

Environment for Transnational Education  
Partnerships and UK Qualifications:  
Challenges and Opportunities

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# The Philippines and the UK

Findings and recommendations  
from primary research

Part of Going Global Partnerships



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# 1. Introduction

This report considers the opportunities for higher education collaboration between institutions in the Philippines and the UK to develop and extend joint international partnerships in education. While the report attempts to address the wide range of degrees from undergraduate to doctoral level, many of the newly formed partnerships are at the postgraduate level. Given the country's focus on higher education capacity building and the use of transnational education (TNE) to internationalise its universities and colleges, the primary data collection mainly included Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) that are engaged in dual and double master's and doctoral programmes, and a small number of UK HEIs.

The report aims to better understand the environment for TNE and international partnerships and the recognition of international degrees and qualifications. A review of the legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks for international higher education was undertaken. Interviews were then conducted with higher education stakeholders in both countries. These included government departments in the Philippines, higher education leaders from the UK, Philippine institutions, and heads of international

relations. The report contains their views on the opportunities, the main challenges, and how these might be addressed. Their contributions in the interview discussions inform the recommendations.

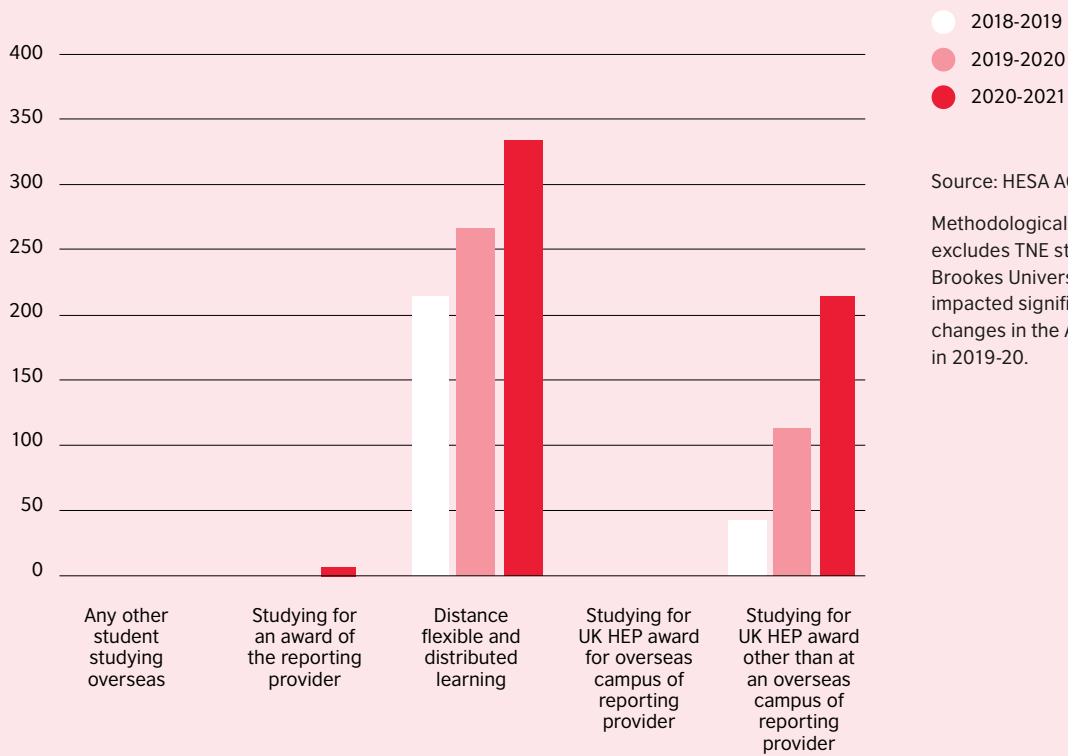
Data in this report is drawn from three sources:

1. Desk research of the regulatory and policy context of higher education in the Philippines.
2. Semi-structured interviews conducted in March and April 2022 with eight stakeholders, including HEIs and the government department overseeing TNE. Seventy-five per cent of the interviewees were women.
3. An online survey collecting broad views on the environment for TNE partnerships with the Philippines. The survey received a limited number of responses, five, of which four met the participation criteria.
4. Analysis of the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency Aggregate Offshore Record (2022) to provide a background on the current position of TNE provision for the academic year 2020-21.

## 2. The current position

There is very little data globally on the international mobility of programmes. The UK's aggregate offshore record reports 580 higher education learners based in the Philippines who were studying towards UK qualifications in 2020-21. A significant proportion of those, 60 per cent (335 students), were enrolled on distance, flexible and distributed learning. There was a steady growth in the number of students over the past three years – TNE learners have doubled between 2018-19 and 2020-21 to reach 580.

**Figure 1: Type of transnational education activity in the Philippines (2020)**



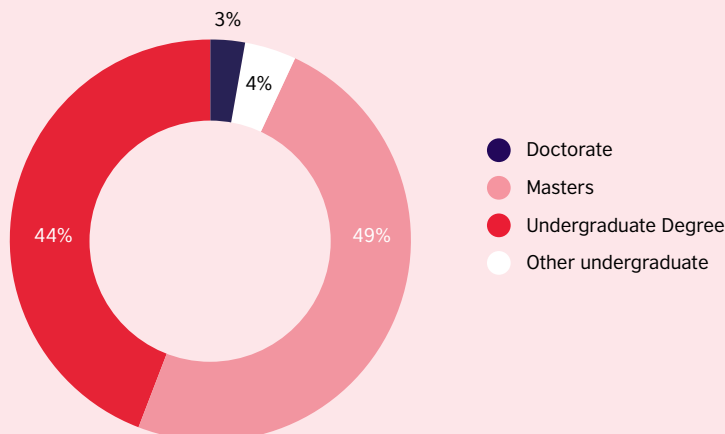
Source: HESA AOR 2022.

Methodological note: The data excludes TNE students at Oxford Brookes University, which was impacted significantly by the changes in the AOR methodology in 2019-20.

Most of the students were studying master’s level courses (275 students, 49 per cent), followed by first-degree students (245 students, 44 per cent).

Three UK institutions collectively account for more than half of the TNE provision (52 per cent), with a further eight HEIs training more than 10 students.

**Figure 2: UK TNE students by level of study**



Source: HESA AOR 2022.

Methodological note: The data excludes TNE students at Oxford Brookes University, which was impacted significantly by the changes in the AOR methodology in 2019-20.

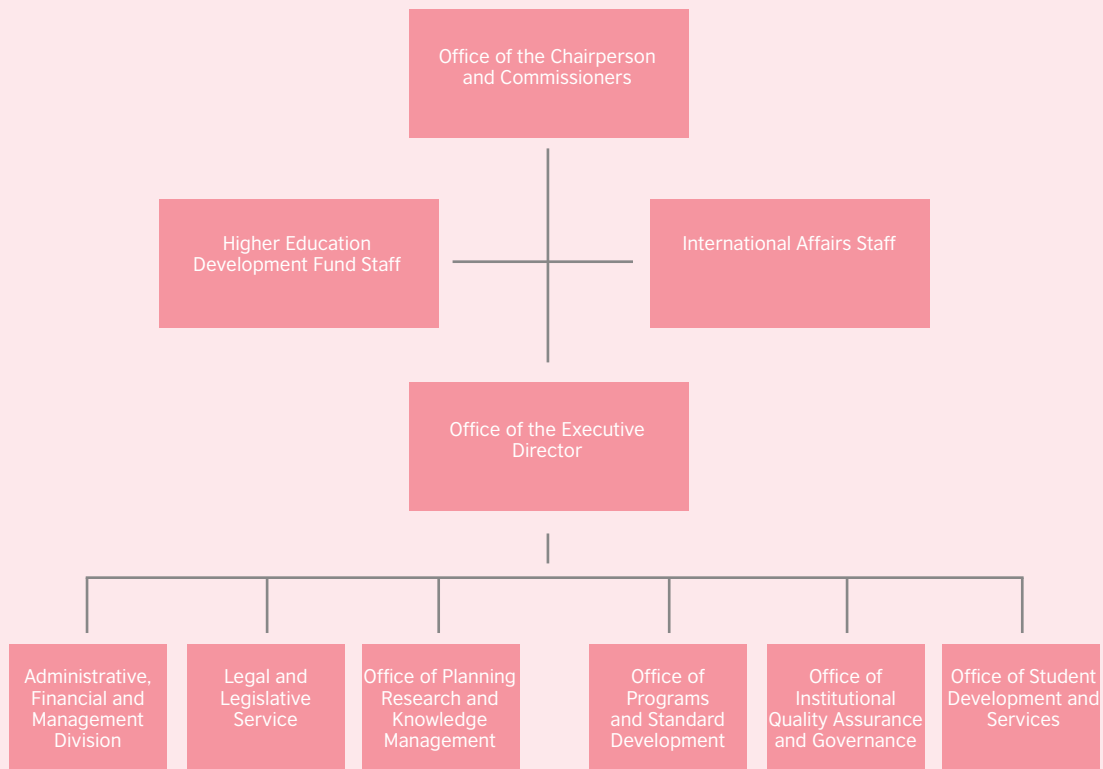
## 2.1 Overview of International Collaboration Policy Landscape

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is the country's regulatory body and is mandated with the formulation of higher education policy. Its vision is that the Philippine higher education system becomes globally competitive and produces high-quality graduates.

The International affairs staff (IAS) is a high-level technical secretariat at CHED tasked with international cooperation and being a 'clearing house' for recognition of agreements relating to international degrees and qualifications. IAS has responsibility for TNE in the country. Having a designated TNE office within IAS contributes to better transparency and accountability in the regulatory oversight of TNE in the Philippines.

In addition to the structure below, CHED operates 17 regional offices. The respective TNE programmes need to be registered with the regional CHED office at the location of delivery.

**Figure 3: Organisational structure of CHED and the International Affairs Staff secretariat**



Source: British Council. <https://ched.gov.ph/ched/official-organization-structure/>



Alongside other responsibilities, CHED is tasked with setting minimum quality standards for programmes and HEIs and the monitoring and evaluation of education programmes and institutions, whose outcome of which may include withdrawal of subsidy, recommendations on the downgrading or withdrawal of accreditation, termination of education programmes and the closure of courses.

The country's Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) legislation from 2019 mandates CHED with the regulation of TNE.<sup>1</sup> This development ensures CHED has the resources to provide support, guidance, and effective regulation promptly. The new TNE Office will operate under IAS as a central function, and equally, at the regional office level. The governance structure of the TNE office is still being discussed, and will most likely be completed once the new TNE national strategy is formulated. The TNE Office will be tasked with the implementation and evaluation of the TNE strategy.

The definition and rules for engaging in TNE are clearly defined. The rationale behind the new TNHE legislation is to advance the Philippine higher education system. The importance of TNE is enshrined in legislation, which stipulates that:

‘the State shall endeavour to modernise the higher education sector and bring international quality standards and expertise into the country, with a view to making higher education globally competitive, attracting a flow of talented students, faculty and staff, and improving the country's human resource base.’

CHED plays an active role in facilitating TNE provision and ensuring that international engagement through TNE supports its capacity building across all educational institutions in the country.<sup>2</sup>

CHED grants autonomous and deregulated status—from three to five years—to private higher education institutions that have consistently shown excellent performance in the provision of education and research. The HEIs with the most autonomous status, also known as Level IV accreditation, do not need CHED's approval to deliver TNE programmes; however, they need to inform the respective CHED's regional office of them.

The latest evaluation took place in 2016, and the outcomes known as the State Universities and Colleges Levelling Results were published by CHED in 2018.<sup>3</sup> A detailed list of state universities and colleges and their respective accreditation levels are published as part of the evaluation. Level IV accreditation requires the respective institution to be ‘excellent in undertaking the full range of functions of a state university/college; namely, instruction, research and extension manifested through teaching effectiveness, research competence, active community service, and efficient management of resources’<sup>5</sup>.

1 Official Gazette (2019, p. 2), Republic Act 11448 <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2019/08aug/20190828-RA-11448-RRD.pdf>.

2 Ibid.

3 See page 57 for Level III and Level IV accreditation stated in the Manual of Regulations for the Private Higher Education; <https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Manual-of-Regulations-for-Private-Higher-Education.pdf>.

Institutions willing to engage in the delivery of distance learning programmes require Level III accreditation. Institutions with lower levels of accreditation can still engage in TNE; however, they attract a significant degree of scrutiny over the programmes they deliver with international partners.

The types of TNE that TNHE legislation supports and recognises include.<sup>4</sup>

- Franchising
- Articulation
- International branch campuses (with a caveat that foreign citizens may constitute up to 80 per cent of the faculty and academic personnel, and up to 40 per cent of the administrative personnel and staff members, in any of the local branches)
- Joint degrees
- Double degrees
- Online, blended and distance learning
- Open distance learning
- Twinning arrangements.

TNHE legislation (Republic Act 11448) provides detailed definitions for the permitted types of TNE.<sup>5</sup>

To support the expansion and the knowledge base of TNE in the Philippines, CHED has invested in an online portal, which serves as a repository for TNE and details all related activities in the country.

It is important to note that any partnerships or other collaborative arrangements between Philippine and overseas HEIs require a memorandum of agreement, which is legally binding and details the arrangement. CHED decides whether the memorandum complies with the national laws.<sup>6</sup>

A significant limitation for foreign HEIs setting intending to set up a branch campus in the country is that it is only permissible through a local partner, and at least 60 per cent of the venture is owned by Filipino citizens.<sup>7</sup> The local partner is tasked with ensuring the quality of the programmes offered. Previous research carried by Universities UK International established that over 90 percent of UK HEIs engaged in TNE have the overall responsibility for the curriculum development and the quality of the respective programmes.<sup>8</sup>

4 See pages 6-8 of the TNHE legislation <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2019/08aug/20190828-RA-11448-RRD.pdf>.

5 Ibid (pages 6-8).

6 See Section 8 of TNHE Law: <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2019/08aug/20190828-RA-11448-RRD.pdf>.

7 The threshold requirements for 60 percent ownership by Filipino citizens are aligned with the foreign investment legislation in the country. For details see Section 9 of the TNHE Law: <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2019/08aug/20190828-RA-11448-RRD.pdf>.

8 UUKi and British Council (2016; page 73). The Scale and Scope of UK Higher Education: Transnational Education. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/scale-and-scope-of-uk-he-tne-report.pdf>.

# 3. Value of teaching partnerships

While TNE is relatively new to the Philippines, there is an appreciation among government officials and local institutions of its potential. Since 2015, CHED has funded several initiatives encouraging the participation of some of the largest universities in TNE initiatives. Two examples of collaborative programmes between CHED and the British Council include the Joint Development of Niche Programmes through PH-UK Linkages (JDNP)<sup>9</sup> and, more recently, Access and Competitiveness through Internationalisation of Higher Education.<sup>10</sup>

HEIs that participated in these programmes have benefited from greater exposure to internationalisation through their TNE programmes. In this context, TNE can promote international visibility and support institutional capacity.

This is echoed by a sample of Philippine HEIs that took part in a British Council study, which looked at the needs of local HEIs. Most of the surveyed HEIs in the Philippines believed that participating in TNE partnerships would enhance their international and regional reputation (95 per cent of the HEIs rated it either as very important (75 per cent) or important (19.6 per cent)), followed by faculty development and training (98 per cent of the HEIs rated it important or very important) and building teaching capacity (96 per cent of the HEIs).<sup>11</sup>

As suggested by several interviewees at Philippine HEIs, the benefits of TNE are summarised at the national, institutional, and individual levels. The value of TNE as perceived by these respondents is summarised below.

## 3.1 Value of TNE partnerships at the national level

The Philippine HEIs interviewed for this report were mainly engaged with UK HEIs in collaborative TNE partnerships delivering dual and double degrees at the master's and doctoral levels. Some of them had experience in TNE partnerships with other countries. In addition to the interviews, the online survey received responses from four HEIs in the Philippines.

At the national level, TNE is perceived to bring the following benefits:

- TNE contributes to national capacity-building in niche subject areas, with a limited number of courses available in the country, that are nonetheless deemed of national importance for future economic development and prosperity.
- TNE collaborations have given the Philippine higher education sector greater international visibility through joint participation in major international conferences, where they showcased their work. The examples referenced included the British Council's Going Global conference, the Asia-Pacific Association for International Education and the European Association for International Education.
- There was an appreciation of the additional benefits that the TNE partnerships, forged under the joint CHED-British Council (BC) programmes, have brought, such as collaborative research outputs.

9 For details on Joint Development of Niche Programmes through PH-UK Linkages, see <https://www.britishcouncil.ph/tne/about>.

10 For details on Access and Competitiveness through Internationalisation of Higher Education, see <https://www.britishcouncil.ph/tne/act-ihe>.

11 Ilieva, J., Postrado, L. and M. Peak (2021), Capacity building and institutional development through TNE in the Philippines, in (Eds Tsiligiris, V., Hill, C and W. Lawton), *Importing Transnational Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Interviews with several HEIs show significant contributions to the sustainability of the local area, such as building sustainable communities, transitioning to sustainable farming and reductions in the usage of pesticides.
- In addition, at the policy level, there is a huge opportunity to develop innovative pedagogies in the training of local faculty, and equally, greater employer engagement
- In parallel to the TNE pilots, schemes were drafted that considered placements and internships as part of the degrees. These aimed at greater engagement between the HEIs and the employers.

A response from a private HEI described the following advantages:

‘Providing platforms/opportunities for Filipino learners, faculty, and experts to participate in global knowledge-building initiatives; (2) upgrading of faculty qualifications; (3) alignment of employability-related outcomes to global standards; (4) new business models for the overall sustainability of schools, especially independent/private institutions; and (5) revisioning/reimagining of the fundamental philosophy of teaching, assessment, and student engagement.’

Significant contribution of the CHED- BC Joint Development of Niche Programmes is the seed funding provided to HEIs. As a result, these partnerships developed beyond their TNE collaboration into joint research outputs. Table 1 shows Newton grants awarded to Philippine HEIs, where the majority of the grantees were participants in the CHED-BC JDNP programme.

**Table 1: Newton grants awarded to Philippine HEIs**

Newton grant	Awarded to Philippine HEIs	Awards to JDNP HEIs in the Philippines	JDNP Awards % of total
%	28	16	57%
Institutional Links	21	12	57%
Workshops	11	9	82%
Travel grants	5	4	80%

Source: British Council.

### 3.2 Value of TNE partnerships at the institutional level

At the institutional level, the benefits include, but are not limited to:

- Upskilling faculty staff to master’s or PhD level as part of the collaboratively run CHED-BC TNE programme.
- Enhancing the capacity of the institution to teach in subject areas and building capability for knowledge and expertise sharing.
- Significant improvements in the league table positions of some of the HEIs participating in the CHED-BC initiative. Examples include Ateneo De Manila, which jumped into the 100 to 200 bracket in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Ranking, from 200 to 300 in previous years. In addition, the number of Philippine universities in the THE Impact Ranking increased from five in 2021 to 15 in 2022.<sup>12</sup>

- Advanced internationalisation of higher education at the sector and institutional level. HEIs value the opportunity to see how their partners are working and how they can improve their internal processes.
- HEIs are benefiting from best practices from international partners, updating of curriculum and instruction content, standards, and directions.
- Participation in the mobility of staff and students to partner HEIs.
- Strong networks and collaborations beyond the respective TNE programmes.
- Strengthened linkages between industry and academia.
- Contributions to enhanced research capabilities, alongside the recruitment of home and international students.

The interviews revealed examples of how universities that benefited from the TNE programmes held dissemination events to share their best practice. For example, Bicol University held events with other local institutions to share experiences on teaching subjects in the broad area of food security systems. To support the dissemination of the learning from the TNE MSc programme in this subject, Bicol University developed a dedicated portal,<sup>13</sup> which celebrates the partnership with the University of Liverpool. In addition, a Facebook page dedicated to the programme was created to widen the engagement with the broader local community.<sup>14</sup>

TNE has acted as an enabler in the Philippines – the case study below shows the benefit of the TNE programmes locally, and how they contribute to the building of sustainable communities in the location of the TNE delivery. In addition, it has also strengthened the engagement between the universities and their local communities.

Another significant outcome of the partnership between Bicol University and the University of Liverpool is the high impact of their collaborative research on the local communities in the Philippines. The case study argues that their collaboration contributed to three UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): a cleaner environment (SDG 13 Climate Action), sustainable farming ((SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities) and improved quality of life (SDG 3: Good health and wellbeing).

13 See <https://bicolu-tne.wixsite.com/home>.

14 See <https://www.facebook.com/butne2017/>.

## Case study: Bicol University (Philippines) – University of Liverpool (UK) MSc in Sustainable Food Systems

### Type of impact:

- Reduced usage of pesticides and a cleaner environment (SDG 13: Climate action).
- Sustainable farming (SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities).
- Improved quality of life (SDG 3: Good health and wellbeing).

### Description

Rice production is one of the Philippines' major agricultural products. However, pomacea canaliculata, commonly known as the golden apple snail, is highly invasive and causes considerable damage to rice crops, estimated to reach more than 50 per cent yield loss. Using pesticides against pomacea canaliculata has led to severe health deterioration in the farming communities.

A master's course jointly developed between Bicol University in the Philippines and the UK's University of Liverpool is expected to enable recent graduates from the MSc in Sustainable Food Systems, who are also faculty members of Bicol University, to perform trials to test the efficacy of the wild yam as part of a field study with rice communities where golden apple snail is a common problem. The findings are documented by a TNE graduate from the Bicol-Liverpool dual degree partnership, and will inform the trials.

As a result, the jointly developed master's programme in food security contributes to a significant reduction in the usage of pesticides in the area. A more sustainable farming approach to rice crops is being developed, which also considerably improves the quality of life of the farming communities in the Bicol province.

### 3.3 Value of TNE partnerships at the individual level

Individual benefits vary according to exposure to and participation in TNE activities. Those who have benefited from TNE degrees shared the following experiences:

- Postgraduate degree awarded from two HEIs – the UK and Philippine HEI. This brings the benefits of recognition across two countries and, equally, the benefits of labour market recognition in two geographies.
- Academic advancement stemming from the higher degree acquired and enhanced research skills and publication record.
- Exposure to international environment and learning.
- Widened networks of collaborators across the two countries.
- The Fire Side Chat series started by students from Bicol University, where they share their learning from studying in the UK with students from other universities in the area.<sup>15</sup>

Staff who have participated in the setup and running of the TNE collaborative CHED-BC TNE programmes have benefited from:

- Know-how on how to set up a successful TNE programme.
- Access to the international networks of the overseas partner institution.
- Knowledge and expertise in TNE programme management.
- Advanced career following the respective master's or doctoral degree undertaken through the TNE route.



# 4. Challenges to international partnerships in the Philippines

While there is strong support for international partnerships at the government level, and a high degree of appreciation by HEIs that have participated in such programmes, there are some challenges too. This section summarises the challenges to forging international partnerships that the interviewees highlighted.

## 4.1 Perceptions and knowledge of each other

One of the significant challenges is the lack of awareness both in the UK and the Philippines about each other's education systems. However, over the past few years, there has been a growing recognition of UK higher education in the Philippines. The UK was the seventh largest study destination for Filipino students in 2017, behind Australia, the USA, New Zealand, Canada, Japan and Saudi Arabia. In 2020, with almost 2,000 students from the Philippines, the UK ranked fourth globally, behind Australia (10,082 students), the USA (3,368 students) and Canada (2,814 students).<sup>16</sup>

Awareness raising on both sides will contribute to improved understanding of each other. The CHED-BC collaborative programmes have contributed to significant knowledge sharing and, most importantly, awareness of both countries' higher education systems and their HEIs.

## 4.2 Recognition of international degrees and qualifications

The Philippines has a range of bilateral mutual recognitions of professional qualifications for certain regulated professions in short supply. Most of these and the mutual recognition agreements are within the Association of South East Nations (ASEAN).

Given the country's ambition to internationalise its higher education system and improve its quality standards, there is a will to grow these arrangements beyond ASEAN. An example of such an effort is the collaboration between CHED and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, which aims to understand better and align the qualifications frameworks of both countries. Given the growing number of TNE students from the Philippines, and the steady increase in the number of UK-Philippine TNE partnerships, there is an opportunity for a similar approach with the UK. Such an agreement will facilitate greater mobility of students and professionals between the two countries. Along those lines, one of the interviewees highlighted the importance of non-traditional pathways for earning a degree or a qualification, which employers should recognise and encourage:

'Generally, an advantage; however, knowledge of non-traditional pathways for earning a degree or an academic qualification other than a "diploma" is something that industries should understand. If Philippine Credit Transfer System is fully operational, these non-traditional pathways can even be built into the qualification system in the country that is easily recognised by industries/employers.'

While UK degrees are generally widely accepted for academic advancement and recognised by employers, degrees acquired in the Philippines through the TNE route are less known. Funding and other forms of support from CHED are a positive signal to students and employers about the value of TNE degrees delivered in the country. This requires proactive and continuous communication about their legitimacy from the regulatory and professional bodies in the Philippines. UK agencies such as the British Council, UK Embassy and the Department for International Trade can support such initiatives.

### 4.3 Implementation rules for TNE

There was agreement among the interviewees that most challenges in the Philippines are not regulatory. The implementation of TNE needs to be streamlined and the process made transparent. This issue is in the process of being addressed by CHED.

There is a working group set up to develop a manual that is expected to address inefficiencies in the current regulatory provision. As a result, a select group of state and private universities are involved in developing TNE implementation rules and regulations. The outcome of this work is expected to be approved by CHED by the end of 2022.

In addition, a clear governance structure from central to regional offices will address the streamlining and transparency of TNE in the Philippines. CHED has initiated a programme that looks at the governance structure of the newly set up TNE office as part of IAS, and the training needs of its staff and operations.

An interviewee from a private institution, however, highlighted an area where the current policies on who can engage in TNE and international partnership are restrictive. This is linked to HEIs' accreditation status as a prerequisite to engaging in collaborative TNE programmes. The institutions this disadvantages include even those that have demonstrated capability for managing such initiatives. This is in the context that programme accreditation takes a long time to be approved in the Philippines.

### 4.4 Infrastructure challenges – student and academic visas

All interviewees agreed about the lack of coordination between the government departments, such as the Bureau of Immigration and the Department of Labor and Employment.

HEIs are looking to CHED to lead the initiative and bring alignment between various government departments. The most striking example, quoted by the HEIs, is the lack of visas earmarked for international researchers and students. The visa application process is onerous and very bureaucratic. CHED is aware of this lack of alignment, and there is a plan to review and make recommendations for enabling functions and policies across government departments and agencies on how to best support TNE, and the broader internationalisation of education. This is scheduled to take place by 2023. The proposed streamlining of visas for students, academics and researchers should encourage greater engagement between the education system of the Philippines and those of other countries.

If the potential of international partnerships is to be fully utilised in the Philippines, the international mobility of academic programmes and research requires the seamless mobility of students and staff both ways – outbound and inbound.

The Philippines is one of the world's largest net losers of talent – the history of outbound flows of highly skilled professionals from the Philippines is well documented<sup>17</sup>. The immigration rules for students and academics of countries where talent

attraction is a national policy are significantly more attractive than those of the Philippines. Compared with these countries, the Philippines has a prohibitively complicated immigration system. This is likely to result in a widening gap between the amounts of highly skilled labour leaving the country and talent flowing in. Streamlined immigration rules, favouring inbound mobility of international students, academics and researchers, will likely contribute to better brain circulation and reduce brain drain. They will also enable international faculty to engage better with the research and teaching programmes they are engaged in in the Philippines.

#### **4.5 Recognition of sub-degrees**

There is a lack of recognition of sub-degree qualifications, such as diplomas, certificates, credits, and micro-credentials. The pandemic has amplified the importance of sub-degrees and micro-credentials; anecdotally, those have become popular with employers.

However, the interviewees pointed to challenges associated with the lack of recognition of credits and sub-degrees for academic and career progression. This is a gap that CHED can fill. Interviewees recommended that the work in this area should start with a clear definition of what sub-degrees entail.

#### **4.6 Economic barriers**

Economic barriers relate to the students' finances – many students do not have the financial means to study for a premium degree. All interviewees mentioned financial barriers and lack of funding as a challenge. There is an appreciation of the TNE partnerships, and the discounts offered by international TNE providers.

However, the financial implications are significant. Given the success of the TNE programmes so far, there is a considerable desire to widen this opportunity to more institutions. There is a consideration that a way to overcome the funding challenge is to pull funds from several local institutions and to set a budget for several postgraduate student places, to be funded through the TNE route. Sustaining the existing partnership over time would require several local HEIs in the Philippines combining resources, to fund such places each year.

# 5. Recommendations

Since 2015, the Philippines has set the scene for quality higher education by gradually introducing transnational education programmes. The government's primary intent is to build the capacity of its higher education institutions and equip its citizens with skills that the national economy will demand in future.

While transnational higher education is widening globally, its ambition in the Philippines is to support and enable local institutions, their students and communities to benefit from the advances that international partnerships bring through collaborative teaching and research.

The Transnational Higher Education bill tasks TNE with improving the international competitiveness of the Philippine HEIs. An essential component of the CHED-funded TNE partnerships is capacity building and advancing the process of internationalisation throughout the participating HEIs.

The interviews carried out for this report show that TNE has acted as an enabler of capacity building in the Philippines. Interviewees highlighted the benefits collaborative teaching programmes bring to the higher education system, the universities and colleges and their local communities.

Many reflected that the pandemic had liberalised online education provision – local experiences with online education were not inferior to face-to-face learning. As a result, TNE partnerships were strengthened. Some respondents mentioned that they are enjoying growing visibility with

international universities, measured by the number of times they have been approached to start a formal partnership.

Interviewees are mindful of the critical role CHED plays in the process, and progress would not have happened at that pace it has if it was not for CHED's support.

However, for TNE to fully achieve its potential, the following recommendations may be considered by policymakers and HEIs.

## 5.1 Recommendations at the national level

### Development of talent policy through the immigration system

The most significant challenge highlighted by the interviewees is rooted in the country's visa rules for international students and academics. To fully benefit from the global mobility of students, programmes and research, barriers to such mobility should be removed or reduced where possible. Other countries' policies are desirable to international researchers and students, whereas those in the Philippines are very restrictive. This facilitates brain drain out of the country, whereas brain circulation is discouraged because the local higher education system is inaccessible for international students and researchers.

Greater coordination and policy alignment between government departments will likely boost international cooperation in teaching and research between the Philippines and other countries.

### **Recognition of degrees and qualifications**

The Philippines already has mutual recognition agreements and mutual recognition of professional qualifications across seven regulated professions within ASEAN. Extending these arrangements will contribute to better mobility of students and professionals between the Philippines and other countries.

While employers and the higher education system recognise international degrees, TNE degrees and qualifications require proactive communication with potential students, local HEIs and industry.

### **Recognition of sub-degrees**

TNE national policy signals the openness of the country and its readiness to engage internationally. In addition to greater recognition of degrees and qualifications, interviewees highlighted the growing importance of sub-degrees and micro-credentials. Covid has amplified the reach of online education and resulted in significant growth in demand for micro-credentials. The formal recognition of such credentials will benefit employees for their career advancement and equip them to learn flexibly. Employers will benefit from the continuous professional development of their workforce.

### **Policy formulation focused on TNE and enhancement of teaching and research partnerships**

The policy advances made by CHED in encouraging TNE partnerships in high-impact areas, such as the development of niche programmes and double and joint PhD programmes, have been well received by the HEIs. The pandemic has amplified the importance of such partnerships. Additional benefits of these partnerships were stronger engagement with the local communities and industry, and the development of research capabilities.

Two areas can strengthen the advancement of TNE in the Philippines:

- TNE as a vehicle that drives sustainable development.
- Enhancement of TNE partnerships to build research capabilities.

### **TNE as a vehicle that drives sustainable development**

Sustainability has emerged as a recurrent theme. The shift to online learning resulted in more environmental means of international cooperation, while more sustainable means of food security were developed in the Philippines. The latter led to reductions in the use of pesticides and resulted in more robust engagement with the local communities. Sustainable development will continue to preoccupy policymakers and HEIs globally. Progress in the Philippines is already noted through the increase in HEIs participating in the THE Impact Rankings.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals provide an excellent framework to engage with the sustainability agenda. TNE can play a significant role in encouraging teaching and research partnerships that support the achievement of the SDGs.

### **Enhancement of TNE partnerships to build research collaborations**

Government funding will remove many of the economic barriers discussed in the paper and focus HEIs' efforts in high-impact areas.

A cost-effective option to acquire a higher research degree is an extension facility funded by the government, as part of the national 'free tertiary education', which creates an opportunity for undergraduate students to continue their studies in a postgraduate TNE programme (MA, MSc or PhD) awarded by local and overseas institutions.

In addition, existing research collaborations can be enhanced to include TNE partnerships. Equally, to fully utilise the potential of dual and double PhD partnerships, they can include research collaborations. Many of the existing dual and double PhD programmes funded by CHED and the British Council have resulted in a collaborative research output and stronger research links between the partner HEIs. Where possible, in locations with a high concentration of TNE and research partnerships, the establishment of Centres for Doctoral Training can be considered, which will focus the investment of resources into priority areas<sup>18</sup>.

### **TNE as a talent attraction strategy**

The survey respondents indicated the value of TNE as a vehicle to attract international students. Expanding their student recruitment to ASEAN and East Asia is a natural extension of student flows already present in the Philippines for the purpose of learning English.

The Philippines is still to emerge as an international higher education study destination. High-quality courses leading to double and dual degrees are likely to appeal to value-seeking students in the region. To be successful, targeted marketing and promotion of higher education are required at the national level.

An additional benefit of such a strategy is that it is likely to balance the current talent outflows from the Philippines.

## **5.2 Recommendations at the institutional level**

The recommendations at the institutional level were suggested by the interviewees based at Philippine HEIs. They highlighted the following alternatives to address challenges to their TNE partnerships.

### **Economic barriers**

Considering the benefits of teaching partnerships, interviewees highlighted options that would enable them to overcome financial barriers. The Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges was mentioned as a potential stakeholder that may be interested in providing funding for a small number of scholars.

<sup>18</sup> Details on Centres for Doctoral Training, also known as Doctoral Training Partnerships, can be found on the UK Research and Innovation website at <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/developing-people-and-skills/nerc/nerc-studentships/directed-training/centres-for-doctoral-training-cdt/>.

In addition, at the regional level, universities and colleges interested in the initiative can collectively contribute to the training of several scholars, typically one per institution. This means that the TNE partnerships initially funded by the British Council and CHED are now being used to facilitate further training of local staff and postgraduate students. This highlights the long-term nature of the TNE partnerships, which are now a part of an infrastructure that encourages professional development and capacity building at the regional level.

#### **Improved internal processes**

As a result of the TNE partnerships, several interviewees shared that their institutions' internal policies and processes are being revisited and examined to enable new initiatives to take place and mobilise resources to ensure they are well funded and supported by the university leadership. Professional development workshops and training can be offered to further the professionalisation of international offices and international relations departments at Philippine HEIs.

#### **Creating a TNE community of practice**

The CHED-BC collaborations have brought together Philippine and UK HEIs as a group, where learning and best practice were shared. A bilateral or multilateral community of practice can be developed to further build on the momentum created, which will provide the forum for continuous sharing of the lessons learned and encourage best practice.

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