TNE - What we know

Local and global impact

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Introduction

British Council has researched TNE for over two decades and has built up a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the role TNE plays and the environments in which it operates.

This brief summarises some of the findings from British Council research papers published since summer 2022 which relate to Action 4 within our TNE Strategy: "Support TNE to contribute to the transformation of local education systems and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)".

This is only a summary of a small window of our research – see the back page for how to find out more.

UK TNE is perceived as having an internationalising role that helps to build prosperity and facilitates ambitions to attract international investment and development.

Local and global impact

Local impact

TNE can have an impact on a significant number of local priorities. It can address local labour market needs through programmes focused on identified skills gaps and produces graduates with relevant high-level knowledge and skills. Many TNE providers are actively looking to identify and meet future labour market needs. UK TNE is perceived as having an internationalising role that helps to build prosperity and facilitates ambitions to attract international investment and development. In some contexts, local stakeholders believe that UK TNE programmes attract international students who will join the labour market with knowledge and skills that can support global business needs. For students, the language capital of TNE programmes taught in English also increases employment opportunities with multinational companies in-country. And where providers establish international branch campuses, they have a direct and positive impact on the local economy, providing employment for administrative and ancillary staff as well as academic staff.

This is exemplified by the educational component of Kazakh government reforms set out in Kazakhstan – 2050, and the engagement of 14 UK tertiary providers with counterpart institutions through our Interlinks programme. Policy dialogues were held over a six-month period to plan the development of strategies for TNE, with outcomes focused towards creating specific TNE tools, products and/or structures, to develop entrepreneurial skills in the creative industries.

The contribution of TNE to the transformation of local education systems extends beyond undergraduate programmes to promote the growth and development of postgraduate and PhD research. Research collaboration enhances the capability of partner institutions and helps to mitigate against potential brain drain, but also plays a key role in developing academic competencies and building faculty capacity for joint teaching programmes. The expansion of TNE to include micro-credentials (short, on demand, online courses, with certification on completion) targeting specific pathways to employment also has the potential to expand the UK provider base *beyond the usual players* (see our TNE Strategy, page 41).

Global impact

TNE, and international partnerships in HE more broadly, make an importnat contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Case studies in the TNE Impact Repository suggest that UK TNE supports the implementation of SDGs, with significant impact generated at local and global levels.

Our research provides strong evidence that TNE partnerships are a primary driver in achieving the SDGs. They play a critical role in the area of education, gender, and equality. The ethos and direction of many TNE programmes are seen by host country partners to align strongly with several of the SDGs, in particular, quality education (SDG 4); gender equality (SDG 5); inclusive economic growth (SDG 8); and disability inclusion (SDG 10).

SDGs	Examples of international HE partnerships which contribute
SDG 1: No poverty	Access to education
SDG 2: Zero hunger	Research on agri-food, nutrition and sustainable consumption
SDG 3: Good health and well-being	Research on various health topics, services scale-up, communication campaigns
SDG 4: Quality education	Curriculum development, infrastructure investment, academic and student mobility
SDG 5: Gender equality	Women's position in academia, tackling sexual violence and feminine healthcare
SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation	Dam building, ecosystem management, equitable water use
SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy	Training engineering lecturers, renewable energy themes in education
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth	Working conditions, equal pay, HE-industry collaboration
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Locally relevant innovation in production, logistics
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities	Access to labour markets, research on employability

SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities	Community outreach, solutions to local challenges
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production	Innovation in agriculture, sustainable production principles
SDG 13: Climate action	Climate change research, pathways to sustainable greenhouse gas emissions
SDG 14: Life below water	Maritime research
SDG 15: Life on land	Research on ecosystems
SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions	Development and transformation of institutions
SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals	Contribution to how partnerships can be more impactful in the future

Source: International HE Partnerships and the SDGs pages 5-6

However, the impact of TNE on this global change agenda presents a mixed picture. On the one hand, the in-country delivery of UK HE programmes brings educational opportunities within reach of populations who would be unable to travel internationally to study. On the other hand, TNE programmes remain unaffordable for many, as fees are often determined on a cost-recovery basis. However, in a survey of over 100 higher education stakeholders involved in the delivery or regulation of TNE in both host and provider countries, *68 per cent of survey respondents pointed to TNE widening access for students from underrepresented socioeconomic groups, contributing to better gender balance (63 per cent), and widening access for underrepresented ethnicities (37 per cent)* (The Value of TNE Partnerships page 6).

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is a key consideration for global tertiary education. In all countries, EDI issues may be related to ethnicity, disability, gender equality across academic disciplines, and access across socio-economic classes. There are some positive signs of progressive thinking about a more equitable future for tertiary education, alongside opportunities for TNE providers to contribute. In Mexico, for example, the government aspires to develop 100 new universities, and make tertiary education free to all students, with 100% geographical coverage, and a determined focus on the indigenous population and low-income families. The Egypt Vision 2030 sets out an ambitious plan to *expand access to quality education for everyone, with no discrimination and to provide adequate classrooms for all social groups in both rural and urban areas, with particular consideration for the needs of individuals with disabilities* (pages 61-2).

And in India, planned liberalisation of online and distance education may be used *to widen access to HE to atypical student groups, including those in rural areas or HE cold spots, and learners with family or work responsibilities* (The Value of TNE Partnerships, page 24).

Information and knowledge

Realising the potential of TNE – to transform lives locally and promote sustainability globally – is not without its challenges. The key to meeting many of these challenges is the better availability of information and insight. Through our Going Global conference, our Deep Dialogue events, and published research and insight reports, we strive to create a dynamic international community of practice to exchange and disseminate mutual understanding and support the development of UK TNE. We endeavour to facilitate negotiations between UK providers and local institutions to shape policy and to support their efforts to reach agreement on the alignment of regulatory systems and quality assurance.

This can often be a challenging and lengthy process, aptly summed up in the TNE landscape report on Indonesia and the UK: *institutions should not expect quick outcomes. Instead, lay the groundwork with partners and be responsive to opportunities as they arise* (page 14).

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Research

To find out more

British Council's research and insight on TNE (and other areas of international higher education) can be accessed via the following pages:

Research and insight | British Council

Opportunities and insight | British Council

On the local impact of TNE activity, see our report on The Value of TNE Partnerships pages 20-53. Information on the Interlinks programme came from the "Assessment of the Interlinks Grants Scheme on Transnational Education Strategies between UK and Kazakhstan universities" (to be published).

On micro-credentials, see the relevant QAA Characteristics Statement

On the contribution of TNE to achieving SDGs, see our report on International HE Partnerships and the SDGs and also The Value of TNE Partnerships at pages 15-19.

The Higher Education Sustainability Initiative discusses integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into Higher Education. For a detailed perspective on the role of education in the SDGs, see J. D. Sachs et al. (2019), Six Transformations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals Nature Sustainability 2: 805–14