Understanding quality in Transnational Education in Vietnam: Stakeholder perspectives in a Vietnam-UK undergraduate partnership context

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Intellectual Property

The candidate confirms the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

The research focuses on stakeholder perceptions of the quality of undergraduate transnational higher education (TNHE) provision based on the context of a Vietnam-UK partnership offering two joint undergraduate programmes named BA in Business Management and BA in Banking and Finance. This is a research context that has previously received little attention. The thesis is underpinned by three research questions designed to explore issues related to the determinants of the quality, the effectiveness of the programme delivery and the factors that enable or conversely hinder the quality of the provision, with an emphasis on comparing the perceptions of students, university policy-makers and staff providers. These insights provide the basis of an understanding of the factors contributing to quality from a comparative and intercultural perspective.

The methodology is based on a conceptual framework that combines the approach of defining quality in higher education as a stakeholder-specific meaning, the stakeholder theory to approach quality management, and the input-process-output model of quality management in higher education. The research applies a multiple-method approach, including interviews and questionnaires within a predominantly qualitative interpretive paradigm.

The key findings fall within four categories. First is the importance of curricular equivalence and adaptation to tailor student learning needs. Second is the awareness of cultural differences to the approaches of transnational teaching and learning which focuses on a glocalised approach in a learning-centred environment. Third is the effective learning environment which focuses on providing value-added activities to enhance student learning opportunities and develop student employability. Fourth is building working relations by a means of effective communications and sharing practices in working with the partner institution. Overall, the findings are not generalizable in quantitative terms, but provide rich evidence (through an in-depth qualitative enquiry) of processes that promote, or conversely hinder, quality undergraduate provision in a TNHE partnership.

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Chapter 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

This study offers an approach to researching the quality of a transnational higher education programme from the stakeholder perspectives. For the purpose of this research, quality is defined in terms of socially constructed determinants or factors that contribute to perceptions of quality from the perspectives of key stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrative staff and university policy-makers. Quality is referred to in the rest of this thesis not as something to measure objectively but as a judgement that is perceived subjectively by stakeholders. The study aims to identify what factors to inform judgements on quality in the context of the Vietnam-UK undergraduate transnational partnership.

The term “transnational education” refers to all types of higher education provision, or sets of courses of study, and educational services (including online/distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based (UNESCO and the Council of Europe). With this regard, transnational education (THNE) is a component of the wider phenomenon of the internationalisation of education. Transnational education has become an increasingly important and integral part of internationalisation of higher education of the countries and institutions through the establishment of transnational education programmes (Huang 2007). Challenges, however, occur in managing and delivering these transnational programmes, for ensuring perceived quality, and meeting expectations of the learners, the providers and other stakeholders involved. Since quality is a socially constructed, rather than an absolute concept, it follows that whether or not quality targets are achieved will be decided by the stakeholders’ perspective. In other words, stakeholder perceptions of quality will be the facilitators of quality for a transnational programme.

Managing and ensuring that transnational programmes are of a high perceived quality is of critical importance to the success of transnational education. Several studies have been conducted, however, mostly in the context of partnership and relationship management between the transnational institutions or foreign branch campus operations in the host countries, focusing on cultural politics of flexible learning (Ziguras 2012), students' mobility and accessing the participation in cross-border higher education (Ziguras and Pham 2014). With a broader context, most of current literature is about the impact of transnational education (British Council 2013), knowledge transfer (Li-Hua 2007) and the development of transnational education (Fang 2012). There is a growing interest in the current research on quality management of transnational education; however, those studies are approached from the perspective of providing countries. There is limited research on assessing the quality of such transnational education programmes on its operation from the perspective of the delivering country.

Ensuring positive perceptions of quality of transnational education programmes is critical since the pressure of quality has not just come from the sending institutions but also from the host institutions and the stakeholders involved. It has been argued that one of the most commonly raised issues across the transnational education literature is the experience and the effectiveness of cross-cultural teaching and learning and power relations between the awarding and the delivering institutions (Djerasimovic 2014). Along with this issue is the appropriateness and adaptability of educational programmes, the approaches to teaching and learning in the transnational context or the different expectations, learning trends, cultures of communication and learning styles. However, those issues have not been covered yet in the literature research on quality to evaluate the effectiveness of the transnational programme delivery.

My motivation for conducting this research was based on my interest in transnational higher education and the area of quality management. I have experienced TNHE through the time I worked in an international school at a university in Vietnam. Taking different positions, such as an academic coordinator, a lecturer, and a member of management board, I personally realised the importance of assuring quality in transnational higher education. Transnational education is operated in an inter-cultural environment, with different expectations and motivations of different people. My experience of working in transnational education helped me to understanding the several challenges of THNE, for both sending country and receiving country. The challenge for the sending country, for example, is to understand the local operating environment and the various approaches adopted by host countries to facilitate and manage quality. The challenge for the host country and institutions is to understand what they want to achieve from transnational education and how to maximise the benefits that it offers. In the fierce competition of the local and international integration of educational aspect, I think quality is considered as a bench-mark for sustainable development of any collaborative programmes and of the competitive advantages for any educational institutions. It is a central task for the institution to be effective in delivering the international collaborative programme and being active in managing its quality. As such, a better understanding of how quality is perceived and experienced from the people directly involved in delivering, and receiving, the programme is important and essential. I consider this approach as crucial for the transnational institutions to reflect their operations to improve and enhance quality.

This study was therefore undertaken to provide a better understanding of the factors contributing to quality of transnational education by investigating how quality was perceived and how it was operated through the perspectives of the stakeholders directly involved in the delivery of the THNE programme. The purpose of this thesis was therefore to fill the gap of the existing literature in transnational higher education and to provide better insights into quality and the operation of the transnational educational programme.

1.2 Understanding quality

Although there is no universal way in which quality is defined and managed, the literature on quality in higher education reveals that for any model of defining quality to be accepted community-wide, it must represent the views of influential stakeholders (Srikanthan 2005, Srikanthan & Dalrymple 2007). As suggested by Kettunen (2015), stakeholders can influence the strategic and other objectives and the quality of teaching and other activities. The success of the higher education institution depends on its ability in the respective management approaches. Since different stakeholders in higher education are likely to value the importance of the dimensions of quality according to their particular motivations and interest and interpret them differently (Owlia and Aspinwall 1996). Therefore, in order to understand the quality and manage the quality effectively, an essential first step would involve identifying key factors contributing to quality from the perspective of the primary stakeholders, as without some degree of consensus on major quality determinants, quality management will not be effective in the longer term (Zachariah 2007).

Quality is recognised as a fundamental issue in management theory and practice in higher education. However, the vast array of literature on quality in transnational education illustrates that research has essentially focused on students, in terms of their satisfactions and perceptions. Quality management could be assessed through not only from a single stakeholder (as student perspective or employer perspective) but by different stakeholders to assess implications for institutional performance (Saad and Siha 2000). Therefore, quality management can be accessed through the consideration of the perceptions of different stakeholders (Harvey & Williams 2010). The study engaged the way of thinking about how quality is related to a stakeholder-specific meaning (Harvey & Green 1994), the stakeholder theory to approach quality management (Foley 2005). The study also followed the quality management framework of Cheng and Tam (1997), who argued that the conceptual input-process-output framework for quality dimensions in higher education could provide a basis for understanding and consequently improving the quality in the education context. The ideas underpinning those theories is regarded as a useful tool in understanding factors that influence stakeholder conceptions of quality.

1.3 The Vietnam-UK undergraduate partnership programme

Acknowledging the various definitions of transitional education and complex delivery modes of transnational education, the transnational education programme referred to in this study is a local delivery franchised programme. This is an undergraduate partnership programme between a university in Hanoi, Vietnam and the partners in the UK. Two main majors of the partnership programme are the BA in Business Management and BA in Banking and Finance. Students register full-time at both the host institution in Vietnam and the home institution in the UK. The overall objective of the partnership is to provide the same educational experience to students in both institutions and confer a similar degree on completion of the curriculum.

Under the partnership agreement, the division of responsibilities between the two institutions generally share the following elements (Waterval *et al.* 2014): (i) the Vietnam institution is largely responsible for the recruitment of students and staff; and in charge of delivering the programme; (ii) the UK institution provides the educational programme, and is responsible for quality assurance. The UK institution assists with the delivery of the programme by providing staff training and some other support.

English is the main language of teaching and learning. The programme is structured over four years. After finishing the first year, having English ability equivalent to IELTS 6.5 and equipped with basic foundation courses of study skills, computer skills and basic economics (and maths in economics for majors of Banking and Finance only), students are assigned to the major of their choice, either for the BA in Business Management or BA in Banking and Finance. Students can choose to stay for the rest, the second, third and fourth year, at the home institution to finish the programme or to choose the top-up year (the final year) at the partner institution. The qualification is awarded by the UK institution according to the study major of the student’s choice.

1.4 Research aims

The purpose of this research was to provide a better understanding of the factors that influence stakeholder perceptions of quality of transnational higher education, investigating how quality was perceived and how we could evaluate the effectiveness of the programme through the stakeholders’ analysis of quality. Those investigations were accessed through the stakeholders’ experiences of quality and the impact on teaching, learning and the partnership delivery. From the exploration of quality and the comparison of stakeholders’ expectations and perceptions of quality, the study aimed at providing some implications for provisional policy and practice for quality management in transnational education.

Three research questions have been formulated in light of the above research aims:

RQ1: What do the different groups of stakeholders understand to be the factors that determine quality in the provision of transnational education?

RQ2: How effectively has the transnational programme been delivered, from a stakeholder perspective, and with what impact on the quality of the student experience, including teaching, learning and employability?

RQ3. From a stakeholder perspective, what has enabled or obstructed the quality of the partnership programme?

1.5 Significance of the study

Firstly, it is intended that the study provides a greater understanding of the quality through the staff's and students' experiences and perceptions of the chosen partnership programme. Understanding staff's and students' perceptions of contributing factors to quality could therefore help to achieve the institutional management goals, to improve the provisional practices and policies and to enhance the partnership quality. Secondly, the findings of this research could contribute in TNHE literature, on understanding, managing and accessing quality of the transnational business studies programmes, especially through the aspects of intercultural curriculum, transnational teaching and learning, and working relationships between the transnational institutions. Thirdly, the study could contribute to providing a useful framework for higher education institutions, researchers, academic staff and anyone who interested in transnational higher education, in managing and working in the transnational educational setting.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured within eight chapters. Following this introductory chapter, the Literature Review chapter (Chapter 2) provides the concepts and the development of TNHE and addresses the gap in current research on the quality of TNHE programme in order to provide room for this research. This chapter then examines the concepts of quality, defining quality and quality management in higher education and theories to build up a conceptual framework for the study.

The Methodology chapter (Chapter 3) provides a research design and the process which help to answer the research questions. The design focuses on methodological approach which adopts the interpretism research paradigm. It explains the use of the multiple-method approach, including interviews (nine student interviews and 14 staff interviews), 349 questionnaires within the predominantly qualitative interpretive paradigm, and the procedures to collect and analyse these qualitative and quantitative data accordingly. The area of validity and reliability is discussed around the issues of triangulation and the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Some considerations for ethical issues are discussed in this chapter.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are devoted to the presentation and analysis of collected data. Findings from the student perspectives are presented in two chapters. The interview findings are presented in Chapter 4, and followed by an analysis of the findings from the student survey in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 provides the findings from the staff perspectives. At the end of each of these chapters, key implications from the main findings are highlighted for further discussion.

The Discussion chapter (Chapter 7) provides a reflection on the main findings through a comparative analysis approach. The discussion reflects the research inquiries to understand the stakeholder perceptions of quality, the way this informs us how we can evaluate the effectiveness of the programme delivery, and the quality management for the transnational provision.

The Conclusion chapter (Chapter 8) provides a summary of main contributions and implications of the study. Four key findings emerged from the research are outlined and followed by five main contributions to the literature. Six key recommendations and implications in total are made for institutional practices and policies in transnational higher education. A reflection on the two limitations of the study is acknowledged and four areas for future research are proposed. The final part of the chapter is a reflection on how the study has contributed to my own personal and professional development.

Chapter 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review for this study includes information divided into two main sections. The first section provides the concepts of transnational higher education and explores the development and motivations of transnational higher education from the perspectives of Vietnam and the UK, which represent the host and home country of this transnational higher education programme. The first section also provides a review of current research on transnational education, addressing the need for understanding quality of transnational education and opens space for further research on the quality of transnational education programmes from the perspectives of different stakeholders in the transnational programme operation.

The second section provides a review of the literature on quality and quality management in higher education. It examines the concepts of quality, defining quality and quality management in higher education, with an emphasis on an overview of the various stakeholders of higher education and explores the stakeholder theory to approach for quality management in higher education. The various theories will help to build up a conceptual framework for this study, to examine the implication of the cross-cultural and multiple stakeholder perceptions of facilitators of quality in a Vietnamese TNHE partnership.

2.2 Transnational higher education

2.2.1 The scope and definitions of transnational higher education

Transnational higher education (TNHE) has become an increasingly important and integral part of the internationalisation of higher education in many countries (Huang 2007). What is known as transnational education is a part of international engagement or internationalisation of the higher education institutions. International engagement has been an important aspect of higher education for many decades, and institutions and scholars have established many forms of educational collaboration that cross national borders (Stella and

Woodhouse 2011). Teachers and professionals crossing national borders for academic and professional purposes (academic/people mobility) is an age-old phenomenon. However, the mobility of programmes and institutions crossing national borders (programme/institution mobility) is of recent origin, except for some traditional forms of distance education. The movement of people, programmes and institutions are becoming more complex, so the landscape continues to evolve, and as a result, the term 'transnational education' is also acquiring new dimensions (Stella & Woodhouse 2011). There are agreements about the broad elements of TNHE, but various groups differ in the emphasis they give to certain aspects of TNHE and what is included within the scope of TNHE.

The Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE) – one of the early developments in providing quality assurance services for TNHE providers – states that transnational education is "any teaching or learning activity in which the students are in a different country (the host country) to that in which the institution providing the education is based (the home country)". This situation requires that national boundaries be crossed by information about the education, and by staff and/or educational materials (Global Alliance for Transnational Education 1997). This definition focuses not only on the 'more than one country' aspect or characteristic but also categorises the countries involved as host country and home country. It also highlights that national boundaries are crossed. However, a gap in the GATE definition is that the scope of TNHE is not very clear. Although it refers to any teaching or learning activity, it is not explicit that distance education is included in the scope of this definition. A later and more specific definition is proposed by the Council of Europe (2002), which defines transnational education as

> *All type of higher education study programmes, or set up study courses or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the education system of a state different from the state in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national education system. (Council of Europe 2002)*

The general principle of transnational higher education is that students can study toward a foreign qualification without leaving their home country. The provision of TNHE would necessitate some forms of affiliation, linkage and partnership, either through formal or informal agreement, between foreign and local institutions (Sirat 2006). TNHE also encompasses the aspects of “franchised provision”, “offshore education”, “international collaboration provision” or “cross-border education” (Machado 2000, Huang 2007, Naidoo 2009). Among all these terms, “transnational education” (TNE) tends to be the term which has been widely accepted and used by regional or international institutions and scholars all over the world. This study will therefore adopt the most widely-used term “transnational education” to refer the study of the TNHE quality from the perspectives of educational providers and receivers.

2.2.2 Modes and forms of TNHE

There are a variety of ways in which education is conducted transnationally. The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) defines that it should include distance education courses offered by higher education providers located in another country, joint programs offered between a local provider and a foreign institution, franchised courses offered with or without involvement of staff members from the parent institution, and foreign campuses of institutions developed with or without local partnerships (INQAAHE (2010) cited in Going Global 2013).

Knight (2015) identifies four models of cross-border education/TNHE depending on who or what moves across borders: people, providers, programmes. However, the British Council (Going Global 2013) has provided a clearer identification of the five TNHE delivery modes:

- *International branch campus*

This is a kind of collaboration in which the sending institution establishes a stand-alone satellite operation in the host country and is responsible for all aspects of recruiting, admission, programme delivery and awarding of qualifications. The full-campus operations like this present a significant opportunity for both the providing and the host countries; however, Doorbar and Bateman (2008) argued that UK institutions have taken only limited steps to set up overseas campuses due to the financial risks and threat of draining resources. By contrast, Australian institutions seem to be very keen on full campus operations, such as the branch campuses in Dubai, Hong Kong, China, Singapore and Vietnam (Adams 2007), although the collapse of University of New South Wales campus in Singapore after one semester of operation also affected the long-term reputation of this country. This has been seen as a salutary lesson for those engaged in TNHE development. In comparison with other types of transnational education (TNE), branch campus establishment is exposed to a considerably higher level of risk due to the required large amount of investment and commitment of time and resources (Shams and Huisman 2012).

- *Franchise programme*

This is a kind of collaboration in which the providing institution authorises a host institution to deliver its programme with no curricular input by the host country. The qualification is awarded and quality assured by the providing institution. Knight's typology of franchising arrangements suggests that under a franchise arrangement, the provider institution grants a host institution in another country permission or license to offer the provider institution's degree under agreed conditions (Knight and Yorke 2004). Besides the degree itself being from the provider institution, there are many other resources from that direction, as Farthing (2005) points out, "A franchised programme is a programme designed and owned by the University but delivered by a partner college. The University remains responsible for the design, content, mode of delivery and assessment of the programme" (Farthing 2015, p. 5).

- *Articulation arrangement*

This is an arrangement in TNE that allows host country students who have completed a specified curriculum to apply to a sending country programme and enrol with advanced standing there. Advanced standing applies generally to admissions onto a course for a semester or year of the course other than the first semester or year. Articulation is important because it is related to opportunity and it is a signification on the broader scale at the national level (Hass 1999).

- *Double/dual degree programmes*

Two or more partner institutions in different countries collaborate to design and deliver a common programme. The student receives a qualification from each partner institution. This results in a student receiving two or more qualifications for completion of one programme. According to Doorbar and Bateman (2008), this will provide a way of providing mutual recognition of systems and academic input and lead to a more collaborative award with high relevance to the global marketplace.

- *Joint degree programme*

The joint degree programme is similar to the double/dual programme in that two or more institutions collaborate to design and deliver a new programme. Students receive one qualification which includes the badges of each partner institution on the award.

The delivery modes of TNHE have overlaps between them, such as the twinning programme and articulation agreement, which means a student may apply to the sending country and complete the programme there. The dual degree and joint degree programmes share a similarity in that two or more institutions collaborate to design and deliver a programme. Various modes of TNHE could be differentiated in terms of the learning, teaching and assessment provision and the nature of the contractual arrangements (Drew and McCaig 2007). The contractual agreements refer to the student's contractual arrangements between partner organisations or to quality assurance, such as validation, articulation, franchise, joint award, or dual award. Student registration also differs for the different transnational education modes. For example, a student is registered with the host institution in a franchised programme, whereas with articulation arrangement, the student is initially registered with the host institution and then transfers to the sending institution

(Going Global 2013). With the new trend in transnational education, joint-awards, dual degrees and combined modes are becoming the dominant models of delivery (Doorbar & Bateman 2008).

2.2.3 TNHE from the UK perspective

The UK has a long history of delivering transnational education. As one of the early developers of large-scale distance learning programmes, the UK has been well positioned to offer courses to students in many countries outside the UK (Doorbar and Bateman 2008). In the early 1980s, the introduction of full fees for international students by the British government brought about more international education. UK higher education institutions have developed stronger and have adapted well to change and taken advantage of the opportunities to move internationally. Since the late 1990s, there has been exceptional growth in TNHE, initiated by the drive of overseas governments to develop knowledge economies (Bohm *et al.* 2004). A review on TNHE in the UK from a study by Hodson and Thomas (2001) showed some trends have been accompanied by a shift towards mass participation in higher education and an environment in which higher education has been seen increasingly as a commodity. The need to increase non-government funding and the concept of higher education as a commodity have combined to cause many higher education institutions to extend their activities into the field of international collaborations.

The current research on TNHE has revealed that most UK higher education providers have a strong interest in, and are engaged to some extent with, transnational education (Tang and Nollent 2007). Literature shows that TNHE has become an important strand of internationalisation strategies in many UK universities and it has provided an important new revenue stream for the universities. Government approaches to funding domestic activities are also encouraging institutions to seek income from abroad (Hatakenaka 2004). Consequently, internationalisation in order to export TNHE and thereby promote the university plays an important part in the UK higher education institutions' strategies. For example, Kwan (2005) sees the motivations of UK institutions to export TNHE as promotion of the university brand, working with world class academia, recruitment of a diverse student body and generating income. TNHE's broader contributions as part of an internationalisation strategy in the UK also include providing mechanisms for ensuring that universities' 'home' students, staff, research profiles and curricula are attuned to the needs of an increasingly globalised economy and workforce (Knight 2008). Drew and McCaig (2007) found that TNHE is indeed important to UK institutions since the income from international students is important and TNHE is a way of making up shortfalls in income. Engagement in international education, both in the UK and via TNHE, enhances the reputation and brand recognition of UK institutions. The UK policy emphasises higher education as a tradable activity generating foreign currency from the recruitment of international students and 'e-University' initiatives, rather than addressing any genuine educational needs, which has differentiated the UK significantly from many of its international counterparts in policy terms (Caruana & Montgomery 2015). However, the export of UK education is currently driven by more than simply a contribution to the balance of payments and it is deemed a cultural, political and foreign policy instrument of influence (Caruana and Montgomery 2015).

Key partners of UK TNHE are mainly from Asian countries (Malaysia, Singapore, China and Hong Kong), which made up 58 per cent of TNHE activity for the UK in 2003; however, it is predicted that those countries will account for 65 per cent of global demand by 2020 (Doorbar & Bateman 2008). China, Singapore and Malaysia have imported TNHE in order to increase enrolments and quicken the pace of massifying higher education, but they are also promoting wider access and more inclusion despite the potential conflict with aspirations to enhance the competitiveness and quality of higher education (Huang 2006). Those overseas partners are willing to collaborate with UK higher education institutions because the reputation of UK education is high, marking it a readily marketable commodity (Hodson and Thomas 2001).

The Higher Education Global study in 2014/15 reframed three distinct categories of the UK TNHE: local delivery partnership (40 per cent), physical presence (8 per cent, referring mainly to international branch campuses), and distance or online provision (52 per cent). The following chart shows the breakdown of British TNHE enrolment in the top five offshore markets across these three categories for 2014/15.

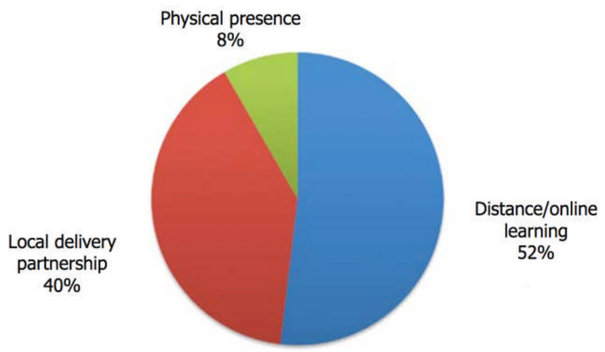

Figure 2-1: Enrolment by TNHE delivery method in top five offshore markets for UK providers, 2014/15

The Higher Education Global study also showed that Business and Management programmes account for about two of every five TNHE students enrolled with British providers, followed by Social Studies and Law, and then STEM subjects. Programming is roughly split between undergraduate (47 per cent) and post-graduate studies (44 per cent).

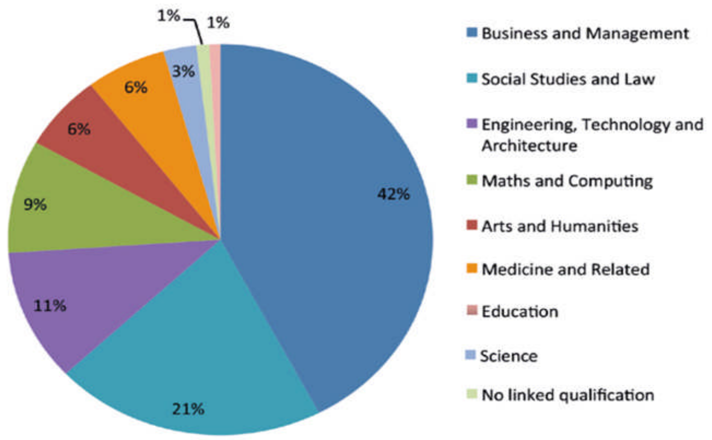

Figure 2-2: TNHE enrolment of British higher education providers by subject area, 2014/15

As informed by Hodson and Thomas (2001), whilst financial considerations have motivated UK institutions towards seeking more international collaborations, the incentive for overseas institutions has often been the attraction of association with an education system with an established international reputation. As the number of collaborations has increased, however, concern has grown about the maintenance of the quality of the commodity being exported from the UK. Procedures for ensuring the quality of these collaborations are intimately related to the quality assurance and assessment procedures established within UK higher education. Those procedures, however, according to Hodson and Thomas (2001), are rooted in the culture of UK higher education and may not be easily comprehensible within partner institutions. To ensure that quality is maintained, partnership provision is subject to collaborative audit by the QAA and was formerly considered by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC). The role of the QAA and the Council of Validating Universities' (CVU) has been paramount in establishing a collaborative audit regime and framework to ensure that the quality of the academic programmes is not compromised.

2.2.4 TNHE from the Vietnam perspective

Responding to globalization and international integration, new trade agreements and developments in information technology have embarked on major reforms in Vietnam's higher education with the aim of developing a modern higher education system that can support economic and social development (Harman, Hayden and Nghi 2010). Vietnam has shown considerable courage in opening its doors to foreign providers in education services (Wilmoth 2004). The renovation with integration into the world economy and access to WTO in 2007 has opened doors for foreign direct investment into every sector of the economy and brought opportunities for higher education in Vietnam. International cooperation in education is considered as a strategy in the process of reforming higher education. Within that policy, Vietnamese institutions have been given autonomy in international academic exchanges and cooperation and have opportunities to win access to international education by creating international educational programmes. The list of international educational programmes has been expanded into hundreds of collaborations between Vietnamese institutions and overseas partners (Le 2016), with 436 partnership programmes licensed in 2016.

Like other emerging economic countries with the growing and young population, the demand for higher education in Vietnam is putting pressure on domestic educational systems with transnational education from the developed western nations seen as the immediate solution (Huang 2010, McBurnie & Ziguras 2007, Yang 2008). TNHE has been seen as a way in improving access to higher education in Vietnam, where the demand for higher education is far exceeding the available supply. Prior to 2011 fewer than 15 per cent of Vietnamese high school graduates were able to acquire a college degree (Chen 2013), indicating a serious imbalance of supply and demand. By having TNHE programmes in-cooperation with the developed educational systems in Western countries, students have a chance to access international education at a very reasonable cost in their home country (McBurnie 2000). Students can also access high-quality education with the labour-oriented courses and acquaint international knowledge and practice through transnational education (Fang 2012). TNHE, however, also creates challenges for HE institutions in Vietnam. The demand for higher education puts pressure on institutions to develop international relationships, reform curriculum, and strengthen graduates’ skills. The demand for international programmes also comes from the willingness of parents to invest in their children to study in international higher education and their capacity to pay, therefore, puts the pressure on the quality in return. This is because pursuing higher education and academic degrees in Vietnamese communities is both highly valued and respected, prompting parents to prioritise investing in their children’s education as a culturally deep-rooted heritage.

There are great impacts by transnational higher education in terms of academic, economic, skills and social-cultural impact to developing countries like Vietnam. Higher education courses facilitated and provided by English-speaking countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Canada – in addition to other Western nations such as France and the Netherlands. Among these countries, Australia’s presence and impact are the largest owing to its close proximity and strong marketing strategy. The Royal Melbourne Information and Technology (RMIT) of Australia is the first international branch campus (100% foreign ownership) currently operating in Vietnam, which had been established in 2001, having campuses in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The full campus operation like this presents a significant opportunity for both countries; however, the foreign institutions have taken limited steps to set up overseas campuses due to the financial risks and threat of draining resources, and the Vietnamese government has its own policy to control the setting up branch campus. In comparison with other types of transnational education, establishment of a branch campus is exposed to a considerably higher level of risk due to the large amount of investment required and the commitment of time and resources from the providing countries (Shams and Huisman 2012). According to Wilmoth (2004), RMIT Vietnam has been continuous in its support of the economic, political, cultural and social interests of Vietnam and has greatly contributed to the country. However, the concerns also have been expressed over the role of market-oriented from international higher education providers in developing countries through providing higher educational services (Wilmoth 2004).

The operation of the franchise programmes, double/dual degree programmes and joint degrees is a common practice in Vietnam. It is generally the case that individual higher education institutions take the lead in choosing foreign institutions for collaborative programmes. In the franchised programmes, the providing institution authorises a Vietnamese institution to deliver its programme with occasional curricular input by the host country. The qualification is awarded and quality assured by the providing institution, the Vietnamese institution is primarily responsible for delivery of the programme. The processes of recruitment of students, teaching staff and management and provision of facilities (such as library, classroom) is provided by the Vietnamese institution. There have been several partnerships operating in Vietnam (e.g. with the US (Washington State University – at postgraduate level), the UK (University of Sunderland, University of the West of England, University of Bedfordshire – at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels), Australia (Melbourne University, Monash University) and Victoria University of New Zealand). These universities mainly offer programmes that are in demand in the employment market, such as Business Management, Information Technology and English.

The following table and figure show the TNHE franchised programmes operating in Vietnam, according to the statistics from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in 2016.

Table 2-1 Top partners for TNHE franchised programmes in Vietnam

Key providers	Undergraduate programmes	Post-graduate programmes
United Kingdom (UK)	28	8
United States of America (US)	18	14
France	9	18
Australia	14	8

Source: (MOET 2016)

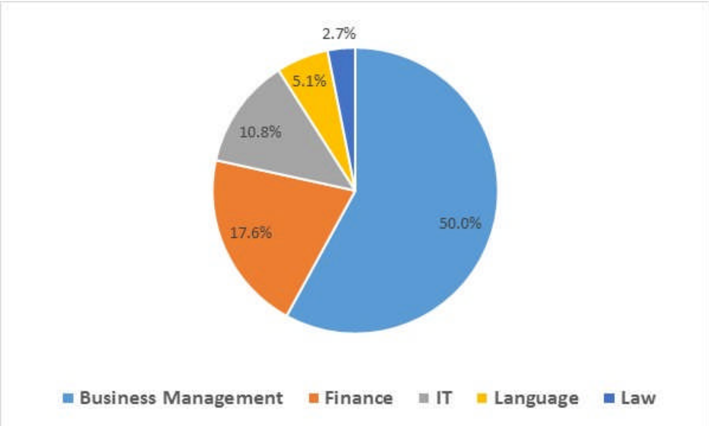

Figure 2-3: Main majors of transnational programmes in Vietnam

Figure 2-3 illustrates that the UK is currently the biggest TNHE provider at the undergraduate level. The largest groups of the major subjects of transnational programmes are Business and Management (50 per cent) and Finance (17.6 per cent) followed by others such as IT, Language Studies and Law. The research from the British Council (2003) has shown that transnational education has the greatest effect in academic impact, especially capacity building at the institutional and programme level in terms of teaching and assessment methods, programme assessment and quality assurance processes through these kind of franchise/twinning and double/dual degree programmes.

Transnational education establishment and operations have been controlled by the government. Any establishment of cross-border programmes in the country has to be authorised by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). Any operations lacking this authorisation will not be recognised as higher education institutions. The International Education Development (VIED) is a department under the governance of the MOET which was established to manage and control all activities in international education in Vietnam, under education law. In 2001, the MOET issued *Decree No.18/2001/ND-CP* regarding the setting up and operation of Vietnam-based foreign cultural and/or educational establishments. In article 5, where granting, extensions, modification, supplementations and withdrawal of operations permits are outlined, it states that in order for a foreign educational institution to become established as a sole entity it must meet fundamental criteria such as having legal status and operation plan and guidelines lasting at least three years for running an educational programme in Vietnam. For a joint-venture or franchised establishment, both Vietnamese and foreign partners must fully meet the conditions regarding legal status and reputation and financial situation that satisfy the joint-venture conditions and contracts. For ensuring the quality of such a programme, the regulations governing applying for the partnership approval from the MOET in Vietnam have been modelled as in other countries in Southeast Asian. McBurnie and Ziguras (2001) have outlined some key information required from foreign providers and local institutions to secure registration of their collaborative partnership. Those issues include the requirement on the course content (aims and objective, structure and content, any adaptation for host country); the delivery methods; the requirements for students (admission standards including language proficiency, course assessment tasks and weighting and details of who carries out the assessment); the staff involved (qualification and relevant experience); and the facilities and support offered (classroom, library, and computer cluster). The foreign providers must also provide details of their quality assurance procedures in relation to course design, student admission, course delivery including teaching and administrative staff, learning support and facilities, management of local arrangements including communication with local students and personnel (McBurnie and Ziguras 2001).

2.2.5 The current research on TNHE

Reviewing the research on TNHE it appears that research on quality perceptions of the transnational programme is still very limited. The literature shows that there are many different viewpoints on TNHE; however, as stated by Stella (2006), whatever the view is, there is a consensus that the quality perceptions of stakeholders should be taken into consideration, and that quality assurance frameworks have to pay attention to the quality of TNHE (Stella 2006). This section provides the review and a brief discussion on current literature which reflects these needs and opens space for further research into how quality is viewed and how the TNHE programme is operated.

The literature on transnational higher education has been primarily concerned with the impact of the transnational programmes within particular regions and with matters of quality assurance from the perspective of the providing countries (e.g. McBurnie & Ziguras 2001, Huang 2007, Going Global 2013). Most of studies on TNHE tend to cover its purposes or rationale and the impacts of doing internalization and cooperation in higher education. At the country level, a series of studies funded by the British Council with the title “The shape of global higher education” maps the evolutionary development of transnational education, aiming to measure the role of governments in international engagement of higher education and to assess the regulatory and market environment of transnational education. The “shape of things to come” in 2013 revealed results of the research in 25 different countries and administrative regions of the environmental factors that are most conducive to the successful delivery of transnational higher education. A follow-up study in 2014 was then done to explore the impacts of transnational education on host countries with a pilot study of 10 different nations. An online survey of current students and recent graduates of transnational programmes in these countries was conducted to focus on skills, knowledge and cultural awareness questions.

The impact of TNHE on host countries has been revealed as beneficial in terms of academia, economics, skills and socio-cultural considerations.

The partnership and relationship management between the transnational institutions is another aspect that many researchers are interested in exploring. Sutrisno and Pillay (2013) conducted interviews and used document data from two Indonesian universities to identify the key purposes of TNHE programmes in light of the conflicting global-national-local agendas and unequal power relations between transnational higher education partners. Hefferman and Poole (2005) assumed that the partnerships, under the rubric of 'transnational education' and 'franchising', added additional challenges, complexities and risks to the roles of international education managers and administrators. Using convergent interviews and case studies, their research identified and examined the critical success factors for the establishment and development of relationships between Australian universities and their international partners. Critical among these factors are the development of effective communication structures and frameworks, the building of mutual trust, and the encouragement and demonstration of commitment between relationship partners.

Walton and Guarisco (2007), by another approach, analysed knowledge flows within a transnational educational partnership and used social network analysis to map out structural differences between the two partners and the evolution of these differences over time. They used a single longitudinal case study social network analysis undertaken over a ten-year period based on semi-structured interviews with key informants from both the UK and Russia, supported by observational and archival data. Their research has presented a new diagnostic-enabling knowledge management model that helps address issues of how knowledge flows/transfer can be analysed and identified between partners at individual, group and organisational level. From the Australian perspective, Stafford and Taylor (2016) considered the impact of transnational education on institutional management. They argue that management practice is critical to success or failure of the transnational programme delivery and partnership. Their research was based on a detailed analysis of institutional audit reports prepared by the Australian Universities Quality Agency in the period 2008-2012 to offer a theoretical insight into governance and leadership of transnational programme and provide guidance for strategy formation. Most research in the context of TNHE has been conducted by researchers in Australia. This is not surprising as Australia is one of the top exporters of TNHE services and also the leading destination for international students (Naidoo 2009, Tsiligiris 2014).

In the UK context, Bordogna (2017) explored social capital development between operational faculty members delivering Sino-British transnational partnerships. Her research focused on two Sino-British ‘joint programme’ partnership case studies in order to investigate boundary spanning and the development of social capital between UK and Chinese academics involved in the programme delivery. In her research, she considered a boundary spanner as a person who can span the boundaries between disparate entities and champion the goals of the partnership in multiple settings and who operates as a broker or gatekeeper and manages the interface between organisations. The boundary spanner, due to their position within the partnership, is key in the development of networks and alliances, increasing the transference of knowledge between stakeholders and enabling them to forge connections that inspire new initiatives. She argued that since social capital is posited as a central facet in the development and institutionalisation of successful partnerships, understanding how to grow, nurture and maintain productive levels of social capital between operational academics could significantly improve and strengthen transnational partnerships. Findings from her study suggested that boundary spanning is a useful tool, enabling individuals to interpret, transmit and filter knowledge, facilitate resource transmission and represent their organisations, building cohesion and commitment between stakeholders.

There are several research studies on the quality of transnational education; however, most of them are focused on quality assurance and regulation in transnational education. Coleman (2003) discussed the evolution of branch campuses of Australian institutions in Southeast Asia by culminating in a discussion of the British Quality Assurance and the Australian Universities Quality Agency to examine the extended quality assurance oversight to transnational educational activities. The research undertook case studies in two branch campuses in Indonesia and Malaysia to investigate the actual operations of branch campuses in these countries and the relationship with their owner universities. They emphasised that it is not the sole responsibility of external monitors (QAA or AUQA) to assure the equivalency of international separated educational programmes.

It is important to give special emphasis to teaching and learning processes, student support services, academic equivalence measures and indicators of overall educational outcomes, from the perspective of the developing countries that are now concentrating on external programmes operate. Shams and Huisman (2012) discussed the particular challenges of managing offshore branch campuses by drawing on the widely recognised strategic management dichotomy of 'global integration' versus 'local responsiveness'. However, their approach brings into sharp focus an often unacknowledged tension within TNHE ventures, in terms of equivalence of standards and student experiences. They argued that a branch campus has to juggle alignment with the home institution, and hence focus on possible accusations of cultural arrogance or imperialism, with adaptation to the norms and culture of the host country in alignment with local institutions.

There are several studies on quality perceptions and student satisfaction in transnational education; however, most of them focus on measuring student satisfaction or perceptions of quality in the delivery model of international branch campus. Wilkins and Balakrishnan (2012) identified the determinants of student satisfaction at international branch campuses in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Their quantitative study involved 247 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the UAE across multiple international branch campus. They found that levels of student satisfaction at UAE branch campuses were generally high. The factors that were most influential in determining whether or not a student at a UAE branch campus was satisfied overall with their institution were quality of lecturers, quality and availability of resources, and effective use of technology. Their findings also indicated that there remained scope for UAE branch campuses to further increase levels of student satisfaction. Similarly, Ahmad (2015) also explored the determinants of student’s perceptions of quality and experience of study at international branch campuses in Malaysia and administered a self-developed questionnaire (245 students) at six renowned international branch campuses from Australia (3), the UK (2) and one from India, supplemented by interviews (21) with offshore students in Malaysia. Their results revealed that across the seven dimensions examined concerning education and non-education qualities – university reputation/image, programme quality, lecturers and teaching quality, student learning environment, effective use of technology, counselling and academic advising support, and social life (direct/indirect) facilities – the students were largely satisfied. Their research has added to the existing body of research on higher education service quality, particularly on students' perceptions and expectations of international branch campuses. Kelly and Ha (1998) also examined the issues surrounding the quality of education offered to overseas students from the perspective of their educational goals and expectations, particularly of effective teaching and learning environments. They argued that courses designed for Australian students, even though they are of demonstrably high quality, would not necessarily be viewed in this way by the students based in Hong Kong. Nair, Murdoch, and Mertova (2011) also compared the student perceptions between the onshore campus in Australia and the offshore campus in South Africa. They used the Student Experience Questionnaire and found out that offshore students were overall satisfied with their learning experience but highlighted key areas for improvement in timeliness and usefulness of feedback, computer facilities and library resources. Their study also found several areas where offshore students were more satisfied, such as social life at campus and they claimed that the findings were due to the offshore campus being significantly smaller in size than the onshore one and did not attribute any differences to the transnational context in particular. Several other pieces of research on transnational students focused on the stages of their adjustments and adaptations, the difficulties they face and the factors that influence their adjustment and adaptations in the transnational context (Gaw 2000, Furnham 1997).

There are some other studies on quality of teaching and student learning in transnational higher education; however, most of them are from the staff perspectives. O'Mahony (2014) explored the current and prospective ways in which UK higher education providers can ensure an equitable student learning experience and teaching excellence in transnational arrangements. His research is based on primary data of a survey and focus group discussion with UK TNHE staff and an examination of peer-reviewed literature on TNHE provision. Pyvis (2011), on the other hand, investigated how academics understood and pursued educational quality in an Australian university programme delivered in partnership with a Chinese university. He argued that the current approach to educational quality formation in TNHE promotes educational imperialism, and that guidelines and practices should be altered to embrace context-sensitive measures of quality. A key finding was that a home programme functioned as the single reference point for quality in the programme delivered in China. Quality in the China programme was sought through the imposition of practices and philosophies associated with the home programme, which required the suppression of local educational traditions.

It has been argued that one of the most commonly raised issues across the TNHE literature is the experience and the effectiveness of cross-cultural teaching and learning and the power relations between importer and exporter institutions (Djerasimovic 2014). Tied in with this issue is the appropriateness and adaptability of educational programmes, or the assurance of standards of the exporter institution in sometimes quite radically different contexts with different expectations, learning trends, cultures of communication and learning styles. However, the above review shows that those issues have not been covered yet in the literature from the perspective of the multiple stakeholders. Ensuring quality of a transnational education programme is critical, since the pressure of quality comes not only from the awarding institutions but also from the receiving institutions and the many stakeholders involved. It brings the need to know how quality is experienced by the stakeholders (not only focused on students but other groups such as teaching staff, managers and employers, and policy-makers). Further understanding on quality and how these programmes function to ensure their quality on the basis of the transnational setting will be covered next to address this current gap in the literature.

2.3 Quality

2.3.1 Definitions of quality

Quality is an elusive concept; it is considered difficult to define and subject to widely differing interpretations in the higher education context (Stone 1997). Traditionally, quality is associated with ideas of excellence or outstanding performance of a product or service; however, this is not of much value when it comes to quality in higher education as a whole since quality is a value-laden term and subjectively associated with that which is good and worthwhile (Green 1994). Definitions of quality in higher education vary and reflect the different perspectives of the individual (Harvey and Knight 1996).

In order to have clearly defined systems for quality management, it is important to have a clear statement of what exactly is meant by quality (Doherty 1997). A main contention in defining quality is whether quality is a desired state, as put forth traditionally, or whether it is a process, a view which considers the dynamic nature of the industry, market needs and stakeholder expectations (Saad and Siha 2000). A common conceptualisation of quality for business organisations is that quality is defined as the ability to satisfy, or even exceed, customer expectations of a service or a product (Grönroos 1984). Thus, it could be considered that the concept of quality can include different meanings around the standards of the product or service.

According to Harvey and Green (1993), there are differing conceptualisations of quality and they can be grouped into five interrelated ways of thinking about quality. The definitions of quality are not in any sense mutually exclusive (Harvey and Knight 1996).

- *Quality as exceptional*: the quality is defined by the concept of “exceptional” with three notions in terms of “being distinctive; exceeding very high standards; and passing a set of required standards”, with each of these being subject to debate.
- *Quality as consistency (or perfection):* it focuses on processes and sets of specifications that it aims to meet perfectly through a “zero defects approach and a quality culture”. Quality of any product or service is the one which conforms exactly to specification and a quality producer or service provider is the one whose output is consistently free of defects.

- *Quality as fitness for purpose*: this approach suggests that quality only has meaning in relation to the purpose of the product or service. Fitness for purpose views quality from the perspective of fulfilling customers' requirements, needs and desires. However, it also raises three issues – fitting the customer specifications; mission-based fitness for purpose; and customer satisfaction, each being subject to debate.
- *Quality as value for money*: the notion of quality equates with value. It is equated with the level of the specification and related to cost, referring back to elements taken for granted. If the same outcome is achieved at a lower cost, or a better outcome achieved at the same cost, then the customer has a quality product or service (Rowley 1996). This approach views quality as value for money through efficiency and effectiveness, which links to accountability and emphasises performance indicators, the emphasis on performance indicators is debatable.
- *Quality as transformation:* this view is rooted in the notion of qualitative change. This approach also leads to two notions of transformative quality in higher education: enhancing the consumer, and empowering the consumer.

2.3.2 Perceived quality

Researchers adopting the perceived quality approach use the term "perceived quality" instead of "quality" to stress that quality judgments are dependent on the perceptions, needs, and goals of the consumer.

Traditionally, many researchers have proposed definitions of perceived quality that have in common that perceived quality is based on perceptions with respect to product/service attributes to yield customer satisfaction (Oxenfeldt 1950, Maynes 1976). In their words, Oxenfeldt (1950) defined perceived quality as all attributes of a product/service which yield consumer satisfaction and Maynes (1976) defined it as the extent to which the specimen provides the service characteristics that the individual consumer desires . The ultimate judge of quality, according to these definitions, is the consumer.

2.3.2.1 Perceived quality versus perceived value

Zeithaml (1988) defined value as the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given. It is the value that customers perceive they receive or experience by using a service (Bettman, Luce and Payne 1998). Value could be defined by the customers, when the customers are satisfied with the total experience (Vandermerwe and Rada 1989). Quality and value are globally and holistically perceived by the customer during the interaction with the provider in the long-term relationship (Pencarelli, Splendiani and Cini 2013).

Value has been defined in many diverse ways and the value concept is multi-faceted and complicated by numerous interpretations and emphases (Huber, Herrmann and Morgan 2001). Value derives from long-term comparison between benefits and the sacrifices connected to them. According to Holbrook and Corfman (1983), value can be defined as a relativistic (comparative, personal, situational) preference characterizing a subject's experience of interaction with some object . This definition is formulated in general terms to be relevant to specific types of value as perceived quality, with three dimensions:

(i) *Perceived quality as an evaluative judgment*: perceived quality is regarded as an overall evaluative judgment. It is a higher-level abstraction instead of a specific attribute, based on the perception of the product/service on the quality attributes.

(ii) *Perceived quality as a subject-object interaction*: the formation of quality judgments entails a subject-object interaction, since the quality judgment is formed by an individual consumer with respect to a certain product. Perceived-quality judgments emerge in a contextual setting and, therefore, cannot be located "inside" the consumer as a completely subjective concept or "outside" the consumer as a subject-free objectivity. The contextual setting consists of comparative, personal, and situational factors.

(iii) *Perceived quality and the consumption experience*: perceived quality is the bridge between basic and derived wants and it is the extent to

which the product/service is perceived to be fit to provide a desired consumption experience.

The relationship between perceived quality and perceived value has been closely examined by many researchers (Cronin *et al.* 2000, Petrick 2004). Generally, in the previous studies there are two approaches in which the relationships between value and quality have been conceptualised. On the one hand, most researchers who subscribed to the multidimensional model conceptualise quality as one of the dimensions for value (Holbrook 1999, Petrick 2002). On the other hand, researchers who advocated the unidimensional model conceptualise quality as a predictor for value (Monroe 1990, Oliver 1996, Parasuraman & Grewal 2000). Since value is a multi-faceted concept, perceived quality in higher education should be assessed through a multidimensional model, to conceptualise quality as a dimension for value.

In higher education, several studies have identified consumer-perceived value by assessing the value of educational services. Oldfield and Baron (2000) pointed out that higher education institutions can be seen as a pure service. They also pointed out that educational services differ from other types of professional services in several ways: educational services play a central role in the lives of students, and students require huge amounts of motivation and intellectual skills to attain their goals. Since higher education institutions can be seen as a service, there is a way to evaluate and tailor the offerings of higher education institutions that optimise students' learning experience (Unni 2005). LeBlanc and Nguyen (1999), for example, have identified the student-perceived value in higher education, by using the five major categories of value (Sheth, Newman and Gross 1991). The research in perceived value in higher education suggests the benefits that students perceived: such as, guaranteed future employment (a functional value); the value students received as friends in classes and through social activities at the university (a social value); that students are glad to choose courses in their specialisation and whether they find courses interesting (an emotional value); student judgements on the quality of education they receive and course contents (an epistemic value); or student choice (a conditional value).

2.3.2.2 Perceived quality versus customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has been defined as a cognitive or affective reaction that emerges in response to a single or prolonged set of service encounters. One of the most-cited definitions of perceived quality is the one relating to the comparison that customers make between their expectations and perceptions of experience (Grönroos 1984, Parasuraman 1988, Parasuraman *et al*. 1988). Juran (1988) states that customer satisfaction is the state achieved when service or product features respond to customer needs and when the organisation meets or exceeds customers' expectations over the lifetime of a product or service . According to Kotler and Clarke (1987), satisfaction is not the immediate experience, but it is a multilevel one, which is gradually reached after undergoing various stages and levels of fulfilled expectations after a service is performed in a certain way. The most similarity between perceived quality and customer satisfaction is that both are based on the confirmation of expectations by actual experience. Therefore, an understanding of perceived quality and customer satisfaction is essential to effective management (Rust and Oliver 1993). Satisfaction is a function of perceived performance and expectations (Kotler and Fox 1985). Managers realise that satisfaction is determined by how closely an experience with a product meets or exceeds a customer's expectations. It could be considered that when perceived quality and satisfaction are regarded as overall assessments, perceived quality is understood as an antecedent of satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction has been defined as a transaction-specific assessment and as an overall assessment. With regard to transaction-specific assessment, Oliver (1981 p.42, in Parasuraman *et al.* 1998) defines satisfaction as "the emotional reaction following a disconfirmation experience which acts on the base attitude level and is consumption-specific". This means that satisfaction is the emotional reaction to a specific product/service experience, and these emotional reactions come from confirmation of a consumer's perceived performance of product or service and his or her expectations of performance. From this perspective, it could be assumed that an accumulation of transaction-specific assessments leads to a global assessment represented by perceived quality. This means that customer satisfaction will precede the organisation's perceived quality. From other aspect, customer satisfaction is defined as an overall assessment (Anderson & Fornell 1994, Parasuraman *et al.* 1998) and it refers to the consumer's overall satisfaction with the organisation based on all encounters and experiences with that particular organisation. Anderson and Fornell (1994) suggested that customer satisfaction is a post-consumption experience which compares perceived quality with expected quality. There is a causal relationship between the service quality and satisfaction (Hurley and Estelami 1998), and that perceptions of service quality affect feelings of satisfaction which, in turn, influence future purchase behaviour.

In higher education, many research studies have been conducted with the approach of quality as customer satisfaction; however, it is difficult to define the customer of higher education (see further discussion of this in part 2.3.3). While the students of an institution of higher education are perhaps the most obvious customer, many other stakeholders also function as customers from the varying areas of operations (Quinn *et al.* 2009). For instance, students are the main customers since they pay for the service, receive educational instruction, and utilise administrative functions. Parents are also considered as customers since they select or assist in the selection of service provider, pay for the service, and can be primary points of contact during some service interactions. Staff/faculty members who control some of product/service design are also customers since they consume some services. Future employers of students who purchase the end product of the service process and sometimes provide funding and advice in service design are therefore customers of higher education. It could be seen that different aspects of university operations serve different customers. Sahey *et al*. (2004) and many other researchers believed that global changes and competition are making education more like a product with students as the main customer and higher education institutions, therefore, have the responsibility to fulfil the needs of their main customers. Pitman *et al*. (1996) stressed the importance of addressing the needs of all customer groups. To deal with the multiple customers in higher education, Ho and Wearn (1995) recommended that universities consider the relative importance of competing customers in order to balance quality improvement efforts.

2.3.3 Defining quality in higher education

Recently much has been written on the evolving meaning of quality in higher education (Harvey & Green 1993, Harvey & Knight 1996, Cheng & Tam 1997). Exploring quality and examining the philosophical and political underpinnings of it in higher education, Harvey and Green (1994) argue that quality is often referred to as a relative concept that it is relative to the stakeholders in higher education:

> *Quality is relative to the user of the term and the circumstances in which it is involved. It means different things to different people, indeed the same person may adopt different conceptualisations at different moments. (Harvey & Green 1994)*

As discussed earlier, quality is relative to the user of the term and the invoked circumstances and quality can be viewed as exceptional performance, consistency, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation (Harvey & Green 1993). While quality is recognised as a fundamental issue in management theory and practice, there is considerable variation in how it is perceived by different stakeholders and the ensuing implications for organisational performance (Saad and Siha 2000). It could be suggested that quality in higher education should be accessed and determined by the stakeholders who have a legitimate interest in it (Harvey & Green 1993, Hewitt & Clayton 1999, Lacovidou *et al*. 2009, Shanahan & Gerber 2004, Watty 2005). Different stakeholders in higher education are likely to value the importance of the dimensions of quality according to their particular motivations and interests and interpret them differently (Owlia and Aspinwall 1996). Therefore, the perspectives of different stakeholders in higher education must be considered when trying to assess the issue of quality since defining quality in higher education is lacking from a multiple stakeholder perspectives approach (Harvey & Green 1993). Harvey and Green (1993) further suggest that, defining a criterion for assessing quality in higher education requires an understanding of different perceptions of quality that informs the preferences of stakeholders. Sharing a similar approach, Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2003) and Cullen (2003) claim that any quality model must be sensitive and include all the expectations from all stakeholders. In a general sense, higher education is a service industry directing attention to the needs and expectations of many groups of people which are termed interchangeably as customers, stakeholders, consumers and users (Ruben 1995). It is not possible to deal with quality as a unitary concept (Green 1994); the best that can be achieved is to define clearly the criteria that each stakeholder uses when judging quality and to take into account the competing views when assessment of quality is undertaken.

The literature has suggested that, if quality is defined by fitness for purpose, then when the quality of a programme is being evaluated, its quality will be judged by stakeholders according to the extent to which their purposes have been achieved. Sahney, Banwet and Karunes (2004) claim that different stakeholders may have different views as to what the purposes of education should be. According to Cheng (2017), purpose is a key component in the definition of quality in higher education as fitness for purpose, but there is no agreement on what purpose and for whose purpose. One view is that the purpose is to meet the needs of students and employers as customers. This makes quality become a means for customer satisfaction and to achieve better value for money and employment prospects for students. Another view is that purpose is often associated with the government's political ambitions of changing the way institutions work in a more competitive and economical way. It aims for short-term benefit and has created concern in the higher education sector. It therefore takes into account the consideration of the multidimensional model when assessing quality in higher education, including the indicators of considering the diversity of learning and teaching (Skolnik 2010), the extent of academics' and students' understandings of quality (Cheng 2012) and the emerging consumer culture that focuses on meeting students' needs instead of teaching students how to learn (Molesworth *et al*. 2009).

Customer satisfaction is often used synonymously with quality, and quality is frequently defined as meeting and exceeding customer expectations. Customer focus provides direction for improvement efforts. Most definitions of quality in higher education are student-focused, such as meeting or exceeding student's satisfaction in education (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1988). However, there are debates on whether students are the true customers of higher education. One view is that the concept of customer-defined quality is problematic (Eagle & Brennan 2007, Houston 2008), as this conception will lead to a passive approach to education (Saunders 2011). This is because improvement can only be achieved through increasing students' efforts in learning. Another view is that students do not fit the traditional model of customers in that customers are free to purchase products that they want, whereas students' freedom of choice is limited. They need to satisfy the university entry criteria before they can purchase an educational product (Sirvanci 1996). Students cannot simply purchase their degrees, because they need to pass designated examinations in order to obtain their degrees (Delucchi & Korgen 2002, Sirvance 1996). Furthermore, there is conflict between the perceived role of academics as subject experts and their perceived role of providing a purchased product to a student, as students lack the experience to understand the subject fields that they choose to study (Redding 2005). However, students can be customers of higher education in several ways. Sirvance (1996) analyses that if we look at the flow of students through a university, we can see that students are cast as raw material when they enter the institution, the product-in-process while attending the institution, and the finished product when they graduate. Within educational institutions, students interact with two types of system: academic and non-academic. In the non-academic system, students are clearly internal customers. They pay for the use of university facilities. For effective quality improvement, these facilities and educational services must treat students as their primary customers. In the academic system, the instructor is on the delivery end of the knowledge flow process, the student is on the receiving end; it is natural to treat the student as the customer. Students are primary customers for the delivery of course material when studying quality improvement in teaching (Hau 1996). Although there is a debate over the idea of the student as customer in higher education, in the globalisation of higher education and in the context of this study, it is a widely accepted that higher education generally is considered as a service and students are considered as primary consumers of higher education services (Hill 1995).

From the quality management perspective, although quality in the education context should be handled in a different way to that of manufacturing or service corporation (Madu & Kuei 1993), literature on quality in higher education reveals that higher education leaders, experts and institutions have now turned their attention to the quality management models practiced in the industry (Becket & Brooks 2008, Chua 2004). The traditional external quality assessment agencies tend to look at quality in higher education by focusing mainly on aspects of student learning and teaching (Cheng 2003). Other scholars tend to define quality from an internal institutional perspective by looking at some main aspects, such as faculty, resources, student quality, curriculum requirements and multidimensional levels (Haworth & Conrad 1996). Cheng (2017) reclaims the idea of quality from a purely managerialist approach and at multiple levels.

There is no universal way in which quality in higher education is defined and managed, the literature on quality in higher education reveals that for any model of quality to be accepted community-wide, it must represent the views of influential stakeholders (Srikanthan 2005, Srikanthan & Dalrymple 2007). Harvey and Green's four definitions of quality illustrate different ways of interpreting the concept. However, whatever definition or blend of definitions is chosen, gauging the quality of a programme requires an assessment of certain key educational processes and outcomes. Essentially, quality is concerned with undertaking certain processes well and improving quality involves carrying out those processes better. Therefore, attention should be centred on assessing particular activities and their outcomes from the perceptions of the perspectives of the different stakeholders involved.

2.4 Stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory first emerged from management literature in the context of business studies. According to Freeman (2010), stakeholders are defined as any group or individual who is affected by, or can affect, the achievement of an institution’s objectives. Within this concept, a person, informal group, institution, or organisation can all be considered stakeholders. The concept of the stakeholder theory as applied to quality in corporate management has been labelled as an effective tool for institutional improvement and sustainability (Freeman 2010, Johansson 2008, Boesso & Kumar 2009).

Stakeholder theory was originally designed by Freeman in 1984 to address the failure of the input-output model, or production view, of a corporation in capturing the external business environment and influences. The fundamentals of stakeholder analysis provide a better understanding of who the stakeholders are and what satisfies them. This can assist in defining how to meet their needs and comply with their demands. Therefore, the fundamental premise of the stakeholder theory being long-term value, and the continued existence of the institution, is achieved through proactively managing the needs of its stakeholders. Freeman (2010) defined stakeholder theory as (i) redistribute benefits to stakeholders, and (ii) redistribute important decision-making power to stakeholders. Foster and Jonker (2007) argue that if a theory of quality management employing the stakeholder theory is to be of value, it needs to be applicable to all forms of organisations, not simply to those focusing on profit. Because of this argument, the stakeholder theory from strategic management has also been applied in the educational context, and it is widely used in research which tries to understand the concept of quality in higher education (Hewitt & Clayton 1999, Shanahan & Gerber 2004, Lacovidou *et al*. 2009).

Foley (2001) later develops a stakeholder theory for quality management based on an analysis of the purpose of the organisation and the crucial role that stakeholders play in the achievement of that purpose. According to Foley, the aim of organisational sustainability will be accomplished if organisations act to maximise the quality of their products to customers, subject to meeting the wants and expectations of relevant stakeholders (Foley 2001). With this approach, an organisation must satisfy its key stakeholders, and the driving force of an organisation becomes, when under a voluntarism philosophy of management, to satisfy the needs of as many stakeholders as possible.

The success of an organisation can be affected by the way in which management engages with stakeholders. This means that quality management must look beyond the internal operation of the institution and consider the nature and management of its relationships with the relevant stakeholders (Foster and Jonker 2007). Seeking to meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders implies some degree of implicit or explicit responsibility. As noted by Freeman (2010), managers have to deal with the complexity of economic, formal and political power and influence used variously by different types of stakeholders in diverse situations. Management is about designing and implementing strategic processes and controlling systems in order to satisfy needs and expectations of various stakeholders. Managers can be seen as “interest balancers” and are judged by their ability to satisfy the needs and expectations of participants within the constraints of achieving the goals for the organization (Foster and Jonker). According to the stakeholder approach of Foley, stakeholders are distinguished from other affected or interested parties in having both the means of bringing attention to their needs and the ability to take action if those needs are not met (Foley 2001). The degrees of importance of different stakeholders and stakeholder interests can vary with respect to different aspects, regarding their power or legitimacy in a specific context or according to a prioritisation (Garvare and Johansson 2010). It is argued that the problems faced by any focal organisation arise partly because its management does not meet the needs and expectations of the stakeholders (Foster & Jonker 2007).

2.5 Stakeholders in transnational higher education

There are many stakeholders for whom the quality of transnational higher education is vital, such as students, academic staff, administrative staff, potential employers, employers, students’ families, graduates, the host and provider universities, and the respective governments (Rowley 1997, Leveille 2006). Amongst these, the more significant stakeholders are those who either have an effect on the process or outcome of the service or are directly affected by it (Kasetwar 2008). Students and staff are among the key stakeholders in TNHE, whose roles in improving the quality of institution mean therefore they are the focus of this study. Cheng and Tam (1997) consider that current students and academic staff are internal constituents in the quality management process. These stakeholders are likely to have disparate definitions of quality as well as preferences for how quality is assessed (Cheng & Tam 1997). In other words, the primary internal stakeholders, those being educated (students) and the educators (academic and management staff), therefore, would invariably be important sources in the quality management process as they participate in or are responsible for and influence the process of education. Although the primary internal stakeholders, including students and staff, are the main focus on this study, it is not to understate the importance of other groups such as the host and provider universities, the governments and so on.

The recognition of students as stakeholders first appeared in the literature in 1975 before the tuition fees were charged in the UK (Douglas, McClelland and Davies 2008). According to Jongbloed *et al*. (2008), higher education institutions today must respond to a number of communities and groups, with students being the most important stakeholder group. McDowell and Sambell (1999) and Hill (1995) argue that students should be considered valuable stakeholders, especially related to internal quality assessment. According to Leistyle and Westerheijden (2014), students as stakeholders have role in quality assurance, through representation and influence on study programmes and curriculum. Students as internal stakeholders could be represented at different levels of the institutions, from the overall representative body to faculty boards and committees. In the UK, for example, policy-makers increasingly perceived students as legitimate stakeholders who should participate in evaluation processes. Students also have wide and significant impact on the revision of study programmes, and they are involved in education and in revisions of programmes' learning outcomes. Yet on the whole students are represented widely in all higher education institutions and these internal stakeholders hold a place second only to teaching staff (Leisyte and Westerheijden 2014).

It is widely acknowledged that students as stakeholders have an increasingly powerful influence in the process and outcomes of higher education (Johnson & Deem 2003). Students are more overtly perceived as carriers of power relations (Morley 2003), and their voices are being appropriated, rejected and selectively included for institutional purposes. Students are supposed to be involved in the evaluation of courses and to participate in internal quality assurance via decision-making and quality management processes at higher education institutions as equal partners. Student feedback on their experiences has emerged as one of the central pillars of the quality process, as highlighted in the statement below by Williams and Cappuccini-Ansfield (2007):

> *Students, so long taken for granted, have been recognised as the principal stakeholders in higher education and their own voice on their experiences is now being heard more clearly by institutions. (p. 159).*

Students are also customers and they can they provide essential feedback on teaching. Douglas *et al*. (2008) show that regarding students as customers is not a very new idea. Previously, students were regarded as consumers of service; with the advent of private institutions, where students consciously pick, choose and buy the service, they have the right to be regarded as customers being partners in the learning process (Yorke & Longden 2004). Tam (2001) seems to agree that the holistic experience of students in a university, and their professed satisfaction with the experience is the true performance indicator of university quality. Hill (1995) and Sander *el al*. (2000) regard students as the primary customers of higher education services; thus, assessing service quality from their perspective is important. In accordance with the general definition of service quality, O'Neill and Palmer (2004) define service quality in higher education as the difference between what a student expects to receive and his/ her perceptions of actual delivery.

Approaches to quality in higher education consider students as two distinct aspects: one as that of a customer who buys a service in expectation of career benefits, and the other as that of raw material that will be transformed by the process of higher education into an individual with added skills (Eriksen 1995). It is therefore worth noting that students could have multifaceted understandings of quality (Cheng 2017). According to Jungblut *et al*. (2015), students have a multifaceted perception of quality in higher education, that they not only perceive themselves as customers but also prefer perspectives that put them in the centre of the quality process, though not necessarily only as active participants and co-creators of the higher education experience but potentially also as passive consumers. These perspectives suggest that there is a need for higher education institutions to manage student expectations and to put appropriate mechanisms in place to handle this consumerist culture (Jones 2010).

Regarding the role of university staff and teachers, many quality management models stress the commitment and motivation of staff and their roles as key stakeholders having a direct influence on the overall process and outcome of higher education. Clarifying what academics mean when they talk about quality as important, Giertz (2000, p.96) explains:

> *As academics, we work within the same framework and share the same values and even though we might not be able to explain to outsiders what quality in higher education is, that constitutes no problem since we still know: we know it when we see it.*

An understanding of what is meant by quality from the staff is important in terms of the desire to develop enhanced educational opportunities for students. Kalayci, Watty and Hayirsver (2012) share that clarifying the views of academics provides an opportunities for them to reflect on their own beliefs and attitudes in relation to their perceptions about quality. With clarification comes a greater sense of a shared purpose for the mission and objectives of education institutions, in relation to quality teaching and learning. Quality of education can be evaluated through the lens of a lecturer's success, his or her knowledge, skills and competence, as well as the ability to create a facilitating atmosphere between a lecturer and students (Ng 2015). The enthusiasm, expertise and teaching style of instructors are vital to learning, as they determine to a great extent the outcome and the overall experiences of students. Anderson (2000) emphasises the role of lecturer and student interaction and the passion and enthusiasm conveyed by the lecturer in enhancing students' engagement with the subject. Hill, Lomas and MacGregor (2003) show that the enthusiasm and motivation of lecturers translate to high levels of student motivation. High levels of staff motivation also correlate positively with professional satisfaction and the overall quality of services offered (Konidari and Abernot 2006).

The importance of a shared understanding of how students and staff as primary stakeholders think about quality is critical to quality improvements and enhancements of the institution. A shared awareness of common goals allows an institution to work collectively rather than as multiple separate units and, thus, fosters trust among participants (Srikanthan and Dalrymple 2007). The factors contributing to quality identified by stakeholders could be used by the university administrators as guidelines for quality improvements, resource allocation, as well as for the development of policies and practices that will lead to quality improvements. As stated by Neville and Menguc (2006), primary stakeholders compete for managerial resources, which creates a need to identify strategies for managing them. Institutions need to reach beyond merely identifying their stakeholders to be able to recognize their different needs and expectations (Bertrand & Busugutsala 1998). Jongbloed, Enders and Salerno (2007) maintain that the very legitimacy of higher education in society is increasingly evaluated by the level of quality and commitment higher education institutions establish with stakeholders. Institutions win over and sustain this social legitimacy through their ways and means of guaranteeing quality, and the responsibility shown towards their stakeholders. This means that universities need to discover ways of drawing in and involving stakeholders so as to convey an understanding of the services rendered and the way these may be further improved.

2.6 Quality management model in higher education

The review of defining quality in higher education demonstrated that the definition of quality referred to the relativity of the quality concept according to the respective situation and the stakeholders involved. It implied the various variables which affect quality and thus allowed for the development of specific models to manage quality in the various contexts. Cheng and Tam (1997) argue that the conceptual input-process-output framework for quality dimensions in higher education could provide a basis for understanding and consequently improving the quality in the education context as it covered all the characteristics of quality. Under the comprehensive aspects of higher education, the input-process-output approach appears to cover most of the aspects of quality in higher education. Other approaches to conceptualising quality in higher education would be lacking as they fail to examine various aspects of quality in higher education.

Managing quality in higher education may focus around three broad areas: “input-process-output” (Cheng & Tam 1997). The variables that comprise each of the input, process and output dimensions in higher education can be developed as follows (Sahney, Banwet and Karunes 2008).

Input: student intake and characteristics, programme and curriculum, experience and qualifications of teaching staff and support staff, physical infrastructure and resources including library and teaching and learning facilities.

Process: The teaching and learning methods and environment, content and delivery of course units, assessment and evaluation activities, extracurricular activities.

Output: student achievement and experience in terms of graduation employability, acquisition of practical knowledge and transferable skills for employment, destination of graduate, and student satisfaction. In the context of a transnational partnership, effectiveness of it will be considered as an output element of the education system.

EDUCATION SYSTEM

Figure 2-4 The input–process-output framework of quality classification

In general, the classification of quality attributes is in accordance with the organisation’s operation system of converting the inputs into outputs via the process. In this way, one can associate the improvements in quality with the operating system of any organisation, including those from the education sector. While dealing with process management, Lewis and Smith (1994) explain inputs refer to resources from the external environment, the physical environment, organisational cultural and people, whereas outputs are seen as tangible and intangible outcomes and value addition through examination results, employment, earnings and satisfaction. Jaraiedi and Ritz (1994) refer to inputs as the students, faculty and staff, facilities and the goals of the university and refer to outputs as the products or services that are generated within the education system. Sink and Tuttle (1989) explain the education system as the one that receives inputs from upstream systems, to which they add value through transformation processes by creating outputs necessary for downstream system or for meeting customer needs, all for the purpose of achieving outcomes.

The input qualities

The dimensions of education quality are defined by different authors referring to the input-process and output quality. Input quality refers to the quality of the students and faculty in the institute (Shank 1995, Sahney 2006). Input quality, faculty knowledge, competence (Shank *et al*. 1995, Owlia & Aspinwall 1998), contact personnel (LeBlanc & Nha 1997) and academic staff (Ford 1999) have been accepted by researchers as important determinants for service quality. Inputs are also related to academic facilities – including resources such as the library, computer facilities and laboratories (Shank *et al.* 1995, Joseph & Joseph 1997, LeBlanc & Nha 1997, Owlia & Aspinwall 1998) – which have affected the quality of higher education.

Students could be considered the main input and could be the major focus and the centred approach of the education process, although they play three roles: the input, the customer and the processor of the education (Williams 1993). Eriksen (1995) defines the primary input as the student (before exposure to a value-added service), who is subjected to a transformation of a value-added service which in turn produces an output. According to Cheng and Tam (1997), the quality of student intake is a necessary condition for institutional success. The quality of student also reflects on the admission criteria of the institution. Lawrence and Pharr (2003) emphasise that admission standards are employed as a means of maintaining the quality of an academic programme's student pool, and as a result, the programme itself. Admission plays an important role in ensuring the quality of the academic programme and ensures that students admitted onto programmes have a higher probability of succeeding. Ensuring qualities of students to achieve educational outcomes seems challenging, as Wilson (2002) points out that in TNE with the student-centred approach, it could be difficult to cope with for the student due to the "spoon-fed" approach in secondary education. However, the gap could be overcome by introducing a preparatory year to support students in the transnational setting (Waterval *et al.* 2014).

Curriculum – understood as the programme content and its utility to industry and society (LeBlanc & Nha 1997, Owlia & Aspinwall 1998, Sahney *et al.* 2004) – also plays an important role in deciding the quality of the transnational education programme. In transnational higher education, curriculum is a complex concept since it is imported from one country to be delivered in another. Ziguras and Rizvi (2001) suggest that the simplest way to develop programmes to be taught simultaneously to students in transnational education is to produce a standardised, globalised curriculum that it is largely independent of the local context of the student. According to Dunn and Wallace (2006), there are divergent views relating to curriculum (and pedagogy) in the transnational context. One view is that students engage with a Western degree and want just that; the credential and an insight into Western outlook and practices, an unmediated Western curriculum and pedagogy. This view is not substantiated by the literature but common in discussion among academics. Another view expressed is that to adapt curriculum and pedagogy is somewhat condescending, a form of reverse colonialism that denies that sophisticated Asian and other cultures can be selective in engaging with a Western approach. However, Leask (2008) argues that the transnational curriculum must provide the opportunities for students to explore the ways in which the culture of local context and culture of others shape knowledge and professional practice internationally and locally. Transnational curriculum needs to be both internationalised and localised since it develops and assesses specific international perspectives like knowledge, skills and attitudes through the inclusion of international content and intercultural perspectives on knowledge (Leask 2008).

The process qualities

The educational process could be defined as a series of actions or operations leading to an educational end: for example, learning, training and/or scholar activity (Divoky 1996). Non-academic processes are extracurricular activities, social activities, counselling services, or personality development activities taking place in an institution (Owlia & Aspinwall 1996, Cook 1997, Kwan & Ng 1999). Sirvanci (1996) identifies that the teaching and learning processes, mainly based on different roles taken over by the students, must be separated into two distinct processes: the “teaching”, under the teacher’s responsibility, and “learning”, under the student’s responsibility.

Research on the service quality aspects of higher education mostly deals with the process aspects: for instance, on the effectiveness of course delivery mechanisms, the quality of courses, and teaching and learning (Oldfield and Baron 2000). The educational process is normally divided into two distinct areas: the administrative and academic support areas, and the teaching and learning function (Srikanthan & Dalrymple 2007). The quality of teaching and learning could be addressed under the quality through design, quality in delivery and assessment and monitoring (Stone 1997). Focusing attention on good design will provide a powerful mechanism for improving the quality of the process.

The coordination of teaching, learning and administration in transnational educational seems to be complex and difficult. It is difficult and complex since it is the delivery of a curriculum outside national borders which has different shapes. Communication in these programmes has been found to be the most pervasive issue (Dunn and Wallace 2008). It appears in all kinds of communication, between partner institutions and administrative and teaching staff, within teaching and learning experience. This means that practices for teaching and learning in transnational education face some challenges across different cultures. Accordingly, Ziguras (2001) considered that the Western educational teaching methodology was appropriate in individualistic exporting countries but may not be suitable in importing countries (South East Asian) where the students are usually characterized as “less self-directed learners who defer more to the authority of the teacher and prefer more structured learning environments". Expecting students to conform to Western expectations of student behaviour (as standards) may not be possible and realistic. Therefore, Pyvis (2011) argued that delivering educational quality in the transnational programme requires the 'transfer' or re-production of the values, understandings and methods identified with the home programme. This means that international educators are hardly insensitive to cultural context, so there may well be some allowance made for local cultural understandings.

The process of teaching and learning in the transnational setting requires particular types of cultural knowledge and self-awareness as well as curriculum modification (Gribble and Ziguras 2003a). According to Leask (2008), two of the major challenges for teachers in transnational education are identifying the range and balance of knowledge, skills and attitudes that they need to develop, and balancing their own learning with students by understanding and meeting the needs of students. Pyvis (2011) argues that a standardised curriculum in transnational education could easily deliver the educational quality; however, the problem, from the viewpoint of academics, was in teaching and learning. It is not easy to get the goal of delivering quality by providing the same teaching philosophies and approaches and the same learning activities, behaviour and outcomes in different contexts and cultures. Therefore, good preparation in teaching is respected to promoting great cross-cultural awareness (Dunn and Wallace 2006). A major risk for many universities working in a transnational setting is the quality of teaching (Debowski 2008) since teaching is a complex process that requires thoughtful understanding of the student needs, learning context and the desired outcomes. Debowski (2008) also defines that the resultant hybrid of local and foreign teaching strategies can lead to inconsistent expectations and confusion for desired outcomes. The quality of teachers, teaching and instructional interaction needs to be reviewed regularly.

Within the delivery process in transnational education, students find that the pedagogy and curriculum are at odds with their prior learning experiences and the educational traditions of their own culture. It refers to the debate about learning behaviour and teaching style when cultural differences are involved (Waterval *et al.* 2014). According to Struyven, Janssens and Dochy (2002), student learning is influenced by the course organisation and resources, teaching and learning activities and assessment. How the students use the context depends on the students' self-management, their motivations and needs, and their understanding and their need for support. Telford and Masson (2005) share that students' expectations and values and positive perceptions of quality are associated with their ability to contribute and participate, role clarity, positive perceptions of the organisational climate in which the service takes place and the extent of student satisfaction. In this respect, Leask (2006) suggests several types of cultural knowledge required for effective transnational teaching. These include an understanding of local cultures and environments (political, legal and economic), understanding of how a teacher's own culture affects the way they think and act, of how culture affects how they interact with others, and of social, cultural and educational backgrounds of students.

Literature on transnational education also informs the level of adaptation in the process of teaching and learning in transnational setting. According to Phillip and Ochs (2003), the degree of adaptation and change will depend on the number of contextual factors as to whether change should be speedy or long-term in nature, which depends on the adaptability of particular policy measures. Change also will be influenced by significant actors at various stage and levels (Phillips and Ochs 2003).

The output qualities

The outputs of higher education could be tangible or intangible. There is a view that the real outcome of higher education is more than just certification, which can be measured easily, while the deeper benefits may become obvious only when seen some years afterwards and, therefore, cannot be easily measured. Between the moments of entering and leaving the system, the student is on the receiving end of and participates in the process – the intention underlying the process is to modify the student's intellectual maturity. According to Yorke and Longden (2004), higher education plays an important role in developing skills for lifelong learning so that graduates can be more effective in their work place and can process knowledge effectively as well as apply skills and knowledge in different contexts. Graduates' success in gaining employment or access to higher qualifications is an important measure of the quality of educational provision. Therefore, the curriculum or teaching and learning in higher education must be helping students to achieve the outcomes that can meet the personal development expectations as well as social demand.

Literature on transnational education focuses on the outcomes and ensures that students are better prepared through their learning experience for participation in globalisation context. There are five broad areas of graduate attributes which are important to employers including knowledge, intellectual ability, the ability to work in modern organisations, interpersonal skills and communication (Harvey and Green 1994). By means of offering transnational education, students could gain international context and be equipped with knowledge and skills for competing in international or multinational work environments (Zimitat 2008). This links the concept of employability to quality of transnational higher education. Employability could be viewed as the benefit and usefulness of the study programme for career and work tasks (Støren and Aamodt 2010). The understanding of employability may change from being the propensity of the individual student to get employment to an institutional achievement (Harvey 2001).

In general, the input-process-outcome framework is a descriptive conceptual framework that was used to categorise a range of interpretations and a roadmap of achieving educational quality (Scheerens and Hendriks 2004). The input-process-output framework is also consistent with the UNESCO (1998) declaration that quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept which should embrace all its functions and activities such as teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment with stakeholders being an integral part of the institutional evaluation process. The model views quality as an internal process of transformation, the administration staff to perform the administrative task, the teachers to perform the teaching tasks and students to gain knowledge (Cheng & Tam 1997). Barnett (1992b) also adds that it is possible to identify and quantify certain aspects of higher education that can be universal to all course and institutions; however, this could be insensitive to the differences across institutions of higher education. Therefore, in light of the input-process-output model, it is suggested to focus on what is called the development approach to quality with the internal members of the institution reviewing what they are about for themselves, with a focus on improving the quality of an institution (Barnett 1992a).

2.7 Implications for a Conceptual Framework

The study would engage the way of thinking about how quality related to a stakeholder-specific meaning (Harvey & Green 1993), the stakeholder theory to approach quality management (Foley 2001) and the input-process-output education quality model (Cheng & Tam 1997) to provide a conceptual framework for the research. Understanding of the quality of the partnership programme would be explored from the perspectives of different key groups of stakeholders, such as students, academic staff and management staff, in terms of the quality perceptions in the input, the process and the output of the collaborative educational programme.

According to Harvey and Green (1993), quality is related to a stakeholder-specific meaning. Quality values may be different to many stakeholders as each thinks quality in different ways and because they may have incongruent interest. Green (1994) considers that it is impossible to deal with quality as a unitary concept and the best that can be achieved is to define clearly the criteria that each stakeholder uses when judging quality and to take into account the competing views when assessment of quality is undertaken. Harvey and Green (1993) note that there are many ways to define quality in higher education and confirm that any definition of quality in higher education should be "stakeholder relative".

Stakeholders are likely to have disparate definitions of quality as well as preferences for how quality is assessed (Cheng & Tam 1997). Cheng and Tam (1997) explained that education quality was the character of the set of elements in the input-process-output of the education system that provided services that completely satisfy both internal and external strategic constituencies by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations. Their framework of "input-process-output" could be used as an initial framework for the exploration of stakeholders' perceptions of the quality of the collaborative programme. Based on the model, input variables to the partnership programme were the partnership agreement, the students, the admission, the curriculum, the staff and facilities. Processes involved teaching and learning as well as delivering the partnership programme. Outputs referred to student performances, employability and graduate destinations of students and the effectiveness of the partnership.

Considering quality as stakeholder-relative then stakeholder approach to quality management in higher education institutions was taken into consideration for the study. According to Foster and Jonker (2007), the stakeholder theory to quality was regarded as a useful tool when considering the institutional effectiveness and maximizing the stakeholders' benefits. Foley (2001) develops a stakeholder theory of quality management based on an analysis of the purpose of the institution and the crucial role that stakeholders play in the achievement of that purpose. As suggested by Foley (2001), the aim of organisational sustainability would be accomplished if organisations act to maximise the quality of their products to customers, subject to meeting the *wants/needs* and *expectations* of relevant stakeholders. Under this approach, an institution must satisfy its key stakeholders and the driving force of an organisation becomes, under a voluntarism philosophy of management, to satisfy the needs of as many stakeholders as possible. The success of an organisation could be affected by the way in which management engages with stakeholders. This means that quality management must look beyond the internal operation of the organisation and consider the nature and management of its relationships with the relevant stakeholders (Foster & Jonker 2007).

Drawing together these key considerations, the conceptual framework underpinning the study is illustrated in Figure 2-5:

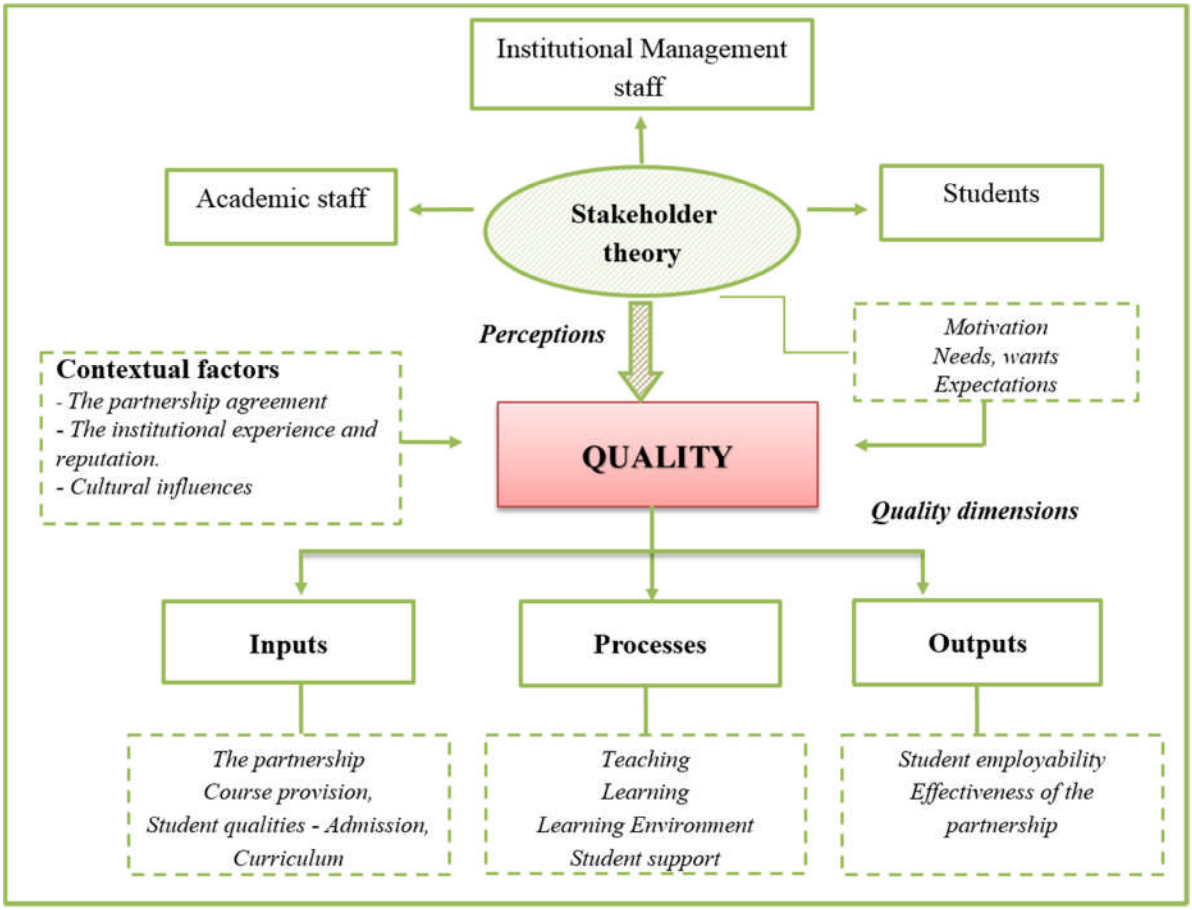

Figure 2-5: Conceptual framework for the study

2.8 Summary

The first part of the chapter has provided the review of TNHE, the delivery modes and the development of TNHE from the UK and VN perspectives, the theoretical and empirical studies related to TNHE, its development and the motivations for delivering a TNHE programme. The review has illustrated that TNE seems to be addressed at international, national and institutional levels. Although a country like Vietnam has gradually come to a better understanding of quality in education, which has been concretised in various respects, the operation of the programmes and managing quality of the programmes are still an open topic.

Quality in transnational education programmes is understood as involving learners, content, processes, environment and outcomes and allowing for an understanding of education as a complex system with the involvement of foreign partners and cultural differences. Moreover, the perceptions of quality from the different people involved in this process are different. From that consequence, it is important to investigate the experience of both the students and staff of the transnational programme to address their quality perceptions, which seem to be lacking in the current literature. It therefore provides a room for exploring the quality of the TNE programme in order to have a closer look the programme, which contributes to a better understanding of the factors contributing to quality in transnational education.

The chapter has provided the review of how quality is defined and perceived in higher education. The review has brought a fundamental analysis and underpinned a conceptual framework for the study in the understanding the quality framework of the transnational education programme. This identifies a wide range of possible factors that have the potential to influence stakeholders' perceptions of quality, including a range of inputs, process and outputs (Cheng & Tam 1997), from a socially constructed perspective. This draws on theory related to "perceived quality" in terms of "value" and "satisfaction" and stakeholder theory, which provides deeper understanding of who stakeholders are and what factors satisfy their needs in a given context.

Chapter 3 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Methodology is the *strategy* used for answering research questions (Taber 2013). This chapter aims at identifying and explaining the methodology underpinning the research study. The interpretivist paradigm emerges as a suitable framework for conducting this research into understanding the factors contributing to quality of the transnational programme from the stakeholder perspectives.

The chapter starts with a reminder of the research aims and the formulation of the research questions. The research design is presented next to explain how the chosen research paradigm is suitable to help answering those research questions. A detailed discussion of the chosen research methodology is followed by an exploration of the qualitative-quantitative methods employed. This includes the strategies and approaches for analysing and combining the resulting qualitative and quantitative data. The explanation of the elements is then presented in order to create the validity and reliability of the research. Ethical considerations are discussed at the end of the chapter.

3.2 Research aims and questions

The study aimed at understanding the factors contributing to quality from different key stakeholders in the collaborative transnational partnership undergraduate programme between a Vietnamese university and the UK partners. Through an analysis of the stakeholder perspectives on quality, this helped to understand how effective the transnational programme has been delivered as well as any factors that enable or hinder the quality of the programme. From this exploration of quality and the comparison of stakeholders' expectations and perceptions on quality, the study also aimed at providing some implications for provisional policy and practice for quality management in the partnership programme between the Vietnam and UK universities.

In attempting to achieve the above aims, the following questions are formulated for the research:

RQ1: What do the different groups of stakeholders understand to be the factors that determine quality in the provision of transnational education?

RQ2: How effectively has the TNHE programme been delivered, from the stakeholders' perspective, and with what impact on the quality of the student experience, including teaching, learning and employability?

RQ3: From a stakeholder perspective, what has enabled or obstructed the quality of the partnership programme?

And an implication question: What are the implications for the institutions' policies and practices in managing the quality of the transnational undergraduate course?

3.3 Research strategy

In order to address the above research questions, an interpretive paradigm and a design applying both qualitative and quantitative methods were selected. In terms of strategy, the approach of "multiplism" (Cook 1985) was adopted in this study. Multiplism appeared in this research as the way of selecting research methods, selecting stakeholder groups and building a multiple theoretical underpinning and a valuable framework. In particular, the multiple-method approach of having both qualitative and quantitative in the data collection was used to collect data from the multiple stakeholders for their quality perceptions and from the different groups of respondents, such as programme receivers (students) and programme providers, which include academics and management staff on the both sides of the partnership programme. Besides that, as stated earlier, the conceptual framework underpinning the study was formed, combining different theories such as the stakeholders' views on quality (Knight & Green 1993), the input-process-output quality management model (Cheng & Tam 1997) in higher education and the stakeholder theory to approach quality management (Foley 2001). The use of this framework helped to address the research questions and interpret the research findings accordingly.

The research strategy and journey of the research process is conceptualised as the following figure:

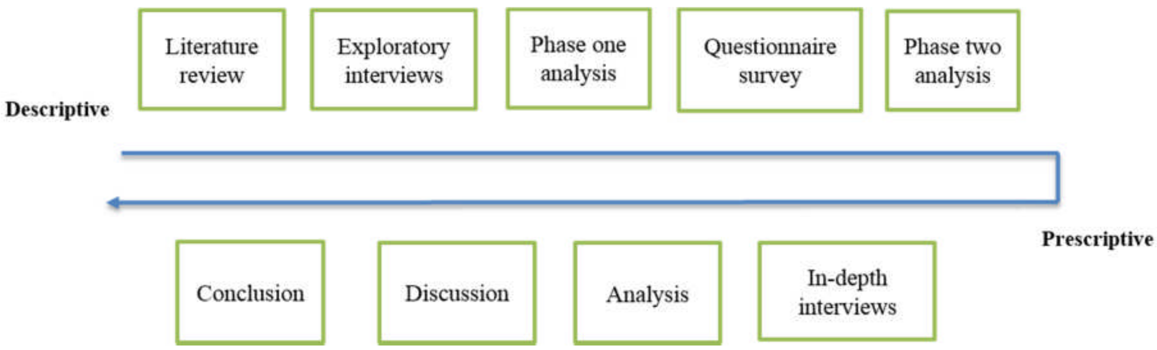

Figure 3-1: Research strategy

The diagram is adopted from Amaratunga and Baldry (2001)

3.4 Interpretive research paradigm

Selection of the research paradigm was determined by the research aims and the guidance and explanation Pickard (2013) provides for research paradigms. Accordingly, the interpretive paradigm was selected as the most appropriate research paradigm for this study. Pickard (2013) suggests that there are three major research paradigms – namely positivism, post-positivism and interpretivism – and there are fundamental differences between them. Table 3-1 shows the examination of the beliefs of each paradigm and how to contrast the fundamental differences between them.

Table 3-1: Characteristics of research paradigms

	Positivism	**Post-positivism**	**Interpretivism**
Ontological stance	'Realism'	'Critical realism'	'Relativist'
	Belief in a tangible, social reality. This reality exists independently of those 'creating' the reality. A social reality can exist just as a natural reality exists.	Belief in a social reality but acceptance that knowing this reality will always be inhabited by imperfections in detecting its nature. The imperfections are the result of human fallibility.	Belief in multiple constructed realities that cannot exist outside the social contexts that create them. Realities vary in nature and are time and context bound.
Epistemological stance	Objectivist/dualist Investigator and investigated are independent of each other	Modified dualist/objectivist Acceptance that independence is not possible but objectivity is seen as the goal and demonstrated by external verification	Transactional/subjectivist The results of the investigation are a product of interaction between the subject and the investigator. What can be known is a result of the interaction
Methodological stance	Experimental/manipulative Hypothesis testing, variables identified before the investigation Empirical testing is conducted in order to establish the 'truth' of the proposition Predominantly quantitative Analysis by variables	Modified experimental/manipulative Hypothesis testing but more emphasis placed on context Quantitative and qualitative Analysis by variables	Empathetic interaction Investigator interacts with the object of the investigation. Each construction of reality is investigated in its own right and is interpreted by the investigator. Qualitative, including hermeneutics and dialectic interchanges Analysis by case.
Purpose	Prediction/control/ Explanation. Framing of general laws.	Prediction/explanation. Generalizations.	Understanding/ Reconstruction. Transfer of findings.

Source: Adopted from Lincoln and Guba (1985) by Pickard (2013).

Examining the characteristics of each research paradigm as the table suggested, the interpretative paradigm appears to be the most appropriate approach for this study compared to other approaches such as positivism and post-positivism. An epistemological stance under interpretivism has significance to this study where the knowledge which comes out of the study is the result of interaction between the quality perceptions of the stakeholders and the investigator. As stated by Pickard, interpretivism can offer understanding of the meanings behind the actions and perceptions of individual. This is suitable since this study aimed to explore the experiences, perceptions and interactions of the stakeholders and reflected the different ways in which people experienced, engaged with the quality of the programme and the processes around them. As the table shows, the interpretivist understands reality as multiple, constructed and holistic. Flick (2014) further emphasised that there is no single, tangible reality, instead there are complex, multiple realities (of the different stakeholder perceptions) and reality is seen as individual and embedded in the context of study. As individual stakeholders perceived or experienced the same situation differently, participants would interpret or make sense of the situation based on their own context and personal frames of reference. In turn, the researcher as a unique individual also biases the research and research text by these perceptions, referred to as multiple constructed realities. In terms of the methodological stance, the researcher was continuously interacting with the object of the investigation and each construction of reality was investigated in its own right and was interpreted by the researcher. The outcomes of the investigation expanded the understanding and helped to construct the understanding of the quality of the programme as well as constructing the effectiveness of the delivery of the programme. This could be placed under the ‘purpose’ of ‘understanding’ which led to the ‘transfer of findings’ based on the contextual application.

3.5 Research sample: A rationale

The research focused on an in-depth study of an international bachelor programme offered by a TNHE partnership running a BA in Business Management and BA in Banking and Finance of a Vietnam and UK university. The sample partnership study was chosen because this context provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration, from multiple perspectives, of the complexity and uniqueness of such institutions and their programmes in a real-life context (Simons 2009). Stake (1995) makes a similar point when saying that choosing a sample of a single programme helped coming to understand its activities within its circumstances. The sample could bring both discrepancies or conflicts between the viewpoints held by participants (Bassey 1999). Particularly, it could present the difference viewpoints on quality from stakeholders and recognise their complexity; therefore, it was suitable for the purpose of this study. The strategy was suitable to investigate the institution's activities and strategies and therefore provided a deeper understanding of the quality framework underpinning the stakeholders' perceptions of quality in the context of this transnational programme (Yin 2013).

This research was not intended to produce generalizations but to allow for transferability of findings based on contextual applicability of the sample (Pickard 2013). This study especially wanted to establish particularisation (Stake 1995), producing a rich picture of the partnership programme and its quality and gaining analytical insights from this. The research helped to understand the perceived quality of the partnership programme in depth and its encompassing important contextual conditions (Yin and Davis 2007). As suggested by Creswell (2013), it is important to have contextual material available to describe the setting for the sample and have a wide array of information about the sample to provide an in-depth picture of it and its boundaries. Yin (2013) also emphasised that using a programme, with its various components and activities, as a research sample allowed a developmental approach to data generation and analysis which was very suitable for the exploratory and interpretive nature of the study.

3.5.1 Sample selected – An international bachelor programme

The chosen partnership programme as a unit of study was selected to serve the research purposes in several ways. Firstly, this is the first undergraduate franchised programme of the UK in Vietnam, with authority given by the Vietnamese government since 2005. Since this is the first and the longest undergraduate international programme operated in Hanoi under the authority of the Vietnamese government, it might gain significant insights and we could learn much from it (Stake 1995). Secondly, the practice of franchised transnational education programme is common in the discipline of business studies. Therefore, a Business Studies BA in Business and Management and a BA in Banking and Finance were selected for this study. Thirdly, this first partnership programme was with the UK institution partner who is one of the main transnational providers in the country and again this could provide significant insights into the quality in transnational education from the experienced partners. This means the selection of this franchised programme has the involvement of the experienced institutions in transnational education, from both Vietnam and the UK. For those reasons, this partnership programme could be considered as a representative programme of the transnational education operation in Vietnam.

The purposeful selection of the sample programme and the stakeholders involved in this study therefore were adopted to ensure the possibility of research findings in terms of deep understanding of the stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of the quality in the partnership programme. As explained by Patton (2002), the power of purposive selection lied in selecting a "formation-rich sample" for study in depth (Patton 2002). Furthermore, the choice of this sample programme technically represented a purposive sample (Henry 1990, Patton 2002) to take advantage of the insider-outsider in the research. Merton (1972) defines the insider as having a priori intimate knowledge of the community and its members, a priori familiarity with the setting and people the researcher is researching. I had been working in the institution for many years. My role in this institution was as an academic coordinator for the partnership programme, as a teacher involved in teaching the BA in Business Management courses, and I was also a member of the management board of the institution. Therefore, choosing this sample programme meant I could consider myself an insider of this research. Hockey (1993) points out that the advantages of researching in a familiar setting might include, for example, the possibility of enhanced rapport and communication or the ability to gauge the honesty and accuracy of responses; therefore, I could use these advantages, being part of the management staff and a teacher. However, I also considered myself as an outsider to the students and the partner UK institution.

This means being an outsider gave me scope to stand back and abstract material from the research experience (Burgess 2002). Therefore, the chances of findings from the research might be enhanced by a combination of involvement and estrangement (Hammersley 1993). Hellawell (2006) argues that ideally the researcher should be both inside and outside the perceptions of the “researched”. That is, both empathy (as an insider) and alienation (as an outsider) are useful qualities for research.

3.5.2 Embedded units of the sample programme

The international bachelor programme offers two majors for which the awarding institutions are the UK partner universities. According to Yin (2013), an embedded sample is a sample study containing more than one sub-unit of analysis (Yin 2013). The in-depth qualitative analysis of these two programmes within the context of a single TNHE partnership has many features and advantages associated with embedded case-study investigation, including providing a means of integrating quantitative and qualitative methods into a single research study (Yin 2013). The sample study design could be figured as an embedded sample (Yin 2013). This is also considered as a nested sample study (Thomas 2015), as described in the Figure 3-2.

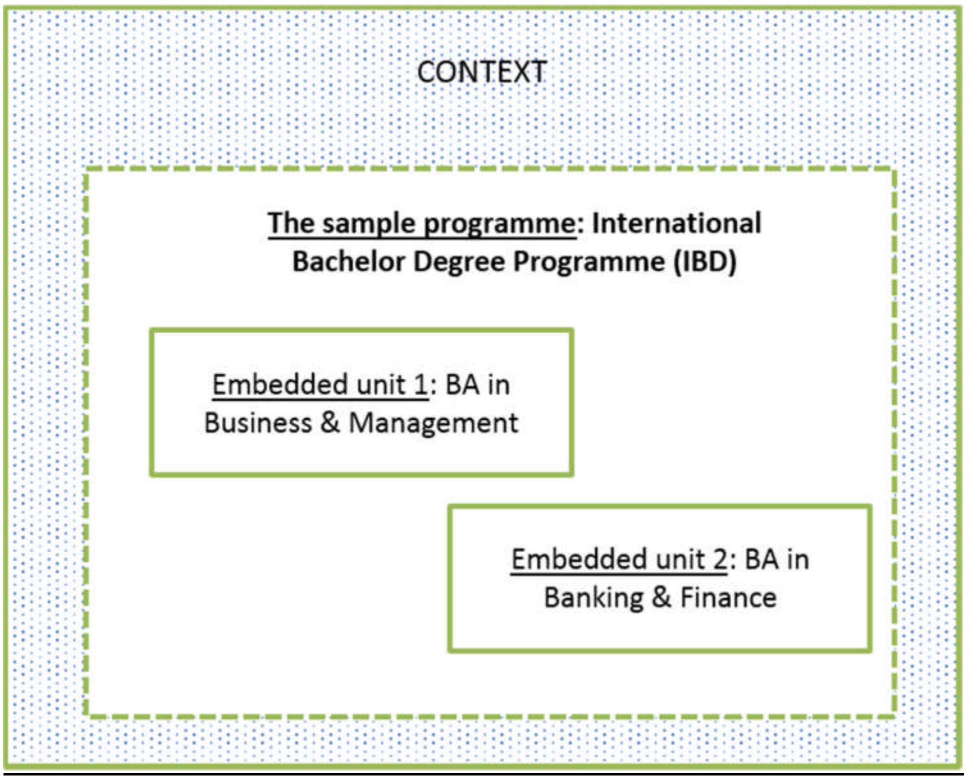

Figure 3-2: The sample programme

The embedded sample therefore was chosen as a representative transnational programme in Vietnam delivering the UK programmes, and selected as a sample for this study to create an in-depth analysis for understanding the perceptions of quality in the context of transnational higher education at undergraduate level in Vietnam.

(1) BA in Business and Management

The Bachelor in Business Management course started in 2005 (the first intake) with three specialisations: marketing, accounting, and general management. Students can study four years at the institution and are granted the BA (Hons) in Business Management by the partner university in the UK or students can finish the first three years in the institution in Vietnam and then top-up the final year at the university in the UK to complete their degree.

The provider of the BA in Business Management is an institution located in the North of England. The institution has been providing higher education in the city since 1901, and as an innovative, accessible and inspirational university. As a teaching-led post-1992 higher education institution, it has 19,478 students, and strengths range from widening access and student experience to research, international and industry links. Approximately 17 per cent of students come from countries outside of the UK, and each year the university welcomes students from over 100 countries.

(2) BA in Banking and Finance

The Bachelor course in Banking and Finance started in 2010 (the first intake), providing students with a complete system of knowledge and financial analysis tools, at both macro and micro level. Students can study for four years at the institution and are granted the BA (Hons) in Banking and Finance by the partner university in the UK or students can finish the first three years in the institution in Vietnam and then top-up the final year at the university in the UK to complete their degree.

The provider of the BA in Banking and Finance is an institution located in the West of England. This is a thriving, modern university, offering a wide range of highly respected courses and employment-enhancing opportunities – in one of the UK's most vibrant cities. The university has over 27,000 students, 250,000 alumni and 3,500 staff. Students come to study at the university from all over the UK, as well as from 140 different countries around the world, making this a diverse and place to come and study.

Under the partnership agreement and the contract between the two institutions, the responsibilities of each party in the collaboration are defined clearly at the beginning of the partnership. All activities related to responsibilities have been agreed by both parties. The partner UK institution is responsible for curriculum development, quality assurance and assessment. These include the activities for designing the programme to ensure the currency of the curriculum and on-going development of the programme, and approving modifications to the programme and modules. The partner is also responsible for developing, designing and preparing teaching materials that are appropriate to the programme and the student cohorts. All activities related to designing and marking assessments also fall within the partner university's responsibilities.

The institution in Vietnam is responsible for delivering teaching and learning materials and providing academic advice and support to students. The institution is also in charge of designing a marketing plan and preparing publicity materials and undertaking student recruitment. The institution is also responsible for recruiting staff for teaching and administration.

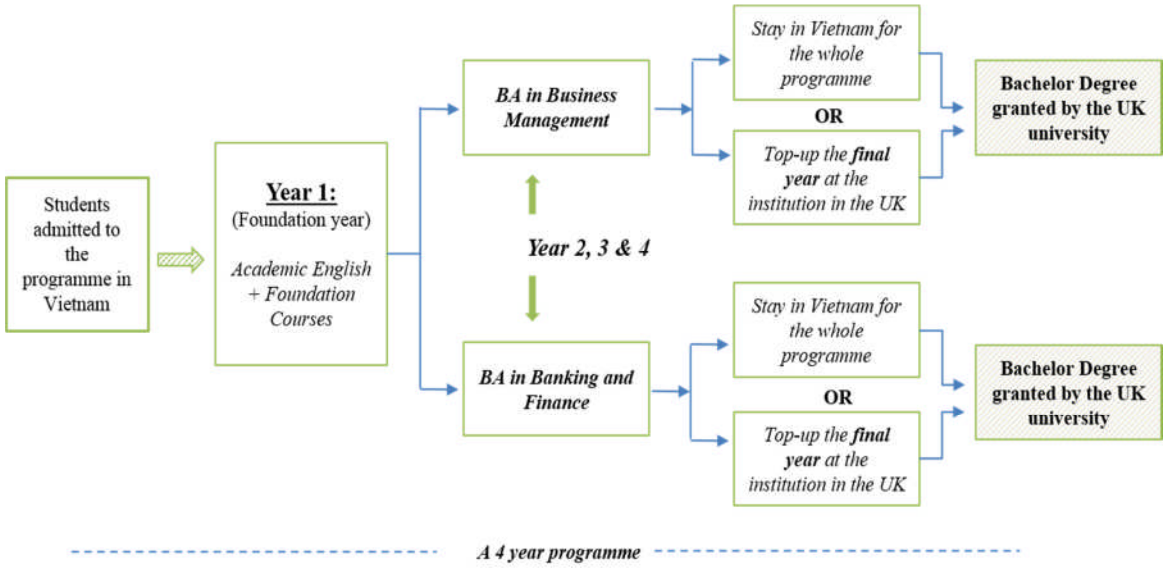

Figure 3-3: The programme structure

Under the programme structure as shown in Figure 3-3, after finishing the first year on the international bachelor programme and having English ability equivalent to IELTS 6.5, and equipped with basic foundation courses in study skills, computer skills and basic economics (and Maths in Economics only for the major in Banking and Finance), students will be assigned to the major of their choice, either the BA in Business Management or BA in Banking and Finance programmes for the next two, three and four years as per the course structure of that major. Whether the student chooses to stay in Vietnam or transfer to the UK institution in the final year, he or she will be granted the same bachelor degree by the UK institution.

3.6 A multiple-method design

As suggested by Yin (2013), a research methodology could rely on multiple sources of evidence to add breadth and depth to data collection, to assist in bringing a richness of data together in an apex of understanding through triangulation, and to contribute to the validity of the research (Yin 2013). The ‘multiple sources of evidence’ commonly produce not only qualitative data, but an amount of quantitative data as well. The unique strength of this approach is the ability to combine a variety of information sources. Therefore, the study adopted multiple sources of evidence, including from interviews and questionnaires. A design approaching both interviews and survey methods in this research was chosen since the approach helped in exploring the comprehensive views on quality from stakeholders’ perspectives as well as identifying the reasons behind it. Denzin (1978) insists that such multiple-method approach is the generic form of the use of triangulation in research methodology.

From the qualitative approach, the design of using interviews was considered ideal for exploring the complexities and contrasting values and experiences of the different stakeholders groups about quality. It is believed that the stakeholder groups may not share common perspectives on quality in transnational education and even the same group may refer to quality differently based on their priorities and expectations. The study aimed to explore the understanding, expectations and perceptions on quality which stakeholders expressed through their personal experiences and involvements in TNHE programmes. This approach appeared to be the appropriate choice since it could be used to explore the areas about which little was known in order to gain deeper understanding and could be used to obtain details about feelings, thoughts and emotions (Strauss and Corbin 1994). Furthermore, using the qualitative method provided an understanding and description of personal experience and the viewpoints of the stakeholders, and it enabled identification of contextual factors as they related to the phenomenon of interest (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson and Collins 2009). The qualitative approach was responsive to the situation, conditions and stakeholders’ needs.

The primary advantage of interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through the other data collection methods, such as surveys (Boyce and Neale 2006). The interviews also provided a more relaxed atmosphere to collect information since respondents feel more comfortable having a conversation about their programme rather than filling out a survey. Crudely, the interview could be described in terms of individuals directing their attention towards each other with the purpose of opening up the possibility of gaining insight into their experiences, concerns, interests, beliefs, values, knowledge and ways of seeing, thinking and acting. This is described as the preferred research method as it facilitated both an understanding of the interviewees' perspectives and the meanings that the interviewees attached to the situations or social contexts that were important to them (Finn, Walton and Elliott-White 2000).

From the student perspectives, in attempting to answer the research questions, a sequential phase of a qualitative-quantitative ('Qual-Quan') approach was used. Instead of having a one-dimensional research strategy, either qualitative or quantitative, the study utilized two dimensions into one, which has served in broadening its scope and offering a better picture of reality of the student perceptions on quality (Lampard and Pole 2015). In the first phase, the qualitative approach via student interviews was conducted to identify the dimensions and criteria of quality that students considered to be important and relevant to quality in the collaborative business partnership programme. This was seen as the initial exploration phase of quality perceptions from different groups of students in the programme. The initial phase then facilitated the design of the second phase. In the second phase, based on the criteria defined by students, a questionnaire was developed to investigate the respondent's expectations as well as their perceptions on quality from a larger population to evaluate the level of satisfaction of the students in the programme. It therefore could be concluded that quantitative results were used to embellish the primarily qualitative study.

The approach of using quantitative data means the students' perceptions and the extent to which they were satisfied with the quality of the programme were acquired through the survey by using structured questionnaires. The objective of this approach was to canvass the dimensions and determinants of quality perceived by the students as important and relevant to TNHE as well as to see how their expectations were satisfied in the transnational higher education programme. The quantitative method using questionnaires helped to measure the reactions of students and made comparisons within the student group according to their year of study, gender and course of study, thus facilitating comparisons and statistic aggregation of the data (Patton 2002). The combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches embellishing the qualitative could win a deeper understanding of the situation and overcome the limitations of having only one method. A distinguishing feature of both the quantitative and qualitative research described and the use of a sequentially phased qualitative-quantitative approach was therefore expected in meeting objectives of the study.

From the staff perspectives, in-depth interviews were chosen and conducted with the staff on the programme to explore the perceptions from the views of the providers on both sides of the partnership programme. The decision not to involve questionnaires for staff was considered based on the following reasons. Firstly, quality determinants and therefore expectations would likely be different between students and staff. Staff are the providers of the programme so they are more likely to focus on efficiency measures in terms of the programme delivery, the introduction of curricular and pedagogical initiatives and possibly in reference to student satisfaction data of their own, including module evaluations. Secondly, the number of staff was substantially smaller than the numbers of students so that the use of questionnaires for staff and their attitude ratings would have little or no statistical significance. For these reasons, it was possible to use interviews as the data collection method. An interview on its own could provide rich information about the staff perceptions of factors contributing to quality, and help to find out the reasons for differences or similarities in the perceptions among stakeholders, make comparisons of perspective (which will be interpretive, not statistical) between the student and staff views, and evaluate the effectiveness of the programme delivery as well as provide implications for the programme management.

3.7 Data collection procedures

Once the multiple-method approach was chosen, the different stages of data collection proceeded. Data was collected through interviews – with both students and staff – and through the student survey.

Firstly, the study used exploratory interviews with students, and then based on the results of those, the questionnaire was developed to conduct with the whole population of the students of the transnational programme. From the views of programme providers, data was collected from the staff on the programme based on the in-depth interview method. Burgess (2002) argues that one should be flexible when choosing the suitable methods of collection and therefore should select a range of methods that are appropriate to the research problem under investigation. It is important to understand that each data collection tool has its own strengths and weaknesses. In this research, the points of strength and weakness of each tool were considered in order to eliminate any unconstructive impact.

The diagram in Figure 3-4 below illustrates the data collection design for the study. The data was collected from two sides – seen as programme receivers (students) and programme providers. From the views of students, the interviews were conducted with the sample of both students in the Vietnam institution and the ones who had joined the top-up programme with the partner university in the UK. The survey was conducted for the whole group of students in the sample institution in Vietnam. From the staff side, interviews were the main method of collecting data. Participants in these in-depth interviews included the staff in the Vietnamese institution involved in teaching, administration and managing the programme. In the UK side, only management staff of the programme were selected.

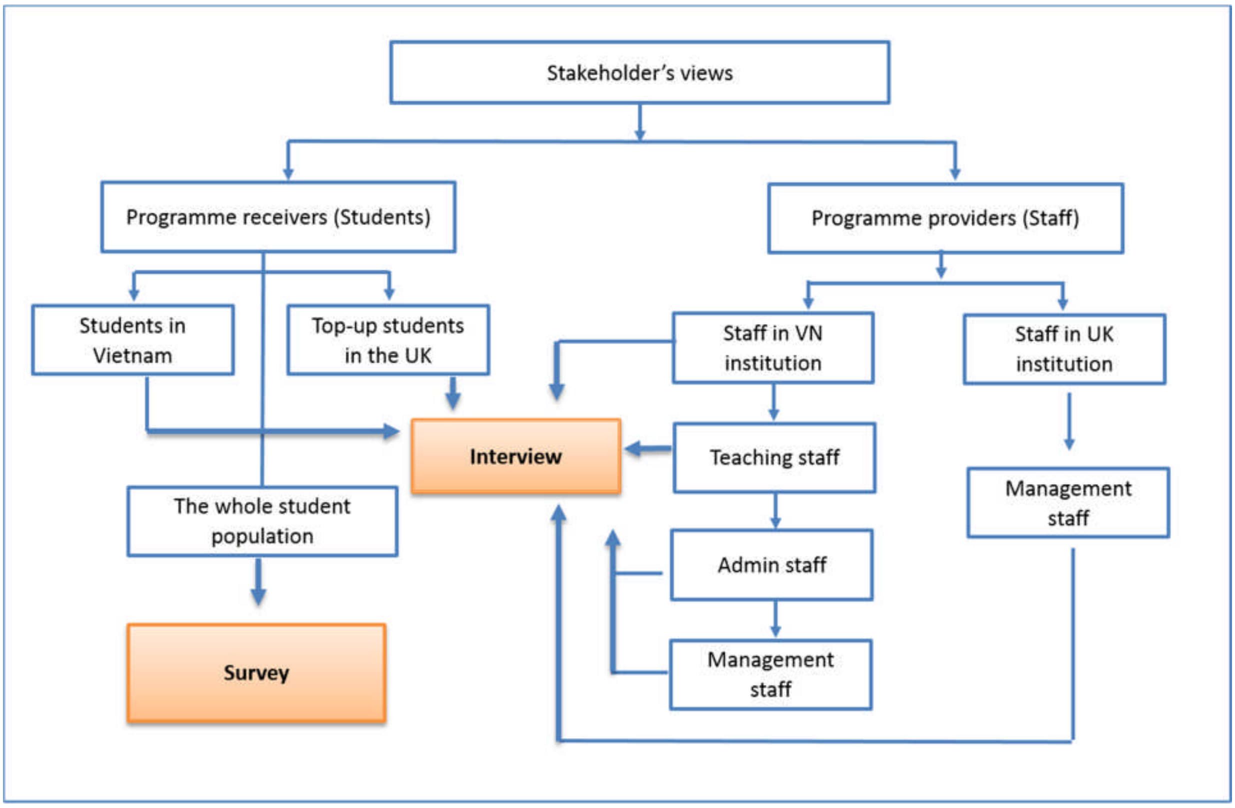

Figure 3-4: Structure of the data collection design

The following subsections described the data collection procedure for the different stages of the research.

3.7.1 The student interview

This phase was exploratory in nature, the investigation was about students' perspectives on perceptions of quality with the primary objective of understanding what shaped the student's thinking about quality, what motivated the student joining the programme, and during the process of learning in the programme, how they reflect on the overall experience of it. This implied that this phase was aimed at developing ideas rather than gathering facts and statistics. It was concerned with trying to understand how students thought and felt about the issues mentioned above (Oppenheim 2000).

Semi-structured interviews were used in this phase to explore the students' experiences of the collaborative transnational programme. The semi-structured interview allowed the conversation to flow comparatively freely and tended to move in such a way that the researcher could introduce specific questions when the opportunity arose (Clark-Carter 2009). This approach was used in the sense that it did not ignore the literature that existed. Punch (2013) claims that interviewing is one of the main tools for data collection as it provides a means of accessing people’s perceptions, meanings and definitions of situations and constructions of reality. This is suitable for the purpose in this phase, which is to explore the understanding and perceptions of the quality of the students based upon their experience and engagement in the programme.

Beginning with semi-structured interviews offered opportunities to engage more with the participants, enabling me to probe more information, and clarify some points (Cohen *et al*. 2000). The interview questions (see the *Appendix 2)* were prepared based on the research questions and the theoretical framework of the study. Each interview was conducted in Vietnamese, with an hour session for each and in a face-to-face setting, providing a convenient communication method and safe environment for students to answer the questions and share their experiences. Face-to-face interviewing was considered one of the most appropriate methods for understanding people’s emotions and gaining access to the motives, meanings, actions and reactions of people in the context of the investigation (Mullins and Kiley 2002). Interview questions had been formulated in a way that stimulated the participants to tell their experience and the story of how they engaged in the programme. The interview questions were a predetermined set of open-ended questions, and organised in a way that ensured consistency of the data flow and flexibility (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

Using the interview question schedule aimed to avoid ambiguity and made it easier for the process of analysing data afterwards. As stated by Patton (2002), the interview schedule was used to ensure that the same basic lines of enquiry were pursued with each interviewee. It was useful to explore, probe and ask questions that would elucidate and illuminate the particular issues. It also saved time and made interviewing a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive (Patton 2002). Through conducting the interviews, two further questions emerged that were added to the schedule.

These two questions were around the interviewees' views on extra-curriculum activities and the supporting activities for their graduate destinations.

The qualitative data from the interviews with students helped find an understanding of the reasons that motivated students to choose the programme and gain deeper insights into the input, process and output dimensions of quality and perceptions of quality in the collaborative partnership programme. The data also helped to further refine the components of quality identified from the literature. The interviews in this phase also helped identify commonly used terminology and particularly complex issues and differences in interpretation and perception among the students groups. The interpretation of the student perceptions of quality in this phase helped in identifying the affected factors to the quality of transnational education.

3.7.2 The student survey

The questionnaire was developed based on the results of the initial phase which were taken from the interviews with students on the transnational programme, and this served in choosing all the questions that had been explicitly relevant to the research enquiry. The survey method was claimed as efficient in terms of being able to gather large amounts of data at reasonable low cost and time compared to other methods (Coleman and Briggs 2002) The questionnaire survey approach also provided convenience in data analysis and reduced bias in presenting the findings (Fife-Schaw 2000). A questionnaire survey was also easy to standardise, as similar procedures could be carried out when it was conducted. The main advantage of using questionnaires in this phase was the standardization and uniformity in the data-gathering process, which was considered important in order to be able to interpret and contrast the findings between the different groups of respondents.

The questionnaire was designed to be self-administered and organised into sections, each with a title that related to the central purpose of the research. The questions moved from generalised areas of interest to a more specific set of features about which direct data was gathered. The questionnaire contained closed questions for the purpose of generating statistical data; an open-ended question was also added at the end of the questionnaire in order to leave it open for more ideas to emerge, bearing in mind the potential for generating qualitative data. With those closed questions, a detailed questionnaire was conducted, consisting of fixed-response items based on the various criteria that underpin each quality dimension, all of which were identified from the interviews and were considered to be ideal and in line with the objectives of the study.

The questionnaire was designed in the English language. The draft questionnaire was piloted with some students in the programme in order to eliminate any misunderstanding in terms of languages and meanings of the questions. Based on the received feedback, some changes were made. The revised questionnaire was then finalized and distributed. It included a total of 84 questions *(see Appendix 4 for a full questionnaire*), divided into five parts, which were compiled in the final version of the questionnaire.

1. General information
2. Student motivations for choosing the transnational higher education programme
3. Student perceptions of the quality in the programme
4. Criteria for determining quality of the transnational education programme
5. Open question about student experience on the transnational education programme

The first part of the questionnaire requested the respondent's personal information such as their gender, level of study and major of study (Q1 to Q3).

Parts 2 to 4 addressed the criteria and dimensions of stakeholders' expectations and perceptions of quality, which were developed and divided into sections. It is very unlikely that single items can measure any complex theoretical concept and, therefore, a number of related items is included under each section so the likelihood for getting consistent answers and reducing random answers are improved. These items were measured on a five-point Likert scale with *1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree* and on which respondents indicated their attitudes and opinions between two extreme choices in order to assess the respondents' expectations and perceptions of quality in the programme. Respondents were presented with complete statements and used an agreement scale to indicate their beliefs, selecting the number that best represented how they feel. The Likert scale is used as a means of capturing an infinite number of attitudes in an ordinal scale format (Likert 1932).

Part 2 particularly related to the motivations for choosing the TNHE programme. The respondents were asked to rate each of the 15 items (from item 4 to item 18) in terms of the motivations that made the respondent chose to attend the programme, ranging from (1) very insignificantly to (5) very significantly. The 15 items in this part were mainly developed from the initial exploratory interviews with students and some others were adopted from the literature.

Part 3 investigated the extent to which the programme met students' expectations of quality. This part was divided into five sub-sections which addressed the levels of satisfaction of the respondents along different dimensions, from Course provision (section A: 12 items – related to input of the programme), Teaching and quality of teachers (section B: 12 items – related to input and process), Assessment and student performance (section C: 10 items – related to process and output), Interaction and communication in the programme (section D: 7 items – related to process), Learning environment (section E: 10 items – related to process) and Student support (section F: 11 items – related to process). At the end of each sub-section, a question on the overall satisfaction of respondents towards each quality dimension was added in order to explore the overall view of students on the quality of the programme. These items was rated from (1) feeling significantly short of expectation to (5) feeling significantly exceeded expectation.

Part 4 explored the student views on the determining factors of the quality of transnational education. The respondents were asked to rate the given phrases (items 81 to 84) in terms of the most important to the least important factor for determining quality. These items stemmed from the outcomes framework of the programme that addressed the students' views.

The questionnaire ended with an open question (Part 5) with extra blank space to address further comments from respondents on their personal experience of the transnational programme. Although there were not many respondents that gave their answer to this question, the open question was there to serve the purpose of preventing the questionnaire of having only a priori list of items (Schuman, Presser and Ludwig 1981).

3.7.3 The staff interview

The data collection procedure in this phase with staff was different with the exploratory interview phase with students. The purpose of the staff interview was to gain in-depth information on the staff views on the issues around the quality of the transnational programmes. The participants were the groups of stakeholders, including the teaching staff and management staff involved directly with the partnership programme. The management staff from the host institutions were invited to share their experiences involving the transnational programme. They were asked about their experiences and expectations related to the programme; the thoughts they had concerning programme operations, processes and outcomes; and about any challenges and development they perceived in themselves as a result of their involvement in the programme. The data collection with the staff was for the purpose of in-depth exploration of the understanding, the reasons of the similarities and differences on the quality perceptions of the stakeholders, and the reasons for the gaps between the perceptions and the expectations. As defined by Patton (2005), the purpose of in-depth interviews was to enter into the other person's perspective, which was meaningful and able to make explicit. Potential areas of misunderstanding and misperception due to different cultural backgrounds and experiences well as the effect of the contextual factors were explored. The in-depth interview focused on the questions of why and how it happened and allowed for the generation of rich data for the research (Kuper, Reeves and Levinson 2008).

The procedures of collecting interview data with the staff had been done in steps as suggested by Creswell (2013). Firstly, the staff were chosen based on the “criterion type” and it worked well because all individuals represented people who had experience in the programme being studied and therefore provided accurate and sufficient knowledge about the quality of the programme. Secondly, it was determined that face-to-face and one-to-one types of interview would be used to collect information necessary to answer research questions. I found this very helpful because face-to-face interviews helped me capture verbal and non-verbal languages more accurate. This also helped me by indicating the levels of enthusiasm among the participants in answering and providing related information. Since the interview was conducted as the one-to-one type, it helped to maintain focus on the interview and keep control over it, with the use of the interview schedule *(see Appendix 3).* Thirdly, the interview was conducted in a quiet room and free from distractions from others. The participant was asked to complete a consent form before the start of the interview and he/she was also provided with some important related information such as purpose of the study, the amount of time needed and the plan for using the results from the interview, etc. During the interview, as the participant answered the questions, it was possible for me to immediately record answers by jotting down notes and through the use of an audio recorder. This really provided an opportunity to engage with participants in further explanations (McNeill and Chapman 2005). Furthermore, by using some prompts – the questions that were supposed to be probed for if the respondent did not bring them up: for example, *“Could you please give some examples of the issues that you have just mentioned?”* And also using *“How”*, *“Why?”* and *“And then..?”* or *“Do you mean…”* to ask for clarification and at the same time to build rapport in the interview. These probes helped to ensure that specific information within the context of the questioning process was being addressed. As explained by Leech (2002), one difference between a prompt and a question was that the prompts were not scripted while the initial questions were, and most instinctive type of prompt was an informal prompt. When conducting the in-depth interview, I realized the importance of having a good interview was to develop a positive relationship (rapport) during the interview. The process of establishing rapport was an essential component of the interview and was described in the classic work of Douglas (1985), since rapport involved trust and a respect for the interviewee and the information that the respondent shared. It was also meant of establishing a safe and comfortable environment for sharing the experiences and attitudes.

The interviews were held in the respondent's native language. For instance, the interviews with local Vietnamese teaching staff, administrative staff and management staff were held in Vietnamese. For those of foreign teaching staff and UK management staff, the interviews were conducted in English. Interviews were recorded with respondents' permission and lasted on average one hour. Respondents' permission to re-contact for further information was gained at the end of the interview.

3.8 Participant sampling methods

In line with the research purpose and with an aim of focusing on institutional quality management and improvement for the programme, the study followed the stakeholder theory (Freeman 1984) and categories defined by Cheng and Tam (1997), selected three main groups of stakeholders whose views were considered fundamental to the objectives of higher education and who were directly involved in the delivery and operation of the transnational higher education programme: students, academic staff and management staff of both the Vietnamese and UK institutions.

The following table illustrates the specific main groups and subgroups of stakeholders selected for the study.

Table 3-2: Stakeholder groups selected for the study

Main groups	**Sub-groups**	**Main role in the programme**
Students	Students in the institution in Vietnam	Receiving the programme
	Students joined the top-up programme in the partner institution in the UK	
Academic staff	Foreign teaching staff	Delivering the programme
	Local teaching staff	
Management staff	Administrative staff	Managing the programme and partnership agreements: Contract, regulations, policy, management and quality assurance.
	Senior and middle-level management staff from the Viet Nam institution	
	Management staff from the partner institution	

The stakeholder groups chosen for the study were selected from two main internal stakeholders: the programme receivers and the programme providers. Students presented for the programme receivers, and sub-groups included the students in the programme in Vietnam and the ones who had joined the top-up programme in the partner institution. Staff defined as programme providers, including academic staff at the institution in Vietnam and management staff from both home and host institutions of the partnership programme.

3.8.1 Student interview sample

The study used a purposeful sampling approach for which the selection of participants was criterion-based or purposeful (Patton 2002). Accordingly, the target respondents from students in the exploratory interviews were the third and final year students as students' familiarity with the programme grew over time. Purposeful sampling represented a group of different non-probability sampling techniques, and the participants are chosen because they have particular features which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and questions which the researcher wishes to study (Bryman 2015). Those students were expected to have more experiences and have accurate perceptions of the programme and be able to provide a deeper understanding of the quality of the international programme. Furthermore, these students could also share some critical viewpoints regarding the programme and its quality elements. For these reasons, the perceptions and experiences in the third and final year were usually more critical than in the early years.

Some were concerned about the bias in purposeful sampling since the participants were chosen out of convenience or from recommendations by knowledgeable people; however, data collection from purposeful sampling in this study was valid (Tongco 2007) because the strength of the method actually lay in its intentional bias (Bernard 2012). Purposeful sampling was more efficient than random sampling in this research circumstance, and it was more realistic and efficient than random sampling in terms of time and effort needed (Bernard 2012). The sampling method is described in the Table 3-3.

Table 3-3: Sampling for the student interview

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Stakeholder groups</th><th>Sample</th><th>Reasons to choose</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Group 1</td><td>Third year students</td><td>3</td><td rowspan="2">The bachelor programme is four years long. The first and second year students seem to be new to the programme. The third and final year students are expected to have more experience and to be able to provide deeper understanding of the quality in the transnational programme.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Final year students</td><td>4</td></tr>
<tr><td>Group 2</td><td>Top-up students in the partner institution in the UK (final year)</td><td>2</td><td>Ten per cent of the students in the transnational programme will top up at the partner's university programme. This group of students provides perceptions of the quality in transnational education from the perspective of providing experience and comparing the quality between the host and home country.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Total</td><td>9</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

An invitation email was sent to the group email of the third and final year students through the course administrators of the both courses - BA in Business Management and BA in Banking and Finance, to invite the students for the interviews in the given time schedule. Four students (one female and three male students) from the BA in Banking and Finance were interested and they agreed to participate in the research. Six students (one male and 5 female students) from the BA in Business Management replied to show their interests in the research. However, one student from the BA in Business Management (year 3) could not make it due to her illness on the date of the interview. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that the number of interviews depends upon access, resources, research objectives and the time available and original decisions regarding sample size may also have been modified as the theory evolved. As per the purposeful sampling method suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), nine participants were considered sufficient to generate the descriptive analysis required to identify the relevant quality criteria for each group of respondents since they were from the group of third and final year students who have experience in the two courses of the sample programme. Therefore, nine students were selected as a representative sample for the interviews.

The nine students were selected based on the main characteristic of the participants who had great involvement in and experience of quality in the collaborative programme and based on the volunteering approach.

Table 3-4 : Student interview samples

	Banking and Finance	Business Management	Total
Year 3	3	1	4
Year 4	1	4	5
Total	4	5	9

As the table shows, the sample students included four from the BA in Banking and Finance and five from the BA in Business Management. Among them, there were four male and five female students. Two of the final year students from the BA in Business and Management joined the top-up programme at the partner’s institution in the UK after finishing the first three years of the collaborative international programme in Vietnam. The involvement of the top-up group was expected to include a sharing experience in a different environment – in the host country and the home country of the programme – and in comparison with those studying the whole programme in Vietnam.

3.8.2 Student survey sample

Taking the fact that the transnational programme was quite small in terms of the number of students enrolled each year, the study targeted the whole student population of the international school which delivers the undergraduate programme of both the BA in Business and Management and the BA in Banking and Finance.

The use of total population sampling with these groups of stakeholder respondents made it possible to include analytical generation as well as formulating the perceptions of stakeholders which met the objectives of the study. The Table 3-5 below illustrates the number of targeted students for the survey, according to the statistics of the August 2016 programme for the two courses, BA in Business and Management and BA in Banking and Finance, and on the year of study.

Table 3-5: Student survey sample

Year of study	BA in Business Management	BA in Banking and Finance	Total
Year 1	48	35	**83**
Year 2	112	70	**140**
Year 3	128	29	**209**
Year 4	116	38	**204**
Total	**404**	**172**	**576**

Since the survey targeted the whole population of the programme, the best way to deliver it and administer it was during the lectures and tutorial sessions where students were present (Al-Rabani 2002). The questionnaire was administered by following a standardised, consistent format and procedure in order to facilitate replication and this also facilitated testing the findings to evaluate reliability. Being able to attend several sessions to distribute the questionnaire, I talked to students and asked them to participate in the research and this gave me an opportunity to explain the purpose of the study and the meaning of the items, which may not have been clear to them. This also encouraged the students to complete the questionnaire as they were encouraged personally to take the task of completing it seriously (Al-Rabani 2002). According to Verma and Mallick (1999), it is potentially important to have a high rate of responses; therefore, the questionnaire is administered in the best environment for respondents to complete at the highest success rate.

3.8.3 Staff interview sample

According to Robinson (2014), the size of the sample used was influenced by both theoretical and practical considerations. Patton (2005) stated that a qualitative enquiry typically focused on an in-depth selection of relatively few samples. Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that all sampling is done with some purpose in mind, and the sample of the staff involved in the interview was selected to fit with the purpose of the study aims.

The purposeful sampling for the in-depth interviews with staff was selected from the samples of staff from both institutions. In more detail, from the Vietnamese institution, three sub-groups were selected from the teaching staff, admin staff and management staff. From the UK side, only management staff were chosen. The purpose of focusing on the management group from the UK was to have an in-depth understanding of the managements' perspective on quality, the nature of the collaborative programme, the quality management and arrangement of the programme from the providing country that might have affected the quality as well as the level of satisfaction from the staff and students of the programme in the host country. Only the UK institutions were also in charge of quality management and the degree awarded (not involved in teaching) so involving the management staff in the sampling was a good choice. The interviews with staff from both sides also helped to provide insights into policy implication and practice implication for managing quality in the collaborative programme. The sampling is described as in Table 3-6:

Table 3-6: Sampling for the staff interview

Groups	**Sub-groups**		**Total**
Teaching staff	Local teaching staff	Foreign teaching staff	7
	5	2	
Management staff: from the Vietnam institution	Management staff	Administration staff	5
	3	2	
Management staff from the UK institution	Management staff		2
Total			**14**

As per examining the typology of strategies for purposeful sampling advanced by Miles and Huberman (1994), the selection of samples from the staff was chosen based on the "criterion type" and it worked well when all individuals studied represented people who had experience of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell 2013).

- *Teaching staff (7):* those involved in teaching the programme for at least four years were selected. The four-year period is seen as one cycle of an education programme. Therefore, the staff who have at least four years of working experience with an assumption they had established expectations and perceptions of quality in the transnational programme were selected to invite for taking part in the research. They were addressed through emails and seven of them agreed to be interviewed. Among those, five local teaching staff and two foreign lecturers replied to agree to be in the research. One foreign lecturer refused to take part in and one local tutor agreed to be interviewed but could not attend due to the time conflict.

- *Management staff (7)*: those involved in managing the programme and the partnership agreement between the two institutions. From the Vietnam side, two administrative staff were chosen in terms of their responsibility for admissions, academic issues and extra-curricular activities. They were invited through emails and these two administrative staff agreed to be interviewed. Three management staff from the Vietnamese institution were selected and they all agreed to take part in, in which, two were programme managers and one was institutional manager. Two UK managers were invited and interviewed right at the time they visited the institution in Vietnam.

3.9 Data analysis methods

3.9.1 Qualitative data analysis

The object of analysing qualitative data was to determine the categories, relationships and assumptions that inform the participants' views of the topic related to the quality of the transnational programme (McCracken 1988). The analysis was processed at the stage of collecting data, when all comments and thoughts from interviewees were recorded and reviewed after each interview. This meant ongoing interpretation of the data was conducted as it was collected (as illustrated in Figure 3-6). It helped to identify possible changes for the next session of data collection, identify missing information, and define the focus for further exploration.

Figure 3-5: Processual analysis at the stage of collecting data

The study applied the thematic framework approach described by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) to analyse the collected data. The recorded interviews were transcribed carefully and saved in a safety folder under two categories named Student Interview and Staff Interview. Since the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese (with students and local staff) and in English with foreign teaching staff and UK management staff, the process was therefore transcribed in Vietnamese and English language accordingly. For those transcripts in Vietnamese, only quotations which were quoted in the thesis were translated into English, on the basis of capturing the meaning of the participants' responses.

There were two phases in relation to the thematic framework approach that were used in this study. The first required managing data and the second involved making sense of the evidence through descriptive/explanatory accounts. This framework was used because it was particularly suited to the analysis of descriptive data enabling different aspects of the perceptions under investigation (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). The framework approach also helped to show the transparency of the interpretations of participants' experiences. The interconnected stages within the framework approach explicitly described the processes that guided the systematic analysis of data from the development of descriptive to explanatory accounts (as shown in Table 3-7).

Table 3-7: The thematic framework approach (adapted from Ritchie & Lewis 2003)

	Phases		
	Phase 1: Managing Data	***Phase 2: Making sense of data***	
	Data management	Descriptive accounts	Explanatory accounts
Process	• Becoming familiar with the data (reading and re-reading) • Identifying initial themes/categories • Developing a coding index • Assigning data to the themes and categories in the coded index	• Summarising and synthesising the range and diversity of coded data by refining initial themes and categories • Identify association between the themes until "the whole picture" emerges • Developing more abstract concepts	• Developing patterns within concepts and themes • Reflecting back on the original data and analytical stages in order to ensure participant accounts are accurately presented thereby reducing the possibility of misinterpretation • Interpreting and explaining the concepts and themes • Seeking wider application of concepts and themes

The different phases of data analysis for this study are described as follows:

- *Data management using theme based approach (Phase 1)*

The process of data management initially involved using the guidelines from Braun and Clarke (2006), in which the first phase of data analysis was familiarising myself with the data by transcribing the interview records. The next phase was generating initial codes by using printed versions of the transcripts with key phrases highlighted and comments written in the margins. Based on a close reading of the transcripts in searching for words, for shifting in content and the underlying meaning as suggested by Creswell (2013), I started to code and organise data into meaningful groups (Tuckett 2005) among groups of respondents to find out further themes that would emerge and in an attempt to summarise what was described. The concepts or themes carried valuable information and content about the phenomena within the study; therefore, I used both deductive and inductive approaches at this stage, which required me to read through the data again and again to code the data and then to find out the related themes.

As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), the literature review, the research questions, the conceptual framework and my own experience with the subject matter helped me to start with some general themes first, and then the process followed by adding more themes and subthemes as it went along. Patton (2002) emphasised that the patterns, themes and categories of analysis come from data and emerge out of the data; therefore, the list of themes was developed based on the text itself while doing data analysis. Codes and categories were developed by considering each line, phrase or paragraph of the transcripts. The table below illustrates a sample of two main themes among the six drawn from the student data analysis:

Table 3-8: Main themes and sub-themes drawn from the student data analysis

Main themes	**Sub-themes**
Teaching and Learning	The role of lectures Teaching practices Student learning Assessment methods Cultural differences
Learning Environment	Extra-curriculum Facilities Student support activities Network Access to partner university resources

Since a thematic approach was applied for the data analysis and themes were identified based on the major categories, the first cycle of coding was conducted to initially summarise segments of data and then the pattern coding was conducted to group the summaries into a smaller number of categories and themes. In the words of Coffey and Atkinson (1996), coding is a mixture of data and data complication and breaking the data apart in analytically relevant ways in order to lead toward further questions about the data; coding allowed me to reduce large quantities of information so they could be more easily handled. By coding and sorting the data, I was merely seeking to make them more accessible and easier to understand. Each code initially formed a potential theme and as coding progressed and the number of themes developed, they were grouped together into broader categories.

A qualitative software package, NViVo, had been used for further help in the data analysis. The NViVo software was mainly used in the study for coding, searching and retrieving data as it helped to reduce the time consumed by the process. Since the main categories/themes had been done manually, the list of nodes were created in NVivo accordingly (see Appendix 6 for examples of NViVo coding). The main themes/codes were assigned to a position on the top of tree nodes – the categories and subcategories organised in a hierarchical structure and the views from each group of the interviewees were saved under each tree nodes. From each tree node, it was easy to retrieve the coded data for analysis. For this reason, I found that there was flexibility in coding within NViVo, and a node could be renamed or moved from one node to another. In addition, an extract could be coded as many times as possible if more than one node was applicable and an extract could be coded with a different node. It also was possible to extend the coding, or possible to begin coding again, when data had been gathered under descriptive codes and thematic ideas had emerged. This helped me to ensure that the theoretical ideas which had emerged could be systematically evidenced in the data, thus addressing the validity of the research results.

Although the NViVo software program facilitated the process of coding, as stated above, I still needed to identify categories and themes from the raw data before they were electronically coded. I transcribed the interviews in a word format and then imported them into NViVo. That was the way to combine the best features of both electronic and manual methods. For analysing data, some researchers believed that the computer package is not capable of linking between theory and data or defining a rigorous structure for analysis (Pope, Ziebland & Mays 2000, Thorne 2000). Therefore, I exported large blocks of coded data from NViVo to Word documents and worked with these documents in order to organise them within the context of developing description and explanation.

- *Development of descriptive and explanatory accounts (Phase 2)*

The development of descriptive accounts involved summarising and synthesising the range and diversity of coded data by refining initial themes and categories. In this stage, remaining true to participants' descriptions is a fundamental principle within the framework approach and central when developing more abstract concepts (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). As suggested by Smith and Firth (2010), two linked processes were undertaken to reconcile these tensions. First, data was synthesised by refining the initial themes and categories until the whole picture emerged whilst remaining grounded in participant's description. This was achieved by constantly referring back to the original transcripts and checking meaning across interviews using NViVo search functions. Second, abstract concepts were developed through the identification of key dimensions of the synthesised data, and making associations between themes and concepts.

Table 3-9 illustrates an example of using framework for descriptive analysis, showing the process of moving from synthesised or original text to descriptive categories. As the table shown, at the first stage of abstraction (Column B), the descriptions stayed close to the original data. In the more abstract categorisation shown in Column C, the analysis began to assign labels to the data that moved beyond the original text and began to interpret the data in a more conceptual way.

Table 3-9: Using framework for descriptive analysis

Column A	Column B	Column C
Data from Perceptions of Curriculum	**Elements/Dimensions**	**Categories/Classes**
FT2: I think a good curriculum affects what they learn about and good teaching, good management to ensure the smooth running within the framework of a suitable educational programme. Quality is about the understanding what student has, not about the case study about the UK and what the point of knowing all about the UK banking system when it is totally different in Vietnam therefore the curriculum should be adapted where necessary.	A good curriculum affects student learning Curriculum, teaching and management to the success of the programme Suitability of the curriculum to local context Different of UK and Vietnam business context The need for an adaptation	Curriculum standards Understanding/meeting student needs Adaptation
LT3: You can't take the programme from England and drop it off here. In some subjects like Organisation and Behaviour (OB), Working with and Leading people (WLP), there are some learning outcomes that overlap in the subjects or not suitable but the assignments have to follow those learning outcomes therefore it really affects the effectiveness of teaching and learning.	Felt it is impossible to "drop off" the curriculum from the UK to run in Vietnam The mismatch of the curriculum to student learning needs Linkage between curriculum and assignments Curriculum and the effectiveness of teaching and learning	Issues of equivalence Comparable Effectiveness of teaching and learning
PM1: We follow strictly the curriculum and academic content from the UK partner's institution. The partner's institution is in charge of providing the curriculum, ensuring the standards of the curriculum and we follow them. However, we have to design supplementary modules that are suitable to the context of Vietnam. Student learning from international curriculum and local adaptation.	Follow strictly UK curriculum Responsibilities of each partners: UK curriculum, Vietnam delivery Curriculum standards Supplementary modules added	Curriculum standards UK equivalence Adding extra modules Tailor students learning needs Localisation

The explanatory process followed the suggestion of Smith and Firth (2011) that explanatory accounts began with reflecting back on the original data as a whole in order to ensure the experiences and beliefs of participants were accurately reflected and to minimise the possibility of misinterpretation. The theoretical framework and the nature of the study were used to unpack the explanations. Firstly, the process was based on the explicit reasons that were given by the participants and secondly, considered the situational aspects which were attributed to factors from the context to contribute to the outcome (Lofland and Lofland 1995). Since the analysis of the stakeholder perceptions helped to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme, the realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley 1997) was adopted to search for further explanations at this phase.

According to Pawson and Tiley (1997), four key linked concepts for explaining and understanding the programme included mechanism (interventions, effects), context (circumstances, conditions), outcome pattern (intended/unintended consequences) and context-mechanism-outcome pattern configuration. Those components helped for further explanation accounts and seeking for wider applications of the findings.

3.9.2 Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS, which involved measurements of variables, with frequency, factor analysis and reliability analysis. Each of the questionnaires was coded with a serial number to identify the group of respondents from their majors, gender and year of study.

Following a traditional quantitative data analysis method, which could be summarized in the form of determining the relationship between variables/differences between groups, descriptive method was adopted for the study. This included presentations of results through simple statistics and graphic displays to provide images and summaries of the data that helped the reader understand the nature of the variables and their relationships.

As explained earlier, Likert scales in the questionnaire were developed to measure attitudes by asking students to respond to a series of statements about a topic in terms of the extent to which they agree with them, and so tapping into the cognitive and affective components of attitudes (McLeod 2008). To begin with the Likert data analysis, I had to consider the most appropriate ways of analysing the Likert data. There is controversy over the analysis of Likert-type questions, linked to whether the data is treated as ordinal or interval data. The basic choice was between a parametric test and a non-parametric test.

Subedi (2016) suggests that many decisions to use the test for Likert-type data arose from the fact that Likert data was used to refer to Likert items or Likert scales (sums or averages of the results on sets of Likert items). Accordingly, the data obtained from Likert items is ordinal and non-parametric tests should be used to analyse the data (Jakobsson 2004). However, some consider that the Likert scale is interval and parametric tests should be used to analyse the results (Allen & Seaman 1997, Carifio & Perla 2007). At the beginning I chose parametric tests to analyse my quantitative data since I intended to treat my data as interval data. Consequently, the process of analysis was focused on looking at mean values and standard deviation of the variables and data was treated on average by the results on sets of Likert items. However, I realised that the research setting of the sample programme in my research had a different sample size (the number of respondents in the BA in Banking and Finance and BA in Business Management was not the same). This affected the normality of the distribution. Therefore, I tried the non-parametric test, which it is suggested is more appropriate (Field 2009), wherein I could analyse categorical or rank data. By using non-parametric tests, the analysis was focused on descriptive statistics such as median for central tendency and frequencies for variability. Having tested both parametric and non-parametric tests with my data, I realised that the results of both approaches were almost the same. I realised that non-parametric tests involved fewer assumptions than the parametric tests so the non-parametric tests were generally less powerful than their parametric counterparts. However, the data of my study met the non-parametric test conditions and the results appeared clearer for the Likert items and data categories of my study, so this helped me to use and report non-parametric tests with confidence.

Considering that students from different courses of study and years of study could have different perceptions of quality, therefore, those categories were selected for analysis to understand the quality perceptions from the student perspectives. The selection of these categories also helped to address the research questions (particularly RQ1 and RQ2). To describe the process of analysing quantitative data, as guided by Connolly (2007), the non-parametric statistical tests were used for the research, as described in Table 3-10.

Table 3-10: Guide for selecting the appropriate test (adopted from Connolly 2007)

Conditions	**Categories**	**Appropriate statistic test**
Comparing 2 categories	Male and Female	Mann Whitney U Test
Comparting 2 categories	BA in Business Management BA in Banking and Finance	Mann Whitney U Test
Comparing 3 or over categories	Student year of study (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4)	Kruskal – Wallis Test

For selecting the appropriate statistical test for Likert-scales data, the Mann Whitney U test (comparing 2 categories) and Kruskal-Wallis test (comparing 3 or more categories) were selected for this study.

Mann-Whitney test

The Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare two independent samples of ordinal data. In this research, it was used for the two independent samples of male/female students in the programme as well as the two groups of students from two different courses of study. Whereas a t test (in the parametric test) is a test of population means, the Mann-Whitney test is commonly regarded as a test of population medians. It relies on scores being ranked from lowest to highest of the data in the two groups. The group with the lowest mean rank is the group with the greatest number of lower scores in it. Similarly, the group with the highest mean rank should have the greater number of high scores within it. In the discussion of the two group mean comparison, any difference above 0.5 is considered as an indication of a significant difference between the responses of the two groups. This is because a difference of 0.5 indicates that the group response falls into a different Likert scale category. *Mann-Whitney U* values indicated the possible difference between the two groups; U = 0 would mean that no sample group was ranked higher than other. As the two samples became more alike, the scores began to intermix, U became larger. If the p value is below .05, it can be concluded that there is a statistically difference between the two samples. By comparing the mean ranks, the direction of difference could be determined. This statistic also allowed the weighting of each observed difference and facilitated the appropriate focused discussion of the findings. In case of having difference, the effect size (r) is also recommended to report accordingly. Clark-Carter (2009) recommends to calculate the effect size as the formula below:

$$r = \frac{z}{\sqrt{N}}$$

Cohen (1988) suggested that r = 0.1 could be considered small effect, r = 0.3 could be considered medium effect, and r = 0.5 could be considered large.

Kruskal-Wallis test

The Kruskal-Wallis is used to compare three or more independent samples of ordinal data. In this research, it was used for the independent samples for respondents from different years of study (year 1, year 2, year 3 and year 4 groups). This was used to determine if there were any significant differences between the four groups. P value is looked at where the probability of the groups sharing the same value was less than 5 per cent and if this happens, it is considered an indication of significant difference or lack of congruence ($p<.05$). Using the Kruskal-Wallis test helped to reject the hypothesis that the samples were identical; however, it could not be stated how they differed. Therefore, in case of having significant differences, the results were further analysed by accessing the frequency distribution of the variables per group of respondents, by looking at the percentages of respondents who rated each statement according to a five-point Likert scale. The combination of this and the mean ranks and median values helped determine the degree of differences.

3.10 Validity and reliability

In order to assess the validity and reliability for this research on the research findings, it is important to answer two basic questions pertaining to the collected data, as suggested by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998). The first one was “Am I truly measuring/recording what I intend to measure/record rather than something else?” – the question of measurement validity; and the second question, which concerns measurement reliability, was, “Assuming that I am measuring/recording what is intended, is my measurement/recording without error?”. Accordingly, my consideration for validity in this study referred to the basic trustworthiness of the whole research process: the instruments, the data collected and ultimately the findings (Bernard 2012).

It is worth noting that there is a different approach to validity and reliability when viewed within the context of qualitative and quantitative research. The approach for assessing validity and reliability is different; however, the principles of reliability and validity remain equally important for both qualitative and quantitative research (Lampard and Pole 2015). For this study, reliability and validity of the qualitative data is firmly based on the process of getting to know the data, on engaging in thorough analysis of the data, as explained in the previous part.

- ***Assessing validity and reliability from qualitative data***

From the qualitative research approach, it was suggested to use the terms such as "trustworthiness", "rigorousness", or "quality" of the data to address the validity (Guba & Lincoln 1994, Miles & Huberman 1994, Creswell 2003). It was important that qualitative research and data analysis were carried out in a thorough and transparent manner. Reliability from the qualitative data in this study was seen as reflecting the use of appropriate procedures for ensuring quality and consistency in data interpretations (Guba 1981). That approach offered a means of establishing confidence in the research findings by ensuring that the data came first and that any claims for the research could be traced back directly to the data. Guba and Lincoln (1994) conceptualised a number of suggested indicators of trustworthiness, which could be used to evaluate the rigor of qualitative research in this study, which were *‘credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability”*.

Since *credibility* deals with the problem of reality which is being interpreted differently by different individuals and is parallel to the concept of internal validity (Guba & Lincoln 1994), credibility in this study was facilitated by comparing data from three primary sources – students, staff members from both home and host country of the transnational programme and also from the secondary source – and sources of documents such as partnership agreements, annual reports, and university websites as suggested through the interview data. In other words, credibility in this study was also achieved through the respondents as well as methodological triangulation. The subjectivity of respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives together contributed to a degree of bias so it was necessary to minimise the level of bias in interviews in the way the interview questions were formed in the study. As explained in the previous part, the structured interview guide was created with the same format and sequence of words and questions for each respondent. The interview data helped to build the various constructs in the questionnaire and provide a balance between the breadth and depth of the relevant issues.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), *transferability* is similar to external validity and *dependability* is analogous to reliability and it should be considered whether the procedures and techniques used in the enquiry process are consistent. This was achieved in this study by the compatibility between the research questions and the research design of the study. For example, this reflected the procedures and techniques used dependently in both the qualitative and quantitative approaches with students or the in-depth interview processes with the staff. Transferability also referred to the ability to transfer the findings from this study to other similar cases. Although this study did not intend for generalisation as representative of the entire Vietnamese transnational education context, it was expected that the findings would be relevant to other institutions which were dealing with transnational programmes. Moreover, the findings from this study also provided useful insights into transnational programmes' operation and delivery that would be useful for the reference of the foreign partner's institutions.

Confirmability refers to whether the interpretation of the data is logical and unprejudiced. Confirmability in this study was achieved by interweaving quotes by respondents within each stakeholder group and differentiating the conclusions that were drawn from the actual findings. Confirmability was also achieved by careful consideration to provide a clear and accurate description of the context. An important reason for including quotations was transparency, so that the reader could make judgments as to the accuracy of the analysis and interpretation from being able to see the direct supporting evidence.

- ***Assessing validity and reliability from quantitative data***

From the quantitative approach, reliability measures the extent to which data collected is accurate and real while validity, on the other hand, measures the extent to which the research really measures what it says it is (Punch 2013). In this research, validity and reliability for the quantitative data were ensured through questionnaire design and data validity testing. The questionnaire was designed and piloted before being distributed so that the clarity and consistency and the questions were clear and conveyed the same meaning to all respondents. The questionnaire dealt with the concept of quality and captured the relevant dimensions and complexity, which were developed after the results of the exploration in the first phase. Therefore, content validity was enhanced by further investigating the preliminary concepts that were initially identified from the qualitative exploration. The sample size of the whole population of students in the programme also affected the validity of the statistical conclusion of the findings by influencing the margin of error and the power of statistic tests to detect effects (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998). To test the validity and reliability of the quantitative data, Cronbach's Alpha was used as a measure of internal consistency, as shown in Table 3-11.

Table 3-11: Internal consistency of scales

Dimension/ Scale	**Cronbach's alpha**
Course provision	*0.887*
Teaching and quality of teachers	*0.991*
Assessment and student performance	*0.870*
Interaction and communication	*0.861*
Learning environment	*0.883*
Student support	*0.909*

As the Table shows, the internal consistency of the quality dimensions was assessed and found to be reliable since Cronbach's alpha of each dimension was ranging from 0.861 to 0.991. The internal consistency of the measurement scales within the 84 items of the questionnaire was 0.978. Nunnally (1978) suggests that reliability coefficients of 0.7 or more are considered good. This means that it confirmed the reliability of the instrument.

The reasonably high respondent rate of the questionnaire also reflected the validity of the questionnaire result. The reliability of the questionnaire was ensured because it was anonymous and therefore encouraged greater honesty.

- ***Triangulation of combining qualitative and quantitative data***

The use of the multiple-method design brings triangulation to the research (Briggs A, Coleman M and Morrison M 2012). The combination of both qualitative and quantitative data meant a significant contribution in understanding the perceptions of students and taking into consideration multiple perspectives, and also avoiding bias (Olsen 2004). An example of the triangulation procedure is described in Figure 3-6 below.

Figure 3-6: Example of triangulation procedure

For the purpose of complementarity, the use of both quantitative and qualitative data helped to elaborate, deepen and enhance the interpretations and also benefit from the complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses of each approach (Punch 2013). The major benefit was that, the weakness of interviews where the sample size was small was compensated for by the strengths of the survey, where the issues were accessed in a large population (Sekaran 2003). For the purpose of development, the sequentially phased 'qualitative-quantitative' approach created the development since the results in the interviews in the first phase helped to facilitate the design of the quantitative survey in the second phase. Therefore, the multiple-method design helped to address some of the inherent tensions and allowed greater flexibility than using a single method to study the interest of the stakeholders.

It is worth noting that the triangulation was not only related to data triangulation (exploratory interviews, questionnaire and in-depth interviews) but also respondents (different groups of stakeholders). It offered deeper insight into the relationship between the stakeholder perceptions and the concept of quality itself as the issues under the investigation of the study (Patton 2005).

3.11 Ethical consideration

Ethical issues were of importance since the nature of social and educational research in general investigates people's lives and privacy makes these areas highly sensitive (Baker 1999). At the basic level, in order for a research study to be ethical, the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of participants was the primary consideration (Pahl 2004).

As this study employed interviews, which meant gaining access to the motives, meanings, actions and reactions of people in the context of their experience in the partnership programme, the right of the participants had been protected (Fehring 2002). In this sense, the study was conducted in a way that would avoid either potential harm or physical risks to anyone involved. The process of getting consent involved the participants having a clear idea about what they were consenting to and when their involvement began and ended. Participants to the interviews were recruited voluntarily and the information letter and consent form were sent to each participant for their understanding and agreement to participate. They were also told that they were free to withdraw from the interview at any time and that the information obtained would be confidential and anonymous. Therefore, the names of all interviewees, respondents and institutions that took part in this study have been kept completely confidential. Working under this principle, all sampled respondents agreed to participate in the interview, except for one teaching staff member (a foreign lecturer). After being given the consent form and the basic information related to this research, that lecturer refused to be interviewed because he said that the topic related to quality which is “a sensitive topic” – in his perception. Since I was working on a voluntary basis, his refusal was accepted. As for the rest of the participants, including students, administrative staff, teaching and management staff, they were willing to be involved in the interviews. During the one hour interview section, they were open to share their experiences and opinions about the programme, its quality and the areas for programme improvement.

Since ethical considerations continued throughout the research process; therefore, considerations in particular were crucial when data was being collected (Fogelman 2002). According to Broom (2006), although the most cited ethical concerns are confidentiality and informed consent, the way the researcher interacts with participants and collects data are also important in terms of doing ethical research. The study was done to be ethically responsible to ensure that the methods and instruments are as unobtrusive and inoffensive as possible. The interviews were conducted with the notice of the responsibility not to over-direct the respondents. This indicated the way of collecting data so as not to impose predetermined issues onto the interviewee, but rather, work through the participant’s experiences. Since the interview data was collected in this way, the data remained true to the experience of the participants. In the survey, as the participants were collected in class, it could seem inconvenient interrupting the class with the survey; therefore, this was done only after getting the class teachers’ consent at an earlier stage. The purpose of the survey and information about the research were provided to students and the students told they had the right not to participate, withdraw at any time, or not answer any questions they might find intimidating.

As suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1994), confidentiality and anonymity resulting from personal interaction between the researcher and researched need to be safeguarded. This means it was also essential to be aware of the ethical responsibility of reporting the findings of the study as accurately and truthfully as possible and that the techniques proposed were appropriate. In this study, all participants were anonymous, in both interviews and questionnaires and therefore they could not be identified in any reports or publications. The research also does not include any form of fabrication of data or findings or any conscious bias either in the data collection or the interpretation processes (Clough 2004). To protect the participants' anonymity, the researcher used a number-based system for the informants.

This study was conducted strictly following the regulations of ethical and safety procedures of the University of Leeds. Data collected from the participants was treated in a way that protected their confidentiality and the anonymity of the informants. The data was stored in a safe place in accordance with the University of Leeds regulations. Furthermore, all ethical issues for the study were addressed fully, following the regulations and policy of the University of Leeds, in which the approval for conducting the research was granted by the University committee (see Appendix 1). The study also followed all the necessary standards of research such as BERA (British Educational Research Association), SRHE (Society for Research into Higher Education) to ensure the integrity and honesty of the study to be undertaken.

3.12 Summary

The chapter has provided significant information related to the research methodology and issues related to validity and reliability as well as ethical considerations for the study. The study was conducted for the purpose of providing an exploration into quality in the transnational higher education programme in Vietnam from the different stakeholder perspectives, within the context of the partnership programme between a Vietnamese university and its partner institutions in the UK. An interpretive paradigm was selected in order to produce the comprehensive data that reflected the stakeholders' experiences, perceptions and opinions on the quality of the transnational programme. Especially, the embedded-units of the sample programme design and the combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data had served in broadening the scope of offering a better picture of quality within the chosen transnational programme.

The chapter also presented the way the sampling was chosen and respondents were selected. As this study sought to understand how the quality of the transnational programme was perceived by different stakeholder groups, from both programme receivers and programme providers, the purposeful sampling method was chosen since it offered the best way of exploring the perceptions and opinions from the experienced people involved in the programme. The process of selecting different groups of respondents and the process to access data in exploratory interviews, the survey and the in-depth interviews were discussed clearly in the chapter.

The method of analysing the qualitative and quantitative data of the study was discussed fully through a rigorous process of analysis. The method of data analysis employed was believed to produce the valuable required data for presenting what the stakeholders perceived the quality of the programme, which factors could enable or hinder the quality and also addressing the way to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme delivery. Validity and reliability of the interview and survey data were discussed aligning with the ethical considerations for the research.

Chapter 4 : FINDINGS FROM THE STUDENT INTERVIEWS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the exploratory interviews of students' perceptions of the quality of their learning experiences in the transnational programme. The first section of the chapter is about understanding why students chose transnational higher education. Although this is a brief section, it is essential because the reasons behind their motivation to study in this programme will be informing their perceptions of the quality of the transnational Vietnam-UK partnership programme.

The second section which is the main part of the chapter focuses on the analysis of the course-related issues in relation to quality of the programme. Five key themes emerged from the data and based upon the conceptual framework of the study are presented as sub-heading of this section. The next section is the key implications based on both research findings and related literature which are presented to provide an insight into the student perspective on the factors contributing to perceptions of quality of their education. These key findings were facilitated for designing a questionnaire for the student survey at the next stage.

4.2 Student motivations for transnational education

As the review of the literature has indicated, the world has become a global marketplace in which people, no matter where they live, desire the same products and lifestyles. As a result of this convergence of employment needs and technological advancement in the speed of information exchange, students now have greater freedom of choice in the pursuit of higher education. The research findings are consistent with the insight of the literature, indicate that the dominant motivations for choosing transnational education which influenced their views on quality are the factors that pull them to the programme. These include the UK qualification, the possibility of developing practical and relevant skills for employment, the reputations of both the awarding and providing programmes and the development of English language competency.

Upon further investigation into these ‘pull’ factors, which were dominant in the discussion of career opportunities and student employability, the data suggests that these included the prestigious UK degree and the value of the UK degree as relevant to its worldwide recognition. Giving an explanation for the prestige of the qualification, students linked it to the value of having a recognised international qualification which was believed to lead to better future jobs and careers. The following comments from the students illustrated that,

> *The programme is value for money because without leaving my country I still could gain an international qualification which is a valuable degree. The UK is on top of the world for higher education, having a UK degree is a kind of esteem for me, especially with the business major that I am following. (Student 8, top-up in the UK)*

And,

> *Quality of transnational higher education means the quality of the internationalisation. It is seen as not only a great international qualification and global knowledge gained but also the skills needed for me to have a good job in the globalised economy. (Student 6, year 3, Business Management)*

Final year students added to the point by stating that “the international degree meant the strong foundation for my future career” (Student 8) and “with this international qualification, my future would be very bright” (Student 7). The majority of participants felt that transnational programme could provide more opportunities for their future career compared with the equivalent local ones. Three of them mentioned that they wanted access to the UK international higher education, which was expected to be better in terms of educational services compared with the local Vietnamese higher education.

Most of participants believed that their English language competence could be improved when they studied on the international programme. This indicates that the potential for developing English language skills was seen by many students as a subsidiary rationale for their selection of the UK transnational programme, as shared by a third year student:

> *I chose the programme because I would like to have an international qualification and studying in English. It is a competitive advantage in terms of the English language and international knowledge rather than the other local degree. (Student 3, Banking and Finance)*

Most participants also indicated that their choice was influenced by the status of the institutions, both the delivering and awarding institutions, and that factor pulled them to choose this specific transnational programme. Two of the respondents (one from Banking and Finance and one from the Business Management course) mentioned the words “leading university” when they referred to the university that delivered the programme. These students admitted that the reputation in providing the international programme influenced their choice.

Half of the respondents shared their interests in the model of cooperation and the delivery in the transnational programme, in which they could study three years in the joint programme in Vietnam and then transfer the final year to the UK – to the partner university. This was evident from the statement from the top-up students involved in the interviews, that this transnational programme model was really useful for them, enabling them to be better prepared for studying overseas and to get familiar with the UK education system. The following statement from one of the top-up Business and Management students stated the point:

> *Studying at the international programme would help me to achieve the change to go to abroad in a better way. I could study here in Vietnam for the first three years and have the final year in the UK. Having experience in the transnational programme in Vietnam helped me to get involved easily with the top-up programme in the UK. (Student 8, top-up, year 4)*

Findings also indicate that students were influenced to enter the transnational programme due to the ’push’ factors. The push situation was seen when students could not enter the local equivalence programme so they had to choose the international programme. From this perspective, students perceived the international programme as an alternative for them to gain access to higher education. One half of the students involved in the interviews were the ones who could not pass the national entrance exam for the university in Vietnam and they shared that this situation pushed them to choose this kind of programme, since the programme provided an opportunity for them to pursue higher education, rather than just waiting for another year to re-sit the national entrance exam for the local programme. The following statement was shared by one of the students who failed to enter the local programme:

> *I could not pass the national entrance exam to get into the local university so I decided to choose this programme. This means the international programme offered an opportunity for me to gain access to university. At the point of deciding to study on the international programme, I just thought that it was good not to wait one more year to re-sit for the local programme. After joining the programme, I found that my decision to study here was smart and I also recommended it for my friends and relatives. (Student 3, Banking and Finance, year 3)*

It was understood that international education might be chosen as the other alternative when the national higher education was not possible for participants. However, the other three students from the interviews shared that although they had passed the national entrance exam and got places at the various universities with the local higher education programme, they still wanted the international programme since it offered an international degree which they considered better for their personal and professional development. It could be assumed that the international joint programme offered more opportunities for students who wanted to pursue higher education for their employability. Those motives may be due to the impact of globalisation, whereby people can access and find it easier to study and work worldwide. Globalisation encourages the flows of knowledge, skills and job opportunities (Altbach 2004).

4.3 Student perceptions of the quality in the course delivery

Quality is a complex concept and needs to be considered in context and in relation to the perceptions of the purposes of higher education (Harvey and Williams 2010). Students' perceptions of quality were reflected in their experience of quality-related issues occurring at the course level. Five main dimensions were discussed by students as the key indicators for perceived quality in the course delivery. These include the course curriculum, teaching and learning, interaction and communication, learning environment and student support.

4.3.1 Course curriculum

The findings indicate that the most positive aspect of the course provision was seen as the international aspect of the curriculum and the practical knowledge and skills that all together benefit their future career. In line with that, students also considered undertaking a curriculum adapted to the local context to make the course content more relevant to their needs.

Signalling the student knowledge that the programme was based on the UK curriculum, “international standard” was mentioned as a key word for the programme curriculum. Students saw the course curriculum in relation to international perspectives of knowledge and skills and attitudes through the inclusion of international content. Looking into the specific details of the international aspect of the curriculum, evidence shows that the UK curriculum covered up-to-date topics and enhanced international content (Student 7, Business Management), and the course content covered international issues that equipped students with international views related to subject areas (Student 8, Business Management). These were considered as the important inputs that determined the quality of the course as well as the significant factor of the academic standard. The following statements illustrated such perceptions:

> *My course content covered the in-depth knowledge of fundamental topics and equipped us with global views in Business and Management. (Student 7, top-up)*

> *I felt good about the course because the UK-based content of the course was relevant to the programme with the local adaptation and the content that prepared us for workplace would be a benefit for us. (Student 8, top-up)*

Most of interviewees (Students 2, 3 and 4) emphasised that the curriculum focused on the important and fundamental topics related to the course subjects and helped students to have specific learning outcomes together with the suitable skills required for their future career, as illustrated by a third year student:

> *I felt satisfaction about the programme because it not only provides fundamental knowledge but also covers skills needed for my future work. Furthermore, it is also in relation to the competency of English as the language of teaching and learning. (Student 4, year 3, Banking and Finance)*

A Business Management student from year 4 (Student 5) explained that the international programme provided a source of knowledge that would help empower and develop his capabilities. Furthermore, he added that participating in activities in class or acting in role-playing activities had relatively strong professional identities for them. These were described as positive reflections and outcomes from transnational higher education. The reflections were the positive changes that had taken place in students when they become students in the international programme. One of the final year students shared,

> *I was a bit shy and lacking confidence about my English and communication skills when I first joined the programme. However, I changed a lot day by day, under the international and English-learning environment and making contact with foreign teachers every day, my English was getting better. I felt very confident when chatting with foreigners now and making presentations in front of groups of people. (Student 8, top-up)*

The findings indicate that students believed in the quality of the UK curriculum and Western education approach, which were more practical and focused on transferrable skills compared with the equivalent local programmes, which enabled them greater employability opportunities. This is consistent with Bennett, Dunne and Carre (1999) who suggest that disciplinary content knowledge, disciplinary skills and workplace awareness are the important elements of the course provision in higher education that ensure a graduate achieves an optimum level of employability. A business student shared that “the advantage of the programme is the practical knowledge provided and the skills needed for us for our future careers” (Student 5) and “with those practical knowledge and relevant skills for the workplace, it is seen as a passport for our future” (Student 4). It seems that the dominant view of the students was that the course offered more practical knowledge and relevant skills for their future careers. As explained by other Business and Management students (Students 2, 6 and 9), the course paid more attention to practical knowledge and made students more confident in applying all they had learned in the real business. Sharing similar views, Banking and Finance students (Students 1 and 4) made a comparison between the international programme and the domestic programme regarding the issue of the way they receive knowledge and the way they apply knowledge to practice. Most students believed that practical knowledge helped them acquire the specific techniques and a deeper understanding of a concept that become the tools of their future job, as stated by a final year student:

> *I got a part-time job and I found that the practical knowledge that I have been equipped with here was a competitive advantage at work compared with other students at other local programmes. Soft skills like presentation skills, communication skills and creative thinking are the most valuable skills that I have in the international programme and help me a lot at work. (Student 2, Banking and Finance)*

As explained by the above student, he felt he enjoyed more advantages compared to his friends at the local programme when he had a part time job and he could apply what he learnt from the course to the job he was doing. It again indicates that quality from the student perspective meant the significant focus on skills that the course provided for them in relation to their employability. As stated above, soft skills like communication, creative thinking and presentation skills were transferrable while studying in the programme and students perceived them as valuable skills for them for their future careers. The findings indicate a set of key skills that were integrated into the curriculum such as organisational skills, project management skills, decision-making, creativity and problem-solving and adaptability, which students considered created significant value for their future careers. A final year student shared,

> *At first when joining the international programme I thought that quality is the outcome of the education programme. I now personally care more about the transferable skills that I gained from the programme. It's about all the opportunities that the*

> *programme provides for students. These are valuable tools for students' careers. (Student 5, Business Management)*

Chappie and Tolley (2000) argue that the experience of embedding key skills into the existing curricula leads to other benefits, in that it facilitates a shift towards a more student-centred view of learning, with the students required to engage more deeply with the content of their courses. The findings appear to show that students believed in the opportunities that helped to gain practical knowledge and to gain skills that helped them in their future careers.

The findings indicate the notion of curriculum adaptation to address the student needs. Students believed that adapting the curriculum to tailor their needs for understanding both international aspects and local application of the knowledge would enhance their learning experience. This seems consistent with the insight from the research by Nabi and Bagley (1998), who suggest that curriculum has an important impact on encouraging the development of subject and practical knowledge, the development of core skills and the choice of student learning in the educational programme. The following statement illustrated the student's views on the curriculum:

> *I think the most important characteristic of international education is the focus of the curriculum that was on building a strong fundamental knowledge of subject areas and also the emphasis on developing flexibility and adaptation and application to the local context. (Student 5, Business Management)*

Some students shared that the content of the course was too UK-centric (Students 4, 7 and 9). This was evident from the claim that "we study about the UK taxation system but not the relevant Vietnamese information; therefore, it's quite difficult to apply to the Vietnamese context" (Student 7). A final year student (Student 4) added that too much subject matter, especially advanced theoretical concepts of Western education, would result in them not really understanding them properly. The evidence shows students on both the Business and Management and Banking and Finance courses had the same views on the problem of the course being too UK-centric. A Business and Management student shared, *Some specification terms hardly translated to Vietnamese so we feel it was very difficult to understand the concepts clearly and deeply. (Student 9, top-up, Business Management)*

The research evidence also suggests a need for provision support to enhance the student learning experience by providing additional courses. Such support helped them engage more with the UK curriculum and enhance their learning opportunities, as one of the following statements demonstrates:

One of the challenges that we found is, for example, about the module on the banking system, it's all about the UK banking and financial systems and the operation of the big banks, whereas, in Vietnam the system is different and most of the banks are small scale… (Student 4, Banking and Finance)

Findings show that most of the students are aware of undertaking preparatory courses to augment the curricula in Vietnam, to improve study skills, and to develop further study and learning skills associated with the UK education system. Having supplementary courses and clear programme structure helped them to decide the pathway, core and compulsory modules and the optional specialised pathway modules. They were happy with the clear induction of these modules during the module registration period which helped them select the appropriate subjects.

4.3.2 Teaching and learning

Students tended to emphasise the process of teaching and learning to define the quality of the programme and also focused on the role of the lecturers in stimulating student interest in the subject and providing them with adequate knowledge and skills. Getting into details of the perceptions from students on these issues, the following sub-themes are presented to give clearer views:

4.3.2.1 The role of lecturers and their teaching practices

Students identified their lecturers as the main actors in influencing their learning experiences. Teacher qualities were seen in relation to teacher attitudes and teaching pedagogy to address student needs for overcoming the cultural differences in the transnational setting. The student perceptions of the teacher qualities agree with Lamm (2000), who portrays two major prototypes for ideal teachers deriving from educational ideologies that lecturers are acculturated – the providers of culture – and the disciplinary expertise – the ones who transmit knowledge of their subject.

The indicators of quality for lecturers identified by students were the subject knowledge of lecturers, the practical experience of lecturers and the helpfulness of lecturers in class. The findings show that students evaluated the role of the lecturers as enthusiastic teachers and facilitators who displayed sufficient empathy with students' learning needs. These were evident from the views of the Business and Management students (Students 5, 6 and 9) who showed their appreciation for the lecturers' enthusiasm, that the teacher effectively showed effort in helping students to understand the course content. Those students also perceived that lecturers in the programme had impressive and strong communication skills and understood students' needs in order to positively influence students' attitude and interest in a subject of teaching and learning. This suggests that the level of engagement and enthusiasm a lecturer shows toward their subject while teaching could inspire and motivate students and could influence students' perceptions of the quality of the course. Lecturers with experience in teaching in the international programme was perceived as an advantage by students. A Business student (Student 9, year 4, top-up) explained that if lecturers had more experience in both practical knowledge and in teaching in the international programme, they would understand students more and communicate well with students and they would definitely find the best way to teach and encourage students in this kind of collaborative programme. It was noticed from the student explanation that the approach of teaching and learning in the transnational education programme was new, that both students and staff in the programme had to change their ways of thinking and working where there were differences compared with the traditional one that they were familiar with.

The findings indicate the need to involve both foreign and local teaching staff since having both local and foreign teachers ensured the quality of the course delivery in responding to student needs. The evidence shows that students broadly were aware of the benefit of having local and foreign teachers in delivering lectures and they appreciated the lecturers work in pairs to deliver the programme. They defined the foreign teachers in the programme as “professional”, whereas “good qualification and enthusiasm” were used to define local lecturers. Most respondents admitted that at the beginning they expected to have as many foreign lecturers as possible to ensure the quality of the course delivery; however, their perception changed when they get into the course. A final year student explained:

> *I changed my mind since I have been taught by very well qualified Vietnamese lecturers in several subjects like Business Law or Business Strategy and I am very satisfied with them, even I thought that a foreign lecturer could not be better than that. (Student 5, Business Management)*

And also a statement from a third year student,

> *I think that having foreign lecturers in the programme is very important because it represents the international aspect of the programme. I feel that I am in the international programme when being taught by foreign lecturers. Of course we also need local lecturers since they understand and support us more… (Student 6, year 3, Business Management)*

The above evidence suggests the importance of having a combination of both foreign and local teaching staff in delivery of the lectures. However, the data also indicates a different perception of the expectations between foreign lecturers and students. The evidence shows that students saw foreign lecturers expected them to be active in learning and participative in class and to be responsible for independent learning while in fact students seemed to place the responsibility for understanding of the subject on the lecturers. Students expected that foreign lecturers understood this and helped students to overcome the differences in learning styles. Their perceptions were that if the foreign lecturers understood the situation, they could know how to motivate students and guide them in their learning.

The findings indicate the important role of lecturers in supporting activities for developing student's learning experience in the programme. Most students perceived that teaching staff were able to make complex concepts accessible and easier to understand. Students also perceived that they preferred lecturers to use the relevant examples and applications when teaching. The evidence shows that most students felt the importance of being engaged with critical thinking through real scenarios and a problem-solving approach which allowed the development of their identification and interpretation. They cited that work related-based assignments helped them to develop analytical skills. One point raised by most of the students was the recognition of the importance of teaching style which was focused on student interaction and development compared to the traditional teaching approach, in which they were familiar with the spoon-feeding system. The evidence shows that final year students seemed to realise clearly that lecturers were very keen on providing practical knowledge that was relevant to the local context. The followings statements illustrated their views on this issue:

> *Teaching methods and assessment methods in transnational education programme encouraged my critical thinking through doing real scenario and work-based assignments. (Student 5, year 4, Business Management)*

And another year 4 student said,

> *We have improved the presentation skills through the workshop every week and the critical thinking skills by the way lecturers engaged with us in class. (Student 2, year 4, Banking and Finance)*

Students also reported that it was very important for lecturers to add more practical knowledge through examples of the Vietnamese situation into the lectures, which helped them to understand more about not only the international environment but also Vietnamese practice. They reported that the new teaching and learning strategies required them to adapt to promote interactive and applied learning. The evidence shows that students realised the importance of having case studies and group work. Students generally realised the role of student presentations and class discussions, which helped them to engage more with the content. They expressed satisfaction with the more interactive teaching methods used by lecturers as they felt that it improved their overall understanding of the topic. Students, especially on the Business and Management course, seemed to emphasise the importance of having role-play and workshops guided by lecturers, which made the class more interesting and motivating. These could help them to adapt to a new learning approach as stated by most of the final year students.

The other key feature that most of students perceived as a significant contribution to the quality of their learning was the arrangement of tutorial classes delivered by Vietnamese teachers who used both English and Vietnamese languages in class. The combination of lecture and tutorial was seen as a supplemental and effective method of delivering in transnational education, as admitted by both Business and Management and Banking and Finance students in the interviews. In particular, students broadly appreciated the role of Vietnamese tutors in the programme, as per one statement from a third year student:

> *The support from the tutor is very important and useful for us. The role of tutors was not only transferring knowledge and skills but also to help us to transfer the theory into practice and apply these knowledge and skills in the tutorial sessions and workshop. (Student 3, Banking and Finance)*

It is worth noticing that there was a teaching team combining a lecturer (usually foreigner) and a tutor (Vietnamese) for each module in a separate lecture and tutorial arrangement. Although lectures and tutorials were traditional methods of teaching and commonly used in Western countries, here the tutorial arrangements were considered new methods of teaching and learning for the system in Vietnam. The data reveals that tutorials were supporting and facilitating students' learning as well as mentoring and helping students' assessments. Providing tutorial sessions has a positive impact on students in both emotional and academic aspects. Firstly, tutorials provided emotional support since most students have more human contact when attending tutorials and the encouragement gained through the contact motivated them to improve their performance. Secondly, tutorials give academic support by clarifying concepts that help students to understand clearly about the topic and consolidate what they have learned.

Evidence from the data reveals the need for better cooperation between lecturers and tutors, although most of students were satisfied with having both. Students believed that they gained a better and more accurate understanding of the subject matter from the different perspectives. However, it seems that different teaching styles, personalities, and levels of familiarity with each other and of teaching experience were the issues that affected the quality of the collaborations. This indicates the expectation from students for better connections between lectures and tutorials, especially the collaboration of the staff in providing revisions and assessment guidance. As explained by a final year student from the Business Management course, the teaching in tandem of a lecturer and tutor could lead to confusion if there were different perspectives.

4.3.2.2 Assessment and approaches to student learning

From student' views, the combination of different methods of assessment brought benefits for student development in learning on the international programme. The data shows that there were different assessment methods that students experienced in the programme, including the assignment-based and exam-based assessments. It was a bit different from the traditional method of assessing a student's knowledge of the subject in Vietnamese education system, which was by means of formal examination taken at the end of the course.

It seems that most students realised the essential value of being assessed by different methods: namely, assignment and examination. This is also clearly reflected in the approaches to learning and the ways in which these different types of assessment seem to encourage learning opportunities. The evidence shows that most students believed in examinations which forced them to study hard and pay attention to detail. Students felt that examinations allowed teachers to assess their ability accurately, whereas, an assignment, especially the essay type of assessment, required a deeper approach to learning. Students stated that group assignment encouraged team-working skills and skills in collecting and analysing information. When talking about the assessment methods used in their particular course, two students of Business and Management (Students 5 and 8) shared that they were pleased with the way the modules were assessed, by taking the combination of individual assignments and examinations, with some modules assessed by group work and a presentation at the end of the course. Most students from Business and Management were excited by the design of the weekly workshop, weekly assessment by presentation and e-portfolio development of particular Management modules, as stated by one final year student:

> *We like the way to be assessed in the module "Personal and professional development". The weekly workshop and presentation in group every week made us work hard and improved a lot of skills. We feel motivated and we achieved. (Student 5, Business Management)*

The above statement suggests that assessment has an important influence on student learning, as evident from the opinion that "we feel motivated and we achieved". The findings indicate that a good way to stimulate student learning is by having a combination of different methods of assessment due to the effects of assessments on the process of learning. Having different methods of assessments is believed to be fair for different learning styles and preferences of students. This is evident from a claim from a Banking and Finance student (Student 4) who claimed that they had a module in this semester with 100% exam assessment and it made them "scared". He shared:

> *I think having 50% assignment & 50% examination is fair for students, or even 30-70% respectively is fine. Since some students are good at doing assignment, some good at exams, so the combination of both creates fairness for everyone. The presentation assessment at the end of the module would be a good choice since the module will be assessed from different aspects and ways. If there's only one exam at the end, it will make it difficult and risky for us to achieve good result for the module. (Student 4, Banking and Finance)*

The findings also indicate that improving and enhancing student critical-thinking skills are essential. Signalling from the student experience that the focus of the assessment is on critical reflection of the knowledge learnt, students realised the correlation between critical thinking and assessment performance. This was evident from the claim that they were lacking displays of critical argument in their assessment. For example, some Business and Management students (Students 5, 7 and 8) stated that it made it difficult for them to achieve standards by showing their understanding of the knowledge, which therefore caused low performance in assessments. A Banking and Finance student (Student 2) shared that he thought that good marks for work would be obtained by repeating what they had been taught in class or read in books. This seems to be consistent with the research from Tempelaar (2006), who investigated the role of critical thinking in business education programmes and found a positive correlation between critical thinking (identified as a subset of metacognition skills) and course performance. It is presumed that those things were affected by the cultural differences in approaches to learning. Students were familiar with the traditional teaching and assessment methods used in the Vietnamese system in which those skills and approaches to learning were not emphasised. This indicates that it is essential that students adjust their learning style and approach to learning in the transnational setting as well as that supported activities are needed from the programme to tailor these difficulties for students. Several studies generally suggest that teaching staff have a vital role in developing critical skills by offering guidance about what is required, setting structured, explicit goals, facilitating, coaching and designing customised learning experiences, and providing feedback for improvement (Srikanthan & Dalrymple 2003, 2007).

Cultural difference was an influence when students found themselves not only getting low marks for not being creative in their thinking but also being charged with cheating or plagiarism. Students started the international programme from a background where the assessment was mainly exam-based and which had now changed to assignment-based, which made it easier to exchange copies from other sources between students without proper referencing. Some did not realise that plagiarism was a form of cheating that students had to avoid seriously in the international programme. Plagiarism seems to be an increasing problem in Vietnamese higher education, often the result of a lack of awareness among students, when they consider the sharing of work to be merely co-operative and helpful, as cited by a final year student

(Student 5, Business Management). This indicates clear guidelines should be issued to students, in order to raise awareness of plagiarism and also avoiding cheating in the assessment. A third year student shared her view on this issue:

> *It is really very helpful if there were more orientation and guidance from the programme about referencing provided for students in order to avoid cheating. The awareness about this issue should be built from the first year when students engaged with study skills. (Student 6, year 3, Business Management)*

The above statement indicates the importance of supporting activities from the course provision in addressing the student needs and enhancing student learning opportunities.

4.3.3 Interaction and communication

The findings indicate the role of interaction and communication of students in class, which influenced the outcome of their learning in the transnational education programme. As McCroskey and Andersen (1976) suggest, interaction has long been considered the key to success in traditional classrooms. Students experiencing higher levels of interaction have been shown to have more positive attitudes (Hackman and Walker 1990) and higher levels of achievement (McCroskey and Andersen 1976) than those experiencing less interaction.

The findings indicate the role of lecturers and their techniques in facilitating the communication and interaction between students and lecturers. Several respondents shared the opinion that there was a positive relationship between the interaction and communication in class and the quality and quantity of their learning. Business and Management students (Students 6, 7 and 9) believed that the relationship between teachers and students was important and it would motivate students' learning in the way that lecturers took care of students' needs and always listened to and answered the questions that the students did not understand. By having interaction and communication, lecturers could find out the way to best support to students in order to improve learning. One of them said, *The lecturers here are very caring. I have good relations with the lecturers, I exchange emails with them and have discussions with them, even aside from the subjects they are teaching. (Student 9, top-up, Business Management)*

Adding to the point about the interaction between student and lecturer, a top-up student (Student 8) said that it was important for teachers to motivate the students to learn, to enhance and maintain the learner's interest, including self-direction and self-motivation. However, the findings also indicate the importance of addressing the participation of students in class to enhance the student interaction and motivation in learning. The evidence shows that, in response to the content of study, there was a low rate of participation by students in raising their voice in class to show their understanding of the topic, regardless of whether teachers motivated them. This was explained by a student (Student 2, Banking and Finance) who said that because English was not their first language, they met difficulty in immediately responding to the teacher’s questions. Another (Student 6, Business Management) claimed that it was because they were familiar with the just listening rather than communicating in class. This indicates the influence of cultural differences and that past-learning experiences and language difficulties have impacts on student participation. These suggest better support for student learning is crucial in order to enhance student learning opportunities.

The findings also indicate that the class-size was seen as a factor to motivate students’ engagement and involvement in learning. Since the size of the English class was 20 students per class, and 40-50 for the specialised class, most students perceived that this would increase the effectiveness in lecture time and avoid student chatting in class. Besides that, arranging a small number of students in a class would enable the teacher to have effective interactions with individual students. Business and Management students explained that they could easily get the help of their teacher when they misunderstood something. Teachers could know the strengths and the weaknesses of each student in a class with a small number of students. For most students, this was considered the best way to improve on students’ strengths and work on the weaknesses of each student, and therefore would increase the interactive learning in the international programme. Cheng, Lehman, and Reynolds (1991) point out that it is often too time-consuming to provide an occasion for every student to join the discussion; therefore, in practice, discussion effectively only includes a small number of students. This indicates that small-class size stimulates student learning experience. Most final year students shared that if the classes had a huge number of students, both lecturers and students could face some difficulties in teaching and receiving knowledge and therefore it would limit the interaction between the lecturer and student.

The findings also indicate the role of students – in learning together and working together - to facilitate communication and interaction in learning. This was evident from the views of most final year students who reported the importance of the interaction amongst themselves. Three students did mention the role of other students (one Business Management and two Banking and Finance students) as an important criterion for the quality of effective learning. They admitted that working in team and a supportive attitude and commitment from other students in the classroom and outside were key determinants of the quality of their overall learning experience. Student 5 (Business Management, year 4) expressed the importance of learning together and from each other by doing group work, course work, project and weekly workshop presentations in the international programme, as a result of which his learning experience was richer. This student also added that the attitude of the students, their maturity and discipline, were key factors that affected students' commitment to studies in the transnational programme. He noted that openness and commitment of students that had to share with each other and learn from each other were essential.

4.3.4 Learning environment

An effective learning environment is defined as the conditions that are created to improve the learning experience (Adams and Granić 2009). When they mentioned the learning environment, a majority of students perceived the quality of learning environment in relation to the availability of extra-curricular activities, the role of these activities in the students' university life and the supporting activities as well as the learning resources that the programme provided for them.

Extra-curricular activities were seen by students as a good way to provide an active learning environment where students could gain key skills and knowledge. This is evident from the students' belief in personal changes they have made. A top-up year student (Student 6) reported that her biggest change was her "level of confidence in communication" after joining several events. A Business and Management student added a point regarding social communication skills, when she took part in the extra-curricular activities and took the role of Mentor for the programme, stated that "as a Mentor I had a chance to help new students in many ways and it helped me to develop myself in terms of communication skills and organization skills. I felt involvement and engagement in the programme" (Student 5), and that "it gave me more of a real-life experience, it helped me recognize my strengths and weaknesses" (Student 5, Banking and Finance). Another final year student said,

> *My communication skills were enhanced through not only the course of study but also through activities offered by the programme. We grow up from joining organising activities with staff of the programme, from the planning to organizing and taking decisions to the activities. (Student 4, Banking and Finance)*

The above evidence shows that students had their choice to get involved in the clubs, organizing activities when joining with fellow class-mates and intakes. Student 9 emphasised that at the beginning when she visited the school at the open day, she was impressed by the activities featured in the programme, which was something different from the local programme that she had intended to enrol onto. Other students agreed that the international programme provided more extra-curricular activities for students than other local programmes. The extracts below illustrate their views:

> *In the programme, we could join in with the organisation of the activities throughout the whole year, starting from the beginning of the academic year with Orientation Week, My Smart Choice Gala, Boot Camp, Cool Summer, and Graduation Prom. (Students 5 and 9)*

> *What is significant and unique about this international programme was that it not only focused on the curricular but also extra-curricular activities. The programme made us explore and do many things. (Student 4, Banking and Finance)*

It seems that students defined a good learning environment as the environment that provides students with opportunities to establish, join and develop networks that are related to their study interests. The literature also shows that a good learning environment is defined as the environment that also has an active social and cultural life, where all students are engaged both as organisers and participants and that, therefore, can build new social networks including creating new friends and learning about new cultures (Guidry Lacina 2002, Krause 2006) . The findings illustrate that one of the significant strengths of the international programme seen by students was the opportunity to join and to organise extra-curricular activities. Having the opportunities to join activities and to develop networks and connections was found to have a positive impact on students' learning outcomes. The findings, however, indicate a difference in the views on participating in extra-curricular activities. While Business and Management students seemed to be more active in participating in extra-curricular activities in the programme, the Banking and Finance students found it difficult to arrange time for getting involved. Finding time to engage in sufficient extra-curricular activities was difficult for some students, although they found that extra-curricular activity was very helpful and could build social networks including creating new friends and learning about new things and skills.

The quality of the learning environment was viewed as the effort of the programme in providing an effective learning environment. Most students were satisfied with the facilities of the programme, as stated by a third year Business and Management student:

> *We are happy with the facilities in the programme, nice classroom, air-condition, well- decorated for the whole area of the third and fourth floors of the building where our programme is based. Compared with many other classrooms in the building where the local programme takes place, we are so different. We have a good learning environment here that we feel and engage with every day. (Student 6, Business and Management)*

Students viewed the programme as the provider of an effective infrastructure for learning. Most of the Banking and Finance students that responded (Students 1, 4 and 9) expressed that the programme had adequate learning materials and resources for them to do research, and that they did have access to the Internet and e-journals. They reported that they were given advice to buy the textbook on each subject from the UK institution and suggested to read further at the libraries (the school library and the university library). Business and Management students (Students 2, 5 and 6) pointed out that the library in their programme had books related to Business and Management which were inherited from a Master’s programme and they were satisfied with the access to these resources. The university library also had a large supply of books related to their programme specification; however, as a third year Business and Management student said she had never ever been to the university library. Asking more students for explanation for this issue in the interviews, most of them admitted that they did not feel there was a good learning environment at the university library; they even preferred to work at the coffee shop or in another public environment. The group of top-up students (Students 7, 8 and 9) made a big confession that in comparison with the learning materials such as textbooks and journals from the library in the institution they transferred to in the UK, the learning resources at the transnational programme in Vietnam were very limited. They also shared that they went to the library more often and used learning resources more efficiently. It can be seen that students had shared their satisfaction in terms of having good learning resources; the only concern was the effectiveness of students using those resources. This suggests the critical importance of consulting with the partner university in terms of providing more learning materials from the UK for their students as well as making the library as friendly a learning environment as possible.

In assessing the online system from the partner university, both Business Management and Banking and Finance students shared their positive views related to accessing resources, since all students had their accounts to log into the UK system with. Students said that the use of “Blackboard” and VLE via the UK awarding institution provided a solid base for their distance learning and the information technology teaching-learning process in the international programme. A third year student from Business and Management added that with wireless internet, the use of Facebook at the programme page to enhance communication and interaction between students and teaching staff was also extensive. Furthermore, Turnitin had been implemented for assignment submission and originality checking, and students had been provided with personal accounts to use.

4.3.5 Student support

Students perceived good support from the programme and considered it was as a key quality dimension that addressed students' satisfaction. The supporting activities mentioned by students were the orientation and induction activities provided by the programme. The data indicated that providing orientation activities was considered significant from the students' perspectives. As defined by the Business and Management students (Students 5,6,7 and 8), a series on orientation activities which was organized for students at different stages created positive impacts for them, from Orientation Week for first year students, Career Week for third year students or Induction Day at the commencement of the specialised stages (for years 2 and 4).

Adding to the above point, the Banking and Finance students reported that advice from staff to students on academic and non-academic matters were positively received by all students. For academic matters, all students agreed that the programme had services to advise students on course choice, module selection and career destination. As illustrated by a third year student, who commented:

> *Some of students are still unclear about which pathway they should follow, the orientation is really helpful for these students to have a proper selection of the specialisation, module registration, programme requirement as well as overall aims. (Student 6, Business Management)*

The role of staff in motivational, inspirational, and guidance roles had a significant influence on students reporting high-quality experiences. It is generally agreed by students that providing a clear programme induction was necessary. This is especially the case given that, on entering a UK-based programme, students have to become familiar with the unfamiliar programme specifications, new assessment methods, new grading systems and new learning style approaches required. Individual care was very much appreciated in the programme and students perceived this as an advantage of being a student in the programme. As per information shared by a final year student from the Business and Management course (Student 5), the programme maintained an ‘open office’ system in terms of student access, and the programme team members, including tutors and mentors, were available for tutorial and pastoral support on a regular and comprehensive basis.

One more thing related to student support was the arrangement of the ‘peer tutor programme’ in the international programme. This is very much based on “students helping students” in which qualified students would be selected, with one or two per module, and they worked closely with lecturers from the module to provide additional tutorial sessions for their peers. The peer tutor programme received significant positive comments from all interview students, about its efficiency in providing additional support for student learning.

For other academic supported activities, the arrangement and involvement of field trips and guest speakers served as great support for students because it was considered a channel to deliver real-life experience and opportunity for real world exposure, which assisted the teachers greatly in helping the students link theories in class to actual events in life. Field study trips and guest speaker sessions were other advantages that the programme provides for students, which the local programme could hardly have done so frequently.

> *The programme has organised very useful guest speaker sessions, in which experts from the business field are invited to share and talk with us about their experiences in career and life. Through these activities, we get the chance to interact and communicate with them, to build up our practical knowledge as well as good personalities. (Student 1, Banking and Finance)*

Students had education experience, with small teaching sessions, opportunities to meet other staff and students, personal care and opportunities to develop their potential. Clearly, students entered the international programme with different backgrounds and expectations, and they need different kinds and levels of support; therefore, the programme needs to be responsive to students' needs.

4.4 Key implications from the findings

Drawing on the research findings and their relation to previous literature, key implications are highlighted as the following:

Student motivations and career needs

The world is becoming a global marketplace in which people desire the same products and lifestyles. As a consequence of this, the higher education market has met this demand by creating joint international programmes across the world. The findings imply that joining with the international programme is seen as a positive choice, accessing international higher education which provides a UK qualification. Students in Vietnam in particular seem to have greater freedom of choice in the pursuit of international higher education, even if they study in Vietnam but receive their degree from the UK. Most students chose the programme because they expected to have better employability. The findings show that career opportunities seem to be the most significant motivation that students considered for studying on the international programme. It could be understood that the motivations that students shared in the interviews are similar to the previous studies which have identified some common reasons influencing Asian students when choosing a transnational programme. For instance, Chapman and Pyvis (2007) found that Malaysian students valued an international education as a passport to employment. Hoare (2012) found that Singaporean students decided to choose a transnational programme to achieve high level positional career opportunities.

Quality of the course delivery

Students' experiences in relation to the quality of course provision were framed according to how students view the quality of the transnational higher education. Accordingly, five key dimensions (as shown in Figure 4-1), including course content, teaching and learning, assessment, learning environment and student support factors were considered important aspects of quality when accessing the transnational programme.

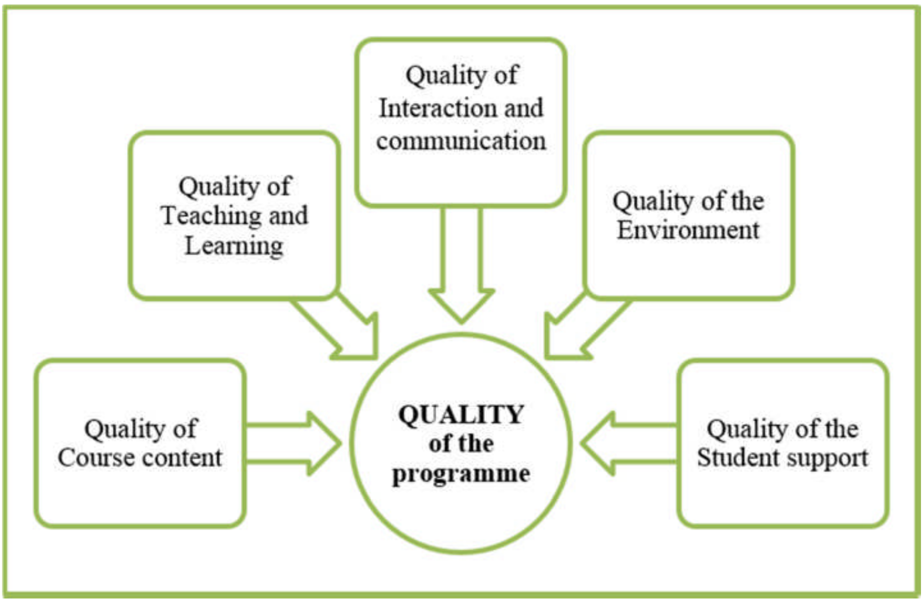

Figure 4-1: Quality dimensions from the student perspectives

Students demanding a good quality of course provision seem to reflect the common characteristics of quality in higher education in the developing world. Several studies show that the students perceive quality in higher education through their courses of study, teaching and learning processes, student support services, teaching and learning facilities, student examination and assessment, buildings and general facilities, and competencies of lecturers and students. This is evident from research by Hill et al. (2003), who show that the themes emerging in relation to what the students perceived as quality in higher education include good quality lecturers, a flexible curriculum, resources in libraries and IT, and a student support system. Miliszewska and Sztendur (2010) undertook a study that investigated student views on various dimensions of Australian transnational education programmes in South East Asia, which included curriculum and instruction design, lecturers and teaching, use of technology, evaluation and assessment, programme management, and organisational support. Ahmad (2015) researched the determinants of students' perceptions of quality and experience in a study at international branch campuses in Malaysia. The findings of his research indicated the seven dimensions (educational and non-educational issues), including university reputation/image, programme quality, lecturers and teaching quality, student learning environment, effective use of technology, counselling and academic advising support, and social life (direct/indirect) facilities provided by the universities.

The findings provide insights into quality as perceived and experienced by students. Generally, the findings indicate that quality is seen by students in relation to graduate employability and accumulate from the international qualifications and recognition of the degree, the practical knowledge and skills gained from the course and in the positive changes in terms of their personal and professional development. The data shows that the perceived quality of the international programme was in relation to the UK curriculum and Western education approach, which were more practical and transferrable, compared with the local equivalent programmes. It is because the transnational curriculum could provide the opportunities for students to explore the ways in which the culture of local context and culture of others shape knowledge and professional practice internationally and locally. The findings also indicate that a majority of students believed that the transnational programme made them felt developed and differentiated, as a process of personal and professional development.

- ***Adaptation and international aspects of the curriculum***

Students focused on the process of providing practical knowledge and relevant skills for the workplace in the course provision, which are considered important for their future career. Although higher education was traditionally more concerned with the transmission of knowledge, today's knowledge economy requires lectures that develop a different skill set for students' employability, involving seeking, analysing and using information(Stefani 2005). Findings indicate the student views on the international aspect of the curriculum and show the essential importance of curriculum adaptation to the local context. The findings from a recent study on the voices of Asian students substantiate the findings of this study. Hoare (2011) spoke with Singaporean students about contextualising the curriculum at transnational institutions and reported that some undergraduates were uncomfortable with Western content, believing those concepts were from applicable in Singapore. Pyvis and Chapman (2007) reported a high level of demand for international content and emphasised that to the Malaysian students being more international equates higher quality. This is applicable in the transnational education programme in Vietnam where the UK programme was imported. Under the partnership, maintaining international standards and being flexible in adaptation with local context seems to be an important task.

- ***The role of teachers and their teaching pedagogy***

The findings indicate the importance of teaching staff in facilitating student learning and interaction since students have realised the importance of lectures, from both Vietnamese tutors and foreign lecturers, for enhancing their learning experience in the transnational programme. This aligns with the research of Hill, Lomas and MacGregor (2003), in which the quality of the lecturer was one of the themes indicating quality of education. The findings also reflect the research from Srikantan and Dalrymple (2003), who also state that teaching staff have a vital role in developing skills by offering guidance, designing customised learning experiences and providing feedback for improvement.

The findings indicate the importance of lecturers and their supporting activities in developing the student’s learning experience in the programme. This was evident from the claims that teaching staff were keen on making complex concepts accessible and easier to understand when using relevant examples of the Vietnamese context to make the link between the theories and knowledge applications when teaching. Although previous research has found TNE students were more concerned about “Western” course content than the intercultural sensitivity of lecturers (Leask 2006, Pyvis & Chapman 2007), the research findings show that students appreciate the role of teachers in addressing the intercultural curriculum and the difficult of cultural differences in learning to support students. Facilitating the communication and interaction in class, arranging the group-work activities and focusing on small-class size arrangement are those of efficiency. From this point, it can be seen that beside the lecturers’ qualifications, enthusiasm and experience in teaching, it is necessary for lecturers to have a better understanding about student needs as well as being able to motivate and support students. McBurnie and Ziguras (2001) address the differences in learning behaviours, finding that students, regardless of their prior learning behaviour, were able to adapt to a different learning approach, especially if during the initial transition phase supportive measures were in place, such as study skill workshops, adaptation of learning tasks to the local context and interactive, supportive learning tools.

- ***Approach to assessment and student learning***

The results reveal the students expected to be assessed by different formats of assessment used in their course and reported the effect of different methods of assessments on student learning. This indicates the student-centred approaches of the transnational programme, which are different from the traditional approach in which students expected to be provided with large information and to recall this information through examination assessment (Ziguras 2001). With regards to this issue, Sambell and McDowell (1998) reveal that alternative assessment was perceived as enabling the quality of learning achieved. Many students made the point that for alternative assessment they were channelling their efforts into trying to understand, rather than simply memorize, the material being studied (Sambell, McDowell and Brown 1997). The literature suggests that students may prefer this assessment method rather than the others: for example, Slater (1996) found that students like portfolio assessments since they thought they would remember much better and longer what they were learning, compared with other assessment formats. Segers and Dochy (2001) found similar results in students' perceptions about self and peer assessment in a problem-based learning environment setting and reported that these assessments stimulate deep learning and critical thinking.

- ***Learning environment and student support activities***

Evidence shows that students defined a good learning environment as an environment that provides learners with opportunities to establish, to join and develop networks that relate to students' study interests. The findings indicate that the provided extra-curricular activities in the programme were seen as the good way for enhancing student learning opportunities and providing outstanding learning experiences.

The findings indicate that students' opinions on a supportive learning environment were positively reflected through their participation and interaction with the value-added activities which influenced the outcomes of transnational higher education. Joining and organising extra-curricular activities was perceived as a good way to develop skills in the transnational setting. Social activities such as sports, clubs, societies and so forth were regularly mentioned by students in their discussion of their student experience. Guest speaker sessions and field-trip studies were other sources of supportive activities. It is clear that students expected to have support learning activities as they emphasized that providing guest speakers' sessions and field-trip studies were good practice in giving practical knowledge and building skills as well as raising career interest for students. This aligns with Morrison, Sweeney and Heffernan (2003), who show that global learners prefer guest speakers that provide global learners with opportunities for creativity, as well as contextualizing learning. A final year student (Student 6) strongly believed that these supporting activities were very necessary and important and needed to be developed more at the programme. This reflects the fact that students are expected to apply knowledge in work and gain more working experience through these supporting activities from the institution.

4.5 Summary

The chapter has provided findings and analysis of the student views on the motivations and perceptions of the quality of the transnational partnership programme. The results of the exploration of student perspectives suggest several insights into how students are motivated, what they expect from transnational higher education, and what they received as the key determinants of quality in the transnational programme.

The findings indicate several educational aspects of transnational education which affected perceptions of the quality of the programme. These include the international aspect of the course curriculum, the adaptability of the curriculum to local context, the quality of lecturers, and their teaching practices in the transnational setting. The findings also indicate critical views on effective interaction and communication which contribute to enhancing student learning opportunities. These suggest that students' demands for good quality course provision reflects the conception of quality in the transnational education, in which quality is seen in relation to graduate employability that cumulates from the international qualification and recognition of the degree, the practical knowledge and skills gained from the course, and in the positive change in terms of their personal and professional development.

The quality dimensions, taken into consideration in transnational higher education from a student perspective, are the quality of both functional and technical education services. In the context of transnational collaboration, the findings have reflected the students' views on quality, in which, quality is perceived in relation to their learning experience of having skills and knowledge for employability.

Chapter 5 : FINDINGS FROM THE STUDENT SURVEY

5.1 Introduction

The focus of the chapter is on analysing the questionnaire returns that indicate student perceptions on quality and the similarities and differences between the perceived quality according to the student's course of study and year of study in the programme. The chapter also provides a brief discussion of the main findings on the student perceptions through this quantitative approach. Some key implications from the findings are raised and presented in this chapter.

5.2 Participant profile

The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of course of study, gender and level of study is presented in Figure 1 below. A total of 576 questionnaires were distributed to students on the programme and 349 questionnaires were returned, which gave a total response rate of 61 per cent. It is often suggested that a response rate of above 60 per cent is adequate for social research and representative of the full sample (Johnson and Wislar 2012). Within the response rate, 46 per cent of the sample (160 respondents) were male and the remaining respondents were female, accounting for 54 per cent of the total survey respondents (189 female respondents). The slightly higher proportion of female students to male students participating in the survey reflects the actual scenario of the gender distribution in the programme. The recruitment reports of the programme revealed that every year there is a higher percentage of female students than male students enrolling in the transnational programme at the institution.

The recruitment reports also revealed that the number of enrolled students on the BA in Business Management is nearly double the number enrolled on the BA in Banking and Finance, so the respondents of the survey from the two programmes show a respectively representative proportion, of which 64 per cent of respondents came from the Business and Management major and 36 per cent came from the Banking and Finance group.

Table 5-1: Number of participants (course of study, gender, year of study)

	Description	Number of participants	Percentage of participants (%)
Courses	BA in Business Management	223	64
	BA in Banking and Finance	126	36
Total		*349*	*100%*

Gender	Male	160	46
	Female	189	54
Total		*349*	*100 %*

Year of study	Year 1	36	10
	Year 2	151	43
	Year 3	75	22
	Year 4	87	25
Total		*349*	*100%*

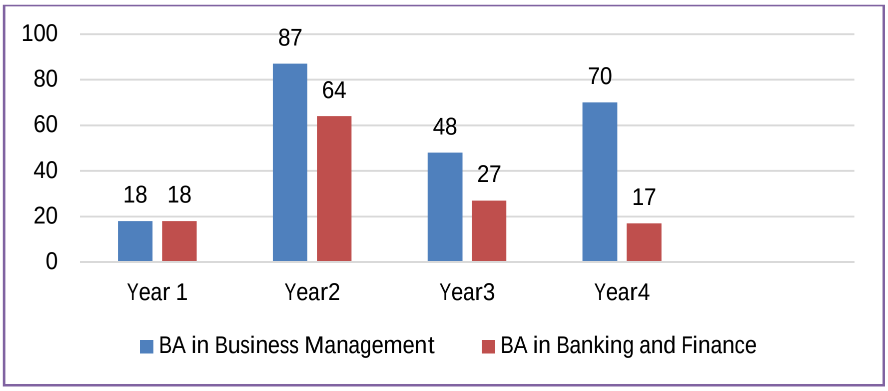

Figure 5-1: Number of participants according to course and year of study

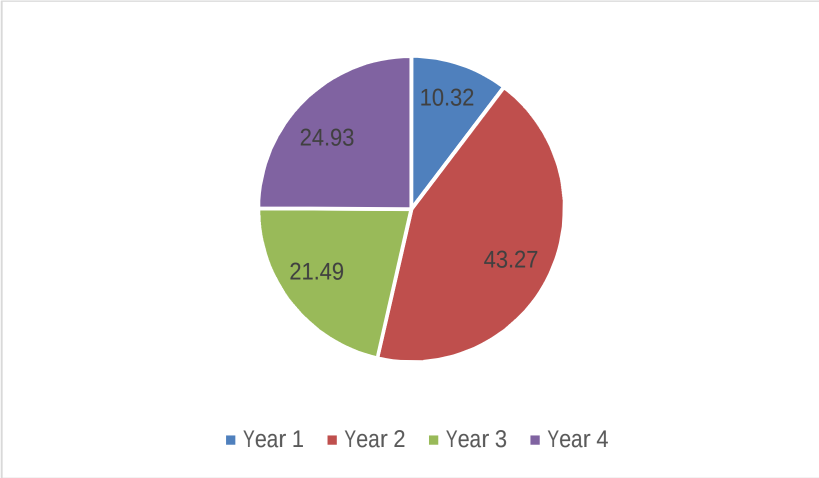

Figure 5-2: Proportions of participations per year of study

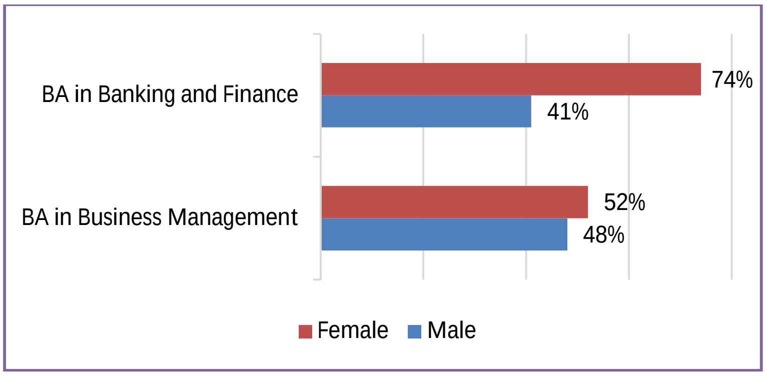

Figure 5-3: Proportions of participants according to their gender per course of study

As the table above indicates, the highest number of respondents was from year 2 (43 per cent) and the lowest level was from year 1, which accounted for 10 per cent of the participants in the survey. It is noted that year 1 is the foundation year, in which students study language and basic foundation courses. From year 2 onwards, students are on the specification courses. Respondents from years 3 and 4 together counted for 47 per cent, which was exceptional and valuable since students from years 3 and 4 were expected to be more familiar with the programme and their perceptions of quality of the programme could be more critical than the ones in earlier years.

5.3 Student responses to the motivations for the programme

In the first section of the questionnaire on student perceptions, students were asked for their views on the primary reasons they chose to enrol in the transnational programme. A review of why students want to enrol in the transnational programme is critical to understanding both students' expectations and the attraction of the programme. Students were asked to rate the extent to which the reasons motivate them to choose the transnational programme among the list of 15 items. The Likert scale of five was arranged from 'very insignificantly' (1) to 'very significantly' (5) relating to their decisions.

To investigate the underlying structure of the items on student motivations behind choosing the transnational programme, data was subjected to a principal axis factoring with Varimax rotation. Varimax rotation was used as it minimises the number of variables with high loadings on any one given factor resulting in clearer interpretation of the research findings (Rennie 1997). Two groups were identified (shown in Table 5-2) as underlying the motivations for students in choosing the programme. In total, these groups accounted for around 53 per cent of the variance in the data.

Table 5-2: Factor analysis outputs

No.	Items	Loadings	
		Component 1	Component 2
1	The reputation of the local university	.748	
2	The reputation of the foreign university	.702	
3	Quality of UK education	.771	
4	International recognition of the UK degree	.704	
5	High employability after graduation	.686	
6	Personal and professional development	.801	
7	Providing practical knowledge	.784	
8	Lower cost than study abroad	.474	.328
9	Structure of the programme	.523	.343
10	Experiencing international environment	.679	.331
11	Specific qualification offer	.433	.607
12	Study abroad option included	.400	.622
13	Develop English competency	.532	.441
14	Failure to enter the equivalent local programmes		.705
15	Attractiveness of scholarship offered		.747
	Percentage of variance	36.43%	16.63%

As the table shown, the first group – defined as group of component 1 - included 11 items, in which, the first seven items were strongly loaded in component 1; the last four items were loaded in both components but they most closely linked to component 1:

1. Personal and professional development
2. Providing practical knowledge
3. Quality of UK education
4. Reputation of the local university
5. High employability after graduation
6. International recognition of the UK degree
7. Reputation of foreign university of the transnational programme
8. Experiencing the international environment
9. Developing English competency
10. Structure of the programme
11. Lower cost than study abroad

The two items most closely linked to component 2:

1. Study abroad option included
2. Specific qualification offered

Two items strongly loaded in component 2 but with no relation to component 1:

1. The availability of the scholarship offered
2. The failure to enter the equivalent local programmes

Based on the association of variables within each component, they could be grouped as involving “values of transnational education” – Component 1 and “attractions of the transnational programme” – Component 2. These could be interpreted as “pull factors” to attract students into transnational education as well as to keep students choosing the specific programme. The other two items that were loaded in component 2 but not related to component 1 could be interpreted as “push factors”.

For further analysis, student responses to the motivations are presented in Figure 5_4 below, of which the response rates were formed into three categories: Insignificant, Neutral and Significant influence on the respondents’ decisions.

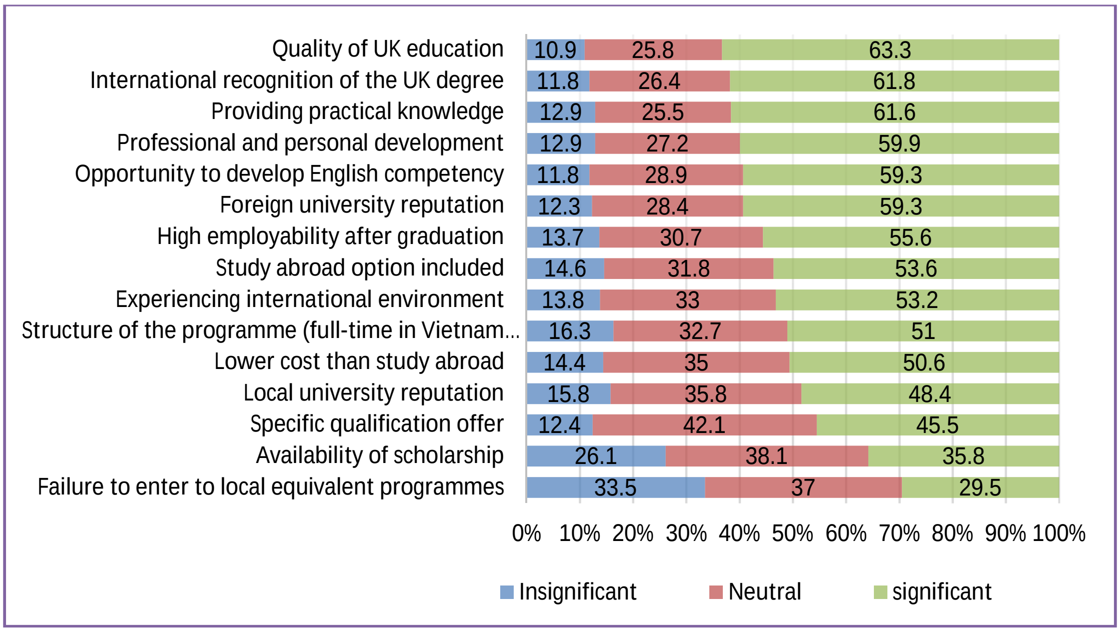

Figure 5-4: Student motivations for the transnational programme

By associating the reasons for choosing the programme to student demographics, the results suggest that the final year students were more likely than the students from earlier years on the programme to believe that the quality of the UK education and the international recognition of the UK degree were the significant influences for choosing the course (Kruskall Wallis H = 12.072, df = 3, p = .007 and H = 11.030, df = 3, p = .012 respectively). The mean ranks (the average values) were different among the students in different years of study in terms of these factors, indicating the different motives when choosing the course, as well as assuming different criteria for judging the quality of the programme when they have been through the course.

The next (deleted: most significant factors) motivations were in relation to the students' motives for achieving personal and professional development (59.9 per cent) and developing English competency (59.3 per cent) when studying in the transnational programme. These indicate that over half of the respondents were (deleted: significantly) motivated to join the programme because of the role of the transnational education in offering the programme in English as well as providing practical knowledge for students. There is no statistically significant difference between the options of students in their course of study or year of study related to these motivations. As explained by most students in the interviews, students' motivations for having English competency, receiving practical knowledge and developing personal and professional development played key roles since these factors helped them in their future careers. This is also reflected in the student survey results in that the benefit of the programme was perceived in relation to high employability.

Findings from the student interviews suggest that the reputation of both the local university and the partner institution were considered as important (deleted: factors) motives for choosing a suitable international programme since they believed in the link between the institutional reputation and the quality of the course offered. The findings from the survey show that over half of the respondents were motivated by the reputation of the UK university (approximately 60 per cent), whereas nearly half of the respondents reported that they choose the programme because of the reputation of the local institution. About 30 per cent of the respondents reported a neutral opinion about the effect of the reputation of the institution on their decision to choose the transnational education.

The findings show (deleted: significant) slightly high scores in the opportunity for experiencing the environment of the transnational programme (53.2 per cent of students saw this factor significantly influence their decision). The only student characteristic associated with this was student gender, in which female students in the programme were more likely to agree with this than the male students ($U = 12669.5$, $z = -2.725$, $p = .006$). The results also show high rates of motivation (53.6 per cent) around the option of study abroad being included in the transnational programme. While students may have a reason for not doing a top-up year abroad, it is important to know that students perceived the attraction of the study abroad option that the programme offered.

The results show that the availability of the scholarship and the failure to obtain a place at the local equivalent programmes seemed to be the least influential items. As suggested from the factor analysis test as above, these two items were not strongly grouped in relation to other items in the above groups. These items could be excluded from the motivations for choosing the transnational programme.

5.4 Student responses to the quality of course content

Students' views on the 11 items categorised in course content are presented on the table below, in which the last item (Item 12) - the overall satisfaction of students toward this quality dimension - was excluded for further assessment at the end of the section. Respondents were asked to show their views on the course provision in those 11 related items, to see how they respond to the quality of course provision and whether the course provision met their expectations. The results suggest that the majority of students were satisfied with the quality of the course provision and that the course programme generally met their expectations.

Table 5-3: Student responses to Course content

No.	Statements	% Fell significantly short of expectation	% Fell short of expectation	% Met expectation	% Exceeded expectation	% Significantly exceeded expectation
1	The programme offers practical knowledge	3.7	9.7	40.1	36.4	9.7
2	The programme prepares me for a future career	**1.1**	**9.5**	**36.1**	**42.7**	**10.6**
3	The course sets clear learning outcomes	1.7	10.3	38.7	37	12.3
4	The programme is stimulating my personal and professional development	1.7	10.9	38.1	37.8	11.5
5	The course content is made relevant to the Vietnamese context	2.6	15.8	44.4	30.1	7.2
6	The course emphasises developing independent learning	1.4	12	34.1	39.8	12.6
7	The curriculum equips with international views	**2.3**	**8.3**	**35.2**	**39.8**	**14.3**
8	Supplementary modules had been added to help improving my learning skills	2	11.5	36.4	37.5	12.6
9	Supplementary modules had been added to help associating with UK education	4	11.5	40.7	31.8	12
10	The programme has clear structure	0.9	10.9	40.4	35.8	12
11	The programme provides a good orientation on how to study in an international programme	2	10.6	37	35.5	14.9

The (deleted: significantly) highest rates of confirmation for satisfaction were on

(i) The international perspective of the curriculum and

(ii) The helpfulness of the programme for students' future career

Accordingly, the highest rate was for the statement that "the curriculum equips me with international views", of which 54.1 per cent of respondents felt that the curriculum exceeded their expectations and 35.2 per cent of respondents reported that it met their expectations. This indicates the positive feedback from the majority of students in the programme in regard to the international perspective of the programme. There was no significant association in terms of gender, nor course of study nor year of study, from the students toward this statement. As indicated in the interviews at the earlier stage, students believed in the quality of the course provision due to the international aspect of the curriculum.

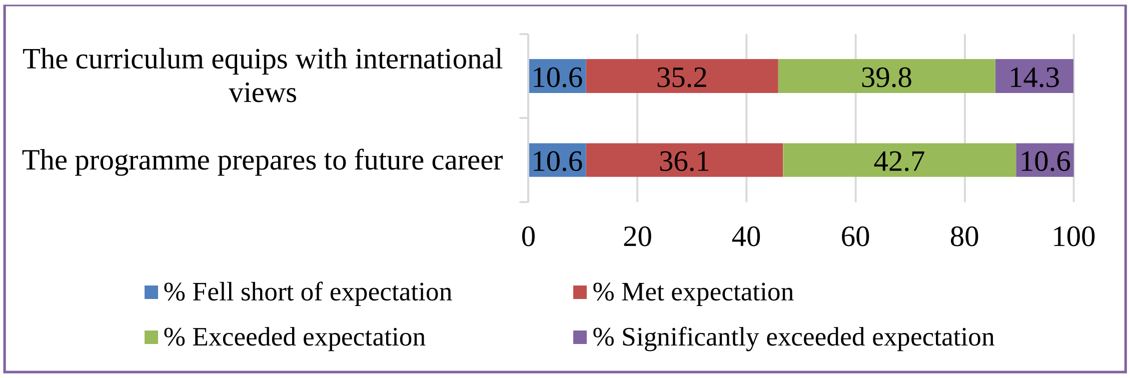

Figure 5-5: Students' views on the curriculum

The results show a high satisfaction rate for "the programme prepares for my future career" with over half of the respondents reporting that this aspect of the course provision made them satisfied. Response to this statement was not correlated to any of the student characteristics. There was no significant association in terms of respondents' gender or course of study (based on the results of the Mann Whitney U test, $p > .05$) with this statement nor was it linked to whether students from years 1, 2, 3 or 4 in the programme (the Kruskal-Wallis test results, $p > .05$). This indicates the consistency of the student motivation and the level of satisfaction with the employability factor in relation to the quality of the course provision. In particular, these affirmations were in the light of the students' motivations for choosing the transnational programme, in which a UK-quality education and students' employability were considered as the most motivational factors for the quality of the transnational programme. These suggest that student employability could be seen as an important quality indicator for the transnational programme and graduate students who were equipped with the international perspective of the curriculum could enjoy one of the more competitive advantages for students' future careers, in their professions in the Business Management and Banking and Finance career fields.

Furthermore, in light of the earlier reference to the stimulation of personal and professional development as a key motivator for choosing the transnational programme, the majority of students were satisfied with this in the course provision (87.4 per cent of respondents reported this met their expectations). There were some associations between students' views on this statement and student characteristics. Differences were found between Business Management students and Banking and Finance students in relation to the responses on the views of the stimulation of personal and professional development. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed a statistical difference in the satisfaction levels of students from the Business Management course (Md = 4, n = 223, mean rank = 183.48) and students from the Banking and Finance course (Md = 3, n= 126, mean rank = 159.98), U = 12157, z = -2.128, p = .027. Business and Management students tended to be more satisfied than Banking and Finance students on average, with a slightly higher rating of "exceeded expectation" compared with Banking and Finance ones. However, the strength of the relationship between the course of study and the views on personal and professional development was found to be fairly weak (r = 0.114). Female students in the programme were more likely to be satisfied with this than their male counterparts (U = 13328.5, z = -2.025, p = .043). No supporting evidence from the interview data from the previous stage was found to interpret why students from Business Management had stronger views on the stimulation of personal and professional development in the transnational programme, or why female students had more positive views of this.

It seems that students with more experience in the programme were more likely to be satisfied with the programme than the students from its earlier years not only in their views for personal and professional development (H = 15.823, df = 3, p = .001) but also for their "developing independent learning" (H = 17.251, df = 3, p = .001) and "improving learning skills" (H = 8.752. df = 3, p = .005). The evidence suggests that the more experience students have in the programme, the more familiar with the programme they become and the more satisfaction they received in regard to their personal and professional development as well as their independent learning in the transnational programme. The finding seems consistent with the literature that learning is progressive and students are challenged to approach learning through the lens of their experiences and interests.

Although students' expectations of the quality of the course were confirmed by the majority of students by their experiences in the programme, there was a number of students who were unsatisfied with the linkage between the UK programme and the Vietnamese context. These related to the perceptions on "the relevance of the programme to Vietnamese context" (18.4 per cent of respondents said it fell short of expectations) and "supplementary modules added to associate with UK education" (15.5 per cent of respondents said they fell short of expectation), as indicated in the figure below:

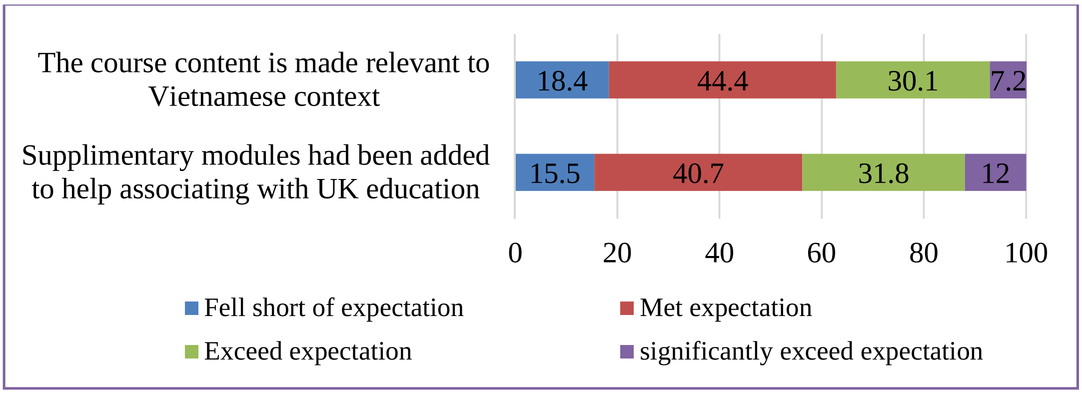

Figure 5-6: Students' views on the course content and supplementary modules

The results show that respondents' years of study have a correlation on these figures, particularly with the views of "supplementary modules had been added to help associating with UK education". As Table 5.2 below shows, students in the final year were more likely to be satisfied with this than the other students in years 1 and 2. The final year students recorded a higher median score (Md = 4) than the students of the other years of study, who recorded median values of 3. Looking closer at the data, it appears that third year students were less satisfied with this situation (25 per cent of year 3 rating "fell short of expectation") than those in the other years (H = 13.039, df = 3, p = .005). These suggest the unequal confirmation among students for the supplementary course that the programme provided in order to help students associated with UK education. The explanation of this was slightly partially in the interview data, in which students confirmed the role of supplementary modules and the foundation courses that the institution provided in different years during the educational programme to help them associate with UK education.

Table 5-4: Students response on the supplementary modules

	No.	Fell significantly short of expectation	Fell short of expectation	Met expectation	Exceeded expectation	Significantly exceeded expectation	Mean rank	Median
Year 1	36	2.8%	11.1%	44.4%	30.6%	11.1%	173.32	3
Year 2	151	2.6%	14.6%	40.4%	31.8%	10.6%	170.84	3
Year 3	75	**10.7%**	**13.3%**	41.3%	26.7%	8.0%	150.75	3
Year 4	87	1.1%	4.6%	39.1%	36.8%	18.4%	**203.82**	**4**

The relevance of the curriculum to the Vietnamese context appears to be the lowest satisfaction in comparison with other factors in the quality of course provision (18.4 per cent of respondents answered that it fell short of expectation). It was evident from the interview data that some students felt that the curriculum was too UK-centric and they found it difficult to see how the knowledge could be applied in the Vietnamese context. Those students expected that the course content should be more relevant to the Vietnamese context. No significant associations of the views to students' characteristics were identified, meaning that this was not linked to whether students were from a particular course of study, gender or year of study. However, this seems consistent with the earlier reference to competency in English being a key motivator, suggesting an international career outlook rather than one focused more locally on the Vietnamese context.

5.5 Student responses to teaching and quality of teachers

The second dimension identified in the analysis is related to teaching and the quality of teachers. The interview results suggested that "teaching and quality of teachers" was considered as one of the key indicators for quality. Figure 5-7 below shows students' responses to this quality aspect, with the frequency of the attitude formed into three categories: "fell short of expectations", "met expectations" and "exceeded expectations". For the purpose of the analysis, the categories of "significantly fell short of expectation" and "fell short of expectation" were combined, as well as the combined categories of "significantly exceeded expectations" and "exceeded expectations".

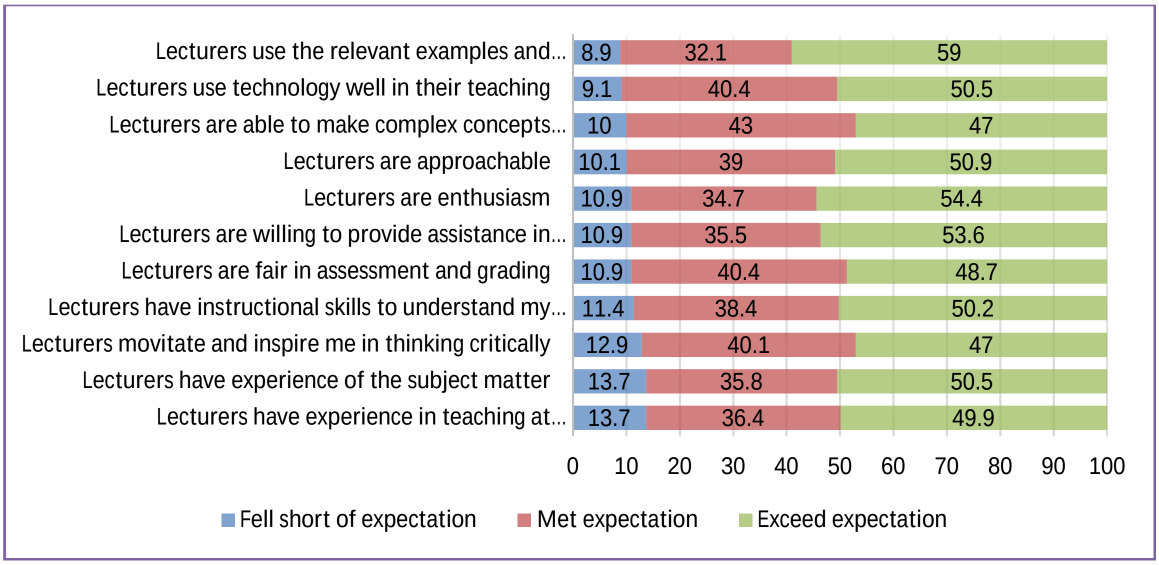

Figure 5-7: Students' responses to teaching and quality of teachers

The results show that, generally, students were satisfied with the lecturers and teaching performance on the programme. It appears that the majority of the respondents' views on the statements under this quality aspect were (deleted: significantly) within the category of "exceeded expectation", ranging from 47 per cent to 59 per cent, and "met expectation", ranging from 32.1 per cent to 40.4 per cent. The results indicate that, broadly, students showed a higher level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and teachers in the programme compared with other dimensions within the analysis of the study. This indicates that students in the programme generally have great respect for their teachers, which might to some extent be considered part of Vietnamese culture.

It is notable that the response to "lecturers use the relevant examples and applications when teaching" had the highest rates of satisfaction. These were explained from the interviews in the earlier phase, in which they admitted the role of lecturers in enhancing the student learning experience by using the relevant case examples to illustrate the differences in the applications of the theories into practice. By doing this, students were able to understand the lectures and gained more knowledge and international perspective from the programme of study. Responses to this statement were influenced by the respondents' year of study ($p = 0.005$, Kruskal Wallis $H = 12.997$, $df = 3$). Respondents from years 2 and 4 recorded a higher median score ($Md = 4$) than the other two groups, which recorded median values of 3.5 and 3 respectively for group of students in years 1 and 3.

High rates of satisfaction were also found in the responses to the skills of lecturers in using teaching technology (40.4 per cent of respondents fell within 'meeting expectation' and 50.5 per cent within 'exceeding expectation') as well as making complex concepts accessible to students (43 per cent and 47 per cent respectively). No associations between students' characteristics with these statements were found. The evidence shows that the majority of students were satisfied with the quality of lecturers in teaching the programme. These indicate that students' satisfaction was significantly linked to the quality of the lecturers. It is understandable since students clearly saw their lecturers as highly qualified, knowledgeable, helpful and enthusiastic. These opinions are reflected in the survey results with high response rates of confirmation on "the enthusiasm of lecturers" and "approachableness of lecturers".

Responses to the above statements appeared to be fairly distributed across respondents' courses of study and gender. However, there were some associations found for these statements with the respondents' levels of study. In most cases, students from the final year of their study were more likely than their colleagues from earlier years to be satisfied with those issues (see Table 5-4 below).

In particular, differences were found among the students' views on "the enthusiasm of lecturers" ($H = 10.773$, $df = 3$, $p = .013$). It appeared that final year students were more likely than years 1, 2 and 3 students to agree with this, on average: for example, 64.4 per cent of final year students strongly agreed about the enthusiasm of teachers, whereas only 38.9 per cent of the first year students reported they were satisfied with this. The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that first year students recorded a lower median score (Md = 3) than the other three groups, which recorded median values of 4.

Similarly, the levels of the students were associated with "the approachableness of lecturers" (H = 9.337, df = 3, p = .025). Again, final year students were more likely to agree on this than students from the other years of study. This evidence suggests that the longer the experience students have in the programme, the more satisfied they appear to be with the quality of teachers.

Table 5-5: Student responses related to quality of teachers

Quality	Year of study	Number	Fell significantly short of expectations	Fell short of expectations	Met expectations	Exceeded expectations	Significantly exceeded expectations	Mean rank	Median
Enthusiasm	Yr. 1	36	0.0%	16.7%	44.4%	27.8%	11.1%	147.61	3
	Yr. 2	151	0.0%	13.9%	34.4%	39.7%	11.9%	167.33	4
	Yr. 3	75	2.7%	9.3%	32.0%	45.3%	10.7%	172.85	4
	Yr. 4	87	0.0%	2.3%	33.3%	43.7%	20.7%	**201.49**	4
Approach able-ness	Yr. 1	36	0.0%	13.9%	38.9%	33.3%	13.9%	167.40	3
	Yr. 2	151	0.7%	9.9%	40.4%	36.4%	12.6%	171.30	3
	Yr. 3	75	1.3%	12.0%	45.3%	30.7%	10.7%	156.88	3
	Yr. 4	87	0.0%	4.6%	31.0%	48.3%	16.1%	**200.19**	**4**

There was still a number of students who were less satisfied with the lecturers in some aspects. A group of 13.7 per cent of respondents reported "fell short of expectations" in terms of lecturers' experience of the subjects' teaching and lecturers' experience in teaching at the international programme. The interview data showed that students expected to have lecturers who had been teaching and were familiar with the transnational programme as well as understanding transnational students. This indicates that students believed the

UK programme was different to the local programme, with different teaching and learning approaches, and the students expected to be assisted by the teaching staff to overcome the differences and challenges. It implies that teaching staff could be qualified and experienced in teaching in the local programme; however, if they are not familiar with the international programme, this can limit their understanding on students' needs. The evidence seems to imply the importance of having teaching staff with sound knowledge and experience.

Regarding the students' views of the lecturers' experience on the subject matters, it appears that there was an association between this and the students' characteristics, in gender, courses of study and also years of study of the respondents. Accordingly, the genders' differing views have had an impact on this (p = .022, Mann Whitney U = 13101.5, z = -2.287). The mean scores reveal that female students in the programme were more likely than male students to be satisfied with the experience of the lecturers. It also appeared that students from the Business Management course were more positive than the ones from the Banking and Finance course in their perceptions of this (U = 12309, z = -2.045, p = .041, mean rank of Business Management = 182.8, Banking and Finance = 161.19). Differences were also found among the views of students from different years of study (p = .004, Kruskal Wallis H = 13587, df = 3). Final year students were far more likely to be happy with this than the other students in years 1, 2 and 3, as can be seen in Table 5-6 below.

Table 5-6: Student responses to lecturers' experience on subject matter

	No.	Fell significantly short of expectation	Fell short of expectation	Met expectation	Exceeded expectation	Significantly exceeded expectation	Mean rank	Median
Year 1	36	2.8%	11.1%	44.4%	30.6%	11.1%	165.18	3
Year 2	151	2.6%	14.6%	40.4%	31.8%	10.6%	162.51	3
Year 3	75	10.7%	13.3%	41.3%	26.7%	8.0%	167.39	3
Year 4	87	1.1%	4.6%	39.1%	36.8%	18.4%	207.3	4

In general, findings suggest that the quality of teachers is strongly linked to students' satisfaction, with respect to the lecturers' enthusiasm and approachableness and the willingness of teachers to help students in understanding subject matters, by using relevant examples and cases, using relevant technology in teaching, and fairness in grading.

5.6 Student responses to assessment

Responses to the nine statements related to assessment and student performance are presented in the table below.

Table 5-7: Student responses to assessment and student performance

Statements	% Fell significantly short of expectation	% Fell short of expectation	% Met expectation	% Exceeded expectation	% Significantly exceeded expectation
Assessment methods encourage my critical thinking	5.4	12.3	42.7	33	6.6
The modules are assessed by variety of methods	0.9	8.6	41.5	37.8	11.2
My course involves on going assessment	1.7	8.6	40.4	39.3	10
Necessary guidance and interpreting assessment requirements are provided for me	1.1	12	40.4	36.7	9.7
I received detailed and helpful feedback on my work	1.7	7.4	40.1	36.7	14
Assessments set high standard for my performance	1.1	9.5	35.2	45.6	8.6
The assessments focus on specific subject knowledge	1.1	10	41.5	35.5	11.7
The assessments emphasise developing my skills for workplace	3.2	8.6	40.4	36.7	11.2
The programme provided clear guidance for avoiding plagiarism	2	8.9	39.3	35.5	14.3

The results from the survey show the students' highest levels of satisfaction are significantly in the following areas:

(i) The helpfulness of the feedback from the lecturers
(ii) The standard of assessments
(iii) The variety of the assessment methods used

The results show that the highest area of satisfaction from students was in the detailed and helpful feedback on students' work that they received from the lecturers (90.7 per cent of respondents reported they were satisfied with this). Feedback is information about how the student did in the light of what he or she attempted. Several studies have suggested that giving students detailed feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of their work with suggestions for improvements is an important motivator for students' learning improvement. The results appear to show that students on the transnational programme were happy with the helpfulness of the feedback that they received from the lecturers. There was no significant difference in the satisfaction levels of students from different years of study or courses of study. This indicates these were common views among students on the helpfulness of the feedback from the lecturers in the programme.

The variety of assessment methods provided in the programme also received a high satisfaction rating from most of the students in the programme. However, there was a slight difference among students from different courses of study in terms of satisfaction with this. Business and Management students were more likely than Banking and Finance students to be satisfied with this ($U = 12115.5$, $z = -2.87$, $p = .022$). In the interview data, both students from Business Management and Banking and Finance shared that they were happy that their course modules were assessed by a variety of methods like individual assignment, group work, examination, and final presentation. However, it seems that Banking and Finance students expected more to be assessed by different methods since they were "scared" of having only one examination at the end of the module. Business and Management students, in contrast, shared that they had experienced the assessment-like role-play, portfolio assessments and weekly workshop presentation assessments, and these made them excited and felt they were achieving in learning.

There was also a significant difference in the views from students at their different years of study. As the Figure 5-8 below shows, students from years 3 and 4 were more likely to be satisfied than the ones in the earlier years with the variety of assessment methods (H = 24.644, df = 3, p <.05).

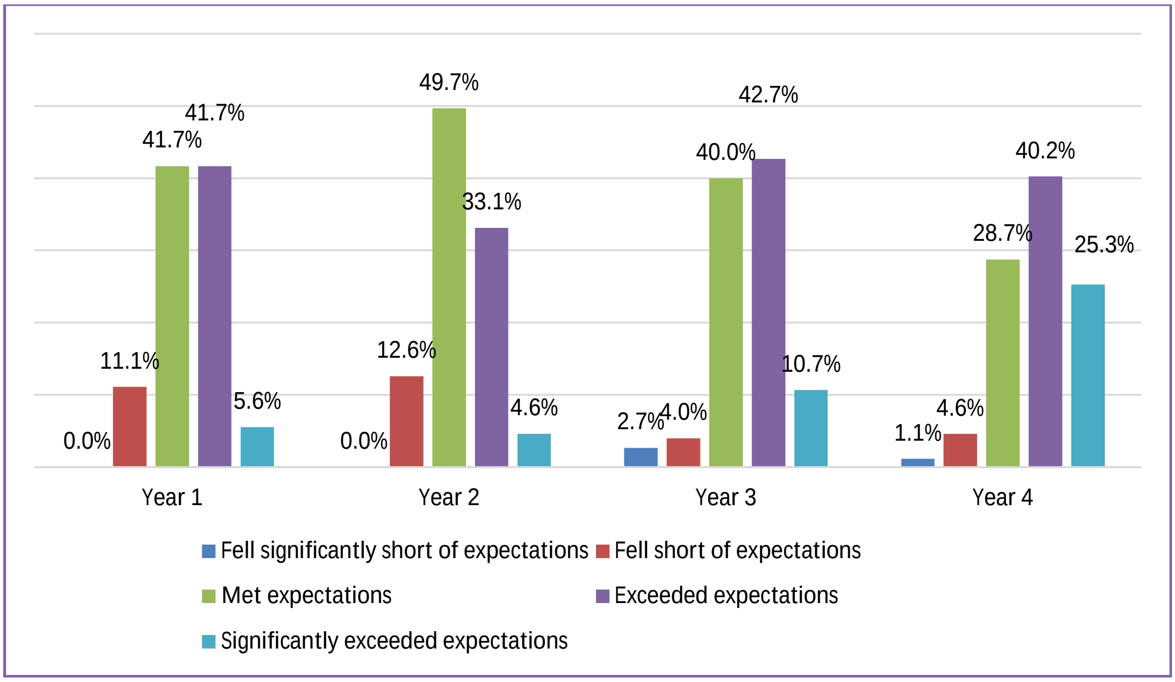

Figure 5-8: Students responses to the variety of assessment methods

The results also show that the majority of students in the survey were also satisfied with the assessment focused on developing skills for the workplace. It also appeared that final year students from both courses seemed to be more satisfied with this than the students from earlier years (H = 11.456, df = 3, p = .010).

Although the highest proportion of the category “met expectation” (42.7 per cent) was in answer to the statement “assessment methods encourage my critical thinking”, this also related to the highest proportion of “fell short of expectation” (12.3 per cent) and the highest proportion of “significantly fell short of expectation” (5.4 per cent) in comparison with the other statements. This was associated with the respondents’ level of study (H = 20.989, df = 3, p <.005).

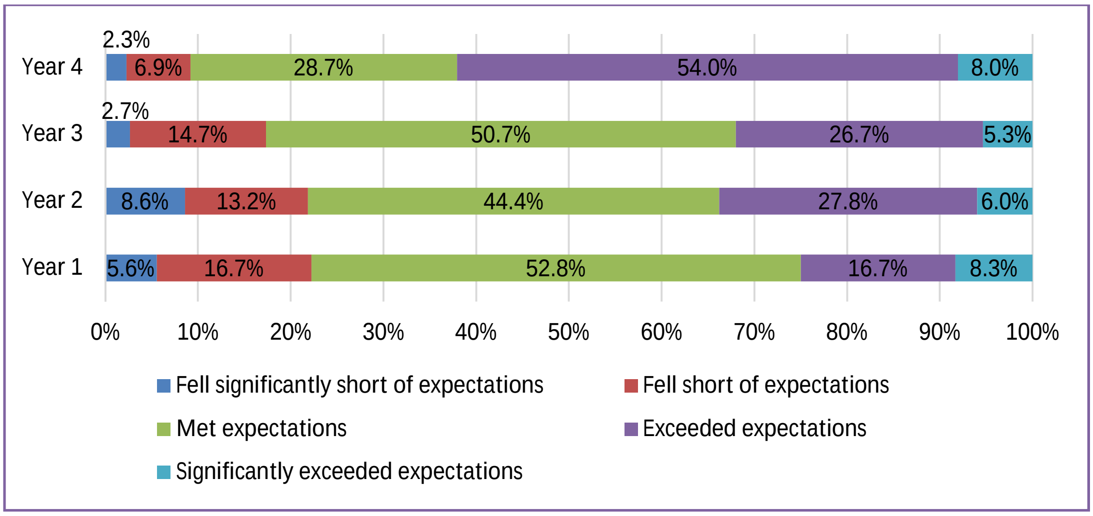

Figure 5-9: Student perceptions of assessment and critical thinking

Students from years 1 and 2 appeared to be more likely to be less satisfied with this than those in the later years of the programme (see Figure 5-9). It was noticeable from the interviews that the majority of students had trouble showing critical thinking in their assessment performance and they expected to improve those skills. Differences were found between the Business Management students and Banking and Finance students in relation to this ($p = .033$, Mann Whitney $U = 12230$, $z = -2.137$). Business students were more satisfied with this than the Banking and Finance students. However, the strength of this relationship was found to be fairly weak ($r = 0.114$).

5.7 Student responses to interaction and communication

Figure 5-10 below offers data related to the responses to interaction and communication in the programme. The responses to the given statements are presented in descending order of meeting expectations, with three categories: “fell short of expectation”, “met expectation” and “exceeded expectation”.

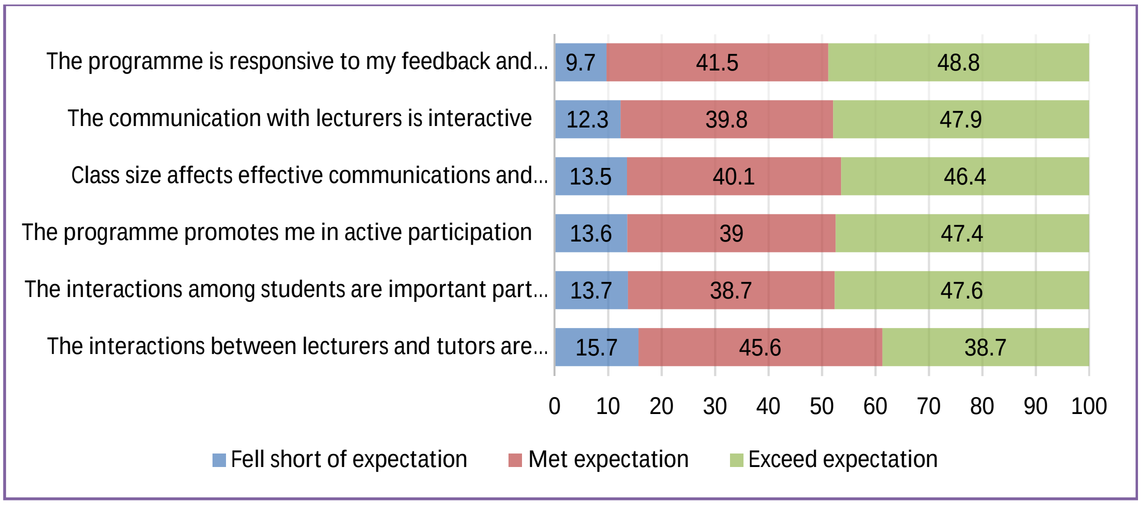

Figure 5-10: Student perceptions of communication and interaction

The results appear to show that a high rate of satisfaction was related to the responsiveness of the programme to student's feedback and complaints, when students dealt with the provision. The results indicate the majority of students in the programme were satisfied with this; no associations were found in relation to respondents' levels of study, gender or courses of study with this statement. Effective communication and interaction were considered as effective approaches to learning by most of interviewed students, and the survey results showed the satisfactory aspects related to the communication and inter-activeness with lecturers in the class as well as the class-size arrangements effected to communication in class.

Level of study from respondents has an association with the interaction and communication with teachers in class ($p = 0.001$, Kruskal Wallis $H = 15.892$, $df = 3$). The results show that final year students were more likely than younger year students to be satisfied with this. Examination of the mean values revealed that years 1 and 2 students had the same rate of response on this, with the average mean rank at 159.51. Year 3 students were a little bit more likely to be satisfied with this than those in years 1 and 2 (mean rank at 174.22), but less satisfied than the final year students (see the Table 5-8 below).

Table 5-8 Student response to the interaction with teachers in class

	No.	Fell significantly short of expectation	Fell short of expectation	Met expectation	Exceeded expectation	Significantly exceeded expectation	Mean rank
Year 1	36	2.8%	19.4%	36.1%	30.6%	11.1%	159.51
Year 2	151	1.3%	13.9%	43.7%	36.4%	4.6%	159.77
Year 3	75	1.3%	12.0%	40.0%	36.0%	10.7%	174.22
Year 4	87	1.1%	1.1%	34.5%	50.6%	12.6%	208.52

A high rating for meeting expectations was also indicated for the interaction among students. The evidence suggests that the way of learning together and from other students in the programme is an important criterion for effective learning. It was evident from the interviews, students perceived that working in team, the supportive attitude and commitment of other students in the classroom and outside classroom played an important role in their overall learning experience.

It appeared that most of responses to the statements under this quality aspect were fairly distributed across respondents' courses of study, years of study and gender. There were no statistically significant differences in the perceptions of the students on the programme in terms of the quality related to communication and interaction. The results indicate the satisfaction among students on the programme with the quality of the communication and interaction; however, there were some students who were less than satisfied with the interaction between the lecturers and tutors delivering the course (15.7 per cent respondents chose "fell short of expectation"). Data from the interviews revealed that some Business and Management students expected to have more collaboration and interaction with lecturers and tutors for course delivery; although they admitted the role of lecturers and tutors in helping students with the acquisition of knowledge and skills and findings from the survey reflected these views clearly, there was no association of this to the respondent's course of study, showing a quarter of the respondents generally felt less satisfaction on this issue.

5.8 Student responses to learning environment

The next quality dimension identified in the analysis is related to learning environment. Table 5-9 below indicates the students' responses to this quality aspect:

Table 5-9: Student responses to learning environment

Statements	% Fell significantly short of expectation	% Fell short of expectation	% Met expectation	% Exceeded expectation	% Significantly exceeded expectation
The programme offers modern learning and teaching facilities	5.2	10	38.4	32.4	14
The programme arranges manageable class sizes	2.6	9.5	39.8	37.2	10.9
The programme offers available regular wireless internet access	6.9	14.6	41.3	30.7	6.6
The programme provides easy access to learning sources of the partner's university	2	12.9	37.2	38.7	9.2
The programme provides many extra-curricular activities	1.7	10.6	39	38.7	10
The programme provides supported distance learning network	0.9	9.7	39.5	38.1	11.7
The library meets my learning needs	5.7	12	42.4	30.7	9.2
Active student union and social clubs helped me in gaining transferrable skills	3.4	10.9	39.5	32.1	14
The course materials provide good source of learning	2.3	9.7	41	36.1	10.9

Looking back to the student motivations for choosing the transnational programme, it was noticeable that experiencing an international environment was considered as one of the most influential factors for the majority of students in the programme. The learning environment seems to be one important part of it. As identified from the student interviews, good learning resources and different kinds of extra-curricular activities were important factors in the international environment that supported the student's learning experience. The results from the survey strongly reflected these views, showing high satisfaction with supported distance learning networks and extra-curricular activities provided in the programme:

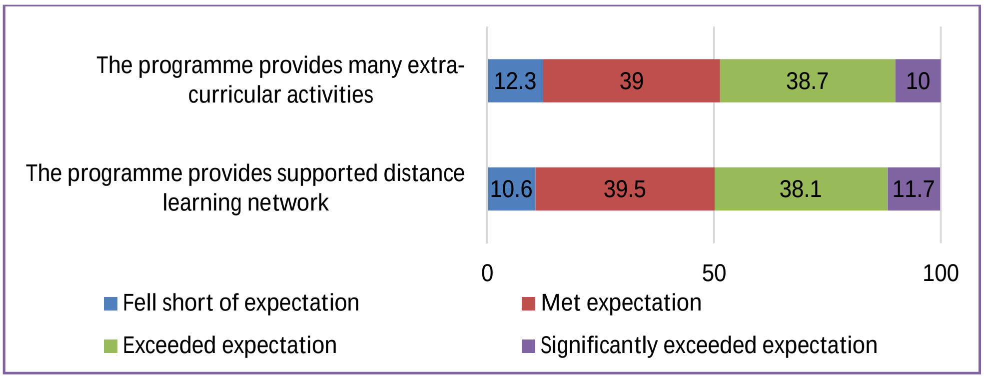

Figure 5-11: Students' responses to extra-curricular activities and the distance learning network

The results show that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the extra-curricular activities provided for students in the programme, with nearly half of the respondents reporting this exceeded their expectations. The results show no associations between the student characteristics and the statement. These indicate the confirmation of expectations from the majority of students regarding the active learning environment, since most of students explained that having the opportunity to join extra-curricular activities as well as developing networks and connections had a positive impact on student's learning outcomes. It could be seen that the network and activities were valued as part of the students' personal and professional development.

The results also show high levels of satisfaction on the support of the distance learning network (39.5 per cent meeting expectation and 49.8 per cent exceeding expectations), and in light of the satisfaction with the access to learning resources at the partner's university (the UK institution). These indicate the sense of belonging to the awarding UK institution from the majority of students in the programme, although they were based at an institution in a different place. Students' levels of study have an impact on this (p = .036, Kruskal Wallis H = 8.552, df = 3). As indicated in the table below, it seemed that students in the first year were more likely than students from other years to be satisfied with this. Years 2 and 4 tended to have similar rates on average. Students from year 3 were more likely to expect more support from the UK institution on this point. The difference was not associated with their course of study, meaning that this was not linked to whether students were from Business Management or Banking and Finance courses of study. No significant association in terms of gender were established either for students' responses to this issue. These findings suggest implications, within the institutions and their overseas partners, about the extent of their involvement in supporting students in their learning in an international environment.

Table 5-10: Students response regarding access to learning resources at the partner university

	No.	Fell significantly short of expectation	Fell short of expectation	Met expectation	Exceeded expectation	Significant-ly exceeded expectation	Mean rank
Year 1	36	0.0%	8.3%	33.3%	30.6%	27.8%	210.69
Year 2	151	.7%	11.3%	41.1%	39.1%	7.9%	175.83
Year 3	75	4.0%	21.3%	33.3%	34.7%	6.7%	154.63
Year 4	87	3.4%	10.3%	35.6%	44.8%	5.7%	176.34

Regarding the views on facilities like classroom, air-conditioning, projectors, etc. in the programme, the results show that this was also associated with the respondents' level of study. Opposite to the views on the access to learning resource of the partner's university whereas students from year 1 tended to satisfy with this than students from other years, they were more likely to be less satisfied with the facilities in the programme than the ones in year 2, 3 and 4. As can be seen in the figure below, students in the final year were more significantly than year 2 and 3 to satisfy with the facilities.

Responses to this were not associated with respondents' gender or course of study.

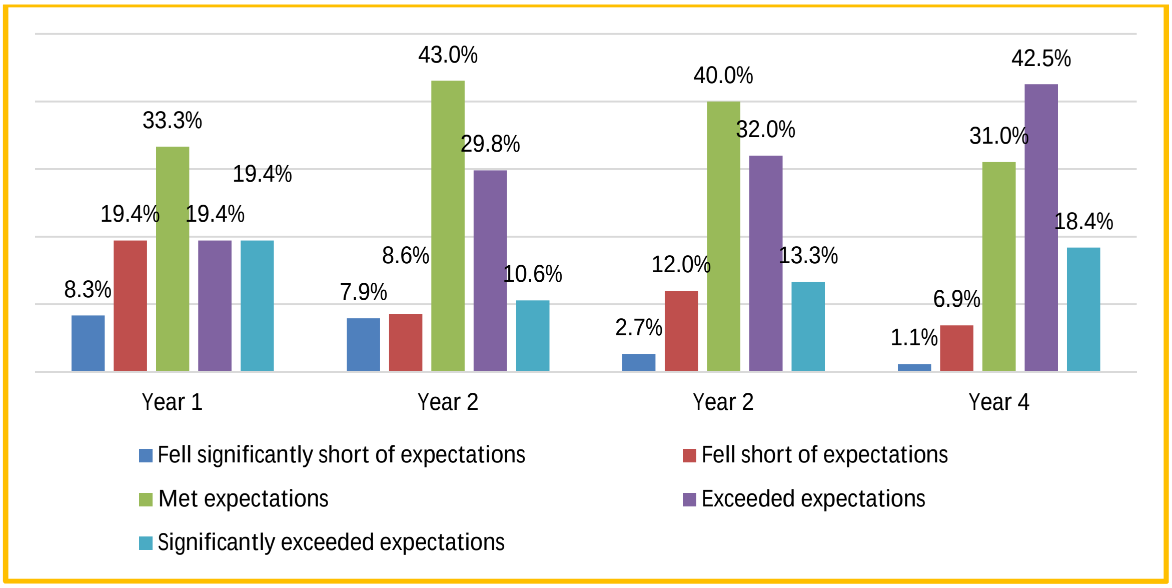

Figure 5-12: Students' response to the facilities in the programme

In light of the role of the extra-curricular activities that helped students in gaining transferrable skills which were found from the interview data, joining social clubs and active participation in the student union were seen as good ways to gain transferrable skills. The results from the survey show that the majority of students were satisfied with this (see the figure 11 below). There were statistically significant differences in the responses to this corresponding to the courses of study ($p = .028$, Mann Whitney $U = 12159.5$, $z = -2.199$, $r = 0.118$) and years of study of the respondents ($p = .010$, Kruskal Wallis $H = 11.355$, $df = 3$). The results show students from the first and second years (mean rank at 203.1 and 186.73 respectively) were more likely to agree on this than the later ones (mean rank at 150.67 and 163.98 respectively). Banking and Finance students (mean rank = 190, n = 126) were more likely than Business students (mean rank = 166.53, n = 223) to be satisfied with this, with 38.9 per cent on average of Banking and Finance students, for example, rating "exceeded expectation" compared to 28.3 per cent of Business Management students or 7.9 per cent of Banking and Finance students rating "fell short of expectation" compared to 12.6 per cent of Business Management students.

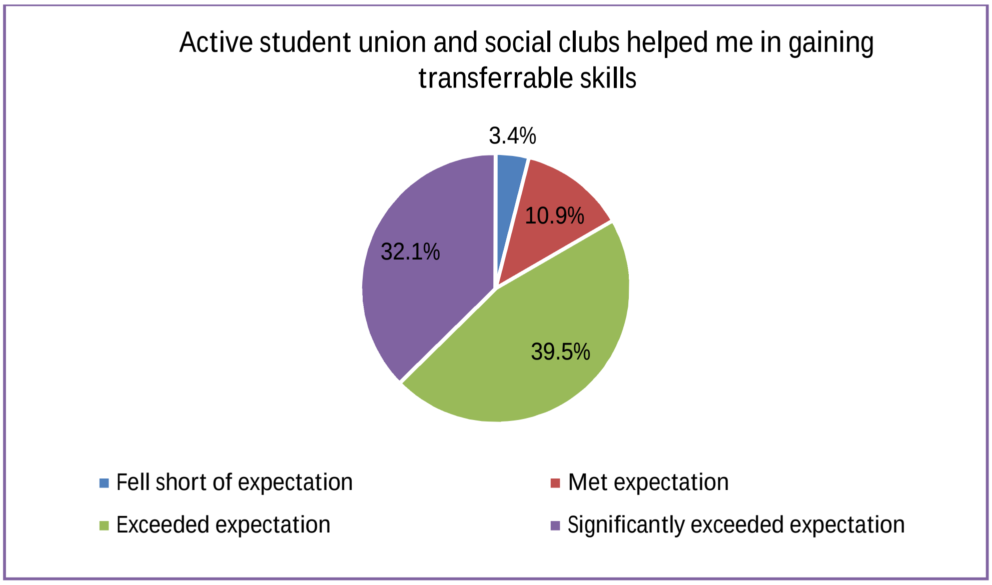

Figure 5-13: Students responses to the transferrable skills gained through joining student unions and social clubs

The results revealed that there was still a number of students who were less satisfied with two particular things within this quality aspect, which were related to the library and the availability of wireless internet access (shown in Table 5-11). These were the lowest levels of satisfaction in the aspects of learning environment. Regarding the library, there was concerns from some students in the interviews that students did not feel there was a good learning environment at the university library. The results show that respondents' courses of study have an impact on this ($p = .002$, Mann Whitney $U = 11430.5$, $z = -3.062$, $r = 0.164$). Banking and Finance students (mean rank = 195.78, $n = 223$) were more likely than Business students (mean rank = 163.26, $n = 126$) to be satisfied with this, with on average 46 per cent of Banking and Finance students, for example, rating “exceeded expectation” compared with 36.3 per cent of Business Management students. There was a statistically significant difference between the views on the library by the year of study of respondents ($p = 0.001$, $H = 17.378$, $df = 3$). As the table below illustrates, the satisfaction level decreased, from year 1 to year 4. In particular, mean rank of the first year respondents to this was 207.65 whereas the final year it was only 159.73. This indicates the higher demand from the final year students for library.

Table 5-11: Student responses related to library and internet access

Issue	Year of study	Number	Fell significantly short of expectations	Fell short of expectations	Met expectations	Exceeded expectations	Significantly exceeded expectations	Mean rank
Library	Year 1	36	0.0%	13.9%	30.6%	36.1%	19.4%	**207.65**
	Year 2	151	2.0%	6.0%	49.0%	32.5%	10.6%	190.58
	Year 3	75	9.3%	17.3%	37.3%	28.0%	8.0%	159.73
	Year 4	87	11.5%	17.2%	40.2%	27.6%	3.4%	147.60
Internet access	Year 1	36	0.0%	5.6%	44.4%	27.8%	22.2%	**219.28**
	Year 2	151	3.3%	13.2%	43.7%	34.4%	5.3%	183.43
	Year 3	75	1.3%	20.0%	49.3%	25.3%	4.0%	165.61
	Year 4	87	20.7%	16.1%	28.7%	29.9%	4.6%	150.14

The table also shows the same rate of decreasing satisfaction from students in year 1 to year 4 in relation to the views on internet access. Year 1 students (mean rank at 219.28) appeared to be happier than their colleagues in the later years (for example, mean rank at 150.14 of final year students). This could possibly be that expectations rise as students go through the course. With the development of IT and the internet in global education, expectations of regular internet/Wi-Fi access seems to be essential; however, this was rated as the lowest satisfaction from among the student views. Respondents' course of study also have an impact of the views on the availability of wireless internet access ($p = .007$, Mann Whitney $U = 11717.5$, $z = -2.719$, $r = 0.146$). Banking and Finance students (mean rank = 193.5, $n = 223$) were more likely than Business Management students (mean rank = 164.54, $n = 126$) to be satisfied with this.

5.9 Student responses to supporting activities

The areas of student support identified from the interviews were on the supporting activities that the programme provides for students, including academic and non-academic related issues. The activities such as the orientation and induction training, advice for course choice, module selection or career orientation provided by staff received positive feedback from students. There are 10 statements related to student support that were identified for analysis in the survey. Responses to these statements are illustrated on the Table 5-12 below:

Table 5-12: Student responses to quality of student support

Statements	% Fell significantly short of expectation	% Fell short of expectation	% Met expectation	% Exceeded expectation	% Significantly exceeded expectation
The peer tutor programme is organised effectively	6.3	16.9	38.4	31.8	6.6
The administrative staff are very helpful	1.4	9.5	39.8	39.5	9.7
The programme offers sufficient services to choose top-up programmes overseas	5.2	12.6	40.7	32.4	9.2
The programme provides opportunities to participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities	2	13.8	39.5	36.7	8
Guest speakers from industry experts are organised	0.9	13.2	37.8	38.1	10
The programme offers field study trips	1.7	10.3	34.1	39	14.9
The orientation week/induction programme is helpful in setting down in the programme	2.3	9.2	36.1	39	13.5
The programme provides opportunities to join the organising team of extra-curricular activities	2	10	32.1	42.7	13.2
The programme has a good career advice for my future job	2	11	36.1	38.4	12.3
Internship services are important for my career development	2.3	13.8	35	37	12

The results of high proportion of expectations' confirmation were from the following issues:

(i) Opportunities to join the organising team of extra-curricular activities
(ii) Field study trips provided
(iii) The helpfulness of orientation activities/induction

(iv) Career advice for future job

The findings show that generally students were satisfied with the supporting activities that the programme provided for students. As the data shows, the majority of students were happy with not only participating in the extra-curricular activities but also joining with the organising team of these activities, with over half of respondents satisfied with this (42.7 per cent responded with “exceeded expectation” and 13.2 per cent responded with “significantly exceeded expectation”). Field-study trips provided by the programme were received with high levels of satisfaction from over 88 per cent of the respondents. A high rate of satisfaction confirmed the role of the field-study trip which is considered a good way for students to learn something new outside the classroom and as students explained in the interview data, this was perceived as an effective learning experience. The next factors for satisfaction were the support from the programme and from staff to help students through the orientation activities as well as counselling activities and advice for student’s future jobs.

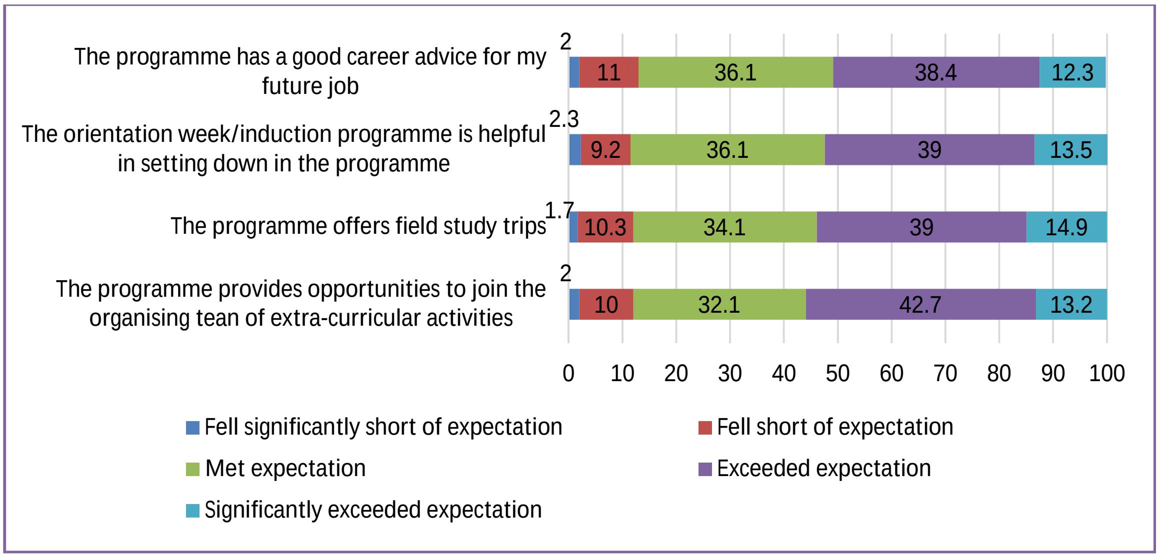

Figure 5-14: Students responses to statements on quality of student supports

It appears that there were no associations between the above statements and the students’ characteristics. No statistically significant differences were found in relation to gender, course of study or year of study for the respondents in the above issues. It was noticeable from the interview data that some students mentioned the expectation for more opportunities to join the top-up programme with the partner's university in England, especially for the Banking and Finance students, since the chance for joining the top-up programme was limited to the Autumn term, whereas for the Business Management course, students could join in the Autumn and Spring terms. However, the survey results revealed that no statistical difference in the views from the students of these two course of study was established. This indicates the satisfaction with the support for services related to top-up programmes with the partners' universities overseas.

The survey's results show, under this quality dimension, that only one statistical difference was found in relation to the respondents' course of study in reply to the opinion that "the internship services are important for my future career" ($p = 0.001$, Mann Whitney $U = 11315.5$, $z = -3.179$, $r = 0.17$). It tended to be that Banking and Finance students were more likely than their peers in Business Management to agree with this (mean rank at 196.69 and 162.74 for Banking and Finance and Business Management respectively).

Generally, students were satisfied with the support from the programme, though there were some students who were less satisfied with some aspects under the supporting activities. For example, the least satisfactory aspect of support was on the effectiveness of the peer tutor programme. Findings from the student interviews have indicated the role of "students help students" through the peer tutor programme; however, this seems to be within a -dissatisfaction factor due to the effectiveness of its operation. This indicates the implication for pastoral care in the programme.

5.10 Student responses to overall satisfaction

Since at the end of each section on the quality dimensions, students were asked for their overall satisfaction toward that quality aspect, this part presented the results of these. This is also to reconfirm the student satisfaction on the quality of the each dimension identified.

Table 5-13: Overall satisfaction of students on quality dimensions

Quality dimensions	% Fell significantly short of expectation	% Fell short of expect-ation	% Met expect-ation	% Exceeded expect-ation	% Significantly exceeded expectation
Course provision	2.3	6.9	37.8	44.1	8.9
Teaching and quality of teachers	1.4	7.2	37.8	40.1	**13.5**
Assessment and student performance	1.1	7.4	**41.8**	38.7	10.9
Interaction and Communication	2	7.2	38.4	**41.5**	10.9
Learning Environment	**2.9**	**9.2**	39.5	37.2	11.2
Student support	1.4	12	37.5	37	12

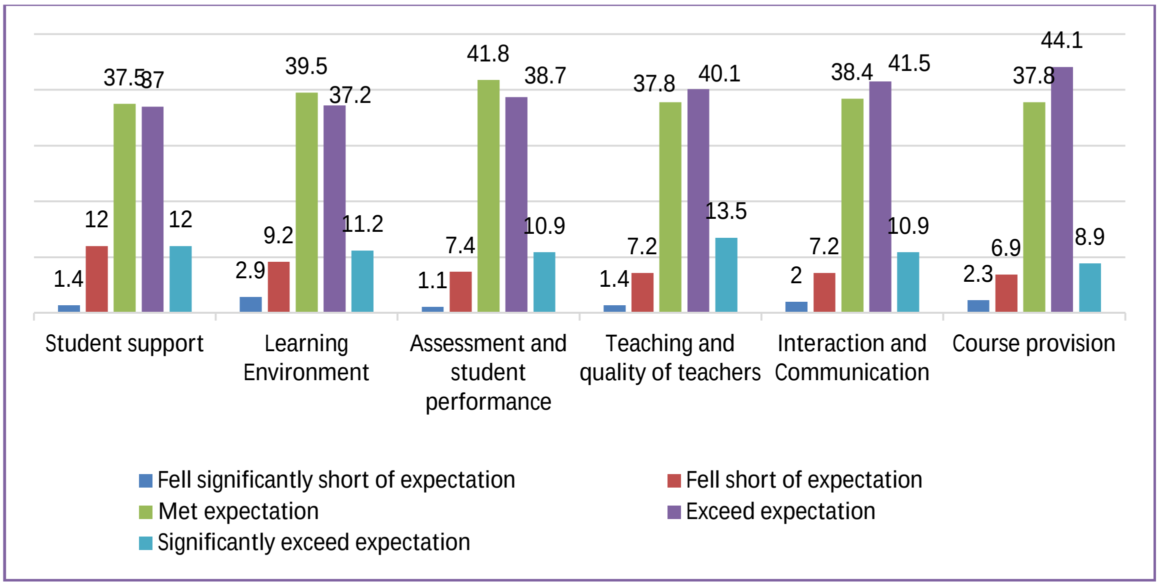

Figure 5-15: Student overall satisfaction on quality dimensions

Accordingly, the results indicate that, overall, students were satisfied with the quality of the programme. The highest level of satisfaction was on the “teaching and quality of teachers” dimension, which accounted for 53.6 per cent of the exceeded expectation. The programme itself was ranked the second highest (53 per cent) and followed by the effectiveness of interaction and communication (52.4 per cent). The results also reveal the lower levels of satisfaction from the aspects of learning environment and student support.

After further examination of the highest levels of satisfaction on the teaching and quality of teachers, it appeared that over half of respondents were strongly happy with the quality of teachers and teaching (53.6 per cent), about 37 per cent of respondents feel this met their expectation. Final year students were more likely to be satisfied with the quality of teaching and teachers than the other students from the earlier years (p = 0.023, Chi-square = 9.517, df = 3). No significant association in terms of course of study and respondents' gender were established for the students' responses to any of the overall satisfaction on quality of the six dimensions.

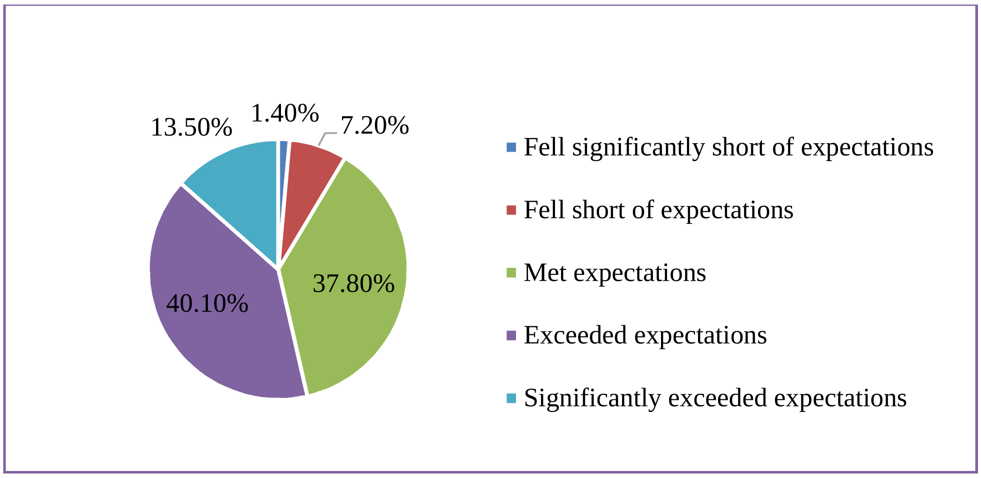

Figure 5-16: Overall satisfaction with teaching and quality of teachers

Respondents' years of study appeared to have an impact on the overall satisfaction with the course provision, assessment and student performance. Accordingly, students from the final year (year 4) tended to be happier with the course provision (mean rank at 202.02) in comparison with the students from other years in the programme (p = 0.08, Kruskal Wallis H = 111.911, df = 3). Year 1 students tended to be less satisfied than those from years 2, 3 and 4 with the overall satisfaction of the course provision (mean rank at the lowest at 144.0). A statistically significant difference was found on the overall satisfaction on assessment and student performance (p = 0.23, H = 9.502, df = 3). Again, final year students were more likely to be satisfied with this than the students in years 1, 2 and 3 on the programme.

5.11 Student responses to the conceptions of quality

The last section of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement with the conceptions of quality which were identified from the interview data in the transnational education programme. The results appear to show that the majority of respondents agreed to a relatively high degree with most of the definitions, as Figure 5-17 below shows:

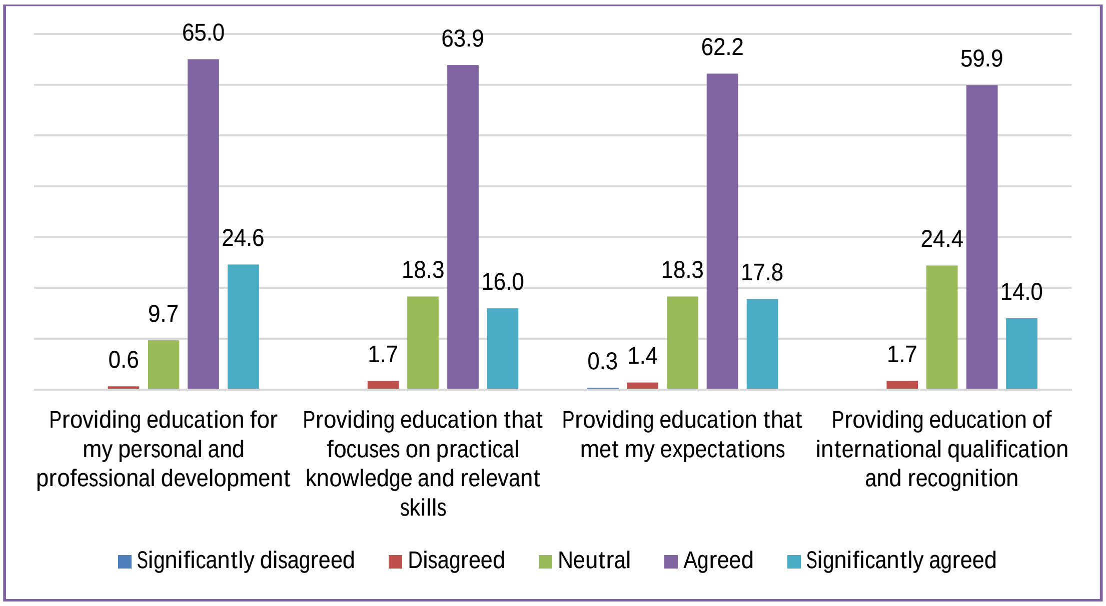

Figure 5-17: Responses to the definitions of quality

The majority of students from the survey agreed that quality in a transnational higher education programme is about *"providing education for my personal and professional development"*, with 65 per cent of respondents agreeing and about 25 per cent of them strongly agreeing with this. It appeared that the respondents' levels of study had an impact on this ($p = 0.001$, Chi-square = 16.521, $df = 3$). The third and final year students tended to agree more strongly with this statement. This indicates the consistent views that the more experience students have, the strong the perception they consider the effect of personal and professional development, through their learning experience in the programme, under the quality of the course provision as well as teaching and learning in the programme.

With regard to the definition that transnational programme is about "*focus on practical knowledge and relevant skills for workforce",* the results show that most of students agreed on this; however, about 18 per cent of respondents seemed to be unsure. The description statistics showed the different views among students on this; however, there were no statistically significant differences between this and the respondents' characteristics. This is not linked to respondents' course of study or level of study.

The results show that, generally, students agreed on the definition that the quality of the transnational programme is *"providing education and services that met my needs and expectations",* with 62.2 per cent of respondents agreeing and 17.8 per cent of them strongly agreeing with this statement. Again, about 18.3 per cent of respondents chose to be neutral on this statement. The Mann Whitney test shows that respondents' gender has an impact on this ($p = 0.049$, $U = 13521$, $z = -1.969$). It tended that female students in the programme are more likely than their male counterparts to agree to this (mean rank for male = 165.01, female = 183.46).

The differences were found in the association between the respondents' level of study and the respondents' agreement with the statement that quality of transnational education is "*providing education of international qualification and recognition*".

Table 5-14: Response to definition of TNE in relation to international qualification and recognition

Definition		N	Mean Rank
Providing education of international qualification and recognition	Year 1	36	167.74
	Year 2	151	156.87
	Year 3	75	171.67
	Year 4	87	212.34
	Total	349	
Chi-square = 22.220; df = 3, p<.05			

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test as illustrated in the Table 5-14 above indicate that final year students are more likely to agree with this statement than the other students in the early years of the programme. No associations were found between this and the respondents' gender neither was this linked to the students' courses of study.

5.12 Discussion of the main findings

5.12.1 Differences in the student perceptions

With regard to student's year of study

It could be seen from the survey results how student's perceptions differ according to their academic career. The findings appear to show generally that the final year students' responses to the quality of the transnational programme were more positive than those of the first, second and third year students. The evidence shows that the final year students responded positively to independent learning and to personal and professional development in the programme. This indicates that final year students are more independent and familiar with the independent learning approach, which reflected their personal development. The survey findings also appear to show that final year students were more positive about the quality of teachers and satisfied with their teaching quality, in that lecturers used relevant examples and applications when teaching, and they satisfied with the impact of the interaction and communication with teachers in class. The results also show that final year students were also more likely to be satisfied with the programme with regard to the preparation for students' future career, which were also discussed mostly by the interview students.

The differences suggest the involvement and experience of the final year students in the programme have a significant impact. The final year students certainly have more experience in the programme and have more involvement across the different years in the programme compared to the earlier year students. The different perceptions may also reflect the general nature of the different phases of study in the programme. In particular, the first year programme basically focuses on English courses and the foundation for developing relevant skills and an international perspective on their discipline; therefore, the first year students are less related to the specialised course. The first year students are also less engaged with the specialised subjects and less experienced with the assessment of the profession modules. The data shows that first year students are more likely to be satisfied with the learning environment and with the extra-curricular activities than to those from the later years, whereas they felt short of expectation on, for example, the course's help in developing independent learning or the assessments encouragement of critical thinking. Curriculum is a course of study, including content, teaching and learning method, and assessment. Different perceptions of curriculum according to the student year of study indicate the links of the curriculum to the student views on the programme quality. Different surveys per year group may be advisable to understand the quality properly.

With regard to student's course of study

The findings appear to show some slight differences in the perceptions of students from the BA in Business Management and BA in Banking and Finance groups. Although the differences are small (small effect size), there are some differences in the perceptions of the two groups of the quality as per different aspects. Generally, the evidence shows that in most of the cases, Business and Management students show higher satisfaction than Banking and Finance students regarding particular quality aspects.

In particular, related to quality of course provision, while students of both courses in Business Management and Banking and Finance agreed on the quality related to the international aspect of the curriculum and the employability of the course, which were in synch with the motivations of students to choose the transnational education, students of BA in Business Management were particularly likely to feel the stimulation of personal and professional development during the course than the students of the BA in Banking and Finance. It could be said that the nature of the course itself and the activeness of the students in participating with learning in class as well as being involved in extra-curricular activities might be the factors that made the personal and professional development of students different according their course of study.

In regard to teaching and learning, the results show the students' different views on the experience of lecturers on subject matters. Students from the Business and Management group were more positive than the ones in Banking and Finance about satisfaction with the lecturers in terms of their experience on subject matters. Business and Management students were also happier than the Banking and Finance students about the combination of different assessment methods used in their course. From the Banking and Finance perspective, as shared by a student of the third year, taking an example of having only examination in the assessment of one particular module in that semester made them scared and they expected to have a combination of, for example, an assignment, a presentation and an exam for the modules of their course. It could be argued that using any particular assessment methods needs to take into account the nature of the module, the ability to measure different instructional objective levels of the course. Although traditionally examination is the most commonly used method in higher education courses (Frank and Barzilai 2004), the use of any assessment methods should be based on making the best inference about a student's achievement (Shultz, Whitney and Zickar 2013) and they should be used to enhance students' learning and development.

In light of the role of the extra-curricular activities in helping students of both Business and Management and Banking and Finance courses in gaining transferrable skills which were found from the interview data, the survey data shows that joining social clubs and active participation in the student union were positively rated by students on both courses, as a good way to gain transferrable skills. However, students of Business and Management seem to be more active and satisfied with this than the ones on the Banking and Finance course. Although there is no supporting evidence from the data to justify the reasons for the differences, there could be factors like personal references, the time arrangement and working in a team that affected the views of Business and Management students so they achieved greater satisfaction in this aspect than the Banking and Finance students.

5.12.2 Student motivations for the transnational programme

Findings concur with previous research literature in transnational higher education in almost all Asian countries that transnational students pursue international education because of (i) seeking academic quality, and (ii) seeking opportunities such as employment and experiences (Pyvis & Chapman 2007, Ziguras & Rizvi 2001, Hoare 2012). It could be seen that students studying for a foreign degree are driven by various motives and hold different expectations. Results from both interviews and the survey appeared to show that students of the programme are motivated by factors such as the reputation of the UK qualification and the recognition of the quality of UK education around the world.

The evidence indicates students seek quality education by accessing the UK degree and are motivated by the practical knowledge of the programme, and the possibility of personal and professional development through the course, all of which contribute to their future career opportunities. The findings also show students were motivated to enter the transnational programme because of the English competency. The expectation of enhancing job employability through English competency could be met since English has offered new job seekers an advantage in a time of globalisation (Altbach 2004). Since English is a dominant language and is a factor in globalisation, higher education worldwide has grappled with the role of English (Crystal 2012). This indicates that transnational education is seen as a commodity that students buy so they are being prepared for participation in global employment contexts. The results also show that many students are motivated to study in international education because they believe that the foreign qualification will better prepare them for a career in the international labour market, as similar views from Zimitat (2008) show.

The results also show that the students' reasons to choose the international programme relate to the reputation and image of both the awarding and delivering institutions, and in having experiences in internationalisation, which reflect the quality of the programme offered. The literature shows that the image is created by an institution to persuade outsiders that the institution represents specific and desirable characteristics (Pampaloni 2010); education has become more globalised, and higher education institutions are now increasingly interested in developing and maintaining an international image in order to influence potential students' choice of institution. The results show that over half students in the survey were influenced by the reputation of the UK institution when choosing the programme. The result also illustrates the fact that an institution's reputation for quality plays an important role in making a particular institution more attractive than others.

5.13 Key summary and implications for managing quality of the transnational course delivery

Hackman and Walker (1990) suggest that effectiveness of the programme depends on learner satisfaction, since learners ultimately decide whether the expectations are met. The following sections provide a brief discussion on student satisfaction and the evaluation of the programme effectiveness.

- ***Course content***

Student responses from the survey reveal that what students demanded as a good quality for the course seemed to reflect the common characteristics of quality as reported in the literature on transnational higher education. The survey findings appear to show that students are satisfied with the international aspect of the curriculum, with regard to international perspective for which students could gain access to Western culture and intercultural education.

The results show a high satisfaction from students on the preparation of the course for their future career. The findings indicate the most positive aspects of the programme curriculum were the opportunity to apply theory, gain knowledge and skills, and work in a real-life environment. The literature also suggests that the curriculum has an important impact on almost all educational aspects, from encouraging the development of subject and practical knowledge and the development of core skills to the choice of student learning in the educational programme (Nabi and Bagley 1998). The findings indicate the consistent nature of the student motivation and the level of satisfaction with the employability factor in relation to the quality of the transnational programme.

Both interview and survey data show that motivations for choosing the transnational programme, in which UK education embedded students' employability, were considered as the most influential factors driving quality in the transnational programme. These suggest that student employability could be seen as an important quality indicator for the transnational programme and graduate students who were equipped with the international perspective of the curriculum could enjoy one of the competitive advantages for their future careers.

The findings also show a relationship is perceived between the international curriculum and the relevance of the curriculum to the local context. While the majority of students from the survey shared their satisfaction with the international aspect of the course curriculum, there was still a number of students concerned about the relevance of the course curriculum to the local context. This indicates the need of making the course content more relevant to student needs, in a way of making the course content approach to local adaptation. It could be the fact that the cross-cultural relevance of curriculum and pedagogy embedded in one local cultural setting and exported to students situated in other cultural settings is a concern for transnational higher education. The needs for local adaptation are therefore necessary since they are linked to the perception of the quality of the course. Although knowledge is sometimes considered universal, local cultural contexts can affect the pedagogy and construction of that knowledge (Heffernan *et al.* 2010, Ziguras 2001).

- ***Teaching and quality of teachers***

The results appear to show that students were broadly satisfied with the performance of their lecturers and the quality of teaching they received. The findings also reveal that this quality aspect received the highest satisfaction from students in the programme. Positive perceptions of the teaching environment not only directly influence academic achievement but also qualitative learning outcomes (Lizzio, Wilson and Simons 2002).

The most satisfactory aspects of teaching and learning were established from two important factors. The first factor is related to the quality of lecturers.

Students generally highlighted the importance of the lecturer's enthusiasm, approachability, professionalism and experience in teaching and motivating students in learning and enhancing their learning experience in the international educational environment. The results also appear to show that students were happy with both foreign lecturers and the Vietnamese ones, although most students expected that if they enrolled onto the international programme, they would be taught by lecturers from the UK or foreigners, but this expectation changed when they were taught by Vietnamese local lecturers. McBurnie and Ziguras (2001) share similar findings, show that local teaching staff often have a better understanding of student needs and are better able to make course content relevant to the local context. This finding is similar to the results of a survey of students undertaking Australian transnational programmes in South East Asia, that students were more satisfied when being taught by both home university and local instructors; the results from this study showed that students reported higher overall satisfaction with the home university lecturers (Miliszewska and Sztendur 2010)

The second factor is related to the application of knowledge to the local cultural context and the connection between theories and knowledge applications. The results show that students were satisfied with the way lecturers used relevant examples and varieties of case studies to illustrate knowledge and its application and therefore students can enrich that knowledge and apply it into real-life contexts. Dunn and Wallace (2006) show similar results and demonstrate that transnational teaching could provide enrichment through adding examples and case studies from different countries. These concepts reflect the current approach to educational quality formation in TNHE as suggested by Pyvis (2011), that the approach promotes educational imperialism, and that guidelines and practices should be altered to embrace context-sensitive measures of quality.

The results reveal the lesser satisfaction level with the ability of lecturers to make complex concepts accessible and the experience of lecturers on subject matter, which should be improved in order to enhance students' learning. This indicates that the programme has some room for improvement. It could be seen that students expected a lot from the lecturers, and satisfaction came from the ability of lecturers for thoughtful understanding of the student needs, their learning context and the desired outcomes. The results show that students' perceptions of quality of teaching were related to the teaching experience of the lecturers in the transnational education; if lectures have experience in teaching in such collaborative settings, they could understand students more and help students to overcome the differences and barriers in international education. This could be linked to the proper induction of academic staff involved in transnational programme, which is essential to both the quality and equivalence of teaching and learning (Gribble & Ziguras 2003).

- ***Assessment and feedback***

Assessment is commonly held to contribute to feedback for students on their learning and the certification of their achievement. The survey results show that students were satisfied when receiving good feedback from lecturers. In particular, the survey results show that students were highly satisfied with the detailed and valuable feedback from the teaching staff which contributed to the student improvement in assessment performance. It could be understood from the study that since the teaching approach at the transnational programme facilitates student-centred learning and focuses more on developing critical thinking as well as active learning (compared with the local programme), guidance and feedback to help student improvement is central.

Results reveal the student satisfaction with having a variety of assessment methods used in their courses and the effect of different methods of assessments on student learning. Students in Business and Management liked the formats of assessments used in their course, of combining different methods like assignment, exam, portfolio assessment and presentation. The Banking and Finance students expected to have a combination of different formats and that they would be used more often.

The results suggest that improving and enhancing student's critical thinking skills is important because students were concerned about how to show critical arguments and how to improve their skills in learning and completing assessments. This is crucial because the lack of ability to think critically hinders students' performance in assessments (Samuelowicz 1987). It could be argued that lacking the ability to think and act critically during assessment is partly due to a student's learning style, because Vietnamese students, as many with Asian learners, are deemed to be passive recipients of knowledge and consequently have had little experience in studying independently and thinking critically (Go and Mok 1995). However, Ziguras (2001) found that transnational students were able to adapt to a different learning style and also suggested that they can be trained to develop an adaptable learning style (Smith 2001).

- ***Interactions and communications***

The results show the student perceptions of satisfaction related to the communication and interactivity with lecturers in class as well as the class-size arrangement contributing to effective communication in class. This could be seen as evidence for promoting creative thinking and promoting challenges and relevancy in the academic setting.

Both survey and interview findings show that effective communication and interaction among students themselves were considered as effective approaches to learning. This indicates the way students can learn together and from each other, through working in teams, supporting and giving commitment to their peers inside and outside the classroom, as an important criterion for effective learning. This is because students learned more and saw themselves as more engaged both academically and socially. This also indicates the importance of a learning community in which students spent more time learning together both inside and outside the classroom, as a good way to enhance the quality of student learning (Tinto 2003). The findings also reflect Mileswskas's (2006) study, showing that students perceived the most important attributes in assisting their learning were the development of strategies and formats that would enable communication between students and academics and students to students.

The results also indicate the desirable expectation of greater communications and interaction between the lecturers and tutors in delivering the course (15.7 per cent of respondents said it fell short of expectation). This seems to be a common expectation among students in the transnational setting, as Wallace and Dunn (2008) indicate: that greater communication between foreign and local academics in relation to transnational pedagogy would be highly desirable. Pannan and Gribble (2005) also found that communication needs to be increased and fostered among teaching staff within a transnational educational partnership.

- ***Learning environment and student supports***

With regard to learning environment, the survey results show two important aspects that contributed to the quality of learning experience, which were linked to the supported distance-learning network and extra-curricular activities provided for students. Evidence shows high levels of satisfaction with the support of the distance learning network (39.5 per cent meeting expectations and 49.8 per cent exceeding expectations), indicating a sense of belonging to the awarding UK institution, the accessing to learning resources and enhancing learning opportunities. This is consistent with Kember *et al*. (2010) in which findings show that student's motivation to learn was enhanced through a teaching and learning environment of specific supportive conditions, including a sense of belonging.

The literature illustrates that with technological changes, educational institutions must keep pace in providing the ideal learning environments to meet changing demands. This indicates the change of students' behaviours in using educational technology to enhance self-directed learning. Evidence from the survey shows that students are less satisfied with the service related to technology like internet connection services and computer clusters. This suggests areas for improvement in programme delivery. This could be an objective of bringing local practices in line with teaching and learning practices in the awarding institution which may have more resources and be more advanced (Ziguras 2001).

The results show that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the extra-curricular activities provided for students in the programme, with nearly half of the respondents reporting this exceeded their expectations. Most of students explained that having the opportunities to join extra-curricular activities as well as developing networks and connections had a positive impact on their learning outcomes. It could be seen that the network and activities were valued as part of the students' satisfaction with development. Research in both leisure studies and adolescent development provides support for the benefits of participating in the kinds of constructive leisure activities associated with extra-curricular activities (Larson 2000, McLellan 1999), linked to increases in interpersonal competence, self-image and better job quality.

Chapter 6 : FINDINGS FROM THE STAFF INTERVIEW

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of the staff perceptions of the partnership and the quality-related issues in delivering the partnership transnational programme which have an impact on perceived quality in terms of teaching, learning and student experience. The analysis seeks to provide an understanding of the quality of the transnational education programme from the perspectives of the programme providers.

Accordingly, the staff views on the partnership in relation to these expectations and perceptions are explored with a focus on analysis in relation to the input-process-and output of the education. This exploration is with the purpose of developing an understanding of the staff determinants for quality of the transnational programme. Six key themes emerged from the interview data and related literature are presented accordingly, each covered separately in sections 6.2 to 6.7. The analysis explores the areas, context conditions and mechanisms affecting the quality of the course delivery beyond the interpretations of the staff perceptions. Key implications from the findings are presented at the end of the chapter (section 6.8).

6.2 Staff motivations of the transnational partnership

The main motive or benefit of the partnership can be seen in terms of input. That is, both institutions sought to increase access to higher education for students and believed they could do this by responding to the market demand for internationalisation in education. A matter of equity in expanding access to transnational higher education is also raised through the analysis of the motivations for initiating the partnership.

Responding to the market demand for international education was seen as a key rationale for the Vietnamese institution to enter into the partnership. The evidence shows that the transnational programme was established with an overall aim to provide opportunities for students to gain access to international higher education, and to meet the increasing demand of the market for international higher education, as cited by a programme manager:

> *The overall aim of the institution is to provide good educational opportunities for students. With the transnational education programme, this is a great chance for students to gain access to international education in Vietnam with the most reasonable cost for studying. (Management staff, programme level)*

The above statement indicates the institutional strategy in providing opportunities for students to gain access to the UK programme, at the most reasonable cost. However, it could be argued that the financial burden is a limiting factor preventing some students from gaining access to international education, since the tuition fee is still much higher than the local equivalent programmes. This indicates the inequity issue in gaining access to education since better opportunities are being provided for those who can afford to pay. This reflects the exclusive role of education in serving particular elites in the middle and upper classes only. This also creates the inequality of access to higher education, and this could also widen the gap between the rich and the poor (Surichai 2002, cited in Rhein 2017). In light of this, the manager's comment about aiming “to provide good opportunities for students” should be read as referring to students who can afford their tuition.

With regards to the motivations and benefits of the partnership for the process of education, the data shows that having greater cross-cultural awareness and multicultural involvement as well as developing curricula internationally were seen as motives for the Vietnamese institution. The opportunities were seen through the development of institutional capacity through knowledge transfer from the UK partner. Vietnamese academics and managers shared the motives that they could learn and gain experience through working with the UK partner. This indicates that the experience they learn and gain when working with the partner institution, and through teaching in the programme, would reflect their level of satisfaction in the programme. They believed the partnership would provide developing opportunities through academic collaboration and the educational environment of the international standard for the institution. The transnational programme was positively seen to be linked to capacity-building where there was a possibility for enhancing the capacity of academic research and teaching collaboration, as cited by an institutional manager:

> *The international programme is seen as an international academic environment for our staff to work in and collaborate with our partner's university. (Vietnam management staff, institutional level)*

The partnerships were also seen as benefits to increase international interactions between the staff of both UK and Vietnam institutions. Leask (2004) argued that the transnational programmes provide a unique opportunity for institutions to achieve international goals if academic staff can be assisted to transform their teaching through active engagement with cultural others and local tutors also have an important role to play in this process and that effort should be put into fully integrating them into the teaching.

While Vietnamese staff emphasised the motivations of capacity-building and institutional development through the partnership, the UK staff seem to focus more on revenues and expansion opportunities in the international market. The data shows that the UK managers believed that there was an open market for them to enter and to attract Vietnamese students who would like to do a UK degree but financially they could not afford to do it. The UK programme managers considered opportunities in the Vietnamese market in particular because of the development of education in Vietnam and the openness of Vietnamese higher educational institutions to internationalisation. The UK managers shared that recruiting more international students was seen as one way of building revenues, brand and reputation.

The evidence shows that the motivation was seen as the way to spread the concept of the UK programme being offering it overseas as well as the way of delivering a UK degree without having a UK campus. The following statement of the management staff illustrates the point:

> *One of the reasons that we do engage in international activities is that we want to be seen as a proactive international university. We*

> *would like to spread the concept of the UK degree offering overseas to the home-country students. (UK Manager 2)*

The UK partner considered their approach to recruit international students through the international collaborative programme to be similar to the widening participation approach which encourages students to gain access to higher education. This was evident from the claim that *"widening participation would be understood in a sense of recruiting international students"* (UK manager 1). Although the UK manager cited the widening participation strategy in their approach to recruit more international students, the nature of it seems to be different. It could be argued that the transnational programme could bring opportunities to gain access to higher education for students, but it is also about charging fees and targeting those students who are able to pay the cost of international education. It could therefore raise a question of the quality of the course if it only focuses on the policy of attracting as many international students as possible, from the views of providers. Literature on widening participation shows that policies aimed at widening the participation of students from less privileged social groups urged institutions to lower their entry requirements even if the academic success of these students is questioned (Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown 2010). It could be argued that traditionally many universities in the UK have had a strong interest in developing an international atmosphere within their campuses for the development of their students; however, in increasingly competitive domestic markets, it is not easy for them to make a significant change to their international reputation through domestic recruitment. It is therefore natural for the universities to focus on the international market (Lieven and Martin 2006). There is also a revenue-raising interest for the international education institutions to develop a source of revenue through recruiting international students and charging them fees (Kälvemark and Van der Wende 1997).

6.3 Staff views on student qualities – reflecting on the recruitment strategy of the institution

The review of the literature has informed that the quality of student intake is considered by many researchers as a necessary condition for institutional success (Cheng and Tam 1997). Pursglove and Simpson (2007) indicate that admissions standards have a significant quality control role in influencing the quality of the overall educational outcomes. The findings indicate the role of the student recruitment strategy of the institution which emphasises the appropriate selection criteria to target potential students with a good chance of graduation and employability. The results show that the recruitment strategy of the institution is influenced by the market opportunities where there is an increasing demand for international education as well as demand for employability (Altbach and Knight 2007).

The selection criteria for the transnational programme was perceived as appropriate and suitable for a transnational setting, in which the selection was customised and focused on the suitability of the candidates to be successful in transnational education. This indicates the awareness of the institution in assuring the quality of student intake (as an input) to fit with the process of the transnational education and to achieve employment outputs. Evidence shows that the institution did not just recruit students based on their academic achievement but also through the individual essay and the interview test. The essay and interview test were seen as good ways to realise students' potential, as per this statement from the programme manager:

> *The good thing with the recruitment method that we do implement, that through the face-to-face interviews with judges – including experts from the business community – encouraging the interactions with potential students. It will help students to evaluate themselves, to open their minds about the outside world and then help them to find out a suitable learning environment and the programme that suits them most in terms of their ability, their desire and their aims. It's also the process of realising their potential. (Management staff 1, programme level)*

It seems that the institution was influenced by the market orientation and beliefs in quality as fitness for purpose (Harvey and Green 1993) to invite experts from the business community to be on interview panels for student selection. This indicates the focus of the institution in adding value to the recruitment process in selecting the potential students as well as signalling the employability dimension. The managers believed that the interview assessment promoted the interactions between the candidate and the recruitment committee, thereby serving two purposes. The first purpose was to help the committee to assess the general background and potential strengths and weaknesses of each candidate. The second purpose was, in contrast, to provide an opportunity for the candidate to develop knowledge about the programme and receive advice about the progression to the university.

It could be argued that the involvement of the business community interviews was a good way to send a message to students about employability and possibly represents the connection between the university and industry. However, the involvement of the business community in the interviews might lead to an issue of inequity since the habitus and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) could influence the recruitment and student's choice to the institution (Nora 2004). Cultural capital in this context represents that there could be significant support and encouragement from family (e.g. business background family) and community upon which a student could draw to influence his or her desire to attend the programme. Habitus refers to the student's values and belief system that fit within the academic environment of the programme, and he or she could take advantage of these in the interview. On the other hand, involving the business community – another group of stakeholders – can be seen as strategic in light of the outcome-driven approach (Harvey 2001) upon which the quality of the course will be judged by others. Responding to students' motivations for employability by building employability skills for students is also an important aspect of the institution strategy.

It seems that market opportunity is creating a more market-like environment which influences how the institution acts and competes for students. The findings indicate that student selection was considered important as an input factor but the process and output factors played more important parts in this transnational context. The quality of the students could affect the quality and efficiency of the programme delivery, which impacts on the reputation and outcomes of the programme. The staff perceptions demonstrate that the selection process operated so that they could recruit the students who have the necessary academic background in terms of knowledge and ability and have the potential to fully benefit from the programme.

6.4 Staff views on the course curriculum

There has been an increasing awareness of the appropriate level of adaptation of the content and pedagogy of international programmes and the impact of foreign providers on the culture of students and the nation. According to GATE (1997), materials and learning resources used should normally be adjusted to be culturally appropriate to the range of students to whom the courses are being offered. The findings indicate the awareness of the comparability and equivalency of the course delivery, in which the adaptation was necessary to address the local context and respond to student experience.

The evidence shows that programme managers from the Vietnamese institution were fully aware of the academic standards and equivalence of the curriculum of the course delivery. This was evident from the claim that “the programme follows strictly the curriculum and academic content from the UK partner’s institution” (Programme manager 1) and that the programme was marketed based on the UK reputation and qualifications that could ensure the quality of the programme delivery. However, from the academics’ views, the level of equivalence was not always straightforward if taking into account the context suitability. The curriculum is a body of knowledge-content and education is the process by which these are transmitted or delivered to students by the most effective methods that can be devised (Blenkin, Kelly and Edwards 1992). The data shows that most academic staff believed that adapting their materials to suit the Vietnamese context was a key contributor to the perceived quality of the curriculum, as illustrated in the following statements:

> *I think a good curriculum affects what they learn about and good teaching, good management to ensure the smooth running within the framework of a suitable educational programme. (Teaching staff, foreign 2)*

> *The curriculum should be adapted where necessary/possible for the lives and educational experiences on local students. (Teaching staff, foreign 1)*

> *You can’t take the programme from England and drop it off here. (Local tutor 3)*

The above statements clearly show the opinions from the teaching staff about the UK standard curriculum but they also show the need for adapting the course content for localisation, for meeting students' learning experiences. The teaching staff understood that students were undertaking the UK degree so in principle they had to follow the course content but they considered the way of teaching and delivering the lectures that could be adjusted in accordance to the student's educational experience. In particular, most of teaching staff realised the importance of having accurate assignment/examination questions which should be relevant to the local context since inappropriate assignment/examination questions really affected the students' performance when demonstrating their acquired knowledge. This was due to the curriculum being designed in the UK, in a different context to where the curriculum was delivered. The following statement is an example:

> *In some subjects like Organisation and Behaviour (OB), Working with and Leading people (WLP), there are some learning outcomes that overlap in the subjects or are not suitable but the assignments have to follow those learning outcomes; therefore, it really affects the effectiveness of teaching and learning. (Teaching staff, local tutor 3)*

The evidence shows that maintaining complete equivalence without any allowance for the localisation or adjustment was unpromising and not the way that the local staff wanted to deliver the programme. This indicates the need for adaptation, but the question was how to make such adaption, in order to still retain the equivalence of the franchised transnational programme. The evidence shows that the majority of teaching staff believed in adding more sections related to the local context in the syllabus, for instance, and adding more examples or case studies related to the local environment that made students understand the subject better. Those could address the issues, as cited in the following statements:

> *I think that we do not change much about the content but what we have to change is the way we deliver it, by adding examples and case studies of the local practices. (Teaching staff, foreign lecturer 1)*

> *….for example, in the Business Environment (BE) module, we have an additional section about Vietnamese business environment, beside the original one about the UK and European business environment. (Teaching staff, local tutor 2)*

It could be understood that the curricular adaptations to local context were necessary and teaching staff were those who could develop curriculum in the way that reflected the cultural context. Leask (2004) shows that locally employed teachers are in an excellent position to be able to assist in developing curricula in ways that reflect the culture and context in which their students are learning. Re-structuring the course and providing more supplementary modules for students could meet students' needs and also remain with demonstrable equivalence: for example, "adding supplementary modules will provide students with the wider range of skills and knowledge" and "the focus is to make sure to develop students to become a well-grounded graduate" (Programme manager 1) and "adding supplementary modules was totally out of the requirement of the franchised agreement but it all was useful for students to cope with UK degree" (Programme manager 2). These indicate that both managers and teaching staff believed in providing the necessary preparation that could help students to adapt themselves to the curriculum and new approaches to effective learning.

In this regard, the managers from the UK acknowledged the need for customising the course content by designing the assignment and exam questions. One of the management staff (UK manager 2) reported his acknowledgement from a series of examples of the mismatch between the assignment and the local context. This indicates the need for keeping the basic assignment but also adjusting to the local contextualisation, and that could be a solution for meeting the local needs and tailoring students' learning experiences. However, as explained by another UK manager, citing that "we all have to satisfy QAA and we all have to work on the same quality standard" (UK manager 1), the curriculum for the transnational programme should be kept original, in order to respect QAA requirements.

The above evidence seems to indicate the conflict between following the UK academic standards to respect the QAA requirements and adjusting the curriculum to adapt to the local context. It can be seen that UK management staff recognised the difficulty of reaching a balance between being responsive to local needs while retaining the equivalence of the qualification. It is worth noting that under the agreement of the franchised programme, the same qualification would be awarded for students, regardless of whether students were based in the awarding country or delivering country. It was also noted that the collaboration allowed the UK institution to maintain quality control by setting up curriculum content and teaching materials, setting the exam questions and setting the quality of the assessment to ensure the academic standards and maintain the equivalence of the programme delivery. These indicate that the conflict over the adaptation of the course content stemmed from concerns over quality control. However, it is worth referring to the identification of academic standards by Sharp (2017), who suggests that academic standards almost always rely on the exercise of judgement. Academic standards are determined by judgements made by members of a particular profession and the ways in which such judgements inform academic standards is by no means mechanically straightforward. Professional and academic knowledge is dynamic and subject to continual challenge and development; thus, academic standards derived from a consensus amongst professionals or academics will be temporary and subject to revision (Sharp 2017).

6.5 The staff views on teaching and learning

Teaching and learning were considered as important aspects that the staff discussed in relation to quality of the transnational programme. The findings suggest the essentials of providing excellence in teaching and learning in a student-central approach as per the UK requirements and framework, but they also raise cultural awareness influences on the quality of teaching and learning in the programme. Two aspects including teaching pedagogy and learning styles will be analysed. Through the analysis of the issues, it is suggested that adjusting teaching and learning and support strategies should be considered to reflect those cultural differences.

6.5.1 Teaching qualities

Quality in teaching was interpreted by the teaching staff as understanding students' learning needs and encouraging students to engage in their learning process as well as making students actively engage with the learning process to fully understand the relationship between knowledge and its practical application. The evidence shows that the adjustment was needed in achieving the quality of teaching and in response to cultural differences, in which, the teaching practices were facilitated by a student-centred approach which emphasised students' involvement and engagement.

The data shows that most lecturers believed in developing communication skills to enable students to identify their difficulties and learning needs, and to adjust their teaching practices as well as to develop suitable materials for students. Taking an example, a foreign lecturer (Foreign lecturer 1) shared that at the beginning he expected that students in his course – as a university student working to a Western standard - had to be familiar with the active learning approach. However, after a few sessions, he realised that students seemed to be passive in learning and unwilling to participate individually in discussion in class. By understanding student's prior experience and expectations, he had arranged his lectures by arranging for student discussion in groups and encouraging them to present their options by group. He saw that student's cooperativeness and activeness were developed gradually by doing this. This indicates that students learning together, teaching and sharing with one another, could achieve great results. The reason behind that could be cultural appropriateness, taking into account that students are in a society that is culturally oriented towards collectivism rather than individualism (Hofstede 1984). While most of local tutors were familiar with the passive learning styles due to the cultural issues and traditional learning approach, foreign lecturers reported that they had taken a so-called *"adaptation"* (Teaching staff 2) to get familiar with them. This is consistent with the insights of Widdowson (1992), who shows that teachers and students from different cultural backgrounds may differ significantly in interpreting their respective roles in classroom interactions, and in their conceptualisation of what constitutes learning and teaching.

While most foreign teachers seem clearly aware of the Western teaching approach, in which student independent learning and active participation in class were emphasised, the local tutors seem still to follow the teacher-centred approach of spoon-feeding students which stemmed from the traditional practices. Most local tutors admitted considerable challenges that they had to face, especially their traditional teaching practices that led to difficulties in adapting their teaching in the transnational programme. Reflection on the perceptions through the experience of most local tutors, who were permanently also teaching at the equivalent local programmes, appears to show that the local tutors now considered themselves as “facilitators” of learning whereas previously they were “providers” who provided information for students as in the traditional approach. The tutors shared that being facilitators meant they had to put in more effort in terms of time and skills to prepare lectures and to adjust their teaching styles as well as to update their academic expertise to match the requirements of the partnership programme and to encourage students’ participation. Taking another example, a local tutor said that “it changes my practice” when mentioning the way of giving feedback with students’ work (Local tutor 4). He shared the experience that previously he just followed the course profile to deliver the lecture and he mainly used to mark student’s work through examinations, without giving any oral feedback or written feedback to students. However, through teaching in the transnational programme he had to give not only written feedback with specific and detailed comments to students but also provide oral feedback to them – to encourage student-lecturer communication and interaction. Furthermore, adopting the practice of giving feedback by not just criticising the student’s work but also communicating the student’s achievements was what he learnt from the process. He admitted it was a challenge for him but having a good effect on students, he believed. It could be understood that the function of giving feedback to students was for the improvement in performance; however, it was found to be important through providing motivation for the student’s work.

The above evidence indicates that it is essential to adjust teaching styles and practices, together with adapting the curriculum as the analysis in the previous section (section 1.3.2), in aiming for quality in course delivery. Moreover, as students were not familiar with these new teaching and learning approaches, teaching staff believed that it is essential to address the cultural context in providing more supports for students to address these differences. Many have argued that teaching in transnational education should be tailored to the specific cultural context in which the students are located (Kelly and Ha 1998). Smith and Smith (1999), for example, conclude that “in those cases where a significant difference has been shown, it is prudent to consider adjusting teaching and support strategies” (p.77).

Biggs (1997) has argued that cultural differences can be overcome by applying the same universal principles of good teaching wherever a course is taught. Transnational educators argue that, while differences in teaching and learning may exist between providing and delivering countries, the differences are being reduced as common educational philosophies and techniques take hold around the world. However, the evidence from the data here suggests that it is, still, essential to tailor to the cultural context and adjust the teaching practices in the transnational setting accordingly. As for processing the transnational context, there would be pressures for institutions and teaching staff to revise curricular content to meet the needs of students and the local context. Internationalisation could mean local knowledges becoming part of higher education on equal terms with the dominant Western knowledge. However, neoliberal ideology would encourage uniformity or standardisation of Western values in higher education as a knowledge commodity in the global education market. In the process, they would lose their distinctive cultures and autonomy. Therefore, it raises a question of power relations; the concept of internationalisation in the process of delivery has connections with power and dominance.

It is understandable that as the programme was imported from a Western country, local tutors were unfamiliar with teaching styles and teaching practices; therefore, providing professional development for staff would be essential to help staff to deal with different learning styles and cross cultural teaching. In line with the adjustments in teaching and support strategies needed for students, the findings suggest the need to address staff development which is essential for improving teaching as well as fulfilling the student learning experience. Comments from the teachers showed that they were keen to take part in networking and professional development opportunities in order to enhance their teaching, curriculum adaptation and assessment practices, for example:

> *The programme had provided several training sections, of which, staff from partner's institution came and worked with teaching staff. However, those training were provided on the purpose of quality control and from the management perspective. (Foreign lecturer 1)*

> *What we expected were the opportunities to develop international experience or teaching experience at the international level: for example, a visit to the partner institution, or involvement in teaching there for a period of three months or a semester. (Local lecturer 1)*

> *We teach for a UK programme but have never been to the UK. I could expect to be there to experience the actual programme and have emulation of practice. (Local tutor 4)*

As the evidence above shows, the support could be a chance to visit the partner's university and exchange teaching activities with partner staff. Although there are barriers in terms of financial supports to do such things, it is considered as a good way of motivating and encouraging staff. These findings, therefore, suggest a policy priority for meeting and satisfying staff expectations.

6.5.2 Student learning styles and practices

Recognition of students' learning styles is regarded by many staff as a vital part of an effective teaching strategy. Most lecturers mentioned the previous student's educational experience which appeared to be traditional learning styles, such as lack of participation and engagement and or passively receiving information and instruction from the teachers, which were considered as a factor affecting the quality of students' learning in the transnational programme. The findings indicate that it is essential to address cultural differences which affect student learning styles, and to provide appropriate teaching methods and additional supports to tailor students' needs. Responding to these was seen as a way to help students to have a more positive attitude to their subjects and gaining better experience in learning.

The findings indicate that class participation and engagement of students were issues to address, due to the cultural effects. The teaching staff realised that the attitude and behaviour in participation and engagement were due to student learning approaches which were affected by the previous learning experience in high school where students were not encouraged to engage or be active learners. The evidence shows that the teaching staff saw students depending too much on the lecturers and the text books since students believed these as the definitive sources of knowledge. It appeared that students accepted the authority of the teacher or material studied without question. Evidence from the literature suggests that the problem of Asian students in general, for example, is that they are often characterised by Western lecturers as being less self-directed learners who defer more to the authority of the teacher (Biggs 1997, Kelly & Ha 1998) and that the students prefer more structured learning environments (Smith & Smith 1999).

Some lecturers reported that students generally struggled with notions of criticality, lacked confidence in speaking or answering questions in class and were also reluctant to question or challenge lecturer. For example, a foreign lecturer (Staff 2) cited that most students faced difficulties in transforming their ability and creative skills that they had from outside class activities to in-class activities that required the same creative skills to develop student's learning. He stated that,

> *I am surprised when observing students in their extra-curricular activities where students show their full of energy and their strong creativeness. It is totally opposite to their quietness in class. (Foreign lecturer 2)*

It could be seen that the quietness in class and lack of interaction with lecturers in class were criticised by lecturers as the student's weakness and affected the quality of learning in the programme. In respond to this, most of teaching staff believed that making students engage and participate by arranging the classroom and assigning roles to students were the solutions. In particular, they believed that selecting and dividing the lesson for group work effectively influenced student's motivations for participating (Foreign lecturers 1 and 2, Local tutors 4 and 5). Group discussions were held in which all participants were encouraged to freely exchange their ways of learning. Teaching staff working as facilitators were able to motivate students so they could feel part of the learning community. They believed in the use of better learning practices and therefore, gaining better learning outcomes. The teaching staff also believed that it is essential to make students realise their roles by actively involved in their learning as well as in learning processes of their peers.

Communication styles between students and lectures were considered as another issue that needed to be addressed. Most of lecturers saw the majority of students' shyness when voluntarily sharing ideas or discussing in class. They reported that students seemed to leave the questions at the end when the lecture was finished to look for clarification. Lecturers found that students were likely to ask questions when in a small class-size. Responding to these issues, the data suggests that reducing class-size and arranging tutorial classes were the keys to enhance the opportunities to communicate with students. Tutorial classes were delivered by local tutors and in using both English and Vietnamese to provide a more structured learning environment. Those were perceived as appropriate adjustments that the programme managed to do.

The above evidence suggests that cultural differences affected the students' approach to learning, and therefore it is essential to adjust the teaching methods and support strategies to respond to the issues. However, it could be argued that it was their levels of English which affected the level of motivation in communicating and participating seemed unavoidable. It could be understood that English is the main language of instruction in the programme. Facing difficulties of learning English can cause problems in developing student's understanding the specification subjects and therefore limit their capability and interaction (Errey 1994, Felix & Lawson 1994). Although, as per the programme requirements, students have to fulfil their English requirements (after finishing their first year of the programme) in order to proceed to the second year (as the first year of the specialist modules in their qualification), Schmitt (2005) shows that a language proficiency threshold will vary according to the complexity of the reading or writing task and that complex academic tasks may cause cognitive overload for students who have met the language entry requirements. This again suggests the need for further support for students in their learning in this English environment programme.

The evidence also indicates that transition to a new learning context in a different culture, which creates challenges to students in their approach to learning, should be taken into account. There has been a growing awareness of the need for better articulation between secondary education and higher education, since the secondary education was mismatched with the higher education expectations. The data shows that learning in a UK degree programme would be a challenge for students, such as "students are not used to familiar with coursework, it has been all with their life doing only exams" (Foreign lecturer 2), and facing with plagiarism, for example:

> *Plagiarism is a big issue that students have in the programme. Due to unfamiliar with citing or quoting the work of others, students used these resources without referencing. (Local tutor 4)*

Discussing the notion of plagiarism further, it could be argued that in the Western educational approach, judgments about plagiarism are underpinned by the view that valuable learning happens when students construct their own understandings rather than remember and reproduce that of others which often being referred to as rote learning or denigrated as spoon feeding. As explained in Le Ha (2006), in Vietnamese academic cultures, copying or finding others' answers may be the recognised and valued way to show one's learning and students allude to the origin of ideas but may do so indirectly rather than in a citation. Transitioning to the new academic culture, students arguably need to have further support, as suggested by Carroll (2008), by being given opportunities for discussion and interaction in which the concept of plagiarism and how the rules are applied in practice are discussed.

The above evidence indicates the support strategies are needed to help students in overcoming challenges in setting in a transnational course as well as having the necessary learning skills. It could, therefore, be suggested that it is essential to understand students' learning styles and cultural issues to facilitate a student-centred learning approach. The findings also suggest that cultural differences, language difficulties and transition to new learning contexts are the areas that should be addressed to provide appropriate support strategies for enhancing the student learning experience.

6.6 Staff views on learning environment

UNESCO (2004) stated that, due to increasing global competition, higher education institutions should improve their learning environments to support a more diverse community of students. The learning environment is a means of handling and responding to the growing globalisation and marketisation of the sector. The evidence shows that the programme created an environment in which students could learn and develop skills, both personal and professional, that were helpful for their future careers.

Most of teaching staff and the programme managers mentioned the benefits and the role of curricular-supported activities in enhancing a student's learning experience. The findings suggest that providing value-added activities could positively contribute towards creating an effective learning environment which enriches the quality of student learning opportunities in the programme.

Firstly, the data indicates a focus on building up social and transferable skills for students through extra-curricular activities. The management staff believed that these activities could create a learning environment that sparked students' interest and enabled students to develop their skills and knowledge, as the programme manager said,

> *We think that learning is a process of realising and fulfilling oneself. With a range of activities that the programme provided – starting from the beginning of the academic year to the end and from the annual activities to events – had created an environment where students could realize themselves and become more confident. (Programme manager 1)*

Offering efficient and professional extra-curricular activities seems to have received a positive impact, not only for students but also for the institution. A local tutor said,

> *These activities had been spreading widely and successfully and I could see it as a way of increasing the competitive advantage for the transnational programme and for the institution. (Local tutor 2)*

The data appears to show that the majority of teaching staff agreed that extra-curricular activities provided a rich array of opportunities and experience, in overcoming the passive and rote-learning approach and supporting teaching and learning which stimulated the desire of students to learn and to become engaged. This suggests that a wide range of extra-curricular activities could be an increasingly important factor for creating quality in the overall learning experience of the students. A tutor said,

> *I could see the difference and influence of the programme by looking at the extra-curricular activities provided by the institution and the way students engaged with these activities. (Local tutor 4)*

The focus of this approach seems to have made an impact from the context where most of local Vietnamese higher education programmes emphasise providing academic knowledge but are limited in developing the skills needed for students' future careers. As stated in Tran (2012), the forces of building social skills for preparing students for an increasingly demanding and technical labour market are reflected through the institutional constructive activities. However, it appears there is concern that the participating extra-curricular activities could lead to the detriment of academic development. Students might spend more time on the activities than studying. This suggests how to integrate these extra-curricular activities with academic learning and academic assignments: for example, to address students with more constructive activities which engage more with academic development.

Secondly, the data indicates the value of the guest speakers' sessions in promoting active learning for students. Speakers were business managers and experts in accounting, finance and other disciplines related to the academic modules (for in-class guest speakers) and also experts in developing professional skills. Most of the teaching staff believed that providing a pedagogical method that involved professionals as guest speakers in the classroom (Business Strategy, Accounting, Organisation and Behaviour, for example) could bring benefits for the student’s learning experience. They believed that this involvement enhanced active learning for students, since learning was seen as not only of basic facts or theories but also of the relationships between different branches of knowledge. The programme managers believed that students would be able to obtain knowledge about the working environment of the guest members (managers in the business community were invited) so students could gain career-specific information. A programme manager also cited that “the speakers also provided students with industry-specific information that may give students an extra edge when interviewing and when actually entering the workplace” (Programme manager 2).

There is a link between this and the teaching pedagogy (see section 6.5.1) in that quality in teaching was seen as making students actively engaged with the learning process to fully understand the relationship between knowledge and its practical application - especially in the local context. The data shows that lecturers believed in effectively engaging with activities in teaching which provided relevance and contributed to the desired outcomes for students. The involvement of guest-speakers was an example of those activities in classroom teaching. The education literature also suggests that frequent use of alternate class formats will enrich the classroom experience (Lowman 1995) and one suggestion for promoting student involvement is guest speakers. Davis (2009) advises the use of guests with relevant expertise or practical experience in which speakers in an accounting class could include both accounting practitioners (covering public, private, government), and users of accounting information (such as managers, analysts or investors).

Thirdly, the data indicates the role of field-study trips that the programme provided for students in enhancing students’ practical engagement. The arrangement of field study trips was seen as a good way to stimulate learning and teaching. Field trips are widely regarded as an important part of the undergraduate experience (Gold *et al*. 1991, Jenkins 1994, Kent *et al*. 1997) where students can learn via first-hand experience, far removed from the sometimes austere confines of the classroom (Kent, Gilbertson and Hunt 1994). These academic-related activities were seen as inspiring and motivating factors for students' engagement in learning. The evidence suggests that field trips are considered an opportunity for affective learning through skills development which enriches the student learning experience. The following statements show how the teachers responded to this:

> *I organise a field trip for students to go to international organisations or local business. They are motivated. The field-trip is good for students to learn about the organisational behaviour and business environment of those organisations. (Teaching staff, foreign lecturer 1)*
>
> *Most of the field trip is associated with the subject and linked to assessment of the subject and therefore students could gain the live experience and value added in such trips. (Local tutor 2)*

As reported by the management staff, the field study trip organised for the students had a very positive influence on their learning according to the feedback after the trip that the programme received. The nature of the field trip depends on the focus and level of the course; there has been a transition from 'sight-seeing' to problem-oriented fieldwork in which students also develop transferable skills in project design, organisation, leadership and group dynamics (Jenkins 1994, Kent *et al.* 1997).

While most management staff and local tutors referred to learning environment as the value-added activities and seemed reluctant to criticise the physical resources, foreign staff particularly emphasized the standard of the physical learning environment which is called "a learning resource centre", as stated by a foreign lecturer:

> *I am not blaming anything, but what students need is a learning resource centre which has, not a kind of super library, but you should have a work station, IT, café and social environment to encourage students to come to university and stay to university for a day.*
>
> *At the moment, my feeling is that our students see themselves as part-time students who come to class and leave – and feel that being in class is where the learning is done. (Foreign lecturer 2)*

The above evidence suggests that learning resources should be at the equivalent standard – in engaging students and providing learning experience for students. It could be argued that the quality of learning opportunities refer to the means provided to students to assist them in reaching the academic standards (QAA 2015), these include appropriate teaching pedagogy, extra-curricular activities, student support and guidance and of course the learning resources such as libraries, computer clusters and the learning resource centre as suggested above.

6.7 Staff views on working with the partner institution

The findings indicate that it is essential to address the issues of differing expectations, communication and time delays in working with the partner, since these issues affect the quality of the programme delivery.

This is the first partnership programme at undergraduate level between a Vietnamese institution and UK partner. Over the decade of the partnership, it was expected to have achieved a shared understanding between the partners and effective co-operation at the operational level. However, the findings showed there are still issues at the operational level of the partnership. It can be said that time, in this case over a decade of operation, is important in developing a shared understanding across the partner group (Baus and Ramsbottom 1999) and over time, shared norms and shared beliefs guide the partnership towards institutionalisation (Amey, Eddy and Campbell 2010).

Firstly, there is a difference in the perceptions around accessing resources and knowledge-sharing of the staff of the two institutions. While the UK programme managers believed that they were supportive in sharing resources and providing support that enabled the teaching and administrative staff to gain access to their systems, the local staff perceived the situation differently. The evidence suggests that better support should be provided for the host institution. The data shows there are issues of not receiving enough information, such as, "they changed the curriculum but we haven't been updated the necessary instruction" (Local tutor 2); not receiving prompt support when expected, as cited by one administrative staff member: "recently they changed the module code, the assessment form, the evaluation form and with those changes we should have detailed guidance on how to work with them" (Administrative staff 1); or the issue of staffing and support needed, as cited by another administrative staff member:

> *At the beginning I worked with a very supportive member of staff who dealt with the situation very quickly and sufficiently. However, since that staff member changed and a new one replaced her, everything was very slow and not supportive. (Administrative staff 2)*

Most academic staff hold an expectation that the partner's institution would provide enough instruction and support materials for teaching when they were given opportunities to become involved in developing the course curriculum; however, as cited by one local tutor, the expected support does not seem to arrive:

> *We work on the partner institution's curriculum and materials, we expected to receive teaching manuals like case study, CD, course book, but these were limited. (Local tutor 4)*

The above evidence highlights the importance of resource exchange and knowledge-sharing in the partnership since in restricting access to resources such as knowledge and support, the delivery of teaching and learning are affected. This is essential because sharing practices and resources could develop the sense of ownership and belonging. The literature shows that a key aspect of international collaborative partnership is developing a participatory approach in which all partners feel that they have ownership of the development and that problems which result from unequal power relationships should be avoided (Quicke 2000, Foskett 2005). When realising the full potential of international collaborations, the relationships between the institutions should be on an equal footing. For instance, an effective collaboration should involve staff in curriculum development activities and allow them to share experiences of teaching (Campbell and Van der Wende 2000).

Secondly, time and geographical distance were seen as factors creating tensions in operational relationships. Due to the distance between the partners, activities undertaken by the institution in Vietnam occur seven hours ahead of the UK institution. Activities between the partners therefore do not occur simultaneously. The responses to activities such as emails asking for help or advice could not be actioned at times that suited the needs of either Vietnam or the UK. Findings from the staff views suggest time delays affect the effectiveness of the programme delivery, whereby the staff feel powerless to provide students with the information they perceive the programme should be able to do, as cited by a programme manager:

> *For example, in dealing with a student's request about an assignment or assessment, we couldn't process it here so we have to send the request to the UK and wait….It's time consuming when processing students' requests. (Management staff 2)*

In the transnational context, it is understandable that distance and time make it impossible for both parties to engage in and negotiate the outcomes at the same time. Usher (2002) suggests that distance and time can be influenced by changing the relationship between the two dimensions through the introduction of electronic technology. However, it is clear that the transnational education partnership benefits from the technological forms of interaction like computer-mediated communication or web conferencing for inter-exchange. While web conferencing requires an arrangement in advance, email can be sent at any time but this is not enough to ensure that the problem can be solved promptly and the relationships between the faculty members remain positive. This therefore suggests a transformation mechanism is required to enable the institution to solve the problems on behalf of the partner.

Communication is another factor that caused the conflict between the two partners. The data shows having more effective communication from the partner's institution should be addressed. The problems occur when the staff of the two institutions communicated issues related to assessment, marking and the moderation procedures. A lack of direct interaction between the two parties led to misunderstanding in communication sometimes, as cited by one lecturer:

> *I think it's because of the communication problem. I sent an email about assessment and expected to receive a response promptly*

but received it after three months. I know that's their priorities. (Foreign lecturer 1)

Problems with communication due to delays in responding to emails, delay in solving the requests or the level of understanding among partnership members were revealed. The evidence suggests the need of effective communication and trust between the staff of the two institutions in dealing with problems. It could be argued that effective communication was initially established via face-to-face setting, both formally and informally; however, with the transnational programme setting, the main communication was via email, and therefore, responses to emails were important.

6.8 Key implications and summary

The chapter has provided insights into the understanding of quality in the context of the collaborative programme between Vietnamese and UK institutions, based on the analysis of the data gleaned through a qualitative approach and an interview tool used to uncover staff views. The chapter helps in the identification of quality determinants that could lead to understanding the quality of institutions and the partnership programme. It could be seen that quality is defined based on the different perspectives of the staff, which have significant impact on teaching, learning and student employment opportunities in the transnational education programme.

Considering the staff motivations and expectations in the section above together with the analysis of the staff perceptions of the quality of course delivery, it is suggested that quality as perceived by staff has different emphases. The UK partner focuses more on the output elements (student employability) and their input (a UK programme) rather than the process of education. The Vietnamese staff, however, focus more on the process of the delivery of high-level education experiences for students in the programme. The process of delivery is seen as comparable to that in the UK partner's country and the elements of the educational experiences which help the students to attain valuable educational and employment outcomes. These have been filtered locally by acknowledging the Vietnamese cultural influences on teaching and learning as well as working with the partner university.

Particularly, with regard to student qualities, the findings have offered an insight into the institutional recruitment strategy, in which the selection emphasised the most suitable students because of their successfulness in studying in the programme as well as their employability. This reflects the input element of the input-process-output model of quality management. The message raised from this is the quality of the input which influences the quality of the process and output of the education.

The findings also indicate that most transnational education arrangements are based on the premise of comparability between the transnational education offering (UK standards and equivalence) and the transnational education delivery (local adaptation). The findings indicate the important role of management staff and academic staff focusing on the process of teaching and learning, in re-constructing the course, and in making it more relevant to the local context while still keeping the equivalence of the content. There are similarities between these findings and those that Gribble and Ziguras (2003) have observed, indicating that engaging with the transnational education context in terms of an intercultural curriculum that uses country-relevant case studies and materials and more in-depth understanding of the local institution was viewed as important.

The findings confirm that recognition of students' learning styles is regarded by the staff as a vital part of an effective teaching strategy. The findings indicate that it is essential to address cultural differences, which affected student learning styles, and to provide appropriate teaching methods and additional supports tailored to students' needs. Responding to these was seen as a way to help students have a more positive attitude to their subjects and gain better experience in learning.

An effective learning environment was reflected in the views of the staff through the adding-value activities. The findings indicate the focus on building up social and transferable skills for students through the extra-curricular activities. The value of providing guest-speaker sessions and field-study trips to promote active learning for students was highlighted.

It could be understood that it is clearly important to have good communication between the two partner institutions because it is essential to ensure that each party understands what is expected and how to solve the problems from working in a cross-cultural environment. However, intercultural engagement is not easy to achieve, since “professional intercultural educators know that communicating and interacting with culturally different other is psychologically intense” (Paig 1993, p.1). It could be argued that problems happened when communication in a cross-cultural environment was caused not only by the cultural distance but also by intentional choices made by the different parties. This suggests that cultural issues and logistical issues affect communication when working with a partner.

Chapter 7 : DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have provided a reflection on how quality is understood through the student and staff perspectives on transnational education. This chapter brings a further reflection on quality through a comparative analysis of the stakeholder perspectives, in which a significant overlap and the similarities on the views between the students and staff are highlighted in understanding the factors contributing to quality of transnational education.

The reflection emphasises the importance of curricular equivalence and adaptation to facilitate the quality of the programme delivery; the awareness of cultural differences in the approaches to teaching and learning; the value of supporting activities for enhancing student learning needs and skills; and the factors to consider when working with the partner institution. In the light of the stakeholder analysis, a model for quality management of the transnational programme delivery is embedded through a developed framework of stakeholder perspectives. Those discussions are engaged with key implications for quality management of the transnational operation.

7.2 The stakeholder perspectives on quality

The findings appear to show that both students and staff shared a common understanding of quality from their perceptions of how to understand the quality of the transnational programme. Overall, they conceived of quality of transnational education in relation to fitness for purpose in achieving learning experiences for students and attaining educational and employment outcomes. The evidence shows a significant overlap and similarities in the views between students and staff on quality in transnational education. This makes a significant contribution to the current literature since there is little in the literature which addresses the question of overlapping perceptions between staff and students on quality. Most of the current literature on stakeholder perceptions of quality show that different stakeholders hold different expectations and perceive quality differently in transnational higher education (Wilkins & Balakrishnan 2012, Stella & Bhushan 2011).

There are common views among the students and the management staff who shared their beliefs and values about quality in transnational education, in which quality is perceived in accordance with enhancing student learning opportunities and employability. From the student views, the concern for employability can be seen as linked to their references to three main factors: the qualification, their skills and knowledge developed through the course, and their personal development, as described in Figure 7.1.

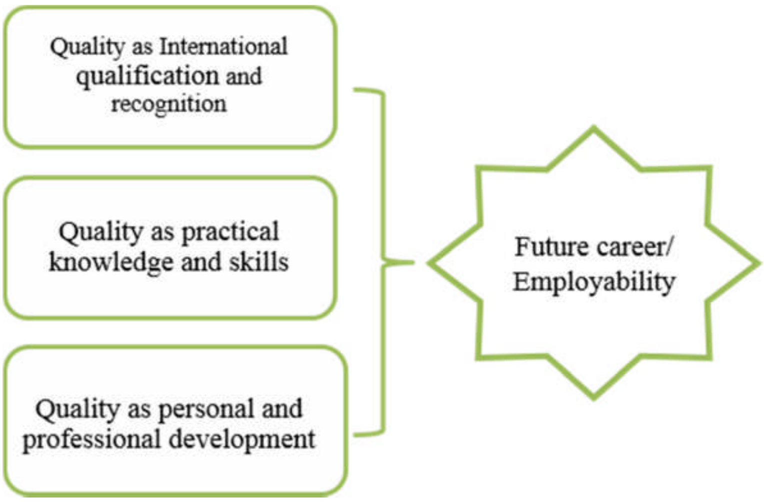

Figure 7-1: Course quality defined by students

This suggests that the dominant student view on the purpose of TNHE is as a pathway to advance future careers through personally transformative experiences (process to output). This finding is partly in line with the findings of the existing research (Shekarchizadeh *et al*. 2011, Moorman 2011, Beljulji *et al*. 2011) into the influence of employability on a student's choice and perceptions of quality of higher education institutions and programmes. It can be interpreted that students regard transnational education as an investment in career advancement and employability and that this is becoming a more important factor, which shaped their perceptions of quality. This reflects the insight of Wilson *et al*. (2007), who also show that students increasingly consider their time studying as an investment in the likelihood of developing a successful career.

The student views on quality focusing on the outcome of the education are consistent with the views from the UK and Vietnamese management staff. The results show that management staff consider that job prospects and employability are the main focus, in which students will be equipped with a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make them more secure for their future careers. This reflects the views from Egege and Kutieleh (2008), who state that transnational students deliberately choose to enrol in international education because they think they will receive a better quality education as well as expecting significant differences in their international programme that the local programme cannot sufficiently provide them. The research findings suggest that UK international recognition and qualifications, in particular, are important elements from the student perspective, which reflects their perceptions on quality, and from the management staff, which reflects the reputation of the institution.

While sharing similar expectations on the outcomes of the transnational education linked to the employability aspects of the course, however, the focus of the teaching staff shifts sharply onto the delivery process of education for the student learning experience. The research findings highlight that quality as perceived by the academic staff is in relation to the delivery of high-level education experiences, equivalent to those in the UK partner's country, and the elements of the educational experiences which help students to attain valuable educational and employment opportunities in the global market. The staff providers perceptions of quality seem to be in line with the approach of defining quality "as fitness for purpose" (Ball 1985, Reynolds 1986, Crawford 1991), whereby quality is perceived in relation to the purpose of education to help students acquire and experience learning opportunities (with professional knowledge and practical skills) to be able to support employability outcomes. This is consistent with Watty (2005) and Lomas (2002), who find that quality as fitness for purpose is widely prevalent among academic staff in Australia and the UK.

Quality as perceived from staff perspectives is strongly consistent with Chua (2004), who finds that the staff perspectives of quality compared to those of students are wider in that they consider the focus should be on many aspects of higher education (of the input-process-output elements). Both staff and students emphasise the elements of curriculum, teaching and learning, learning environment and student support as important dimensions for the quality of the transnational programme. Two dimensions were found to be wider from the staff perspective.

Firstly, the “student qualities” indicator falls within the concern for quality from the staff perspective, not from the student perspectives. The staff perspectives on the student qualities reflect the institutional policy in responding to market demand, to the recruitment of students and their ability to adapt to and succeed in the transnational educational environment. The quality of student intake, which is input, is considered by the staff as an important issue which could positively affect the process and outcome of the education, which is consistent with the literature of Wang (2008). Moreover, the findings show that staff perceived the quality of the student intake reflects the image and reputation of the programme.

Secondly, staff considered the account of the relationship with the partner institution as an important factor to consider for the quality of transnational education, which related to communication and relationships and commitment between the institutions. This is supported by a vast amount of current literature on transnational partnerships that identified effective, inter-culturally sensitive communication as one of the critical factors (Strafford & Taylor 2016, Sutrisno & Pillay 2013, Hefferman & Poole 2015).

7.3 Curriculum - the importance of equivalence and adaptation

Findings from the perceptions of both staff and students indicate that for enhancing student learning experiences as well as ensuring quality and maintaining reputation of the programme, the issues of equivalence and adaptation need to be addressed thoroughly. Their perceptions of the quality of the course provision on curriculum is described in Figure 7-2.

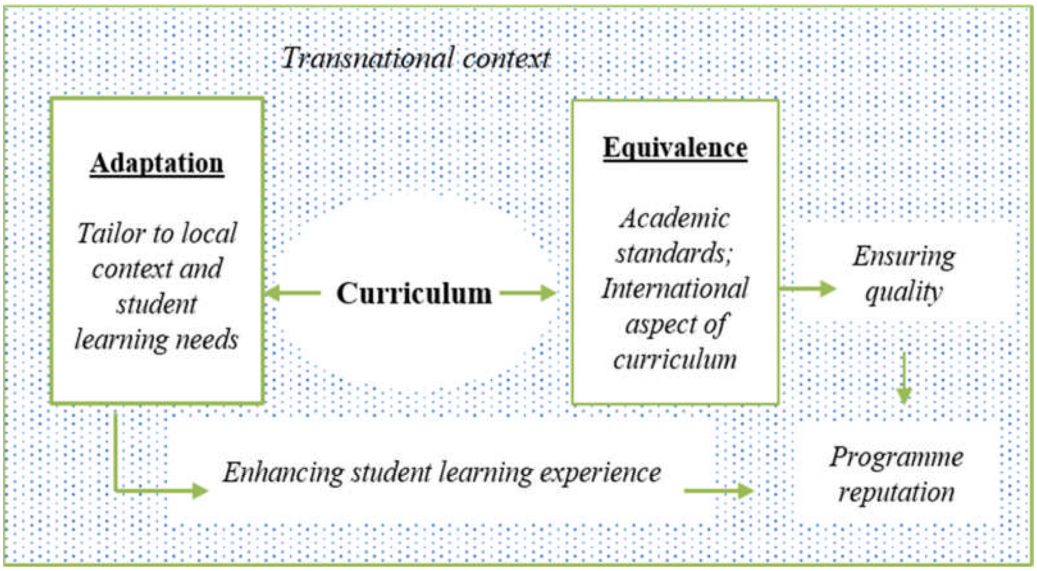

Figure 7-2: Adaptation and equivalence of the transnational curriculum

The significant highlights from this study which contribute to the current knowledge are the notion of adaptation in the curriculum and teaching and learning in the transnational setting. This indicates that the extent of curriculum adaptation to the local context and the effectiveness of the transnational curriculum delivery implies the role of the institution lies in enhancing the quality of student learning. Specifically, the findings strongly support the approach that adaptation of curriculum to tailor the specific cultural context is necessary and is related to quality of learning and teaching. This means that being flexible in the adaptation to the local context is evidently an important factor in enabling the quality of transnational education. Research evidence shows that most of teaching staff experienced that inappropriate assignments or examination questions really affected the students' performance in demonstrating their acquired knowledge; therefore, they believed that adapting their materials to suit the Vietnamese context is the key contributor to the quality of the teaching. Students also support this, since they considered the curriculum was too UK-centric and less relevant to their local context. This therefore suggests the essential need for change in the curriculum where adaptation is needed to engage with local context.

The evidence from the academic staff strongly reflects the essential need for the adaptation of the curriculum and the level of equivalence was not always straightforward if taking into account the context suitability. This is consistent with the insights of Smith (2010), who states that equivalence has closer meaning to “comparable” than rigid equality to the awarding institution and adaptation is strongly advisable. This provides significant empirical evidence to consolidate the quality assurance framework, in which quality assurance (QAA) guidelines tend to require that transnational programmes have equivalent curricula and similar standards at both awarding and delivering institutions. As such, notions of equivalence play an important role in the documents of quality assurance in transnational education. However, none of them is advocating that equivalence represents the same as the home programme (Smith 2010). The research findings affirm the UNESCO and OECD (2005) *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education*, that awarding institutions should “ensure that the programmes they deliver across borders and in their home country are of comparable quality and that they also take into account the cultural and linguistic sensitivities of the delivering country” (p.14). Such guidance and the views of staff in this study can be interpreted as the contribution to quality assurance of transnational education. This means that the delivering institution can adapt the curriculum to the local context to enhance student learning opportunities by providing a more context-based curriculum (Pyvis 2011).

It is argued that students may learn new things from a curriculum rooted in one cultural setting; however, their social, religious, cultural, economic, legal, or political constraints may affect the application of what they learn (Chan 2008, Wang 2008). As such, the transnational curriculum is considered to provide the opportunities for students to explore the ways in which the culture of local context and culture of others shape knowledge and professional practice internationally and locally. The research findings indicate that this, however, brings challenges and opportunities for both students and staff, since not only students need to learn about what is expected of them in a curriculum that was designed in another culture, but teachers also have to be aware of adding more local contexts and applications when delivering the curriculum. This reflects Dunn and Wallace (2008), who suggest that curriculum adaptation to contexts requires intercultural understanding and competence on the part of the institution in order to better understand students' references, and to better tailor the curriculum to the students' competency needs.

Adaptation to the local context is clearly confirmed as a factor to enhance the quality of the programme delivery. The findings, on the other hand, also show that keeping academic standards comparable to the awarding institution is crucial for ensuring the quality of the programme. This is consistent with most of the current literature on the notion of equivalence for transnational programmes (Blickkem & Shackeford 2008, Castle & Kelly 2004). The evidence shows that the most positive aspect of the course provision perceived by students is the international aspect of the curriculum, which is equivalent to the UK international curriculum. This is considered as a factor to enhance international outlook for students and to be helpful for their future careers. These perceptions are similar across the students' disciplines (e.g. in Business Management and in Banking and Finance), in that they relate quality to the international aspects of the curriculum and the employability prospects resulting from the course, thus satisfying their motivations for choosing transnational education. The views on the quality standard is supported by the evidence from the student survey indicating that the significant highest rates of satisfaction of the course perceived by students of both disciplines are on the "international dimensions of the curriculum" and "the practical knowledge and skills provided" and "the helpfulness of the programme for students' future career". This highlights the extent to which transnational education has the potential to enhance employment-specific skills and qualifications that are relevant to the context of global professions and act as an important driver for students (British Council 2013). With regard to staff views on the equivalence of the course provision, the findings indicate that equivalence is seen as the benchmark by the programme managers of both the UK and Vietnam institutions. This was evident from the claim that "the programme follows strictly the curriculum and academic content from the UK partner's institution" (Vietnam management staff) and "we all have to satisfy QAA and we all have to work on the same quality standard" (UK management staff).

7.4 The approaches to teaching and learning - the awareness of cultural differences

With a shared programme, teaching and learning is characterised by a set of elements which were formulated through the perceptions of both students and staff by the awareness of cultural differences towards a learning-centred approach to maximise learning opportunities and quality (shown in Figure 7.3). The transnational approach to teaching and learning is discussed further through the two main components: teaching and learning.

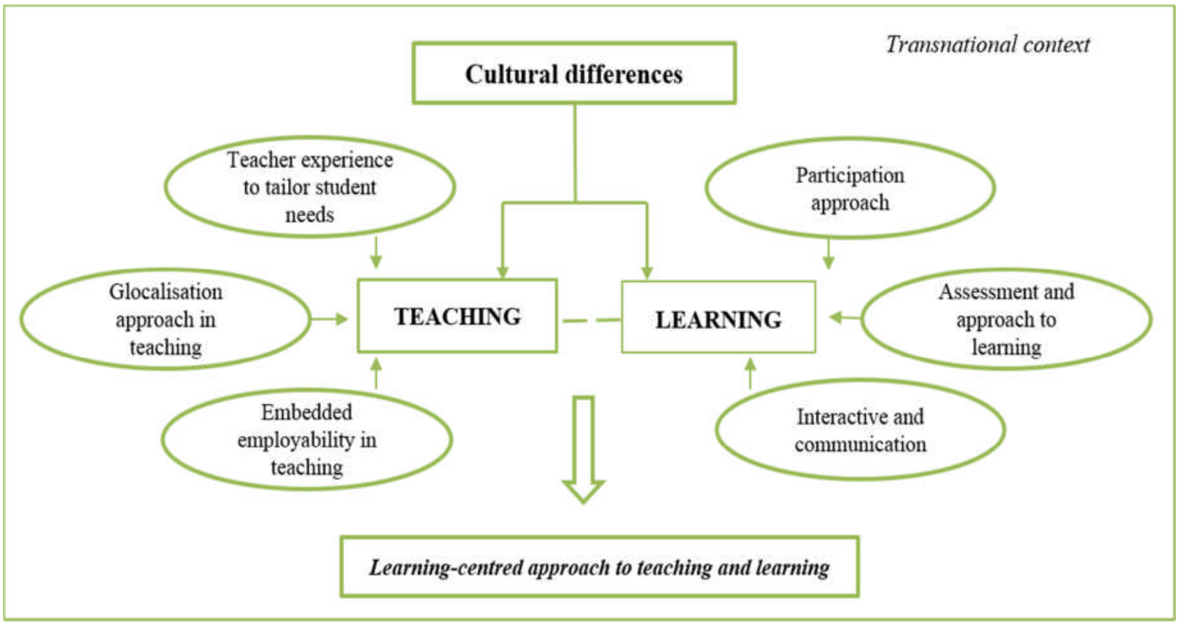

Figure 7-3: Transnational approach to teaching and learning

7.4.1 Teaching and the role of teachers

Findings agree with the current literature that teaching and delivery aspects of education have been perceived as important determinants for education quality and student satisfaction (Elliott & Shin 2002, Browne *et al*. 1998). However, the significance of the views from the both students and staff is that teachers' qualities are seen in relation to the ability to address student learning needs and by overcoming the cultural differences to reach achievement goals in a cultural specific context (Berliner 2005).

From the student perspectives, the insights of their perceptions on teacher quality suggest the requirement of a complex blend of personal qualities, cultural and subject discipline knowledge, language competency and teaching skills. This aligns with the research of Hill, Lomas and MacGregor (2003) in which the quality of the lecturer is one of four themes indicating quality of education, including cultural and disciplinary knowledge and skills. This remains true, despite the argument that following globalisation and technology developments, the nature of higher education has changed with the Internet, email and distance learning materials becoming used to a far greater extent to communicate knowledge, with less dependence on the relationship between lecturer and student (Lomas 2002). This indicates that the role and qualities of lecturers still play an important role in students' learning in the transnational education setting where the curriculum is designed in one country but the delivery is at another. This finding is consistent with the views of Lomas (2004), who suggests that the need to reward and recognise good quality teaching in an environment does not adequately emphasise the teaching function, further than that and more importantly, it is the ability of teaching staff to stimulate student's interest in the subject and to motivate them to participate in the learning process. The study indicates the appreciation of students for the role of academic staff in facilitating student learning and interaction, and therefore it is seen as a factor that enables the quality of the transnational course delivery. This confirms Cook's (1997) findings that students consider academic staff factors as most critical to their success. The research evidence shows that students emphasise the importance of having a combination of lectures by both local tutors and foreign lecturers who have the teaching experience in transnational education to facilitate their learning needs and learning opportunities.

From the teaching staff perspectives, quality in teaching was interpreted as the process of understanding students' learning needs and making students actively engage with the learning process to fully understand the relationship between knowledge and its practical application. This means teachers have an important role in reflecting their ways of making students actively engaged and fully participated in learning. These are the way to enable understanding the relationship between international knowledge and its practical application locally. Research evidence shows that most lecturers believed in developing communication skills to enable students to identify their difficulties and learning needs, and to adjust their teaching practices and to develop suitable materials for students. The staff perceptions also reflect the level of adjustment of their teaching pedagogy within a complex and rapidly changing environment that requires cultural knowledge, self-awareness and curriculum modification (Gribble and Ziguras 2003a). This implies the practice of effective teaching in transnational education is about transforming knowledge and being aware of cultural differences to facilitate student learning.

Regarding teaching in the transnational context, the research findings highlight that teaching staff perceived challenging teaching in the transnational setting, in which the challenges were due to the requirement to provide similar learning experiences and outcomes as students at the home institution. The findings indicate that working in a more student-centred way demands much more from teachers than working in a teacher-centred way, in meeting the individual needs of students (Schweisfurth 2013). This reflects the need to be adequately prepared for distinct academic and cultural encounters due to students having different sets of knowledge bases and being accustomed to different teaching and learning styles that are located in the cultural setting of the institution (Gribble and Ziguras 2003a). This is supported by Betty Leask (2008) who reveals that two of the major challenges for teachers in transnational education are identifying the range and balance of knowledge, skills and attitudes that they need to develop and balancing their own learning with students by understanding and meeting the needs of students locally. This factor could be seen as common challenge since a major risk for many universities working in transnational setting is the quality of teaching (Debowski 2008).

The insights of the pedagogy indicate that the approach to enhance student learning by giving more real-life contexts and examples has an impact on the depth of knowledge and graduate employability. The evidence shows that the ways the course was designed and the module delivered to embed employability in transnational teaching are considered by the teaching staff as factors enabling quality of teaching and learning. This is relevant to what Leask

(Leask 2008) has called “knowledge to become expert in the field in a transnational setting”, emphasising the need for “transnational lecturers who are able to present both theory and theory in practice and incorporate current examples from the local as well as the international context” (p.125). Students also support this views, when emphasising the role of lecturers in transforming knowledge from theory to practice. Students were happy with the use of relevant examples and local context case studies and the applicable aspect of the curriculum.

It can be seen that if the lecturers are able to add relevant examples and case studies of the local practices and embed employability into the curriculum, it will be a good way to localise the curriculum. When employability is understood as the inclusion of skills agenda into the curriculum, it may bring more work for academic staff (Knight and Yorke 2004). However, if the academic staff have been motivated to do this well, it could consequently keep standards of the international curriculum (institution-wide integration) and at the same time localise the cultural local context (local responsiveness). Among the many challenges of operating transnationally, effectively managing the tension between the need for institution-wide integration and the need for local responsiveness seems to be a central task (Shams and Huisman 2012).

It can be interpreted that the above discussion and the perceptions of staff and students can lead to a “glocalisation” (Robertson 1992) approach to teaching and learning in the transnational setting. Defining effectiveness in teaching in higher education is difficult because it encompasses values, behaviour and many other factors. This study, however, is supported by the evidence from both students and staff to suggest the glocalisation of teaching and learning is an effective approach. It could be argued that embedding a glocal perspective across the transnational education curriculum encourages teachers and students to explore local and global perspectives that will enrich learning experiences in a positive way. This is because learning is perceived in this study as effective when contextualised locally, since the local context frames the learner’s experience and lived reality (Pyvis 2011). From the evidence of student motivations and expectations on transnational education, it can be seen that students are increasingly referred to as ‘glocal’ (Caruana and

Montgomery 2015) and have particular and distinctive needs in realising global educational aspirations by overcoming constraints which tie them to their localities. The glocalisation refers to the respectful exchange of cultural wealth among students and teachers in order to inform and enhance pedagogical practice (Patel and Lynch 2013).

Given the importance of teachers and delivery aspects to enable the quality of the course delivery, it is arguable for the institutions in transnational operations to address the professional development. It can be seen that professional development is needed to encourage reflective practices, increase cultural understanding, improve communication among staff and facilitate curriculum adaptation. Teaching staff involved in the programme include both local tutors and foreign lecturers. The foreign lecturers are challenged with the cultural differences and the context setting in delivering the course. Local tutors, on the other hand, are not always familiar with teaching practices in this setting. Therefore, professional development needs to be designed for the teaching teams. Evidence from the student survey also indicates the critical importance of having proper induction and training for the academic staff. It is argued that in transnational teaching, qualifications, language skills and experience are important, but so are attitudes and cultural awareness. The research undertaken by Keevers *et al*. (2014) suggests that it is fundamental to enable transnational programme designers to consider the role of professional development in enhancing dialogic interaction, negotiation and relations. Providing professional development for staff as expected by the staff is arguably a good way to enhance the quality of the transnational operations. This is emphasised by Smith (2009), who recognises the importance of structured academic development opportunities for reflection and the transformation of personal perspectives and practices. The expectations noted by the QAA also show that all staff, irrespective of location, should receive adequate support and development in learning and teaching. However, this is still somewhat patchy in terms of transnational education partners, as indicated by Smith (2015). As the research findings suggested, the support for teaching staff could be a chance to visit the partner university and exchange teaching activities with partner staff, focusing on the development of practice rather than the development of the individual academic. This means further collaboration between the institution and foreign partners in teacher training needs to address enhancing teaching quality. This is similar to the suggestion of Henderson and Barnett (2017), who state that staff exchanges or visits can support teaching practices, helping to ensure a joint approach to delivery and monitoring.

7.4.2 Student learning in the transnational setting

The findings from the staff views direct attention to the adjustment in student learning behaviours to adapting to cultural differences in the transnational context. Evidence shows that teaching staff recognising students' learning behaviours is regarded as a vital part of an effective teaching strategy in the transnational operation. This affirms the theme in the current literature that being aware of students having different learning behaviours, which may interfere with the objective of comparable study experience for students, is an important area for discussion for transnational pedagogy and the development of teaching for teachers and learning for students (O'Mahony 2014).

The research findings highlight that strategy of adjustment to the new realities of the transnational operation is evident by using teaching methods which encourage participation of all students and a curriculum that recognises the international dimensions and attention paid to specific areas of difficulty. This approach is consistent with the insights of Carroll and Ryan (2007), who state that "by re-examining their teaching and learning practices, lecturers can make changes that are more sustainable for them as teachers and more suitable for the students" (p. 100). Wilson (2002) reports that the student-centred educational approach that is characteristic of many export curricula can be difficult to cope with for students in the host institution, due to the predominantly "spoon-fed" approach in secondary education. Evidence shows that arranging for student discussions in groups and encouraging them to present their options within a group are considered by teaching staff as good ways to achieve effective learning. This is the evidence of taking advantage of cultural differences as explained in Hofstede (1984), that students are in a society that is culturally oriented towards collectivism; therefore, it is more effective to learn in groups rather than as individuals. This requires that the teacher also has some level of global knowledge, skills and attitudes and a willingness to create spaces for students with full rights of participation and success. This finding insists with education literature that when teaching styles are consistent with student learning styles, students have a more positive attitude toward their subjects (Felder and Silverman 1988).

The findings show that cultural differences impact on student learning preferences, such as whether students prefer to work independently or work collaboratively in a group (Nieto and Bode 2007). As the evidence has shown, students tend to have a passive learning style, shyness in voluntarily sharing ideas and discussion in class, and low participation and engagement. This can be explained by the effect of the Vietnamese education system in general where teaching strongly reflects both Confucian culture and the old Soviet system top-down approach (Tran 2012). Chapman and Pyvis (2006) report that teachers at the home and host institution observed a “subtle cultural variation in student’s style of learning and thinking” (p.299), which became manifest, for example, when students were expected to show active, self-directed study behaviour. This is common in most South East Asian countries, in that transnational Asian students are challenged when they face the preferred Western academic style that emphasises self-directed learning, problem solving, analytical skills and critical enquiry (Ballard & Clanchy 1991, Furnham 1997). This means, culture differences are considered as one of the factors of this influence.

Another significant insight from the findings which contributes to the current knowledge is the evidence of experiential learning which is considered as an effective approach to both teaching and learning in the transnational context. The literature has informed us about the theory of experiential learning (Kolb 2014); however, there is no evidence from the literature to show the importance of the experiential learning for the staff and students in response to the need of adaptation in the transnational education as this study does. From the student side, it is understandable that students learn more and see themselves as more engaged both academically and socially since students spent more time learning together both inside and outside class. The arrangement of the peer tutor programme – “students help students” – for instance, is evidence of this learning approach. The peer tutor programme received significant positive comments from all interview students, for its efficiency in providing additional support for student learning. From the staff side, the evidence shows that teaching in the transnational setting is an “adaptation process”, in which the teaching staff had to learn how to adapt themselves to the contextual setting. The evidence also shows that the local tutors admitted to considerable challenges they had to face, especially in their traditional teaching practices, which led to difficulties in adapting their teaching in the transnational programme. It reflects the process that teaching staff do not just teach how to learn but also learn how to teach within the transnational context. This also raises another dimension to learning and not just experiential learning but learning as a member of a community of practice. This links to the concept of the learning community (see more in Tinto 2003) where people shared knowledge, shared knowing and shared responsibility together. It could be seen that both students and staff are consistent in showing the important criteria for effective learning. Those are the opportunities for learning together and from each other, through working in a team, supporting and showing commitment to students/staff and their peers within the classroom, within the course discipline and outside the classroom to adapt to the learning environment of a transnational setting. This means that learning together and working together are seen as influential factors to facilitate communication and interaction in effective learning, for both teaching staff and students.

The findings indicate a growing awareness of the need for better articulation between the previous sites of education and transnational education, which contributes to affirm with the current literature on the education transition. The research findings show that local education is mismatched with the expectations of transnational higher education. This therefore enforces the need for supporting strategies from the institution to help students overcome challenges in setting a transnational course as well as having the necessary learning skills needed to enhance their learning experiences and skills in the transnational context. For instance, the lack of ability to think and act critically during assessment is partly due to the student’s learning style, because Vietnamese students, as many Asian learners, are deemed to be passive recipients of knowledge and consequently have had little experience in studying independently and thinking critically (Go and Mok 1995).

Evidence also shows that plagiarism is an issue with a lack of awareness reflecting the cultural differences and mismatched expectations. The findings affirm with Carroll (2008), showing that in the Western educational approach, judgments about plagiarism are underpinned by the students' construction of their own understanding, whereas in the culture dominated by rote learning and spoon feeding, plagiarism is viewed as remembering and reproducing that of others.

The research findings indicate a need to have supported strategies from the institution to address the transition to a new learning context in a different culture, which creates challenges to transnational students in their approach to learning. Evidence shows that both staff and students realised the difficulties of students in a learning context where the programme is imported from a new environment. The findings from the student survey and interviews clearly show that improving and enhancing a student's critical thinking skills is essential. This is evident in the concerns from students on how to show critical arguments in their assessments, and improving and enhancing the student's critical thinking skills is important as lack of ability to think critically hinders students' performance in assessments. This is supported by Hill (2003) who makes the connection between student expectations and their prior educational experiences, while Rolfe (2002) finds that students tend to adopt passive learning approaches and expect all information to be provided to them as a result of their secondary school experiences and time and societal constraints. The findings are in line with Nicholson (1990), who suggests that there is a positive relationship between the move from secondary school to higher education, because the greater the fit in terms of previous and current learning experience, the fewer problems arise in terms of integration in the transition period.

From the above discussion of the issues covered in the student learning, a "learning-centred approach" (O'Sullivan 2004; Hunt & Chalmers 2013) might be considered in the context of transnational education. As evidenced from the staff views, although they believe that a student-centred learning approach promises to provide students with skills required by the local market like independence, creativity and activeness, they also reflect on the cultural differences (Hofstede 2005) and the environment which is affected by the teaching-central approach. The learning-centred approach seems to be an effective approach wherein the focus is combining the effectiveness of both approaches.

7.5 Learning Environment - focusing on supporting activities

The most significant findings relating to the learning environment, which contribute to enhance a student's learning experience, are the influence of value-added learning activities provided on the development of student learning (as described in figure 7.5). Both students and staff considered that the value-added activities to the students' knowledge and skills through the teaching and learning opportunities provided by the institution are an indicator of quality for employability outcomes. This is consistent with the current literature, in which an effective learning environment has been defined as activities and interactive atmospheres wherein students can develop their knowledge, skills and values (Juceviciene and Tautkeviciene 2002), as well as the conditions that are created to improve learning experience (Adams and Granić 2009).

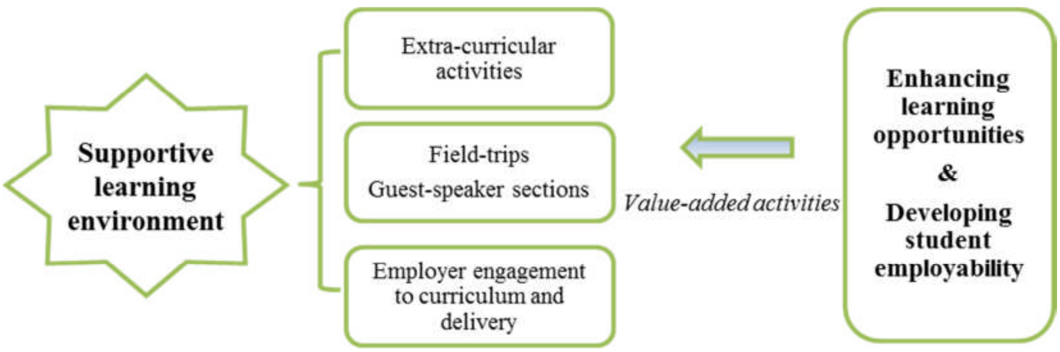

Figure 7-4: Supportive learning environment perceived by the stakeholders

Evidence from both perspectives - students and staff - indicates that these value-added activities have been seen and experienced as an important evidence for developing student employability in the transnational programme. From the student perspective, what makes them happy about the course is the extra-curricular activities that the programme provides. In particular, providing extra-curriculum activities is seen by students as a good way to provide an active learning environment in which they can gain transferable skills. Students see that having the opportunities to join activities, to organise activities and to develop networks and connections tends to positively impact on their learning outcomes. Sharing similar views, teaching and management staff believe that these activities have positive impacts, not only for student employability development but also for the institution's image. Evidence shows that the management staff believed that focusing on these extra-curricular activities could create a learning environment that sparks the student's interest and enables students to develop skills and knowledge, which were also considered a competitive advantage for their programme. It is argued that participating extra-curricular activities could lead to the detriment of academic development, meaning that if learning is simply about undergoing a process then what students may have at the end is a set of good experiences and transferable skills and graduate attributes with no real content knowledge (Bonwell and Eison 1991). Evidence from this study indicates the need for integration of these extra-curricular activities into academic learning – for example, in academic assignments – to address students with more constructive activities which were engaged more with academic development.

The significant finding is the emphasis of a range of activities supporting student employability (such as guest speakers, field trips, and careers services) and that the programme provided which is considered as the conditions for building up employability and creating personal and professional development as well as the evidence of the role of local engagement with the transnational course. This is in contrast to the earlier studies, for example, in the research for the Higher Education Academy by Mellors-Bourne, Jones and Woodfield (2015) who have shown that there is little development in employability skills for TNHE students studying for a UK degree. In their research, they emphasise that better support for students is needed in order to help them to understand and articulate the value not only of transnational qualifications but also of the transferable skills they could gain or have gained through their transnational study and how these might enhance their employability (Mellors-Bourne, Jones and Woodfield 2015). In contrast, the emphasis of the extra-curricular activities and skills-building that the transnational institution offered in this study is due to the clear understanding about what employability is and the institution – the transnational programme provider – understands the importance of developing skills for future career opportunities that students expected. Evidence from the students and staff highlights that strategic focusing on employability by the institution, which is embedded in the curriculum (in teaching, as discussed on the above section) through co-curricular support and extra-curricular activity, is evident in this transnational operation. As discussed in Chapter 6 – section 6.3.4, the focus of providing learning opportunities for students through these activities has been influenced by local context conditions. There were concerns on the Vietnamese higher education and the issue of enhancing graduate employability (Tran 2012), particularly due to the fact that most of local Vietnamese higher education programmes place more emphasis on providing academic knowledge but lack of focus on providing extra-curriculum activities which is to develop transferable skills needed for the students' future careers.

The finding is consistent with Haworth and Conrad (1997) who see these learning experiences have effects on student growth and development. The research findings suggest that Business Management students tend to have a belief of the course quality in relation to their personal and professional development rather than the Banking and Finance students. The findings from the student survey also indicate that students of Business and Management seem to be more active in participating in extra-curriculum activities and satisfied with the role of these activities than the ones from Banking and Finance. This may reflect the nature of the course content itself as it affects the student perceptions of quality. However, it is the activeness of students in participating in learning in class as well as being involved in extra-curricular activities that made the personal and professional development of students different among their courses. This brings the evidence to support the view that different disciplines in higher education create diverse professional tribes and cultures among learners, including those who might share the same cultural background (Clark 1983; McCune & Hounsell 2005). This also implies the need for further research into the nature of the course of study and its effect on student behaviour in participating in the sort of activities provided.

The research findings show strong views on the engagement of employers in connection to curricula and the delivery of this transnational programme, which reflects the perceptions of the effectiveness of the programme delivery by the staff and students. There is strong evidence to suggest that this is the factor that enables the quality of student learning experience in the programme. The study shows that the relationship between the university and business is evident from the involvement of employers (business community) in the interview assessment of the admission process, the providing of guest speaker sections and the arrangement of field trips for students. The involvement of the business community – another group of stakeholders – can be seen as strategic in light of the outcome-driven approach (Harvey 2001) upon which the quality of the course is judged by other stakeholders. The involvement of these activities and the benefits of those is supported by Lowman (1995), who found that frequent use of these activities will enrich the student learning experience. Guest speakers, for instance, with relevant expertise or practical experience in the classroom are suggested as an alternative to lecturers (Davis 2009), which is considered by students as a motive for learning from experience. Teaching staff believe that these engagements can enhance active learning for students, since learning is seen as not only as basic facts and theories but also of the relationships with practical aspects. It can be argued that business practices change frequently, rapidly and sometimes dramatically, and gaps inevitably arise between practice and academic teaching; thus, close and regular interactions between universities and businesses are required (Walker and Black 2000). The programme managers believe that students can obtain knowledge about the working environment so students can gain career-specific information. This is consistent with the insights of Jones and Harris (1995), who suggest that engagement with business helps institutions furnish students with skills and knowledge directly relevant to employment, to embed the student’s appropriate perspectives and attitudes towards industry. From the student perspectives, evidence shows that the arrangement and involvement of field trips and guest speakers serve as great supports for students because it is considered a channel to deliver real-life experience and an opportunity for real-world exposure. Students tend to be satisfied with this since the field study trip and guest speaker sessions provided are seen as another advantage that the transnational operations focus on and where the local programme could hardly have similar events that frequently (Tran 2012).

A further point needed for discussion is that, most of the management staff and local tutors referred to the effective learning environment as value-added activities and seemed to be reluctant to criticise the physical resources. However, foreign teaching staff, in contrast, particularly emphasised the standard of the physical learning environment for international education of at least having a so-called “learning resource centre”, where the environment is equipped with physical facilities such as a library, common room, and computer cluster as equivalent to the UK standard. Students seem also very reluctant on these issues. Evidence shows that students viewed the programme as the provider of effective infrastructure for learning, including facilities such as well-equipped classrooms, wireless internet access, air-conditioning and a library. For the management purpose, it could be argued in reference to the transnational institution that quality of learning opportunities refer to the means of providing to students and to assisting them in reaching the required academic standards (QAA 2016), it must include appropriate teaching pedagogy, extra-curricular activities, student supports and adequate learning resources such as libraries, computer clusters and other physical facilities. This reflects the resource theory of Astin (1999), who indicates that if adequate resources are brought together with value-added activities, student learning and development will occur.

7.6 Working relations in the partnership provision

Working relations in this transnational setting happen between the staff of the two institutions, at management level and operational level. Students are not directly involved in the daily contact and communication with the partner institution; however, the relationships between the staff of the two institutions affect the quality of the partnership which eventually affects the quality of student learning and the education process. Shared information and the effect of this on relationship development is considered by the staff in this study as an important part of the collaboration. This is believed to be essential because evidence of sharing practices and resources in this study shows that these could develop a sense of ownership and belonging in the transnational setting.

From the student perspectives, feeling a sense of belonging to the UK institution is an indicator of satisfaction. As the evidence showed, students consider that the use of “Blackboard”, for example, and VLE and online library access from the UK awarding institution provide a solid base for the distance learning and IT teaching-learning process in the programme. Evidence from the student survey also shows high levels of satisfaction with the support of the distance learning network, indicating a sense of belonging to the awarding UK institution, following access to learning resources and enhanced learning opportunities. It could be seen that those supports for knowledge-sharing play an important part in improving operations and student satisfaction (Selmer *et al.* 2014).

However, from the staff views, the evidence shows that this does not meet their expectations. It is considered by the staff that restricting access to resources, such as sharing knowledge and technical support, means the delivery of teaching and learning are affected. The research findings indicate that there seems to be a difference in the expectations of accessing resources and knowledge-sharing between the staff of the two institutions. It means, while the UK programme managers believe that they are supportive in sharing resources and providing support that enables the teaching staff and administrative staff to engage in dialogue, work together and gain access to their system, the local staff perceive the situation differently. This can be explained in terms of the relationship between the two institutions not encouraging dialogic interaction with the result that teaching staff are unlikely to perceive a sense of belonging or connectedness. This suggests that further support, in terms of academic, professional practice and interactions are needed to enhance the quality of the programme operations.

From analysis of the findings from the administrative staff and academics, it appears that transnational education is viewed as collaborative, and yet the challenges, in particular, relate to working relations and communication. As suggested by Heffernan and Pool (2004), the success of transnational programmes depends largely on the quality of the relationships between stakeholders; therefore, any tensions or issues happening in the relationship cannot be underestimated. Evidence in this study shows that time and distance are seen as factors creating tensions in operational relationships. Due to the distance between the two countries, any activities undertaken by the institutions do not occur simultaneously. This affects the effectiveness of the communication since high-quality communication requires the elements of relevance and reliability and occurs in a timely manner (Morgan and Hunt 1994). The evidence shows there are several problems in communication in a distance setting, such as delays in responding to emails, delays in solving the requests or the level of understanding among partnership members when solving the problem via email. This indicates that communication via technology increases the difficulties when trying to engage in transnational operational activities. It is argued that technology not only makes the interpretation of messages more challenging but also increases the difficulties of resolving cultural conflicts between partners (Roberts, Yan & Tan 2014).

The evidence suggests the need for effective communication and trust between the staff of the two institutions in dealing with those problems. This is supported by Dixon and Scot (2004) who find that “establishing and maintaining excellent communication across and between all levels of the provider institution and the receiver institution is central to the success of a transnational programme” (p.4). As stated in Sarkar, Cavusgil and Evirgen (1997), effective communication can assist in resolving disputes, aligning perceptions and expectations, and reducing misunderstandings. The findings are consistent with Heffernan and Pool (2005), who examined the critical success factors for the successful establishment and development of relationships between Australian universities and their international partners and they suggest that the development of effective communication is one of critical factors. It is suggested that with the transnational setting, the main communication is via email, therefore, alternative forms of communication, such as face-to-face contact, both formally and informally, is supposed to be considered and embedded into the operational processes. Effective communication therefore can lead to higher commitment between relationship partners (Anderson & Weitz 1992).

The findings regarding the relationship between the programme partners indicate that it is fundamental to a partnership's overall success (Heffernan & Poole 2005) where partnership is conceptualised as being an opportunity to support, to learn and to develop together. The findings and discussion around the issues suggest the essential importance of collaborative working relations within the transnational context, in the sense of providing opportunities to support and develop the partnership together. This is in light of the insights of a study on improving teaching and learning in transnational education by Keay, May & O'Mahony (2014), who argue that working towards the development of communities of practice could be used to raise the quality of learning experiences for students. They thus argue that transnational education processes can be improved through mutual engagement to promote shared responsibility for developing the community, and shared repertoire, which highlights the importance of working collaboratively to seek contextually appropriate solutions. The findings indicate that more collaborative working within communities of practice would allow for the integration of academic, support and administration in the different locations in which transnational education occurs. The shaping and enhancement of learning through interaction between individuals is highlighted in Wenger (1998), who suggests that communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

7.7 The proposed framework for quality management of the partnership programme

The findings indicate that the stakeholders' determinants of quality comprised key criteria which included the input, process and output dimensions of transnational education. The input-process-output model of educational quality management and stakeholders' approaches to quality in this study enabled the institutions to understand the quality determinants and how the transnational programme enabled the teaching, learning and student employability as well as impacted on the operations of the partnership. The criteria exert differing but considerable influence on the overall learning experience and employability outcomes of transnational higher education.

The insights from the stakeholder perceptions of the quality informed the implications for quality management in the course delivery, by taking into account the shared understanding of quality from these stakeholders. The significance of the commonalities and similarities of the perceived quality that have been shared by both students and staff in the course provision could be used as a developed version of the input-process-outcome model. The model could be seen as the framework for understanding the inter-relationship between the dimensions and actions, the operations of the institutions, the stakeholders' motives and expectations, and aspects of transnational education.

It therefore suggests considering quality management as a process, supported by policies and systems of both the providing and delivering institutions, towards an integrated approach for quality assurance and enhancement. The model for quality management reflects that, any institution can only succeed if it represents the shared values of the stakeholders (Senge *et al.* 2000). Those are reflected in a newly developed model, as described in Figure 7-5.

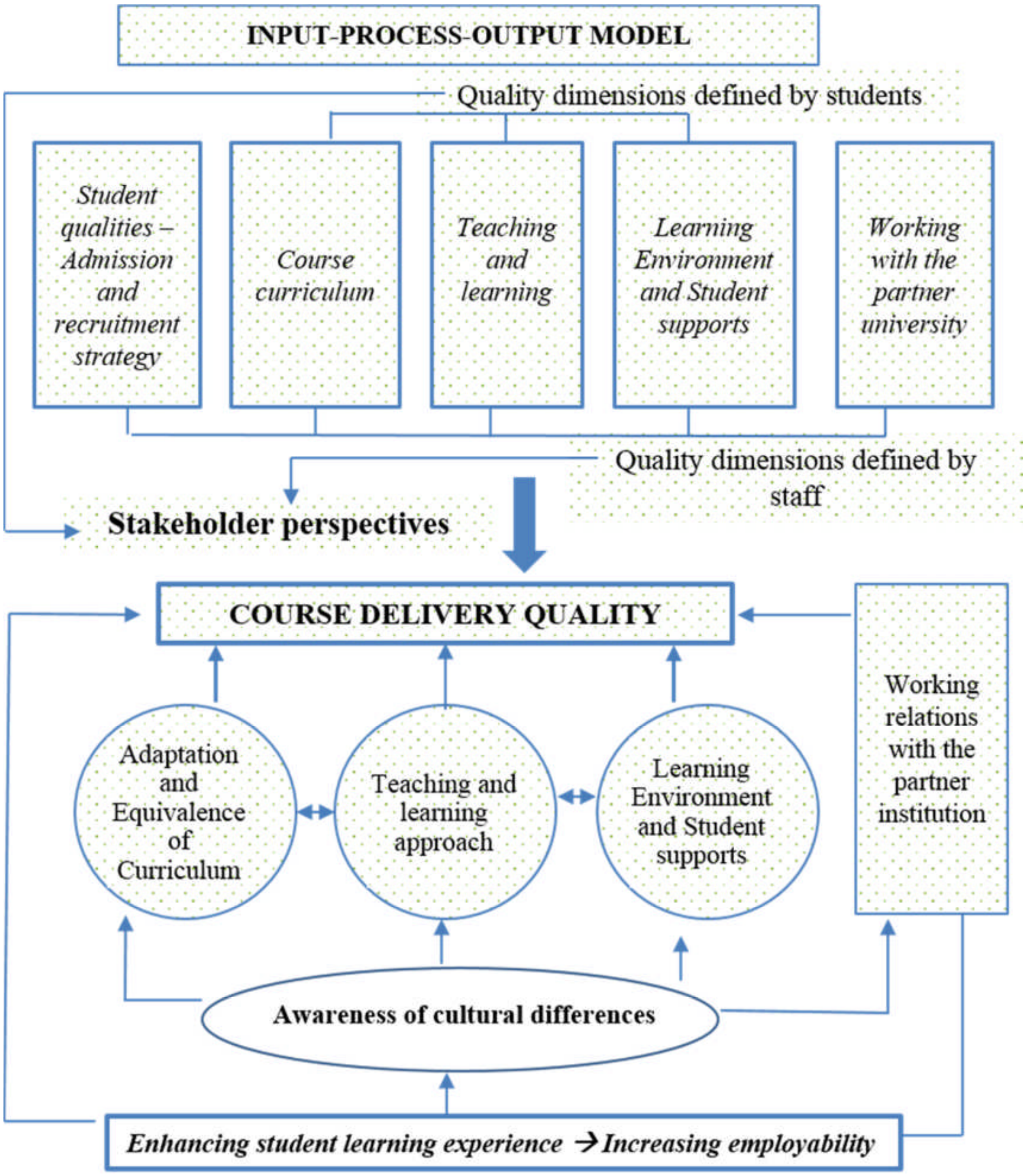

Figure 7-5: Stakeholder determinants of quality for the transnational course delivery

Quality perceived by the stakeholders is in line with the impact on the teaching, learning and student employability in the transnational context. It is important to ensure a synergistic balance between these dimensions, i.e. curriculum, teaching and learning, student learning environment and supports, and building a relationship with the partner institution to enhance student learning. Management for quality (doing the right job) suggests that there is a tacit understanding within an institution of the prescribed quality of the service that has to be delivered. Management for quality in the context of transnational teaching and learning, which involves processes such as cultural course design, the shaping of student process and student support, requires careful analysis (Hodgkinson and Brown 2003). Underpinning the student and staff indicators of quality, it is suggested from this study it would be best to approach quality through the determinants that focus on the internal process with the impact on teaching, learning and student learning experiences. In supporting a comprehensive student experience, it is essential to address to adapting the curriculum to the local context, which should be taken into account when delivering the transnational partnership.

The significant research findings as discussed have reflected the approach that, in order to manage the effectiveness of the programme delivery, it is critical to thoroughly understand stakeholder experiences and their perceptions of quality. It is worth repeating that quality is a relative concept and needs to be considered in context and in relation to the perceptions of different stakeholders and the purpose of higher education (Harvey & Williams 2010). Findings from this study confirm the case that what makes quality management in transnational education a challenging process is the harmony of different stakeholders' interests. Any model for quality management in any institution can only succeed if it represents the shared values of the stakeholders (Senge *et al.* 2000). The similarities and differences in quality indicators among the students and staff reflect the diverse interests and expectations among the given stakeholders, which imply potential strategies for the institutions involved in transnational education to manage quality effectively.

7.8 Summary

The chapter has provided significant understanding of quality of the transnational programme through the stakeholders' perspectives. These insights are reflected in the stakeholders' theories of how to approach quality and the stakeholders' determinants for quality of transnational education to inform management quality goals. The insights of this cross-chapter analysis imply the complexities surrounding the practices of effectively delivery of the transnational education programme.

The research findings show that the "input-process-output" model (Cheng and Tam 1997), the "perceived quality" and "the stakeholder theory" are fit and appropriate for understanding TNE quality. The insights of the students and staff perceptions on quality, moreover, create a deeper understanding on how quality is perceived by the stakeholders and inform signification implications for programme management. Taking a stance for managing quality, it is suggested that quality management should be viewed as the process, supported by policies and systems in the institutions, to put quality assurance as a priority and it should be determined by the perceptions of both students and staff directly involved in the implementation of the programme. The process has reflected that transnational delivery needs to embed multiple perspectives of understanding quality and that quality needs to be context-dependent in delivery.

The findings have shown that it is essential to address the issues of maintaining standards and equivalence for the curriculum and the adaptation needed to tailor to the local context for enhancing student learning experiences. These could be interpreted as the factors that both enable and hinder the quality of the transnational setting that the transnational institutions should be aware of. The findings indicate that being flexible in adaptation to the local context is evidently an important factor in enabling the quality of transnational education. The extent of curriculum adaptation to the local context and effectiveness of the transnational curriculum delivery suggests the role of the institution in proactively enhancing quality of student learning experiences.

The study has shown the importance of the adaptation to teaching and learning through the awareness of cultural differences towards a learning-centred approach (O'Sullivan 2004; Hunt & Chalmers 2013), to maximize learning opportunities and quality in operations of the transnational programme. Glocalisation is suggested as an effective approach in teaching and learning in this transnational context. The focus on glocalised teaching and learning is a critical reflection and understanding of important and relevant connections between the local and global perspectives of students (Patel and Lynch 2013).

Ensuring positive perceptions of quality in a transnational context should involve an awareness of the relationship between partners. The relationship between programme partners is fundamental to a partnership's success. Partnership is conceptualised as being about opportunities to support, to learn and to develop. The findings and discussion around the partnership issues in this study suggest the essential importance of collaborative working relations – communities of practice – within the transnational context, in the sense of providing opportunities to support and develop the partnership together through developing a shared understanding of perceptions of quality. These need to be embedded in agreements between the parties and in policies and guidelines for practice. This is in line with the suggestion on policy priority of providing support for the professional development of staff which is not only for meeting and satisfying staff expectations but also enhancing the quality of teaching and working in the transnational setting. The professional development is advisable and is needed to be designed to encourage reflective practices, increase cultural understanding, improve communication among staff involved in transnational programme and facilitate curriculum adaptation.

Chapter 8 : CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

By way of conclusion, a number of key research findings is made and key contributions to knowledge are highlighted in this chapter. Recommendations and implications from the research findings are suggested. The chapter also provides a reflection on the limitations of the study and addresses the areas for future research. The chapter ends with my own reflections on the development which I have achieved through the research.

8.2 Summary of the research findings

The research findings concerning stakeholder perspectives on the factors contributing to the perceptions of quality of a transnational programme, the effectiveness of the programme delivery and the facilitators influencing the quality of the partnership fell into four main categories.

Firstly, the quality of the course curriculum is considered as one of most important determinants for quality of the transnational programme. In supporting a comprehensive student experience, the findings indicate that it is essential to adapt the curriculum to the local context to meet the students' learning needs, while maintaining equivalent content to preserve the quality of the course. This reflects the current debate on transnational education quality assurance and the issues of academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities (Sharp 2017). The insights of this finding also support extending the idea of differences in curricula to learning styles (Dunn & Wallace 2004, Heffernam *et al*. 2010) and the argument that for a teaching and learning experience to be effective, the curriculum must be adapted to the local context (Kelly & Ha 1998).

Secondly, the study has emphasised that it is essential to address the approaches to transnational teaching and learning and an effective teaching and learning which focuses on a glocalised approach in a learning-centred environment. This is seen as a major factor for enabling the quality of transnational operations. The findings support the learning-centred approach which emphasises stimulating teaching practices. On the one hand, this facilitates a means for a student-centred approach to emphasise students' involvement and participation; on the other hand, it means adjusting a teacher-centred learning approach to adapt to the transnational learning needs. The teaching and delivery aspects of education have been confirmed as important determinants for quality and student satisfaction.

Culture differences are evidently one of the factors that affects student approaches to learning in this transnational setting. Under the different cultural setting, glocalisation is suggested as an effective approach to teaching and learning. The findings suggest that the focus on glocalised teaching and learning is a critical reflection and understanding of the important and relevant connections between the local and global perspectives. Glocalisation has been shown to be the approach to empower and encourage all stakeholders to work harmoniously toward a sustainable future (Patel and Lynch 2013). The evidence from the findings also suggests addressing the professional development, which is needed to be designed to encourage reflective practices, increase cultural understanding, improve communication among staff involved in transnational programmes and facilitate curriculum adaptation.

Thirdly, the results show that quality is seen by both staff and students in relation to the supportive student learning environment. An effective learning environment is characterised by a set of value-added activities that the institution provided to enhance student learning opportunities and develop student employability. Findings from this study also suggest that participating in extra-curricular activities could lead to the detriment of academic development; as argued in Bonwell and Eison (1991), if learning is simply about undergoing a process then what students may have at the end is a set of good experiences and transferable skills and graduate attributes with no real content knowledge. This might suggest that better integration of these extra-curricular activities into academic learning, for example, in academic assignment, would help students address more constructive activities which engaged more with their academic development.

Finally, the results show that quality is perceived in terms of the relationship with the partner institution. Taking the increasing complexity and multidimensionality of the transnational partnership, the collaborative relationship between programme partners is fundamental to a partnership's success. Important highlights from the findings are the issues of knowledge sharing and resource exchange in the partnership, and the communication issues and working relations between the institutions that need to be taken into consideration to assess the quality of the partnership provision. Partnership is conceptualised as opportunities to support, to learn and to develop together. It is suggested the essential nature of collaborative working relations – communities of practice – within the transnational context is a sense of providing opportunities to support and develop the partnership together. These need to be embedded in agreements between the parties and in policy and guidelines for practice.

8.3 Contributions to knowledge

Findings from this study could be categorised into five main contributions to knowledge of stakeholder perceptions of quality, the knowledge of transnational education and its operation.

Firstly, the findings show a significant overlap and similarities in the views of students and staff about the determinants of quality in transnational education. This makes a significant contribution to current literature since there is little in the literature which addresses the question of overlap perceptions between the staff and students on what factors facilitate quality. Most of the current literature on the stakeholder perceptions on quality show that different stakeholders hold different expectations and perceived quality differently in transnational higher education (Wilkins & Balakrishnan 2012, Stella & Bhushan 2011). Students and staff were agreed that the key determinants of quality in transnational education related to fitness for purpose in achieving both a learning experience for students, that satisfied their perceived needs and in satisfying educational and employment outcomes.

Globalisation of higher education has led to an increase in the delivery of the transnational programmes which offer access for students to international higher education. The study has provided insights into the student and staff motivations and determinants of quality which emphasised opportunities to gain high quality education and to meet the increasing demands of the labour market where the graduate attributes are those of employability. The dominant perceptions of quality determinants from the students of the transnational education programme were the pathway to advance future careers through personally transformative experience to get a good job in the globalised environment. Staff, with similar views, emphasised transnational education quality through the delivery of high-level education experiences and the elements of the educational experiences which help students to attain educational and employment outcomes. A convergence of perceptions of factors contributing to quality shared by both students and staff fall within curriculum; teaching and learning; environment; and working with the partner institution.

Secondly, the significant highlights from this study which contribute to the current knowledge are the notion of adaption in curriculum and teaching and learning in the transnational setting. The phenomenon of transnational education quality in this study indicates the complex relationship between local culture and transnational educational practice which reflects the internationalisation and localisation of higher education. The study highlights that although the general principle is that the course curriculum for transnational education should be equivalent to that of the awarding institution, the perceived quality in the transnational programme suggests the notion of adaptation, of the needs for responsiveness to the local context and respect to cultural differences. This significant finding extends the current debate towards difficult decisions about what is more appropriate between the central issue of consistency of standards and the notion of equivalence and local adaptation.

Thirdly, the findings support the current literature on the integration and intercultural aspects of international higher education. The insights of intercultural teaching and learning in transnational operations align with the general agreement in the literature on the need to include an intercultural dimension in internationalisation (for example, see in Knight 1994, 1997, 2004, Gallagher 2002).

Internationalisation of higher education is the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, learning and service of the institutions (Knight 1996). Cultural differences are evidently one of the factors that affects students' approaches to learning in this transnational setting. Under a different cultural setting, glocalisation is suggested as an effective approach to teaching and learning. The research findings reflect glocalised teaching and learning as an approach to empower and encourage all stakeholders to work harmoniously toward a sustainable future (Patel and Lynch 2013). The operation of transnational programmes and quality management are connected to the intercultural dimensions of higher education, in a glocalisation approach and a learning-central environment. In the context of transnational teaching and learning, the study has provided an insight into teaching and learning which raises awareness and promotes values of cultural diversity, with a particular focus on how these apply to transnational students. This shows the importance of cultural awareness for institutions that want to interact over cross-cultural boundaries. The findings also provided significant insights into cultural responsiveness and tailoring to the learning styles and social context of students. The results also provide insights into how to operationalise intercultural teaching and learning in a way which develops student capacity to understand and interact inter-culturally.

Fourthly, the findings have provided insights into how quality management, leadership and management roles at the transnational institutions have significant impact on the perceived quality of transnational operations. This study evidently showed that the role of the institution is designing and re-constructing the course to enhance the student learning experience which is increasingly recognised as a key element of quality of the programme delivery. Evidence from this study also shows insights into the proactive actions of the institution in localising the course to enhance student learning opportunities. The findings indicate that the emphasis on providing value-added activities and skills-building for students is due to the clear understanding of student needs as well as reflecting the institution's experience in operating in international education for student employment outcomes. The findings have provided significant insights into how to manage the quality of the programme by emphasising strong engagement with employers in connection to curricula and the delivery of the transnational programme, such as the involvement of employers (business community) in the interview assessments in the admission process, the providing of guest speaker selections and the arrangement of field trips for students. Evidence highlights the strategic to focus on employability by the institution, which is embedded in the curriculum and in teaching, through co-curricular support and extracurricular activity.

Finally, the study also re-confirms the importance of building working relations between institutions in a collaborative manner. In the context of the transnational partnership, particularly at the operational level, sharing information and the effect of this on relationship development is considered by the staff of this study as an important part of the collaboration. This is believed to be essential because the evidence of sharing practices and resources in this study show that these could develop a sense of ownership and belonging in the transnational setting.

8.4 Considerations and implications

8.4.1 Considerations for TNHE programmes

Following this research, there are three key areas that TNHE institutions should consider .

Firstly, regarding the policy, the further action for staff professional development is recommended. The research evidence shows that further collaboration between the institution and the UK partner in terms of providing professional development and sharing professional practice is critical for enhancing teaching quality in the transnational context. In light of this recommendation, an implication for the institutions involved is that they should address the policy by supporting students for developing student learning skills as well as the skills to adapt to a transnational learning environment. Supporting strategies are also needed from the transnational institution in setting up clear expectations for students when they are involved in transnational learning. This means a further focus is needed on induction and orientation for students in learning.

Secondly, regarding suggestions for practice, it is advisable for the delivering institution to focus on providing an appropriate learning centre which not only provides value-added activities but also physical resources. The student survey has shown that there was a number of students feeling less satisfied with two particular aspects of this quality dimension. These include the library service and the availability of wireless internet access. Through the analysis of stakeholder perceptions on quality, we can learn that the student learning experience in the delivering institution is comparable (not the same or equivalent to but comparable) to that in the UK. While most students in the institution in Vietnam feel less than satisfied, the students who joined the top-up programme in the UK, in that they were impressed by the learning resources such as library services and computer clusters. It might be suggested, therefore, that a better support would be the same standard of learning resource at the delivering institution.

Thirdly, insights from the student perceptions also suggest the issue of collaboration and communication between teaching staff. Evidence from the student survey indicates the expectation for further collaboration between the lecturers and tutors in delivering the course. This is very much related to the professional development policy as suggested above. This means the focus on further guidance and requirements for teaching staff to work together and share.

8.4.2 Implications for policies and practices in TNHE

Three main implications can be made for any transnational institutions, in informing their policies and practices regarding the operation of transnational higher education programmes.

Firstly, the developed framework based on the input-process-output model of educational quality management and the stakeholders' approaches to quality in this study provided significant insights for the institutions to understand the quality determinants and how the transnational programme enabled the teaching, learning and student employability and its impact on the partnership. Through this particular programme of the partnership with the UK partners, individual higher education institutions may have the ways to access curriculum arrangement and the delivery aspects of the transnational education programmes. With the information obtained from this study, an integrated approach to quality is suggested from the stakeholder perspectives that encompass a variety of quality practices to manage quality issues in TNHE.

Secondly, what is clear from this study is that it provides a practical and efficient way to approach teaching and learning in the transnational context which contributes to improving, maintaining and enhancing academic quality and standards and to facilitating student learning opportunities. The study suggests that effective teaching and learning in a transnational setting is in line with the awareness of cultural differences to adjust both teaching and learning. Evidence from this study also provides implications for tailoring the student learning communities which would facilitate the best practices of student learning and sharing together.

One contextual dimension of the internationalised curriculum in this study implied that those involved in a transnational teaching setting should get acquainted with some context-specific aspects and intercultural aspects of education. The study provides evidence of the cultural perspectives of the content and delivery of the course and therefore implies that delivering educational quality in the cross-border programme requires the transfer of the values, understandings and methods identified with the local context. Transnational teaching, learning and managing the quality of the course are sensitive to cultural context and allowances are made for local cultural understandings. Evidence from this study also suggests the strategic focus on employability by transnational institutions, whether embedded in curriculum, through co-curricular support or extra-curricular activity, which are all critical in enhancing student learning experiences. These give some hints for institutions on re-structuring the transnational course and delivering the transnational curriculum in a way to engage with the employers and industry, to close the gap between the theory, knowledge and practical aspects of education.

Furthermore, the findings in this study show that students tend to choose the programme because of the international aspects of the curriculum, the practical knowledge provided and the opportunities to gain transferable skills; it is therefore important for the transnational institutions to ensure that the programme is delivered in accordance with those expectations and fulfil the needs of the students on these quality indicators.

8.5 Limitations

One limitation of the research is that although the study has involved the most significant stakeholders who have an effect on the process and outcome of the education and service – those being educated (students) and the educators (teaching staff and management staff) of the education programme – the study does not consider the views of other stakeholders such as graduate students and employers who have great impact on the outcomes of education. The absence of these stakeholders limits the understanding of the quality due to the lack of broader views. Employers of graduates are external stakeholders who are ultimately and directly affected by the outcomes of higher education. Lack of feedback from these stakeholders limits the improvement of the quality in the programme. Policy makers such as the Ministry of Higher Education, who have a key regulatory role in higher education, have not been involved; therefore, the understanding of quality from the policy aspects, which could be useful for the research, is also limited. Stakeholders' perceptions and requirements can change over time, so continuous evaluation of feedback could assist institutions in defining the objectives and improving the processes in order to meet the quality expectations.

This study is limited to the sample of the Vietnam-UK undergraduate business partnership programme. The common concern about a single sample study research is that it provides little basis for generalisation. However, naturalistic generation (Stake 1995) could be achieved from this single sample study. A reader responding to a single sample report is consequently able to employ the ordinary processes of judgement by which people tacitly understand life and social actions around them (Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis 1976). Although this research is not as strong a base for generalising to a population of many programmes, institutions/staff/students can generally understand the quality issues around the operation of transnational education. Other programmes can learn much that was facilitated from this programme.

8.6 Areas of future research

In response to the above limitations, findings and issues around this study indicate the following possible avenues for future research.

The first and the most important priority which responds the limitation of this study is to look at quality from a more comprehensive perspective of stakeholders. This would include graduate students and employers and some key policy-makers. The research findings have revealed that the most important perception of both students and staff linked quality of the transnational programme to student employability. This means having quality perceptions and evaluation from the graduate students who are now working in the labour market; this will be a good source of quality judgement. Furthermore, employers are an important external stakeholder who have impact on student career; therefore, their expectations and opinions on quality could bring invaluable sources and insights. It could be predictable that involving employers and considering industry as a stakeholder could provide rich insights into how industry requires universities to deliver programmes that provide a broad and professional understanding of business functions, processes, and environments and graduate outcomes.

Secondly, a future study would be very interesting in measuring quality of the transnational programmes from different disciplines. Transnational education is currently developing very quickly in many Asian countries including Malaysia, China and Singapore. Vietnam has followed the trend by setting up many collaborations and transnational programmes in other different disciplines, such as law, IT and engineering. This could be done through a multiple-case studies approach which is believed to achieve a better generalisation of the study results (Yin 2013). It is believed that if measuring quality by using a multiple-sample study approach, results from different cases could supply different contexts and illustrate how results can be applied to facilitate the practices of transnational operations more broadly as well as improve the ability to theorise about a broader context (Stake 2013). Another possibility for further research which links to the principle of replication is to address other case studies replicating the methods of this study. In doing this way, it will create more case studies to validate and test the methodological approach and overall findings of this study.

Thirdly, the study has provided an insight into the experiential learning, from both staff and students and linked to the concept of learning community. It raises an area that could be explored further: for instance, the extent to which the staff, including teaching and management staff of both transnational institutions, are supporting each other with regards to the needs of the adaptation in the transnational environment and intercultural setting. In doing so, it promises to provide further insights into understanding quality in transnational education through professional communities of practice in which people working on the transnational programme support each other; therefore it could enrich the understanding of the partnership in the transnational setting.

Another worthwhile direction for future research that could help to understand quality is a further study on the link between curriculum and programme quality. This is because the evidence from this study indicated the differences in student perceptions of the quality of curriculum according to their level of study. This can be done through a different survey per year group, which may enable a clearer understanding of the quality of the programme.

8.7 Personal reflections

Undertaking this research study has been an invaluable learning experience for me. This has been true from both my personal and academic perspectives with many lessons learnt along the way while undertaking the research. I have gained an understanding of the nature of research and the philosophical underpinning of the research study as well as developing my skills in the process of analysing data and interpreting the results and findings. My learning has developed through the process of discussing the results and making arguments using the research findings. Performing the research also reflects my development in critical thinking, decision-making and time management skills.

The development reflects that doing PhD is a learning process, especially in the process of analysing data. Taking an example, it was a big challenge for me to consider and decide the way to analyse my quantitative data. It was difficult to decide the most appropriate approach to the data, whether using parametric tests or non-parametric tests. I tried both, realised the difference of each and then decided the most appropriate approach for my set of data, which was the non-parametric test. Although it was a time consuming process, I was happy with the results.

By undertaking this study, I have not only achieved the research objectives but also gained additional benefits, especially in professional development. In particular, my own knowledge and understanding of the students and staff in transnational education have greatly expanded. This has made me much more aware of the students' needs and concerns, and the staff motivations and challenges as well as their views on quality, which are really useful for my professional career. My knowledge of transnational education has been expanded with the significant understanding of the concepts like glocalisation, localisation and intercultural differences as well as the learning-centre approach, experiential learning and professional community of practice. The research findings also appear to suggest some areas for my further research, which I will consider continuing to research. This eventually ensures my academic and professional development and enriches my knowledge of quality, quality management and transnational education.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical approval

Performance, Governance and Operations
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Charles Thackrah Building
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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Thi Hong Van Nguyen

School of Education

University of Leeds

Leeds, LS2 9JT

ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee

University of Leeds

2 February 2015

Dear Thi Hong Van Nguyen

Title of study:	**Managing transnational higher education programmes from the quality perception of stakeholder perspective in a Vietnamese university context.**
Ethics reference:	**AREA 14-063**

I am pleased to inform you that the above research application has been reviewed by the ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and following receipt of your response to the Committee's initial comments, I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion as of the date of this letter. The following documentation was considered:

Document	Version	Date
AREA 14-063 Committee Provisional (Revised report).doc	1	02/02/15
AREA 14-063 Ethical review form (Van Nguyen 200148511).doc	1	02/12/14
AREA 14-063 Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form (Van Nguyen 200148511).doc	1	02/12/14
AREA 14-063 Information Letter (Van Nguyen- 200148511).docx	1	02/12/14
AREA 14-063 Consent form (Van Nguyen - 200148511).docx	1	02/12/14
AREA 14-063 Proposed focus group questions (Van Nguyen - 200148511).docx	1	02/12/14

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted at date of this approval, including changes to recruitment methodology. All changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available at http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAmendment.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited. There is a checklist listing examples of documents to be kept which is available at http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAudits.

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Blaikie

Senior Research Ethics Administrator, Research & Innovation Service

On behalf of Dr Andrew Evans, Chair, AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee

CC: Student’s supervisor(s)

Appendix 2: Student Interview questions

1. Why do you choose to study at the transnational education programme? What are the influence factors of your choice?
2. What does transnational education mean to you?
3. What do you expect from this transnational programme?
4. What does the quality of transnational education mean to you?
5. What are the most important issues that affect the quality of the programme? Could you please explain why these are important?
6. What is your opinion of the course curriculum that has been imported from the UK institution to be delivered in Vietnam?
7. Could you please provide some examples of effective teaching in the programme?
8. What is your opinion about the learning environment of the programme?
9. Could you please give examples of extra-curriculum activities in the programme and how do you perceive them?
10. What do you expect for the employability after graduate from the programme? How does the programme provide you with the graduate destination?
11. Does the programme delivery meet your expectations? (E.g. In Teaching and Learning, Student Supports, Learning Environment…) Why and why not?
12. What are the areas that the programme should be improved for a better service?

Appendix 3: Staff Interview questions

1. What are the motivations of you/your institution for working in this collaboration?
2. Do you face any challenges in working in this partnership? How could you overcome those challenges?
3. How do you define quality of transnational education?
4. What are the indicators of quality in this collaborative partnership programme, in terms of:
    - the Input: students, staff, curriculum,
    - the Process: Teaching and learning, Assessment, Supporting activities, the learning environment
    - the Output: the effectiveness of the partnership, the graduate destinations? Student employability?
5. What are the factors that promote or hinder the quality of the programme? Could you please explain why?
6. What is your opinion of the curriculum that has been imported from the UK institution to be delivered in Vietnam?
7. How do you perceive the teaching and learning activities of the transnational programme?
8. What is your opinion about the role of extra-curriculum activities and how do you perceive these activities of the programme provided for students?
9. How do you perceive the activities for supporting student learning opportunities and graduate destination?
10. What are the areas that the programme should be improved for a better delivery?

Appendix 4: The Student Questionnaire

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUALITY IN THE TRANSNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME: QUESTIONNAIRE

The following survey is part of my PhD research exploring the perceptions of the quality from the student perspectives in the UK-VN partnership undergraduate programme. Please kindly give your opinion of statements based on your personal experience in your international bachelor programme. The information that you provide will be used for research purposes only and will be kept entirely confidential. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me at: Van Nguyen, University of Leeds, Email: bus4thvn@leeds.ac.uk. Thank you!

Part 1: General information

1. What is your course of study: *(Please tick the relevant answer)*
   (a) BA in Business Management: ……………..
   (b) BA in Banking and Finance: …………..
2. Which is your year of study: *(Please tick the relevant answer)*
   (a) Year 1 ……… (b) Year 2 ……….. (c) Year 3 ……….. (d) Year 4 ………
3. What is your gender: *(Please tick the relevant answer)*
   (a) Male: ………….. (b) Female: ………

Part 2: Student's motivation for choosing the transnational higher education programme

Please rate the extent to which the following reasons motivate you to choose your transnational higher education programme, on a scale from 1 to 5 where: ***1=Very insignificantly; 2=Insignificantly; 3= Neutral; 4= Significantly; 5= Very significantly.***

	Student's motivation	1	2	3	4	5
4	I believe that the reputation of the local university would be high					
5	I believe that the foreign university would have good reputation in my country					
6	I believe that the UK education would be high quality					
7	I believe that this programme would be lower cost compared with studying the entire programme abroad					
8	I choose this because of the structure of the programme (offering full-time programme in Vietnam or choosing for top-up programme in the UK)					
9	I believe that it would be recognized internationally of the degree from the UK university					
10	I believe that the programme would offer high employability after graduation					

11	I believe that the programme would be good for my professional and personal development					
12	I believe that the programme would offer practical knowledge and relevant skills for my future job					
13	I believe the programme would provide opportunities for me to experience the international environment					
14	I choose the programme because of a specific qualification on offer					
15	I believe the programme would offer study abroad option for me					
16	I believe my English language competency would be developed					
17	I choose the programme because of the failure to secure a place on local equivalent programmes					
18	I choose the programme because of the availability of the scholarship					

Part 3: Student's perceptions of the quality of the programme

Please rate the extent to which the programme meets your expectations by ticking the most suitable answer on a scale from 1 to 5 where ***1 =Fell significantly short of expectations; 2=fell short of expectations; 3=Met expectations; 4=Exceeded expectations and 5=significantly exceeded expectations****, regarding to the following dimensions and statements:*

A	**Course provision**	**Meeting expectations**				
		1	2	3	4	5
19	The programme offers practical knowledge					
20	The programme is preparing to my future career					
21	The course sets clear learning outcomes					
22	The programme is stimulating my personal and professional development					
23	The course content is made relevant to Vietnamese context					
24	The course emphases on developing my independent learning					
25	The curriculum equips me with international views					
26	The provision has added supplementary modules that help me in improving my learning skills					
27	The programme has added supplementary modules that help me in associating with UK education					
28	The programme has a clear structure					
29	The programme has provided a good orientation on how to study in an international programme					
30	**Overall satisfaction with the course provision**					

B	**Teaching and quality of lecturers**	**Meeting expectations**				
		1	2	3	4	5

31	My lecturers have experience of the subject matters					
32	My lecturers are enthusiasm					
33	My lecturers are approachable					
34	My lecturers are able to make complex concepts accessible					
35	My lecturers use the relevant examples and applications when teaching					
36	My lecturers have experience in teaching at the international education programme					
37	My lecturers are willing to provide assistance in academic-related areas					
38	My lecturers have instructional skills to understand my needs					
39	My lecturers motivate and inspire me in thinking critically					
40	My lecturers are fair in assessment and grading					
41	My lecturers use technology well in their teaching					
42	**Overall satisfaction with the teaching and quality of lecturers**					

C	**Assessment**	**Meeting expectations**				
		1	2	3	4	5
43	Assessment methods in the programme encourage my critical thinking					
44	The modules are assessed by variety of methods (exam, individual assignment, group assignment, presentation…)					
45	My course involves course work/on-going assessment					
46	Necessary guidance and interpreting assessment requirements are provided for me					
47	I receive helpful feedback on my work					
48	Assessments set high standard for my performance					
49	The assessments focus on specific subject knowledge					
50	The assessments emphasize on developing my skills for workplace					
51	The programme has clear rules and policies for examination (number of re-sit exam, retake the course)					
52	**Overall satisfaction with the assessment**					

D	**Interaction and communication in the programme**	**Meeting expectations**				
		1	2	3	4	5
53	Interaction and communication between lecturers and tutors are effective					
54	The communication with lecturers/tutors in class is interactive					
55	Interactions among students are important part of active learning					
56	The programme is responsive to my feedback and complaints					
57	The programme promotes me in active participation					
58	Class size affects effective communications and interaction					

	in class					
59	**Overall satisfaction with the interaction and communication**					

E	**Learning environment**	**Meeting expectations**				
		1	2	3	4	5
60	The programme offers modern learning and teaching facilities (classroom, air-conditions, projectors…)					
61	The programme arranges manageable class sizes					
62	The programme offers available regular wireless internet access					
63	The programme provides easy access to information sources of the partner's university					
64	The programme provides adequate extra-curricular activities					
65	The programme involves supported distance communications (Moodle, Facebook, VLE)					
66	The library meets my learning needs					
67	Active student union and social clubs helped me in gaining transferrable skills					
68	The course materials provide sufficient source of learning					
69	**Overall satisfaction with the learning environment**					
F	**Student support**	**Meeting expectations**				
		1	2	3	4	5
70	The peer tutor programme is organized usefully					
71	The administrative staff are very helpful					
72	The programme offers sufficient services for me to choose top-up programme overseas (choosing appropriate studying programme, university and preparing for visa)					
73	The programme provides me opportunities to participate variety of extra-curricular activities					
74	Guest speakers from industry experts are organized effectively					
75	The programme offers appropriate field study trips					
76	The orientation week/induction program is helpful in settling down in the programme					
77	The programme provides opportunities for me to join the organizing team of extra-curriculum activities					
78	The programme provides careers advices for my future job					
79	Internships services are important for my career development					
80	**Overall satisfaction with the student support**					

Part 4: This part refers your definitions of quality in transnational higher education. Please choose your best answer by ticking on: ***1 = significantly disagreed; 2= Disagreed; 3=Neutral; 4=Agreed and 5=significantly agreed*** for the following statements:

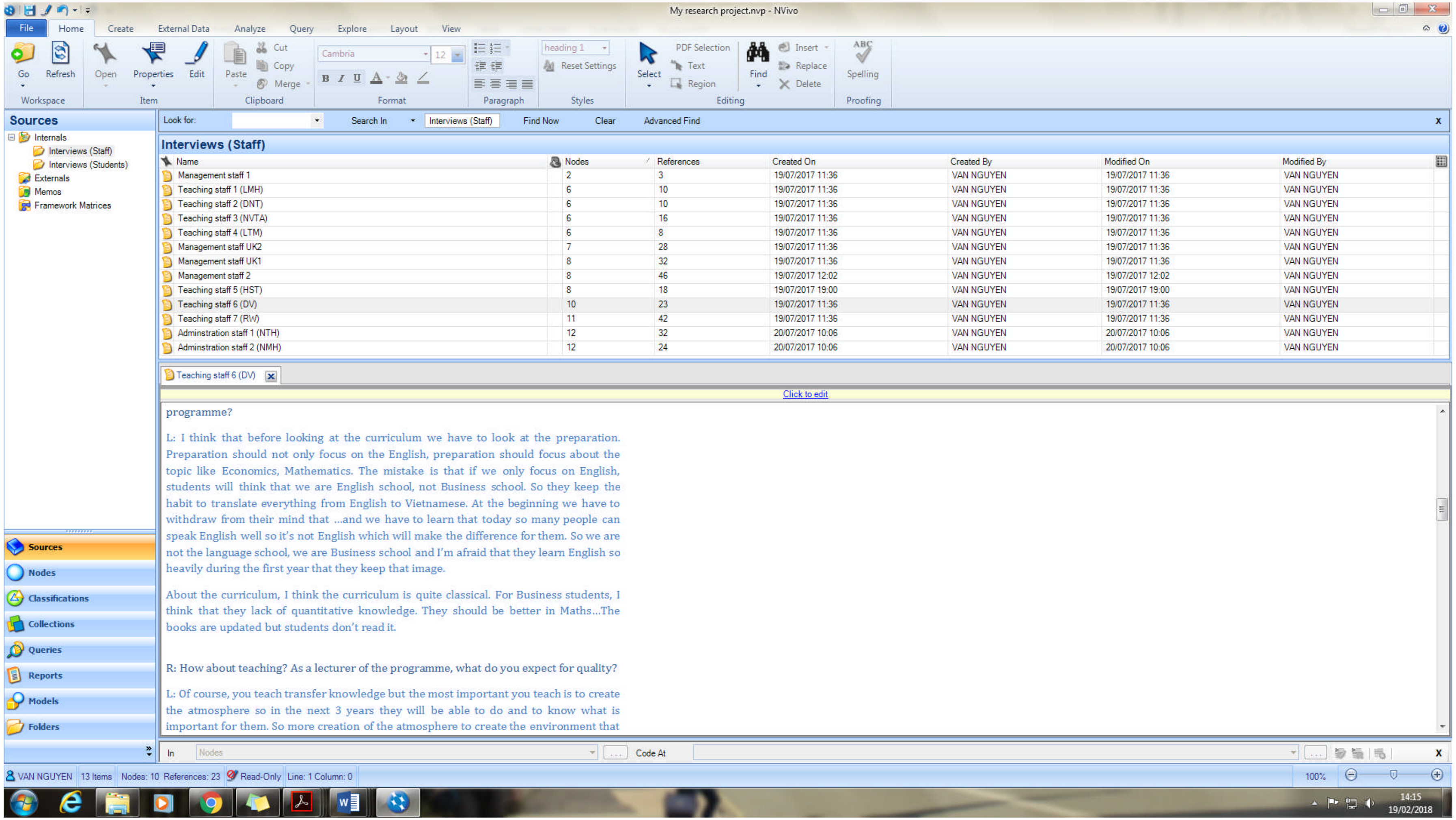
		1	2	3	4	5

81	Providing education of international qualification and recognition					
82	Providing education for personal and professional development					
83	Providing education that focus on practical knowledge and relevant skills					
84	Providing education and services that satisfied and fulfilled my expectations					

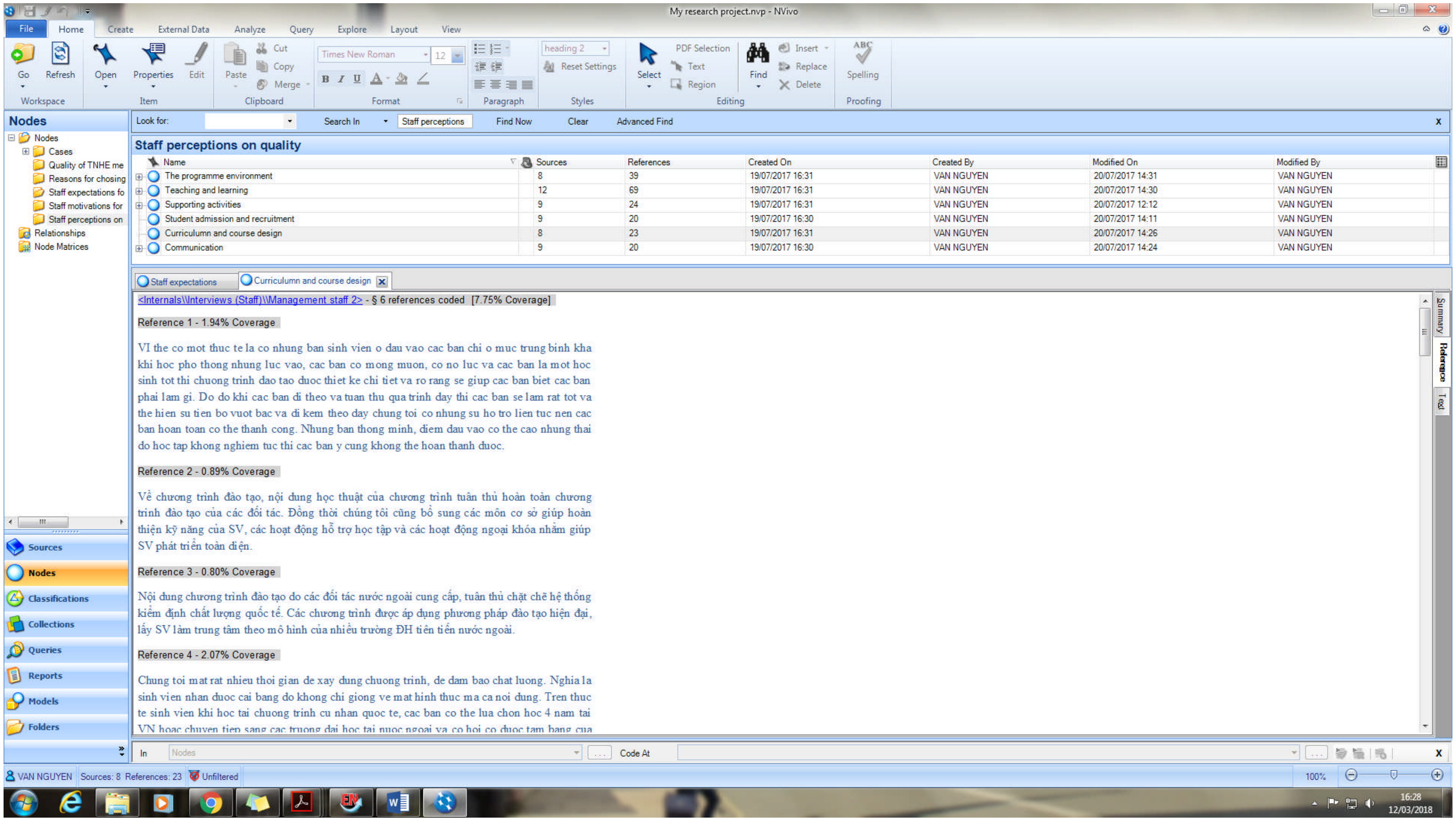
Part 5: If you wish to add any comments about your experiences of the transnational higher education degree programme, please use the space bellow:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**.**

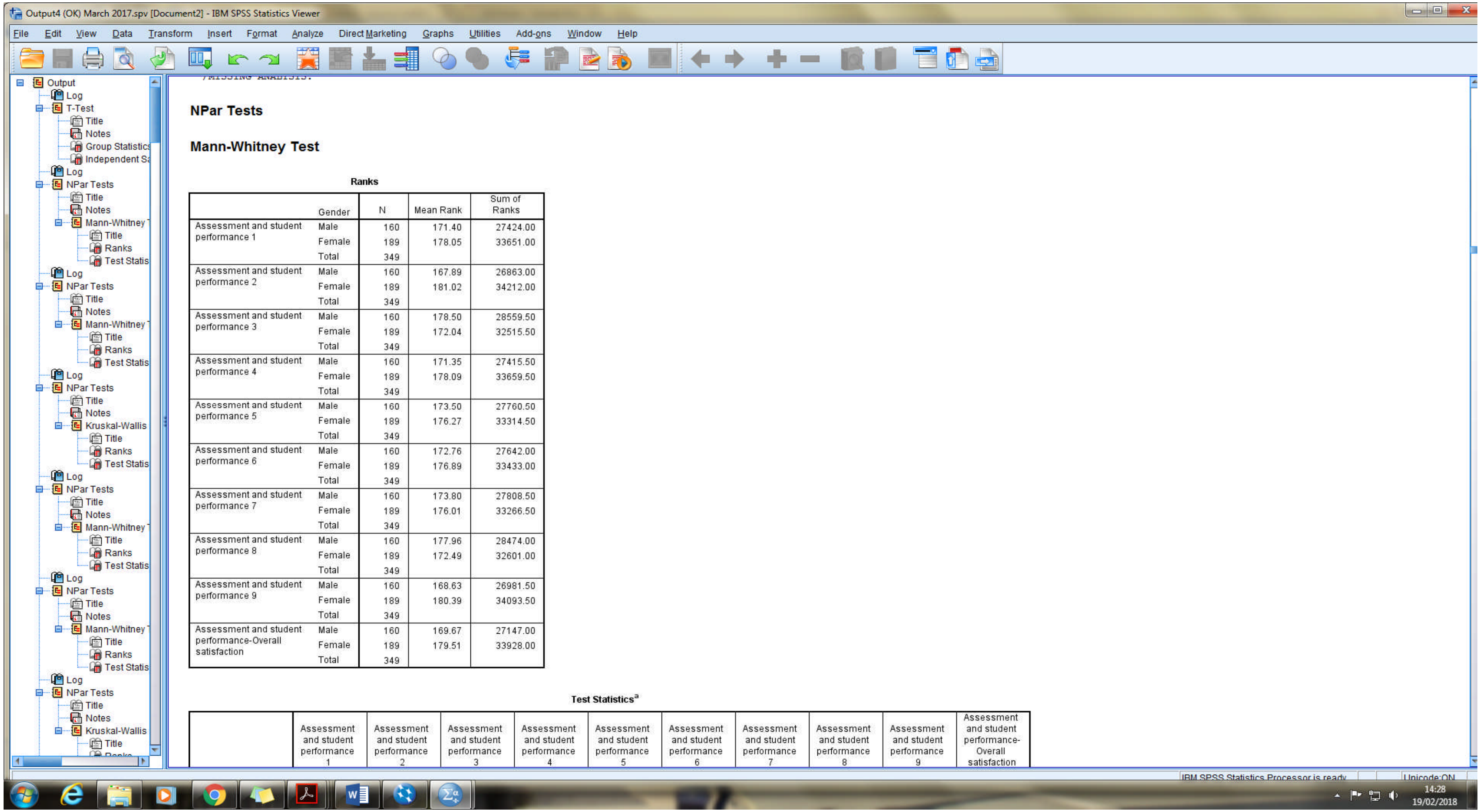
Appendix 5: Example of transcriptions on NViVo



Appendix 6: Example of NViVo coding



Appendix 7: Examples of quantitative data analysed on SPSS and Excel



NPar Tests

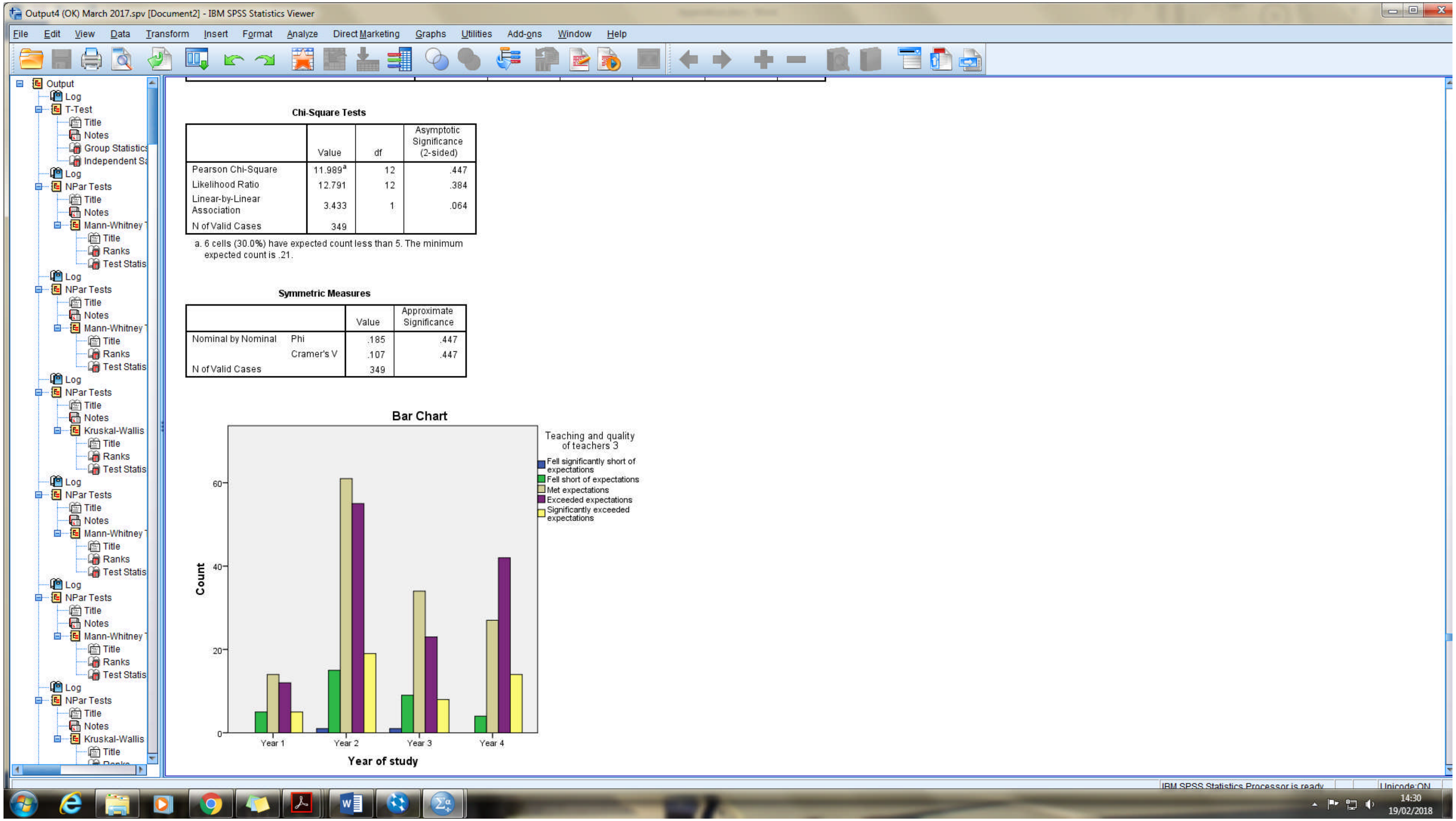
Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Assessment and student performance 1	Male	160	171.40	27424.00
	Female	189	178.05	33651.00
	Total	349		
Assessment and student performance 2	Male	160	167.89	26863.00
	Female	189	181.02	34212.00
	Total	349		
Assessment and student performance 3	Male	160	178.50	28559.50
	Female	189	172.04	32515.50
	Total	349		
Assessment and student performance 4	Male	160	171.35	27415.50
	Female	189	178.09	33659.50
	Total	349		
Assessment and student performance 5	Male	160	173.50	27760.50
	Female	189	176.27	33314.50
	Total	349		
Assessment and student performance 6	Male	160	172.76	27642.00
	Female	189	176.89	33433.00
	Total	349		
Assessment and student performance 7	Male	160	173.80	27808.50
	Female	189	176.01	33266.50
	Total	349		
Assessment and student performance 8	Male	160	177.96	28474.00
	Female	189	172.49	32601.00
	Total	349		
Assessment and student performance 9	Male	160	168.63	26981.50
	Female	189	180.39	34093.50
	Total	349		
Assessment and student performance-Overall satisfaction	Male	160	169.67	27147.00
	Female	189	179.51	33928.00
	Total	349		

Test Statistics[a]

	Assessment and student performance 1	Assessment and student performance 2	Assessment and student performance 3	Assessment and student performance 4	Assessment and student performance 5	Assessment and student performance 6	Assessment and student performance 7	Assessment and student performance 8	Assessment and student performance 9	Assessment and student performance-Overall satisfaction



Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.989[a]	12	.447
Likelihood Ratio	12.791	12	.384
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.433	1	.064
N of Valid Cases	349		

a. 6 cells (30.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .21.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.185	.447
	Cramer's V	.107	.447
N of Valid Cases		349	

Year of study * Learning Environment 1 Crosstabulation

			Learning Environment 1					
			Fell significantly short of expectations	Fell short of expectations	Met expectations	Exceeded expectations	Significantly exceeded expectations	Total
Year of study	Year 1	Count	$3_{a, b}$	7_{b}	$12_{a, b}$	7_{a}	$7_{a, b}$	36
		% within Year of study	8.3%	19.4%	33.3%	19.4%	19.4%	100.0%
		% within Learning Environment 1	16.7%	20.0%	9.0%	6.2%	14.3%	10.3%
	Year 2	Count	12_{a}	13_{b}	$65_{a, b}$	45_{b}	16_{b}	151
		% within Year of study	7.9%	8.6%	43.0%	29.8%	10.6%	100.0%
		% within Learning Environment 1	66.7%	37.1%	48.5%	39.8%	32.7%	43.3%
	Year 3	Count	2_{a}	9_{a}	30_{a}	24_{a}	10_{a}	75
		% within Year of study	2.7%	12.0%	40.0%	32.0%	13.3%	100.0%
		% within Learning Environment 1	11.1%	25.7%	22.4%	21.2%	20.4%	21.5%
	Year 4	Count	1_{a}	$6_{a, b, c}$	$27_{a, c}$	37_{b}	$16_{b, c}$	87
		% within Year of study	1.1%	6.9%	31.0%	42.5%	18.4%	100.0%
		% within Learning Environment 1	5.6%	17.1%	20.1%	32.7%	32.7%	24.9%
Total		Count	18	35	134	113	49	349
		% within Year of study	5.2%	10.0%	38.4%	32.4%	14.0%	100.0%
		% within Learning Environment 1	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Learning Environment 1 categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly

	Fell significantly short of expectations	Fell short of expectations	Met expectations	Exceeded expectations	Significantly exceeded expectations
Year 1	8.3%	19.4%	33.3%	19.4%	19.4%
Year 2	7.9%	8.6%	43.0%	29.8%	10.6%
Year 2	2.7%	12.0%	40.0%	32.0%	13.3%
Year 4	1.1%	6.9%	31.0%	42.5%	18.4%