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# Supporting Transnational Education in the Philippines through the development of a TNE Toolkit

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## Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

## Abstract

Transnational Education (TNE) has played a strategic role in internationalisation agendas, and while many forms of TNE exist, shared emphasis is on the mobility of programmes and providers across borders. This presentation focuses on the development of TNE within the Philippines, referencing the development of a TNE Toolkit for the Philippines, led by the UK's Advance HE in collaboration with the British Council Philippines, as part of a national commitment to support capacity development for TNE. The Toolkit development, which uses a co-creation approach with key stakeholders, draws on and recognises the insight, expertise, and experience of those engaged in Philippine TNE and those that support it. The paper provides a reflective account of this ongoing development, how stakeholder engagement is shaping the Toolkit to reflect the ethos of Philippine TNE, and outlines the challenges and benefits of a co-creation approach for all those involved in its development.

## Full paper

Within higher education, there has been a strong strategic drive towards internationalisation (de Witt & Altbach, 2021) and Transnational Education (TNE) has played a key role in that agenda (Smith, 2020). In relation to mobilities, the focus of TNE is not on the mobility of students, or of staff (although both can, and do, move in TNE), but on the movement of programmes and providers (Knight & McNamara, 2017) across borders. Approaches to TNE can vary widely with differing roles and responsibilities for foreign and local partners (Knight, 2016). The permutations for TNE are multitude and decisions made are often based on the motivation for programme and provider mobility.

This paper will focus on TNE and its development in the Philippines, with particularly reference to the development of a TNE Toolkit for the Philippines, the development of which was led by the UK's Advance HE, in collaboration with the British Council Philippines. It provides a reflective account of the ongoing development of the Toolkit, through a co-creation approach, and outlines the benefits and challenges of such an approach. Additionally, it shows how the Toolkit development sits within a national commitment to TNE and support for capacity development for TNE engagement.

Within the Philippines, there has been strong national support for TNE. In 2015, a moratorium on the establishment of TNE programmes was lifted as the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) confirmed its support for the development of borderless teaching and learning, to the benefit of Philippine students and universities (British Council, 2016). In August 2019, the Philippines passed the Transnational Higher Education Act (Republic Act (RA) 11448), which allows foreign universities to provide education services in the Philippines through partnering with a local institution, thus providing a policy environment conducive to internationalisation through TNE and also opening up opportunities to further develop TNE through a diversification of models and approaches. Through collaborative projects between CHED and the British Council, a commitment to inclusive and internationally connected higher education has been demonstrated, and as part of this commitment the development of a TNE Toolkit to provide support to those seeking to engage in TNE in and with the Philippines.

The development of the Toolkit uses elements of cooperative inquiry (Heron & Reason, 2001), which draws on and recognises the insight, expertise, and experience of those engaged in Philippine TNE and those that support it. Through a series of ongoing participatory and reflective activities, stakeholders, with a range of TNE expertise and experience, have been invited to contribute to the Toolkit in terms of its design, coverage and content to ensure relevance to the Philippine context and to benefit from alignment with existing TNE development projects (e.g. Joint Development of Niche Programmes through Philippine-UK linkages). Here the stakeholders are contributors in the project, rather than research subjects, and are involved in the co-creation of the final output.  A number of important considerations have already been identified, including: finding and working with partners; accreditation and recognition of qualifications; cultural differences; the impact of COVID and movement to more widespread digital technologies; and engagement with UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals. Before finalising the Toolkit, a validation activity will be carried out with a different constituency of stakeholders, who have not contributed to the development and process of production previously, to develop and further enrich the Toolkit through examples and case studies.

The benefits of a co-creation approach are early engagement and investment in the Toolkit and the continuing fostering of a community of TNE experts who can support the future development of TNE in the Philippines, and thus contribute to its ongoing impact (Greenhalgh et al, 2016). Aside from the challenge of time for engagement, some challenges related to the Toolkit development are a result of the complexity of TNE itself, and the different models and modes that it employs. The Toolkit needs to reflect those differences, and the different experiences that co-creators bring, in providing useful general guidance to a wide audience, while at the same time capturing the essence, drive, and ethos of TNE in the Philippines.

As TNE becomes more strategically important, globally, the Toolkit development addresses both the transactional as well as transformative expectations of a Toolkit by providing opportunities for professional learning for all involved in its development, and for the students and the institutions that the resulting TNE will serve.

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