BRITISH COUNCIL

PROSPECTS FOR PARTNERSHIP

COLLABORATION BETWEEN BRITISH AND IRAQI UNIVERSITIES

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BIOGRAPHY

Colin Raban is a graduate of the Universities of Manchester and East Anglia, and an Emeritus Professor of the University of Derby. His academic work was in the fields of sociology and social policy, and he has held management posts with responsibility for quality assurance and academic development at Sheffield Hallam University, Edge Hill, the University of Derby and most recently at the University of Greenwich (where he worked on an interim basis as Deputy Vice Chancellor).

Professor Raban has served as an academic reviewer since 1994, working initially with the Higher Education Funding Council and, since 1998, with the UK Quality Assurance Agency. In his work with QAA he completed in excess of 25 audits, including overseas audits in Malaysia and the Republic of Ireland. In 2016 he was contracted by the Lithuanian Studijų Kokybės Vertinimo Centras (SKVC) to chair an institutional review in Lithuania, and (in 2018) by the Georgian National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement to chair reviews for the authorisation of two universities.

Professor Raban currently works on a freelance basis, providing staff development, audit and consultancy services to universities, alternative providers and regulatory bodies in the UK, Europe, South East Asia and the Middle East. His recent consultancies, publications and conference presentations have been in such areas as the regulation of higher education, innovative and 'risk-based' approaches to quality assurance, academic governance, and the development and management of academic partnerships.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In this report, we consider the nature and range of current international partnerships in Iraq, identify the opportunities for collaboration in the future, discuss the challenges that British universities are likely to encounter in seeking to realise these opportunities, and suggest the conditions that might govern the longer term sustainability of UK-Iraqi partnerships. Annex 1 provides details of the project's terms of reference, and the methods used to collect the evidence upon which this report is based. This is followed by a technical appendix (Annex 2) dealing with the classification of international partnerships.

Our key finding is that the involvement of British universities in Iraq is currently limited with respect to both the scale and scope of partnership activity, and that universities located in other countries are developing a significant presence in the country. There remain, nevertheless, considerable opportunities for UK institutions to engage with Iraqi universities as well as with non-academic organisations in the public, private and third sectors. The opportunities include partnerships for:

- the delivery of 'transnational education' (TNE),

- the production of joint research and publications,

- institutional capacity building,

- the provision of advice and support for the management and governance of Iraq's higher education sector, and

- the pursuit of various 'third stream' activities.

We go on to argue that the benefits of collaboration need to be weighed against the various risks or 'challenges': in essence, our argument is that the opportunities are considerable, the benefits of partnership can be maximised, and the risks can be reduced to manageable proportions by universities that are experienced and are prepared to act creatively. If an institution is to work in Iraq it must ensure that its due diligence procedures are effective; and if it is to 'act creatively' it should consider the possibility of developing a comprehensive, rather than single focus partnership, one that is multilateral rather than bilateral, and a relationship between the partners that is based on parity not patronage.

Our principal recommendations are that a stakeholder group should be established with representatives from the relevant government departments, businesses and universities in the UK and Iraq, and that the group's primary function should be to create and maintain a common strategic framework for the development of partnerships between the two countries. We also recommend that the British Council should work with the authorities in the UK and Iraq to secure funding for the development of partnerships. These proposals for action by the British Council are complemented by some recommendations for consideration by universities. This final group of recommendations is designed to encourage universities to act in ways that are mutually supportive and to consider whether their established quality management procedures and approaches to partnership are fit for the purpose of operating in a country that presents such a distinctive mix of needs, challenges and rewards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. The British Council should:

    a. Establish a stakeholder group that is representative of academic, business and political interests in both Iraq and the UK.

    b. Support the stakeholder group in creating (or commissioning) a common strategic framework (CSF) for the development of UK-Iraqi partnerships.

    c. Work with the stakeholder group to secure funding to support the development of partnerships between universities in the UK and Iraq, and/or between higher education institutions and other non-academic organisations.

2. The British Council should support the stakeholder group and UK and Iraqi universities by:

    a. Maintaining a register of UK universities that are active in Iraq

    b. Working with UK and Iraqi universities to establish and maintain an alumni network

    c. Acting as a clearing house for universities and other organisations that are seeking to establish a UK-Iraqi partnership.

3. Each university that has established (or is planning to develop) one or more partnerships with higher education institutions or other organisations in Iraq might wish to:

    a. Consult with the government of Iraq, expatriate Iraqi staff and Iraqi alumni on the initial and continuing development of the university's partnerships in the country.

    b. Consider the risks and benefits of the full range of opportunities for partnership with universities and other organisations in Iraq.

    c. Ensure that their initial and subsequent due diligence enquiries are conducted in a manner that is consistent with best practice in the higher education sector.

    d. Provide the British Council with details of their current or proposed partnership activities.

    e. Respond positively to requests from other universities for advice and support in their engagements with HEIs and other organisations in Iraq.

INTRODUCTION

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'I feel hope for a new Iraq that is open for business and prepared to face the next challenge of rebuilding communities while reconstructing schools, roads, bridges, hospitals and public infrastructure. A prosperous Iraq will be a pillar for development and stability in the region'.[1]

1. Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates, is often described as the cradle of civilisation and, in the 1970s, Iraq's universities were reputed to be amongst the best in the Middle East. Since 1980, however, Iraq has suffered the depredations of isolation, war and insurgency. As a consequence of sanctions in the 1990s, universities were isolated from the international academic community and deprived of materials and resources, and the 2003 US-led invasion was followed by the destruction and looting of university buildings, libraries and laboratories.[2]

2. The higher education (HE) sector began a process of recovery with the creation of the Iraqi Interim Government in 2004 and its replacement, a year later, by the Transitional Government. The key events in the recovery process included a UNESCO Roundtable held in 2005,[3] the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement between the government of Iraq and the US State Department,[4] the Higher Education Initiative launched in 2009 by the Prime Minister to provide scholarships to support Iraqi academics wishing to register for higher degrees at foreign universities,[5] the publication in 2009-10 of national strategies for higher education, and the expansion of the HE sector through the creation of new universities and colleges. The British contribution to this process included the 'Development Partnerships in Higher Education' (DelPHE) programme (see paragraph 15, below).

3. The loss, from 2014, of large swathes of Iraqi territory to Da'esh meant that many of the DelPHE-funded projects failed to bear fruit. Tragedy repeated itself in those parts of the country that had fallen to the insurgents: at least ten universities were reduced to rubble, academics were murdered, humiliated and tortured, books and research papers were burned, and equipment was destroyed. Iraq's difficulties were compounded by a fiscal liquidity crisis caused by the fall in the price of crude oil and this, in turn, has had an impact on the funds available for the reconstruction of the HE system. The legacy for education has been a decline in literacy rates, an entire generation that is adrift and

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1 Haider Al-Abadi, Prime Minister of Iraq 2014-18, quoted in *Kuwait loans Iraq $1 billion for reconstruction, invests $1 billion more*, Rudaw, 14 February 2018.
   http://www.rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=359630

2 The UNESCO Office for Iraq has described higher education as 'one of the sectors that sustained serious destruction of infrastructure in 2003. Approximately 61 universities and college buildings were war damaged and 101 college buildings were looted. The damage was especially severe in laboratories, workshops and libraries'.
   (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/iraq-office/education/higher-education/)

3 http://www.unesco.org/new/en/iraq-office/education/higher-education/

4 https://photos.state.gov/libraries/iraq/216651/US-IRAQ/us-iraq-sfa-en.pdf. See also A Abu Zeed, *Baghdad looks to Trump with framework agreement*, Al-Monitor, December 19, 2016

5 The website for the Higher Committee for Education Development states that the aim of the Education Initiative was to send 10,000 students over a five year period 'to study in all research areas at the world best accredited universities'.
   http://www.hcediraq.org/HCED_english_website/aboutus.html

alienated, universities that lack the necessary learning resources, and a shortage of academics with higher-level qualifications.[6]

4. The situation improved markedly following the territorial defeat of Da'esh in 2017. In the words of one commentator, 'Iraq's security situation…is better than at any other point since 2003, and its economy is rebounding strongly'; and the UK Department for International Trade has described Iraq as being 'open for business', and as a country in which 'commercial opportunities are significant as (it) continues to rebuild its infrastructure and main institutions'.[7] Whilst these two publications do not make specific reference to the opportunities available to universities, there is frequent reference elsewhere to the role of HE as a 'pillar of recovery'. It can 'connect to a wide range of reconstruction and recovery processes and effectively drive post-conflict recovery and transitions', and it is 'an important pillar in rebuilding civil society by bridging the gap between universities and the private sector'.[8] Given 'the considerable interest within Iraq to push for international partnerships', opportunities to contribute to this process of national renewal are extended to foreign universities, including and perhaps especially to those that are located in the UK.[9]

6   M Saadoun, *Why has illiteracy rate gone up in Iraq?* Al-Monitor, December 9 2018; International Crisis Group, *Fight or Flight: the desperate plight of Iraq's "Generation 2000"*, Report No 169, August 2016;

7   R Mansour, *Iraq in 2019: a pivotal year for the transition,* Chatham House and IBBC, 2019; Department for International Trade, *Doing business in Iraq*, September 2015; and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Overseas Business Risk – Iraq*, March 2018.

8   S A Milton, *The Neglected Pillar of Recovery: a study of higher education in post-war Iraq and2Libya*, University of York PhD thesis, October 2013; *Iraq University Linkages Program*, IREX (https://www.irex.org/project/iraq-university-linkages-program).

9   C Hill, *Iraq needs academics to rebuild reputation of its university sector*, The Conversation, April 9 28 2014 (http://theconversation.com/iraq-needs-academics-to-rebuild-reputation-of-its-university-sector-24175). See also: Salam Zidane, *Corruption, deceit plague private education in Iraq*, Al-Monitor, April 6 2017; and U Lindsey, Iraqi Universities Reach a Crossroads, The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 25, 2012

OPPORTUNITIES

OPPORTUNITIES

'Iraq is a country of promise and wonder. Its history is sublime and, despite difficult times, a bright future may yet be assured. It's right and proper that bold universities offer the hand of friendship'.[10]

The higher education system

5. Iraqi has a large and expanding higher education system. Across the country as a whole, there are 136 universities, including seven technical and two Islamic universities. The majority of Iraq's universities are now privately owned and this part of the sector has been subject to exponential growth over the past fifteen years. In addition to its universities, Iraq also has a large number of technical institutes offering diploma level qualifications.

Types of opportunity

6. Whilst this report is primarily concerned with the opportunities to form partnership between British and Iraqi universities, we have extended our remit to consider the potential for institutions in both countries to collaborate with business and other non-academic organisations. Table 1 identifies three ways in which partnerships might contribute to the rehabilitation and development of Iraq's higher education system and, either directly or indirectly, to the rebuilding of the country. In each case there are variants, giving a total of seven possible types of partnership:

*   **Type 1: Third Stream:**

    This category comprises partnerships between universities and organisations in the private, public and third sectors (see paragraph 7, below).

*   **Type 2: Higher Education (HE) Capacity Building:**

    Sector-level partnerships would contribute directly to the 'modernisation' of Iraq's higher education system as a whole, whilst collaborations at institution-level would seek to enhance the capacity of individual universities to deliver their own core business (see paragraph 8).

*   **Type 3: Academic:**

    Partnerships between Iraqi and foreign universities to provide opportunities for students to gain academic qualifications, or to promote academic research and the production of co-authored publications (see paragraphs 9-10).

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10   N Petford, *Working with the universities of Iraq*, Times Higher Education, May 21 2017.

Table 1 provides examples of these partnership types, as well as an indication of the contributions that they could make to the rebuilding and continuing development of Iraq, and the rehabilitation of its higher education system. The table's final column lists the paragraphs in this report in which each of the seven types of partnership activity is discussed.

7. Third stream activities are defined as 'the generation, use, application and exploitation of knowledge and other university capabilities outside academic environments'.[11] Here, the operative phrase is 'outside academic environments' indicating that, although local universities *may* be included, third stream (Type 1) partnerships will usually be forged with businesses, or with organisations in the public and third sectors.[12] Partnerships of this type can contribute directly to the rebuilding of the country, addressing the challenges facing Iraq.[13] These challenges include water-food-energy (the nexus for sustainable development), skills shortages and unemployment, healthcare, security, the rebuilding and upgrading of Iraq's physical infrastructure, and the need to diversify the economy and reform the country's financial and professional services.[14]

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11   D Watson, L Hall, S Tazzyman, C Hume, *Closed for business! Academic engagement in third stream activity. Society for Research in Higher Education, 2014. See also Annex 2, below.*

12   The National Audit Office defines the 'third sector' as 'the range of organisations that are neither public sector nor private sector. It includes voluntary and community organisations (both registered charities and other organisations such as associations, self-help groups and community groups), social enterprises, mutuals and co-operatives'. (https://www.nao.org.uk/successful-commissioning/ introduction/what-are-civil-society-organisations-and-their-benefits-for-commissioners/#). See also U Brandenberg, *Internationalisation in Higher Education for Society,* University World News, 20 April 2019; P Benneworth et al., *Mapping and Critical Synthesis of Current State-of-the-Art on Community Engagement in Higher education*, TEFCE 2018; and Research England, *Knowledge Exchange Framework Consultation*, January 2019.

13   M A Al-Khateeb, N Al-Ansar and S Knutsson, *Sustainable University Model for Higher Education Iraq*, Creative Education 2014.

14   S Hatekenaka *(Development of third stream activity: lessons from international experience*, Higher Education Policy Institute, November 2005) provides a useful comment on the way in which the OECD agenda has developed a broadly defined economic role for universities that no longer focuses narrowly on scientific innovation.

Table 1: Types of Partnership Opportunity

		Examples	Function	Paragraph references
Type 1: Third Stream	**Private sector**	Partnerships with an Iraqi company, or with a foreign company operating in Iraq, to provide staff training, research and development, specialist skills, etc.	Contribute directly to the rebuilding of the country.	7, 16[d] and [f], 17, 18[a] and [c], 19, 44, 48, 53-4.
	Public sector	Partnerships to advise and support Ministries and public sector organisations in areas other than higher education. May include capacity building projects.		
	Third sector	Partnerships with community and voluntary organisations to work with refugees and internally displaced persons, provide education or health care facilities, etc. etc.		
Type 2: HE Capacity Building	**Sectoral**	Partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to develop systems and procedures for sector governance and external quality assurance, including the accreditation, monitoring and review of universities.	Contribute directly to the 'modernisation' of Iraq's HE system and to the capacity of universities to deliver their own core business. If higher education is seen as a 'pillar of recovery' these partnerships will contribute indirectly to the rebuilding of the country.	8, 15, 16[d] and [e], 18[b], 19, 27-9, 44, 48-9, 51, 53-4, 56 and 92.
	Institutional	Partnerships with individual universities to assist them in enhancing their (staffing and learning) resources, reforming their governance and quality assurance (QA) arrangements, building research capacity, and supporting staff in developing less didactic forms of pedagogy and in updating their curricula.		
Type 3: Academic	**Teaching**	Partnership with an Iraqi university to deliver programmes leading to the degree of the UK institution – i.e., transnational education (TNE).	Engagements that may make an indirect contribution to meeting the country's needs	9-10, 16[b] and [c], 18[c], 23, 31[c] and [e], 46, 49-54, 56.
	Research	Partnership to enable staff in the partner institutions to engage in joint research projects leading to co-authored publications.		9-11, 16[f], 17, 18[c], 28, 48, 53-4, 56.

8. 'Modernisation' is a theme that runs through commentaries and official documents, focusing on needs at both sector and institutional levels. This presents foreign universities with the opportunity to establish a wide range of 'capacity building' (Type 2) partnerships. At *institutional level*, the opportunities are to assist Iraqi universities in enhancing their staffing and learning resources,[15] reforming their governance and quality assurance (QA) arrangements, and supporting staff in developing new and less didactic forms of pedagogy and in updating their curricula. Partnerships at the sector level, probably with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, might address the country's decentralisation agenda, re-drawing the relationship between universities and the state. This aspect of the modernisation project would seek to reconcile the need for universities to be granted more independence whilst ensuring that they are accountable for the quality and standards of their provision.

9. The third type of opportunity is for the formation of academic (Type 3) partnerships for the delivery of 'export' education, transnational education (TNE), and in support of research activities including the production of co-authored publications. As will be apparent from the chart in Annex 2 (p.69), the term 'export education' refers to the recruitment of Iraqis to study at UK institutions. Study abroad has been (and continues to be) supported by scholarships provided by the Iraqi or foreign governments and, in some cases, by the receiving institutions. When a UK university negotiates an articulation agreement as a means of recruiting Iraqi students, the arrangement falls into the TNE category.

10. The British Council has defined transnational education as 'education provision from one country offered in another'.[16] In most TNE partnerships one university will have lead responsibility as the 'awarding institution': it is ultimately responsible for the quality of the programme that is delivered by its partner, and for the standard of the qualification that students will gain on completion of their studies. However, TNE partnerships assume a variety of different guises, as demonstrated by the chart in Annex 2 (page 69). These range from the aforementioned articulation (or 'twinning') agreements, through the franchising or validation of programmes, accreditation arrangements in which wide-ranging responsibilities are devolved to the partner organisation, to the setting up of branch campuses and 'international joint universities'. What differentiates these various forms of TNE from one another is the way in which power and responsibility are distributed between the awarding institution and the partner that delivers the programmes. Collaborations to promote staff research and publications, on the other hand, are normally established for the purpose of combining the strengths of the two partners and, for this reason, the relationship between them tends to be more equal.

11. It is important to stress that these partnership types are not mutually exclusive. For example, partnerships for the purpose of delivering taught programmes (Type 3: Academic) often entail Type 2 institution-level capacity building activities and, by enhancing the expertise and experience of academic staff, Type 3 research partnerships can make an incidental but important contribution to building the capacity of the institutions in which they are employed.[17] Towards the end of this report we shall discuss the potential benefits of

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15   With the imminent defeat of Da'esh, Lori Mason (*A roadmap for rebuilding higher education in Iraq*, IREX, 21 February 2017) wrote that 'the most immediate tangible needs of universities…include textbooks and access to academic libraries…. Essential classroom equipment and computers, along with field-specific equipment such as microscopes for medical labs, are also vital'. She goes on to say that 'given the key role of higher education in community-building and stabilisation' there is a pressing need for the international academic community to support Iraqi universities in improving 'the quality of…institutions and campus services' so that they can 'genuinely build back better'.

16   https://siem.britishcouncil.org/service-catalogue/transnational-education)

17   This is not invariably the case. Research collaborations are sometimes driven by the personal (career) interests of the staff concerned, rather than by the needs of their institutions.

'comprehensive' and 'multilateral' partnerships to undertake activities that span all three types of collaboration (see paragraphs 54-55, below).

Realising the opportunities

12. Shortly after the 2003 invasion and following discussions between the Coalition Provision Authority and the British Council, a dozen UK universities established the British Universities Iraq Consortium (BUIC). The consortium's founding purpose had been to assist with the rebuilding of Iraq's HE system. With the launch in 2009 of the Iraqi government's Education Initiative (see para 2, above), BUIC worked with the Higher Committee for Education Development to 'facilitate (the) mobility of students and staff from Iraq to the UK to undertake research and build links with Britain'.[18]

13. Approximately 96% of the 2,640 students recruited by UK universities in 2014/15 were registered for higher degrees (see Table 2). This would suggest that the majority of these students were employed as academic staff in their own universities back in Iraq and that this particular instance of (Type 3) 'export education' might therefore be regarded as a contribution to (Type 2) 'capacity building.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Total Middle East	28,525	29,420	29,125	29,670
Total Iraq	2,640	2,265	1,400	780
Post graduate research	1,680	1,575	990	455
Post graduate taught	765	525	265	195

Table 2: Students from Iraq studying in UK universities[19]

14. In 2014/15 the recruitment of Iraqi students to British universities exceeded by a significant margin the number recruited to the United States in the same year.[20] Since then, and with the reduction in the number of scholarships provided by the Iraqi government, there has been an accelerating decline in the recruitment to the UK of postgraduate students from Iraq. Notwithstanding Britain's overall strength in the market for international students (including the Middle East), its pre-eminence in Iraq has been lost to other countries, with some offering their own scholarships, and others offering higher degrees at lower cost and with visa requirements that are less onerous than those of the UK.[21] There has also been a notable shift in the composition of the Iraqi student body within UK universities: the proportion of undergraduate students and those registered for taught postgraduate degrees has increased from 8% of the total in 2014/15 to 42% in 2017/18.

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18   http://www.buic.ac.uk

19   https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-28

20   Lorna Middlebrough has reported that 1,727 Iraqis studied at US universities in 2014/15, a 16% increase over the previous academic year *(Identifying Ways Forward within Higher Education in Iraq*, IEM Spotlight Newsletter, Vol 13, Issue 2, August 2016)

21   *International Education – Global Growth and Prosperity* (HM Government, July 2013) noted the challenges to the UK's position from its traditional competitors – Canada, the USA and Australia. In addition, the UK's position is challenged by various European countries: 'for example, Germany has a clear strategy to promote itself as an attractive location for research, development and innovation, backed up by considerable funding'. It adds that 'Germany is becoming increasingly competitive by offering courses in English and providing job opportunities for international graduates'.

15. Capacity building was the avowed purpose of the DelPHE programme: it was expected that project funding would enable higher education institutions in partner countries to have 'strengthened capacity … to contribute toward the (UN Millennium Development Goals)', and to act as 'catalysts for poverty reduction and sustainable development'.[22] Initially, the programme was remarkably successful: from 2009 to 2011, the relatively modest allocation of £3m to the DelPHE Iraq programme supported 35 projects involving 45 institutions, of which 14 were in Iraq and 26 in the UK. These were mostly Type 2 projects focused at the institutional (rather than sector) level. The main subject areas were science, engineering and technology (45% of the total funds awarded), health (26% of funds) and capacity-building for teaching, learning and research. The DelPHE programme also supported a number of projects for management and leadership skills development, and for the professional development of academic and support staff.[23]

16. By the close of the DelPHE programme (in 2012) eleven memoranda of understanding had been signed by Iraqi and British universities, prompting the Department for International Development to claim that the successes of DelPHE included 'its legacy … and sustainability'. However, for reasons that had little to do with the programme and its management (see paragraph 3, above), few of the intended partnerships have survived and, in general, the presence of British universities in Iraq is now a shadow of what it had been in 2012. As far as we can establish, the current position is as follows:

    a. The decline in UK universities' recruitment of Iraqi students has been noted already, as has the apparent shift in the function of this area of activity from Type 2 capacity-building to Type 3 'export' education. It has also been noted that Britain's pre-eminence in this field has been lost to a variety of competitor nations (see paragraph 14, above).

    b. Only two UK universities currently maintain (Type 3) TNE partnerships in Iraq. These entail franchise and 'twinning' (articulation) arrangements, catering for less than 100 students in total, and the continuation of at least one of these partnerships is in doubt. In both cases, the universities concerned engage in Type 2 capacity-building (mainly in the form of staff development) to support their TNE provision.

    c. The creation of international branch campuses is another example of Type 3 (TNE) activity. Currently, there are no British branch campuses in Iraq, although there is a proposal to establish a new university with sponsorship from British and Iraqi business interests and with support from one or more UK universities.[24] There are two American universities in Kurdistan, and another is planned for Baghdad. The German-funded 'joint universities' that have been established elsewhere in the Middle East could also provide a model for the development of similar ventures in Iraq.[25]

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22 Department for International Development, *DelPHE Project Annual Review*, 31 October, 2012

23 Department for International Development, *DelPHE-Iraq Final Programme results*, 2012

24 Although the proposal is in its early stages, the new university has the potential to develop secondary Type 1 partnerships for the purpose of engaging in third stream activities.

25 "Joint" universities are newly-established institutions that are wholly or partly sponsored and supported, but not controlled by, one or more foreign universities. The DAAD-funded German universities abroad scheme falls into this category. Such institutions as the German-Jordanian University are 'legally independent private or public institutions, which award their own degrees and are part of the national higher education system in the host country. DAAD funding is used to support the development costs and the new universities work with a consortium of German universities to develop the curriculum, which is modelled on the German higher Education system'. In these cases the partnership is at ministry of higher education level. N Healey and C Bordogna, *From Transnational to Multinational Eduction*: *emerging Trends in International `higher Education*, Internationalisation of Higher Education,

    d. In the past, at least, the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) has drawn upon federal grants and contracts to promote partnerships between universities in Iraq and the United States.[26] The primary focus of IREX-sponsored activity in Iraq seems to have been third stream (Type 1) projects to 'rebuild civil society', and Type 2 capacity-building at the institutional level. Of greater current significance are the partnerships which are supported by the European Union's Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) programme.[27] CBHE projects 'are aimed at modernising and reforming higher education institutions, developing new curricula, improving governance, and building relationships between higher education institutions and enterprises'. In essence, CBHE is a source of funding for Type 2 capacity-building projects at both institutional and sector levels, and for promoting Type 1 engagements between HE and 'the wider economic and social environment'.[28] Since 2015 there have been seven CBHE projects involving 21 Iraqi HEIs and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The funding for each of these projects was set at just under €1m.[29]

    e. It has not been possible to identify any significant examples of British university involvement in Type 2 sector-level capacity building based on partnerships with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, or with other national organisations. With respect to the 'modernisation' of the Ministry's arrangements for the governance of universities, there is evidence of American and German interest either in providing accreditation for Iraqi institutions, or in assisting the Ministry in developing its own accreditation arrangements.[30] In Afghanistan, this type of intervention has been a feature of a jointly-funded World Bank, British Council and USAID-funded University Support and Workforce Development Program.

    f. Although the Iraq Britain Business Council has an interest in the area, we have been unable to identify any current examples of British university involvement in (Type 1) partnerships to undertake third stream activity. The website of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Baghdad provides some evidence of training and research partnerships between Iraqi and foreign companies and there is at least one multinational corporation that maintains its own training academy in partnership with private, non-university partners.

17. The picture presented in the previous paragraph needs to be qualified in three ways. First, it focuses exclusively on the activities of British, American and European universities and it does not take into account the growing presence in Iraq of universities located in countries that have not been the UK's 'traditional competitors' (for example, China, Russia, India, Turkey and Iran).[31] Second, it neglects some significant success stories.

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26   Volume 3, 2014, pp 14-15. See also Chapter 8 of J Knight, *Knowledge Diplomacy in Action*, British Council, 2019.

27   https://www.irex.org/project/us-iraq-higher-education-partnerships-program

    The other components of Erasmus+ involving participants from Iraq are International Credit Mobility, Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees, and Jean Monnet activities.

28   https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/capacity-0_en

29   The scale and significance of Erasmus+ activity is illustrated by the most recent project - INsPIRE (Innovative Governance Practices in the Higher Education Institutions in Iraq, starting January 2019 and ending January 2022) is funded from this source. The lead contractor is the University of Siena, Italy; there are four other EU partners; and 10 Iraqi university partners plus the MOHESR.

30   For example, in February 2019 the MOHESR in Kurdistan established a national accreditation board in collaboration with the German *Zentrale Evaluations und Akkreditierungsagentur* (ZEvA - https://www.zeva.org/ueber-die-zeva).

31   HM Government, *International Education – Global Growth and Prosperity*, July 2013.

Notable amongst these are the various cultural heritage projects supported by the Department for Digital, Cultural, Media and Sport through the Cultural Protection Fund,[32] the work of the Nahrein Network (which might be classified as both a Type 1 third stream and a Type 3 research partnership involving several universities and cultural heritage organisations in the UK and Iraq), and some long-standing work in the field of medical education (which is discussed further in paragraph 54).[33] And, finally, there are various initiatives which have been developed and are being maintained by British and Iraqi academics working independently and outside the framework of any formal partnership agreement between their employing institutions or organisations. These initiatives include joint research ventures and co-authored publications, various engagements with schools and charitable organisations, and the assistance provided by several individuals for the development of a national accreditation system for medical schools.

18. Whilst foreign universities may have become more active in Iraq, the country remains a 'land of opportunity' for UK institutions. Indeed, within Iraq and globally, UK higher education has a reputation and track record that should confer an advantage on a university that wishes to realise one or more of the three kinds of opportunity discussed in paragraphs 6-11):

   a. Opportunities for third stream (Type 1) partnerships have been under-exploited even though they have the potential to generate a high level of return for the organisations and institutions concerned. One example of this type might be UK university involvement in a partnership with a British company operating in Iraq, the purpose of the collaboration being to provide in-company training for the company's local employees. Irrespective of its purpose (whether, for example, it is to provide in-company training or applied research), the partnership would be strengthened and would generate additional value if one or more Iraqi universities were to be brought into the partnership.[34] Other examples of Type 1 opportunities might include various forms of community engagement, partnerships to develop Iraq's infrastructure, collaboration with employers to deliver higher or degree apprenticeships, and the development, with industry and local universities, of research and innovation centres.[35]

   b. Type 2 capacity-building partnerships can be at sector or institutional level (see paragraphs 8 and 16[d-e]). There is a continuing need for sector reform and any partnerships to assist the decentralisation agenda, and the strengthening of Iraq's arrangements for sector governance and external quality assurance, would be contingent on negotiations at Ministry level. It is likely that this sector-level capacity building, linked with local universities' strong interest in improving their reputation and position within the ranking systems that are being developed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, will stimulate demand for assistance in the development of internal quality management systems. There are also opportunities arising from the wide range of institution level capacity-building needs. These include the modernisation of curricula and pedagogy, and the enhancement of English language training.

32 https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-protection-fund/projects

33 This work has progressed from institution-level capacity building to sector-level engagement with the Ministry of Health and, potentially, interventions to improve healthcare facilities in Iraq.

34 Several of our respondents have commented on Iraqi institutions' lack of experience of applied research and of business-university engagement. Bringing these universities into a partnership of this type would enable them to acquire the expertise that they would require in developing their own third stream partnerships.

35 The Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) has been suggested as a model. The AMRC is based on a partnership between the University of Sheffield and a number of companies including Boeing, Rolls-Royce and Airbus. (https://www.amrc.co.uk/pages/about)

    c. Although the UK is a world leader in the provision of TNE and for the recruitment of international students, the prospects for Type 3 academic partnerships (see paragraphs 9-13 and 16[a-c]) may be more mixed. Colleagues in Iraq have expressed a keen interest in the development of staff and student exchange schemes. These, however, together with progression and articulation arrangements, are likely to encounter barriers that may prove to be insuperable (see paragraph 31[b-c], below). Interest in TNE partnerships, including the establishment of branch campuses, appears to be limited and, as discussed later in this report, their value will depend on whether they can meet the longer-term needs of the country and its universities. Finally, there is considerable mutual benefit to be gained from formal institutional partnerships to develop research facilities, pursue joint research projects and produce co-authored publications (see paragraph 17, above).[36] Research partnerships could also be extended to include businesses and other organisations in Iraq, combining Type 3 (academic) with Type 1 (third stream) activity (see paragraph 18[a], above). The possibility of extending the scope of a partnership to encompass a wider range of activities is discussed further in paragraph 53.

19. British universities are in a potentially strong position to realise these opportunities. With respect to third stream activity (and the potential for developing Type 1 partnerships), UK higher education was recently placed third out of 50 systems for its 'connectivity' (which is a measure of international engagement and business perceptions of knowledge exchange performance).[37] The development of Type 2 capacity-building partnerships would be facilitated by the fact that the UK was a founder member of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA). A further asset for universities wishing to develop Type 2 partnerships is the fact that the British approach to institutional and sector governance, internal and external quality assurance, curriculum design and pedagogy stands, alongside the American system, as the dominant model for the development of higher education systems within the Middle East and globally. Finally, the strong international reputation enjoyed by British higher education should prove advantageous for any university seeking to develop a Type 3 academic partnership.[38]

20. There are further advantages on which British universities might capitalise. In a recent interview, the Iraqi government's Minister of Higher Education stressed the importance of maintaining 'a dialogue with Iraqi academicians outside Iraq, and especially in the United Kingdom'. Given the need to 'rebuild and develop Iraq', the Ministry is, he said, 'keen on having a communication process that will evaluate and highlight the problematic academic issues in Iraq, and work on solutions with Iraqi academic institutions and with the Higher Education Ministry...'.[39] The Minister's statement reflects the high regard within Iraq for British higher education, and the value that he and others attach to the close personal relationships that have been established between the two countries.

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36 Several of our respondents have suggested that, in the absence of a national research strategy, the PhD studentships provided by the Ministries of Higher Education are not always focused on national needs. There is, for example, a striking lack of research in the petrochemical area, and in alternative sources of energy.

37 Y Chang et. al., *Ranking of National Higher Education Systems 2019*, Universitas21. Another rating exercise assessed the performance of some 556 institutions against the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and placed 17 UK institutions in the top 100. Times Higher Education University Impact Ratings 2019 (https://www.timeshighereducation.com/rankings/impact/2019/overall#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/undefined. See also Universities UK International, *International Innovation and UK Universities*, July 2016

38 The UK sector is often described as 'punching above its weight in the international league tables. For example, British universities occupy 13 of the top 100 places in the 2019 *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings. After the US, the UK is the second most popular destination for international students, and the number of British research publications is exceeded only by the USA and China and second only to France for the proportion (54%) of publications that are internationally co-authored (UUKi, *International Facts and Figures*, 2018)

39 *Exclusive interview with Iraq's Minister of Higher Education Abdel Razzaq Al-Issa*, Arabisk October 3 2018. Emphasis added.

This 'human bridge' comprises not just Iraqi expatriates, many of whom now occupy senior positions in British universities, but also the large number Iraqi academics, civil servants and senior politicians who have themselves studied in the UK.[40]

21. A bond of mutual sympathy and understanding, particularly at senior levels within British and Iraqi universities, and within the government of Iraq, is one fundamentally important component of this human bridge. Another is the large number of young academics who, having completed their studies in the UK, have returned to work in Iraq. Many of our respondents told us that they and other alumni are keen to retain their affiliation with the universities from which they had graduated and to explore opportunities for continuing their research with colleagues back in the UK. It was also suggested that alumni of British universities might act as agents of change, contributing to the introduction of new approaches to pedagogy and curriculum design. More generally, members of the Iraqi diaspora who remain in the UK, and alumni who are now working in Iraq, can play a vitally important role in identifying and negotiating opportunities for partnership, and in providing the longer term support that will ensure the sustainability of joint ventures.

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40 It should be noted that a small number of universities have made a disproportionate contribution to the education of Iraq's elite. For example, in 2014/15, the universities with the largest number (between 55 and 250) of registered Iraqi students were Leicester, Sheffield, Cardiff, Nottingham, Newcastle, Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool. In 2017/18, more or less the same group of institutions catered for the largest number of students (in the range 20-60). The one difference was that the 2017/18 group included the University of Northampton with the University of Nottingham leaving the group.

BENEFITS
AND CHALLENGES

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

'Iraq … is a challenging, high risk but potentially high return market in which to do business'.[41]

Benefits

22. Whilst Iraq may well be a 'high return market', defining the nature of these returns is more difficult because the perceived benefits or the expectations that will motivate international collaborations, will vary by partner and level. A recent survey by the International Aassociation of Universities (IAU) suggests that, at institutional level, internationalisation is seen as not only contributing 'to improving the quality of education' but also as 'a process that brings a positive contribution to society'.[42] This consensus may be more apparent than real. In common with the respondents to the IAU survey, academic staff in both British and Iraqi institutions are inclined to emphasise the intrinsic (intellectual) and humanitarian value of their international partnerships, whilst senior staff with corporate management responsibilities are more likely to justify the activity in terms of the prospective material or reputational gain.[43]

23. Government interest adds another dimension. For the UK, tackling 'global challenges' through development aid and educational initiatives is 'in the national interest': it has export potential, it is a means of exercising 'soft power' and it strengthens 'national security at home'.[44] For Britain's partner governments, on the other hand, the policy motives are likely to include 'demand absorption' (TNE and other forms of collaboration as a way of supplementing domestic provision), capacity-building and the use of international partnerships for their 'demonstration effect'.[45] And, overlaying the differences between the motives of governments, institutional managers and staff, there is a genuine commitment to the idea that partnership is a means of assisting with the rebuilding a country that has suffered for decades. In the words of one vice chancellor: 'our rationale for working (with Iraq) and in other challenging territories is simple. Our mission requires it, and frankly the Iraqi people deserve our support…'.[46]

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41 Department for International Trade, *Doing business in Iraq,* September 2015

42 The survey of 907 institutions from 126 countries found that the top three expected benefits of internationalization were capacity building, improved quality of teaching and learning and the opportunity to internationalise the curriculum. G Marinoni, E Egron-Polak and M Green, *A changing view of the benefits of higher education internationalization*, University World News, 1 February 2019.

43 N Healey, *The challenges of managing transnational education partnerships: the views of 'home-based' managers versus 'in-country' managers, International Journal of Educational Management, 2018, 32:2; N Healey, Why do English universities really franchise degrees to overseas providers?* Higher Education Quarterly, 2013.

44 Department for Education/Department for International Trade, *International Education Strategy: global potential, global growth,* March 2019; HM Treasury/Department for International Development, *UK aid: tackling global challenges in the national interest,* November 2015.

45 Healey *(in Transnational education and domestic higher education in Asian-Pacific host countries,* Pacific-Asian Education, 29, 57-74) describes the demonstration effect as the use of 'high quality foreign universities to provide an example of best practice to local institutions and to encourage the transfer of forms of education technology, including curriculum design, pedagogy, quality assurance, the use of English as a medium of instruction and systems of academic governance'.

46 N Petford, *Working with the universities of Iraq*, Times Higher Education, May 21, 2017.

24. Given the distinct possibility that British and Iraqi governments, institutions and individuals will seek to realise the opportunities for partnership for a variety of quite different reasons, the stability and sustainability of a collaborative project will depend on the compatibility, and perhaps clarity, of the various actors' expectations. In each of the organisations that is party to a collaboration, the motives of managers and their staff, may be overt or obscure, and they may be held in common (shared), complementary or incompatible. In the final section of this report we shall argue that the viability of any partnership proposal will be dependent on trust and that this, in turn, requires mutual transparency of motive. We will also suggest that a condition for success in the longer term, the sustainability of the partnership, is the ability of all parties to reconcile the expected benefits with a realistic assessment of the risks to their realisation.

Challenges

> 'Overall the political, economic and security situation remains fragile in Iraq.… Despite this, commercial opportunities are significant as the country continues to rebuild its infrastructure and main institutions. Sizeable contracts have been and continue to be signed with UK businesses sufficiently robust and strategically placed to do business in Iraq'.[47]

25. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) assessment echoes the earlier reference to Iraq as a market that is 'high risk but potentially high return'. 'Risk' has been usefully defined as 'the threat or possibility that an action or event will adversely … affect an organisation's ability to achieve its objectives'.[48] For an academic institution seeking a partnership with an Iraqi university (or other organisation) there are, as the FCO suggests, risks (or challenges) that reside in the operating environment and these are discussed in paragraphs 26-30, below. The terms of engagement between universities and organisations in the two countries can also be challenging (paragraph 31) and, finally, there are factors at institutional level (paragraphs 32-33) that can 'adversely affect' a university's ability to achieve its objective. The discussion in this section is based on the premise that a 'robust and strategically placed' university should be able to mitigate, manage or eliminate risks at all three levels and, possibly, turn some of these risks into opportunities.

47 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Overseas Business Risk – Iraq*, 19 March 2018.

48 Higher Education Funding Council for England, *Risk management: a guide to good practice for higher education institutions*, May 01/28, 2001. See also C Raban, *Risk, Regulation and Quality Management,* Academic Audit Associates, 2017; and C Raban and E Turner, *Managing Academic Risk*, Edge Hill, 2005.

The operating environment

26. We have discussed already the changing security situation in Iraq and the impact that it has had on the country's higher education system, and on engagements between foreign universities and their Iraqi counterparts. The dependency of the Iraqi economy on oil revenues has meant that efforts to rebuild the country and its universities, and to maintain HE partnerships, were severely impeded by the 56% drop in the price of crude in 2014, falling by a further 36% in February 2016. Both security and the economic situation have improved although it remains the case that there are risks for staff travelling to and working in Iraq. Whilst these security risks will continue to challenge efforts to establish and maintain the lines of communication that are essential to the effective management of an international partnership, appropriate measures can be put in place to mitigate the risks and enable staff to visit and work in Iraq.

27. The operating environment also presents certain 'political' challenges. According to Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index*, the perceived level of public sector corruption ranks Iraq 168th out of the 180 countries in the Index.[49] The relationship between universities and government also represents a challenge that could have implications for any university that is considering the possibility of developing a partnership with an Iraqi institution. Universities in Iraq lack autonomy: as one of our respondents put it, 'education belongs to the government'.[50] Apart from the problems that this will pose to a UK institution jealousy guarding its right to determine the content of its curricula, the four-yearly (or sometimes more frequent) turnover of ministers means that policies can be changed or reversed, making it difficult for universities and their partners to engage in long term planning. Paradoxically, whilst the HE system is subject to strong political control, the governance of the sector and external quality assurance systems are under-developed. There is evidence, however, to suggest that these political challenges are being addressed. Following the May 2018 elections, senior government figures now 'speak the language of reform' and this includes a commitment to deal with corruption and other structural problems.[51] It is also recognised that universities should be allowed a greater degree of independence, and at Ministry level there is a genuine interest in the development of appropriate arrangements for the regulation and review of the country's universities.

28. Iraq's current arrangements for sector governance and quality assurance (QA) are one example of a challenge that might be considered an opportunity: the opportunity to assist the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in developing effective regimes for the regulation and review of universities. The operating environment also presents an array of cultural challenges which might be regarded as opportunities for a British university wishing to assist in resolving the problems. The challenges include an educational culture that affords little scope for critical thinking and independent study, and some of our respondents suggested that there is, at senior level in Iraqi universities, a tendency to be

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49 https://www.transparency.org. The issue of patronage and corruption as it affects Iraqi universities is discussed in U Lindsey, *Iraqi Universities Reach a Crossroads*, The Chronicle of Higher Education, March, 2012.

50 The powers of government include control over admissions, budgets, senior appointments, curricula and, potentially, universities' relationships with foreign institutions.

51 R Mansour, *Iraq in 2019: a pivotal year for the transition*, Chatham House, April 2019.

resistant to change, and to undervalue applied research and the closer engagement of universities with business, public and third sector organisations.[52] Underlying the challenges at university level is a system for primary and secondary education that has been under-resourced together with widely recognised weaknesses in the provision for English language teaching.[53]

29. Iraq's higher education sector is not a single indivisible entity: there are significant differences (and the opportunities and challenges differ) across Iraq, and between the public and private sectors. There has been a recent and rapid growth in the number of private universities and several of our respondents expressed the view that the pursuit of profit by these institutions has been at the expense of 'quality' and that corruption is a particular issue in that part of the sector.[54] Other respondents have taken a rather different view: they suggested that public universities have been under-resourced, at least partly as a consequence of the financial crisis (see paragraph 26, above), whilst private institutions tend to be better endowed. This, they argued, has implications for the staffing of universities: salaries in the public sector are lower but jobs are more secure than those in private universities and, consequently, the private sector benefits from superior levels of staff quality and performance. It was also argued that, to the extent that they are not dependent on state funding, private universities enjoy a degree of independence from government control. Nevertheless, private institutions remain subject to regulation and, in an attempt to improve the quality of their provision and their QA arrangements, the government encourages them to collaborate with foreign universities.

30. In its assessment of business regulations, the World Bank gives Iraq a 'doing business' score of 44.72, ranking it 171st out of 190 countries.[55] Whilst no separate measure is provided for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), respondents have suggested that it presents a less challenging, 'safer and more stable' business environment, and this would appear to be confirmed by the marked tendency for foreign universities to concentrate their activities in that Region.

Terms of engagement

31. We have adopted the phrase 'terms of engagement' to describe the conditions which govern or affect the transactions (and relationships) between organisations in the two countries. In the case of transactions between universities and other organisations in Britain and Iraq, the terms of engagement include, but are certainly not limited to:

   a. **National strategies**

      Political turbulence (paragraph 27) and mixed motives (paragraphs 22-24) create an uncertain environment for the development of partnerships. The uncertainties can be reduced by the production of credible national strategies for higher education and international collaboration.

      Strategies have been published by the Ministries of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR), and the UK Government has recently updated its strategy for international education.[56]

52 U Lindsey, *Iraqi Universities Reach a Crossroads*, The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 25 2012.

53 See for example, M Sofi-Karim, *English Language Teaching in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, thesis submitted to Webster University, May 2015.

54 See also S Zidane, *Corruption, deceit plague private education in Iraq, Al-Monitor, April 6 2017.*

55 World Bank, *Doing Business 2019* (http://www.doingbusiness.org/en/doingbusiness)

56 D Ala'Aldeen, *A Vision to the Future of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Kurdistan Region of Iraq,* KRG 2009; MOHESR, *Strategies of the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research*, undated; HM Government, International Education Strategy, March 2019.

The MOHESR strategies are useful documents, setting out what were the Ministries' priorities for the development of Iraqi higher education and emphasising the importance of international partnerships for the rehabilitation of the sector. However, the fact that they were published ten years ago means that they now lack currency; and, whilst the UK strategy is helpful in reaffirming the government's commitment to internationalisation, it lacks the specificity that would guide discussions between universities and government departments in the two countries.

b. Migration policy

Many of our respondents have commented on the impact of the UK's migration policy on their efforts to strengthen ties between the two countries. The cost of a Tier 4 visa is greater than that for visas to enter the Schengen area, and the application procedure is complex. This fosters a belief that Iraqi staff and students are not welcome in the UK and it is a factor that affects the viability of staff and student exchange schemes, and of articulation/twinning arrangements.

c. Cost-competitiveness

'Cost-competitiveness' is another factor that affects the feasibility of staff and student travel to Britain, and thus the viability of those types of HE partnership that require a period of study in the UK. The cost of travel and accommodation places the UK in an unfavourable position relative to some of Iraq's nearby countries and, for Iraqi students, the fees for study in the UK are higher than those charged by many European universities. Notwithstanding the scholarships that are available from UK sources (a case in point being the 17 Chevening scholarships and fellowships awarded in 2017/18 rising to 22 in 2019/20),[57] Britain is undercut in the market for 'export education' by countries that do not charge fees or which (like Germany) offer a large number of scholarships to students from Iraq.

For these reasons, the costs of study abroad, twinning and articulation arrangements may be prohibitive. On the other hand, the use of 'flying faculty' and the franchising of programmes may present more affordable options because, for students, attendance on these kinds of TNE programme does not incur additional travel and accommodation costs. However, it is likely that the cost to the Iraqi university (which would normally be passed on to the students) will result in a fee that is greater than that charged by private universities and to the public universities' evening students.

d. Funding

We have noted already the success of the DelPHE programme, and of various other schemes to support staff/student mobility and the initial development of partnerships between Iraqi and foreign universities.[58] These schemes are important for three reasons: some projects will be established for purposes other than revenue generation; in many cases there can only be a realistic expectation of recovering the project's set-up costs over a long term period; and, crucially, funding for the early stages of a project would indemnify the partners against the financial risks arising from the uncertain nature of the political, security and economic situation.[59]

57 https://www.chevening.org

58 A recent study comparing national frameworks for international engagement in higher education has suggested that most of these countries' aid is focused on research partnerships. A 'more balanced' approach is advocated, on that 'supports capacity building through research and teaching'. J. Ilieva et. al., *The Shape of Global Higher Education: international comparisons with Europe*, British Council 2019.

59 Although the level of funding available to British universities may compare unfavourably with that provided by the European Union or the United States, it is important to acknowledge the value, in the past, of the Iraq Educational Initiative and the assistance provided by such UK sources as the Cultural Protection Fund, the Research Councils, UK Export Finance and the Newton Fund.

e. Information sharing

Later in this report we make the point that effective due diligence is essential if a university is (or is considering the possibility of) operating in a challenging environment. In such an environment, due diligence enquiries should include the collection of information about (and from) other universities that are active in the country. However, with the exception of the Aggregate Offshore Record (which is maintained by the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency but yields only limited information on universities' TNE partnerships), there is no definitive source of intelligence on UK universities' activities in Iraq.[60] In our view this constitutes a serious impediment to the development and maintenance of viable and sustainable partnerships between organisations and universities in Britain and Iraq.

These terms of engagement, and the challenges they present, are not 'givens': in principle at least, they would be amenable to change by universities acting collectively. This might take the form of institutions agreeing to share information or deciding to work through their representative bodies to lobby government and other national agencies. However, the competitive relationship between UK (and especially English)[61] universities is a final 'term of engagement' that might limit the willingness of institutions to share information and to adopt a collaborative approach to working in high-risk environments.[62]

Institutional factors

32. The final set of 'challenges' arises from the characteristics of the parties to a collaboration and, specifically, the way in which the UK institution manages its international partnerships. The relevant institutional characteristics should be assessed through the due diligence enquiries which each partner should make of the other (see paragraphs 36-37). These characteristics will include the competence, capacity and commitment of those academic and administrative departments that will have responsibility for the management and development of the partnership. 'Competence' is a function of experience – whether the relevant staff have the experience required for discharging their responsibilities; the issue of 'capacity' concerns the extent to which the staff concerned have the time and resources that would be required to manage the partnership; and the purpose of any assessment of 'commitment' would be to ascertain the willingness of staff to take responsibility for the partnership, and also to ensure the clarity and compatibility of the motives of staff at institutional and departmental levels within each of the participating partners (see paragraphs 22-24 above, and Annex 2, paragraphs 12-15).

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60 We were informed that the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the UK and Iraqi Embassies, the British Council, the UK Quality Assurance Agency and the UK's regulator for higher education (the Office for Students) do not currently hold this information.

61 This problem may be more pronounced in England and Wales than it is in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

62 A recent KPMG report *(Future-proofing the University: an approach to strategic collaboration*, Spring 2019) argues that collaboration is a means of managing uncertain environments. Paul Greatrix (in *Branching out: new international campus developments,* Wonkhe, 17 November, 2016) states that 'while collaboration is built into the sector's DNA to some extent, it is rarely considered in a strategic context …'. This can lead to 'unstructured activity, with resulting challenges in effective oversight and governance; poor monitoring and a subsequent lack of visibility around the delivery of intended aims and, in the worst cases, financial and reputational issues'.

33. The UK institution's *approach* to the management of its international partnerships is a particular aspect of its 'competence'. A number of our respondents have drawn our attention to the level of risk aversion in many British universities (and perhaps their insurers), resulting in a reluctance to permit staff travel to Iraq. This may be because their risk assessments and due diligence enquiries are over-reliant on the necessarily cautious travel advice issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. More generally, quality management arrangements (including due diligence procedures) that are not fit for purpose are an all-to-frequent cause of partnership failure, and a related factor is the tendency for some universities to engage in transnational activity in what one author has described as 'an immature, reactive and opportunistic' manner.[63] This and the other challenges at this level lie entirely within an institution's sphere of control.

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63 N Healey, *Why do English universities really franchise degrees to overseas providers?*, Higher Education Quarterly, 2013.

SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS

SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS

'*Since 2003, significant sums of external funds have been expended to reform Iraq's national education curriculum.… These top-down approaches, designed in places far away from Iraq, rely mostly on exporting US-European models to Iraq that have little if any sensitivity to Iraq's specific cultural and educational infrastructure. Such approaches are designed for Iraqis to follow a predetermined model that creates little ownership of educational tools, methodologies and outputs*'.[64]

34. Various partnership opportunities were identified in the opening sections of this report and we have gone on to suggest that, in their attempts to realise these opportunities and in spite of their advantages, British universities may encounter three levels or types of challenge. These are the challenges that arise from the nature of the operating environment (paragraphs 26-30), the terms of engagement that will govern British-Iraqi partnerships (paragraph 31), and the characteristics and management practices of each of the participating institutions (paragraphs 32-33). We have also asserted that a university that is 'robust and strategically placed' should be able to mitigate, manage or eliminate these challenges.

35. In this final section of the report we consider the action that needs to be taken by universities, British and Iraqi, if they are to maximise the benefits of collaboration while minimising the risks. We argue that the 'robustness' of a university's approach to partnership management is rooted in the effectiveness of its due diligence and approval procedures; and, to be 'strategically placed' a university will need to plan for the longer term, ensuring that its partnerships develop in a way that is consistent with local and national priorities as well as being responsive to its own needs and those of its partner. We go on to suggest that the productivity and sustainability of a partnership would be maximised if it were to be governed by three principles: it should encompass a comprehensive range of activities, it should be multilateral rather than bilateral, and the relationship between the partners should be based on parity not patronage. We finish by proposing some models for the longer-term development of partnerships between universities and other organisations in the UK and Iraq.

Initiating the partnership

36. Due diligence can be defined as 'the investigation or exercise of care that a reasonable business or person is expected to take before entering into an agreement or contract with another party'. The investigation should enhance 'the amount and quality of information available to decision-makers and (ensure) that this information is systematically used to deliberate on the decision at hand and all its costs, benefits and risks'. A due diligence enquiry is, then, the essential first step in developing a partnership.

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64 Head of Department of a university located in South Iraq.

37. A due diligence procedure has to be fit for the purpose of assessing the viability of a proposed partnership, informing decisions on how the collaboration should be managed, and providing the basis upon which the partners can plan for its longer term development. For this to be the case the procedure would need to have the following properties:

   a. Due diligence should be mutual, with each partner making enquiries about the other, and it should address the issues discussed in paragraph 32.

   b. The focus of the enquiries should extend beyond the prospective partner to obtain an 'in-depth knowledge of local conditions and regulatory frameworks'.[65] It would be good practice for the assessment of the operating context to be conducted jointly by the two or more parties to the collaboration.

   c. There should be a careful examination of the *opportunities* for partnership as well as an assessment of the risks that the partners are likely to encounter.

   d. And, finally, due diligence enquiries should be conducted on a regular basis. By ensuring that the partners remain alert to changes in the operating context, and to their own capacity and needs, regular due diligence enquiries will provide the information that would inform the partners' decisions on any changes that should be made to the way in which the partnership is managed.

38. The reliability of the decision to proceed with, manage and develop a partnership will depend on the quality of the information upon which it is based. Some of that information will be generated by the partners' due diligence procedures and we suggested earlier that enquiries might (and we would argue should) also be made of foreign and Iraqi institutions that have already established partnerships with one another (see paragraph 31[e]).[66] It is also essential that the partners, and in particular the UK university, inform and solicit information from the relevant Iraqi authorities and British agencies located in Iraq.[67]

39. It appears that most, at least, of the successful partnerships between UK and Iraqi universities were established and have been maintained through the good offices of alumni and expatriate staff. Alumni who have returned to Iraq can be an invaluable source of local intelligence – intelligence that can then be used to supplement, interpret and verify the information that has been generated through a university's due diligence enquiries.[68] Our respondents have also emphasised the importance of personal contacts and loyalties for the initiation of partnerships.[69]

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65 UUKi/Warwick Economics and Development (2018), *Transnational education: global location, local innovation*. According to the UK's Quality Assurance Agency, due diligence enquiries should include 'the legal and regulatory frameworks of the country concerned; the political, ethical and cultural context; the higher education structures in the country where the delivery, support or partner organisation is operating'; and the prevailing 'cultural assumptions about higher education learning methods'. QAA (2018), *UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B10, Indicator 6.*

66 In the past, this kind of information exchange has been facilitated by the British Universities Iraq Consortium (BUIC) and, although it only has a few university members, currently by the Iraq Britain Business Council (IBBC).

67 The relevant 'authorities' and 'agencies' would include the Iraqi Embassy and the Cultural Attaché in London, the British Council and Embassy in Baghdad, and local representatives of the Department for International Trade.

68 The UUKi/Warwick Economics and Development report (*Transnational Education*: *Global Location, Local Innovation*, October 2018) also stresses 'the importance of building strong relationships and trust… through regular communication, including face-to-face meetings'.

69 Lorna Middlebrough has made the point that 'US universities will be well served by establishing alumni networks that stay connected with these hardworking and talented students after they return. They are to become leaders within their fields of study and within the higher education system, which will create new pathways for recruitment and partnerships in the future' (Partnership Opportunities for US and Iraqi Universities, IEM Spotlight Nesletter, Vol 13, Issue 2, August 2016).

In any prospective partnership, the presence of alumni in the Iraqi university, or of expatriate staff in the UK institution will, therefore, greatly assist in the building of mutual trust and understanding. Alumni, and in particular those who are employed at senior levels in government, business and third sector organisations, can also play a key role in influencing the development of a partnership and in acting, on a wider stage, as its advocates.

Planning for the longer term

40. An effective due diligence procedure provides the basis upon which the partners can agree a strategy for the development of the partnership. Planning for the longer term is particularly important in ensuring the sustainability of a collaboration that will be operating in a challenging environment. As Christopher Hill has pointed out, 'quick fixes' do not provide 'long term solutions to real problems': 'the considerable cost and time involved in creating and maintaining a successful international partnership in Iraq must be tempered by a long-term view of how we (achieve) success'.[70]

41. In the absence of a plan to guide its development, a partnership would proceed in a reactive manner, taking opportunities and dealing with threats as and when they arise. This kind of opportunistic development is unlikely to ensure the scalability of the partnership and therefore its sustainability in the longer term. Scalability would be in doubt because, in the absence of a fully-costed strategic plan, it is unlikely that the partner institutions and their external sponsors would be willing to commit the resources that would be required to support the development of the partnership. In these circumstances it is likely that the survival of the venture will remain dependent on the efforts of a few enthusiastic and committed individuals, and this would call into question its sustainability over the longer term.

42. When the development of a partnership is governed by a strategic plan, its managers are attempting to 'shape the future', to achieve 'desirable ends with the available means'.[71] Having used the due diligence enquiries to analyse the operating environment and to consider the assets that they will bring to the project, the British university and its partner will be plotting a course of action that will, they hope, secure the sustainability of their partnership by ensuring that it will serve not just the immediate interests of the enthusiasts within their own institutions but also, and crucially, both their longer term corporate needs and the needs of their external stakeholders (the 'desirable ends'). The development plan – the path to achieving these 'desirable ends' – will reflect the partners' decisions in response to two questions: on what activities should the collaboration focus, and how should the relationship itself be developed?

43. Earlier in this report we distinguished three broad types, each with a different focus: Type 1 (third stream) partnerships, Type 2 capacity-building collaborations sub-divided into sector and institution-focused activities, and Type 3 academic partnerships encompassing both TNE and research (paragraphs 6-10).[72] This was followed by an indication (in paragraph 18) of some of the opportunities to develop partnerships to engage with each of these three areas. Success in seizing these opportunities will not, however, guarantee the sustainability of the project.

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70 Iraq needs academics to rebuild reputation of its university sector, The Conversation, April 28 2014 (http://theconversation.com/iraq-needs-academics-to-rebuild-reputation-of-its-university-sector-24175).

71 M McKeown, *The Strategy Book,* Pearson, 2011

72 Annex 2 (below) draws the map in a rather different way, using the distinction between teaching, research and third stream activity to identify seven types of partnership.

44. Sustainable partnerships will be those that create long-term value for Iraq, its universities, companies and third sector organisations, as well as for its UK participants. To the extent that a Type 1 (third stream) project makes a direct contribution to the rebuilding of the country, its value is self-evident; and, for a UK university, the opportunity to form a partnership with a British or international company operating in Iraq would offer the attractions of reduced levels of security and financial risk. And, if a bilateral arrangement of this kind were to be extended to include a local Iraqi university, it would have the added value of enhancing that institution's capacity for business engagement (see paragraph 18[a] and footnote 35).

45. In the case of TNE partnerships, there are two aspects to the issue of responsiveness and thus the desirability or value of the activity. The first of these concerns the relevance and appropriateness of an 'exported' (franchised) curriculum, or of a programme delivered by 'flying faculty', to local and national skills requirements. The second relates to the structure of the relationship between the partners. We contend that an unequal relationship is likely to be unresponsive, not just to local, national and labour market needs, but also to the needs of the Iraqi higher education sector and of its institutions. The problem arises if and when the distribution of power within the relationship inhibits or prevents the local partner from adapting the curriculum, or customising its delivery, to local needs and circumstances. The alternative would be a relationship between the partners that is characterised by at least a degree of symmetry.

Relationship structure

46. We would define a symmetrical relationship as one that entails an equal partnership between organisations that are working together for outcomes that neither could achieve on its own.[73] Type 1 contract research and consultancy, and Type 2 (capacity building) partnerships are, by definition, asymmetrical: they resemble patron-client relationships in that they are conceived for the purpose of enabling one partner to benefit from the expertise of the other. But it would be difficult to image a partnership of this kind that was not founded on a commitment to the 'client' achieving, over time, parity with its 'patron'. It can also be argued that Type 3 research partnerships are usually formed for the purpose of exploiting the synergies (in terms of research findings and co-authored publications) that might arise by combining the interests and strengths of each partner and that, for this reason, the relationship between the two will be more or less equal.

47. The issue concerning the structure of the relationship is, therefore, more pertinent to Type 3 TNE partnerships. We have explained already (paragraph 10) that these partnerships can be placed along a continuum, with articulation (twinning) agreements and franchises at one end, and validation and accreditation arrangements at the other. What distinguishes these various arrangements is the extent of the local university's responsibilities and the degree to which it can act independently of the institution that grants the students' academic award. In the case of an articulation or franchise, unless the awarding institution is committed to capacity building, the value of the arrangement (to either partner) will be questionable.[74] Such a partnership would merely supplement the programmes that are already offered by the Iraqi university and it would not, in itself, enable it to acquire the expertise and experience necessary for the delivery of its own programmes in the new curriculum area. Instead, the local university is held in a subordinate position without any promise of release, and the awarding institution could be exposing itself to the charge of 'academic imperialism' [75] A recent review of the TNE activities of 17 British universities has referred to symmetry as a 'shift towards equitable bilateral partnerships'.

73 This is close to the definition employed in Peter Wilmott and Michael Young's classic study, T*he Symmetrical Family, Penguin, 1973.*

74 For an explanation of the phrase 'awarding institution', see paragraph 10, above.

75 M. Shattock, *Overseas Campuses: the management perspective*, in British Universities in China: the Reality Beyond the Rhetoric, Agora 2007.

The report goes on to explain 'equitable bilateral partnerships' would entail 'engagement with partners who build on each other's strengths on equal terms and where responsibilities are equally shared'. UUKi/Warwick Economics and Development (2018), Transnational education: global location, local innovation.

48. Awarding (foreign or UK) universities will often maintain asymmetrical relationships with (and therefore control over) their partners in order to minimise risks to the quality of their TNE provision and to the standard of their academic awards. The establishment of international branch campuses (IBCs) is a case in point. If the branch campus is managed as if it were a faculty of the parent institution, the IBC could well be seen as a vehicle for 'exporting (foreign) models to Iraq', models that 'have little if any sensitivity to Iraq's specific cultural and educational infrastructure'. Establishing an IBC 'outpost', or internationalisation policies that restrict a university's TNE partnerships to such low risk options as 'flying faculty', articulation or franchise arrangements, may reflect an excess of caution on the part of a university faced with the prospect of working with an unfamiliar partner in a challenging host environment.[76]

49. Whilst an unequal or close supervisory relationship is, of course, entirely appropriate when the awarding university is working with an inexperienced partner, the implication of our argument is that the agreement for the delivery of, say, a franchised programme should include a commitment on the part of the awarding institution to develop its partner's capacity. This would mean that the partnership would have the potential to progress to a more equal validation relationship as and when the partner has demonstrated that it is able to act with greater independence:[77] once the new arrangement has been achieved, the Iraqi university would be able draw upon the expertise of its own staff and their knowledge of local requirements to develop a curriculum that the UK institution then approves (validates) as a programme that would lead to one of its academic awards.

50. Validation is just one option for a UK university wishing to develop a more equal TNE partnership. The other possibilities will include:

   • An accreditation arrangement in which the awarding institution oversees and, in effect, licences the partner's quality assurance arrangements rather than controlling the design and delivery of the programmes it offers. 'Accreditation' is one possible model for the relationship between a British university and its IBCs, enabling locally employed staff to determine the range and content of the curriculum).

   • Once a British and Iraqi university have reached the position where they each have confidence in the standard and integrity of the other's awards, they could build on their respective strengths to develop curricula leading to dual or joint awards.

   • British universities could contribute to the development of 'international joint universities' (IJU). IJUs have been defined as 'new independent universities created through collaboration between HE institutes and government from two or more countries'. An IJU would be free to make its own decisions on what should be delivered and how, and the role of a sponsoring UK university would be to support rather than supervise the new institution (see paragraphs 16[c] and footnote 26).[78]

The characteristics of each of these three types of 'symmetrical' partnership are explained in more detail in Annex 2 (p.69).

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76 It is usual for power in a Type 3 TNE arrangement will lie initially with the franchising or validating institution because it needs to maintain control of the partnership in order to secure the quality and standards of the programmes that lead to its own academic awards

77 The points made in this and in the previous paragraph will also apply to Type 1 activity. In collaborations with business or third sector organisations, it is important that the UK institution seeks the involvement of one or more Iraqi universities, thereby assisting them in developing their capacity/capability for industry/community engagement (see paragraphs 26 and 44).

78 See Chapter 8 of J Knight, *Knowledge Diplomacy in Action*, British Council, 2019.

51. So far, we have assumed that partnerships will be bilateral, with the two organisations working together in a single area (focused specifically on the delivery of third stream, capacity-building or academic activities). However, British and Iraqi institutions could derive considerable mutual benefit by extending the range or scope of their partnership activities. A comprehensive partnership might entail various TNE arrangements structured to take account of the needs and experience of the Iraqi partner within each curriculum area, academic research, and third stream activities. Some or all of these activities could be underpinned by a capacity-building programme. The value and thus the sustainability of such a project would depend, in part, on whether the partners are able to establish a genuinely synergetic relationship between these activities based, perhaps, on a common focus on university-business engagement.[79] If synergy is not achieved the partnership could become unsustainable, with either or both of the partners being overcome by the burden of having to manage such a diverse range of activities.

52. The more comprehensive the range of collaborative activity, the greater the likelihood that the partnership will become multilateral. A simple, hypothetical example would be a TNE and research partnership between a UK and Iraqi institution that was extended to include a third business partner for the purpose of engaging in related, that is, 'synergetic', third stream activities (see paragraph 44).[80] A current example that is both comprehensive and multilateral is to be found in the field of medical education. With the support, initially, of DelPHE and Erasmus+ funding, a UK medical school established a partnership with an Iraqi university to undertake a range of joint research, postgraduate education and capacity-building activities. They were then joined by two other UK universities and by two Iraqi institutions, and the project outcomes have impacted more widely on the curricula offered by a number of other medical schools in Iraq. The partnership has achieved sustainability in the sense that it is now self-funding and of mutual benefit: in the words of the British university's Head of Medical Education, 'we always learn as much from our colleagues from overseas as they learn from us'.

The way forward

53. We have suggested that, compared with single-focus bilateral partnerships, institutions would derive greater benefit from partnerships that are comprehensive in their scope and multilateral in their structure; they are more likely to achieve sustainability, partly because they would have the critical mass that will enable them to withstand and overcome the various challenges discussed earlier in this report. We have also argued that a sustainable partnership is one that is aligned with the partners' priorities and aspirations and that this, in turn, requires the UK institution to adopt, or plan for, a mode of collaboration that is based on parity not patronage. This is consistent with what some, including a number of our respondents, have described as an Iraqi-led, 'decolonising' approach [81]

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79 Hatekenaka (...) has questioned the separation of third stream activities from teaching and research, noting that 'the "third stream" was simply defined as *anything other than* universities' core businesses of teaching and research'. He suggests that third stream activities should have 'strong linkages with teaching and/or research, and that it is important to emphasize synergy and integration sooner rather than later.' (Hatakenaka). D Pilsbury (*Building relationships,* not assets, Agora 2007) makes a similar point: 'it is essential that we recognise that the bedrock of a partnership has to be a deep and long-standing collaborative relationship with a university that is based around research, teaching interactions and synergies for mutual benefit'.

80 This is exemplified by the Nahrein Network, comprising several UK and Iraqi universities and museums working initially on various research projects and the restoration of Iraq's cultural heritage, and then bringing in new partners and extending the scope of the partnership to include curriculum development and research capacity building. See https://www.ucl.ac.uk/nahrein/ and https://www.ucl.ac.uk/history/news/2019/apr/ucl-researcher-mehiyar-kathem-wins-british-academy-funding-iraq-publishing-workshops

81 F. Sutherland, *The case for qualitative restitution of Iraqi Higher Education*, MA dissertation, School of Education, University of Sheffield, 2017; M Reisz, *Build your own path to quality, Iraqi academy told,* Times Higher Education, September 5 2013;

54. Granting parity is not an act of generosity: it brings benefit to both sides of a partnership. It would enable the Iraqi partner to adapt curricula, staff research or third stream activities to local needs ensuring, where appropriate, that provision is consistent with institutional and national priorities; and (in the case of TNE partnerships) validation and accreditation arrangements are less costly, and therefore more affordable, than articulations and franchises.[82] For the British university, on the other hand, capacity-building to enhance staff quality, the partner's learning infrastructure or management and governance arrangements is, in the longer term, more effective than close supervision as a means of ensuring the quality of the partnership activities and securing the standard of the UK institution's award.[83] Finally, and crucially, parity or the prospect of parity is more likely to ensure the partners' enduring commitment to the relationship and to exploring opportunities for the partnership to move on to new forms and areas of collaboration.

55. Earlier in this section we argued that a development plan would be the product of the partners' decisions on the activities on which the partnership should focus, and how the relationship should be developed. Our discussion of the first issue led to the suggestion that the partners might, in time, engage in a comprehensive range of activities; with respect to the second issue, we argued that the partners should aim to establish a more equal relationship, and that they should consider whether the partnership would benefit if its membership were to be extended to include other universities or organisations. These decisions will be based on assessments of the partners' competence and on interpretations of their ongoing due diligence enquiries. The assessments and interpretations may lead to difficult conversations. Staff at different levels within each of the partner organisations may have different views on the strengths and weaknesses of their institutions, and their readiness to take on the greater responsibilities implied by a more equal relationship. They may also disagree on the salient features of the operating environment.

56. We suggest, therefore, that another factor that will govern the strength and sustainability of a collaboration will be the extent to which the partners, acting separately and together, are able to conduct full, frank and collegial debates on the outcomes of their due diligence enquiries, appropriate mitigation, the needs that the partnership should serve, and the planned focus, scope and structure of the arrangement. Once these matters are resolved, the outcomes could be captured by a formal partnership strategy which would itself serve as a *pro tem* settlement or compact to guide the management of the project (including decisions on resource allocation), and provide the success criteria against which the collaboration can be evaluated.

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82 N. Healey (*The optimal global integration – local responsiveness tradeoff for an international branch campus*, Research in Higher Education, August 2018, Vol 59, Issue 5) provides a useful discussion of the tensions between 'standardisation' and 'localisation'.

83 C. Raban, *Partnership, prudence and the management of risk*, in K Clarke (ed), Quality in Partnership, Council of Validating Universities/the Open University, 2008.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

57. Iraq is, indeed, 'a land of opportunity': the country has been declared 'open for business' and the invitation to 'trade' is extended to British universities, no less than to commercial organisations. The opportunities arise from the acute and wide-ranging needs of a country and of a higher education sector that has been devastated by decades of isolation, war and insurgency. Overlaying these needs is the complex array of motives and interests of those who, in both countries, will make partnership decisions at government and institutional levels (paragraphs 22-23, and Annex 2 paragraphs 13-15).

58. We have suggested that the plans or strategies that will guide the development of individual partnerships should be honed and approved on the basis of a collegial discussion between and within the partner organisations (paragraph 55). We believe that there is a strong case for similar discussions to be conducted at national level. Our first recommendation, therefore, is for a group to be established to oversee and guide the development of partnerships between British and Iraqi universities, acknowledging the possibility that these partnerships might be extended to include business, public and third sector organisations.

59. Although the composition of the group will be subject to discussion between the British Council and other parties, it is anticipated that its membership will include representatives of Iraqi universities, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the British Council, the Department for International Trade, and representation from UK universities and business interests.

Recommendation 1: The British Council should establish a stakeholder group that is representative of academic, business and political interests in both Iraq and the UK.

60. We have argued that the sustainability of a partnership will depend on the extent to which it meets, not just the partners' corporate needs but also the expectations of their internal and external stakeholders. British and Iraqi universities work within uncertain political environments, exacerbated by the fact that the two countries' national strategies are either out of date or insufficiently specific to guide the partnership activities of their universities, and to provide the criteria against which priorities can be determined and progress can be evaluated (paragraph 31[a]). We recommend, therefore, that the stakeholder group should commission the production of a common strategic framework, one that is based on a consideration of the risks, opportunities and needs that might be addressed through the formation of partnerships between universities and other organisations in the UK and Iraq.

61. The Common Strategic Framework (CSF) should provide specific guidance on the country's needs and priorities, focusing on both the delivery of, and capacity building for, teaching (including TNE), academic research and third stream activity. With respect to third stream and capacity-building activities, it would be helpful if the CSF were to recognise the potential impact of higher education partnerships on such other sectors as healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture, financial and professional services, culture, and education. The CSF should also encourage institutions to consider the measures they should adopt to ensure the sustainability of their partnership arrangements.

Recommendation 2: The British Council should support the stakeholder group in creating (or commissioning) a common strategic framework (CSF) for the development of UK-Iraqi partnerships.

62. External funding is important in ensuring the initial viability of partnerships, if not their longer-term sustainability. We have commented on the success of the DelPHE programme in funding the early stages of partnership development when costs were likely to exceed revenues and when the partners may not yet have gained a full appreciation of the risks that they are likely to encounter (paragraphs 15 and 31[c]). We have also noted the relatively generous funding available to universities in the European Union (paragraph 16[d]). We therefore suggest that a successor to DelPHE is needed if UK higher education is to make a full and productive contribution to rebuilding the country and rehabilitating its higher education sector.

63. In the concluding section of this report we emphasised the importance of parity in ensuring that the design and planned development of a partnership will address longer term needs and Iraqi national requirements. For this reason, we would suggest that the stakeholder group should consider the benefits that would accrue from such co-funding arrangements as the support that is provided by the Newton-Mosharafa Fund which promotes science and innovation partnerships between the UK and Egypt.[84]

Recommendation 3: The British Council should work with the stakeholder group to secure funding to support the development of partnerships between universities in the UK and Iraq, and/or between higher education institutions and other non-academic organisations.

64. We have argued that UK universities need to collaborate with one another if they are to overcome the challenges of operating in the Iraqi environment, and that the free exchange of information is important for the conduct of due diligence enquiries. The report notes that the paucity of publicly available information on UK universities' activities in Iraq is a serious impediment to the development and maintenance of viable and sustainable partnerships (paragraph 31[d]). It is therefore recommended that funding should be conditional on the applicant universities being prepared to disclose their intentions and activities, and being willing to advise other institutions that are seeking partnerships with universities and other organisations in Iraq. In support of this recommendation, it is proposed that the British Council should maintain a register of UK universities that are active in Iraq.

65. Applicants for funding will (and should) make their own decisions on how best to ensure the sustainability of their partnerships, and their ability to meet the longer term needs of Iraqi institutions and their external stakeholders. It is assumed that, in making their decisions on the allocation of funds to support partnership development, the British Council and the stakeholder group will require applicants to provide an agreed plan for the longer term development and sustainability of the partnership, demonstrating that it addresses any needs, priorities or requirements that may be specified by the CSF.

66. The next set of recommendations deals specifically with the role that the British Council can play in supporting universities and the stakeholder group.

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84 https://www.britishcouncil.org.eg/en/programmes/education/newton-mosharafa-fund

Recommendation 4: The British Council should support the stakeholder group and UK and Iraqi universities by:

a. **maintaining a register of UK universities that are active in Iraq**

Registration with the British Council would be a requirement for financial support, should funding become available. The information contained within the register should be placed in the public domain.

b. **working with UK and Iraqi universities and governments to establish and maintain an alumni network**

Alumni are keen to retain their affiliation with their UK universities and, for reasons explained in paragraphs 21 and 39-40, universities will gain significant advantages by maintaining contact with their Iraqi graduates. These advantages might include the possibility of an alumni network acting as a forum for consultation on the CSF and the effectiveness of partnership arrangements.

c. **acting as a clearing house (or broker) for universities and other organisations that are seeking to establish a UK-Iraqi partnership.**

This recommendation would formalise a role that the British Council already performs, building on its access to academic networks and government agencies in the UK and Iraq.

66. Our remit was to provide the British Council with recommendations for the action that it might take to support the development and maintenance of partnerships between UK and Iraqi institutions. Nevertheless, the contents of this report, together with recommendations 1-5, have implications for the manner in which British institutions might engage with Iraqi universities, and more generally with organisations based in Iraq. The following recommendation is offered, therefore, for consideration by British universities.

Recommendation 5: Each university that has established (or is planning to develop) one or more partnerships with higher education institutions or other organisations in Iraq should:

a. **consult with the government of Iraq, expatriate Iraqi staff and Iraqi alumni on the initial and continuing development of the university's partnerships in the country**

See paragraphs 20-21, 38-39.

b. **consider the risks and benefits of the full range of opportunities for partnership with universities and other organisations in Iraq**

Paragraphs 6-10 and 18 of this report provide guidance on partnership options in the three areas of activity (research, TNE and third stream), and the analysis in paragraphs 25-33 should enable universities to make a judgement on the risks and benefits associated with each option. We have also sought to encourage the development of 'third stream' partnerships with business and other non-academic organisations, and we have commented on the limitations of international student recruitment and TNE arrangements (especially franchising and 'twinning') that do not include a commitment to building the capacity of the Iraqi partner.

c. **ensure that their initial and subsequent due diligence enquiries are conducted in a manner that is consistent with best practice in the higher education sector**

In paragraphs 36-37 we encourage universities to consider whether their due diligence and risk assessment procedures are fit for the purpose of operating in challenging environments.

d. **provide the British Council with details of their current or proposed partnership activities**

See Recommendations 4[a] and [c].

e. **Respond positively to requests from other universities for advice and support in their engagements with HEIs and other organisations in Iraq.**

A commitment to advising and supporting other institutions is not only intrinsically important, it would also be a condition of funding (Recommendation 4[a]).

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

PROJECT DETAILS

November 2018 the British Council commissioned a small-scale research project on current relationships between universities in the UK and the Republic of Iraq, and the potential for the future development of such partnerships. The project remit was to:

- review the relevant literature, identifying appropriate and potentially non-viable partnership models for collaboration;

- identify current partnerships between Iraqi universities and their counterparts in the UK and other foreign countries;

- define the motivations and areas of interest of British and Iraqi institutions that might be considering the possibility of forming partnerships;

- identify the most viable, productive and mutually beneficial approaches to and opportunities for collaboration;

- highlight any challenges and barriers to collaboration; and

- provide the British Council with recommendations for how it might support the development and maintenance of partnerships between UK and Iraqi institutions.

The contents of this report are based, in part, on interviews with some 41 individuals. Approximately half of the respondents were representatives of seven universities in the UK, the British Universities Iraq Consortium (BUIC), the Iraq Britain Business Council (IBBC), the Nahrein Network and the Department for International Trade. There were 23 interviews with colleagues working in Iraq. These interviewees included staff employed in 13 public and private universities in Iraq and Kurdistan, the British Embassy and British Council in Baghdad and the Cultural Attaché at the Iraqi Embassy in London. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Baghdad and Erbil, and with senior staff working in two British companies based in Iraq.

The author of this report also participated in HM Ambassador's Roadshow in Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Belfast and Glasgow from the 18th to the 21st March, 2019. In the course of the Roadshow meetings were held with colleagues from a number of UK universities, Advance HE, various business organisations and with regional staff in the Department for International Trade (including Invest Northern Ireland and Scottish Development International).

The author gratefully acknowledges the advice and assistance provided by the project's Iraq-based researcher, Nazar Jamil Abdulazeez.

ANNEX 2

THE CLASSIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

1. For the purposes of the current project, the terms 'partnership' and 'collaboration' describe a formal relationship between two or more universities (or between a university and a non-academic organisation). A 'formal relationship' is one that is supported by a written and legally binding contract or agreement between the two or more institutions or organisations.

2. This note suggests that international partnerships might be classified on the basis of three issues or criteria – their scope and focus, purpose and structure. The concluding section considers whether a fourth criterion – motive – might provide an additional basis for the classification of partnerships.

Scope and focus

3. Our first criterion for the classification of international partnerships is the area or type of activity in which a partnership is engaging. Partnership activities can be classified on the basis of the distinction between the two 'core' functions of a university – teaching and research – and 'third stream' activities.

4. The jobs.ac.uk website describes third stream activities as 'revenue-raising activities that academics undertake alongside their more traditional work of teaching and research (which form the first two 'streams')'. This definition is misleading because third stream activities are not necessarily 'revenue-raising'. Watson et al provide a more useful definition: third stream activity is 'concerned with the generation, use application and exploitation of knowledge and other university capabilities outside academic environments'.[85]
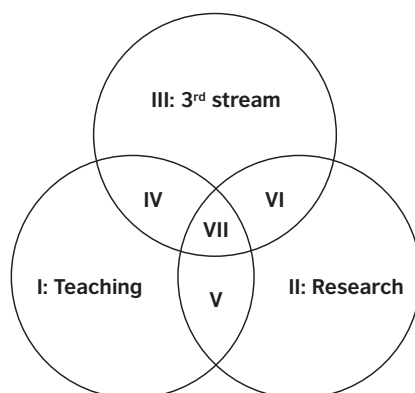
5. The Venn diagram suggests that partnership activity might encompass one or more of a total of seven possible types. Examples of each type would be:

    I. various forms of 'transnational education' (TNE);[86]

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85 D Watson, L Hall, S Tazzyman, C Hume, *Closed for business! Academic engagement in third stream activity*. SRHE, 2014.

86 TNE is 'any teaching or learning activity in which the students are in a different country to that in which the institution providing the education is based'.

II.   staff research and scholarly activity;

III.   contract research/consultancy, the development of new products/services or production processes etc;

IV.   working with employers to provide higher apprenticeships, trainee and CPD programmes etc;

V.   postgraduate research provision, projects to promote research-informed teaching, etc;

VI.   the creation of new knowledge (through collaborative research and co-authorship) with a non-academic organisation;[87]

VII. working with a non-academic organisation to provide products or services integrated with education/training and research activity.

These examples are not exhaustive of the possibilities and, as illustrated by Type VII, partnerships could entail activity in all three areas.[88]

6.   It is important to distinguish between 'focus' and 'scope'. 'Focus' implies that partnership activity is confined to one or a small number of the seven activities listed in the previous paragraph. It would be appropriate to use the term 'scope' in recognition of the possibility that a partnership might engage in a wide, or comprehensive range of activities.

Purpose

7.   Partnerships can be distinguished in terms of the purposes they serve. Here we can make a simple distinction between partnerships formed for the purpose of delivering of 'service' or 'product' (e.g. the delivery of programmes to students, joint research or publications or the provision of consultancy services), and partnerships that set out to *build the capacity* of one or both partners to engage in its core business, or to extend it into new areas. It is not, of course, a simple binary choice: TNE partnerships might be formed for the purpose of delivering a programme *and* to enhance a partner's ability to act in the longer term with complete or partial autonomy.

Structure

8.   Capacity-building implies, at least in the longer term, a relationship structure that differs from a partnership in which there is a clear division of labour between the two organisations, with one taking more responsibility for the delivery of the product or service than the other.

9.   Michael Shattock has observed that 'one danger with a British university setting up a British campus overseas is that it begins to look, maybe not imperial, but certainly counter-cultural …'.[89] This raises the issue of structure in its starkest form. More generally, we can place collaborative arrangements on a continuum based on the degree of parity between the two partners.

10. This is most clearly illustrated by the various forms of TNE arrangement described in the appended chart. In Types A and B ('export education' and 'local delivery') the role and contribution of the overseas partner is strictly limited, and the arrangement is closely controlled by the UK institution. The various forms of 'licencing' described by Types C1-C4 are distinguished by the extent of the 'host' institution's responsibilities and its

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87 The Nahrein Network exemplifies this type of partnership.

88 Such partnerships may be more 'sustainable' than those that are formed for the purpose of engaging in a single area of activity.

89 Shattock goes on to make the point that 'if Britain had not had a colonial past, one would not be so sensitive about this kind of thing'. (*Overseas Campuses: the management perspective*, in British Universities in China: the Reality Beyond the Rhetoric, Agora 2007).

opportunities to exert control over the content of a curriculum and its delivery. In the case of 'joint universities' and some branch campus arrangements, the UK sponsor's control over the venture is relaxed to an extent that enables the local campus or, in the case of joint universities (D2) the local authorities, to exert strategic direction over the provision that is offered.

11. Relaxed control by the licensing (UK) university (e.g. Types C2-3) is important if the provision is to be customised to local needs and to the host institution's competences; on the other hand, limiting the responsibilities of inexperienced partners, and subjecting their operations to close supervision (e.g. Types B and C1), is also important for the effective management of risks to the quality of the provision and to the standard of the licensing institution's awards. In the case of inexperienced hosts, these objectives might be reconciled by the partners agreeing to combine the initial delivery of a programme under, say, a franchising arrangement with various capacity-building measures which, if successful, could lead to the eventual replacement of the franchise with a validation or accreditation arrangement with the result that the relationship between the partners becomes more equal.

12. It is important to stress that these observations on relationship structure apply not just to TNE but to partnerships that engage in all the areas of activity mapped out in paragraph 5, above.[90] We should also recognise that *capacity building* works both ways: it is a process from which both (or, in the case of multilateral partnerships, all) partners can benefit.[91] The issue of benefit takes us to the final basis upon which we might attempt a classification of partnerships.

Motive

13. At first sight, a classification of partnerships by the motives that drive them would seem to be a simple affair. Such a classification could simply distinguish between engagement with a venture for its intrinsic value on the one hand, and for its instrumental value on the other. In this context, it is likely that altruistic and academic motives will fall into the first category, whilst economic and political motives will fall into the second.[92]

14. Motivation is, however, a complex issue, and its complexity may well defy any attempts to classify partnerships on this basis. The complexity arises from the possibility that:
   • the interests of one party may be different from those of the other;
   • motives at the institutional or corporate level may not accord with those of staff who have responsibility for the day-to-day management of the partnership;
   • a party's declared or ostensible interests may cloak its real motives;
   • the parties to a collaboration may distinguish between their short-term and long-term interests;
   • the reasons why partnership might be promoted by governments may not accord with the intentions of the organisations that are engaged in the activity.

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90 For example, in the case of third stream partnerships, the issue of relationship structure is captured by the relatively recent preference for the term knowledge *exchange* rather than technology *transfer*. This recognises that such partnerships may be mutually beneficial and not simply a question of universities passing (or selling) the fruits of their expertise to their commercial clients.

91 The 'Internationalisation' of curricula, staff expertise and the student experience – through staff and student exchanges, joint research and scholarly activity, and joint/dual awards – is a clear example of mutually beneficial 'capacity building'.

92 Motives of the 'political' type would value a partnership as a means of securing future gains. These future gains might include (for a government) the exercise of soft power, and (for an institution) an enhanced reputation or profile.

15. Economic and strategic drivers may operate at the corporate or institutional level, with partnership activity being seen as a means of diversifying the organisation's income streams or as part of a strategy to secure, in the longer term, such other advantages as an enhanced institutional reputation and profile. Staff with operational responsibility for the development and management of a partnership may advance an academic rationale for engaging in the activity; alternatively (or perhaps additionally) they may be motivated by a desire for personal (i.e. career) advancement. Government departments and agencies, on the other hand, might promote partnerships as part of a development aid agenda and/ or as a means of projecting 'soft power'.   And finally, we should not discount the possibility that, for all these actors, partnership activity may be driven by altruism or a sense of moral obligation.

TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION

	Types	Definition and Examples	Comments
A: Export Education[1]	**A1: Open market recruitment**	The recruitment of students in one country (Iraq) to attend universities in another (UK). Like tourism, 'the consumer (student) travels to the exporting country to consume the service'.	To qualify as a form of 'partnership', student recruitment must be based on a formal 'articulation' or 'progression' agreement.
	A2: Articulation or progression	An agreement between the UK (recruiting) university and an overseas partner in which the former recognises the programmes of the latter for admissions purposes. 'Twinning' arrangements (in which students take the first part of their programme in Iraq, and complete their studies at the UK institution) fall into this category.	Progression agreements do not normally guarantee admission, whereas articulation agreements may do so. Articulation agreements also enable the admission of students with credit (on the basis of their having completed their home programme).[2] Student exchange schemes might be placed in this category.[2]
B: Local delivery		'Flying Faculty' or Distance Learning: the home (UK) university delivers programmes in the host country using its own staff, curricula etc. The host has limited involvement in programme delivery.[3]	In these arrangements, students who complete programmes delivered in the host country are entitled to awards (BA, BSc, MA, MBA etc.) of the foreign university.
C: Licencing	**C1: Franchise**	The partner delivers (teaches) a programme that is designed by the home university. The former may have some responsibility for student assessment.	The types of TNE vary in terms of the balance of power between the two partners. In types B & C1 the UK university retains a high level of control over the curriculum, teaching, assessment and, often, the admission of students. In Type C2 some of these controls are relaxed and Type C3 affords a high level of independence to the partner institution. It is only in type C4 that there is genuine parity between the two partners.
	C2: Validation	The host institution designs and delivers the programme (curriculum) which is then approved by the home university.	
	C3: Accreditation	The home university recognises and relies on the internal QA procedures of its partner, enabling the latter to develop and validate its own programmes leading to the awards of the home university[4]	
	C4: Joint/Dual Awards	The two partners work together to develop a shared curriculum and on completion of the programme students gain either the awards of both universities (dual awards), or a single 'joint' award in the name of both partners.[5]	
D: Foreign investment[6]	**D1: International Branch Campus (IBC)**	An IBC is a satellite operation "that is owned, at least in part, by a foreign education provider; operated in (its) name …; and provides an entire academic programme … leading to a degree awarded by the foreign education provider" (Garrett et al).	Branch campus arrangements (D1) will vary according to the level of control exercised by the foreign university.[7] In type (D2) there is complete local control over the design of the institution's curriculum, systems, procedures etc. The local HEI issues its own degrees and, for these reasons, this arrangement barely qualifies as 'transnational education'. (See Healey, 2018). Government funding for D2 ventures is often seen as a form of development aid'.
	D2: Joint Universities	'Joint universities' (Knight and McNamara) are co-funded/developed by both sending and host country HEIs/governments, and are formally accredited by the relevant authority in the host country[8]	

Transnational Education (TNE)

1   Strictly speaking, 'export education' does not conform to the definition of transnational education (i.e. as TNE is 'any teaching or learning activity in which the students are in a different country to that in which the institution providing the education is based').

2   Whether a student exchange scheme is classifiable as 'export education' would depend on the number of foreign students coming to the UK institution for a period of study compared with the number of UK students going to the foreign institution.

3   The host institution's contribution is typically limited to providing learning spaces and support facilities.

4   The Higher Education Quality Council defined 'accreditation' as 'a process by which an institution without its own degree awarding powers is given authority by a university… to exercise powers and responsibility for academic provision. Typically, an accredited institution…is authorized to validate and approve programmes, and to exercise delegated powers of quality control and assurance, subject to annual or other periodic reporting requirements' (Council of Validating Universities, *Code of Practice*, 1997). Accreditation arrangements are now unusual in the UK higher education system.

5   Dual award arrangements allow each of the two (or more) partners to exert a higher level of control over academic standards than is the case with joint award partnerships.

6   The distinction between exporting, licencing and direct foreign investment is derived from J Johanson and J Vahlne, *The Internationalisation process of the Firm: a model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitments*, Journal of International Business Studies, Vol 8 No 1, 1977.

7   The locus of control (between the IBC and its parent institution) will depend on how the IBC is owned and controlled. The possibilities will range between the IBC serving as an 'outpost' that is wholly owned and controlled by the parent university, and the latter being a minority shareholder in the IBC and granting it responsibilities that are comparable to that of an accredited institution (C3). Where an IBC is placed on this continuum will have implications for the balance between the quality and financial risks that it might encounter (i.e. in the case of an 'outpost' arrangement, high financial risks are accompanied by low quality risks; the reverse would be the case at the other end of the continuum).

8   The use of the term "joint" to describe institutions of this kind may be misleading. In many cases, these are newly-established institutions that are wholly or partly sponsored and supported, but not controlled by, one or more foreign universities. The DAAD-funded German universities abroad scheme falls into this category (D2). Such institutions as the German-Jordanian University are 'legally independent private or public institutions, which award their own degrees and are part of the national higher education system in the host country. DAAD funding is used to support the development costs and the new universities work with a consortium of German universities to develop the curriculum, which is modelled on the German higher Education system' (Healey). In these cases the partnership is at ministry of higher education level.