

UK threshold standards in an Egyptian TNE context: An exploration of different understandings, mediation and safeguarding processes

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Abstract

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This study explores how United Kingdom (UK) threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded in an Egyptian Transnational Education (TNE) context. The professional challenge this thesis addresses is the requirement for Higher Education (HE) leaders and practitioners to understand the principles and values that inform UK threshold standards and to enable their appropriate mediation and safeguarding in an Egyptian TNE context with its own threshold standards. It seeks to understand how the situated context, and the lived experience of educational practitioners and leaders, impact UK threshold standards. This research was conducted as a case study of UK TNE provision between a UK Higher Education Institute (HEI) and a private HEI located in Egypt. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview tool to interview thirty-two practitioners and leaders from the Egyptian and UK HEIs. Data were analysed using coding to identify relevant themes from the data and their interrelationship. Analysis of the data revealed the TNE context results in significant complexity to how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded. First, the movement of threshold standards from a UK context to a new national context requires significant additional work by practitioners and leaders to understand and align different national requirement. Second, UK threshold standards are primarily understood through a safeguarding prism which seeks to articulate learning outcomes and measure their achievement through assessment processes. This constrains development of learning, teaching and assessment. Finally, the understanding of UK threshold standards requires significant ongoing staff development processes, with appropriate resourcing levels, to embed and develop understandings through time.

Keywords: transnational higher education; threshold standards; UK; Egypt; HEI; lived experience; complexity; staff development; resources

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List of abbreviations

EE	External Examiner
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institute
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
TNE	Transnational Education
WTO	World Trade Organisation
Egypt specific abbreviations	
EGP	Egyptian
MHESR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
NARS	National Academic Reference Standards
NAQAAE	National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education
SCU	Supreme Council of Universities
SCPU	Supreme Council of Private Universities
United Kingdom specific abbreviations	
UK	United Kingdom
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency

Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Overview

This chapter first provides the context in which this study is located. It then sets out the aims of the study and the rationale for it as well as my position in the field. Next, the professional challenges that the study addresses are outlined mapped to the aims of the study. This is followed by the research questions that the study seeks to answer and concludes by outlining the structure of the thesis.

1.1 The research context

1.1.0 A UK TNE collaboration with a private HEI in Egypt

The transnational education (TNE) collaboration that is the focus of this study is between a United Kingdom (UK) Higher Education Institute (HEI) and a private HEI located in Egypt. The Mission of the Egyptian HEI, inaugurated in 2005, is to produce high calibre graduates who are highly employable and able to contribute to the development of Egypt and the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). To deliver its Mission, the Egyptian HEI has adopted a strategy that seeks UK validation of its degree programmes. It does so through the development of validation agreements with UK HEIs. At its inception the Egyptian HEI developed a validation agreement with a single UK HEI. This UK HEI was responsible for the validation of eight undergraduate programmes across three faculties. Additionally, the development of a Nursing faculty led to a new validation agreement with a second UK HEI.

1.1.1 Validation as a mode of TNE

Validation is a mode of TNE that involves a UK HEI ‘validating’ a degree programme which has been developed by a foreign HEI as equivalent to its own degree award. Validation allows the foreign HEI to offer its own degree programmes as a degree of the awarding UK HEI. This means that on successful completion of a degree programme graduates receive two-degree certificates, one awarded by the UK validating HEI and one awarded by the Egyptian HEI (Healey

and Michael, 2014). Additionally, whilst UK HEIs have the right to award their own qualifications in TNE contexts, through validation agreements, they are also required to set and maintain academic standards, and the quality of their academic awards, irrespective of where the award is made (QAA, 2011k, p.24). This suggests validation is a particularly complex mode of TNE. It rests on processes needed to establish equivalency between degree programmes as well as ongoing processes to ensure understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards to ensure the integrity of UK awards (QAA, 2011k, p.24). This requires development of effective relationships between practitioners and leaders situated in two independent HEIs, each located in a different nation state, and managed through a transnational context.

The nature of the TNE collaboration between the UK HEI and the private Egyptian HEI is complex. An important characteristic of the Egyptian HEI is that it has experienced significant institutional development over a short period of time and is a very different institution from its initial creation in 2005. Originally created with just three faculties, it now has ten faculties offering a broad spectrum of undergraduate as well as postgraduate provision. Similarly, undergraduate student numbers have increased from 300 in its first year of operation to over 10,000 on UK validated degree programmes. A significant rupture occurred when the initial validating UK HEI withdrew from the TNE collaboration in 2014. This resulted in a new validation agreement with a third UK HEI which now validates a large number of undergraduate programmes and postgraduate programmes. This suggests that relationships between independent HEIs in TNE collaborations must be responsive and enable development of institutional change that occurs in each HEI.

1.1.2 The Egyptian context

The Egyptian HEI is privately funded by shareholders with a single shareholder having the majority holding in the HEI. Shareholders receive a return on their investment. As a private Egyptian HEI students are required to pay fees. Students pay tuition fees ranging from approximately £3,000 to £6,000 per annum dependent upon programme of study. In addition, students pay a UK vali-

duction fee of approximately £650. The student body is largely comprised of Egyptian nationals with a minority of students from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the Nile valley states.

Finally, in addition to meeting the safeguarding and quality requirements of the UK HEI and the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the Egyptian HEI is also subject to the statutory requirements of Egyptian regulatory bodies. These include, the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU), the Supreme Council of Private Universities (SCPU) as well as the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE). Each regulatory body reports to different centres of authority and specify different requirements and norms. A specific feature of the research context is that the majority of staff involved in the design and delivery of UK validated programmes are Egyptian nationals who, to a large extent, have had limited direct experience of UK higher education. The majority of Egyptian staff have HE experience from the Egyptian national universities or from North America: only a minority of staff have had direct experience of working within a British HE context.

1.2 Aims of this research

This study aims to understand how UK threshold standards, derived from a UK HE context, and used in an Egyptian HE context, are understood, mediated and safeguarded through a UK TNE collaboration located in Egypt. It does so through a focus on two undergraduate programmes: Business Administration and Political Science taught at levels, 4, 5 and 6 (QAA, 2008). In doing so the study seeks to address four aims to explore how the situated context, and the lived experience of educational practitioners and leaders, impacts how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded.

- First, it seeks to provide new understandings of how practitioners and leaders in an Egyptian HEI describe and understand UK threshold standards.
- Second, this research aims to provide new insights into the impact that different national norms and regulatory requirements have on understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards.

- Third, the research seeks to reveal the resources that are important in supporting understanding, mediation and safeguarding processes.
- Fourth, the study aims to understand the alternative resources and approaches practitioners and leaders in the Egyptian HEI identify as important to support their future work to understand, mediate and safeguard UK threshold standards.

By addressing these four aims, this research seeks to identify how the findings can be addressed and theorised to inform the development of future policy, practice and research in relation to UK threshold standards in TNE contexts.

1.3 Rationale for this research

1.3.0 Current research: A gap in the literature

The literature reveals significant gaps in TNE research in two areas that are relevant to this study.

- First, this research seeks to provide new understandings about UK threshold standards, informed by evidence, to enable the development of hypothesis and theories of change, to improve the effectiveness of UK TNE in meeting UK threshold standards in a manner which supports sustainable, social, economic and political development (Taysum, 2012). The safeguarding of UK threshold standards in TNE contexts is of prime concern to the QAA because it seeks to protect the integrity of UK academic awards and ensure public confidence in UK higher education is maintained (QAA, 2013a, p.3).
- Second, there is limited research that explores the lived experience of educational practitioners and leaders in an Egyptian TNE context in relation to their perception of the UK threshold standards they are required to meet. This includes understanding the impact different national norms and regulatory requirements have on mediation and safeguarding processes, the resources and strategies staff currently use, and the different ways in which staff would like to further develop mediation and safeguarding processes of UK threshold standards.

Currently, the restricted research in this field means there is a lack of knowledge on how the effectiveness of UK TNE in Egypt can be improved (O'Mahony, 2014, p.13).

1.3.1 TNE: A growing mode of UK HE

TNE represents a source of growing student numbers and of income for the UK HE sector. Over 84% of UK HEIs provide a form of TNE (Tsiligiris and Ilieva *et al*, 2018, p.2). TNE represents the main source of growth for UK HE in relation to student numbers. In 2016/17 the number of students studying on HE programmes in the UK was 2, 317, 880 which represent a decline of 7% since 2010 whilst the number of international students studying in the UK remained largely constant at 442, 375 (Trifiro, 2017, p.132). In contrast, the number of students studying HE programmes outside the UK through UK TNE has seen a 40% increase over the same period (Trifiro, 2017, p.132). In 2017-18 693,695 students were enrolled in UK TNE provision worldwide (HESA).

UK HEIs identify TNE as a new source of funding (Eldridge and Cranston, 2009, p.67). TNE provides significant financial benefits to UK HEIs with £580 million derived from higher education TNE in 2015 (Tsiligiris and Ilieva *et al*, 2018, p.5). Additionally, profit also accrues to the private HEIs which usually partner UK TNE provision. The focus by UK HEIs on developing TNE provision is partly in response to changes in the funding regime, and introduction of student fees (McNamara, 2013), but also results from the emergence of new public management in HEIs with a drive to do more for less (Voegtle and Knill *et al*, 2011). The impact this has on how UK HEIs support and resource processes to ensure understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK thresholds standards in TNE contexts has yet to be determined. However, TNE collaborations have not always succeeded which indicates TNE may not provide a sustainable source of future funding that some in the UK HE sector envisage (Wilkins, 2010).

1.3.2 The Egyptian development strategy: A growth area for UK TNE

Whilst the majority of students in UK TNE are located in Asia and the Gulf States, a significant and growing number are now located in Egypt. Moreover, whilst research on UK TNE is largely focused on provision located in Asia and the United Arab Emirates, there is a need to broaden the focus of research to reflect the reality of where students are actually located. This includes Egypt which has significant numbers of students studying via UK TNE. In 2016-2017, 75.1% of all students in Africa studying in UK HE undergraduate TNE provision were located in Egypt (UUKi, 2018, p.25). Despite the growing numbers of students studying via UK TNE in Egypt, there is little research on how UK TNE is understood, mediated and safeguarded in this context. The 2017-18 HESA data shows that Egypt ranked in the top ten countries by student numbers for UK TNE:

#	Country	Number of UK TNE students in 2017/18
1	China	75 995
2	Malaysia	72 485
3	Singapore	44 805
4	Pakistan	40 210
5	Nigeria	29 865
	Sri Lanka	27 450
7	Hong Kong	25 675
8	Oman	20 645
9	Egypt	20 480
10	United Arab Emirates	18 120
11	Greece	17 410
12	India	17 135
13	Mauritius	15 350
14	Ghana	15 315
15	Kenya	11 755
16	Ireland	11 625
17	Cyprus	9 865
18	Zimbabwe	9 480
19	Saudi Arabia	9 465
20	Trinidad and Tobago	9 450

Table 1: Transnational students studying wholly overseas for a UK higher education qualification in 2017/18 (HESA)

Moreover, the Egyptian government has identified the development of TNE as a strategy to support the reform of the national HE sector as well as to provide additional HE capacity. The Egyptian government's national development agenda, Egypt Vision 2030, establishes challenging targets for the country and has a strong influence in shaping national priorities. The strategy aims to "grow private sector employment and entrepreneurship, and to nurture new knowledge industries" (UUKi, December 2018, p.3). To meet the national targets, the Egyptian government seeks to expand UK TNE in Egypt (UUKi, December 2018, p.3). However, whilst the HESA statistics (HESA) indicate TNE is of growing significance for UK HE, it is important that the principles and values that inform UK threshold standards are understood in TNE contexts to ensure their appropriate understanding, mediation and safeguarding. In doing so, this enables students engaged in UK TNE to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities and for its graduates to be better positioned to enter employment, to support the development of the private sector and to live a good life.

1.3.3 My field position

Gunter (2005, p.165) outlines a requirement for those involved in educational research to acknowledge their own position in the process, one in which they are simultaneously practising and describing. To locate my own position in the research process I seek to acknowledge how my experience of policy enactment has shaped my practice. In my 30 years as an education practitioner, I have worked in different national contexts working closely with colleagues to understand how different policy requirements can be enacted to support the development of learning and teaching, provide meaning to students and practitioners, and lead to improved life opportunities. This has required working carefully with colleagues to ensure the development of education courses that enable students to develop new knowledge, skills and perspectives. Ensuring this has not always been easy, and at times has resulted in significant challenges, as well as professional and personal frustration. These were particularly felt whilst working as a practitioner and educational leader in the UK Further Education sector from the late 1990s to 2010 and which coincided with the New Labour government which entered office in 1997 with a manifesto promise that, "Education will be our number one priority" (Heath, *et al*, 2013, p.227). I sometimes felt overwhelmed by

often conflicting demands. Frustration resulted from perceived unrealistic policy requirements that did not reflect the complex context, respect the experience of staff, or the learning needs of students. As a practitioner and leader, this left me struggling to align my personal and professional beliefs with the requirements to enact policy and report outcomes. These requirements did not readily align with my beliefs: a commitment to educational practice rooted in mutual respect for colleagues and students, which seeks to support development of knowledge and learning that are life affirming, and provide students with new perspectives and thus new opportunities. Through this experience I understand enactment of educational policy and educational standards does not rest solely on an ability to understand and apply a set of abstract policy requirements. Rather, it requires recognition of context, and the lived experience, to enable shared understandings of values and knowledge that are meaningful to people, and which allow their personal and professional development.

The insights gained from my work in UK Further Education informed my approach to how I worked with UK threshold standards when I moved to work in the Egyptian HEI. My role in an Egyptian HEI involved responsibility for academic quality issues as part of the central management team. However, in carrying out this research study, I also recognise the importance of ensuring my own perceptions and understandings are not imposed upon participants and the research context. The manner in which I have tried to ensure a reflexive stance is outlined in chapter three.

1.4 Nature of the professional challenge

1.4.0 Theme One: Different national conceptions of threshold standards

The extent to which shared understandings of the principles and values which inform UK threshold standards are developed amongst HE leaders and practitioners in different TNE settings has yet to be determined. The development of UK validated degrees in an Egyptian TNE context is informed by the requirements of the UK Quality Code (QAA, 2013a). This articulates academic

standards comprise two elements: threshold academic standards and academic standards (QAA, 2013a). The two elements are defined thus (QAA, 2013a):

Threshold academic standards

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. For equivalent qualifications, the threshold level of achievement is agreed across the UK and is described by the qualification descriptors set out in the UK frameworks for higher education qualifications. (p.5)

Academic standards

The standards that individual degree-awarding bodies set and maintain for the award of their academic credit or qualifications. These may exceed the threshold academic standards. (p.5)

A key requirement of UK threshold standards is that students demonstrate a minimum level of achievement in relation to knowledge, critical and analytical skills and transferable skills required for conferral of an academic award (QAA, 2013a). The three areas relate to (QAA, 2014n, p.26):

1. Systematic understanding of key knowledge within an academic discipline.
2. Development and application of critical and analytical thinking.
3. Evidence of transferable skills that include independent learning and the ability to learn how to learn.

In focusing on these three areas UK threshold standards seek to enable students to engage in the co-creation of knowledge and enable graduates to apply knowledge, understanding and skills in different employment contexts through their future careers (QAA, 2014n, p.26). However, the principles and values which inform UK threshold standards derive from a UK context and are not readily understood within an Egyptian TNE context.

TNE is a mode of higher education that enables educational services to be provided across national borders. A distinguishing feature of TNE is that the award bearing HEI is located in a different nation state to the HEI where the degree is provided. Although there is no commonly accepted definition, the Council of Europe defines TNE as (Council of Europe, 2001):

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

The complexity of TNE is compounded by the diversity of arrangements that inform its delivery. TNE is delivered through a number of different modes and arrangements with no single mode of delivery or agreement on definition (Knight, 2006; Naidoo, 2009; McNamara, 2013). The modes of TNE sit on a spectrum that result in different levels of commitment, financial obligation, as well as risk to the different parties involved. Modes of TNE include International Branch Campuses (IBCs), franchising, dual degrees and validation arrangements. TNE research to date has focused on the operation of IBCs, yet in 2016-17 only 3.6% of students enrolled in UK TNE provision studied in the context of an IBC of a UK HEI with the remainder studying via different modes (UUKi, 2018, p.6).

The Council of Europe's definition of TNE might suggest TNE programmes operate in isolation of their TNE context: they either "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, 2001). Yet, learners in TNE provision are situated in a different country from the one where the awarding HEI is located (Council of Europe, 2001). Importantly, this is also true of staff working in TNE contexts as well as employers that provide jobs to graduates of TNE, both of which are not referenced in the Council of Europe definition. However, the context in which TNE is located has an important impact on how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded. All HEIs in Egypt are subject to the regulatory requirements of the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU), the Supreme Council of Private Universities (SCPU), as well as the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) which is responsible for defining National Academic Reference Standards (NARS). The NARS articulate Egyptian notions of threshold standards and there is a statutory requirement they must be integrated into all degree programmes. This foregrounds that notions of knowledge, critical

and analytical skills, and transferable skills have different meanings in different geographic locations and suggests that the UK Quality Code is subject to interpretation as it moves from a UK to a TNE context. It identifies that a critical challenge for HE leaders and practitioners is the requirement to understand the principles and values that inform UK threshold standards to enable their appropriate mediation and safeguarding in an Egyptian TNE context.

In the research context, a UK HEI validates the degree programmes of an Egyptian private HEI. This involves a UK HEI ‘validating’ a degree programme which has been developed by the Egyptian HEI as equivalent to its own award (Healey and Michael, 2014). It requires that leaders and practitioners in the Egyptian HEI develop degree programmes equivalent to those offered by the UK HEI ensuring they reflect the requirements of UK threshold standards in their design, mediation and safeguarding. This suggests that leaders and practitioners will have an understanding of the UK HE system to be able to design appropriate degree programmes. However, whilst understanding the different elements that inform UK threshold standards is required to develop degree programmes that can be validated by a UK HEI, it is also important for leaders and practitioners to engage with the UK threshold standards and to meet them through the development of classroom learning, teaching and assessment practices. Yet, within the Egyptian HE context there is a focus in classroom learning, teaching and assessment practices on hierarchical knowledge transmission rather than on student engagement with learning, and the co-creation of new knowledge, which are the principles that inform UK threshold standards. This presents a significant point of difference and provides the professional context in which it is important to develop shared understanding of the principles which inform UK threshold standards.

The UK HE system is informed by The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA, 2013a), subsequently revised as The Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education (UKSCQA, 2018), and henceforth referred to as the UK Quality Code. The UK Quality Code is described as the definitive reference point for all UK HEIs and articulates what they are expected to do, what they can expect of each other, as well as what the public can expect of them (QAA, 2013a, p.1). A key

message of the Quality Assurance Agency is that the UK Quality Code provides, “the cornerstone for quality in UK higher education, protecting the public and student interest, and championing UK higher education’s world-leading reputation for quality” (UKSCQA, 2018, p.1). Yet, the formal requirements that inform UK threshold standards are not outlined in a QAA single document. Rather, the requirements are outlined in a range of different documents. These include (QAA, 2013a, p.3):

1. The national qualification frameworks
2. Credit arrangements
3. Subject benchmark statements
4. Guidance on qualification characteristics

This requires leaders and practitioners in the Egyptian HEI to understand how complex notions that derive from different UK QAA documents inform understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards as they seek to develop degree programmes to be validated by a UK HEI as well as to develop teaching, learning and assessment practices. Yet, leaders and practitioners in the Egyptian HEI have limited previous experience of the UK HE system and its various norms and requirements. Rather, leaders and practitioners in the Egyptian HEI are informed and shaped by the Egyptian national HE system and its associated norms. They are positioned in different professional, institutional and national settings to those of the UK and reflect diverse identities and subjectivities. Moreover, leaders and practitioners in the Egyptian HEI are also subject to the requirements of complex policy documents that derive from Egyptian statutory bodies and so are required to align two sets of national requirements that inform notions of threshold standards.

1.4.1 Theme Two: National statutory requirements and HE norms

The Egyptian HEI is required to meet the statutory requirements of both UK and Egyptian regulatory bodies. In the UK HE sector regulation and quality are underpinned by a co-regulatory approach between HEIs and sector regulatory bodies (UKSCQA, 2018, p.1). UK HEIs are at liberty to set standards aligned to relevant national benchmark statements whilst ensuring that these are secure and credible irrespective of how or where they are delivered (UKSCQA, 2018,

p.3). These include requirements that UK threshold standards must align with the UK Qualification Framework; students must have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold and at a level comparable to other UK providers; and that assessment and classification processes must operate in a reliable and fair and transparent manner (UKSCQA, 2018, p.3). Whilst HEIs in the UK HE sector have a significant degree of autonomy, this does not apply to the Egyptian private HE sector. In contrast, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) assumes central responsibility for the development and implementation of HE policy and governance (Samy and Elshayeb, 2017, p.5). As a result, the Egyptian TNE context is heavily regulated and impacts how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded.

The context in which the Egyptian HEI operates is heavily regulated. Two executive bodies in the MHESR, the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU) and the Supreme Council of Private Universities (SCPU), report to the Minister of Higher Education and are responsible for setting the standards that public and private HEIs must abide by including in relation to governance, regulation, curriculum design, staffing and student entry requirements (Barsoum, 2014; OECD, 2010; Samy and Elshayeb, 2017). The operation of centralised SCU norms inform staffing appointments and promotion processes and focus on the requirement for academic credentials and research rather than on valuing professional experience of learning, teaching and assessment practice. Additionally, all new degree programmes developed by the Egyptian HEI must be submitted for review and validation by the SCU for a period of up to five years during which time only minor changes can be made (OECD, 2010; Samy and Elshayeb, 2017). Additionally, all HEIs in Egypt are subject to the requirements of the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE). NAQAAE was established in 2006 and, unlike the SCU and SCPU, reports directly to the President of the Republic (OECD, 2010; Samy and Elshayeb, 2017). It is responsible for defining National Academic Reference Standards (NARS) as well as requiring all Egyptian HEIs to achieve NAQAAE institutional accreditation and to meet quality assurance requirements. As a result, the Egyptian HEI is required to meet the quality assurance requirements of the UK and Egyptian regulatory bodies which requires significant work by practitioners and leaders.

1.4.2 Theme Three: The impact of profit on resources required to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards

The provision of educational services through TNE is underpinned by a financial agreement that requires payment by one party to another party for the educational services provided. This means the Egyptian HEI pays the UK HEI for the validation of its degrees with an associated expectation that the UK HEI will derive a profit from the validation arrangement. Moreover, because the Egyptian HEI operates as a private entity, funded by shareholders, the main source of funding is student fees with an associated expectation by shareholders that they will receive a return on their investment. UK threshold standards are thus understood, mediated and safeguarded through the prism of national, institutional and individual relationships which derive from a contractual basis, informed by notions of profit that accrue to the UK HEI as well as to the shareholders of the Egyptian HEI (McNamara and Knight, 2015).

The operation of a profit function shapes determination of resource allocation within the Egyptian HEI as well as in the operation of the TNE collaborative agreement between the two HEIs. First, the reliance of the Egyptian HEI on student fees means it must ensure it recruits a sufficient student body to operate with a profit. This informs how student entry standards are set and which serves to shape students' ability to engage with learning on UK validated degree programmes. Second, whilst at its inception the Egyptian HEI sought to recruit significant numbers of UK experienced staff, this proved financially unrealistic. It means the staffing profile of the Egyptian HEI is predominantly comprised of Egyptian nationals whose previous HE experience is from the Egyptian national HE sector or from the North American HE systems where many staff completed their postgraduate qualifications. This has important implications for how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded. Most staff working in the Egyptian HEI take the standards and norms that operate in the Egyptian national HE sector as their main reference point. Finally, the profit function that informs the TNE collaboration, and the operation of the Egyptian HEI, requires determination as to which party is responsible for provision of the differ-

ent resources, including staff development, that are required to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards. The extent to which the profit function serves to enable or to constrain shared understandings of the principles and values which inform UK threshold standard has yet to be determined.

1.5 The research questions

This research seeks to answer the research question: What factors impact understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards in the delivery of UK THE within an Egyptian context? Four subsidiary research questions seek to enable this question to be answered. They are:

1. How do staff describe and understand UK Threshold Standards?
2. How do staff describe the impact that different national norms and regulatory requirements have on the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards?
3. What resources and strategies do staff make use of in the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards?
4. How do staff describe the ways they would develop the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards?

1.6 Why this work is distinctive

This work is distinctive because it seeks to address the gap in the literature in relation to four areas.

- First, it focuses on how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded in an Egyptian TNE context exploring both the challenges involved and the responses to these.
- Second, it seeks to identify the impact that national regulatory requirements and HE norms have on the mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards.

- Third, it seeks to identify the resources staff identify as important in mediation and safeguarding processes and finally the resources they identify as important for future development.

In doing so the research seeks to explore the lived experience of educational practitioners and leaders in their situated Egyptian TNE context.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

Chapter two provides a summary and analysis of relevant literature. This focuses on areas aligned to the aims of this research and to the research questions. A critical review of these areas results in the conceptual framework for this research to enable the study to answer the four research questions. The conceptual framework identifies the concepts required to explore how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded in a UK TNE collaboration with a private HEI located in Egypt.

Chapter three provides an outline of the research design including consideration of how the chosen methodology aligns with the epistemological perspective that informs this research. An outline of the methodology is provided including the rationale for a case study to locate the research in the specific context where academic practice is located. The challenge of developing and using a semi-structured interview tool is discussed as well as its role to collect relevant data from participants. Finally, the different methods used to prepare and analyse data are outlined including the issues of validity, ethics and the limitations of this research.

Chapter four presents the findings and discussion from the research relevant to research questions one. The chapter has a focus on how staff describe and understand UK threshold standards. It presents representative quotes from the findings to reveal different positions taken by participants in relation to the research question. This includes a synthesis of the findings in relation to the literature presented in chapter two which serves to demonstrate how the evidence relates to the literature presented in chapter two.

Chapter five presents the findings and discussion from the research relevant to research question two. The chapter has a focus on how staff describe the impact that different national norms and regulatory requirements have on how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded. It presents representative quotes from the findings to reveal different positions taken by participants in relation to the research question. This includes a synthesis of the findings in relation to the literature presented in chapter two which serves to demonstrate how the evidence relates to the literature presented in chapter two.

Chapter six presents the findings and discussion from the research relevant to research questions three and four. The chapter has a focus on how the resources staff describe as important for their understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards as well as different resources they identify as important to develop this in future. It presents representative quotes from the findings to reveal different positions taken by participants in relation to the research questions. This includes a synthesis of the findings in relation to the literature presented in chapter two which serves to demonstrate how the evidence relates to the literature presented in chapter two.

Finally, chapter seven concludes the research. It provides a discussion of the findings from this study mapped to the four research questions. It provides a conclusion, recommendations for future research, policy, practice as well as a personal reflection on the experience of conducting this study.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has introduced the context in which this research is located. It has outlined the aims and rationale for this study. In doing so it has identified the professional challenge which the research seeks to address and outlined the research questions which the study seeks to answer. The factors that make this study distinct have been outlined and the structure of the thesis has been described.

Chapter Two: Literature review and conceptual framework

2.0 Overview

This chapter provides a summary and analysis of the literature. In the following sections I review the literature relevant to each of the research questions, the context in which TNE is located, and the professional challenge which the research seeks to address. The first section provides a focus on research question one, how staff describe and understand UK Threshold Standards. Given the important role of context, I then review the literature relevant to the role this has in TNE collaborative provision. This is aligned to the second research question, which seeks to address how staff describe the impact of different national norms and regulatory requirements on the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards. The third section examines the literature concerned with the resources and strategies staff make use of in the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards and so addresses research questions three and four. Finally, the different themes revealed through the literature review are outlined in the conceptual framework for this research in a visual form (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.18). The conceptual framework reveals a number of themes, aligned to each research question, which enable me to develop the research methodology to answer the research question: What factors impact understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards in the delivery of UK TNE within an Egyptian context?

2.1 Threshold standards in a TNE context

2.1.0 UK threshold standards: Specification of knowledge, skills and abilities

The development of UK validated degrees in an Egyptian TNE context is informed by the requirements of the UK Quality Code (QAA, 2013a). UK threshold standards and associated requirements are articulated in the UK Quality Code, which is described as the definitive reference point for all UK HEIs (QAA, 2013a, p.1). This articulates the mandatory expectations UK HEIs must ensure irrespective of the geographic location where an award is provided (QAA, 2011k, p.6). Whilst UK HEIs can award their own qualifications they are also required

to set and maintain academic standards as well as the quality of their academic awards (QAA, October 2014, p.8). These require students to demonstrate an agreed minimum level of achievement in relation to knowledge, understanding and skills for conferral of an academic award (QAA, 2014, p.5). However, the extent to which there is common understanding of the principles, values and achievement levels that inform UK threshold standards in different geographic TNE settings has yet to be determined (Timmermans, 2015, p.80).

The role of professional judgment in understanding, mediation and safeguarding UK threshold standards in TNE contexts is critical (Sharp, 2017). The definition of threshold standards outlined by the QAA underscores the requirement for a minimum level of achievement, linked to conferral of an academic award, which suggests a critical role for professional judgment in determining this (QAA, 2014, p.5). Moreover, the Quality Code outlines an associated requirement that students can move beyond the threshold level to demonstrate achievement of learning at a higher level within the specified range for the award of a UK undergraduate degree qualification at Level 6 on the UK Qualification Framework (QAA, 2008n). Thus, practitioners and leaders in TNE contexts need to not only understand the associated requirements for knowledge, understanding and skills embodied in UK threshold standards (QAA, 2014, p.5), but also the associated notions of academic level that inform the UK Quality Code and UK Qualifications Framework (QAA, 2008n) to make ethically informed judgements on the level of student achievement. This foregrounds that understanding the principles and values which inform UK threshold standards, as well as the associated achievement levels, in TNE contexts is challenging because practitioners and leaders are situated in different national contexts and share different conceptions (Schneider, 2013).

The requirement for the development of shared understandings, which inform professional judgment in TNE contexts, may be neglected if it is assumed that UK threshold standards are clearly articulated. The UK Quality Code is informed by an outcomes-based approach which seeks to support development of common understandings of UK threshold standards (QAA, 2013a, p.9). However, this claim rests on an assumption that the language used to describe required

outcomes is indeed common, and shared by all, across all geographic contexts (Rust *et al*, 2003, p.148; Sadler, 2014; Sadler, 2017). This is also made more complex because the requirements for UK threshold standards are specified in a range of policy documents so that leaders and practitioners are required to understand each document and interrelationship with requirements specified in other documents.

The development of an outcomes-based approach is underpinned by specification of academic standards. Specification of academic standards seek to “capture the essence of the standards in words, symbols or diagrams”, to create standards in a material form which can be shared and understood by all users in different locations and contexts (Sadler, 2014, p.274). Sadler (2017, p.89) further defines academic standards as:

a definite degree of academic achievement established by some accepted authority and used as a fixed reference point for reporting a student's level of attainment as a particular grade on the scale used.

Information thus specified enables the standard to perform its function by outlining “the various roles of users, as well as their skills, motivations, requirements, tools, and final outcomes” (Timmermans, 2015, p.79). Thus specified the requirement for the development of professional judgement that inform shared understandings of UK threshold standards in TNE contexts is minimized.

However, in TNE contexts, where different national norms inform conceptions of standards, the specification of threshold standards in a material form of itself is unlikely to enable the consistent determination of academic achievement and attainment levels (Timmermans, 2015, p.80). The design strategy which informs higher education learning outcomes can result in generic definitions that are often experienced as ambiguous “meaning that they are characterised by an openness to different interpretations” (Caspersen *et al*, 2017b, p.8). This research seeks to explore how this ambiguity is experienced by staff working across the subject areas of Business Administration and of Political Science in an Egyptian HEI as they seek to understand, mediate and safeguard UK threshold standards.

Whilst Sadler (2014) concurs the specifiers used in the specification of standards, and associated marking criteria, are highly elastic it is further identified their use by academic staff is informed by the context in which they work and by their previous experience. This suggests that understanding the requirements specified in a range of different UK QAA documents is a complex process, particularly in TNE contexts where staff are not familiar with UK HE requirements and norms (Ball, 2015; Avelar, 2016). Because of the complexity involved, if practitioners are to establish shared understanding of the principles and values which inform UK threshold standards, and their associated achievement and attainment levels, they need to be supported by socially informed professional practice to enable the development of shared understandings as well as mediation and safeguarding processes (Bolton and Nie, 2010).

The extent to which academic staff in TNE are part of the dynamic consensus that determine UK threshold standards has important implications for the manner in which they are understood, mediated and safeguarded. The UK context from which the UK Quality Code is derived shapes matters of professional judgment which inform understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards (Sharp, 2017). Matters of inclusion, exclusion and participation remain important considerations in the exploration of TNE. Fraser (2004), identifies that a lack of equity and social justice within transnational social spaces can result from systemic structural causes:

In my view, then, justice pertains by definition to social structures and institutional frame-works. It follows that individual problems become matters of justice if and when they cumulate into a pattern that can be traced to a systemic cause. (p.378)

Moreover, transnational scholarship identifies a requirement to not only focus on the processes by which various groups become connected but also to identify those which result in groups being excluded from participation in transnational exchanges (Bayly *et al*, 2006, p.1458). The extent to which the processes of policy production embody plural perspectives, or exclude alternative perspectives, has important considerations for how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded (Ball, 1993; Fimyar, 2014; Sharp, 2017).

2.1.1 UK threshold standards in an Egyptian context: Different national conceptions of threshold standards

Consideration of the impact context has in determining the purpose of education, the values that inform it, and how this shapes education practice is often neglected in comparative and TNE research (Davies, 2009, p.28; O'Mahony, 2014). In the research context a TNE collaboration, between a UK HEI and a private HEI located in Egypt, provides UK validated undergraduate degree programmes, in a transnational context, located in Egypt. TNE is a mode of higher education that enables educational services to be provided across national borders. A distinguishing feature of TNE is that the award bearing HEI is located in a different nation state to the HEI where the degree is provided and this serves to locate UK threshold standards within an Egyptian HE context (Council of Europe, 2001; McNamara 2013, p.45). However, whilst UK thresholds standards derive from a UK epistemological tradition, they are enacted within an Egyptian context with its own epistemological tradition, threshold standards, and HE norms (Sharp, 2017).

The Quality Code identifies the elements which inform UK threshold standards (QAA, 2014n, p.26). However, notions of knowledge, critical and analytical skills and transferable skills have different meanings in different geographic locations (Gunter, 2013a, p.1; Avelar, 2016, p.5). Gunter (2013a, p.1) outlines that a 'production process' informs the development of knowledge. This is shaped by the specific social and economic context in which academic practice is located:

Theories do not develop in a vacuum and are not taken up out of a particular economic and political context, and so there is a need to examine the way in which ideas are generated, combined and recombined through the knowledge production process. (p.1)

Thus, specification of threshold standards results from dynamic and complex socially embedded processes, located in each national context, which serve to establish the agreed standards in an academic discipline and which are likely to be different in each national domain (Croxford, 2012; Schneider, 2013; Sharp, 2017). In the research context, all HEIs in Egypt are subject to the requirements

of the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) which is responsible for defining National Academic Reference Standards (NARS). The NARS articulate Egyptian notions of threshold standards with a statutory requirement they are integrated into all degree programmes and which are different to those of the UK QAA. This brings into focus the requirement to understand how leaders and practitioners working in TNE contexts understand, negotiate, mediate and safeguard different national conceptions of threshold standards. However, recognition of the situated nature from which threshold standards derive enables a focus on the reality of the lived experience, interpretations and practices of those who enact UK threshold standards and the professional challenges they face in seeking to understand, mediate and safeguard UK threshold standards (Jones, 2013, p.4).

The challenge for practitioners and leaders in TNE is to understand how the epistemological traditions, and supporting infrastructures, from two distinct national HE systems can be aligned to support understating, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards (Croxford, 2012; O'Mahony, 2014). The concept of the policy trajectory identifies that the meaning of policy derives from its various contexts that include the context of influence, the context of text production and context of practice (Avelar, 2016, p.5). This foregrounds the UK Quality Code is subject to interpretation as it moves from its UK context and is applied in the Egyptian TNE context which has its own national conceptions of threshold standards. Alignment of standards, to ensure their comparability and equivalence, is challenging in TNE contexts if there is a lack of understanding how threshold standards and HE norms differ in each national setting (Smith, 2009, p.477). This may result in narrow and instrumental interpretations and responses (Sanderson *et al*, 2010). The development of shared understandings of threshold standards to ensure their comparability and equivalence requires development of context sensitive approaches to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding processes (Bolton and Nie, 2010; Pyvis, 2011, p. 741). This reflects Pring's (2010, p.83) assertion that educational policy and practice must provide a focus on, "the values that should shape the standards to be achieved, the

knowledge to be transmitted and the virtues to be nourished” to enable individuals to develop, “the knowledge and understanding that enables them to live fully human lives.”

2.1.2 UK threshold standards: Specification of minimum level of achievement to ensure comparability and integrity

UK threshold standards require students demonstrate a minimum level of achievement in relation to knowledge, understanding and skills for conferral of an academic award (QAA, 2013a, p.4). Critically, UK HEIs involved in TNE are required to ensure safeguarding of UK threshold standards, as well as the integrity of their academic awards, irrespective of where the qualification is delivered (Brown, 2011a; QAA, 2011k). The requirement that UK HEIs set and maintain academic standards has led to a focus on the integrity and comparability of standards (Brown, 2011a). Integrity and comparability are identified as requirements to enable international comparability of national HE systems and to enable movement between them (Taysum, 2012; Sadler, 2017, p.90). Ensuring equivalence and comparability between different national standards requires confidence the final graduate transcript reflects the stated knowledge and cognitive skills outlined by the standards to facilitate movement between them (Taysum, 2012; Sadler, 2017). However, research has yet to determine the manner in which the integrity and comparability of standards in different TNE contexts is assured. Moreover, there is a concern that whilst the threshold attainment level enables student achievement to be recognised, with the award of a degree, the low level of attainment may result in institutional pressures on staff to mitigate the number of failing students. This may result in instrumental understandings of UK threshold standards and responses which serve to undermine the currency of the associated award (Yorke and Vidovich, 2016).

2.1.3 UK threshold standards: The development of employability skills

A failure to locate transnational phenomena in their proper historical and economic context can lead to uncritical conceptualisation which serves to celebrate rather than critically explore their different aspects (Duong, 2015, p.233).

This can result in valorisation of UK TNE as providing new and alternative modes of HE including increased access, new programmes, higher standards and improved graduate employability outcomes. Globally, there is a significant increase in the establishment of private HEIs (Levy, 2010) and in Egypt their establishment, linked to the development of UK TNE, forms part of the Egyptian government's strategy to provide alternatives to the state HE sector, and to support the needs of the labour market (OECD and World Bank, 2010; UUKi, 2018b). Although there is a paucity of data on Egypt's labour market requirements, a significant challenge for the Egyptian government, and for HEIs, is the oversupply of graduates with recognition that the, "economy can absorb only modest annual additions to professional occupations in fields such as in health, education and social services" (OECD and World Bank, 2010, p.183). Egypt's high annual population growth marks it as the most populous country in the MENA region with a population in excess of 92 million in 2017 (Megahed, 2017, p.2). This creates significant challenges with 51.2% of the population in cohorts requiring educational services from pre-schooling through to higher education provision (Megahed, 2017, p.2).

The Egyptian government's national development agenda, Egypt Vision 2030, provides the framework in which discourse on national development and employability is located. It shapes national priorities and aims to "grow private sector employment and entrepreneurship, and to nurture new knowledge industries" (UUKi, 2018b, p.3). Students usually enrol in TNE for a learning experience that will enhance their future career aspirations and life chances (Levy and Zumeta, 2011). One definition of employability identifies that it comprises, "university-level learning experiences [with the] potential to outlast the knowledge and contexts in which they were originally acquired" (Speight *et al*, 2013, p.113). This reveals a key characteristic of employability is the ability to transfer learning experiences from one context to another. UK threshold standards aim to support the development of knowledge and skills required for graduates to gain meaningful employment through the development of transferable skills (QAA, 2014n, p.26). However, the extent to which understanding, mediation and safeguarding processes in TNE contexts enable this has yet to be determined.

Whilst there is a growth of private HEIs delivering UK TNE there is little research to determine if private HEIs deliver an educational experience which supports improved employability prospects (Levy and Zumeta, 2011; Mok, *et al*, 2017). This is a critical consideration for UK TNE given students pay fees to cover the full cost of their education. However, in TNE contexts the conception of student achievement means employability is often understood, “in a narrow and instrumental way as being about the securing of employment upon graduation” rather than the development of transferable skills to enable development of future employability options (Speight *et al*, 2013, p.113). Currently data on employability outcomes is unavailable in UK TNE contexts so students and their parents do not know if they are receiving a return on their investment in relation to improved employability opportunities (Barsoum and Rashad, 2018). Research suggests, completion of a degree in a TNE context has less impact in determining employment prospects than the operation of social networks in the first six months after graduation and so rather than developing employability opportunities TNE may serve to perpetuate existing social inequality (Mok *et al*, 2017; Barsoum and Rashad, 2018).

2.1.4 Policy enactment: Translation and interpretation of UK threshold standards

The UK Quality Code provides the definitive reference point for UK threshold standards (QAA, 2013a, p.1). One definition of policy is that it is, a set of laws or guidelines with a governing text (Callewaert, 2006, p.767, quoted in Jones, 2013, p.3). This aligns with the notion of policy implementation (Avelar, 2016):

A policy is “implemented” or implementation fails, policy is fixed in texts, it is something somebody writes and designs it and that somebody else implements or not. (p.4)

Notions of policy implementation would suggest that successful implementation rests solely on the bilateral transfer of UK threshold standards from a UK context to a different national context via ‘policy borrowing’ (Phillips and Ochs, 2004), ‘policy transfer’ or ‘policy travelling’ (Silova, 2005). This suggests the success of

policy implementation solely rests on the extent to which practitioners and leaders understand and implement the guidelines or laws in a given policy text (Jones, 2013, p.3). Through implementation of the guidelines, understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards is secured by the bilateral transfer of policy and practice from one geographic context to another (Davies, 2009, p.14).

However, whilst policy makers' intentions, and resultant policy texts, are important elements in the conceptualisation of policy, a sole focus on these elements fails to consider the wider material and discursive contexts in which policy is made and implemented (Ozga, 2000, p.113). This serves to deny the lived experience, interpretations and practices of those who are the subject of policy (Jones, 2013, p.4). As a result, the subjects of policy only assume visibility as they are referenced within the policy text itself. Yet, the diversity of contexts in which UK threshold standards operate suggest standards are understood in different ways and is context dependent (Price, 2005; Stewart *et al*, 2005; Knight. 2006; Sadler, 2014). Sayed (2006, p.52) asserts policy documents travel via 'politicised spaces' and that context plays an important role in how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded. Recognising the role of context suggests a need for the development of social capital to enable practitioners and leaders to develop shared understandings of threshold standards (Bolton and Nie, 2010) and contextually appropriate responses (Pyvis, 2011, p. 741). This conception aligns with Ball's (2015) notion of enactment which involves thinking about policy (Avelar, 2016):

not as a document, or as thing, [but] as a social entity which moves through space and changes as it moves, and changes things as it moves, changes the spaces it moves through: so, it is changed by and it changes things, (p.4)

In contrast to notions of policy borrowing (Phillips and Ochs, 2004), policy enactment recognises policy documents travel from one national context to a different national context through a policy trajectory with different contexts (Ball, 2015; Avelar, 2016).

The policy trajectory suggests additional work is required by practitioners and leaders to make sense of UK threshold standards as they move to TNE contexts (Ball, 2015; Avelar, 2016). Policy enactment identifies a requirement for two processes to support practitioners and leaders understand UK threshold standards: interpretation and translation. Interpretation is required because policy makers assume, “they write texts that are clear, obvious and coherent that contain no contradictions or problems” (Avelar, 2016). Additionally, translation is required to allow practitioners and leaders to turn policy requirements into a range of their own programme related documents that include; a programme specification; module specifications; assessments and exams; marking criteria; and regulations. Whilst the concept of policy enactment supports conceptualisation for this research, exploration of its application has largely been within policy contexts located in the UK (Ball, 2015; Avelar, 2016). The context of policy enactment in TNE differs significantly from UK contexts where enactment occurs within the borders of the nation state from which policy texts derive. This represents a significant point of difference to policy enactment where enactment processes are situated in the nation state from which policy derives.

2.2 The impact of national norms and regulation in a TNE context

2.2.0 Regulation, quality assurance and enhancement

The movement of educational services across borders locates TNE within a new regulatory environment and subject to the regulatory environment of a host state (Amaral *et al*, 2010; Hill, Cheong *et al*, 2013). However, national quality assurance systems are designed for specific contexts and so their requirements may conflict in TNE contexts where multiple different agencies operate (Lim, 2010; Kinser, 2011). The QAA outlines “the importance of quality assuring UK overseas provision on a collective basis, with the long-term reputation of UK higher education as the backdrop” (QAA, 2013b p.18). However, UK TNE is subject to the requirements of different regulatory and quality and agencies located in each national domain (Cheung, 2006; Lim, 2010; Smith 2010; Wilkins, 2010). Whilst national quality assurance agencies seek to safeguard academic standards, to ensure confidence is maintained in the integrity and comparability of education awards (Cheung, 2006), this is often characterised by a fragmented approach

with responsibility sitting across different statutory bodies (McNamara, 2013). This can create conflicting demands that practitioners and leaders working in UK TNE must seek to navigate in seeking to understand, mediate and safeguard UK threshold standards (McNamara, 2013).

Difficulties in aligning national requirements can be compounded because regulatory bodies and agencies are often at different stages of development. Moreover, some are “government-run or government sanctioned, which in some cases can give rise doubts as to their ability to make decisions independent of policy considerations” (Cheung, 2006, p.284). The location of TNE in the private sector can also create a perception that private HEIs lack quality and are not interested in quality improvement with tensions between academic and commercial priorities (Lim, 2010). Tensions can be further exacerbated given the geographic distance between HEIs involved in TNE collaborations and which have the potential to result in “opportunities for slippery academic standards” Smith (2010, p.794). This suggests the requirement for close cooperation is important in TNE contexts particularly if staff lack direct experience of UK HE norms and quality requirements (Bolton and Nie, 2010). The extent to which the operation of different national regulatory and quality frameworks in TNE enable collaboration, or are perceived as an erosion of national education sovereignty, is an important consideration in how UK thresholds standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded (Zwanikken *et al*, 2013).

The manner in which the requirements of each national agency are mediated may negatively impact the development of social relations in TNE. This may mean that “authentic social relations are replaced by judgmental relations” which may result in a lack of transparency that quality assurance agencies seek to provide (Ball, 1999, p.7). King (2012, p.592), identifies possible behavioural variations may be exhibited that include, ‘mock compliance’ and ‘regulatory ritualism’, noting that in both cases, “the outward appearance of compliance is combined with relatively disguised behavioural divergence from the newly-adopted standards.” Increased accountability to national agencies also results in an increased volume of activity required of academic staff, often involving tasks that may not have been part of their previous role and responsibility (Croxford, 2012).

This requires completion of ‘first order acts’, associated with reporting requirements, which leaves little time for ‘second order acts’ associated with the development and enhancement of academic practice (Ball, 1999, p.7). Thus, an increased focus on ‘first order acts’ may result in the reduction in the time and energy staff have to make improvements (Ball, 1999, p.7). This is a particularly important consideration where leaders and practitioners are seeking to develop understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards as it may detract from a focus on enabling the development of shared understandings between staff located in different HEIs.

2.2.1 The Egyptian HE context: norms and regulation

In the research context, three statutory bodies regulate Egyptian higher education. First, the Supreme Council of Universities and the Supreme Council of Private Universities each chaired by the Minister of Higher Education and reporting to the Prime Minister. Third, and more recently, NAQAAE, reporting to the President, has a central role in university quality assurance (Emira, 2014; Dorio, 2016; Barsoun and Rashad, 2018). The operation of different sets of national academic standards and norms within TNE contexts, as well as different, and potentially conflicting and competing national statutory requirements, each representing different centres of authority, custom and practice, suggests the process of seeking understanding and consensus on standards related issues in TNE is complex. Potentially, this may result in irreconcilable differences between regulatory bodies in different states.

The regulatory and HE norms in which UK TNE collaborations operate are often significantly different from that of the UK. Whilst different regulatory and statutory requirements operate in TNE contexts, contemporary higher education structures and norms are also informed by historical legacies (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002; Ball, 2015). Marginson and Rhoades (2002) underscore the impact of historical legacies:

The point is that higher education institutions, systems, and countries have long histories shaped through centuries of sedimentation of ideas, struc-

tures, resources and practices. Contemporary agencies and agency generally do not sweep all this away; their influence and activity is layered on top of powerful and resilient structures and commitments. It is also contingent upon and shaped by a range of current structural conditions. (p.293).

The central role of the Egyptian state in the development and enactment of educational policy has resulted in state institutions being deeply imbricated within educational institutions and has served to shape HE norms and approaches to regulation (Herrera and Torres, 2006; Herrera, 2008; Dorio, 2017). Egyptian HEIs in the state sector are characterised by limited autonomy, hierarchical management structures, limited capacity to plan for the needs of the market, over enrolment, high student staff ratios, and limited resources (OECD and World Bank, 2010; Emira, 2014; Barsoun and Rashad, 2018). This suggests the HE norms and regulatory requirements which apply to the Egyptian HEI are significantly different from those of the UK validating HEI. The central role of the Egyptian state in education has resulted in an HE sector with governance structures dominated by central government control (OECD and World Bank, 2010; Croxford, 2012; Emira, 2014; Barsoum, 2017). The application of rigid quality assurance mechanisms can constrain the development of cooperation and limit understanding of standards and serve to undermine their safeguarding (Smith, 2010). The extent to which Egyptian norms and regulatory requirements enable the development of shared understandings of UK threshold standards, as well as processes that enable their mediation and safeguarding, has yet to be determined.

2.2.2 TNE as a commercial provider of educational services

The Council of Europe definition of TNE confirms contractual arrangements shape TNE as a commercial provider of educational services (Council of Europe, 2001). This results from the World Trade Organisation's 1995 General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) which designates TNE as a provider of educational services governed by market relations (Verger, 2009). The development of TNE as a commercial provider of educational services places UK HEIs in a series of financial relationships with actors in the private sector in TNE con-

texts. As a result, transnational collaborative provision is “built upon contract rather than collegiality and aimed at profit generation rather than knowledge for its own sake or public service and enfold public universities into the field of commerce” (Ball, S. 2012b, p.24). The interdependency that derives from commercial contractual obligations may compound existing geographical differences in positionality between national states and serve to create present or potentially future states of compliance and/or dependence (Caruana and Montgomery, 2015, p.7).

The movement of educational services across borders via UK TNE calls into focus the mission of HEIs and notions of education as a public good (Delanty, 2001; Shams and Huisman, 2012; Caruana, 2016). This can result in a focus on production of marketable education qualifications rather than ensuring comparability and equivalency of the student learning experience and associated outcomes (Yang, 2006; Caruana and Montgomery, 2015; Leung and Waters, 2017). The commercial aspect that derives from the commodification of TNE, including the nature and extent of profit derived from TNE by different parties, are protected by claims of commercial sensitivity so it remains unclear how the commercial context impacts understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards (Eldridge and Cranston, 2009; Verger, 2009; Edwards *et al*, 2014). However, the impact of commercial considerations has on practice is evidenced in the commercial failure and closure of TNE collaborations (Wilkins and Balakrishnan, 2013). This suggests developing shared understandings of UK threshold standards may be challenging in TNE collaborative provision if they are purely driven by commercial considerations between contracting parties as to which party is responsible for provision and payment of which services.

2.2.3 The location of UK TNE in the private sector

The impact of market relations in shaping TNE also derives from its location within the private sector (Lane and Kinser, 2011). There is an increasing move in Egypt to finance education from the private sector (OECD and World Bank, 2010; Barsoum, 2017). Per capita expenditure on education in Egypt is above the OECD average and in addition to paying school and university fees students often also attend private lesson centres (Herrera, 2008, p.71). The Egyptian government seeks to develop private HEIs delivering UK TNE to address the

shortcomings of the Egyptian national HE system (OECD and World Bank, 2010; Barsoum, 2017). The World Bank outlines a requirement private HEIs are designated as not for profit to ensure their independence and sustainable development (OECD and World Bank 2010). Yet, Egyptian Law 101, which facilitates the creation of private HEIs, does not require this designation, and instead private HEIs in Egypt largely operate for profit (Barsoum, 2017). This results in market relations shaping relationships between individuals, institutions and nation states engaged in TNE (Robertson and Dale, 2013). As a result, private HEIs are dependent on student fees to meet costs, as well as provide a return to shareholders on their investment (Barsoum, 2017, p.198). This suggests the role of profit has a significant function, both in determining the long-term viability of the Egyptian HEI, and also for the staff who are employed by it, and may result in a focus on recruiting and retaining students and ensuring their gradation with a qualification.

The absence of state subsidy, and the tuition driven nature of private HEIs, may significantly impact the manner in which business decisions, and the profit function, influence and shape their operation. This may serve to constrain understandings of the role of UK threshold standards to support knowledge creation and also the manner in which they are mediated and safeguarded (Lane and Kinser, 2011; Blum and Ullman, 2012; Barsoum, 2017). To ensure student recruitment targets, private HEIs can struggle to attract appropriately qualified students with the required entry qualification to succeed on a UK validated degree and may operate with lower entry standards than in the UK (Altbach, 2010; Lane and Kinser, 2011). Students recruited from public schools often have lower levels in English and maths than is required for learning on UK validated degrees which restricts their capacity to engage with the curriculum, especially in the early degree years (Altbach, 2010). This can create significant challenges for academic staff (Edwards, 2007; Yang, 2008). However, despite the significant challenges identified, and which suggest students may initially struggle with the requirements of UK threshold standards, research fails to explore how this gap might be addressed through the development of teaching and learning practice (O'Mahony, 2014).

The location of UK TNE in the private sector, with an associated profit function, may also restrict how the role of HEIs, and of the teaching profession, is conceived and develops. The operation of a profit function in private HEI's can involve a move to reduce costs by employing staff from the country in which the TNE is located creating staff cohorts unfamiliar with the academic standards of the awarding HEI, and dependent on student results for their salary (Shams and Huisman, 2012). Profit can further limit the student experience (Chapman and Pyvis, 2006b; Lane, 2011) and restrict investment in staff development and quality procedures that support the development of learning and teaching (Lim, 2010). Moreover, privatisation of education places a significant financial burden on families as they face pressures to invest in an education system that possibly does not yield returns (Barsoum, 2017). The role of teacher as educator is narrowed to a service provider of exam preparation to students who are recast as clients (Herrera, 2008, p.71) and it changes "meanings of fundamental categories, such as knowledge, learning and learners, [which] are transformed into credentials, consumption and human capital" (Robertson and Dale 2013, p.432). This may result in UK threshold standards, and the associated UK degree award, to be understood as a credential rather than as capital that seeks to meet the needs of employers and the capacity of individuals to shape the professions and societies in which they live.

The extent to which the development of private HEIs, delivering UK TNE, provide alternatives to the national HE system has yet to be determined. The profit function impacts and shapes the governance structures that operate in private HEIs (OECD and World Bank, 2010; Barsoum, 2017). Herrera (2008, p.72) identifies whilst the public Egyptian education sector is marked by hierarchical and non-consultative structures, that privatisation of education has served to embed similar governance structures within private HEIs. This replicates existing norms and results in the operation "of multiple hierarchies each with its own strict authority, rather than opening the way for a new culture of consultation and participation" Herrera (2008, p.72). Critically, Barsoum, (2017, p.198) outlines that Egyptian private HEIs have a common governance structure which mirrors the private sector companies that fund them and with family members of the

main investors acting in key governance roles. This constrains the creation of alternative governance structures and enables the operation of social processes within educational institutions that reflect “a microcosm of society and an element of social production” (Naguib, 2006, p.54). The extent to which private HEIs, providing TNE collaborative provision, enable the development of alternative perspectives, an impetus for innovation and quality, or are better placed to meet the needs of the Egyptian labour market, has yet to be determined (Croxford, 2012; Emira, 2014; Barsoum, 2017)

2.2.4 Notions of learning, teaching and assessment that enable mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards

UK threshold standard seek to establish the minimum level of attainment whilst permitting diversity of attainment beyond it (QAA, 2013a, p.5). The definition of threshold standards outlined by the QAA underscores the requirement for acceptable levels of achievement that is linked to an academic award (QAA, 2013a, p.5). Given their function to determine the distinction between a pass and a fail, threshold standards must not only capture students’ academic ability in a meaningful way, but must also convey the notion of academic level beyond the threshold attainment level and how this relates to practice in professional contexts. This identifies exercise of judgment is required to determine whether students meet the standards through the use of valid and reliable assessment methods (Sharp, 2017). However, assessment practices in TNE contexts may be very different from those of the UK (Clifford and Montgomery, 2014). Differences may include how the purpose of assessment is conceived; familiarity with different assessment types; whether the assessor is a novice or more experienced; the role of feedback; the employment status of staff including whether they are full time or part time (Rust *et al*, 2005; Knight, 2006a; Sadler, 2014).

The development of learning, teaching and assessment results from a complex interaction of different elements. Elements include teachers, students, subject matter, knowledge as well different teaching and assessment processes which inform different pedagogical approaches (Zepke, 2013). Given significant differences exist in how learning, teaching and assessment is conceived in TNE contexts the relative importance attached to each element is likely vary according

to place and to change through time (Zepke, 2013, p.97). This identifies two challenges for practitioners and leaders. First, a requirement to ensure ethical engagement that enables trustworthy discrimination, on a consistent basis, across levels of academic achievement, thus ensuring the integrity of threshold standards is secure (Sadler, 2014). Second, to ensure development of assessment that enable all students to move beyond the threshold attainments level and demonstrate achievement of learning at a higher level.

Practitioners and leaders can experience difficulty in interpreting UK threshold standard to ensure their consistent application because different assessment norms operate in TNE contexts (Rust *et al*, 2005). A focus on measurement of student attainment, to ensure consistency and reliability across all contexts, results in the development of assessment practices which seek to measure learning gains as opposed support learning (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004/5). Assessment as measurement provides a focus on specification of learning outcomes (Sadler, 2014); alignment of learning outcomes to assessment (Knight, 2002b; Sadler, 2014); development and use of marking criteria (O'Donovan *et al*, 2008); and marking and moderation processes (Rust *et al* 2003). In contrast, assessment for learning provides a focus on the design of assessment process including: design of assessment to promote student engagement (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004/5; Carless, 2007) and provision of timely and effective feedback which engages learners to inform learning (Taras, 2001; Gibbs and Simpson, 2004/5; Carless, 2007). However, despite UK threshold standards requiring student involvement in the co-creation of knowledge, there is little consideration how assessment for learning can be developed in TNE contexts to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards to enable this.

2.3 Resources and strategies to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards

2.3.0 Equity and social justice in transnational collaborations

The development of shared understandings of UK threshold standards in TNE collaborations requires relationships between practitioners and leaders from each HEI informed by equity and respect (Sanderson *et al*, 2010, p.6). The

extent to which practitioners and leaders in TNE contexts are part of a dynamic consensus with their counterparts in the UK suggests matters of inclusion, exclusion and participation remain important considerations in the sustainable development of UK TNE. A lack of equity and social justice within transnational social spaces result from systemic structural causes (Fraser, 2004, p.378) and there is thus a requirement to focus not only on processes through which groups become connected but also those which result in groups being excluded from participation in transnational exchanges (Bayly *et al*, 2006, p.1458). Although transnationalism is referenced in its very title, its impact on TNE practice is often weakly conceptualised. Smith and Guarnizo (1998) confirm transnational practices derive from their situated context and are embodied through social relations:

Transnational practices do not take place in an imaginary 'third space' (Bhabha 1990; Soja 1996) abstractly located 'in-between' national territories. Transnational practices, while connecting collectivities located in more than one national territory, are embodied in specific social relations established between specific people, situated in unequivocal localities, at historically determined times. (p.11)

The concepts of transnational social fields (Foucault and Schiller, 2001), and transnational spaces (Faist, 2000a), further identify the important role of social relations, and of social positioning, in transnational contexts. Faist (2000a) defines transnational spaces as:

relatively stable, lasting and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across borders of sovereign states. Transnational spaces comprise combinations of ties and their substance, positions within networks and organisations and networks of organisations that cut across the borders of at least two national states. (p.13)

This suggests the need to recognise how the lived experience, interpretations and practices of those who enact TNE (Jones, 2013, p.4) is impacted through the social and professional relations that operate in TNE contexts.

Fraser (2014, p.3) identifies the operation of transnationalism creates two particular challenges: extension and of intensity. Both challenges have impli-

cations how relationships are created and managed in TNE. The challenge of extension requires “decisions increasingly need to be made, and public opinion starts to need to be formed, across much larger spaces than before” (Fraser and Nash, 2014, p.53). The challenge of intensity means that (Fraser, 2014):

what counts as a national or local issue needs itself to be rethought as our awareness of the interdependence of local actions and translocal forces increases. This second challenge - of intensity - introduces a transnational dimension into the most local of acts, and so requires that every public sphere at any scale becomes amenable to influences, voices, cultural norms, and media inputs that do not fit within the implied boundaries of the Westphalian model. (p.53)

Recognition of the interdependence of the local and transnational, and associated challenge of intensity (Fraser and Nash, 2014, p.53), presents a challenge for practitioners and leaders working in TNE. It suggests the transnational context, through which UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded, requires practitioners and leaders to develop social capital marked by dispositions and skills (Bolton and Nie, 2010) to enable the development of contextually appropriate understandings and responses (Pyvis, 2011, p. 741). Bolton and Nie (2010) identify effective relationships and dialogue are required in the operation of TNE and identify this requires investment in the development of social capital to enable:

appreciation of respective partner challenges, the negotiation of effective outcomes, the shifting of traditional mind-sets to embrace a broader stakeholder culture, and the operationalising of agreed ways forward. Achieving consensus in TNHE arrangements also demands an increasingly sophisticated capability to deal with language and cultural barriers; diverse and shifting power relations at local, national, and global levels; and individual partner responses to rapidly changing economic, political, and community priorities. (p.702)

This reveals a requirement for the development of social capital to enable practitioners and leaders with dispositions and skills to negotiate and agree shared understandings of the values and principles which inform UK threshold standards.

2.3.1 The role of the UK HEI in developing understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards

Staff supporting TNE collaborations from UK HEIs often are not sufficiently prepared for the demands their role and may lack the required skills, attributes and knowledge to support staff development activities in a TNE context (Gribble and Zigura 2003). This may result from poor quality training prior to their engagement which is often limited to informal advice rather than formal training (Hoare, 2013) and can result in staff who are poorly equipped to engage in capacity building processes (Smith, 2009; Dobos, 2011; Austin *et al*, 2014). Staff from validating HEIs may lack a personal or professional commitment to the TNE collaboration which may impact their level of engagement (Smith, 2013; McDonnell and Boyle 2012). Interaction between staff in TNE collaborative provision is often minimal and less than satisfactory (Chapman and Pyvis 2006b; Smith 2009; Sidhu, 2015). Moreover, staff from validating HEIs may not have the time required to develop effective working practices with their colleagues in TNE contexts particularly if this represents a small part of their professional responsibilities (Ziguras, 2008; Dobos *et al*, 2013; Healey, 2016). Poor communication between staff within TNE collaborations, and a failure to respond in a timely way, may have a negative impact on its operation (Eldridge and Cranston, 2009; Montgomery, 2014). Significant difficulties may arise as a result of the different levels of commitment that actors have to resolve conflicts (McBurnie and Ziguras, 2001). This can be compounded by a lack of institutional commitment that characterise some TNE collaborations and which leaves them vulnerable if difficulties arise (Lane and Kinser, 2011). This suggests that staff from UK HEIs involved in TNE collaborations require significant support and development to successfully operate within TNE.

2.3.2 Staffing and staff development

The nature of the relationships established by staff working in TNE, as well as the manner in which they interact, is an important consideration in determining the effectiveness of staff development. Research suggests the challenges that result from policy enactment are often downplayed by policy makers and researchers (Avelar, 2016). The active involvement of practitioners and leaders in

assuring and enhancing quality through their practice enables meaningful understanding of quality frameworks to inform enhancement (Chapman and Pyvis, 2006b). The development of socialisation processes involving practitioners and leaders from each HEI involved in TNE collaborative provision are important to support understanding of policy enactment processes (Rust *et al*, 2003). These can include practice, feedback and discussion, and training (Rust *et al*, 2003). Situating staff development in the everyday work practices of teaching teams, to facilitate interaction with peers from the UK validating HEI enables the development of new perspectives that extend both the scope and depth of professional development (Keevers *et al*, 2014).

Staff development requirements associated with policy enactment can be resource intensive and represent a challenge for institutions particularly those located in the private sector (Rust *et al*, 2003). This can result in under investment in staff development to support staff in their roles (Dobos *et al*, 2013). Moreover, opportunities for joint curriculum development projects between staff teams from the different HEIs in TNE collaborations are limited (Sidhu and Christie, 2015). To support the development of joint staff development opportunities, Keay *et al* (2014, p.257) outline Wenger's (1998) communities of practice, a group of people who share a concern for something they do and seek to learn how to do it better, can be applied in TNE contexts to support the development of joint enterprise to develop a shared repertoire of academic practice and shared resources. However, the extent to which Wenger's conception of communities of practice is practical and could be operationalised within TNE contexts, which are heavily regulated and managed, has yet to be determined (Cox, 2005, p.532). Critically, whilst Keay *et al* (2014) identify a key failing of TNE research is a lack of focus on academic practice in TNE contexts, the research fails to include responses from academic staff situated in TNE contexts. Thus, the research fails to reflect the lived experience of staff directly involved in the development and delivery of UK TNE.

2.4 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is a visual or written product, one that “explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied, the key factors, concepts, or variables, and the presumed relationships among them” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.18). This notion is developed further by Mouzelis (1993) who defines a conceptual framework as:

sets of logically interrelated conceptual tools for looking at social phenomena in such a way that interesting questions are generated and methodologically proper linkages established between different levels of analysis.
(p.676)

The conceptual framework for this research has been developed through an iterative process and identifies relevant themes from the literature to enable and exploration of the research questions. It has been developed through a systematic literature review from a literature search derived from the research questions. This sought to identify the state of current knowledge in relation to the research questions. It was developed further as a result of a review of the findings from the pilot study, as well as through the ongoing process of reflection that has informed the research process (Gunter, 2005; Newby, 2010).

The different themes revealed through the literature review are outlined in the conceptual framework for this research in a visual form (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.18). This reveals a number of themes, aligned to each research question, which enable me to develop the research methodology to answer the research question: What factors impact the understanding, mediation and safeguarding of threshold standards in the delivery of UK THE within an Egyptian context?

#	Research question	Theme	Key author
1	How UK threshold standards are understood	Specification of knowledge, skills and abilities:	QAA (2008n); Sadler (2014); Timmermans (2015); Caspersen <i>et al</i> (2017b); Sadler (2017)
		UK and Egyptian conceptions of knowledge and HE norms	Fraser and Naples (2004); Pring (2010b); Croxford (2012); Gunter (2013a); Schneider (2013)
		Social justice including extension, intensity and participatory parity	Djerasimovic, (2014); Fraser and Nash (2014)
		Minimum levels of achievement; comparability and equivalence; integrity	Taysum (2012a); Yorke and Vlodovich (2016); Sadler (2017)
		Development of employability skills	OECD and World Bank (2010); Speight <i>et al</i> (2013); Megahed (2017); Barsoum and Rashad (2018)
		Policy enactment: interpretation, translation and alignment processes	Ball (1993); Ball (2015); Avelar (2016); Sharp (2017)
2	The impact of regulation and national norms	The Egyptian context: regulation, HE norms, location in the private sector, staffing, quality assurance and enhancement	Marginson and Rhoades (2002); Smith (2010); Wilkins (2011); Croxford (2012); Schneider (2013); Hill, Cheong <i>et al</i> (2014); Dorio (2017)
		TNE as a commercial provider located in the private sector	Delanty (2001); Herrera (2008); OECD and World Bank (2010); Ball (2012a); Lane and Kinser (2011); Barsoun and Rashad (2018); Tsiligris and Ilieva <i>et al</i> (2018)
		Learning, teaching and the co-creation of knowledge; programme infrastructure; situated practice	Bolton and Nie (2010); Pyvis (2011); Zepke (2013)
		Assessment as measurement and for learning; marking processes; professional judgement	Gibbs and Simpson (2004/5); Rust <i>et al</i> (2005); Knight (2006); Sander-son <i>et al</i> (2010); Bloxham and Boyd (2012)
3&4	Re-sources currently used and new re-sources required	Social justice: extension and intensity in a transnational context	Fraser and Naples (2004); Bayly <i>et al</i> (2006); Faist (2010); Bolton and Nie (2010); Fraser and Nash (2014)
		The role of the UK HEI	Gribble and Ziguras (2003); Eldridge and Cranston (2009); Hoare (2013); Sidhu (2015); Healey (2016)
		Staffing and staff development: joint enterprise: collaboratively designed and negotiated: situated in the everyday work practices; communities of practice	Wenger (1998); Rust <i>et al</i> (2003); Keay <i>et al</i> (2014); Cox (2005); Keevers <i>et al</i> (2014); Bordogna (2018)

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for this research

2.5 Summary

This chapter provides a summary and analysis of relevant literature. Through this review it identifies relevant research aligned to each of the research questions. A critical review of the literature results in the conceptual framework for this research to enable this study to answer the four research questions. The conceptual framework identifies the themes required to explore how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded in a UK TNE collaboration with a private HEI located in Egypt.

Chapter Three: Research design

3.0 Overview

This chapter provides an outline of the research design including consideration of how the chosen methodology aligns with the epistemological perspective that informs this research. The methodology used is identified including the rationale for a case study. This serves to provide a focus for the research in the context of the UK TNE collaboration located in a private Egyptian HEI. The challenge of developing and using a semi-structured interview tool is discussed as well as its role to collect relevant and trustworthy data from participants closely involved in academic practice. Finally, the different methods used to prepare and analyse data are outlined including the issues of validity, ethics and the limitations of this research.

3.1 Research paradigm: Assumptions underpinning the research

3.1.0 Research as a process of systematic enquiry

Research is differentiated from other forms of knowing and understanding because it is, “a process of systematic inquiry that is designed to collect, analyse, interpret, and use data” (Mertens, 2014, p.2). Thus characterised, the research process is located within a particular research paradigm. A broad definition of paradigm is provided by Kinash (2014, p.1) as, “a matrix of beliefs and perceptions”. The definition is extended further by Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.107) who outline it also represents, “a worldview that defines for the holder, the nature of the “world,” the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts.” The distinction between paradigms rests on how proponents respond to four key questions. First, ontological; ‘what is’? Second, epistemological; how should I enquire into ‘what is’? Third, methodological; how should I approach my research? Fourth, axiological; how do my values impact all stages of the research process? (Guba and Lincoln, 2000). Crotty (1998) outlines the relationship in a similar manner but also includes reference to data collection instruments and approaches which seeks to address the methods to be used for data collection data. The next sections address these four questions.

3.1.1 The research paradigm

This research adopts an interpretivist paradigm and uses a qualitative research approach informed by case study design (Yin, 2006; Newby, 2010). The difficulty of accessing the ontology of complex situations is a key consideration and an epistemological approach is required to enable this (Mears, 2009; Taysum, 2011). Johnson and Christensen (2000, p.32) assert a pragmatic approach to paradigm choice enables research design to be, “planned and conducted on what will best help answer your research questions.” My conception of reality is that meanings and understandings are created socially and experientially (Cohen and Manion *et al*, 2011). A basic tenet of interpretivist paradigms is that reality is socially constructed and each person experiences the world differently (Creswell, 2014). This aligns with the research aims which seeks to understand the experience of people in their situated context, and the meaning they make of that experience, within a complex transnational environment, to enable an exploration of how HE leaders and practitioners understand, mediate and safeguard UK thresholds standards.

My research is located in the interpretivist paradigm. The conception of reality that informs this research contrasts with that of post-positivist paradigms which make claims for reality as an objective nature and external to the individual (Guba and Lincoln, 2000; Cohen and Manion *et al*, 2011). Researchers working within interpretive paradigms critique the ontological and epistemological assumptions of post-positivist paradigms (Cohen and Manion *et al*, 2011, p.19) because they are informed by notions that human cognition and behaviour is highly predictable and determined by one or more causes (Johnson and Christensen, 2010, p.33). Aligned to such conceptions is the validity of the scientific method with an assumption that the social world can be studied in a similar way to the natural world with behaviour and action viewed as responses either to external environmental stimuli or to internal stimuli (Mertens, 2014, p.10). In contrast, the strength of the interpretivist paradigm which informs this research lies in the claims it makes concerning reality and human nature. Human nature is viewed as voluntary, “fluid, dynamic, and changing over time and place” (Johnson and Christensen, 2010, p.35). This further aligns with my own position given this re-

search seeks to provide an understanding of the subjective world of human experience and of individuals who are situated within a specific context which shapes academic norms and practice.

The researcher is the main instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative and case study research design and so the researcher's values are inherent in all phases of the research process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is necessary to recognise the manner in which researchers understand reality is shaped by their own experiences and subjectivities. Moreover, in conducting this research, it was important to acknowledge the insider perspective I have as a researcher may result in a personal predisposition to a particular point of view which could introduce a bias (Shah, 2004; Gunter, 2005; Mears, 2009). This meant it was important I acknowledge these differences and how this bias might impact this research (Gray, 2009; Gunter, 2013). As a white male citizen of the United Kingdom working in a private Egyptian HEI it is important to acknowledge the differences that result from this when working with Egyptian colleagues. These result not only from my experience and understanding of UK HE, but also from my role and position in the Egyptian HEI as well as from my own cultural heritage. To do so required I develop a reflexive stance in which I monitored my reactions and responses to ensure awareness of the impact of subjective lenses (Stake, 1995; Mears, 2009; Merriam, 2009). My reflexive approach was developed through noting down and logging ideas throughout the research process. It also developed through discussions with a trusted colleague not directly involved in the research process which enabled me to test and to explore my own perceptions. Kassam (2007, p. 358) touches upon both the responsibilities the researcher has in understanding the different realities individuals construct as well as the complexities this involves in their deconstruction and this guided my approach: "In the end, I cannot decolonise, but in refusing to deconstruct reality, and the role of the media, the curriculum and the global political situation in its construction, I perpetuate colonial narratives" (Kassam, 2007, p. 358).

3.1.2 Values and the purpose of research

Whilst paradigm choice has important consequences for how the research process proceeds, so too does the question of values (Guba and Lincoln, 2000; Cohen and Manion *et al*, 2011). Taysum (2012) outlines an important function of postgraduate research is to further the search for truth and identifies four core values required in this process. By implication they precede questions concerning the choice of paradigm and epistemological approach and include the requirement to be critical of self, respectful of others, tolerant of opposing views and committed to the generation of new knowledge (Taysum, 2012). The purpose of conceptualisation must also be made explicit and whether the purpose is, “to challenge what is being done or might be done, to affirm stability and/or to deliver change” (Gunter, 2005, p. 165). Gunter’s (2005) multi-level recognises the requirement to provide clarity as to the purpose of research: to challenge what is being done or might be done: to affirm stability: or to deliver change (Gunter, 2005). Aligning with Gunter’s (2005) multi-level conceptual framework of educational leadership this research seeks to draw conclusions that can inform the future development of policy and practice in UK TNE.

3.2 Research design

3.2.0 A case study

A case study was chosen for this study. My research does not seek to test hypotheses but rather to understand the experience of people in their situated context, and the meaning they make of that experience, within a complex transnational environment, at a particular point in time. This aligns with the objective of case study design which seeks to focus on understanding a single bounded case within its context at a specific point in time (Yin, 2006). However, it is important to recognise that case study has different meanings, for different people, in different disciplines (Simons, 2009). Stake (1995, p.x1) defines case study as, “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.” Importantly, case study is not defined by a requirement to implement qualitative methods but rather by its focus

on studying a social phenomenon in its 'real life' context and by its recognition of the role played by complexity (Simons, 2009, p.20).

Case study has been critiqued for its limited application, with findings specific to the circumstances of individual practice and which have limited theoretical application and generalisability beyond this context (Harland, 2014). Moreover, case study can be characterised by conservatism if it locks the case study in time while participants and practice have moved on (Simons, 2009). In response to these concerns, (Simons, 2009, p.164) posits the notion of transferability and usability of findings that enables generalisability from case study research. Two forms of generalisation are identified as relevant for this research. Naturalistic generalisation that seek to identify similarities and differences between cases by providing rich accounts that emphasises time, place and person (Stake, 1995). This aligns with Guba's and Lincoln's (2000) notion of transferability through identifying the similarities, and comparing the alignment between the source and the target cases.

3.2.1 Participant selection: Sampling

To select the research population, I used purposive sampling. A random sample, a concept often associated with large scale quantitative studies, and which seeks to be representative of an entire population, was not appropriate because it is not commensurate with case study research design (Yin, 2006; Newby, 2010). Instead purposive sampling was used because my research focuses on the unique context of the participants in the particular case study (Yin, 1981). Purposive sampling enables the researcher to focus on participants who are identified as critical for the research (Denscombe, 2007). Thus, it enables the researcher to identify participants who are information rich, and who can provide a depth of experience, as well as the greatest insight into the research questions (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Rubin and Rubin 2005; Mears 2009).

The ethical approval provided by the University of Leicester stipulated I should gain approval from institutional gatekeepers (Cohen and Manion *et al*, 2011). I obtained this from members of the senior management teams of both the Egyptian and UK HEIs. The aim of the sampling strategy was to provide me the

opportunity to compare and contrast views of staff in different positions and backgrounds. To ensure this it was important the sample included participants with a range of experience, post holder roles, seniority, nationalities and genders across both HEIs. Once potential participants had been identified I contacted each person by email to request their participation in my research. The email included as an attachment the participant information sheet (Appendix 2) which outlined the purpose of my research. The email also included a copy of the informed consent form which requested consent for participation in the research and made explicit the procedures to ensure anonymity and confidentiality as well as the right to withdraw from the research at any time (Appendix 3). Finally, the email requested participants contact me with a proposed date and time for an interview if they wished to participate.

The sample for this research included staff working in both the Egyptian HEI and the UK HEI. These were clustered into 5 groups corresponding to job role, seniority and backgrounds. The five groups were:

Group #	HEI	Role	Number of participants
1	Egyptian	Staff in an institutional leadership position	5
2	Egyptian	Staff in a faculty leadership position	6
3	Egyptian	Programme academic staff	9
4	Egyptian	Programme staff in a support role	6
5	UK	Staff responsible for TNE collaborative provision	6

Table 2: Composition of the sample

A fuller outline of the sample is provided in Appendix 5 including reference to gender and nationality. There was a total of 32 participants in the sample. 26 from the Egyptian HEI and 6 from the UK HEI. Of the 26 staff from the Egyptian HEI, 19 were Egyptian nationals, 5 were UK nationals and 2 were nationals of other Arab or European states. Moreover, 18 were women and 8 were male. The majority of staff members had worked in the institution between 5 and 10 years with some having worked in it for over 10 years since its establishment. Only 2 of the

more junior Teaching Assistants had worked in the institution for a shorter period of time of between 1 and 2 years having recently graduated and been appointed to their posts. Of the 6 staff from the UK HEI all were UK nationals. Moreover, 3 were women and 3 were men and most had worked in the institution for between 5 to 10 years. The composition of each group in the final sample can be found in Appendix 5.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.0 Data collection tool

The main data collection method used was a semi-structured interview tool (see Appendix 4). The strength of case study is that it provides detail to enable the experiences of participants, as well as the complexity of the case, to be studied in depth and from multiple perspectives (Simons, 2009). The detail required for a case study can be obtained using semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data (Rubin and Rubin, 2005; Denscombe, 2007). The use of this data collection tool enables different voices to be captured within their natural settings (Rubin and Rubin, 2005; Mears, 2009) and it helps the researcher to understand the meaning people make of their experience (Seidman, 2006).

To facilitate the semi-structured interviews, I constructed a semi-structured interview tool (Appendix 4). The semi-structured interview tool was designed to reflect the focus of the four research questions and its development was informed by the themes identified in the conceptual framework outlined in chapter two. It included a range of questions types to enable an exploration of the four subsidiary research questions (Kvale, 1996; Denscombe, 2007). First, the semi-structured interview tool included key questions which elaborated aspects of each research question. This was to enable participants' opportunity to respond with a focus on the research questions. Second, to elicit detail I included prompts. Prompts are prepared questions to enable the interviewer to clarify understanding, explore a viewpoint, or open up new areas not raised by the participant and seeks to produce data to enable the researcher to better understand the issue (Newby, 2010, p.340). To ensure consistency in their use, prompts were designed relevant to the research questions, and were informed by the literature review

and could be used flexibly as required. Third, to seek further elaboration I included probes which are specific questions focusing on eliciting detail from participants (Newby, 2010, p.340). Finally, to enable participants the opportunity to add their own insights and experience, and to validate responses, I included a request that participants provide examples (Appendix 4, Semi-structured interview tool). The inclusion of prompts and probes also reminds the interviewer of the need to use an enabling style of interviewing. Through a careful process of listening and the subsequent use of prompts, probes and request for examples, meaning can be expanded and further information can be elicited.

3.3.1 Pilot study and engagement in the field

Engagement in the research field is identified as important to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Before carrying out data collection, I prepared the groundwork for the research. This included developing and testing the semi-structured interview tool, carrying out a pilot study, identifying and agreeing the sample, and obtaining ethical approval from the University of Leicester.

3.4 Conducting the research

3.4.0 Interview protocol

I carried out interviews from February 2017 to April 2018. I established an interview protocol that informed the conduct of all the interviews (Mears, 2009). This first protocol included thanking respondents for their participation in my research and for their time in doing so. I also gave a brief overview of the research and outlined the informed consent requirements of the research including the right to anonymity, as well as the right of participants to withdraw at any time during the research process. I requested permission from participants to record the interview. In doing this I explained my research protocols to ensure anonymity, confidentiality and data protection. This included explaining all interviews would be transcribed and participants, as well as the HEI for which they worked, would be anonymised in both the transcriptions as well as in the findings. Only one participant requested their interview should not be recorded and

so for this one interview I took notes. All other participants did not object to being recorded whilst many participants commented they were familiar with this process having used it in their own research.

Participants worked in either a private HEI located in Egypt or an HEI located in the UK. The semi-structured interviews for participants working in the Egyptian HEI were all conducted in Egypt whilst those for participants working in the UK HEI were all conducted in the UK. All interviews were completed in a one to one setting, which enabled privacy, and were face to face. Interviews were held in a location of the participant's own choice, usually in their office. I scheduled one-hour slots for each interview although the length of interviews sometimes varied particularly if a member of staff had an urgent call upon their time. In such cases the interview was condensed, although this only happened twice, and occasionally I rescheduled to another time. Before starting any interview, I always confirmed with participants that they were comfortable with the process and whether they had any questions that needed to be responded to. Finally, if participants had not already signed the informed consent form (Appendix 3) I ensured that this was completed before the interview proceeded. A fuller exploration of the ethical considerations that informed this research is included in section 3.7.

3.5 Data analysis

3.5.0 The process

Approaches to preparing and analysing data in qualitative research are varied. However, the pilot study provided a significant learning experience and allowed me to understand the complexity of this process. Although the process of data analysis was iterative rather than sequential, data analysis was undertaken in four broad phases following the processes outlined in qualitative and case study research design (Yin, 1994; Newby, 2010; Harland, 2014). The four phases are outlined by Newby (2010):

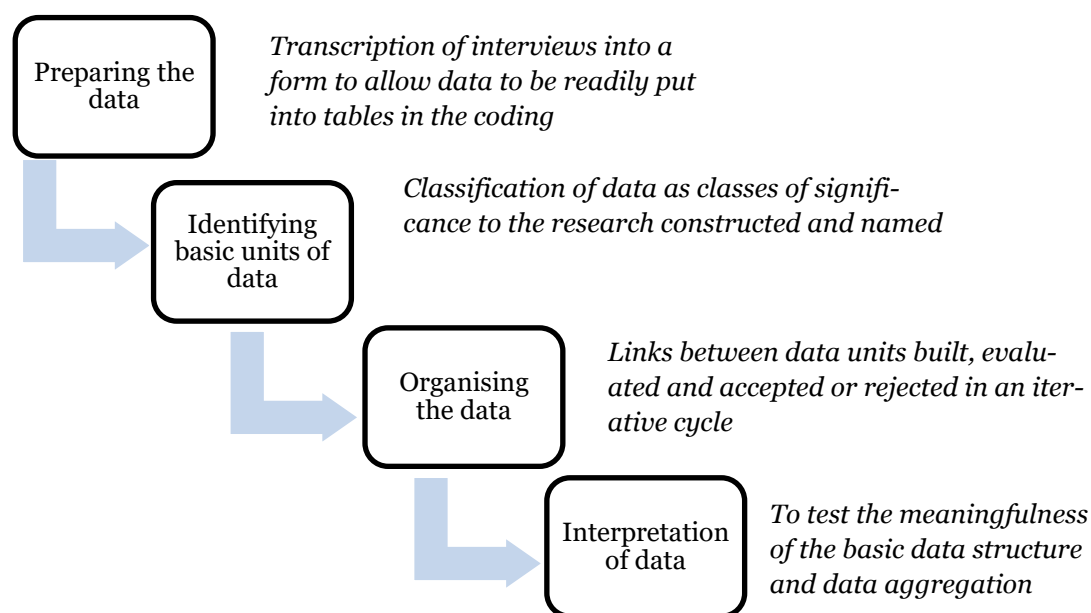


Figure 2: The process of data analysis (Newby, 2010, p.459)

This process involved preparing the data into a form that can readily put into tables in the coding; working with the data to identify information that describes social phenomena; identifying similarities and differences; finding links and patterns; and interpreting the data in relation to the research questions (Yin, 1994; Newby, 2010; Harland, 2014; Miles *et al*, 2014).

3.5.1 Preparing the data

The first stage in the analytic process involved preparation of the written transcripts from the interviews to enable the transcripts to be analysed and sorted (Newby, 2010, p.459). I conducted a number of interviews prior to their transcription and analysis to gain an insight into the voices and issues raised (Seidman, 2013). This minimises the risk of “imposing on the generative process of the interviews what I think I have learnt from other participants” (Seidman, 2013, p.116). The decision to adopt this approach was partly informed by the experience I gained from the pilot study which demonstrated the transcription process involves a significant time commitment with each hour of recorded interview taking a minimum of six hours to transcribe (Newby, 2010, p.461). Partly for this reason, but also to try to complete as many interviews as possible before the summer exam period began, when staff had additional responsibilities, I decided to postpone the bulk of transcription until I had completed most interviews. At the same

time Ramadan fell in 2018 from mid-May to mid-June curtailing the working hours for staff in the Egyptian HEI and so it was important to be aware of the constraints and focus on completing interviews.

The transcription process was labour intensive. When producing the transcriptions, I used a system to ensure participants were not named on either the transcription or on the Microsoft Word file. To meet data protection and confidentiality requirements I stored the coding list on a different locked personal computer to the transcriptions which I stored on a locked portable hard drive. The transcription process resulted in long documents of up to twenty A4 pages of double-spaced text. As each transcription was produced, I then listened to the recording of the associated interview to check for accuracy and to adjust the transcription if required (Mears, 2009; Newby, 2010). I created a filing system where the transcripts from participant was stored in a separate ring binder. At this stage of data analysis, I focused on seeking to understand the nature and scope of the data (Newby, 2010; St Pierre and Jackson, 2014).

3.5.2 Identifying basic units of analysis

This stage involved beginning to identify units of data by coding the transcripts (Merriam, 2009; Newby, 2010). The purpose of coding the data is to use codes that are in some way “connected with the issue under investigation, so that when the codes are put together, we obtain insight that was, with the raw data, not available to us” (Newby, 2010, p.462). In relation to the coding process Newby (2010) outlines coding can derive from systems used in previous research, derive from existing theory and knowledge, or emerge inductively from the data of the research context. Given the interpretivist paradigm in which my research is located an inductive approach to the coding process appeared most appropriate (Patton, 1980, p.360; Newby, 2010). Originally, I had intended to use to use Nvivo software to support the coding process. However, the use of Nvivo software appeared problematic once I began to transcribe the interviews and to seek to listen to them. I experimented with Nvivo software but I was uncomfortable using it and I wanted to be able to continue to move between the paper transcripts and the codes to better understand the data.

Initially the coding process appeared a daunting task given the quantity of transcription material resulting from the interviews. As a novice researcher it was important to recognise the coding process is not a linear process but rather iterative (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Newby, 2010; Miles *et al*, 2014). This required I develop a process to allow the development of different coding, as my understanding developed to enable me to go back and forth between the transcripts and the emerging codes. Having read the transcripts a number of times, I began a first cycle of inductive, open coding in which the coding structure emerges from the data (Rubin, 2005; Newby, 2010; Cohen and Manion, *et al*, 2011). In doing this I focused on using the participants own language highlighting sentences and longer passages with markings in the margin to focus on how responses related to my four research questions.

3.5.3 Organising the data

In this phase, I focused on reduction and categorisation of data. I sought to develop categories and to identify patterns within the data through a process of categorical aggregation (Creswell, 2014, p.195). This was to enable me to narrow the data by focusing on the parts that appeared important in relation to the four research questions (Creswell, 2014, p.195). The process of ‘focused coding’ (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007) involved looking for examples of repeat codes that were found across different participants. It also involved identifying where participants hold alternative perspectives. As a result of this process I sought to identify patterns and links within and between the data (Miles *et al*, 2014).

To ensure a close ongoing relationship with the transcripts, I created a simple Microsoft Excel document. The purpose of this document was to list, collect and sort examples of the different codes that I created. I set up an Excel document with five cells into which I copied relevant examples of each code which emerged from each transcript. This included sentences and longer passages. Storing examples of each code in the Excel document allowed me aggregate, sort and search for examples of each code and also to link them to particular participants. The Excel document also helped me in the iterative coding process as I amalgamated, split or created new codes and thus proved helpful in sorting and identi-

fying examples of each code. As a result of this iterative process I created a Microsoft Word table derived from the Excel document which contained a description of all the key codes and a description of the associated quotes (Appendix 6). However, I continued to use the Excel document to sort and review data.

3.6 Trustworthiness and reliability

To ensure outcomes of research are trustworthy and credible Firestone (1987, p.19) identifies qualitative research must “provide the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author’s conclusion ‘makes sense.’” This requires a robust research design to demonstrate methods used for data collection and analysis, as well as conduct of research are appropriate and address the research questions of this research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Newby, 2010). I carefully developed the semi-structured interview tool and have sought to ensure that in the findings of this research I provide representative quotes for each position that derive from the five different groups in the sample. To further ensure the trustworthiness of my research I carefully documented decisions and reflections throughout the research process including the choice, development and implementation of methodological procedures. This included preparation, conduct and review of the pilot study as well as a research diary through the course of the research period.

The notion of validity seeks to ensure the processes of collecting data are accurate and reflect the aspects that they are meant to measure (Newby 2010). Recognising data collection is not an end in itself, a conceptual framework for the research was developed that is outlined in chapter two to determine the appropriate areas for data collection (Miles and Huberman, 1994; St Pierre, Jackson, 2014). The conceptual framework for this research evolved over a period of time until the conceptual framework was clarified, research questions confirmed, and an appropriate semi-structured interview tool developed to use in the pilot study. Moreover, the semi-structured interview tool was further refined as a result of the pilot study. This pace enabled the development of a robust research design.

It was important I recognise that the intercultural context of the research results in communication that is cross-cultural and characterised by being difference based (Shah, 2004) (see section 3.1.1). Difference is acknowledged in this research and reliability is sought through the operation of congruence to ensure the internal consistency of the story being told, and how well the account agrees with the narratives of others (Mears, 2009).

3.7 Ethical considerations

I ensured the ethical considerations that inform the research process have been considered at all stages and that my research was conducted in accordance with the University of Leicester Ethical Guidelines (Pring, 2010; BERA 2011; Cohen and Manion *et al*, 2011). Procedural issues were concerned with gaining access and acceptance in the research context; confirmation of understanding of information; obtaining informed consent from participants; outlining the right to leave the study at any time; ensuring and maintaining confidentiality and anonymity; as well as data protection of recorded material (BERA, 2011). To do so required I develop a reflexive stance in which I monitored my reactions and responses to ensure awareness of the impact of subjective lenses (Stake, 1995; Mears, 2009; Merriam, 2009). My reflexive approach was developed through noting down and logging ideas throughout the research process. It also developed through discussions with a trusted colleague not directly involved in the research process which enabled me to test and to explore my own perceptions.

It was important to acknowledge the differences that result from my insider positioning when seeking to obtain participation by Egyptian colleagues in this research. As a senior leader in a central management team responsible for academic quality it was necessary to ensure that I first obtained permission from the Faculty Dean before approaching members of staff to request their participation in this research. In doing so it was also important to ensure that staff members did not feel obligated to participate. To ensure this I emailed relevant staff members once permission had been given by the Dean and awaited their response. Only at this stage did I then proceed to have a conversation with potential participants in which I explained the purpose of the research and discussed the

participant information sheet. Staff members responded positively and often expressed they did so because they too were involved in research projects and recognised the importance of the research process in the development of new knowledge.

To ensure this I produced a participant information sheet (Appendix 2) as well as a participant consent form (Appendix 3). These outline how I have ensured confidentiality and anonymity are maintained as well as the right of participants to withdraw at any time during the research process. My interview protocol included outlining to participants their right to withdraw from the research process at any time. My research protocols to ensure anonymity, confidentiality and data protection included ensuring all interviews are transcribed so that all participants, as well as the HEI for which they worked, are anonymised in both the transcriptions as well as in the findings. A unique identification code was added to the written transcripts to ensure each transcript is anonymised. When producing the transcriptions, I used a system to ensure participants were not named on either the transcription or on the Microsoft Word file. To meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 for secure data storage (BERA, 2011) I stored the coding list on a different locked personal computer to the transcriptions which I stored on a locked portable hard drive.

Once I had developed my research protocols to ensure anonymity, confidentiality and data protection I applied for ethical consent from the University of Leicester to conduct my research and permission was granted. The ethical approval provided by the University of Leicester stipulated I should gain approval from institutional gatekeepers (Cohen and Manion *et al*, 2011). I obtained this from members of the senior management teams of both the Egyptian and UK HEI. Finally, to ensure an ethics of accuracy in the portrayal of participants (Mears, 2009) I sent a copy of the transcript to the participants, as a check for accuracy, and requested any feedback they might like to provide but also outlined this was not mandatory. I also felt this was an important step to acknowledge the time, effort and contribution each participant had made to the research process. Most participants seemed to appreciate this and none requested any changes or amendments be made to the transcript.

3.8 Limitations of the study

The ethical approval required from the University of Leicester before conducting this study required the two HEIs and all participants remain anonymous and confidential. This was to protect participants from potential harm if their identifies were disclosed and also to protect the two HEIs given the commercial nature of their relationship. However, a fuller description of the research context would helpfully locate the research and its findings particularly given the dynamic higher education landscape in Egypt and TNE more generally. Moreover, this research was located in one faculty of the Egyptian HEI, and explored the experience of staff responsible for two different programmes: Business Administration and Political Science. It would be helpful if the findings could be compared to the experience of staff in a different faculty and set of programmes to confirm how academic subject matter, as well as faculty and programme management impacts, understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards.

3.9 Summary

The chapter provides an outline of the research design including consideration of how the chosen methodology aligns with the interpretivist perspective that informs this research. An outline of the methodology is provided including the rationale for a case study to locate the research in the specific context of a private Egyptian HEI involved in a UK TNE collaboration. The challenge of developing and using a semi-structured interview tool is discussed as well as its role to collect relevant data from participants. Finally, the different methods used to prepare and analyse data are outlined including the issues of trustworthiness and reliability, ethics and the limitations of this research.

Chapter Four: How UK threshold standards are understood in a TNE context

4.0 Overview

In the following chapter, I answer the first research question by presenting the evidence from the semi-structured interviews to show how participants describe and understand UK threshold standards. I present the positions of the different participants and groups. Some participants hold positions within their group or may reflect a position across a different group. For each position I present representational quotes that sum up all the quotes from the data that align with that position. Different participants provide different concrete examples when presenting a position, and the representative samples are not intended to represent exact examples from each participant aligning with that position. Rather the concrete examples might be different but the representative quotes present the position.

The evidence is presented through five themes. First, UK threshold standards specify knowledge, skills and abilities. Second, UK threshold standard should remain dynamic and reflect latest developments in knowledge. Third, UK threshold standard specify a minimum level of achievement and provide a benchmark to protect the integrity of UK awards. Fourth, UK threshold standards derive from different QAA documents. Finally, the Egyptian HEI must meet both UK and Egyptian threshold requirement. Within each theme, evidence is presented by providing representative quotes as relevant to outline different positions articulated by participants. Finally, the findings are discussed and related to the literature outlined in chapter two. The five groups are:

Group 1: 5 participants in institutional leadership roles in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 2: 6 participants in faculty leadership roles in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 3: 9 Module Leaders in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 4: 6 Teaching Assistants in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 5: 6 participants in leadership roles in the UK HEI.

4.1 UK threshold standards specify knowledge, skills and abilities

The evidence reveals participants across all five groups understand that UK threshold standards specify and embody required knowledge, skills and abilities students must demonstrate to pass an assessment, module, programme level and to graduate. However, two positions are articulated by participants. First, thirteen participants in groups one, two and five describe their understanding of UK threshold standards through high-level statements that refer to different elements, including: knowledge, critical, analytical and transferable skills, intended learning outcomes, levels of achievement, minimum level of achievement, as well as QAA documents. Second, twelve participants from groups three and four responded on this theme and outlined how they understood UK threshold standards within the context of the modules on which they work. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

4.1.0 Presentation of the evidence

Thirteen participants in groups one, two and five describe their understanding of UK threshold standards through high-level statements that refer to different elements, including: knowledge, critical, analytical and transferable skills, intended learning outcomes, levels of achievement, minimum level of achievement, as well as QAA documents. Participant one (group 1) states:

I would say that standards embrace probably two basic categories and then there's something else as well. I think the first category would be that what we offer and deliver is consistent with norms, and that implies values and requirements of British higher education, and those have been the ones that are expressed by the QAA through our validated programmes. And so, you have those three elements: you've got the norms, you got the standards themselves, and you've got the concept of thresholds.

Participant two (group 1) outlines that UK threshold standards embody both knowledge and transferable skills and states:

I think that my definition of standards would actually be the standard of the graduate output. So, the academic ability of the output of the students. And a secondary part of that would be the transferable skills. So, it would be the underpinning knowledge and understanding of their subject area, and then secondly their ability to apply it through transferable skills.

Participant three (group 1) agrees with this and states:

Students must show that that they have met the ILOs covering the required knowledge, critical and analytical skills and transferable skills. And the extent that students have done so results in the various levels of achievement. But you would expect that it must be at a certain level to demonstrate that they are able to pass the module.

This is confirmed by participant nine (group 2) who states:

Threshold standards for me are mainly the minimum levels of specific subject knowledge and students' ability to absorb, understand and apply it. So, threshold standards include the subject knowledge; the ability to analysis and use critical thinking; as well as their ability to use different transferable skills including how to learn and good communication skills. And, as we always say, the British system is not just about what students' study but also their ability to develop and apply knowledge and skills in different contexts.

Participant twenty-eight (group 5) states:

So, I would use reference points, the Framework of Higher Educational qualifications and look at what those graduate attributes would be, I would look at the Subject Benchmark Statements, when a particular subject can combine with another, and particular characteristics of any award again as nationally agreed from subject expertise. So, I would always benchmark it back to national guidance, QAA National Guidance and then UK Quality Code.

In contrast, responses from participants in groups three and four, who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants, express their understanding of

UK threshold standards in relation to the knowledge, skills and abilities required by students on the modules they teach and support. Twelve participants from groups three and four responded on this theme and outlined how they understood UK threshold standards within the context of the modules on which they work. Participant twelve (group 3) states:

We can just name it [UK threshold standards] as a behaviour. I think this is what we mean by UK threshold standards from my own understanding: that we're ensuring by the end of the module we've met the UK benchmark statements and at least that when we abide by the standards this means we are delivering the best. So, students must be able to demonstrate understanding, demonstrate, let's call it comprehension of what has been delivered during this module and apply it using the transferable skills. And if it's for the whole programme, so students are able to put it all together, all the modules as building blocks.

Participant fifteen (group 3) who works as a Module Leader states:

The module I taught last semester was a final year module. It focused on sustainable development which I felt was good because it's something that is emerging more and more and is required in the market here in Egypt. And the way I define threshold standards is that I tried to handpick the materials, and designed the project to make sure that it gave the students the required knowledge and skills as well as the chance to apply their knowledge and skills in a real-life scenario. Also, that the exam assessed their understanding of the foundations of the concepts as well as the theories.

Participant twelve (group 3) concurs and states:

Well students need to demonstrate knowledge and transferable skills in the modules that they have taken. They need to show they can relate the different information together and that they can answer the questions in the exam in a way that is at the required level.

In a similar way, participant twenty-one (group 4) describes how the UK threshold standards relate to the module they work on as a Teaching Assistant. They state:

We also teach them different standards, the standards of accounting according to US, according to UK, according to the Egyptian authorities. So, they should be familiar with all these different accounting standards to prepare them for employment.

4.1.1 Discussion

The findings demonstrate the development of UK TNE collaborative requires the Egyptian HEI to meet UK threshold standards on its UK validated degree programmes. The findings further reveal that leaders in the Egyptian and UK HEI's understand that UK threshold standards are complex and require students to demonstrate an agreed minimum level of achievement in relation to knowledge, understanding and skills to pass a module, level and for the conferral of an academic award (QAA, 2014, p.5). They express their understanding through high level statements. In contrast, the evidence reveals that Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants understand UK threshold standards through the context of the modules on which they work. The evidence demonstrates that participants in these groups recognise that UK threshold standards include subject knowledge, skills and transferable skills applied in real life contexts through their particular modules. This distinction in how understanding is expressed suggests that there are important considerations how understandings of UK threshold standards are developed through processes of interpretation and translation (Ball, 2015; Avelar, 2016) to ensure shared understandings are arrived at and shared by all staff groups.

The evidence illustrates complexity results from a requirement to understand how the interrelationship between the different elements embodied in UK threshold standards enable learning, support the development of knowledge and skills, and determine the relationship between a pass and a fail. Moreover, the evidence shows that leaders in the two HEIs recognise that UK threshold standards are informed by UK HE norms and derive from a number of different QAA documents including The Quality Code, Benchmark Statements, and UK Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. This aligns with the QAA description of UK threshold standards (QAA, 2014n). This aligns with the literature in chapter two that outlines specification of threshold standards results from dynamic

and complex socially embedded processes, located in each national context, which serve to establish the agreed standards in an academic discipline and which are likely to be different in each national domain (Croxford, 2012; Schneider, 2013; Sharp, 2017).

4.2 UK threshold standard and the latest development in knowledge

Two positions are articulated by participants. First, six participants from groups two, three and five express an understanding that UK threshold standards must remain dynamic and reflect latest developments in knowledge. Second, thirteen participants across groups one, two, three and four identify the requirements of the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU) can constrain the ability of the Egyptian HEI to introduce programme changes to ensure UK threshold standards remain current. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

4.2.0 Presentation of the evidence

The evidence demonstrates only a limited number of participants in groups two, three and five, express an understanding that UK threshold standards must remain dynamic and reflect latest developments in knowledge. Six participants express this view. Participant seven (group 2) states:

We need to anticipate future developments because with the changing environment we need to ensure our programmes reflect this. For example, things like Information Technology (IT). Certain programmes do not have enough IT components but we know that in the future so much will depend on graduates' ability to be very IT literate. So, we must increase this component to ensure students are capable of achieving the required knowledge and skills needed by industry and to support their employability.

Participant nine (group 2) concurs and states:

For me, threshold standards are mainly about the required knowledge and skills which students need to absorb, understand, develop and apply in different contexts. And, threshold standards must ensure the

knowledge is updated to reflect what's recent and new in the subject area.

Participant seventeen (group 3) identifies programme teams should reflect the requirements of employers in the development of their programmes and states:

I don't think that we should decide alone on programme development. We should sit with the different stakeholders to design the programme. We should not design it on our own, we need to sit with the employers and with different types of employers. And by employers, I mean the employers that tend to employ political science graduates.

Participant twenty-seven (group 5) outlines UK threshold standards must remain dynamic and states:

But I think there is another aspect of it, which is really important and that HE is dynamic. The reason that HEIs are autonomous and focus on research education is that knowledge isn't static, it's changing. So, I think that's a real challenge with standards: that although maybe graduate outcomes are comparable, they only have it measured through subjects and subjects change. So, there is a dynamic element in standards as well, which we really need. Students won't be able to grow up with that critical awareness and ability to learn through their lives without this. And I guess that's why I find the current regulatory system very depressing because I think they're only concerned with something that's very static to me and I think actually Higher Education is dynamic.

Participant twenty-eight (group 5) suggests the UK HEI seeks to test the relevancy and currency of UK threshold standards within its UK context and states:

So, I think you need to push boundaries because this is Higher Education, we are not building washing machines. Higher Education traditionally is about the creation of knowledge, adapting knowledge, and therefore we probably have to push the boundaries of what those thresholds are and whether those thresholds are still appropriate. This is why we test it out nationally, we test it out with our External Examiners.

However, thirteen participants across groups one, two, three and four identify the requirements of the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU) can constrain the ability of the Egyptian HEI to introduce programme changes to ensure UK threshold standards remain current. This view was particularly expressed by ten participants in groups two and three who hold faculty leadership roles or who work as Module Leaders, but was not expressed by participants in group five from the UK HEI. Participant ten (group 2) states:

Yes, the quality and validation team take this into consideration and are responsible for making sure that our standards meet the requirements of both the SCU as well as the British standards. And we have to do extensive work on this before we finalise them [programme and module specifications].

Participant nine (group 2) confirms this and states:

We know we cannot touch the major issues in the programme because of the restrictions of the Supreme Council. So, we look at how we can ensure the programme remains relevant; we update the texts, the readings; we revise the content; we update the weekly outlines so we're touching upon new aspects. And of course, through our ways of delivering our programme and we developed interactive and the blended learning which had a very positive experience last semester.

Participant fourteen (group 3) concurs and states:

We also, want to evolve the programme, change the programme, introduce new module. But that is subjected to not only the UK partner, it's also subjected to the Supreme Council. And one of the issues we're having at the moment is we want to change the programme, to update it, to give different options and that is difficult because the Supreme Council requires programme changes to be very incremental.

Participant seventeen (group 3) outlines there is limited flexibility for programme development due to SCU requirements. They state:

We don't have much flexibility in adapting things in the programme for the sake of the students. Every five years we have the ability to change. I have been here for three years; we haven't changed the programmes yet

now. I wanted to integrate to give space for module leaders to act upon need, to act upon their judgement and to trust the judgement of the Module Leader.

Participant sixteen (group 3) concurs and states:

There are differences between the two systems, so there should be some kind of flexibility, because in the end changes made to the programme are not harming the students. On the contrary, it adds something and ensures students become better qualified graduates to meet the needs of the economy.

Participant twenty-six (group 4) further identifies the importance that staff in the UK HEI understand the Egyptian regulatory context and states:

Our relationship with the UK HEI must go beyond the correspondence over email and the paperwork. It's more about the interaction, the day to day work. This makes a lot of difference because then they can understand how the Egyptian system is being run. So that whenever we're talking about the Supreme Council of Higher Education, they would understand what we're talking about. About the rules and regulations that they impose on us.

4.2.1 Discussion

The evidence from this research reveals that a limited number of participants recognise that UK threshold standards should reflect the “current boundaries of an academic discipline” (QAA, 2014n, p.26). Significantly the evidence identifies an understanding that the operation of SCU validation requirements serve to constrain the ability of programme teams to develop their programme to reflect latest developments in knowledge. This serves to provide a static conception of UK threshold standards, “used as a fixed reference point for reporting a student’s level of attainment as a particular grade on the scale used” (Sadler, 2017, p.89). This suggests there is a need to understand the principles and values that inform UK threshold standards within an Egyptian context. This is particularly in relation to the role of UK threshold standards to enable students to be actively involved in the co-creation of new knowledge, and the development of

transferable and employability skills, that provide graduates with new perspectives and opportunities relevant to their context. The evidence from this research identifies a requirement by UK and Egyptian regulatory bodies for consideration how alignment can be achieved between the two national systems to ensure that UK TNE is able to provide a focus on, “the values that should shape the standards to be achieved, the knowledge to be transmitted and the virtues to be nourished” to enable individuals to develop, “the knowledge and understanding that enables them to live fully human lives” (Pring, 2010, p.83).

4.3 UK threshold standard specify a minimum level of achievement and provide a benchmark to protect the integrity of UK awards

Three positions are articulated by participants. First, seven participants in groups one and five outline that UK threshold standards provide a benchmark function to enable comparison between HEIs and to protect the integrity of the UK degree award. Second, twelve participants in groups three and four identify how they understand the UK threshold attainment level in the context of the modules they work on. Third, eleven participants in groups two and three express a concern that UK threshold standards represent a low level of attainment. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

4.3.0 Presentation of the evidence

Seven participants in groups one and five, in leadership roles in the two HEIs, outline that UK threshold standards provide a benchmark function to enable comparison of performance between HEIs delivering UK validated degrees and protects the integrity of UK awards. Participant three (group 1) states:

We are ensuring that by the end of whatever we are doing we have met a benchmark which compares to the performance of other universities delivering UK degrees.

Participants also express the UK HEI has a responsibility to ensure the integrity of UK threshold standards. Participant two (group 1) states:

What I would call a minimum threshold standard is probably as low as you go, but still have actually obtained a UK degree. And the QAA is

really clear, it is the UK validating HEI's role to uphold academic standards of its own degree, regardless of how or where it is delivered. So, therefore the onus is actually on the UK partner to put in structures, and for us to go off and implement.

Participant twenty-seven (group 5) states:

So, my view is that the UK threshold standard is about protecting the integrity of any qualification that students' study and are awarded, so that they have a value to that award and that maintains a currency internationally and over time. And it's by meeting threshold academic standard that we can ensure that integrity, so that a BA is really a BA and a masters really is a masters, and a doctorate really is a doctorate, and all qualifications in between that. I think that would be my primary kind of definition. And the idea of the threshold is important because it meets a threshold. So, because of UK HEIs have autonomy in making those awards, so the awards that we give, we want to make sure that we meet the UK thresholds. We want to be assured in order to protect that integrity that we meet a national baseline, beyond that we may do more than that and probably hope that we do. But we want to know that we don't fall below a baseline and that's why you need the national threshold.

Participant twenty-eight (group 5) underlines the statutory responsibility of the UK HE to safeguard UK threshold standards and the integrity of the UK degree award. They state:

Whoever is offering that award [UK degree] ultimately bears the responsibility for it because it's their award. In terms of the validating institution, their responsibility I would see is making sure that the standards of that award meet the criteria it needs to; that all sounds a little harsh. And, I think in building a relationship there should be support in how that happens and that's the quality angle. But in terms of the standards angle, the standards, that's where I would be quite hard line: on the standards side. It is the validating partners' responsibility to protect the integrity of the award. And that's where I draw the line

between the standards, protecting the integrity of the award, and enhancing the quality. So, if the course team can't demonstrate they're doing that, then the validating HEI needs to be hard line.

In contrast, twelve participants in groups three and four, who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants, articulate an understanding that UK threshold standards specify a minimum threshold attainment level in the context of the modules on which they work. Participant thirteen (group 3) provides a focus on what students at the UK threshold attainment level must demonstrate and states:

So, the 40% threshold is the student who has just met the minimum understanding of the subject and a minimum level of critical skills applied to the knowledge that the module looks at.

Participant fourteen (group 3) concurs and states:

I think in terms of what would I look out for is students who are just able to pass the module. I think you're looking at a basic understanding and engagement with the module in terms of the subjects taught within that module, and in terms of the literature and analytical skills it's minimal.

Participant twenty-four (group 4) agrees and states:

Students are supposed to know the minimum requirements in each topic we're supposed to cover. I think that the D students, for instance, if they just pass the module they should have some knowledge about what we're saying. They should be familiar in practicing or understanding the concepts of the topics we're covering and apply it with lots of support.

Finally, eleven participants in groups two and three express a concern that the UK threshold attainment level represents a low level of achievement. Participants recognise the UK threshold attainment level enables student achievement to be recognised. Participant sixteen (group 3) states:

So, it [the threshold] gives students a way to exit and say they have some of the basics.

Participant seventeen (group 3) concurs and states:

I think it [the 40% threshold attainment level] gives them a standard that is achievable in their own way. But it's not uniform across the entire class. I have those students where maybe their application of things is poor, but they are good at studying and memorising theories, whereas for someone else their application is better. In the end they can both achieve the threshold in their own way.

However, participants express a concern about the low attainment level represented by the UK threshold and identify this is different than the threshold attainment level that operates in the national HE system. Participant eighteen (group 3), states:

The threshold pass mark of 40% gives the wrong message to the students as well as to the wider community. They think that because we have a pass mark of 40% that we are easier than other universities because in the national system the pass mark is 50%. So, they think that because we have a lower threshold attainment mark that this means we are easier, whereas it's exactly the opposite. In fact, it is difficult to even reach the 40% pass in the British system compared to the 50% in the national system. I mean it's exactly the opposite.

Participant twenty-three (group 4) outlines it can be difficult for staff to determine the threshold attainment level and states:

I think it's [the 40% UK threshold attainment level] minimal understanding of knowledge and concepts. It's just enough to pass. But the amount of knowledge and skills students have acquired is very minimal. So that is my concern about the UK threshold level and students may pass because it's difficult to really tell the difference between a 38% and a 40% for example. I think we need to ensure that we push students much further beyond the threshold level in terms of the expectations that we have of them.

Participant nine (group 2) articulates that the condonement regulations operated by the Egyptian HEI may enable failing students to pass at the threshold attainment level. They state:

Because 40% reflects the minimum required knowledge and skills which is a very low level. And maybe sometimes with the condonement regulations they are raised to reach this minimum even though we may not be fully satisfied with their performance. And you agree with me, I don't know if you agree with me or not, but there are too many students who are just being pushed to reach the threshold, but if we left them without condonement they wouldn't.

Finally, participant sixteen (group 3) outlines that students at the threshold level may find it difficult to find employment and states:

I think that students who just get a D, the 40%, or from 40% to 45%, have just provided the minimum level of information, the minimum level of discussion and have limited skills and may struggle when it comes to employment and getting a job. They're very poor, or we can't say poor, it's just we can't let them have a higher grade.

4.3.1 Discussion

The evidence aligns with the literature outlined in chapter two which identifies UK HEIs involved in TNE are required to ensure safeguarding of UK threshold standards, as well as the integrity of their academic awards, irrespective of where the qualification is delivered (Brown, 2011a; QAA, 2011k). Participants from the UK HEI outlined the need to ensure confidence in the final graduate transcript to reflect the stated knowledge and cognitive skills so that graduates, as well as employers, can be confident that the final graduate transcript reflects the stated knowledge and cognitive skills (Taysum, 2012; Sadler, 2017).

Moreover, participant twenty-eight (group 5) expressed the view that, “if the course team can't demonstrate they're doing that, then the validating HEI needs to be hard line.” This suggests that it is important for TNE collaborations to ensure the development of jointly owned processes to enable safeguarding of UK threshold standards and to ensure the long-term sustainability of UK TNE. Moreover, this aligns with the literature from transnational scholarship which identifies a requirement to not only focus on the processes by which various groups

become connected but also to identify those which result in groups being excluded from participation in transnational exchanges (Bayly *et al*, 2006, p.1458).

The evidence confirms that participants who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants understand UK threshold standards specify the minimum level of achievement required by students to pass an assessment, module, programme level and ultimately to graduate (QAA, 2013a, p.4). Moreover, participants describe that UK threshold standards serve to distinguish between a pass and fail, and convey attainment level as a particular grade against a given scale (Sadler, 2017, p.89). This identifies, practitioners in TNE contexts need to not only understand the associated requirements for knowledge, understanding and skills embodied in UK threshold standards (QAA, 2014, p.5), but also notions of academic level that inform the UK Quality Code and UK Qualifications Framework (QAA, 2008n) to be able to make ethically informed judgements on the level of student achievement.

The evidence reveals two concerns in relation to the 40% UK pass mark. First, the UK pass mark, and associated marking scale, is different than its equivalent in the Egyptian national HE system. The evidence further identifies academic staff working in a TNE context, who are used to working with different norms of attainment, including marking scales, may find it challenging to assess UK threshold standards in a consistent manner. This aligns with Sadler (2014) who outlines that the specifiers used in the specification of standards, and associated marking criteria, are highly elastic their use by academic staff is informed by the context in which they work and by their previous experience. Moreover, this reflects Smith's (2009, p.477) assertion that alignment of standards, to ensure their comparability and equivalence, is challenging in TNE contexts if there is a lack of understanding how threshold standards and HE norms differ in each national setting (Smith, 2009, p.477). It suggests that the development of shared understandings of threshold standards to ensure their comparability and equivalence requires development of context sensitive approaches to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding processes (Bolton and Nie, 2010; Pyvis, 2011, p. 741).

Second, participants articulate the 40% UK attainment level represents a low level of achievement and that students operating at the threshold attainment level develop minimum knowledge, skills and abilities which serves to limit opportunities for future employability. The evidence identifies that the application of the condonement regulations operated by the Egyptian HEI can enable students in particular circumstances to meet the UK threshold standards. The evidence further reveals a concern that the 40% UK threshold attainment mark could result in pressure on staff to ensure all students pass an assessment, module or degree programme. This aligns with the literature outlined in chapter two that the low threshold attainment level may result in instrumental understandings of UK threshold standards and responses which serve to undermine the currency of the associated award (Yorke and Vidovich, 2016). However, the evidence did not reveal staff felt constrained to respond in this way and the evidence also identifies participants believe this would serve to devalue the degree award, and would represent a significant threat to the safeguarding of UK thresholds standards and integrity of UK awards. This suggests that the development of shared understandings of UK threshold standards is required to enable ethically informed decisions to be made.

4.4 UK threshold standards derive from UK QAA documents

Five positions are articulated by participants. First, fifteen participants across groups one, two and five outline the requirements that inform UK QAA threshold standards are specified in different QAA documents. Second, nine participants in group three and four, who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants, refer to the UK HEI as informing their understanding of UK threshold standards rather than referring to specific QAA documents. Third, ten participants in groups one, two and five, reveal the language used in QAA documents is vague and open to interpretation. Fourth, four participants in group five, who hold a leadership role in the UK HEI, identify a formal validation event scrutinises the programme documentation from the Egyptian HEI to determine that it is appropriately aligned to UK norms and requirements. Fifth, six participants from the Egyptian HEI in groups two and three identify a requirement for developing shared understanding of academic standards that goes beyond the formal

validated programme documents. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

4.4.0 Presentation of the evidence

First, the evidence reveals practitioners and leaders understand that UK threshold standards derive from UK QAA policy documents. Fifteen participants across groups one, two and five outline the requirements that inform UK QAA threshold standards are specified in different QAA documents. This position is articulated by participants in groups one, two and five who hold leadership positions in the two HEIs. Participant eleven (group 2) outlines that UK threshold requirements derive from at least three sets of UK policy documents: The QAA Quality Code; the UK Framework for Qualifications; and the Subject Benchmark Statements. They state:

The process we go through is to follow the QAA requirements set out in the Quality Code, the UK framework and the benchmark statements in the design of the programme and module specifications and in all the other aspects of our programme. And then we have the Link Tutors and External Examiners to ensure it is all ok. They advise us, or ask us to change things such as different parts of the module specifications.

Participant three (group 1) concurs and states:

The UK model informs all quality processes from the preparation of the programme and module specifications as well as annual changes to the specifications, all assessment processes as well as the processes that inform this. Well, the programme specification is clearly linked to the QAA Guidance as well as to the Subject Benchmark Statements. Also, the University has developed its own Regulations which are based on the QAA expectations set out in the Quality Code.

Participant four (group 1) agrees and states:

Programme teams will need to refer to the QAA benchmark statements for each programme. They will refer to it and ensure they design the programme to align the programmes learning outcomes so it is clear

what students should achieve as a minimum on completing this programme.

Participant six (group 2) also identifies UK threshold standards derive from UK QAA documents and states:

I mean, we have the QAA Quality Code and the benchmark statements in order to say what we expect in the programme and of our students. And the benchmarks provide the guidelines for the programme and module specifications as to what are the ILOs that you expect students to demonstrate in each particular module and in the programme as a whole.

Additionally, three participants from the UK HEI in group five all articulate the requirements set out in QAA policy documents are complex. Participant twenty-four (group 5) states:

In my role what I'd say is I suspect that the people producing QAA documents, it's very easy to write policies that are demanding and look very logical, but in practice maybe how they are applied is more difficult or maybe not cost-effective to apply. But I do think it's very easy to sit around a roundtable and write policy documents without having thought pragmatically what would it take to implement it.

Participant twenty-three (group 5) concurs the requirements which inform UK threshold standards derive from multiple QAA documents and the requirements embody complex concepts. They state:

I think we throw about this term a lot [standards] and it's actually quite difficult. I do think over the years I've been in HE, we've moved a long way to have absolutely clear and explicit standards mostly supported by the QAA through things like subject benchmarking, and the articulation of different levels, and even further back credit accumulated transfer, the idea that there is a correlation between credits acquired and the notion of the work that students do. So, I think there's actually a framework which I feel is peer reviewed and robust for articulating standards. However, this doesn't make it simple because I've already given a number of reference points. You're actually referencing to a number of

very complex things.

Second, nine participants in group three and four, who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants, refer to the UK HEI as informing their understanding of UK threshold standards rather than referring to specific QAA documents. Participant fourteen (group 3) states:

Well obviously, we understand UK threshold standards through our quality assurance processes so that all work is subjected to scrutiny by external review from the UK HEI and an External Examiner. And it also comes through staff having experienced of working in the British Education System and then coming to work at the British University in Egypt.

Participant fifteen (group 3) states:

As I received the module specifications, I understood the threshold standards were set externally, this is something that would be set by our validating partners for example. And then I received them and did not really do much apart from write my module weekly outline, and course work briefs. And the threshold standard was if a student could get a forty per cent on their assessments then they have sufficient knowledge and skills to pass the module.

Participant seventeen (group 3) concurs and states:

The threshold are the standards set by the UK partner. This would be the minimum standards that we should achieve. We can definitely go beyond them but they are the standards of our UK partner that we should go along with.

Participant twenty-three (group 4) identifies the role of the UK HEI in ensuring UK threshold validated degree programmes and states:

The Link Tutor and External Examiner review our work and they look at the course outlines, the assessments, the grading that have been to make sure our programme is up to the threshold standards of the QAA.

Participant twenty-six (group 4) states:

Because they [the UK HEI] are the ones, they are the experts about the QAA threshold standards. They know what the QAA really wants. They

understand the rules and regulations. So, we need some kind of a channel of communication in order for us to know what the QAA rules and the regulations are. Maybe there are updates that we're unaware of. Regardless of the fact whether we've been here for so long or not, maybe they have changes in the system, the changes in the requirements of the QAA. We are not always up to date with that, so we need our British HEI or the British staff to give us some kind of orientation about what's going on.

Third, the evidence further reveals the language used in QAA policy documents to specify UK threshold requirements is open to interpretation which makes understanding requirements more complex. Ten participants in groups one, two and five, reveal the language used in QAA documents is vague and open to interpretation. This response was not provided by participants in groups three and four, who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants, perhaps indicating they have less familiarity with such documents. Participant two (group 1) states:

So, you will find them [the UK threshold requirements] in the subject benchmark statements, it will talk about transferable skills, practical application, and there is a description in the level descriptors which actually sets out these kinds of skills as well. But they are written in a very vague way, it is very subjective: somebody has excellent ability to communicate, to analyse, or to synthesise. These are all words that are in themselves quite open to interpretation and which may also have different meanings in different subject areas.

Participant eleven (group 2) concurs and identifies this can result in different understandings of policy documents. They state:

The term [threshold standards] is very tricky and meanings can be very different for different people. When you come to put academic standards into practice you find that people have many different interpretations based on their previous experience. And academic standards include reference to broad terms like knowledge, skills, assessment, academic honesty; and not everyone has the same understanding of their

meaning. So, when it comes to implementation there are going to be difficulties.

Participant twenty-seven (group 5) agrees and states:

So, I would always the benchmark refer back to QAA national guidance. I think in transnational settings, it's about interpretation of language. So, the way that things are set up for the UK Quality Code sits very neatly within UK awards and has brought UK expertise around the table to decide what that is. My experience working internationally is that every country has the same issues, and the same desires, but the language we use is often very different and therefore can cause points of conflict when people try to interpret guidance. Effectively, what we're all trying to do is do the best for our students. It would be very unusual in a higher education situation where somebody didn't want to do the best for their students. So, in a transnational environment, you are bringing a culture into something where you want an absolute and that doesn't fit neatly.

Fourth, four participants in group five, who hold a leadership role in the UK HEI, identify a formal validation event scrutinises programme documentation from the Egyptian HEI to determine that it is appropriately aligned to UK norms and requirements. Participant thirty (group 5) states:

In terms of academic standards, I would ensure that at the validation event the course has an appropriate structure, content, learning outcomes and that it is benchmarked to the national benchmarks as well as to the qualification framework. Also, that the course has academic rigor and that the assessment strategy is appropriate. I would also look at if there are qualified teaching staff and that they are involved in relevant research. But, it's not just about research of course, it also includes their ability to teach and communicate, their feel for the subject, their engagement with the subject.

Participant thirty-one (group 5) concurs the formal validation event has an important role and states:

Well, the validated documents refer to things like the programme outcomes, the QAA benchmark statements and degree titles to ensure they are all matched to the UK Qualification Framework. And I'm familiar with those [the Egyptian HEI's programme documents] because we recently validated their degrees or are about to revalidate other ones. So, comparing their documents, and knowing that the staff have looked at them, and that the staff are also active in British Political Science circles and British academic circles is used as evidence during the validation event that the threshold standards are being met.

Fifth, whilst it is recognised the formal validation event is important, six participants from the Egyptian HEI in groups two and three also identify the difficulty of developing a shared understanding of academic standards that goes beyond the formal validated programme documents. Participant twenty (group 3) states:

I mean, the problem of course is at the end of the day, threshold standards are something that are very, very fluid. And they are institutional because as people come to an institution, they are shaped by the institution they are in. And now through the validation process, and I guess in the UK through the QAA, there is mechanism to unify certain forms of academic standards through the required documentation. But it's very, very difficult to do, you can't just simply unify standards across the board through a validation event and documents.

Participant eleven (group 2) concurs and states:

Theoretically these things [threshold standards] appear very easy. They appear very easy because the documents state what you should have, and institutions have quality systems which means that they can check that the requirements are being met. So, the programme specification should include this; the modules should be taught like this; it should be assessed like this; and you should follow the assessment briefs; and it all looks great in the document. The documents, the material, the systems, everything looks great. But you need to be very serious in the im-

plementation because you can have a lot of good documents and paperwork, but when it comes to implementation and what is happening in the classroom, if the philosophy and understanding itself is not there, you will be far away from meeting the threshold standards.

Participant eight (group 2) agrees and states:

But you can have a system that is set out in the documents, and you can try to have the same system here on paper as it is in the UK, but ensuring that the requirements and system are really applied as it is set out in the documents are two different things

4.4.1 Discussion

The evidence shows that staff in leadership roles in the Egyptian and UK HEIs understand that UK threshold standards derive from multiple policy documents and aligns with evidence from the literature review in chapter two which identifies the QAA Quality Code (QAA, 2013a) as the primary UK policy document. The evidence from this research aligns with the literature that the requirements for UK threshold standards are captured in an extensive range of policy documents (QAA, 2013a, p.3; Sadler, 2014, p.274). This outlines that UK threshold standards are informed by multiple reference points that are referenced by participants including (QAA, 2013a, p.3):

- a. *The UK National Framework for Higher Education Qualifications which set out the levels and national expectations for standards of achievement associated with a particular award.*
- b. *The Higher Education Credit Framework for England which sets out requirements for award of credit including the required level, value and volume of credit associated with a particular award.*
- c. *The Subject Benchmark Statements which specify the characteristics of undergraduate degrees as well as the specific outcomes graduates are expected to achieve in a particular subject area.*
- d. *The Quality Code which sets out the expectations and requirements in relation to how awards are designed, taught, assessed and reviewed.*

The evidence confirms that it is mainly leaders in the two HEIs who understand that UK threshold standards derive from UK policy documents. This position is articulated by participants in groups one, two and five who hold leadership positions in the two HEIs. In contrast, participants in groups three and four, who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants in the Egyptian HEI, refer to the UK HEI as the source from which UK threshold standards derive and describe their understanding in the context of the modules they teach and support.

This evidence from this research thus suggests that understanding of UK threshold standards in the Egyptian HEI has a top down approach and that Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants are not actively involved in processes which seek to develop shared understandings of UK threshold standards from UK QAA policy documents. Moreover, it reveals that the UK HEI has a critical role to play in seeking to ensure understandings of UK threshold standards are developed across programme teams. This may result in a sense of limited ownership of UK threshold standards reflected by participant twenty-six (group 4) who suggests that “they [the UK HEI] are the ones, they are the experts about the QAA threshold standards. They know what the QAA really wants. They understand the rules and regulations.” This aligns with the literature outlined in chapter two which identifies a requirement for transnational research to not only focus on the processes by which various groups become connected but also to identify those which result in groups being excluded from participation in transnational exchanges (Bayly *et al*, 2006, p.1458). This suggests that if processes do not enable the development of shared understanding of UK threshold standards which embody plural perspectives then understandings of UK threshold standards will be constrained (Ball, 1993; Fimyar, 2014; Sharp, 2017). Critically, the evidence from this research identifies that whilst the validation event held by the UK HEI, to confirm UK threshold standards are accurately reflected in the programme documentation produced by the Egyptian HEI, that processes to inform understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK thresholds standards are required that reach beyond the validation event.

Participants outline that understanding the requirements outlined in the different QAA documents is challenging because the complex concepts which

each embody and because staff are not familiar with associated UK HE requirements and norms (Ball, 2015; Avelar, 2016). Moreover, the evidence reveals that although the UK Quality Code is informed by an outcomes-based approach, which seeks to support development of common understandings of UK threshold standards (QAA, 2013a, p.9), leaders and practitioners in the Egyptian HEI experience the language as open to interpretation. This synthesis with the literature in chapter two that the design strategy which informs UK threshold standards can result in generic definitions that are often experienced as ambiguous “meaning that they are characterised by an openness to different interpretations” (Caspersen *et al*, 2017b, p.8). Moreover, it suggests the understanding of UK threshold standards is informed by the context in which practitioners and leaders work as well as by their previous experience (Sadler, 2014). This suggests if practitioners are to establish shared understanding of the principles which inform UK threshold standards, and their associated achievement and attainment levels, they also need to be supported by socially informed professional practice that enable the development of shared understandings as well as mediation and safeguarding processes (Bolton and Nie, 2010).

The literature in chapter two identifies additional work is required by practitioners and leaders in TNE contexts to make sense of UK policy documents that outline the requirements for UK threshold standards (Ball, 2015; Avelar, 2016). Policy enactment identifies a requirement for two: interpretation and translation. Interpretation is required because policy makers assume, “they write texts that are clear, obvious and coherent that contain no contradictions or problems” (Avelar, 2016). Additionally, translation is required to allow practitioners and leaders to turn policy requirements into a range of their own programme related documents that include; a programme specification; module specifications; assessments and exams; marking criteria; and regulations. However, the evidence suggests that translation and interpretation processes are largely the responsibility of those in institutional and faculty leadership roles.

4.5 The Egyptian HEI must meet both UK and Egyptian threshold requirements

Eighteen participants across groups one, two, three and four outline that in addition to meeting the UK QAA threshold standards, the Egyptian HEI must also meet the requirements the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) which is responsible for quality assurance in the Egyptian HE sector. The position is outlined in the following section by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

4.5.0 Presentation of the evidence

Eighteen participants across groups one, two, three and four outline that in addition to meeting the UK QAA threshold standards, the Egyptian HEI must also meet the requirements of NAQAAE which is responsible for quality assurance in the Egyptian HE sector. This requirement was not referenced by participants in group five from the UK HEI. Participant seven (group 2) articulates that the Egyptian HEI must meet three sets of national requirement and states:

Of course, we refer to the quality standards of the UK that are currently published by QAA, the standards which are published by the Supreme Council of Universities and those of NAQAAE, and we abide by them and we develop them even further.

In relation to the NAQAAE threshold requirements, participant nine (group 2) states:

We have this problem because we have to use the [NAQAAE] NARS and match them to the programme learning outcomes and ILOs of our programme. They want us to combine both the British standards and the Egyptian standards and to satisfy both of them. Everyone needs some different requirement. Sometimes they'll clash. So, we have to reach a way to satisfy them.

Participant eight (group 2) outlines that NAQAAE requirements place an additional burden on practitioners and states:

They [programmes] have to follow the NAQAAE requirements but I think, I am sure, that the UK has much higher threshold standards. We

are going through the [NAQAAE validation] path now and everybody's worried, there's tension, but I keep telling them, no, don't be worried. Because I believe we are at a higher standard, it's just that there are some bureaucratic things that have to be applied.

Participant thirteen (group 3) articulates the requirements of the two national authorities are different and states:

Well, threshold standards are the minimum specifications that any graduate should have. It's what we want the minimum level of performance for our students [to be]. For us, when you use national standards that come from UK, or from any other country, it means that you are improving your standards, you are not just accepting the national standards, you are accepting a more advanced standard.

Participant eleven, (group 2) reveals the NARS place a greater emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, as opposed to the development of transferable skills and the co-creation of knowledge. They state:

The Egyptian threshold is that students memorise the knowledge that the professor wants, so you are not looking at how the theory is applied: it's a totally different thing. And no one is reviewing what is being delivered. I graduated from a national university and completed my PhD in one so I know the national system well.

Participant fifteen (group 3) states:

I guess the Egyptian notion of the threshold is less to do with students' eventual employability and more to do with their understanding and acquisition of knowledge. The Egyptian notion typically relies more on just memorisation: the ability to recall the information as it was, they are fed. To take the information and then process it, and produce something new or original with it, is probably overlooked in Egyptian conception.

Participants acknowledge the role of NAQAAE in establishing a national Egyptian HE quality assurance system but also identify the organisation is in an early stage of development. A common response expressed by ten participants within the eighteen who responded on this theme is a view that the regulatory approach

adopted by NAQAAE is prescriptive and bureaucratic and is an additional regulatory requirement they must meet. Participant two (group 1) states:

I think that NAQAAE is trying to begin an academic infrastructure, through the development of subject benchmark statements [NARS] and institutional review processes. But I think the understanding of quality issues of the people who are actually implementing it in NAQAAE is so limited that it has become a kind of tick box checklist exercise that focuses not on academic quality and understanding of academic standards and enhancement, but rather on the number of chairs and the number of tables and such like.

Participants reveal NAQAAE has an audit approach with a requirement to demonstrate threshold standards have been met via submission of required documentation. Participant three (group 1) states:

Looking at the NAQAAE requirements it appears that they are more paper based and focus on ensuring paper trails and documents are in place. I don't think that NAQAAE has any more insights into quality issues than those provided by the QAA framework. It's just that there are additional NAQAAE requirements that have to be met.

Participant seventeen (group 3) agrees and states:

But then again, let's take for example NAQAAE. I think at the end of the day it goes down to being about paper work, the documents and the files and everything for NAQAAE. And it's mere paperwork. Even though we do things that are even beyond this and at a higher level of quality than they require but sometimes they just want paperwork. They need to see everything on paper, stamped, valid, and signed. So, it is not a way to maintain the quality, and they do not have a close relationship with us and they will not maintain a close relationship later on.

4.5.1 Discussion

The evidence identifies the Egyptian HEI is subject to the regulatory requirements of NAQAAE which is responsible for quality assurance and academic standards in the Egyptian HE sector. Participants outline NAQAAE accreditation

requires all programmes adopt the relevant NAQAAE National Academic Reference Statements (NARS). The NARS are identified as the Egyptian equivalent of the UK QAA subject benchmark statements which embody Egyptian threshold standards for each degree area. However, participants articulate that the NAQAAE NARS are different to the UK threshold standards. This aligns with Gunter's (2015, p.518) assertion that context, and the political processes thus embodied, shape the interpretation of the texts, and associated activity, which inform processes of knowledge production.

The evidence aligns with the literature reviewed in chapter two which outlines that the movement of educational services across borders locates TNE within a new regulatory environment and subject to the regulatory environment of a host state (Amaral *et al*, 2010; Hill, Cheong *et al*, 2013). Moreover, participants identify there are significant differences in the NAQAAE approach to threshold standards and quality assurance than those expressed by the UK QAA. This aligns with the literature that national quality assurance systems are designed for specific contexts and so their requirements may conflict in TNE contexts where multiple different agencies operate (Lim, 2010; Kinser, 2011). The evidence from this research identifies a greater focus is required by UK and Egyptian regulatory bodies on how alignment can be achieved between the two national systems to ensure that UK TNE is able to provide a focus on, "the values that should shape the standards to be achieved, the knowledge to be transmitted and the virtues to be nourished" to enable individuals to develop, "the knowledge and understanding that enables them to live fully human lives" (Pring, 2010, p.83).

Participants identify the regulatory approach adopted by NAQAAE is prescriptive and bureaucratic and places additional regulatory requirements on the Egyptian HEI and staff working in it. This aligns with the literature reviewed in chapter two that increased accountability to national regulatory agencies results in an increased volume of activity required of academic staff (Croxford, 2012). The evidence from this research suggest that the regulatory requirements within the Egyptian HEI requires HE leaders and practitioners to focus on completion of 'first order acts', associated with reporting requirements, which leaves

little time for ‘second order acts’ associated with the development and enhancement of academic practice (Ball, 1999, p.7). The focus on completion of ‘first order acts’ may result in the reduction in the time and energy staff have to make improvements (Ball, 1999, p.7). This is a particularly important consideration where leaders and practitioners are seeking to develop shared understandings, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards as it may detract from a focus on enabling the development of shared understandings between staff located in different HEIs. King (2102, p.592).

4.6 Summary

This chapter presented evidence to show that participants understand that UK threshold standards specify knowledge, skills and abilities. The evidence reveals HE leaders in the Egyptian and UK HEI’s understand that UK threshold standards are complex and require students to demonstrate an agreed minimum level of achievement in relation to knowledge, understanding and skills to pass a module, level and for the conferral of an academic award (QAA, 2014, p.5). In contrast, the evidence reveals that Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants understand UK threshold standards through the context of the modules on which they work. This distinction in how understanding is expressed suggests that there are important considerations how understandings of UK threshold standards are developed through processes of interpretation and translation (Ball, 2015; Avelar, 2016) to ensure shared understandings are arrived at.

Next, the chapter presented evidence to show that participants understand UK threshold standard must remain dynamic and reflect latest developments in knowledge. The evidence reveals limited number of participants recognise that UK thresholds standards should reflect the “current boundaries of an academic discipline” (QAA, 2014n, p.26). The operation of SCU validation requirements serve to constrain the ability of programme teams to develop their programme to reflect latest developments in knowledge which serves to provide a static conception of UK threshold standards. This reveals a requirement for understanding the principles and values that inform UK threshold standards within the Egyptian HEI particularly in relation to their role in enabling students to be actively involved in the co-creation of new knowledge and the development of

transferable and employability skills that provide graduates with new perspectives and opportunities relevant to their context.

The chapter then outlined participants understand UK threshold standard specify a minimum level of achievement and provide a benchmark to protect the integrity of UK awards. Leaders in the Egyptian and UK HEI recognise the requirements to ensure safeguarding of UK threshold standards, as well as the integrity of their academic awards. However, the statutory responsibility the UK HEI has for safeguarding suggests it is important for TNE collaborations to ensure the development of jointly owned processes to enable safeguarding of UK threshold standards and to enable the long-term sustainability of UK TNE. There is a concern that the low threshold attainment level may result in instrumental responses and that students operating at this level are not well prepared to enter employment and which serves to limit opportunities for future employability. The evidence identifies the application of the condonement regulations operated by the Egyptian HEI can enable students in particular circumstances to meet the UK threshold standards. This could result in pressure on staff to ensure all students pass an assessment, module or degree programme. The evidence did not reveal staff felt constrained to respond in this way and the evidence also identifies participants believe this would serve to devalue the degree award, and would represent a significant threat to the safeguarding of UK thresholds standards and integrity of UK awards. This suggests that the development of shared understandings of UK threshold standards is required to enable ethically informed decisions to be made.

Next the chapter outlined that participants understand UK threshold standards derive from UK QAA documents. The evidence shows staff in leadership roles in the Egyptian and UK HEIs understand that UK threshold standards derive from multiple QAA policy documents. Understanding of UK threshold standards in the Egyptian HEI has a top down approach and that Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants are not actively involved in processes which seek to develop shared understandings of UK threshold standards from UK QAA policy documents. The UK HEI has a critical role to play in seeking to ensure understandings of UK threshold stands are developed across programme teams. This

may result in a sense of limited ownership of UK threshold standards. Moreover, processes to inform understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK thresholds standards are required that reach beyond the validation event. Although the UK Quality Code is informed by an outcomes-based approach leaders and practitioners in the Egyptian HEI experience the language as open to interpretation. This suggest they also need to be supported by socially informed professional practice that enable the development of shared understandings as well as mediation and safeguarding processes (Bolton and Nie, 2010).

Finally, the chapter presented evidence to show that participants understand the Egyptian HEI must meet both UK and Egyptian threshold requirements. Different national conceptions of threshold standards operate as well as different approaches to quality assurance. A greater focus is required by UK and Egyptian regulatory bodies on how alignment can be achieved between the two national systems to ensure that the principles and values which inform UK threshold standards are understood in the Egyptian regulatory context. Staff working in the Egyptian HEI experience additional regulatory requirements as a result of their TNE context. The manner in which this is managed is an important consideration where leaders and practitioners are seeking to develop shared understandings, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards as it may detract from a focus on enabling the development of shared understandings between staff located in different HEIs.

Chapter Five: The impact of regulation and national norms on mediation and safeguarding UK threshold standards

5.0 Overview

In the following chapter I answer the second research question by presenting the evidence from the semi-structured interviews. This shows how participants describe and understand the impact different national norms and regulatory requirements have on the understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards. I present the positions of the different participants and groups. Some participants hold positions within their group or may reflect a position across a different group. For each position I present representational quotes that sum up all the quotes from the data that align with that position. Different participants provide different concrete examples when presenting a position, and the representative samples are not intended to represent exact examples from each participant aligning with that position. Rather the concrete examples might be different but the representative quotes present the position.

The evidence is presented through the four themes which result from the literature review in chapter two. First, how different conceptions of learning and teaching impact mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards. Second, the impact of English language entry requirements. Third, the impact of students' previous education background has on their engagement with UK threshold standards. Finally, the role of assessment in enabling mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards. Within each theme, evidence is presented by providing representative quotes as relevant. Finally, the findings are discussed and related to the literature outlined in chapter two. The five groups are:

Group 1: 5 participants in institutional leadership roles in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 2: 6 participants in faculty leadership roles in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 3: 9 Module Leaders in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 4: 6 Teaching Assistants in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 5: 6 participants in leadership roles in the UK HEI.

5.1 Different conceptions of learning and teaching

First, eight participants in groups one, two, and five in leadership positions in the Egyptian and UK HEI's, articulate that the UK HE norms which inform UK threshold standards require the development of learning and teaching which actively involve students in learning and enables them to be involved in co-creation of knowledge. Second, seven participants in groups one, two and five reveal the development of learning and teaching aligned to UK norms is challenging. Third, two participants in group one identify the focus of the Egyptian HEI thus far has been to ensure assessment processes are in place to safeguard UK threshold standards. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

5.1.0 Presentation of the evidence

First, the evidence demonstrates participants recognise that the UK HE norms which inform UK threshold standards require the development of learning and teaching which actively involve students in learning and enables them to be involved in co-creation of knowledge. Eight participants in groups one, two, and five in leadership positions in the Egyptian and UK HEIs, articulate such a conception of learning and teaching. This is reflected by participant one (group 1) who states:

I would say that the principal element would involve the concept of learning, and not merely that of teaching. And that the concept of learning implies first of all, the student as an active participant in the process and that therefore that process is seen from the students' point of view. And, that it is indeed incremental, and that what is on offer is the various elements that make that possible. Part of it will in fact be the nature of the teaching and all the facilities that support that. Part of that is also an attempt to understand the learning needs of students, so I would say it's actually the crucial concept of learning that underpins it. And it's seen not simply as one thing after another, it's seen as something that is incremental but that could also take into account different learning styles and so on.

Participant seven (group 2) articulates academic staff seek to develop different teaching and learning strategies that align with each module and the needs of student cohorts. They state:

So, we try several strategies. We try dealing with different strategies like group work versus individual work, interactive learning and eLearning. We see which strategy fits more with the module, how we can achieve our ILOs in the best way considering the student numbers, considering the language skills and so on. So, we are trying to develop several strategies and we see which works best with which group of students and which modules.

Participant six (group 2) outlines how the Faculty has introduced new teaching approaches and states:

We have introduced student centred learning. I think students are very receptive and there's also the interactive teaching and we have had different staff development sessions on it. We had this presentation and one of our Module Leaders explained how she is using this approach and indicated the students had responded well. So, I think this ensures a higher probability that we will meet the UK thresholds.

Participant thirty-one (group 5) identifies the importance of student engagement in the learning process and states:

Well, there is two aspects; there is the intellectual component the academic rigour, the quality of the teaching staff and their research, not just research of course but their ability to teach and communicate, their feel for the subject, their engagement with the subject and how they involve students in the learning.

Second, whilst participants identify different aspects required to enable the development of learning and teaching aligned to UK norms, seven of the seventeen participants in groups one, two and five reveal this is challenging. Participants refer to the use of didactic teaching approaches which limit student engagement in the learning process and which constrain opportunities for the co-creation of knowledge. Participant one (group 1) states:

I think some of our staff are simply replicating with the students many of the habits of mind that actually British Higher Education is averse to. For example, memorisation, assuming that there is a given and entirely finite body of knowledge, the text book that will be looked at, and I think therefore you have some barriers in the how [UK] threshold standards are developed.

Participant thirty-one (group 5) identifies the heavy teaching load that results from small credit modules delivered by the Egyptian HEI and which constrains opportunity for learning. They state:

My suspicion is that [the Egyptian HEI] teaches quite heavily, that there is a lot of classroom engagement and contact. I mean only on the basis of the number of modules, albeit that some of them are quite small. But one module of, I don't know, I'd say 40 credits with 100 hours of teaching is less onerous than 4, 10 credits with 25 hours each. Simply because there's continuity -- conceptual continuity, and learning new stuff from scratch is more difficult.

Participant fifteen (group 3) outlines there is limited capacity in the Egyptian HEI of staff with experience of different teaching and learning approaches and states:

Well I guess understanding of teaching comes from a few people who are dedicated to doing this. Explaining this but in a very theoretical way. What are we trying to achieve? What do we do? How are we trying to do it? But I think there is a real lack of a unified vision as to what exactly we are teaching the students and trying to develop them for graduation. What we are trying to teach them? How we are trying to teach them? What are our aspirations for them? I think that stuff is not really clear.

Participant sixteen (group 3) outlines that Egyptian HE norms do not provide a focus on teaching and learning and states:

In Egypt if you're going to be promoted to lecturer, the entry level of the academia, you have to have PhD. I know that they have the technical skills and they will be aware what's exactly is written in the book, they will have research abilities, they will have knowledge, but it's not certain that they will be able to deliver this knowledge to the students. Maybe

they have the knowledge but they can't deliver it to the students. So, this will create a problem, create a gap between the teacher and the student actually.

Participant five (group 2) suggest that greater awareness is needed as to the focus of each module and how this informs teaching and learning and states:

We try to get staff to think carefully about the level of module, what do you expect people who are studying in degree-one to understand? What do you expect them in degree year-two to understand? What do you mean critical thinking in different levels and to what extent do you depend outside readings? Because if you keep teaching a textbook it's very negative for the preparation of students for the job market.

Participant six (group 2) identify a need for the development of teaching and learning approaches and states:

Staff have liberty in the method of teaching they use and some staff have good teaching and communication skills and think of new ways to engage the students. However, we need to introduce new ways of teaching and learning to ensure that the classes and the methods are more interesting. We have staff who use very boring methods and if you keep teaching [from] a textbook I think it's very negative for the preparation of students for employment and their ability to do research. We have to get staff to teach and to make the classes more interesting.

Participant twenty-nine (group 5) outlines a need for collaborative work to develop teaching with colleagues in the Egyptian HEI and states:

One area that I think both HEIs can do more work on is a different type of involvement in the teaching and learning to appreciate the student experience and to support their greater engagement.

Participant ten (group 2) outlines that the programme team is seeking to develop teaching and learning approaches and states:

We are also trying to diversify the teaching experience of our students by inviting guest speakers to some of our classes which is actually getting very positive response from the students.

Participant five (group 1) agrees the development of pedagogy which engages students in the learning process is limited and there is instead a focus on the transmission of knowledge. They state:

Well I guess whatever the degree programme, there has to be a link with the real world. I think quite often that's missing, it's not always there. And so often staff just seek to transfer knowledge sometimes using a textbook. So, in addition to just being taught modules, students need to be better involved in the modules and with the ILOs. On the one hand they need the knowledge, but we also need to ensure students have the communication, research and the presentations skills so that they can create and apply their knowledge. This would give them a better chance when they leave university or find work. I think that's sometimes the downside of education here: there isn't enough focus on how staff can do that.

Third, two participants in group one reveal the focus of the Egyptian HEI thus far has been to ensure assessment processes are in place to safeguard UK threshold standards. They identify this has been achieved primarily through the development of assessment processes and suggests this constrains the development of learning and teaching. Participant one (group 1) states:

I would like to try and shift the way of thinking about standards as predominantly thinking about the threshold standards in terms of safeguarding assessment processes, highly important and indispensable though that is. Rather, I would like to think of standards in terms of the worthwhileness for students and for the academic staff who are actually teaching the academic programmes. And I think this would provide a certain momentum and drive the business of standards along with it. I think if we remain at the level of dealing with the threshold standards through regulations and monitoring, and of thinking so much in terms of assessment processes, we will never develop to the position of excellence.

Participant five (group 1) states:

The students and staff spend so much time here on assessment processes, but where is the learning process therefore, you know, they should be given more time to learn.

Critically, this suggests that whilst safeguarding of UK threshold standards is a fundamental requirement, a singular focus on assessment processes serves to constrain opportunities for development of mediation processes to enable academic staff to shift practice from the use of didactic approaches to ones which more fully engage students in the learning and teaching process.

5.1.1 Discussion

The evidence demonstrates participants in leadership roles in the Egyptian HEI understand the norms that inform the UK QAA expectations in relation to learning and teaching (UKSCQA, 2018b, p.2). However, it also identifies learning and teaching results from a complex interaction of different elements: teachers, learners, subject matter, knowledge as well including different teaching and assessment processes that inform pedagogical approaches (Zepke, 2013). Moreover, the evidence demonstrates the relative importance attached to these different elements is informed by context and the previous experience that staff bring to their role (Zepke, 2013, p.97). The evidence reveals staff in the Egyptian HEI find it challenging to develop pedagogy fully aligned to the QAA expectations. Unlike in IBCs, the evidence from this research did not find a concern there should be a close alignment with the UK HEI's curriculum (Altbach, 2007) or teaching learning and assessment practices (Knight, 2013). Moreover, participants articulate Egyptian national norms shape pedagogy with the use of didactic approaches and an emphasis on transmission of knowledge rather than seeking to involve students in the learning process and in co-creation of knowledge. Importantly, two participants from the Egyptian HEI, in leadership roles, identify that the focus on assessment processes as a mean to safeguard UK threshold standards may serve to constrain the development of teaching and learning approaches aligned to UK QAA expectations (UKSCQA, 2018b, p.2).

5.2 The impact of English language entry requirements on student engagement with UK threshold standards

Twenty out of twenty-six participants across groups one to four, articulate a concern that the academic and English Language entry requirements set by the Egyptian HEI reflect the lower end of those required by the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU). Within the twenty responses participants articulate three positions. First, four participants in groups one and two identify the English language entry requirements set by the Egyptian HEI derive from the requirements set by the Supreme Council of Universities as well as from the Egyptian HEI's reliance on student fees as its main source of income. Second, sixteen participants of the twenty participants from groups one to four reveal that students who have weak English skills struggle to engage with the UK validated degree programme and may fail to meet the UK threshold standards. Third, twelve participants in groups one, two and three identify that students on entry to the Egyptian HEI require support to meet the requirements of UK HE and particularly those with weak English language skills. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

5.2.0 Presentation of the evidence

First, four participants in groups one and two identify the English language entry requirements set by the Egyptian HEI derive from the requirements set by the Supreme Council of Universities as well as to the reliance of the Egyptian HEI on student fees as its main source of income. Participant three (group 1) states:

Students coming in the British system of HE often have not had a British schooling and so it is a huge step and that's on top of the language demands as many have been schooled in Arabic. This is a very big issue because without a firm grasp of English it is difficult for students to achieve the demand of the programme. Compared to their counterparts in the UK there is a greater reliance on the IP procedure and claims for extenuating circumstances. But at the moment the level is not raised because the University depends on student fees.

Participant one (group 1) outlines that the Egyptian HEI depends for its income on student fees. They state:

Well the University needs to ensure in a highly competitive environment that it is going to have the size of the student body that it requires because our major resource comes from a student fees and so it hasn't raised the English entry levels and this has limited our ability to develop different approaches. But I think that not just in terms the few British staff we have but also for the senior Egyptian staff there is a real appetite to raise the level of English, and a real appetite to move towards bringing in more students with good IGCSE scores and things of that nature.

Participant six (group 2) reveals that weak English language skills provide a challenge for some students and that English entry requirements are set at the lower end of the Supreme Council of Universities' requirements. They state:

The poorer students have weak English and they find it difficult to understand. If they are not used to studying in English, they face a big challenge and the programme is very demanding. Staff need to make a lot of effort with these students. This [English language entry requirement] is the minimum set by the Supreme Council of Universities. But I think with the new policies, they [the Egyptian HEI] are trying to improve the intake and the English level. This will make a big difference because the English level is a problem.

Participant nine (group 2) states:

The problem is well known, the intake the English level. The University should reduce the number of its intake. And I think this is the best way. And in the short run it may reduce with the number of students and the programme may not be profitable as it should be even though but the students will have a better experience.

Second, sixteen participants of the twenty participants from groups one to four who responded on the theme of English language entry requirements reveal that students who have weak English skills struggle to engage with the UK

validated degree programme and may fail to meet the UK threshold standards. Participant two (group 1) states:

What I do see of the students' work is in the student appeals which are generally written in poor English, and when I meet the students the majority of them find it difficult to articulate their appeal. Maybe I just all the weak students, because we are in the middle of an appeal period, but that indicates to me that the bottom end of our students, our tail, is of low quality and probably find it difficult to meet the academic standards in a UK qualification.

Participant six (group 2) outlines that students with weak English struggle to meet the UK threshold standards and can be forced to withdraw from their UK validated degree programme. They state:

Well, because of our intake level is not as high as is needed. Unfortunately, the weaker students are not the best students. So, it depends on the level of the student intake including their English. The high-level students they meet the thresholds but the weaker ones struggle. And that's where they face a choice either to leave the University or transfer from the British validated degree to the Egyptian one. If they are not up to the standard, they cannot continue.

Participant nineteen (group 3) articulates that students with low English levels are often unable to move beyond a threshold attainment level. They state:

But a student who passes with the threshold achievement level is at quite a low level and that would probably be students who have weak English skills.

Participant twenty-five (group 4) confirms that students with weak English skills struggle to meet the UK threshold standards. They state:

I think students have difficulties in meeting the threshold standards if they have weak English and so there is a language barrier. Many students didn't have the opportunity to study English for instance, before joining an English based programme. So, the language barrier is one of the main obstacles.

Participant fifteen (group 3) reveals that students with weak English skills struggle at the start of their degree programme and states:

At least for me in my modules I would say that the barriers are things that students have picked up in their education prior to getting here. I would say some of the students have poor English and I had this a lot in my Preparatory Year level module. They can't really show up here and learn English and express themselves at a university level and meet the threshold. So, this is a potential limitation, also some of them come from a background where they are accustomed to just memorising things.

Finally, participant twenty-three (group 4) outlines that setting higher entry requirements would positively impact students' performance and states:

I think the main problem is the intake level and the entry qualifications of the students. If it was possible to raise the minimum entry scores, then it would have a big impact on performance and students' achievement levels.

Third, twelve participants in groups one, two and three identify that students on entry to the Egyptian HEI require support to meet the requirements of UK HE and particularly those with weak English language skills. Participants outline all students complete an initial year, the Preparatory Year, which seeks to support the transition from school to study on a UK validated degree programme. Participant 1 (group 1) states:

The first thing is obviously induction and preparing quite consciously a means of offering the students a year, in the Preparatory Year, that at least does some of the things that sixth form might do in Britain, and which is quite consciously developed in order to allow students to find a way of learning and managing time, developing study skills and all those sorts of thing, and finding their way into their subject in the first-degree year.

Participant twelve (group 3) agrees that the Preparatory Year seeks to prepare students for study on a UK validated degree programme and states:

I think that especially in the Preparatory Year we focus on developing students. As I said we have students coming from different backgrounds, IGCSE, the American Diploma, Thanaweya Amma. So, we try to build a strong base for all these students so as to have a shared based. So, it's not because you come from IGCSE, you're better than the other students but we're helping students to develop something common in the Preparatory Year.

Participant six (group 2) also outlines that seeking to support students who are weak on entry places an additional burden on staff and impacts interaction in the classroom. They state:

Because when you have a weak intake it does affect the level of the advanced students because you're taking time in order to address the weaker students. Of course, we are now taking a lot of staff development on how to have a class which offers differentiation but still it affects the students' learning. I mean the quality of the discussion between the students is different, the discussion between the strong students and the weak students is different.

Participant eight (group 2) outlines how staff seek to support students with weak English language skills. They state:

Basically, English language is the challenge for the weaker students and when the University accepts lower grades when it comes to English, we have a harder time and the students too. We try to advise them on a personal level. I remember meeting a student three years ago, he came from a middle-class family, and he said he felt that his language level was hindering him. He's working hard studying, he's reviewing the lectures, he's doing extra readings but he cannot express himself. He said he was afraid that he was wasting all the money his dad, who was working in Saudi Arabia, was paying for his tuition. And I helped him on a personal level, and now he has developed. I helped him, I directed him to the English Department, I directed him to online tutoring to help him on his English. And he now he's a good student, not maybe the top, but he's a good student.

5.2.1 Discussion

The evidence aligns with the research findings presented in chapter two that demonstrates TNE provision located in a private HEI can face a challenge to recruit appropriately qualified students to meet entry standards required for study on a UK validated degree (Lane and Kinser, 2011). The findings also synthesise with the research that students entering TNE provision often have lower levels in English required for learning on UK validated degrees which may restrict their capacity to engage with the curriculum, especially in the early degree years (Altbach, 2010).

The evidence from this research suggests there is an expectation that as a private HEI, students are recruited to degree programmes and that they will pass their modules and be awarded a qualification. The evidence aligns with the literature outlined in chapter two that private HEIs which are dependent on student fees to meet costs, as well as provide a return to shareholders on their investment (Barsoum, 2017, p.198) result in a focus on recruiting and retaining students and ensuring their graduation with a qualification. This results in UK threshold standards, and the associated UK degree award, being understood as a credential rather than as capital that seeks to enable the development of the individual and their capacity to shape the professions and societies in which they live (Herrera, 2008, p.71). However, in doing so, the capacity to support students to engage with UK threshold standards, to enable them to develop critical, analytical and transferable skills, and the capacity to develop as critical and as autonomous participatory human beings, is constrained through a focus on mediation of the threshold standards.

5.3 The impact of students' previous educational background on engagement with UK threshold standards

Eleven participants in groups one, three and four outline students' ability to engage with the UK validated degree programme is partly determined by students' previous educational background. Within the eleven responses participants articulate two positions. First, eleven participants in groups one, three and four identify students are recruited from three main educational backgrounds:

the UK IGCSE system: the American Diploma system and the national Thanaweya Amma system. Participants identify each system embodies a different approach to learning and teaching and equips students with different skills sets. Second, nine of the eleven participants in groups one, three and four who responded on this them outline that for some students the primary focus is on the achievement of grades rather than engaging with learning and the development of knowledge and skills that underpin the UK threshold standards. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

5.3.0 Presentation of the evidence

First, eleven participants in groups one, three and four identify students are recruited from three main educational backgrounds. Participant eighteen (group 3) states:

We have three types of students. Students who come from the American system, the national system and the IGCSE system. The best equipped are the IGCSE students, secondly the Thanaweya Amma, and lastly those from the American system who are generally the weakest academically.

Participant sixteen (group 3) agrees that students recruited from the IGCSE system tend to perform better because they are more used to the learning which they experience when they enter the UK validated degree programmes. They state:

Students from the IGCSE system for example are accustomed to reading, completing assignments and studying more independently. They are accustomed to having two exams on the same day for example. Also, they are more accustomed to how the British curriculum usually assesses them and they are accustomed to handling a lot of topics and a lot of material at the same time. The Thanaweya Amma students are more used to memorisation and initially are not prepared to give opinions for example. The American Diploma students usually have very good English but they don't have well developed writing skills

Participant one (group 1) identifies that students recruited from the Thanaweya Amma system can find it difficult to adapt to the requirements of study on a UK validated degree and states:

I think also, some of the students come from the Arabic schools and don't have the experience that they might gain had they come from the American Diploma or the IGCSE having any kind of foretaste of British Higher Education, if you had done A levels. And so, for them to adapt to a UK system is quite complicated.

Participant twenty-two (group 4) concurs and states:

That's what I've been trying to tell you. That from my own experience, the Thanaweya Amma way of teaching does not really reinforce these notions. It is always about memorisation and recitation and so students from that background can struggle when they join the University because the Thanaweya Amma system focuses on conformity and how the textbook answers the questions asked.

Second, nine of the eleven participants in groups one, three and four who responded on this theme outline that for some students the primary focus is on the achievement of grades rather than engaging with learning and the development of knowledge and skills that underpin the UK threshold standards. Participant one (group 1) states:

There is a tendency for some students to focus on achieving grades rather than on their learning. For some, which is a kind of major skill, it's an act of memory, and not the taking of what has been learnt and applying it in different situations. It's not seen as a dynamic process that they are involved in.

Participant twenty-two (group 4) agrees that for some students achievement of an exam grade is more important than their learning and development. They state:

At the end of the day many students are more concerned with their grades rather than how well they are performing or how much they are developing because at the end it's the parents who see the grades.

Participant twelve (group 3) concurs and states:

So maybe because some students focus on memorising at the end of the day just memorise it for the exam and that's it because they're just interested in the final grade.

Participant twenty-six (group 4) identifies the difficulties involved in supporting students to develop new learning approaches and states:

From a student's perspective, it's very difficult to understand the UK system. They only are concerned with the grades, because at the end of the day they want to please their parents. So, that's a challenge. It's very difficult to make them understand that we want you to learn something that is not just taken from a textbook. We want you to learn something that is going to help you out later on, not just in the job market, but in your life. It's very difficult.

Participant twenty-one (group 4) outlines that there is a focus on achievement of grades within the national education system and states:

The barrier I think is that the culture itself is very focused on grades. So, the students are not so focused on what they learn, they are more focused on a need to do well in the exam and to get a particular grade.

Two participants in group three both identify that social pressures also inform the focus on achievement of grades. Participant fourteen (group 3) states:

Well, I think for certain students the ambition, the total ambition, is to get a pass. So, I think there can be a bit of an emphasis on doing the minimum amount of work to get a pass and then the degree is all that matters, not the classification of grade. And for some of the students, it's a social thing whereby they have to achieve any degree for them to keep their particular social standing.

Participant fifteen (group 3) further outlines that there is not a good understanding amongst Egyptian employers of the UK degree system and what a UK validated degree represents. They state:

It is just a piece of paper for some students. I do think, because in my experience not a great deal of employers within Egypt will necessarily

ask too much about your grade point average or what you did, but rather the name of the university matters. And also, this is a whole different study obviously, but where are the students getting jobs? Often, it's in family businesses and so the actual degree is not so important in terms of work.

5.3.1 Discussion

In the research context, Egyptian students are recruited from three different educational backgrounds; the national Thanaweya Amma system; the UK IGCSE system; and the American Diploma system. The evidence identified, academic staff find it challenging to engage students from different educational backgrounds who have experienced different educational approaches in their previous schooling (Edwards, 2007; Yang, 2008). The findings demonstrate students recruited with the national Thanaweya Amma qualification often have weak critical thinking skills and are used to didactic forms of teaching (Brewer *et al*, 2007). The findings synthesise with the literature outlined in chapter two that identifies students recruited with lower levels in English than is required for learning on UK validated degrees have a restricted capacity to engage with the curriculum, especially in the early degree years (Altbach, 2010). This can create significant challenges for academic staff (Edwards, 2007; Yang, 2008). However, despite the significant challenges identified, which suggest students may initially struggle with the requirements of UK threshold standards, there is no evidence from this research to show how academic staff are supported to develop appropriate learning and teaching strategies to address these learning needs. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Egyptian HEI works closely with schools to ensure students and parents are aware of the demands involved in study on a UK validated degree programme.

5.4 The role of assessment in enabling mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards

All thirty-two participants across groups one to five, reference that achievement of UK threshold standards is demonstrated through the completion of assessments, linked to the ILOs, outlined in the assessment strategy of each

module. Within the thirty-two responses participants articulate three positions. First, twenty-one participants in groups two, three and four who hold faculty leadership roles, or who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants outline their understanding of assessment practices that is informed by measurement of student achievement against ILOs. Second, all five participants in group one, who hold leadership roles in the Egyptian HEI articulate concerns with how the role of assessment is currently conceived. Third, six participants in group five, in leadership roles in the UK HEI, focus on the design and current conception of assessment in the Egyptian HEI particularly in relation to the current volume of assessment. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

5.4.0 Presentation of the evidence

First, twenty-one participants in groups two, three and four who hold faculty leadership roles, or who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants outline their understanding of assessment practices that is informed by measurement of student achievement against ILOs. Those in faculty leadership roles in group two, and Module Leaders in group three, provide a focus on the role of programme and module ILOs to inform design of assessments and exams that are used to measure student achievement. In contrast Teaching Assistants in group four provide responses that focus on how they provide administrative support for assessments processes through completion of a Module File. Participant 8 (group 2) states:

When I say academic standards, I would think of rules and regulations. I would look at, I would think of a stable system regardless of who is applying that system with criteria for everything, for marking, for teaching, for design of assessments. And that's very much what we're trying to do here, in order to keep it running at a certain level.

Participant nine (group 2) outlines that assessments and exams measure students' achievement of the ILOs and states:

I think the main way to know if the threshold standards have been met is through our assessments: the course work and the exams. These are

the two things that we use to measure the students' achievement. Students must achieve a minimum to pass the module and then move to another level.

Participant 7 (group 2) outlines that assessments are used to measure and determine if students are eligible to graduate. They state:

I mean the threshold standard states the minimum that should be achieved, and consequently should be measured through assessments, whereby I can conclude that achieving this means that the student is ready to graduate, to be out of the system and to be awarded a degree.

Participant twelve (group 3) concurs that the module ILOs form a contract with the students and that these must be assessed by the end of the module. They state:

And I think that what governs the relationship between us and the students, are the modules specifications. We have the module specifications and then we try to abide by these. There are the ILOs that you need to achieve during the semester, the module ILOs and the programme learning outcomes as well. So, this is our starting point where we try to meet the ILOs for the modules and the learning outcomes for the programme: and the module specification is our contract that we have with the student. And then we build everything else on including the course and the module outlines and the assessments and exams. So, we ensure by the end of the semester that what we promised the students to deliver has been delivered at the end of the semester and at the end of the programme

The role played by learning outcomes is reflected by participant six (group 2) who states:

Academic standards reflect what the student must achieve in terms of the learning outcomes in a programme and in its modules that are measured through the assessments and exams of the module.

This is also reflected by participant ten (group 3) who states:

One of the channels we make sure achievement is measured is through assessments and double marking. So, we are making sure that whatever

is delivered to the students, and whatever achievement the students deserve, is really what they should get.

Participants outline that the level and ILOs of the module related to the degree year informs how assessments are designed. Participant eleven (group 2) states:

It [the assessment strategy] depends on the level and the ILOs. For example, what you expect from first year is different from a second year or third year: and this is how we design everything. So, the assessment requirements are different. We design the programme, modules and assessments based on this. If it is an introductory module in finance, for example, what I need students to do is solve a basic equation; but the second module at a higher level is not just about solving the equation but also analysing it. The assessments must reflect this development in requirements.

This is further reflected by participant twelve (group 3) who states:

For example, the standards are met through the ILOs and the way the assessments are set and designed. And we have different assessments for the different the years. For example, the focus in the Preparatory Year is more on the exam and then it moves more to coursework. Even the way we design the exam questions: we use different verbs so in the first year we ask students to explain, however in the second year and final year we ask students to debate, to critically demonstrate, to discuss, to analyse and evaluate etc.

Participant seven (group 2) concurs there has been a focus on the design of exam papers and underlines it has taken time for staff in the Egyptian HEI to develop understanding of exam design. They state:

The design of the exam questions itself can be a problem. Some of the questions used to be very detailed, and the important thing is that you are assessing what the student knows not trying to identify what they don't know. So, the question therefore needs to be broad enough to let the student show the breadth of their learning, but also to stretch so that they can demonstrate the depth of their knowledge and skills. However, in the beginning we used to have many more questions in the exam or

the assessment. Maybe we would have ten very detailed questions; each question was very detailed. Now, people have learned to write assessment questions that are broader and which allow the student to demonstrate many aspects. So, understanding the design of exam questions has developed over time.

Participants in group four who work as Teaching Assistants outline their role to support assessment processes on the modules that they support. Participant twenty-three (group 4) states:

We keep copies of everything in the Module File including the assessments, marking criteria, and marked assessments. Everything that has gone into the assessment. A lot of trees have been killed for that process but this is again part of supporting our work that we are meeting the standards.

Participant twenty-five (group 4) states:

All Teaching Assistants in our Department have to do the Module File by getting to know what should be included in a review file including assessment and evidence of double marking for instance.

Second, all five participants in group one, who hold leadership roles in the Egyptian HEI articulate concerns with how the role of assessment is currently conceived. Participant five (group 1) confirms the importance of module ILOs in assessment design but outlines there is variable understanding of them and how they inform assessment design. They state:

Well they [UK threshold standards] are set out in the programme and module specifications. The ILOs have to be satisfied and there needs to be assessments and exams as well as assessment criteria to demonstrate this. There is variable understanding of this. The more experienced staff have a good understanding of this but this depends on their exposure to the UK system at [the UK HEI] and work with colleagues with UK experience.

Participant one (group 1) articulates how assessment should support the development of students' learning through the UK validated degree programme and states:

I think that if one goes year by year in each of the programmes to what the expectation of each year is, I would expect fairly full evidence that the student is incrementally progressing in his or her learning capacities. And, I would certainly believe that there would be an increasing element of independent learning and that would be accompanied by more, and one could define this, more creativity and more openness to one of the things that does actually come right at the end of the course, an awareness of the uncertainty of knowledge and the openness of whatever the intellectual field that the student had gone into. And in terms of the work situation, that the student is ultimately prepared to be independent and do whatever his or her job is going to be.

Participant four (group 1) states:

So, the assessment strategy that is used in the UK system is seen as being more demanding than that used in the Egyptian system in terms it requiring students to give analysis and more in-depth responses rather than just for example MCQs. Also, the UK system is for example very keen on practical work.

Participant two (group 1) outlines that there is limited understanding how the different elements of the programme inform the design of assessment and states:

So, the TNE partner really just understands most of the time, that there is a programme specification, there is an assessment strategy, I have to mark, I have to deliver these assessments to that programme specification, and I have to mark them like this, and follow these other regulations. I don't think there is actually much understanding at all of how everything fits together.

Participant five (group 1) concurs that there is a focus on assessment of learning outcomes and states:

Well one of the issues here is that staff always say that if you don't keep assessing the students that they won't study. They won't revise and they

won't work. So, they try to have lots of assessment which takes a lot of time, a lot of effort, including for the teachers to mark it. And, I don't see the point of it to be honest with you.

Participant three (group 1) identifies the design of assessment for learning is not well understood within the Egyptian HEI. This reveals an emphasis on the use of final exams and small pieces of assessed work. They state:

We have got assessment methods that don't necessarily challenge the students. It's very exam heavy in one way, but also, we seem to have a huge amount of very small bits of coursework assessment in 10 credits modules which probably doesn't encourage depth of understanding. It's more of a scatter gun approach which looks at breadth and not depth of learning.

However, participant two (group 1), whilst agreeing programme design can result in an excessive volume of assessments also identifies that this is an area which the Egyptian HEI has tried to address through time. They state:

One of the drivers over the past ten years has been to try to reduce the number of ILOs in module specifications, as well as assessments, because our programmes are usually designed with lots of 10 credit modules that have far too many ILOs and too much assessment. This means that students spend too much time being assessed: where is the learning process therefore? You know, they should be given more time to learn. I think we need to keep revisiting the modules to ensure that they are appropriately designed because with new members of staff joining teams they bring their experience of the national universities where they are used to having lots of ILOs and assessment.

Third, six participants in group five, in leadership roles in the UK HEI, focus on the design and current conception of assessment in the Egyptian HEI particularly in relation to the current volume of assessment. Participant twenty-seven (group 5), a senior post holder in the UK HEI, outlines appropriate design of assessment is complex and that there is variable understanding of this in the UK HE sector. This participant states:

I think exams do not adequately assess the learning outcomes that we write. And that's something that I want to work on, but I would say that's probably true across the sector [UK HE sector]: you see examples of good practice but they are pockets of good practice. So, I think work to have assessment strategies that genuinely assess the learning outcomes that are set is crucial. And also writing good learning outcomes is really hard and there's lot of variability in how well they're articulated and again, I don't think as a sector [UK HE sector] we've done the work to prepare staff to really think about how to articulate good learning outcomes. So, to me that would be a standard risk.

Participant twenty-nine (group 5) from the UK HEI outlines that staff in the Egyptian HEI have sometimes found it challenging to write assessments and exams which provide discrimination between levels. They state:

Yes, so we have access to the whole of the assessment sample for each module, and we require a sample so we can see the discrimination between levels. So has the assessment brief, be it a coursework or exam, provided clear discrimination between pass and fail, but also the discrimination between the higher ability students, and that is always a challenge I think in education anywhere. Making sure the assessment is designed in such a way that you can see that. So, when we come to moderate and look at exam boards, we want to see examples of the fails and then those, you know which we still refer to as a classification boundary.

Participant twenty-five (group 5) identifies staff in the Egyptian HEI can find the design of assessment challenging, but also suggests the degree programmes designed by the Egyptian HEI have an excessive volume of assessment and states:

So, the design of assessments can be difficult. If there are ILOs, then they all have to be assessed. Of course, if it's a learning outcome it needs to be assessed. But you can design assessments that capture more learning outcomes and so you actually give students more space and time - all of which provide greater depth to their learning. It also provides more opportunity to deliver an improved piece of work through their learning as opposed to being overwhelmed by the volume of assessment. So, I

think it's generally viewed the students are over assessed and particularly because it's largely 10 credit modules.

Participant twenty-eight (group 5) also outlines that the programme structure of the validated degree programmes offered by the Egyptian HEI are largely comprised of ten credit modules which results in a heavy assessment loading. They state:

Because the 10 credit modules that [the Egyptian HEI] has have assessment strategies which have much more assessment being delivered. So, in order to show you are meeting threshold standards you need to demonstrate the learning outcomes, and therefore your learning outcome are probably much more specific than when you have a 20-credit module where you can be wider in scope and students have got more space for learning. I'm not saying one or other is wrong but that's where your interpretation starts to appreciate each other and the differences that exist.

Participant twenty-nine (group 5) concurs that the degree programmes offered by the Egyptian HEI have more assessment than is the UK norm. They state:

I would say this is my personal view, but also, I think from many of the academics here and the External Examiners that I think [the Egyptian HEI] over assess but I know that that is an HE norm in Egypt.

Participant thirty (group 5) agrees with this view and states:

I have noticed they [the Egyptian HEI] are over-assessing students. I know its cultural, but for us it's quite a lot. However, what we do here [the UK HEI] is to keep addressing this with the programme teams we work with

5.4.1 Discussion

The findings align with the literature outlined in chapter two which outlines that different conceptions on the role of assessment exists in TNE contexts and the relative importance attached to each element is likely vary according to place and to change through time (Zepke, 2013, p.97). The findings found the design of degree programmes can result in a high volume of assessment which

constrains opportunity for the development of assessment practices which engages students in the learning process and which supports their learning (Rust *et al*, 2005). Critically, the findings from this research demonstrate that a focus on the development of assessment as measurement results in practitioners and leaders seeking to ensure specification of learning outcomes (Sadler, 2014) and alignment of learning outcomes to assessment (Knight, 2002b; Sadler, 2014). This serves to limit the development of assessment which seeks to support student engagement in the learning process to enable their critical engagement with UK threshold standards (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004/5).

The evidence from this research shows there is currently a lack of understanding within the Egyptian HEI on the role played by assessment in the mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards and its role to support student learning. Assessment for learning provides a focus on the design of assessment process including: design of assessment to promote student engagement (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004/5; Carless, 2007) and provision of timely and effective feedback to inform learning (Taras, 2001; Gibbs and Simpson, 2004/5; Carless, 2007). This references the observation made by participant fifteen (group 3) who states:

But I think there is a real lack of a unified vision as to what exactly we are teaching the students and trying to develop them for graduation. What we are trying to teach them? How we are trying to teach them? What are our aspirations for them? I think that stuff is not really clear.

5.5 Summary

First, evidence was presented that demonstrates students entering the Egyptian HEI have lower English levels than is required for learning on UK validated degrees which restrict their capacity to engage with the curriculum, especially in the early degree years. The evidence from this research suggests there is an expectation that as a private HEI, students are recruited to degree programmes and that they will pass their modules and be awarded a qualification. This results in UK threshold standards, and the associated UK degree award, being understood as a credential. In doing so, the capacity to support students to

engage with UK threshold standards, to enable them to develop knowledge, critical, analytical and transferable skills, and the capacity to develop as critical and as autonomous participatory human beings, is constrained through a focus on mediation of the threshold standards.

Next, the evidence identified, academic staff find it challenging to engage students from different educational backgrounds who have experienced different educational approaches in their previous schooling. The diverse learning backgrounds that student enter the Egyptian HEI can create significant challenges for academic staff. However, despite the significant challenges identified, which suggest students may initially struggle with the requirements of UK threshold standards, there is no evidence from this research to show how academic staff are supported to develop appropriate learning and teaching strategies to address these learning needs.

Finally, the findings found the design of degree programmes can result in a high volume of assessment which constrains opportunity for the development of assessment practices which engages students in the learning process and which supports their learning. Critically, the findings from this research demonstrate that there is a focus on the development of assessment as measurement. The evidence from this research shows there is currently a lack of understanding within the Egyptian HEI on the role played by assessment in the mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards and its role to support student learning. This include through the design of assessment to enable student engagement in learning and provision of timely and effective feedback to inform their development. With a significant focus on ensuring student outcomes, it is difficult for practitioners to enable students to engage with a learning journey that develops knowledge, transferable skills and employability skills so as to equip graduates for future employment, thus enabling them to support the development of the professions, society and to live a good life.

Chapter Six: Resources to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding

6.0 Overview

In the following chapter I answer the third and fourth research questions by presenting the evidence from the semi-structured interviews. In the first part of the chapter I answer the third research question which seeks to identify the resources participants identify as important to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards evidence is presented through the two themes. The final part of the chapter answers research question four which seeks to identify the additional resources participants identify are required to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards. I present the positions of the different participants and groups. Some participants hold positions within their group or may reflect a position across a different group. For each position I present representational quotes that sum up all the quotes from the data that align with that position. Different participants provide different concrete examples when presenting a position, and the representative samples are not intended to represent exact examples from each participant aligning with that position. Rather the concrete examples might be different but the representative quotes present the position.

The evidence is presented through four themes. First, the role of internal and external review and monitoring. Second, post holder roles in internal and external review. Third, the impact of staff development. Finally, alternative resources identified by participants. Within each theme, evidence is presented by providing representative quotes as relevant. Finally, the findings are discussed and related to the literature outlined in chapter two. The five groups are:

Group 1: 5 participants in institutional leadership roles in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 2: 6 participants in faculty leadership roles in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 3: 9 Module Leaders in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 4: 6 Teaching Assistants in the Egyptian HEI.

Group 5: 6 participants in leadership roles in the UK HEI.

6.1 Internal and external review and monitoring processes

First, ten participants in groups one, two and five identify that the Link Tutor appointed by the UK HEI are an important resource to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding processes which inform UK threshold standards. Second, four participants in group five outline the Link Tutor has an important function for the UK HEI to monitor threshold standards and support programme development in the Egyptian HEI. Third, seven participants in groups three and four who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants also identify that Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants only have interaction with the UK HEI's Link Tutor via written feedback on draft assessments. Fourth, in addition to review of assessments by the UK HEI's Link Tutor, eleven participants in groups one, two and five identify that role of the External Examiner is an important resource to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards and has resulted in improvements. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

6.1.0 Presentation of the evidence

First, ten participants in groups one and two outline that Link Tutors appointed by the UK HEI support and monitor programme development through biannual visits to the Egyptian HEI. Participant one (group 1) states:

The Link Tutors visit us and do not take such a heavy monitoring role as [the first UK validating HEI] but play a greater development role.

Participant ten (group 2) states:

They [the UK HEI] are engaged with us at different stages in the academic year. The Link Tutor usually comes on regular visits to the University. They review the way we assess our students. They also have an External Examiner. So, I think at the end of the day we have this continuous feedback and continuous engagement with these people.

Participants identify that Link Tutors need to ensure that they are engaged with the programme they are responsible for and carry out effective monitoring. Participant three (group 1) states:

Also, they must be seen to be supportive and should also dig down into the detail and ask questions about the assessment processes because it is important that there is also a monitoring role because it can't just be about development at this stage. This is needed to ensure quality and standards particularly in relation to assessment including looking at marking processes, double marking and the quality processes.

Participants acknowledge interactions with Link Tutors during their visit to the Egyptian HEI supports the development of systems including review of assessments, marking and moderation processes. Participant eleven (group 2) states:

And there is always our UK partner that has an input and a vision about the system. This means that things improve because every time we have moderation meetings, every time we have a Link Tutor visit, and other interactions, there are very fruitful discussions.

Second, four participants in group five outline the Link Tutor plays an important function for the UK HEI to monitor threshold standards and support programme development in the Egyptian HEI. Participant twenty-seven (group 5) states:

And I think the role of the Link Tutor goes into the gap between how things are and how I would like them to be. I think we did very well in developing the role of Link Tutor. So, I think we went from something where I think it was high risk, and that we didn't have structures and resources in place, to an infrastructure that I think if something were going to be a problem, I believe it would get to me.

Participant twenty-nine (group 5) states:

I think that the key aspect of the collaboration now is the role of the Link Tutors. What's important is this academic link between the two HEIs. So, I've proposed changes to the role, which emphasise the aspects of the standards, but also that it should be developmental for both HEIs and for the person in the role. And that we need to be mindful that, that role evolves over time. I think the institutional relationship is now becoming much stronger and people now understand the importance of this collaboration across the University.

Participant thirty (group 5) states:

Well, I have not been involved in collaboration before as a Link Tutor, this was my first time. And, I've realised how big this project is. So, it is important that we ensure we provide the support to the programme team at [the Egyptian HEI].

Third, seven participants in groups three and four who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants identify that Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants only have interaction with the UK HEI's Link Tutor via written feedback on draft assessments. Participant thirteen (group 3) outlines that Link Tutors generally interact with members of the faculty and programme management teams and states:

The people who meet the Link Tutor are specific members of the team including the Dean, Head of Department, Programme Director, the Heads of Specialisations.

Participant twelve (group 3) confirms Module Leaders have limited interaction with Link Tutors and states:

Well let's look at it this way, the only interaction we have with the community in UK is through the External Examiner and Link Tutor. This is through their reports as only sometimes do the Module Leaders get to see them. So, really, there is limited interaction between us and them.

Participant fifteen (group 3) concurs and states:

I received written comments on my coursework briefs and exams from the External Examiner and then later we had our Link Tutor visit and report. I saw those things, but a lot of it just seemed kind of distant and things that would be taken care of by the time they got there without me really being involved.

Participant eighteen (group 3) outlines that interaction with the Link Tutor is via written feedback on draft assessments rather than face to face meeting during visits to the Egyptian HEI. They state:

We design our exams and assessments by the due date and we send them both to the External Examiner and Link Tutor who look at them and send

them back to us with comments. If they are not at the right level, they will tell us but I don't meet them.

Participant twenty-five (group 4) agrees there is limited interaction between the Link Tutor and with Teaching Assistants. They state:

The Link Tutor visits but I don't actually interact with them because it's not part of my job.

Fourth, in addition to review of assessments by the UK HEI's Link Tutor, eleven participants in groups one, two and five identify that role of the External Examiner is an important resource to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards and has resulted in improvements. Participant one (group 1) states:

In other words, I don't believe dealing with standards is an abstraction or as a concept, is the way to do it. I believe it's a matter of the practice in terms of Exam Boards, setting of assessments and things of that nature. If one is looking at that I think part of it will be responses to what the validating universities expect to see. In other words, appropriate coursework briefs and exam papers that the External Examiners need to see. Making sure that the Programme Boards and the moderation is appropriate. That would be part of what drives how people understand the standards.

Participant six (group 2) outlines how programme teams prepare for the visit of the External Examiner and states:

There is lot in preparing the departments for the External Examiner visits. So, through this annual cycle, it's about picking up and making sure we address the issues.

Participant three (group 1) outlines that the External Examiner acts as an important independent review and states:

Well, both the Link Tutor and the External Examiner are critical as they are the independent eye. The Link Tutors are involved in working with colleagues in the departments on how to review the programme and modules, how to make improvements and how to share good practice.

While the External Examiner is about ensuring academic standards are met.

Participant five (group 1) concurs and states:

So, the External Examiner has opportunities to pick up issues and to discuss it and address it with us. And also, there is another step for the External Examiners, it's not only that they attend the Exam Boards but they also review the exams and reviewing the programme's modules. They can go and check the answer booklets and see whether it has been double marked or not and they can also review the course work. So, this is an important process.

Participant nine (group 2) outlines that feedback from the External Examiner has informed development of assessment practices and states:

Oh, it has been helpful [External Examiner Reports]. Now, we get much better comments and we have learnt from them. When we get comments, we do staff development sessions based on these in order not to repeat them again and in order to share good practice. So, I think that's helpful. And I think the feedback we are getting is less critical, and I think we learned a lot from previous mistakes, and in general there is improvement.

Participants from the UK HEI also outline External Examiners are a key resource to ensure that UK threshold standards are safeguarded. Participant twenty-seven (group 5) states:

The work the External Examiners does explicitly includes threshold standards in the report. If there's a perceived problem with threshold standards, it will be addressed by the course team. Also, In the course design, if the validating panel [which the External sits] doesn't think that the programme will enable students to meet threshold standards, that would be challenged. So that it would be fundamental to the process although it might not be articulated in exactly that way. And I would expect course teams to refer to their subject benchmark statement and explaining how they articulate with that.

Participant twenty-eight (group 5) confirms this and states:

We would look at it [the degree programme] annually, we do annual monitoring and that's a matrix we gather, how well are the students doing, are they progressing, those kinds of things. Combined with what people say qualitatively and in particular using External Examiners. So, we have people that come from other universities and we ask them explicitly do the standards of this programme meet national standards in your opinion.

6.1.1 Discussion

Evidence from this research indicates the Link Tutor and External role provided by the UK HEI to support the TNE collaboration has had a positive impact in the development of assessment and review processes that seek to safeguard UK threshold standards. The evidence demonstrates review of assessment by Link Tutors and External Examiners appointed by the UK HEI serve to identify areas requiring further development by staff in the Egyptian HEI. The evidence confirms that the quality and nature of the interactions between staff in the two HEIs is critical to their sustainability (Gribble and Ziguras 2003; Chapman and Pyvis 2013; Smith 2014; Sidhu, 2015). The evidence aligns with the literature which outlines the importance of developing effective relationships informed by dialogue in the operation of TNE and investment in the development of social capital to enable this (Bolton and Nie, 2010).

The evidence shows the Link Tutor and External Examiner role has informed the development of academic practice in relation to design of assessment and associated processes. This aligns with research that demonstrates TNE collaborations are at risk if validating HEIs do not ensure adequate levels of staffing, with an appropriate skill set, to support the development of TNE collaborative provision (Gribble and Zigura 2003; Hoare, 2013). It suggests the long-term sustainability of TNE collaborative provision requires significant investment in staffing by each HEI involved in a collaborative venture.

However, the evidence from this research reveals that interaction between the Link Tutor and staff in the Egyptian HEI is largely at the faculty and programme management level with minimal interaction with staff at the Module

Leader and Teaching Assistant level. Moreover, that the interaction is largely focused on safeguarding UK threshold standards via review of assessment processes rather than providing opportunities for joint curriculum development projects (British Council 2014; Sidhu, 2015). This suggests the current focus of the Link Tutor role constrains their ability to support capacity building in the Egyptian HEI in relation to the development of teaching, learning and assessment practices.

6.2 Post holder roles in internal and external review processes

First, eighteen participants across groups one, two and three identify assessments are reviewed both internally and by the UK validating HEI before they are used with students. Second, ten participants in groups one, two and three identify staff with previous experience from the Egyptian and North American HE systems are not used to external review processes and can resent them. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants. Third, ten participants from groups one, two and five identify the development of post holder roles has been an important strategy to enable review processes and to ensure future sustainability. Finally, four participants from groups one and two identify that staff in the Egyptian are sensitive to how they are positioned in relation to the UK validating HEI and refer to their experience of the first UK validating HEI. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

6.2.0 Presentation of the evidence

First, eighteen participants across groups one, two and three identify assessments are reviewed both internally and by the UK validating HEI before they are used with students. Processes require submission of draft assessments and exams internally, as well as external review by the UK HEI. Participants identify assessments are reviewed both internally and by the UK validating HEI before they are used with students. Participant nine (group 2) states:

We have to ensure that all our assessments and exams are reviewed by our colleagues and then by [the UK HEI] before they are given to students.

Participants outline the important role of internal and external review processes to establish a shared understanding of assessment processes. Participant one (group 1), states:

Let me give you just one example because that goes to the core of it. The ultimate determiner of how it's working is the External Examiner. The External Examiner needs to see that we perform double marking appropriately, that our exam papers are fit for purpose and coursework briefs and so on, and that in fact we have heeded his or her remarks from last year. Now, how we go about that about that is to ensure the faculties and programme teams are working appropriately. To ensure the Head of Department works with the Exam Officer, Programme Director and the Specialism Directors. In other words, to take an example, if you are preparing an exam paper, who is going to double read it and how will you monitor it etc. So, all of these review processes, how it works within the faculty from an administrative and management point of view, to get the result that you want and which is acceptable to the External Examiner and of course appropriate to the students.

Participant twelve (group 3) outline the process for development and review of assessments and states:

The way we design the exams, you know that we have Officers in place like the Assessment Officers, and the Quality Assurance Officer, Teaching and Learning Officer and I think that every one of them has a role in this. So, everything is in place, we have procedures and processes for it and we abide by them.

Participant fourteen (group 3) confirms that there is an annual cycle for review of assessments and states:

We have the annual quality assurance processes so that all assessments are reviewed in the Department and by the Link Tutor and an External Examiner.

Participant four (group 1) outlines that the Link Tutor is also involved in review and moderation of marks and states:

They [UK HEI] has an understanding about these policies and processes that we implement and each process has different stages. During the marking process itself, we have double marking, and when they [UK HEI] come to attend the exam boards they also review samples of the students work to check that they are marked appropriately and also that they have been double marked and any discrepancies between markers explained.

Participant ten (group 2) outlines the benefits of review processes and states:

But at the end of the day we are humans and in academia, and particularly in social sciences, nothing is a hundred percent objective. There's always an element of subjectivity when it comes to your own thinking, your own assessment of a certain aspect or certain achievement of students. That's why we always emphasise that there is a double marking process in place to ensure that students get the highest level of objective assessment in their modules.

Participant eight (group 2) concurs and outlines double marking processes help ensure staff mark to UK standards and states:

It wasn't until the moment I double marked with somebody else that I understood, that I fully understood, how to assess according to the UK standards. But we do have our differences too and one healthy thing to do is to focus on specialisation when assigning the double marker because it's obvious that you teach inside your field. Sometimes they used to distribute double markers based on the number [of scripts] and that's it. Now, we tend to distribute double markers based on the area of specialisation. And we have these prolonged discussions and we did have some cases where we had to introduce a third marker. This happened and I think we have reached an adequate amount, or a safe line, of consistency in marking.

Participant thirteen (group 3) outlines how internal double marking processes have informed the development of assessment processes and states:

I think marking has improved actually because of the double marking process. It has helped people understand assessment criteria, not just ticking like this, no you have to respond to your double marker and discuss any differences.

Participants acknowledge that feedback received from the UK HEI has helped develop assessment practices. Participant eleven (group 2) states:

Some Professors question why they should send their exams [for review] and so on, and it's hard for them to change their idea on this. But I am convinced because I have done it and see the benefit. First of all, it helps clarify your thinking, and second it gives you self-discipline. Because if you know that when you write the exam it will be reviewed by another Professor, and that it should have a model answer and mark scheme, you start thinking about your exam in a different way. And I have changed a lot of questions because when I come to the model answer it took me time. So, if I'm the Professor and it took me time how will the students do?

Participants identify that review of assessment material by Link Tutors has informed the development of assessment processes. Participant seven (group 2) states:

Oh, it [external review of assessments] has been helpful. Now, we get good comments back on our assessments and we learn from them and then when we get comments, we arrange staff development sessions for staff based on these comments in order not to repeat them again and in order to share good practice. So, I think that's helpful.

Participant ten (group 2) reveals staff in the Egyptian HEI take feedback from the Link Tutor and External Examiner seriously and are required to respond to it. They state:

We take them seriously [the UK validating HEI]. They come, they review our work, they review our assessments, the way we create our assessments and our exams. They have formal discussions with different people in the Department and we exchange views and we sit together. They write their reports and as a Department we have to respond to these,

have to acknowledge that there are areas of deficiencies that we need to address, have to comment on positive remarks. So, I think the process is going in a very positive way.

Second, the evidence identifies assessment review processes can be perceived as bureaucratic and an infringement on the authority and autonomy of academic staff. Ten participants in groups one, two and three identify staff with previous experience from the Egyptian and North American HE systems are not used to external review processes and can resent them. Participant 1 (group 1) outlines that implementing external review of assessment can be problematic due to the notions of staff seniority and states:

The second thing that makes it very difficult [operation of review processes], and I think something in the Egyptian system militates against that, is that you could only be judged by somebody who is your senior and the higher you go up the scale the more old-fashioned people are and resistant to change. When they are younger it's much more possible.

Participant ten (group 2) reveals external review of assessments is often a new experience for staff in the Egyptian HEI and states:

You know it all depends on where you are in the programme. I can say that when I first joined the University the process looked very awkward at the beginning given that I come from a Canadian HE background. And in the North American system you don't have this quality control approach to higher education whereby another institution has to review your work, where your own work has to be double marked by another person, or by another module leader. So, for me it appeared a very rigid system when I first came here. But I think as time goes on, I eventually discovered that no, the process is positive, the process really ensures a minimum quality of higher education that we need to maintain.

This is confirmed by participant nine (group 2) who states:

But the big difference, the big difference was when I worked in the USA nobody questioned my marks, nobody looked at my exams. I had total authority. And this is consistent with academic freedom. You have to

trust this person. I'm not saying this is better than the UK system because every system has its pros and cons. So, now [in the Egyptian HEI] staff have to follow every step in the British system and it is a big difference.

Participant eighteen (group 3) concurs and states:

At the end of the day you might be faced with a new member of staff who is very rigid and who doesn't want to comply. They have the attitude that they have been teaching for 15 years and so resent being told how to do things. They will say, 'don't tell me that I don't know how to do this, or that I need to learn how to set an exam. I am a Professor.' Yes, we face people like that, it happens in a number of cases.

Third, ten participants from groups one, two and five identify the development of post holder roles has been an important strategy to enable review processes and to ensure future sustainability. The requirement for explicit job descriptions and systems that hold post holders accountable is identified. Participant 1 (group 1) states:

I think the first thing that is necessary is that there should be clarity about the organisation of the faculty, or department, or programme and it should be absolutely clear what the responsibilities are of the Dean, Head of Department, Programme Director, Exam Officer, et cetera. So, I think that has got to be clear and they need job descriptions and so on, and people need to be held to it.

Participants identify that the Coordinators' function is to ensure that reviews occur systematically and at different levels by different people. Participant 13 (group 3) states:

Another thing is that it's not only one person that's responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the programme. You have levels, you have the Subject Coordinator responsible for a part of it and then you have the Programme Director and you have the Head of Department and then the Vice Deans. Each one is responsible for a specific area and each process depends on the other. This ensures that all processes are going the right way, this doesn't mean it is perfect.

Participant fourteen (group 3) identifies time is required to develop understandings of UK threshold standards and states:

And it [staffs' understanding] comes through staff having experienced working in the British Education System and then coming to work at the University. But understanding UK threshold standards, and the structures and processes that support them, have been developed over time. They have been inculcated into teaching, assessment and marking over the 10 years that the system has been developed and implemented

Participants reveal there is a risk to sustainability if experienced staff, who understand UK threshold standards, leave the Egyptian HEI. Participant six (group 2) states:

You don't want it to fade away [staffs' understanding of UK HE requirements]. You want to maintain it and strengthen it. But, if you do lose these people [Coordinators], the effect is quite negative. But I am worried if some of the more experienced people leave for any reason, I think this would have negative impact. I think there are a number of people who have really mastered the system and that hold it together. But if for any reason, in the future, these people leave I don't know how well the others would be able to replace them. But I think what is helping now is because you have a core group who understands the system very well.

Participant nineteen (group 3) confirms the threat to sustainability if staff resign and states:

Building the capacity, and the number of staff who understand things, has been a very, very serious issue. Well, it emerged because two my colleagues left and because of that we had to hire some people fast. These people are not the kind of the people I would have wanted to bring on board and so now we have these other people who have a totally different mind-set and have different ideas about grading and about the programme.

Participants from the UK HEI also identify the need to ensure sustainability of the staffing model that supports their TNE collaborative provision. Participant twenty-eight (group 5) articulate staff in across the UK HEI need to understand

the TNE collaboration and have the skills, and formal job descriptions, to sustain it. This participant states:

We have addressed staffing capacity and come back to sustainability and to succession planning. So, we are not in a situation if somebody suddenly retires, we go back to square one. So, I really enjoy this role, and I think we can really build and grow, but also, we've got to build sustainability. And that's why I keep coming back to us having an institutional position to say these are the systems, the procedures and training we've got in place for Quality Assurance and Quality Control in terms of our benchmarks etc. We now have Link Tutors appointed for all subject areas as well as Deputy Link Tutors. The collaborations team is doing a lot of work to ensure all of the professional services staff are very familiar with the requirements. We've got a team of trained co-chairs [of Exam Boards], and a team of trained administrators. But we also mix it up. So, normally we have administrators who are familiar with running the Exam Board support more than one subject area which is important to develop their familiarity and expertise.

Fourth, the evidence demonstrates ensuring understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards can result in significant challenges in TNE collaborative provision. Four participants from groups one and two identify that staff in the Egyptian are sensitive to how they are positioned in relation to the UK validating HEI and refer to their experience of the first UK validating HEI. Participant one (group 1) outlines the first UK HEI to validate degree programmes in the Egyptian HEI did not appreciate the complexity involved in ensuring understanding, mediation and safeguarding UK threshold standards which resulted in significant challenges for the TNE collaboration. They state:

It [the first UK validating HEI] had had no experience at all of transnational education and it presumed, and it was put very well by the then PVC for Teaching and Learning, that if you knew what the QAA standards were, you would simply apply them. And why wouldn't you, they are fairly clear. And when they discovered that people were having trouble applying the standards, either because they didn't agree with them, or they didn't understand them, or they didn't believe them, or

they were too much work, or they were different from Egyptian standards, I think the validating university then was very shocked.

This participant further describes the reaction of the first UK validating HEI on discovering that QAA policy documents detailing requirements for UK threshold standards were not readily understood and states:

It no longer saw the relationship between our universities as a partnership in which we were not only being validated by them but also, we were working on things such as research, and staff exchanges, and student exchanges. But it began to take the view of it as micro-managing, as a policing operation, where they were very concerned about risk to their reputation.

Participant two (group 2) states:

I think it [the first UK validating HEI] developed a master slave kind of relationship with [the Egyptian HEI] that was very unhealthy for both parties. I think that was perpetuated in how they dealt with the University, and I think that has caused huge resentment within staff groups here.

Participant six (group 2) states:

We had this feeling of being policed [by the first UK validating HEI] and people resented this very much.

Participant nine (group 2) states:

If I may say, most of the Egyptian staff felt that our first UK partner dealt with us as a superior and subordinate, a boss and as people working for them. It was not very helpful. If we had comments on what they thought, and if we didn't see it as relevant, or not applicable to us, they were not very welcoming to consider our opinions.

6.2.1 Discussion

The evidence reveals that long term sustainability of TNE collaborative provision requires significant investment in staffing by both the Egyptian and UK HEIs (Ziguras, 2008; Dobos *et al*, 2013; Healey, 2016). The evidence identifies

the development of a critical mass of staff, who understand UK threshold standards, is a primary resource in the Egyptian HEI to ensure long term sustainability but that the understanding of post holders develops through time and takes significant time to do so. In particular, the evidence demonstrates a strategy by the Egyptian HEI to develop staffing roles with specific responsibility for aspects that inform understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards including Module Leader and Coordinators. The evidence further reveals the development of a critical mass of staff who understand UK threshold standards is a primary resource to ensure long term sustainability. The evidence identifies that developing and embedding understanding of UK thresholds standards in the Egyptian HEI has taken a considerable length of time. Importantly, the evidence identifies there is a significant risk to sustainability if experienced staff, who understand UK threshold standards, leave the Egyptian HEI. Finally, the evidence shows that staffing sustainability in the UK HEI also needs to be safeguarded with a strategy to ensure academic and administrative staff in dedicated roles who understand the needs of the TNE collaboration.

The evidence identifies the critical role of equity and social justice in TNE collaborative provision (Fraser, 2014). The manner and extent to which academic staff working in TNE collaborations are enabled to be part of a dynamic consensus with their counterparts in the UK HEI has important implications for the way in which UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded in TNE contexts (Sharp, 2017). The evidence demonstrates that relationships marked by the absence of equity and social justice result in practitioners and leaders feeling isolated, with no control and disrespected (Dobos, 2011). This can lead to academic staff feeling excluded from participation in transnational exchanges and the opportunity they present for the development of shared understandings of UK threshold standards informed by notions of equity and respect (Bayly *et al*, 2006, p.1458).

This reveals a requirement for consideration of how the challenges of extension and of intensity are addressed (Fraser and Nash, 2014) recognising transnational spaces “comprise combinations of ties and their substance, positions within networks and organisations and networks of organisations that cut across

the borders of at least two national states” (Faist, 2000a, p.13). However, the evidence also reveals staff must have the skills and dispositions to enable their effective work in TNE contexts. This suggests practitioners and leaders require support to develop appropriate dispositions and skills to work effectively in TNE contexts. It reveals greater clarity is required to identify the skills and dispositions needed by staff in each HEI to address the challenges of extension and intensity (Fraser and Nash, 2014, p.53).

6.3 The impact of staff development

First, participants across groups one to four identify staff induction and staff development workshops are provided for new and continuing staff members but that these have largely focused on assessment processes. Second, five participants from groups one and three reveal staff development has been constrained by its restricted focus on providing induction and workshops for continuing staff members. Third, six participants from groups one, three and four identify a requirement for staff who have direct experience of UK HE to share their experience and deepen understandings of UK threshold standards. Fourth three participants from groups one, two and five outline the impact of staff development has been limited by resource issues. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

6.3.0 Presentation of the evidence

First, twenty participants across groups one to four identify staff induction and staff development workshops are provided for new and continuing staff members but that these have largely focused on assessment processes.

Participant one (group 1) states:

I think the first thing is obviously for new staff there's induction and also staff development for continuing staff.

Participant eighteen (group 3) states:

If there is a new staff member, we assign a mentor, one of the current staff, the ones who have experience. The mentor takes care of everything with this new staff member from the first semester till the end, including

review and proofreading assessments, peer review as well as visiting their class to see how they are delivering.

Participant sixteen (group 3) articulates induction is short and provides condensed information about UK HE and UK validated degrees:

I went through the induction process in which I had an induction to the role of module leader. I was taught various things about this role. Other than that, I felt I was more or less left up to my own to ask. And then I did ask a lot of people [about grading and marking]. I asked a bunch of people what is a forty and I received a lot of different answers on what exactly a forty is. How do you achieve a forty? At the same time, at the opposite end of the threshold, I would ask so what's an A equivalent to?

Participant two (group 1) states:

I think up until now we have mainly done staff development by explaining UK threshold standards and through marking and moderation workshops. But we really need to move beyond that format and involve staff in more real-life case studies which involves different aspects of their work.

Participant twelve (group 3) identifies that workshops are held each semester and states:

So even now for example each semester we have sessions, workshops and training on how to design assessments, how to mark exams, how to do double marking. And when we have any new staff, we do this orientation for them. We assign mentors to new staff to ensure that they are aligned with the system.

Participant twenty-six (group 4) outlines that workshops mainly focus on assessment processes and states:

So, we have departmental workshops rather than faculty based. Sometimes, it's faculty based, but it's very difficult to organise them and usually there is time constraints for it. But when it comes to departmental levels, we do. We have, for example, people from the team, they would or the HOD or the Teaching and Learning team, they would give us workshops on the design of assessment and how to assess to the British

standards.

Participant eighteen (group 3) states:

There are double marking workshops also, we usually we usually assign a mentor to new staff, one of the current staff, the ones who have experience.

Participant twenty-four (group 4) identifies how workshops supported their transition and states:

Now, we have staff development sessions and meetings for all of us to make sure we're well informed about what's going on. So, it's really important. I'm not struggling like before. For the first two years when I came here everything was new. Now I'm familiar with the basic requirements.

Second, five participants from groups one and three reveal staff development has been constrained by its restricted focus on providing induction and workshops for continuing staff members. Participant five (group 1) states:

For academic staff, I think the main focus till now has been design of assessment, marking and feedback partly because the validating partners keep picking up on these areas, and it has got better. And then we have new staff coming in and they need to be aware of these things in particular. So, I think that's been the main focus of staff development whereas I think now we need to take it a whole new level, and we need to be thinking now more of pedagogy teaching and learning.

Participant five (group 1) identifies that the impact of workshops is limited and states:

We've had lots of workshops in the past, but not all staff attend them as you know. I think that there has to be longer training periods. I think one workshop is totally insufficient. I think when it comes to things like marking, feedback and designing assessments it needs to be for much longer periods of time, and I think that we need to be bringing in fresh faces to deliver these things as opposed to staff within their own faculties delivering them.

Participant sixteen (group 3) outlines the role of learning by doing and states:

Workshops are helpful but another thing which is more helpful is learn by doing things, by time, through experience. Like for example when you start to do things after staff development, after you have all the inputs regarding these standards, you start to do things on your own and with colleagues.

Participant one (group 1) states:

I think that the entrenchment of understanding [of UK threshold standards] has to be driven from practice. That means creating contexts within which people are discussing actual items. In other words, I think it has to be practical, not really conceptual. And here things like moderation, marking committees, opportunities for people to discuss how to provide the kind of appropriate draft of exam papers and not just through workshops.

Participant three (group 1) reveals understanding is more usefully developed through everyday professional practice working alongside colleagues. They state:

Perhaps there needs to be more awareness raising of this with academic staff. I hesitate to say staff development. Rather [it needs] more mentoring type roles, more working closely with colleagues to steer them through the maze, because it can be complicated, and it has become more complicated with NAQAAE requirements. It can't be staff development because this implies that staff are forced to attend sessions and just because they have attended a session does not mean that they have got the hang of it.

Third, six participants from groups one, three and four identify a requirement for staff who have direct experience of UK HE to share their experience and deepen understandings of UK threshold standards. Participant three (group 1) indicates this cohort of staff act as a reference point on the requirements of UK threshold standards and states:

Knowledge comes from UK staff and also from Egyptian staff who have UK experience. So, staff such as the Registrar, Head of Q&V, the Senior

Assistant Registrars, Module Leaders and Senior Vice President have a vital role in the institution. Otherwise there would be a lack of understanding of UK requirements and consistency as each faculty would do its own thing and there would be no guarantee of standards and quality.

Participants reveal staff in the Egyptian HEI with UK experience help colleagues understand the norms and requirements of UK HE. Participant twenty (group 3) states:

Well, I think it's this acculturation process. If you have a programme which follows British standards and grading you need a certain amount of people who are familiar with the British system, standards and grading. And you need a certain amount of people familiar with it and who don't come out of the local system, whether that is Chinese or Egyptian or whatever. Because if everyone is local, and everybody reinforces each other, what we come out with is the local norm and you don't even realise that the norm could be different in different places. You only realise that once there is somebody who says, but why do you do that? And so, it is particularly important for colleagues [UK or UK experienced colleagues] in the team to give advice on UK grading and different ways of teaching.

Participant twenty-six (group 4) states:

If I'm talking about it personally, as a student in a PhD programme in the UK. When I go and spend some time in the UK, I get oriented with a lot of things over there. So, for me, I learn a lot about the UK system, the rules and regulations about it just by spending an intensive semester there. When I come back, okay now I understand where are the British coming from, what do they think, the way they are dealing with the students and how things are running things. But if I didn't go to the UK, I wouldn't have understood that, so it's different. It makes a lot of difference.

Fourth three participants from groups one, two and five outline the impact of staff development has been limited by resource issues. First, issues of

quality, consistency and impact are affected by the capacity of staff in coordination roles. Participant seven (group 2) states:

It [staff development] has had its ups and downs because it really depends on the capacity and skills of the Staff Development Coordinator of the faculty. More recently with having somebody at the University level who is in charge of staff development, I think things are now more organised.

This is confirmed by participant five (group 1) who states:

Consistency across all the faculties is a problem. At the moment we don't have that. I think that's quite unfortunate. I feel quite sad about that; I feel I can't do more because I think it's due to the limitations of Coordinators and is also related to resources.

Critically, two participants from groups one and five, in leadership positions in each HEI, identify securing resourcing for staff development is problematic. Participant twenty-seven (group 5), from the UK HEI, articulates provision of additional resources for staff development is difficult to justify when there are no critical standards related issues to be addressed. This participant states:

I guess one of the things that I perceive is the boat hasn't been rocked. I mean there have been cases that we know [in the HE UK sector] where there have been quality problems with international partners and there have been a few scandals because of it. But everything is perceived as more or less okay and so it's actually quite hard to direct more resource into something where you can neither show that there's going to be a financial benefit from putting that resource in and there are absolutely no risks to be mitigated. So, it's actually quite hard to argue for the additional resource, I think unless it's done at the outset negotiating the partnership.

This also reveals the importance of identifying staff development requirements, to ensure appropriate resourcing is secured, when negotiating the initial TNE agreement. Participant five (group 1) identifies that securing funding for staff development in the Egyptian HEI has been problematic and states:

Quite frankly it hasn't developed capacity because it [the Egyptian HEI]

hasn't invested money in staff development. We have been self-sufficient all these years and for the faculties I think it's the easiest thing to do, just offer a workshop or a session for an hour or two hours and that's the end of it. There's no follow up at all. But I think also two hours sometimes is very, very short.

6.3.1 Discussion

The evidence identifies four constraints on staff development that limit its impact to support understanding of UK threshold standards. First, staff induction is delivered in condensed formats via workshops. Moreover, it reveals the effectiveness of induction and workshops is constrained by the commitment and skills of staff who have responsibility for this which mean newly appointed staff are often required to take personal initiative to understand the UK threshold standards. Second, workshops for new and continuing staff are largely focused on assessment processes rather than on developing awareness of learning and teaching approaches or the development of assessment for learning. The evidence reveals a wider focus for staff development is required to support the development of learning and teaching approaches. Third, whilst the evidence reveals recognition that understanding is more usefully developed through everyday professional practice, with staff working alongside colleagues in contextualised settings, it also identifies the potential for the development of communities of practice is problematic because of the limited numbers of staff with direct experience of UK Higher Education (Cox, 2005, p.532). Finally, the evidence reveals the quality, consistency and impact of staff development is constrained by its limited resourcing. This aligns with Rust *et al* (2003, p.162) that funding appropriate staff development can be resource intensive and represents a financial challenge to HEIs. The evidence synthesis with Dobos' (2013) findings that TNE collaborations often lack proper investment in staff development to support staff understand their role and develop appropriate professional practice.

6.4 Alternative resources

In addressing research question four, participants outline different resources and alternative ways of working which they believe would assist them to

ensure understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards. Two positions are identified. First, twenty participants across groups one to four outline closer interaction, with the UK HEI would assist their understanding of UK standards and provide opportunities for development of new approaches. Second, thirteen participants in groups one, two and three reveal a requirement for increased administrative staffing, including the development of the professional services staff, to support the delivery of UK validated programmes and to safeguard UK threshold standards. The positions are outlined in the following sections by providing representative quotes from the different participants.

6.4.0 Presentation of the evidence

First, twenty participants across groups one to four outline closer interaction, with the UK HEI would assist their understanding of UK standards and provide opportunities for development of new approaches. Participants articulate a belief that greater understanding of UK threshold standards would have been achieved earlier had staff exchanges been available. Participant twenty-six (group 4) states:

Because if we had had exchanges, I think it would have been like a shortcut. It would have speeded up the process. The Egyptian staff members spend some time there, like three months, or a whole semester, and come back. The same thing would happen with the British staff. They would come and spend some time here and go back. So, there will be some kind of mutual orientation for both sides about the different systems.

Participants reveal an opportunity to spend time at the UK HEI is particularly important for Egyptian staff who do not have direct experience of UK HE and threshold standards. Participant twelve (group 3) states:

We've been asking this for years [exchanges with the UK HEI]. We need to have exchange opportunities where we can go and see how people work [in the UK HEI]. Maybe spend a couple of months in their department to see how they work. If we had done this, I think we would have made progress sooner. We've done a great job here and we've invested a lot in this but we have very few interactions with the community there.

Participant thirteen (group 3) states:

Actually, we would like to have exchanges with [the UK HEI] but we haven't had this. Actually, one of our main expectations when we joined the University was that we're going to get exposed to different types of education, not for students, but through communication and exchange with UK universities, this will be very motivating for us and we would like to be involved in it. If we can get an exchange or an exposure to new methods, knowledge with UK Module Leaders, UK educators but we haven't had this. If you improve the quality of the Module Leaders here by allowing them to have exchanges with the UK it will be reflected in the students. I need to see the application, the real application in the UK context. If I can see specific strategies implemented in a UK context, with other students, with other Module Leaders, I will learn more, I may learn new methods, new ways of doing this. This is how I want to improve myself.

Participant sixteen (group 3) states:

For me personally I feel I would like to go and see how they handle lectures and to see new ways of teaching that are different from what we do here.

Participants also outline staff exchanges would enable staff from the Egyptian HEI to develop their understanding of teaching and assessment strategies. Participant six (group 2) states:

Looking at our weekly outlines, giving ideas about how to tackle delivery in different ways, suggesting different strategies, giving us more staff development on how things are done in a different way, not necessarily better ways, but different way so that we can know more of the options available. I would like to have new techniques in teaching and assessment. We cannot just be standing still. Having a British partner should actually be our window to the world, to new approaches that support students' learning and students' engagement.

Participants outline that students would benefit from greater exposure to teaching staff from the UK HEI but that this has not been progressed due to financial constraints. Participant seven (group 2) states:

More internationalisation, more exposure from both sides. Exposing our Module Leaders to different thing and having their module leaders come and teach here. There is not enough exposure because exposure is not just about knowledge. It's many things, it's about the cultures. Many times, it's a problem of money. Interaction with another culture means travel which means expenses. So, money is a big problem.

Finally, participants identify administrative staff would also benefit from the opportunity to spend time at the UK HEI and that when this occurred it had significant impact for the member of staff. Participant three (group 1) states:

Well, it would be good to have staff exchanges and to have administrative staff travel to the UK and meet their counterparts there. I only know one person who has done this, and it had a huge beneficial impact. They found they learnt from their UK colleagues but that they also could gave things.

Second, thirteen participants in groups one, two and three reveal a requirement for increased administrative staffing, including the development of the professional services staff, to support the delivery of UK validated programmes and to safeguard UK threshold standards. Participant 8 (group 2) states:

We have a sense of feeling of being pressured. There is a short time and a lot of work that has to be done, a lot of administrative work, the APR [Annual Programme Review] we have a lot to do, I don't deny that and we also don't have much administrative support. But deep down inside, as scholars, at the end of the day, when you're finished, when you're outside that circle of pressure, no, you realise it's a good thing.

Participant nineteen (group 3) states:

We don't have [enough] administrative staff and that's why we have so many administrative tasks. Also, we are going to be introducing a new programme next year which has many, many more modules and the

problem is that modules and student numbers are increasing. I mean now we deal with larger classes - it's hard.

Participants outline that staff in the Egyptian HEI sometimes find the level of external checks required by the UK system requires significant levels of documentation. Participant ten (group 2) states:

In addition, of course, the number one trend of British Higher Education is quality assurance. And from this follows a lot of paperwork and templates to fill out, deadlines and things like that.

Participant seventeen (group 3) states:

They've stopped recruiting administrative staff and so it's got to a degree that Module Leaders feel that we are being asked to do too many administrative tasks. We need help.

Participant nineteen (group 3) states:

We don't have administrative staff that's number one and that's why we have so many administrative tasks. We need help with administrative task because they really cut into our time, which means that I have less time for teaching and research. But the fact is that it's just so hard to get something out because we are really pressured with the administration needed for our degree programme.

Participant five (group 1) states:

Well first of all because I'm one person I'm limited in what I can do. I do a lot of the admin work and follow-up takes a huge amount of time. So, I need admin support.

However, participants identify the recruitment of appropriate administrative staff is problematic due to low salaries. Participant six (group 2) states:

Some of them [administrative staff] are developing but it also has to do with the salaries they give and then the fact that the university is very far in terms of location.

Moreover, participants identify providing professional development for administrative staff, to enable them to support the delivery of UK validated programmes, is difficult. Participant two (group 1) states:

This is more difficult because there are no professional development routes for administrative staff in Egyptian HE. Also, administrative staff are not generally respected for different cultural reasons. It is difficult for a junior administrative staff member to ask a professor to meet a deadline or complete something in the correct way as they do not have the authority to do this. This makes work more difficult to complete and to get the information that is required or in the format that is required. It results the need for a lot of chasing of information and this wastes time.

6.4.1 Discussion

The evidence reveals participants identify a requirement for closer interaction with the UK HEI is required. This is to support their understanding of UK HE and in particular to provide opportunities to develop new perspectives on teaching, learning and assessment which inform the mediation of UK threshold standards. However, the evidence reveals that the ability to do so is constrained by resource implications. The evidence also reveals that participants in the Egyptian HEI seek additional administrative support as well as support from professional services staff as they experience a heavy administrative workload. Yet the evidence also reveals the difficulties of recruiting such staff because this is not a profession which is recognised within the Egyptian HE system.

6.5 Summary

The first part of the chapter addressed research question three to reveal the resources staff identify as important to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards. It did so through three themes: the role of internal and external monitoring processes; the impact of review processes; and the impact of staff development. The last part of the chapter addressed research question four to identify the alternative resources staff identify as important for the future understanding mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards. This identified two themes, first greater interaction with the UK HEI and second the provision of additional administrative support and professional services staff.

In relation to the first theme, the chapter presented evidence that shows participants recognise the UK HEI as an important resource. In particular, the roles of the Link Tutor and External Examiner are identified as important. Participants acknowledge interactions with Link Tutors and External Examiners support the development of appropriate systems for the understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards. The evidence reveals the systems established have primarily focused on the development of assessment processes to ensure safeguarding of UK threshold standards including the review of assessment and exam papers, marking and moderation. Participants from the UK HEI also identify that the External Examiner is a key resource to ensure that UK threshold standards are safeguarded.

The evidence further reveals the critical role of equity and social justice in TNE collaborative provision (Fraser and Nash, 2014). The evidence demonstrates that relationships marked by the absence of equity and social justice result in practitioners and leaders feeling isolated, with no control and disrespected and can lead to academic staff feeling excluded from participation in transnational exchanges and the opportunity they present for the development of shared understandings of UK threshold standards informed by notions of equity and respect. Critically, this identifies a requirement for consideration of how the challenges of extension and of intensity are addressed (Fraser, 2014). However, the evidence also reveals staff must have the skills and dispositions to enable their effective work in TNE contexts. This suggests practitioners and leaders must be supported to develop appropriate dispositions and skills to work effectively in TNE contexts.

In relation to the impact of review processes the evidence reveals the development of a critical mass of staff, who understand UK threshold standards, is a primary resource to ensure sustainability. So far this has been achieved through the development of post holder roles, with defined responsibilities and accountability and explicit job descriptions. Significantly, the evidence identifies there is a significant risk to sustainability if experienced staff, who understand UK thresh-

old standards, leave the Egyptian HEI. Moreover, the evidence shows that staffing sustainability in the UK HEI also needs to be assured with staff in dedicated roles who understand the TNE collaboration.

This chapter next presented evidence to show the impact of staff development on understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards. Participants acknowledge identify a number of factors that serve to constrain its effectiveness. Importantly, the evidence demonstrates developing and embedding understanding of UK thresholds standards has taken a considerable length of time. Whilst the evidence reveals understanding is more usefully developed through everyday professional practice, the evidence also shows the development of communities of practice is problematic. Finally, the evidence reveals the quality, consistency and impact of staff development are constrained by its resourcing.

Chapter Seven: Findings, conclusions and recommendations

7.0 Overview

In this chapter I present the findings and examine how these findings can be theorised to inform future policy and practice in relation to UK threshold standards in a TNE context. This reveals the study's contribution to new knowledge. Finally, the chapter provides a conclusion of the thesis and makes recommendations for policy, practice and research.

7.1 Discussion of the findings

7.1.0 Understanding of UK threshold standards

The first research question is focused on understanding the impact of national norms and regulation on understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards. It seeks to answer the question: How do staff describe and understand UK Threshold Standards?

UK threshold standards specify knowledge, skills and abilities

The evidence demonstrates participants understand that UK threshold standards specify an inter-relationship between knowledge, skills and abilities (QAA, 2014). The evidence shows leaders in the Egyptian and UK HEI's understand that UK threshold standards are complex and require students to demonstrate an agreed minimum level of achievement in relation to knowledge, understanding and skills to pass a module, level and for the conferral of an academic award (QAA, 2014, p.5). However, Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants understand UK threshold standards through the context of the modules on which they work. This distinction in how UK threshold standards are understood suggests that consideration is required as to how staff working as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants develop understandings through processes that seek to interpret and translate the requirements set out in UK policy document into academic practice (Ball, 2015; Avelar, 2016).

UK threshold standards and the latest development in knowledge

The evidence reveals a limited number of participants recognise that UK thresholds standards should reflect the “current boundaries of an academic discipline” (QAA, 2014n, p.26). Significantly the evidence identifies an understanding that the operation of SCU validation requirements serve to constrain the ability of programme teams to develop their programme to reflect latest developments in knowledge and which serves to provide a static conception of UK threshold standards. The evidence from this research thus reveals a requirement for a deeper understanding of the principles and values that inform UK threshold standards within the Egyptian HEI. This is particularly in relation to their role in enabling students to be actively involved in the co-creation of new knowledge and the development of transferable and employability skills that provide graduates with new perspectives and opportunities relevant to their context (QAA, 2014). The evidence from this research also identifies a greater focus is required by UK and Egyptian regulatory bodies on how alignment can be achieved between the two national systems to enable better understanding of the principles and values which inform UK threshold standards.

UK threshold standard specify a minimum level of achievement and provide a benchmark to protect the integrity of UK awards

Leaders in the Egyptian and UK HEI recognise the requirements to ensure safeguarding of UK threshold standards, as well as the integrity of their academic awards. However, the statutory responsibility the UK HEI has for safeguarding UK threshold standards (QAA, 2014) suggests it is important for TNE collaborations to ensure the development of jointly owned processes to enable safeguarding and to enable the long-term sustainability of UK TNE. The evidence identifies, practitioners in TNE contexts need to not only understand the associated requirements for knowledge, understanding and skills embodied in UK threshold standards (QAA, 2014, p.5), but also notions of academic level that inform the UK Quality Code and UK Qualifications Framework (QAA, 2008n) to be able to make ethically informed judgements on the level of student achievement. The evidence reveals academic staff working in the Egyptian HEI are used to working with different norms of attainment, including marking scales, and find

it challenging to assess UK threshold standards in a consistent manner. Finally, the evidence reveals a concern that the low threshold attainment level may result in instrumental responses and that students operating at this level are not well prepared to enter employment and which serves to limit opportunities for future employability.

The evidence further identifies that the application of the condonement regulations operated by the Egyptian HEI can enable students with particular circumstances to meet the UK threshold standards. The evidence reveals a concern the 40% UK threshold attainment mark could result in pressure on staff to ensure all students pass an assessment, module or degree programme. This aligns with the literature that the low threshold attainment level may result in instrumental understandings of UK threshold standards and responses which serve to undermine the currency of the associated award (Yorke and Vidovich, 2016). However, the evidence did not reveal staff felt constrained to respond in this way and the evidence also identifies participants believe this would serve to devalue the degree award, and would represent a significant threat to the safeguarding of UK thresholds standards and integrity of UK awards. This demonstrates the importance of developing shared understandings of UK threshold standards to enable ethically informed decisions to be made.

UK threshold standards derive from UK QAA documents

The evidence reveals participants in leadership roles in the Egyptian and UK HEIs understand that UK threshold standards derive from multiple QAA policy documents. In contrast, participants who work as Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants in the Egyptian HEI, refer to the UK HEI as the source from which UK threshold standards derive and describe their understanding in the context of the modules they teach and support. Critically, the evidence from this research suggests that understanding of UK threshold standards in the Egyptian HEI has a top down approach and that Module Leaders and Teaching Assistants are not actively involved in processes which seek to develop shared understandings of UK threshold standards from UK QAA policy documents. This might suggest that ensuring sustainability of the principles and values which inform UK threshold standards is at risk if there is not a wider and deeper understanding of these

across the Egyptian HEI. The evidence further reveals that the UK HEI has a critical role to play in seeking to ensure understandings of UK threshold standards are developed across programme teams. However, the evidence also reveals this may result in a sense of limited ownership of UK threshold standards if it is perceived that the UK HEI has sole responsibility for this.

Moreover, the evidence from this research identifies that whilst the validation event held by the UK HEI, to confirm UK threshold standards are accurately reflected in the programme documentation produced by the Egyptian HEI, that processes to inform understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK thresholds standards are required that reach beyond the validation event. Finally, the evidence reveals that although the UK Quality Code is informed by an outcomes-based approach leaders and practitioners in the Egyptian HEI experience the language as open to interpretation. This suggests if practitioners are to establish shared understanding of the principles which inform UK threshold standards, and their associated achievement and attainment levels, they also need to be supported by socially informed professional practice that enable the development of shared understandings as well as mediation and safeguarding processes (Bolton and Nie, 2010).

The Egyptian HEI is required to meet both UK and Egyptian threshold requirements

The evidence reveals different national conceptions of threshold standards operate as well as different approaches to quality assurance in the Egyptian TNE context. The evidence from this research identifies a greater focus is required by UK and Egyptian regulatory bodies on how alignment can be achieved between the two national systems to ensure that the principles and values which inform UK threshold standards are understood within the Egyptian regulatory context. The evidence reveals staff working in the Egyptian HEI experience additional regulatory requirements as a result of their TNE context. The manner in which this additional burden is managed is an important consideration as leaders and practitioners are simultaneously seeking to develop shared understandings, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards as it may detract from a

focus on enabling the development of shared understandings between staff located in different HEIs.

7.1.1 Impact of national norms

The second research question is focused on understandings the impact of national norms and regulation on understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards. It seeks to answer the question: How do staff describe the impact that different national norms and regulatory requirements have on the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards?

The impact of English language entry requirements on student engagement with UK threshold standards

The evidence demonstrates that TNE provision located in a private HEI can face a challenge to recruit appropriately qualified students to meet entry standards required for study on a UK validated degree (Lane and Kinser, 2011). The findings also demonstrate some students entering UK TNE provision have lower levels in English required for learning on UK validated degrees and this may restrict their capacity to engage with the curriculum, especially in the early degree years (Altbach, 2010). The evidence identifies that private HEIs, which are dependent on student fees to meet costs as well as provide a return to shareholders on their investment seek to recruit and retain students, ensuring their graduation with a qualification (Barsoum, 2017, p.198). Significantly, the evidence from this research suggests there is an expectation that as a private HEI, students recruited by the Egyptian HEI to degree programmes will pass their modules and be awarded a qualification. This results in UK threshold standards, and the associated UK degree award, being understood as a credential rather than as capital that seeks to enable the development of the individual and their capacity to shape the professions and societies in which they live (Herrera, 2008, p.71). However, in doing so, the capacity to support students to engage with UK threshold standards, to enable them to develop critical, analytical and transferable skills, and the capacity to develop as critical and as autonomous participatory human beings, is constrained through a focus on mediation of the threshold standards.

The impact of students' previous educational background on engagement with UK threshold standards

The evidence from this research reveals Egyptian students are recruited from three different educational backgrounds; the national Thanaweya Amma system; the UK IGCSE system; and the American Diploma system. The evidence further identifies academic staff find it challenging to engage students from different educational backgrounds who have experienced different educational approaches in their previous schooling (Edwards, 2007; Yang, 2008). The findings demonstrate participants understand students recruited with the national Thanaweya Amma qualification often have weak critical thinking skills and are used to didactic forms of teaching (Brewer *et al*, 2007). This can create significant challenges for academic staff in developing appropriate forms of teaching, learning and assessment to support student engagement with the UK threshold standards (Edwards, 2007; Yang, 2008). However, despite the significant challenges identified, which suggest students may initially struggle with the requirements of UK threshold standards, there is no evidence to show how academic staff are supported by either the Egyptian or UK HEI to develop appropriate learning and teaching strategies to address these learning needs. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Egyptian HEI works closely with schools to ensure students and parents are aware of the demands involved in study on a UK validated degree programme.

The role of assessment in enabling mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards

The findings identify different understandings of the nature and role of assessment (Zepke, 2013, p.97). The evidence from this research shows there is currently a lack of understanding by leaders and practitioners within the Egyptian HEI on the role played by assessment in the mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards and its role to support student learning. Assessment for learning provides a focus on the design of assessment process including: design of assessment to promote student engagement (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004/5; Carless, 2007) and provision of timely and effective feedback to inform learning (Taras, 2001; Gibbs and Simpson, 2004/5; Carless, 2007). However, the findings

from this research found the design of degree programmes can result in a high volume of assessment which constrains opportunity for the development of assessment practices which engage students in the learning process and which supports their learning (Rust *et al*, 2005). Critically, the findings from this research demonstrate that a focus on the development of assessment as measurement results in practitioners and leaders seeking to ensure specification of learning outcomes (Sadler, 2014) and alignment of learning outcomes to assessment (Knight, 2002b; Sadler, 2014). This serves to limit the development of assessment for learning which aims to support student engagement in the learning process and to enable their critical engagement with the different aspects embodied by UK threshold standards (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004/5).

7.1.2 Resources

The third research question is focused on understandings the different resources identified to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards. It seeks to answer the question: What resources and strategies do staff make use of in the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards?

Internal and external review and monitoring processes

The evidence from this research indicates the Link Tutor and External role provided by the UK HEI to support the TNE collaboration has had a positive impact in the development of assessment and review processes that seek to safeguard UK threshold standards. The evidence demonstrates review of assessment by Link Tutors and External Examiners serve to identify areas requiring further development by staff in the Egyptian HEI. The evidence shows the Link Tutor and External Examiner role has informed the development of academic practice in relation to design of assessment and associated processes. This aligns with research that demonstrates TNE collaborations are at risk if validating HEIs do not ensure adequate levels of staffing, with an appropriate skill set, to support the development of TNE collaborative provision (Gribble and Zigura 2003; Hoare, 2013). This suggests the long-term sustainability of TNE collaborative provision requires significant investment in staffing by each HEI involved in a collaborative

venture. The evidence confirms that the quality and nature of the interactions between staff in the two HEIs is critical to their sustainability (Gribble and Ziguras 2003; Chapman and Pyvis 2013; Smith 2014; Sidhu, 2015) and aligns with the literature which outlines the importance of developing effective relationships, informed by respect and dialogue, in the operation of TNE as well as a requirement to invest in the development of social capital to enable this (Bolton and Nie, 2010).

However, the evidence from this research reveals that interaction between the Link Tutor and staff in the Egyptian HEI is largely at the faculty and programme management level with minimal interaction with staff at the Module Leader and Teaching Assistant level. Moreover, that the interaction is largely focused on safeguarding UK threshold standards via review of assessment processes rather than providing opportunities for joint curriculum development projects (British Council 2014; Sidhu, 2015). This suggests the current focus of the Link Tutor role constrains their ability to support capacity building in the Egyptian HEI in relation to the development of teaching, learning and assessment practices.

The impact of internal and external review processes

The evidence from this research reveals that long term sustainability of TNE collaborative provision requires significant investment in staffing by both the Egyptian and UK HEIs (Ziguras, 2008; Dobos *et al*, 2013; Healey, 2016). In particular, the evidence demonstrates a strategy by the Egyptian HEI to develop staffing roles with specific responsibility for aspects that inform understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards including Module Leader and Coordinators. The evidence further reveals the development of a critical mass of staff, who understand UK threshold standards, is a primary resource in the Egyptian HEI to ensure long term sustainability but that the understanding of post holders develops through time and takes significant time to do so. The evidence identifies that developing and embedding understanding of UK thresholds standards in the Egyptian HEI has taken a considerable length of time. Importantly, the evidence identifies there is a significant risk to sustainability if experienced staff, who understand UK threshold standards, leave the Egyptian HEI.

Finally, the evidence shows that staffing sustainability in the UK HEI also needs to be safeguarded with a strategy to ensure academic and administrative staff in dedicated roles who understand the needs of the TNE collaboration.

The evidence reveals the critical role of equity and social justice in TNE collaborative provision (Fraser and Nash, 2014). The manner and extent to which academic staff working in TNE collaborations are enabled to be part of a dynamic consensus with their counterparts in the UK HEI has important implications for the way in which UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded in TNE contexts (Sharp, 2017). The evidence demonstrates that relationships marked by the absence of equity and social justice result in practitioners and leaders feeling isolated, with no control and disrespected (Dobos, 2011). This can lead to academic staff feeling excluded from participation in transnational exchanges and the opportunity they present for the development of shared understandings of UK threshold standards informed by notions of equity and respect (Bayly *et al*, 2006, p.1458). This identifies a requirement for consideration of how the challenges of extension and of intensity are addressed (Fraser, 2014) recognising transnational spaces “comprise combinations of ties and their substance, positions within networks and organisations and networks of organisations that cut across the borders of at least two national states” (Faist, 2000a, p.13). However, the evidence also reveals staff must have the skills and dispositions to enable their effective work in TNE contexts. This suggests practitioners and leaders require support to develop appropriate dispositions and skills to work effectively in TNE contexts. It reveals greater clarity is required to identify the skills and dispositions needed by staff in each HEI to address the challenges of extension and intensity (Fraser and Nash, 2014, p.53).

Staffing and staff development

The evidence identifies four constraints on staff development that limit its impact to support understanding of UK threshold standards. First, staff induction is delivered in condensed formats via workshops. Moreover, the evidence shows the effectiveness of induction and workshops is constrained by the commitment and skills of staff who have responsibility for this which mean newly appointed staff are often required to take personal initiative to understand the

UK threshold standards. Second, workshops for new and continuing staff are largely focused on assessment processes rather than on developing awareness of learning and teaching approaches or the development of assessment for learning practices. The evidence reveals a wider focus for staff development is required to support the development of learning and teaching approaches. Third, whilst the evidence reveals recognition that understanding is more usefully developed through everyday professional practice, with staff working alongside colleagues in contextualised settings, it also identifies the potential for the development of communities of practice is problematic because of the limited numbers of staff with direct experience of UK Higher Education (Cox, 2005, p.532). Finally, the evidence reveals the quality, consistency and impact of staff development is constrained by its limited resourcing. This aligns with Rust *et al* (2003, p.162) that funding appropriate staff development can be resource intensive and represents a financial challenge to HEIs. The evidence synthesis with Dobos' (2013) findings that TNE collaborations often lack proper investment in staff development to support staff understand their role and develop appropriate professional practice.

7.1.3 Further developments

Greater contact with the UK

The evidence reveals participants identify a requirement for closer interaction with the UK HEI is required. Participants reveal that this would support their understanding of UK HE and in particular to provide opportunities to develop new perspectives on teaching, learning and assessment which inform the mediation of UK threshold standards.

Greater administrative support

However, the evidence reveals that the ability to do so is constrained by resource implications. The evidence also reveals that participants in the Egyptian HEI seek additional administrative support, as well as support from professional

services staff as they experience a heavy administrative workload. Yet the evidence also reveals the difficulties of recruiting such staff because this is not a profession which is recognised within the Egyptian, HE system.

7.2 Contribution to knowledge

This study aimed to answer the research question, ‘How are UK threshold standards understood, mediated and safeguarded in a TNE setting?’ The primary contribution to knowledge is that this is the first research study focusing on understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards in an Egyptian TNE context. This research also provides a new contribution to the knowledge by revealing the challenges associated with understanding, mediation and safeguarding UK threshold standards in an Egyptian TNE context and the importance of developing jointly owned and sustainable solutions to ensure the long-term sustainability of UK TNE.

The evidence identifies jointly owned processes are required not only between each HEI, but also within the Egyptian HEI as this currently has a top down approach to how UK threshold standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded. The evidence from this research thus reveals that jointly owned processes are required to enable staff in TNE contexts to understand, interpret and translate into practice the requirements set out in UK policy document, as well as to align these requirements with those of the Egyptian context. The findings identify that understandings of UK threshold standards must reach beyond the initial validation event. The evidence further reveals that the UK HEI has a critical role to play in ensuring understandings of UK threshold standards are developed across programme teams but that this may result in a sense of limited ownership of UK threshold standards if it is perceived that the UK HEI has sole responsibility for this.

The evidence from this research also identifies a greater focus is required by UK and Egyptian regulatory bodies on how alignment can be achieved between the two national systems to enable better understanding of the principles and values which inform UK threshold standards. Moreover, there is no evidence that

the Egyptian HEI works closely with schools to ensure students and parents are aware of the demands involved in study on a UK validated degree programme.

The evidence demonstrates there is currently a lack of understanding by leaders and practitioners in the Egyptian HEI on the role played by assessment in the mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards and its role to support student learning. Critically, the findings from this research demonstrate that a focus on the development of assessment as measurement results in practitioners and leaders seeking to ensure specification of learning outcomes (Sadler, 2014) and alignment of learning outcomes to assessment (Knight, 2002b; Sadler, 2014). This serves to limit the development of assessment for learning which aims to support student engagement in the learning process and to enable their critical engagement with the different aspects embodied by UK threshold standards (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004/5).

The evidence reveals a concern the 40% UK threshold attainment mark could result in pressure on staff to ensure all students pass an assessment, module or degree programme. The evidence identifies the application of the condonement regulations operated by the Egyptian HEI can enable students with particular circumstances to meet the UK threshold standards. This reveals the 40% UK threshold attainment mark could result in pressure on staff to ensure all students pass an assessment, module or degree programme. This would serve to devalue the degree award, and would represent a significant threat to the safeguarding of UK thresholds standards and integrity of UK awards. This demonstrates the critical importance of developing shared understandings of UK threshold standards, and jointly owned processes, to enable ethically informed decisions to be made.

The evidence suggests there is an expectation that as a private HEI, students recruited by the Egyptian HEI to degree programmes will pass their modules and be awarded a qualification. The findings demonstrate students entering UK TNE provision can have lower levels in English than is required for learning on UK validated degrees and this may restrict their capacity to engage with the curriculum, especially in the early degree years. This results in UK threshold standards, and the associated UK degree award, being understood as a credential

rather than as capital that seeks to enable the development of the individual and their capacity to shape the professions and societies in which they live (Herrera, 2008, p.71). The evidence further identifies academic staff find it challenging to engage students from different educational backgrounds who have experienced different educational approaches in their previous schooling (Edwards, 2007; Yang, 2008). However, despite the significant challenges identified, which suggest students may initially struggle with the requirements of UK threshold standards, this research identifies that limited support is provided to academic staff to develop appropriate learning, teaching and assessment strategies to address these needs.

The evidence identifies the long-term sustainability of TNE collaborative provision requires significant investment in staffing by each HEI involved in a collaborative venture. The evidence reveals the development of a critical mass of staff, who understand UK threshold standards, is a primary resource in the Egyptian HEI to ensure long term sustainability but that the understanding of post holders develops through time and takes significant time to do so. Importantly, the evidence identifies there is a significant risk to sustainability if experienced staff, who understand UK threshold standards, leave the Egyptian HEI. Moreover, the evidence identifies the impact of staff development is constrained by its limited resourcing. Whilst the evidence reveals recognition that understanding of UK threshold standards is more usefully developed through everyday professional practice, with staff working alongside colleagues in contextualised settings, it also identifies the potential for the development of communities of practice is problematic because of the limited numbers of staff with direct experience of UK Higher Education (Cox, 2005, p.532). The evidence reveals a wider focus for staff development is required to support the development of learning and teaching approaches. Moreover, the evidence reveals that leaders and practitioners working in the Egyptian HEI seek opportunities for closer engagement with the UK HE to develop new perspectives on learning, teaching and assessment.

Finally, the evidence reveals the critical role of equity and social justice in TNE collaborative provision (Fraser and Nash, 2014). The evidence identifies a requirement for the development of effective relationships, informed by respect

and dialogue, in the operation of UK TNE as well as a requirement to invest in the development of social capital to enable this (Bolton and Nie, 2010). This identifies a requirement for consideration of how the challenges of extension and of intensity are addressed (Fraser and Nash, 2014). The evidence further reveals staff must have the skills and dispositions to enable their effective work in UK TNE contexts. This suggests practitioners and leaders require support to develop appropriate dispositions and skills to work effectively in UK TNE contexts. It reveals greater clarity is required to identify the skills and dispositions needed by staff in each HEI to address the challenges of extension and intensity (Fraser and Nash, 2014, p.53).

7.3 Recommendations for policy

This research identifies developing understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards in an Egyptian TNE context is marked by complexity. Moreover, the impact of complexity is not fully appreciated by policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners. Consideration of the impact that complexity has is required if UK TNE is to deliver its promise of providing an alternative to current higher education provision in order to provide students with an educational experience that is transformational. A transformational educational experience should not only support future employability opportunities, but develop students' capacity to critique knowledge, influence and lead development within their profession and wider society, and provide opportunities for the development of alternatively conceived futures to be able to live a good life. To enable this, the following areas are recommended for consideration by policy makers:

- a. UK QAA and UK HEIs involved in delivery of UK TNE: To establish forums in the UK which enable active participation by different stakeholders involved in UK TNE to meet the challenges of extension and intensity (Fraser and Nash, 2014, p.3) and to develop shared understandings of UK threshold standards.
- b. Senior leadership team in each HEI: To identify how quality assurance requirements from different national domains can be better aligned to support delivery of UK TNE. This is to support enhancement of UK threshold standards and to reduce the administrative load on academic staff.

- c. Senior leadership team in each HEI: To identify how professional services roles in TNE contexts can be developed where such roles do not currently exist to support understandings, mediation and safeguarding UK threshold standards.
- d. Senior leadership team in each HEI: To identify the resourcing requirements, and develop a resourcing model, required to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding of UK threshold standards in an Egyptian TNE context. This is to ensure appropriate resource requirements needed to support interpretation, translation and alignment processes are in place to support understanding, mediation and safeguarding UK threshold standards on an ongoing basis. These requirements should be elaborated and documented in TNE agreements.
- e. Senior leadership team in each HEI: To identify the ongoing staff development requirements needed by staff responsible for UK threshold standards in TNE contexts. In particular, the development of a training programme with a focus on learning, teaching and assessment practices to support understandings, mediation and safeguarding UK threshold standards in TNE contexts. These requirements should be elaborated and documented in TNE agreements.
- f. Senior leadership team in each HEI: To identify the skills and dispositions required by staff involved in UK TNE collaboration to engage effectively in UK TNE required to develop sustainable collaborative provision with partners.

7.4 Recommendations for practice

The development of practice is recommended in the areas outlined in the findings to include:

- a. Head of Quality Assurance in each HEI: To better align quality assurance systems from the two national systems within the Egyptian HEI to reduce the administrative load on academic staff.
- b. Staff in leadership roles for Learning and Teaching in each HEI: To develop understanding of how assessment for learning can be developed with staff teams.

- c. Senior staff in each HEI responsible for Learning and Teaching: To identify forums to enable closer cooperation between practitioners and leaders in the two national contexts including opportunities for sharing practice.
- d. Senior Leadership Team and Head of Staff Development: To expand the scope of staff development through the development of a structured programme with a focus on learning, teaching and assessment for learning.
- e. Head of Student Admissions: To establish forums with schools to enable greater interaction and understanding of the requirements for UK HE study in a TNE context including a review of student entry requirements.

7.5 Recommendations for further research

Further research is recommended in the areas outlined in the findings to explore:

- a. How different notions of threshold standards that operate in TNE contexts can be aligned to enable understanding of the principles and values which inform UK threshold standards.
- b. The significance and impact that different national staffing models have on how UK thresholds standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded in TNE contexts and the impact of this on the sustainability of TNE collaborative provision.
- c. The significance and impact of the private sector context on how UK thresholds standards are understood, mediated and safeguarded.
- d. The significance and impact of safeguarding requirements on the development of learning and teaching.
- e. The role of professional services staff, including the effect of underdeveloped professional services in TNE contexts, in the understanding, mediation and safeguarding UK threshold standards.

7.6 Limitations of the study

First, the ethical approval required from the University of Leicester before conducting this study required the two HEIs and all participants remain

anonymous. This was to protect participants from potential harm if their identities were disclosed and also to protect the two HEIs given the commercial nature of their relationship in a competitive TNE environment. This necessitated careful presentation of the TNE context, use of relevant documentation from the two HEIs, as well as in discussion of the findings. However, a fuller description of the research context would helpfully locate the research and its findings particularly given the dynamic higher education landscape in Egypt and TNE more generally.

Second, this research was located in one faculty of the Egyptian HEI and explored the experience of staff responsible for two different programmes. However, it would also be helpful if the findings could be compared to the experience of staff in a different faculty and set of programmes to confirm how academic subject matter as well as faculty and programme management impacts understanding, mediation and safeguarding issues.

7.7 Personal reflection

The opportunity to conduct this research has impacted my professional development as an educational leader in Higher Education. The opportunity to complete the EdD programme, the support and feedback from my supervisors, as well as the involvement of all participants, has provided me with an important understanding of the research process. These understandings, and the insights provided, will impact and shape my future career. The research process has enabled me to better understand my positioning as an educational leader in a TNE HE context and my relationship to practice in different national contexts. Importantly, the research has provided me important insights into how policy is understood and enacted in different national contexts as well as the different factors that both constrain and enable this. In doing so, I have developed an understanding of the requirement to ensure all voices are represented who are involved in the complexity of TNE provision and safeguarding UK threshold standards and aligning them with Egyptian threshold standards in an Egyptian TNE context. Through the research process, I have committed to listening to these voices with a need for careful consideration of how this can be achieved to ensure an inclusive

participation is reflected through the research findings. Importantly, I now understand that complexity of UK TNE is an important characteristic which I now seek to better understand through my practice and future work with colleagues.

7.8 Conclusion

UK TNE provides learners in different TNE contexts opportunity for engaging in learning to meet UK threshold standards as well as attainment levels beyond this. In doing so learners in UK TNE can experience new ways of learning that involve them in the co-creation of knowledge, the development of transferable skills so creating new perspectives with which they can shape their future lives, engagement with the professions and wider society. If UK TNE is to provide this opportunity significant resources and development work are required to enable educational leaders and practitioners working in UK TNE contexts to understand, mediate and safeguard UK threshold standards in a way that supports students' development, learning and future career prospects.

Appendices

Appendix 1: UK threshold standards (QAA, 2014n, p.26)

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6: Bachelor's degree with honours

- The descriptor provided for this level of the FHEQ is for any bachelor's degree with honours which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor can also be used as a reference point for other level 6 qualifications, including bachelor's degrees, graduate diplomas etc.

Bachelor's degrees with honours are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline
- an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline

conceptual understanding that enables the student:

- to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline
- to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline
- an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge
- the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline)

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects

- critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem
- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

And holders will have:

the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
- the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.
- Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this, the holder will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment. The holder of such a qualification will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements and to communicate them effectively.

37 Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours should have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.

38 Bachelor's degrees with honours form the largest group of higher education qualifications. Typically, learning outcomes for these programmes would be expected to be achieved on the basis of study equivalent to three full-time academic years and lead to awards with titles such as Bachelor of Arts, BA (Hons) or Bachelor of Science, BSc (Hons).

In addition to bachelor's degrees at this level are short courses and professional 'conversion' courses, based largely on undergraduate material, and taken usually by those

Appendix 2: Participant information sheet

Researcher

Mr Kevin Millam, Postgraduate Research Student, Leicester University, Leicester

Email: xxxx

Address: xxxxx

You are invited to take part in this research study. The following explains why the research is being done and what it will involve.

What is the purpose of this study?

This research project is the focus of my doctoral research at Leicester University. I recognise the important role that Egyptian Standards have alongside UK Threshold Standards and my research seeks to understand how knowledge is transmitted, exchanged, and co-created regarding the mediation of threshold standards. Specifically, the research seeks to explore how staff working in an Egyptian private university, delivering UK undergraduate degrees, understand the concept of UK Threshold Standards, and how these are mediated and safeguarded within a transnational higher education context. It seeks to understand what staff think constitutes effective practice.

Why you are being asked to take part?

My research seeks to understand the experience of staff delivering UK transitional Higher Education within an Egyptian private university and so your contribution, and the insights that you can provide, are very important. This is particularly the case given that most research in this area has not acknowledged the role and experience of staff delivering such programmes.

I would appreciate the opportunity to interview you because I want to understand your experience of working on a UK validated programme within an Egyptian context: I am particularly interested in your views of how your programme has developed, as well as your experience of teaching, learning and assessment. Your experience is very important and seeking to understand it will provide new insights into how Threshold Standards are mediated within transnational settings.

How much time is needed and what will happen if you decide to take part?

I will ask you to sign a consent form and will invite you to take part in an individual interview. The interview will take about an hour. If you are willing to be interviewed, I would like to record our interview but will also bring paper to take notes if you prefer.

How will your participation be kept anonymous and confidential?

Your contributions to interviews will be treated and stored confidentially as required by the Research Ethics Code of Leicester University. Any views expressed will be given in confidence, and any quotes used will be anonymised. Data will be stored securely on a password protected computer, and backed up in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003. It is important to note that you can withdraw from the research at any time. If you are willing to take part in this research, would you please sign and return the consent form.

Why is your participation in this research project important?

My research seeks to understand the experience of staff delivering UK transitional Higher Education and so your contribution, and the insights that you can provide, are very valuable. I trust that you will be willing to share your experience with me in the knowledge that your contribution will be kept fully confidential and that all participants will be kept anonymous as part of the research process. This research project is the focus of my doctoral research at Leicester University and I would like in future to subsequently publish findings from it.

Finally

If you are willing to take part in this research, would you please sign below and return this form to me before data collection takes place, or I can give you a form to sign at the start of the interview.

If you would like to ask any questions concerning this process, please feel free to email me on xxxxx or telephone me on xxxxx.

Thank you.

Kevin Millam

Appendix 3: Participant consent form

Please tick the statement and provide your details

#		Yes	No
1	I understand the participant information sheet for this study and have had the opportunity to ask any questions.		
2	I agree to take part in the above study.		
3	I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time.		
4	I agree to interviews being audio recorded.		

Name of participant:

Signature:

Date:

Email address:

Researcher

Mr Kevin Millam, Postgraduate Research Student, Leicester University

Email: xxxxx

Appendix 4: Semi structured interview tool

#	Frame
	Preamble
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Thank for participating in this project.2. The project seeks to understand how staff understand the concept of UK threshold standards. Your responses will be very important to this and I appreciate your time and involvement.3. The interview has 4 sections and it will take about an hour. Please answer the questions as you think most appropriate.4. Shall we begin?
	Ice breaker
	You are teaching on this dual award degree programme that has UK and Egyptian accreditation, what do you enjoy about doing that?
1.0	Frame 1 - How do staff describe and understand UK Threshold Standards?
1.1	What are academic standards? 1.1a Prompt The literature suggests Standards are, ‘judgments about the comparability of different levels of underlying academic achievement can be made by <i>different judges</i> , in <i>different places</i> , at different times from <i>different evidence</i> ’ (emphasis added) (Sadler 2014, p124) how does this definition connect with your view of standards? Probe Could you give me an example? Reflect back You seem to be saying that
1.2	What are the key characteristics of UK Threshold Standards?

1.2a Prompt

What do you mean by Threshold Standards? (Do you mean a pass linked to the marking criteria linked to the brief/exam questions, linked to the intended learning outcomes, and linked to the programme specification?)

1.2b Prompt

If you think about the module and programme that you teach on, what would you say are the key Threshold Standards?

1.2c Prompt

The QAA statement of UK Threshold Standards establishes a minimum requirement that graduates must demonstrate in a number of areas. A key purpose of this is to ensure that graduates have the qualities needed for future employment (4.15.2). What are your views on this and how does this relate to, (a) the module you teach and (b) the programme overall?

[See the extent to which responses refer to UK Threshold Standards including (4.15): (a) systematic understanding of knowledge; (b) conceptual understanding; (c) techniques of analysis; (d) management of own learning; (e) communication skills; (f) initiative, personal responsibility and decision making as well as, (g) the learning skills required for future development.]

1.2d Prompt

How does this conception of Threshold Standards compare to the Egyptian conception of Threshold Standards?

1.2e Prompt

What are the strengths of students meeting these different standards in your programme?

1.2f Prompt

What are the barriers of students meeting these standards? (For example, Students may not have engaged with these transferable skills at school, so it

Frame

is very difficult to facilitate learning activities that enable students to meet these standards).

Probe

Can you give me an example of that please?

Reflect back

You seem to be saying that

2. Frame 2 – How do staff describe the impact that different national norms and regulatory requirements have on the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards?

2.1 Could you outline the different ways in which you seek to work with students on your module, to ensure that UK Threshold Standards are met?

2.1a Prompt

How do you ensure that the module you teach on is aligned to the UK Threshold Standards? (Including, (a) the module's ILOs, (b) Teaching and Learning Strategy, (c) Assessment Strategy and, (d) Feedback Strategy).

2.1b Prompt

How does the module you teach on support the development of Threshold Standards within the overall context of Programme? (This might include a focus on, (a) Student Centred Teaching and Learning approaches, (b) the focus of different degree years, (d) assessment design through the programme, (e) support for students, (f) provision of internships, (g) the final year dissertation and (h) programme regulations).

2.1c Prompt

How are these processes and approaches informed by Egyptian norms?

2.2 Could you tell me what impact you think regulatory requirements and processes have on the safeguarding of Threshold Standards?

Frame

2.2a Prompt

What processes of monitoring enable you to meet the requirements for the safeguarding of standards of UK HE provision in your module and your programme? (This might include, (a) peer review, (b) double marking, (c) the role of external examining, and (d) the role of Subject Advisors/Link Tutors).

2.2b Prompt

What committees, leadership and management teams, and other University departments or central services are important for you in the mediation and safeguarding of standards?

2.2c Prompt

Are there any other processes which are particularly important?

2.2d Prompt

What are the barriers to safeguarding the Threshold Standards?

2.2e Prompt

How do you resolve any tensions between different understandings of the requirements?

Probe

Can you give me an example of that please?

3. Frame 3 - What resources and strategies do staff make use of in the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards?

- 3.1 Could you tell me what opportunities you have in your programme team to develop shared understandings of Threshold Standards and what strategies and resources you use to support this? (Staff induction, programme team meetings, team teaching, joint marking, committees, staff development, Subject Advisors/Link Tutors, External Examiner, etc).

3.1a Prompt

Frame

Do you have opportunities to build communities of practice with colleagues to develop the threshold standards? (including, (a) in the programme, (b) in the Faculty, (c) in the University, and (d) with the UK validating university?).

3.1b Prompt

What have been the most effective opportunities to share and develop common understandings of Threshold Standards?

3.1c Prompt

What are the barriers to establishing shared understandings of Threshold Standards?

3.1d Prompt

How do you resolve any tensions between different understandings?

Probe

Could you give me an example of that?

Reflect back

You seem to be saying that

4. Frame 4 - How do staff describe the ways they would develop the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards?

4.1 What resources and strategies would you like to mediate the Threshold Standards?

4.1 a Prompt

The literature suggests that government policy and university leaders agree the regulations for transnational degree programmes, but lack an understanding of how these programmes will be implemented, assessed and standards safeguarded in classrooms. What is your view on this?

Frame

Probe

Can you give me an example of that?

Reflect back

You seem to be saying that.....

4.2 How would you like to develop different approaches to the mediation and development of the UK Threshold and Egyptian Threshold Standards?

4.2a Prompt

How would you like to build effective communities of practice (a) in the programme, (b) in the Faculty, (c) in the University, (d) nationally, and (e) with the UK?

4.2 b Prompt

How would this optimise learning?

Probe

Could you give an example of that?

Closing frame

- That concludes my questions
 - Do you have any further observation?
 - Thank you for your contributions.
-

Appendix 5: Profile of the sample

#	Post holder	Total	Gender		Nationality		
			M	F	EG	UK	Other
1.0	Egyptian HEI staff in an institutional leadership position						
1.1	Vice President (Teaching & Learning)	1	1	0	0	1	0
1.2	University Registrar	1	0	1	0	1	0
1.3	Head of Quality and Validation	1	1	0	1	0	0
1.4	Head of Staff Development	1	0	1	0	1	0
2.0	Egyptian HEI staff in a faculty leadership position						
2.1	Dean	1	0	1	1	0	0
2.2	Vice Dean (Teaching & Learning)	1	0	1	1	0	0
2.3	Head of Department	2	0	2	2	0	0
2.4	Programme Director	2	1	1	2	0	0
2.5	Senior Assistant Registrar	1	0	1	0	1	0
3.0	Egyptian HEI staff responsible for academic delivery on an undergraduate programme						
3.1	Module Leader	9	3	6	6	1	2
4.0	Egyptian HEI staff responsible for supporting academic delivery on an undergraduate programme						
4.1	Assistant Lecturer	3	0	3	3	0	0
4.2	Teaching Assistant	3	1	2	3	0	0
5.0	UK HEI staff responsible for collaborative provision with the Egyptian HEI						
5.1	PVC Learning and Teaching	1	0	1	0	1	0
5.2	Academic Director of Collaborative Partnerships	1	0	1	0	1	0
5.3	Head of Quality	1	0	1	0	1	0
5.4	Link Tutor	2	2	0	0	2	0
5.5	Chair of Exam Board	1	1	0	0	1	0
		32	11	21	19	11	2
		100%	34%	66%	60%	34%	6%

Appendix 6: Coding sheet

#	Code	Nature of associated quotes
<i>Icebreaker: Reasons given for UK validation of undergraduate degree programmes</i>		
0.1	Standards	Standards / Reputation of UK HE / Quality / Foreign / English language /
0.2	Marketing	Traditions / Values / Foreign v local
<i>Frame 1: How participants describe the notion of Standards and UK Threshold Standards</i>		
1a	How participants describe the notion of standards	Requirements / Rules / Regulations / Independent / Quality / Aspirations/ Enable behaviours / Provide a benchmark for comparison/ Recognise achievement / Student ready to progress or graduate
1b	How participants describe the key characteristics of UK threshold standards	Minimum knowledge and skills / Preparation for employment / Incremental / Anticipate future needs / Need a vision beyond / Employment market in Egypt complex
1c	Factors identified by participants that impact how standards are understood	Complex / Paper and practice / Vague statements / Open to interpretation / Need careful implementation / Practice and discussion required / Takes time to understand / Informed by previous experience / Resentments / Needs practical implementation to understand
1d	Students' ability to meet Threshold Standards	Students' ability to meet threshold standards / English language / Motivation / Previous educational experience / Egyptian track
<i>Frame 2: How participants describe the impact of different national norms and regulatory requirements on the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards</i>		
2a	Programme design	Programme specification / Module specifications / ILOs / Assessment strategy /Supreme Council of Universities
2b	Teaching and learning	Teaching / Preparatory Year / Induction / Students as active learners / Incremental / Independence / Egyptian notions of teaching / Critical skills / Transferable skills / Support / Lack of pedagogical awareness / Complex employment

#	Code	Nature of associated quotes
		market / Role of TAs / Student engagement / Ability to address issues through teaching
2c	Assessment	Assessment design / Criteria / Marking / Moderation / Egyptian notions of assessment / Processes required
2d	Role of UK validating HEI	Manner of the relationship / Lack of partnership
2e	Role of the External Examiner	Checks / Assessment / Feedback
2f	Perceived national differences	UK approaches / Egyptian approaches / Resistances / Chauvinism / QAA / Bureaucratic / Legal status of University / NAQAAE / Micromanagement / Bewildered / Egyptian notions of hierarchy / Administration required / Learnt processes but not the ethos / Role of regulation / Locus of decision / Private
<i>Frame 3: Resources that participants make use of in the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards</i>		
3a	Staff recruitment and staffing	Quality of staff / Part time staff / Job roles / Roles not the same in Egyptian system / Employ graduates as TAs
3b	Staff development	Collegiality / Learning from colleagues / Mentors / Induction / Staff development / Practical sessions not conceptual / Role models / Egyptian notions of seniority / Capacity building
3c	Role of the UK validating HEI	Dual role: monitoring and development / QAA requirements / How staff benefited from the relationship / Limited understanding of UK partner / Requirements of the role of Link Tutor or Subject Advisor / Actions taken by validating partner to secure standards or to enhance / Role of UK validating university required on ongoing basis to maintain standards / Transitions / Need for clear roles of staff from UK validating university
3d	Governance, regulation and quality assurance	Governance / Regulations / Documentation / Committees / Meetings / Systems / Checks / Quality Cycle / Power of senior post holders / Custom & practice

#	Code	Nature of associated quotes
<i>Frame 4: Different or additional resources that participants would like to enable alternative approaches to the mediation and safeguarding of UK Threshold Standards</i>		
4a	Links to UK and other professional bodies	Increased internationalisation / Staff & student exchanges / New teaching strategies / Joint research
4b	New approaches	Use of technology / Developing teaching / Student support

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