

# Challenges for Australian TNE

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According to Woodhouse (2011, p. 43) “Education is now (2010) the third or fourth largest export earner for Australia (behind coal, iron, and sometimes gold)”. Transnational education has been viewed by some as a potential threat to educational sovereignty, cultural security and public education in importing countries (Jianxin, 2009) while others consider TNE as a provider of value to the host country by others (Stella & Woodhouse, 2011, p. 15).

Layton and Clarke (2011, p. 153) refer to “compatible education partners” as one of the key success factors for TNE operations. Similarly Bolton and Nie (2010) emphasise the need for agreement between partners and an alignment of stakeholders on key issues such as curriculum design, pedagogy, program design and student outcomes to deliver quality in transnational higher education. Nanda (2011, p. 232) advocates the “appreciation of the venture in different cultural contexts without compromising threshold quality” for the partnership to be beneficial in TNE.

Studies on Australian transnational programmes in Asia indicate a need “to respond to local conditions, regional forces and global factors rather than being locked into a standard model” (Pimpa, 2009). Similarly Yeo et al. (2011) highlight the need to contextualise the curriculum and recognise that “total uniformity is not essential for quality assurance purposes”. Heffernan et al. (2010) raise the issues of differences in culture and learning styles between business students in Australia and China to conclude that “program managers need to consider these differences when structuring course offerings for students in China”.

While demand for transnational education (TNE) by Australian universities is projected to be strong in the coming years (Bohm, Davis, & Meares, 2002 cited in Jianxin 2009, p.635), a number of challenges persist including quality assurance and control (Bolton & Nie, 2010; Stella & Bhushan, 2011; Yeo, et al., 2011), differences in culture and learning styles (Heffernan, et al., 2010; Pimpa, 2009) and TNE partnerships (Layton & Clarke, 2011; Nanda, 2011).

It is encouraging that emerging themes in the literature like these resonate strongly with the research findings of this ALTC priority project on TNE Assessment Moderation.

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