CHAPTER 10

Transition into Transnational Postgraduate Education: Reflections from Programme Facilitators

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Abstract

The present chapter examines, through the lens of two transnational partnerships (located within North-South and South-South contexts), the possibilities for strengthening student transition into postgraduate studies in education. Drawing from the experiences of facilitators across three transnational postgraduate programmes, namely a Master of Arts in Education, a professional doctorate in education (EdD) and a PhD in Education, it reflects on what has been learned with respect to the barriers and enablers to transitioning from undergraduate to postgraduate learning, highlighting aspects of transnational education which could prove to be supportive of strong student outcomes. The paper thus re-situates the debate on postgraduateness, responding to the critique of postgraduate education being much talked about but misunderstood. The chapter has implications for exploring how institutional partnerships across Africa could enhance transition into postgraduate studies because it

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offers a space for modelling out expectations of collaboration, sustained dialogue, critique, shared understanding of epistemological and methodological rigour and intercultural sensitivity which cohere with the attributes expected of postgraduate education.

Keywords: Transnational education, Postgraduate learning, Partnerships, Collaborative work

1 Introduction

Transnational education (TNE) is a specific form of International Education (IE) where the programmes move to the students, rather than students moving to the institutions which offer the programmes (Knight & McNamara 2017). Sending countries which have successfully extended their international reach include the UK, Australia, Germany, France and the US, as well as Qatar, China, Malaysia and Singapore, with enrolment hitting the thousands (Buckner *et al.* 2022; Kosmutzhy & Putty 2016). Although undergraduate studies represent the largest recruitment, especially in engineering, medical and computer sciences, postgraduate programmes are garnering interest (Alam *et al.* 2022). These are often proposed under collaborative arrangements whose resulting programmes of study can be in the form of a joint or dual award between an international higher education institution (HEI) and a local private or public HEI, as a response to the demands for more affordable study options for low and middle income. The anticipated gains reside in the financial advantages from recruitment, the influence and reputational dividend, legitimacy and branding, especially through the establishment of branch campuses (Tight 2022). TNE offers a range of value-added in terms of building research capacity and promoting cultural understanding (McNamara and Knight 2014; Hoare 2013). It has also been politically appropriated to create support for policies related to the development of a student and knowledge hub, as in the case of countries like Singapore and Malaysia.

The challenges facing African education are multiple, ranging from chronic under-resourcing and its impact on the quality of outcomes especially at postgraduate levels, as this is strongly linked to research capacity and quality of faculty (Knight & Woldegiorgis 2017). The project of Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence represents an attempt to enhance postgraduate provisions across more than 50 universities in 20 African countries. However,

in the literature, drop out at the level of master's programmes is 12%, 40% in doctoral education (Rotem, Yair & Shustat 2021). Objective factors which explain attrition are related to the demands of full-time enrolment (Barry & Mathies 2011). Cohen and Greenberg (2011) argue that academic and social integration constitutes an important factor in the persistence of postgraduate students. It echoes the four elements of Tinto's (1987) conceptual model: a feeling of estrangement, disappointment with the expectations of being challenged, feeling at home within the university (O'Keefe 2013); and institutionally hospitable environment, with the latest factor having more significant impact. Interest in TNE is also increasing on the African continent especially among those who are seeking career enhancement opportunities through flexible formats. The higher demand for transnational provision is also associated with the higher prestige and mobility of international awards. In 2021, out of the 510,835 students who were enrolled on TNE programmes in the UK, 56,140 were hosted in African countries. 63% were from Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa, with Mauritius being one of the top ten providers (Kigotho 2022).

2 Postgraduate Provisions in the Field of Education in the Mauritian Context

Mauritius has developed a multipronged strategy to expanding TNE based on independent and collaborative programmes and provision, through franchise programmes, dual/ joint degrees, and/or through the setting up of a branch campus with a local partner. Not all of these formats necessarily involve shared academic responsibility for programme design and outcomes, as the management of the quality may rest predominantly with the international partner.

The rise in national tertiary enrolments at the turn of this century evidenced by a Gross Tertiary enrolment ratio of 50%, has been accompanied by a steady rise in postgraduate enrolment which stands at 15.4 % for the year 2020-2021 at 5,0339 (Knight & Motala-Timol 2021). Education, as a discipline, accounts for 9% of total yearly new enrolment, with taught postgraduate enrolment accounting for the larger share of higher degrees (Higher Education Commission 2022). Transnational postgraduate provision constitutes a smaller share of total enrolment, given the much higher cost of postgraduate awards even when delivered in flexible modes.

In the discipline of education, master's level study was first offered through a partnership between the University of Brighton (UoB) and the Mauritius Institute of Education allowing some 500 school teachers to earn higher qualifications (Mariaye *et al.* 2022). At the turn of this century, similar provision was offered by the University of Technology, the University of Mauritius and more recently, the Open University, the University of Mauritius and a host of private providers making the Master of Arts in Education programme one of the most preferred choices of postgraduate study, together with the MBA (Higher Education Commission 2022). Doctoral provision however, first appeared on Mauritian campuses after 2010, again through a partnership offering by the University of Brighton, which expanded the existing postgraduate portfolio with the MIE, by means of a Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD). This was later supplemented by a second doctoral programme (PhD), similarly provided through a transnational partnership with the School of Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) (Samuel & Mariaye 2014). Public universities in Mauritius also offer doctoral degrees in education through their respective faculties but uptake has been relatively less, given the demands of doctoral education.

Whilst the professional affordances of postgraduate education are becoming increasingly acknowledged (Sbaffi & Bennett 2019) within the context of knowledge economies, higher education institutions continue to experience challenges in resourcing programmes adequately and facilitating student transitions into postgraduate studies, despite efforts to set up dedicated structures which acknowledge the specific requirements for learning the skills set expected (Crane *et al.* 2016; Steele 2015). Student surveys reveal the manifold difficulties such as academic writing, understanding of the research language, autonomy and criticality, indicating the steep learning curve for students (McPherson *et al.* 2017).

For students who are registered on transnational programmes, the transition may be further complicated given the need to understand and meet the expectations of learning of a foreign institution, adapting to new sets of rules and policies they may be totally unfamiliar with, and adjusting to the supervisory relationship within novel pedagogic and administrative frameworks (Sun *et al.* 2022; Menzies & Baron 2014; Chapman & Pyvis 2013).

However, there are equally interesting possibilities for enhancing students learning within the collaborative spaces of partnerships through the cross fertilization of approaches and the extension of best practices across

contexts (Mariaye *et al.* 2022; Barnes *et al.* 2021). Extant literature on collegial practices within partnerships signals the merits of professional learning nested within cross-institutional and cross-cultural contexts which impact positively on student learning (Shagrir 2017). With the expectations of postgraduate education being constructed around complexity, creativity and autonomy, TNE has added value in enabling students to interact with peers and tutors across diverse practices, realities and worldviews.

The purpose of this chapter is not to celebrate the practices being engaged with, but rather use experience to problematize the nature of postgraduate learning and the practices which are currently in place. The argument presented is that TNE contexts offer an ideal terrain to explore the issues around postgraduate education because collaborative arrangements across radically different cultural, legal, historical and institutional contexts make more demands on the need to articulate and justify positions. Working together implies becoming conscious of differences and negotiating with partners about every single aspect of the curriculum, and achieving a coherent approach to generate expected student outcomes. It also affords an added opportunity for collaborative work to be enacted and modelled for students.

3 Transitioning to Postgraduate Learning

In Mauritius, as in other countries, the distinction between postgraduate and undergraduate studies is embedded in the qualifications level descriptors of the National Qualifications Framework which defines the level of expected learning outcomes. The difference is often framed in terms of criticality, complexity, research skills, depth of specialist knowledge demonstrated, as well as autonomy and creative problem-solving in non-routine situations through research inquiry and development of innovative procedures and methods (Barnes *et al.* 2022; McPherson *et al.* 2017).

Transition from undergraduate to postgraduate level is experienced as a learning challenge by many students, although they expect workloads to be heavier and more intense, especially if the expectations are not made clear enough and adaptation time is short. Tobbell *et al.* (2010) considered transition as a process of negotiating complex identities through the experiences of communities of practice and broader valued institutional practices. They argued against the view that students joining postgraduate courses are already 'experts' by virtue of their undergraduate success. Recognising the deep learner identity

shift required, has implications for the ways in which pedagogical support is organised to 'mind' the multiple discontinuities as students learn to become members of a different community (Tobbell *et al.* 2010). Current literature indicates that while other aspects of educational transitions have been documented, transition to postgraduate studies has not been as deeply explored, with only a few studies on doctoral students and some focussed on taught master's level provision. The claim that postgraduate students are already experts persists despite Tobell *et al.*'s (2010) work more than a decade ago, as it is regarded that there is little change in students' educational environment. However, Heussi (2012) and McPherson *et al.* (2017) contest this assumption, highlighting the following discontinuities may characterise postgraduate studies:

1. Firstly, the students may have completed their undergraduate studies in another university, possibly from another country, in case of international or transnational students.

2. Secondly, students may be crossing over disciplinary boundaries. Entry to master's level courses in education may be open to applicants who do not necessarily have a background in education.

3. Thirdly, they could have a background in vocational sector and as such, may not totally be familiar with higher education culture and environments. Added to the shift in environment integration in a new community also poses a set of challenges, if expectations are not made clear at the onset and deliberate effort is not put into creating opportunities for interaction and creating a sense of belonging.

4. Fourthly, unlike doctoral studies which span a longer period of time, master's students have limited time to achieve a complex set of target research and specialist knowledge.

The term 'postgraduateness' invokes those specified features in relation to expectations of autonomy and criticality developed by means of different types of student-student and student-teacher interactions, and modes of assessment within the context of a dense workload, for which undergraduate experience does not really prepare learners. Anxiety and stress often result

(McPherson *et al.* 2017; Heussi 2012) as an outcome of the 'shock' of the new social and cognitive challenges (Neves 2022), giving rise to what is referred to as the 'imposter syndrome'. Menzies and Baron (2014) posit further that transitioning into an online environment adds an additional layer of complexity to masters' study, by requiring a supplementary type of transition for those students who completed their undergraduate education in a face-to-face mode (Lemay, Bazelais & Doleck 2021). Although technology has become an integral part of master's level studies, there is little research on how it supports learning (Robb & Moffat 2020), how ready students are, even when it is planned, and how it is likely to be more disruptive for staff and students if it is unplanned.

4 Student Experiences of International and Transnational Programmes

Students registered on international postgraduate programmes identified a range of concerns that are related to either the programmatic expectations of learning or the particular life circumstances associated with settling in economically, socially and culturally in a foreign country. International students also find it challenging to understand the expectations associated with the new rules and how these will be performed within the university context (Liu & Zhu 2020; Chapman & Pyvis 2013). Given the varied circumstances of postgraduate international students and their diverse profiles in terms of age and professional contexts, the quality of their engagement and the challenges faced are likely to be different across disciplines and groups (Neves 2022).

While transnational students registered with a foreign university in their home country may be advantaged in terms of cultural acclimatisation, the issues experienced remain largely similar to those on more traditional, international programmes, specifically those associated with expectations of criticality and cognitive autonomy. These are arguably more pronounced when postgraduate students have studied in a local context, where learning cultures are still rooted in a more teacher/knowledge-centred approach to teaching and learning, even at undergraduate level. The first few months are likely to be experienced as destabilising for many who find the costs of unlearning past practices onerous (Van der Rijst *et al.* 2022).

Increasingly, TNE programmes are delivered in a range of modes requiring the use of technological skills to operate in an online environment. However, while these technical skills can be rapidly developed, the learning

skills which are required to be a successful online learner are far more complex, involving the enhancement of cognitive and social skills, and teacher presence (Kreijns *et al.* 2014) through careful instructional design and curricular adaptation appropriate for postgraduate level work. The success of TNE programmes, experienced through online modes of delivery, varies from institution to institution and across programmes. Despite the fact that a common platform may be used for both home and foreign students, the online readiness of students as it is understood and expected from the transnational education provider may not reflect realities of local students in terms of internet penetration and speed, and their understanding of online engagement (Alam *et al.* 2022; Kanwar & Carr 2020).

For programmes which are delivered under partnership arrangements, complications may arise out of organisational compatibilities in terms of values, expectations, structures and practices, notwithstanding divergences created by discontinuities in the legal frameworks and economic and political ambitions of each partner. How these are understood and managed may create further transition issues for students (Ma & Montgomery 2021).

The foreign collaborating institution is likely to be larger than the local higher education institution, and may often be dealing with a range of partners across differing contexts. The local institution may find itself in a relationship of compliance, on account of imbalances and lack of equity in terms of reputational power and prestige. Control of the academic aspects of the programme may rest with faculty located on the main campus, with only second-hand knowledge of the local contexts and students. This can then result in curricular provisions which are not meaningful for students and local faculty alike (Hoare 2013; Chan 2011).

Administratively, the partnership may be handled by an office which oversees a number of similar arrangements. The implications for students are manifold. *First*, they have to navigate complex regulatory frameworks which govern registration and progress mediated through local intermediaries. If these are not made sufficiently clear or appear incoherent between institutions, it can result in significant delays which, in turn, can be a source of additional stress and anxiety (Stafford & Taylor 2016). *Second*, with high rates of staff turnover in larger organisations, disruptions in supervisory arrangements could also mean delays in progress. *Third*, equitable access to resources, though often guaranteed under the partnership agreement, may not always translate seamlessly in practice, resulting in weaker integration of transnational students

into the academic life of the main campus. All this then has the potential for differential and fragmented learning experiences for students, making the transition even harder (Van der Rijst 2022; Liu & Zhu 2020).

5 Three Postgraduate Transnational Programmes

5.1 The Master of Arts in Education (MA Education) Programme [Part-time]

The MA Education programme offered by the Mauritius Institute of Education in partnership with the University of Brighton is a two-year, part-time programme offered to working professionals in the field of education. It is a cohort-based model, accommodating an annual intake of 20 students. It is co-delivered under collaborative arrangements, with staff from both institutions team-teaching, co-marking and co-supervising. The modules are in a synchronous, remote mode, supplemented by online tutorial with the presence of partner tutors. A critical support group system has been set in place with groups of about five students meeting regularly, without supervision to discuss their assignments and research projects.

5.2 The Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) [Part-time]

Offered since 2011 on the Mauritius Institute of Education campus, the programme builds on the model of the MA Education, although the cohorts are ostensibly smaller, with 3 to 8 students, who work under co-supervision arrangements between the collaborating institutions. Students who are educational professionals, working in different contexts, complete taught modules in the first three years, in preparation for a move onto the thesis study for the next three years.

5.3 The PhD (Education) [Full-time]

This University of KwaZulu-Natal doctoral programme is delivered jointly with the Mauritius Institute of education and offered to larger cohorts of 20 students, who are afforded four years to complete their thesis, with the provision of an additional year based on supervisor recommendation. They are also placed in supervisory teams of 2 to 3 supervisors, with one supervisor being appointed from the local team.

6 Student Transition in Three Transnational Postgraduate Programmes

Based on our experiences as leads and tutors on the programmes, we report here on some issues which have been repeatedly foregrounded in assessment and planning meetings, discussion with other tutors, and the students themselves during staff-students meetings or tutorial meetings. These themes, which relate to transition issues, have been clustered in four overarching categories which are presented in an exploratory rather than explanatory manner. Similarly, in the following section, we discuss some of the practices which we have found to be useful in easing students into transition at postgraduate level.

6.1 On Preparedness for Postgraduate Studies

The diversity of student experience generally, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, explains the large differences in entry knowledge and skills of students. For the field of education, this is even more conspicuous on account of the broad range of disciplines with differing epistemological and methodological traditions which are deemed as being relevant or related to education. Added to this, is the often expansive approach to accepting what constitutes adequate and appropriate prior learning and the diverse routes to postgraduate programmes. Some undergraduate and even taught master's programmes do not have a strong research component which could have, in some ways, evened out the wide disparities which have been noted by facilitators across the three programmes considered here. While it is true that not all undergraduate programmes and taught, professional master's programmes have or should have a strong research orientation, it is equally true that the integration of research skills in its most elementary form in terms of the use of evidence to substantiate arguments and the critical use of literature and theories, remain generic undergraduate attributes across disciplines. Yet, classroom interactions and initial assignments submitted for both formative and summative purposes reveal a worrying cluster towards the lower end of the spectrum; a trend which appears to confirm itself across cohorts.

Students' understanding of the nature of postgraduate learning is strongly coloured by previous experiences of what passes as academic work. While it is common that students expect that more resources and effort will have to be put in on account of the higher level of cognitive demands, many struggle with the experienced gap between their current aptitudes and the minimum

expectations in terms of scholarly writing. Significant unlearning of previous practices is often also required although many tend to hold on to unscholarly practices which were successfully used, especially those related to paraphrasing, reporting and describing, rather than argument development. While there has been an initial response from tutors, supervisors and facilitators alike to leave much of this learning to the students to develop on their own, this process had to be somehow integrated within the formal curriculum. There is, nevertheless, a cost to this decision in terms of time and resources but the price of not attending early on to unproductive habits can be excessively high from a programmatic perspective.

6.2 On Student Resilience

University processes with respect to the administrative management of postgraduate studies, are conditioned by wider considerations of optimizing resources and performance, as well as the setting up of coherent procedures across faculty and departments. This can often translate into a heavy administrative load, as decisions need to be taken and validated at various instances. The 'communication loop' back to students takes longer if there are two institutions involved. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the process of obtaining ethical clearance required for field work. The process involves supervisors and students in the first instance, moving subsequently to an ethics committee, which could potentially sit outside the immediate faculty. A second feedback loop is triggered with the process taking, in the worst cases a few months. The consequences of this have been far-reaching and impacting detrimentally on student progress, delaying the data collection process and requiring students to creatively make adjustments. Some students have been compelled to interrupt/suspend their studies and in an extreme case one student has dropped out of the course because of the high levels of anxiety and stress the delay occasioned.

A noted issue has also been the harmonization of ethical clearance procedures and ethical considerations. The nature of what constitutes an ethical risk depends in a large measure on the legal provisions of the context within which the research is being carried out, as well as what the universities consider to be acceptable with respect to their own principles and values. These are embodied in the procedures, the criteria for what constitutes acceptable risk to organisations and individuals. While the values and principles related to respect,

responsibility, fairness and freedom cut across institutions in the main, it is in the specificities of each case as it unfolds in the context that divergence may occur. Current experience indicates how educational research outcomes are being politically read by authorities who exercise considerable gatekeeping power through the setting up of new procedures to assess not only the risk to participants, but also the risks to policymakers. Such layering of procedures makes the transition even more challenging for collaborating institutions, as students have to work within a triple layer of ethical parameters, one of which is located within the broader political discourse of the local context.

6.3 Students' Response to Transition

While each individual student is bound to respond differently on account of their own professional circumstances, as well as their own learning history and trajectory, we have noted two sets of contrasting responses to the exigencies of postgraduate work. At one end of the spectrum is the response of collective survival, based on the understanding that chances are considerably augmented if one is part of a group. It is premised on the effort which needs to be put in to meet the requirements, giving up on old patterns of thinking and habits. By finding a supportive critical support group, many students eventually overcome transition and progressively learning not only the performances, but also alternative modes of being and becoming a postgraduate learner.

The other response is to remain in the transition mode, in a kind of 'twilight zone' between undergraduate and postgraduate work. Because TNE is expensive and often privately financed, the pressure to meet the performance expectations could lead students to develop 'beat the system strategies', mimicking postgraduateness and perhaps even meeting the requirements but not really being transformed in terms of autonomy and criticality. A significant number of casualties result from not understanding the requirements in terms of *being* and *becoming*, and committing the time and the effort to engage with the complexity of postgraduate learning.

These responses are not unconnected to the purposes of postgraduate programmes in education and how they are considered in transnational contexts, where the intentions of the local partner, the home university and the expectations of the students could be pointing in different directions, all of which are arguably legitimate and sensible, but equally problematic in terms of the research capacity agenda of postgraduate education. For students, the

credentialing opportunity offered that would put them ahead of the competition for a promotion or any such career advancement opportunities, tends to be the dominating consideration; for the collaborating institutions, recruitment, soft power and prestige can be the expected benefits; for faculty, students' research functioning may be a more sought-after objective not unconnected though with faculty own professional agenda.

Our experience reveals that students who attend regularly and engage in spaces where expected academic behaviours are modelled, and become familiar with the way that student work is included, acknowledged and rewarded, develop a sharper and more focused sense, learning a 'way' of being that predisposes them to develop and perform postgraduateness. So, the seminar room and the classroom are resources in supporting these transitions into developing postgraduate identity, discourses, practices and knowledge which assist and are constituents of the cognitive processes involved. This is no less than a cultural knowledge transition embedded in the quality of the bond-nurturing collegial relationships.

Transnational provisions offer an opportunity for postgraduate students to expand these spaces beyond the limits of the local contexts, to accommodate peers with diverse worldviews and realities, and to hear alternative viewpoints which challenge their own. However, whether the creation of this community would materialize depends on the programmatic structures set up to develop an expanding network of relationships.

6.4 On Quality Supervision and Teaching at Postgraduate Level in Transnational Programmes

The cognitive transition to be achieved remains perhaps the most exciting and yet poorly understood aspect of postgraduate transition. However, what is less uncertain is the role played by strong faculty to mediate and scaffold the process and understand how teaching/supervision at postgraduate level 'works'. Although the modes of pedagogy and educational activity are different in teaching and supervision, they coalesce to produce effective student outcomes. Subordination of teaching at postgraduate level to the research activities of faculty, or not understanding that postgraduate supervision is a form of teaching, could limit student learning. Supervisory conversations reveal how academic work is constructed, authorised and represented. Thus, the thought, thinking, and conversational patterns emerging out of supervision are academic

practices which cohere with other existing established spaces and forms of learning.

Ensuring that faculty across institutions understand how postgraduateness can be developed in a variety of academic forums/spaces, where these behaviours are modelled, is certainly a challenge within one institution and, more so, when partners from other organizations are involved. For one, finding local supervisors in the area of specialisation has not been without caveats. Facilitators have found it good practice to develop collegial ties among the supervisory groups, to ensure coherence as to how expectations about postgraduate work is understood and communicated. Sharing of experiences and ongoing discussions about each student's progression enables the articulation and internal discussion of how as a group, supervisors are interpreting the criteria for quality postgraduate work.

7 Managing Transition under Transnational Partnership Arrangements

7.1 Avoiding the Double Administration Load

Recognising the added difficulty in managing information flow with two separate administrations working with different structures, time scales and sets of rules and regulations in place, more attention has been paid to how the administrative processes are cleared and adequate communication between the structures developed. This also includes the financial arrangements to be made and communicated to administrative sections of both institutions. While this synchrony worked well in the case of two of the programmes, a lack of clarity around procedures and high administrative staff turnover on account of organizational restructuring did generate a fair measure of confusion resulting in delays in registration and processing of students' request in the case of the third programme. Attention has to be paid to explicitly laying down the processes for staff and students alike, with a proviso for changes in rules and regulations to be immediately communicated and discussed with all parties concerned.

7.2 Building in Transition Support in the Curriculum

One of the issues indicated in the literature regarding international student transition relates to student acclimatisation to the expectations of learning and

approaches to teaching, a process which can be rendered more challenging if student previous experience is more frontal; didactic literature on transnational transitions reveal differences in the experience of domestic and foreign students. The latter, apart from the issue of language adaptation, sometimes struggle with academic writing while having to balance studies with external commitments emanating from personal and professional circumstances. A large proportion of students across all cohorts appear to find achieving this balance a challenge, which results in the inabilities to meet deadlines for submission of assignments or written work, interruption/suspension of studies and registration, extensions, and applications for mitigating circumstances, all of which are institutional mechanisms in place to assist students towards completion. Attrition rates for the doctoral programme, though comparable to international statistics have been a source of institutional concern and called for action on both provisions for the MIE-UoB partnership and the MIE-UKZN programme. These included foregrounding academic and critical writing workshops (at least four times a year) and the provision of academic enrichment sessions for those who require additional support. The fluctuating attendance on these workshops continues to baffle, despite the fact that students still demand support.

7.3 Managing Neocolonialism

Student learning appears to be particularly challenging in the context of the use of 'Anglo pedagogy' within what remains in the Mauritian setting, a largely Asian learning culture, alimented through a highly elitist and performance-oriented primary, secondary and undergraduate education culture. Despite the fact that students register on postgraduate TNE programmes, seeking a foreign learning credential and expertise, they still remain fully entrenched in all pervading local culture which Healey (2018), and Wilkins and Balakrishnan (2013) call 'a "transient" bubble' of foreign culture, which students experience for only part of each day, resulting in conflicts of identity and adjustments difficulties. We are conscious, in this analysis, of the power equation that may be operating at various levels in transnational provisions, which 'sets up' the foreign expertise and professionalism (Compton & Alsford 2022). This is an aspect of TNE work that local facilitators had to factor in the design of the curriculum itself.

Team planning, teaching and sustained conversations between teams of supervisors and facilitators did contribute to what we think was enhanced

coherence in programme delivery. Some students reported positive experience of the collaborative work of tutors (Mariaye *et al.* 2022) which was supported by a system of three-way communication among student and tutors from both institutions by means of email and online meetings. This, however, did not work in all cases, often where students chose to work exclusively with the foreign tutor for varied reasons, ranging from perceived superior professionalism, the belief that they are buying in an international and not a local service, or even personal affinities. On the other hand, some students liaised more frequently with the local tutor who is more accessible for face-to-face meetings and more knowledge of the context. In many cases, local tutors have brokered the challenges for students, translating the expectations more effectively on account of their knowledge of what the students had as local higher education experience and professional practice.

We argue the co-presence of local and international faculty works well in terms of foregrounding the importance of collaborative work in achieving desired outcomes. The postgraduate classroom, in TNE settings is thus a space that is essentially transcultural in nature. Students and tutors come to the TNE situation with agency derived from their own values, goals, motivation and educational experience, which are deployed and renegotiated (Djerasimovic 2014). Current literature reveals that TNE could be a space for collaboration and transformation if nurtured through trust, reciprocity and collegial relationships (Compton & Alsford 2022).

7.4 Changing Relationships

Transitioning to postgraduate education involves shifts in relationships. From a knowledge perspective, students are encouraged to re-negotiate their own relationship with knowledge, knowing and learning, to reposition themselves as the ones who assign meaning and value to the ideas of others in relation to their own. Many find the process of developing their own ideas a challenge, having spent much of their previous studies 'wearing the robes of other people's thought'. The experienced vulnerability of having to grow their own intellectual skin can be destabilizing in the transition period. We have found that formative assessment tasks, coupled with the practices of encouraging students to work initially around an annotated bibliography, helps to give a sense of the scope of the field and what could potentially be their choice of focus. More importantly though, renegotiating the relationship with theory, has been the biggest stone in

the shoe of many students as they transition to postgraduateness. Shifting from understanding of theory as a frame that is meant to be applied, to an understanding of theory as a cognitive lens and tool, often represents one of the biggest challenges. Strategies deployed across programmes have focused on encouraging students to expand their theoretical repertoire in early stages, as they consider competing theories and models from the perspective of their own experience. Reading critiques of well-established theories is also an additional avenue to take critical distance from preferred theoretical postures. The advantage of the transnational supervisory teams has been the overture afforded on account of supervisors' diverse international backgrounds and access to a range of literature.

From a pedagogical perspective, students are also encouraged to progressively move into a more equal relationship with their tutors on the strength of their reading and developing understanding of their field of study, as well as their more nuanced interpretation of practices. Activating voice in pedagogical relationship is possible if spaces are programmatically offered to exercise it. This is likely to be more successful if students exercise voice in a semi-public space like a critical support group, which consists of at most five students, before moving to the seminar room. Our experience of the most successful students are those who learn quickly to be an insider in such spaces.

8 On Forms of Transitions and Transnationality

Looking back on our shared work in designing, teaching and assessing three transnational programmes, we recognize weak and strong versions of our experience based on our observations, discussions and interactions with staff and students.

We highlight possibilities of weak and strong transitions being dependent on a set of personal, institutional and programmatic factors. Personal factors relate to personal and professional motivations such as personal development, professional and career intentions, and credentials. The value the institution assigns to postgraduate students in terms of allocating resources and facilities is also key. Programmatic factors refer to the curriculum design, tutor input, support system in terms of specific and individualized support, availability of student-led spaces, communication, quality of feedback, and possibilities for contextualizing learning.

Transnational education could also be interpreted as weak or strong,

based on the nature of interactions between local and foreign facilitators; connectedness among tutors in terms of planning, implementation and assessment of programmes; collegiality, trust and reciprocity; intercultural competence; and contextual awareness.

Building an African scholarship is then constructed in dialogue with multiple partners from both the Global North and South. We posit that strong forms of TNE offers a space for modelling out expectations of collaboration, sustained dialogue, critique, shared understanding of epistemological and methodological rigour, and intercultural sensitivity, which cohere with the attributes expected of postgraduate education. For this to happen transnational higher education would need to strategically move away from a partnership posture focusing only on strategic development for institutions to expand provision, gain soft power and prestige, towards a more collaborative stance seeking to enhance professionalism through mutually beneficial capacity development, and intercultural understanding across the continent.

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