth and depth of the institution only fell into place if the most senior authority had publicly endorsed the development of the project. All saw a significant change in their endeavour if the Vice-Chancellor backed the project.

> *There is now generally good consensus across the leadership team with taking TNE forward, the leadership team understand the benefits that TNE can have on the institution both in financial terms and non-financial benefits, but we needed to secure the Vice-Chancellor's support to move forward. (IL3)*

Leadership styles revealed an element of maverick along with ambition in the tone and language used by project leaders.

> *This was a real opportunity to do things differently, it was about the sustainability of my faculty, an opportunity to recruit new staff … with central university it was very much us having to go to them to resolve things (PL3)*

Project leaders (PL1, PL2) navigated their own routes within the university, choosing to work with those who were constructive to the discussion, the negativity and scepticism driving them to work outside of the formal structures. This also led to position taking for these project leaders, shaped by their perception of what might best promote their agenda and what would contribute to their status and help with developing new international networks beyond the boundaries of the domestic institution.

A particular type of leadership was suggested as necessary to make the TNE collaboration happen, requiring not only a strong, personal and emotional connection to the TNE project coupled with good working relationship with their international counterparts but also an ability to build credibility and networks within the domestic institution.

There were many layers to the leadership role considered necessary to make things happen. The programme leaders were involved in behind the scenes manoeuvring, and pre-empting challenges:

> *I was expecting to be challenged on all kinds of things, and I was prepared for the fight, but it just didn't happen. For example, I was expecting a real challenge on the choice of partnering with China – ethics, human rights records, but nothing. (PL3)*

Acting as a conduit between faculty structures and using skills of influence and on occasion, as one project leader described as playing one person off against another to get the best possible outcome. The project leader played a strong agentic role to making things happen. They expressed an approach to marshalling the TNE project through university systems and structures that suggested them acting as a resource to others as well as knowing how to access resources.

4.3.3 TNE is a skillset learned along the way

Apart from those who held formal designations to develop TNE within the institution, for example within the international partnerships team, most found themselves working with the TNE project as a result of their own ambitions within their faculty.

Typically, the project leaders were senior faculty at the domestic university with oversight for the programme. Knowledge and management of the partnership workings were augmented through regular visits to the overseas location.

The data appears to demonstrate a lack of pre-conceived understanding and know-how of what it means to be a TNE project leader, and the set of skills and know-how required to implement a TNE project were explicated as skills that were acquired during the process, rather than learned from specific practices or previous involvement in TNE:

> *This is only a small part of my day job, it was very time-consuming at the outset, but I was interested enough to try to make it happen, I could see great potential with this, and it is not just about us expecting those students to come to us, we have to think differently and work differently (PL6).*

Individuals leading the developments expressed limited exposure to TNE before their involvement (PL1, PL2, PL3, PL4). This suggests that the role of the project leader had greater power as a discourse, rather than through a specific set of practices and skills learned during their organisational life.

This notion is further confirmed as some programme leaders chose to work outside of the designated institutional structures, as the structures were considered to be unsupportive and obstructive to achieving the faculty's goals of diversification for their portfolio and ensuring sustainability of the faculty.

> *We do have a collaborations department, but we lead this within the faculty, we have enough experience and we can draw on knowledge from other faculties to supplement (PL2)*

For the project leader (PL1, PL2, PL3, PL4, PL5) it was critical to use their own authorities and leadership techniques to achieve stability for the programme. The endeavour began as the individual's task of socialising the notion with senior members of the institution. The TNE projects were presented to Senate only after a series of involved and intricate negotiations had taken place to "*socialise the idea*" (PL3). The operation of power dynamics in the discourse used by the project leader made clear that the TNE project was subject to blunt challenges and strained relations within the hierarchies. The role of the project leader was one of defending the decision to proceed with the TNE programme (PL1, PL2, PL3). Project leaders found themselves holding a pivotal role in amongst the dissenting voices, suggesting their institutions operated a distributed leadership model within the institution as they were able to proceed with the endeavour. The culture of collegiality and seeking support from their peers before the notion was presented to the '*cold audience of the senate'* (PL3) was used for the benefit of ensuring a positive outcome.

> *I knew "X" in a different department had already done this, so I was able to talk to him to find out how he did it, what were the quick wins and what were the pitfalls. I used to meet him regularly for a coffee so I could pick his brains. (PL3)*

Project leaders needed to grow their own networks and understand how and when to bring other professionals into the loop. This aptitude proved to be hugely important for the success of the project:

> In advising on curriculum development, I had to understand how this worked – I was asking questions of my own system that I had previously taken for granted. (*PL4)*
>
> *I needed to understand how my institution worked before I could get anything done – I had to build my networks within the university, I spoke*

to people I knew who already had experience in this area and, informally, we shared ideas and tactics. But it was all about knowing how the systems worked to make sure I could find the shortcuts and to get the outcomes I wanted. (PL1)

The project leaders' hierarchy of objectives was to establish their institution for recognition by international governments, to grow research collaborations, the objective of the TNE project was subordinated to these other objectives (PL1, PL2, PL3, PL4, PL5, PL6). However, they acknowledged the need to deal with the TNE project effectively if they were to positively position their faculty and university in the international environment to attract recognition from international governments.

4.4 **Ways of relating**

4.4.1 Organisational structures and policies

As the TNE project was socialised within the university, the pathways for the project leader established the connections into the existing committees and structures (PL1, PL2, PL3, PL4). These pathways had to be uncovered and the institutional rules and regulations in the form of documentation and protocols were written in retrospect or in some cases, in parallel to the TNE project. Written policies were considered porous and open to challenge.

The formal institution requirements of developing TNE, including quality assurance, assessment processes and registration provided the structure needed to develop the TNE project and these formal requirements also revealed a sense of '*stumbling through*'(PL3) the processes. There was little

appetite to seek fundamental change to the internal organisational structures even if these were thought to be not wholly supportive:

> *We knew the programme had to meet certain thresholds to be a viable programme, but each process introduced its own set of requirements that had to be met. We wanted to ensure we met those thresholds to be able to get on with the more strategic elements of the collaboration (IL4)*

The stage of development of the organisational structures varied from institution to institution depending on the maturity of other TNE projects that had been managed previously. Of the institutions in this study three locations had specific TNE policy (4, 5, 6).

Developing the TNE project was also considered as an action that would impact on the home institution. External forces, such as international ranking systems also formed a part of the discussions and opinion setting of leadership. Collaborating with the 'right' partner was critical. The exposure to potentially damaging rankings was often used in Senate discussions.

4.4.2 TNE and institution documentation

Pursuit of an internationalisation agenda was endorsed by the universities, all referring to grand terminology in their mission statements: "*global university*"; "*responsive to global challenges*"; "*educating global citizens*"; and the desire to be a "*part of a global society*", appearing in corporate documentation.

The corporate strategy documents did not refer to TNE as a part of the internationalisation process. Only one of the sites in the corporate documentation referred to TNE where it was described as "*adding a dimension to a global university*". In the other 5 sites TNE was only alluded to

in corporate documentation as "*academic collaboration*", "*multi-dimensional partnerships*", "*international relationship", "programmes with an international dimension".*

The TNE projects were obscured in the external facing corporate literature and couched in terminology of more strategic agendas as*:* "*strong traditions of extending our reach internationally*", "*prestigious partners", "international alliances"* and *"work with our partners to further our education, research, development and innovation network".*

The documentation stirred the TNE partnerships in terms of '*addressing global challenges*' and *'building strategic collaborations'*. Within the internal facing documentation, it was not specified what they wanted to achieve but the messaging was around what the institution did not want:

> *The university did not have a clear view of how it wanted to engage, for example, my university has always stated it did not want to have a campus, but this initiative wasn't a campus, it was driven by our desire to engage and get a foothold and a way of expanding our portfolio within our school (PL3)*

Reinforcing these messages, the discourse used in formal documents and statements, as well as by the leadership was precise. Their mission is to engage globally and a solus operandi teaching model would not achieve the 'type' of international engagement they were looking for. According to their literature, these universities strive to engage with the global challenges through research informed teaching. The fundamental norms and values of the institution were not felt to be fully compatible with the pursuit of the teaching programme alone:

I presented it as an innovative educational partnership that is embedding research-led education directly alongside research [PL3]

As these projects developed, the project leaders were finding new ways to purpose the collaborations. New modes of engagement developed as spin-out actions from the primary project of the TNE programme, beyond this there were moves into engagement with other international universities in the same geographic location as the primary partner and others were pursuing an enterprise agenda and engaging with industry. Official documents did not capture or convey these messages of innovation and further development.

4.5 **Summary**

In this chapter, I have organised the data gathered from six sites from semi-structured interviews along with the policies and strategy documentation into a theoretically informed order. This chapter shows how the data are ordered through the lens of practice architecture and framework analysis. It has been ordered into the basic concepts of practice architectures: forms of understanding, modes of action and ways of relating. The data offers insight into the social interactions and encounters along the TNE project's trajectory within the university.

I commenced the chapter with forms of understanding and the notions of how the TNE project is conceptualised by the participants. This revealed some of the shared understandings and also differences in understanding of the TNE project and what it might achieve either as a shared vision or a fragmented set of ideals. I then moved on to set out the modes of action, or how the TNE project is operationalised by the workgroups associated with the TNE project,

with special focus, as informed through data analysis of the leadership techniques and the specialist skillset required to drive TNE forward. Finally, I looked at the ways of relating within the TNE project, the specific material frameworks established in the institutions, the structures (including committees) and policies along with the documentation aspect of the TNE project. Throughout this data ordering process and presentation, it became clear that arrangements within the institutions are shaped by the intersubjective spaces, prefiguring the TNE project practices as it is entangled within the organisation cultures.

In the next chapter, the theoretical framework of practice architectures will be applied, foregrounding the arrangements of the cultural discursive, material economic and social political as they are locating within the site ontology of the “higher status” university, and addressing the question as to what enables and / or constrains the TNE project.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the practices within the institution that together form TNE practice architectures. It draws on empirical data gathered from the informants and relevant literature to build a deeper understanding of the TNE project. The themes identified build towards providing answers to the research questions: by investigating the regularities in the ways the TNE project is conceptualised within the practice architectures, as explicated through the intersubjective spaces, as practices are secured through the sayings, doings and relatings of the practice architectures. Furthermore, it examines how these TNE practices are conceived through the ecologies of practice within the institution setting, through the enabling and constraining elements with regards to structures and strategies.

The chapter builds on the themes identified in the data presentation chapter and uses informants' quotes to further explicate the construction of the practice architectures. It presents the findings of the intersubjective spaces of semantic space, physical space and social habit and further explores the tensions that exist that either enable or constrain the TNE project.

The chapter is organised into four sections. First I will identify elements of TNE practice from a practice understanding, with the intention of establishing what may be considered as practice regularities across the six sites. The headings are derived from the themes as they emerged from the data from

each of the six universities that formed a part of the study and were extracted during first and second order coding and categorisation.

Secondly, taking these practice elements, a meta-analysis of the TNE project within the practice architecture analyses the tensions that enable and constrain the TNE project as a collaborative endeavour; an institution-wide endeavour is analysed through both the collective and individual approaches used to secure the TNE project. From an analysis of the practice arrangements, it is the material economic that presents as the dominant arrangement particularly in the initial stages, suggesting the TNE project within the home institution is modelled as a project of compliance.

Thirdly, individual leadership of the TNE project is examined and its criticality to the TNE project. This element of leadership is critical in light of the collective actions that show the contribution to acceptance and adopting the TNE project rests with the individual leader.

Finally, the practice architectures that bind the TNE project is examined, in light of their links with other parts of the institution. Through a summary analysis of these arrangements, this makes more visible the practice architectures that have conditioned the TNE project.

5.2 **Practice architectures in focus**

The analysis of the TNE project attempts to show the three kinds of arrangements that comprise the practice architectures: cultural-discursive, social-political, and material-economic. Quotes are used from the empirical

data to define the practice architectures found within the intersubjective spaces between TNE practices and institutional culture. Each section explores the factors and tensions that exist that either enable or constrain the TNE project.

As TNE gains traction as an international activity within the research-intensive university, an understanding of these practices, the practice ecologies and practice architectures explicates the regularities in conceptualisations within site ontologies (Schatzki 2006).

Site ontology is understood to be "*a bundle of enmeshed social practices at a particular locale*" (Schatzki, 2005), bringing this notion to the analysis, it is possible to navigate between the pivotal agentic role played by the project leader and individual accounts of practice and their relations with their social surroundings. A site ontological approach offers an understanding of how a particular process develops within the institution. This process, or as it is referred to in the practice architectures literature, the '*happeningness'* of the institutionalised process illuminates how it unfolds at the site.

Through an understanding of the organisation viewed principally as a social phenomenon where practices play out through what Kemmis (2014) refers to as 'happenings' of practice, this study takes a 'site ontological' approach (Schatzki, 2002) navigating between individual accounts as they interpret the world around them and the broader societal accounts of social systems, discourse and materialities (Schatzki, 2005)

Practice architectures provide a framework for the components of practice and, how practices are interconnected and relate together, with other sets of practices or practice ecologies. The theory of practice architectures also allows reflection on specific practices through an analysis of the enabling and constraining elements encountered as the TNE project is accomplished through the institution.

Practices are located in an environment and are specific and idiosyncratic to that particular site. They are a part of the immediate surrounding landscape and the traditions, time and space activity that further envelop the practice (Kemmis et al 2014).

An analysis of the practice architectures for TNE requires in the first instance an identification of the main elements of practice that together make up what is recognised as the TNE project. From the data, these elements of practice are made visible in all six sites.

Cultural discursive, social political and material economic arrangements are brought to the fore with varying prominence and influence at different stages in the development of the TNE project. In order to reveal these entangled practices that together form the practice architectures, a deeper investigation is needed to make each of the arrangements more visible.

An investigation of TNE as collaborative social practice is significant as the literature suggests that the results of such an endeavour within the institution may leverage new practices and innovations. However, there are also suggestions in the literature that, depending on the dominant culture of the

institution, this may lead to a fragmented response, whereby the institution is slow to build on learning and new exposures.

5.3 **Identifying practices of the TNE project**

Through the first and second order analysis of the empirical data from each of the six universities, component parts of the practice architectures of TNE became apparent. Identifying these elements of practice across all six sites allows for a clearer understanding of the practices of transnational education. Together, these practices form a structured notion of the TNE project and also set out a schematic for the arrangements of the TNE practice observable in the empirical data (Pennanen et al., 2016).

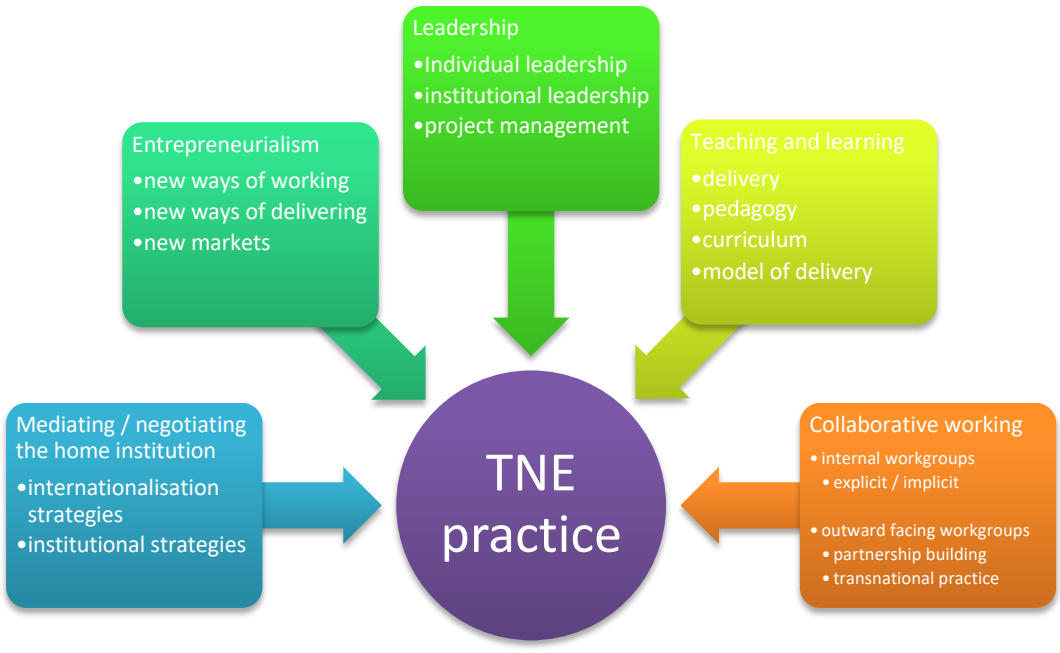

Figure 12 Summary of TNE practices

Five categories of practice became apparent across all six sites as the most clearly pronounced and repeated elements of practice: collaborative working; the TNE teaching programme; leadership; entrepreneurialism and mediating

within the home institution. These categories are illustrated in Figure 12. Each forming part of TNE practice. The diagram simplifies the sites and shows a linear relationship with the TNE practice, in reality, each element is dependent on the others and interacts with each of the other practices in different ways. This next section explores in more detail the TNE practice elements identified in the data. See Appendix 3 for a summary of the data analysis and coding.

5.3.1 Collaborative working

The TNE project is a socially constructed activity, dependent on social processes to develop the transnational relationships as well as internal relationships within the home institution (Bolton, 2018). Bordogna (2018) draws on analyses based on business-type relationships of partnership activities. She cites partnerships as socially structured and dependent on an evolution of supporting actions necessary for the TNE project to develop over time (Bordogna, 2018).

As was discussed in the previous chapter, individuals in the six sites formed explicit groups to negotiate the TNE project. They also formed tacit groups made up of colleagues from other departments to share similar experiences, skills and knowledge of interactions with the institutional structures. These internal workgroups across the institution work towards ensuring compliance with the universities' codes and practices, so that risks are mitigated, and institutional committee structures are addressed. Collaboration also exists within parts of the extended workgroup, within the faculty, as tutors form their own workgroups to deliver the programmes, designing curriculum and

pedagogies. Externally facing collaborative groups are established to build the partnership with the international partner. This is the critical and unique transnational element to the TNE project where partnership building takes place. It is important to note that the workgroups are engaged as groups and not as individuals in the TNE project and the practices are shaped predominantly by the home institution through their strategies and documentation.

5.3.2 Teaching and learning

This set of practices are located in the teaching and learning of the programme. It is also made up of the artefacts of the university award, the curriculum, the pedagogical practices, and, where a flying teacher model is used, the delivery of teaching to the students at the international location. The TNE programme requires specialist practices to ensure successful delivery of the project. This practice set is critical to the discussion of the TNE project. It forms the basis for the social political arrangements and the material economic arrangements and together comprise a critical component to the practices.

5.3.3 Mediating and negotiating

This is the third category of practice and is located formally in the workgroups and informally as it is embodied in the individuals and workgroups as they negotiate the TNE project through the institutional cultures and strategies. TNE as a practice is located within the internationalisation actions and therefore the institutional strategies of the organisation, and, where they exist,

the TNE strategies. These mediating practices are of significance to the TNE project as it reveals the location of where the tensions occur within the social political arrangements that shape the route the TNE project takes through the institution. The informal groups, or subgroups, also mediate the TNE project outside the formal channels and so influence through cultural discursive arrangements the material economic.

5.3.4 Leadership

Leadership practices are critical in the enactment of the TNE project and are needed to initiate a culture of change and innovation. As the TNE project may be new or small-scale, it is clear from the data that leadership practices are required to support the launching of the project within the institution as well as ensure ongoing development and delivery of the programme. Leadership is embodied within different practitioners and different phases across the lifespan of the endeavour and working in the social political space is influenced through the cultural discursive, as individuals bring their own modalities of leadership to the project.

5.3.5 Entrepreneurialism

The TNE project is an innovation to the institution. Rarely are institutions able to lift an existing TNE project from one location and transplant to another. There are new ways of working to consider across the material economic arrangements, new ways of delivering, new markets and new combinations of activities. Across the six sites, all but one aligned the teaching programme with the desire to build new academic research projects. There is also the

potential to consider commercial partnerships resulting from the TNE project. As an innovation, the TNE project gives the arrangements a new cultural discursive consideration, challenging the existing material economic and social political arrangements.

These elements represent the most obvious components of the TNE project. The practices together form an eco-system within which the practices operate. The practice architecture for TNE practice is the scaffolding that sits around these practices, bound together by the ‘sayings, doing and relatings’.

The analysis that follows locates each of these elements within the site ontologies of the universities, and the balance and tensions between the arrangements are foregrounded through the empirical data and reinforced or otherwise with the extant literature.

5.4 **A meta-analysis of TNE practice architectures**

This section provides a meta-analysis of the practice architectures and also reviews how and to what extent TNE practices, internationalisation practices and institutional practices are interconnected within the institutions. Firstly, this section seeks to identify the regularities across the six sites as to how the TNE project is conceived. Further, it also seeks to identify the differences across these six sites and provides some suggestions on what may be considered learning points of interest to other institutions as they seek to develop the TNE project within their own university.

The TNE programme, institutional and internationalisation cultures are key aspects of the practice ecologies of the TNE project. These ecologies in equal measure enable or constrain the TNE development and delivery. Practice architectures provide the context to explicate university TNE practice cultures through the intersubjective spaces of the ‘sayings’, ‘doings’ and ‘relatings’, where ‘sayings’ are the semantic space interactionally secured through language; ‘doings’ are the physical space and time realised through activity and work; and the ‘relatings’ are secured through the social space realised through power and solidarity. Through an understanding of these ‘sayings’, ‘doings’ and ‘relatings’, not viewed as separate elements, but seen as they hold together to make up the whole sum of the parts – the TNE project, it is possible to build a picture of how the project is enabled or constrained within the organisation.

Sayings doings and relatings together are referred to in the literature as practice architectures. These are made visible by the overall endeavour of the TNE project. An examination of the practice architectures exposes the inherent interconnectivity between them, or their connections between what people say, do and how they relate, and from this we can build a picture of the practices of TNE cultures and how its development is enabled or constrained by the institutional environment and within that, the internationalisation environment.

The location of tensions and intersubjective spaces within the TNE development space are found within the internationalisation cultures and more notably within the institutional cultures. Furthermore, TNE practices are

influenced by internal as well as external forces within this intersubjective space.

5.4.1 The institution in a global environment

University culture does not exist in isolation, but rather domestic and international forces have influenced the ecologies within the university. Internationalisation activities, such as TNE, research collaboration, and student recruitment have become a key aspect of the 21st Century university (Altbach, 2004; Naidoo, 2006; Robertson, 2010). The globalising forces in higher education have influenced the pattern of research collaborations (Adams, 2013) and the opportunities to deliver teaching programmes internationally are made in response to student demand and international institution demand wanting to partner with world leading institutions from UK (Henderson et al. 2017).

Internationalisation has created an opportunity in the practice landscape of the university and has introduced the potential to do things differently (Healey, 2013; Marginson, 2004; Williams et al. 2013). These external opportunities have made significant impact on the institution as new knowledge, skills and resource have been introduced, and structures put in place to deal with these new activities.

Rooted in the historical antecedents to the development of UK international activity: the introduction of student fees in UK universities for international students in the 1980's, followed by a series of direct actions through for example, the GATS World Trade agreement (1997) making education a

tradable commodity, firmly established the potential for a neo-liberal dimension that arguably has shaped the wider internationalisation endeavour (Humfrey, 2011; Olssen & Peters, 2005b; Robertson, 2010).

This environment has set a pathway for UK TNE. UK universities began to prepare models to deliver their programmes internationally from wholly commercial endeavours through to pure educational ventures (Altbach et al, 2013, Furedi, 2010, Robson 2008). The institutional leader at site 3 noted "*we are living in a very competitive environment, there are big new markets opening up and significantly greater competition and greater volatility".* The discourse of UK government policy validates the rationales for TNE within the institution and demonstrates the conception of policy as practice as policy is reproduced within the institution (Heimans, 2012).

The cultural discursive arrangements in these institutions, as it reflects and reproduces the external global and domestic actions, display regularities across the six sites. Only one of the sites in the corporate documentation referred to TNE. It "*added a dimension to a global university*". In the other 5 sites TNE was only alluded to in corporate documentation as "*academic collaboration*", "*multi-dimensional partnerships*", "*international relationship", "programmes with an international dimension".*

The TNE partnerships were obscured in the corporate literature and couched in terminology of more strategic agendas*:* "*strong traditions of extending our reach internationally*", "*prestigious partners", "international alliances"* and

"work with our partners to further our education, research, development and innovation network".

The narrative accounts couched the TNE partnerships in terms of '*addressing global challenges*' and *'building strategic collaborations'*. The external dominant neo-liberal discourse of marketisation was immediately downplayed in the semantics within the cultural discursive arrangements of all six universities. The need to generate income to the UK institution was reduced in the cultural discursive to '*at most, we need to cover costs', 'this is absolutely not about making money'.* Instead, the presiding message of *'sustainability'* was considered to be the anchoring rationale, in contradiction to TNE as an income generating activity (Garrett, 2004). TNE was an opportunity to bring sustainability for the faculty in terms of building global strategic partnerships (Caniglia et al., 2017; Shams, 2016), it was also about diversifying (Drew et. Al 2006). The more ambitious strategy extended to offering their home students the "*opportunity to spend time at the partner institution" (IL5)*, however, for all institutions, this ambition was not yet realised, and work to secure this action was embryonic at best.

These cultural discursive arrangements extended through the internationalisation strategies of the institutions, perceiving the TNE project as stimulating and strengthening the cosmopolitan and outward looking disposition of the faculties. This outward facing approach was set in institution traditions and '*strong international history'*. These international collaborations are not new.

And this was reflected back into the TNE project, the institutional identity, auto-defined as research-intensive institutions translated the TNE project as an activity to leverage research collaborations. This complementary activity was viewed as essential for all six universities that formed this study. An '*unconnected'* (Site 1 FL) teaching partnership was insufficient to gain traction or endorsement within the institutional ecologies. There was an understanding that the TNE project could contribute to this broader institutional cultural discursive arrangement, as the TNE project was not limited to leveraging a teaching partnership arrangement.

The language and semantics used by the faculty leaders from their encounters with the rest of the university shaped the project. The project was not shaped out with the cultural discourse of the institution, but it was necessary to attribute the broader home institution cultural discourse from an early stage to ensure support and endorsement to continue. According to Wittgenstein, language provides a structure that is bound up in everyday practice, words and concepts are fluid and language becomes a game. Meaning is derived from the chosen language and it is not necessarily what is said, but how it is said and the intention (Wittgenstein, 2001). Wording is significant in our understandings of the representations of the arrangements across the 6 universities as the personal experiences and knowledge of those outside of the TNE project are temporarily limited to the scope of their exposure to the TNE project. Depending on the individual's power and influence, these soon become the social political arrangement of the TNE project as it moved forward within the institution.

Global rankings were considered important to the identities of these six institutions and this was recognised as important to preserve this status. Rankings provided another aspect to the cultural discourse arrangements, as the emphasis for many global rankings is research output. International strength was recorded in placings in ranking tables.

The participants viewed China as an essential partner for new research collaborations as this would unlock funding resources, the right partners would give the institutions profile in front of international governments.

The ecologies described in this section affect how the TNE project is shaped by the outside world, the TNE workgroups and the institutional hierarchies and define how individuals who form a part of the TNE project, both formally and informally, are able to relate (Parkes et al. 2014). The TNE project in these institutions has resulted in restrictive social political arrangements and "*heavy duty*" (FL1) physical space of the material economic arrangements as will be analysed in the next section.

5.4.2 TNE is a project of compliance

External accountability is driven directly through the Quality Assurance Agency and the guidelines for collaborative provision. There is also an indirect influence from international league tables. These external policies present a space and capacity for universities to develop detailed and sophisticated internationalisation actions and the TNE programmes.

The language of the TNE project was risk-laden and had potential to damage institutional reputation. This has curtailed the practice landscape for the TNE project within many institutions (McBurnie et. al 2007, Kosmutzky, 2016). *"This is not an international activity that can be entered into without a full understanding of the potential to fail"*. (IL 3). There was an awareness that the institution is only able to ensure a very limited number of high-quality partnerships. At sites 1, 3, 4 and 6, they were in the process of reducing the number of international partnerships, instead wanting to concentrate resources to a '*few select academic partnerships*' (IL1).

This cultural discourse of safeguarding was shared across four of the six sites. The institutional leaders, viewed their roles as safeguarding the institutional reputation (Stafford & Taylor, 2016). As the faculty leaders prepared for delivering the TNE project, it was the material economic arrangements of the institution that presented significant challenges and dominated the practice landscapes. The material economic arrangements, manifest in the processual documentation of the institution and committee structures attempted to ensure the TNE project was subject to detailed scrutiny and compliance.

Regulations and guidance in the form of documentary artefacts and processual documents were considered by faculty leaders to be complex and in many cases burdensome. These arrangements were necessarily at the fore to force the projects into the open.

A number of faculty leaders sought ways to circumnavigate elements of process in what they believed had been intentionally designed to be obstructive and built out of the "*cynicism"* (PL1) towards the international teaching project. Constructed out of the prevailing rules and regulations of the institution, the cultural historic backdrop of the institution shaped the production of these documents.

One faculty leader expressed that their institution '*wanted them to fail'* (FL2). The tensions of negotiating the TNE project in the physical and social intersubjective spaces meant that it was treated as an adjunct activity and the structures were created as obstructive.

The knowledge of the prevailing material economic arrangements within each organisation did not deter the faculty leaders from commencing the TNE project.

In two sites, faculty leaders and teams expressed the material economic arrangements as providing a "*healthy challenge*" (PL4) to the project ensuring review and detailed analysis before the institution engaged in the delivery of the project. However, the process at site 1 was considered to be less than a comprehensive challenge, leaving many aspects of the TNE project under scrutinised. There was an expectation that more challenges would be made around, for example, the cultural political 'fit' with China as a partner and the home institution.

Navigating the TNE project through the material economic arrangement added significantly to the timeframes necessary to achieve the point at which

the TNE project becomes active. The route through the institution architectures was described as a "*rocky path*" and sometimes the route appeared to be opaque "*it wasn't clear who we had to talk to first*".

In two universities, the TNE project was taken outside of the formal institutional material economic arrangements, where faculty leaders felt there was sufficient existing knowledge and skill within the bounds of the faculty team to not require engagement with other parts of the university. Whether these decisions were taken as there was disagreement across the social political arrangements or whether the material economic arrangements were lacking in supporting the TNE project was not clear. Whichever the reason, a subculture was formed in these two institutions with the faculty leader choosing to establish their own expertise within the faculty and without recourse to some elements of the material economic arrangement, most notably the professional services teams.

The cultural discursive arrangements of the wider institution, and more specifically those not directly part of the TNE workgroup, made up of for example, members of Senate and other faculty's staff, were overlaid with tones of caution. Although their involvement was limited and temporal, they still managed a powerful influence over the course of the TNE project. "*We encountered scepticism"*. At Institution 2, they were forced to re-present the TNE project on several occasions to Senate before getting approval.

The social political arrangements of Sites 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were set in institutionalised practice, founded in the familiarity of existing cultural

practices, supporting the notion that organisational identity is slow to adapt (Macdonald 2013, Stensaker 2015, Weerts et al 2014). Huisman (2009) states "*research has also consistently demonstrated how higher education is a sector which is highly institutionalised and resistant to change*".

Faculty leaders who considered themselves to be the drivers to ensuring a successful outcome of the TNE project, expressed trepidation in engaging with the material economic and social political arrangements. The social political arrangements were difficult to grasp, and they did not attempt to change them as they considered these to be part of the institutional practice ecology. This fostered a culture of administrative leadership practices, viewing the process as a series of gates or hurdles.

5.4.3 TNE is an important endeavour

Against this institutional backdrop of dense material economic arrangements rooted in compliance and regulation, it was the faculty workgroup that drove the TNE project across all six sites.

Kemmis et al (2014) suggest that practice architectures are fluid and have the propensity to transform over time. The faculty leaders were able to navigate institutional arrangements at the same time as the partnerships they were developing with their China partner, the material economic arrangements did not deter the TNE project. "*This initiative was really driven by the faculty*" (PL1). PL1 traced a history to the partnership that had shifted from 3+1 to 2+2 to 3+0. He was also aware that his home institution wanted to engage with China, but there was no supporting institutional strategy or vision. This fluidity

offered opportunities for the TNE project to develop in this space. Further, practice architectures reinforce the notion that innovation is affected by social and structural features prevalent in the practitioner's environment (Coburn, 2005; Goodyear et al. 2017). Initially the practice architecture at site 1 were perceived by PL1 as overly restrictive, "*they wanted us to fail" (PL1*). The material economic arrangement 'held together' with processual documentation and Senate's expectation for research-focused international activity, the practice ecologies constrained the TNE practices.

After a lengthy period of mediating the TNE project through the system, and through the cultural discourse, the faculty leader positioned the TNE project as important for reasons of sustainability for the faculty; developing a link with a strategically important partner in China and opening up potential for further innovations for the faculty. These potentials were borne out with an oversubscribed teaching programme in China and new commercial innovations are being realised.

The social political arrangements have been further adjusted over time as the international strategy is now being informed by the faculty, whereas previously these arrangements were not fully connected (PL6). Similar narratives were presented at the other sites: "*it has to be something with a bigger payback*" (IL3) and wanting to be known as "*a high-quality provider of student education in China*" (IL6), the TNE project is an innovative education project, embedding research-led education directly alongside research.

Interpretations of the material economic arrangements from the faculty leaders – about "*winning people over*" (PL2) and through building the new team required to deliver the project, "*was an opportunity to recruit new staff who would bring new ideas*" (PL5)

5.4.4 Fault lines in the workgroups

The TNE workgroup is perceived inconsistently across the 6 sites of practice. Mediating the TNE project through the material economic arrangements highlighted tensions as they arose across the institution. Subcultures, or smaller subsets within the social political arrangements of the faculties appeared, most notably where a flying tutor model was used (Site 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

These tutor subgroups are worthy of further exploration. This subculture was particularly remarkable as the informants from this group shared stories of radically different comprehensions of conceptualisation of the TNE project within their institution as compared to those responsible for leading and shaping the project. The tutors were employed specifically to deliver the TNE programme at the international campus.

These subcultures held very different views to the rest of the institution workgroup, as they work through gaps in perception. The cultural discourse was at odds with the practice ecologies of the organisations: "*we are just left to get on with this ourselves*", "*I have no idea, why the university is doing this, I think it is just another way to make money*", "*I bet when you talk to the institution leaders they will tell you about the terrible way we are treated*", "*this*

is great for my own personal development, but I have no way of engaging with the rest of the faculty or institution". This suggests that trust was weak between this subgroup and the rest of the TNE workgroup. Where trust is understood to be "an individual's belief in a willingness to act on the actions of another" (Lewicki & Wiethoff, 2000, p. 87), their actions did not reflect those of the faculty or the institution beyond that of delivery of the programme. There was no integration of the tutor groups, in 3 sites, the physical arrangements encouraged separation from the rest of the faculty.

Arguably, this group holds the potential to shift the material economic arrangements and provide innovative teaching practices of value to the rest of the organisation (Leask & Carroll, 2011; Leibowitz et al. 2013). However, these groups are overlooked by the TNE workgroup. For both the tutors and the faculty subgroups their transformational approach to developing new practices in internationalisation are limited within the bounds of the subgroups. Their skills and knowledge continue to reside within the workgroup and do not extend beyond that group. As a consequence, their learning and expertise rarely found its way through to the material economic arrangements of the wider institutional culture or the institutional internationalisation strategy.

In contrast, the cultural discursive arrangements from the international professional services team was one of offering expansive potential as they brought language and knowledge honed from continual international facing engagement and informed by a domestic and international debate on the benefits of the project. Individually, they were able to visualise potential expansive possibilities that would contribute directly to an agenda of

sustainability, this highly sought outcome by the faculty leads. The international office professional services were able to contribute to the semantic space to open up the challenge to the rest of the institution to think bigger and to think beyond the transaction of the TNE activity. Individuals in this group introduced challenges to faculty colleagues based on the domestic material economic arrangements, one international director cited the Teaching Excellence Framework as focusing the mind. However, their contribution was not uniformly sought. Even though they provided compelling knowledge to strengthening the international project, this may be viewed as part of the social political arrangement of the institution – the matrix of teams lacked connection and visibility in the practice architectures. This lack of connectivity of third space professionals is borne out in the work of Whitchurch (2013). The potential for change to the cultural discursive was limited and consequently the social political. The intersubjective spaces of physicality, the 'doings' and the 'relatings' were not sufficiently robust or visible against the more dominant backdrop of the protective environment of the Senate or other cross institution groupings.

5.4.5 Individual leadership is critical to a successful outcome

As evidenced in the previous chapter, leadership of the TNE project is most critical in its embodiment in the individual, through the faculty leader's input. This professional leadership is particularly important during the phases of establishing the TNE project. The implementation of the TNE project was most challenging where this was a new activity for the institution and material and economic arrangements were being tested for the first time (UKHEP 1).

At another site, where this activity was part of a more comprehensive portfolio of TNE delivery globally (UKHEP 6), the leadership power was distributed across the workgroup. This model of distributed leadership where several individuals are able to enact strategy was welcomed by those in the TNE workgroup, (Bolden et al., 2012; Bolden et al. 2015). However, the need for a central leader was still required to help enact strategy and effectuate changes predominantly through the semantic spaces in cultural discourse arrangements (Whitchurch, 2010).

On closer investigation into the management practices of Site 6, this university had developed a leadership approach that challenged practice architectures and looked beyond the conception of leadership as that of individual professional practice (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). The institutional leader had been responsible for taking this oversight and shifting the locus of power, through the social political arrangement, out of the faculty and into the institution. This led to a redistribution of leadership across the TNE project and empowered individuals to influence and make decisions. This distributed model has proved successful in challenging the reified practice ecologies of the institution.

The role of the faculty leader is further complicated as it is the site of the embodiment of the tensions between the international partner and their home institution; they have responsibility for translating the TNE project into the cultural discourse arrangement of their institutional ecologies. They are responsible for understanding the tensions and subtleties at the intersection of the collaborative arrangement with the international partner (Fumasoli et al.,

2015). This is a specialist role and one that has not received much attention in the extant literature.

The practice ecology of compliance as noted in the section above (See Section “TNE is a project of compliance”) fosters administrative leadership rather than allowing for a more open style of leadership that favours innovation or creativity, or leads with the TNE project as object (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). They further argue that the role of the positional leader is to meld and repurpose the existing intersubjective spaces to make it possible for new practices to exist. However, efforts to modify or transform institutional leadership cultures were not attempted at any of the other sites. Institutional leadership was not prone to either reculturing or realignment through engagement with the TNE project.

Faculty leaders, considered the drivers to ensuring a successful outcome of the TNE project, expressed trepidation in engaging with the material economic and social political arrangements. The social political arrangements were difficult to grasp, and they did not attempt to change them as they considered these to be part of the institutional fabric.

The practices of the faculty leaders are akin to the less visible activity of micro-politicing, these being the attributes of leadership that sit behind the formal more visible practice of leadership (Lumby, 2015). The faculty leaders presented accounts of leadership moving behind the scenes, attempting to find workarounds to challenges and being the go-between between faculty teams and the wider institution (Mumford & Van Doorn, 2001). It is argued

that whilst formal leadership is an important feature of effective organisations (Middlehurst, 2013) what carried more importance were those actions that were enacted at a micro level that may not always be considered strategic or rational but as a leadership practice tackles the social political arrangements of the institution (Greenhalgh, 2015). The faculty leaders have a highly complex role in that they must navigate the international partnership within the international context and translate the needs that arise therein into their own organisational structures.

5.4.6 TNE is only a small part of the day job

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the role of programme leader was a part-time role backed up with very little previous experience and only forming a small part of the working day. The role of the programme leader as a TNE developer was neither grounded in training nor previous experience. This role was in addition to the 'day job' and something that was learned as part of the process of engaging in the development of the TNE programme. Legitimacy for the individual's practice were gained through day to day interactions. The necessity of "know-how" – the knowledge of process and what may be considered professional knowledge of TNE development requirements were eclipsed by "know-why" – or the need to translate, contextualise and interpret information formed the basis of the role of TNE developer (Kezar & Eckel, 2016; Vincent, 2012; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010).

TNE skills and knowledge were developed as individuals engaged in the TNE project and this was partly shaped by personality, history, career, background,

expertise and experiences. What was interesting was the participants embodied parts of the arrangements as they bring with them the material-economic arrangements in the form of knowing why something may work (Lewis, 2014). They contributed to the TNE project through their personal cultural background thus influencing the cultural discursive arrangements and their very personal way of relating to other TNE workgroup participants.

This raises the issue of the extent to which the external, physical and social practice architectures are influenced and transformed by individual participants. This question can only be viewed in the fullness of the practice architecture analysis. It brings into focus the need to extend the analysis to better understand the role of agency and how the dominant participants in the project are able to negotiate the process to a successful conclusion.

5.4.7 Sharing practice is important

Sharing practice was viewed as important to the TNE project and opportunities to do so, whether through formal or informal means, were sought by those involved. Formal methods for sharing practice were limited to the committee structures required for approving the TNE project in three of the six institutions with no other meeting points or convening actions taken by central organisation hierarchies.

In the remaining locations, there were efforts to build fewer formal opportunities to share practices. These took different forms across the sites, some focused on the geography of international collaboration, whilst one focused on TNE as an activity. These groups were likened by one faculty

leader (Site 2) to communities of practice and were viewed as an attempt to share practice knowledge through the exchange of problem-solving approaches and situational analysis (Lave & Wenger 1991). However, practice architectures suggests that communities of practice are an insufficient explanation as they are restricted by co-constructed knowledge where individuals develop their own practices and expertise within the ecology and furthermore communities of practice rely on the readiness of the individual to contribute and share knowledge (Goodyear et al., 2017).

At Site 3, the faculty leader was keen to empower individuals within the faculty as much as possible to take forward the TNE project, developing practices and knowledge in TNE development. A workgroup, made up of quality assurance expertise, programme development expertise, including modelling (costing) and overall compliance with the material economic arrangements. Within the intersubjective space of relatings between individuals, the faculty leader here was clear to express this as an opportunity for the faculty to develop skills. "*I needed to buy-in expertise from one of the big accounting firms to look at risk and financial modelling, so I felt confident we were doing the right thing. But I wanted to make sure knowledge was developed within the faculty*"

It was the informal opportunities and networks that also presented enriching and valuable exchanges with others in the organisation. "*I hadn't realised that faculty X was also working in China, using a similar model, nobody thought to tell us*" (PL1). It was these opportunities for informal sharing of practice that

revealed gaps in the practice architectures that perhaps should have been able to bridge these fundamental revelations.

The TNE project was viewed as a one-way endeavour "*with little benefits in learning for the faculty or the institution*" PL3. The TNE project was viewed as outward facing. This response was familiar across all of the six sites. Systems and structures of the home institution were seen as impervious to learning from the international site. "*Cultural memory*" constrained the possibilities for change within the home institutions, the universities forming part of this study were all driving for change through novel partnership collaborations.

5.4.8 TNE a project built on traditions and accepted practices

The TNE project is a product of the environment and traditions that exist at the six sites, in particular, cultural memory. The TNE practices identified at the beginning of this chapter are multiple, overlapping and interconnected. They happen as multiple practices being performed throughout the university sites. The practices include discrete actions such as Senate meetings, modelling of the TNE project, engaging with quality assurance tenets. And just as there are proto-practices (Shove et al. 2012) there are proto-practice reservoirs (Trowler, 2020). Proto-practice reservoirs are the ideologies, symbolic structures, and accepted ways of understanding. These reservoirs inform the formation of the practices at the specific sites and "*flow into and condition the enactment of practice and practice architectures*" (Trowler, 2020 p. 107). They happen further upstream than the enactment of practices, they are ubiquitous and part of the fabric of the institution. The institutional voice and tone is

communicated through committee meetings, documentation, guidance and direction contributed through formal channels by institutional leaders who are nominated by the central hierarchies to work with the project leaders; the material economic, the cultural discursive and the social political arrangements are all informed by proto-practice reservoirs and the intersubjective spaces are the location where they are introduced into the practice architectures.

The six sites used documentation and texts to establish the tone of acceptability for the TNE project. Documentation was a received practice for faculty leaders (PL1, PL2, PL4, PL5) rather than a co-constructed practice. At these sites, the proto-practice reservoirs informed the TNE project as risk-laden. Project leaders, through their agentic leadership circumnavigated the regularities of ideologies and ways of understanding through seeking endorsement from the head of institution. At the remaining sites, documentation was a shared practice, with contributions for their construction sought from faculty leaders. In these locations, the concept of risk was more balanced. However, worthy of mention, the constructing of documentation did not include the tutors at any of the sites.

These proto-practice reservoirs are most visible in the Senate meetings as the institutional ideologies and ways of understanding externalities (globalisation and neo-liberalism) and enmeshing of ecologies of practice, where research ecologies of practice take priority. They are also evident in the documentation that downplays the TNE project. Faculty leaders expected a struggle to get approval for the projects and mitigated the risk of disappointment by shifting

the emphasis of cultural discourse to focus on the strategic elements of the international partnership and the accomplishment of building new research collaborations with a priority institution in a priority country.

5.5 **Summary**

The practice architecture of the TNE project in the research-intensive institution is predominated by social political conditions that legitimises TNE within the framework of the institutions' broader agenda of sustainability and strategic partnership building. The activity of teaching and learning delivered at an international location does not merit sufficient recompense for these institutions to get involved in TNE as a single agenda. The cultural discourse constructed by the faculty leaders to embed the TNE project necessarily reflects the ruling institutional language and semantics set out in documentation and strategy.

The TNE project creates new dimensions in existing institutional practice architectures where faculty, institutional hierarchies and professional services have to cooperate together. However, tensions appear initially as a result of the interpretations of the prevailing external discourse of TNE as a risk-laden project. These tensions are interpreted back into a complex system of compliance that each institution develops to respond to this balancing of risks. The material economic arrangements are significant: they are considered time consuming and obstructive, and whilst they are believed by the faculty leader as necessary, they also view them as incomplete and unhelpful challenges to the TNE project. The practice architecture traditions at the universities were

considered “old school”, deploying an inflexible and lengthy approval process and demonstrating a disinclination to innovation. A move to more progressive approaches would require substantial change in the social political and hence, large-scale influence to stimulate into action a reworking of material economic arrangements.

There is a lack of shared understanding in the vision for the TNE project. Apart from simple misunderstandings in definitions of TNE, of greater significance is the purpose of the TNE project and the lack of shared vision across the institution.

There are disconnections within the workgroups, firstly between faculty and the hierarchies. This is universally circumnavigated by engaging the Vice-Chancellor to ensure the next-level hierarchies do not close the project down. Secondly, within the faculty, between faculty leaders and tutors, this is the location for the formation of subgroups or subcultures. Tutors described a sense of abandonment, made to get on with the TNE project for themselves, with little or no interaction with the faculty in which they are located. For this subgroup, the TNE project becomes a personal professional endeavour. Their learned skills and practices are not embedded either into the TNE project or their faculty, suggesting that valuable learning is not being drawn into the faculty or wider institution. And finally, there are schisms between faculty and professional services, particularly with dedicated international teams where the cultural discourse is compelling, however the social political arrangements allow the faculty to bypass this resource as they are disconnected from the material economic and social political.

Informal groups, in the form of communities of practice have gone some way in promoting shared understanding of the TNE project, however, these have not been adopted in all of the sites. Where they exist, they provide a forum for discussion to assist with issues encountered during the decision-making processes. However, these groups are limited and usually convened with a geographic focus and learning is overlooked from other similar activities where the institution may be working in other parts of the world.

TNE within these institutions is also strongly interconnected with other existing more traditional ecologies of practice, most notably research. These TNE projects are looking to develop the research endeavour through a different conduit than that which is already tried and tested within the institution. The faculty leaders are seeking to bring on board some of their most successful researchers into an unfamiliar cultural discourse.

The sayings doings and relatings (Kemmis, 2009) frame the TNE project in the institutional context. However, there is a deeper more embedded aspect that pre-figures the TNE project and that is the proto-practice reservoirs or the symbolic structures, ideologies and accepted ways of understanding. Whilst it is clear from this research that practice architectures are subject to change, the rate and pace of change of the proto-practice reservoirs is less clear.

The next and final chapter will bring this thesis to a close. I will revisit the research questions and set out my conclusions to the study and offer some further thoughts on next steps for the research agenda.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This chapter revisits the original purpose statement and research questions set out at the beginning of the study. It presents key findings and makes explicit some implications for future TNE development. It sets out perceived limitations to the research and some suggestions as to how the approach of practice architectures may be supplemented or re-worked to address a collective case study approach. It also identifies suggested contributions to knowledge and suggests areas for further research.

6.2 Purpose of this study

The aim of this study was to generate insights into how the TNE project is accomplished in the research-intensive university and to examine the practices that make up the TNE project. From the literature, it is evident that challenges to the TNE project exist within the institution-setting. With an appropriate methodology, I wanted to be able to focus the analytical frame to uncover the practice landscapes of these six sites and expose within them the practice architectures that mediate and condition the TNE project and to generate insight into how TNE is accomplished in a manner that offers contextual analysis, and moves beyond the narrative of deficit that so regularly surrounds TNE. Furthermore, I wanted to develop an understanding of how the practices at each site are interwoven and enmeshed within those sites to reveal how the TNE project is affected by other ecologies of practice and dynamic contextualisation. The intention was to provide a clearer

understanding of how the TNE project is conceptualised within the practice landscape using the theory of practice architectures to illuminate the enmeshed nature of the ecologies of practice surrounding the TNE project. The approach foregrounds social processes and enabling and constraining factors that shape and condition the TNE project within the institutional and global contexts.

The practice architectures approach foregrounds the ‘threats’ to the TNE project, making it possible to consider ways of addressing these threats through further scrutiny and refinement of existing practice architectures, and to allow for more sustaining frameworks.

Also, as the methodology examined a specific set of conditions, in this case, that of the research intensive university, these conditions prefigure the shape of the project and found that they are re-defining traditional faculty connections for research collaboration, also these became a major driver to acceptance within the awarding institution. The projects were leading the development of research collaborations in a country of high priority for this work.

6.3 **Research questions**

The purpose statement of this thesis was to analyse how pre-figured conditions and practices mediate the TNE project as it is located within the UK research intensive higher education institution setting. I addressed this statement through four research questions, and these offered the opportunity to examine different aspects of the TNE project including the regularities in

conceptualisation of TNE project, enabling and constraining factors, and the internal and external forces impacting on the project. The final question looked at practice architectures as an analytical framework to be used across several different sites.

- RQ1: What regularities exist in the ways TNE programmes are conceptualised in a sample of UK universities, and in what ways do the differences shape the accomplishment of those programmes?
- RQ2: From the experiences of the TNE programme leaders, what elements enable and constrain the TNE project?
- RQ3: To what extent do internal and external forces influence the TNE project?
- RQ4: What insights do practice architectures offer in relation to the research questions above, and in what ways does this study indicate ameliorative refinements or amendments to that conceptual framework?

6.3.1 Conceptualisation of the TNE project

The first research question aimed at exposing the regularities and consistencies in conceptualisation of the TNE project and sought to establish symmetries within the six different research-intensive universities. It also sought to identify the differences on how these shape the development of the TNE project:

RQ1: *What regularities exist in the ways TNE programmes are conceptualised in a sample of UK universities, and in what ways do the differences shape the accomplishment of those programmes?*

This first question intended to uncover the regularities and differences in the way the TNE projects are conceptualised at the sample of universities.

At the six sites, the TNE project is conceptualised as temporary in the first instance as workgroups are formed to shape the development of the project. These workgroups took their core focus as ensuring compliance to quality regimes, protecting institutional reputation, and safeguarding the interests of the wider institution. The messages from the members of these workgroups accentuated a cultural discourse of containment and not of expansive potential. All sites constituted workgroups, but their identity, visibility, breadth of membership and permanence differed at each location. These differences further shaped the development of those programmes. At site 6, the TNE project was embedded in a broader institutional workgroup focusing on international developments, situational knowledge was shared, compliance was still part of the discourse, but expanded to satisfy more opportunistic goals to bring on board other faculties beyond the initiating faculty. At site 2, the workgroup was limited to the faculty and only engaged with the wider institution when it was absolutely necessary, through matters of Senate. This shaped the project in different ways, and whilst demonstrating strong collegiality with other faculties, it was in conflict with professional services and there was limited engagement. And in parallel to all other sites, did not include tutors in the strategic conversations. At the remaining sites, the workgroups

were cross-cutting, formed at the request of Senate or the upper hierarchies of the institutions and addressed a minimal acceptable compliance set down by the institution, and heavily informed by external quality and international guidelines from the partner operating country.

Within the workgroups, engagement with the TNE project generated new regularities and understandings as the project gained traction. These regularities happen as exposures to international working, understanding and knowledge condition to establish proto practices. The regularities were established by personal interest in engaging with China and Chinese academics.

The terminology used by the faculty leader to conceptualise the TNE project meant that the TNE project became part of several ecologies of practice within the institution. TNE was championed at all sites as an opportunity to build more strategic links and open up the potential for research collaborations to happen with an international partner based in a 'priority' country and with institutions of equal status to their own. This conceptualisation meant that the TNE project ecologies of practice segued into other practice ecologies across the institution. The segue with the research ecologies of practice demonstrated elements of complementarity. This complementarity of ecologies was limited to individual researchers who had shown interest in becoming part of this organised research and teaching collaboration (at sites 1, 2, 3, 5); at site 4 the connections were yet to be fully made so it is difficult to form a conclusion; at site 6, research and teaching formed part of an international eco-system of practices. Other

conceptualisations of the TNE project such as entrepreneurialism or innovation were less well formed to be able to draw judgement.

These regularities (workgroups and terminology) quickly dissipated as discernibly forming established regularities as the TNE projects were exposed to the wider institution. Kemmis et al (2012) suggest that practice architectures evolve over time (ref.) and there is a degree of fragility and impermanence within the structures. This suggests that the deeply embedded regularities are to be found, not in the practice architectures, but in the ideologies, symbolic structures and sets of meaning and assumptions across the university. According to a Foucauldian view, a community is defined by its constitutive practices and practice is the regularity of behaviour (Shove et al., 2012) These regularities are the result of conditioning factors and embedded in the normative governance structures (Olssen, 2010). This is what Trowler (2020) refers to as proto-practice reservoirs. The practice architectures approach here becomes limited insofar as it illuminates general social processes, enabling and constraining factors in the shaping and conditioning and external factors from the shaping and conditioning nature of the institution in a global context. The regularities identified do not happen accidentally but are the result of conditioning factors rooted in the ideologies and symbolic structures. Instead it is the “proto-practice reservoirs” that suggest structural forces are those that condition how meaning is made locally in specific circumstances and particular site ontologies. These proto-practice reservoirs limit and restrict the growth of the TNE project as these are at odds with the assumptions and ideologies of the institution.

6.3.2 Enabling and constraining factors of the TNE project

RQ2: *From the experiences of the TNE programme leaders, what elements enable and constrain the TNE project?*

Practice architectures foreground the practices and intersubjectivities between people and structures as they construct, mediate and adapt the systems and processes of the TNE project, the sayings doings and relatings. The section below identifies understandings of the enabling and constraining elements on the TNE project. These elements do not necessarily fall into a binary division of only enabling or only constraining, as practices can simultaneously enable and constrain the drivers of the TNE project. Consequently, elements of practice architectures appear on both sides. This section is organised through the conceptualisations identified in the data analysis:

1) **The TNE project as sustainability**: The TNE project is enabled by the practice landscapes of the faculty and the sustainability aspect aligns with the institutional agendas. This cultural discourse foregrounded by the project leader acts as the anchoring concept for the TNE project and is acknowledged and replicated in the institutional cultural discourse. It is consequently from this perspective, considered a worthwhile and valuable endeavour. The significance of context and location produce the regularities within these research-intensive institutions and are the result of conditioning factors. The data revealed regularities across the six sites and circumstances conditioned what was to become the accepted view of the TNE project. However, the

social political and material economic arrangements of the institution constrain TNE as contributing to institutional sustainability. The language of risk and quality drawn from external sources dominate the practice landscapes and seek compliance, this becomes the defining feature within the institution, rankings are important here and the broader social political arrangements seek positive contribution to institutional reputation, certainly not an activity that may threaten status. Sustainability is a concept that individual faculty leaders are faced with in their day-to-day role and resolution is sought from different sources, domestic as well as international actions. Familiarity with the pressures of maintaining relevance, international connectedness and world-class knowledge generation have led faculty leaders to the TNE project. These interconnected rationales are less visible to the rest of the institution where practice ecologies are historically delineated from teaching to research, but not from research to teaching.

2) **The TNE project is a collaborative endeavour**: TNE is a co-constructed endeavour and meaning happens through the co-constitution of the project as people work together. It requires extensive input from many departments and centres within the institution. Where this co-construction and co-constitution of meaning was maximised through the formation of workgroups the TNE project had greater validity and visibility. Coherent and explicit TNE workgroups that existed beyond the limits of the faculty and beyond the remit of the teaching elements of the project, contributed to an institution-wide

mutually constructed reality, creating a more embedded project. Where workgroups were limited or inhibited, this led to disconnections and lack of shared vision. Professional services from the international office or international partnerships department were not always engaged to the fullest extent and on occasion were excluded.

The endeavour is enabled by formal and informal opportunities for mutual sharing of experience. However, where silence filled the intersubjective spaces, fractures appeared in the workgroup structures as participants were decoupled from the conversation, including contributions from flying faculty and in some cases, professional services. Endorsement of the project became limited where institutional collaboration was restricted. Practice architectures that facilitate collaborative practices and collective endeavour, where the TNE project is co-constructed, result in a broadly shared endeavour. Mistrust of the TNE project was initially founded in external pressures of risk and quality, but perpetuated through project leaders, unwilling to challenge the assumptions.

3) **TNE as internationalisation**: TNE forms bridges that are outward-facing and inward-facing as it brings opportunities to faculty, institution staff and students in both the international location and the domestic location. TNE as internationalisation within the domestic institution was under-used and under-represented. The cultural discursive arrangements acknowledged the potential for internationalisation to carry positive and valuable outcomes for the domestic location,

however, attention was focused on getting the external elements of internationalisation right at the cost of any domestic advantage. The practice ecologies of internationalisation were weak and through this study, their location was not revealed to any great degree. Where internationalisation at home was most developed was through the lens of the research collaboration. Ecologies of research practices embedded in the traditions and foundations of these institutions were not necessarily easily leveraged but once engaged through the institutional strategic partnerships presented creative spaces for domestic researchers. Enhancement was rarely a term associated with the TNE project.

4) **Leading the TNE project**: accomplishing a TNE project is a collective endeavour as it draws on different departments and processes. This study revealed leadership of the TNE project as rarely a distributed practice, as power sensitivities located within other more established ecologies of practice (research, quality), meant that leadership was inconsistently distributed. This was a product of the practice landscape in which the project was located. Practice architectures that favoured workgroup-centric approaches showed greater agility and propensity for distributed leadership. However, agentic leadership located in the faculty leader was the enabling practice that ensured accomplishment of the TNE project. This aspect demonstrating the importance of agentic leadership was further played out as the faculty leader sought endorsement from the Vice-Chancellor, middle management from the

rest of the institution was only brought into the project once the most senior hierarchies had been persuaded.

5) **TNE as entrepreneurialism**: Entrepreneurialism was presented in terms of innovation as innovation, showed clearer links to research communities and ecologies of practice, this alignment enabled the project to proceed. The TNE project for the faculty leader was viewed in terms of entrepreneurial activity but not in the language of entrepreneurialism. This was a project that they approached in addition to the existing 'day job', and with no previous knowledge or experience of developing an international teaching programme. They had to be guided by the dominant material economic arrangements. The material economic arrangements were deeply influenced by the social political and these proved to be the least fluid of all arrangements, founded in the familiarity of the prevailing institutional culture, thus reinforcing the notion that higher education institutions are resistant to change (Huisman, 2009). The material economic arrangements of the institutions dominated the TNE project development, considerably extending timelines and giving space for cynicism and skepticism to be heaped on the project development from those who were not directly involved. The primary objective of the material economic arrangements, it was considered, were to ensure the educational endeavour was delivered in a sufficiently robust manner and mitigated risk as well as safeguarded reputations.

6.3.3 Internal and external forces

RQ3: *To what extent do internal and external forces influence the TNE project?*

The research found that the TNE project was prefigured by a complex arrangement of internal forces located in other practices, predominantly research and management practices as well as the individual project leader's personal background, including leadership, technical knowledge, ambitions and values for the TNE project, formed through their own personal experiences. What they brought to the TNE project was equally as important as the conditions they found at the sites of practice, suggesting that for change to take place, a theory of change needs to address all levels from personal subjectivities, shared practices and the practice architectures that support them.

The primary external force that drove the TNE project was the need to generate international engagement opportunities influenced through the dynamic forces of globalisation and neo-liberalism (as considered in Chapter 2 sections globalisation, neo-liberalism and internationalisation). The type of international engagement adopted by the institutions through the TNE project was closely aligned to the conceptualisation of TNE as instrumental (as opposed to educational or idealist) (Stier, 2010). The TNE projects were adopted by faculty eager to work with like-minded world-class universities. International engagement for UK faculty was critical for research output. Teaching and other entrepreneurial activities were a conduit to achieve the primary objective. In these research-intensive institutions, the practice traditions for the TNE project were entangled in the existing accepted ways,

ensuring a collective response to accomplishing the project was constrained. Tensions and conflict did not happen in the faculty, but across the wider institution, argued through negative press stories and the institutions' approach to risk. These tensions considerably slowed the pace of progress.

External pressures from the Quality Assurance Agency contributed significantly to internal regulations of compliance that were made evermore burdensome within the awarding institution, as the risk-appetite was seriously challenged within these research-intensive institutions. This culture of compliance did not inspire trust within and outwith the workgroups and was not supportive but was considered a challenge to the TNE project. The external influence of the Quality Assurance Agency is currently changing in the UK, the domestic system is shifting to a metrics-based analysis with only a small number of institutional reviews taking place.

External influence from the transnational elements had direct influence on the shape and acceptance of the project within the university and are worthy of mention. Engagement with the Ministry of Education in China was the positive driver that ensured the TNE project gained traction within the UK university hierarchies. The cultural discursive arrangements were shaped by the interactions with the Ministry of Education thus affording a high-status relationship that the university believed would unlock the greater gains of international research collaboration. The status of the partner institution in China also contributed to this cultural discursive arrangement in the UK institution, as UK researchers outside of the immediate TNE workgroup were

better pre-disposed to engage in China UK research partnerships if their collaborators were located in world-class institutions.

The internal elements that influenced the TNE project came from sustainability agendas faced most immediately by the faculty leaders. Sustainability was defined in terms of funding, relevance and renewal, all of which were delivered through the TNE project. Internationalisation at home was not an internal influence that aided the accomplishment of the TNE project. The cultural discursive arrangements alluded to internationalisation at home objectives, but these largely remained unfulfilled within the UK institution. The sayings revealed opportunities for domestic students but rarely interpreted into doings or relatings.

6.3.4 Does practice architecture help to build theory?

RQ4: *What insights do practice architectures offer in relation to the research questions above, and in what ways does this study indicate ameliorative refinements or amendments to that conceptual framework?*

In terms of analysis and appropriateness of the analytical frame, practice architectures have brought useful insight to the TNE project in drawing out individual perspectives and shared viewpoints of practices in an institutional setting. It produces theory-rich analytical discussion text, interweaving theory and concepts with data, making the analysis more substantial and critical. It does so through foregrounding the individual and collective “sayings doings and relatings” of the TNE project and illuminates how the progress of the TNE project is shaped by those architectures where at times it may be in alignment

or in tension within the architectures. These tensions and symmetries also highlight the points at which changes can be made to improve the route, shape and acceptability of the TNE project (Penuel, Van Horne, DiGiacomo, & Kirshner, 2016). The TNE project is the location where new practices develop - entrepreneurialism; internationalisation; a cross-over point for international practices of teaching and research collaborations; interculturalism; exposures to new ways of working. A practice architectures approach reveals these 'happenings' and offers valuable insight into their existence, how they interconnect with other ecologies of practices and valuable information to inform change processes. During the analysis phase, it was important to treat the practice architecture theory as a generative framework through which to study the TNE projects. Interpreting the data too rigidly, in the assignment of categories and themes, proved problematic as in reality, social practices are fluid and a less rigid application of theory provided greater potential for understanding and interpreting practices.

However, there are limitations in our understanding of the TNE project in its entirety through a practice architecture approach as there is a need to understand the deeper-rooted context and influences. The application of practice architectures to these specific sites has revealed a more dominant conditioning and structural aspect that can be better informed through the concept of the proto-practice reservoirs (Trowler, 2020). These reservoirs are structural and more permanent than the TNE project practices. They act to restrict choices as they influence and build the structuring perspectives of the institution.

Ameliorative refinements are needed to understand these ideologies, symbolic structures and ways of understanding and this is achieved through an understanding of proto-practice reservoirs. They set the tone of voice for the institution and are pervasive through systems, concepts and individuals.

As this research has taken a collective case study approach, this has highlighted the need to consider further analysis of how to interpret the signification of practice architectures. Within each of the six universities forming part of this study, practice architectures have demonstrated the multiplicity and overlapping nature of practice that together produce a unique identity of the location. Practice architectures must also be viewed in the broader context of practice landscapes that include the practice ecologies that exist around institutional practices. The TNE project draws on other practices and groups, or practices or ecologies of practice, including: research, leadership, internationalisation, entrepreneurialism. Together, these make up the practice landscape for the institution (See Figure 13).

Figure 13 Ecologies of practice and TNE

The manner in which these practice ecologies are interwoven and enmesh in a particular site are framed by the practice architectures of the institution. However, it would seem that practice architectures when applied to multiple sites, would benefit from further definition, to illuminate the context being explicated. This resonates with a study conducted by Trowler, Saunders and Trowler (2018) that sought to identify the different ways in which institutions used student feedback to improve practices using data gathered from multiple sites. Practice architectures were used across a range of university settings. Three distinctive forms of practice architecture were identified as defining how

the practice architectures were constituted, the study offered three types of institution architecture: integrated, multiple and atomistic architectures. In institutions with atomistic architectures characteristics, practices took place in isolated locations, symptomatic of fragmented enabling structures. In contrast, those institutions that demonstrated integrated practice architectures, at the other end of the spectrum, there were well defined support structures, with clear reporting lines, accountabilities and interconnectedness. This typology resonates with the universities forming part of this study and enlightens understanding of how the practice architectures can be conceived for future research projects.

A further aspect of practice architectures that would benefit from additional investigation is that of the role of the individual in shaping the TNE project. Social practice theory, of which practice architectures forms a part, advocates the inseparability of the social context and the individual whereby, the individual is only ever the product of the social construction in which they operate (See Chapter 2). This perspective appears extreme and human nature and the endeavour of the individual as evidenced in this research, particularly the faculty leader, is the locus for the TNE project and without their contributions in shaping the TNE project and their agency, this would result either in failure or more likely the non-existence of the project. Practice architectures only allow a study of what is there already, they do not permit investigation of practices that have not happened or do not exist. Trowler (2020) calls for a less rigid adherence to this element of social practice theory, and goes on to say:

Understanding the nature of the subjectivities in interaction and the likely patterns of how they will play out is a really important element in the change process, and it is dangerous to dismiss this through an overly strong adherence to the inseparability thesis. (p13)

A more productive perspective might be to view the individual in relation to the workgroups and their formations through which the TNE project is realised. This research has shown that the workgroups at each of the sites have varying degrees of cohesion and visibility. Some workgroups demonstrate a high degree of visibility in the institution and are positively constructed to address the work of the TNE project. At the other end of the scale, the individual project leader is responsible for piecing the institutional jigsaw together and forming more loosely constructed workgroups to address the TNE project. I will call the extremes of this spectrum individualist, where the tendency for the practice architectures is to encourage individual agency to lead the construction of the TNE project and collectivist, where the propensity for group working is more developed and practice architectures encourage this orientation. This aspect of practice architectures, when combined with the practice architecture types (atomistic, multiple and integrated) sheds further light on the TNE project within the university and how it is conceptualised within the practice architectures (See

Figure 14)

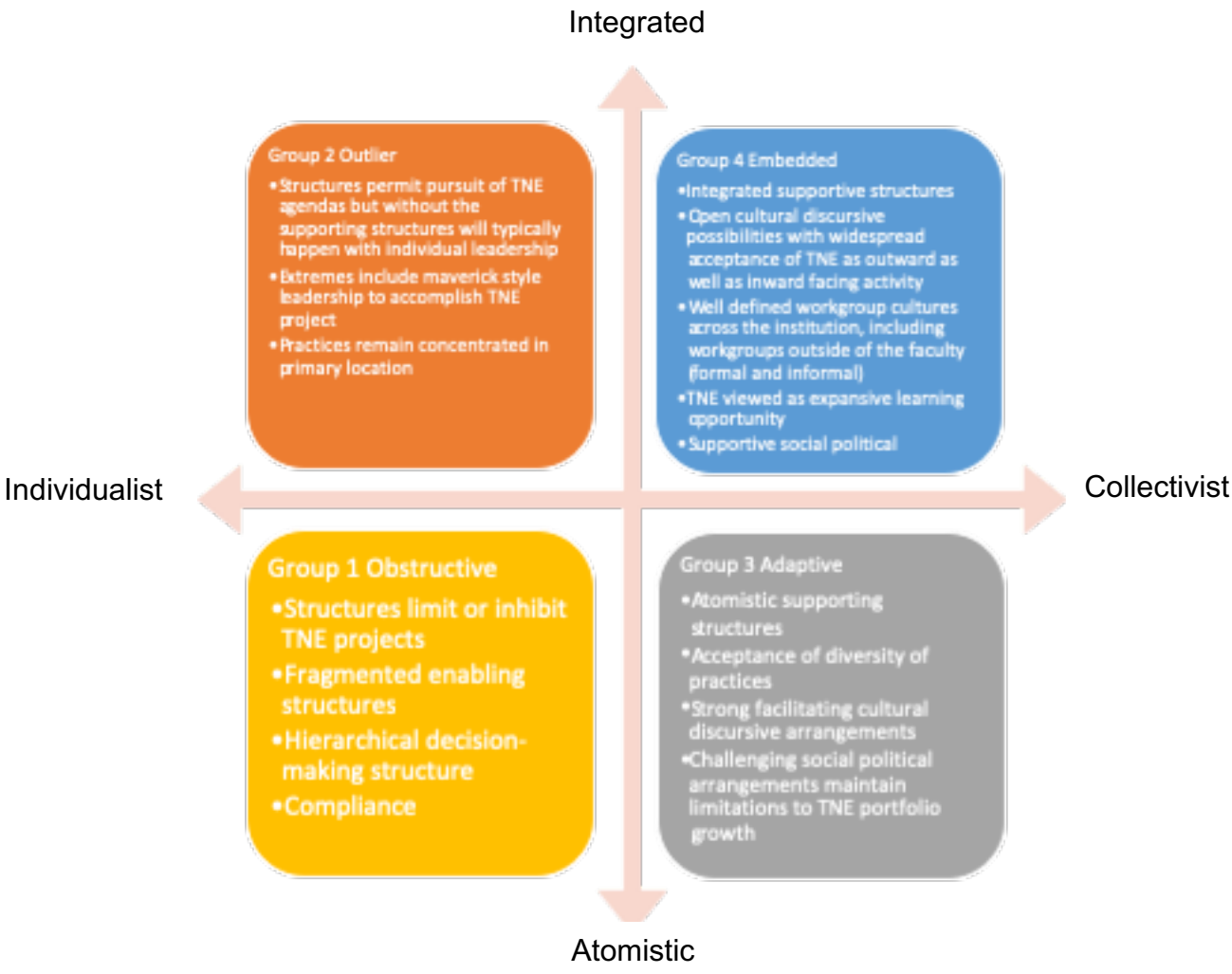

Figure 14 Scenarios for the TNE project within different institution settings

These scenarios of obstructive; outlier; adaptive and embedded can assist those involved in the TNE project in understanding the environments in which they are working and further illuminate how and where changes can be made.

Group 1 - Obstructive: where the prevailing structures intend to limit or inhibit TNE projects. The TNE project can still happen in this environment but

will be met with unpredictable challenges as it is mediated through the processes. The processes themselves will be fragmented and the faculty leader must canvas support at every stage. Workgroups are difficult to convene as there is little or no shared understanding of the potential of the TNE project. This scenario demands a minimal acceptable practice of compliance.

Group 2 - Outlier: Structures permit pursuit of the TNE agenda, through guidance and documentation. The practice architectures demonstrate greater integrity and offer structured support. This scenario is most likely to foreground the more maverick style leader, capable of convincing and persuading. Practices and learned skills will remain within the site of the TNE project with little sharing of knowledge, skill and experience across the rest of the institution. (Site 1, 2, 4)

Group 3 – Adaptive: Atomistic support structures limit the full development and expansive opportunities for the TNE project in this scenario. The institution demonstrates an acceptance of a diversity of practices thus allowing for the more entrepreneurial aspects of TNE development. There are strong facilitating cultural discursive arrangements but a challenging social political environment that maintains limitations to the TNE portfolio growth. (Site 3, 5)

Group 4 – Embedded: This scenario optimises the workgroup approach alongside a well-defined and integrated supporting structure where professional services, teaching functions and faculty convene to maximise

opportunity from the TNE project. There is open cultural discursive possibility with widespread acceptance of TNE as outward as well as inward facing activity. In this scenario TNE is viewed as expansive learning opportunity. (Site 6)

6.4 **Truth claims**

Research knowledge or truth claims are situational and co-constructed, and a reflection of the position of the setting and the subjects involved. This study focused on six universities in the UK, they were selected through a staged process using purposive sampling techniques (See Chapter 3) conclusions were drawn from this sample of six institutions, including 22 respondents and supporting institutional documentation. In taking my critical realist perspective to the study, I have to conclude that there may be other possible interpretations from the data collected. I have used terminology including enabling and constraining which are dependent on the site within which the study is located, I am conscious that what may be considered enabling in a research-intensive institution may not be considered enabling in a post-92 university.

The study focuses on the TNE project as a series of practices held together through the happenings on the six sites. At site 6 there seemed to be greater adaptability and openness to change allowing for learning and positive action to position the TNE project within the awarding institution. Whilst the theoretical frame used in this study places emphasis on the shared implementation and design of the TNE project, it is also apparent that the TNE

project led by an individual does exist but less and less so. This may make this study particular to the six sites. Additionally, the participants selected for this study appear to be leaning towards TNE as a positive action. There are no staff completely outside of the TNE development who have been included in this study.

The use of collective case study analysis followed up with framework analysis shaped the design of the semi-structured interviews. The schematic was also informed by knowledge gained in my professional role as TNE practitioner and in my current role at British Council as international higher education policy consultant. The interviews were conducted through a combination of face-to-face interactions and where this was not possible alternatively through Skype calls. On reflection, I maintain my decisions to use both methods of interaction as productive modes to obtain rich data. In my day to day role at British Council, virtual modes of communication are now becoming second nature to my daily interactions, so I consider myself comfortable and able to use the medium to good effect. I would also reflect the skype mode of interaction on occasion produced responses that may have been more difficult with a face-to-face conversation, with the interviewees at ease in sharing valuable and sensitive information.

6.5 **Contribution to knowledge**

There are a number of important claims for contribution to knowledge that this research study makes.

6.5.1 Using practice architectures to investigate the TNE project: a revised theoretical perspective

This study contributes to the literature on social practice theory and practice architectures as revealed through their application to several sites through a collective case study analysis. My original contribution to knowledge is achieved in two ways: Firstly, through an application of a theoretical framework informed by social practice theory: practice architectures to the TNE project. This approach foregrounds the individual and collective “sayings doings and relatings” of the TNE project and illuminates how the progress of the endeavour is shaped by those architectures. This is a new way of seeing the TNE project and foregrounds regularities in behaviours and reveals unique phenomena as instances in broad categories of concepts conditioned by prevailing structural forces. If offers empirical descriptions of configurations and exposes local patterns revealing potential points of change where efforts to modify practice can most effectively take place.

Secondly, this thesis offers a mnemonic for analysis of the accomplishment of the TNE project within the institution (see Figure 14). Through combining the dimensions of possible scenarios of practice architectures, whether they may be defined as integrated, multiple or atomistic settings, along with the possibilities encountered within the institutions for organising participation in the TNE project (from individualist and fragmented through to participative and collective workgroup functions) this derives four identifiable operating environments for TNE accomplishment: obstructive; outlier; adaptive; and embedded. These environments provide interpretive analysis for TNE

practitioners to derive an effective approach to navigate a pathway through the practice architecture scenarios, whereby obstructive depicts an environment that seeks to actively limit or inhibit the TNE project, outlier permits the TNE project through signposting and guidance but with limited active support from workgroups and social structures; adaptive demonstrates atomistic support structures that limit the development of the project, but is supportive of an entrepreneurial culture and finally the embedded scenario that optimises the workgroup functions to achieve dynamic results from the TNE project, providing learning back into the institution from the transnational project. This mnemonic can be used by TNE practitioners to inform a way of understanding the environment within which they are working and further illuminate the enabling structure and modes of workgroup participation.

This new way of seeing the TNE project is derived through a challenge to the inseparability theory of social practice analysis, and a review of the role and criticality of the individual in shaping the TNE project. Social practice theory, of which practice architectures forms a part, advocates the inseparability theory of social context and the individual whereby the individual is only ever the product of the social construction in which they operate. This perspective appears extreme and human nature and individual endeavour, informed by personal backstories and history, is evidenced in this research, is particularly important for the development of the TNE project. Without the individual contribution in shaping the TNE project and the power of agency, it is likely the project would fail or not exist. This notion leads to a consideration of how

the individual interacts with others in the institutional setting and how the workgroups at each site were constituted.

The depiction gives structure and definition to the practice architectures and allows for a position on what 'type' of practice architectures TNE practitioners may encounter as they work to accomplish the TNE outputs. It further defines how workgroups are organised and thus the way that activities take place around the TNE project within the institution.

This revised practice architectures perspective illuminates understanding as it helps researchers to look at similar situations with an improved conceptual framework. This conceptual framework offers a way of seeing how individual behaviours, choices and attitudes are actually shaped in a socially conditioned way. In order to reveal this fuller picture, this relies on the application of proto-practice reservoirs to explicate the ideological, symbolic and ways of understanding "happenings". It also has implications for those institutions involved in TNE development to consider the work in terms of practice appreciation that will help the institutions involved in TNE to accomplish better results and facilitate change.

6.5.2 Implications for TNE development

The core message from this thesis for TNE development scholars is the need to adopt a practice theoretical lens to more effectively identify the sites for change within the institution where change can most effectively be accomplished. If we are to change the currently problematic journey that TNE encounters within the institution, then focusing only on the TNE programme

and associated professional knowledge in an attempt to change its character misses the situatedness of the project in other practices. The practice trajectory will change as patterns of interaction change. By adopting a practice sensibility and sensitivity to ‘how’ TNE is accomplished, we are better able to apprehend and capture the interrelationships and dependencies of the TNE project across the interconnected ecologies of practices. A practice sensibility allows for a light to be directed into the ‘black box’ and surfaces those underpinning forces that are at work in conditioning and shaping the project making it possible to identify points for opportunities to change TNE accomplishment.

The TNE project in the institutions studied had multiple conceptualisations, varying across hierarchies and workgroups. This further highlights the need to identify a shared conceptualisation of the TNE project and helps to work towards what ‘good’ TNE looks like. Without such a conceptualisation underpinning the endeavour, the TNE project can lack a compass and direction.

6.6 **Opportunities for further research**

Contingent to the advantages of using a social practice approach to analyse the TNE project, it is also helpful to think of future directions for further research to the area of transnational education in the first instance and secondly the further development of social practice theory and application. Firstly, the proto practice reservoirs

- Based on these findings, what implications are there for future TNE development?
- And how does this differ at differing site ontologies, for example the teaching intensive institutions who have adopted the more largescale approach to TNE development with teaching partnerships as the primary objective?
- Within this study, it was not possible to fully understand the implication of transnationality on the domestic institution. This study focused on the broader piece of the TNE project, however, within this there are well developed aspects of transnationality that bring with them intercultural understandings through the transnational paradigm. Arguably, transnational makes the role and space that TNE occupies as more complex and different, the transnational elements act as disruptors. Being able to trace these through a social practice theoretical perspective will broaden their understanding.

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Appendix 1 – Interview protocol

Protocol for semi-structured interview / conversation

1. Experience

RQ2: From the experiences of the TNE programme leaders, what elements enable and constrain the TNE project?

- What is your role in the university?
- What is your specific role in relation to this TNE programme? And are you involved in other international activities for the university?
- How is this role in TNE defined (e.g. is it on top of your day job? Do you have a recognised title e.g. Project manager? Is provision made for you to develop this TNE programme, e.g. are you given additional remuneration?)

2. Conceptualisation / Orientation of TNE

RQ1: What regularities exist in the ways TNE programmes are conceptualised in a sample of UK universities, and in what ways do the differences shape the accomplishment of those programmes?

- What does the term TNE signify for you?
- Why do you develop TNE?
- How would you describe the use of TNE in your university?
- Why do you think the university is pursuing this particular TNE project?
- What are the explicit aims and objectives of this TNE programme?

3. University environment and setting

RQ3: To what extent do internal and external forces influence the TNE project?

- What do you believe to be the challenges / enablers for the design and implementation of TNE in your university?
- Do you think other parts (hierarchies / departments) of the university share your understanding of these challenges / enablers?
- Is the process explicit or did you have to find your own way?
- Do you feel as though you are breaking new ground when you are developing TNE – if so how? New connections, new ways of working etc.?

4. Institutional policy and strategy

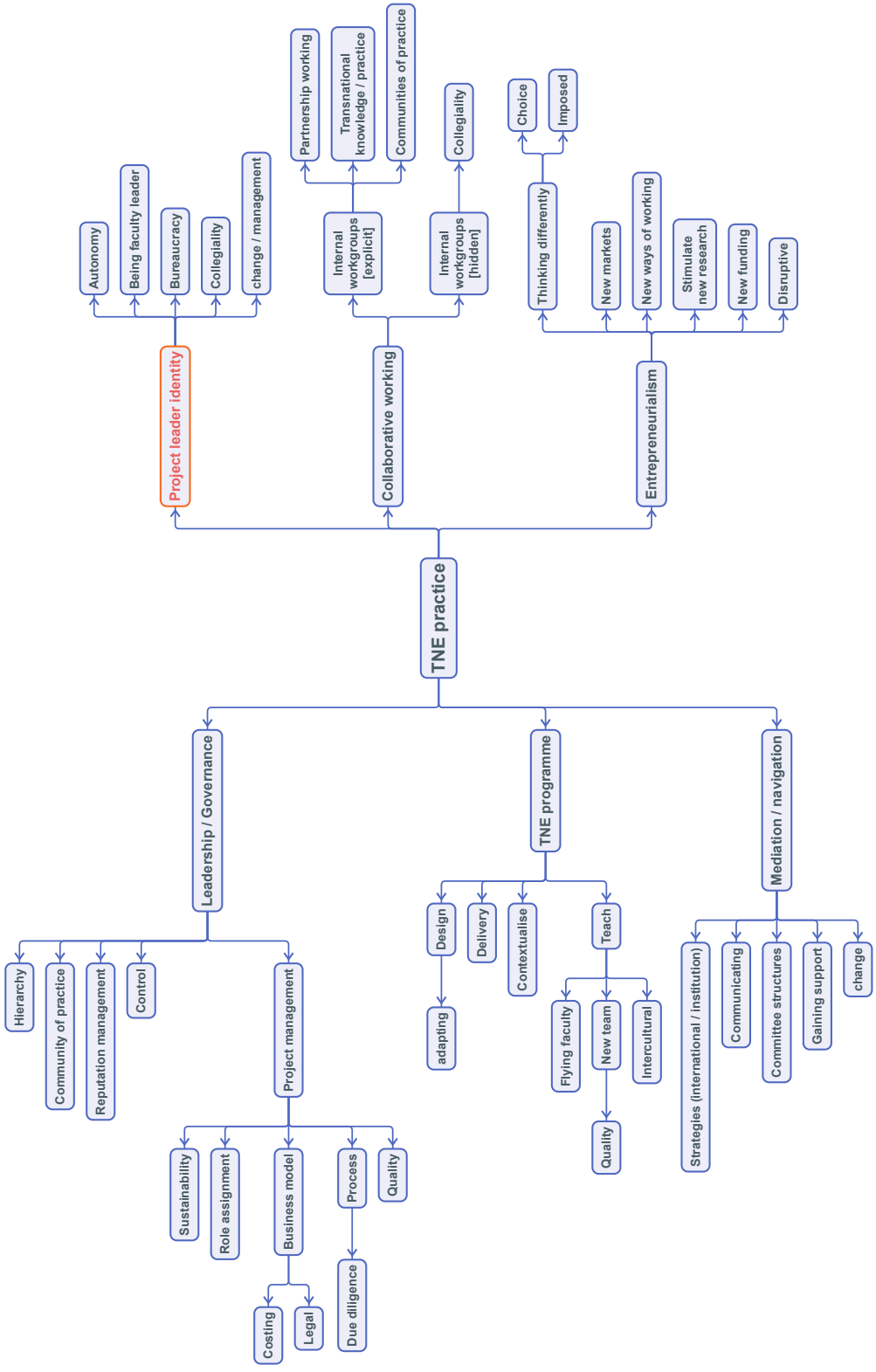
RQ3 & RQ1

- What are the processes and how are you involved in constructing policy vis a vis TNE?
- What are your views on your institutional strategy: internationalisation / fit with institutional strategy?

Statements – hypotheses used during the interviews as prompts and intended as provocations

1. *STRUCTURE VS AGENCY*: TNE "experts" are more influential than central actors and leaders in this higher education settings, in generating interest and activity to grow TNE within the university.
2. *CONCEPTUALISATIONS*: Institutional strategy for TNE is generally focused on income generation objectives and consequently overlook opportunities for contribution of 'wider benefits' (deep learning, intercultural exposures, etc.) to the university.
3. *WORKGROUPS:* The lack of shared vision across institutional hierarchies, a disconnection from faculty and discrete units creates disjuncture and lines of fault for workgroups and networks, making certain outcomes and processes a challenge.
4. *THE PROMISE OF TNE*: Transnational collaborations create strong ties, collective efficacy and deep-learning within the TNE [transnationally facing] workgroup however, this 'deep-learning' is rarely mobilised for cross institutional understanding and possible adaptations (institutional learning) within the UKHEI support structures and networks for the benefit of next generation TNE and secondary learning points.
5. *LEADERSHIP*: TNE is reliant on strong social relations and tacit networks within the home institution if it is to thrive and develop.

Appendix 2 - Summary of coding



Appendix 3 – Coding phase and consideration of practice architectures

Appendix 3 Final coding stage – extracted sample of elements / concepts from framework matrix illustrative of coding and consideration of practice architectures

	Participant	Sample quotes	Enabling / constraining Neutral	Observed elements	Practice architecture (using template of prompts based on Figure 12)
Internationalisation	Institutional leaders	*"It's about nurturing and including relationships with universities around the world – the more international we are the more we are able to receive students and maybe to send students and the more we can serve our mission which is to help students to work internationally and globally – be part of a global society – it sounds grand but…"*	*Nurturing / inclusion (of who?) / focus on students / MAYBE send students* *Globalisation discourse sounds grand but …* *Located in institution*	*Mediation / communication* *Messaging to institution is* *Increased student numbers* *Internationalisation acknowledged as expansive (more than recruitment)* *Hesitation: Polemic vs Reality / practicalities*	***Cultural discursive*** *Lofty language … but* ***Social political*** *Need to mediate with rest of institution* ***Material economic*** *In alignment w University mission*
		"Financial sustainability relies on attracting international students, not exclusively but largely we have been successful at postgraduate with lots of students from China – this was about raising our profile, building reputation, delivering international programmes"	*Financial **sustainability** /other forms of sustainability? / focus on student recruitment* *Raising profile / building reputation*	*Leadership (modelling / process)* *Instrumentalism of TNE (do this to get something else)*	***Material economic*** *resourcings focus* ***Social political*** *Reputational theme / attitudes*
Internationalisation	What flying faculty said about internationalisation	*"Just another way for the university to make money quite frankly I see this as the sole motivation"*	*Money making – sole motivation*	*Mediation / communication* *Detached from institution understandings*	***Social political*** *Excluded from* ***Cultural discursive*** *Contemptuous of institution aims*
		"My university are doing this for their widening participation agenda, it is about reaching out to new students who wouldn't get the chance to travel to the UK"	*Widening participation – not shared across the interviewees from same institution*	*Collaborative working* *Not part of the institution design / strategy development*	***Material economic*** *Resource to deliver the programme*