



UCL

DOCTORAL THESIS

**Forming and implementing international
partnerships in the context of locally and
globally engaged higher education institutions:**

A qualitative study of administrators' perspectives
from the USA, UK, Canada

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*A thesis submitted to the University College of London
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

May 2021

DECLARATION

I, Zaneta Bertot, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been delivered from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore why and how international partnerships function. Serving as conduits for people, knowledge, and resource sharing, partnerships materialise a complex combination of influences and tensions, thus, raise challenges for practitioners involved in their formation and implementation. The study seeks to expand the current literature, which has largely dealt with best practices based on individual cases of building international partnerships, by accounting for the complexities of forming and implementing partnerships across different national and institutional contexts. Asking why institutions form international partnerships and how they respond to implementation tensions enable a deeper understanding of the underlying ambiguities surrounding the partnership development. Using a multi-case research design, the study gathers evidence from fifteen locally and globally focused institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada. The multi-country design allows to access a phenomenon that transcends a single country and operates in a shared space. The fieldwork based on semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis gives voice to senior administrators positioned at the nexus of strategic and operational dimensions of partnerships but rarely heard in literature.

The thesis highlights the complexity of interactions within which international partnerships are formed and implemented. First, the analysis of the reasons behind the formation of partnerships identifies a multiplicity of influences that situates international partnerships within embedded institutional layers and integrated global, national, and local influences, some of which may be hidden from both partners. It finds evidence demonstrating similar institutional responses among institutions with a similar global or local focus regardless of the national context they occupy. The findings suggest that the institutional context has a greater impact on partnerships than the national context and point to the growing need for integrating international partnerships locally. Second, the analysis of the implementation of partnerships identifies a compromise between intended collaborative advantage and experienced inertia stretched over institutional and individual levels. It exposes differences in how locally and globally engaged institutions respond to resource limitations, structural dichotomy, and cultural heterogeneity, while showing similar responses to leadership changes, communication maintenance, trust building, and power imbalances. The findings suggest that collaborative advantage has more to do with the process of achieving productive tensions rather than the actual resolution of contradictory forces and stress the centrality of individual involvement.

IMPACT STATEMENT

The research has a strong potential to impact higher education institutions and assist all those involved in international partnerships. It has captured the interest of participating administrators and institutions that are keen to improve their international engagement and capitalise on the findings. By provoking reflection on 'why' and 'how' international partnerships function, this thesis has offered practical pointers for strengthening international partnerships. It has proposed a framework to guide practitioners' efforts toward those areas that can produce the most impact. As many internationally partnered higher education institutions constantly review their strategies, the thesis promises to help direct the development of policy and increase the effectiveness of international engagement. It further promises to stimulate and inform practising and aspiring administrators who support wider strategies of internationalisation, such as student and faculty exchange, study abroad, joint degrees, teaching and research collaboration. Although the study is not representative of all institutions and partnerships, the findings illustrate the importance of understanding common patterns and shared challenges generated from multiple institutional and national contexts.

In addition to higher education institutions and practitioners, the research has contributed to the academic knowledge base in the area of international partnerships. It has expanded the current literature, which has largely dealt with best practices based on individual cases, by placing multiple idiosyncratic experiences and contexts in perspective. The thesis has provided an integrative view of the partnering process by uncovering factors driving international partnerships and identifying areas where tensions persist. The findings have been presented at UCL IOE departmental seminars and conferences. They have also been submitted for inclusion at the CIHE Summer Institute and the publication of the special issue of CIHE Perspectives (Center for International Higher Education) at Boston College. Additionally, the impacts of the research have been extended through networks such as the Institute of International Education (IIE) and European Association for International Education (EAIE) by sharing the study findings in professional meetings and encouraging others to consider this research area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors Dr. Vincent Carpentier and Dr. Rebecca Schendel for their valuable inspiration and guidance through this doctoral programme and the thesis. Thank you for providing constructive feedback and pushing me forward. Your unwavering support encouraged me to keep going through countless moments of doubt and overwhelm.

I am indebted to all participants who took part in the study and enabled this research to be possible. I am grateful for your generosity in sharing your precious time, insights, and experiences with me. Your professionalism and engagement transpired through every interview.

Thank you to my peers who embarked on a similar journey. You made this experience more enjoyable and I am fortunate that our paths crossed. Virtually or in-person, I am sure we will keep providing encouragement to one another.

Without a doubt, I owe much to my family. To my loving husband, Damien, and my beautiful sons, Noam and Max. I would have not reached the finish line without your endless patience, understanding, and positive energy. Thank you for putting up with me being distracted and missing many fun moments. To my mom who always supported me and let me do whatever I felt was right. To my siblings who never shied away from offering help.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my late dad who knew I would reach this point. I wish you were here to experience it but know you celebrate it with me!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	2
Abstract	3
Impact statement.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	5
Chapter 1 - Introduction	11
1.1. Problem statement	12
1.2. Need for the study	14
1.3. Purpose of the study.....	15
1.4. Research questions	16
1.5. Research design overview	17
1.6. Structure of the study.....	18
Chapter 2 - Literature review.....	20
2.1. Introduction	20
2.2. Characterising internationalisation and international partnerships: definitions, dimensions, and historical layers.....	20
2.2.1. Defining international partnerships.....	21
2.2.2. Dimensions of internationalisation: Global, national, and institutional	21
2.2.3. Historical layers of international partnerships	23
2.2.3.1. Historical layer I: Early internationalisation (World War II to the 1970s) ..	25
2.2.3.2. Historical layer II: Product-oriented internationalisation (from the 1980s to the early 1990s)	30
2.2.3.3. Historical layer III: Process-oriented internationalisation (from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s)	33
2.2.3.4. Historical layer IV: Linked internationalisation (from the early 2000s to the present)	37
2.3. Developing international partnerships.....	42
2.3.1. Global and local engagement	43
2.3.2. Dark side of partnerships.....	46
2.3.3. Stages of the partnership process	49
2.3.4. Forming partnerships: External influences and institutional motives.....	51
2.3.4.1. The role of environmental scanning.....	51
2.3.4.2. Diversity of motives	52
2.3.4.3. Motivational asymmetries.....	57
2.3.5. Implementing partnerships: Institutional and individual arrangements	58
2.3.5.1. Resource costs	59
2.3.5.2. Organisational structure mapping.....	62
2.3.5.3. Cultural influences	64
2.3.5.4. Relationship building	66
2.3.5.5. Leadership tensions.....	69
2.4. Chapter summary	71
Chapter 3 - Methodology.....	74
3.1. Introduction	74
3.2. Epistemological perspective	74
3.3. Theoretical lenses	75
3.4. Empirical methods: Qualitative case study	77

3.4.1.	Multi-case study design	78
3.5.	Selection criteria	80
3.5.1.	National setting: Similar yet different countries	80
3.5.2.	Institutional setting: Globally and locally engaged institutions	88
3.5.3.	Participant selection	90
3.6.	Data collection	92
3.6.1.	Documents	92
3.6.2.	Semi-structured interviews.....	94
3.7.	Data analysis	97
3.8.	Data quality.....	107
3.9.	Ethical considerations	108
3.10.	Limitations of the study	109
3.11.	Chapter summary	111
Chapter 4 -	Balance-seeking partnerships of U.S. higher education institutions.....	113
4.1.	Introduction	113
4.1.1.	U.S. higher education context	113
4.1.2.	Profiles of participating institutions	116
4.2.	Forming international partnerships.....	118
4.2.1.	Research and student advancement: The influence of the founding history .	118
4.2.2.	Local impact: Enhancing local opportunities	120
4.2.3.	Funding access: Challenges seeking reciprocity	122
4.2.4.	Global visibility: To raise profile and gain access.....	124
4.2.5.	Partner motivations: ‘What’s in it for them?’	126
4.3.	Implementing international partnerships	127
4.3.1.	Resources: ‘Spend in order to make’	127
4.3.2.	Structure: Centralising inherently decentralised arrangements.....	128
4.3.3.	Dealing with cultural differences.....	130
4.3.4.	Organisational culture favouring and challenging partnerships	131
4.3.5.	Leadership: Changes at the top	133
4.3.6.	Beyond communication: Individual investment.....	135
4.3.7.	Trust cannot be verified.....	136
4.3.8.	Power: Who needs whom?.....	137
4.4.	Chapter summary: Changing notions of superiority.....	139
Chapter 5 -	Market-driven partnerships in the UK.....	142
5.1.	Introduction	142
5.1.1.	UK higher education context	142
5.1.2.	Profiles of participating institutions	144
5.2.	Forming international partnerships.....	147
5.2.1.	Research and student advancement: Contributing to the delivery of core activities	147
5.2.2.	Local impact: Partnerships with European institutions.....	149
5.2.3.	Funding access: Adding to ‘the bottom line’	151
5.2.4.	Global visibility: Enhancing university brand.....	153
5.2.5.	Partner motivations: Assessing partnership sustainability	155
5.3.	Implementing international partnerships	156
5.3.1.	Resources are always limited.....	156

5.3.2.	Structure: Placing partnerships ‘front and centre’	157
5.3.3.	National culture: Layers of meaning.....	159
5.3.4.	Organisational culture: ‘Everybody loves international’	160
5.3.5.	Leadership at different levels	162
5.3.6.	Communication in the negotiated space.....	164
5.3.7.	Trust building	165
5.3.8.	Power: Who’s bringing what to the table and why	166
5.4.	Chapter summary: Partnering for value	167
Chapter 6 - The ‘Canadian brand’ building through international partnerships.....		169
6.1.	Introduction	169
6.1.1.	Canadian higher education context.....	169
6.1.2.	Profiles of participating institutions	172
6.2.	Forming international partnerships.....	175
6.2.1.	Research and student advancement: Expanding institutional mission and priorities.....	175
6.2.2.	Local impact: Internationalising underrepresented communities and countering declining demographics.....	177
6.2.3.	Funding access: Building reciprocal relationships	179
6.2.4.	Global visibility: Connecting to like-minded partners	181
6.2.5.	Partner motivations: Joint learning	182
6.3.	Implementing international partnerships	182
6.3.1.	Resources: The biggest challenge	182
6.3.2.	Structure: Centralised operations and decentralised initiatives.....	184
6.3.3.	National culture: Ways to adjust	185
6.3.4.	Organisational culture: Decoupling between vision and reality	187
6.3.5.	Leadership: Who drives partnerships?	188
6.3.6.	Communication: Laborious and intricate	190
6.3.7.	Trust: There are no shortcuts	191
6.3.8.	Power: Who wants what and from whom?.....	192
6.4.	Chapter summary: Driving Canada’s future prosperity.....	193
Chapter 7 - Discussion of research findings.....		196
7.1.	Introduction	196
7.2.	International partnership formation	196
7.2.1.	Embedded influences: Research and student advancement	197
7.2.2.	Integrated influences: Local impact, funding access, global visibility	199
7.2.2.1.	Local impact: Students and communities	199
7.2.2.2.	Funding access: The issues of reciprocity and sustainability	202
7.2.2.3.	Global visibility: The role of complementarity and similarity	205
7.2.3.	Hidden influences: Partner motivations.....	207
7.3.	Conclusion: Toward seeking a successful combination of influences	209
7.3.1.	The significance of the institutional context	209
7.3.2.	The need for integrating international partnerships locally.....	211
7.4.	International partnership implementation	212
7.4.1.	Tensions at the institutional level.....	212
7.4.1.1.	Resource limitations	212

7.4.1.2.	Structural dichotomy: Administrative centralisation and academic decentralisation	215
7.4.1.3.	National culture: Language and work traditions.....	217
7.4.1.4.	Organisational culture: Partnership inventory and faculty resistance	219
7.4.2.	Tensions at the individual level	222
7.4.2.1.	Leadership changes	222
7.4.2.2.	Communication challenges	224
7.4.2.3.	Trust building.....	226
7.4.2.4.	Points of power.....	228
7.5.	Conclusion: Productive tensions.....	230
7.5.1.	Achieving productive tensions.....	230
7.5.2.	Individual and relational dimension	231
7.6.	Chapter summary	233
Chapter 8 -	Conclusions and implications.....	235
8.1.	International partnerships revisited	235
8.2.	Contributions of the study	237
8.3.	Implications for practice	238
8.4.	Future research areas	241
8.5.	Concluding remarks	242
References	244
Appendix A –	Information and consent form	260
Appendix B –	Interview questions	264
Appendix C –	Coded Interview extracts.....	266

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Historical layers of international partnerships (created by author)	24
Table 2: Theoretical lenses (created by author)	76
Table 3: National similarities and differences (created by author)	86
Table 4: Participant characteristics.....	90
Table 5: Selected documents.....	92
Table 6: Phases of thematic analysis	98
Table 7: Initial coding framework	99
Table 8: List of themes and sub-themes.....	102
Table 9: Three-level theme organisation.....	103
Table 10: Final thematic framework.....	106
Table 11: Institutional characteristics – USA	118
Table 12: Institutional characteristics - UK.....	146
Table 13: Institutional characteristics - Canada.....	174
Table 14: Embedded influences - Mission advancement	197
Table 15: Integrated influences - Local impact.....	199
Table 16: Integrated influences – Funding access	202
Table 17: Integrated influences - Global visibility.....	205
Table 18: Hidden influences - Partner motivations	207
Table 19: Tensions - Resource limitations	213
Table 20: Tensions - Structural dichotomy	215
Table 21: Tensions - National culture	217
Table 22: Tensions - Organisational culture	219
Table 23: Tensions - Top-level leadership changes	222
Table 24: Tensions - Partnership championing.....	223
Table 25: Tensions – Communication maintenance.....	225
Table 26: Tensions – Trust building	226
Table 27: Tensions – Power imbalance.....	228
Figure 1: Shell Model - Adapted from Kosmützky and Ewen (2016).....	45

Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION

"Strategic partnerships in research, teaching and transfer of knowledge, between universities and of universities with business and beyond national borders, will be the future for higher education, in order to manage the challenges that globalisation will place on it."

(Stockley & de Wit, 2011, p. 58)

Whilst playing more strategically, institutions increasingly pursue opportunities to remain competitive and adjust their teaching, research, and institutional services by collaborating with other institutions on a global scale (Sutton, Egginton, & Favela, 2012). It is hard to argue against the value of international engagement in today's networked environment (Van der Wende, 2011) marked by fluidity and boundary blurring (Bauman, 2000). Peterson and Helms (2013, p. 34) concur that "globalisation has created a new interconnected landscape of higher education worldwide" which carries much potential for growth and new opportunities, "but we do not yet know all its contours" (Sutton, 2010, p. 60). There is a general agreement that globalisation challenges the national project of education, and as a consequence "universities have ceased to be simply projects of nation-states and arbiters of national identity" (Rhoads & Liu, 2009, p. 285). Although their operations are unevenly but increasingly connected to the global framework, they are pressured to reach and serve the local environment. As Marginson and Rhoades (2002) write, "Even as universities position themselves globally, there is heightened local and state governmental and public pressure to expand their involvement in local contexts" (p. 304). Given the interplay of global, national, and local influences, it is crucially important for higher education institutions to both recognise the complex combination of influences and engage in their successful combination (Gacel-Ávila, 2005). Such engagement promises to enhance the potential embedded in varied higher education responses to the call for greater international involvement (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Although establishing international partnerships is not new to higher education, Deardorff et al. (2012) noted that institutions are becoming increasingly selective and approach them more strategically. For many institutions, such partnerships are no longer marginal and incidental collaborations. Indeed, the role of international partnerships is expected to further grow as a response to challenges that globalisation places on higher education (Stockley & de Wit, 2011). Although the current global pandemic is changing international education 'as

we know it' (Marginson, 2020), it is apparent that the role of international partnerships becomes even more prominent as tackling global challenges requires global collaborating and problem-solving. Higher education institutions currently have an opportunity to reimagine international collaboration (Newman, 2020). In that regard, they have been showing signs of strengthening existing partnerships or creating new opportunities as a way to address the COVID-19 crisis (IAU, 2020). Pointing to the increasing relevance and importance of international agreements, as succinctly captured in the introductory quote, Stockley and de Wit (2011) have observed a trend toward rationalisation of partnerships and concentration on quality rather than quantity. The process of shifting away from quantity toward quality underscores deep engagement of many higher education institutions toward a 'successful combination' of global, national, and local dimensions (Gacel-Ávila, 2005).

Fitting the current competitive environment, institutions realise that they can no longer engage in a trial and error approach but need to commit to building and sustaining effective and mutually beneficial linkages (Stockley & de Wit, 2011). There may be an underpinning assumption that partnerships are good as symmetrical and complementary partners join up forces to work together to realise an agreed-upon objective (Cardini, 2006). However, this assumption invites a closer enquiry into understanding "how partnerships come together and what facilitates or challenges their longevity" (Amey, Eddy, & Campbell, 2010, p. 19). Understanding them as "a work in progress, a conversation that needs many voices and points of entry" (Sutton, Obst, Louime, Jones, & Jones, 2011, pp. xiv-xv) provides access to their complex and paradoxical nature (Cardini, 2006). It is within the context of increasingly strategic approaches to internationalise that partnerships, viewed as a complex combination of influences and tensions, are targeted as a focus of this study. The study intends to examine why and how international partnerships function.

1.1. Problem statement

Altbach and Knight state that "internationalisation involves many choices" (2007, p. 291). Indeed, internationalisation has been diversely interpreted and a variety of manifestations have been elaborated over the years. Understanding one of its manifestations – partnerships is critical as they "set the stage for further international work and outreach" (Sutton et al., 2011, p. xiv). While recognising that "going it alone" may not be useful as a dominant strategy" (Kinser & Green, 2009, p. 2), a growing number of institutions has demonstrated interest in developing and strengthening collaborative agreements. Sutton et al. (2012) have remarked that "The past two decades have witnessed a remarkable repositioning of

institutional partnerships so that they are not simply one tactic among many, but rather a defining characteristic of academic internationalization” (p. 147). To thrive in the globalised world of the twenty-first century, academic institutions recognise the need to partner with one another and integrate the new interconnected reality (Amey, 2010; Eddy, 2010). Magrath (2000) maintains that the best and the most vital institutions are those that create partnerships not only with businesses, governments, and private agencies, but above all with one another.

International partnerships are on the rise as they become central to the health and well-being of institutions (Eddy, 2010b). One of the underlying forces that influence their expansion is an opportunity for bringing value to the partnering institutions in the form of new collaborative programmes, reduced costs, shared resources, but also in the ‘more theoretical’ form of increased international presence, individual and organisational learning (Burley, Gnam, Newman, Straker, & Babies, 2012; Dhillon, 2005). In other words, an opportunity for collaborative advantage which makes it possible for institutions to get the advantage from partner’s resources and expertise to achieve something that none of them could achieve on their own (Vangen & Huxham, 2006).

Yet, no matter how valuable they may be, partnership ventures are difficult to implement. Partnerships experience collaborative inertia as they tend to be “frustratingly slow to produce output or uncomfortably conflict-ridden” (Vangen & Huxham, 2010, p. 163). In that regard, inertia captures the resistance to alter undesirable actions or consequences throughout the partnership process. Kinser and Green (2009) argue that the likelihood of “a conflict at some point is practically guaranteed” (p. 12). Other commentators concur and lament that “not many success stories can be told as yet” (Stockley & de Wit, 2011). While some partnerships may fail before ever becoming fully operational, many scale back or collapse later in the developmental process (Eddy, 2010b; Heffernan & Poole, 2004; Witte, 2014). Reasons often cited in the literature include the relative newness of current robust multifaceted collaborations (Sutton et al., 2011), the unequal basis of power (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010), implicit and changing objectives (Jie, 2010; Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011), or differing organisational structures and norms about decision making (Eckel & Hartley, 2008).

Additionally, there are significant tensions in international partnerships as they incorporate varying global, national, and local dimensions. On one side there is a strong emphasis on internationalisation and what such opening can achieve for institutions. Yet, at the same time institutions are being increasingly pressured to engage with local communities and serve its

immediate environment. Whilst existing research has established the paradox of different yet interrelated dimensions of internationalisation where “universities face global opportunities while being strongly embedded in national institutional environments” (Beerkens & Derwende, 2007, pp. 62-63), some sources have noted challenges and concerns over the integration of “the international dimension into frameworks that tend to concentrate on the single nation state and domestic policies” (Enders, 2004, p. 379). Others have posed questions: Can state-supported institutions be global in orientation while ignoring the local and national dimensions? Can universities be locally and globally engaged? (Jones, 2008a; O'Malley, 2017). Serving as conduits for people, knowledge, and resource sharing, international partnerships materialise a complex combination of influences and, thus, raise challenges for practitioners involved in their design and implementation. Tensions underpinned by the coexistence of global opportunities and local responsibilities affect the partnership functioning and the achievement of collaborative advantage.

1.2. Need for the study

Much of the current literature describes practices that promise to develop sustainable and high-performing partnerships (Holland, 2010; Martin & Samels, 2001; Strittmatter, Bharadwaj, & Camp, 2014; Van de Water, Green, & Koch, 2008). Although best practices may offer a recipe for partnership success, they are often “insufficiently context sensitive and fail to open the black box of partnership operations to reveal the operational mechanisms by which partnership activities lead to particular outcomes” (Hora & Millar, 2012, p. 2). While best practices describe and delve into the specifics of individual cases in relation to building international partnerships, they lack to offer a deeper understanding of underlying dynamics of the partnering process. A limited number of studies has applied an analytical rather than descriptive approach to address some of the ambiguities surrounding the development of international partnerships (Amey & Eddy, 2015; Butcher, Bezzina, & Moran, 2011; Cozza & Blessinger, 2016a; Dhillon, 2009; Jie, 2010; Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011; Taylor, 2016). Drawing primarily from inter-organisational theories, these examinations illuminate different aspects of partnership ventures to isolate those components that most often contribute to effective partnerships and those that impinge on success.

However, an overview of the relevant literature revealed that a number of areas remain understudied. There is still a void in the literature focusing on motivations: What is the impetus to initiate the partnership? How differing motivating forces coexist? What demotivates institutions to partner? (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007; Jie, 2010), external

influences: What are the economic, political, and sociocultural circumstances? Why institutions seek continuation of the partnership after they ran into problems and conflicts? (Amey & Eddy, 2015; Eddy, 2010b), resource asymmetries: What resources are required? How asymmetries are addressed? (Obamba & Mwema, 2009; Tedrow & Mabokela, 2007), the involvement of faculty and administrators: How do faculty and administrators perceive and value their participation in the partnership? How do they build and sustain relationships? (Amey, 2010; Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010), outcomes and success: What is required for the successful development of partnership? How is success defined by different institutions? Why do some partnerships fail when others succeed? (Heffernan & Poole, 2004; Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011; Stockley & de Wit, 2011). Taken altogether, the number of underresearched areas seems to underscore a central preoccupation of inter-organisational arrangements that is to “explain why and how organisations connect effectively, work cooperatively, and coordinate their activities to achieve superior performance” (Nahapiet, 2008, p. 1).

1.3. Purpose of the study

In line with the central concern of the growing body of literature on international partnerships, the primary purpose of the current study is to understand why and how international partnerships function. To this end, the study aims to expand the current literature, which has largely dealt with best practices based on individual cases of building international partnerships, to examine the complexities of forming and implementing partnerships across different national and institutional settings.

Understanding reasons for engaging in international partnerships is essential as the initial imprinting forms the cornerstone upon which they are constructed and affects the implementation of agreed-upon objectives (Doz, 1996). Encapsulating the impact of the founding environment that persists beyond the founding phase, the imprinting concept helps direct attention to subtle contextual influences (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). Further, partnerships “cannot be sustained by rationale alone; they must also be financially sound and realistic, based on the institution’s human and financial resources” to enact the agreed-upon content (Kinser & Green, 2009, p. v). Thus, equally important is to explore how the imprinting develops and translates into the implementation of partnerships.

Underscored by expectations of being successful and rewarded, motivations give institutions the ability to achieve collaborative advantage. With a growing emphasis on the value that

partnerships can bring, many higher education institutions are eager to engage and “achieve something that none of them could achieve on their own” (Vangen & Huxham, 2006, p. 1). However, achieving collaborative advantage is only one side of the coin as partnerships often struggle to deliver the anticipated value (Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010; Holland, 2010; Shore & Groen, 2009). Amidst the enthusiasm of enhancing their international opportunities, they often overlook the areas that require careful consideration and coordination. As a result, partnerships experience difficult realities and manifest signs of resistance, including slow progress, conflict, inaction or inappropriate action (Huxham, 2003). As such, international partnerships involve a delicate balancing act between intended advantage and experienced inertia. The purpose of this study is to examine the process of international partnerships by focusing on influences that drive the joint work and tensions that shape its implementation.

1.4. Research questions

In this thesis I propose to explore international partnerships through the lens of the underlying influences and tensions that are integral to their development. I am interested in analysing ‘why’ and ‘how’ international partnerships function in the context of varying national and institutional settings. Understanding partnerships as “a conversation that needs many voices and points of entry” (Sutton et al., 2011), the study gives voice to senior administrators who hold responsibility for fostering ‘conversations’ within and beyond their institutions as well as for discerning leverage points in their formation and implementation. For this study, international partnerships are defined as institution-wide agreements between two higher education institutions located in different countries for the purpose of coordination and sharing of people, knowledge, and resources related to a specific programme or goal (Kinser & Green, 2009). Influences denote motivating forces that propel individuals and their institutions to explore and pursue the possibility of working together. Further, tensions imply differing frames of reference leading to a set of manifestations ranging from conflicts to new ideas and innovative approaches.

In order to analyse the intended purpose of the study in more detail, the study explores two main questions and a set of guiding questions:

1. Why do higher education institutions form international partnerships?

What influences drive different institutions to partner internationally? How those influences inform globally and locally oriented institutions?

2. How do higher education institutions respond to tensions that accompany the implementation of partnerships?

What tensions persist in the implementation of international partnerships? How are they dealt with at globally engaged institutions? How are they dealt with at locally engaged institutions?

1.5. Research design overview

The empirical dimension of the thesis involves an exploration of international partnerships in the USA, UK, and Canada based on administrators' perspectives. To address the research questions in a thorough and in-depth manner, the present study adopts a qualitative approach supported by a multi-case study method. Shaped by differing national and institutional contexts, the multi-case design expands the current literature that largely describes best practices drawn from individual cases. The intention is to generate an integrative perspective of influences and tensions surrounding the partnering process. Given that partnership arrangements manifest a variety of choices and there are no two partnerships alike, the multi-case design allows for the integration of different components while offering a holistic perspective. In that sense, it promises to both grasp their complex and paradoxical nature and discern common patterns and shared challenges.

In an attempt to capture the influences forming and tensions implementing international partnerships across different national and institutional backgrounds, the data will be collected from semi-structured interviews and institutional documents relevant to international partnerships. The data will be drawn from fifteen public higher education institutions identified through a non-probability sample strategy. The sampling units will be deliberately selected representing two different segments: locally oriented and globally oriented institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada. The multi-country design promises to improve understanding of a phenomenon that transcends a single country and operates in an inter-institutional space. The intention of the data analysis process will be not to evaluate the selected cases, but rather to map key points of entry and tensions experienced throughout the partnership process.

The study explores partnerships from key administrators' perspective. It has been noted that little attention has been paid to the experiences of "those most intimately involved in the process" (Turner & Robson, 2007, p. 7). For this study, key administrators denote senior staff directly involved in the formation and implementation of international partnerships.

Fostered by the emergence of formalised partnerships and more broadly comprehensive internationalisation, their roles and capacities cross internal and external institutional boundaries. Positioned at the nexus of strategic and operational dimensions of international partnerships, it is argued that their unique position allows them to both recognise the potential of collaboration and shape its conversion into policy and practice. They possess a first-hand understanding of reasons for establishing partnerships and arrangements taking place within them, and experience daily challenges and tensions.

1.6. Structure of the study

The study is presented in eight chapters. In this introductory chapter, I presented the background and justification for undertaking such research in relation to the existing findings and literature.

Chapter 2 explores in detail the literature pertinent to the study. It merges two main streams of literature: internationalisation of higher education and inter-organisational relationships, a subset of organisational studies. It maps the historical layers of global, national, and institutional dimensions of internationalisation providing the necessary background on the growing importance of international partnerships. It further discusses key themes of the partnering process with a focus on forming and implementing partnerships.

Chapter 3 focuses on methodology and provides the background to the selected methods of enquiry, data collection, and analysis. It presents the epistemological and theoretical perspectives and justification for the qualitative multi-case design including three country cases as well as the criteria for selecting research participants and higher education institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada. To help draw out insights on international partnerships, semi-structured interviews and documentary evidence were coded inductively with a thematic coding scheme. The chapter concludes with a discussion addressing ethical practices and limitations of the study.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the research findings collected from fifteen higher education institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada respectively. After presenting the national and institutional profiles, each chapter examines the themes that emerged from the data collection phase. Against the background of three similar yet different countries, they conclude with portraying nuanced emphases in developing international partnerships, which manifested as balance-seeking relationships in the USA, market-driven ventures in the UK, and national brand building collaborations in Canada.

Chapter 7 draws together the findings from the USA, UK, and Canada case studies. The key themes borne out of the cross-case analysis are discussed in relation to the reviewed literature. The chapter completes the examination of partnerships by highlighting similarities in patterns of responses among institutions with a similar global or local focus irrespective of the national context they occupy. The summarising tables further facilitate an understanding of the complexities involved in the formation of international partnerships and areas of tensions that accompany the implementation process.

Chapter 8 presents the conclusions of the main findings of this study with reference to the research questions. It also suggests areas for future research and highlights contributions of the study and implications for practice. The final concluding remarks convey the larger significance of the study placed within the internationalisation discourse.

Chapter 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the relevant literature underpinning the thesis. Its purpose is to situate the studied topic in a wider academic context stemming from two main literatures: internationalisation of higher education and inter-organisational relationships, a subset of organisational studies. This focused review helped identify gaps in the current literature and possibilities for further research lying at the intersection of international partnerships and the dynamics affecting their functioning. First, the research on internationalisation and more specifically on international partnerships between higher education institutions drew attention to multiple influences and responses most conducive to their development. Second, the literature on inter-organisational relationships brought awareness to processes, structures, and patterns of relations between organisations pursuing a mutual interest. The two streams of literature complemented each other and served as a helpful guide throughout the research process.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part attempts to contextualise international partnerships and discuss those conceptual developments that affected their expansion. It approaches it vertically by portraying the historical layers of global, national, and institutional dimensions of internationalisation with an emphasis on the USA, UK, and Canada from the post-war period to present. Following the broad contextualisation, the second part lends attention to debates surrounding the development of international partnerships. Structured around key themes of the partnering process, the underlying focus on forming and implementing partnerships illuminates varied motives and tensions.

2.2. Characterising internationalisation and international partnerships: definitions, dimensions, and historical layers

This literature review of the internationalisation of higher education and one of its manifestations – international partnerships – was guided by three main intentions: a) to trace the evolving presence of the global, national, and local institutional dimensions of internationalisation; b) to gather evidence on the major developments in the partnership

expansion; and c) to highlight interconnecting factors relevant to the interplay between the different spatial dimensions and international partnerships.

2.2.1. Defining international partnerships

Literature in higher education uses the term partnership synonymously with terms such as joint venture, network, collaboration, association, or exchange. In an attempt to clearly define them, it is possible to consider, for example, the number of partnering institutions (bi-lateral, multi-lateral), their engagement level (individual, collective) or their geographic reach. However, many definitional criteria overlap and different terms are used interchangeably. Stockley and De Wit (2011) observed that “they are talking of “partnerships” and we of “networks”, but there is much in common” (p. 51). Similarly, Chan (2004) noted the overlap in the type of activities they aim to accomplish regardless of the used term. “Whichever name they adopt, student and staff mobility, academic exchanges, curriculum development, joint course delivery, research collaboration, joint bidding for research projects, and benchmarking are the most common activities that institutional cooperation intend to accomplish” (ibid., p. 38).

Thus, different perspectives may be used to define inter-organisational arrangements. They may be carried out at the individual level by academic staff, initiated at the unit or department level or administered as an institution-wide arrangement. Indeed, Eddy (2010b) suggests to consider joint working at the organisational level as partnerships, while joint working at the individual level denotes collaboration. As stated earlier, international partnership is understood in the present study as an institution-wide agreement between two higher education institutions located in different countries for the purpose of coordination and sharing of people, knowledge, and resources (Kinser & Green, 2009).

2.2.2. Dimensions of internationalisation: Global, national, and institutional

A suitable starting point for a discussion about internationalisation would be its definition. However, defining internationalisation and its various manifestations have been the subject of intense discussions over the past few decades. As a result, a number of definitions have been proposed ranging from “a concrete element of international education” to “used as pars pro toto as a synonym for the overall term” (de Wit, Deca, & Hunter, 2015, p. 4). The variety of definitions describing the phenomenon also used different terminology such as international education, globalisation of higher education or international dimension and, thus, rendering

the concept of internationalisation even more problematic. Indeed, a review of the literature on the internationalisation of higher education has revealed that the definition of the term suffered from ambiguity reflecting the multi-faceted nature of international activity in an ever-changing environment. Bartell has observed that internationalisation is “far from a clearly defined and understood concept” (2003, p. 45). Multiple scholars have remarked a lack of all-encompassing definition and recognised difficulties in conceptualising the term (de Wit, 2002; Knight, 1999; van der Wende, 2007; Yelland, 2000). It became “a catch-all phrase for everything and anything international” (de Wit, 2002, p. 16). In a similar vein, Callan described it “as a portmanteau concept” because of its fluid and inclusive scope that is hard to confine within a specific set of programmes or activities (2000, p. 18). As this study sets out to explore partnerships as increasingly strategic and deliberate agreements, it adopts a definition illustrating “a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and services missions of higher education” (Hudzik, 2011). Hudzik’s interpretation of internationalisation captures an intention to engage with internationalisation in an active and attentive manner.

Regardless of definitional vagueness, institutions worldwide have demonstrated longstanding interest in an exchange of ideas and practices across national borders and scholars and students have always sought to broaden their geographic horizons. In that sense, Teichler has argued that “the claim that higher education is internationalising or ought to be is somewhat surprising, because universities have long been considered one of society’s most international institutions (2009, p. 96). Although internationalisation is not a new phenomenon, it has been growing in scope and complexity altering the higher education landscape. Viewed as a strategic process rather than a set of individual activities carried out by an institution (Knight, 2004), the concept of internationalisation has progressively widened and moved from the level of an individual person to a system level (Wächter, 2003). Multiple sources have commented on its expansion and noted that “new components were added to its multidimensional body” transforming internationalisation from student mobility to a big global business. (Brandenburg & De Wit, 2015, p. 15; Van de Water et al., 2008). In a similar vein, Knight commented on the gradual shift “from a development cooperation framework to a partnership model” (2012, p. 20). The shift came with the realisation that higher education is now part of a larger academic world and must appropriately modify its relationship with its immediate surrounding as well as its wider global context (Kinser & Green, 2009; Sutton, 2010).

It is in this context that some commentators have sharpened the focus on the interplay between global, national, and local dimensions (Ahola, 2005; Jones, 2008b; Jones &

Oleksiyenko, 2011; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002; Vidovich, 2004). It has been established that these dimensions are intertwined and manifest in various international initiatives (Rumbley & Altbach, 2016). While the global dimension encompasses a broader political and socio-economic orientation promoted by national, regional or federal governments, the local dimension refers to those institutional responses that adequately address these orientations. Criticising the overwhelming use of 'methodological nationalism' in the internationalisation literature (Shahjahan & Kezar, 2013), the analytical frameworks incorporating the dimensions above and below the national states and systems of higher education have been proposed (Jones & Oleksiyenko, 2011; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002).

The frequently used 'glonacal analytical heuristic' developed by Marginson and Rhoades (2002) serves as an entry point for the consideration of multidimensionality in internationalisation studies. An understanding that higher education institutions operate on multiple dimensions "encourages a focus on specific organisations and collective action rather than overgeneralised conceptions" (ibid., p. 290). The global, national, and local interrelatedness allows for a more integrative understanding of the complexities surfaced by internationalisation. The 'glonacal agency heuristic' offers new conceptual considerations of organisational and collective human action including reciprocity, strength, spheres of activity, historical layers, and current conditions. In that way, it encourages to view various responses to globalisation as they "operate simultaneously in the three domains or planes of existence – global, national, local – amid multiple and reciprocal flows of activity" (ibid., p. 305). The heuristic is applicable to the study of international partnerships as it problematises their understanding as good and mutually beneficial by highlighting different levels and flows of influence. It helps to draw attention to the interrelatedness of the global patterns, national contexts, and institutional responses. It further enables to understand these interconnections as "constructed on an embedded internal structure formed of various strata of historical layers and current conditions" (ibid., p. 293). The following section will discuss the layers of global, national, and institutional dimensions as they relate to the concept of internationalisation and one of its manifestations – international partnerships.

2.2.3. Historical layers of international partnerships

The different yet inter-related dimensions can be detected in international partnerships as they combine seemingly unrelated concepts of representing "a business arrangement with learning as a core organising principle" (Messenger et al., 2016, p. 142). On the one hand they emulate business-like and global market-driven practices (Chan, 2004), while on the

other hand, they are advocated as a means to leverage student learning, cutting-edge scholarship, and local community engagement (Sutton et al., 2011). To begin the investigation of international partnerships, the glonacal framing suggests to consider historical layers and existing conditions on which they are grounded.

Understanding the layers of a wider internationalisation context and mapping current conditions promise to provide the necessary background for why higher education institutions engage in partnerships. However, the intention is not to draw a comprehensive historical timeline of internationalisation or its complete geographical scope. While applying the glonacal framing, the intention is to focus on those regions or ‘spheres of influence’ demonstrating the longstanding experience of international activity. Historically speaking, internationalisation mostly concerned influential and well-connected countries and regions. These regions, therefore, show the longest history of international activity. In that vein, research largely points to North America and Europe as places where “The concept as well as the practice of internationalisation is predominantly developed and designed” (de Wit, 2014, p. 96).

Historically embedded in the internationalisation process, international partnerships are closely aligned with core issues and debates surrounding this process. The following four major stages or historical layers help portray varied global and national influences in order to sharpen the focus on the institutional level (Table 1). According to Marginson and Rhoades (2002), “Such a focus sharpens the significance of the regional and local in the global” (p. 303).

Table 1: Historical layers of international partnerships (created by author)

Historical layer	Period	Global dimension	National dimension	Institutional dimension
Early internationalisation	World War II - 1970s	International education as foreign policy	The heightened involvement of government	Focus on one-way student mobility
Product-oriented internationalisation	1980s	Transition from euphoria to pragmatism in higher education	Economic competition and private cost sharing	Institutionalisation of international partnerships

Process-oriented internationalisation	1990s	The process of integrating international perspectives	Growing market-based imperatives	Re-evaluating international partnerships
Linked internationalisation	2000s - present	Internationalisation as a collective undertaking	Development of nation-wide strategies	Strengthening internationally linked institutions

The following section discusses each layer in further detail. It maps the major developments in the internationalisation of higher education and highlights developments affecting the partnership expansion in the USA, UK, and Canada.

2.2.3.1. Historical layer I: Early internationalisation (World War II to the 1970s)

The post-World War II period introduced a mass model of higher education within which a growing attention was paid to international education.

Global dimension: International education as foreign policy

Undeniably, the post-World War II period rationalised the focus on world peace and mutual understanding that permeated foreign policy priorities (Knight & de Wit, 1995; Vestal, 1994). It further shifted the thinking about education not only as domestic policy but as a powerful foreign policy instrument supporting the advancement of international knowledge and educational exchanges. According to de Wit (2002), international education encompassed the period from World War II to the end of the Cold War and was predominantly observed in the United States through the Fulbright programme¹, foreign language, and area studies. Although Europe, Australia, and Canada were not completely absent from the international scene during that period, their efforts intensified at the end of the Cold War. Focused on the post-war recovery, Europe lost many of its students and scholars to the U.S., Canada, and Australia and had to restrict or interrupt many of its operations in international education.

The organisations dedicated to international academic exchanges founded before World War II, such as DAAD German Academic Exchange Service (1925) and the British Council

¹ More information about the Fulbright programme can be found at <https://eca.state.gov/fulbright>

(1934), were slowly resuming their operations. In 1950, International Association of Universities (IAU), a subsidiary of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), was formed to encourage collaboration among higher education institutions worldwide. The period was marked by “an increased focus on international cooperation and exchange in higher education” (de Wit et al., 2015, p. 42). The imperative to expand the boundaries of human understanding of the world led to several educational cooperation and exchange initiatives. Although the bilateral cooperation programmes were increasingly common between nations and driven by political rationales, higher education institutions were only “passive partners in these programs” and inter-institutional agreements were vague and rarely institutionalised (De Wit & Merckx, 2012, p. 51). As Klasek noted, such agreements “were being signed haphazardly at all levels of administration, had little or no funding behind them and rarely had presidential/chancellorship involvement” (1992, p. 108).

Marked by a number of influential studies, international education was slowly ceasing to be viewed as “a convenient rubric upon which to consolidate educational programmes that were adjunct to development aid” (Sylvester, 2005, p. 126). Following the stormy period filled with the two world wars, Burn commented that “international education has tended to react to shifting currents in international relations” and reflected a greater governmental involvement. In the late 1960s, Butts (as cited in Sylvester, 2005) argued that government-based international education initiatives should not be part of international education. In his view, genuine international education is distinct from a national programme of foreign aid. He also put forward a broad description highlighting a double role of education as both an international force in the modernisation process and a direct preparation for active participation in international processes (Butts, 1967). The author stressed the need to view international education as “a first order of business for all educators” in his holistic and complete approach to the study and practice of education (ibid., p. 159).

Heavily influenced by Butts’ works in the emerging field of international education, Harari (1972) brought a novel way of looking at international education by identifying its three main components: a) international content of curricula, b) international movement of scholars and students, and c) technical assistance and education cooperation programmes abroad. Viewing education as a whole and identifying its constitutive parts helped draw the contours of the field which suffered ‘conceptual confusion’ during the 1950s and 60s (Mestenhauser, 2002). Further problematising the concept of international education, Mestenhauser believed it is an institutional setting that poorly fits internationalisation. He claimed that “most international dimensions were subdivided into projects that were subsumed as parts of other units and departments not conceptually related to international education” (ibid., p. 173).

Encouraged by a heightened interest of the federal government associated with the International Education Act (IEA) of 1966, a number of U.S. higher education institutions committed funds and established specialised offices and departments to strengthen their international engagement and institutionalise certain activities including partnerships (Klasek, 1992). However, the funding promised for the IEA bill failed to materialise which led to an overall slowdown of educational outreach and a period of 'darkening clouds' further accompanied by reduced support from non-governmental organisations and foundations (Mestenhauser & Ellingboe, 1998). Despite the fact that the potential of the Bill was not achieved, "the seeds of an expansive federal program in international education had been sown" (Vestal, 1994, p. 5). It introduced a significant and full-scale government attention and attempt to coordinate major international education activities.

It could be argued that the IEA of 1966 promoted international education not only because of its mention in the title but also because of the subsequent attention within the U.S. higher education community it led to (Arum & Van de Water, 1992). Mestenhauser (2002) suggests that the Bill positively contributed to the comprehensiveness and visibility of international education by combining splintered activities and programmes under a common objective or a "mega-goal" of education. In that sense, the Institute of International Education (IIE), one of the first organisations to advocate for international exchange, coordinated some of the earliest academic collaborations between institutions in the United States and countries around the world. Despite its efforts, Halpern (as cited in de Wit, 2011) reported in his 1969 review of the history of IIE that the Institute failed to define international education as its goals were vague and its work too administrative:

"The Institute failed to give international education real definition. Its goals were vague, its programs eclectic and its work with foreign exchange projects excessively administrative. There was a tendency to regard almost any kind of transnational academic contact as part of international education, a tendency which was intellectually lazy and misleading." (p. 123)

A significant non-governmental contribution to define the meaning and scope of international education came in 1974 from UNESCO (UNESCO, 1974). The term undergone several modifications since 1946 when 'education for peace and security' was noted in UNESCO's programmes. Later publications included terms such as education for international understanding and cooperation, world citizenship, education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms. In an attempt to provide a universal framework and further direction for international education, the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation included several guiding

principles for specific actions and measures aiming to promote international understanding, cooperation, and peace:

1. a global perspective in education
2. understanding and respect for all peoples and their cultures
3. awareness of the increasing global interdependence
4. communication ability
5. awareness of both human rights and duties
6. international solidarity and cooperation
7. participation in problem-solving for community, country, and the world

(adapted from UNESCO, 1974, p. 2)

The Recommendation promoted 'friendly relations' between differing people and nations that is to be achieved through education including educational partnerships. Buergenthal and Torney praised the Recommendation and its compelling agenda as providing "a theoretical basis and justification for the promotion of international education on a national as well as a global basis" (1976, p. 20). The Recommendation further contributed to a generally perceived idealistic undertone of international cooperation, mutual understanding, and peace (Knight & de Wit, 1995). Although international education gradually ceased to be viewed within the governmental programmes of foreign aid, it remained an important instrument of political influence in the post-war period.

National dimension: The heightened involvement of government

The new leadership role of the United States in the global arena during and after WWII created a greater involvement of the U.S. government in various parts of the world and had a tremendous impact on the U.S. foreign policy and its interaction with the rest of the world. This, in turn, impacted international education and partnerships, which according to Deutsch developed "in close alignment with the changing patterns of international relations and with the perceived function of education as an instrument of foreign policy" (1970, p.14). During the period after WWII, the U.S. federal government gradually became the most important financial provider for international education.

Similarly, the Canadian federal government became increasingly involved in educational areas that contributed to national interests (Fisher et al., 2006). This period, referred as "Canadianization" of higher education, marked an increased emphasis on promoting Canadian studies and investing in international cultural relations to support both domestic and foreign policy objectives (Trilokekar, 2015, p. 5). Although there was not a cohesive

nation-wide policy on internationalisation at the time, the government had been involved in international activities of higher education. To a large degree, this can be explained by the fact that international affairs have been a federal and not a provincial government responsibility. Described as the 'golden era' in both the USA and Canada, the post-war years reflected heightened involvement of federal government in international education that created a form of soft power diplomacy (Trilokekar, 2015).

UK higher education occupied a 'domesticated' environment that allowed universities to promote "nonfinancial priorities – academic objectives, and cultural and social requirements" as financial losses were largely underwritten by government (Foskett, 2010, p. 27). In service of trade and diplomacy, rising numbers of international students were heavily subsidised by local taxpayers and described as 'guests' of the British government (Walker, 2014). Although the largely favourable era for international education came to a halt following the 1970s economic challenges, there was a growing sentiment that "government intervention would be essential to turn the system round" (Foskett, 2010, p. 29). Thus, the government's more direct involvement and the introduction of fees for international students were to ensure the UK economy would be highly competitive in global markets (ibid.).

Overall, the historical layer I reflected the heightened involvement of governments that came with an understanding that international education can enhance nation's global influence as it was intrinsically linked with a nation's foreign policy and economic development.

Institutional dimension: Focus on one-way student mobility

By the end of the 1970s, the concept of internationalisation became well nested in the higher education discourse covering a wide spectrum of programmes and activities aimed to "prepare a citizenry capable of dealing with the challenges of the modern world" (Spaulding & Colucci, 1982, p. 205). It involved people and information exchange through study abroad, technical cooperation, foreign language instruction, area studies, and other curriculum enhancements. In some cases, these started to be coordinated by offices dedicated to international affairs. For example, the first international office on a Canadian campus was established in 1967 at the University of Guelph (Trilokekar, 2010).

According to Knight and de Wit, "internationalisation is expressed predominantly in the growing one-way mobility of students from the South to the North" during that period (1995, p. 8). Forecasted to reach six million students by 2020 (Agarwal, Said, Sehoole, Sirozi, & de Wit, 2007), the mobility was receiving persistent attention in terms of its organisation and scope beginning in the 1980s. With the soaring number of mobile students, higher education

institutions became increasingly interested in building relationships with partner institutions to primarily streamline mobility programmes and subsequently initiate new activities.

In sum, the post-World War II period marked an important shift in thinking about higher education as an influential foreign policy tool rather than just a domestic policy instrument. Indicative of the growing governmental interest in higher education, the shift brought increased attention to international cooperation programmes and inter-institutional agreements, though they were signed haphazardly and focused on one-way student mobility. While these early agreements were rarely formalised, they initiated important conversations about pragmatic aspects of relationship building that carried over to the next period.

2.2.3.2. Historical layer II: Product-oriented internationalisation (from the 1980s to the early 1990s)

The historical layer II marked a shift from post-war euphoria of international cooperation to pragmatism in approaching multiplying internationalisation efforts in a strategic manner.

Global dimension: Transition from euphoria to pragmatism in higher education.

Parting away from the idealistic undertone of the previous decades, this period was marked by the move toward a more pragmatic need for education to “prepare internationally sophisticated manpower who can more effectively serve the political, economic, and social needs of the country and the world” (Spaulding & Colucci, 1982, p. 212). Hanvey wrote in 1982 that “we are in a period of transition, moving from a pre-global to a global cognition” which necessitates a shift in education toward learning that promotes a realistic perspective on world issues (p. 166). The emerging concept reflected the view of the world as one interconnected and interdependent system. It was expressed through terms such as global education, education for a global perspective, education for global interdependence, or education for global awareness (Spaulding & Colucci, 1982). The internationalising initiatives were largely framed as the activities or products of the global educational undertaking. Backman viewed internationalisation as “international studies, global education, foreign language study, exchanges, study abroad, area studies, comparative education and the like” (1984, p.xiv), while Ferish summed the term under “all programs, projects, studies, and activities that help an individual learn and care more about the world beyond his or her community and to transcend his or her culturally conditioned, ethnocentric perspectives, perceptions and behaviour” (1990, p.68). Similar orientation could be noticed in the definition

promoted by Husen and Postlethwaite in Europe: “all educative efforts that aim at fostering an international orientation in knowledge and attitudes” (1985, p. 2660).

Following the post-war reconstruction and a mostly passive approach to internationalisation, Europe was reasserting itself and was ready to resume its position within a global community (ibid.). International educational efforts “began to move from the incidental and individual into organised activities, projects, and programmes” (de Wit & Merckx, 2012, p. 52). They were grouped into three main categories: 1) the movement of students, 2) the movement of academic staff, and 3) the institutional development and sharing of resources and expertise (Smith, 1985). As evoked earlier, the largest and the most visible category involved the movement of students. The Erasmus programme was created in 1987 and involved 11 European Union (EU) countries and over 3,000 students at the time (Huisman & van der Wende, 2004). The need for “a better understanding of national policies and system structures” ruminated within the European community since the late 1970s and was tested in the form of a pilot student exchange between 1981 and 1986 (ibid., p. 349). The Erasmus programme, which grew out of this pilot exchange, became the EU’s flagship education initiative strengthening the role of higher education within the EU agenda. The launch of the European Association for International Education (EAIE) in 1989 put a further emphasis on the international dimension of higher education. It also served a more practical purpose of connecting the institutions and professionals in the field across Europe and facilitating inter-institutional relationship building. A similar ambition led to the formation of the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) in the United States in 1982.

National dimension: Economic competition and private cost sharing

The changing global scene in the late 1980s and the early 1990s made internationalisation of higher education more relevant to a growing global competition (Slaughter, 1998). The ability of the United States to be the economic and political leader was challenged in the wake of the strengthening of the European Union, the rapid rise of Asia, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In the context of the fast-growing global economic competition, higher education emerged as a key player that was “too important to too many elements of society and to too many people for anyone to leave it alone” (Kerr, 1987, p. 183). Considering the wider global context, Slaughter studied the development of higher education policies in the USA, UK, Australia, and Canada during that period. The author concluded that all the studied nations “began integrating higher education into broad government planning processes, processes that focus primarily on economic development” (1998, p. 46). For the

most part, these policies were concerned with economic competitiveness and tied to the needs of a global marketplace (ibid.).

Conditioned by a global cognition and a pragmatic need to educate ‘internationally sophisticated manpower’, national policy priorities shifted showing changes in the flow of government investment in international higher education. With government contributions thinning, they most visibly connected to shifts from public funding to private cost sharing. In the USA, for example, the state contribution levels have been decreasing since the 1980s and are estimated to reach zero by 2059 (Mortenson, 2012). The steady shifts of public funding towards individuals who benefit have created pressures on institutions to exploit the international student market. Indeed, international students became to be viewed as “forerunners of the greater financial contribution demanded of students after the 1970s economic crisis” (Carpentier, 2010, p. 23). In the UK, the introduction of the £250 international student fee in the late 1960s and the full tuition fee under the Thatcher administration a decade later “resulted not only in immediate income, necessary for the financial health of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), but also in economic benefits for the state and the economy” (Lomer, Papatsiba, & Naidoo, 2018, p. 134). Similarly, Canadian provinces started charging international students differential fees in 1986 (Trilokekar, 2015). The move that formally recognised financial benefits of establishing relationships and attracting students internationally. It forced institutions to consider international activities including partnerships as alternative sources of revenue.

Institutional dimension: Institutionalisation of international partnerships.

Given the rising visibility of higher education, institutions were pressured to approach their multiplying internationalising efforts in a more comprehensive and strategic manner. They began to institutionalise bi-lateral and multilateral agreements involving mainly student and scholar exchange. In the early 1990s, Klasek used the term ‘interinstitutional cooperation’ and observed that “only in the last few years have institutions begun to formalise the guidelines, processes, and contents of agreements” (1992, p. 108). Similarly, Smith (1980) observed a gradual move from ‘euphoria’ to ‘pragmatism’ in higher education partnerships marked by the increasing importance of organised inter-institutional cooperation. Though, the actual implementation of the content of inter-institutional agreements followed an uneven path and varied from ad hoc to systematic (Davies, 1992). The proliferation of international activities encouraged a more focused and deliberate approach to their operationalisation. Knight and de Wit stressed that these international undertakings may fade, “if they are not underpinned by a permanent organisational commitment and structure” (1995, p. 20).

Indeed, organisational factors became to be viewed as a gateway permitting or prohibiting the integration of an international dimension (Knight, 1994). The importance of an operational aspect further widened the concept of internationalisation and remained to be featured in future definitional descriptions (Hudzik, 2011; Knight, 1994; Rudzki, 1995; Söderqvist, 2002).

The historical layer II noted an important shift from post-war euphoria to pragmatism in higher education. It was a period in which higher education experienced funding cuts and started to rely on private funding in order to compensate for decreasing government contributions. Driven by a growing demand for higher education and the need to produce 'internationally sophisticated manpower', institutions became interested in how varied internationalising efforts are practised and how to approach them in a more comprehensive and organised way.

2.2.3.3. Historical layer III: Process-oriented internationalisation (from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s)

With the growing market-based imperatives throughout the 1990s, higher education institutions developed a proactive and intentional stance to building partnerships and securing access to the international market.

Global dimension: The process of integrating international perspectives

With an increased interest of national and regional governments in higher education, the efforts to internationalise were more ambitious and approaches more strategic. The concept of internationalisation reflected a greater reach and breadth. For example, de Wit described internationalisation as “the complex of processes whose combined effect, whether planned or not, is to enhance the international dimension” (1995, p. 1). Similarly, van der Wende considered “any systematic effort aimed at making higher education responsive to ... globalisation” as adequate to delineate the term (1997, p. 18). Rudzki viewed internationalisation as “a defining feature of all universities” built on four large pillars of organisational change, curriculum innovation, staff development, and student mobility (1995, p. 1). In order to allow for loose interpretations and flexibility in identifying an appropriately adapted approach, the tendency was to embrace the process as a whole and avoid “the mistake of treating the areas in isolation” (Rudzki, 1995, p. 1). While many researchers noted that “there is no agreement on a precise definition” (Knight & de Wit, 1995, p. 16), Callan stressed that “there seems to have been a kind of tactical avoidance of too much precision” (2000, p. 20). The assumption that the phenomenon could be clearly defined in

the early 1990s was losing its ground to “an increasing fuzziness or multidimensional character of the topic” (Kehm & Teichler, 2007, p. 262). The authors attributed this development to the growing complexity of themes associated with internationalisation across institution. For example, student mobility would be linked to subthemes such as cooperation, knowledge transfer, statistics, impact on careers, recognition of study abroad, recruitment and selection of students, support structures, organisation and funding, virtual mobility, etc. (ibid.).

In Callan’s view (2000), it was in the mid-1990s that research produced both in Europe and North America began to systematically ‘map’ the development of internationalisation to the benefit of scholars, policymakers as well as practitioners in the field worldwide. The raised visibility of internationalisation led to the widely accepted formulation of the concept as a process put forward by Knight in 1994. Indeed, the proposed definition was a milestone in the development of the concept of internationalisation, which promoted it as “the process of integrating the international dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of an institution of higher education” (Knight, 1994, p. 1). The significance of this new outlook on internationalisation was twofold. First, it represented a departure from the product-oriented meanings of the previous years by identifying internationalisation as an ongoing process rather than a fixed activity. Second, it highlighted the central and strategic position of internationalisation “that needed to be integrated and sustainable at the institutional level” (Knight, 2004, p. 9). Placing an emphasis on its central position reflected a shift away from “earlier, more piecemeal and limited, concerns with the management of student mobility” (Callan, 2000, p. 17).

On the ground, the view of internationalisation as an ongoing and strategically important process raised questions about the quality of international engagement including partnerships that were “more of a status symbol than a record of functional academic collaborations” (Knight, 2014, p. 82). Concerns about a gap between vision and reality preceded the calls for a ‘customised process’ based on assessment of individual objectives and expectations (Knight, 2014). Noted as a ‘decoupling’ between the governing policies and the actual implementation of these policies (Musselin, 2011), Caruana and Hanstock explained that “there is a gap between rhetoric and practice which may be rooted in the fact that internationalisation is a social practice which takes time to put into effect and will always occur at different levels of engagement” (2005, p. 3).

National dimension: Growing market-based imperatives

The use of the term international education mostly employed in the United States subsided by the late 1990s. This was due to its delineation that was limited to the American context and mainly focused on “programmes and activities relevant to the American study abroad tradition” (de Wit, 2002, p. 114). Additionally, literature notes a growing use of ‘internationalisation’ in research and practice throughout Europe, Canada, and other regions. As de Wit confirmed “the internationalisation of higher education reflects the period starting with the end of the Cold War and is more predominant in Europe, as well as Australia and Canada” (2002, p. 114). With the end of the Cold War, the efforts grouped under the umbrella term international education substantially weakened in the United States. Altbach and McGill Peterson (1998) attributed it to the lack of an external threat and suggested that “the sense that we have to gear up our educational resources to confront something beyond our borders is missing” (p. 38). Bowen highlighted that the somewhat aimless post-Cold War period was ideal for making education “the glue of alliances, relationships, and transnational dealings” (2000, p. 76).

Reflecting back on the Cold War and higher education, Altbach and McGill Peterson (2008) noted that the focus on education during the Cold War prompted more funding that helped the U.S. academic system become the international “gold standard” and a model for higher education institutions around the world. As a result, establishing partnerships with U.S. higher education institutions became to be perceived as a “mark of distinction” (Klasek, 1992, p. 108). Marginson and Van der Wende (2007) later commented on the hegemonic position of American higher education and compared it to “that of the American creative industries in film, TV, music, books, and software” (p. 25). Formal agreements quickly spread to other parts of the world extending the benefit of connecting institutions rather than individuals and generating mutual influences (Knight, 1994; Teichler, 1999). In that vein, Smith et al. (2002) highlighted that the USA exercised an important role in the development of the UK higher education noting parallel developments toward market-based orientations.

Following the introduction of fees for international students in 1979, the efforts to raise the visibility and attractiveness of the UK higher education system intensified and materialised through a series of Prime Minister’s Initiatives (PMI, PMI2) in 1999 and 2006. They sought to promote the UK education brand abroad and increase international student recruitment. While the PMI exceeded the initial recruitment target of 75,000 students ahead of the 2005 deadline, the PMI2 widened the focus in an attempt to “improve the experience of international students at British institutions and also, importantly, to build closer partnerships with their colleagues overseas” (Blair, 2006). The widened focus resulted from critical views about PMI’s short-term financial interests associated with international student recruitment

(Lomer, 2016). Although one may argue that the shift of the PMI2 to build partnerships represented another, more covert, way to international recruitment. Nonetheless, benefiting from an increasingly competitive international market became a strategic way forward for UK universities (Foskett, 2010).

In the post-Cold War period, Canada's higher education became to be viewed as an important mechanism of 'economic diplomacy' and its international component as a 'tradable product' serving to secure national prosperity (Trilokekar, 2015). Closely connected to the needs of the local labour market, the focus was on increasing international student population, academic collaboration, and more broadly on the brand recognition. In response to the 'global rush for international students', Canada's government engaged in developing immigration policies to attract and retain highly educated students (Johnstone & Lee, 2017). The importance of effective marketing of higher education and competing in the international markets grew at the federal level mainly because Canada relied on exports for a third of its gross national product (Trilokekar & Kizilbash, 2013). Its international education priorities became to be framed in the context of the local labour market and economic prosperity.

Institutional dimension: Re-evaluating international partnerships

Confined as a process of strategic transformation of institutions, internationalisation was underscored by a growing emphasis on competition and the formation of strategic partnerships (Callan, 2000; Kehm & Teichler, 2007). Considerations of competition and strategy became interwoven into the fabric of institutional efforts. Competition-driven considerations prevailed in the design and implementation of international activities including the selection of partners for cooperation (Kehm & Teichler, 2007). Teichler (1999) noted 'quantum leaps' occurring in the process stemming from a heightened strategic awareness of the competitive context. As a consequence, many inter-institutional agreements were re-evaluated and some became 'worthless pieces of paper' (ibid.). Knight (2004) also noted that institutions were simply unable to support multiple agreements and ended up with many inactive paper-based arrangements.

The sense of strategically and intentionally-built relations also appeared in Knight's updated definition of internationalisation denoting "the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of postsecondary education" (de Wit et al., 2015, p. 27). Similarly, Teichler held the view that higher education institutions should pay more attention to "the opportunities arising with communication, cooperation, and mobility in other areas of the world" (2004, p. 20). In that regard, Paige and Mestenhauser emphasised internationally minded actions of staff and

students. The authors promoted the construction of ‘an international mind-set’ that would then translate into “education that graduate students receive, the research being conducted by scholars, and the policies being developed and implemented by educational planners and administrators” (1999, p. 505). Their understanding of the concept of internationalisation stretched beyond the process of integrating an international dimension into teaching, research, and services to focus on all individuals involved and their transformation in the process. “Internationalisation, then, is not just about acquiring knowledge; it is about what we do with it” (ibid., p. 506).

Overall, the end of the Cold War initiated a new era of influence of higher education “seeking to dominate not for ideological or political reasons but rather for commercial gain” (Altbach, 2002, p. 4). Securing access to the international market and building intentional partnerships with higher education institutions abroad became key to supporting wider national priorities. Prompted by “the inability of governments to mobilize resources for higher education and the rebranding of higher education as an exportable commodity” (Naidoo, 2003 p. 252), it became difficult to think of partnerships beyond the market-based and competition-driven narrative. Within such a context, institutions became interested in re-evaluating their international arrangements which marked a shift from a reactive to proactive mode (Knight, 2004). While institutions were “often reacting to the multitude of opportunities to establish international institutional linkages” (ibid., p. 27) in early internationalisation, they began to adopt an increasingly proactive stance fitting a view of internationalisation as a collective undertaking at the turn of the century. The concept of a collective rather than solitary international undertaking replaced self-serving interests of individual institutions with more controlling and outward-looking collaborative engagements. (Hawawini, 2011; Sutton, 2015).

2.2.3.4. Historical layer IV: Linked internationalisation (from the early 2000s to the present)

Underscored by increased global market interconnectedness, an outward-looking and collective understanding of internationalisation strengthened the importance of linked higher education institutions.

Global dimension: Internationalisation as a collective undertaking

The debates concerned with rethinking of the concept of internationalisation and revisiting its core values and purposes rather than (re)defining it surfaced in the 21st century. Seeking balance between academic and market-driven orientations, considering risks of commodification and commercialisation of education programmes, growing access, inequality, and performance gaps among institutions, countries, and regions were some of

the highly debated topics. The relevant research drew attention to “the growing discomfort with internationalisation” and questioned different interpretations and implementation strategies to bring about more effective practice (Egron-Polak , 2012, p. 2). Moderated by the International Association of Universities (IAU), the rethinking debates brought together a group of experts in order to get “internationalisation back on track” and spark continuous reflections and focused action on core values and purposes of internationalising (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2012, p. 17).

The rethinking process highlighted the importance of shifting the focus and understanding of internationalisation as bidirectional and transcendental (Sutton et al., 2012). A uni-directional approach of infusing international perspectives inwardly no longer reflected the reality as more institutions viewed internationalisation as connection and engagement. Additionally, new voices promoted outward-looking internationalisation based on “integrating the institution and its key stakeholders – its students, faculty, and staff – into a globalizing world” (Hawawini , 2011, p. 5). It involved adjusting the existing operating modes and mind-sets to the emerging global environment in order to make more valuable and relevant contributions. As Hudzik confirmed “the idea that innovation and learning is not bound by place, but rather aided by connections to other places and cultures” was increasingly shared by institutions (2014, p. 9). With the rapidly changing global and local context of higher education, the simple divides such as West-East, North-South were ceasing to be relevant.

Internationalisation expanded to the whole sector and there was “practically no university that would deny being keen to become more ‘international’” (Egron-Polak , 2013, p. 220). The IAU 4th Global Survey in Internationalisation of Higher Education (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014) reported that 75% of the 1,336 participating institutions spanning 131 countries had an internationalisation strategy in place.

Releasing the overwhelming attention on the form and refocusing on why and how to internationalise, as noted by Brandenburg and de Wit (2011), came with the realisation that teaching, research, institution-building, and services are now shared and global endeavours. Such endeavours were linked to the wider context dependent on issues, events, and audiences beyond campus boundaries. The aggregate effects of the outer environmental changes altered the very essence of what it meant to internationalise. For example, tackling global environmental issues, internationalising curriculum or developing globally portable skills affected the relevance of institutional boundaries. As Teichler affirmed, “efforts to internationalise higher education cannot opt anymore for stand-alone activities but have to integrate border-crossing activities” (2009, p. 16). In that vein, Sutton (2015) remarked that internationalisation became a collective rather than solitary undertaking. The focus shifted

from self-serving interests of individual institutions to building links with other institutions through collaborative engagements. It is in this context that institutions engaged in “rethinking their reasons for pursuing international partnerships and the processes by which they form them” (Sutton et al., 2011, p. xiii).

National dimension: Development of nation-wide strategies

Following the recognition of the role of knowledge in economic growth, the OECD introduced the term ‘knowledge-based economy’ by defining it as “directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information” (OECD, 1996, p. 7). The International Association of Universities (IAU) further concluded in its policy statement that “highly educated personnel and research at the highest levels are essential to increasingly knowledge-based development everywhere” (IAU, 2000). To align with the new knowledge-based designation, the USA, UK, and Canada developed international education strategies to ensure their competitive position in the global knowledge economy.

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education released its first international education strategy, *Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement*. Although criticised for the lack of firm and specific policy commitments related to declining funding and immigration (Trilokekar, 2015), it established the importance of developing advanced knowledge and global competencies of U.S. students. Unlike the strategies announced by the UK and Canada which targeted exclusively higher education, the U.S. strategy included all levels of the education system. Although revised in 2018, the updated strategy maintained its general commitment to preparing U.S. students for a globalised world. Focusing on the student recruitment, the UK’s 2013 *International Education: Global Growth and Prosperity* strategy consolidated the marketisation discourse and set out a plan to grow the international education sector. In 2019, the UK government renewed its strategy further increasing international student targets and the value of its education exports (UUK, 2019).

The focus on national prosperity also transpired in the 2014 *International Education Strategy: Harnessing Our Knowledge Advantage to Drive Innovation and Prosperity* published by Canada’s Department of International Trade. Similar to the UK strategy, it promoted the economic orientation of higher education and differed from the U.S. plan that “was unique in its notable promotion of international education for reasons of geopolitical stability, national defence and addressing global challenges” (Engel & Siczek, 2018, p. 763). Regardless of the overarching orientation, each strategy emphasised partnerships with other institutions as being of central importance (ibid.). Overall, the international education strategies signified that internationalisation is a national priority addressing different

concerns. While the U.S. strategy lacked specific targets and objectives, the UK and Canada's national plans aimed to seize a greater market share by highlighting international student recruitment and setting economic contribution targets.

Institutional dimension: Strengthening internationally linked institutions

The strategic orientation of higher education institutions initiated in the previous decade matured and became a mainstream issue impacting the life of an institution. Teichler observed that "in recent years higher education institutions or their departments expected to become or often actually became stronger strategic actors with respect to internationalisation than they had been in the past" (2004, p. 20). The understanding of internationalisation expanded to capture "the dynamic transformation of higher education, both its institutions and the entire system, both the disciplinary and the enterprise elements" (Ruther, 2014, p. 30). In a similar vein, Soderqvist felt that higher education is undergoing "a change process from a national higher education institution to an international higher education leading to the inclusion of an international dimension in all aspects of its holistic management in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to achieve the desired competencies" (2002, p. 29). Teichler further summarised it as "the totality of substantial changes in the context and inner life of higher education relative to an increasing frequency of border-crossing activities" (Teichler, 2004, p. 22). Although the definition proposed by Soderqvist might have been understood as narrow and with limited applicability (Knight, 2004), all three examples implied a number of contextual factors that affected global higher education at the turn of the century. In a study of the world context in the 21st century, Magrath (2000) observed the following globalising factors that had an impact on higher education institutions:

1. economic interconnectedness among nations
2. shift toward democracy and market mechanisms
3. emerging consumerism
4. restructuring and decentralising of national and international organisations
5. flatter organisational structures
6. global ecological issues
7. emerging global multicultural values
8. new information and communication technologies

(adapted from Magrath, 2000, p. 251-253)

The author concluded that “all universities of the world are going to be vastly changed” under the influence of these contextual transformations. Competing on the global playing field in the 21st century put them under pressure to transform themselves. Many institutions have responded in ways that strengthened economic and marketing forces. Knight (2003) noted an increased use of business-like models and terms of expanding production, increasing revenue, strategic planning, branding, and marketing. Several scholars posited that the changes impacting upon higher education will create internationally competitive corporations (Hatcher, Meadmore, & McWilliam, 1999). In Magrath’s view, the contextual transformations of the early 21st century created a fantastic opportunity to support *linked* higher education forming partnerships in a number of creative ways among themselves as well as with other organisations that were not historically connected to higher education (2000). In that regard, many institutions made formal arrangements for partnerships in a form of bilateral agreements, memoranda of understanding or letters of intent (De Wit, 2002). In the context where access to resources was increasingly uncertain and related to a global competition, Magrath (2000) pointed to the shift from ‘cottage industries’ toward ‘multinational consortia’. Additionally, Higgitt et al. (2008) argued that developing international links became essential in order to project an image of a well-connected institution.

In line with the observed shift toward multinational consortia, various data pointed to the overall increase of international engagement. Internationally partnered collaborations have grown in size and complexity. According to the 4th Global Survey conducted by the International Association of Universities (IAU), the top-ranked internationalisation activities involved partnership building to offer mobility opportunities for students (29%) and international research collaboration (24%) (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014). Along these lines, the 2014 Barometer survey of 1,500 European institutions and over 2,000 practitioners led by the European Association for International Education (EAIE) found that dealing with and improving international partnerships were the most commonly mentioned activities and challenges for more than half of the survey participants (EAIE, 2015). Similarly, the 2011 Mapping internationalisation on U.S. campuses report found that nearly half of the 1,041 surveyed institutions expanded their partnerships (ACE, 2012).

As demonstrated above, the evolving definitions and various dimensions of internationalisation affected the development of international partnerships and provided the necessary background for their study. The early fragmented and vague nature of inter-institutional linkages reflected both the post-war reconstruction efforts as well as a close alignment with the changing foreign relations. In that sense, international partnerships were largely defined within the national frameworks of government-sponsored programmes of

developmental aid. With the promotion of an increasingly organised approach to education aiming to prepare ‘internationally sophisticated manpower’ in the 1980s, the prevailing pragmatic nature of partnerships embraced a growing global awareness. Internationalisation was framed as a sum of activities or products of the global educational undertaking. Alongside the intensifying global competition, institutions were increasingly interested in how varied internationalising efforts are practised and how to approach partnerships in a more coordinated way. The subsequent post-Cold War years introduced internationalisation as an ongoing and central process of integrating the international dimension into the various institutional functions. Thus, developing increasingly intentional partnerships and expanding access to the global market emerged as key in nation-wide strategies of internationalisation. The advent of the knowledge society at the end of the 20th century positioned higher education at its centre and gave international partnerships a strategic undertone. Widely understood as essential, they became to reflect an increasingly interconnected landscape permeated with market-driven and value-promoting orientations. Building international links among higher education institutions became an essential tactic set in an overall move from ‘cottage industries’ toward ‘multinational consortia’ (Magrath, 2000). In light of growing complexity, external forces, and financial constraints, international partnerships became core philosophy rather than one tactic among many (Sutton et al., 2012). Tubbeh and Williams put forward that institutions “must look beyond their border to maintain viability in an increasingly competitive yet collaborative world, and perhaps the best answer is through international education partnerships” (2010, p. 14).

2.3. Developing international partnerships

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, partnerships reflect conversations with a plurality of entry points (Sutton et al., 2011). The word conversation is commonly defined as the interchange of information and ideas between two or more entities (Collins, n.d.). It provides a useful analogy to access the study of international partnerships as it implies both relational qualities, such as communication and trust, as well as processual and structural qualities, such as varying conversational stages and themes. Conversations are viewed as a fundamental aspect of inter-organisational collaborations manifesting a complex interplay of communicative processes among individuals (Franco, 2006; Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005; Huxham & Vangen, 2013). They further represent processes that are strategic and intentional as conversations “must move globally towards a goal” (Franco, 2006, p. 814). As

such, conversations are structured by themes or ‘constructions of key issues’ (Hardy et al., 2005) providing the basis for finding a common language.

To raise awareness of the complex nature of international partnerships, the following section explores the partnership development and its key themes. Viewed as conversations, partnerships can be broken down into stages to further uncover different ‘constructions of key issues’ within each stage. Moving beyond one-sided considerations of partnerships as good and beneficial, the development of partnerships integrates the ‘dark side’ exposing the presence of tensions. The inherent tensions encompass differing and countervailing forces that may suggest contrary prescriptions for practice (Huxham & Beech, 2003). The presence of dynamic tensions underscores the fact that partnerships are formed between heterogenous institutions. Stemming from such diversity, tensions generate varying effects on the partnership development including conflicts, but also new ideas and innovative approaches (Thune & Gulbrandsen, 2016). To adequately support the current examination, the study is set in the context of institutions with different layers of global and local engagement.

2.3.1. Global and local engagement

The literature provides countless references to the dual global and local engagement of higher education in most countries. Marginson and Rhoades (2002) comment that higher education institutions worldwide are “increasingly global and at the same time local actors” (p. 301), while OECD (2007) describes them as ‘globally competitive and locally engaged’. Historically, engagement with local surroundings followed varying motivational drivers. In the USA, it can be traced to the establishment of Land Grant universities in the late 19th century “where service to the “community” of the supporting State was an explicit part of the founding purpose of those universities” (Duke, 2008, p. 89) In the UK, it grew out of a sense of a duty to extend education to “those unable to enter the small, essentially private system” during the 19th century (ibid.). Spreading across the Commonwealth countries, Canadian universities continued this trend with different degrees of variation and it is now “deep in the fabric of Canadian higher education” (Hall, 2009, p. 20).

Several commentators have recently observed a renewed approach and shift in understanding engagement and its orientation (Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2016; Roper & Hirth, 2005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Moving away from a unidirectional model of service to society and preservation of its own financial well-being to a bidirectional model of engagement with an emphasis on relationships and interactions (Roper & Hirth,

2005). According to Fitzgerald et al. (2016), the renewed approach to engagement stems from an understanding that knowledge resides in both academic and non-academic settings. Higher education institutions must then develop “new forms of diverse partnerships to exploit and enhance our discovery and learning expertise across economic, social, educational, health, and quality of life societal concerns” (ibid., p. 224). The authors also acknowledge the fact that current political, social, and economic influences may force some institutions to consider disengaging from their communities as they address funding issues, programme consolidations, or staff reductions. In that line, they must “carefully select their stakeholders and identify the ‘right’ degree of differentiation” to prevent ‘mission overload’ or ‘mission confusion’ (Enders, 2004, p. 321).

The level of engagement may be shaped by the multitude of communities with which institutions interact. While institutions in most countries were largely funded by national or state governments to prepare skilled manpower and respond to national labour-market needs in the past, their core communities included students and governments (Enders, 2004). Today they include domestic and international students and staff, as well as external research communities, alumni, businesses, social movements, professional associations, and governments including foreign ones (ibid.). Thus, institutions are required to respond and engage with a growing set of diverse communities that often demand international excellence in order to meet regional needs (Chatterton & Goddard, 2000).

It has been argued that the global and the local dimensions coexist as “we cannot simply assume that there is a linear relationship that begins with the local and extends towards a global institution” (Jones, 2008a, p. 459). In practical terms, this is most often communicated in the statements of mission and strategic planning where explicit references to both international involvement and local community connections are included (Chatterton & Goddard, 2000). Serving as the institutional ‘life force’, Scott (2006) commented that “virtually all of today’s policies and issues in higher education – from admissions to weapons technology – derive from institutional mission” (p. 2). Although mission statements may be considered vague or general, they garner significant attention to institutional utility and willingness to engage (Morphew & Hartley, 2006). In that sense, Kosmützky and Ewen (2016) proposed a ‘shell model’ incorporating the global, national, and local layers of engagement (Figure 1).

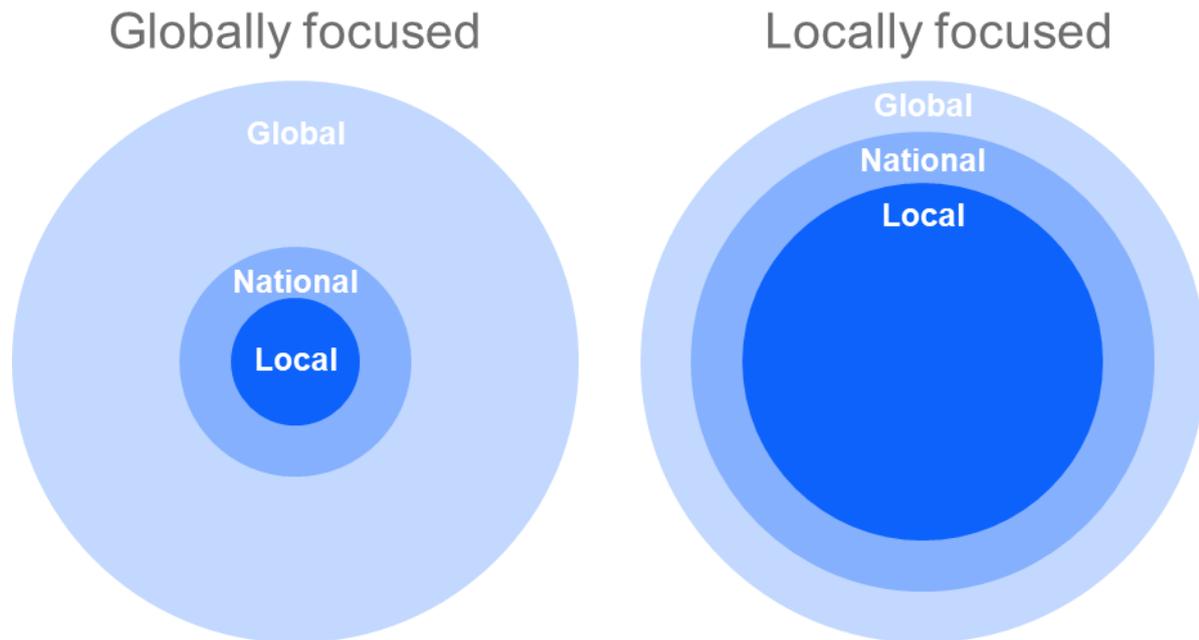


Figure 1: Shell Model - Adapted from Kosmützky and Ewen (2016)

Although the model portrays idealised types of institutional focus, it provides a useful context for the consideration of spatial configuration of higher education institutions for the current study. It portrays a focal dominant layer of engagement that coexists with other layers. While the national layer displays the engagement with public resources and provides the main ground for attracting funding and students for all institutions, the global and local layers show the prevailing degree of engagement. They convey a dominant institutional mission priority anchored either in research that “constitutively contains an international dimension” and attracts the globally recognizable status or in teaching that warrants the local grounding and lower status (Kosmützky & Ewen, 2016, p. 243). In that line, Davies & Zarifa (2012) put forward that while certain institutions enjoy higher status, they also have an advantage to acquire more compared to lower status ones for which the attainment of a more favourable status may be harder. In other words, they experience a ‘Matthew effect’² as they enter the global competition with more prominent strategic links, more attractive locations, and healthier budgets than lower status institutions (ibid.). Access and resource advantages allow these institutions to design more high-status engagements and so further reinforce their status. With variations existing and situated in between the two ideal types, globally and locally engaged institutions tend to counterbalance the dominant spatial orientation to varied

² Matthew effect or Matthew principle is generally summarised as ‘the rich get richer and the poor get poorer’.

extent by developing the other layers. For example, by reconnecting with the region through research and technology transfers in the case of globally engaged institutions. Or, in the case of locally oriented institutions, by attracting students and staff from abroad to elevate the institutional position internationally.

Inter-institutional partnerships provide one way of allowing institutions to engage and “become more open and entrepreneurial, socially-engaged, civic-minded and strategic, by identifying local and global challenges and opportunities and development trajectories” (Puukka, 2017, p. 162). Multiple sources have noted that “international academic partnerships are being asked to do more than has been the case in the past” (Sutton et al., 2011, p. xv). Exhibiting a wider geographical reach, new objectives and multiplying activities, they are asked to respond to new demands for value creation on a local level and perform alongside a growing number of global priorities. With partnership agreements multiplying and diversifying, the questions that many institutions now face are “which partnerships to pursue, and how to manage their global engagement activities in a planned, coherent way” (Helms, 2015, p. 19). Combining both opportunities and responsibilities raise challenges for those involved in the partnership development.

2.3.2. Dark side of partnerships

Regardless of the definitional vagueness, internationalisation became synonymous to “doing good” (Brandenburg & De Wit, 2015). Equally, strategies for pursuing internationalisation such as partnering with other institutions became to be regarded as good and mutually beneficial (Amey & Eddy, 2015; Cardini, 2006). Although positive connotations associated with internationalisation and its strategies increased its popularity, it adversely affected the quality as “people are less into questioning its effectiveness and essential nature” (Brandenburg & De Wit, 2015, p. 16). However, there are conceptual and practical aspects that deserve further attention and questioning. Practical challenges may arise from difficulties in communication, complexities of organisational and professional cultures, power imbalances, differences in natural and professional languages, and ethical issues (ibid.). The business literature often labels such challenges as a ‘dark side’ of inter-organisational relationships (Abosag, Yen, & Barnes, 2016; Anderson & Jap, 2005; Fang, Chang, & Peng, 2011).

The concept of a partnership has a positive connotation among practitioners and policymakers stemming from the belief that benefits accrue from developing and sustaining a collaboration (Eddy, 2010). Referred to as ‘value-added’ partnerships, Dhillon

mathematically expressed it as $1+1+1=\text{more than } 3$, encapsulating the assumption that the individuals and institutions in a partnership gain more by working together than by working individually (2005, p. 215). Partners can gain access to shared resources, services, and knowledge that would not be available without the joint work. In that vein, partnerships are viewed as important tools helping institutions to be creative and adaptive (Kinser & Green, 2009). Because of the overall tendency to view internationalisation and its various manifestations as strategies in which benefits outweigh risks, the discussion of potential or realised risks is limited. Nonetheless, there are strong indications that partnerships may be risky strategies and symbolic benefits may hide operational problems (Amey, 2010a; Chapman & Sakamoto, 2010; Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010; Higgitt et al., 2008; Jie, 2010). No matter how grand the vision may be, the partnership may fail to deliver the expected goals as it involves a complex web of contextual and relational influences. The literature review points to some critical voices commenting on ambitious and unrealistic discourse (Cardini, 2006; Dhillon, 2005; Lumby & Morrison, 2006) based on the idea of “some unexamined and idealized “let’s all do this together”” (Klees, 2001).

On the surface, the concept of partnerships appears relatively simple. It denotes a voluntary collaborative involving two or more institutions with the goal of obtaining an agreed-upon objective (Eddy, 2010b). It presumes that partners have rationalised potential benefits and established a relationship to realise them (Jie, 2010). Ideally, they have framed their joint venture through a bilateral agreement listing what should be achieved. The concept of partnerships may signify a “synergistic relationship where the total effect is greater than the sum of the parts (Foskett, 2005, p. 253). However, this is only one side of the picture. The practice of partnerships meets numerous challenges associated with delivering the agreed-upon content. Shore and Groen (2009) have found that collaborating “is not as straightforward as the official story of an institutional Memorandum of Understanding might suggest” (p. 536). In their narrative analysis of a four-year partnership between their respective home universities in Australia and Canada, they identified three areas of practice that may challenge partnerships after the official document had been signed: relationships, interests, and a framework for understanding the support systems and structures. Similarly, Cooper and Mitsunaga (2010) and Eddy (2010b) highlighted the importance of healthy relationship building as key to partnership performance. Other sources have pointed out to finance, time, and people as contributing to success or failure of joint work (Higgitt et al., 2008; Holland, 2010; Rybnicek & Konigsgruber, 2016). While initial investments are high, benefits are often uncertain and distant. Caruana and Montgomery (2015) argue that “institutions invest tremendous resource over an extended period of time to agree

arrangements which are acceptable to both 'home' and 'host', 'sender' and 'receiver'. Yet, these partnerships tend to be rightly perceived as fragile entities involving high-risk" (p.15). Additionally, tensions may arise when divergent motivations, organisational structures, and cultures meet (Cardini, 2006; Eddy, 2010b). Due to the inherent partnership complexities and high investments, Huxham and Vangen (2013) go so far as to say "don't do it unless you have to" (p. 80).

International partnerships express both conceptual assumptions and practical challenges. While it is conceptually assumed that partnering institutions should have clear goals or build trusting relationships, it has been found that the reality of practice is different. Proposed by Huxham and Vangen (2013), a theory of collaborative advantage (TCA) helps explain the 'dark side' of collaborative practice using a tension perspective. Based on nearly 20 years of research covering varied types of inter-organisational partnerships in the public and non-profit sectors, the theory conceptualises partnerships as captured in a dynamic tension grounded in the coexistence of collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia. Although partners typically aspire to achieve collaborative advantage, they often experience difficulties throughout the partnership lifecycle (Kanter, 1994). The theory assists in understanding the areas for consideration and recognises each area as a tension between intended advantage and experienced inertia. Embedded in the paradoxical nature of inter-organisational collaboration, the theory unpacks potentials and risks inherent in partnerships. It provides a network of themes where 'reward and anxiety' persist in the joint work including aims, culture, identity, accountability, communication, commitment, compromise, social capital, risk, power, trust, resources, membership structures, working processes, and leadership as they stand in the way of making adjustments and progress. Although the theory does not deliver clear-cut guidelines for how to act or which themes to focus on, it provides points of entry or 'handles for reflective practice' (Huxham, 2003).

The tensions between intended advantage and experienced inertia find their roots in complex and asymmetric influences that may sway partners to become 'odd bedfellows or lasting partners' (Eddy, 2007). To address diverse challenges and mitigate the 'dark side', it is important to recognise and navigate these influences. The aim is to create conditions for a 'productive tension of asymmetries' in a way that they would lead to a balancing partnership process (Psaltis, 2007). As the accumulated asymmetries constrain the flow between partners, they exacerbate status, power, and resource imbalances which may ultimately exhaust commitment to the partnership (Tedrow & Mabokela, 2007). These constraints can further intensify in North-South partnerships due to inequalities between partnering institutions (Obamba et al., 2009).

When working in partnerships, it is important to approach them as “complex, contradictory and even paradoxical social phenomena” (Cardini, 2006, p. 394). De Lima (2010) echoes such approach and proposes to shift away from normative and instrumental considerations of networks towards conceptually, pragmatically, and politically problematic. Awareness of tensions and asymmetric influences as integral and key part of joint work allows for shared understanding to emerge (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). Amey, Eddy, and Ozaki (2007) are advocates of raising awareness in that regard. They put forward that “Allowing for awareness of these elements of difference can lend support for the partnerships so as to weather a period of contention or disagreement” throughout the partnership process (ibid., p 13).

2.3.3. Stages of the partnership process

There is evidence that international partnerships should be viewed as process-oriented and living systems (Amey et al., 2007; Messenger, Warren, & Bloisi, 2016). The literature review points to a plethora of arrangements depicting partnership processes. While some focus on resources (Holland, 2010; Rybnicek & Konigsgruber, 2016) or relational dimensions (Heffernan & Poole, 2004), the majority of them consider stages and cycles through which partnerships evolve.

Although there is no definitive agreement as to the stages of an inter-institutional relationship within higher education, research into inter-university and university-business partnerships suggests a three-stage lifecycle (Rybnicek & Konigsgruber, 2016):

Stage 1 Planning

Stage 2 Implementation

Stage 3 Establishment

The first stage typically commences with selecting the partner(s), stating the aims, possible contributions, financial and time commitments. Following the planning stage, partners implement the agreed upon content and work toward establishing long-term relationships. During the implementation and establishment stages, they may experience asymmetries associated with resources-based factors, such as time, staff, equipment, and finances.

Research into business partnerships often uses a marriage analogy emphasising their relational dimension. “Relationships between companies begin, grow, and develop – or fail – much like relationships between people” (Kanter, 1994, p. 98). Extending an analysis of inter-organisational relationships in the private sector, Heffernan and Poole (2004) propose

to view higher education partnerships as relationships progressing through a five-stage lifecycle:

Stage 1 *Pre-relationship* during which partnering institutions meet and discover their compatibility. Kanter (1994) uses a courtship analogy to describe the initial stage.

Stage 2 *Early interaction* involves negotiations about the format and structure of the partnership. It is the stage in which partners 'get engaged' and draw up plans to close the deal (Kanter, 1994).

Stage 3 *Relationship growth* involves a high level of interaction and exchange between the partners. The third stage also offers an opportunity to discover differences.

Stage 4 *Partnership* is stable and mature enough to deal with differences. Partnering institutions are able to devise mechanisms for bridging those differences.

Stage 5 *Relationship end* denotes the partnership dissolution because the purpose has been achieved or no longer exist. It equally denotes the changes within because of the ongoing collaboration that may lead to a new or improved relationship and lifecycle (Berzina-Pitcher, Mishra, & Giridhar, 2016). Kanter believes that "as old-marrieds, each company discovers that it has changed internally as a result of its accommodation to the ongoing collaboration" (ibid., p. 99).

Similarly, Amey et al. (2007) view partnerships in higher education as developmental processes supported by feedback loops and a champion who brings reputation, resources, political influence, and expertise. Feedback is essential as it helps make sense of the interaction between different contexts, motivations, and outcomes and ultimately shapes a decision-making process. It can further serve as a coping mechanism allowing institutions to take a step backwards in the form of seeking new goals, new activities, or new members (Beerkens & Derwende, 2007). As the partnership moves from the planning to maintenance stage, the authors emphasise the importance of framing and appropriate adjusting of the partnership. Eddy (2010b) argues that the ways in which partnerships are "initially framed and the problems defined set the stage for the collaboration" (p. 18). The framing of the partnership contributes to how internal and external stakeholders perceive it and how they (re)interpret its values as the partnership evolves over time.

Finally, it is possible to recognise the forming, storming, norming, and performing stages of partnership development as developed by Tuckman and Jensen (1977). It is argued that in order to reach a high-performing partnership, it is likely that partners will experience the storming and norming stages. With regards to education partnerships, Hora and Millar

(2012) view such experiences as beneficial for future development and gaining of new insights and capacities.

The absence of a definitive agreement as to the stages of an inter-organisational relationship within higher education allows for the alignment of the variety of perspectives and interpretations with a particular arrangement. In other words, it allows for the diversity of considerations. Based on their nearly two decades of research on inter-organisational collaboration, Huxham and Vangen (2013) emphasise the difficulty of identifying specific phases in the development of such endeavours, which they link to the difficulty of recognising clear beginnings and endings. This difficulty may be attributed to a growing recognition of the fact that international partnerships necessitate flexibility and adjustments (Amey et al., 2007; Berzina-Pitcher et al., 2016; Mullinix, 2001). The adjustments of various degrees and orientations affect the clear demarcation of specific stages and further support the view of partnerships as process-oriented and living systems. Confined within the process-oriented and living interpretation of partnership development, the current study focuses on the 'constructions of key issues' surrounding the forming and implementing stages.

2.3.4. Forming partnerships: External influences and institutional motives

Green posits that "it is vital to articulate the reasons for undertaking a particular internationalisation strategy" (2012, p. 4). The initial phase of forming an international dimension should spark a deep reflection about ways to promote and sustain that strategy. Additionally, that reflection must be inclusive of the pressures and challenges of the environment surrounding a higher education institution. Institutions receive impetus to partner internationally from the current national and global conditions. Reasons for partnering with other institution(s) internationally also reflect local contextual factors, such as institutional values, interests, and needs (Foskett, 2005; Jie, 2010; Saffu & Mamman, 2000). The following section will discuss the role of environmental scanning and different motives for engaging in international partnerships.

2.3.4.1. *The role of environmental scanning*

External influences marked by funding restrictions, global market pressures, and status competition drive partnerships and play a part in creating an environment in which partnerships function. In order to appropriately review and respond to these conditions, Eddy (2010b) suggests to conduct 'environmental scanning'. Assessing immediate external

conditions often begins in the initial forming stage of the partnership development (Amey, 2010a; Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). The purpose is to gather and analyse different forms of data to determine the most suitable partnership strategies. Considering an increasingly interconnected and interdependent surrounding, a more active role is emerging for inter-institutional collaborations compared to those set in place in the past (Ripoll-Soler & de-Miguel-Molina, 2014). To better serve students, enhance research, and meet public interests, institutions are asked to employ a more active and even entrepreneurial approach to their environment (Clark, 2001).

In their observation of the Transatlantic Dialogue series bringing together institutional leaders from both sides of the Atlantic, Kinser and Green (2009) noted the growing convergence of 'environmental themes' these leaders are preoccupied with. While building relationships with external stakeholders becomes increasingly prominent, the issues of access, accountability, changing demographics, higher education's role in society, limited resources, globalisation, and the rise of market influences are widely present (ibid.). The authors emphasise the need for institutions to be "more creative and adaptive in an environment in which expectations are increasing and resources decreasing" (Kinser & Green, 2009, p. iii). The interplay of external expectations and institutional capabilities is varied, idiosyncratic, and evolving. Therefore, choosing to engage in scanning of the environment promises to discern 'adaptational pressures' and asymmetric conditions in order to generate feedback loops and map out more adaptive strategies (Trondal, 2002).

2.3.4.2. Diversity of motives

Motivation is typically regarded on the continuum from extrinsic based on external stimuli and rewards to intrinsic characterised by inherent benefits of self-development. The expectancy theory of motivation assumes that organisations and individuals are driven to do something based on their expectations of being successful and being rewarded. The stronger drive results from the higher expectation of the reward or benefit. Partnerships among higher education institutions develop based on a variety of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations "with some being economically driven and others more altruistically oriented" (Eddy, 2010b, p. 17). Influenced by the immediate external environment marked by competition, resource gains, and status building (Chan, 2004; Knight, 2014; Marginson, 2011), institutions expect to gain international visibility and generate income. The pursuit of international partnerships is also strongly fuelled by a desire to enhance academic opportunities for students and staff through exchange, study abroad, joint programmes,

research collaboration, and collaborative teaching (Amey, 2010a; Ayoubi & Al-Habaibeh, 2006; Chapman & Sakamoto, 2010; Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010).

International status. Chan (2004) argues that institutions form international partnerships for various reasons, but most importantly and most often they provide an opportunity to compete in order to stand out from the crowd. Marginson finds that “internationalisation strategies are designed to make systems and institutions more globally engaged and competitive” (2011, p. 15). In that view, institutions negotiate their global position by setting out strategies that differentiate them from the competition. Building partnerships with highly visible institutions in other countries is regarded as a way to boost reputation and positioning. It has been well documented that the competitive dynamic is driven by global rankings. Hazelkorn maintains that “they have become a barometer of global competition measuring the knowledge-producing and talent-catching capacity of higher education institutions” (2009, p. 1). While their contributions and limitations remain to be widely discussed, Marginson argues that “rankings have irreducible reputation-making role” and greatly influence the decisions and judgements of higher education leaders, faculty, students, and other stakeholders (2014, p. 56). The competition to be in the top 100 has become intense as institutions worldwide try to position themselves within the limited space. Hazelkorn affirms that “despite the fact that there are over 17,000 HEIs [higher education institutions] worldwide, there is a near gladiatorial obsession with the ‘top’ 100” (2008, p. 4). Competing on the global playing field highlights the need for higher education to “reinvent, reengineer and re-enchant itself, to compromise its own integrity in order to allow a new configuration of ‘knowledge’ institutions to develop” (Scott, 2000, p. 10). Many institutions have responded in ways that strengthen economic and marketing forces. In the context of internationalisation, Knight has noted that “capacity building through international cooperation projects is being replaced by status building initiatives to gain world-class recognition and higher ranking” (2014, p. 78).

Income generation. In the “race to be internationally present” (Amey, 2010a, p. 57), many partnerships are driven by economic enhancement in the form of income generation (Chapman & Sakamoto, 2011; Jie, 2010). They expect gains through fee-paying international students (Van Damme 2001) and saving or leveraging partnership resources with existing ones (Eddy, 2010b). Although many scholars have argued that income generation is not a primary motivation for joint international endeavours, they acknowledge that it is a widely recognised and significant factor underlying the sustainability of such endeavours (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Higgitt et al., 2008; Jie, 2010; Obst & Kuder, 2015; Saffu & Mamman, 2000). Having surveyed 28 UK higher education institutions, Woodfield,

Middlehurst, Fielden, and Forland (2009) reported that institutions expect partnerships to be self-financing and sustainable after an initial set-up period. They also view partnerships as a way to generate income for re-investment in other international activities. In the examination of a Sino-U.S. partnership, Jie (2010) found that 'breaking even' or performing self-sustainably was acceptable for the participating institutions. Echoing this finding, Saffu and Mamman (2000) gathered evidence from 22 universities in Australia to report that "entering into a strategic alliance as a way of raising additional sources of revenue was not as important a motivator as the sharing of scholarship and knowledge with overseas counterparts" (p. 511). This is congruent with the 2014 IAU Global Survey results in which revenue generation appeared as the lowest ranked expected benefit of internationalisation.

Student development. International partnerships can be intrinsically motivated based on the drive to adhere to institution's mission and vision. Motivated by student outcomes, research opportunities, human resource development, and cultural understanding, partnerships react to the increasing demand for "producing graduates fit for living and working in multicultural, global environments" (Clifford, 2005, p. 116). Many institutions are motivated to team up because "they share interest in students' success" (Eddy, 2010b, p. 7). In their study of four institutions in the UK with a total of 435 international partnership agreements, Ayoubi and Al-Habaibeh (2006) discovered that both students and staff development led institutions to pursue international partnerships. Out of these two dimensions, the student dimension was given more importance by senior level management. Although this emphasis may go hand in hand with the extrinsic motivation of income generation, it may also be that institutions are driven by their core mission of 'producing graduates fit for living and working in multicultural, global environments'. The 2014 IAU Global Survey affirms that institutions place student learning and their engagement with global issues high on their list of priorities. The sharing of institutional resources and strengths enable partners to enhance their potential for developing global perspectives and engaging students in intercultural learning (Bourn, 2011; Leask, 2004; Woodfield et al., 2009). In practical terms that means that:

"It is not enough to say the role of the engineer is to come in and solve the problem by building a new road or a dam. The engineer has to understand the problem and recognise that there may well be more than one solution and that these solutions need to take account of differing social and cultural perspectives" (Bourn, 2011, p. 568).

In that vein, Lumby and Foskett (2005) underscore the importance of collaboration as a means of incorporating diverse perspectives. They put forward “a demand for a wide range of sources and forms of knowledge to be accessible to learners” (p. 136).

Faculty development. In addition to student-oriented motivations, partnerships create new opportunities for faculty in terms of teaching and research collaborations with international colleagues that their home institution by itself would be unable to deliver (Obst & Kuder, 2015; Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011; Shore & Groen, 2009). It is faculty who possess authority over the orientation of the curriculum, research, and teaching (Childress, 2010). It is also faculty who “can best facilitate the intercultural development and transformative learning of others if they have opportunity to experience this process first” (Friesen, 2013, p. 224). The increasing and pressing importance of faculty development vis-à-vis changing student population coming to the classroom not as ‘empty vessels’ but with capital in the form of previous linguistic, educational, cultural experience and social connections has been well established (Djerasimovic, 2014). As Carroll and Ryan (2007) evoke, academics cease to be bastions of conventional wisdom. Rather they are facilitators of learning who lead by example, engage, and care to increase cultural awareness and enhance global perspectives. The survey of 28 UK higher education institutions conducted by Woodfield et al. (2009) validates the central role of faculty in initiating as well as sustaining the success of international partnerships. It further details the key involvement of faculty in the area of recruitment, course development, teaching, and assessment. Given that faculty serve as an invaluable cultural and educational resource, Tubbeh and Williams (2010) insist that “international education partners must look to the faculty as a distinct stakeholder, constituent, ally, and contributor to international efforts” (p. 9).

Research. Many institutions engage in international partnerships to tackle issues greater than the campus boundaries, such as environmental degradation, poverty, terrorism, global health issues. In many cases, institutions view international partnerships as the precursor to large-scale research collaborations that would otherwise be impossible (Taylor, 2016). They expect to develop the necessary capacity to take part in basic and applied research addressing global issues and develop research cultures within institutions (Woodfield et al., 2009). The notion of contributing to the ‘greater good’ and participating in global solutions has been noted as a crucial motivator by both administrators and faculty (Willis & Taylor, 2014). Given that international collaboration is key to solving global concerns, joint research and knowledge production became a primary motivating factor for many institutional partnerships (Knight, 2008). It is unlikely that any higher education institution would possess the capacity and capability sufficient to solve complex globally stretched problems alone. In

that vein, Gibbons (1998) noted that research is being re-organised and shifting from small teams of professors and graduate students to “transient and complex problem-solving teams” (p. 44). Having analysed international research collaboration involving UK universities and covering the period since 1981 to the present, Adams and Gurney (2016) concluded that “universities that are not partnered with institutions in other countries are less closely engaged with that leading network. If they are not actively involved, then they risk being left behind the advancing research front” (p. 7). Having access to international research networks generates a positive impact on the quality and efficiency of the institutional research culture. The authors emphasised the need for every higher education institution to maintain and expand its international engagement in the current ‘fourth age’ of research as most of their research wealth comes from such engagement (ibid.). Adams (2013) further noted that research has moved through the individual, institutional, and national age to now occupy a fourth age of research driven by international collaboration.

Institutional development. At a practical level, partnerships may serve as a benchmarking tool to enhance quality and increase institutional effectiveness. Through international ventures, institutions may expect to “gain innovative solutions to ongoing management, academic, and research-related challenges” (Knight, 2008, pp. 28-29). Literature on inter-organisational relationships in the private sector supports this notion arguing that partnerships create opportunities for: co-learning, co-specialisation, and co-option (Doz & Hamel, 1998). As institutions position themselves and engage in the race to be internationally present, they seek opportunities for improvement and co-learning experiences to reflect on programmes (Cozza & Blessinger, 2016b). Additionally, Austin and Foxcroft (2011) reported that international collaborations provide institutions with information essential to understanding how other institutions organise and respond to policies related to faculty work, reward and career structures, as well as strategies employed to support teaching and research excellence. In the process of improvement, they may also be attracted by an opportunity to share and maximise expertise and resources through co-specialisation. Finally, the need to position themselves strategically drives them to engage in co-option processes to promote coordinated action related to common interests. Collaborative engagements expand prospects for innovative solutions and organisational flexibility.

Mutual understanding. Another motivating factor driving institutions to form international partnerships is that of mutual understanding. Gürüz (2008) argues that “International relations of all kinds – confrontational, collaboration, political, cultural, and commercial – require people on all sides who know about each other’s history, culture, social fabric,

strengths, and weaknesses” (p. 175). Building on the requirement of an international mindset as promoted by Paige and Mestenhauser (1999), the individual involvement in partnerships is often underpinned by the desire of students as well as staff to acquire intercultural skills and gain international currency. Institutions employ different tools to increase international understanding, such as student and alumni networks or foreign born faculty (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). The respect of the partner’s history and culture as well as reciprocity assist in accessing and enhancing mutual understanding (Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010; Holland, 2010; Psaltis, 2007).

Social empowerment. Finally, some partnerships develop for reasons related to the social mission of education and its empowering potential (Clegg & McNulty, 2002; Jones, 2000). According to the survey conducted by Woodfield et al. (2009) institutions view international partnerships as providing “a means of expanding access to students who would not otherwise be able to access their programmes” (p. 24). The authors further cite two impediments to providing students access to international opportunities: cost and delivery mode. In that sense, international collaborations assist institutions to broaden participation to students who are unable for financial reasons or unwilling for personal reasons to study abroad. This can take a form of delivering programmes in a host destination or flexible online and blended learning where faculty from two or more institutions deliver courses and arrange for students to interact virtually and/or in person with a reduced cost (Higgitt et al., 2008; Shore & Groen, 2009).

As shown above, multiple motives frame the development of international partnerships. The current literature addresses the varied rationales in the way that tends to emphasise their distinct and separate nature while attention to their interconnectedness is less apparent (Amey et al., 2007; Jie, 2010). The coexistence of motives can become problematic and create barriers to the effective implementation of partnerships. In that way, Amey et al. (2007) propose to develop ‘mental models’ of underlying motivations by raising questions about how different motivations coexist and how they are tied to institutional mission. Further research is important in order to better understand the complexities introduced by multiple and interrelated influences as they affect the partnership direction.

2.3.4.3. Motivational asymmetries

International engagements between higher education institutions seem to have an asymmetric motivational structure with benefits promoted both intrinsically and extrinsically. For the majority of partnerships, both extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions play a part (Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010; Eddy, 2010b). There is a tendency to view extrinsic motivations to be

associated with providing short-term benefits and a limited basis to sustain partnerships. Amey et al. (2007) argue that the external environment plays an important role as it “furnishes at least part of the rationale for initial involvement and usually has an impact on sustainability” (p. 10). On the contrary, intrinsically-motivated outcomes are often associated with long-lasting partnerships (Eddy, 2010b). In a case study of three academic partnerships between institutions in the United States and New Zealand, Cooper and Mitsunaga (2010) found that extrinsic motivations prevail in the initial phase of partnership building when funding and time seem to carry more importance. Conversely, intrinsically motivated actions kept the partnerships running in the long term. This is consistent with a systematic literature review of 342 articles published between 2000 and 2016 that focused on collaboration among higher education institutions or with private companies. In this review, Rybnicek and Konigsgruber (2016) found that the emphasis on finance and time drives only the initial planning phase.

As explored above, the underlying motivations may manifest as improving student learning, developing the international capacity of faculty and staff, curriculum building, advancing research, increasing the institutional efficiency (Sutton et al., 2011). They do not need to be symmetrical or identical. Although some reasons may overlap, Amey et al. state that partnering institutions may have their own reasons which is “not inherently problematic so long as the partnership is mutually beneficial (2007, p. 7). Because each partner has its own culture, identity, and history, it is inevitable that the varied and unique combinations of motivational factors will influence and drive partnerships. To generate a productive tension of motivational asymmetries, it is necessary to develop awareness of complementary as well as compatible elements in a search for mutual benefits (Beerkens & Derwende, 2007). Although many partners articulate and agree on broad aims and drivers for them, scholars note that they do not remain the same over time (Eddy, 2010b; Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011). Moreover, there may be subtle differences in understanding and interpretation despite the similar rhetoric (Jie, 2010). Foskett (2005) further advances that hidden or un-stated aims may be “revealed slowly as the project develops and as the trust between the partners grows, but which are not stated at the start” (p. 359).

2.3.5. Implementing partnerships: Institutional and individual arrangements

Institutional arrangements refer to the ways higher education institutions make partnerships possible. In this study, arrangements encompass resources, organisational structures, and cultures which shape and support partnerships. In the empirical investigation of challenges

in 435 partnerships initiated by four different higher education institutions, Ayoubi and Massoud (2012) found that “obstacles related to partnership arrangements are much greater than obstacles related to the partner” (p. 350). To further investigate the arrangement complexities, the next section will focus on key issues pertaining to partnership resources, structure, and culture.

Further, the various aspects of partnership arrangements described above are useful for better understanding of underlying dynamics. However, de Lima warns that collaboration examinations should not ignore interactional aspects, such as interpersonal relations, communication, trust, power. Similarly, Coupar and Stevens (1998, p. 145) claim that partnerships are “not so much about institutions and methods, as about attitudes” (p. 145). It has been established that any collaborative venture must be understood not only as a professional undertaking, but also as a human action (D'Amour, Ferrada-Videla, San Martin Rodriguez, & Beaulieu, 2005). Indeed, “the structure and processes of a collaboration are as central to leading its activities as are the participants associated with it” (Huxham & Vangen, 2000b, pp. 1165-1166). The implementation of various partnership activities occurs at the level of individual and through his/her persistent involvement ‘after the ink dries’ (Shore & Groen, 2009). People are at the core of collaborations and partnerships (Eddy, 2010b) and their engagement in relationship building and leadership determine the partnership functioning.

2.3.5.1. Resource costs

There are considerable resource costs involved in partnership working. Although they are most commonly portrayed as “innovative avenues to generate revenue”, partnerships incur or cause resource difficulties (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010, p. 7). They may reduce or even remove resources, such as staff time, facilities, material or financial resources from other institutional projects and activities. This may have a negative impact in terms of the partnership reputation intra as well as inter-institutionally. Eddy (2010b) further highlights the paradoxical nature of partnership resources that may “provide leverage in the partnership, but they can also show the differentials between partners that may lead to problems in the relationship’s stability” (p. 48).

Financial resources

Rybnicek and Konigsgruber (2016) identified four key resources affecting higher education partnerships that are differently important throughout the three-stage lifecycle: finance, time, staff, equipment. While finance and time prevail in the initial stage, staff and equipment are

essential in the subsequent implementation and establishment stages. Drawing from a systematic literature review of 342 articles focusing on collaboration among higher education institutions or with private companies, they concluded that these key resources contribute to the partnership success or failure. These findings echo Holland's (2010) observation of a partnership established between a Canadian and a Chinese institution. According to the study, three key resources create both challenges and solutions in the joint work: money, time, and people. Also, Butcher et al. (2011) advise partners to be "realistic in the allocation of their resources, including people, time, and money" (p. 39). It has been well established that financial resources must be viable, available, and sustainable at least for the anticipated duration of the partnership (Sakamoto & Chapman, 2012). To make the partnership work with restricted financial resources, it is advisable to recognise that partners operate within a limited budget. Holland (2010) maintains that "Recognizing that both institutions are working from a limited resource budget acknowledges that both parties are willing to make sacrifices to make this program a success" (p. 37). Although willingness to participate in the partnership may contribute to a more transparent relationship, it can also be a source of tension due to an uncertain funding ability. Partners are advised to not only assess their funding capacity, but also determine what contributions they will make (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). Berzina-Pitcher et al. (2016) maintain that the financial structure of the partnership impacts "the nature of the relationship between partners and sustainability of the partnership" (p. 175). Assessment and awareness of funding resources assist partners with identifying ways to create effective synergies and rules for the development of common goals. Changes to the funding structure may promote reactions ranging from a tighter bonding between partnering institutions to seeking institutional rather than mutual partnership benefits (Eddy, 2010a).

Time

There is a consensus that it takes time to establish and build international partnerships. Indeed, it is critical that leaders allocate time to developing partnerships (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). Holland (2010) assures that "Investing time upfront to ensure both parties fully understand their responsibilities will pay dividends down the road" (p. 37). Because it takes a considerable effort and amount of resources to work effectively either in a new context or with foreign participants at home, the early interaction stage may span months and even years (Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Holland, 2010). It is designed for building partner relationships and understanding differences to maximise anticipated benefits. Tubbeh and Williams (2010) warn against "the pull to do too many things at once and not recognising discrepancies in partner needs or attending to potential tensions" (p. 13).

Human resources

Partnerships cannot function without commitment of human resources including faculty and administrators. It may be challenging for partners to find and undergird the right faculty to animate a memorandum of understanding (Shore & Groen, 2009). As Berzina-Pitcher et al. (2016) point out not all faculty engaging in international collaborations are successful. Beyond being passionate about their discipline, they stress the need for faculty to be “flexible, able to think on their feet, open to challenges, and opportunities, and embrace working collaboratively with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds and traditions” (p. 175). Many institutions recruit qualified professors abroad because they cannot send their own faculty (Holland, 2010) or they integrate foreign born faculty to leverage their ties abroad (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). In addition to finding the right faculty, partners often struggle with the paradox of expanding joint work and discouraging faculty participation. The invisible labour put toward building and preserving the cross-border educational context goes often unnoticed and lacks formal acknowledgement (Shore & Groen, 2009). The tensions produced by the lack of wide support and reward system have an impact on faculty participation as well as partnership sustainability (Amey, 2010a; Sakamoto & Chapman, 2012). Tubbeh and Williams (2010) make clear that “when faculty members do contribute to international education partnerships, these efforts must be rewarded” (p. 9).

The increasing pace of international engagement contributes to the changes within international offices reshaping the work of individuals charged with administrative capacity, partnership oversight and support (Sutton, 2010). A synthesis of the literature reveals multi-dimensional competence demands placed on these professionals. On the one hand, implementing and preserving varied relationships abroad, they must possess a level of intercultural sensitivity and interpersonal skills as they often fill the role of “part diplomat, part attorney, part counsellor, part soothsayer” (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010, p. 10). On the other hand, they must be “strategically innovative in order to best position their institutions in an increasingly competitive and dynamic sector” (Poole, 2001, p. 432). In that regard, Poole (ibid.) identified seven critical competencies for staff involved in the coordination of international activities:

1. *The strategic choice competency* involves the ability to choose appropriate strategies based on the knowledge of external and internal conditions and resources.
2. *The collaborative competency* denotes the ability to develop trust-based relationships (Shore & Groen, 2009) and manage processes.

3. *The production and logistics competencies* evolve around the sourcing of academic content.
4. *The global technology management competency* depends on the future direction of information technologies and higher education markets. It is, therefore, necessary for staff to cultivate a sufficient understanding of these technologies and their support of academic programmes.
5. *The global human resources management competency* involves services to traveling faculty and staff including international relocation, orientation, language preparation, taxation, etc.
6. *The global marketing management competencies* encompass the issues related to costing and pricing of academic activity, programme promotions, recruitment strategies, etc.
7. *The global financial management competency* relates to the ability to assess economic and political risks in new and foreign markets, to use or transfer funds between international entities, etc.

Although the incremental accumulation of experience working with partnerships is valuable, the author maintains that it is not sufficient as higher education changes rapidly. Tensions may, therefore, emerge from different levels of preparedness and skill-set necessary to effectively conduct the complex, risky, and challenging international operations. To bridge the gap, Poole proposes to investigate alternative routes, such as education upgrades of existing staff or hiring external staff (ibid.).

2.3.5.2. Organisational structure mapping

In addition to the asymmetric level and types of resources, many partnerships are challenged by dissimilar institutional policies, working practices, management issues, workload and reward structures, tuition and enrolment frameworks (Amey, 2010a; Chapman & Sakamoto, 2011; Connolly, Jones & Jones, 2007). Organisational structure is understood as “the formal allocation of work roles and the administrative mechanisms to control and integrate work activities including those which cross formal organizational boundaries” (Child, 1972, p. 2). With an increased international dimension that higher education institutions have taken worldwide, many created administrative units aiming to combine their expertise in internationalisation. Supported by the relevant institutional documentation and leadership communication of their commitment, these units differ in ways they prioritise and address internationalisation objectives.

For the partnership to work successfully, institutions must engage in constant mapping of their differences that “often results in difficult discussions” (Amey et al., 2010, p. 15). For example, even seemingly clear policies about student transfer may “get entangled” in discussions about general education requirements, majors, credits, teacher expertise, etc. (ibid.). Shore and Groen (2009) point out the benefit of generating ‘space of engagement’ in which new policies and working practices emerge. In their case study, Butcher et al. (2011) gathered evidence showing that sharing a common ground rather than separate territories encouraged genuine engagement resulting in changed practices. Amey et al. (2010) also acknowledged that key to dealing with organisational differences is moving away from individual interests and toward a sense of shared beliefs and norms. Each institution has to “ensure a meshing of the overarching policy with internal procedures” (Eddy, 2010a, p. 26).

Partnerships may be structured in different ways depending on the strength of their interdependencies within and across organisations (Orton & Weick, 1990). Commenting on education partnerships, Hora and Millar (2012) argue that structural configurations determine how partners communicate, establish routines, and develop working practices to achieve a particular goal. They put forward three types of organisational structures for partnerships ranging from tightly to loosely coupled ones:

Limited partnerships: Business transactions. Partnership is based on a ‘give and take’ principle with one organisation maintaining strong control of the nature of the joint work. The other organisation(s) provide(s) on a contract basis.

Coordinated partnerships: Friendships. Partners agree to coordinate their participation through a loose governance structure and have little or no authority over the actions of other(s). Each partner bears responsibility for its own piece of pie and its performance.

Collaborative partnerships: Marriage. Partners are tightly coupled and approach problems through a consensus-based governance structure. It is also described as “a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible” (Gray, 1989, p. 5).

Although any actual partnership will fit only one of these structures, the authors acknowledge the impact of the external context that may change the partnership’s structure (Hora & Millar, 2012). In that vein, Sutton (2010) observed a general shift from transactional toward transformational international partnerships:

- Transactional – short-term and product-oriented in which resources are traded

- Transformational – ever-growing and relationship-oriented in which resources are combined

While individuals involved in transactional partnerships or exchanges may emerge altered due to a short-term experience abroad, institutions remain largely unaffected.

Transformational partnerships, in contrast, affect and “expand the capacity of each institution for educating students, conducting research, and serving communities” (ibid., p. 62). They reflect dynamic and organic relationships creating a basis for a long-term collaboration and mutually beneficial transfer of tangible and intangible resources. Further, Butcher et al. argue that “transactional exchanges or partnerships are not sufficient to achieve the mutual benefits and new ways of perceiving and changing realities that are expected of an “engaged” university” (2011, p. 31). To promote transformational orientation, Butcher et al. (2011) identified five principles to guide partnering institutions: 1) work out of a shared purpose, 2) lead collaboratively, 3) relate on a basis of trust, 4) ensure appropriate and adequate resources, and 5) remain open to learning and change.

2.3.5.3. Cultural influences

It is important to consider and distinguish between national and organisational cultures in the discussion about international partnerships. The relevant literature points to dissimilarities at both cultural levels. The definition of culture is most commonly associated with beliefs and values that are demonstrated through practices and behaviours (Hofstede, 1980). While national culture refers to beliefs and values that individual members learn and hold, organisational culture is embedded in practices and behaviours (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990).

There is a wealth of studies examining various academic and operational aspects as underlined by cultural differences between different nations (Heffernan, Morrison, Basu, & Sweeney, 2010; Holland, 2010; Tedrow & Mabokela, 2007; Walton & Guarisco, 2007; Witte, 2014). National cultural differences can be a source of conflict and contribute to the partnership dissolution (Eddy, 2010b). A case of a Canadian-Chinese partnership by Holland (2010) highlighted the importance of exploring cultural nuances in the negotiation stage in order to minimise and overcome possible misunderstandings in the future. The author gives an example of “Something as simple as exchanging business cards takes on a whole different meaning in China than it does in the West” (p. 40). One way to bridge the cultural gap is to acknowledge the differences and remain focused on the partnership goals and benefits (Amey & Eddy, 2015).

Kezar and Eckel (2002) noted a shift in understanding organisational culture within higher education. The shift away from being a descriptive device toward becoming linked with organisational success and advancement. Because organisational culture is typically recognised at the time of crisis, severe conflict or adverse relationships, leaders and administrators are advised to diagnose their institutions and become aware of the varied dimensions and dynamics of culture (Tierney, 1988). There is a consensus about organisational culture being holistic, socially constructed, soft, and difficult to change (Hofstede et al., 1990). Culture influences all institutional decisions (Tierney, 1988) as it is “ubiquitous throughout campus processes and structures” (Eckel & Kezar, 2003, p. 130). Different organisations share different set of values, beliefs, behaviours, and meanings that individuals construct about their organisations. The ubiquitous and unique nature of organisational culture underscores the way partners interact, approach problems, and challenge each other. Tedrow and Mabokela (2007) argue that there is an increased potential for conflict when differences in organisational culture and values occur. In their study of a partnership between a South African institution and three institutions located in North America and Europe, they concluded that the effectiveness and efficiency of international partnerships rely on resolving conflicts over differences in organisational culture.

However, it is difficult to understand and interpret culture for someone who is immersed in it every day (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). Multiple and varied approaches have been proposed for understanding one’s own organisational culture. They overlap in attempting to break down the concept of culture and make its diverse components explicit. Tierney (1988) proposed a framework for studying culture in higher education by assessing its six main components: environment, mission, socialisation, information, strategy, and leadership. Eckel and Kezar (2003) delineated and described organisational culture as a set of three layers. The layered delineation can also be depicted as an iceberg with layers above and under the waterline. The most visible outer layer consisting of institutional structures, policies, and documents; the less visible middle layer including values and ideals transitioning between the two layers and becoming more or less visible; the invisible inner layer including deeply held assumptions and beliefs. For international partnerships to be successful, it is essential to explore and understand one’s own culture in order to overcome conflicts and advance. Tierney (1988) argues that the importance of understanding organisational culture is to “minimize the occurrence and consequences of cultural conflict and help foster the development of shared goals” (p. 5).

The concept of cultural influences embraces both national and organisational dimensions. Research into organisational behaviour has uncovered how the two dimensions relate showing the significance of national culture effects on organisations (Adler & Gundersen, 2007; Hofstede, 1985). Organisational culture represents the collective behaviour of individuals who are part of an organisation and whose beliefs and values shape its cultural preferences. Within higher education institutions, beliefs and values learnt and held by individuals affect organisational practices and behaviours including the development of international partnerships. In that sense, Adler and Gundersen (2007) affirm that multinational settings enhance and maintain national cultural influences as oppose to reduce them. For international partnerships that means recognising areas of cultural differences and learning to use them to good advantage.

2.3.5.4. Relationship building

The literature often highlights the relational dimension of international partnerships and regards it as its most important and challenging element (Cozza & Blessinger, 2016a; Heffernan & Poole, 2005). Amey (2010b) argues that “partnerships are often more important for the relationships they facilitate, the values they symbolize, and the political alliances that can be banked for future use than for the measurable outputs they produce” (p. 15). The way people engage interpersonally and build relationships is shaped by effective communication, trust, and power sharing (Amey et al., 2010; Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010; Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Jie, 2010).

Communication

It has been widely acknowledged that effective communication is a core requisite to successful international partnerships (Chapman & Sakamoto, 2011; Etling & McGirr, 2005; Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Tedrow & Mabokela, 2007). In a study of 10 partnerships between Australian institutions and their partners in Asia, Heffernan and Poole (2005) identified the qualities that make communication effective: open, honest, clear, and timely. High quality communication leads to trust building and higher commitment. It also facilitates a ‘shared sense of understanding’ (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010) of virtually every aspect of the partnership, including motivations, expectations, resources, organisational culture, and leadership. The implications of effective communication extend to resolving conflicts and disputes, reaching agreement before acting unilaterally, or reducing misunderstandings and misjudgements (Etling & McGirr, 2005; Heffernan & Poole, 2005).

Given that international partnerships rely on communication between individuals and collectives to enable the formation of shared understanding, it is helpful to think of communication taking place in a shared space. International partnerships provide a unique setting for institutions and individuals to create a space in which different levels of experience, values, insights, resources, and awareness connect. Peterson sees the space between partnering institutions as 'negotiated space' (as cited in Helms, 2015) where the voices of different individuals and institutions come together in order to enable candid communication and building of shared language (Eddy, 2010b). Walton and Guarisco (2007) highlight the need to frame communication by exploring what methods, what forms of knowledge, and for what purpose the different voices exchange. Different formats of communication can be observed within international partnerships: 1) The virtual format can be observed through partner interactions via e-mail, phone or other form of Internet-based communication. The virtual communication represents the most common means of staying in touch (Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010). 2) The physical one might be less present due to the geographical distance between the partners, but extremely important. It is activated through face-to-face meetings, faculty visits, student and staff mobility, and informal discussions (Butcher et al., 2011; Heffernan & Poole, 2005). Shore and Groen (2009) describe them as 'catalytic events' that make things happen. 3) The written format includes formal documentation, such as memoranda, letters of intent, policies, procedures, and other legal documents. Partners typically document their responsibilities in the memoranda of understanding attempting for clear communication. However, some details may be lost when translated from language to another. Holland (2010) maintains that "All documentation must be produced and vetted in both languages" (p. 37). Any loss in language subtleties may hinder the progress of the partnership.

Trust

Generated through effective communication, trust is another key element in the partnership development. Trust is "an orientation – based on the faith or confidence that the overseas education provider will act with integrity – which will allow the university to increase its vulnerability to the overseas education provider" (Heffernan & Poole, 2005, p. 229). The literature highlights the importance of trust and often discusses the roots of trust building taking place in the initial forming stage when partners are getting to know one another (Eddy, 2010b). There is evidence that trust is built in a cyclical process and must be exercised throughout the partnership lifetime. Zhang and Huxham (2009) describe a trust-building cycle as consisting of expectation forming, risk taking, and confidence and commitment sustaining. Every time the expected outcome is achieved, trust is reinforced

which leads to more ambitious expectations and a reduced risk. In that way, trust builds on itself incrementally and over time producing “greater fruits than were initially expected” (Butcher et al., 2011). Increasing levels of trust also increase the likelihood of weathering conflict and crisis and reinforces confidence. In practical terms, it means focusing on little things and fulfilling promises (Heffernan & Poole, 2005). Amey et al. (2010) maintain that trust provides ‘bridges of understanding’ between partner differences which could otherwise undermine collective work. It further contributes to “flexibility and partnership “learning”” (Amey et al 2010, p. 11). In a longitudinal study of a British-Russian partnership, Walton and Guarisco (2008) discovered that trust impacts on partners’ power differences. According to the study, as trust developed, power imbalances became less significant. On the contrary, a lack or loss of trust can be detrimental to the partnership functioning (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). The trust building process is fragile and involves many paradoxes inherent to the partnership such as differing views on aims and benefits, varying levels of commitment, power imbalances (Vangen & Huxham, 2003b). Additionally, the departure of the champion or key individuals or the arrival of new members disrupt the trust building cycle.

Power

Partners bring to the relationship multiple and different levels of power. They may be viewed as originating in social, organisational, and partnership capital (Amey & Eddy, 2015; Eddy, 2010b). Social capital or power is embedded in relationships between and among partnership members. It comprises multiple elements and manifests through structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions (Zimmermann & Ravishankar, 2014). The extent to which social capital is activated depends on the combination of all dimensions which may be developed differently by different individuals (Eddy, 2010b). The structural dimension of social capital lies in the strength of ties and network density. While close ties create more density, weak ties produce less network density. Eddy (2010b) suggests the need for individuals in partnerships to cultivate both close and weak ties to allow for “more cognitive flexibility in seeing more options for problem solutions” (p. 30). Exercising various strengths of ties also reduces the risk of excluding potentially valuable individuals and partners (Dhillon, 2009). The main ingredient in the relational dimension of social capital is trust and trust building (Amey & Eddy, 2015; Vangen & Huxham, 2003b; Zimmermann & Ravishankar, 2014). Eddy (2010b) maintains that “The more trust available, the more social capital is able to grow and be put in motion” (p. 31). Dhillon (2009) employed the concept of social capital as a theoretical framework in a three-year long observation of a post-16 education partnership with regional training providers. The author concluded that trust was one of key elements of the collaboration functioning and served as “as social glue or bonding social

capital” (p. 701). Finally, the cognitive dimension of social capital relies on a shared contextual understanding. In that regard, access to information and the central or peripheral position of an individual within the partnership are key. Those individuals positioned close to the core functions have typically more open access to critical information and knowledge.

While social capital encompasses all those qualities at the disposal of an individual, organisational capital manifests through formal structures, communication pathways, authority, and tangible resources generated by institutions which individuals can use to reach specific partnership goals (Eddy, 2010b). These different facets of organisational capital create power asymmetries as institutions often bring different organisational structures, practices, and resources to the partnership. Although unequal basis of power is of special concern (Tedrow & Mabokela, 2007; Tubbeh & Williams, 2010), Eddy (2010b) draws attention to *how* the power in possession is used. Thus, knowing the types of capital and their different dimensions helps understand and explore a variety of levers or ‘points of power’ (Huxham & Vangen, 2013). One obvious point of power is financial; however, there are many other points in which power is enacted. For example, those making meeting arrangements are in the possession of power as they set the agenda, choose the location, participants, etc. Similarly, faculty have discipline expertise that grants them a point of power. All partners possess enough power to block the evolution of the partnership and exit. The points of power are dynamic, and all partners have power at one time or another (ibid.).

Partnership capital lies at the intersection of social and organisational capitals (Amey et al., 2010). However, the construction of partnership capital is not automatic and many partnerships fail to develop a sufficient level of shared capital (Eddy, 2010b). The author identified multiple push and pull factors that challenge the creation of partnership capital: conflict – trust, individual motivations – relationships, institutional loyalty – shared values, changed objectives – open communication, lack of resources – organisational resources, shift of key players – strong champion, individual focus – partnership focus. Partnership capital can be reduced if institutions focus on self-interests over partnership interests (Jie, 2010), rely on a single champion (Amey, 2010a), and uncertain resources (Sakamoto & Chapman, 2012). Exploring the tensions between these factors and pushing toward trust, shared meaning, and strategic alignment serves as a basis for effective partnerships.

2.3.5.5. Leadership tensions

Vangen and Huxham (2003a) conceptualised the essence of leadership within partnerships as a tension between the ‘spirit of collaboration’ and towards ‘collaborative thuggery’. In that sense, leaders and partnership members appear to be caught in between genuinely

supporting partnership activities and pragmatically handling problems. While supportive forces push them towards embracing, empowering, involving, and mobilising others, pragmatic or directive forces move them towards manipulating the collaborative agenda and playing the politics. The authors further argue that “those who seem to lead most successfully are those who can operate from both perspectives and who are able to continually switch from one to the other” (ibid., p. 73). In international partnerships, this may involve a certain level of manipulation to mobilise resistant individuals or obtain their buy-in. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the success of partnerships is dependent on leaders’ awareness of the opposing perspectives and their ability to combine them.

Leadership is enacted at different levels because partnerships are initiated by different individuals throughout the institution and attract leadership responses starting with the department head and moving up the hierarchy (Eddy, 2010b). It has equally been argued that inclusive forms of leadership are more likely to contribute to effective partnerships than leader-centred ones (Amey, 2010b). The vast majority of the relevant literature attest to the fact that a champion is critical for effective international partnerships (Amey, 2010a; Austin & Foxcroft, 2011; Chapman & Sakamoto, 2010; Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010; Eddy, 2010b). Its role often involves creating the visions, shepherding processes, securing buy-in, communicating goals and outcomes, and motivating others (Amey, 2010b). Many partnerships are initiated by champions occupying either an academic or administrative rank. Sakamoto and Chapman (2011) claim that a champion is often a faculty member with international competences and connections. However, the authors also note that the role of champion is becoming institutionalised and multiple individuals including administrators within international offices are increasingly involved. In that way, the social capital of a champion contributes to the formation of partnership capital. This is important as reliance on a single champion may negatively impact the partnership sustainability when the champion departs or retires (Amey, 2010a).

Given that academic staff serve as the backbone of higher education institutions carrying out teaching and research activities (Eddy, 2010b), international partnerships rely on their expertise as well as their professional and personal network (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). Cooper and Mitsunaga (2010) found that institutions need to better understand what motivates and sustains their engagement in international work. Faculty international engagement is often viewed as an additional and marginal to one’s academic work (Shore & Groen, 2009). Some sources, therefore, comment on insufficient institutional infrastructure and compensation considerations related to time and efforts faculty members dedicate to

partnership work (Amey, 2010a; Holland, 2010; Shore & Groen, 2009; Tubbeh & Williams, 2010).

Participation of senior and midlevel administrators is critical as they are responsible for developing, implementing, and maintaining international partnerships (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). These responsibilities are often led and performed by the members of international offices. Sutton (2010) affirms that such offices “must take the lead in catalysing and supporting these activities” (p. 63).

In sum, discussions and debates about implementing international partnerships have revealed a number of institutional and individual arrangements that both promote and impede success of partnerships. For example, asymmetric levels of resources, dissimilar organisational structures and cultures, interpersonal relationships, leadership changes can both frustrate and enrich partnerships. To reach their potential, it is important to look closer at a ‘framework for understanding the support systems and structures’ (Shore and Groen (2009) and highlight those areas and processes that promote viability (Eddy, 2010).

2.4. Chapter summary

Chapter 2 provided a foundation of knowledge for an understanding of international partnerships. Grounded in two strands of relevant literature, theoretical and empirically derived constructs shaped and directed their review. They offered practical pointers to viewing partnerships as combining both opportunities and responsibilities set within increasingly strategic approaches to internationalise. The review of relevant literature further revealed conceptual and methodological gaps in the field and the need for additional research.

First, the literature review of the internationalisation of higher education outlined the evolving landscape and highlighted major developments driving the partnership expansion. The internationalisation of higher education has undergone an evolutionary process that gave rise to diversity resulting in new participants, products, and forms of education over the past few decades. With regards to partnerships, they evolved from the post-war years of isolated agreements extending opportunities for international cooperation and mutual understanding into institutionalised engagements of strategic importance. With the rising importance attached to partnerships emerged the need for a closer understanding of factors that contribute to partnership success. The move to a greater intentionality and re-evaluation of

partnerships with some of them becoming 'worthless pieces of paper' sharpened the focus on why and how to internationalise as raised by Brandenburg and de Wit (2011).

While the current literature has addressed the distinct nature of reasons that drive international engagement, few empirical studies have asked questions about their coexistence and interconnectedness. In that sense, this study seeks to expand the current literature by capturing the multiplicity of influences flowing from global, national, and local levels as well as their interactions with different institutional contexts, specifically globally and locally oriented higher education institutions. The first research question and a set of guiding questions address this aspect by exploring influences and interactions within which different institutions form international partnerships by asking: Why do higher education institutions form international partnerships? (What influences drive different institutions to partner internationally? How those influences inform globally and locally oriented institutions?).

Second, the focused review of the current state of research on inter-organisational relationships pointed to their 'dark side' and identified the areas in which tensions tend to persist. Reflecting the diversity of motives, arrangements, and participants, they manifested through tensions between intended advantage and practical challenges with varying effects on the partnership implementation (Huxham and Vangen, 2013). Although the literature review substantiated the need to view partnerships as contradictory, social, and problematic phenomena, it failed to provide a definitive interpretation of differing and countervailing forces and their implications for practice. The second research question and related sub-questions guide the examination of tensions by focusing on: How do higher education institutions respond to tensions that accompany the implementation of partnerships? (What tensions persist in the implementation of international partnerships? How are they dealt with at globally engaged institutions? How are they dealt with at locally engaged institutions?).

Further, the literature review demonstrated a methodological gap in that it largely involved specific single case studies drawing best practices for sustainable and high-performing partnerships. In an attempt to highlight underlying patterns and common challenges, this research places partnerships in different national and institutional contexts by exploring a set of locally and globally engaged institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada.

The next chapter will outline the research design used to guide the in-depth exploration of forming and implementing international partnerships.

Chapter 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to justify and outline the methodological basis applied to this study. The study examines why institutions form international partnerships and how they respond to tensions that accompany the implementation process. To capture the complexity of interactions within which international partnerships are formed and implemented, the study employs a qualitative case study. Additionally, to access a phenomenon that transcends a single country, it gathers evidence from fifteen higher education institutions located in the USA, UK, and Canada.

The chapter starts by setting out the epistemological and theoretical perspectives that guide the research methodology and the choice of qualitative multi-case study involving three country cases. It further includes procedures for data collection and analysis. The data obtained from semi-structured interviews and documents pertinent to partnerships produced a thematic framework enveloping the enquiry into why and how institutions engage internationally. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the data quality, ethical issues, and limitations raised in relation to the research sites and participants.

3.2. Epistemological perspective

The present study seeks to uncover the complexities of partnership development enacted by individuals closely involved in their design. In this sense, international collaborative work is accessed through participants who own their experiences and assign different meanings to them. The research is situated within the orientation of the social constructivist epistemology which is based on the belief that knowledge is socially constructed (Usher, 1996) and “comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). Viewed as contradictory, social, and problematic phenomena, international partnerships depend on and require the involvement of individuals. Although the study aims to examine partnerships between institutions, these are made up of individuals whose perceptions of reality have an impact on how those partnerships are formed and implemented. Crotty asserts that “different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon” (1998, p. 9). Thus, gathering multiple perspectives allows for more insights and positions to be taken into account. In that way, it is

possible to create a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the realities of partnership development.

Creswell posits that the meanings about the world and their interpretations “are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and social norms that operate in individual’s lives” (2013, p. 8). Since individuals develop meanings of their experiences based on their own subjective realities, the choice of social constructivism for this study involves an understanding of the wider background in which the researched phenomenon is situated. “People, unlike the objects of the natural world, are conscious, purposive actors who have ideas about their world and attach meaning to what is going on around them” (Robson, 2011, p. 24). Along the lines of this view, the study considers not only multiple perspectives, but also conditions in which interpretations are constructed. It includes participants’ differing national and institutional contexts in order to appropriately attend to the complexity of interactions within which international partnerships are formed and implemented.

3.3. Theoretical lenses

To explore the main research questions of why and how higher education institutions engage in international partnerships, the study is informed by two theoretical views (Table 2). First, a glonacal (global, national, local) analytical heuristic developed by Marginson and Rhoades (2002) assists in considering multiplicity and multidimensionality of influences impacting the formation of partnerships. Applying the glonacal heuristic as a theoretical lens assists in providing the necessary background for the exploration of reasons for engaging in international partnerships across different national and institutional backgrounds. In particular, its key organising concepts of layers, reciprocity, strength, spheres of influence, and agency inform the exploration of factors driving international partnerships. By considering multi-level influences and contexts, it problematises a broadly regarded concept of good and mutually beneficial arrangements and enables an integrative perspective of the complexities of international engagement.

Second, the research is further informed by the Theory of Collaborative Advantage (TCA) developed by Huxham and Vangen (2013). The theory provides a network of themes or key issues that underpin the coexistence of collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia. While, on the one hand, “Almost anything is, in principle, possible through collaboration because you are not limited by your own resources and expertise” (Huxham & Vangen,

2013, p. 3). On the other hand, collaborations are filled with frustration as they make slow progress or die without achieving anything (ibid.). These organising concepts enable to capture complex micro-processes taking place within collaborative activities. Themes such as trust, power, membership structure, leadership, culture, resources, or communication assist in accessing the complexity of international partnerships and conceptualising its various parts.

Table 2: Theoretical lenses (created by author)

Theoretical lens	Partnership stage	Contribution	Organising concepts
Glonacal (global, national, local) analytical heuristic	Formation	It allows for influences of multiplicity and multidimensionality to be considered when thinking about why to partner	Historical layers, current conditions, reciprocity, strength, spheres of influence, and agency
Theory of collaborative advantage (TCA)	Implementation	It offers 'handles' for how to recognise and grasp tensions	The coexistence of collaborative advantage and inertia within multiple thematic areas

It is argued that the two theoretical lenses have significant analytical power and provide access to the complexities that underlie the formation and implementation of international partnerships. In that way, they help highlight influences and tensions that accompany them. The multi-dimensional glonacal heuristic encourages to consider the different yet interrelated influences as they manifest in partnerships. The theme-based theory of collaborative advantage helps navigate their entangled structure and zoom in on those areas that require attention. It pertains to many issues surrounding the maintenance of inter-organisational collaborations and offers 'handles' for how to recognise and grasp its varied challenges (Huxham & Vangen, 2013). In that regard, the theory is usable in practical applications as it is grounded in the practitioner-generated themes and aims to support reflective practice. With the potential to instigate careful reflection and questioning for all those working within or caring about developing international partnerships between higher education institutions, both theories offer a view of partnerships as settings in which complex and paradoxical influences occur enabling or constraining successful practice. They are linked by an

allowance of multiplicity in order to more accurately understand and explain a nuanced nature of collaborative practice.

3.4. Empirical methods: Qualitative case study

The empirical objectives of this research are to gather data on reasons for engaging and practices of implementing international partnerships across locally and globally engaged institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada. Asking why institutions form international partnerships and how they respond to implementation tensions enables a deeper understanding of the underlying ambiguities surrounding the partnership development. Situating the study across multiple cases expands the current literature that largely describes best practices based on individual cases and offers an integrative perspective of the influences and tensions surrounding the partnering process.

Driven by a constructivist worldview, this study requires to consider a complex interplay of factors which would be difficult to analyse applying quantitative methods. Patton posits that qualitative findings “can illuminate the people behind the numbers and put faces on the statistics to deepen understanding” (2005, p. 2). To explore the collaborative dynamics in international partnerships and its implications for practice, the study necessitates an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. To gain insights and varying perspectives on the joint work, it is necessary to generate a rich description of the context and the partnership activity. Stake claims that qualitative research is best at “examining the actual, ongoing ways that persons or organisations are doing their thing” (2010, p. 2). As the quantitative approach seeks precise measurements in the interests of objectivity and control, it stands in contrast to the subjective accounts and context-dependent orientation of this study. The present study is geared toward “finding out what people do, know, think, and feel by observing, interviewing, and analysing documents” rather than attempting to quantify a problem by collecting numbered data (Patton, 1990, p. 94). The qualitative approach benefits the study as it promises to capture the nuances of partnership practitioners’ experiences that would have been missed using a quantitative approach.

Furthermore, qualitative studies are more adaptable to capturing multiple realities. As different individuals interpret events differently and assign different meanings to them, Lincoln and Guba (1986) assert that there are multiple socially constructed realities of the phenomenon in question. These multiple interpretations cannot be isolated and must be studied holistically for a more accurate understanding of the studied phenomenon (*ibid.*).

They provide multiple perspectives of the studied phenomenon. Because qualitative studies are interested in understanding experiences and meanings individuals have constructed, they allow for rich descriptions and situational interpretations (Stake, 2010).

In sum, a qualitative case study is the most fitting for this research because it facilitates a better understanding of the actual experiences of the participants and illuminates their own realities of international partnerships. It enables to provide insights into the underresearched area through exploratory ('why' questions) and explanatory ('how' questions) probes and generate rich and interactive accounts while acknowledging their interrelatedness. Given the complex and dynamic nature of inter-organisational partnerships, a qualitative case study promises to provide the necessary insights and evidence for the study of forming and implementing international partnerships.

However, multiple sources have pointed out to generalisation problems as case studies provide poor basis for scientific generalisation (Stake, 1995; Swanborn, 2010; Yin, 2013a). In that regard, Yin proposes to consider 'analytic generalisation' which translates as "the extraction of a more abstract level of ideas from a set of case study findings – ideas that nevertheless can pertain to newer situations other than the case(s) in the original case study" (Yin, 2013b, p. 325). Further to that, Stake (1995) claims that 'petite generalisations' regularly occur all along the way in case study research and may produce 'grand generalisations'. In that way, the present study considers idiosyncratic experiences from multiple contexts in an attempt to generate common patterns and shared challenges. Although the study is not representative of all partnerships, many factors may resonate with other similar institutions. The choice of case study for this research lies in the possibility of contributing to knowledge in the conceptual rather than statistical sense.

3.4.1. Multi-case study design

The research will be framed using a multi-case study method with a baseline of three country cases to allow for a better and broader understanding of the reported research issue. Yin (2014) claims that the evidence from multiple cases is considered more convincing which may render the study more robust and increase its validity. The choice of multiple cases enables to view and examine the phenomenon of international partnerships in different settings. The current study gathers evidence from three different countries to better access a phenomenon that transcends a single country and operates in a shared 'space of engagement' (Shore & Groen, 2009). Swanborn (2010) stipulates that with more cases studied "the more independent information becomes available" (p. 104).

The multi-case design offers substantial analytic benefits as findings independently arising from multiple cases allows to display variations of forming and implementing international partnerships. In that way, they are viewed as “more powerful than those coming from a single case” (Yin, 2009, p. 61). The present study views international partnerships as being contextually conditioned and complex requiring the application of multiple sources of evidence situated in different settings. Rather than framing it as a comparison of institutional studies, the research design develops a multiple case study involving three country cases. It offers the opportunity to explore international partnerships through an inductive, constructivist lens while also applying qualitative measures to capture influences and tensions common to the partnership development.

Nonetheless, Miles (1979) has remarked on tensions between “the unique, contextually specific nature of single sites, and the need to make sense across a number of sites” which may render generalisations accurate but thin (as cited in Yin, 1981, p.62). Future research may, therefore, add other parts of the world and institutions. As stated earlier, the intention of this study is to examine international partnerships in the context of public higher education institutions in the USA, UK, Canada

Given the national variations, an embedded design will be employed. While a holistic design includes one unit of analysis for each case, for example, one type of institution, an embedded case study design adopts several units of analysis and subunits. In this case locally and globally engaged institutions in different countries. Yin (2009) claims that an embedded design allows for focusing the enquiry as different orientations may emerge as research progresses. The embedded approach also addresses the issue of interpreter’s bias as noted by Stake (1995). It allows for ‘preserving the multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views’ by examining processes and patterns within each case.

The embedded multiple case study design promises to strengthen research findings (Yin, 2009). The multiple case analysis improves the likelihood of producing robust findings and reliable conclusions. It offers to consider idiosyncratic experiences in perspective and reduce ‘self-delusion about conclusions’ (Miles, 1979). It further supports the position that studying multiple cases of the same phenomenon instead of a single case study might corroborate findings or ‘petite generalisations’ (Stake, 1995) across cases and attempt to ‘analytic generalisation’ (Yin, 2013b). As such, multiple case study design is optimal for the needs of this study.

3.5. Selection criteria

To identify cases, the study used a non-probability sample strategy which is widely employed in qualitative research. The sampling units were deliberately selected to reflect particular features within the sampled population (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2013). Swanborn (2010) advises to select the study cases based on its informative and representative nature for their frequent occurrence. The institutions identified for the study were chosen for their long-standing engagement in internationalisation and service to local community as explicitly noted in their mission statements and institutional strategies. By focusing on institutions that were publicly positioned and committed to leverage their global and local efforts, the study aimed to explore institutional debates and identify institution-level efforts to incorporating the global trends and local patterns into the development of international partnerships.

3.5.1. National setting: Similar yet different countries

The criteria for the selection of cases were guided by the 'domain demarcation' set by the research enquiry which probes a specific international phenomenon within certain types of higher education institutions in certain countries (Swanborn, 2010). The choice of higher education institutions located in the USA, UK, and Canada provided a fruitful ground for the investigation of international partnerships. Considering wider political, economic, academic, and cultural criteria, the selected countries share a number of similarities. First, they share a tradition of offering quality education and research excellence highly attractive in an international context. In the past decade, they all released national-level policies targeting internationalisation of education that elevated the importance of the sector and its benefits to the nation. Second, the majority of institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada identify internationalisation as part of their strategic planning. Their internationalisation efforts are longer and more established than in other parts of the world (de Wit, 1995). As a result, their international activity is mature, and partnerships have likely moved beyond simple transactions of students to more complex and multi-layer engagements that is also reflected in their design and implementation.

It is important to note that this study and its research method is not meant to be comparative in its cross-national understanding of partnerships in three countries. As an important defining characteristic of comparative research is "the contrast among different macro-level units" (Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017, p. 2), it tends to describe and explain differences and similarities among units (Teune & Przeworski, 1970). On the contrary, the aim of this study

was to shed light on the research questions and understand the multiplicity of influences and tensions in the development of international partnerships. In that sense, the selected countries exemplified differences in policies toward international education, economic concerns, as well as cultural variations. Elevated awareness of subtle differences across these settings and their influences lent further support for the study of partnerships so as to grasp their complex and paradoxical nature. The study's 'border-transgressing' nature comprising two institutional types and three countries was important in order to adequately examine a phenomenon that both breaks institutional and national borders as well as connects to these contexts (Esser et al).

National policies

Higher education is largely autonomous across the three countries which enables institutions to engage in international activities without direct government supervision. Although they do not function in a vacuum, their internationalisation policies are primarily institution driven. The U.S. higher education system is a collection of different state systems. In terms of international activities, the influence of the federal government is limited and fragmented as several agencies support different mobility and research funding programmes that do not work in synergy. These are often linked to the frameworks of foreign policy, diplomacy, and national security since the policy landscape related to international higher education has been "highly dictated by its geopolitical global orientation" (Trilokekar & El Masri, 2016, p. 12). Similarly, given the decentralised nature of the Canadian federation, the role of federal government is largely left to autonomous provinces. There is no ministry or department of education at the federal level. In 2014, the Canadian federal government announced its inaugural international education strategy: *Harnessing our Knowledge Advantage to Drive Innovation and Prosperity*. While the strategy targets the development of a 'Canadian brand', individual institutions drive and track the implementation of their internationalisation progress (Stephenson, 2018). In the UK, the higher education and policy landscape represents the amalgamation of the central government and those of the four devolved nations. UK higher education is devolved to its 4 constituent nations: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Thus, the UK system possesses some federal features although the relationships between the central government and the devolved regions are not as clearly defined as in the USA and Canada. It has been argued that in the UK context "across large areas of policy the more important trend is the continued similarity of policies, despite differences of detail" (Gallacher & Raffe, 2012, p. 18). The influence of the UK government centres largely on funding for research and further links to policies affecting higher and international education such as immigration, economic priorities, and trade policies. Collectively, the three higher

education systems and mainly their internationalisation efforts can be described as a combination of federal or national government involvement and dynamic institutional initiatives. It is important to note that higher education largely falls under the competence of U.S. states, UK devolved nations, and Canadian provinces. There are naturally differences across the individual systems. In terms of the international agenda of higher education, the central governments address policy areas that are closely linked to partnerships as these blend in with visa regulations, needs of the domestic labour market, and contributions to economic well-being of the country.

Variations related to the coordination of immigration policies reflect an important background for internationalisation including partnerships. Tightening immigration policies in the USA and the UK and the growing global competition seem to have negative effects on the position of the two academically powerful countries. Visa application delays and denials have been reported to be a top reason for the recent declining international student enrolments in the USA (NAFSA, 2019). Similarly, UK's international student growth has been low, for example dropping from 0.5% in 2015 to 0.3% in 2016 (UUKi, 2019). The development largely attributed to the reduction of the post-study visa duration between 2012 and 2019. With regards to partnership building, these developments may cause institutions to need to renegotiate their relationships with international partners. On the contrary to the unwelcoming immigration policies in the USA and the UK, the current Canadian political context favours those who wish to obtain a Canadian degree. In light of its demographic challenges, Canada's focus on skill development and retention has been a significant policy lever (Trilokekar & El Masri, 2016). In terms of international partnerships, this is an important consideration to not only those students who plan to remain in the country post-graduation, but it is also a reassuring signal to partnering institutions that their students and staff are welcome and that collaborations would endure. While the overall interest and support of internationalisation is present in the three countries, there are differences in national policies toward the entrance of international participants that may create varying effects on partnerships.

Economic imperatives

Maringe and Foskett suggest that "universities have now become key players in the global economy, contributing significantly to the knowledge stock of the world and to the financial economy of their countries" (2010, p.5). The global economy relies on higher education institutions that are often viewed as key to economic well-being. The responses of higher education across the three countries can be observed in more strategic approaches to

international performance. The convergence of strategic responses manifests through heightened recruitment of international students and scholars, greater competition for prestige and world ranking positioning, increased interest in joint research and co-authorships. The relevant statistical data show the \$36,9 billion³ contribution of over 1 million of international students and their visitors to the U.S. economy in 2016-2017. Multiple ranking tables further underline the leading position of academic research performance generated by U.S. institutions. Similarly, the UK derived over £25 billion⁴ from international student tuition and living expenses in 2014-15. As the second most popular destination for international students after the USA, it attracted roughly half million of EU and non-EU students. A smaller in size but comparable picture presents itself in Canada where over a quarter million of international students contributed close to \$8 billion⁵ to the economic development in 2017.

The economic orientation has increasing significance and relevance affecting international strategies of higher education institutions worldwide including the development of partnerships in the USA, UK, and Canada. As key players and contributors, their strategic responses have had positive impact on the economic development and prosperity in their countries (Trilokekar, 2015; Maringe and Foskett, 2010). However, it has been observed that the unlimited growth of different manifestations of internationalisation “appears to have come to a rather abrupt end, especially in Europe and North America” (Altbach & Wit, 2018, p. 1). Zooming in on the USA and the UK, the statistical data point to the flattening of their attractiveness showing slim international student increases of 3.4%⁶ and 0.5%⁷ respectively over the previous year. The prognosis is “not at all good for international education in the UK, which is no longer the unchallenged number two country after the United States” and might lose its second place (Marginson, 2018b, p. 6). On the contrary, the Canadian Bureau for International Education⁸ reported a 20% increase of international student enrolment in 2017 from the previous year. These observations may lead to further discussions about tools and incentives for international collaboration that institutions will need to be equipped with to remain competitive (Marmolejo, 2014). The changing attractiveness of higher education is

³<http://www.nafsa.org>

⁴<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/briefing-economic-impact-of-international-students.aspx>

⁵ <https://cbie.ca/media/facts-and-figures>

⁶ <https://www.iie.org/Why-IIE/Announcements/2017-11-13-Open-Doors-2017-Executive-Summary>

⁷<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/international-facts-and-figures-2018.aspx>

⁸ <https://cbie.ca/media/facts-and-figures>

significant for the study of international partnerships as they reflect new income-generating patterns (Kwiek, 2009).

Academic environment

All three countries provide an attractive environment for teaching and learning with a long-lasting tradition of intellectual enquiry and cutting-edge research. According to the world ranking table compiled by the Times Higher Education, more than half of the world's top 200 universities are located in either the USA or the UK. Serving more than 20 million students⁹ and with over 4,000 institutions ranging from Doctoral and Master's universities to Baccalaureate and Associate colleges¹⁰, the USA has a larger higher education sector compared to the UK and Canada. The total student population in the UK and Canada represents roughly 10% of that in the USA with 2,3 million students frequenting 162 institutions¹¹ and 1,7 million students enrolled in nearly 100 institutions¹² respectively.

Their success in teaching and research missions is further supported by organisational, academic, financial, and staffing autonomy. Various policies and procedures are in place to provide student and faculty services, facilitate joint research endeavours, and coordinate international engagements. As the institutions in the three countries manage large volume of mobile individuals and international programmes, they rely on staff who must be adequately equipped for complex tasks. The professionals who understand the global context, demonstrate a broader worldview, linguistic skills, and ability to work in a multicultural setting. In the three higher education systems, the similar organisational structures can be observed with a department or office specifically assigned to international affairs, albeit with different responsibilities. Additionally, the operations crossing the institutional borders require a solid technology infrastructure. In general, U.S., UK, and Canadian institutions are equipped with a similar level of technology which accompany long-distance instruction, research, and peer-to-peer communication.

The vast majority of higher education institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada identify internationalisation as part of their strategic planning. The 2017 Mapping Internationalisation on U.S. campuses report found that internationalisation accelerated for 72% of the 1,164 surveyed respondents indicating 'high' or 'very high' levels of internationalisation in nearly one third (ACE, 2017). Similarly, the 2018 Barometer survey of 1,292 European institutions

⁹ <https://www.iie.org/Why-IIE/Announcements/2017-11-13-Open-Doors-2017-Executive-Summary>

¹⁰ http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification_descriptions/basic.php

¹¹ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/facts-and-stats/Pages/higher-education-data.aspx>

¹² <https://www.univcan.ca/universities/facts-and-stats>

revealed that over 80% of the respondents in all regions in Europe reported having an internationalisation strategy in place (EAIE, 2018). The increased integration of such strategy means that “Almost all UK universities now have international strategies – again, almost unheard of 5-10 years ago.” (Hills, 2018). In Canada, the 2014 Internationalisation survey led by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada found that 95% of the 97 surveyed institutions include internationalisation in their strategic planning and 82% consider it as one of their top five priorities with 89% of respondents agreeing that the pace of internationalisation has accelerated in the past three years (AUCC, 2014). The reported data further underscore the growing importance and attention paid to international collaboration and partnership building. According to the 2017 Mapping Internationalisation on U.S. campuses, nearly half of the surveyed institutions have or are in the process of developing a formal strategy for international partnerships (Helms & Brajkovic, 2017). Despite the lack of systematic and up-to-date information on international partnerships in the UK (Woodfield et al., 2009), an annual snapshot of the international dimensions of UK higher education produced by Universities UK International suggests the similar. It portrays the key activities facilitated by international partnerships: student and staff recruitment and exchange, research collaboration and joint publication. The comparable picture can be drawn in Canada where strategic partnerships with overseas higher education institutions is the second top-rated priority following the recruitment of international students (AUCC, 2014).

Despite the relatively high flow of internationally mobile students, all three countries have reported concerns related to the low or even declining outbound student flows (Helms, Brajkovic, & Griffin, 2017; Stephenson, 2018). To tackle the issue of domestic student mobility, the country-wide campaigns encouraging institutions to build linkages with institutions overseas and facilitate exchange and study abroad opportunities for domestic students have been launched. They include Generation Study Abroad initiated by the Institute of International Education in the USA, Go International: Stand Out launched by Universities UK International, and various institution-driven efforts aligned with the outward mobility targets pledged by 74% of Canadian universities (AUCC, 2014).

Overall, the USA, UK, and Canada represent academically powerful systems experiencing an accelerated pace of internationalisation and attaching great importance to partnerships. There are differences in size or representation in global rankings that may influence the selection of partnering institutions. In that sense, Marmolejo (2014) has observed that U.S. universities have had an “easier time, compared with peers in other countries, positioning themselves to explore and establish international partnerships” (p. 41).

Cultural heritage

The shared historical and cultural heritage including the language has allowed for largely positive relationships among the three countries as well as with other countries. This further translates into relationships built by higher education institutions. Given the cultural and linguistic proximity, the three destinations often appear as top study abroad choices for their students at home. Similarly, engagement in international research collaborations is well-established with the USA and the UK being the top collaborative partners and more than 60% of Canadian institutions also targeting U.S. institutions ((AUCC, 2014; UUKi, 2019). Canada's linguistic duality accommodating English and French languages positions a number of its higher education institutions to experience different set of challenges and opportunities. The dominance of English and the resulting international recognition can curtail or reduce institutional and individual abilities in participating in partnerships. However, it can also create new opportunities for research and teaching related to French language, literature or history. As supported by the 2014 survey conducted by the AUCC, all Quebec institutions reported that internationalisation is one of their top five priorities. Such proactive approach to internationalisation may help their programmes become more accessible to international partners and make their internationalisation strategy of particular interest.

Despite the cultural and linguistic similarities at a macro-level, many disparities between the three systems exist at a micro-level. Stemming from differences in communication and teaching styles, research practices, academic and operational aspects, as well as wider social and professional norms, they may be a source of conflict and confusion. With regards to international partnerships, the variations at a micro-level can affect the functioning of such arrangements and contribute to both the partnership success as well as its dissolution. The macro-level similarities can mask important micro-level differences. For instance, the 2017 review of higher education partnerships between the USA and the UK produced by the American Council on Education found that subtle cultural differences go often unnoticed at the start, but add up and cause frustration later on (Helms et al., 2017). At the same time, the cultural similarities can positively influence the development of partnerships as they may accelerate the initiation phase or lead to new ideas and innovative approaches that benefit partners over time.

Table 3: National similarities and differences (created by author)

Influences	Similarities	Differences
National policies	Institutional autonomy	Immigration policies

	Institution-driven internationalisation	
Economic imperatives	Economic benefits	Changing attractiveness of higher education
Academic environment	Academic lead Institutional infrastructure Acceleration of internationalisation Low outbound mobility	Size Representation in global rankings
Cultural heritage	Cultural similarities Language	Cultural differences Language (French speaking provinces in Canada)

As illustrated above and summarised in Table 3, higher education is taking place against the backdrop of political, economic, cultural, and academic influences shaping its varied international responses. The three countries are currently positioned as global leaders in terms of internationalisation initiatives. They also demonstrate a high level of activity in building and maintaining international partnerships among themselves as well as with other countries and regions. As noted earlier, establishing partnerships with U.S. higher education institutions became to be perceived as a ‘mark of distinction’ in the 1990s (Klasek, 1992, p. 108). Following the ‘gold standard’ set by the U.S. higher education system after the Cold War as well as the historical reputation enjoyed by the UK higher education (Altbach & McGill Peterson, 2008), Canada is quickly rising and strengthening its position. For example, the 2018 QS Applicant Survey Report revealed that Canada (34%) placed behind the USA (48%) and the UK (42%) as the third most preferred study destination among 16,560 respondents. It is reasonable to assume that “Although Canada remains well behind the UK, the gap is beginning to close” (Marginson, 2018b, p. 5). While some attribute the downward trend in the USA and the UK as the win for Canada, others assign the rising position to a combination of coherent government and institutional strategies.

A closer look at seemingly similar systems helped uncover differences that create both challenges and opportunities for building and sustaining international partnerships. These may vary from differing policies toward international student entrance, shrinking and expanding economic contributions through differences in the size of higher education to subtle cultural variations. Indeed, the differences between similar systems indicate that there is no one way to approach and implement internationalisation strategies. However, it is

possible to generate an integrative understanding of common patterns and dynamics from multiple contexts to inform those most closely involved in the development of international partnerships. By understanding the broader context of influences and by focusing on their implications at the operational level, it is possible to successfully navigate the interrelated landscape of inter-institutional arrangements.

3.5.2. Institutional setting: Globally and locally engaged institutions

Research on differentiation in higher education suggests that different criteria are used to differentiate institutions which may resemble ‘postsecondary anarchy’ as a vast variety of institutions indicate differing foci, quality, and purpose (Altbach, Reisberg, & de Wit, 2017). Given the focus of this study on partnerships situated within institutions with varied ‘shells’ of engagement, it was important to consider two main criteria: resource dependency (public higher education institutions) and spatial configuration (global and local engagement).

First, public institutions dependent of government funding were targeted due to their heightened public responsibilities as oppose to private institutions. They share an obligation to address economic and social needs of the communities in which they are located as beneficiaries of public funding. To narrow down the pool of prospective institutions, it was necessary to determine public resource dependency. This was more important in the USA than in the UK and Canada where the majority of higher education institutions are publicly or state funded. In the USA, the membership of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities¹³ was helpful to access public higher education institutions. Special focus institutions such as institutes of art and applied sciences were excluded from the study. The sampling units were deliberately selected representing different regions within each country. They were located in both suburban and urban areas but outside the major metropolitan areas of New York, London, and Toronto.

Second, to determine institutional engagement at the local level, it was important to consider relevant national networks and systematically review mission statements and strategic plans. In the USA, the Carnegie Foundation selects locally engaged institutions through Community Engagement Classification published every five years. Defined as “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of

¹³ <http://www.aplu.org/members>

partnership and reciprocity”¹⁴, the community classification was considered to narrow down the pool of U.S. institutions with an exception of institutions with a specialised focus – arts, technology, and community colleges. In the UK, the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement combines over 80 higher education institutions that made their commitment to local engagement public by signing Manifesto for Public Engagement initiated by the Centre. Similarly, nearly 50 institutions participate in the national community engagement networks in Canada; Community Based Research Canada and Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning. The participation in the national networks demonstrates an important level of involvement with issues surrounding institutional responsiveness vis-à-vis local communities. Furthermore, ensuring that the selected cases were sufficiently informative and representative of the demarcated domain, the selection of institutions extended to those that attract a globally recognisable orientation. In addition to the focus on local engagement, the selection concentrated on the members of the following associations: Association of American Universities (AAU) in the USA, the Russell Group in the UK and the U15 Group in Canada.

To control for differences in the partnership experience among the participating institutions, those institutions that have formally centralised the affairs related to institution-wide internationalisation including partnerships and integrated a dedicated unit into their organisational structure were considered. After shortlisting institutions according to the previously established criteria, it was necessary to systematically review the level and volume of international agreements by revising the information available online to filter out those institutions with insufficient information. Among many variations of international partnerships, all selected institutions operated multi-faceted collaborations nested in the gamut of student and staff exchanges, research collaborations, joint degree programmes, and summer sessions. This demonstrates a robust engagement and proactive international involvement. The institutions also made partnerships official in a form of bilateral letters of agreement or contracts.

Finally, the selection of partnerships involving fifteen institutions was based on practical considerations. To obtain access to individuals knowledgeable of one specific institutional activity was both essential and challenging. I have been fortunate to secure access to a number of research participants through the professional network of international education organisations, specifically European Association for International Education (EAIE) and Institute of International Education (IIE). For the past ten years I have been involved in the

¹⁴ <https://www.brown.edu/swearer/carnegie/about>

administration of international activities in higher education. Although not working directly with international partnerships, the professional experience provided me with an invaluable insight into the studied environment as well as helped access individuals involved in the internationalisation of higher education.

3.5.3. Participant selection

The individuals selected for participation were voluntary participants targeted because of their role in the design and implementation of the partnerships. Their professional profile gave them credibility in discussing the issues of collaborative engagement. In identifying which individuals to interview, it was appropriate to use purposeful sampling as it allowed the intentional selection of those participants who possessed an understanding of the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). While seeking “those that best help us understand the case,” senior administrators whose responsibilities included the oversight of partnership design and implementation were approached (Stake, 1995, p. 56). Their central position as well as unique experience allowed for increased richness of data. Study participants brought a variety of educational and professional experiences to their roles. To better portray the relevant experiences, the Table 4 offers information about their role, tenure, and education.

Table 4: Participant characteristics

Country	Institution	Role	Tenure (years)	Educational background
USA	Global North University (GNU) ¹⁵	Director	5-10	MA
	Global Coast University (GCU)	Chief International Officer	5-10	PhD
	Mountain Regional University (MRU)	Executive Director	>5	MA
	Regional Pacific University (RPU)	Director	>5	MA
	Regional Inland University (RIU)	Executive Director	<10	PhD

¹⁵ To preserve confidentiality and anonymity of participants and their institutions, I have used pseudonyms such as Global North University (GNU), etc.

UK	Regional North University (RNU)	Head	>5	MA
	Global South University (GSU)	Dean	5-10	PhD
	Regional Midland University (RMU)	Director	>5	MBA
	Global Inland University (GIU)	Director	5-10	MBA
	Regional South University (RSU)	Director	>5	MBA
Canada	Western Regional University (WRU)	Dean	<10	PhD
	Global Metropolitan University (GMU)	Executive Director	>5	MA
	Atlantic Regional University (ARU)	Director	<10	MA
	Eastern Global University (EGU)	Executive Director	5-10	PhD
	Global Urban University (GUU)	Head	<10	MA

Positioned at the nexus of strategic and operational dimensions of international partnerships, their unique position allowed them to both understand the potential of collaboration and influence its conversion into policy and practice. Their professional backgrounds included years of experience in the field. Further, increasingly intentional and business-like undertone of internationalisation efforts reflected a relatively new training requirement in the form of an MBA degree alongside MA and PhD degrees. Depending on each institution's structure, research participants serving as executive directors, deans, chief international officers, directors or heads of international offices were included in the study. These participants are in the front line of partnership formations and negotiations. They possess a lot of first-hand experience of interaction with partnering institutions. They can provide the most insight into the actual process of international partnerships as they are the ones who institutionalise and oversee connections with partnering institutions. However, it was necessary to recognise possible limitations of selecting this group as they are likely to provide a positive view of internationalisation and partnerships. At the same time, they may also be prone to critically

engage with institution-wide strategies given their seniority and experience. Given these considerations, I remained confident that the interviews would generate a range of perspectives and thoughts.

3.6. Data collection

The objective of this research involved gathering data about collaborative dynamics in the context of international partnerships. To help draw out insights on international partnerships, the data were collected from two sources: documents and semi-structured interviews.

3.6.1. Documents

First, given the focus of this study on international partnerships, the analysis centred on the documentation related to internationalisation and one of its manifestations – partnerships. It was important to seek a parallel documentation structure across the participating institutions. It included institutional strategies and visions, internationalisation plans, and partnership checklists including statistical reports (Table 5). This information was invaluable in learning about the nature of on-going activities that helped better understand the context and scope of international engagement of each participating institution. It further provided specific details to develop new questions or corroborate from other sources (Yin, 2009). For example, the information about the institution’s focus on certain geographic region(s) led to further question motivations for selecting countries or regions of strategic importance during the interview process. In another instance, the information about a strategic designation of some partnerships resulted in investigation about the co-existence of different designations and developmental stages.

Table 5: Selected documents

Country	Institution	Documentation
USA	Global North University (GNU)	Strategic Plan 2016-2021, Partnership List
	Global Coast University (GCU)	2016 Strategic Plan, International Agreements
	Mountain Regional University (MRU)	

		Strategic Planning Vision Forums, Final Report of the International Advisory Council – 2012
	Regional Pacific University (RPU)	Strategic Plan: Transformation 2030, Partnership Activity Checklist
	Regional Inland University (RIU)	Strategic Plan, 2018 Feedback Themes, Partnership List
UK	Regional North University (RNU)	Strategic Plan 2016-2021 including Internationalisation Goals
	Global South University (GSU)	Strategy 2025, International Partnerships Strategy 2020
	Regional Midland University (RMU)	Strategic Plan 2018-23, International Strategy 2020
	Global Inland University (GIU)	Strategy 2020; Strategic Global Engagement
	Regional South University (RSU)	Strategy 2016-2021, Internationalisation Strategic Plan 2018-2021
Canada	Western Regional University (WRU)	Academic Plan 2016, International Strategic Vision 2017
	Global Metropolitan University (GMU)	Academic Plan 2019-2024, International Engagement Strategy 2013
	Atlantic Regional University (ARU)	Strategic Plan 2017-2020, Strategic Internationalization Plan 2020
	Eastern Global University (EGU)	University Plan 2015, International Strategy 2017-2020
	Global Urban University (GUU)	Strategic Plan 2016-2021, Internationalization Strategy

To extract meaning from the collected documentation, it was useful to export it to the NVivo software. By running text search queries, it was then possible to locate the sections pertinent to internationalisation and partnerships. Document analysis is sometimes referred to as structured observation as its focus and direction can be adjusted to the needs of the study (Robson, 2011). The computer-aided document analysis allowed for an in-depth understanding of the selected texts and preparation of interview questions.

With an understanding that “the documentary evidence reflects a communication among other parties attempting to achieve some other objectives,” Yin has advised to maintain the position of a ‘vicarious observer’ (2009, p. 105). For this study, it meant to critically engage with the clues and inputs obtained from the documentary evidence and develop more complete interpretations through interviews. Information captured in the documents provided both the background of the inter-organisational collaborations and context for the individual interviews. This triangulation of data assisted the overall interpretation of findings. For example, the information about partnerships included in the international strategic plans reflected different levels of detail in terms of number, location, and types of partnerships, their selection, or institutional support. This allowed to acknowledge different points of departure for the study and adjust the interview questions.

3.6.2. Semi-structured interviews

Second, conducting interviews with the university representatives involved in international partnerships was key to further support the current study and provide tangible accounts of why and how international partnerships develop. It was necessary to seek the views of those individuals directly involved in the process of partnership formation and implementation. They possess in-depth knowledge of the reasons for establishing partnerships and arrangements taking place within them, and experience daily challenges and tensions. Neuman (2011) posits that insights, experiences and other subjective meanings are revealed through a discussion process. Therefore, it was necessary to employ interviewing as a research method. As one of the most common social constructionist approaches, interviews also allowed to acquire multiple perspectives. Stake (1995) posits that “The interview is the main road to multiple realities” (p. 64). Although the study involved collecting subjective accounts, it gathered multiple perspectives which allowed for a better and broader understanding of the reported research issue. It has been recognised that understanding is the central endeavour of the social constructionist research. The focus was on practitioners’ understandings and interpretations of their involvement in international partnerships. In this way research participants were actively involved in the making of meaning. Given the constructionist orientation of this research, they were regarded as helping to construct the ‘reality’ with the researcher (Robson, 2011).

Merriam (1998) put forward that “interviewing is often the major source of qualitative data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study” (p. 91). For this study, the individual interviews were the main sources of data. The data were collected from fifteen

semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted between April 2018 and April 2019. In that regard, it is important to note the fact that all the interviews took place before the UK's departure from the European Union. Although Brexit was not the focus of interview questions, some participants elaborated on uncertainty related to the anticipated departure. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Prior to attending the interview, all participants were given the opportunity to review the enclosed Information Sheet and Consent Form (Appendix A) and bring up any questions or concerns they might have. They were also given the opportunity to opt out of the interview at any time and without stating a reason. Additionally, they were given logistical details about the interview and specifics of audio-recording and confidentiality guarantee.

As mentioned earlier, the study used purposive sampling to identify which individuals to interview as it allowed to intentionally select those participants who possessed an understanding of the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Profiles of potential research participants available on the institutional web sites were examined prior to the interviews in order to obtain as much data as possible about international activities in their units and determine a right fit for the study. The selected participants were subsequently contacted by email with a brief overview of the research and enquiry to schedule an interview if interested.

The choice of interviewing technique was important to this study due to its international dimension and the fact that the participants were at distant locations and often traveling. In addition to face-to-face interviewing, multiple insights have been provided into the ways in which using alternative interview techniques – telephone, Skype, e-mail – can be successfully used for carrying out qualitative interviews (Hanna, 2012; Holt; 2010; Kazmer & Xie, 2008; Mann & Stewart, 2002; Opdenakker, 2006). Some of the advantages of the telephone and Internet-based interviews have been identified as enabling a more equal relationship between the participants and the researcher, providing more time for reflection, reaching out to participants concurrently, saying things that would not be said face to face (Robson, 2011). Kazmer & Xie (2008) suggest that it is important to consider time zones and local scheduling conflicts which can significantly obstruct access to participants. Additionally, their findings highlight the importance of preserving 'contextual naturalness' when choosing the research medium. Because different everyday interactions occur in different contexts, it is appropriate to adapt to the participants' context and let them choose the preferred mode of communication. Stake (1995) agrees that "Almost always, data gathering is done on somebody's 'home grounds'" (p. 57). The ultimate goal is to make the participants feel comfortable and establish genuine rapport in order to facilitate the collection of superior and meaningful data. Despite being geographically unrestricted and economical, disadvantages

may exist such as impersonality, lack of contextual information, and missing social cues (Opdenakker, 2006).

In this study, a combination of face-to-face, telephone, and Skype interviewing techniques were employed. To ensure that the varied techniques did not affect the quality of the collected data, it was important to maintain consistency throughout the sampling and interviewing process and encourage each participant to ask questions before, during, and after the interview. Given participant's availability, preferences as well as limitations to travel, five interviews were conducted face-to-face and ten by telephone or Skype. The face-to-face interviews took place at professional settings or conference venues including three UK, one U.S. and one Canadian representative. The telephone and Internet-based interviews respected the participants' time zone location and setting. There was no major or unexpected technical difficulty.

Each interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder. It started with an introduction in which each participant obtained the information about the approximate amount of time necessary for the interview, about recording and note taking, about the status of a volunteer participant who may decide to stop the interview at any time, and about the extent to which confidentiality could be guaranteed. The first question involved discussion about the participant's professional background and responsibilities related to the administration of international partnership. The initial question set an open and engaging tone as it linked the research interests to the participant's own experience. Participants were given an opportunity to ask for clarification in the course of the interview and encouraged to suggest additional areas for discussion at the end. Although there were no additional topics suggested, the majority of the participants concluded the interview by returning to a previously discussed topic to either expand on their views or provide further clarification.

The interviews were geared toward an understanding of their experiences of international partnerships at their institutions. They included open-ended questions about participants' descriptions and interpretations of the ongoing collaboration (Stake, 1995). The guiding questions were thematically organised according to the research questions focusing on partnership forming and implementing. The ultimate goal was to bring structure to the interview process and encourage coherent thinking. As a reminder, the present study sought to explore the following questions:

1. Why do higher education institutions form international partnerships?
2. How do higher education institutions respond to tensions that accompany the implementation of partnerships?

Thus, the interview questions were concerned with insights about motivational drivers, mission alignment, benefits and challenges, external influences, and individual interaction. The guiding interview questions are included in Appendix B. Depending on the interview, it was not necessary to ask every question as information about one was sometimes provided in a response to another. Arranging the interviews in that manner helped maintain the flow of the interview and provided an initial set of themes to consider in the analysis and coding phase.

After each interview, the recording and the transcript were assigned a code to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of both the participating individual as well as the institution. There were no individual names, contact details or other identifiable information attached to the saved files. All data were kept in a digital format only and protected by strong password stored. To avoid the data loss in the event of hardware/software failure, the saved files were also backed up using the password-protected cloud storage service.

3.7. Data analysis

Having gathered the data, the next step was to “reduce a huge amount of data in order to obtain an answer to the research question” (Swanborn, 2010, p. 113). Thus, giving meaning to those parts that were important to the study (Stake, 1995). The data related to asking why institutions form international partnerships and how they respond to implementation tensions were subjected to inductive thematic analysis. As one of the benefits of thematic analysis lies in its flexibility, multiple studies point to the need for tools that would guide and systematise the process of conducting a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). They call for the disclosure of each step in order to facilitate the organisation and interpretation of the data while maintaining a rigorous thematic approach. Following up on that, the next section includes the detailed disclosure of reviewing the collected data and developing the thematic network. Attride-Stirling points to the lack of tools available “in the most elusive step” of the research process and proposes thematic networks as a way of structuring and depicting the themes (2001, p. 403). In an attempt to produce an insightful presentation of the data that answers the research questions as well as better organise the data set and its processing, it was helpful to follow the six phases of thematic analysis listed in Table 6 as summarised from Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 16-23). It facilitated the development of the final thematic network.

Table 6: Phases of thematic analysis

#	Phase	Description
1	Familiarising with data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3	Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4	Reviewing themes	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5	Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6	Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Phase 1: Familiarising with data. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed to ensure the accuracy of the data. As mentioned earlier, to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of participants and their institutions, pseudonyms such as Global North University (GNU) or Western Regional University (WRU) were used throughout the study. Additionally, excerpts from institutional documents were paraphrased and pseudonymised to maintain confidentiality, for example GNU – Strategic Plan. To better support the analysis, the pseudonyms reflected institutions' global (G) or local/regional (R) orientation. During the transcription of the recorded files, some ideas for potential themes emerged. Robson (2011) notes that using memos to jot down possible thoughts about themes is crucial in the early phase of data processing.

The initial thoughts about themes that emerged during the process of data familiarisation were informed by the study’s research questions and the relevant literature presented in Chapter 2. As a result, the collected data were approached with some predetermined themes instead of letting the themes emerge from interaction with the data. Although this approach may be viewed as biased, some scholars claim that prior engagement with the readings of the research literature can actually enhance the analysis (Robson, 2011; Tuckett, 2005). The data were processed inductively, and these initial prompts helped maintain focus on key questions and connect to prior research. In that regard, Braun, Clarke, and Terry (2012) assert that “It is impossible to be purely inductive, as we always bring something to the data” (p. 58). Though one tends to predominate, both inductive and deductive approaches are typically present (ibid.). These initial prompts contributed to the enhancement of the data analysis.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes. The first reading of the data allowed for the identification of repeated patterns and key words in order to begin formulating the codes embedded in the data. It resulted in an initial coding framework including the nodes and occurrences of the data relevant to answering the research questions (Table 7). In this phase, it was necessary to code the entire data set and collate the codes and the relevant data extracts. In addition to the data obtained from interviews, this included the data from the documentation. As this was a first run at noting the codes, inconsistencies were expected. Pieces that did not seem to fit in were grouped under Other as shown in Table 7. Although these data did not specifically answer the research questions, they provided an important contextual perspective illuminating the studied topic. For example, many participants compared their current observations with those they experienced previously when involved in international partnerships at other institutions.

The QSR NVivo 12 software made it easy to gather all references related to each code in one place and also retrieve the basic statistical information about each reference, such as its location within the source document. Individual extracts of data were coded as many times as deemed relevant. Appendix C includes a sample of two coded extracts of the interview transcripts.

Table 7: Initial coding framework

Initial codes	Number of occurrences			
	USA	UK	Canada	Total
Aims	3	4	6	13

Benefits	4	3	8	15
Challenges and risks	31	33	21	85
Champion	4	5	8	17
Changes to motivation	3	3	5	11
Communication	10	15	6	31
Effectiveness	7	5	11	23
Ext Developments	6	9	7	22
Funding	7	9	3	19
Global standing	3	3	3	9
Language	1	7	7	15
Leadership	9	6	5	20
Local impact	8	8	11	27
Milestones	5	5	6	16
Mission alignment	5	5	6	16
Next step	8	14	4	26
Organisational support	14	14	4	32
Perceptions and Organisational framing	10	11	7	28
Partner rationale	4	3	5	12
Partner selection	9	6	9	24
Power imbalances	4	6	5	15
Faculty and research-oriented interests	5	4	3	12
Resources	12	14	8	34
Social capital	9	6	5	20
Strategic designation	4	7	7	18
Student-focused impetus (inbound & outbound)	9	5	7	21
Trust	5	7	4	16
Unexpected	2	2	3	7
Other	6	11	6	23

Phase 3: Searching for themes. Next, it was important to carefully examine the different codes listed above in order to organise and group them into a smaller number of themes. This iterative process of turning codes into themes involved repeated readings of the entire dataset and the coded data. The identified themes combined multiple codes that bound together meaningfully. For example, the Interaction theme included the data coded under Communication, Trust, and Power Imbalances. The goal was not to summarise the data content but rather capture key patterns of the data in relation to the research questions

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). Several scholars suggest that the interpretative analysis of the data begins in this phase (Robson, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

When searching for the themes, there were recurring topics, terms that the participants themselves used, similarities and differences across data items that helped highlight different themes. In addition to that, there were theory-related issues relevant to the research enquiry focusing on understanding influences and tensions within international partnerships. The glonacal heuristic supported a focus on historical layers, reciprocity, strength, spheres of influence, and agency. It enabled to organise and make sense of the collected data. In that way, considerations of historical layers and existing conditions transpired in discussions about institutional mission, its advancement and changing reasons for engaging. Reciprocity was apparent in reflections about expanded opportunities that reciprocal relationships can deliver for students, faculty, staff, and research. Strength and spheres of influence reflected environmental considerations such as external developments, global positioning, funding, local impact. Agential influences, in this case, enacted by individuals implied in the design and implementation of international partnerships allowed for the emergence of themes related to inter-partner learning such as partner rationale or partner selection.

By unpacking potentials and risks inherent in partnerships, the theory of collaborative advantage suggested a number of themes that can explain collaborative tensions including aims, culture, identity, accountability, communication, commitment, compromise, social capital, risk, power, trust, resources, membership structures, working processes, and leadership (Vangen & Huxham, 2010). Due to the context and content-based variations of inter-organisational arrangements, the theory “does not tell the user “which of these themes to focus on, when to do so and how to use the information captured in them” (ibid., p. 182). In that way, it allowed for specific themes to emerge and focus on, in this study, explaining the aspects of international partnerships within the higher education sector. Themes such as trust, power, membership structure, leadership, culture, resources, or communication assisted in accessing the complexity of implementation of international partnerships and conceptualising its various parts. The theory informed the study by providing a platform for (re)constructing themes often experienced in practice, but unexplained within the context of international partnerships in higher education.

Phase 3 ended with a refined list of themes related to the entire data set and sub-themes related to the data extracts (Table 8). The next step was to interpret and ‘make meaning’ of the data.

Table 8: List of themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Mission advancement	Faculty and research-oriented interests Mission alignment Student-focused impetus
Environmental scanning	External developments Funding access Global positioning Local impact
Learning about partner	Changing reasons Partner rationale Partner selection
Developmental stages	Milestones Next steps Strategic designation
Organisational aspects	Benefits Challenges and risks Effectiveness Language Perceptions and framing Resources
Interaction	Communication channels Trust vs. distrust Imbalances
Individual involvement	Champion Leadership changes Social capital

Phase 4: Reviewing themes. This phase involved the review of the themes and sub-themes in order to fit them together and ensure that they capture the data set. By re-reading the themes and coded extracts, some themes were merged, while others were broken down. It is suggested that the thematic analysis is not a linear process and there is much movement back and forth (Robson, 2011).

In addition to re-coding, it was also necessary to re-organise the themes into different levels. Attride-Stirling (2001) proposes to break up the data set using a three-level organisation of

themes, which should provide a technique for “finding within it explicit rationalizations and their implicit signification” (ibid., p. 388). The author further suggests to start with ‘basic or lowest-order’ themes which are fundamental to the analysis but do not make sense beyond its immediate meaning. Examples such as Mission alignment, Local students, or Perceptions and framing say very little about the collected data as a whole. When clustered into ‘organising or middle-order’ themes, they together reveal more about what is going on in the data. Taking, for example, the Interaction theme which organises and unites the aspects of the interpersonal interaction occurring in partnerships (Table 9). Finally, a ‘global or super-ordinate’ theme lies at the core of the analytical framework and encompasses the underlying theme and research focus. Given its significance in the eyes and experiences of the study participants as well as its presence in the reviewed literature, the focus on ‘why and how organisations connect’ (Nahapiet, 2008) serves as an overarching and global theme for this study. As this research recounts participants’ perspectives and experiences of partnership functioning, its main concern implies generating a meaningful account of influences forming international partnerships and tensions implementing them.

Table 9: Three-level theme organisation

Global themes	Organising themes	Basic themes
International partnership formation	Mission advancement	Faculty and research-oriented interests Founding mission influence Mission alignment Student-focused impetus
	Environmental scanning	External developments Funding access Global positioning Local communities Local students
	Learning about partner	Changing reasons Partner rationale Partner selection
International partnership implementation	Organisational aspects	Challenges and risks Effectiveness tools National culture and language

		Partnership framing Resources and costs Strategic planning
	Interaction	Communication challenges Communication channels Points of power Trust building Trust erosion
	Individual involvement	Leadership changes Role of champion

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes. In this phase, Braun and Clarke (2006) propose to identify the ‘story’ that each theme tells rather than simply paraphrase the content of the data extracts. By revisiting the coded data, it was possible to form a coherent and internally consistent account within and between each theme (ibid.). While considering how each theme fits into the overall story, the glonacal heuristic and the collaborative advantage theory assisted in recognising factors that shape the development of international partnerships.

Building on the glonacal analytical heuristic, the process of partnership forming was regarded as operating simultaneously in global, national, and local domains amid layers of influences and spheres of activity (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). In this study, the layers of influences referred to historically embedded priorities and interests by which the current direction was shaped. The embedded influences forming international partnerships included student and research-related advancement priorities.

The spheres of activity referred to not only geographical but also functional range of activity and impact. The data showed that partnerships occupied simultaneously local, national, and global domains. While recognising the significance of location, the data included references to local impact that international partnerships create through diversifying local communities and extending opportunities to local students. Further, institutions were driven to partner in order to access national funding opportunities that were increasingly tied to international collaboration. Additionally, partnership forming was influenced by the need to be globally active and maintain a level of global visibility in an attempt to enhance the market positioning. Integrated with the historically embedded influences, they were part of an organising base for consideration of diverse forming influences.

Further to that, comments of hidden influences transpired in the collected accounts. They referred to those motivational points that were difficult to articulate and subject to interpretation. However, they had a strong potential to contribute to sustainable partnerships. The data pointed to the importance of understanding partner motivations in order to be adequately responsive to the goals and needs of the partnering institution.

Applying the theory of collaborative advantage (TCA), partnerships encompass tensions as an integral and key part of the joint work allowing for shared understanding to emerge. By re-examining the data in more detail through the TCA lens, tensions within organisational and individual aspects of the partnership process emerged. In that sense, the implementation of partnerships emerged as unfolding on two different levels. At the institutional level, tensions included resource limitations, structural dichotomy, national and organisational culture. First, resource limitations included references to limited time, finances, and staff dedicated to partnerships that encouraged institutions to focus on quality of partnerships rather than proliferation. Next, structural dichotomy reflected tensions between administrative centralisation and academic decentralisation. Challenges associated with national cultural dissimilarities transpired primarily through language and work traditions. Finally, the data brought about contrasting evidence of organisational cultures favouring international partnerships but experiencing difficulties related to faculty participation and partnership inventory.

At the individual level, the comments of the study participants concentrated on leadership changes and interactional aspects of communication, trust, and power. Leadership changes combined mainly patterns of continuity and disconnect from the existing course of activity as a result of inevitable personnel changes. To maintain productive relationships, the data pointed to communication challenges associated with over-reliance on Internet-based interaction. Further, the importance of trust building included references to its cyclical nature that was reinforced or weakened through early contacts, campus visits, and pilot projects. Lastly, the gathered data pointed to the issue of power in inter-institutional relationships indicating multiple points of power. These strategic areas included the power of finance as well as the power of academic expertise, global ranking, regional knowledge and experience.

As Robson declares “it is not unknown to get an epiphany at a late stage where you realize that the data are better interpreted in a radically different way” (2011, p. x). The analysis of qualitative data represents “a necessarily subjective process capitalizing on the researchers’ appreciation of the enormity, contingency and fragility of signification” (Attride-Stirling, 2001,

p. 402). In that way, the human agency acts as a filter through which certain pieces of information may be over-emphasised, omitted or merged. By revisiting the themes from the previous table of basic, organising, and global themes, it was possible to develop the final analytical framework with concise names that give the reader a sense of what the theme is about (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Given the wealth of the collected data, it was important to ensure that the themes are sufficiently clear and easily understandable. For example, the basic themes of External developments, Funding access, Global positioning, Local communities, and Local students were renamed to Local impact, Funding access, and Global visibility that capture more succinctly the integrated influences of partnership forming. The table below captures the final three-level thematic framework (Table 10).

Table 10: Final thematic framework

Global themes	Organising themes	Basic themes
International partnership formation	Embedded influences	Research advancement Student advancement
	Integrated influences	Local impact Funding access Global visibility
	Hidden influences	Partner motivations
International partnership implementation	Tensions at the institutional level	Resource limitations Structural dichotomy National culture Organisational culture
	Tensions at the individual level	Leadership changes Communication challenges Trust building Points of power

Phase 6: Producing the report. The closing phase involved producing the report based on the analysed data and ‘telling the story’ of the data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and trustworthiness of the analysis (Robson, 2011). In this step, the aim was to bring the key findings into a cohesive story by relating them back to the research questions as well as to the theoretical grounding of the research. To reinforce the analysis and

conclusions and provide the relevant evidence, the final report included quotations from interviews, which added depth and transparency to the present study.

3.8. Data quality

Although Robson (2011) claims that “there is no foolproof way of guaranteeing validity,” he suggests being thorough, careful, and honest in conducting the research as well as in recording the activities while carrying it out (p. 172). When dealing with validity, Maxwell (2008) suggests to focus on the question: How might you be wrong? Although he admits that it is impossible to address all validity threats, he underscores researcher bias and reactivity as the types of validity threats most commonly raised in relation to qualitative studies (*ibid.*). To counter these threats to validity, triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing and support, and audit trail were employed in this study.

Data were collected from multiple and different sources. In addition to the multiple interviews, internal documentation relevant to international partnerships and internationalisation strategies served as an important source of data. The inspected documents informed the interview questions and data analysis about the studied context. Triangulation by source served as a useful addition to the primary source of data provided in the interviews. According to Neuman (2011), triangulation improves accuracy as we learn more by observing from different perspectives.

Member checking or respondent validation (Maxwell, 2008) was a continuous part of the data collection process. Referred to as returning to research participants, this strategy allowed them to check the accuracy of the interview transcripts and judge the credibility of the account. The choice of reviewing the interview transcript was provided to all participants. There was one request to modify the provided interview transcript. Flyvbjerg maintains that the proximity to study objects is essential in case studies as it is likely that researchers get “corrected by the study objects “talking back”” (2006, p. 236).

Peer debriefing and support provided an important means of countering researcher bias. Regular discussions with both professionals involved in the management of international partnerships as well as research students of similar status were beneficial for gaining the necessary perspective that helped cope with unexpected and uneasy situations throughout the desktop and fieldwork stages. According to Robson (2011), peer support has a valuable therapeutic function guarding against researcher bias. In addition to that, discussions with peers served to both better understand the international partnership context and draw a

more accurate picture of the studied phenomenon. Although these consultations fell outside of the formal data collection, they helped to contextualise the main data. These additional sources supplied background knowledge and offered an alternative lens through which to look at the primary data.

Audit trail provided a record of activities while carrying out the study (Robson, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) list multiple elements of audit trails, including raw data (transcripts and field notes), data reduction and analysis products (transcript notes and emerging concepts), data reconstruction and synthesis products (thematic structures), instrument development (interview questions, report drafts and feedback), process notes (methodological notes), and personal notes. To enhance validity, it was useful to keep a reflexive journal for the duration of the study to trace the development of the present study. Additionally, it proved effective to use a data management software to store and organise the collected data as well as different notes so that they can be readily located and accessed. The visual display provided by the NVivo 12 software enabled to more easily observe different themes and connections in the data. This approach proved useful when writing up the results in a narrative report as it facilitated the tracking of and access to the coded data.

3.9. Ethical considerations

Robson warns that “there is potential for harm, stress and anxiety, and a myriad other negative consequences for research participants” (2011, p. 205). Therefore, different ethical considerations must be taken into account at a very early stage of research. Creswell (2012) elaborates that ethical practices should be considered throughout the research process and involved in the purpose and research questions, in the data collection and analysis, and in the writing up and dissemination phase. The overarching principle followed throughout the research process focused on respect for participating individuals and institutions.

As part of ethical considerations, all research participants signed and returned informed consent. Informed consent was designed to provide participants with enough information about the research and enable them to make informed decisions about their participation. Participants were given an option to withdraw at any stage without giving a reason and without being disadvantaged. They were also informed about the estimated time the interview would take. Additionally, they were asked about the possibility of audio-recording and given details about data usage and confidentiality. For any follow-up enquiries or concerns, they were provided with my contact information and encouraged to reach out.

Following up on the information provided along with the written agreement (the consent form), each participant was given answers to the following questions in the beginning of interview: Who will have access to the data? Who owns the data? Who has the right to review the report? (Patton, 2003). As the only researcher on this project, there was no need to share the collected data with other researchers. The recordings of all interviews were transcribed by me and used for the purpose of this study. The transcripts of interviews were available for verification by the participants prior to final inclusion.

The participation in the study was voluntary. Thus, the approached candidates could refuse to be involved or discontinue their participation without any negative consequences. In addition to that, they could choose to skip a question if they felt uncomfortable or did not know how to answer it. When reporting on research, appropriate measures were taken to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of any personal information. Personal information of the participants and documents deemed for internal use were treated with care and discretion. The study utilised pseudonyms for both the participating individuals as well as their institutions.

Apart from the inconvenience of dedicating approximately 60 minutes of their time, there was no known risk or other major inconvenience to participants. Given that the issues discussed during the interview were not personal, the potential for harm, stress, or anxiety was largely reduced. However, it was important to consider the sensitivity of some views and information. Further, the intensity and dynamic of the discussions caused some unexpected reactions. For example, in a couple of instances, the participants freely offered responses of a political nature or commented on internal discussions about possible changes in the administration of international partnerships. When the interviews stirred away from its agreed goal, it was helpful to have a 'shopping list of topics' to maintain the balance between the needs of the research and the participant's reactions (Robson, 2011). Additionally, it was important to remain vigilant to the reactions of the participants and pause the recording or note taking whenever necessary.

3.10. Limitations of the study

In bringing this chapter to a close, it is important to outline some limitations in relation to the methodology. The concept of internationalisation means different things to different people and internationalisation is "to a large extent accidental" (Swensson and Wihlborg, 2010, p. 603). Due to its varied interpretations and multi-faceted nature, the focus of this research

study was limited to one of its manifestations - international partnerships. There are many aspects of international partnerships that could have been studied. The goal of this study was to provide an insightful exploration of the influences and tensions that shape their development. This was based on an in-depth analysis of a selection of globally and locally engaged higher education institutions operating in relatively similar contexts. Hence, there are limitations to the generalisability of the findings as results from this study are not intended to be generalisable to all institutional or national contexts. However, they can serve to instigate careful reflection and questioning for all those working or caring about developing international partnerships. It may give them an opportunity to interpret the findings within their own unique context and foster greater levels of success in partnerships.

It is likely that findings of a study examining partnerships within higher education institutions located in dissimilar contexts would have yielded different results. Given that countries are positioned differently within the international education market, they engage in partnerships with varying flows of empowerment, resources, and geopolitics (Obamba & Mwema, 2009). Thus, a study of exploring North-South or South-South partnerships would have likely presented a different set of patterns and challenges. The countries selected for this study represent 'most similar' contexts of the global North that largely define the global competition (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). In particular, they represent highly marketised systems that have created a focus on competition and profits. Their dominant position underscored by the use of English reflects institutional approaches and experiences that differ from those in the global South. Stemming from enduring postcolonial links, unequal access to the higher education market, and negative effects of competition, the global South context has struggled to balance "strategies that strengthen their knowledge regimes, interests, and alliances" with "the mad rush to neo-liberal homogeneity" (Zezeza, 2012). Additionally, the increasing capacity in the South and Southern institutions has been noted to encourage cooperation between emerging countries as they are better positioned to generate appropriate solutions to their problems than the global North and Northern institutions (Islam & Anwar, 2012).

Further, the study was limited to the perspective of a sample of those practitioners involved in forming and implementing international partnerships. Thus, another limitation comes with the limited access to individuals who were involved in the partnership design and its maintenance and the potential bias that comes with it. The collected information may be viewed as one-sided because it focuses on capturing the experiences of those directly involved in the design and maintenance of partnerships. As one of the delimitations of the study, the views of non-academic professionals constitute an important addition to the

current literature. The studies on international partnerships tend to privilege academic issues and viewpoints, and whilst these are critical, nevertheless administrative staff perform vital roles at all levels of internationalisation. Their views constituted the main source of data for this study and a specific lens on international partnerships which can be connected to other studies.

Similarly, students were not included in the present study. In addition to academic and administrative stakeholders, students undoubtedly play an important role in the development of international partnerships. They are participants of programmes born out of inter-institutional arrangements and their experiences and learning outcomes are invaluable to both academics and administrators. Despite its acknowledged importance, the perspective of students was beyond the scope and focus of the present study. Instead, the study was limited to the views of administrators involved in the partnership process. It did not intend to capture the views of participating students but rather add administrators' voice to the knowledge base concerned with international partnerships.

Lastly, the interviews were one of the main sources of data for the study. As such, the interview results were confined in contingencies of the interview participants and their willingness and interest in reporting on their experiences and perceptions. Thus, a human component which is closely associated with interviewing affected the study (Gray, 2013). Different participants expressed their views with different levels of openness and focus. As this sort of limitation was anticipated, I tried to remain 'sensitively alert' to the encountered differences during both the collection and analysis of the data (Robson, 2011).

3.11. Chapter summary

Chapter 3 outlined the research methodology applied to this study. It started by setting out the epistemological and theoretical perspectives that guide the methodology as well as the choice of methods. Set within the social constructivist orientation, the study is informed by two theoretical views. First, a glonacal (global, national, local) analytical heuristic developed by Marginson and Rhoades (2002) assists in considering multiplicity and multidimensionality of influences impacting the formation of partnerships. Second, the theory of collaborative advantage by Vangen and Huxham (2010) provides a platform for (re)constructing themes that capture the coexistence of collaborative advantage and inertia and underpin the partnership implementation. Collectively, these theoretical perspectives help construct the framework for exploring why and how international partnerships function.

In order to document the complex process of international partnerships, the study adopts a qualitative approach supported by case study drawing data from three country cases. The choice of a qualitative multiple case study method is well suited to the purpose of this research that engages with the complexities of international partnerships across different national and institutional settings. To help draw out insights on international partnerships in higher education, semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used. The data were coded inductively with a coding scheme developed through the thematic analysis. The categorisation at the level of basic themes was then followed by the development of organising and global themes leading to the production of the thematic network. The strategies of triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trail were employed in this study to counter the validity threats.

In the following chapters, I present the selected higher education institutions and provide the analysis of responses in order to later draw a conclusion from the research findings. To examine international partnerships in the context of public higher education institutions in different countries, the analysed responses have been organised by the national context: the USA, UK, Canada to then consider them holistically. The identifying characteristics of the research sites have been removed in the presentation to maintain participant confidentiality.

Chapter 4 - BALANCE-SEEKING PARTNERSHIPS OF U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

"They're bringing something that is of an absolutely equal value and should be treated with the same respect as an equal partner."

(Interviewee - Global Coast University)

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings collected from the selected globally and locally focused institutions in the USA. It begins with providing background information about the U.S. public higher education context and the participating institutions. Thus, laying the ground for the more focused exploration of international partnerships. It then introduces the themes that emerged from the collected data in relation to the research questions. The objective is to explore why the selected U.S. institutions form partnerships and how they respond to implementation tensions.

4.1.1. U.S. higher education context

As stated in the previous chapter, U.S. higher education represents a collection of state systems with considerable differences among states in terms of economic vigour, scientific capabilities, and industrial base (Geiger & Sa, 2005). Besides state governments, the federal government engages in education. Following the establishment of a department of education in 1953, the influence of the federal government became most visible in the area of research funding and student financial aid leading to a massive enrolment expansion in the post-war period (Antonio, Carnoy & Nelson, 2018). The qualities such as "the "three P's" of prosperity, prestige, and popularity" described the quarter-century of support following the World War II (Thelin, 2011, p. 260). By the end of the 1970s, more than half of the school-leaver age cohort enrolled in higher education making it the first high participation system in the world (Marginson, 2016b). With enrolments continuously rising, for example at a rate of 25% in the

first decade of the 21st century (Geiger & Heller, 2011), the number of higher education students reached a peak of 21 million in 2010¹⁶.

During the post-war growth of higher education, U.S. institutions adjusted and developed new programmes and fields of study. Ultimately, these developments contributed to the creation of a research university as a new entity attracting funding and quickly earning international respect and appetite to build partnerships (Thelin, 2011). Further, this period was marked by the expansion of community colleges and the emergence of a for-profit higher education sector (ibid.). In that regard, the California Master Plan of 1960 became to be viewed as a model of state-wide system planning and governance. Referred to as a blueprint for the transition to mass higher education (Thelin, 2011), it assigned distinct missions to three different segments of the system: community colleges, master's and doctoral universities. The California model encouraged similar developments in other states. Notably, New York created a large state-wide comprehensive network of sixty-four campuses followed by Texas, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Georgia.

Following the unprecedented expansion of the sector and a light-handed involvement of the federal government, the state role progressively grew (Antonio et al., 2018). To guide and coordinate ever-growing state policy issues and liaise with the federal government, the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) was founded in 1954. As its title suggests, it is a national association of the chief executives representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. To further provide the states with a forum for sharing experiences and insights, state governors and appointed representatives from all levels of education established the Education Commission of the States in 1965. It was founded on the belief that "education is the primary job of the states, the primary direction and support for public education must come from the states" (ECS, 1965, p. 4). Continuing their missions, both SHEEO and ECS keep contributing and shaping policy issues by collecting and publishing policy-relevant data and facilitating cross-state dialogue and collaboration (Antonio et al., 2018).

Although higher education financing varies from state to state, the state contribution levels have been decreasing across all states. With a gradual decrease of approximately 40% since 1980, average state funding contributions have been estimated to reach zero by 2059 (Mortenson, 2012). Indeed, it was the 1980s that "saw the beginning of a far-reaching transformation in the ways Americans paid for higher education and in the financing of public

¹⁶ More information available at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_105.30.asp.

and private institutions” (Geiger, 2021, p. 281). While the federal research grants expanded the individual state funding schemes, the financial aid programme gradually reduced the state support for public higher education and shifted the cost of higher education from the public sector to students (ibid.). To compensate for the falling revenue, tuition rates have been steadily increasing to the current average cost of \$17,503 for undergraduate education (Snyder, De Brey & Dillow, 2019). As a result of the growing private cost sharing and its direct impact on enrolments, the cost of higher education is expected to “reach a politically unstable point as many states begin to experience consequential decreases in access” (Antonio et al., 2018, p. 90). In that vein, it is reasonable to hypothesise that tightening public investments will further incentivise institutions to partner internationally to generate revenue, reduce costs, and share resources.

The increased attention to research and student access afforded by federal funding made the U.S. higher education system internationally attractive. As noted earlier, establishing partnerships with U.S. institutions became to be perceived as a ‘mark of distinction’ for many institutions worldwide and set the tone for international negotiations (Klasek, 1992). However, the superior position of the U.S. higher education system has been showing signs of change as the data from multiple sources point to repositioning of the priority regions for international engagement. For example, the 2014 EAIE Barometer of 1,500 European institutions of higher education found the North America region as the third priority region surpassed by the EU countries (89%) and by Asia (56%). Although the North America region has remained very important, many institutions in Europe increasingly prioritise partnerships within Europe and with Asian institutions. Similarly, the 4th global survey conducted by IAU identified North America as the third most important geographic priority for Europe. Other sources have commented that the USA “is entering a world in which it will no longer be overwhelmingly dominant, though for the foreseeable future it will remain the strongest power” (Marginson, 2016a, p. 116). As the field of “international education has become much more sophisticated and competitive on a global basis”, many countries are catching up and reaping the benefits of investing in education (Marmolejo, 2014, p. 41). These observations may lead to further discussions about tools and incentives for international collaborations that U.S. higher education institutions will need to be equipped with to remain competitive (Marmolejo, 2014).

4.1.2. Profiles of participating institutions

With 1,647 public higher education institutions and 3,062 private¹⁷ ones, the U.S. higher education systems encompasses a rich variety of institutions. The sheer volume and institutional variety can fuel confusion and misunderstandings for partners coming from less differentiated systems. In that sense, Marmolejo (2014) put forward that “U.S. higher education institutions must work harder to make potential partners aware of the different types of institutions that exist in the United States and the specific advantages that the different actors may bring to the table” (p. 42).

They are commonly categorised using the framework produced by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. The framework includes baccalaureate, master’s, doctorate-granting colleges and universities, associate colleges, special focus institutions, and tribal colleges. The institutions participating in this study represent public doctorate-granting universities and master’s colleges and universities. According to the 2015 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education¹⁸, these two clusters of institutions enrol more than half of all the students (53%).

Profile 1: Global North University (GNU) was established with a purpose to spread and advance the field of medicine. Over the past 150 years, it has expanded to offer a wide array of academic programmes to students from diverse backgrounds. Located in a multicultural urban area, GNU has gained a reputation of a prominent and indispensable partner in the ongoing transformation of the city and the surrounding region. Its community engagement and research intensiveness have been recognised in the Carnegie Foundation measurements. Leveraging its commitment to diversity, GNU promotes multicultural and intercultural education and enters in partnerships with higher education institutions to leverage the transfer of knowledge internationally.

Profile 2: Founded as a conduit for bringing cutting-edge research and public service to its community, Global Coast University (GCU) is a distinguished research institution and a member of the Association of American Universities. Its global outlook underscores GCU’s commitment to tackling social problems and addressing the world’s most pressing issues as demonstrated through its rich scholarly output. Seeking international collaboration and interaction of faculty and students from other countries has become central to GCU’s growth

¹⁷ <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Project-Atlas/Explore-Data/United-States>

¹⁸ https://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification_descriptions/basic.php

and success. Forming both regional and global connections to enhance its educational mission and generate social impact has been part of its strategic plan launched in 2016.

Profile 3: Since its inception over a century ago, Mountain Regional University (MRU) has been a leader in training educators. With a steady growth in student numbers, it has expanded its academic portfolio to now offer over 200 undergraduate and graduate programmes. Regionally recognised for its community engagement, MRU's 2020 strategic plan outlines ways to achieve engaged teaching, learning, and research. Serving nearly 13,000 students, the 2020 plan also focuses on engaging students with international cultures through curricular as well as extra-curricular activities. As part of its internationalisation effort, it has been developing sustainable links with similar universities abroad to create opportunities for sharing people and ideas.

Profile 4: From small beginnings in 1857, Regional Pacific University (RPU) has grown to a complex and diverse institution offering 250 areas of study for nearly 35,000 students. Aligned with its vision to be transformational for its students and the broader community, RPU combines learning with impact. Tightly connected to the city it is located in, its goal is to encourage and prepare its students and staff to engage outside the classroom in events and organisations supporting academic, social, and professional expansion. RPU maintains multiple agreements internationally. One of RPU's priorities is to involve all students in experiential learning through international experience.

Profile 5: Regional Inland University (RIU) is a comprehensive public institution firmly embedded in the social, economic, and cultural life of the surrounding region. With a population of 23,000 students and 1,000 international students, RIU has been expanding its national and international partnerships to provide comparable experiences to its students and staff. As set out in the strategic plan, the goal is to advance the institution's impact through strong partnerships empowering people, strengthening programmes and research, and expanding resources.

Table 11 below portrays the institutional characteristics relevant to the examination of why and how institutions form international partnerships. It provides an overview of the elements discussed throughout the chapter.

Table 11: Institutional characteristics – USA

Institution	Established	Founding mission	All students	Int'l students	Current mission	Spatial focus	¹⁹ Global ranking	National ranking
GNU	1868	Medical school	27,000	2,000	Research	Global	100-200	50-100
GCU	1965	Interdisciplinary education	36,000	10,000	Research	Global	1-100	1-50
MRU	1889	Teacher training	13,000	500	Comprehensive teaching and research	Local and regional	>1000	300-400
RPU	1857	Teacher training	35,000	4,000	Predominantly teaching	Local and regional	600-700	100-200
RIU	1910	Teacher training	23,000	1,000	Comprehensive teaching and research	Local and regional	600-700	100-200

4.2. Forming international partnerships

4.2.1. Research and student advancement: The influence of the founding history

It was unsurprising to find accounts of partnerships operating for reasons aligned with institutional core missions of teaching and conducting research. Scratching under the surface, the interviews and the reviewed mission statements uncovered a formative influence of the founding history and focus on partnership initiations. The imprinting of the founding history appeared to shape the spatial orientation toward the global or the local. For example, the institution founded for the purpose of generating and disseminating ground-breaking research and discovery was from its inception oriented toward tackling the world's great challenges, changing humanity, and advancing an understanding of the world (GCU – 2016 Strategic Plan). The institution's key international administrator further affirmed that:

“Our priority is really around research and making sure that we are bringing the best knowledge creation possible to world challenges and wherever there are resources that enhance and improve that work. We're committed to being there and taking advantage of the

¹⁹ Webometrics takes into account teaching commitment, research results, perceived international prestige, and links with community to measure global and national performance. More information is available at: <http://www.webometrics.info/en>.

resources and sharing the results to wherever it's useful. As long as I have been here that's been for partnerships the main motivation.” (GCU)

Similarly, the initial commitment to rigorous medical training and research shaped GNU's early structures and persisted over time to encompass the renewed commitment to academic and research excellence across global communities. The reasons for engaging in international partnerships, therefore, encompassed research and the chain of overlapping motives, such as knowledge advancement for student and faculty, joint research and publication, curriculum enhancement, and new funding generation. For example:

“We are a Tier 1 research institution, so we certainly expect our faculty to be involved in their field in the current research and work that's being done in their field and to do that globally. Having international partnerships for both our faculty and our students allows them to accomplish those goals.” (GNU)

Where the founding mission included training of professionals, for example for teaching careers, partnerships more closely aligned with the local and regional focus and commitment. The orientations expressed in the reviewed mission statements implied more inclusive spatial dimensions of impacting local communities, providing benefits to the region, the state, the nation, and the world (RPU - Strategic Plan: Transformation 2030; RIU – Strategic Plan) or including the state-wide contributions and recruiting local students with international backgrounds (MRU - Strategic Planning Vision Forums). The use of location as a way to shape the institutional identity also prompted the local reach and demands of the nearby industries and communities. For example:

“We would reach out to our partners in the private, usually in the tech industries, and then arrange collaboration and things like that. So, we are working closely with those different organizations if we're looking to develop a new exchange program.” (RPU)

International partnerships established by the institutions with missions anchored in meeting regional needs reflected their primary preoccupation of preparing students. The chain of overlapping motives further included diversification of student body, study abroad opportunities, educating for global citizenship. As an example:

“They include things like dual degree articulation for undergraduate or graduate degrees, short programs or international training opportunities. We engage in exchanging faculty, exchanging students as well as study abroad opportunities, which are sort of teaching assignments for our home students pursuing education degrees.” (MRU)

Whether focusing on the global reach or meeting regional mandates, the formation of international partnerships seemed to be influenced by the institutional founding conditions. Arising from the embedded layers of institutional history and mission, the drivers for partnerships reflected institutional priorities that most visibly manifested in the area of research and student advancement. Although the institutions have altered and differently expanded their outward and inward-looking orientations since the establishment, the founding influence seemed to persist and partially furnish the rationale for establishing international linkages.

While all institutions were receptive to the imprinting of the founding mission, differences between locally engaged and globally engaged institutions transpired. They enveloped tendencies to either integrate the institution into the globalising world (Hawawini, 2011) or to integrate the international dimension into the institution (Knight, 2004). Reflective of their research designation, globally engaged institutions formed partnerships to primarily expose their scholarship, participate in global networks, and disseminate produced knowledge, while locally engaged institutions tended to partner for reasons related to student advancement and instruction.

4.2.2. Local impact: Enhancing local opportunities

Ensuring the skills development within the surrounding environment, institutions viewed partnerships as a way to internationalise their local student communities and better prepare them for the globalised world. The impetus to enhance international learning opportunities was partially furnished by the need to either match the already diverse local regions and communities or diversify student population on campus with effects beyond its borders. The reflection of the local situation in developing international linkages was acknowledged accordingly:

“If we’re training our students to take on roles within our regions and our communities, and to actively be part of the business community, then, you know, we need to develop partnerships internationally, because of where we are. I think that our state is one of the states in the U.S. that is really focused on being a globalised state.” (RPU)

Further to that, understanding the composition of the local student population appeared to be an important indicator for international engagement. Given that U.S. public institutions receive most of their students from within their state as distance and in-state tuition play an important role in student choice (Alm & Winters, 2009), they provide a vital local service and

adapt their international engagement to local demands.

“... when I say we're a locally serving institution that means at the undergraduate level over 90% of our students come from within 100 miles of our campus. But we're also a very diverse campus, we have a lot of students who are first-generation Americans and first-generation college students. And so, for those students who may have even international connections with friends or family, they may not have had many opportunities to travel and to have international experiences.” (GNU)

In alignment with the literature on international partnerships, the collected data extended the view that partnerships provide “a means of expanding access to students who would not otherwise be able to access their programmes” (Woodfield et al., 2009, p. 24). In this case, facilitating access for first-generation college and first-generation American students to international opportunities at home or abroad.

“For first-generation Americans oftentimes, their parents are the ones that discourage the students from participating in a study abroad program. For the parents, you know, they were able to move to the United States and put down roots and make it home, so they don't see the purpose of going someplace else, because they've already arrived at the end goal. That's challenging to work around.” (RPU)

Driven by reasons related to local student population, international partnerships served to extend opportunities to those students unable or resistant to access international learning experiences. They further assisted institutions to either respond to diverse local communities or bring diversity to less diverse regions. As illustrated in the following two accounts:

“You see diversity pretty clearly here on our campus at [institution's name], we do not have the majority demographic for our student profile. We do not have it. In most institutions in the U.S., you would see 80% Caucasian students, or something along those lines. Here at [institution's name], I believe our breakdown is 40% Asian students, 30% Latino students and 30% Caucasian and African American students. So, we have such high levels of diversity that we are kind of by default already an international location on campus.” (RPU)

“Where we are located in the Midwest in the United States, it's very traditional. Our students are not too adventurous They have that opportunity also to have an organized program for them to go to where there is an office that will come to take care of them.” (RIU)

In addition to the partnership alignment with the institutional mission, the analysis uncovered the integration of influences generated by local students and communities. Developing international partnerships reflected the contours of its immediate environment both within

and beyond campus. It underscored the significance of location that interacted with the development of partnerships. In that sense, international partnerships contributed to enhancing opportunities at ‘a very diverse campus’ (GNU) or providing new prospects for ‘very traditional’ (RIU) settings. This may be a promising aspect of further examinations of how connected international partnerships are to location and what impact they can generate.

4.2.3. Funding access: Challenges seeking reciprocity

As noted earlier, eroding state support and uneven or uncertain federal funding cause spending cuts and downsizing in some cases (Altbach et al. 2011). Although initiating partnerships for revenue generation did not emerge as the primary reason, it was an important motivational driver. Its contribution to the sustainability of not only partnerships but more broadly other international and institutional initiatives made it an inevitable driver. As the following quote illustrates, some institutions found themselves forced to seek international partnerships that increase their revenue.

“Well, as time goes by, we find ourselves, many institutions in the U.S. find themselves going through significant budget shortcuts and a lack of state funding, we have to seek international engagements and partnerships that actually increase our revenue.” (MRU)

As a result of the growing importance given to the search for alternative funding sources, institutions’ priorities had progressively shifted from the generation of opportunities for students toward the generation of revenue opportunities. Thus, intrinsically motivated drivers of campus diversification had been outshined by extrinsically motivated revenue needs, as noted below:

“I think there might have been more of the motivation for diversifying the student body, diversifying the opportunity for our domestic students may have been bigger than enrolment because public universities like ours had more financial support from the government in the past than they have now. So, cost is more of an issue right now.” (RIU)

Based on the collected data, an understanding that partnerships incur ‘cost’ manifested within both negative and positive externalities. While international partnerships allowed for more international students, which led to employing more staff and generating more research and joint work, they also allowed for difficulties to emerge. On the one hand, an increase in international students was perceived positively:

“It’s always to our advantage to have more international students from purely an enrolment perspective, I mean, more students is good, that’s a good problem to have.” (GNU)

On the other hand, the revenue generated by receiving more students through partnerships brought attention to the problems of reciprocity and challenges of sending students abroad. The unequal inbound and outbound levels meant possible financial difficulties:

“But then if we're not sending students that's problematic because that means we're simply waving tuition for students and not getting anything financially in return. We're certainly not motivated by finances, but any institution is going to have to look at that eventually. If you're just letting students come and wave their tuition like a few students every semester and you are not sending anyone back that means you are technically giving these students free tuition at your institution.” (GNU)

“Institutions in the United States, especially public institutions like ours, we work with the goal of a certain number of international students we have to have every year. I shouldn't be receiving 200 students and sending 50 because of the balance. So, we have to look at the big picture and as long as we are sending more students than receiving. Financially, we're going to be okay.” (RIU)

Regarded as a business arrangement with learning at the core (Messenger et al., 2016), international partnerships incorporate a business perspective in order to secure and maintain the optimal conditions for their various activities. General hesitance of treating higher education and its international initiatives through the business lens surfaced in the interviews:

“But it is a business and it needs to be treated like a business. In addition to many other considerations. It's a bit of a dirty word, you know, talking about business and higher education, and the business of internationalisation.” (MRU)

The evidence of strategic plans and goals accompanied by progress reports and planning processes further underscored the increasingly business-like behaviours in higher education. Operating as a global business and dealing with higher education “as a commercial product to be bought and sold” can still be felt and perceived as unsettling and disturbing. (Altbach, 2015, p. 1). However, the necessity to employ a responsible business perspective in carrying out partnerships served not only utilitarian purposes but extended to anticipating appropriate academic responses and structures. For example:

“It's a phenomenal amount of risk, financial risk, risk management implications. The calibre of students that they [leadership] accepted to get the numbers, but they were not prepared academically, or direct support structures were not put in place to support them.” (MRU)

In sum, international partnerships afforded funding opportunities and supported access to additional opportunities beyond national sources. The importance that a number of participants from both globally and locally focused institutions attached to financial aspects was unsurprising. As noted in the Literature Review chapter, financial considerations are significant as they relate to partnership sustainability. It is reasonable to assume that those partnerships that fail to demonstrate financial stability are likely to become fragile and lose further investment. Echoing earlier comments, institutions expect partnerships to perform self-sustainably or break even (Jie, 2010; Woodfield et al., 2009). In that way, locally engaged institutions seemed to put a greater emphasis on accessing and attracting funding compared to those engaged globally that reported easier access to funding opportunities. The results demonstrated in this section go beyond the previous studies in that they show that access to sustaining partnership funding centres on the issue of reciprocity and challenges associated with outbound mobility. This can be explained by pressures to use state tax for state residents as well as considerations of financial returns in the event of reduced or waived tuition for international students.

4.2.4. Global visibility: To raise profile and gain access

International partnerships served as a way to raise institutional visibility on a global scale and to widen representation in key or new regions across the world. Like many higher education institutions, the selected universities had ambitions to climb up the ranking ladder, enhance their reputation, and access partner resources.

The drive to enhance reputation seemed to be more pronounced among globally oriented institutions. Partnerships seemed to fulfil or help navigate institutional ambitions more effectively. As illustrated in the following quote:

“They definitely raise the profile of our university. We’re a research institution, but we are also especially at the undergraduate level, really a locally serving institution. So, there are some parts of the world where our university is quite well known. And then there are other parts of the world where I travel, and people have never heard of [institution’s name]. So, having these partnerships give us an avenue to really put ourselves out there, so to speak, and raise the profile of our institution.” (GNU)

As further explained, partnerships were ‘avenues’ to access more and different knowledge, scholars, and approaches to similar issues:

“Our faculty are simply better known and better experts in their field, but also in more tangible ways that will likely result in us receiving more research scholars, that will likely affect our ranking.” (GNU)

“There’s so many different kinds of partnerships that give us sometimes access to data, sometimes it’s access to funding, sometimes it’s equipment, sometimes it’s a different approach to a similar issue.” (GCU)

Cutting across both globally and locally engaged institutions, international partnerships displayed motives underscored by potentialities that they could generate in the future. As RPU’s International Lead elaborated:

“Even if that partnership will directly benefit, let’s say, outbound study abroad programming, does it have the potential to impact the institution in other ways? So, would there be faculty exchange where we could bring an international faculty member to campus to teach from a different lens? Would this partnership develop the opportunities for joint research projects? Would it provide students who want to come to [institution’s name] to matriculate and get their degrees here? We’re looking at it from all of those different angles.”

Access to generating institution-wide impacts through partnerships appeared to manifest in distinct ways. While globally engaged institutions sought complementarity to gain access to international scholars, research equipment and resources, locally engaged institutions sought similarity in terms of academic offerings, programmes, student profiles.

“We look for some mutuality, reciprocity, complementarity for instance, do they have equipment or resources that we need? We have something that’s useful for them. We do look for shared values, how we’re going to use the information and knowledge that we generate.” (GCU)

References to similarity transpired in the accounts provided by the locally engaged institutions. For example:

“... both of us need to make sure that we’re a good fit. And a good fit is determined on so many different things, especially academic offerings. Are we aligning ourselves well with the academic programs at that institution? So, definitely looking for partnerships that have similar mission and vision, similar profile of students if student mobility is an important factor.” (MRU)

“We also look at the programs that they offer because if they are not similar to what we have, it’s not going to be successful.” (RIU)

In sum, the interests of improving the global market positioning and winning the “race to be internationally present” (Amey, 2010a, p. 57) encouraged institutions to seek partnerships. Findings pointed to a distinction in how they perceived an inter-institutional fit within partnerships and how they attempted to control it. They further illustrated an increased attention to self-reflection in terms of institutional unique contributions. To ensure the partnership success, globally engaged institutions tended to approach those institutions able to complement their research in terms of equipment, expertise, facilities, or resources. As detailed above, locally engaged institutions tended to seek similarity in terms of partner mission, vision, academic programmes, and student profiles in order to augment the relationship sustainability.

4.2.5. Partner motivations: ‘What’s in it for them?’

The importance of understanding partner motivations reflected concerns about hidden agendas and evolving plans that may be difficult to capture in documents. In analysing the interview transcripts, the internal probe: “*What’s in it for them?*” (GNU) underscored a limited view on partner motivations. Access to an in-depth understanding of what propels partner institutions to engage, what comprises value for them, and how they express it was problematic. For example:

“I honestly don’t think you’d ever get told on the full motivation or if there’s a motivation that’s nefarious, I don’t think we’d necessarily know that.” (GCU)

At the same time, the significance of probing ‘what’s in it for them’ revealed a paradox of joint ventures incorporating both complementarity and compatibility and choosing partners that are different, yet similar (Beerkens & Derwende, 2007). As different partners bring different values and priorities to the partnership, Amey et al. (2007) stipulate the importance of sustaining mutually beneficial partnerships amid differences. In that regard, GNU’s International Lead noted:

“If they are not in it for the right reasons or simply the reasons that are not consistent with ours, they may not be wrong per se but they may not be in line with what our priorities are, if they have different priorities that can create problems down the line.”

Fitting the increasingly selective and strategic approach to partnerships (Deardorff et al., 2012), the study participants emphasised concerns about changing plans against the backdrop of external developments. For example, tensed relationships between the

governments of the USA and China raised concerns among the participants about ‘what’s in it for them’. As one of the participants noted:

“In the U.S. right now, we’re dealing with a very specific moment of history when the U.S. government and Chinese government are not particularly trustful of one another. And so, we as universities who have strong research partners in China are now double checking the motivations of these partners. Are they only interested in the research we signed up to do together? Or, are they looking to have access to something else that we don’t want share with them?” (GCU).

To generate feedback loops and map out adaptive strategies, the institutions engaged in getting to know the partner mostly through face-to-face meetings that continued beyond the early negotiation stage. The need for continuous environmental scanning challenged many U.S. institutions as they were forced *“to be especially conscious right now in dealing with particular countries” (GCU).*

4.3. Implementing international partnerships

4.3.1. Resources: ‘Spend in order to make’

To function effectively, partnerships rely on resources. What resources partnerships have at their disposal vary across institutions. The evidence gathered in interviews and the relevant documents included time and energy individuals dedicate to partnerships as well as financial resources institutions allocate to them. The following quote describes necessary considerations of initial resource investment:

“Well, you’ve got to first spend money to make money, especially in international education. You’ve got to invest the time and energy and funding to be able to reap rewards, and then not even immediately, right? These are long-term investments.” (MRU)

Partnerships would not produce benefits unless concrete but also less tangible resources were put ‘on the table’. However, looking beyond what is ‘on the table’ can be challenging. The view may be blurred by the investment of tremendous resources upfront as well as over an extended period of time. Regarded in the frame of long-term engagements, benefits are rarely known with certainty. Therefore, risk and uncertainty must be considered in partnership conversations as they navigate the process away from illusive and toward ‘good enough’ resolutions (Huxham & Vangen, 2013). As supported by the gathered evidence,

such considerations led to recognise different starting points between the two institutional types suggesting advantageous start for globally focused institutions. For example:

“We are a Tier 1 research institution, so that specification is used for dedicating resources for international programs and for research and faculty activities.” (GNU)

“In terms of general commitment, resources have been coming to us as the institution has seen the value of that investment.” (GCU)

Reflecting somewhat healthier budgets, globally focused institutions reported a flow of investments in international activities including partnerships. Among locally engaged institutions, concerns about resource limitations encouraged questioning and careful considerations of partnership effectiveness, such as:

“Do we have the capacity to nurture and devote the appropriate resources and energies into sustaining the collaboration effectively?” (RPU)

“The agreements and partnerships that are not beneficial to us financially, these are the ones that we pay extra attention to. These are the ones that we would end.” (RIU)

Overall, an understanding that the resources weren't infinite led to the sharpened view on the fundamental resources, especially financial and human resources. Based on the collected accounts, financial resource differences transpired between the two institutional types placing globally engaged institutions in an advantageous position over locally focused institutions. Additionally, hiring new staff or investing in professional development of the existing staff emerged as lacking and much needed for further development for all institutions. For example: *“I don't have a single partnership officer as many institutions do. Mostly because we are just too short-staffed. I would love to have a partnership person.” (GCU)*. In that regard, institutions noted stretched operations lacking staff.

4.3.2. Structure: Centralising inherently decentralised arrangements

An organisational structure determines how different institutional activities, including partnerships, are supported toward a positive impact. In this case, toward achieving advantage through partnering. The data from the five U.S. institutions of higher education exposed slightly different organisational arrangements reflecting their institutional unique conditions and strategies. Generally underscored by a concerted effort toward 'professionalising', as portrayed in the following quote, institutions acknowledged shifts between decentralised and centralised structures supporting partnerships.

“So, before we can keep on signing or letting faculty engaging in these conversations, that needs to be a bit more centralised or I call it a professionalised approach to managing partnerships. That needs to go to the appropriate channels and needs to go to appropriate reviews and the contract team, the legal team making sure that we use the same language, the same templates.” (MRU)

For globally oriented institutions, it was important to maintain distributed responsibilities among multiple individuals and departments. This was to sustain ideas and energy throughout the campus. For example:

“We have lots of literally hundreds of scientists, scholars, and campus staff, students, leaders, who are each developing things on their own, and then coming to my office and saying, hey, I'd love to do this.” (GCU)

Characterised by the multiplicity of research objectives and interests, the decentralised nature underpinned the inevitable distribution of partnership operations, which was perceived as *“quite frankly, productive in a decentralised academic structure, such as ours” (GCU).*

From the gathered evidence, it appeared that the tendency to centralise multiple operational and strategic components was preferred at locally focused institutions. As documented in the following illustrative comments:

“The international area used to be together when I was a student, then it was all split apart and then the President decided to bring it all back together. She sent the message that she empowered the office or the centralised clearing house of international recruitment and of partnerships and, of course, immigration services, to a smaller but still international initiatives on campus ... and when the upper administration makes a decision to bring back together everything that is international, it empowers that office.” (RIU)

“So, a lot of it has to do with just knowing what you have, coordination, and very much hands-on both operational and strategic management of the partnership. The day-to-day operations of what needs to happen and constantly assessing, reassessing, analysing what you already have and taking out meaningful opportunities for that institution that will help you to move your institution forward. It's always juggling and balancing act all the time.” (MRU)

Positive observations that transpired as a result of the centralisation of partnership coordination further revealed its empowering potential, as acknowledged above. Its usefulness included better coordination and raised visibility throughout the campus. With an understanding that the academic delivery of various partnership activities might remain

inherently distributed, shifts between decentralised and centralised structures may endure, albeit to different extents. Thus, a picture of an *'always juggling and balancing act'* (MRU) perhaps most closely encompassed the continuous efforts to centralising something that will remain inherently decentralised.

4.3.3. Dealing with cultural differences

National cultural differences can pose challenges and greatly affect the functioning of partnerships. On the one hand, diverse cultural perspectives have the potential to instigate innovation and creativity. As the importance of partnerships lies in the production of something that none of the institutions could achieve alone (Vangen & Huxham, 2006). The accounts of key administrators supported the constructive effect of combining dissimilar cultural perspectives. While at the same time, they acknowledged difficulties in practice. For example:

"It's easier to work with anyone who is most similar, it's just not very useful. Is it easier? Yes. Is it worthwhile to go into challenges? Absolutely. So, if the schools are the same size, if they speak the same language, if they have the same governing rules, the same political systems, etc. That makes it really easy that's why so often you have intranational partnerships ... it's easier, but in terms of the value of getting to resources, and complementarity and perspectives that are different than your own, then you just have to go to those international. The difference itself is what's valued, what makes it difficult, but it is definitely worthwhile." (GCU)

Cultural variations probed and highlighted distinctive national qualities. As noted above, the gap created by distinct cultures manifested as both values and challenges. Some of the most distinctive qualities that the participants recognised included work-related traditions, expectations, and work ethic, for example:

"In certain countries when it comes the weekend it's hard to get hold of people, if there is an emergency. I think communication has been a challenge for us in situations of risk that we need to get hold of people after working hours or the weekend." (RIU)

"Engaging in a conversation, it's a power thing, right? We get to control how to respond, when we respond, who responds and what level of detail we actually give that our partner is looking for. And sometimes a lot of it has to do with intercultural competency and understanding of things like holidays, things that, you know, people, not all people in the world subscribe to the American work ethic of being on email 24/7, Saturdays and Sundays,

and holidays, respecting the boundaries and understanding the hierarchies within each institution.” (MRU)

Based on the collected data, one way to approach cultural differences was to recognise the differences and advance beyond them to discern ‘*what’s valued*’ and ‘*what makes it difficult*’ (GCU). By discerning the benefits and challenges of cultural diversity, it was possible to develop appropriate adaptive mechanisms or strategies. Overall, the collected accounts underlined the mechanisms that valued “*having global experience or ability to work across cultures*” (RPU).

4.3.4. Organisational culture favouring and challenging partnerships

Colloquially termed ‘how things are done around here’, organisational culture enveloped beliefs, values, and practices that underpinned institutions’ operations with varying degrees of visibility. As the relevant literature suggested, considerations of organisational culture have been progressively linked to success and advancement (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). In terms of the more observable layers of organisational culture, institutions have become more conscious of how they portray their efforts and their outcomes. The more observable layers of organisational culture materialised as codified practices, policies, and procedures. Consistent across the five institutions were internationalisation articulations included in an overall institutional strategy.

The views of study participants suggested organisational cultures largely supportive of international partnerships and perceived as valuable by top-level leadership. They were often linked to personal international experiences that created commitment for extending international activities within higher education institutions. For example:

“Leadership, both our previous and current president, these are the people who have travelled abroad extensively. These are the people who believe our students, our domestic students need to be exposed to experiences abroad. That we need to have a campus that is diversified and that the international students have a role to play. I have to say my institution is 100% behind international initiatives.” (RIU)

Individuals’ personal experiences seemed to provide a strong reason for creating similar opportunities for others. It was quite clear that these experiences were pivotal to the participants’ perceptions of the value of international initiatives. They likely affected their support of international affairs and also showed commitment of their institutions for further growth:

“Institutionally speaking, that is a value to us. We do really appreciate the partners that we have, and we are always seeking ways to improve our partnerships and enhance them, but then also looking for other partnerships that maybe haven't been developed yet, and to see how that could be a positive impact in value for our campus community in the region.” (RPU)

Direct experiences of the individuals most closely engaged in the formation and implementation of partnerships portrayed nuanced challenges. They reflected a need for greater clarity and transparency of partnership inventory and more deeply of relationships that have been set up in the past. As acknowledged below:

“Number one is the inventory. First of all, you need to know who you partner with and sometimes that is a big topic in and of itself, especially in large universities with layers and years and decades of interaction engagement. To some extent, it's been a common practice in the past.” (MRU)

Evolving objectives, changing circumstances, or departing individuals can disrupt the momentum creating hidden agendas. As many institution-wide partnerships evolved from individual collaborations, their current coordination might struggle to fill in the missing pieces of information to ensure its success. For example:

“Some of the faculty in the schools and colleges may really only look at it from their side. And I think our office has to try to look at it from the partner side a bit more, a bit more in depth than may have happened before.” (GNU)

The experiences of the administrators also portrayed differences around academic participation signalling resistance to engage among locally engaged institutions. Aligned with observations of insufficient institutional infrastructure (Amey, 2010a; Shore & Groen, 2009), they noted uneven involvement that may be explained by disciplinary interests. As an example:

“I have colleges that never champion anything unless we go to them. And there are others who go to NAFSA, they travel, they try to do things, they try to go after new partnerships and they come back and work with us. In our case, it's the College of Business and the College of Education are two best examples that we have.” (RIU)

It may further be explained by a narrow focus on a single or a low number of partnering countries. This may create unintended consequences due to a large concentration of international students from the same region, as noted below:

“... because the program began to be saturated with Chinese students only and that created a reverse effect on faculty not being happy about these things and that dissuaded the whole purpose of global perspectives in the classroom when everybody in the classroom is from the same place. It definitely had some unintended consequences.” (MRU)

The organisational culture encompassed layers of favouring understandings meshed with nuanced challenges. They most commonly associated with calls for greater clarity to ‘know who you partner with’ (MRU) and how to better align academic engagement with international work. The latter one showing faculty participation in the form of expected engagement among institutions with a global focus and expressed as *“we certainly expect our faculty to be involved globally” (GNU)*. To the contrary, locally oriented institutions showed a more voluntary faculty engagement.

4.3.5. Leadership: Changes at the top

Findings showed that top-level leadership changes were linked to tensions in international partnerships. The global ambitions of the top-level leadership were influential in directing the institutional global presence and its coordination. As one participant stated:

“Sometimes the leadership changes or someone retires or changes the job and all of a sudden, the whole conversation becomes irrelevant.” (MRU)

With leadership changes came a fresh look at institutions’ policies and priorities. In terms of internationalisation and partnerships, reviewing and redirecting the relevant strategies suggested two differing approaches. For example, Regional Pacific University appointed a new president over a year ago and followed with changes in several leading posts such as vice presidents and academic provost. The major leadership changes brought *about “a renewal of looking at the different strategies that we’re employing as an institution and different plans that we’re putting forward” (RPU)*. It further led to the development of new and more focused approaches to engaging with overseas partners:

“It’s something that we’ve been revising and really trying to articulate more clearly. It’s something that we’ve been working on now for about a year to have an institutional internationalization plan that’s much more focused.” (RPU)

In practical terms, the top-level leadership changes prompted the institution-wide process of re-evaluation that included a holistic view on both strong and weak points in the context of international partnerships. It began with seeking answers to relevant questions and subsequently led to the refinement of approaches concerned with the selection of partners,

the identification of areas of partnership growth in terms of new geographic regions, as well as new academic activities and modes of delivery.

The recent re-evaluation process triggered by a major leadership transition at Mountain Regional University implied a major departure from the previous international orientation. It included a shift away from a very narrow scope of international collaboration. It also involved careful considerations of next steps due to the unfavourable conditions this narrow view created.

“Our university has been going through a pretty substantial comprehensive leadership change meaning that the previous provost, who was focused on Asia, on specific partnerships with specific universities in China is gone, left the university. We also have a new president and many previous approaches have been re-evaluated looking at effectiveness of these partnerships. We are finding that some of these partnerships have committed the institution to some unfavourable financial promises or financial commitments that we are no longer in a position to continue. For example, offering student discounts that severely undermined the sustainability of many programmes.” (MRU)

The unavoidable changes at the top transpired as the re-evaluation processes that affected the continuation of international partnerships in distinct ways. They led to the refinement and realignment of policies governing partnerships showing signs of continuity. They also revealed the accumulation of the adverse effects and the impetus to engage in course-correcting conversations. It was apparent that the changes at the top prompted the advanced thinking about partnership arrangements.

While the importance of the top-level leadership was key to unlocking the support necessary to fulfil the objectives of the internationalisation plan, the participating administrators highlighted leadership enacted by individuals at different levels. For example:

“So, there are many champions, but there is a formal role within my office for generating and supporting partnerships.” (GCU)

“I think it’s both. You can say both the faculty and I are the champions.” (RIU)

One of the informal but vital role driving partnerships included the role of a champion. Integrating both academic and administrative sides, the gathered data attested to the collective nature played by multiple champions. As noted earlier, this is important due to the impact that a champion departure may have on the partnership sustainability (Amey, 2010a).

4.3.6. Beyond communication: Individual investment

A common view among those interviewed was that communication between partners must go beyond a simple exchange of information to refocus on relationships and relationship building. Although the communication was not reported to be the cause of problems, the use of an appropriate communication channel in building healthy relationships was not straightforward. The global use of communication technology influenced the frequency and ease of information exchanges between partners. As a result, the tendency to use online channels prevailed. While the use of online communication is necessary in situations in which a later review or proof is required, there are situations in which it is important to convey respect, honour or immediate feedback. The non-verbal information conveyed in face-to-face meetings or video communication can inculcate a sense of ownership and confidence that comes from seeing the partner and local conditions. For example:

“I think for partners, particularly in Asia, it's such a big time difference, it's really difficult to get people on the phone. I do find it interesting that our partners in Latin America really value Skype. They want to see your face and talk to you. I actually appreciate it. I think, you feel more comfortable with your colleagues when (even though Skype isn't the same as being in the same room I think it's the next best thing) you can see their faces and also see their office and the environment where they're working. Actually, that helps us work better together.” (GNU)

However, globally induced ways of communication and local constraints of many institutions to fund staff travel affected interpersonal relationships. Different communication channels allowed for different levels of information richness to be transmitted and different degrees of relationships to be built. Understood as *“both the institutional and individual project” (GCU)*, partnerships were reinforced with personal investments promoted especially in the early stages. This reality became apparent in conversations with interviewees. As one interviewee acknowledged:

“It's very important to set the stage right in the very beginning. It's much easier, I guess, it's easier to do it with new partnerships, rather than fixing the legacy or correcting the issues of longstanding partnerships.” (MRU)

The importance of ‘setting the stage right’ through initial face-to-face connections translated into stronger partnerships that could weather down inevitable issues later in the process.

4.3.7. Trust cannot be verified

What transpired in the interviews was that trust is crucially important in partnerships involving students. This may be explained by relatively high tuition fees that American students sustain. The higher fees translate into more student focused amenities and support services that may not exist in the partner countries. The RIU's International Lead clarified that:

"In American education, there is a lot of I'm not going to use the word babysitting, but there's a lot of hand holding. So, students receive a lot of attention here and when they go abroad, sometimes it's not the same kind of hand holding than they're used to. This can be a challenge to partnerships." (RIU)

In cases of student-centered partnerships, institutions paid close attention to the safety and well-being of their students. In addition to the environmental scanning of external developments, they engaged in the scanning of local institutional conditions in order to establish and grow trust-based relationships. With an understanding that the value of trusting relationships was pre-emptive as trust between partners can help develop more accurate interpretations or prevent possible conflicts or issues later in the process. The scanning process involved site visits and meetings:

"We usually do a site visit to see what facilities are there, we meet with faculty, we meet with a study abroad office. But ultimately, you're leaving [institution's name] students and these are someone's children in the care of these people halfway across the world. I would certainly not send, and I am not an advocate for sending a [institution's name] student to somewhere where I didn't feel I could trust them. That would be problematic." (GNU)

Further, it was preferred to start with small projects and progressively enlarge the scope of activity as trust developed. Because *"trust cannot be verified"* (GCU), its fragile and cyclical nature became clear in conversations with key administrators. For example:

"I think institutional trust is very similar to human trust. You might have a good feeling at the beginning, but trust deepens with time. And so, one thing we try to do is to get to know the people that we're working with, we start with smaller projects and built a bigger project. We start with projects that are relatively independent collaborations and work towards those that are more integrated as you get to know the partner better and trust doesn't just mean motivation." (GCU)

Defined as an orientation that increases confidence in partner's integrity but also its own vulnerability (Heffernan & Poole, 2005), trust grew progressively through small projects and pilot collaborations. Findings suggested that the cycle of trust building evolved from expectations to actual commitments. In other words, trust was *"about collaborating in ways and setting up conditions that we know we can all move forward towards the objectives"* (GCU). Its cycle of regeneration seemed to underscore partnership's sustainability or its dissolution. For example, in cases when *"they promised certain things verbally, but also in writing that did not come to fruition. As a result, there hasn't been anything so great we've had to take legal action, but we will not work with that partner again"* (GNU). The erosion of trust could be detrimental to the success of joint work. Findings suggested that investing in getting to know the partner and beginning with pilot collaborations could increase confidence in partner's integrity and reduce risk.

4.3.8. Power: Who needs whom?

From the analysed data, power was seen as a function of relative dependence underlined by global influences on higher education and local understandings of strengths or 'points of power' (Huxham & Vangen, 2013). Power dynamic changes reported in conversations with key administrators suggested terrain shifts associated with globalised market mechanisms. They pointed to new self-perceptions of power, as MRU's International Lead observed:

"The power dynamic has interestingly changed, especially with developing countries, so to speak, where I feel like now on our end, we sometimes need them more than they need us. That's been my observation and it goes back to motivations for the partnership. Why? Why now? Why us? What are you really expecting from us? These reasons are multi-layered and multi-faceted. These are quite sensitive conversations."

With global competition intensifying among higher education institutions, collaborative ventures offer many advantages of enhanced learning, new opportunities, and ultimately progress. The fact that many emerging countries have aggressively sought partnerships with U.S. institutions attests to the achieved advantages and the resulting shifting dynamics.

"For example, there were universities in [Asia] 10 or 12 years ago, many of them wanted to partner with us. They thought that would bring some sort of financial benefit or significant discounts to the students pursuing degrees in the U.S. They signed an MOU, they sealed the document with a handshake agreement. They would host us, they would wine and dine

us and then we'd be able to offer them better deals, better pricing, better conditions, more accommodation and so forth.” (MRU)

The changes in perceived power dynamics have further suggested repositioning of collaboration nodes and changing interactions on a global scale. With Europe and China sustaining the lead in partnerships developed with U.S. institutions, a relative dependency of who needs whom appeared to expand to other world regions. This might be explained by the intensifying global competition and the strengthening position of emerging countries.

“For some, you have to beg to be a partner like try to make a partnership with Scotland. It is impossible because everybody wants to go to Scotland, they don't need exchange programs because anybody would pay to go there. Certain nations in the world I see this especially to a lesser extent now than when I started in China, you know, it was advantageous to them to have a lot of universities on their website as partners. I am seeing this now more in African countries. Countries from Africa reaching out to be partners with us.” (RIU)

“In China, there's a big push to internationalise. I have my own issues with that, I think a lot of schools are dying to have exchanges and have relationships and have agreements with us. But I am not confident in all those cases that the schools in China really want to have a balanced partnership.” (GNU)

The shifting dynamics and repositioning of collaboration nodes and interactions on a global scale reflected changes within emerging education systems. These can be understood as incorporating the necessity to modernise education but also increasingly the capacity to disseminate culture and influence the world. As an example, China is now exporting and facilitating cultural exchanges through the establishment of Confucius Institutes across the world (Yang, 2010).

The relative dependence function of who needs whom unfolded in expanded understandings of power. Often confined to financial points, local understandings of power extended to the areas of knowledge and expertise missing by one partner. Interviews offered many examples of the need to look beyond the power of finance to discover equivalent points in areas such as regional knowledge, expertise, or research facilities. One such example summarises this perspective:

“I have a principle that I use called equivalent, not equal. So, you don't want to establish a partnership in which there's a dominant and a subordinate partner. What you're really looking for is to be sure that there is a mutuality of resources. Let's say the wealthier school is partnering with a less wealthy school. In terms of financial resources, that wealthy school

has a motivation, has a reason for engaging with a less wealthy school, which may be that they are in a region of the world that is unique, and that they wouldn't be able to navigate the geographic or political or economic situation without a partner. And even though they're not bringing what I would call quantitative resources that you can measure, they're bringing something that is an absolutely equal value, and should be treated with the same respect, as an equal partner. There are institutions that are so differently positioned in the world in terms of overall resources but when you define that relationship or a project, it should be mutually equivalent, not necessarily equal. It's an attitude, as well as a contract.” (GNU)

A changing geopolitical landscape forces many U.S. institutions to adapt their international outreach strategies. Shifting away from a U.S. centric approach to international partnerships, the data underscored calls to abandon “the preconceived notions of superiority, which they often bring to conversations with potential international partners” (Marmolejo, 2014, p. 41). The changing ‘spheres of influence’ promise to incite further questioning into global ambitions and imperatives to collaborate inter-institutionally (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002).

4.4. Chapter summary: Changing notions of superiority

In the USA case study, the collected data pointed to the changing notions of superiority. As noted in the Literature Review chapter, the hegemonic position of the American higher education following the Cold War created a heightened interest in building linkages with U.S. institutions, which became to be viewed as a ‘mark of distinction’ (Klasek, 1992). With the rising and expanding global competition, U.S. institutions have been paying renewed attention to their strengths and weaknesses to generate “flexible tools and incentives for international collaboration” that were not required in the past (Marmolejo, 2014, p. 41). Supported by the reputation of academic dominance, a closer look into the actual functioning of partnerships revealed that a new importance is given to mutually equivalent or balance-seeking partnerships that could ‘act as a pipeline into multiple areas of the institution’ (RPU).

Exploring the formation of international partnerships in the U.S. case study revealed different approaches of globally and locally engaged institutions. They highlighted differences in historical embeddedness, local impact, access to funding, and global status. Influenced by the institutional founding conditions, globally engaged institutions showed outward-looking tendencies to integrate the institution into the globalising environment through research production and dissemination (Hawawini, 2011). On the other hand, locally oriented institutions tended to integrate the international dimension into the institution aiming to

enhance student opportunities and instruction (Knight, 2004). The analysis also pointed to influences generated by local students and communities and highlighted the importance of location and the alignment with its interests. In that regard, internationalising more traditional communities of locally focused institutions or enhancing opportunities in diverse settings by globally engaged institutions reflected claims that partnerships are asked to do more than in the past (Sutton et al., 2011, p. xv). Although international partnerships used to represent almost exclusively one-way mobility of students and occasional collaborative research in the past (Klasek, 1992; Knight & de Wit, 1995), they are now asked to respond to a growing number of priorities on a local, national, and global level. While partnerships provide access to funding and shape global visibility, the study results pointed to specific institutional issues and responses, such as reciprocity in terms of equivalent exchanges, pressures to use state tax for state residents, or financial considerations associated with reduced or waived tuition. Further, locally engaged institutions tended to put a greater emphasis on accessing and attracting funding compared to those engaged globally which reported easier access to funding opportunities. Against this background, international partnerships afforded ways to shape institutions' positioning by entering the global stage with partners who could match their mission, vision, programmes, and student profiles or complement their global research expertise, equipment, or resources.

The tendency to build *'equivalent rather than equal' partnerships* (GCU) translated into mechanisms adapted by institutions to respond to resource limitations, structural dichotomy, national and organisational culture diversity as well as leadership and relational tensions. They manifested as a continuous attention to the fundamental resources, especially financial and human resources. Although the data pointed to a more advantageous position for globally engaged institutions in terms of financial resources, the two institutional types shared concerns about insufficient staffing and professional development opportunities. The concerns that capture a paradox of growing international partnerships yet lacking *'strategically innovative'* staff to support it (Poole, 2001). Next, the efforts to centralise an inherently decentralised structure of partnerships showed more resistance among globally oriented institutions as they involved more individual research links. Although international partnerships experienced a largely favouring organisational culture, locally engaged institutions emphasised the need of active faculty participation.

Attempts to achieve balanced and equivalent collaborations also emerged from the collected accounts referring to relational aspects of the implementation process. They most visibly underlined negotiations related to communication channels with face-to-face meetings carrying the highest potential to inculcate a sense of confidence and trust. They reflected

notions of being “*committed to be very, very open, honest, and transparent*” (GCU). Built on the recognition that partnerships function on the basis of relative dependence, the data offered examples of the need to look beyond the power of finance to discover equivalent points that can include regional knowledge, academic expertise, and relevant facilities. The exploration of how institutions respond to tensions highlighted both the potential of achieving advantage as well as inevitable difficulties in their implementation and subsequent adaptations.

Chapter 5 - MARKET-DRIVEN PARTNERSHIPS IN THE UK

“British universities are a lot more upfront about the fact that they are doing it for value. Other higher education systems are quite often quite shocked by that, by commercialism.”

(Interviewee - Global Inland University)

5.1. Introduction

Similar to the previous chapter, this chapter presents the findings related to international partnerships provided by senior administrators from five UK higher education institutions. Preceded by the description of the selected research sites, the analysis is organised around the main research questions. It points to the differences between locally and globally engaged institutions and introduces the themes that emerged from the collected data. The objective is to explore why the selected U.S. institutions form partnerships and how they respond to implementation tensions.

5.1.1. UK higher education context

Higher education is considered to be a devolved matter with differences in funding, regulatory, and reporting structures between the four constituent nations: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales (Gallacher & Raffe, 2012). The most observable nodes of entanglement with the central UK government reflect the development of finance strategies and international market priorities. Similar to the federal governments in the USA and Canada, the UK government also addresses wider policies indirectly affecting higher education institutions, including immigration, employment, and economy (ibid.). The policy areas that are closely linked to international partnerships as they blend in with visa regulations, needs of the domestic labour market, and contributions to economic well-being of the country.

The higher education sector has experienced significant expansion since the 1960s as a response to growing student numbers, rising expectations of better qualified school leavers, and expanding demands for national prosperity (Perkin, 1972). The sector marked the participation rate of only 5% attending 33 universities in the early 1960s (Mayhew, Deer, &

Mehak Dua, 2004). By opening 13 new universities in the 1960s and re-labelling the former polytechnics in 1992, the participation rate of young people attending UK universities significantly increased. It initially reached 49% in 2011 and rose again to a new high of 49.3% in 2015 (Bolton, 2018). The most recent available data showed the post-secondary participation rate of 50.2% in 2018²⁰.

Framed “as a market of competing corporations,” UK higher education system is regulated by research performance reviews that have consequences for funding (Marginson, 2018a, p. 32). As a result, funding levels vary and concentrate in the top research-intensive institutions. In addition to central funding through the research councils, each nation appropriates research funds (Bruce, 2012). While individual research policies promote an ‘ultra-competitive ethos, commercial language, and performative management’ (Riddell, 2015), they also reflect a ‘shared situational logics of public spending cuts’ making the devolved administrations more interested in the international market opportunities (Gallacher & Raffe, 2012).

Although different values and priorities of the devolved administrations show variations in market-led practices, “English policies continue to define the agendas to which the others must respond” (Gallacher & Raffe, 2012, p. 22). Given its considerably larger higher education sector, England’s dominant role has direct and indirect consequences for policies adopted elsewhere. With over 80% of total student numbers and total higher education income, these involve finance strategies, such as student loan schemes, public/private tuition cost-sharing, and research funding (Bruce, 2012). In that vein, successive administrations in England have been more supportive of high fees and economic goals of education than the administrations of the other three nations (Gallacher & Raffe, 2012). The student fees and cost-sharing policy has introduced most significant differences between the devolved administrations oscillating between the absence of tuition fees in Scotland and the ability to charge up to a maximum of £9,250 per year in England (THE, 2020).

In terms of the development of international market priorities, a concerted effort to build the Education UK brand and promote it by the British Council was initiated in 1999²¹. By developing policies and delivering educational programmes, the British Council has been strategically aligning educational objectives with the international objectives of the UK government. In an attempt to successfully compete in the international market and benefit

²⁰ More information available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/participation-rates-in-higher-education-2006-to-2018>.

²¹ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/press/new-education-uk-website>

from the UK's global reputation, the devolved administrations participate in the UK-wide policies concerned with international student admissions, data collection, and quality assurance (Gallacher & Raffe, 2012). As part of the European Higher Education Area, their shared participation also aligns with a range of policy objectives developed at the European level. Prior to the UK's departure from the EU, the most observable ones included frameworks supporting international mobility and research in coordination with the European Commission-funded Erasmus and Horizon 2020 programmes. It is unclear if and in what form the shared participation of the devolved administrations will continue beyond the UK's departure. However, it is certain that the common drive to boost international education exports and exchanges will persist.

5.1.2. Profiles of participating institutions

There are 162 higher education institutions in receipt of public funding²². The expansion of UK higher education has been linked to the expansion of a university sector and a vocational public sector until the system became unified by the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act (Carpentier, 2018). Despite this key transformation of the UK higher education system, old (pre-1992) and new (post-1992) universities continue to show a degree of resonance with the former binary divide with old universities to be held in higher regard compared to new entrants (Raffe & Croxford, 2015). Assembled around similar history, mission, and status, a number of institutions on both sides formed mission-driven groups. In 1994, a select group of pre-1992 research-intensive universities established a Russell Group. Similarly, a cluster of 27 new universities formed a MillionPlus think tank concerned with widening access to higher education. Most recently, a group of 23 old and new institutions with a balanced portfolio of teaching, research, and civic engagement established University Alliance championing technical and professional education.

The present study includes a selection of five English universities, three 'old' universities and two 'new' universities that gained a university status in 1992 (Table 12). While higher education is a devolved matter, the devolved administrations participate in the UK-wide policies concerned with international education (Gallacher & Raffe, 2012). Their participation aligns with a range of policy objectives seeking to attract international communities, build relationships, and benefit from the UK's global reputation. The present study refers to the UK

²² <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/facts-and-stats/Pages/higher-education-data.aspx>

as a whole and does not intend to discuss distinctions between the devolved nations. In the same way as it does not focus on distinctions between U.S. states or Canadian provinces.

Profile 1: Founded in the mid-1800s and granted university status in the 1960s, Regional North University (RNU) is firmly rooted in the regional developments through its interaction with industry. With a student population of nearly 20,000 students, it welcomes around 3,500 students from abroad. In response to an increasingly competitive environment, the University's strategy sets to guide growth and diversification through the development of national and international partnerships. The targeted approach to develop collaborative partnerships with industry in specific areas of priority aims to both expand programme portfolio and diversify student population. RNU's international vision focuses on building partnerships to enhance curriculum and provide real-world experiences and opportunities for students.

Profile 2: The establishment of Global South University (GSU) dates back to 1965. GSU's founding was a response to growing local student numbers. Currently serving 20,000 students including 4,500 international students, it is a research-intensive institution aiming to extend its reach and impact regionally, nationally, and internationally. Its close ties with the surrounding region manifest through several major initiatives focused on delivering higher education in disadvantaged areas and collaborating with neighbouring universities. Its internationalisation vision manifests in the establishment of multiple centres abroad. It further encompasses a strong international outlook in student experience and research. By leveraging existing partnerships and strengthening its linkages in Europe and beyond, GSU seeks to respond to increasingly internationally engaged students and staff.

Profile 3: Regional Midland University (RMU) gained a university status in 1992 and now serves 23,000 students from diverse and non-traditional backgrounds. RMU's academic offerings focus on addressing skills and innovation gaps needed within the local business community. Its high-quality teaching reputation attracts over 2,500 students from abroad each year. To raise its international profile, RMU has been active in developing partnerships with like-minded institutions of higher learning around the world. It has committed to providing access to an international experience to all its students and makes plans to open its first international office.

Profile 4: Global Inland University (GIU), a member of the Russell Group, has a longstanding history of delivering high-calibre research and scholarship. With a student population of over 35,000 students, it welcomes 6,500 international students. Building on its heritage, it is a well-connected and well-reputed global player in higher education. With plans

to be more purposeful and targeted in relationships, GIU maintains multiple collaborative research links regionally as well as internationally and intends to enhance its impact by engaging with the users of its research locally as well as globally.

Profile 5: As a former polytechnic institution, Regional South University (RSU) gained a degree-awarding status in 1992. With over 21,000 students, it aims to sharpen its focus on international engagement and further increase its nearly 3,000 international student population. RSU's new 2018 internationalisation strategy attests to the institution's appetite to streamline and reaffirm its international endeavours. RSU has a long history of building community university partnerships that have become central to its teaching and research offering many benefits from real-world input.

Table 12: Institutional characteristics - UK

Institution	Established	Founding mission	All students	Int'l students	Current mission	Spatial focus	²³ Global ranking	National ranking
RNU	1850	Technical education	19,000	3,500	Comprehensive teaching and research	Local and regional	700-800	60-70
GSU	1965	Interdisciplinary comprehensive education	20,000	4,500	Comprehensive teaching and research	Global	400-500	30-40
RMU	1870 (post 1992)	Art education	23,000	2,700	Comprehensive teaching and research	Local and regional	800-900	70-80
GIU	1900	Medical school	35,000	6,500	Research	Global	400-500	30-40
RSU	1858 (post 1992)	Art education	21,000	3,000	Comprehensive teaching and research	Local and regional	700-800	50-60

²³Webometrics takes into account teaching commitment, research results, perceived international prestige, and links with community to measure global and national performance. More information is available at: <http://www.webometrics.info/en>

5.2. Forming international partnerships

5.2.1. Research and student advancement: Contributing to the delivery of core activities

International partnerships are recognised for adding value to the provision of academic activities including enhanced teaching, research output, and opportunities for students and scholars (Burley et al., 2012; Dhillon, 2005). As evidenced in the collected data, the intrinsically driven commitment to growth and development of academic provision constructed the basis for further and more diverse motivations of globally and locally focused institutions.

Viewed as an expression of institutional utility and willingness to serve (Morphew & Hartley, 2006), the institutional mission and the imprinting of the founding history appeared to influence the formation of international partnerships. The science-oriented foundation of now research-intensive institutions occupying an international stage, delivering world-class research and education (GIU – Strategy 2020) and matching the best in the world (GSU – Strategy 2025) reflected the desire to expand their research strength and reach. In that sense, international partnerships advanced the founding mission through the enhancement of research quality and academic portfolio. As evidenced in the following quote:

“The development of our partnerships is driven by our interest in building global networks for research purposes, recruitment purposes, but also for international capacity building and generally reaching out to our network alumni to build our support and strengthen our message around the world.” (GSU)

Reflecting a history of high calibre research, the GIU's International Lead emphasised academic motivations combined with a need to maintain a strategic approach for partnering by noting that:

“We are a major research university and for Russell Group universities there does need to be an academic drive. There's no point in setting up partnerships that are purely based on commerciality because they wouldn't work academically.”

As further elaborated, ‘commerciality’ was a complement to support academic endeavours internationally. It covered strategies generating or maximising value, such as concentrating multiple academic activities in one partnership. For example:

“The general feeling is that the more activity you can concentrate within a geography and a key partner institution, the more sustainability and value you get out of each of those individual elements of internationalisation because they're helping to support and enrich each other.” (GIU)

Delving deeper into the delivery of academic provision through partnerships, findings revealed that locally engaged institutions tended to describe student-focused benefits and pointed toward the need to incorporate a more strategic approach for partnering. Reflecting their founding history that evolved from providing practical and profession-oriented education, their current mission statements included the focus on practice-based learning and teaching (RSU – Strategy 2016-2021), the commitment to the public good and impact (RMU – Strategic Plan 2018-2023), and the preparation of students for the real world (RNU – Strategic Plan 2016-2021). As further raised in the interviews:

“We partner for student exchange agreements. We also have franchise agreements where we teach modules overseas. We have a slight financial interest. I think we need to move to approach it more strategically. We should also do more of international collaboration which would make our research better overall.” (RNU)

The need to incorporate a more strategic approach to engaging internationally appeared to be horizontal. In other words, the participating locally engaged institutions were concerned about horizontal changes to occupy ‘different market spaces’ (Purcell, Beer, & Southern, 2016). They were interested in incorporating community engagement elements at partner locations. For example:

“One example is here at [institution’s name] there is a project called [name] and that project is replicated in [country]. So, it’s the same project that supports communities within a square mile radius of our university. And likewise, we do something similar in [country] with a local partner that essentially does outreach programs to support the communities within the square mile of that institution. So that’s kind of just an anecdotal example of what we try to do to make sure we provide a comparable opportunity for our students, and also our partners in terms of our mission and values.” (RMU)

“It’s interesting to look at how you can kind of still incorporate some aspects of community and public engagement globally. First of all just getting us out there is a starting point and then trying to make sure that everything we do has a kind of [institution’s name] flavour, which could then mean that we do look at where we can find opportunities to do some community engagement.” (RSU)

In that vein, the review of 128 mission statements of UK universities showed that 34 middle market institutions updated their mission statements between 2010 and 2012 signalling horizontal expansion “to occupy different or ‘new’ market spaces in which they could create the rules of the game” locally and globally (Purcell et al., 2016, p. 29).

There seemed to be an increased attention paid to developing partnerships across all missions – teaching, research, and civic engagement. However, these efforts were at different stages of development and attention as evidenced in the quotes above. They pointed to the differences between the two institutional types. While the embedded history and mission provided an overarching motivation to collaborate internationally, different institutional contexts further informed that motivation. Recognised for adding value, partnerships seemed to benefit globally focused institutions in terms of the expansion of research strength. They also provided value to locally oriented institutions in terms of the provision of practice-based learning and horizontal market expansion.

5.2.2. Local impact: Partnerships with European institutions

The impact of the UK’s departure from the European Union prompted higher education institutions to comment on the foreseen changes. Two major drivers transpired in interviews mainly underscored by concerns about accessing Horizon 2020 research funding and Erasmus+ student mobility schemes. As the biggest EU research programme, Horizon 2020 operates with over 77 billion euros to support innovative projects and partnerships. Similarly, the EU’s flagship education initiative Erasmus+ functions on a solid platform with a budget of nearly 15 billion euros reaching over 4 million individuals and organisations.

In terms of partnership motivations, they manifested in efforts to establish or strengthen partnerships across Europe in order to sustain continuous research and student exchange opportunities. Distinct stances were evident in the collected accounts and further supported by institutional announcements. In that sense, bilateral agreements supporting student mobility resurfaced as the primary preoccupation among locally oriented institutions:

“What we’ve been doing is going over our Erasmus agreements and bilateral partnerships that I think every university has been doing because of the government funding guarantee. Otherwise, opening an office in Paris or so is not an area of priority for us at the moment. It doesn’t mean it has never been spoken about. It might be something that we look at in the future.” (RSU)

While locally focused institutions engaged in reviews of the European Commission-funded student mobility programmes, globally oriented institutions have begun to initiate new or strengthen existing partnerships with European institutions. For example:

“Of course, increasingly now we're looking at European partners because of the uncertainty about Brexit. You've probably might see on the news we've just announced a relationship with [institution's name] in Ireland. It might necessitate the development of some small relationships across Europe.” (GIU)

“We've been strengthening our relationships with European universities. We also have four study centres in [cities across Europe]. Our ambition is very much to build on those activities that we have there. We have the ambition to be a European university. Of course, there are challenges in terms of recruitment. It is that EU students will become international fee payers and there are challenges with Erasmus in terms of our exchange partners, so we've already been building bilateral agreements with Erasmus partners in case we need them to facilitate exchanges with Erasmus that no longer exist, but of course that doesn't solve the funding problem.” (GSU)

Different approaches maybe be explained by mission priorities as well as the national-level guarantee to cover student mobility funding committed to UK universities. While the impact on the student mobility agreement may not need to trigger immediate responses, access to Horizon 2020 research funding guarantee may be unavailable for projects after exit day.²⁴ Therefore, pressures to sustain international collaboration to produce high-profile research with global impact were more pronounced and generating more impact on the globally engaged institutions.

“We have about 40% of our staff international with an international background and they remain very internationally motivated. However, there's some evidence that when our staff engages with European funding streams like Horizon 2020 that the partners that they're working with are reluctant to have them as principal investigators, at this point, given that it's unsure whether the UK will be in the European Union for a long term. But that hasn't stopped people from engaging, I suppose that have encouraged people to look at other funding streams.” (GSU)

In line with that view, the current president of the European Association for International Education (EAIE) anticipates that “Brexit will open up new options for international

²⁴ More information available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/horizon-2020-funding-if-theres-no-brexit-deal/horizon-2020-funding-if-theres-no-brexit-deal--2>

cooperation. Countries where English is more prominently integrated into everyday life, and universities with international profiles, will have an advantage, as UK partners are likely to foster joint initiatives, especially in research” (Pendl, 2018). Enabling to fulfil their mission, partnerships driven by national and European level developments promise to increase in prominence and intensity.

Underscored by concerns about accessing European Commission-funded programmes, the study findings drew attention to student and research communities. Focusing on student opportunities abroad, locally focused institutions engaged in reviewing their bilateral mobility agreements with European partners. Further, as one of the largest recipients of research funding in the EU, the UK would be expected to supplement a £1.5 billion gap in research funding following the expiration of Horizon 2020 (O'Malley, 2019). The associated uncertainty about the future of international research collaboration encouraged globally oriented institutions to act proactively and seek ‘small partnerships’ or alternate funding schemes.

5.2.3. Funding access: Adding to ‘the bottom line’

A common view among all interviewed was that international partnerships are partially formed for reasons related to financial benefits. In line with both the market-oriented strategies adopted at the national level as well as declining government spending, the UK higher education landscape changed from “a small collegium of medium-sized, research- and education-focused organisations to a knowledge-based service industry of medium and large enterprises with diverse missions, profiles and character” (Foskett, 2010, p. 25). Reflecting this change, the current observations among the UK study participants could be summarised as:

“If you go to an internationalisation conference, you'll hear that in terms of universities, British universities are a lot more upfront about the fact that they are doing it for value. Other higher education systems are quite often quite shocked by that, by commercialism. They know that internationalisation is very much seen as something adding to the common good of humanity rather than about adding to the bottom line.” (GIU)

Consistent with the views of the study participants are the EAIE Barometer data showing 42% of UK respondents reporting that their institutions internationalise for financial gains (EAIE, 2018). Signs of both responsiveness and resistance toward the market-driven partnerships emerged from the collected data. In response to market orientations, RMU's

International Lead detailed a business approach to the development of partnerships ensuring financial sustainability:

“It would be obviously the opportunity for us to internationalise. But I think the crucial element is about income generation. The models of partnerships need to be sustainable and for them to be sustainable, they need to be financially grounded in a robust business model associated with it. That's what RMU would also want to ensure in any partnership as it develops that there is sustainability in the partnership and without having a financial element to the partnership, it becomes very difficult.”

Employing business-like practices extends the view of partnerships as business arrangements with learning at their core (Messenger et al., 2016). Although conceptually understood, some voiced concerns over their long-term future as the business focus may fail to take into consideration educational dimensions. For example:

“The most important factors relate to financial gain. This is not, in my view, a sustainable way to develop partnerships which should be based more on mutual educational benefits across research, global citizenship, and teaching.” (RNU)

To increase efficiency and sustain the expanded institutional context, institutions engage in partnerships in anticipation of increased research funding and more fee-paying students. Echoing the commercial orientations, participants noted the recent intensification of partnership development:

“International partnership development as a tool in international student recruitment and income generation has increased in prominence over the last academic year.” (GSU)

The heightened interest in partnerships among UK institutions might be explained by the political uncertainty of the UK position within Europe and the anticipated decline in the flow of European students and scholars. For example, the 2018/19 report of student enrolment collected from Russell Group universities point to a 3% drop of students from the EU countries.²⁵

Meshed with a strong market-oriented and commercial undertone, there appeared to be a common thread to partnership influences found in *“the fact that they are doing it for value” (GIU)*. It manifested as ways to gain access to fee-paying students and research funding, to compensate for declining government spending, and to search for diversified funding.

²⁵ More information is available at <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/news/fall-in-eu-student-numbers/>

Forming and sustaining partnerships ensured access to the wider higher education market. Viewed as a route to financial sustainability, the international market enabled institutions to seek alternative sources of revenue. In exploring it further, the evidence pointed to different access points between the two types of institutions. While globally focused institutions enjoyed higher status with more prominent strategic links and funding, they also had an advantage to acquire more compared to locally focused ones for which the attainment of financial stability was more challenging. In that vein, access and resource advantages allowed these institutions to enter more high-status engagements and so strengthen their advantages.

5.2.4. Global visibility: Enhancing university brand

International partnerships helped institutions to become more visible and boost their reputation. At the time when every institution is visible to every other, the enquiries into image building, reputation management, and branding permeated partnership conversations and responses from the UK participants. They suggested that part of the rationale for engaging internationally revolves around reputation and branding. The participants frequently used terms such as brand development, marketing, reputational enhancement when discussing motivational drivers behind international partnerships. The use of business vocabulary can be explained by their educational background that included business administration degrees as detailed in Chapter 3. The imperative to raise institutional visibility through partnerships manifested in selecting academically stronger institutions, expanding to new markets, but also considering risks of reputational damage.

When identifying partners, the consideration of international status was important for globally oriented institutions. As part of the due diligence process, institutions considered, among others, criteria such as a ranking position, size, and reputation. For example:

“Institutions are looking to marry up. Everybody is looking to find somebody who's higher up the ladder than them because that gives you more benefits if you're partnering with somebody who's better than you, has better rankings so that is a strategic consideration.”
(GIU)

“We encourage our schools to partner with universities, which are in regions which are of strategic importance and universities which are of equal or higher standing than us.” (GSU)

The centrality of institutional strategy and vision seemed key in how institutions saw the role of partnerships in enhancing their brand and informing partner selection. Set in a market-

driven UK environment, locally focused institutions found themselves competing at regional, national, and international level. Acknowledging that:

“Ideally, international partnerships will enhance our institutional profile by raising awareness of our institution regionally or nationally, but this involves more targeted marketing.” (RNU)

The brand enhancement rationale enveloped multiple benefits anchored in the international plan to increase the number, geographical reach, or range of partnerships. Reasons for engaging in partnerships extended to building reputation in new markets. In that sense, partnerships delivered access to new countries and regions as well as local students:

“Obviously, there are wider elements beyond just financial which involve reputational enhancement for the university, building the brand for the university, also developing the brand for the university in markets and countries where the university still does not have a recognition or a brand.” (RMU)

As the reviewed literature suggested partnerships are ‘high-risk’ entities (Caruana & Montgomery, 2015). In terms of the brand building, the study participants identified brand and reputation risks as significant as they fall outside of an institution’s direct control.

“There are dangers as you’ve got the risk of reputational damage if something goes wrong. You increase your exposure to risk because ultimately you don’t control the institution that you’re working with.” (RSU)

To mitigate possible brand damage, institutions focused on careful selection of partnering institutions. For example, for globally engaged institutions choosing an academically strong partner carried a sense of confidence about a positive impact especially on long-term research output. Overall, these institutions tended to be ‘more choosy’ (GSU) compared with locally focused ones:

“For some of the most important partnerships there has to be an understanding that they are a longer term investment and that’s where concentrating on institutions with strong academic records like [names of two elite research institutions] give people confidence that, yes, while we might not see something before four or five years but it’s likely to be significant when it comes out.” (GIU)

The need for more strategic approaches to expanding to new markets and developing the university brand came with a recognition that international markets are more diverse and volatile than home markets (Foskett, 2010). As reported in the collected data, other practices to mitigate or prevent reputation damage included monitoring of external and internal risk

factors throughout the life of partnership. These included changes to the partner political and economic environment, student and scholar feedback, publicity. Raised awareness about the reputation and brand management facilitated the identification of risk factors and ways to limit their impact.

International partnerships helped highlight institutions' market value and raise institutions' visibility by image building, effective reputation management, and branding. The partner positioning was an important indicator of partnership sustainability especially for globally engaged institutions. As these institutions focused on careful selection of partners, findings showed that choosing established partners with high standing carried a sense of confidence that the partnership will endure. Although locally focused institutions were equally interested in raising their visibility, they showed early stages of brand building and recognition in international markets. This can be explained by horizontal expansion to occupy different markets as noted earlier.

5.2.5. Partner motivations: Assessing partnership sustainability

Beyond signed agreements that explicitly articulate partnership goals and benefits, the study participants noted fuzziness of understanding why institutions internationalise and enter partnerships with other higher education institutions. While they expressed hope that *"it's the same thing as us"* (RNU), they drew attention to hidden assumptions and biases as multiple reflections and aspirations of internationalisation agenda shape a need to partner. As elaborated in the response of GIU's International Lead:

"When considering why institutions internationalise, it's about trying to think about where they actually are and also where they perceive themselves to be and where they project themselves to be as those are slightly different." (GIU)

The focus on what motivates the partnering institution transpired as vital in order to be adequately responsive to the needs of partnering institutions and 'engineer' sustainable ventures. For example:

"It's a challenge because we want the right kind of partnerships with the right kind of universities and the right strategic position. But it isn't as easy to engineer as sometimes managers would like." (GSU)

To minimise unknown or hidden narratives in the context of international partnerships, it seemed critical to determine how the pursuit of inter-institutional relationships can enhance the partnering institution's current position as well as its projections for future. In practice,

institutions engaged in 'environmental scanning' (Eddy, 2010b) and developed tools, such as 'balanced scorecards to measure effectiveness and right fit' (RMU) or 'due diligence forms to determine whether or not the partnership is desirable' (RSU). These were combined with face-to-face events and internal discussions to assess sustainability and determine how the particular partnership aligns with the goals of the partnering institutions.

5.3. Implementing international partnerships

5.3.1. Resources are always limited

"If it is a partnership that's only benefiting us or it is only benefiting the partner university, then it's probably not going to be sustainable because it goes back to the resource. If it's not benefiting us, we won't watch for the resource into it and if it's not benefiting the partner, they won't watch for the resource into it. I think that mutual benefit is key." (RSU)

The centrality of generating benefits, ideally for both partners, guided the conversations about resources necessary to initiate and sustain partnerships. The need to exercise a strategic outlook on resources was viewed as critical to partnership sustenance. In that sense, determining the key resources and employing appropriate mechanisms to ensure that 'the partnership keeps ticking along' emerged (RMU). In line with the findings suggesting institutional differences in accessing funding opportunities, the analysis uncovered contrasting comments about using strategic approaches to manage existing resources as oppose to generating sufficient resources. Being involved in "very much prioritising where resources go in terms of meeting the wide range of activities" enveloped the experiences of globally engaged institutions (GIU). On the contrary, being "incredibly small in terms of resources for international" (RSU) was more aligned with the experiences of locally focused institutions.

A combination of finance and time were repeatedly identified as key resources. To conduct partnerships in an efficient manner, time meant prioritising, allocating travel funds, and maintaining people-to-people relationships. However, it also meant challenges revealing some common misconceptions about funding international visits:

"That's where you see money for travel is a key element. I think people are always suspicious around international travel. They think that everyone's going off on a jolly but actually travel with a clear agenda for clear purposes that face to face contact is a huge step

forward. And that's been really the reason why our larger strategic partnerships have taken off.” (GIU)

“You need to be visiting partners, you need to be inviting them to visit. It's not just about the international office visiting, you'd want relevant academic staff. And so yeah, all of that's the resourcing both in terms of how to do it, time, do academics have time within their workload. And is there funding in place in either in the international office or within the schools to actually fund people to go out. I think you need to get that bit right. That's really the most important thing.” (RSU)

International partnerships are resource-dependent and costly. Therefore, an understanding that achieving partnership advantage will always be affected by resource limitations was important. The recognition of both potentialities and limitations helped sharpen the focus on practical resolutions and attainable action. For example:

“I think one of the key things is always focus, so you know having a limited budget and limited resource is a limitation. But on the plus side, it ensures that you need to focus in terms of geographies or institutions, you know, you need to have a limited and defined number of partnerships that you invest in. Because otherwise you're trying to serve too many, it just doesn't work.” (GIU)

Overall, resource limitations encouraged reflective practice aligned with practical needs and displayed as acceptable resolutions to maintain the focus in terms of the number of partnerships, geographic and institutional reach. This finding is consistent with the research of Vangen and Huxham (2006) showing that tensions in partnerships have the potential to shift practitioners' thinking away from the search for illusive resolutions to good enough agreements.

5.3.2. Structure: Placing partnerships 'front and centre'

In a context of market-promoting policies, the participating institutions displayed centralised international functions. The coordination of partnerships was embedded in a larger centralised office comprised of multiple coordinated teams. There was a general agreement that the centralising initiatives related to the partnership oversight are relatively recent and developing. As RSU's International Lead described:

“As that becomes more of an area of focus, maybe something that is more front and centre in the minds of senior management, then there is more oversight, and then you do start to have a bit more rationalisation. What you had previously say, more than 10 years ago was a

lot more autonomy within individual schools, they've set things up, no one had an overview. No one was really monitoring this stuff. Agreements were signed, but never really terminated so until you've got that central resource which, I think, a lot of universities have developed or are developing as we speak until you've got that you probably haven't got the oversight.”

The shift toward more focused and central arrangements shared among locally oriented institutions aligned with the vision of introducing the brand, increasing the market share, and overall strengthening international positioning and relationships. For example:

“Many of our partners originated from school contacts and it's important to shift the emphasis so that central teams are also involved and aware of any developments. Historically this has depended on the school and their development of the partnership.” (RNU)

“My team is quite centralised, and we service not one faculty, we service the whole institution when it comes to developing partnerships.” (RMU)

Bringing a greater intentionality to the arrangements that used to enjoy a high degree of autonomy raised questions about structures necessary to support single faculty collaborations. As many institution-wide partnerships grew out from these collaborations, the push toward a central oversight was met with resistance at globally focused institutions. As acknowledged in the following quotes:

“We have quite a devolved situation where the schools have a lot of control. And it's difficult to say no and if you stomp your foot and say no, very emphatically, then it could cause bad will. It's kind of a cost-benefit analysis as to whether you say yes, and let it happen, knowing that it won't be very impactful. At the same time maintaining the good relationship with the school by not continually saying no. It's complex.” (GSU)

With the oversight exercised by a central office, partnership building remained to be a devolved function shared with individual schools and academic departments. Referred to as a 'marriage', an inherently complex arrangement encompassed the complementary operations:

“So, the marriage should be the special services provide the structure and the processes and the rigor. And the academic side provides the direction, you know, the kind of content for the partnerships. And it's getting that marriage of the two things right is key.” (GIU)

As portrayed above, structures supporting international partnerships involved a balance between inherently complex operations shared among multiple institutional departments. While the process of stirring international partnerships 'front and centre' into a central

structure supplied the necessary oversight for locally engaged institutions, it was met with resistance among globally focused institutions. Noting that *“occasionally Professor Smith in the School of whatever wrote a memorandum of understanding on the back of an envelope and gave it to the partner university. That happens less and less but you do still see that”* (GSU). Thus, creating ‘the marriage’ between academic contributions and professional services seemed to be frustrating due to the size and research orientation of some partnerships.

5.3.3. National culture: Layers of meaning

“There’s a classic cliché of when a British person says ‘Oh, that’s a very bold idea’. They are basically saying, that’s a really stupid idea. Every culture has those things. What someone says isn’t what is being said, there are layers of meaning. And it’s impossible to overstate the importance of picking up on those cultural differences and those cultural clues because otherwise you don’t get clarity and you don’t use all those things I spoke about the openness of how relationships can work. If people are speaking, but not understanding the same thing, then that’s when the problems come.” (GIU)

As the quote illustrates, national cultural differences pose challenges as different layers of meaning attach to different cultures. Culturally induced differences in language and meaning can lead to misunderstandings and cause problems in the process. Understanding and valuing cultural heterogeneity derives from the commitment of a group of individuals. Their preparedness and openness to learn from difference has the biggest influence on the success or failure of the partnership.

“You need to have the right people as well, people who are culturally sensitive, have a good intercultural competencies and have an appreciation for how difficult it is because it’s easy to work in a culture that you’re familiar with, it’s very difficult to work with a culture where it’s so alien to you. And having an appreciation or empathy of what the partner has to go through or what mechanisms they have and regulations they have to adhere to, it just makes for a very strong partnership.” (RMU)

Achieving the formal goals and working well in a relationship between complementary partners can be challenging. Based on the collected data, recognising linguistic and work style challenges but focusing on benefits was addressed by adjusting to cultural variations. For example:

“Having somebody on the ground, for example in China and India because the cultural environment is complex, and people here don't necessarily understand it. Having somebody there or they don't have to physically be there, but somebody from the institution to understand the cultural context, the unwritten rules of culture is quite key as well.” (GIU)

Attempts to augment the potential derived from culturally induced differences reflected inclusive practices. They involved individuals with knowledge of foreign countries, languages, and cultures. For globally engaged institutions, it meant reaching out to ‘*on the ground*’ (GIU) offices abroad. The importance of attending to cultural nuances reinforced partnerships as ‘*it just makes for a very strong partnership*’ (RMU) and assisted in enhancing mutual respect and understanding. In that vein, others have shown that attending to cultural dissimilarities can minimise or overcome possible dissolution or conflicts in the future (Eddy, 2010b; Holland, 2010).

5.3.4. Organisational culture: ‘Everybody loves international’

Consistently across the five UK higher education institutions, the key administrators reported that internationalisation was one of the priority areas articulated as a standalone strategy (GSU, RMU, GIU, RSU) or included in overall institutional strategy (RNU). In addition to internationalisation strategies, the more visible layers of organisational culture included explicit information describing partnership practices. As an example:

“In-depth guidance on the formal process of establishing a partnership framed by an institutional agreement is available on our website. We have produced information for potential partners to make them aware of our strategic priorities. International Partnerships team provides workshops via the Directors of Internationalisation network meetings and other fora to guide staff on strengthening existing partnerships.” (GSU)

The less visible layers captured in experiences, perceptions, and unwritten rules showed subtle variations between the institutions. While increasingly framed as ‘*front and center*’ (RSU), meanings attached to international partnerships varied and displayed a degree of resistance within locally engaged institutions. For example:

“Within my institution, international partnerships are generally well received yet not always understood. We have run training sessions before to encourage staff members to come and find out more, but they have not always been well attended. Some staff see ‘international’ as a ‘bit too difficult’ so try to avoid it - whatever the activity.” (RNU)

“Everybody understands why we develop partnerships. I don't think if you go around the university and ask why we develop partnerships, there will always be a strategic imperative associated with developing partnerships. We are building capacity across the institution and justifying our commitment to developing partnerships overseas. In many ways, I think it depends upon what's in it for a member of staff.” (RMU)

Cognisant of the fact that international partnerships relied on the involvement of academic staff, the key administrators noted the importance of incorporating academics into the course of partnerships. In trying to entice academic staff, they commented on difficulties related to their participation and interest in international activities. For example: *“If a member of staff is linked to a partnership to accompany students on a large-scale mobility. Is it an incentive for them?” (RMU)* The activities facilitated by partnerships were often considered as an extra workload and lacking the alignment with teaching and research interests:

“There has been a hesitation in terms of academic staff thinking about all the exchange students coming in and how they are taking an extra workload, but they are not really taking advantage of that. That could affect teaching quality, the perspectives in the classroom, that's another area for development.” (RNU)

To the contrary, the GIU's International Lead brought a different perspective of 'how things are done around here' portraying a deep self-interest among staff. Informed by quantifiable benefits as well as prior first-hand experiences, partnerships were largely viewed as creating expansion and opportunities. As acknowledged in the following comment:

“Partnerships are perceived very positively. Everybody loves international. It's a subject if you ever get it on the agenda, you're always going to get more time than anything else. Because most academics have international connections, have international experience, been to international conferences. So, most people are interested in it.”

Recognising different layers of organisational culture showed that international partnerships are typically well received as many benefits attach to international activities. The review above further portrayed variations in that it encompassed a contrast between the two institutional types. With partnerships *“generally well received yet not always understood” (RNU)*, locally oriented institutions struggled to generate sufficient academic engagement. The perception of an extra workload or misalignment with teaching and research interests of academics often manifested as resistance to engage.

5.3.5. Leadership at different levels

As evidenced earlier, partnership structures represent inherently complex and dynamic arrangements involving multiple individuals and units working transversally. Thus, leadership is enacted at different levels throughout an institution. An inclusive understanding of leadership encapsulating top-level leadership supplying the strategic vision and front-line leadership constructing the partnership reality emerged in interviews. The quotes below demonstrate this understanding:

“With the introduction of the new Vice Chancellor, this is going back to 2012, that is when internationalisation became a core part of the DNA, let’s put it this way. Over the last four or five years, the university has come a long way in terms of international. Now being very crucial, and one of the fundamental pillars of the university strategy going forward. We’ve had long standing partnerships with many countries going back 20 - 25 years. But those were very much partnerships in silos as opposed to institutionally and strategy driven partnerships.” (RMU)

“There has been stuff happening it just has never been coordinated. Also, even as a post 92, it is fair to say that it’s not really taken international that seriously until now. Certainly not in a coordinated way. Similar institutions are a lot of more advanced. They got going with a lot of this certainly a few years ago, 5 to 7 years ago.” (RSU)

Evidence suggested the progression from ‘partnerships in silos’ (RMU) to institutionalised activities supported by strategic plans and cultivated by ‘putting more flesh on the bones’ (RSU). It underscored the fact that partnership activities are formed and implemented as a result of increasingly collective and coordinated actions of top-level and front-line leaders working in a transverse manner. As explained below:

“The university leadership team or the university board, or what will be the case, that’s a crucial indication of the appetite that the institution has for developing partnerships. I guess once you are in that position, and you get the buy in from that executive level, the chances are that you’re probably, obviously it’s not hundred percent guaranteed that project will deliver as planned, but at least you have the confidence and the mandate to try and drive the project forward.”(RMU)

While the contribution of top-level leadership revolved heavily around resources and partially around partnership championing, the front-line academic and administrative leaders ‘drive the project forward’ (RMU). In that way, the necessity to establish a community of interest in international engagement and partnerships was formulated as:

“Ultimately, none of these things really work unless people go into committees and so what you need to do is just get that community at both ends. Because if this is just one person and if that person leaves then partnership falls over. It’s quite key that you embed that within an institution that there’s some kind of institutional memory, and there is awareness that there is a greater partnership rather than person to person”. (GIU)

Establishing communities of interest around international on both academic and administrative sides ensured feedback loops between different organisational levels. As further explained:

“We have a wider community of interest. For that case, we have five colleges and each college has a director of international who is a senior academic. They spend 20% of their time helping their colleagues, so essentially cascading down the international strategy and feeding back from their colleagues into the international strategy. On the professional side, there is a community of professional services, a community of interest around international.” (GIU)

Accordingly, the role of champion was not attached to a particular individual, but rather transpired as a collective undertaking within those institutions exhibiting more advanced stages of strategy-focused partnerships. While multiple sources noted the importance of distributed championship (Amey, 2010a; Chapman and Sakamoto, 2011), this finding added a new perspective on its development pointing to parallel paths of partnership and championship growth. As elaborated below:

“For individual partnerships, the champion varies. For university-wide exchange arrangements, International Partnerships normally acts in this role. Otherwise, champions would normally be in an academic role and have the most direct contact with the partner via usually research activity.” (GSU)

“There are various stakeholders involved in this, so there are multiple champions both from a professional or administrative element, but also from an academic aspect.” (RMU)

On the contrary, the role of champion was less visible within institutions in early stages of strategy-focused partnerships that described it as ‘an emerging picture’ (RSU) or ‘not at my institution currently unfortunately’ (RNU).

The review above underscored agential influence of top-level and front-line leadership on partnership practice. The findings suggested the progression away from ‘partnerships in silos’ toward more institutionalised engagements involving strategic planning and refined leadership coordination. The renewed focus on international strategies including

partnerships came as a result of disruption. Typically associated with the appointment of new top-level leads, it trickled down to institution-wide reviews of strategies and directions. The analysis of the participating UK institutions further suggested a continuum from the absence of champion to an establishment of a community of interest in international partnerships. The inclusive understanding of the role of champion ties well with the observation of Chapman and Sakamoto (2011) noting that the role of champion is becoming institutionalised and multiple individuals including administrators within international offices are increasingly involved.

5.3.6. Communication in the negotiated space

Based on the evidence, international partnerships provided a unique setting for institutions and individuals to create a space in which different levels of experience, values, insights, and awareness connect. The maintenance of effective communication further enabled partnership practitioners to share, adjust, and negotiate the different levels.

“There always has to be a concession, there always has to be a negotiation. If you go into conversations with partners expecting to always get what you want, then you always feel like you are short-changed, or you almost feel like the partnership is not going according to plan. But if you go with a view that very much partnerships are two ways and they're mutually beneficial, then even challenges that you encounter on a daily basis are surmounted by the fact that there's a bigger picture of why we're doing what we're doing.” (RMU)

The ‘negotiated space’, as noted in the Literature Review chapter, was where communication was occurring between the partnering institutions as well as within them (Peterson, 2014, as cited in Helms, 2015). As demonstrated in the following quote showing the divergence between front-line practitioners’ insights and institutional ambitious plans:

“I'm fully aware as my previous responses indicate of the importance of communication and maintaining relationships, but frustrated. It can be frustrating when you don't have the time to do that. University, therefore, needs to be kind of realistic in terms of what it can achieve and maybe not take on too many partners because, you know, you're going to just get so thinly stretched that you can't maintain any of the relationships.” (RSU)

Reflective of the importance of maintaining effective communication, internal negotiations affected the communication with external partners and possibly challenged the partnership quality. In that sense, the data pointed to the need to frame communication by setting inter-related objectives and maintaining the focus. For example:

“At the end of the day there's a person on the other end of the phone call or email that's trying to basically somehow reach the same objective as you are. I think, so long as you can keep that focus, you know, nothing should be as too big of surprise necessarily.” (RMU)

Undoubtedly, communication was integral to success, but its maintenance seemed to frustrate the process. With an understanding that *“there's a bigger picture of why we're doing what we're doing” (RMU)*, the negotiated space constructed through communication allowed for relationship building. Finding a shared language meant constructing relationships geared toward a mutual understanding of partnership objectives.

5.3.7. Trust building

A common view among those interviewed was that communication served as a basis for trust building. Functioning as ‘social glue or bonding social capital’ (Dhillon, 2009), trust developed through personal relationships underlining the importance of face-to-face meetings especially in the early stages.

“Trust, it's so much about relationships. You need to meet people face to face. I think trust is very hard to build remotely, so you may be having Skype conversations and things like that. I don't think that's going to work and certainly not initially, you know, maybe once trust is there, then you can start do more remote Skype type engagement.” (RSU)

Although conceptually understood, the evidence showed an overreliance on technology for communication due to its practical accessibility and quick reach. Explained as *“in today's technology enabled world you naturally need to be quite quick to respond” (RMU)*.

The flow of communication that channelled trust building or its erosion largely relied on written forms. For example: *“There's a tendency to rely on email over face to face or telephone conversations. It's far better to develop trust building in person wherever possible.” (RNU)*

While providing a sense of connection, some of the consequences of Internet-based communication were perceived as missed opportunities to build trust. As emphasised in the following quote:

“It comes down to human relations and the fact that people are more likely to trust you. You have your meeting then you go for lunch with that person or that team and they see you as a human being that they could be interested in working with. That is something you don't quite yet get to in online conversations.” (GSU)

Trust building signified a critical element of collaboration as it had the potential to strengthen relationships that could lead to the expansion of joint activities. Further, it had the potential to convey partner's reliability and build 'bridges of understanding' between partner differences (Amey et al., 2010).

5.3.8. Power: Who's bringing what to the table and why

Perceptions of power imbalance expressed in conversations with key administrators confirmed the findings of a longitudinal study of a British-Russian partnership (Walton & Guarisco, 2008). Based on the study, as trust developed, power differences became less significant. In that vein, RMU's International Lead elaborated:

"I think there is that undertone, it depends on the nature of partnerships, but I guess it [power imbalance] does exist, but it's not very visible. It tends to surface when there is a conflict, and that's when it shows its face, so to speak. But that changes over a period of time. So, what I like to say is that obviously, it's not visible, it is almost implicit, but over a period of time as the relationships develop it becomes a more equal sort of a mutual respect really for both partners."

The concept of mutuality entailed shared dependence of each partner to the other one. With increasing mutuality, power tended to be distributed as opposed to concentrated on one side of the partnership. While creating a 'power infrastructure' (Huxham & Beech, 2002), it exhibited through mutually-enabling relationships highlighting opportunities to contribute academic expertise, local knowledge, or experience as needed. For example:

"They may have greater convening power, we might have greater rankings power, or they may have higher rankings power, but they may have academic expertise in areas that we don't. So again, if there's something there about being open clear with people about what that power is. If you're going to make a relationship work, you need to be clear about what both are bringing to the table which is, is another way of looking at power imbalances." (GIU)

The recognition of different points of power (Huxham & Vangen, 2013) meant becoming familiar with each other's strengths and ensuring that different points of power were visible and clearly communicated. According to the data, the mutually enabling effect of partnership work could be constrained if power differences are too uneven:

"If there is a really big power imbalance that suggests there isn't really a mutual benefit. And then you start having issues. If there's a mutual benefit, then there isn't a significant power imbalance." (RSU)

Partnering institutions will always be dissimilar and bring differing capital to the relationship. Rather than viewing power heterogeneity as problematic, it is important to be clear on why one enters a partnership that will then help unveil what can be put 'on the table'. As evidence showed, "*greatest effort needs to be made in terms of clarity around who's bringing what to the table and why*" (GIU). In sum, tensions generated by power imbalances can obstruct the partnership. What the evidence pointed to is the importance of recognising the areas of strategic values and seeking clarity on partner contributions.

5.4. Chapter summary: Partnering for value

Seeking answers to why and how international partnerships function emphasised their commercial undertone as the introductory quote illustrated "*that they are doing it for value*". The steady shifts of public funding towards individuals who benefit as well as a progressively strengthening marketisation discourse through the introduction of student fees (1979), Prime Minister's Initiatives (1999, 2006), and international education strategies (2013, 2019) created pressures on institutions to perform in the global market. Along the same lines, research by Middlehurst and Woodfield demonstrated that "an economic dimension (whether viewed positively or negatively) was dominant, both as a driver and as a policy response" for the majority of UK universities (2007, p. 23). Against such a background, institutions approached the development of international partnerships in marketised ways.

The identified commercialism specified and shaped reasons for pursuing partnerships and processes by which they are implemented. Situated in a market-led environment, forming international partnerships meant adding value to core academic activities, accessing alternative sources of revenue within and beyond Europe, compensating for declining national fiscal support, as well as building university brand globally. The results revealed differences between the selected institutional types as globally engaged institutions highlighted the embedded priorities of developing research excellence with established partners and proactively sought partnerships to address concerns about the expiration of European Commission-funded research programmes. Further, international partnerships provided value to locally engaged institutions in terms of enhancing student learning opportunities. They showed an interest in developing a more strategic approach to partnerships in order to raise their global and regional visibility, expand horizontally to new markets, and seek alternative sources of revenue that required these institutions to be '*more nakedly commercial*' (GIU).

In a context of market-driven arrangements, the implementation of international partnerships reflected a greater intentionality and a continuous focus on quality and rationalisation amid resource limitations, structural dichotomy, cultural differences, and relational issues as detailed in the review above. The study results illustrated distinct comments about managing existing resources among globally engaged institutions versus generating resources among locally oriented institutions. They further showed inertia around centralising efforts as these could redirect resources and collide with research interests of academics at those institutions with a dominant global focus. Along an increasingly strategic understanding and placement of partnerships '*front and center*' (RSU), international partnerships were generally well received but often misaligned with faculty workload expectations within locally engaged institutions.

As well, mechanisms targeting increased value and efficiency transpired in areas of leadership and relationship building. Shifting from '*partnerships in silos*' (RMU) to institutionalised arrangements embedded in strategic plans, institutions aimed to reduce inertia associated with leadership and champion changes. They engaged in building a community of interest around partnerships to generate feedback loops between different organisational levels. As evoked in the Literature Review chapter, feedback loops are essential as they help make sense of interactions shaping the partnership process (Amey et al., 2007). In that vein, inter-personal interactions through communication, building trust, discovering each other's strengths, and determining areas of strategic value beyond the power of finance both facilitated and challenged the implementation of mutually advantageous partnerships. Thus, affirming what Huxham and Vangen (2000b) observed that "the structure and processes of a collaboration are as central to leading its activities as are the participants associated with it" (Huxham & Vangen, 2000b, pp. 1165-1166).

Chapter 6 - THE 'CANADIAN BRAND' BUILDING THROUGH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

"It starts with Canada's International Education Strategy, what are the priorities, then our own strategy, and then our countries of focus. We're trying to link that to develop the synergy there. "

(Interviewee - Eastern Global University)

6.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the analysis of the data collected from the interviews with senior administrators from the participating Canadian institutions. As in the previous two chapters, the chapter begins with the description of the provincial character of the higher education context and the selected institutions. It is then organised around the main research questions focusing on the identified influences and tensions of international partnerships.

6.1.1. Canadian higher education context

Canada's higher education is, as observed in the case of the USA, highly decentralised with the major role played by 10 provinces and 3 territories responsible for the institutional coordination and funding. Each provincial government coordination of higher education includes a single ministry and tends to involve responsibilities associated with operating grant funding and financial assistance largely made possible through federal transfers (Jones & Nouri, 2018). In addition to that, provinces also provide funds to their higher education systems through their own mechanisms that depend on student enrolment (Jones, 2014). In the absence of the national ministry of education, the provinces and territories are supported by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). Founded in 1967, CMEC strengthens the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education and continues to provide a platform for pan-Canadian policy discussions and tools for interaction with national education organisations and the federal government.

The role of the federal government is twofold and relates to research funding and student financial assistance. Indeed, the Canadian government "has been the single largest source of support for university research since 1945" (Jones & Oleksiyenko, 2011, p. 4). Despite the fact that its early attempt to be involved in higher education through direct funding of

universities received a wave of provincial criticism in the post-war years, its role in terms of public funding for research and individual financial assistance has continued to grow (Cantwell et al., 2018). For example, its 2018 budget included the single largest investment of \$925 million in fundamental research in Canadian history (UC, 2018b). In addition to funding, the role of the government of Canada in higher education extends to those policy areas that are closely related to higher education. They include research and innovation strategy, education of First Nations populations, student loans, immigration and visa regulations, and internationalisation (Jones & Noumi, 2018). These intersecting policy areas are regulated by different federal agencies, such as the finance department, the human resources and skills development, the federal affairs and international trade department or citizenship and immigration agency.

Facilitated through the federal grants in combination with provincial interests, the post-World War II expansion of higher education led to the establishment of new universities, colleges, and non-degree awarding institutions (Cantwell et al., 2018). By the early 1970s, each province had established a system of higher education comprised of universities and colleges (Jones, 2014). Complementing the existing university sector, a new college sector served to address the need for increased accessibility as well as the void in the vocational and technical education programming. At the federal level, the two sectors have been represented by distinct associations: Universities Canada formed in 1911 and Colleges and Institutes Canada founded in 1972. Being the voice of their respective member institutions at home and abroad, the two associations engage in federal discussions about higher education and the related areas. They also play an important role in fostering and supporting collaborations on a global scale.

The expanding higher education system reached the 50% enrolment mark point in the 1990s (Cantwell et al., 2018). Enrolments in universities and colleges have been rising and reflected 2.15 million students in 2019²⁶. With only a small fraction of private faith-based institutions, all higher education institutions are public. Although there has recently been reported an increase in the number of private institutions, the private sector remains “largely marginalised and invisible” which is similar to the UK education system (Jones, 2018, p. 216). Despite differences in provincial governance, funding structure, size, and population, higher education expanded across the country, albeit differently. Some provinces managed their expansion through a system-level legislation resembling the U.S. system, notably

²⁶More information available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/447739/enrollment-of-postsecondary-students-in-canada/>

British Columbia, Quebec, and Alberta (Jones, 2018). The province of British Columbia expanded the range of degree-granting institutions and created new forms of institutions, such as teaching-intensive and special focus universities. Quebec established a university system serving its large francophone student population, the University of Quebec, operating in parallel to a number of provincial universities. The province of Alberta formed an integrated framework of six institutional categories designed to facilitate transfers between institutions and programmes. Contrary to the system-level expansion, some provinces streamlined the number and types of institutions by merging multiple institutions such as Nova Scotia. Yet, others directed their efforts toward the maintenance of the existing institutions as they involve a very small number of institutions. For example, the provinces of Island of Prince Edward and Newfoundland and Labrador have one university each.

Historically, internationalisation of higher education has received less attention in Canada than in the USA and UK. Reasons cited in the literature relate to the decentralised context and the fear that international activities would displace national or local objectives (Jones, 2009). Given the decentralised context, the central government “consciously avoided investing in IE [international education] within Canadian institutions concentrating instead on IE programs abroad as a way to avoid jurisdictional conflict with the provinces” (Trilokekar, 2015, p. 10). Additionally, there were fears that international students would take part-time jobs away from local students or that research would not benefit the national context. Thus, the emphasis was to support Canadian scholarship of international quality, rather than the participation of Canadian scholars in international projects (Jones, 2009). It was in the early years of the twenty-first century that both federal and provincial governments began to recognise the possibilities associated with the international market. In 2002, the publication of Canada’s Innovation Strategy shifted the view of international students as future immigrants (Trilokekar, 2015). It further encouraged the need to establish a Canadian international education brand and invest in educational marketing (ibid.). Internationalisation has gradually become to be viewed as a means of contributing rather than displacing the national policy objectives. In that sense, partnerships with higher education institutions abroad have been viewed as contributing to building “a Canadian approach that makes sense in the context of our decentralized higher education system, and addresses Canada’s domestic objectives” (Jones, 2009, p. 15).

6.1.2. Profiles of participating institutions

The membership platform of the Universities of Canada, an umbrella association that includes almost all Canadian universities, lists 96 public and private universities²⁷. With only a small fraction of private faith-based institutions, all higher education institutions are public. Nearly all universities engage in research and offer some combination of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programmes (Jones, 2018). Defined as multi-purpose institutions expanding up to the research function and down to mass teaching (Marginson, 2018a), these ‘multiversities’ enrol the majority of students in Canada (Jones, 2018). Within a relatively homogeneous sector, they differ primarily in research activity and levels of provided education. These differences have been outlined in the formation of the U15 Group and the three-level classification produced by the national ranking system.

The U15 Group represents a collective of 15 research-intensive universities undertaking 80% of all university-based research in Canada (Jones, 2018). The three-level classification produced by Maclean’s as part of the national ranking system distinguishes between: primarily undergraduate, comprehensive, and medical doctoral universities. The category of primarily undergraduate institutions tends to be smaller in size and offer fewer graduate programmes. Their mandate includes teaching and some research. The category of comprehensive institutions offers a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programmes with a significant degree of research activities. Finally, the category of medical doctoral universities offers a range of degrees including PhD programmes and research. They also have medical schools.

The following profiles capture the discussed variations within the Canadian university sector reflecting primarily undergraduate, comprehensive, and medical doctoral institutions of higher learning. They are also summarised in Table 13 below. Within this classification, it is possible to distinguish those institutions that are oriented regionally and those that are globally engaged.

Profile 1: Western Regional University (WRU) is a teaching university with a complementary applied research agenda serving a geographic area of the West Coast. With a student population of nearly 17,000 students, it welcomes approximately 1,800 international students. Its engagement with international communities is aligned with achieving the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. WRU’s

²⁷ <https://www.univcan.ca/universities/member-universities/>

internationalisation vision envelopes the goals of creating a diverse campus, promoting international students' success, fostering global literacy, and building a global community. In addition to its international engagement, it has an established history of partnerships with local, especially Aboriginal communities. WRU serves a range of industries and supplies local businesses with skilled workforce.

Profile 2: Global Metropolitan University (GMU) is a comprehensive community-engaged and research-driven university. In line with the current tendencies of isomorphism and institutional convergence, GMU has been increasingly prominent on the global stage. Located in an urban area, it benefits from highly international and diverse communities. With more than half of the local population speaking a language other than English as their first language, its strategic vision for 2020 recognises internationalisation as a key driver of growth at home. Serving over 35,000 students including 6,500 international students, GMU has been actively engaged with partners around the world since the early 1980s. Moving away from partnerships based on individual collaboration, it is in the process of reviewing the existing agreements and shifting toward sustaining comprehensive and multi-faceted partnerships.

Profile 3: Atlantic Regional University (ARU) is a comprehensive publicly engaged university. Public engagement is integral to why the university was founded and continues to guide its mission and values. Through its centralised public engagement office, ARU aims to create a culture of engagement with its surrounding communities. Complementing its public engagement framework, the internationalisation strategy 2020 sets to empower and retain global human capital, built partnerships with global impact, and provide a direction for a wide range of ambitious international and intercultural initiatives. The university's nearly 20,000 student population includes over 2,800 students coming from 90 countries. The internationalisation strategy aims to diversify the province's labour force and shift its declining demographics. It also aims to contribute more generally to the economy.

Profile 4: Eastern Global University (EGU) is a research-intensive university and a member of the U15 Group. As a hub of world-leading research and innovation, it engages with an array of public, private, and non-profit partners from within the province as well as the nation. Its mission incorporates service to local, national, and global communities. Serving almost 20,000 students including more than 4,000 coming from abroad, the university's internationalisation strategy aims to enhance the quality of education and research and provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. Guided by a set of eight principles, the strategy delineates priorities in international partnerships and initiatives focusing on

recruitment, mobility, programme internationalisation, student retention, research and development, and alumni engagement.

Profile 5: Global Urban University (GUU) is a large research-intensive university affiliated with the U15 Group. It hosts over 60,000 students including 9,500 international students. Socially engaged and environmentally conscious, its commitment and contribution to the city and local communities are engrained in the university’s mission and strategic agenda. As a Francophone institution, it provides a multicultural environment that highlights the diversity of languages and backgrounds. To better respond to the demands of the globalised world, the university created the Office of International Relations in 2000. Following up on the decisions taken in the late 1990s, the creation of the office dedicated to all things international highlighted the institutional commitment and direction toward internationalisation.

Table 13: Institutional characteristics - Canada

Institution	Established	Founding mission	All students	Int'l students	Current mission	Spatial focus	²⁸ Global position	²⁹ National position
WRU	1936	Vocational training	17,000	1,800	Predominantly teaching	Local and regional	>1000	>50
GMU	1965	Interdisciplinary education	35,000	6,500	Comprehensive teaching and research	Global	100-200	1-10
ARU	1925	Teacher training	18,000	2,800	Comprehensive teaching and research	Local and regional	400-500	20-30
EGU	1818	Multidisciplinary college	20,000	4,000	Research	Global	200-300	10-20
GUU	1878	Multidisciplinary college	65,000	9,500	Research	Global	100-200	1-10

²⁸ Webometrics takes into account teaching commitment, research results, perceived international prestige, and links with community to measure global and national performance. More information is available at: <http://www.webometrics.info/en>

6.2. Forming international partnerships

6.2.1. Research and student advancement: Expanding institutional mission and priorities

Based on the collected data, the varied reasons for engaging in international partnerships were interwoven with the historical layers of institutional founding conditions. The imprinted influences seemed to persist enveloping the current promotion of engagement with far-reaching communities and their preparation in an ever-changing world (GMU – Academic Plan 2019-2024), pioneering world-leading research and innovation (GUU – Strategic Plan 2016-2021), and fostering an environment of academic excellence (EGU – University Plan 2015). In that sense, the vocational and teacher’s training history reflected the institutions’ primary commitment to excellence in teaching and learning designed for local, national, and international participants (WRU – Academic plan 2016) and obligation to the people of its province to provide access to university education (ARU – Strategic Plan 2017-2020).

Echoing the early mission influences, the inherently different underpinnings transpired in conversations with key administrators. Two key findings related to the partnership formation could be detected in the collected accounts pointing to differences between globally and locally focused institutions.

First, the data pointed to an expanded nature of research necessitating access to international research networks. With an increased recognition that *“the international nature of research is a main motivational driver”* (GMU) for establishing partnerships, globally oriented institutions approached their research mission more strategically by giving their research focus and identity to encourage further international activity. For example:

“There has been a general worldwide trend toward more international co-publication of research over the past 2 decades especially. On top of this and specific to [institution’s name] there has been a near doubling of our research income in the past decade to over \$140M a year. These two trends combined mean that [institution’s name] is involved in more and more international research collaborations.” (GMU)

“... we want these partnerships to align with our institutional priorities and what we call our research clusters or research excellence clusters. The university has identified five signature research clusters. We're trying as much as possible to align our international partnerships with these clusters.” (EGU)

With an increasing number of faculty members either coming from abroad or obtaining their PhD degree abroad, the study participants noted the importance of leveraging the existing individual connections:

“At [institution’s name], 40% of our professors obtained their PhD from abroad. Once they start at [institution’s name], they keep the links with their home universities, so that’s good. We are a very international university. We push a lot for professor’s mobility. We have internal funds for that.” (GUU)

The links established between academic staff and their previous affiliations were viewed as valuable enablers to the formation of international partnerships. As noted in Chapter 2, research moved through the individual, institutional, and national age to be now situated in its fourth age driven by international collaboration (Adams, 2013). To tackle complex globally stretched issues, it became clear that higher education institutions could not solve these problems alone:

“Most people realise that the major challenges are ones we all face together - climate change, loss of biodiversity, meaningful work in an age of automation, migration, aging populations, chronic disease, etc. It is of little use to engage on these issues only on a local level.” (GMU)

The second key finding revealed that locally engaged institutions exhibited traces of the founding history as well as mission expansion in terms of enhanced research and international outlook. In that sense, Morphew and Huisman (2002) also noted such ‘drift’ when “smaller, newer, less comprehensive institutions become more like their larger, older, more comprehensive peers” (p. 492). Nonetheless, the focus on both local and international students prevailed in conversations with the key administrators:

“For me, what’s most important is the benefits that we gain from having international students on our campus. And to some degree, having international students here results from international partnerships. It’s not the sole source for international students, but the international partnerships are important for that. And then the significance of those partnerships for professional development of faculty and providing opportunities for students. I see that as very valuable in terms of the internationalisation of the university.” (WRU)

“Considerations of the goals of the institution. The students researching or the faculty researching, that’s definitely number one. Number two reason for a partnership is the Canadian scholarship programming. So those partnerships that exist in Southeast Asia and Latin America, most of the partnerships they have developed because there is a Canadian

scholarship fund in both of those regions. And then the third one is just straight student exchanges.” (ARU)

The ARU’s International Lead further explained their mission expansion that reflected the persistence of local influences and the related community engagement:

“While we are not part of the Arctic, we are definitely impacted by the Arctic. So, you know, very much about where this place is geographically located, the main drivers are around related industry and research themes.”

As noted earlier, the Canadian government “has been the single largest source of support for university research since 1945” (Jones & Oleksiyenko, 2011, p. 4). In 2018, it committed to fund university research by a major investment of \$925 million as announced by Universities Canada (UC, 2018b). The formation of international partnerships reflected expanded opportunities in terms of research driven by international collaboration among globally oriented institutions. It further reflected efforts to enhance the international outlook among locally focused institutions through mission expansion. In that sense, it has been established that institutions became “extremely susceptible to isomorphic forces” (Morphew, 2009, p. 248). By using an upward mission designation, they expected to access global networks and further the integration of the international dimension within their institutions.

6.2.2. Local impact: Internationalising underrepresented communities and countering declining demographics

Scratching under the surface, some participating institutions recognised the importance of paying attention to underrepresented student groups, especially Indigenous ones. The need for a more concerted approach and attention to Indigenous populations among Canadian higher education institutions also reflected the findings of the most recent survey conducted by Universities Canada (UC, 2018a). According to the survey, the less than 5% Indigenous student representation on campus is being countered by a growing participation of more than 70% of member institutions partnering with Indigenous communities and more than half of them offering Indigenous language courses. Furthermore, 60% of Canadian universities recognise low Indigenous faculty numbers and are setting recruitment targets to increase them, while 71% are taking steps to include Indigenous representation in governance or leadership structures. Both locally and globally engaged institutions seemed to extend the survey findings:

“We’re trying also to support students with needs or underrepresented that means in our case at [institution’s name], we have Aboriginal students or students from black communities or underrepresented on campus in our programs, but also in our international learning experience. So, we’re trying to expand that.” (EGU)

“... certainly, there is a strong connection with our community and our region. And that’s particularly strong in terms of support and connections with our Indigenous communities, which we have a number in the region.” (WRU)

In that sense, international partnerships assisted institutions to enhance opportunities of internationalisation at home and abroad to those students unable to access international learning experiences.

Located within communities with little diversity as well as increasingly culturally diverse ones, the participants also acknowledged that:

“We bring students to our campus from 90 different countries around the world. They’re also in the community which is not very diverse. So, you know, it’s bringing some cultural richness to the community.” (WRU)

It was interesting to note the interaction between the institutional spatial focus and its location. While recognising surrounding communities and location, locally focused institutions tended to bring diversity and internationalise the local population. The study participants representing the three globally engaged institutions commented on their ‘more and more international by definition’ and culturally diverse communities, which was largely facilitated by their urban setting.

“... our own communities who are more and more international by definition because it’s not, you know, the white people community in a small province of [name]. We have important communities from Africa, from the Caribbean countries, from Asia, from China, from the Middle East, etc. So, it’s a projection, of course, and it pays back to the community.” (EGU)

Through partnerships institutions sought to raise international awareness within both their communities on campus and off campus. They further highlighted the importance of paying attention to underrepresented groups, in this case, Indigenous students and communities. The benefits stemming from the presence of visiting scholars and students from abroad or the development of internationalised curriculum shaped those communities. In that way, international partnerships provided one way of allowing institutions to “become more open

and entrepreneurial, socially-engaged, civic-minded and strategic, by identifying local and global challenges and opportunities” as noted earlier (Puukka, 2017, p. 162).

For Canada, declining demographics further allowed institutions to become ‘more open’ and engage internationally. This is a central concern for the majority of provinces, though perhaps to a lesser degree for the most populous provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia. As summarised in a following comment:

“... also, the incentives slash the pressures we're getting from our government to internationalise because they understand both at the federal level and at the provincial level, the impact it has on the economy of our province and our country. For example, international students in Canada are not just providers, you know, generating revenues for the university, for the country but also, they provide a source of skilled workers, they provide cultural diversity, their background etc. That is strongly needed and that is so important for our country, our province, and our local communities.” (EGU)

The voices of the participating institutions located in the Atlantic region expressed the concern over the declining demographics. Their internationalisation plans articulated this concern and addressed ways to retain international students and faculty. For example, they included English as a second language programmes, housing support, student advising centres, connections to local employers (ARU – Strategic Plan 2017-2020).

In sum, the analysis showed influences generated by local students, surrounding communities, as well as provincial and federal governments. In response to falling demographic, labour market issues, as well as increasingly diverse local communities, partnerships represented ways to expand and maintain international opportunities and prospects. Enveloping responsibilities toward those communities, the study findings highlighted ways for temporary or permanent cultural enrichment and workforce augmentation.

6.2.3. Funding access: Building reciprocal relationships

Originating at both federal and provincial levels, economic pressures were widely recognised as a significant and influential factor in driving the partnership formation. The participants did not omit to highlight the relevance of international partnerships at the time of decreasing public funding. As noted below:

“One, of course, is economic. Like many universities, funding from government has declined over the last 10-15 years. And so, there is a need for international student tuition revenue.” (WRU)

“The other pieces are around the decreasing public funding. So, we need to find other ways as sources of revenue. And, of course, the work we do, international, and the programs that we offer are sources of revenue, so it's an important piece.” (EGU)

As evoked earlier, the role of the Government of Canada is quite limited in higher education and largely left to individual provinces. However, as the largest fund provider, the federal government “has staked out policy territory in a number of important areas, including research and innovation, student financial assistance, the education of Canada’s aboriginal populations and internationalization” (Jones & Noumi, 2018, p. 122). Connecting these areas through policies supporting wider access and increased participation in higher education, the federal government seemed to both force and incentivise institutions to pursue international projects as a way to seek alternative sources of revenue. Or, as a way to gain access to specific government funding opportunities:

“Another principle is around the funding opportunities. We want to give preference to international partnerships that allow us to access governmental or other stakeholders’ funding opportunities.” (EGU)

As further described, *“the government policy has been the biggest impetus” (ARU)*. Seeking funding mechanisms that could support reciprocal partnerships generating both outbound and inbound mobility was frequently voiced in interviews. For example:

“The fact that the government has a number of policies and a number of funding mechanisms to be able to support in and outbound mobility. Once you know that your government has connections with a particular country, on a particular type of activity then you can go into that country and see who is the best, you know, fit.” (ARU)

In sum, the formation of partnerships has supported funding opportunities nationally and internationally. The analysis uncovered the significance of building reciprocal relationships and supporting student mobility that interacted with the development of international partnerships. In that sense, revenue generation and more specifically access to funding opportunities were important drivers for forming partnerships.

6.2.4. Global visibility: Connecting to like-minded partners

As mentioned earlier, building partnerships with highly visible institutions can have a positive effect on reputation and positioning. The collected data offered two messages with regards to reputation and international status building. First, the globally oriented institutions paid more attention to the international standing and the positioning of their partner institutions than other institutions. As reflected in the following comments:

“The first principle is the positioning of the university, so the partnerships should enhance our reputation as a university, raise our profile both on the national Canadian scene, but also on the international scene, of course.” (EGU)

“First of all, to be associated with the continent of Europe. It is very prestigious. Second, the reputation of the universities, the depth of the knowledge. The historical aspect, some universities were there for thousands of years. This is very impressive for us. The quality of the teaching, the quality of the research and for our students to be able to go to prestigious universities is the best thing we can do for them.” (GUU)

Second, the data revealed a tendency of all institutions to connect to like-minded institutions to maximise the relationship potential. Thus, seeking ‘match’, ‘fit’ and ‘like-mindedness’ was repeatedly voiced by the research participants. An understanding of a fit between institutions was perceived on the basis of similarity among locally engaged institutions, for example:

“We’re more interested in partnerships with institutions that have a similar focus on teaching excellence, we’re also looking at things like size, you know, we’re probably not going to form partnerships with very large institutions, large research-based institutions.” (WRU)

Further, globally engaged institutions stressed an interest in connecting with institutions that *“have the best fit with the work we’re doing, complementing the type of research we’re doing” (EGU)* and *“where there is the possibility to have multi-layered partnerships” (GMU)*.

Partnerships served as an opportunity to enhance reputation and global standing.

The global higher education market forced both globally and locally engaged institutions to be increasingly aware of their representation and influence on the world stage. In that sense, partnerships provided a means to raise institutional profile and gain access to scholars, students, research or programmes. However, there was a distinction in how institutions perceived a fit between partners and how they attempted to control it through complementarity or similarity to enhance the chances of success for partnerships. While globally engaged institutions prioritised partnerships complementing their research

ambitions, locally oriented institutions emphasised the role of similarity when pursuing inter-institutional arrangements.

6.2.5. Partner motivations: Joint learning

Findings suggested the importance of understanding motivational background of the partnering institution. To create conditions conducive to achieving mutually beneficial relationships, such understanding could both reinforce and weaken the desire to partner. The initial conditions could drive or fail to drive the partnership process. The role of international offices transpired as pivotal in navigating the early enquiries. For example:

“Often, we’ll hear from a university somewhere in the world that we have no familiarity with that they are planning to come, and they would like to meet with our president and our vice president. Well, that’s a request, but I have no idea why they want to come so I have to go back and say: Do you have any research connections with us? Do you have any faculty connections? Do you have any alumni? We have a checklist to kind of check out what their purpose might be.” (ARU)

The focus on questioning the motivational background underscored attempts to learn about partner motivations in a more systematic manner from the very beginning. In some cases, it led to uncovering motivations that *“are not necessarily to do with academic or professional development, but the desire for personal travel” (WRU)*. The configuration of early encounters aided by the involvement of central international offices, campus visits or the development of internal checklists could either block the engagement or lead to ‘joint learning’ which sets the stage for a deep and wide alliance over time (Doz, 1996).

6.3. Implementing international partnerships

6.3.1. Resources: The biggest challenge

Different types of resources can be used by institutions in the partnership development. In line with the relevant literature, the collected data pointed to time, financial resources, and human resources. They were portrayed as the ‘key’ or ‘the biggest’ challenges in supporting partnerships across all institutions. As noted below:

“I think the biggest challenge is time because, up to this point, we have not had a dedicated staff person in charge of partnership development. I have just appointed or just secured funding for a temporary manager of partnerships. And I'm hoping that that will become a permanent position next year.” (WRU)

“So, one of the key challenges is always around the resources that we can put together to support these partnerships. So, financial, human and technical resources. It's really around the support, the mechanics of the resources that you need to support that.” (EGU)

The comments further illustrated that financial resources differentiated locally focused institutions from globally engaged ones in that they showed more ad hoc operations and a somewhat slower start, for example:

“Up to this point, the maintenance has been very ad hoc, it's been done off the side of various people's desks and, of course, when that happens, a lot of things don't get done.” (WRU)

On the contrary, globally oriented institutions reported quantitative expansion of partnerships and budget availability. This can be explained by their involvement in international research collaborations. Framed as:

“Since the last international strategy was produced in 2012, [institution's name] has greatly expanded the number of international opportunities for our students, faculty and staff. [institution's name] is involved in considerably more international research.” (GMU)

“We are very international university. We push a lot for professors' mobility, etc. We have internal funds for that.” (GUU)

With constant changes occurring within higher education, adapting and developing the skill-set necessary to effectively manage complex international tasks is important. Although its importance is broadly understood, the training and development of relevant skills was reported invisible in practice. As one participant noted:

“Again, training is really critical for my staff. We don't have one now in Canada any longer ... I am sending staff to NAFSA outside of Canada, but it's not ideal because Canadian point of view is quite unique.” (ARU)

In response to changing higher education, a closer attention to the development of human resources had the potential to increase partnership efficiency and add value by bringing innovative practices.

Paradoxically, partnerships may be viewed by some as “innovative avenues to generate revenue” (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010, p. 7). However, they are resource-dependent, and their initiation and maintenance incur costs and demand time and skilled staff. The tension between achieving partnership advantage and experiencing resource inertia could be observed in institutional approaches to rationalise their engagement as *“maintaining partnerships involves time and cost, so, we don't necessarily want to develop partnerships everywhere around the world”* (GMU). In that vein, globally engaged institutions appeared to occupy a more advantageous position in terms of budget availability as a result of their involvement in international research collaborations.

6.3.2. Structure: Centralised operations and decentralised initiatives

As highlighted in the Literature Review chapter, higher education institutions responded to increased international demands by establishing dedicated administrative units and allocating work roles among academic and administrative staff. Findings suggested that these units incorporated the design and implementation of international partnerships. More broadly, they provided direction for home students and faculty wishing to be exposed to other institutions worldwide as well as overseas students and faculty to be connected to a university. Various titles such as Office of Internationalisation, International Relations or International Education, they maintained different reporting lines and reflected different cultural and historical settings. Working in concert with other administrative units, academic departments, and senior administration, they appeared to be part of a complex network of collaborations within a given institution. For example:

“At the broader level, you know, we have a legal team and we have a risk team. And so my office isn't involved in that, and we have people who manage privacy issues as we enter an agreement there are lots of different lenses that go on it.” (ARU)

The involvement of multiple individuals, units, and departments underscored the unavoidable complexity in structures supporting international partnerships. Given the high volume of partnerships and the multiplicity of activities they aimed to support, it was unsurprising that complex structures emerged. Each institution displayed its own unique balance between the assigned international unit and other units and academic departments. The collected data pointed to a centralisation – decentralisation continuum with claims for centralised ‘super coordination’ amid a ‘decentralised model’ among globally engaged institutions. As noted in the following comments:

“So, it's a quite decentralised model that we have at [institution's name]. The Office of International Relations or what we call [institution's name] International regroups all these components. We are really the super coordinators.” (EGU)

As further specified, those institutions tended to allow proliferation of department or school coordinated partnerships. This can be explained by a higher level of research collaborations stemming from academic interests as well as the institutional size. A common theme was that central office retained strategic oversight and intervened in operational matters. For example:

“So, we really are working in close collaboration with our faculty and within the faculty with the departments. We have 12 faculties at [institution's name] and each faculty has different departments and we work with the department heads on providing information and tools.” (EGU)

The relatively smaller size of locally focused institutions allowed to centralise more easily and maintain more direct contact and support for academic members promoting a flat structure. As noted:

“If any faculty member approaches me at any time needing an MOU in order to advance research agenda, or, you know, attract students for short term graduate students, whatever it might be, then I work with that person and make sure that that happens.” (ARU)

As evidenced, partnerships encapsulated a balancing act in terms of inevitably complex and dynamic organisational structures. Thus, recognising and raising awareness of a unique balance between centralised operations and decentralised initiatives were key. It meant continual reassessment and renegotiation of structures supporting partnering work. The pattern also recognised among the studied U.S. and UK institutions.

6.3.3. National culture: Ways to adjust

National cultural differences can challenge the partnership development as different cultures have different ways of conveying meaning. Most commonly accessed through language differences and traditions, a culture gap may slow down or impede relationship building. For example:

“Languages can be a challenge. Expectations too, you know, even if a document is translated, it is still not clear what is meant and how it is interpreted. So, we've certainly

encountered different sets of expectations in terms of what the partnership might bring, what it might entail.” (WRU)

Tensions stemming from cultural heterogeneity showed different approaches of coping. Two approaches emerged from the dataset. First, adjusting to cultural variations emerged naturally from the process of working together and created a working culture in a way:

“We have, for example, some Italian collaborators or Latino collaborators and it’s always, in general, I can send 5 students even if it says 2. This is a typical Italian way of thinking. And we have some Scandinavian partners and some German where it’s very strict. It’s cultural. We have to adjust to a lot of cultural thinking.” (GUU)

Second, establishing adaptive or facilitative mechanisms could be intentional reflecting the necessities accompanying cultural heterogeneity. The participating institutions reported on ways to address national culture differences, such as:

“Challenges in terms of language, obviously. So, partnerships that we have with Chinese institutions, I’ve appointed a faculty member in the Faculty of management who is Chinese, so part of his role is China Partnerships Coordinator. He’s able to respond in Chinese, to ask any questions, or to check agreements or whatever when they’re in two languages.” (WRU)

“We’re trying to have as much as possible folks working at our international centre who have different language skills. That’s very very important because they speak other languages, Arabic or Mandarin or Spanish.” (EGU)

“If we have a partnership with China, I’ll get someone on staff who speaks Chinese to just make sure that what is said in one language is the same as in the other. For French or Spanish, I do it myself. And those are probably the most common languages. But sometimes we have had some in Portuguese and we do have Portuguese speakers around the university. I just reach out.” (ARU)

When dealing with different cultures, institutions seemed to both naturally and intentionally develop facilitative mechanisms to overcome relevant challenges. They developed a working culture by acknowledging the differences informed by contact and discussion which then enabled more sensitive approaches. As well, they deliberately set up mechanisms to mitigate possible language discrepancies by engaging individuals knowledgeable about foreign context and language. Within the selected institutions, this took place at home or, in the case of globally engaged institutions, abroad through regional offices in foreign countries.

6.3.4. Organisational culture: Decoupling between vision and reality

Organisational culture can be regarded as consisting of multiple layers placed on the continuum from more visible to less visible ones (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). In the collected dataset, the most visible layers showed policies that were articulated and shared in a codifiable form, such as documents, reports, databases. They encompassed internationalisation orientations that all participating institutions articulated in strategic plans. The comments from the collected dataset portrayed organisational cultures favouring international partnerships as they were widely perceived as good at the institutional level. The less visible layers included values and assumptions expressed by participants. They included experiences, perceptions, and thoughts about institution-wide familiarisation with international partnerships, how partnerships are framed, and what values underpin their operations. The collected accounts revealed challenges associated with capturing a complex web of partnership practices and procedures. As mentioned earlier, partnerships represent inevitably decentralised initiatives attached to different academic units within institution. To some extent, this could be explained by the lack of a centralised inventory. As framed by the participants:

“We went around and physically collected copies of all the MOUs from all the academic units” (ARU).

“Up to this point, it's been a more on an ad hoc basis. But, you know, we're trying to tighten up on a whole procedure of partnership development, so it's something we want to develop.” (WRU)

Confined in tensions between a conceptual and practical understanding of partnerships, locally engaged institutions seemed to have been more active in establishing plans and promoting partnership benefits to academic audiences in order to inform and incentivise their participation. This can be explained by a level of resistance or disinterest in international matters.

“We have twice a week a table in the library where we portray different partner institutions, so that students and faculty coming to a library stop by and ask questions or whatever. We have international week and people come there. But you're really hitting people who already had some idea or experience.” (ARU)

While organisationally favoured, individual perceptions of partnerships provided a contrasting framing. To harness commitment to the guiding vision and the goals that flow

from it, globally oriented institutions engaged in furthering their partnerships, such as developing institution-specific performance guides. For example:

“We have not been consistently tracking performance indicator. A performance measurement framework will be developed to monitor implementation of the new strategy.”
(GMU)

“I think we saw it was important to, first of all, develop an international strategy that would be focused on our institutional issues and strategy based on, what we call, guiding principles.”
(EGU)

Linked to their more advantageous position in terms of budget availability enabled by research collaboration, globally focused institutions appeared to be more engaged in the strategy implementation processes as opposed to establishing plans and strategies.

The analysis above found evidence of a culture of support for international collaboration among the participating Canadian institutions. With a general understanding that *“internationalisation is not something exotic”* (EGU), institutions engaged in the exercise of thinking and planning strategically. However, on the ground realities and perceptions of the individuals most closely implicated in the implementation of partnerships provided more nuanced understandings. For locally engaged institutions, the increased need for building meaningful partnerships presented challenges of establishing and aligning institutional policies with the actual implementation of these policies. Thus, raising awareness of international partnerships on campus was essential. Findings showed that *“the perception of international partnerships has maybe shifted a little bit on the campus because of the work that we’ve been able to do”* (WRU). Taking a more systematic and ongoing approach may, therefore, provide a way to reduce the decoupling between vision and reality.

6.3.5. Leadership: Who drives partnerships?

Although leadership structures vary among institutions, they typically include individuals from both academic and administrative sides whose responsibilities create conditions for the formation and implementation of partnerships. Cutting across these responsibilities, partnerships may be championed by one or multiple individuals with vested interest in driving partnerships to success. Findings suggested that the role of champion was understood as a shared task and most often anchored in the office devoted to international affairs. As the leaders of these offices acknowledged:

“This is the role of my unit. With only 10 people in an institution with 1,100 faculty and 3,000 staff it is obviously a challenge” (GMU).

“That would be me. That probably would be my office that champions partnerships and the provost” (ARU).

The participants from globally oriented institutions highlighted the involvement of faculty in championing partnerships. The faculty mobilisation may be explained by the heightened need to provide impetus and content to research partnerships.

“... our partnerships are championed by faculty members, but we assess these opportunities for international partnerships.” (EGU)

“We have champions at home at the university. Those would be academics, different for different partnerships, but not for each partnership.” (GUU)

Additionally, the structure of partnerships faced continuous and inevitable changes as individuals implied in their development often depart and the new ones arrive. While the dynamic structure allowed for the flexibility to make the adjustments necessary to innovate and increase efficiencies, it also added confusion and impacted how partnerships were framed and perceived within and outside the institution. As the following comments show:

“Certainly, we've noticed in terms of some of that in partnerships that, you know, when people do change positions or leave that there can be a significant impact on the partnership because, you know, even with institutional partnerships, it's often the interest of particular individuals that lead to the partnership developing or being enhanced, and when those individuals leave, there isn't necessarily the same kind of institutional commitment.” (WRU)

“Probably the biggest one is that people change - they graduate, retire, move to another university, change their research focus. How to maintain the institution's interest when the institution is a container for thousands of individual interests?” (GMU)

Set within a culture favouring international partnerships, leadership changes drew attention to the issue of institutional commitment and further partnership development. The impact generated by leadership changes translated to situations of reviewing and redefining institutional commitment. Tensions between continuity and review of partnerships further transpired in cases involving individuals positioned closer to the front line of collaborations. The effect of personnel changes underscored their agential influence in enacting partnerships. For example: *“we certainly noticed that the people who are the main contacts are really critical in terms of the partnership development” (WRU).* As these were the

individuals with responsibilities for shaping day-to-day interaction and so influencing a shared flow of understanding about the potential of international partnerships.

6.3.6. Communication: Laborious and intricate

As the gathered data demonstrated, communication was perceived as both key to success and a major challenge. On one hand, it facilitated a sense of understanding and extended to preventing or resolving misunderstandings and misjudgements. On the other hand, it presented difficulties as its maintenance can be laborious and intricate:

“Communication is always a very, very important challenge and key to success. Good communication within our own university, with our own key stakeholders, but also with our partner institutions is a key piece of success of our partnerships but it’s challenging at the same time.” (EGU)

According to the data, maintaining ‘good communication’ with a number of internal and external constituencies necessitated qualities such as time, patience, accuracy, punctuality. As it *“takes time, we have to be patient, sometimes we get lost in terms of translation, in terms of cultural experience” (EGU)* and *“once we’re back in our offices, the main challenge is maintaining communication in a busy cycle” (ARU)*. In practice, maintaining ‘good communication’ in international collaborations also meant nurturing relationships. Enveloping instances of immediate and distant connections, communication took different forms. In addition to official written documents, it was most frequently conducted virtually by e-mail, phone, or other Internet-based platforms. Interestingly, face-to-face meetings appeared to be the most powerful forms as they carried the potential to add most value and ‘make things happen’ as Shore and Groen (2009) explained. For example:

“E-mail is the most important conduit for communication. Face-to-face meetings either on bilateral visits or in the context of international meetings is the most valuable conduit.” (GMU)

“E-mails are the most employed. The most effective are in person meetings, mission delegations and visits though.” (GUU)

Despite its widespread use, communication by e-mail may be limiting especially in the context of international partnerships where different cultural backgrounds meet. As reported in the collected data, professional meetings and conferences provided venues in which communication sustained by e-mail could be expanded. By acknowledging that *“we are dealing with very different cultural contexts, e-mail is a fairly blunt instrument for*

understanding what people really mean when they write something” (WRU), participants highlighted that “we really heavily rely on international education association conferences in order to have those 30-minute conversations with partners and say what’s working and what isn’t” (ARU). The distinct potential stemming from face-to-face communication underscored the transmission of tacit knowledge. The tacit knowledge is broadly conceptualised as knowledge that is difficult to express in a codifiable form.

6.3.7. Trust: There are no shortcuts

Effective communication helps generate trust among partners. Defined as an orientation leading to increased vulnerability as well as confidence in partner’s integrity (Heffernan & Poole, 2005), trust is important if partnerships are to be successful. The collected data showed that it builds gradually and over time. For example:

“It’s something that needs time and I don’t think there’s any shortcut to that.” (WRU)

Although the research participants explicitly stated that trust is critical and important in partnerships, their comments also implied that the process of trust building is cyclical and dependent on small initiatives and events occurring throughout the partnership lifespan. Partnerships start with a certain level of trust or willingness to build it that forms during the early stages of planning and identifying partners.

“Mutual trust is very important. We estimate that trust is already there from the beginning. I’ve been signing agreements for 10 years, it’s very rare that the minute I am going to engage, trust isn’t there. We did a lot of planning before and also the selection of the partner.” (GUU)

Following the period of due diligence, institutions typically commence discussions and negotiations of partnership terms. It is during these early interactions that trust or willingness to build it is either reinforced or weakened. A good example of the weakened level of trust was provided in the following comment:

“We had to decide whether to seize the large opportunity in a country in the Middle East, for example, and trust was incredibly important. And it was actually in the ongoing negotiations that trust became eroded and then it became impossible to be able to pursue the relationship. But we found that out before we entered into the relationship.” (EGU)

The early stages of partnership forming can be challenged by complexity and ambiguity that are further pronounced in the context of culturally heterogenous collaboration. A lack of

clarity on what benefits can be achieved, who is involved, and in what role means difficulties for trust to endure. The data suggested that the loop of trust (re)building spanned from *'getting to know the partners' (WRU) through 'meeting one's commitments' (GMU)* or eventually risk taking leading to trust erosion. Tying with the trust-building cycle proposed by Zhang and Huxham (2009) as described in the Literature Review chapter, the data showed that:

"Trust takes a long time to develop and it requires getting to know the partners both at the institutional level, but also at the personal level, getting to know the sort of main contacts and being engaged in conversations with them, exchanging delegations, visits, and so on."
(WRU)

Additionally, the data highlighted considerations of commitment by acknowledging that *"trust is based on meeting one's commitments. It is important for us not to promise what we can't deliver"* (GMU). Growing confidence in partner's integrity appeared to be coupled with an increased exposure to the partner. The experienced vulnerability embraced the importance and ability of sustaining commitments and promises.

6.3.8. Power: Who wants what and from whom?

The concept of power and power imbalances revealed themselves on two levels: individual and institutional. As found in the gathered accounts, they may be perceived differently at different levels:

"I don't perceive these at an institutional level. They play out more at the level of individuals in the component relationships of a partnership and how those individuals perceive their power in relation to the power of their counterpart." (GMU)

"I might trust a partner in India very, very well. I trust that person, that person trusts me, but that doesn't have a lot to do with whether there's an imbalance of power between the institutions". (ARU)

"Power imbalances? I don't perceive them. I don't think anyone else does at the individual level." (GUU)

A few messages could be drawn from the above statements. First, they suggested that power in the partnership work was distributed rather than concentrated in a way that underlined the relative importance of individuals and their perceptions of power imbalances. The way individuals perceived power asymmetries as well as their own and their institution's

proximity to power sources shaped performance within partnerships. Acknowledging that *“what are the perceptions of each party in terms of the other because that to some degree determines expectations and ultimately the success or failure of the partnership” (WRU).*

Second, the distributed arrangement of power involved a variety of ‘points of power’ (Huxham & Vangen, 2013) spread out across partners. Some of the points in which power was enacted included knowledge, expertise, and skills in a particular discipline. For example:

“... when there's a particular kind of research expertise involved. And then in other cases, it's the partner who has the power because they've got the expertise that we're seeking. So, it is very much about who has the knowledge can play a role” (ARU).

“There are definitely power imbalances. Maybe not so much with partnerships with established educational institutions in other parts of the world, but there still can be perceptions of imbalance related to knowledge or related to expertise or skills” (WRU).

Underscored by an expectation of achieving something that none of the partnering institutions could attain alone, a recognition of interdependence played a role in managing power asymmetries and reducing the accumulation of power on one side of the partnership. As *“in each case we are offering something of interest and being offered something of interest” (GMU).* By recognising the areas of strategic value, power imbalances became less significant. Although awareness of the mutually advantageous interchange of something strategically valuable did not eliminate power imbalances, it allowed for a shared understanding to emerge. Thus, exploring *‘who wants what, from whom, and can it be reciprocal’ (ARU)* seemed to be central to partnership success.

6.4. Chapter summary: Driving Canada’s future prosperity

Aligned with the interests of national prosperity and supported through the “Canadianization” of higher education, the Canada case study participants emphasised the role of partnerships in the national brand building. Following the Cold War, higher education became to be an arm of ‘economic diplomacy’, as noted earlier. To achieve national interests, international partnerships were increasingly carried out in the context of the domestic agenda and connected to global talent acquisition (Trilokekar, 2015). The data highlighted expanding access for underrepresented students, government incentives to engage internationally, as well as concerns about falling demographics.

The analysis of influences present in international partnerships underlined targeted government and institutional strategies supporting the development of 'Canadian brand' and driving Canada's future prosperity. Higher education institutions engaged in partnerships in anticipation of enhancing their mission priorities and adopted a rationale of partnerships consistent with their research-oriented or student-focused attention. In addition to the imprinting of different mission priorities, locally engaged institutions showed signs of isomorphism by expanding their research to access global networks and funding opportunities to further the integration of the international dimension within their institutions. While recognising mission priorities, institutions also sought to enhance Canada's international education plan and attract institutional partners and students from abroad who were described as "*strongly needed and that is so important for our country and our province, and our local communities*" (EGU). Interlinked with a diplomatic and economic orientation, there seemed to be a central preoccupation with actively creating and seizing opportunities to counter falling demographics. In that way, locally engaged institutions sought to bring cultural richness to '*not very diverse*' (WRU) communities by establishing partnerships with like-minded institutions to maximise the relationship potential. To the contrary, globally oriented institutions tended to prioritise those partners able to complement their research ambitions and enhance global connections within '*more and more international*' (EGU) settings.

Consistent with observations of the study participants from the USA and UK, limiting and insufficient resources transpired as the biggest challenge in the implementation process among the Canadian administrators. In addition to financial resources, human resources, and adequate training were lacking in the practice of partnerships, which encouraged a heightened interest in rationalisation of partnerships. In that vein, globally engaged institutions appeared to occupy a more advantageous position in terms of budget availability as a result of their involvement in international research collaborations. The growing prominence of international partnerships within institutional policies led to tensions between centralised operations and decentralised initiatives resulting in a continuous reassessment and renegotiation of structures. With a relatively smaller size, locally engaged institutions were prone to maintain a more centralised structure including a more direct contact with academic staff than globally oriented institutions. Further, these institutions seemed to be more active in communicating partnership benefits to academic audiences in order to incentivise their participation. Additionally, cultural variations encompassed tensions related to language differences. While institutions largely relied on those individuals knowledgeable

about foreign context and language, globally engaged institutions had an option of reaching out to regional offices in foreign countries.

At the individual level, the implementation of partnerships extended the development of the Canadian brand by strategically engaging in relationship building. In that way, participation in championing partnerships, communication and trust building through small initiatives and events, and the recognition of strategic areas or points of power reflected the notion that “*the institution is a container for thousands of individual interests*” (GMU). Thus, the importance of individuals and social capital they generate in supporting and sustaining partnerships (Dhillon, 2009) was crucial and continuously needed across all institutions.

Chapter 7 - DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

7.1. Introduction

The present study is concerned with understanding one manifestation of internationalisation – international partnerships. In particular, it focuses on their formation and implementation in an attempt to explore why higher education institutions engage in international partnerships and how practitioners go about maintaining them. This chapter draws together the findings from the USA, UK, and Canada case studies. The summarising tables facilitate an understanding of influences forming partnerships and tensions experienced in the implementation stage. The key themes borne out of the data analysis are discussed in relation to the two main research questions and the reviewed literature. Starting with influences forming partnerships, the first section discusses different influences, associated issues, and specific responses of globally and locally engaged institutions. The second section focuses on tensions implementing partnerships stretched over institutional and individual levels.

7.2. International partnership formation

Why do higher education institutions form international partnerships? What influences drive different institutions to partner internationally? How those influences inform globally and locally oriented institutions? The data from the responses to the question ‘why’ reflected a mix of influences. In approaching them systematically, three categories emerged from the data. The first category represented the influences embedded in historical layers that shaped core institutional priorities. Underscored by intrinsic needs for academic advancement, the embedded influences were mainly to augment student opportunities and enhance research. The second category enveloped influences integrated with the current priorities and pressures associated to the environment. They manifested as extrinsic interests to participate in local, national, and global discussions and exchanges. The third category represented hidden or unrevealed influences that shaped the joint work but were largely obstructed from the partner’s view. It included evolving, ambiguous, or difficult to articulate motivational influences that mostly relied on observing the behaviour of the partner. Collectively, the embedded, integrated, and hidden categories portrayed varied degrees of

overlap and opened discussions about important issues, specific responses, and variations between globally and locally engaged institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada.

7.2.1. Embedded influences: Research and student advancement

Intrinsically motivated drivers to advance core institutional missions and academic priorities played an important part in the formation of partnerships of the selected institutions. They predominantly evolved around the advancement of research and students as the study participants so often highlighted. Recognising mission priorities, institutions adopted a rationale of partnerships consistent with their research-dominant or student-focused attention. Through deliberate attention to partnerships, institutions sought the ‘export’ of created knowledge to the world or ‘import’ of global opportunities to the institution, as summarised in Table 14.

Table 14: Embedded influences - Mission advancement

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	To enhance research through deliberate attention to export-driven partnerships
	Locally engaged	To augment student opportunities through deliberate attention to import-driven partnerships
UK	Globally engaged	To enhance research through deliberate attention to export-driven partnerships
	Locally engaged	To augment student opportunities through deliberate attention to import-driven partnerships
CAN	Globally engaged	To enhance research through deliberate attention to export-driven partnerships
	Locally engaged	To augment student opportunities through deliberate attention to import-driven partnerships

The evidence provided in the previous chapters highlighted the broad alignment of international partnerships with institutional core missions. The imprinting of the founding history shaped institutions’ current priorities and also specified the needs for international engagement. In that way, it partially furnished the rationale for engaging in partnerships. Aligned with the Marginson and Rhoades’ glonacal heuristic, the historical layers of resources, ideas, and practices determined some of the current institutional priorities. As

institutions possess “histories shaped through centuries of sedimentation of ideas, structures, resources and practices. Contemporary agencies and agency generally do not sweep all this away; their influence and activity is layered on top of powerful and resilient structures and commitments” (2002, p. 293). Based on the collected evidence, the imprinting manifested most visibly as research-induced collaborations among older institutions founded for the purpose of training elite or more recent institutions designated from inception as multidisciplinary research institutions. Those institutions established for the purpose of delivering practical profession-oriented instruction displayed a common thread of providing enhanced educational experience to students through partnerships. Although institutions have expanded since their establishment, the founding mission persisted over time and could be traced across the participating institutions.

Aligned with an outward-looking definition of internationalisation based on integrating the institution into a globalising world (Hawawini, 2011), globally engaged institutions demonstrated primarily research-driven partnerships. Institutional expectations to have faculty involved in research globally, build global networks, and tackle globally stretched challenges underpinned their mission focused on enhancing research and internationalising educational experiences. Informed by the current fourth age of research driven by international collaboration (Adams, 2013), partnerships were seen as key vehicles for exposing scholarship, accessing global research networks, and contributing to research-led teaching and learning opportunities. As the quotes from the study participants illustrated, the priority was around research and transferring the best knowledge to the world challenges. In that sense, the export of produced knowledge through partnerships enabled institutions’ integration into the globalised world.

Reflecting historical layers that shaped a focus on local and regional needs, international partnerships formed by locally engaged institutions embraced mainly student-focused considerations. The chain of overlapping motives further included diversification of student body, study abroad opportunities, educating for global citizenship, faculty advancement, curriculum enhancement. Aligned with Knight’s (1994) definition of internationalisation featuring the process of integrating the international dimension into the institution, partnerships manifested as primarily attracting international students and faculty as a way to internationalise curriculum, research, and service functions. This was accurately summarised by one participant who argued that “*what’s most important is the benefits that we gain from having international students on our campus*” (WRU). In that way, the import of the global influences through partnerships allowed for their integration into the local institutional functioning.

7.2.2. Integrated influences: Local impact, funding access, global visibility

Consistent with an understanding that internationalisation is a collective rather than a solitary undertaking (Sutton, 2015), the participating administrators reported the necessity of raised awareness of a wider local, national, and global environment. They pointed to the interplay of external developments and institutional responses. The interplay constructed the feedback loops that guided various decision-making processes. When forming partnerships, different types of institutions applied different ways of learning from the environment.

7.2.2.1. Local impact: Students and communities

The immediate environment shaped and responded to the international activity of institutions. As public establishments, all participating institutions were dependent on government funding which implied local and national responsibilities. The pressure to participate in surrounding contexts manifested in different ways. Underscored by differences in local needs and developments, variations for forming partnerships emerged between the institutional types (Table 15).

Table 15: Integrated influences - Local impact

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	To extend opportunities to underrepresented students (first generation American students) To respond to increasingly diverse local communities (e. g. skills development)
	Locally engaged	To extend opportunities to underrepresented students (first generation American students) To bring diversity to less diverse regions (e. g. skills development)
UK	Globally engaged	To extend opportunities to underrepresented students (widening participation in outbound mobility) To respond to and shape local communities (e. g. relationships with a city and region)
	Locally engaged	To extend opportunities to underrepresented students (widening participation in outbound mobility) To shape local communities (e. g. relationships with regions abroad)

CAN	Globally engaged	To extend opportunities to underrepresented students (Indigenous students) To respond to increasingly diverse local communities (e. g. falling demographics, skills development)
	Locally engaged	To extend opportunities to underrepresented students (Indigenous students) To bring diversity to less diverse regions (e. g. falling demographics, skills development)

International partnerships assisted institutions to extend opportunities to underrepresented students and those unable or resistant to access international learning experiences. For example, first generation American students were described as resistant to taking part in mobility programmes. Hence, developing partnerships to internationalise at home ensured the alignment with internationalisation strategies. Similarly, expanding international opportunities to the underrepresented groups of Indigenous students were highlighted by Canadian institutions. In that sense, local student communities contributed to partially shape the international activity. According to Marginson and Rhoades (2002), “universities are increasingly being challenged by groups demanding that they be more sensitive to and promotional of local variations in and diversity of cultural heritage” (p. 304). Conversations with the administrators from UK institutions highlighted local student populations in connection with partnerships. This can be explained by the efforts towards widening participation. In that vein, Universities UK International has reported on widening participation in outbound mobility. Despite an overall increase of outbound mobility, the report showed that a gap in participation still continues, with those students from underrepresented groups being least likely to work, study, or volunteer internationally during their studies (UUKi, 2007).

Across the three systems, the data suggesting an increasing attention to local impact transpired in the interviews with the key administrators. In that sense, the recognition of location and the needs of the community became an important dimension distinguishing the two institutional types. Locally oriented institutions tended to introduce diversity to their communities through international partnerships while globally focused institutions mostly expanded international flows within their location. Partnerships driven by the need to respond to increasingly diverse local communities as well as to bring diversity to less diverse regions were identified by a number of key administrators in the USA and Canada. For

example, they included reasons related to the falling demographics affecting the Atlantic regions of Canada. By attracting international students and faculty, partnerships helped promote not only institutions, but also cities and provinces in which they were situated. This further opened up opportunities for institutions to work with local partners on student work placements, housing assistance, or research and development. More broadly, international partnerships reflected contours of the local contexts and, in some cases, almost felt as a requirement by local communities, industries, and businesses. They were sought for maximising opportunities in highly diverse locations as well as providing new prospects in less diverse settings. In other words, in locations that *were 'more and more international by definition' (EGU)* as well as *'more traditional' ones (RIU)*. Additionally, they were most visibly connected to local industries by supplying them with highly skilled labour that also meant internationally experienced labour, as recognised earlier: *"If we're training our students to take on roles within our regions and our communities, and to actively be part of the business community, then, you know, we need to develop partnerships internationally" (RPU)*.

Interviewees from UK institutions commented on the growing pressures of demonstrating engagement with local communities. For example: *"We know obviously that within the UK there is a perception that we need to say more about what we do locally in terms of the local benefit. And that's obviously leading certain universities towards making more references and strategies linked to the local impact" (GSU)*. In that sense, the results of the 2016 EU referendum have been interpreted as a neglect of the local dimension which might be pushing many higher education institutions to translate the value of higher education into benefits for local communities. In the context of affirming the institutional impact and regaining confidence of the local environment, the study participants highlighted links with local communities as advantageous to partnerships. For example: *"We are linked very closely to the Indian High Commission here, we do work with the Indian diaspora community, we bring them to the university to meet visiting Indian academics. So, where that works to our advantage and to the city's and region's advantage then we like to contribute" (GIU)*. Similarly, extending opportunities to communities attached to the partnering institutions abroad further strengthened the institutional impact. By replicating community support programmes with partners abroad, institutions developed relationships not only with higher education institutions but also surrounding cities and regions. More broadly, pressures to demonstrate *"to the everyday man on the street that the work of the university is of local impact" (GSU)* also translated into conversations about capturing its effect. In that vein, Times Higher Education (THE) has recently launched a new league table to showcase the work being delivered by universities in communities. To expand conversations about the

international positioning, THE University Impact Rankings³⁰ proposed to measure the institutional impact against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Underscored by recent calls for new approaches to engagement with local communities and society, the data underlined an emerging picture of intentional approaches to connect the international activity with the surrounding environment. The study participants acknowledged the need to explore possible intersections of global and local developments. As these “*have largely been parallel trends*” (WRU), the data suggested a nascent stage of linking an international strategy to the local impact across the participating institutions. The emerging nature was consistent with the findings of the 2018 EAIE Barometer survey in which engagement with the local community and society was listed the second least common internationalisation activity (EAIE, 2018).

7.2.2.2. Funding access: The issues of reciprocity and sustainability

To allow for expanded academic opportunities internationally, institutions were driven to partner in order to access national funding opportunities that were increasingly tied to international collaboration. Partnerships brought funding opportunities and also supported access to additional opportunities beyond national limits in lieu of decreasing public contributions (Table 16).

Table 16: Integrated influences – Funding access

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	To increase access to national funding opportunities (state policy pressures to maintain the balance between inbound and outbound mobility)
	Locally engaged	To reach beyond national support to diversify income (greater flexibility among globally engaged institutions)
UK	Globally engaged	To compensate for declining national fiscal support (and more recently the search for diversified funding resulting from the anticipated expiration of European Commission-funded frameworks)
	Locally engaged	

³⁰ More information about THE University Impact ranking can be found at https://www.timeshighereducation.com/rankings/impact/2019/overall#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/undefined

		To reach beyond national support to diversify income (greater flexibility among globally engaged institutions)
CAN	Globally engaged	To increase access to national funding opportunities (funding incentives to support inbound and outbound mobility)
	Locally engaged	To reach beyond national support to diversify income (greater flexibility among globally engaged institutions)

The influence of the national context, especially national funding policies, is broadly similar across the three countries, albeit with varied institutional responses. As outlined in the previous chapters, with government funding gradually subsiding in the USA, UK, and Canada, institutions were increasingly amenable to entrepreneurial practices allowing them to “think about themselves and what they do, differently” (Ball, 2009, pp. 96-97). Within a context where research attracts more attention as well as more direct government support than teaching, the underlying assumption evident from the collected accounts was that *“if you’re a purely teaching university, you’ve got to be even more nakedly commercial in terms of your partnerships and your international activity”* (GIU). Although funding difficulties are common throughout higher education, globally oriented institutions seemed to have greater flexibility in reaching beyond national support to diversify their income (Mohrman, Ma, & Baker, 2008). Overall, the collected evidence affirmed a view of partnerships as *“a business and it needs to be treated like a business”* (MRU). Placed on a continuum between economic and altruistic orientations, as Eddy (2010b) observed, international partnerships encompassed tendencies: *“where on one end we internationalise for profit and value or we internationalise because we believe it is a good thing. In most cases those two kind of directions synthesise into one strategy”* (GIU). The underlying dichotomy shaping the formation of international partnerships synthesised into strategies underlining the issues of sustainability and reciprocity, as noted by interviewees.

Reciprocity in partnerships reflected increased access to national funding and, ultimately, to international outbound opportunities for local students. In the USA, state policy pressures to maintain the balance between inbound and outbound mobility affected partnerships. Building and maintaining the reciprocal and mutually beneficial activity was based on pressures to use state tax for state residents. As noted earlier: *“Institutions in the United States, especially public institutions like ours, we work with the goal of a certain number of international students we have to have every year and having those international*

partnerships add up to our total number of international students on campus” (RIU). Further, the often-prevailing focus on inbound mobility proved to be problematic as it also meant that “we’re simply waving tuition” (GNU). Thus, pressures to use state tax for local students highlighted an increased attention towards the promotion of outbound opportunities for study and research. In practice, it meant that “the strategic plan of the university is to provide global opportunities for our students, which can happen if they go abroad. If they cannot go abroad, it can happen if a student from abroad comes here” (RIU). As indicated in Chapter 3, all three systems currently experience low or even declining outbound mobility compared to a high flow of inbound students. Considering that “the biggest challenge that we have is the fact that we have a really hard time getting Canadians out and having reciprocity” (ARU), forming partnerships was influenced by prospects of gaining access to national funding programmes as “the government has a number of policies and a number of funding mechanisms to be able to support in and outbound mobility” (ARU). Supporting the priorities included in Canada’s International Education Strategy, some of the funding opportunities created incentives for institutions to pay deliberate attention to increased participation of Canadian students abroad as well as inbound opportunities. Thus, revenue generation and access to national funding programmes partially furnished a rationale for international partnerships.

The UK institutions responded to national market-led policies by focusing more on sustainability than reciprocity of joint engagements. Connecting them to ‘robust business models’ (RMU) and ‘commercial benefits’ (GIU), they affirmed the notion of a ‘market of competing corporations’ (Marginson, 2018a, p. 32). Strategies to compensate for declining national fiscal support manifested as the search for diversified funding. For example, current developments prompted by the departure of the UK from the European Union encouraged the search for new funding alternatives nationally and internationally. As a large portion of the research success and mobility is connected to the collaboration with EU partners, participants expressed concerns about the continuation of these activities after the expiration of European Commission-funded frameworks. Consequently, they commented on negotiating new or renegotiating existing partnerships with institutions across Europe. In addition to the review of the bilateral arrangements with European partners, they also engaged in considering “other funding streams, like the Global Challenges Research Fund or other funding streams internationally” (GSU). As Altbach (2004) argued “Internationalisation describes the voluntary and perhaps creative ways of coping. With much room for initiative, institutions and governments can choose the ways in which they

deal with the new environment” (p. 6). In that vein, partnerships represented creative ways of responding to declining national fiscal support and maintaining continuity.

7.2.2.3. Global visibility: The role of complementarity and similarity

The interests of enhancing the global market positioning guided the formation of inter-institutional partnerships as evident from the collected accounts. The awareness of heightened visibility and the need to portray ‘an image of a well-connected institution’ (Higgitt et al., 2008) transpired across all interviews. Affirming a view that “High-ranked and not-ranked, international-facing and regionally-focused, all institutions have been drawn into the global knowledge market” (Hazelkorn, 2015, p. 29). Framed by the study participants as reputational enhancement, international standing improvement, or brand development, partnerships were seen as vehicles for institutions to raise their global profiles (Table 17).

Table 17: Integrated influences - Global visibility

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	To raise profile by selecting partners of equal or higher standing
	Locally engaged	To raise profile by partnering with similar institutions
UK	Globally engaged	To raise profile by selecting partners of equal or higher standing
	Locally engaged	To raise profile by partnering with similar institutions
CAN	Globally engaged	To raise profile by selecting partners of equal or higher standing
	Locally engaged	To raise profile by partnering with similar institutions

In order to ‘stand out from the crowd’ (Chan, 2004) and succeed in the ‘reputation race’ (Van Vught, 2008), pressures to be globally visible attracted different institutional approaches and reflected changing dynamics between partners. With the emergence of global rankings, institutions seemed to pay increased attention to identifying and selecting partnering institutions. In that vein, study participants highlighted the role of complementarity for globally engaged institutions and similarity for locally oriented ones. The analysed data

further revealed changes in partner dynamics pointing to the strengthening of institutions from non-western contexts as well as those institutions from western contexts with lower rankings.

The impetus to raise institutional profile through partnerships materialised in selecting partners of equal or higher standing among globally engaged institutions across the three systems. When *'marrying up'* (GIU), globally oriented institutions sought complementarity in terms of research resources and scholarship to maximise the accumulated advantage. Complementing each other's research equipment, facilities, and other resources as well as creating a pool of expertise with different approaches highlighted each other's strengths in tackling global challenges. Positioned as global leaders occupying higher ranks of the league tables, globally engaged institutions tended to be *"more choosy about whom we pick because of the length of time in bringing a partnership to fruition. We need to be careful what level of university we work with in different regions"* (GSU). Choosing an academically strong partners carried a sense of assurance that the partnership benefits and goals will be attained. The benefits further extended to partnership participants, as it is something that *"really helps our students because it helps people understand where they went to school and the value of their degree, and for our researchers it helps them make connections for future projects"* (GNU). At the same time, the choice of reputable partners helped lessen possible brand and reputation risks.

References to similarity rather than complementarity prevailed in the accounts provided by the institutions that were locally focused. Similarity seemed to play a role in the success of partnerships. As evident in the collected accounts, institutions tended to seek similarity in terms of partner mission, vision, academic programmes, size, and student profiles.

Partnerships with similar institutions helped maximise success as evidenced in interviews: *"if they are not similar to what we have, it's not going to be successful"* (RIU). Partnerships with dissimilar institutions tended to be motivated by the search for a unique expertise and initiated by higher ranked institutions. For example: *"We had institutions that are much more highly ranked than us who wanted to create partnerships with us because of the particular expertise"* (ARU).

The expanded global market and the interlinked institutional and national influences reflected changing dynamics between partners pointing to the reverse influence of increasingly active roles played by the emerging systems. The underlying consensus among the study participants was that the field is realigning with the growing confidence of universities from non-western contexts, as summarised in the comments: *"So sometimes we feel like we're*

the big boy working with a smaller university and sometimes the other way around” (GSU) and “The power dynamic has interestingly changed, especially with developing countries” (MRU). In that sense, Deardorff (2012) noted that “internationalisation is at a turning point” with regards to opening up and realigning with other world regions. Additionally, pressures to be globally visible established new dynamics within higher education systems which translated in the growing strength of locally engaged institutions. For example: “we are more known around the world than I thought, [institution’s name] has got a stronger profile than I expected being from a small place with only half a million people in the entire province. That seems to be reflected in the kinds of questions that I get when people do find out about us and learning that this is a great quality institution” (ARU). Regarded as a means of improving both institutional visibility and influence, partnerships afforded ways to both balance and sharpen institutional unique contributions. In that way, they created greater opportunities to stand out from the crowd.

7.2.3. Hidden influences: Partner motivations

Feeding into the reasons for entering into international partnerships, understanding partner motivations constituted a significant, but a little-known piece of the motivational puzzle. The limited view on partner motivations frustrated the process of partnership forming and largely relied on clues obtained by observing the behaviour of the partner. With institutions approaching partnerships more strategically, the impetus to learn from the partner and assess partnership sustainability became an indispensable part of the forming process for all institutions (Table 18).

Table 18: Hidden influences - Partner motivations

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	To learn from the partner and assess partnership sustainability
	Locally engaged	
UK	Globally engaged	
	Locally engaged	
CAN	Globally engaged	
	Locally engaged	

In conversations with key administrators, it was reported as an area where the institution's view was obstructed. Yet, it was also an area that could inform partnerships and their evolution. By asking *"What's in it for them?" (MRU)*, institutions tended to recognise the overlap of priorities and signal inconsistencies, as voiced by the study participants: *"That's important to know because that will usually indicate in some way what type of a partner that institution will be and, ultimately, how sustainable this partnership will be too" (GNU)*. Similarly, *"It's important to understand partner's motivations. A true partnership means each party understands the other's motivations and a partnership can support the objectives of both parties" (GMU)*.

However, the institution's view on motivations of the partnering institution was obstructed by the difficulty of articulating something that was deep-seated and subject to change and interpretation. According to the study participants, having an understanding of partner motivations remained unclear and *"hoping it's the same thing as us" (RNU)*. As the study participants exposed, clearly articulated reasons for engaging may never be attained. *"It's hard to know what motivates them. We certainly ask the question, but they may have motives that they don't share with us" (GCU)*. And, *"It is really important, and we struggle to get an understanding of the motivation of the partner" (ARU)*.

Although the importance of getting to know partner's motivations and engaging in inter-partner learning was established by the participants, the reality of accessing such knowledge turned to be problematic. The limited view on partner motivations produced a blind spot in the process of partnership forming. In practice, it meant unknown or hidden agendas that prospective partners had concerning the joint work. For example, *"Some circumstances have led certain universities to want to undertake tick box internationalisation where they want to come in and sign an MOU, they want a photograph, they want to say that they're working with various universities, but not necessarily committed to the collaborative side of things" (GSU)*. Also, *"Sometimes, I think why are these people here? I don't think it's anything to do with their interest in developing a partnership with us" (WRU)*.

To minimise the blind spot, institutions seemed to invest more time and diligence in the pre-relationship stage and getting to know the partner. Early events, especially face-to-face meetings appeared to be extremely influential in establishing, or not, a healthy and mutually beneficial relationship. Besides the explicitly shared motives and goals, the behaviour of each partner and personal experiences in early stages provided clues about *"the true motivation behind partnerships which sometimes is blurry, unclear, and sometime those*

reasons can be self-serving” (MRU). Additionally, references to checklists and metrics as tools were repeatedly brought up by the study participants that helped them recognise ‘what’s in it for them’ in a more systematic way.

7.3. Conclusion: Toward seeking a successful combination of influences

The analytical heuristic by Marginson and Rhoades (2002) helped to demonstrate different influences, associated issues, and specific responses operating in the field. By placing multiple idiosyncratic experiences in perspective, the analysis enabled to corroborate findings to draw ‘petite generalisations’ as Stake (1995) suggested. In this case, it allowed for the identification of multiplicity of influences that situated international partnerships within embedded institutional layers and integrated global, national, and local influences, some of which may be hidden from partner’s view. Further, the evidence of differing institutional responses drew attention to ways institutions engaged in seeking a successful combination of influences (Gacel-Ávila, 2005). By factoring in historical embeddedness, local impact, funding access, global visibility, and partner motivations, the study findings presented some of the complexities involved in the formation of international partnerships. Their examination sharpened a focus on the significance of the institutional context and the growing need for integrating international partnerships locally.

7.3.1. The significance of the institutional context

Moving beyond the ‘methodological nationalism’ as Shahjahan and Kezar (2013) evoked, the study considered two different institutional types within three national settings. The institutional context has been brought to the fore in Marginson and Rhoades’ (2002) glonacal conceptualisation by drawing attention to the institutional responses. The findings revealed by the US, UK, and Canadian case studies suggested that the institutional context had a greater impact on partnerships than the national context. The analysis of the reasons why partnerships are formed found evidence demonstrating similar responses among institutions with a similar global or local focus regardless of the national context they occupied.

The identified institutional similarities reinforced an understanding that higher education institutions cease to be ‘projects of nation-states and arbiters of national identity’ as noted in the introductory chapter (Rhoads & Liu, 2009). Traditionally, higher education institutions

“have been employed for nation building” that linked their survival to public resource dependency (Scott, 2006, p. 14). However, with steady and untargeted government funding now subsiding, they are “forced to cut back on spending and, in some cases, to downsize” (Altbach et al., 2011, p. 15). As a result, there has been a growing commitment to entrepreneurial responses (Clark, 2001), the involvement of private providers and the reliance on private cost sharing (Antonio, Carnoy, & Nelson, 2018). In that sense, it has become extremely important how institutions articulate and represent their value as “students and policy makers will be looking closely at how all universities portray and position themselves and thus, how they will support institutions individually or collectively in the future” (Purcell et al., 2016, p. 33). International partnerships play a vital role in enabling higher education institutions to be more open and entrepreneurial (Puukka, 2017).

In that vein, the study results suggested that international partnerships provide opportunities to stand out from the crowd while pointing to different approaches to seize varied opportunities. Interested in raising their visibility and influence, globally engaged institutions tended to partner with institutions of high standing that could further complement their research and access global networks. References to similarity over complementarity prevailed in the accounts provided by locally engaged institutions. Being more strategic in identifying international partners and controlling inter-institutional fit transpired as an integral part of the partnering process.

Further, international partnerships represented creative ways of responding to declining national funding as they brought funding opportunities and supported access to additional opportunities beyond national limits. While some of the funding streams incentivised institutions to maintain reciprocity in terms of inbound and outbound mobility, other opportunities presented sustainability efforts, for example, to continue mobility and research collaborations after the expiration of European Commission-funded frameworks in the case of UK higher education institutions. The need to sustain these collaborations encouraged globally oriented institutions to be proactive and seek ‘small partnerships’ and alternate funding schemes. In that sense, the globally oriented institutional context allowed for accumulated advantages that further strengthened resource and access advantages of those institutions over locally focused ones. It has been established that institutions experience the ‘Matthew effect’ as they enter international collaborations from different starting points showing that it is “a commanding international position that brings great advantages over their regional competitors” (Davies & Zarifa, 2012, p. 154). The study results suggested the Matthew effect was prevalent in terms of access advantages as it was

harder for locally oriented institutions to reach beyond national support to diversify their income.

7.3.2. The need for integrating international partnerships locally

As evidenced above, an increasing attention to the local impact and calls for new approaches to engagement with local communities underlined the interaction between the international activity and the surrounding environment. Against the backdrop of distinct institutional responses, a key finding from the case studies of international partnerships was the attention directed toward the local impact. As illustrated in the previous chapters, the data pointed to a growing preoccupation to explore and benefit from potential intersections between global ambitions and local responsibilities. In unpacking the varied influences forming international partnerships, the data highlighted growing pressures to engage with diverse local communities, in particular local and outbound students, research communities, and industry. It has been established that institutions are increasingly called to respond to more diverse communities that often demand international excellence to meet regional needs. Thus, reflecting a shift away from responding primarily to government and student communities (Chatterton & Goddard, 2000; Enders, 2004).

While promoting opportunities of international status that none of the partnering institutions could realise alone, the examination of partnerships highlighted responsibilities arising from immediate institutional environments. This observation accords with Marginson and Rhoades' illustration of reciprocity and spheres of influence where activities and influences flow in more than one direction with varying strength as higher education institutions simultaneously operate and evolve in multiple domains. Although the integration of international partnerships locally transpired as an emerging area, it is one that deserves to be closely monitored. With pressures for alternative sources of revenue and heightened global visibility, local influences and needs tend to be overshadowed. Aligned with a broader discourse on engagement with the local community and society, it is a topic that is steadily gaining traction (Chankseliani, Qoraboyev, & Gimranova, 2020; Grau, Goddard, Hall, Hazelkorn, & Tandon, 2017; Van der Wende, 2017). The data suggested that local and international engagements are largely parallel developments showing a nascent stage of linking an international strategy to the local impact across the two institutional types.

With regards to engagement, public institutions carry an obligation to exercise their publicness and address economic needs as well as respond to the local communities in which they are situated. As private institutions receive less public funding, they are more

driven by private interests “rather than some loftier ideal of public service” (Antonio et al., 2018, p. 81). The study results suggested that international partnerships reflected contours of the local context. In that vein, the recognition of location and differences in local needs and developments transpired as an important dimension distinguishing the two institutional types. While locally oriented institutions tended to introduce diversity to their communities through international partnerships, globally oriented institutions mostly expanded international flows within their location.

7.4. International partnership implementation

The data answering the question ‘how’ reflected a two-level implementation process occurring at the institutional and individual level. The partnership implementation enquiry identified tensions between intended advantage and experienced inertia. At the institutional level, resource limitations, structural dichotomy, and national and organisational culture diversity shaped the implementation process. Tensions highlighted divergent emphases in resource, structure, and culture placed by different types of institutions. Further, tensions at the individual level underscored issues related to leadership changes, communication, trust, and power. Contrary to the institution-level findings, they showed consistencies between the institutional types.

7.4.1. Tensions at the institutional level

7.4.1.1. Resource limitations

In order to be advantageous and yield benefits, considerations of resources were repeatedly emphasised by participants across the three systems. As evident in interviews, partnerships required ‘*time and energy*’ (MRU), ‘*financial, human and technical resources*’ (EGU) to reach their many potentialities and produce benefits. Linked to the previously noted differences in flexibility and access to funding, financial resource differences placed globally engaged institutions in an advantageous position over locally focused institutions.

Table 19: Tensions - Resource limitations

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	Intended advantage: production of benefits dependent on time, financial, and human resources; advantageous position of globally engaged institutions
	Locally engaged	
UK	Globally engaged	Experienced inertia: upfront and long-term investments; restricted travel budget; understaffed operations with a lack of attention given to the development of skills of individuals involved in partnerships
	Locally engaged	
CAN	Globally engaged	Adaptive mechanisms: resource limitations increased the focus on quality, e.g. focus on partners and regions of strategic importance, strengthening existing partnerships, investing in professional development; (re)generation of resources supported mainly by quantitative measurements of benefits
	Locally engaged	

The key administrators all shared an understanding that partnerships are both dependent on resources and limited by resources (Table 19). The recognition that resources aren't infinite enabled to focus on the fundamental resources. In this case, they appeared to revolve around limited time, finances, and staff dedicated to joint work. Financial resource differences emerged between the two institutional types as globally engaged institutions showed more advantageous position. This was linked mostly to their involvement in international research and the overall attention that these institutions have granted to internationalisation activities, as *"the institution has seen the value of that investment"* (GCU).

Resource limitations allowed individuals involved in the development of partnerships to sharpen the focus on quality. Confined in tensions between partnership potentialities and limited resources, institutions tended to rationalise their engagement abroad and focus on partners and regions of strategic importance for the institution, as *"maintaining partnerships involves time and cost"* (WRU). With an understanding that *"you've got to first spend money to make money"* (MRU), they demanded time, skills, as well as upfront and long-term investments with uncertain results. As repeatedly raised in conversations with key administrators, maintaining people-to-people relationships was the bedrock of partnerships because *"the quality of that interaction is so critical, and this is where a lot of schools make a*

mistake" (MRU). Consequently, important resource-dependent challenges included allocations of time and funds for travel. Time invested in developing relationships was often undervalued. Surrounded by misconceptions about international visits and face-to-face contact, these were sometimes perceived as staff *'going on a jolly'* (GIU) and implied budget restrictions.

Commonly described as understaffed operations with limited budget, participants elaborated that *"we have not had a dedicated staff person in charge of partnership development"* (WRU), or *"the International Partnerships department is quite small"* (GSU). Partnerships were excessively dependent on individuals and their capabilities to generate and invest the required time, energy, and other resources. Therefore, hiring new staff and investing in professional development of the existing staff emerged as valuable and needed. With changes occurring within higher education and internationally, acquiring and maintaining the skill-set necessary to effectively manage complex international tasks was vital. Although broadly understood, the training adequate to keep up with changes introduced by internationalisation was limited to participation in conferences or the similar events. Collectively, the data showed a lack of systematic training designed around internationalisation and specifically partnerships, as some participants lamented: *"It would be wonderful to have a training programme we used to do in Canada"* (ARU). Or, *"Nobody's really teaching the importance of internationalisation other than specific professional conferences"* (MRU). The reported need for a more targeted training exposed a wider international resonance. For example, a recently launched training programme funded by the European Commission, Systemic University Change Towards Internationalisation (SUCTI), attempts to address the void in training opportunities for administrative staff in Europe. The SUCTI training aims to raise awareness of the added value of internationalisation among administrators of European universities and enhance their management, governance, and innovation capacities.

In addition to the recognition of costs, the focus on benefits emerged as having the potential to create conditions supportive of resource (re)generation. Partnerships could be perceived as too costly unless tangible results exist. To balance the costs, tangible outcomes presented as quantitative data of new international students, new programmes, new research funding, awards or publications carried the potential to create favourable conditions for resource (re)generation and allow for cultivating and expanding partnerships. Interestingly, despite an emphasis on possible qualitative benefits of international partnerships such as intercultural skills, student diversity, curriculum internationalisation, or faculty development apparent from interviews, quantitative measures were largely employed

to (re)generate adequate resources. This trend is well summarised by the following comment from an administrator from GIU: *“Although we still look at qualitative measures, ultimately, it’s the quantitative measures that have the greatest impact in terms of plan and investment and those are going to be how many extra students has it brought us, how many more students can we teach overseas, has it brought us any research income, has it brought us any joint papers, conferences. To justify and plan up with executives, it has to be very quantitative”*. Beyond measuring student satisfaction abroad, a common consensus was that assessing partnerships qualitatively was associated with difficulties due to their long-term and evolving goals.

7.4.1.2. Structural dichotomy: Administrative centralisation and academic decentralisation

Defined as “a key driver of the way agendas are shaped and implemented” (Huxham & Vangen, 2000b, p. 1166), organisational structure supports various operations directed toward the achievement of partnership goals. The accounts from the participating higher education institutions portrayed variations positioned on the continuum between centralised and decentralised structures (Table 20).

Table 20: Tensions - Structural dichotomy

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	Intended advantage: partnerships supported by a network of collaborations involving multiple internal units and services
	Locally engaged	
UK	Globally engaged	Experienced inertia: tensions between administrative centralisation and academic decentralisation; more visible among globally engaged institutions due to the large volume and research scope of collaborations
	Locally engaged	
CAN	Globally engaged	Adaptive mechanisms: continuous efforts to balance central oversight and academic delivery; e.g. raising awareness about international priorities, their coordination, leveraging existing links in specific countries or regions
	Locally engaged	

Historically left to individual schools and departments, the coordination of partnerships evolved and expanded to include a complex network of collaborations within a given institution. Supported by legal, marketing, risk, and finance services at different times during the lifecycle, partnerships aligned with claims for integrated and sustainable internationalisation at the institutional level (Knight, 2004). They also reflected study participants' views that *"It's everybody's business"* (MRU). The collected perspectives exposed a dichotomy of organisational arrangements highlighting tensions between integration and autonomy. In other words, they revealed efforts to centralise inherently decentralised activities.

There was a general agreement that centralisation emerged from decentralisation in an attempt to strengthen partnership coordination, combine resources, and reduce fragmentation and confusion over accountability. Its empowering potential highlighted a shift away from transactional exchanges toward transformational arrangements impacting the whole institution. Differing partnership structures between partnering institutions generally did not impact relationships. As evidenced: *"One may handle all through a central office, another may handle it in a decentralised way. You just have to know who the point of contact is and what the process is, so that both can navigate. It doesn't have to be parallel"* (GCU).

Regarded as *'the people-based thing'* (GIU), partnerships appeared to take place between individuals representing their institutions rather than between institutions. As many institution-wide partnerships grew out from decentralised single faculty collaborations, the push toward more focused and strategic engagements appeared to cause inertia. It meant redirecting resources toward a select number of institutions, countries, or regions. The friction appeared to be more visible at those institutions with a dominant global focus due to the large volume and research scope of their collaborations. It collided with interests and incentives of academics as the centralised *'super coordination'* (EGU) implied more control and less flexibility in partnership choices. As summarised in the following comment: *"We have had a couple of incidents prior to my coming into this position. My predecessor basically decided that these two or three universities we are only going to work with more practically and she sort of pushed people into rooms and told them that they were going to work with these people. People didn't work with them in the end"* (GSU). Too much focus had a reversed and unintended effect limiting engagements. In some cases, resulting in missed opportunities of engaging with other partners across the world.

Paradoxically, institutions appeared to both centralise and devolve the engagement activity. The tensions between administrative centralisation and academic decentralisation reflected

varied degrees of control and flexibility. Seeking a balance between the central oversight and academic delivery was a continuous effort and something that “must be expected to be required indefinitely” (Huxham & Vangen, 2000a, p. 800). In other words, seeking “*some kind of a happy medium between the two needs to be found where you encourage people to work with existing partnerships or partners, but still allow some flexibility*” (GSU). For example, raising awareness throughout the campus about international priorities and their coordination. Additionally, introducing those who initiate partnerships to the existing links in the selected country or region was a useful first step as many institutions were attempting to rationalise their engagement activity. In fact, all the participating institutions reported on efforts associated with deepening the established relationships to strengthen meaningful relationships with existing partnering institutions rather than a proliferation of new partnerships with different universities.

7.4.1.3. National culture: Language and work traditions

Defined as beliefs and values that individual members learn and hold, national culture transpired through language, its nuanced meanings, and work traditions (Hofstede et al., 1990). A common thread that united the perspectives across the participating institutions was that combining cultural dissimilarities had the constructive potential but achieving its effect was not straightforward (Table 21).

Table 21: Tensions - National culture

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	Intended advantage: constructive potential of combining cultural dissimilarities
	Locally engaged	
UK	Globally engaged	Experienced inertia: tensions stemming from cultural heterogeneity most visible in language and work traditions
	Locally engaged	
CAN	Globally engaged	Adaptive mechanisms: develop a working culture by integrating individuals knowledgeable about foreign contexts and cultures at home or, in the case of globally engaged institutions, through regional offices abroad
	Locally engaged	

By offering a platform for the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and practices, partnerships provided ways to instigate innovation and increase efficiency. The impacts resulting from

international partnerships generated benefits for students and faculty in areas of new linguistic and cultural exposure, professional as well as personal advancement. Additionally, they brought cultural richness to the surrounding communities, as evidenced in the previous chapters.

However, realising benefits induced by partnerships met with challenges stemming from the gap created by distinct cultures. Differentiated patterns of recognising and developing ways to adjust emerged among the three systems. Culturally induced differences in language and meaning led the study participants in the UK and Canada recognise layers of meaning that can be misinterpreted or difficult to understand. Emphasising that *“What someone says isn’t what is being said, there are layers of meaning”* (GIU). Additionally, written communication presented a nuanced part of cross-cultural interaction. For example: *“even if a document is translated, it is still not clear what is meant and how it is interpreted”* (WRU).

They further recognised different work traditions in terms of partnership initiation and development. Underscored by differences between collectivist and individualist cultures (Hofstede, 1980), varied levels of cultural assertiveness affected the development of partnerships. As pre-dominantly individualist cultures, the USA³¹ being the most individualist of the three systems, findings showed higher levels of assertiveness when forming partnerships with collectivist cultures. As a result, key administrators acknowledged a need for *“a different approach to Indian partners, a different approach to Chinese partners”* (GIU) highlighting different working styles of engaging between *“a culture where pushing yourself forward is the first thing you do”* (GSU) with a less assertive collectivist culture.

Views from the study participants in the USA encompassed less pronounced concerns about language and meaning dissimilarities noting that *“I haven’t had any issue in terms of recent agreements”* (RIU). Instead they encompassed concerns about work styles and cultural sensitivity to professional etiquette. Acknowledging that *“not all people in the world subscribe to the American work ethic of being on email 24/7, Saturdays and Sundays, and holidays”* (MRU). From conversations with key administrators, it seemed that participating U.S. institutions were less concerned about linguistic nuances and relied on the widespread use of English. In negotiations with partner, their concerns revolved around cultural sensitivity in terms of professional attitudes and work traditions. The responses correlated with claims that U.S. universities have had an easier time forming international partnerships and employed a

³¹ Country comparison can be found at <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison>.

more U.S. centric approach to partnerships following their establishment as an international ‘gold standard’ during the Cold War (Altbach & McGill Peterson, 2008; Marmolejo, 2014).

Embracing cultural heterogeneity was important for international partnerships. Constraints introduced by linguistic differences and work traditions made it more difficult to realise their expected potential. As noted earlier, multinational settings augment national cultural influences (Adler and Gundersen (2007). One way to leverage the cultural gap was to acknowledge the differences and remain focused on partnership goals and benefits. In other words, develop a working culture by recognising ‘*what’s valued*’ and ‘*what makes it difficult*’ (GCU). In practice, it meant a combination of deliberately setting up mechanisms to mitigate possible language discrepancies and continuously cultivating cultural sensitivity by ‘*having the right people*’ (RMU). Institutions adapted to cultural heterogeneity by integrating individuals knowledgeable about foreign contexts and proficient in specific languages, maintaining culturally sensitive communication, or liaising with regional offices abroad in the case of globally engaged institutions.

7.4.1.4. Organisational culture: Partnership inventory and faculty resistance

Different layers of organisational culture guided the implementation of international partnerships. As the reviewed literature highlighted, organisational culture incorporates an iceberg model with varied layers ranging from more visible structures, policies, and documents to less visible values and beliefs (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). Accounts from the study participants across the different institutional and national settings revealed organisational cultures largely favouring internationalisation and specifically international partnerships but suggested challenges of aligning vision with on the ground realities (Table 22).

Table 22: Tensions - Organisational culture

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	<p>Intended advantage: organisational culture favouring partnerships</p> <p>Experienced inertia: understanding of inventory</p> <p>Adaptive mechanisms: regular review of agreements</p>
	Locally engaged	<p>Intended advantage: organisational culture favouring partnerships</p> <p>Experienced inertia: understanding of inventory and faculty resistance</p>

		Adaptive mechanisms: regular review of agreements, academic support and interaction
UK	Globally engaged	Intended advantage: organisational culture favouring partnerships Experienced inertia: understanding of inventory Adaptive mechanisms: regular review of agreements
	Locally engaged	Intended advantage: organisational culture favouring partnerships Experienced inertia: understanding of inventory and faculty resistance Adaptive mechanisms: regular review of agreements, academic support and interaction
CAN	Globally engaged	Intended advantage: organisational culture favouring partnerships Experienced inertia: understanding of inventory Adaptive mechanisms: regular review of agreements
	Locally engaged	Intended advantage: organisational culture favouring partnerships Experienced inertia: understanding of inventory and faculty resistance Adaptive mechanisms: regular review of agreements, academic support and interaction

Reflecting claims that organisational culture has been increasingly viewed as a practical rather than descriptive tool and linked to success and advancement (Kezar & Eckel, 2002), institutions developed strategic plans demonstrating direction of their commitment. For example, *“In 2020, we’ll have a look at these partnerships and decide if we carry on with these countries, these institutions or we expand to other places or we delete countries or change the focus” (EGU)*. Through standalone or integrated international strategies and visions, institutions showed a clear interest in engaging with the world. The documented strategies characterised the most visible layer that also served as a message to partners that a commitment exists to international ventures. They further sent a signal internally that a supportive environment exists to carry out those ventures.

The less observable layers embraced on the ground realities in the form of perceptions and meanings shared within institutions. They displayed differentiated responses meshed with nuanced challenges affecting the strategic intent. The study participants highlighted two important areas of internal culture where tensions tended to persist: understanding with whom we partner and ways of involving academic staff.

With partnerships growing and multiplying, many institutions reported a lack of tracking practices and subsequent difficulties knowing their partners. In their attempt to *“know who you partner with”* (MRU), institutions actively sought greater clarity on the inventory of agreed partnerships. Reflecting the current tendency to rationalise and concentrate on quality rather than quantity (Stockley & De Wit, 2011), institutions engaged in reviewing and rationalising their partnership inventory. In order to map out the partnership reach in terms of countries and regions as well as the partnership depth in terms of agreed-upon activities, the process of rationalisation raised awareness of their content. As, in some cases, *“the process was decentralised, highly fragmented and faculty were empowered to sign agreements engaging institution in things that the institution itself may not have been aware of”* (MRU). The shift from an ad hoc to a more systematised approach to tracking and reviewing signed agreements. Reflecting tensions between centralising and decentralising efforts, the issue of a continuous balance seeking was an issue as *“occasionally Professor Smith in the School of whatever wrote a memorandum of understanding on the back of an envelope and gave it to the partner university. That happens less and less but you do still see that”* (GSU).

Facilitated by international partnerships, teaching and research activities involved and relied on academics. Their interest and willingness in supporting partnership activities were paramount to success, as it is *“the faculty member level that must be driven, faculty members are in there and responsible”* (ARU). Conversely, their resistance negatively impacted on partnerships as they perceived *“international as a bit too difficult”* (RNU). A heightened level of resistance emerged among locally engaged institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada. The responses suggested a lower degree of faculty interest due to perceptions of additional workload and misalignment with pre-existing teaching or research. Or, experiences of a large concentration of international students from the same region that may challenge teaching. Naturally, questions about incentives and *“what’s in it for a member of staff”* (RMU) resurfaced. Thus, reflecting findings of the literature review about insufficient institutional structure and compensation considerations (Amey, 2010b; Holland, 2010; Shore & Groen, 2009; Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). The institutions actively engaged in reaching out to faculty by holding targeted events and workshops. The faculty involvement was differently experienced among globally engaged institutions where references to faculty self-interest,

prior international experience, and existing research networks more easily aligned with the culture favouring partnerships. To better combine the overall international strategies with individual interests, the involvement highlighted opportunities where individual partnerships could be “*elevated to be institutional*” (GSU). Further discipline-level differentiations were also noted as different academic disciplines maintain their own cultures and exert varying influences on scholarly behaviours. Given the differences, some disciplines may lend themselves more easily to global exchanges. For example, “*in the hard sciences, they may be a bit more private about what they're doing then in the humanities and social sciences*” (GSU).

7.4.2. Tensions at the individual level

7.4.2.1. Leadership changes

Reflecting inherently complex and dynamic arrangements involving multiple individuals and units working transversally, findings exposed two areas of partnership leadership that persisted in participants’ comments. They pointed to the top-level leadership changes (Table 23) and partnership championing (Table 24).

Table 23: Tensions - Top-level leadership changes

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	Intended advantage: top-level leadership influential in directing the institutional global presence and its coordination; refinement course-correction Experienced inertia: tensions between continuity and disconnect from the existing course of activity Adaptive mechanisms: strategic review of ‘why’ and ‘how’ to partner
	Locally engaged	
UK	Globally engaged	
	Locally engaged	
CAN	Globally engaged	
	Locally engaged	

Supplying the strategic vision and ambition to engage internationally, top-level leadership signalled a level of appetite and institutional commitment to partnerships. As the institution-wide activity, partnerships depended on the ‘*executive approval*’, which translated into “*the confidence and the mandate to try and drive it forward*” (RMU). It also fuelled the progression from partnerships ‘in silos’ to institutionalised activities firmly anchored in strategic plans and enhanced by relevant structures and resources supported by a favouring partnership culture. Comments related to top-level leadership changes followed by re-evaluation of international engagement often marked a milestone in the partnership development. Summarised as “*that is when internationalisation became a core part of the DNA*” (RMU) or “*a renewal of looking at the different strategies that we’re employing as an institution and different plans that we’re putting forward*” (RPU).

Confined in tensions between continuity and disconnect from the existing course of activity, changes at the top were influential in redirecting the institutional presence and its coordination internationally. In addition to constructive developments, they implied inertia in terms of disrupted personal connections built by front-line leaders and relationships developed with partnering countries and institutions. They also implied changed partnership dynamics within institutions, as “*some partnerships have become less effective with less activity following changes in international management*” (RNU). As the collected data portrayed, inertial forces exposed the accumulation of undesirable outcomes and encouraged a renewed engagement with questions ‘why’ and ‘how’ to partner.

Table 24: Tensions - Partnership championing

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	Intended advantage: informal but vital role increasingly supported by a combination of academic and administrative staff
	Locally engaged	
UK	Globally engaged	Adaptive mechanism: establish a wider community of interest in international partnerships
	Locally engaged	
CAN	Globally engaged	
	Locally engaged	

The importance of partnership champions underscored the fact that none of the interviewees expressed difficulty identifying them or eventually their absence. The role of champion was commonly regarded as essential for a partnership to succeed. As one of the informal but vital roles initiating and driving partnerships, findings supported the notion of its collective nature shared between academic and administrative staff and most often anchored in the office devoted to international affairs. The study participants from globally engaged institutions tended to emphasise the championing role of academic staff due to their ties to research and global networks. With a common understanding that *“the most successful partnerships have a faculty member or a dean that really champions that relationship”* (GNU). Interestingly, participants from two locally engaged institutions reported absence in that regard. The institutions defined their internationalisation nascent in terms of a strategy-focused undertaking and partnership development. Following the recent launch of the internationalisation strategy, they expressed an agreement on the importance of partnership champions but described it as an emerging effort in their current transition to *“make it more international”* (RNU).

To ensure continuity and minimise the inertial forces associated with champions departing or changing positions, one of the adaptive mechanisms that transpired in the interviews was to build a *‘wider community of interest’* (GIU) around international partnerships. By sharing the champion role between academic staff, top-level and front-line leadership, institutions seemed to create an *“awareness that there is a greater partnership rather than person to person”* (GIU). In that way, they sought to reduce an impact of inevitable personal changes which *“can often really leave a gaping hole in managing that partnership”* (GNU).

7.4.2.2. Communication challenges

The role of communication frequently resurfaced in conversations with key administrators as key to successful relationships. Yet, it also drew attention to challenges maintaining an effective communication flow (Table 25).

Table 25: Tensions – Communication maintenance

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	Intended advantage: communication facilitates a sense of understanding and extends to preventing or resolving misunderstandings and misjudgements
	Locally engaged	
UK	Globally engaged	Experienced inertia: maintenance challenge; over-reliance on Internet-based communication
	Locally engaged	
CAN	Globally engaged	Adaptive mechanisms: employ face-to-face communication throughout the process especially in early stages
	Locally engaged	

The findings of the study exposed a two-sided nature of communication. The two-sidedness was shared across the participating institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada. On the one side, communication was key to success and relationship building. Extending beyond a simple exchange of information, it allowed for cultivating relationships and creating a space in which different experiences, values, and levels of awareness emerged. Because *“at the end of the day, most of the difficult conversations really stem from misunderstandings, miscommunication or not hearing one another or not listening to one another”* (MRU). On the other side, it represented a major challenge as its maintenance was laborious and delicate. For example, keeping an open communication was difficult due to different time zones, difficulties with traveling and further exacerbated by cultural variations. As interviewees commented earlier, *“for partners, particularly in Asia, it’s such a big time difference, it’s really difficult to get people on the phone”* (GNU). Or, *“Our location can be a challenge for communication with partners outside of North America given the distance and significant difference in time zones”* (GMU).

The gathered responses further pointed to the challenges associated with an overreliance on technology to maintain a communication flow and build trusting relationships. Being economical and largely unrestricted, advantages of using Internet-based communication were apparent. However, the overriding belief was that face-to-face meetings and visits made things happen. As evidenced in the individual study cases, they enabled partners to

build trust, to nurture relationships, and ‘set the stage right’ (MRU) in order to weather down inevitable issues later in the process. Confined in the budgetary constraints as well as difficulties of conveying the value of face-to-face meetings, the administrators across the three systems argued that “more money, especially for travel, would make it all easier” (GMU). Instead their immediate experiences often involved increased scrutiny noting difficulties to explain and justify to the budget-conscious leadership.

Collectively, these experiences highlighted the need to leverage and raise awareness of experienced but unnoticed benefits of in-person events. Described as a ‘huge step forward’ (GIU), they inculcated a sense of confidence that came from seeing the partner, observing the local conditions, and encountering the moments of “then you go for lunch with that person or that team and they see you as a human being that they could be interested in working with” (GSU). The benefits of these experiences rendered face-to-face communication as more efficient compared to the Internet-based one. They were shown as fundamental in building and maintaining propitious conditions for collaboration.

7.4.2.3. Trust building

The study findings exposed advantages of trusting partnerships as they allowed for increased chances of success and resolution of possible conflicts or issues later in the process (Table 26). In practice, trusting partnerships were associated with reduced risk and growing confidence to meet expected commitments. For example, a foundation of trust in the pre-relationship stage helped establish or weaken confidence in pursuing partnerships as reported in the interviews. Interwoven with communication and especially face-to-face meetings, trust was essential notably in the student-focused partnerships in the U.S. institutions. It was gradually built through in-person contacts and visits that helped establish confidence in the reliability and integrity of a partner.

Table 26: Tensions – Trust building

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	Intended advantage: trust meant reduced risk and growing confidence in partner’s reliability and integrity
	Locally engaged	Experienced inertia: cyclical and fragile nature; reinforced or weakened through catalytic events
UK	Globally engaged	

	Locally engaged	Adaptive mechanisms: invest in getting to know the partners; start with small projects and progressively enlarge the scope of activity as trust developed
CAN	Globally engaged	
	Locally engaged	

References to the importance of trust in international partnerships were frequently associated with considerations of time in terms of building and eroding trust. A common agreement was that trust takes a long time to build but a very short time to break. As recognised in the following quote: *“It is really astounding how it can be predetermined, depending on the true effort that you put in and then how easy it is to damage the relationship”* (MRU). The temporal aspect of trust highlighted its cyclical and fragile understandings. Starting with ‘a good feeling at the beginning’ (GCU) or willingness to trust, it deepened over time. In practice, it included small pilot collaborations and face-to-face catalytic events that most commonly resulted in reinforced trust that *“they’re not going to do anything to jeopardise it”* (RSU). With an overriding assumption that smaller collaborations carried a lower risk and a higher chance of success, the study participants noted pilot and short-period collaborations. Having faith and confidence that the partner will act with integrity was built incrementally and enabled through effective communication. Further, interpersonal communication and catalytic events also exposed the fragile aspect of trust causing the institution to increase its vulnerability to the partner throughout the partnership lifespan (Heffernan & Poole, 2005). In other words, to increase the possibility of trust erosion caused by early negotiations when, for example, *“trust became eroded and then it became impossible to be able to pursue the relationship”* (EGU). Or, when the partner did not deliver the agreed-upon commitment as *“they promised certain things verbally, but also in writing in an agreement that did not come to fruition”* (GNU).

To ensure a loop of trust building, the study participants pointed to the initial conditions that played a key role in ‘getting to know the partner’ (WRU). Affording time for due diligence, face-to-face meetings, and campus visits created opportunities for partners to *“make sure everyone’s clear about what they’re putting in and what they’re getting out”* (GIU). These were either generative and leading to enlarged scope of activity and reinforced trust in the partner. Or, they blocked the partnership development early in the process. For example, *“we do a lot of due diligence, and we spend time getting to know a partner, and then we also just don’t engage in certain types of activities”* (GCU). In accordance with the literature on

inter-organisational studies, early events in partnerships had a ‘disproportionate importance’ in creating conditions for a self-reinforcing cycle of trust (Doz, 1996).

7.4.2.4. Points of power

The power dimension in international partnerships was commonly articulated as ‘who needs whom’, ‘who’s bringing what to the table’, and ‘who wants what and from whom’. It was viewed as a function of relative dependence of partnering institutions on strategically valuable interchanges (Table 27). Collectively, the interviews pointed to an expanded understanding of power that manifested as a ‘power infrastructure’ where multiple and varied areas of strategic value co-existed (Huxham & Beech, 2002).

Table 27: Tensions – Power imbalance

Country	Type	Mission
USA	Globally engaged	Intended advantage: relative dependence ensures mutually advantageous relationships
	Locally engaged	
UK	Globally engaged	Experienced inertia: power imbalances influenced by global competition and ranking
	Locally engaged	
CAN	Globally engaged	Adaptive mechanisms: build a ‘power infrastructure’ by recognising the areas of strategic value; seek clarity on why to partner and what to contribute
	Locally engaged	

These strategic areas included the power of finance, but also the power of academic expertise, global ranking, regional knowledge and experience. In practice, the recognition of multiple points of power led institutions and individuals to develop familiarity with each other’s strengths and trust that the partnership will result in mutually beneficial outcomes by “*offering something of interest and being offered something of interest*” (GMU). Recognising a ‘power infrastructure’ helped regard the partner on an equivalent rather than equal basis. Thus, reducing the accumulation of power on one side of the partnership and reaching ‘*mutually equivalent, not necessarily equal*’ collaborations (GCU). With an expectation of

achieving something that none of the partnering institutions could attain alone, the collected accounts attested to the heightened awareness of the mutually beneficial dependency. They further underlined the need to sustain mutually advantageous relationships, as *“it has to be a two-way flow of exchanges, not just one way”* (EGU).

However, uneven or concentrated power constrained the mutually enabling effect of the partnership work. The collected accounts of partnership administrators indicated power imbalances propelled by the intensifying global competition and strengthening position of emerging countries. Affected by these developments, the changing higher education landscape affected the long-time leaders in international education, the USA, UK, and Canada. Comments pointed to perceptions of shifting away from their dominant partnership position. Aligning with Marmolejo’s observations of “rich but poor” U.S. institutions operating large budgets but with limited flexibility in allocating resources to international partnerships, it was noted that *“we sometimes need them more than they need us”* (MRU). Further comments from the study participants suggested an increasingly strengthening position of partners from emerging systems. For example: *“for a number of years, we’ve been building a collaboration with [institution’s name in Asia] and we’d love to do something bigger with them like an articulation degree, but we haven’t yet managed to get them to bite or to be interested in that. I think that’s because they’re a very highly ranked institution, more highly ranked than we are”* (GSU). Capturing the competition between the institutions as well as nations, the global ranking position transpired as an important point of power. Its perceived effect often meant that *“If you’re lower down in the league tables, I think that means in many cases you have less power”* (RSU).

Described as an *‘invisible and implicit undertone’* (RMU), the power dimension both facilitated and challenged the development of mutually advantageous partnerships. To support a two-way flow, it reflected the relative dependence along multiple points of power, such as finance, expertise, ranking, regional knowledge and experience. However, imbalances of power challenged partnerships and achieving something that none of the partnering institutions could attain alone. Influenced by reshaping of power structures globally, power imbalances highlighted the competitive and changing nature of the higher education landscape. From conversations with key partnership administrators, it appeared that the power dimension was present in all partnerships. When asked about dealing with power imbalances, their answers often linked back to entry motivations and the importance of establishing internal reasons for engaging that would then help unveil what can be put ‘on the table’. Collectively, they stressed the need *“to be clear about what both are bringing to the table which is another way of looking at power imbalances”* (GIU).

7.5. Conclusion: Productive tensions

The theory of collaborative advantage (TCA) provided a framework of organising concepts useful to examine the implementation of partnerships. It illuminated the unfolding of the varied influences in practice and highlighted ways for achieving productive tensions. Occurring at the institutional and individual level, the compromise between advantage and inertia or possibilities and limits allowed for capturing complex micro-processes taking place within collaborative activities. In that way, TCA led to propose a more nuanced understanding of international partnerships. Themes such as resource limitations, structural dichotomy, national and organisational culture diversity, leadership changes, communication, trust, and power imbalances were particularly useful to locate and analyse the complex tensions at the heart of the implementation of international partnerships. The analysis of how international partnerships function recognised the importance of placing a focus on achieving productive tensions and stressed the centrality of individual involvement and interpersonal relationships in responding to those tensions.

7.5.1. Achieving productive tensions

Exploring how the initial imprinting translates into the implementation of partnerships reflected tension-filled approaches to rationalise international engagements and sharpen the focus on quality, as the data demonstrated. It placed a focus on achieving productive tensions rather than attempting to resolve the examined contradictory concepts. In other words, a focus on developing an appropriate amount of tension instead of seeking illusive resolutions. Productive tensions carry the potential to 'make things happen' and energise the joint work. As informed by the theory of collaborative advantage and documented through multiple accounts of the invited research participants, partnerships require an advanced understanding of acceptable and practical resolutions rather than magical prescriptions (Vangen & Huxham, 2006).

In cross analysing globally and locally engaged institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada, differences between the two institutional types transpired with regards to experienced tensions in partnership resources, structure, and culture. Differentiated responses to tensions reflected the varied effects of partnership influences. Linked to different points of access to funding opportunities, globally engaged institutions demonstrated more flexibility and advantageous position over locally focused institutions in terms of financial resources. The structural dichotomy between centralising and decentralising efforts showed a

continuous balancing act. It reflected historical layers that translated into a balance seeking between administrative centralisation and academic decentralisation, especially among globally engaged institutions due to a large volume and research scope of collaborations. Finally, global visibility pressures and local context variations encouraged to shape cultures largely favouring international partnerships. As evoked earlier, partnerships encapsulate an assumption that individuals and institutions gain more by working together than by working individually (Dhillon, 2005). However, the analysis also pointed to a heightened level of faculty resistance to engage due to misaligned or insufficient institutional infrastructure among locally engaged institutions. Faculty international engagement can be viewed as an additional or marginal to one's academic work (Shore & Groen, 2009). Further, national cultural nuances showed the continuous need to cultivate cultural sensitivity by recognising '*what's valued*' and '*what makes it difficult*' (GCU) as linguistic differences and interpretations as well as work traditions can frustrate the implementation process. Additionally, the findings showed interweaving amongst the tensions suggesting contrary prescriptions and interacting dilemmas that further emphasised the process rather than the resolution of tensions. For example, human and financial resource limitations contradicted calls for maintaining an effective communication flow, more face-to-face meetings and visits. As people-to-people relationships support dialogue and provide the context for tackling many of the complex problems that may block the achievement of partnership objectives. However, "*people are always suspicious around international travel*" (GIU) and "*it's very difficult to explain it to the leadership when they are so conscious about the budget*" (MRU). Similarly, leadership changes at the top disrupted front-line management dynamics and trust building efforts which sometimes meant a new direction as "*the whole conversation becomes irrelevant*" (MRU). The negotiations between the differing orientations were carried out by individuals whose engagement in building relationships underscored the development of adaptive mechanisms and conditioned the successful implementation of partnerships.

7.5.2. Individual and relational dimension

The various tensions were mediated by adaptive mechanisms which suggested that a greater attention should be directed toward individual and relational dimensions. As the success of partnerships depends on and requires the involvement of multiple external and internal stakeholders, individual leadership, and relationship building conditioned the implementation process. Informed by the contradictory concepts of possibilities and limits put forward by TCA, the study identified tensions underscored by changing leadership and champions, communication maintenance, trust building, and power imbalances. The

adaptive mechanisms employed by institutions showed consistencies across the two types of institutions. In that way, they exposed like-mindedness on the individual and relational dimension to create productively tense partnerships.

The data highlighted the key role of an individual possessing the capacity to add both possibilities and limits to reaching productive tensions. Organisational studies commonly describe inter-organisational relationships as “socially contrived mechanisms for collective action which are continually shaped and restructured by actions and symbolic interpretations of the parties involved” (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994, p. 96). As found in this study, actions and interpretations of individuals involved in the partnership development conditioned its success. Moreover, how individuals led partnership discussions internally and how they maintained internal interest was equally important. In that sense, Marginson and Rhodes (2002) argued for a greater focus on interactions between the individual agency and the internationalisation context.

Enacted by individuals, the possibilities and limits across the studied institutional contexts alluded to the construction of an ‘international mindset’ and a heightened need to focus on individuals involved in the process as noted by Paige and Mestenhauser (1999). In essence, the construction of international mindset can be facilitated by enabling individuals to explore and learn from different settings in order to build a foundation through which they generate new understandings of complex problems and employ better informed actions. Serving on the frontline of internationalisation efforts including partnerships, the participating administrators were positioned to connect to knowledge from different sources encouraging well-rounded conversations and interventions. Their reflections mirrored *“an agreement that partnerships contribute to our success, our future-proofing, and we need to be working collaboratively and internationally” (GSU)*.

As higher education institutions increasingly market their programmes not only nationally but also regionally and internationally, they rely on staff who are adequately equipped for global collaboration. In that context, institutions seek “self-reliant, connected and well-rounded” professionals who understand global dynamics, demonstrate a broad worldview, linguistic skills, and ability to work in a multicultural setting (Bourn & Shiel, 2009, p. 668). How individuals lead partnership interactions significantly influences both the partnership process as well as the wider institutional internationalisation strategy. In addition to an impersonal institution-level commitment, individual interests and investments in building productive relationships create those partnerships that are “often more important for the relationships they facilitate, the values they symbolize, and the political alliances that can be banked for

future use than for the measurable outputs they produce” (Amey (2010b). Partnerships do not merely emerge or happen. They are conditioned by individuals and relationships these individuals build. As found in this study, nurturing relationships involved in-person events, trust building, and developing familiarity with each other’s points of power. Productive relationships served as a precursor to growing existing partnerships as “*the general feeling is that the more activity you can concentrate within a geography and a key partner institution, the more sustainability and value you get out*” (GIU) in line with approaches to rationalise international engagements and sharpen the focus on quality, as evoked earlier.

7.6. Chapter summary

Chapter 7 pulled together the research findings from the three case studies structured around the key themes. This offered a more general interpretation of the findings discussed in relation to the relevant literature. The tables captured and organised them in an attempt to facilitate an understanding of partnership dynamics and highlight the contribution of the current study for the development of international partnerships.

The two theoretical lenses were particularly useful to understand and navigate the complexities that underlie the formation and implementation of international partnerships. In particular, they provided an organising framework for the study of influences and tensions. The glonacal analytical heuristic proved useful in recognising the multidimensionality of influences and informed the categorisation of embedded, integrated, and hidden influences. Set within the context of international partnerships, TCA mapped the areas that need attention by juxtaposing advantages and challenges of practice. The two theoretical approaches proved useful in the co-construction of the organising themes for international partnerships.

The findings cast a similar shadow in ways institutions with a similar global or local focus formed and implemented partnerships. Drawing attention to the institutional context and its interaction with the immediate environments and communities brought to the fore issues of historical embeddedness, local impact, funding access, global visibility, and partner motivations that generated differentiated patterns of responses between globally and locally focused institutions. They pointed to the need to engage in seeking a successful combination of influences and stressed growing concerns about integrating international partnerships locally.

Further, recognising the compromise between intended advantages and experienced practices uncovered differentiated patterns in how the two types of institutions dealt with resource limitations, structural dichotomy, and cultural heterogeneity. The study findings underscored an understanding that dealing with challenges requires an appropriate amount of tension rather than developing solutions to varied partnership challenges. The possibilities and limits enacted by individuals illustrated that achieving productive tensions is continuous and uneven as it “at times can look more like promoting relations of constraint rather than relations of co-operation” (Psaltis, 2007, p.195). They further revealed similarities in how institutions experienced and adapted to changing leadership and champions, communication maintenance, trust building, and power imbalances showing like-mindedness to create productively tense partnerships.

Chapter 8 - CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

"No academic system can exist by itself in the world of the 21st century."

(Altbach, 2004)

The final chapter presents the conclusions of this study with reference to the research questions. It then addresses contributions of the study and implications for practice and suggests areas for future research. To orient the closing presentation, the chapter commences with a brief outline of the background of the study.

8.1. International partnerships revisited

The primary purpose of the current study was to explore why and how international partnerships function. Rather than isolating the components promoting or impeding its effective development, the study aimed to provide an integrative view of the partnering process by uncovering factors driving international partnerships and identifying areas where tensions persist. Central to this exploration was an understanding that partnership arrangements are associated with a variety of choices and that, as a result, there are no two partnerships alike. However, it was important to recognise that they overlap in their determination to achieve something that none of the institutions could achieve alone and in their resolution to collaborate through experiences of contrast (Vangen & Huxham, 2006). To both grasp their complex and paradoxical nature as well as discern common patterns and shared challenges, the study examined partnerships across different national and institutional settings. It considered a mix of globally and locally oriented institutions in the USA, UK, and Canada in relation to the main research questions:

1. Why do higher education institutions form international partnerships?
2. How do higher education institutions respond to tensions that accompany the implementation of partnerships?

The empirical side of the study was conducted through the use of a qualitative case study methodology. In particular, the research was framed using a multi-case study method to allow for a better and broader understanding of why and how institutions partner internationally. The focus was on globally and locally engaged institutions. To assist in

interpreting the collected data, the study's baseline included three countries. While it was not intended as a comparative study, the multi-country design was necessary to better access a phenomenon that transcends a single country and operates in a shared space.

The dataset was collected primarily from two sources: interviews and documents. The interviews were conducted with senior administrators tasked with the design and implementation of institution-wide international partnerships as they possess in-depth knowledge of the reasons for establishing partnerships and arrangements taking place within them. Documents constituted another source of data due to the amount of information they provide as well as the ability to corroborate the interview accounts (Merriam, 1998).

The glonacal analytical heuristic along with the inter-organisational theory of collaborative advantage (TCA) were employed as theoretical groundings for this study. While the glonacal heuristic elucidated global, national, and local influences and responses most conducive to the expansion of international partnerships, TCA drew attention to the properties and patterns of relations between organisations pursuing a mutual interest. It uncovered the coexistence of intended advantage and experienced challenges in the implementation process. Capturing the influences and tensions in international partnerships, the organising framework (Table 10) served as the basis for engaged reflection and interpretation of data.

The focus of the first research question and the glonacal theoretical grounding created the space to consider the multiplicity and multidimensionality of influences impacting the formation of partnerships (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). As noted earlier, partnerships encapsulate 'many voices and points of entry' (Sutton et al., 2011). In the investigation of motivating influences, it was necessary to temporarily isolate those different voices and points of entry in order to ultimately consider them holistically. In thinking about influences systematically, it was helpful to construct an organising framework derived from the collected interview responses. The current study identified three broad categories of embedded, integrated, and hidden influences that were discussed in detail in the previous chapter. The investigation of factors driving the formation of partnerships highlighted the importance of understanding varied influences and engaging in conversations about their successful combination. To establish a strong basis upon which a successful combination of influences can be constructed, findings enveloped an understanding that partnerships combine influences embedded in history and integrated with the current multidimensional pressures, some of which may remain hidden from partner's view. Further, they highlighted differences between institutional types and suggested similarities in patterns of responses among

institutions with a similar global or local focus irrespective of the national context they occupied.

The second research question was grounded in the examination of tensions associated with partnerships and varied responses to them. As highlighted in Chapter 7, these were stretched over institutional and individual levels and captured the coexistence of collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia. The unpacking of these contradictory concepts identified those areas of the implementation process where 'rewards' and 'anxieties' persisted (Huxham, 2003). Further, the identified areas served as 'points of entry' for an in-depth investigation of ways globally and locally engaged institutions attended to achieving a 'productive tension of asymmetries'. They included resources, organisational structure and culture, leadership, communication, trust, and power imbalances. The findings exposed differences in how the two different types of institutions across the three national settings dealt with resource limitations, structural dichotomy, and cultural heterogeneity. They further revealed similarities in how institutions experienced and adapted to changing leadership and champions, communication maintenance, trust building, and power imbalances. Attesting to the notion that the implementation of partnerships is "highly resource-consuming and often painful", this study showed manifestations of both possibilities and limits shaping the collaborative process (Huxham & Vangen, 2013, p. 80). Showing that collaborative advantage has more to do with the process of achieving productive tensions rather than the actual resolution of contradictory forces underscored the importance of keeping the contradictory forces in dialogue. As noted in the Introductory chapter, partnerships are always 'a work in progress' and rarely free of tensions. Focusing on the process of reaching an appropriate amount of tension highlighted the centrality of individual involvement and interpersonal relationships in responding to tensions.

8.2. Contributions of the study

In light of the paucity of current studies on influences and tensions in international partnerships across different institutional and national settings, this study fills an important gap. It extends the current literature, which has largely dealt with best practices based on individual cases of building partnerships, to examine the realities of forming and implementing partnerships using a multi-case design.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, a limited number of studies has applied an analytical approach rather than a descriptive one to explore some of the ambiguities

surrounding the development of international partnerships. While some sources have pointed out their limited sustainability and effectiveness (Cardini, 2006; Dhillon, 2005), others have called for more empirical studies exploring conditions necessary to foster and sustain collaborations rather than identifying barriers to partnership working (Kezar, 2006; Lumby & Morrison, 2006). The current study sought to fill the void by providing insights into the underlying dynamics inherent in inter-institutional partnerships. Guided by two theoretical lenses, it examined their influences and responses in an attempt to offer a deeper understanding of the partnering process in higher education.

Set within the literature on internationalisation of higher education and inter-organisational relationships, the study aimed to contribute to the knowledge base concerned with international partnerships. In that regard, it offered an integrative view of why and how international partnerships function, as it:

- presented some of the complexities involved in the formation of international partnerships by developing an organising framework to capture the multiplicity of influences that interact with different institutional contexts, specifically globally and locally oriented higher education institutions
- identified areas of tensions that accompany the implementation process by recognising intended advantages and experienced challenges at the institutional and individual level
- found similar responses among institutions with a similar global or local focus regardless of the national context they occupied suggesting a greater impact of the institutional context over the national one

Finally, the study offered a perspective on international partnerships by giving voice to senior administrators who are on the frontline of partnership formations and negotiations. Their inclusion strengthened the literature on international partnerships. By provoking reflection on collaborative processes, the study legitimised 'often painful' experiences of 'high-risk' entities and offered details involved in the daily course of partnerships that cannot be captured in a Memorandum of Understanding. In that way, it provided conceptual pointers for an engaged conversation around issues that must be addressed.

8.3. Implications for practice

Multiple implications for practitioners emerged during the course of the study. They may assist those individuals charged with the development of international relationships. The

following suggestions provide 'handles for reflective practice' pointing to the areas where increased awareness and consideration are needed.

Understand influences. Practitioners need to understand the motivational influences behind partnerships in order to maintain and grow its daily coherent practice. If this information is not available due to personnel turnover or the absence of codified institutional knowledge about the partnership origin and rationale, it may disrupt the partnership functioning and affect involvement and buy-in of those involved. If that happens, it is important to engage in a process that would re-establish a vision and goals for partnerships. When (re)establishing a vision and goals for international partnerships, it is essential to recognise multi-layered influences that shape international partnerships. While some arise out of historically embedded imprinting, others emerge from geographical and functional spheres of influence integrating global, national, and local domains. Further, some hidden and unknown factors drive partnerships as practitioners try to understand the overlap of priorities and inconsistencies between their institutions.

Consider partner motivations. As discussed in length in the previous chapter, practitioners experience difficulties understanding 'what's in it for the partner'. In order for them to learn about partner motivations in a more systematic way, organised and regular face-to-face events, internal discussions, and tools, such as checklists and metrics should be employed. They assist in assessing the partnership sustainability as practitioners often struggle to get an understanding of the 'true motivation' for partnering.

Focus on quality. In an era of increasingly limited resources, practice of international partnerships should focus on quality. In that sense, rationalising existing partnerships, identifying countries and regions of strategic importance, investing in professional development should be emphasised. The evidence collected in this study has resonated with the relevant literature commenting on the shift away from collecting MOUs toward rationalising and strengthening the relational aspect of partnerships (Stockley & De Wit, 2011; Sutton et al., 2012).

Know the partner. Practitioners must understand how the partnering institution operates in terms of local culture, habits, and language. One way to address that is to develop a working culture by integrating individuals knowledgeable about foreign contexts and traditions. To leverage the constructive potential of combining cultural dissimilarities, this effort should be ongoing and sensitive to 'what's valued' and 'what makes it difficult'.

Know the partnerships. In line with the shift away from accumulating inactive or paper-based partnerships (Knight, 2004), partnership practices should involve a regular review of inter-institutional agreements. Knowing whom institutions partner with can be highly fragmented and decentralised as different departments and faculty may act on behalf of the institution. Centralised approaches to tracking and reviewing signed agreements should be practised.

Communicate in person. When misunderstandings and conflicts were reported, the underlying cause was often related to communication. To sustain a communication flow, timelines and processes for communication must be in place. Addressing issues early and with sensitivity redirects attention toward understanding and away from their accumulation that constrains the flow between partners. In addition to Internet-based communication, interaction in person should be reinforced as its benefits extend to building trust, nurturing relationships, and weathering down inevitable issues later in the process. However, given a growing awareness that physical mobility generates costs to the environment, in person interaction should be carefully planned and tie in multiple purposes, events, and individuals.

Seek balance. Partnerships reflect two-way exchanges incorporating multiple points of strategic value and relative dependence. It is important for practitioners to recognise this multiplicity and seek balanced and mutually equivalent collaborations. To reduce the accumulation of power on one side of the partnership, practitioners should identify a 'power infrastructure' comprising the power of finance, academic expertise, global ranking, regional knowledge and experience. Seeking balanced partnerships brings clarity to 'what both are bringing to the table' by developing familiarity with each other's strengths and potentials.

Maintain internal interest. In order to reduce the impact of top-level and frontline leadership changes, it is important to establish a wider community of interest in international partnerships. Maintaining a community of interest throughout the institution helps guarding against disruptive effects of changing dynamics. Leadership changes often mark a milestone in the partnership development as they trigger a review of different strategies and plans that are put forward.

Build relationships. Interpersonal relationships are key to the life of inter-institutional partnerships. As the gathered evidence indicated, problems and discrepancies are hard to address without committed and collegial relationships between members of the partnering institutions. They serve as the glue that keeps the institutions together and shapes how partnerships develop. It is sensible to build relationships progressively and enlarge the scope of engagement as trust develops. The importance of establishing and maintaining

productive and trusted relationships is paramount as they have the capacity to enhance partnership effectiveness and success.

Engage in evaluation. Finally, there was a need expressed by the participants for a formal evaluation process. Many partnerships are assessed informally and ad hoc. A formal evaluation process has a potential to bring a structure to the partnership and result in the partnership expansion or termination. It is recommended that both sides agree on a timeline, frequency, and the format of assessment.

8.4. Future research areas

It is widely recognised that higher education institutions “at one time compared themselves only to other in the same country now look across national boundaries for peers” (Mohrman et al., 2008, p. 21). Although this study was supported by the findings in a select number of countries, further research needs to be done covering other parts of the world. It is necessary to gather additional evidence on motivational starting points and productive tensions exhibited by partnerships between higher education institutions. More robust evidence has the potential to provide more accurate ‘handles for reflective practice’ and result in better understanding of “the structures and processes that promote success and sustainability” (Eddy, 2010b, p. 2).

Another area of research may involve examining the impact that the inter-organisational arrangements have made on their participants including students, faculty and staff. The latter examination would complement the present findings and help draw a more complete picture of the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of such arrangements. Additionally, it would guide those institutions interested in developing international partnerships and shape future amendments.

As noted in Chapter 1, much of the current literature describes practices that promise to develop sustainable and high-performing partnerships. Their focus is on successful engagements. Further research on failed partnerships would provide pointers to areas and issues that require careful consideration. First, the examination of how failure is defined by different institutions would help delineate various levels and dimensions of underperforming partnerships. Research enquiries could then focus on questions such as: Why do some partnerships fail when others succeed? Why do institutions seek continuation of partnerships? How do international partnerships evolve over time? What demotivates institutions to partner? Exploring these questions would contribute to an improved

understanding of international partnerships and provide invaluable insights into the 'dark side' of inter-organisational engagements.

Finally, it may be worth examining how partnerships are evaluated and whether the partnering institutions should be actively involved in the evaluation design or not. Given that the success of partnerships rely on the development of shared capital (Eddy, 2010b), there is a need for further research on mapping partnership performance and co-developing subsequent changes. According to Amey et al. (2010), shared partnership capital lies at the intersection of social and organisational capitals. Therefore, exploring individual and institutional positioning in the evaluation process would provide a new perspective on how to improve partnership functioning.

8.5. Concluding remarks

It is possible to recreate international partnerships as conversations within a larger multifaceted internationalisation discourse. As noted earlier, understanding them as "a conversation that needs many voices and points of entry" helps provide access to their complex and paradoxical nature (Sutton et al., 2011). Reflective of an expanding attention to integrate an international dimension and associated with growing pressures for increased competitiveness and responsiveness to external conditions, partnerships have been embraced as 'key shapers' of internationalisation' (Knight, 2010) and 'the best answer' to enhancing ways institutions respond to the growing complexity (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). As this study has shown, finding a common language challenges the partnership development. Therefore, an understanding of different points of entry can facilitate the successful execution of the intended strategy as it helps resurface shared patterns and common challenges.

Given that internationalisation becomes a central part of institutional strategic planning for many institutions, partnerships cease to be incidental and marginal. It was discussed earlier that early euphoria has been replaced by pragmatism in higher education partnerships. Described as the future for higher education and an essential tactic in an overall move from 'cottage industries' toward 'multinational consortia', views of international partnerships as normative and instrumental are taking a subordinate role to complex and paradoxical observations (Magrath, 2000; Stockley & De Wit, 2011). Higher education institutions have reasons for engaging in partnerships that arise in an increasingly complex globalised environment. Using the words of Barnett, it is an environment in which "higher education is

having to detect and to decipher the messages coming at it. The messages are mixed, uneven, often weak, changing and even conflicting; and even merely tacit” (2000, p. 258). In thinking about forming partnerships, institutions are likely to confront the complexity of messages and organise them in a way that would harness the multiplicity and multidimensionality of driving influences. Given the importance of the initial imprinting, an understanding of institutional responses to these influences is crucial to advance self-reflection and ultimately better connect not only with partnering institutions but also with ideas and experiences of those institutions.

Higher education institutions worldwide are increasingly dependent on collaborative joint work to deliver “new means of highlighting the opportunities that individuals and groups might seize with the goal of improving their own circumstances, and those of others around them” (Gunn & Mintrom, 2013, p. 190). In part, this orientation is propelled by changes in understanding of the value of higher education. In part, this is triggered by an increased appreciation that addressing important issues takes place beyond the purview of a single institution. In such context, it is essential to keep expanding the awareness of the complex and paradoxical nature of international partnerships to deliver opportunities to higher education institutions that are worth seizing. Because partnerships support various strategies of internationalisation, such as student and faculty exchange, study abroad, joint degrees, teaching and research collaboration, it is vital to seek insights into the underlying dynamics within them. Despite challenges, the topic of international partnerships within higher education has clear substantive importance. An analytical exploration of influences and tensions of international collaborations promises to assist all those involved as they form and maintain partnerships abroad. Many higher education institutions and their practitioners often lack the time to step back and look comprehensively at the joint work they are carrying out. Such perspective may shed light on the issues they have not considered and benefits they have not noticed. It may help drive the resources and awareness toward those areas of partnerships that are likely to be most influential and valuable.

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APPENDIX A – INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Participant Information Sheet

UCL Research Ethics Committee Approval ID Number: Z6364106/2018/02/22

TITLE OF STUDY

Forming and implementing international partnerships in the context of locally and globally engaged higher education institutions: A qualitative study of administrators' perspectives from the USA, UK, Canada

DEPARTMENT

Education, Practice and Society (EPS)

NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS OF THE RESEARCHER

Zaneta Bertot - [REDACTED]

DESCRIPTION

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research study about international partnerships in higher education. Before you decide to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what your participation will involve.

The study is an exploration of why and how higher education institutions engage in international partnerships. As higher education institutions increasingly embrace the idea that internationalisation is a collective rather than a solitary undertaking, they engage in a wider range of international partnerships involving a growing set of motivations, arrangements, and participants. Serving as conduits for people, knowledge, and resource sharing, international partnerships materialise a complex combination of opportunities and responsibilities and, thus, raise challenges for practitioners involved in their design and implementation. With partnerships multiplying and diversifying, the focus of many institutions is on understanding how to sustain and grow them effectively. It is, therefore, important to understand the underlying dynamics that affect the development of these engagements. By participating in this study, you and other research participants will be contributing to the development of a common understanding of the conditions necessary to foster and sustain collaborative advantage in partnerships.

PARTICIPATION

Your taking part in this study is entirely voluntary, which means you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason or ask me not to use your interview. If you decide to withdraw, you will be asked what you wish to happen to the data you have provided up to that point. You may also decline to answer any of the interview questions if you feel uncomfortable or do not know how to answer it.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. It will be held at a time that is most convenient to you. The interview will consist of questions regarding various aspects of collaboration including its motivations, arrangements, and your involvement as a

practitioner. You will also be asked to provide certain materials and documents that are public record and relevant the study.

With your permission, I would like to digitally record interviews for purposes of accuracy. All responses you provide will be considered confidential. You and your institution will be completely anonymised within this research. The recordings of your interview and my notes will be securely stored and destroyed when they are no longer needed.

· RISKS

Apart from the inconvenience of dedicating your time, there is no known risk or other major inconvenience to participants. I do not anticipate that any of the questions will make you feel uncomfortable, but if you do feel a perceived risk in answering any question, you can choose not to answer that question. In addition, you may at any time enquire why a particular question is being asked.

· EXPECTED BENEFITS

It is expected that this study will not benefit you directly. However, it may benefit your institution by contributing to a greater understanding about the development and sustainability of international partnerships. Given that many higher education institutions often lack the time to step back and look comprehensively at the joint work they are carrying out, the findings may shed light on the issues and benefits your institution may not have considered.

· QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

If you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact the Researcher *Zaneta Bertot* - [REDACTED] or the Thesis Supervisor *Dr Vincent Carpentier* [REDACTED]. If your concern has not been handled to your satisfaction, you can contact the Chair of the UCL Research Ethics Committee – [REDACTED].

· CONFIDENTIALITY

All the information collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study will be published. Each participant will be assigned a coded identity so that data is never linked to individual identity. In addition, a coded identity will be created for your institution. The institution will not be named except for a few basic facts, such as country location, size, mission.

· LIMITS TO CONFIDENTIALITY

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory agencies.

· DATA MANAGEMENT

The data collected for this study will form the basis of a report for the doctoral thesis that may be presented at relevant conferences and in academic journals. All data will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. In addition, all stored data will be destroyed upon the submission of the written report. If you or your institution is interested in obtaining the findings of the study, copies will be sent as requested.

· DATA PROTECTION PRIVACY NOTICE

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at [REDACTED]. UCL's Data Protection Officer is Lee Shailer and he can also be contacted [REDACTED].

Your personal data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this notice. The legal basis that would be used to process your personal data will be the provision of your consent. You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this project by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. If you remain unsatisfied, you may wish to contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Contact details, and details of data subject rights, are available on the ICO website at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/overview-of-the-gdpr/individuals-rights/>

· CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to discuss this project, or your participation in it, at any point, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]. I would appreciate if you could complete and return the attached consent form confirming whether or not you would like to participate in this project.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering to take part in this research study.

Participant Consent Form

Title of Study: Forming and implementing international partnerships in the context of locally and globally engaged higher education institutions: A qualitative study of administrators' perspectives from the USA, UK, Canada

Department: Education, Practice and Society (EPS)

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher: Zaneta Bertot - [REDACTED]

Name and Contact Details of the Thesis Supervisor: Dr Vincent Carpentier - [REDACTED]

Name and Contact Details of the UCL Data Protection Officer: Lee Shailer - [REDACTED]

This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee: ID number Z6364106/2018/02/22

I confirm that I understand that by ticking/initialling each box below I am consenting to this element of the study. I understand that it will be assumed that unticked/initialled boxes mean that I DO NOT consent to that part of the study. I understand that by not giving consent for any one element that I may be deemed ineligible for the study.

		Tick Box
1.	I confirm that I have had an opportunity to ask questions and consider the provided information and what will be expected of me.	
2.	I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to the report submission date, October 2020.	
3.	I understand that my data gathered in this study will be stored anonymously and securely. It will not be possible to identify me in any publications.	
4.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.	
5.	I understand the potential risks of participating and the support that will be available to me should I become distressed during the course of the research.	
6.	I understand that no promise or guarantee of benefits have been made to encourage me to participate.	
7.	I understand that the data will not be made available to any commercial organisations but is solely the responsibility of the researcher undertaking this study.	
8.	I understand that I will not benefit financially from this study or from any possible outcome it may result in in the future.	
9.	I understand that the information I have submitted will be published as a report.	
10.	I consent to my interview being recorded and understand that the recordings and/or written notes will be destroyed immediately following the submission of the written report. To note: If you do not want your participation recorded you can still take part in the study.	
11.	I am aware of who I should contact if I wish to lodge a complaint.	
12.	I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.	

Name of participant

Date

Signature

APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Semi-structured interview questions

The interviews were guided by the following questions:

Experience and Background

1. How long have you been working in this institution/international partnership?
2. What are your main responsibilities?

RQ 1: Why do higher education institutions form international partnerships?

1. What are the main motivational drivers behind this international partnership?
2. Could you comment on any changes in motivations since its inception?
3. Your institution's mission is to ... In your opinion, how do partnerships help advance this vision?
4. Do you have an understanding of what motivates your partner? Can you elaborate on any major differences/commonalities that affect the reasons why your institution selected a particular institution?
5. Does your institution monitor trends and forecasts relating to external developments (specific countries or subject areas)? If so, how does it impact on partnership decisions?
6. Do you see the development of international partnerships somehow connected to the local environment?
7. What does your institution aim to gain from international partnerships?
8. What other benefits could result from partnerships?

RQ 2: How do higher education institutions respond to tensions that accompany the implementation of partnerships?

1. Can you highlight any milestones in the partnership development? Were there any critical moments or events that contributed to the partnership advancement?
2. What are some of the challenges of maintaining and growing this partnership? How are they dealt with and communicated about?
3. In your opinion, what resources are needed to maintain this partnership? What resources are available?
4. What skills/knowledge do you consider essential to perform effectively? What skills/knowledge do you/your team lack?
5. How are international partnerships perceived within the institution? Do you experience any difficulties to convince the worthiness of the partnership at the institutional level/senior administration level?
6. In your opinion, do you think it is important to have similar organisational structures? Do you have an understanding of the organisational structure at the partnering institution?
7. How do you deal with cultural differences?

8. Who is the champion promoting and facilitating this partnership (academic or administrative)? Did he/she change since the beginning? How did it impact on the partnership functioning?
9. Do you experience any difficulties in communicating or staying in touch with your counterparts?
10. Do you think there is a sufficient level of trust between members of the partnership? Can you describe efforts made toward trust building? Can you comment on any challenges?
11. How do power imbalances manifest in the joint work? Have you noticed any changes over time?
12. Given that your institution maintains multiple international agreements, are some of them defined as strategic? If yes, what are the main factors that distinguish them from other partnerships?
13. Is your institution committed to expanding the number of partnerships or rather strengthening the existing ones?

Concluding questions

1. Is there anything that surprised you in the work with international partnerships?
2. Is there anything you would like to add with regards to the discussed topics?
3. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX C – CODED INTERVIEW EXTRACTS

Interview extract #1: Initial coding (Regional Inland University)

Q: What are the motivational drivers behind the development of international partnerships at your institution?

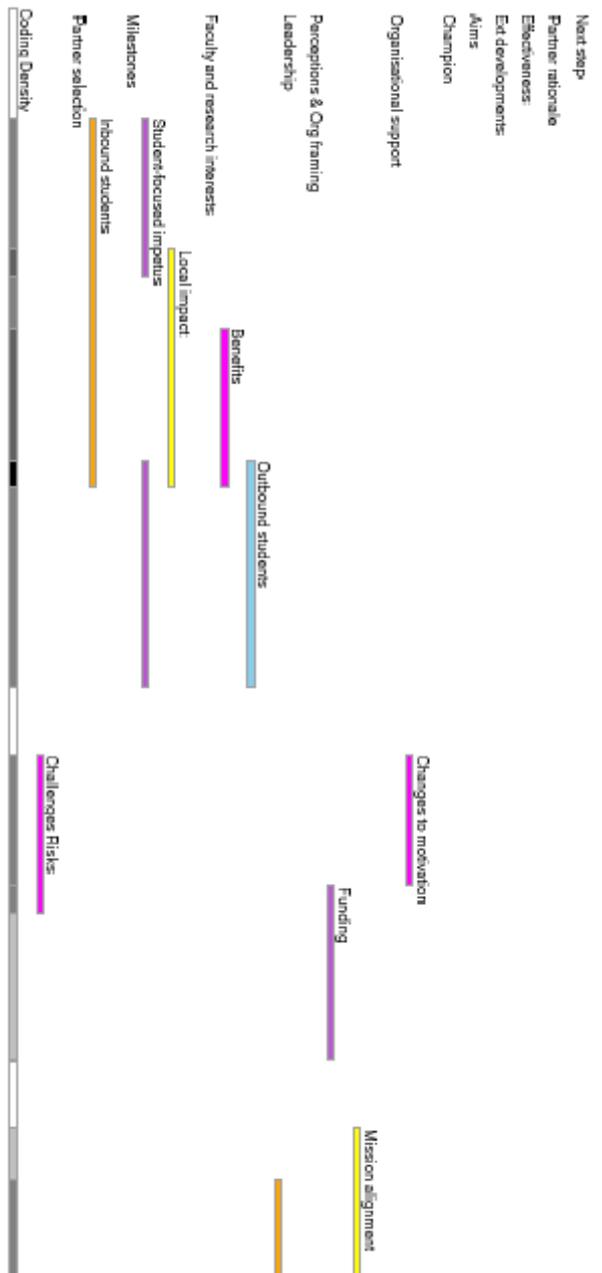
R: There are different motivations; the first one is increasing enrollment for our institution. Institutions in the United States, especially public institutions like ours, we work with the goal of a certain number of international students we have to have every year and having those international partnerships especially for exchange program. The numbers aren't huge. The numbers are not too big, but they do add up to our total number of international students on campus. So again, enrollment is one motivation. The second motivation, especially in our specific case here, in our institution, which I'm sure you're going to find in other institutions as well I'm assuming, is the partnerships that I'm talking about here are mostly student exchange. A lot of institutions in the United States have a lot of students from [redacted] students from [redacted]. Our exchange partnerships bring us students from other countries that are not so highly represented in our international student population from [redacted] for instance, not a lot of students from [redacted] come to the United States to pursue a full degree but they do come on exchange programs for a semester or a year. That brings diversity to our international student body through our partnerships for exchange programs. I would say these two are the main ones. And of course, the third one is to allow our domestic students to have an opportunity to study abroad for a reasonable cost because they pay tuition here and then they have that opportunity to go in our case, to go to [redacted] to go to [redacted] to go to [redacted]. They have that opportunity also to have an organized program for them to go to where there is an office that will come to take care of them. There's going to be somebody waiting for them when they get there. So, motivation is to provide our students with opportunities for going abroad. I'd say, again, enrollment, diversifying our international student body, and giving our domestic students the opportunity to go abroad in an organized way.

Q: Have there been any changes in motivations?

R: Well, I've been leading the international office since 2013 and I think that is the experience I've had here, so I don't know about before me but I think the one thing I've seen in the past, I think there might have been more of the motivation for diversifying the student body, diversifying the opportunity for our domestic students may have been bigger than enrollment because public universities like ours had more financial support from the government in the past than they have now. So, there is more scrutiny in how many students we send and how many students we bring. Again, talking about student exchange partnerships. So, cost is more of an issue right now. So, I shouldn't be receiving 200 students and sending 50 because of the balance. I don't know if in the past that was such a motivation, honestly, because I think the diversification of the student body again, and opportunities for our students to go abroad might have been more of motivation. That's been my experience working at other institutions for 23 years. Enrollment is at the centre now for public institutions.

Q: How do international partnerships help advance the institutional mission? Is this something that's part of the wider internationalisation plan or strategy?

R: Yes, yes, absolutely. The strategic plan of the university is to provide global opportunities for our students, which can happen if they go abroad. If they cannot go abroad, it can happen if a student from abroad comes here. At my institution there is a lot of emphasis on education abroad, a lot of emphasis on bringing students from other countries, a lot of support from the president down.



Q: Does your office monitor trends and forecasts related to external developments, either political or economic? If so, how does it impact on partnership decisions?

R: Yes, what we do is safety and risk. I turn down partnerships in areas deemed of risk by the State Department. We don't do it because we don't want to expose our students to certain situations. I would say that this is the biggest one. And of course, health, we look at health as part of risk assessment. Risk assessment is the number one for us. We work very closely with our risk management office here at the university for that. But I can't think of anything economically. There are some countries where we know our students don't go to. We may not deny a partnership, but we may promote it more as a faculty or research opportunity rather than for student exchange in certain countries.

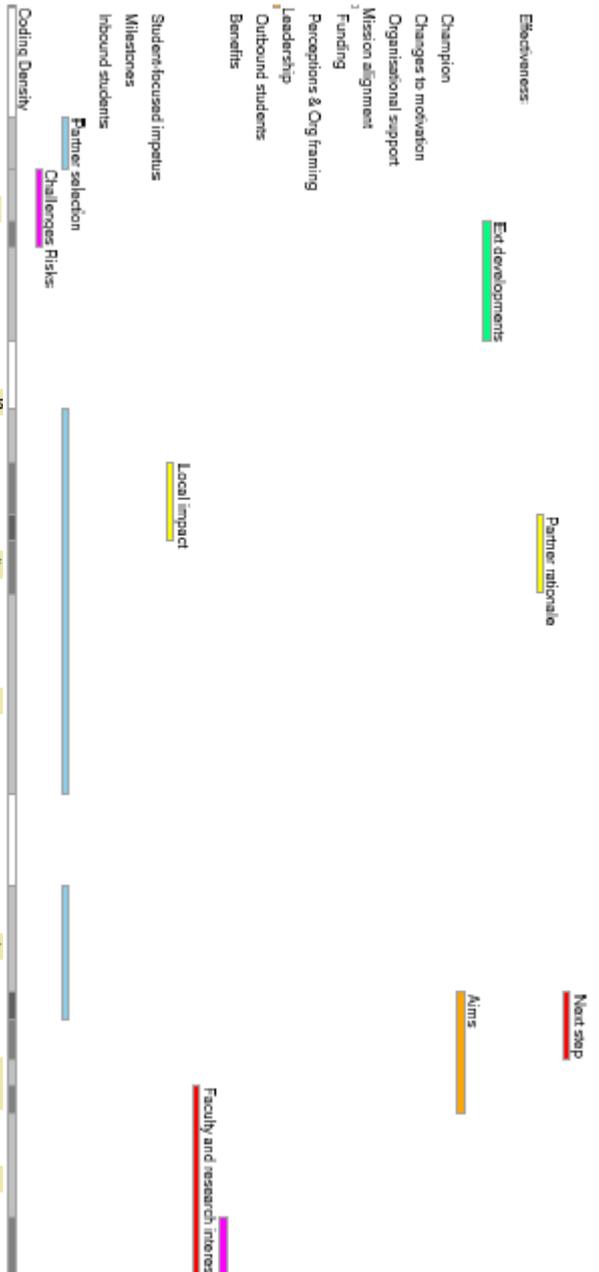
Q: Do you have an understanding of what motivates your partner? What criteria do you consider when selecting a partnering institution?

R: We have a list that we go over and look at. So, location is important. If I already have 10 programs in [redacted] you know, we are not going to be trying to get more programs. Also, safety of the location is very important. Then, honestly, attractiveness for our students to go there. Where we are located in [redacted] in the United States, it's very traditional. Our students are not too adventurous, so you know, definitely that plays a role in the selection. And of course, we also look at the programs that they offer because if they are not similar to what we have, it's not going to be successful. For certain programs, for professional programs we look at accreditation like a college of business, for instance, looking at accreditation to make sure that the classes our students take they're gonna count for our students, so that's very important. I would say location, safety of the place and sometimes, you know, we don't want to be competing with ourselves like we have our own programming space. So, we are careful about the kind of partnerships we have in [redacted] because we already have a Spanish learning program in [redacted]. We have a few employees there. We do go through the selection list. It's not too strict, but it's not entering into partnerships with any institution.

Q: What does your institution aim to gain from international partnerships?

R: In the last years, I think it is to deepen the relationships. There are institutions that have 100s of agreements. You know, again, you're competing with yourselves or you have agreements where your students are not going to go. So, what we are trying to do, what you try to do is let's see the partners that we have, not only expand that partnership but also can we use that institution as a place where our faculty can take students when they go abroad on faculty-led programs or use their residence halls and maybe some of the lecturers from that institution are going to work with ours while they are there with the students. So, it's expanding the types of programs we have. The goal now is deepening relationships rather than adding new ones.

So, aiming to maybe create multi-level partnerships with multiple activities going on and rationalize the existing approach to international partnerships. We have like a partner in the [redacted]. They are sending us their first students this semester. But before we did this, we had a faculty member who was taking our students to the [redacted]. And I contacted my counterpart and we put the faculty from our two institutions in contact with each other because they were doing the same kind of research, they taught the classes at distance, you know, videoconferencing and then when they actually went there, they met with the students from both sides. So again, that wasn't something we thought when we did the agreement. But it's that kind of stuff, the faculty doing research, the



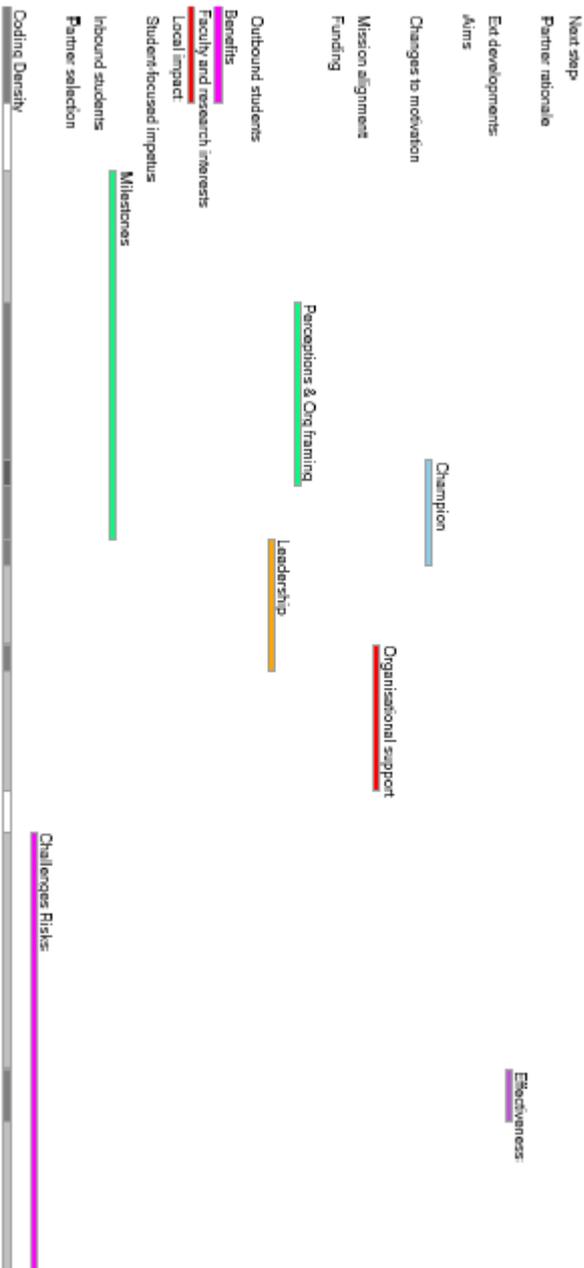
classes can be taught together, it's not only the exchange program. I think, this enriches the program. The faculty are the ones who will bring the students. So, the more we have faculty to faculty connections, the students are going to come too.

Q: Can you highlight any milestones or some critical moments or events that contributed to either the advancement or dissolution of some agreements based on your experience?

R: Again, I've been in this role since [redacted] kind of experienced this office 20 years ago as a client, so to speak, because I was an international student at this university too and now I lead the office. When I was working for the university and had to have some connections to this office, I also could observe it from a perspective of an employee dealing with another office on campus. I think the biggest difference that I can see is when the president, our previous president, the international area used to be together when I was a student, then it was all split apart and the President decided to bring it all back together. I mean, that was a milestone and she sent the message that she empowered the office or the centralized clearing house of international recruitment and of partnerships and, of course, immigration services, and to a smaller but still important responsible for international initiatives on campus. So, for me that was a milestone and when the upper administration makes a decision to bring back together everything that is international, it empowers that office with, for example, I know this sounds very small, but the President will not sign any agreement that comes to his office that doesn't have my cover memo. He would just send it back to me and say, "do you know about this". This is key for an office or a champion for international partnerships that gets 100% support from the administration. Leadership, both our previous and current president, have travelled abroad extensively. These are the people who believe our students, our domestic students need to be exposed to experiences abroad. That we need to have a campus that is diversified and that the international students have a role to play. I have to say my institution is 100% behind international initiatives. And we are very lucky here. So, our university renovated the main building on campus and our office is in this building now, back in the centre of campus. I think all of those things, you know, it is not only my office working hard, I have an excellent team, but it's also the support from the administration, the upper administration. If you don't have that support, nothing is going to happen.

Q: What are, according to your experience, some of the challenges of maintaining the partnerships?

R: I think a challenge is sometimes our students, our domestic students. In American education, there is a lot of I'm not going to use the word babysitting, but there's a lot of hand holding. Students come to college, there is an extensive orientation for all students. Universities like mine, we are in a college town of [redacted] people. There are 20,000 university students. So, the students receive a lot of attention here and when they go abroad, sometimes it's not the same kind of hand holding than they're used to. And I'm not saying that's right or wrong. I'm not saying that at all. But sometimes this can be a challenge to partnerships. Students can complain I didn't have this, or I didn't have that, so we find that a challenge. Keeping the number of students even sometimes it's a challenge for some countries. There are going to be more students to come here than students from our office that want to go there. So, we have to look at the big picture and as long as we are sending more students than receiving more students financially, we're going to be okay. Another challenge is if the college starts a partnership and doesn't involve our office from the start. They come to us at a point when we have to go back keep going back and make changes in the agreement because they didn't involve us from the beginning, which is rare, but when it does happen, it can be a challenge especially if it involves any kind of financial commitment.



Interview extract #2: Initial coding (Global Coast University)

Q: Does your institution monitor trends and forecasts relating to external developments (specific countries or subject areas)? If so, how does it impact on partnership decisions?

R: Definitely. I wish we had a more systematic way to monitor but I think I just see there's not I think even government, international relations, State Department even they don't have a systematic process. So yes, we definitely monitor, and it definitely impacts us because we are looking for favourable conditions for everybody. So, you know, knowing what are the priorities of another government? What are the motivations of another government? How will that affect the partner? So, you know, if our partner is a state institution or a private institution, the amount of government influence might be different, or if the country itself has more or less academic freedom for the partner, that monitoring might have more or less impact on the partners themselves. So yeah, I think being aware of those things is critically important. And yet, we are as informed as possible and on a case by case basis, make decisions about who we partner with, where they're located, and what activity we are engaging with them.

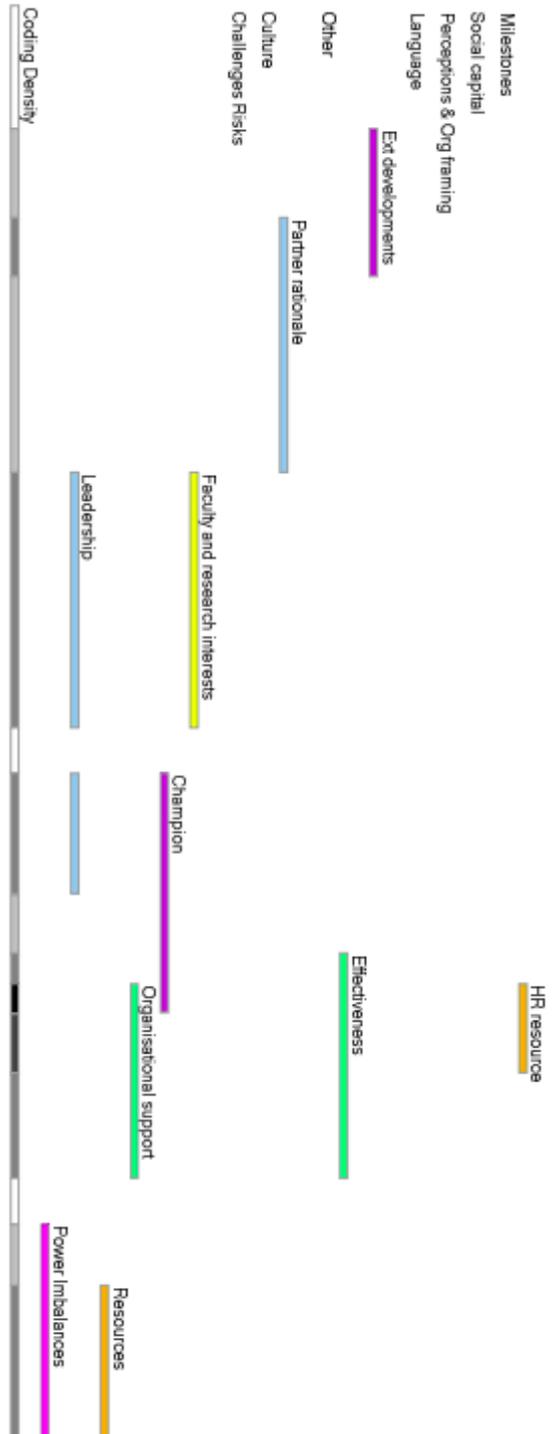
I'm going to add one thing, though, that all of those the ability to move from one project to another project or one area of collaboration to another area collaboration also depends on the individuals within the institution who are enacting the other activities so having started each activity as both an institution behind it, but also individuals. So let's say there's a key partner and our engineers are working well together, I may introduce an opportunity for our School of Medicine, when the school of medicine has a particular interest that I think that same institution could fulfill but then that maybe the medicine people decide they don't want to work together. So it's both institutional and individual project.

Q: Is there a champion, promoting and facilitating partnerships?

R: Yes, but it goes two ways because we have from my office and the chancellor and the provost from the leadership of the university, we are identifying and making opportunities available. But again, any uptake absolutely depends on the interest and agreement and participation of the individuals in the particular project. Conversely, we have lots of literally hundreds of scientists, scholars, and campus staff, students, leaders, who are each developing things on their own, and then coming to my office and saying, hey, I'd love to do this, I champion this particular relationship with this particular project, and we get involved. So, there are many champions, but there is a formal role within my office for generating and supporting partnerships. But I don't have a single partnership officer as many institutions do. Mostly because we are just too short-staffed. I would love to have a partnership person, I would love to have many partnerships people. So yes, we provide tools and resources and empower throughout the campus. But also, because that's quite frankly, productive in a decentralized academic structure, such as ours. So, one is a resource issue and the other is an effectiveness issue.

Q: How do power imbalances manifest in the joint work? Have you noticed any changes over time?

R: It depends on the project. And so, what you try to do is be sure that so I have a principle that I use called equivalent, not equal. So, you don't want to partner with someone where, you never want to establish a partnership in which there's a dominant and subordinate partner. And so what you're really looking for is to be sure that there is a mutuality of resources. So let's say the wealthier school is partnering with a less wealthy school in terms of financial resources, that wealthy school has a motivation, has a reason for engaging with a lesser, less wealthy School, which may be that they are in a region of the world that is unique, and that they wouldn't be able to navigate the geographic or



political or economic situation without a partner. And so even though they're not bringing what I would call quantitative resources that you can measure. They're bringing something that is an absolutely equal value and should be treated with the same respect as an equal partner. And if the relationship and you may have to define a single project to do that. There are institutions that are so differently positioned in the world in terms of overall resources but when you define that relationship, it should be mutually equivalent, not necessarily equal, each one contributing \$50,000. It's an attitude, as well as the contract.

Q: Do you think it's important to have similar organizational structures?

R: No, what's important is that both institutions know who to go to, for fulfilling the various needs of the collaboration, it's not important that they have parallel structures. So, so one may handle all through a central office another may handle it in a decentralized way, you just have to know who the point of contact is and what the process is so that both can navigate. It doesn't have to be parallel.

Q: How do you deal with cultural differences?

R: It's easier to work with anyone who is most similar, it's just not very useful. Is it easier? Yes. Is it worthwhile to go into challenges? Absolutely. So, if the schools are the same size, if they speak the same language, if they have the same governing rules, the same political systems, etc. That makes it really easy as why so often you have intranational partnerships that are just many more of them often than International, because it's easier, but in terms of the value of getting to resources, and complementarity and perspectives that are different than your own, then you just have to go to those. The difference itself is what's valued, what makes it difficult, but it is definitely worthwhile.

I'm going to add one comment to that, which is not everyone will think it's worthwhile. And that's why the decision for participation has to be made at an individual level, because those who don't think it's worth it, you can't force them, you can't convince them. But there may be projects and people for whom it is too difficult, and then you move on, find another partnership, and they're more comfortable. That may not be necessary in some fields as geographical, political, regional, cultural differences don't enhance necessarily, you are self-sufficient, you have all the resources you need and the kind of work you're doing, then go for it, great.

Q: How are international partnerships perceived within the institution? Do you experience any difficulties to convince the worthiness of the partnership at the institutional level/senior level?

R: No. So, the leadership of the university values partnerships in general. I am part of leadership at the university, so I represent that. But it's not the institution that enacts, right, there always has to be individuals involved.

I will add, though, that I would love more resources. So, in some ways, I would say if the institution valued it more, I would have more resources, but I definitely think that they have contributed enough resources to get a new enterprise going. We're only four years to have any international office. So, I think that as resources have been coming to us, as the institution has seen the value of that investment. In terms of general commitment. Absolutely. In terms of resource distribution. That's a little bit tougher, but in terms of the time and the championing of the leadership, that's definitely there. But the chance for the provost, for instance, who will travel, who will see overseas visitors, who will support the collaboration.



