Chapter Three: Quality Assurance in International Collaborative Courses

Authors: Dinusha Boteju and Dave Burnapp

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. This is one of two thematic chapters in this project report concerning transnational education (TNE). This chapter will focus on managerial aspects, in particular quality assurance, whilst 'Chapter Two: Growth of transnational education' concentrates on the learning and teaching aspects of TNE.

3.1.2. This chapter is written for readers and practitioners with an interest in quality assurance, and to introduce this the chapter first looks at the reasons for the growth in transnational/cross-border education and identifies different types of collaboration.

3.1.3. Finally the chapter highlights some recommendations for good practice as well as lessons which can be learnt. These are largely derived from the findings and recommendations made from audits on U.K. Higher Education institutions delivering international collaborative courses, carried out by the U.K. Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

3.1.4. The internationalisation of Higher Education provision has consistently been identified as a major trend since the late 1980s. This has given rise to many international collaborations of differing complexities. The U.K. Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) defines collaborative provision as:

> *educational provision leading to an award, (or to specified credit toward an award) of an awarding higher education institution delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation (QAA, 2004).*

3.1.5. Traditionally the trend was for students to travel overseas to study to broaden their cultural and intellectual horizons, and the opportunity to study in world-renowned academic institutions. However with new and widely-available technologies enabling new delivery modes of education, students now have the flexibility and opportunity to study a course provided by a foreign institution, whilst staying in their own country.

3.1.6. Different terms are used for this phenomena of provision based in one country, but delivered in another: '*transnational education*', '*cross-border education*', or '*borderless education*' (Bennett et al, 2010). *Program mobility* rather than *student mobility* provides a new format of international strategy.

3.1.7. These changes in the educational landscape, and the significant growth of new providers of higher education and resultant collaborative courses, have made quality assurance a very important and topical subject. The QAA defines quality assurance as:

> *All the systems, resources and information devoted to maintaining and improving standards and quality. It covers teaching and learning opportunities, and student support services (QAA, 2004).*

3.1.8. Collaborations inherently carry risks of quality assurance which are less likely to apply if a programme of education is designed and delivered by one provider. However, the level of risk rises when collaborations are of a transnational nature; that is where partner institutions are located in different countries.

3.1.9. The need for quality assurance is also a prerequisite for the accountability of the higher education awarding institution to students, employers, professional and statutory bodies, and funding organisations. Furthermore, quality assurance is a key aspect for building institutional reputation in a competitive environment. For example, at a national level for institutions, quality assurance is the key element to accessing public funds. At an international level, it is key to forming new links and activities (Middlehurst and Campbell, 2004).

3.2. Quality Assurance in International Collaborative Courses

3.2.1. This section highlights issues of quality assurance; the factors that can lead to problems with the quality of international collaborative education, and the resulting implications.

3.2.2. The complexity and range of possible international collaborations pose big challenges for ensuring quality assurance. For a start, any discussion of quality is always challenging and can be contentious, as quality depends on the view of the stakeholder. Different stakeholders including staff, students, institutions, agencies, professional associations, governments and employers, will view the purpose, scope and focus of quality assurance differently. Furthermore, the quality assurance issues that arise differ depending on what the reference point is, that is to say 'the provider', 'the provision', the 'medium of delivery', the 'output' or the 'receiver' of education (Middlehurst, 2001).

3.2.3. Common elements of quality assurance processes have been identified (Lenn, 1992) which would include: educational standards, a self-evaluation process by the institution, an assessment made by an external body, and a final decision made public. Lenn (1992) defines quality assurance in higher education: 'as a process by which an institution is evaluated at least in part by an external body for a level of quality in its educational offering'.

3.2.4. As outlined by Middlehurst (2001), the scope of the term 'quality assurance' can be used to include the following dimensions:

Dimensions of Quality Assurance.	
Regulation.	Legal framework, governance, responsibilities and accountabilities etc.
Educational Processes.	Admissions, registration or enrolment, curriculum design and delivery, support for learning, assessment.
Curriculum Design and Content.	Validation and approval frameworks, levels and standards etc.
Learning Experience.	Consumer protection, student experience, complaints and appeals etc.
Outcomes.	Qualifications, certificates, transcripts and Diploma supplement, security, transferability, recognition/currency and value etc.

Source: Middlehurst, (2001) Quality Assurance Implications of New Forms of Higher Education

3.3. Issues of Quality Assurance

3.3.1. Though some countries have national regulatory frameworks that exist for quality assurance, accreditation, and the recognition of qualifications, and take into account cross-border provision; this is not the case in all. This, along with the unevenness and diversity of quality assurance and accreditation systems even within a national arena, creates gaps in the quality assurance of transnational/cross-border higher education.

3.3.2. This leaves some provision outside any regulatory frameworks (UNESCO/OECD, 2005). This loophole means that students are more susceptible to provision of low quality and disreputable providers, such as those of 'degree mills', where qualifications can be bought for little or no study. These are non-recognised and unregulated higher education institutions that are not under scrutiny of quality assurance processes either from the providing or receiving country. As Adam (2001) has commented: 'Current national and international regulation of transnational education takes many forms and is, in consequence, fragmented, disorganized, uncoordinated, often voluntary and ineffective'.

3.3.3. A collaboration between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), has produced a toolkit intended to act as a reference guide to assist in the development of regulatory frameworks for quality assurance in cross-border education, irrespective of whether it is from the provider or the receiver perspective (UNESCO-APQN, 2007). It has been developed to help support the implementation of the *UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality provision in Cross-Border Higher Education* (UNESCO/OECD, 2005).

3.3.4. The intended audience range is wide and includes policy makers and government personnel, higher education institutions, quality assurance and accreditation agencies, academic recognition bodies, student bodies, and professional bodies.

3.3.5. Another issue is the use of terminology. In different countries, there are differences between quality assurance systems with regards to the definition of quality, purpose and functions, methods, focus, and partners' responsibility (Middlehurst, 2001). Furthermore, similar terms are used in different countries to cover processes which are rather different, for example quality assurance, accreditation, or recognition, (Middlehurst and Campbell, 2004).

3.3.6. Without a common agreed 'language', it is difficult to ensure that quality standards are understood by both parties and are being met. Middlehurst and Campbell (2004), also argue there is ambiguity amongst countries in the terms 'recognition', 'approval', 'licensing', 'registration' and 'accreditation'. It is important that all partners in collaboration have an agreed understanding of terminology.

3.3.7. Clearly, with international collaborations, the choice of partner can have a big effect. The complexities of the legal, cultural, capacity and capability differences have to be considered and carefully managed. Due diligence is an important aspect of quality assurance. It is important for the 'home' institution to check thoroughly that their partner is capable of fulfilling their agreed

responsibilities. This covers checking their financial credibility, checking other organisations the partner is involved with, assessing the partner's organisational performance, and communicating with quality agencies.

3.3.8. The core student learning outcomes are skills which all graduates of an institution are expected to have developed by the time they have completed their course. However if some of the students receive their training abroad, the attributes may not be equitable, taking in the cultural context. Therefore the same set of attributes may not be able to be used by the institution.

3.3.9. Concerning curriculum, it is expected that in higher education institutions delivering programs abroad, courses are equivalent or comparable to the analogous courses delivered at 'home'. However it is evident that these courses cannot be identical. For example, it is common practice and reasonable that case studies are changed to suit local conditions. Debates have therefore revolved around determining what is required to ensure the 'same learning outcomes' (for example the discussion in several papers at DEST 2006, identified in Woodhouse and Carroll, 2006). Thus a number of key quality assurance issues arise: how much of the content can be changed to suit local conditions before there is a significant difference in student learning outcomes? Has the curriculum specifically been approved for transnational delivery? (Woodhouse and Carroll, 2006). Furthermore, technology-mediated learning may raise questions as to the 'quality of the student experience'.

3.3.10. Concerning student entrance standards, it is important not to automatically assume that a student who has studied in one country may be as ready for higher education as a student from another country. The content and quality of teaching, the resources that were made available, and consequently learning outcomes, may all have differed affecting a student's readiness for higher education.

3.3.11. The issue of language raises many quality assurance issues, one such being the competencies of the student in the English language, though assessment models in English language competency are often used such as TOEFL and IELTS, before acceptance onto the course. The Australian Universities Quality Agency, have identified that some Australian universities deliver a small number of their collaborative courses in the local language, which also poses quality assurance challenges such as marking and moderation (Woodhouse and Carroll, 2006).

3.3.12. The QAA (2010) code of practice recognises that each institution needs to maintain its own independent procedures; that said, the discussions in the code of two specific possible arrangements seem to amount to strong warnings

of these presenting dangers which are best avoided. The first of these refers to serial arrangements, where the collaborative partner has dealings with other partners as third parties: in such cases the originating institution would find the necessary quality assurance arrangements difficult to monitor. The second refers to the possibility of collaborations where the language of teaching and assessment is not the language they normally work in (see 3.3.11 above): in such cases the originating institution would have difficulty in matters such as external examination of quality.

3.3.13. Assessment and moderation are key aspects of quality assurance. Issues can include whether the assessment regimes are the same for each location, the maintenance of academic security for examinations conducted in different time zones, which collaborative partner does the marking etc (Woodhouse and Carroll, 2006). The Australian Universities Quality Agency (Woodhouse and Carroll, 2006) identified that the most common concern from students with regards to assessment is the time taken for students to receive feedback on work which is assessed during the term.

3.4. Factors that can lead to problems with quality:

3.4.1. Problems of quality can arise due the following possible reasons (adapted from UNESCO-APQN, 2007, and Wong, W.S. 2005):

3.4.2. Factors at the macro – level include:

- The need to operate within different legal and cultural frameworks.
- The inadequacy of quality assurance systems at the national level to control or monitor the quality of cross-border education.

Many countries are focused on regulating the national education system, and are not geared towards monitoring cross-border education.

- The inadequacy of information sources for students and consumers.

Students may sometimes choose courses for reasons other than their quality. Consumers are also often faced with a lack of clear and accurate information about the nature and status of courses, or the level of recognition of the qualifications they lead to. Therefore low quality courses can exist and students can end up with dubious qualifications.

3.4.3. Factors at the institutional level include:

- Insufficient understanding of the nature of cross-border education.

Many institutions may not fully understand the complexity that cross-border provision brings to planning, which will include adapting to the local educational

environment, the quality and supply of local teachers, and the needs of the local students. Furthermore the mode of delivery chosen by the institution such as distance learning may be one that the providing institution or the local student population is not used to.

- Inadequacy of institutional quality assurance mechanisms.

Cross-border education requires tight quality control, but sometimes this may be underestimated by the provider institution. Even where quality control exists, it may not be vigorous enough or there may be over-delegation to the overseas partner and poor monitoring.

- Unfamiliarity with or lack of understanding of local education systems.

Unfamiliarity can lead to wrong academic decisions being made which can impact on the quality of students admitted to the course or the delivery of the programmes.

- Difficulty in obtaining local resources.

Adequate local resources of an appropriate quality may not be readily available such as local staff, library support, and computers. It may be costly or impractical to supply quality sources from the provider country.

- Over-reliance upon inexperienced local partners.

Sometimes there can be over-delegation to partners who are inexperienced. These partners may also be non-academic or commercial organisations. Conflicting objectives can arise when a commercial organisation is used as the partner; that is profit objectives versus the objective of delivering a quality programme that meets the needs of the students. Over-delegation to partners might also mean insufficient involvement by the awarding institution in the monitoring of the quality of courses and major academic decision making.

- Inadequate inter-institutional agreements or cooperation in place.

Often there are inadequate arrangements with the partner institutions.

- Inadequate management and governance structures.

Often the awarding institution has inadequate involvement in the main academic decisions of its cross-border provision and insufficient quality monitoring arrangements of its programmes.

3.5. Implications of Quality Issues

3.5.1. All the above factors can result in different implications which can be categorized into the following (UNESCO-APQN, 2007, and Wong, W.S., 2005):

3.5.2. Poor quality of courses; problems can arise in program content, delivery and structure. Frequent problems include:

- Lower standard of courses - reduced content, fewer choices of modules for students.
- Lower entry/exit requirements - standards are less for entry onto the course, prerequisite study and for graduation.
- Poor or insufficient resources for teaching - inexperienced/unqualified staff, lack of suitable or good quality learning materials, inadequate library resources, or laboratories.
- Undesirable teaching techniques/delivery mode – intensive block teaching, shortened course duration or fast track progression.
- Poorly monitored mode of delivery and which does not meet student needs.

3.5.3. Information that is misleading or dishonest; this relates to the quality of information that is made available. There can be false claims relating to the courses including information of how the course will be delivered (contents of the course, resources, how it will taught, staffing); and false claims regarding the status or recognition of the courses by the provider or receiver, government or professional bodies.

3.5.4. Financial issues; these include fees being defaulted due to courses being stopped due to financial difficulty of partners. There can also be fraudulence where unscrupulous providers try and make a fast profit from student or government funding.

3.5.5. It can be seen from the above implications that the lack of good quality assurance procedures in international collaborative courses can have a serious impact. With misleading information, students may be obstructed in making a rational well-informed decision to choose a course that is best suited to their needs and goals. With these poor quality courses, students could end up with qualifications that are not recognized by employers or valid.

3.5.6. To address these kinds of issues, a number of good examples of Codes of Practice exist especially in the UK, US and Australia. These codes place responsibility on the awarding Higher Education institution to ensure the quality assurance arrangements guarantee that the programme quality delivered cross borders is to the same standard as that delivered in the home country.

3.5.7. The *UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education* (UNESCO/OECD, 2005) provide an authoritative approach for quality assurance across the globe on cross-border/transnational education. These guidelines can be used internationally to protect students and other

stakeholders from poor quality higher education provision. The guidelines take into account the *UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education* as well as Codes of Practice and guidelines developed in individual countries such as the United States, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom (Bennett et al 2010).

3.6. Different Formats of Collaborations in Transnational Education

3.6.1. The British Council based on HESA data estimated that in 2009, there were nearly 200,000 international students following a UK Transnational Education (TNE) course delivered overseas, generating around £260 million in fees. By 2010, it is likely the demand for TNE programmes will have exceeded the number of students coming onto UK courses from overseas through traditional recruitment (British Council).

3.6.2. These types of collaborations can occur with a cross-border partner in the public or private sector, with public or private universities, with for-profit and non-profit organisations (Humfrey, 2009). Collaborations can also:

> *relate to sub degree, vocational, professional, undergraduate or post graduate qualifications and can be awarded as a single degree, joint degrees or double degrees. In some cases students can graduate at two separate ceremonies (Humfrey, 2009).*

3.6.3. There are a number of models for classifying trans-national activity of Higher Education. One such is the classification used by Drew et al (2008). This consists of two large groups depending on which institution the students' have a contract with.

3.6.4. Where students' contracts are with partners or shared with partners:

> *3.6.4.i. Validation*
>
> The overseas partner designs their own programme, but follows the structure and validation requirements of the UK course. The award is given from the UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) and the UK institution uses its own quality assurance procedures to monitor the course.
>
> *3.6.4.ii. Articulation*
>
> The student begins a programme and completes an award in another country, which enables them to join the UK's Higher Education program at a later identified point. This format still falls within the definition of transnational education as the UK HEI requires the partner institution program of study to ensure equivalence to a stage of one of its own programs. Where students move back and forth between the partner organisation and the UK HEI, this is known as Twinning.

3.6.4.iii. Franchise (or licensed)

The overseas partner runs a UK HEI's programme in the same way as it would be delivered in the UK. Rigorous partner approval is very important. The quality assurance processes of the UK HEI are followed by the partner and may be more rigorous. The external examiner will be the one normally used in the UK.

3.6.4.iv. Joint Award

The award is given jointly by two HEI's of similar status. Both the UK HEI and the partner institution contribute to a proportion of the program delivery and arrangements are jointly agreed. Students may study at each institution for specified times, or it could entail distance learning.

3.6.4.v. Dual Award (or Double Award)

A student receives an award for a program of study by the UK HEI and also by the partner institution. Each partner applies their own processes to their proportion of their contribution. Unlike the Joint Award, where both partner institutions must agree on the standard of the student's work for the award; for a dual award it is possible for one institution to approve and give the award, but for the other not to.

3.6.4.vi. Partial Credit

Students gain transferable credits form a partner institution that can contribute to their award.

3.6.5. Where students' contracts are with the UK HEI

3.6.5.i. In Country/Flying Faculty (may be known as off site, distance taught or/outreach).

Staff from the UK HEI deliver classes overseas, usually in intensive blocks.

3.6.5.ii. Distance Learning.

The UK HEI program is studied remotely, either by paper or on-line sources. The work is assessed by the UK HEI for the award. Students may come to the UK for residential periods.

3.6.5.iii. Blended Delivery.

This involves a mixture of Distance Learning and Flying Faculty, and also tutorial support from the overseas partner.

3.6.5.iv. On-Campus Provision Overseas

The UK HEI has a branch campus overseas.

Lessons which can be learnt

3.7.1. This section first illustrates how one university in the U.K. has set out to ensure Quality Assurance in its international collaborative programmes. This section further uses the findings and recommendations from audits carried out

by the U.K. Quality Assurance Agency on Higher Education Institutions, to identify some examples of where lessons can be learnt.

3.7.2. This university, based in the English East Midlands, mainly has two types of international collaborations: *articulation arrangements* and *flying faculty/supported distance learning.* No teaching is carried out by the overseas partners in these collaborations. The overseas partner's roles are to:

- Offer workshops to students e.g. skills development, how to access and use the UK university's on-line resources.
- Advise students of the UK university's policies and procedures.
- Supply pastoral support, i.e. personal tutor.

3.7.3. A Collaborative Provision Handbook covers policies and procedures for the quality assurance of collaborative activities. The key processes and indicators used for assuring the quality and standards in collaborative provision are the same as for any courses leading to awards given by the university. In addition, international collaborative courses have two extra elements of quality assurance: Link Tutors, and an Annual Report on a Collaborative Programme.

3.7.4. For each programme, there is a UK Link Tutor and an overseas Link Tutor. The UK Link Tutor liaises with the Link Tutor in the overseas establishment, and makes several visits in a year overseas. An Annual Report is produced and sent for approval to the overseas Link Tutor. The report is also viewed by the Quality Standards and Enhancement Council (QSEC) to identify any issues e.g. failure rates, level of support, comments from students etc. This report is also included within the Annual subject report which reflects all the university's programs in a particular subject area. The university views this as an additional level of quality assurance, as it allows comparisons to be made between courses run through international collaborations and courses taught in the UK university.

3.7.5. Collaborative partnerships are reviewed at three levels - Institutional Review, Internal Collaborative Audit, and Periodic Subject Review (which considers programme level arrangements for re-approval). The outputs of the quality assurance process are looked at both at the School and institutional level.

3.7.6. There have been previous difficulties in this institution which can be learnt from: agreement for one articulation arrangement has been terminated due to adverse publicity; and it has been identified that some sets of grades have been over inflated. These are currently being investigated by the UK University's Link Tutor.

3.7.7. There have also been previous examples of good practice in this institution which can be learnt from: marketing material is approved by both Link Tutors and the international office; Link Tutors share with each other their lessons learnt from experience, and cultural considerations. The local tutors impart their local and cultural knowledge which the UK tutors can use to make their teaching more relevant to the students. Tutors overseas are local and their Curriculum Vitae has to be approved by Quality Standards and Enhancement Council.

3.7.8. There are also lessons which can be learnt and recommendations of good practice from the UK's Quality Assurance Agency's Audit Reports. In the UK, the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) role is to safeguard the standard of awards given by UK Higher Education institutions, and therefore to encourage public confidence. The following examples are from the QAA reports published in 2006. These reports can be accessed from the QAA website[1].

3.7.9. Concerning public information, publicity and promotional activity; it is very important to have good procedures for ensuring accuracy in publicity and promotional material, and activity. The reports include these difficulties which were found in audits:

> 3.7.9.i. One UK university kept a publically available record of partnerships and collaborative arrangements, but the QAA recommended they should also include details about the category of provision, contractual status and student numbers, in order to provide more public confidence in the completeness of information.

> 3.7.9.ii. The articulation agreement concerning one agreement did not cover the need for the UK institution to monitor promotional material produced by its partner; in another collaboration the contract did not specify the relevant procedures for the marketing and advertising campaign to have prior written approval from both parties.

> 3.7.9.iii. The QAA found one collaboration handbook to be 'confusing and apparently contradictory', and a website of a partner college abroad to be potentially confusing and misleading to prospective students.   This included an estimate of the percentage of graduating students who went on to complete articulated Master's programs, but which the UK institution was not able to confirm.

3.7.10. Recommendations concerning public information, publicity and promotional activity include;

> *3.7.10.i.* Produce a procedures handbook setting out the requirements for the monitoring of advertising and publicity material.

---

[1] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/international/china06/

3.7.10.ii. The University's Collaborative Programmes Office should undertake a rolling programme of spot checks on partner websites.

3.7.10.iii. Where the University has a network of regional offices worldwide, the regional office could play a main role in overseeing the approval of publicity.

3.7.10. iv. Draft copies of any publicity material provided by partners could be sent to the relevant school for approval.

3.7.10. v. Each school within the University could have a Director of Curriculum, Learning and Quality who is responsible for approval of publicity material.

3.7.10.vi. Publicity material could be produced in English by the UK University staff and sent to the overseas partner organisation for translation. The translated version is then sent back to the UK University to be checked for accuracy.

3.7.10.vii. Information about overseas collaborations can be published on the University's website.

3.7.10.viii. Hold comprehensive lists of overseas collaborative provision by type, including start and renewal dates.

3.7.10.ix. Keep a register of collaborative provision which includes details of the names and addresses of collaborative partnerships, the dates of future reviews, the awards, number of students, the names of the University co-coordinators of the program and the Program Director for both institutions and the language of assessment.

3.7.10.x. With regards to franchises, have a legal contract that requires the overseas partner to only use documentation , stationery, publicity and other material previous approved in writing by the UK HEI.

3.7.10.xi. Within articulation arrangements, formalise the control of publicity as early as possible.

3.7.10.xii. Within publicity information, make it clear which institution gives the award and where students could study. Information available must be comprehensive, informative and accurate. Students should be able to get further information from course staff at the overseas institution and at the UK HEI either on a one-to-one basis and/or email.

Concerning selecting and approving the partner institution there are lessons which can be learnt:

3.7.10.xiii. The QAA recommended that one university should undertake a full risk appraisal to all its overseas partnerships due to the inherent risk with these kinds of collaborations.

3.7.10.xiv. There needs to be compatibility in educational objectives, for example one particular collaboration overtly stated that they 'shared a common vision and a desire to create a truly outstanding experience for students by combining the best of different systems and cultures'.

3.7.10.xv. It is also possible to use firms of international lawyers to undertake due diligence enquiries relating to the partner and programme.

3.7.10.xvi. An investigatory visit should be made to the potential partner by appropriate senior University officers and academic staff which results in a 'Stage One report', which appraises the proposal against the UK HEI requirements.

3.7.10.xvii. This should be followed by a number of more exploratory visits.

3.7.10.xviii. The Senate Committee on Validation of one university looks at the 'institution's fit with the University's Strategy, corporate values and academic portfolio'. In addition, it also looks at the 'institution's objectives, governance, funding, resources, academic capability, general standing, location, critical mass, quality assurance systems (including audit reports carried out by external agencies), risk and existing or previous links with other institutions'.

3.7.10.xix. Resources assessed should be both human and physical.

3.7.10.xx. Consideration also needs to be given for the need to operate within the legislative and cultural requirements of the partner's country.

3.7.10.xxi. In-country knowledge can be sought from the British Council.

Concerning staffing and staff development,

3.7.10.xxii. There needs to be continuing investment for staff support and development, with targeted overseas staff development activities.

3.7.10.xxiii. There needs to be 'willingness of both universities to knit their provision to each other's programmes', which includes curriculum mapping, teaching methods and learning styles.

3.7.10.xxiv. It is necessary to make regular visits to partner organisations and frequent e-mail communication.

3.7.10xxv. The approvals process should confirm the qualifications and suitability of staff teaching on the courses. There should also be measures in place in the partner institution to check the proficiency of staff

3.8. Conclusions

3.8.1. The internationalisation of Higher Education, as well as new technology-driven delivery modes of education, has given rise to many new providers of higher education and international collaborative courses. There are now many possible approaches to programme delivery, structure and formats of collaboration. This has provided students with increased opportunities for access to higher education. However, collaborations inherently carry risks, but these risks increase when partners are located in different parts of the world. Developing and ensuring good quality assurance systems is therefore vital.

3.8.2. Any system of quality assurance in education needs to have the full support and commitment of all the collaborating partner institutions delivering the educational programme. There needs to be an agreed understanding

between partners of the quality and standards expected, terminology, responsibilities, and the type of collaboration.

3.8.3. Any effective system of quality control will need to have as its basis, public responsibility, accountability and an internalised quality culture by all the partner organisations. Quality assurance should therefore be an ongoing process. It is important for both the provider and receiver organisations to work together to ensure that effective quality assurance mechanisms are in place.

3.8.4. It is also important that students have access to information, and that the information is clear and accurate, so that they can make well-informed choices about programmes and providers.

3.8.5. The following bullet points develop the main items identified in this chapter as a series of hints which any staff members who intend to initiate transnational collaborations might wish to follow.

- **Ch 3.1.** It is essential to recognise that collaborations carry more risks of quality assurance than if a programme of education is designed and delivered by one provider, and that the level of risk rises when collaborations are transnational.
- **Ch 3.2.** It is essential to explore and create, rather than to assume, a common agreed 'language', to ensure that quality standards are understood by both parties and are being met, for example with terms like 'recognition', and 'approval'. (Note, in Chapter Two it was pointed out there also can be confusion about types of collaboration, for example 'franchise', or 'flying faculty', hence in at least two areas the risk of confusion, that is the risk of partners not sharing a common understanding, is extremely high).
- **Ch 3.3.** It is essential to carry out a process of due diligence, to check thoroughly that the partner is capable of fulfilling their agreed responsibilities. This covers checking their financial credibility, checking other organisations the partner is involved with, assessing the partner's organisational performance, and communicating with quality agencies.
- **Ch 3.4.** It is expected that TNE programs are equivalent or comparable to the analogous courses delivered at 'home'. Although courses cannot be identical, for example case studies are frequently localised, it is essential to consider at an early stage how much of the course content can be changed to suit local conditions before there is a significant difference in student learning outcomes. As an example the use of elearning may raise questions as to the 'quality of the student experience'.
- **Ch 3.5.** It is important to check the equivalence of entry standards, so not to automatically assume that a student who has studied in one

country may be as ready for higher education as a student from another country.

- **Ch 3.6.** It is best to be extremely cautious about serial arrangements, where the collaborative partner has dealings with other partners as third parties. In such cases the originating institution would have difficulty in matters such as external examination of quality.
- **Ch 3.7.** It is best to be extremely cautious about collaborations where the language of teaching and assessment is not the language they normally work in. In such cases the originating institution would have difficulty in matters such as external examination of quality.
- **Ch 3.8.** It is important to consider issues of assessment and moderation: differences in assessment regimes; maintenance of academic security for examinations; which collaborative partner does the marking; feedback on work.
- **Ch 3.9.** It is essential to consult the *UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education* (UNESCO/OECD, 2005).
- **Ch 3.10.** It is very important to have good procedures for ensuring accuracy in publicity and promotional material, and activity (see the items listed in 3.7.10.)
- **Ch 3.11.** It is essential to have a clear process of selecting and approving the partner institutions.
- **Ch 3.12.** It is essential to recognise the needs which the collaboration will create concerning staffing and staff development.
- **Ch 3.13.** It is recommended to produce a Collaborative Provision Handbook to detail policies and procedures for the quality assurance of the collaboration.
- **Ch 3.14.** It is recommended to have a UK Link Tutor and an overseas Link Tutor for each programme.
- **Ch 3.15.** It is recommended to produce an annual report to identify any issues e.g. failure rates, level of support, comments from students etc.

References

Adam, S. et al (2001) Transnational Education Project: Report and Recommendations. Confederation of European Rectors' Conferences, Geneva (draft report 18.02.01). Cited in R. Middlehurst, (Ed) *Quality Assurance Implications of New Forms of Higher Education*. Part 1: A Typology. ENQA Occasional papers 3. European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Helsinki. Available at: http://www.enqa.eu/files/newforms.pdf

Altbach, P., & Knight, J. (2006) *The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities*. Available at:

http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:Ll8uQfoYPZgJ:www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/pga/pdf/Internationalization_2006.pdf+the+internationalization+of+higher+education:+motivations+and+realities&hl=en&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESjdRXP5YfjSx-YTfTnQxsEASxNII9QrZ5sMNu47Dlo9LHEx7GBV8M4k24HnJwJo-e6Y-dnCiLlI6AN-lNHABrz-PVQAvB5H01sy1AK7LHWc_qPF-7lMiqZBd77MI8yub6SjBVsm&sig=AHIEtbRJ1J3PEL1U5k3WE3kme-j3wooS9w

Bennett, P., Bergan, S., Cassar, D., Hamilton, M., Soinila, M., Sursock, A., Uvalic-Trumbic, S., Williams, P. (2010) *Quality Assurance in Transnational Higher Education.* Chapter 2*.* Available at: http://www.enqa.eu/files/ENQA%20workshop%20report%2011.pdf

British Council. *Transnational Education Student Decision Making Research*. Available at: http://www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-information-research-tne-student-decision-making.htm

Campbell, C., Dr. Van der Wende, M. (2000) *International Initiatives and Trends in Quality Assurance for European Higher Education*. Available at: http://www.enqa.eu/files/initiatives.pdf

Council of Europe (2002) *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education*, Higher Education and Research. Available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/code%20of%20good%20practice_EN.asp

Drew, S., McCaig, C., Marsden, D., Haughton, P., McBride J., McBride, D., Willis, B., Wostenholme, C. (2008) *Trans-national Education and Higher Education Institutions: Exploring patterns of HE Institutional Activity*. DIUS Research report 08 07. Available at: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DIUS-RR-08-07&

Humfrey, C. (2009) *Transnational Education and the Student Experience: a PMI Student Experience Project Report*. Available at: http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/files/pdf/pmi/tne_report.pdf

Jackson, S (2006). *The Quality Assurance of Transnational Education: The UK experience of QAA Overseas Audit*. Quality Audit and Assurance for Transnational Higher Education. Edited by Jeanette Baird. Australian Universities Quality Agency. Available at: *http://www.auqa.edu.au/files/publications/quality%20audit%20&%20assurance%20for%20tne_publication_final.pdf*

Lenn, M. (1992) *Global trends in Quality Assurance in Higher Education*. World Education News and Reviews. Spring 1992, **Vol.5**, No.2. Available at: http://www.wes.org/ewenr/wenrarchive/QA_HighEdQualAssTrendsSpr92.pdf

Middlehurst, R., Campbell, C. (2004) *Quality Assurance and Cross-border Provision: Issues and Challenges*. Second Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications - 'Widening Access to Quality Higher Education'. Available at: http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/files/31917/108797996937E-Campbell-Middlehurst.pdf/7E-Campbell-Middlehurst.pdf

Middlehurst, R. (2001) *Quality Assurance Implications of New Forms of Higher Education*. Part 1: A Typology. ENQA Occasional papers 3. European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Helsinki. Available at: http://www.enqa.eu/files/newforms.pdf

OECD (2004a). Internationalization and Trade in Higher Education. Opportunities and Challenges. Paris: OECD. Cited in M. Martin, (Ed) *The Cross-Border Challenge of Higher Education: Comparing Experiences*. In Cross-Border Higher Education: Regulation, Quality Assurance and Impact .**Vol. I** International Institute for Educational Planning. Available at: http://www.international.ac.uk/resources/TNE.pdf#page=6

QAA (2004) *Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education*. Available at: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeofpractice/section2/default.asp

QAA. *UK Higher Education in China*. Available at: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/international/china06/

Stella, A. (2006) Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education in Quality in Higher Education 12(3). Cited in Drew, S., McCraig, C., Marsden, D., Haughton, P., McBride, J., McBride, D., Willis, B., Wolstenholme, C. *Trans-national Education and Higher Education Institutions: Exploring Patterns of HE Institutional Activity.* Sheffield Hallam University DIUS Research Report 08 07 p.13. Available at: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DIUS-RR-08-07.pdf

UNESCO-APQN (2007) *UNESCO-APQN Toolkit: Regulating the Quality of Cross-Border Education*. Available at: http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/087/APQN_Toolkit.pdf

UNESCO/OECD (2005) *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education.* Available at: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/51/35779480.pdf

Wong, W.S. (2005). *Safeguarding the Quality of Cross-Border Education: The Role of Governments and Quality Assurance Bodies*. Seminar on Establishment of Cross-Border Education Assessment Mechanisms. Organised by UNESCO Bangkok Office, Kunming, China. 25 May, 2005.

Woodhouse, D., Carroll, M. (2006) *Quality Assurance Issues in Transnational Higher Education – Developing Theory by Reflecting on Thematic Findings*

from AUQA Audits. In J. Baird (Ed) Quality Audit and Assurance forTransnational Higher Education. Australian Universities Quality Agency. Available at: http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?hl=en&q=quality+assurance+issues+in+transnational+higher+education+-+developing+theory+by+reflecting+on+thematic+findings+from+AUQA+audits&btnG=Search&as_sdt=2000&as_ylo=&as_vis=0

Strategic Implications of International Collaborations in Higher Education