

A Micro-level Analysis of the RBV in Transnational Joint-venture Universities: The Role of Students in Making an 'International Education'

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Jia Jia, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Jia Jia

Date: 18 September 2019

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the competitive advantage of transnational joint-venture universities (TJVUs). Transnational higher education (TNHE) is growing rapidly, with the global demand for higher education exceeding supply. Since China joined the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group in 2001, collaboration between Chinese and foreign higher education institutions has expanded. In 2016, China became the largest host country of TNHE in relation to the number of China–foreign cooperative programmes, institutions and TJVUs, as well as the total number of students enrolled in them. More than 550,000 students currently study in either a TJVU or a joint programme affiliated to a local Chinese university. This study focuses on the TJVUs in China, the ‘international education’ they provide and the student inputs into such education.

Current literature on multinational corporations (MNCs) has rarely explained how TJVUs develop their competitive advantage – delivering ‘international education’ – in a new market, and how the various organisational members (staff and students, in this case) contribute to this organisational competency. It is indisputable that student engagement is crucial to the successful delivery of an ‘international education’ in TJVUs. Hence, a nuanced understanding of both the connections and mismatches between students and universities in bringing such education about is meaningful to the development of TJVUs. Against the background of the rapid development of TNHE in China, significant gaps still remain in the literature on both MNCs and higher education management regarding how students contribute to the process of making an ‘international education’ in TJVUs.

As its theoretical foundation, this thesis therefore utilises the resource-based view (RBV) – one of the most influential theories of strategic management – to analyse the organisational competitive advantages available. The RBV has rarely been utilised in the context of TNHE with the exception of Lynch and Baines (2004), who applied it to examine how UK universities could enhance the development of their strategy. However, until now, only a very limited number of papers concerning the RBV have portrayed an ‘international education’ from a managerial perspective, the student role having been largely neglected in those studies. This thesis emphasises that students’

expectations, demands, experiences and interpretations could shape and re-shape the ‘international education’ that universities claim to provide. Therefore, this study explores the following research objectives:

- Identification of the organisational resources that comprise the basis of TJVUs’ competitive advantages;
- Examination of the discrepancies between what TJVUs claim to provide and student demands for an ‘international education’;
- Exploration of the subjective elements in those discrepancies, which combine with organisational resources to make, develop and strengthen the competitive advantages of TJVUs.

This thesis is based on qualitative case studies of two China–UK TJVUs. The database included 61 semi-structured interviews conducted at the two universities. Interview data were supplemented by secondary data (website information, public reports and internal documents). The findings explore both the resource base of TJVUs and student educational experiences, and illustrate how students articulate, confront and reconcile with their understandings and aspirations on the progression, mobility and prestige of pursuing an ‘international education’.

In this thesis, the objective notion of organisational resources is challenged, and the complex dynamics of organisational resources are elucidated by exploring the range of student inputs that can influence the nature and the form of an ‘international education’. The chief theoretical contribution of this thesis is to challenge the conventional top-down approach of the RBV so as to demonstrate that the bottom-up inputs of the day-to-day activities of a given organisation are significant to the formation and shaping of its competitive advantages. Empirically, this study utilised the RBV in the higher education sector; this indicates how its application can be expanded from commercial firms to non-profit organisations.

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Abbreviations

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
CEAIE	Chinese Education Association for International Exchanges
CFCRS	China-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools
CPU	Chinese parent university
CP-A	Chinese partner of joint venture university A
CPU-B	Chinese parent university of Joint-Venture University B
EAP	English Courses for Academic Purpose
HEEC	Higher Education Evaluation Centre in China
HEI	Higher education institution
IBCs	International branch campuses
IPAs	Individual public accounts
IT	Information technology
MNC	Multinational corporation
MoE	Ministry of Education
SDE	Subsidiary-driven charter extension
SDR	Subsidiary-driven charter reinforcement
TJVU	Joint-venture university
TJVU-A	Joint-Venture University A
TJVU-B	Joint-Venture University B
TNHE	Transnational higher education
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RBV	Resource-based view
UKPU	Parent university (UK)
UKPU-A	UK parent university of joint-venture university A
UKPU-B	UK parent university of joint-venture university B
UK QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the United Kingdom

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Students are no longer limited by their national boundaries in their search for higher education. Transnational higher education (TNHE), which has grown rapidly, means that students can pursue their education in a host country even though the awarding institution is located in their home country (APEC, 2015). In China, collaborations between Chinese and foreign higher education institutions have expanded since the country joined the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 2001. In 2016, China became the largest host country of TNHE with regard to the number of China–foreign cooperative programmes, institutions and TJVUs, as well as the total number of students enrolled in them. More than 550,000 students currently study in either an international branch campus (formed as a joint-venture university (TJVU) between a foreign university and a local partner), or a joint programme affiliated to a local Chinese university. This study focuses specifically on the TJVUs in China, as they have the independent legal status and the power to award dual degrees. TJVUs are therefore considered a significant example of an MNC.

The competitive advantages of MNCs have been widely studied and developed. The mainstream of relevant research is conducted in commercial firms (e.g. Capron & Hulland, 1999; Srivastava et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2015). As a crucial MNC presence in both developed and developing countries (Guimón & Narula, 2019), TNHEs call for continuing research with emphasis on their organisational competency. This study adds to the existing understanding of organisational resources in an international subsidiary by exploring how a competitive advantage is formed and shaped by the various levels of organisational members, especially the fragmented contributions from students, whose input into firm-level competency have been largely neglected in previous literature.

The resource-based view (RBV), conceived by Penrose (1959) and popularised in the 1990s (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993), has been widely utilised to explain how an organisation may obtain competitive advantage by leveraging existing resources (Barney, 1991), by exploring new resources and capabilities (Teece et al.,

1997; Winter, 2003), and by understanding the importance of knowledge-based resources in the context of the knowledge economy (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Smith, 2001). Barney (1991, 1997) identified organisational strengths and weaknesses through an analysis that considered whether the value and competitive standing of the resources of an organisation are affected by their immobility and heterogeneity. According to Barney (1991, 1997), a firm comprises ‘bundles of resources’ and the way in which such resources are used and managed determines a firm’s output. Following Barney’s work, scholars came to realise that discussing the term ‘resource’ in isolation did not give sufficient explanation of the connection between resources and competitive advantage (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). Numerous studies have been conducted on organisational dynamic capabilities to clarify the distinction between organisational resources and capabilities (Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2009). Attention has also been given to the potential disconnect between the possession of resources and their proper exploitation (Newbert, 2007). Other scholars consider that there is no clear boundary between resources and capabilities (Oladunjoye & Onyeaso, 2007). The literature on dynamic capability complemented the static nature of organisational resources with a dynamic and processual element and emphasised the contribution individual members could make to organisational competency. A further stream of the RBV investigation moved on to explore knowledge-based resources from the perspective that tacit knowledge is largely embodied in people’s experiences and skills, and therefore difficult to transfer through a technological system (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000). The work on the RBV in this stream positioned the relationship between individuals’ input and organisational competency as mutually constitutive on the basis that organisational competency cannot be generated without such contributions, while such input cannot be evaluated by an organisation unless it understands its core advantage. Hence, neither individuals’ perceptions nor their value to organisational competency can be detached from individuals’ interactive processes with the organisation. How individuals contribute to the making of organisational competitive advantage requires further explanation. From an international perspective, this study therefore suggests that TNHEs – specifically, the transnational joint-venture universities (TJVUs) – and their students constitute the organisational competency and, together, reproduce the meaning of it: in this case, an international education.

This study concentrates on TNHEs involving cooperation between China and the UK. China first called for cooperation with foreign partners in education in 1995, when the 1995 Education Act of the People's Republic of China (1995) was implemented. Since then, the Chinese higher education sector has opened up and gradually taken on an internationalised stance. After China joined the World Trade Organisation in 2001, the internationalisation of Chinese higher education has undergone extensive expansion. Consequently, higher education in China has become the largest higher education system worldwide (QAA, 2017). After 2001, in order to improve the quality of domestic higher education and strengthen its international provision, the Chinese government developed regulations for the implementation of Chinese–Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS). According to the CFCRS regulations, foreign education providers cannot offer degree-based programmes without a Chinese partner. The joint institutions and joint programmes included in CFCRS can either establish legally independent institutions as TJVUs or operate as institutions and programmes affiliated to Chinese universities. While joint programmes comprise the majority of CFCRS (2,558 joint programmes and 93 joint institutions, including 9 Chinese–foreign TJVUs) (MoE, 2018), joint-venture universities, which have both independent legal status and the power to awarding Chinese degrees, have rarely been explored as MNCs. Following the Chinese government's regulatory frameworks, the higher education providers in the UK –one of the pioneers delivering higher education in partnership with Chinese universities – enhanced its collaboration with China and, together, they become the top partners for running China–foreign cooperation in China (QAA, 2017). In addition to over 250 joint programmes, UK partners have also established 2 China–UK TJVUs, making 9 China-foreign TJVUs in total.

The TJVU as a form of international branch campus is not new. Shams and Huisman are pioneering researchers who have studied the development of the international branch campus from an MNC perspective. Their work focuses on institutional strategies (Shams & Huisman, 2012) and dual embeddedness (Shams & Huisman, 2016). These studies present the preliminary empirical findings regarding the management of international branch campuses as MNCs. However, these studies simplify the institutional strategy, which they consider to be seeking a position

between global integration and local responsiveness, and reacting to the changing competitive conditions in the local market by adopting this paradigm (Taggart, 1997). In addition, their research neglects a nuanced internal analysis of the international education available at international branch campuses (IBCs), which could be the core competency of a transnational university. Current research on TNHE and MNCs, therefore, calls for a study that could both enrich the understanding of transnational entities in the education sector empirically and extend current literature on strategic management theory.

Previous researchers have attempted to explore the strategic development of universities from an RBV. Lynch and Baines (2004) analysed the resource-based competitive advantages of a UK higher education. According to their study, higher education institutions (HEIs) compete for students by processing bundles of competitive resources, the objectives of such HEIs being comprised by the organisational resources identified institutionally. However, in this situation students are perceived merely as customers, rather than being seen as potential contributors to organisational advantage. In other words, although Lynch and Baines (2004) show that students have to make sense of HEIs' competitive advantages in order to select the university they wish to attend, their work fails to indicate whether organisational competency is identified and constructed by universities alone, or whether there is input from other participants –in this case, the students. Through specifically in-depth interview research, with a reflection of organisational documents, this study explores the concrete ways in which organisational competency is constructed by various inputs. In summary, this thesis seeks to make three contributions: to theory, by presenting the non-managerial and fragmented co-production process of constructing organisational competency according to the managerial RBV framework; to methodology, by showing the value of in-depth interview to the analysis of individual inputs and to organisational competency; and to empirical research, by showing a comparative case study of TNHE.

Section 1.2 states the rationale of this study. The empirical background of transnational higher education in China is introduced in section 1.3, with emphasis on introducing the China–UK collaboration. Section 1.4 clarifies the gap in the literature

and outlines the research objectives, and section 1.5 presents the main contribution of this study. The chapter closes with a brief overview of this thesis in section 1.6.

1.2 Rationale of this study

The rationale considers the importance of transnational higher education (TNHE) in China and the need to access students' perceptions. The specific gap in the literature is identified, centred on the contributory role of students in creating an organisational competitive advantage. Personal motivations are also identified as a further reason for this study.

This study examines TJVUs located in China. This geographic focus is another element of the rationale as, despite the notable development of TNHE in China, little research has been undertaken on the topic. The country has a significant concentration of TNHE. During the period from 2003, when the Chinese government established the CFCRS regulations, until 2016, China became the largest country hosting TNHE institutions. The government has identified the sector as crucial to future educational quality and economic growth. Given the prevalence of TNHE during this time, and the large scale of TNHE institutions and their numbers of students, the lack of research on the Chinese context is surprising. The limited research available indicates a lack of determination to engender an international education that incorporates student perceptions and interpretations. Section 1.3 will therefore introduce the empirical context of TNHE in China for the benefit for the whole study from a Chinese context.

It is widely acknowledged that it is necessary to examine the student experience so as to improve the quality of education (e.g. Ramsden, 1991; Oldfield, 2000; Coates, 2005). More research is required to investigate the role of students in universities' daily practices (e.g. Browne, 1998; Hoffman, 2004). Kotze and Du Plessis (2003) challenge the mainstream perspective that describes students as customers of universities. Together with others (e.g. McCulloch, 2009), Kotze and Du Plessis emphasise the importance of student activities sharing in organisational responsibility and the co-production process involved in making an education. However, this emerging focus does not follow the traditional focus on organisational management, in which how an organisational goal may be achieved has not yet been clarified.

Making an international education that affords students the opportunity to contribute to their educational institution can be a difficult process, hence the continued need for research on the subject.

Despite TNHE management being a fast-growing field of study, several topics remain underexplored, and the theoretical foundations require further development. Although TJVUs are one of the most researched topics in TNHE management, they are a complex phenomenon that is not fully understood. One issue that has been largely overlooked is that how a TJVU initiates its ‘international education’ by taking advantage of the organisational resources of its parent universities and additional resources it has itself discovered. Scholars have recognised the importance of competitive resources in a university (Lynch & Baines, 2004) and the legitimisation of utilising the resource-based view (RBV) in the higher education sector (van Rijnsvoever, 2008; Bobe & Kober, 2015), and yet academic research has focused overwhelmingly on top-down strategic factors relating to the universities and the education. However, the RBV literature gives an indication that bottom-up inputs merit exploration. This is reinforced by the literature on knowledge-based resources and by students–university relationships, which stress the importance of transferring individual capability into organisational competency. This study addresses the neglected issue of whether there is a need to consider making an education a phenomenon that is influenced and shaped by broader groups of people, rather than largely designed in regulations and governed by commitment, and delivered from a university to its students. Section 1.4 presents the research objectives of this study in light of the gap in the literature.

A further motivation for exploring students’ input into TJVUs is my personal interest in the subject. I grew up in a local Chinese university at which my parents worked. I was aware of the impact the students had on the university’s development. In addition, I witnessed how the university connected gradually with foreign institutions and instigated courses with an international perspective. During my period of study in the UK, I recognised the increasing number of students who had graduated from or who had experience of studying in TNHE institutions. These personal experiences

reinforced my interest in the study of TNHE and their students, and led to my commitment to contribute to this field.

1.3 Empirical background of transnational higher education in China

This section gives a comprehensive empirical background of Chinese TNHE, including a brief introduction of the Chinese higher education system and a detailed review of TNHE development in China, with an emphasis on China-UK collaboration and joint-venture universities.

1.3.1 History and context of the Chinese higher education system

Inheriting from a classical Confucian education, Chinese higher education witnessed the turbulent and imbalanced state of society in the twentieth century. The modern Chinese higher education system has been formed in accordance with and affected by various external influences. For instance, the Japanese style of education was implemented successfully in the 1900s; in the early 1920s, China's higher education system was more closely patterned on the American models; during the 1920s–1930s, diverse HEIs emerged such as national universities, church-affiliated universities, corporate universities and so on; the Soviet model was imported in the 1950s; and, during 1960s–1970s, the system underwent massive change due to an idealistic attempt to achieve economic goals (Great Leap Forward Policy) and the Cultural Revolution. There have been further reforms of the education system since the 1980s following the economic reform and open-door policies launched in 1978. To increase manpower and to face the challenges brought about by economic reform, globalisation and worldwide competition, the Chinese government has undertaken many changes in higher education in order to rebuild a stable system that is able to open up.

Typically, during the final year of high school, students take the National Higher Education Entrance Examination (Gaokao) to obtain access to HEIs. There are two levels of undergraduate study: a four-year bachelor's degree (Benke) (a five-year course in the case of Architecture), and a three-year diploma (Dazhuan) with a focus on vocational and occupational training. Students with the lower Gaokao results attend the Dazhuan institutions, from which they can upgrade to a bachelor's degree course through an optional examination at the end of the Dazhuan course. A master's degree course generally involves a two-year study period for a professional degree, or a three-

year study period for an academic degree. A doctoral degree course lasts for at least three years. The recruitment of students for postgraduate studies also relies on the national examination system.

The recruitment of undergraduate students relies largely on their Gaokao results¹ and this process is ‘hierarchical and sequential’ (QAA, 2013, p.5). Institutions awarding bachelor’s degrees are divided into Tier 1 (recruited students), Tier 2 and Tier 3. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE, 2018), there are over 2,600 regular HEIs of which only 112 HEIs are ministered by central government and are seen as research-led key universities. More specifically, those 112 HEIs are divided into 39 ‘Project 985’ universities and 73 ‘Project 211’ universities. Project 985 and Project 211 are two initiatives launched by the MoE in order to support key universities in their research and innovation capability. Project 985 (‘985’ stands for the date when this project was initially put forward: May 1998) aims to raise the research capabilities of selected universities and develop international elite research institutions. Project 211 universities (‘211’ refers to aiming at strengthening over 100 universities in the twenty-first century) award 70% of Chinese scientific research funding (QAA, 2017) and their focus is on establishing key research and teaching institutions in China. However, since 2016 the concept of Project 985 and Project 211 has gradually been replaced by a new initiative called the Double First-Class Project,² which includes 42 first-class universities, and 465 first-class disciplines in 140 universities. Selected institutions will be reassessed every five years so as to shift and reallocate educational resources and fundings to the universities that are making better progress. This project is expected to encourage more international partnership with leading foreign universities, more mergers and reorganisations, and improvement of national and international competitiveness (QAA, 2017).

¹ Exceptions are made for students who have specialties in the sciences (awards from international competitions in maths, physics, chemistry, biology and computer programming), minority languages, sports and art.

² The Double First-Class Project (also refers to World Class 2.0) aims to develop a number of world-class elite universities and individual university departments into world top-class research institutions and disciplines by 2050 (*Source*: Chinese Ministry of Education; QAA).

Accordingly, students who reached the Tier 1 requirements in Gaokao are competing to gain access to those top universities. If their Gaokao results did not meet the entry standards of the particular universities they chose, those students would possibly go to Tier 2 universities. In 2018, 9.75 million students sat the Gaokao examination, and the admission ratio of Tier 1 universities was less than 20% on average (the highest ratio was 34.13% in Beijing, and the lowest ratio was 7.79% in Yunan province; no statistics are available for the Xinjiang, Xizang and Gansu regions).³ In terms of the ratio of top universities, is the ratio was less than 2% of Project 985 students and 6% of Project 211 students. Hence, as the demand for higher education overtakes supply, the other HEIs are growing rapidly, such as private universities and HEIs working with foreign cooperation.

Private universities (Minban) or private invested universities (affiliated colleges) were originally set up for students with very low Gaokao results. Due to a sharp increase in the number of enrolled students, the number of such institutions rose from one million in 1998 to five million in 2005.⁴ Echoing the commercialisation of higher education in China, HEIs that function with foreign cooperation under the CFCSR regulations are seen as a means for students to bypass the traditional Chinese higher education system and access international education domestically. While the number of private universities is decreasing (largely because of quality issues), the number of CFCSR institutions is increasing steadily, especially those that award degrees. The development of TNHE in China, especially under the CFCSR regulations, was seen as a route through which to market higher education, to import international education systems and to enhance the quality of domestic education. In addition, all universities in China should not be profit-seeking organisations.

1.3.2 TNHE and its development in China

Under TNHE, the delivery of education goes beyond national boundaries: students are based in a host country rather than in their home country, in which the awarding institution is located (APEC, 2015). THNE is not a new concept in China. This section outlines the history of TNHE development in China, followed by an introduction to

³ *Source:* http://www.sohu.com/a/252093816_419880

⁴ *Source:* Public statistics of the Chinese Ministry of Education.

the CFCRS landscape, a detailed review of regulatory and quality assurance issues under CFCRS, and a brief report of the recent activities of Chinese universities as exporters of transnational educators.

Since the 1900s, when the Qing Dynasty fell, several foreign countries began to build their own educational models in the north-east, Hong Kong, Macau and other coastal areas in China. In the early 1920s, the Chinese higher education system was more closely patterned on American models. For example, the international settlement of Shanghai is a non-dominant colonial system, which led to colonialism and modernisation developing simultaneously. In addition, in the 1920s–1930s, a large number of overseas students returned to China, contributing to the reshaping of Chinese higher education and improvement its level of both teaching and research. During this period, diverse HEIs emerged, such as national universities, church-affiliated universities, corporate universities and so on. They competed with and complemented each other, as well as establishing a foundation for the development of modern science in China. As mentioned, between 1949 and 1978, Chinese higher education experienced unsystematic development. The higher education system expanded without any plan or supporting resources and models of Soviet, Confucian and Western education co-existed. This was the case until 1977, when the National Higher Education Entrance Examination was reintroduced. Followed by the reform and open-door policies, the Chinese higher education system underwent a process of reformation and rebuilding.

Directly driven by the open-door policy, China has to face the challenges arising from economic reforms, globalisation and worldwide competition. In August 1978, the MoE issued a policy to dispatch more Chinese students abroad to study, mainly in the fields of science, engineering, agriculture and medicine (Huang, 2003). In December 1978, following interruption by the Great Cultural Revolution, the first batch of overseas students departed to America. Later, in 1981, the first policy for self-funded overseas study was promulgated. The MoE also issued several policies regarding the introduction of foreign university textbooks and extending invitations to foreign scholars (Huang, 2003). These post-Maoist changes indicated that China was trying to conduct an English-language based education and seeking Western and Japanese

academic patterns, instead of the Soviet Union model that had been applied in the 1950s. In 1985, the government issued a policy called the Decision on the Reform of the Education System to expand the autonomy of universities themselves. In 1995, the State Education Commission (SEC), as the MoE was known during the period 1985–1998, began to approve and encourage cooperation and joint operation between Chinese HEIs and foreign institutional partners (Huang, 2003). Since 1995, cooperation with foreign universities has gradually become a significant component of Chinese education and constitutes a supplementary part of China’s education system. In 2003, the state council issued the CFCRS regulations.

In 1995, China launched interim provisions for CFCRS, known as education cooperation with foreign partners, so as to promote the importing of foreign education systems. In accordance with these provisions, foreign education institutions were not permitted to provide education solely by themselves or be motivated by profit. In 2003, following the accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), China approved CFCRS, which led to the rapid expansion of TNHE in China. CFCRS could be seen as the only operable form of partnership between Chinese and foreign universities. CFCRS reflects the main concerns of the Chinese government regarding the education sector: improving the quality of domestic education; meeting local and national development needs, leading to economic gain; and making further connections with global markets. CFCRS in China includes joint institutions and joint programmes. While the majority of programmes under CFCRS are joint programmes affiliated in a local university, the Chinese MoE has increasingly encouraged the setting up of joint institutions in recent years. This is largely due to the issue of quality in the joint programmes and the reliability of long-term commitment to joint institutions. Additionally, a small number of joint institutions have been established as joint venture universities, which have independent legal status and the power to award Chinese degrees (QAA, 2017).

In terms of the quality of education under CFCRS, the current regulations demonstrate several key considerations the MoE makes when selecting foreign educators. First, in course design, the MoE encourages courses that have been developed jointly and that can directly enhance the capability for quality collaboration and local education.

Subjects that address national and provincial needs are favoured, while courses such as management, business and finance, of which there is already an abundance, are encouraged to a lesser extent. In order to maintain the international elements under CFCRS, at least one-third of the courses offered should be delivered by the foreign partner. Second, with regard to programme design, the MoE encourages programmes that entail three years of study in China plus one year abroad (3+1) or support the gaining of a foreign degree in China without an overseas study period (4+0). These are preferred to the courses that entail two years' study in China and two years' study abroad (2+2). Finally, in choosing foreign partners, the MoE favours top-ranked universities with experience in undertaking TNHE. Additionally, the MoE discourages any foreign institution that seeks multiple collaborations and joint programmes in China, as this activity is seen as risky in terms of both business operation and the quality of education. Therefore, this study focuses on TJVUs: this type of TNHE has independent legal status; there is long-term commitment between the parent universities; and relatively strict attention is paid to the quality of the education they afford.

Recently, China has become an exporter of TNHE and operates transnational HEIs overseas as well. For instance, Suzhou University opened a branch campus in Laos in 2012, and Xiamen University has had a branch campus in Malaysia since 2015. In terms of collaboration with the UK, Zhejiang University and Imperial College London established a joint applied data science laboratory in London in 2015. In the same year, Beijing Normal University and Cardiff University launched a joint college in Chinese language and cultural studies in Cardiff. More recently, Beijing University collaborated with Oxford University to launch its HSBC business school in Oxford. While China is beginning to export its higher education, the mainstream of TNHE development is still seen in the importing of educational and collaboration in domestic education.

1.3.3 China–UK collaborations

According to the QAA (2012, 2017), at the time of its most recent study the number of students studying in a Chinese–UK collaborative programme had reached 65,199, which made China the second-largest host country of the UK. Chinese–UK collaborations can be divided into three categories: distance learning, affiliated

programmes and branch campuses (TJVUs). The QAA (2017) indicates that, at the time of its study there were just over 2,000 students studying through distance learning programmes, because the Chinese MoE does not recognise the foreign qualifications delivered through the distance learning. In terms of affiliated programmes, there were 46,000 students studying under those programmes.

Setting up joint venture universities is seen as a means to establish international branch campuses in China. The MoE (2018) indicates that, at the time of their report, there were 9 independent Chinese–foreign universities: 2 collaborations with universities in the UK, 3 with the USA, 2 with Hong Kong, and 1 each with Russia and Israel. Significantly, the two Chinese–UK TJVUs were set up first and comprehensive campus and education have already been established. This study therefore takes the two Chinese–UK TJVUs as comparable cases so as to explore how TJVUs create an international education in China. Further details regarding the universities are presented in Chapters 4 and 5).

1.4 Research objectives

The aims of the research were to explore the role of students in shaping and reshaping the international education afforded by TJVUs, and to extend the theoretical understanding of the RBV and organisational competitive advantage. The specific objectives were, from an empirical perspective, to explore:

- how TJVUs have been established by integrating resources from their parent universities;
- the variations in how an international education is provided based on a strategic alliance between similar institutions;
- what types of organisational resources comprise the basis for an international education in TJVUs;
- how students and staff members identify with and become involved in an international education;
- the complexity of the student–university relationship and the role of the student in pursuing an international education;
- how students understand and interpret the education they are experiencing in TJVUs; and

- the discrepancies between what TJVUs claim to provide and student demands for an international education.

Further specific objectives, from a theoretical perspective, were to further supplement the RBV in a bottom-up approach by examining the interactive process of students to extend understanding of the complexity of creating an international education, including:

- exploring subjective elements in the discrepancies between what TJVUs claim to provide and student demands; and
- how such subjective elements have been added to the objective notion of organisational resources so as to create, develop and strengthen the competitive advantages of TJVUs.

1.5 Main contribution

This section outlines the study's key contributions. Through exploring the resource base in two TJVUs, this study illustrates that the integration of resources and the development of TJVUs comprise an international education. While TJVU-A states its education is in the UK style and international, TJVU-B stresses its independent identity in providing an innovative international education. Accordingly, student interpretations of their educational experiences reflect, at least partially, the distinctive form of the international education. The fragmented interpretations and inputs from students demonstrate that the subjective elements that are generally neglected in managerial practice can be meaningful for the strategic and managerial concept of an organisation.

Theoretically, with the focus on the hitherto under-researched dimension of how students interpreted their educational experiences and shaped an international education, this study identifies students as co-producers during their study and emphasises their initiatives in the process of creating an education. The theoretical understanding of the RBV is also enhanced through examining the connections and mismatches between individual inputs and organisational competency. Scholars, from the RBV perspective, have recognised the value of individuals' contributions to organisational achievement (Teece et al., 1997; Smith, 2001; Winter, 2003; Geppert

& Dörrenbächer, 2011; William, 2011). However, in the context of higher education, these studies do not explain sufficiently and clearly how the ongoing and responsibility-sharing relationship, in relation to both the long-term and dynamic characteristics of students and universities, has an impact on creating competitive advantage (international education, in this case). This thesis, by drawing on the relational context, examines the individual contributions that are embedded in the relationships between individuals and the organisation, and resources and competitive advantage. It is noteworthy that a nuanced explanation of those subjective inputs could contribute to the current RBV literature. Crucial to a more nuanced understanding of bottom-up individual contribution in the RBV framework, this study categorises the interactive process according to resource-based parameters with reference to a relational context in transitional universities, through which the subjective elements related to organisational resources that have been neglected in previous research are drawn on to provide the central contribution of the thesis.

The study also makes several empirical contributions to the RBV literature. First, this study addresses the strategic and managerial issues of the international business area with regard to the internationalisation of higher education. The findings empirically demonstrate the feasibility of utilising an RBV in this specific non-profit transnational context. Second, the study complements the emphasis on the importance of an individual's engagement in the literature on knowledge-based resources, which has a potential impact on organisational competitive advantage. Third, through discussing students as stakeholders of universities, rather than as customers for universities, this thesis illustrates how students provide input into various resource-based parameters of an education. In addition, the findings contrast with the main literature on resource management, which focuses either on a top-down path or a bottom-up reverse transfer. Finally, the study addresses the issue of transnational education in the China–UK alliance settings, which are particularly important to transnational and international business.

1.6 Structure of thesis

This chapter has provided the rationale of the study, the detailed empirical context and the research objectives, and has outlined the key areas of contribution. Chapter 2

provides a review of the literature which, in line with the identified research rationale and objectives, stresses the value of the RBV, subsidiary management and transnational higher education management. This review provides an exploration of the current state of knowledge in the areas of research and demonstrates the importance of my research project. Topics explored include defining organisational competency and competitive advantage, the range of existing literature on organisational resources, and knowledge-based resources in the context of MNCs. Subsidiary management and the RBV in regard to subsidiaries are considered as part of the literature review. In addition, the literature on the student role in a university is reviewed so as to link the educational context with the RBV study.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology and provides detailed discussion of the philosophical assumptions, the inductive and qualitative approach, the comparative case study research design, data collection, pilot study settings, ethical consideration, data analysis and methodological limitations. Thereafter, Chapters 4 and 5 present the two in-depth case studies of TJVU-A and TJVU-B. Each chapter provides a case description followed by an analysis of the resource base and the findings from student interpretations. Chapter 6 discusses and compares the two cases, subsequently presenting thematic findings on the resource base, the competitive environment, and the resource-based parameters.

Chapter 7 draws together and reflects on both the within-case and comparative findings from the two universities in order to provide a detailed discussion. The first section of this chapter focuses on the findings relating to the conventional top-down RBV and its implementation in the context of subsidiaries and non-profit organisations. The second section offers theorisation regarding the students' inputs, including the role of students and the mode of interaction between students and universities. Chapter 8 brings the study to a conclusion, providing a summary of the research objectives and articulating the theoretical and empirical contributions. Finally, the limitation of the study and areas for future research are outlined.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In the field of international business and strategic management, research into organisational competitive advantage has attracted broad attention from academia and practitioners (e.g. Akimova, 2000; Dawson, 2000; Ajitabh & Momaya, 2004; Egbu et al., 2005; Gunasekaran et al., 2011). The competitive advantage of an organisation represents the rationales behind its competitiveness. Exploring competitive advantage is central to understanding how an organisation competes with its competitors. The understanding of organisations' competitive advantage has been argued and illustrated from a variety of theoretical perspectives; for example, Porter (1980) states that potential profits may be hidden in the environment of a firm. The firm could be competitive by having explored the external environment to create barriers for its competitors and gain competitive advantage so as to avoid homogeneous products. Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) observe that acquisition of competitive advantage is affected by the intensity of a firm's competition in the external environment. Prahalad and Hamel (1990) emphasise that competencies are the root of organisational competitive advantage because companies exploit, explore and utilise them in product development and business expansion, eventually transforming competencies into competitive advantage in the marketing environment. However, these studies on revealing the generation of competitive advantage have not yet made a thorough investigation of the nature of the competitive advantage and how an organisation may obtain competitiveness by shaping and enhancing its competencies.

A more nuanced explanation comes from the work generated by an RBV perspective. The acquisition of competencies is a collective process of exploring assets and talents in an organisation. Organisational resources, including physical assets and intangible resources, are utilised to comprise a series of competencies that will, eventually, enhance the competitive advantage of an organisation (Barney, 1991; Smith, 2001). Scholars of the RBV consider organisational resources as the source of competency and of competitive advantage. The RBV provides an integrative theoretical framework with which to understand how top management may determine the source of competitive advantage and, eventually, achieve organisational goals. However, with

regard to the RBV, scholars applying this theoretical view still lack the necessary understanding of how a competitive advantage is enhanced by their application and shared dynamically among relevant organisational members. This chapter, by building on the RBV perspective, aims to challenge the static and objective notion of organisational resources and, with an emphasis on the individual-level contributions in the context of TNHE, to add to the understanding of the relationship between organisational competency and organisational competitive advantage.

The individual-level inputs and contributions to an organisation have been widely noted. For example, Selznick (1957) acknowledges that personnel and their experiences are important to organisational success when implementing a formulated strategy. Scholars view the situation from a perspective of knowledge-based resources state that the inimitable, tacit knowledge embedded in an individual's brain is more valuable to the creation of competitive advantage (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Park et al., 2015). However, while building a competency involves many levels of people and all functions (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990), most of the research on individual contributions focuses on managers' aspirations and intentions but neglects fragmented input from other organisational members who are generally not included in the core of managerial decision-making cohorts. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the largely neglected contribution made by personnel to an organisation and on how they have a real impact on enhancing organisational competitive advantage. A more specific focus is on the TNHE sector. This research focus springs, first, from the phenomenon of the rapid development of TNHE. Student demand for high-quality, international higher education influences universities to make provision to offer an international education. The strategy of delivering an international education stagnates not only on the importing of the concept of internationalisation into classes, but also on moving to cross-border physical investment in transnational programmes and institutions.

In China, the collaboration between Chinese and foreign HEIs has expanded since 2001, when China joined the WTO. Large numbers of students undertake international education in a transnational education institution in China. TJVUs, as one of the forms of investment in which China and foreign partners provide education collaboratively, have a unique characteristic in that they are legally independent and have the power

to award both Chinese and foreign degrees. The successful development of TJVUs, their unique provision of an international education and the increasing number of students enrolling every year call for research into what those students expect from a TJVU, how they interpret their experiences in a TJVU, and how the perceptions from these students connect with or mismatch such universities' provision of an international education. Based on those research interests, this chapter reviews the literature from four perspectives: organisational competitive advantages, the resource-based view, subsidiary choice and evolution, and the role of students in a university.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four broad sections. Section 2.2 focuses on the literature relating to organisations' competitive advantages. Section 2.3 reviews the RBV literature comprehensively, covering how the concept of competitive advantage has been explained and utilised in the RBV literature; the importance of knowledge-based resources; and how the RBV has been applied to non-profit organisations, especially in the higher education sector. Section 2.4 reviews the literature on how subsidiaries implement distinctive strategies and keep heterogeneity based on their organisational resources. The literature on the role of students in a university is reviewed and the gap in the literature on how students, as a group of stakeholders, contribute to making an 'international education' through their experiences and interpretations is identified. This chapter concludes by clarifying the research objectives and the contributions to the RBV literature and transnational higher education literature.

2.2 Organisational competitive advantage

There is no universal definition of competitive advantage. Scholars in neither strategic management nor international business define exactly what a competitive advantage is. Rather, they seek to clarify in what situation an organisation can be described as having a competitive advantage. For example, some scholars describe their understanding of strategic positioning by analysing its external environment (e.g. Porter, 1980); some focus on a series of organisational competences, rather than solely on their business units or product lines (e.g. Hamel & Prahalad, 1991). Table 2.1 summarises the key definitions of competitive advantage in both strategic management and international business literature, as well as the one used in this thesis.

Table 2.1 Defining a key concept: competitive advantage

Competitive advantage	
Definitions in literature	Definition used in this study
Competitive advantages come from ownership advantages, location characteristics and internationalisation advantages (Dunning, 1980, 1988).	A company implements a strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors (Barney, 1991, 2018).
A position that a company finds in its industry where the five competitive forces (threat of new entrants, bargaining power of buyers, rivalry between existing competitors, threat of substitute products and bargaining power of suppliers) will do it best or at least harm (Porter, 1980).	
A challenge that a company builds multiple sources of competitive advantage which it can manage in a complementary and flexible manner (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989)	
What constitute competitive advantage is that the organisational activities of allocating resources to build the cross-unit links based on technology and skills (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). [Competency-based view]	
A company implements a value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors (Barney, 1991). [Resource-based view]	
Competitive advantage comes from managing people effectively. Much of a company's advantage comes from its very productive, motivated and unionised workforce. (Pfeffer, 2005)	

Dunning (1980, 1988) states that firms exploit specific ownership advantage against their competitors through cross-border activities. Those firms then invest in focal locations which are attractive because of their 'locational' advantage. Another element of a firm's competitive advantage is the way the firm selects new markets. Internalising markets through foreign direct investment (FDI) requires the advantage that is derived from internationalisation. Therefore, the competitive advantage of a firm, especially one exploring international markets, is determined by the home-based assets the firm holds, the location it chooses where it can supplement its needs for resources as well as the way it utilises them to maintain and maximise the current advantage. Porter (1980, 1993), as Table 2.1 shows, expands this outside-in approach to explain how a firm gains its competitive advantage. It is his view that a firm achieves its competitive advantage by recognising its surrounding suppliers,

customers, competitors and substitutes, as well as other external opportunities. His research largely focuses on the external environment when he analyses the potential profits. According to his work, the potential advantage may be hidden in the surrounding environment and the acquisition of competitive advantages is affected by the organisational intensity of the competition in the external environment. Porter's externally oriented research points to the importance of competency, observing that an organisation is competitive if it has the capability to recognise and analyse the outside environment. A firm gains and secures its competitive advantage by recognising changes in the environment and by responding to opportunities outside. The main focus of those outward approaches is that a firm captures competitive advantage by exploiting opportunities and trends within markets and among competitors in the market. However, his work does not provide further explanation as to what the root of the competitive advantage is or what constitutes the organisational capability to design the firm's strategies.

Some researchers adopt an inward perspective, in which competitive advantage is identified as embedded in the firm's activities (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989) and its resources (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Barney, 1991; Pfeffer, 2005). Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) state that competitive advantage is embedded in organisational operations so that the firm can adapt existing products to the markets. They recognise the importance of seeking the source of competitive advantage (such as organisational manners and resources) internally. However, their focus remains on the connection between products and consumers. As Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) stress, the quality and production of products are determined fundamentally by direct contact with the final consumers. Therefore, in the context of FDI, the competitive advantage, in other words, the firm-specific advantage, becomes a challenge by which a firm exploits its capability and resources to adapt to foreign markets.

Prahalad and Hamel (1990) further contribute to the understanding of the connection between organisational resources, competences and competitive advantages. In their work, Prahalad and Hamel consider an organisation as a collection of heterogeneous resources. The success of the organisation is determined by the organisational activities regarding how to utilise and coordinate the available technology and skills

required to gain competitive advantages. Accordingly, they complement the understanding of what constitutes organisational competitive advantage through an inward approach which emphasises the collective knowledge of allocating resources to build cross-unit links based on technology and skills. This collective knowledge refers to organisational core competence, ‘the collective learning in the organisation, especially how to coordinate diverse production skills and integrate multiple streams of technologies’ (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990, p.82).

Competence refers to distinct and uncommon characteristics (Selznick, 1957). It is asserted that the notion of core competence is of paramount importance to the exploration of the competitiveness of an organisation. From this perspective, a corporation gains its competitive advantages through accumulating its competences. The literature on competence and the competence-based view has many virtues. Competences may be integrated into various products and business activities and, importantly, they are required to enlighten every element of an organisation. In other words, analysing an organisation through recognising its organisational competences, rather than its business units and products, has the advantage of enhancing a comprehensive understanding of that organisation’s complete structure and history, rather than selected parts or periods of its existence. The firm could therefore clearly evaluate its structure of the accumulated competences and estimate their future value for the entire organisation, rather than merely innovate products. This thinking of organisational competency connecting with strategic formulation dominated the research on organisational competitiveness during the 1980s–1990s. The core competency of an organisation has been explained and unpacked from distinct perspectives in order to explore how an organisation gains its competitive advantages by exploring and accumulating competences.

Competences comprise the organisational resources and the collection of individual competencies. According to the competence-based view and the definition of core competence, the process of clarifying the organisational competitive advantage entails the company’s activities and abilities to identify, assess, utilise and exploit the critical resources, capabilities and competences. In other words, the root of competitive advantage is the core competences that are developed through various firm-level

activities. In order to explore what competitive advantage is and how this advantage is generated from competences, scholars from the competence-based view have distinguished different types of competences. For instance, Mills et al., (2002) categorise five types of core competences: core competences, at the centre of strategy, business competences, distinctive competences, supportive competences and dynamic capabilities.

In fact, among the studies of organisational competitive advantage, each of those types of competences has been acknowledged as a key research stream in strategic management, such as the RBV (Barney, 1991), dynamic capabilities (Teece, et al., 1997) and core competence (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). Significantly, these concepts are often defined interchangeably. For example, Hamel and Prahalad (1990, 1994) consider skills and capabilities as competences. Similarly, resource and capability are interchangeably defined by Peteraf and Bergen (2003). In addition, scholars of dynamic capabilities debate whether resources and capabilities have a clear boundary (Teece, et al., 1997). Whilst those concepts are often used synonymously and each has its research stream, it is still necessary to seek a broader, overarching theory to understand what the root of organisational competitive advantage is, as well as to explain what competitive advantage is in a specific firm.

Since Penrose (1959) described the nature and role of resources, scholars have gradually built the RBV on similar economic theories (e.g. Wernerfelt, 1984). The RBV concerns firm resources and considers that firms achieve competitive advantage when they are able to acquire and accumulate valuable, rare and non-substitutable resources. As one of the key contributors to the RBV, Barney (1991) uses a broader definition by explaining that a company holds competitive advantage when it implements a value-creating strategy not being simultaneously implemented by any current or potential competitors. Scholars in the RBV approach consider that each firm has unique resource portfolio that creates the firm's competitive advantage, which is at the heart of strategic management. The RBV of competitive advantage examines the link between the internal characteristics of a firm and its performance. Firms' unique resources and capabilities, such as physical assets, know-how and managerial ability, generate heterogeneity and result in sustained competitive advantage.

More recently, as knowledge-based and service-oriented firms have gradually taken over a crucial segment of the market and economic development, researchers, such as Pfeffer (2005), have focused on people management and the competitive workforce. According to Pfeffer's (2005) study, knowledge-based resources have become the key source of competitive advantage, especially in technology-focused and intelligence-focused organisations. This knowledge-based perspective is seen as an influential branch of the RBV and emphasises the importance of organisational members in the process of gaining competitive advantage during the daily managerial practice. Pfeffer's (2005) definition of the competitive advantage focuses on the contribution of human resources and highlights the idea that effective people management may be the key source of competitive advantage, especially under the context of service-oriented organisations that have a wide range of customers and stakeholders.

To summarise, the concept of competitive advantage has been widely defined from different angles. The dominant outward approaches emphasise the intensive competitiveness in markets, while most inward approaches seek the origin of competitive advantage. The RBV seems the most inclusive perspective to explain what competitive advantage is and how a firm can identify and explore the advantage based on existing assets. In addition, it is worth noting that several sub-branches of the RBV have expanded and enriched the literature that defines competitive advantage. The competence-based view recognises various resources as the objective and that the competitive advantage could be 'hidden' in the competences. However, this view lacks a detailed analysis of how the resources are recognised, interpreted and utilised by the organisational members and, importantly, how the resources eventually become the source of competitive advantage. Pfeffer's (2005) view is closer to that of the intelligence-focused firms and stresses that people, especially the key talents, are the carriers of competitive advantage. However, the working and lived experiences of the firms, which include links and interactions between people and physical assets, are neglected when he analyses how a firm explores competitive advantage during daily managerial practices.

The RBV, as an umbrella theory with an inward approach that explores how a firm gains competitive advantage, is selected as the theoretical foundation of this thesis. Firstly, the RBV is beneficial for analysing comparable entities in the same market environment. The RBV provides a micro-level perspective to explain how the competitive advantage can be used to evaluate and analyse intra-organisational assets and activities in order to explore how an organisation can exploit opportunities and compete with its rivals in a specific market environment. Therefore, when investigating entities that operate under similar market conditions, the RBV is the foundation for exploring the different ways those entities echo the external environment by utilising their existing resources and assets. Secondly, this study values Barney's work published in 2018. He suggests that research must adopt a stakeholder perspective when it aims to explain the generation and appropriation of competitive advantage. By adopting Barney's definition of competitive advantage and taking the stakeholders' contribution into account, this study considers competitive advantage as a strategy that is not being simultaneously implemented by any current or potential competitors and that could be added on to non-managerial perspectives by various stakeholders. In reference to the research objectives that this study is to explore how TJVUs obtain competitive advantage and how various organisational members contribute to it, the RBV is central to the analysis of TJVUs' competitive advantage in the Chinese higher education context.

2.3 Source of competitive advantages, the RBV and higher education context

The RBV provides an internal-oriented and integrative framework with which to analyse how an organisation gains competitive advantage. This view considers that an organisation is comprised of 'a bundle of resources' (Barney, 1991) and that the organisation could acquire competitive advantage by utilising the resources it has and exploring the resources it needs. The RBV is the key to understanding the development of competency. Penrose (1959) was one of the first scholars to provide the important links between resources, capabilities and competitive advantage from a resource-based perspective. She worked on the internal view, dealing with bundled resources at the firm level. More specifically, she focused on a firm's managerial frameworks that combine activities and resources (Penrose, 1959). Later, in the 1980s, Penrose's work

was developed as the RBV, which contrast with the external market perspective from which firms simply concentrate on the supply and demand aspects of their markets to maximise their profits. Scholars of the RBV (e.g. Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991) describe firms as administrative organisations that recognise resources in order to achieve goals and gain potential value. The internal resources of an organisation play a highly significant role in building competitive advantage. In order to acquire competitive advantage in a market, a firm needs to be able to deliver a series of benefits to its customers that its rivals cannot match. This section reviews the literature on RBV with the emphasis on competency as explained by the RBV, the importance of knowledge-based resources and the RBV in the educational sector. This review therefore gives a comprehensive insight into why the RBV is suitable for analysing organisational competitive advantage and why the RBV could be utilised in the higher education sector. Additionally, the primary research gap in the RBV is elucidated in this section.

2.3.1 The resource-based view

The RBV concerns firm resources and how those resources result in differing firm performance. The idea of a firm as a collection of resources (Penrose, 1959) serves as a foundation for the conceptual development of the resource perspective. From Penrose, scholars with the RBV perspective sought to answer the questions: What are firm/organisational resources? And, how do those resources link to competitive advantage? Table 2.2 outlines the key definitions of organisational resources by various authors developed since 1959. It does not attempt to chart all the relevant theories in the RBV but simply summarises the most often cited works.

Table 2.2 Defining a key concept: organisational resources

Organisational resources	
Definitions in literature	Definition used in this study
Physical resources are things that the firm buys, leases, or produces, part and parcel of a firm’s operations and with the uses and properties of which the firm is more or less familiar; human resources that the loss of whose services would involve a cost -or lost opportunity— to the firm. (Penrose, 1959)	Organisational resources are assets that enable the firm to generate and exploit its competencies so as to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its strategic implementation (Barney, 1991; Teece, 2009). Organisational resources and capabilities do not have a clear boundary (Oladunjoye & Onyiaso, 2007).
Firm resources include all assets, capabilities, organisational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc. controlled by a firm that enable the firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness (Daft & Lengel, 1983).	
Anything which could be thought of as a strength or weakness of a given firm; those (tangible and intangible) assets which are tied semipermanently to the firm. (Wernerfelt, 1984, p.172)	
Resources are assets which the enterprise’s ability (its dynamic capability) can sense, seize, and adapt, so as to generate and exploit internal and external enterprise-specific competencies and to address the enterprise’s changing environment (Teece, 2009).	

In *The Theory of the Growth of the Firm*, Penrose (1959) categorises and defines resources as: physical resources – things that the firm buys, leases, or produces as part and parcel of a firm’s operations and with the uses and properties of which the firm is more or less familiar; and human resources – the loss of whose services would involve a cost or lost-opportunity to the firm. She distinguishes resources from services and argues that it is the service that resources render that puts them into the production process. Whilst Penrose pioneered reference to a firm as a collection of resources and laid the early foundation of the RBV, her premises are seen as very different from the resource-based analysis angle. Her study also does not provide for the possibility of rents occurring when using resources to create mechanisms against rivals. The ignorance of rent-seeking among managers may mean that they overlook the efficiencies of the macro-level outcome but expand the efficiencies of the micro-level growth process. However, Penrose tried to carefully describe the process of how firms grow, and her work continues to provide an important foundation for the further

development of the RBV. These criticisms have been further discussed and illustrated from the perspective of the RBV research stream.

Daft and Lengel (1983) suggest that firm resources comprise all the organisational assets, capabilities, processes, information and knowledge possessed and utilised by the firm to enhance its strategy formulation, operational efficiency and effectiveness. Following this definition, Wernerfelt (1984), regarded as the first person to formalise the RBV, argued that a firm should explore its existing resources and develop new resources besides those that are traditionally relied on, such as labour, capital and land. He introduced the application of formal economic tools, which had already been applied to the product side by Porter (1980), to a broader inward perspective of a firm.

As mentioned, traditional economic modelling measures a firm's performance by financial metrics. Wernerfelt (1984) attempted to look at organisational performance from the perspective of broader, abstract resources, such as skillsets, knowledge and information. He suggests that resources can be defined as tangible and intangible assets that are semi-permanently tied to the firm and are 'anything which could be thought of as a strength or weakness of a given firm' (Wernerfelt, 1984, p.172). Considering how a resource strengthens or weakens a firm, Wernerfelt introduces the concept of resource position barriers. Resource position barriers represent a higher cost faced by the firm acquiring a new resource than the cost faced by first movers who are using an existing or given resource. A resource can be described to be attractive to a firm when this resource has the capacity to support a resource position barrier. A firm should find those assets that no other rivals currently hold and that sustain a resource position barrier. The firm has to discern what it already has and how it can combine existing and new resources well so as to gain its competitive advantage. To summarise, Wernerfelt's statement is in line with the growth strategy and involves striking a balance between exploiting existing resources and developing new ones. As Newbert (2007) discusses, a firm's performance is driven directly by its products and indirectly by its resources. The resource perspective provides opportunities for further research on assets, processes, knowledge and other attributes that make up the intangible and qualitative dimensions of a firm's performance (Gibbert, 2006), rather than on the business units and products. Accordingly, the analysis of organisational

competitive advantage could reflect more structural and comprehensive organisational strengths and, importantly, the components of those advantages could be perceived and utilised by the top managers.

Newbert (2007) considers that resources – especially those that are distinctive, costly and hard to copy – are the keys to explain competitive advantage. This statement reflects the most influential work on the RBV from Barney (1986, 1991). In the 1990s, Barney's work further popularised the RBV. He argues that it is not sufficient to implement strategies of imperfect product markets if a firm is seeking above-normal returns. On the contrary, it depends on the imperfectly competitive strategic factors markets to achieve above-normal returns through which the resources necessary to those strategies are acquired. Accordingly, Barney defines organisational resources with a broad approach that includes all assets, capabilities, organisational processes, firm attributes, knowledge, and information. His definition is in line with Wernerfelt's and further explains the relationship between organisational resources and competitive advantage. Organisational resources are assets that enable the firm to generate and exploit its competences in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its strategic implementation (Barney, 1991; Teece, 2009).

What kind of organisational resources contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of a firm's strategic implementation? Barney (1991) proposes two assumptions to enable the identification of a firm's internal strengths and weaknesses through analysing the crucial characteristics of resources that determine whether such resources could be the source of competitive advantage. The first characteristic, resource immobility, was proposed because resources are not perfectly mobile. As Barney (1997, p.142) states, the 'costly to copy or inelastic in supply' contributes to the value of resources. Second, the assumption of 'resource heterogeneity' indicates that different firms have different bundles of resources (Barney, 1991) and that resources a firm has that others do not could be the source of competitive advantage. These two assumptions indicate that some resources embedded in an organisation could enable it to gain competitive advantage in ways competitors would find hard to copy. Meanwhile, firms in any given industry can hold exclusive resources of various types. Therefore, in order to create competitive advantage, a firm is required to access and explore its immobile

and exclusive resources that it brings to the competitive environment. It is necessary to look inside the firm for valuable, rare and costly-to-imitate resources.

Since Penrose firstly provided insight on the nature and role of resources in a firm, the concept of organisational resources has been expanded and popularised through the work of Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1991). Their work has largely explained the question what kinds of resources could contribute to competitive advantage. Subsequently, many researchers have made further contributions to the RBV based on Penrose's initial work on the RBV (e.g. Dierickx & Cool, 1989; Amit & Shoemaker, 1993; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Winter, 2003). Dierickx and Cool (1989) distinguished resources as tradeable and non-tradeable. A firm has an asset stock, which is accumulated over a consistent time. The level of non-tradeable and inimitable characteristics of the stock is determined by the strategic process the firm takes. And the potential profitability is fundamentally generated from and determined by the degree of non-tradability of the asset stock. Amit and Shoemaker (1993) provide a multidimensional view of organisational resources, in which they integrate the resource perspective with industrial analysis and behavioural decision theory. They state that identifying a resource should consider the focal industrial strategic factors. Resources are valuable when, to some extent, they overlap the determined strategic factors of the industry. In other words, the value of organisational resources depends on their imitability, tradability and substitutability according to industry conditions. In addition, the organisational rent also comes out of the decision-making behaviours of investment, by which top management faces and considers the uncertainty and complexity of both the firm and the industry it is embedded in.

Whilst most scholars in the RBV seek to explain the relationship between resources and competitive advantage, they hold various perspectives on what exactly organisational resources are. The most influential debate on this topic amounts to whether the resources and capabilities have a clear boundary. Over time, scholars (e.g. Teece et al., 1997; Ethiraj et al., 2005) have gradually realised that using the term 'resource' does not explain the connection between organisational resources and competitive advantage, because previous understandings of the RBV are relatively static. With the understanding that a firm can be competitive through accessing and

exploring its immobile and exclusive resources (Barney, 1991, 1997), the question as to how immobile and heterogeneous resources can be recognised, accessed and utilised – and, eventually form and shape competitive advantage – becomes the key to research on the RBV. Barney (1997) shed a light on the notions of organisational competency and capability, observing that both notions are crucial to the understanding of how static resources can be transformed into competitive advantage.

Discussions on the connections and distinctions between resources, capabilities and competitive advantage emerged very early. Penrose (1959) initially announced that different capabilities in managing resources lead to the distinctive performances of firms. She argued that the capability to explore resources was not uniform in all firms in any given industry. Although the same resources may be available to every firm, different capabilities lead to variations in competitive advantage. As Mahoney and Pandian (1992, p.365) argued, a ‘firm may achieve rents not because it has better resources, but rather the firm’s distinctive competence involves making better use of its resources’. Resources and capabilities are two complementary aspects of gaining competitive advantage (Barney, 1997; Oladunjoye & Onyeaso, 2007). This view indicates that resources are not the only source of competitive advantage; the way in which resources are acquired, used and managed by a firm determines that firm’s output as well.

While there seems to be almost universal agreement that the terms ‘resource’ and ‘capability’ are described as relating to competitive advantage, scholars generally fall into one of two camps when discussing whether resources and capabilities have a clearly and sharply defined distinction. In the first camp, researchers (e.g. Peteraf, 1993; Ethiraj et al., 2005) follow Barney’s (1991) definition of resources as including all organisational assets, capabilities, processes, information and knowledge. These scholars suggest that resources and capabilities do not have clear boundaries, though they have also mentioned the functions of capabilities in managing resources to achieve a superior performance (Oladunjoye & Onyeaso, 2007). In contrast, scholars in the other camp emphasise a clear-cut distinction between resources and capabilities (e.g. Amit & Schoemaker, 1993; Teece, 2009). Amit and Schoemaker (1993) describe resources as assets, human capital as well as know-how that can be traded, while they

consider that capabilities are a firm's capacity to develop such resources. More recently, Teece argues that resources are assets which the enterprise's ability (its dynamic capability) can sense, seize and adapt, so as to generate and exploit internal and external enterprise-specific competences and to address the enterprise's changing environment (Teece, 2009). This viewpoint emphasises the argument that resources themselves cannot directly lead to competitive advantage; rather, organisational resources can provide competitive advantage only if they are based on a collection and series of processes, routines, skills and knowledge that are hard to imitate. This camp emphasises the innovation and learning process, and stresses that the firm should have strategies to facilitate those processes.

Scholars engage in separating the concepts of resources and capabilities for convenience in order to measure the performance of firms. This is because, in commercial firms, separating the measurable resources and assets from capabilities is helpful in measuring their performance with financial indicators. However, considering that non-profit organisations mainly provide services and have a wide range of stakeholders with more complex demands (Beamon & Balcik, 2008), the suggestion of the first camp, which aggregates resources and capabilities, is more suitable for this thesis. In the context of service-related and intelligence-based organisations, where their performance generally has intangible and qualitative dimensions, the core resources are knowledge and know-how that are tacit and intangible.

To summarise, a combination of Barney's and Teece's definitions of organisational resources provides the best fit for the research purposes of this thesis. In addition, it is emphasised that the definition of organisational resources used in this study does not have a clear boundary in the higher education context. More specific, the competitive resources of a non-profit organisation (TJVUs in this study) are both physical assets and intangible resources (capabilities), especially those that are knowledge intensive, because the core resources and capabilities are normally embedded in individuals (Smith, 2001) and it is difficult to separate an intangible concept from personnel initiatives. The importance of knowledge-intensive resources will be discussed further in section 2.3.2.

2.3.2 Knowledge-based resources

According to Daft and Lengel (1983), a firm's resources include all tangible and intangible resources, as well as information and knowledge. The importance of individual and organisational knowledge has been widely recognised in the knowledge-intensive economic context. The capabilities of learning and sharing knowledge and taking advantage of versatile resources comprise a key to those organisations being competitive. Therefore, this section reviews the literature on knowledge-based resources in order, specifically, to bridge organisational resources, personal initiatives and organisational competitive advantage.

There is no universal definition of knowledge. Some scholars view knowledge as 'parcels' that can be technically moved and stored (Kogut & Zander, 1992), such as data and information. Others consider that knowledge is complex and tacit (Kostova, 1999), and therefore cannot be moved easily between organisations through the internet, paperwork and other physical media (Mudambi & Navarra, 2004). Researchers following the idea that 'knowledge can be delivered' often focus their studies on information technology (IT) systems and media development, used in order to support the efficiency of intra-organisational communication and explicit knowledge transfer. In contrast, scholars who place emphasis on tacit knowledge are more involved in research on 'know-how' and personnel embedded knowledge, which cannot be transferred by means of technologies.

Knowledge is broadly divided into two categories: explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge (Serban & Luan, 2002). Explicit knowledge is knowledge that can be captured in documents, databases and other recorded sources, and can be easily dispersed by IT systems. Tacit knowledge is related more strongly to 'know-how', such as experience, knowledge of local conditions (Reiche, 2011), and product design. As tacit knowledge is embedded in an organisation's members and groups of those members, this type of knowledge becomes difficult to leverage and transfer through a technology system or paper-based methods. In other words, explicit knowledge is a description of practices, whereas tacit knowledge is about 'knowing how to put it successfully into practice' (Park et al., 2015, p. 92). The form and non-tradable features of tacit knowledge embedded as they are in individuals (Gupta &

Govindarajan, 2000) represent the immobile and heterogeneous characteristics of competitive resources that Barney (1991) discussed and, importantly, these two features signify the importance and value of individuals' inputs in the creation of competitive advantage.

This thesis focuses on exploring the connection between organisational resources and the role of individuals in contributing to competitive advantage in a transnational context. That is to say, it is crucial to explore how the personnel of an organisation engage in the process of putting resources into practice, thereby comprising a source of organisational competitive advantage. Thus, tacit knowledge is central to the investigation in this thesis. Following the 'aggregate' perspective, core resources and capabilities are normally embedded in individuals and therefore it is difficult to separate them. In other words, tacit knowledge is practical and action-oriented (Smith, 2001), and relates strongly to personal experiences and social interactions.

Regarding a transnational context, the importance of knowledge in a transnational organisation has been discussed widely. MNCs, for instance, not only create knowledge in their home country, but also exploit the international knowledge derived from their overseas subsidiaries. Dunning (2000) expands the OLI paradigm (also known as the eclectic paradigm) with reference to knowledge, emphasising the role of strategic assets and control from headquarters. Knowledge-based assets, as an ownership advantage, are treated as a non-location-bounded firm-specific advantage. This advantage has the potential to assist an MNC in overcoming their disadvantages when carrying out business activities in foreign markets (Dunning, 1988; Dunning & Lundan, 2009). In addition, MNCs are able to instigate projects to create knowledge simultaneously in different major markets (Dunning & Lundan, 2009).

Researchers claim that a transnational organisation is able to cross borders and create value through the knowledge it has gained both locally and internationally (Caves, 1971; Buckley & Casson, 1976). Recognising, integrating and developing those knowledge-based resources could comprise the source of competitive advantage (Hatch & Dyer, 2004). Literature on MNCs also attributes knowledge with a vital function, as it is required by an organisation's headquarters in order to manage and

facilitate knowledge resources so as to enhance organisational competitive advantage (Minbaeva et al., 2014). Mudambi and Navarra (2004) have used the term ‘knowledge flow’ to describe the fact that knowledge resources have a tendency to move to different places, whereas ‘knowledge transfer’ refers to the automatic behaviours that individuals or organisations exercise to encourage that tendency. Yang and his colleagues (2008, p.884) define knowledge transfer as ‘a process in which an organisation re-creates a complex, casually ambiguous set of routines in new settings and keeps the routines functioning. These routines appear in the form of know-how, R&D, managerial techniques and so on.’ That is to say, knowledge-based resources as well as the processes of knowledge sharing and exchange could be a source of competitive advantage.

According to the RBV, some subsidiaries are akin to resource developers that innovate resources by exploring new resources and finding effective ways to combine and integrate the existing and new resources (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993; Ghoshal & Moran, 1996). Grant (1991) explains the likelihood of the recombination of resources within one firm with an emphasis on knowledge resources. The term ‘knowledge-based resource’ refers to the tangible resources related to skills, organisational principles and other ‘know-how’ (Kogut & Zander, 1992; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). In addition to immobility and heterogeneity (Barney, 1991) being considered general organisational resources, this view claims that knowledge resources have a further three characteristics: tacitness, context specificity and dispersion, which make knowledge resources even harder to share and exchange. Therefore, the level of knowledge generation has significant consequences on a subsidiary’s generation of competency to gain competitive advantage.

The mainstream of literature on knowledge-based resources in MNCs claims that the reason that knowledge and knowledge sharing could be a source for competitive resources is dependent on whether the knowledge could add value to the MNCs (Haas & Hansen, 2005). Knowledge, especially tacit knowledge, is not easily transferred within MNCs (Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998). As Kostova (1999) stated, knowledge transfer is not easy to carry out in MNCs as the process may be too costly or too difficult to complete (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Dellestrand & Kappen, 2011;

Argote & Ingram, 2000). Additionally, a key element in knowledge transfer is not the knowledge itself but, rather, the potential benefits that the recipients can obtain by integrating that knowledge into their operations (Minbaeva et al., 2014). Therefore, it is only when the knowledge resources from a subsidiary can be absorbed by an MNC that the subsidiary has the potential to obtain the competencies to improve its competitive advantage.

More recently, increasing awareness of individuals' impact on organisational competitiveness has focused on the value coming from the knowledge embedded in individuals' experiences, skills and abilities (Steyn, 2004), since intellectual capital has been treated as the prime resource of a knowledge-based transnational organisation. In addition, personal knowledge needs to become institutional knowledge so as to be widely shared, thereby becoming a source of competitive advantage. In other words, knowledge in a transnational organisation is created, accessed and applied throughout the entire organisation as a network (Almeida et al., 2002). Therefore, to gain greater competitive advantage, a transnational organisation should not only form organisational knowledge 'assets', but also generate and maintain its capability to explore and utilise individual-based knowledge from its overseas sub-units (Boussebaa, Sturdy & Morgan, 2014).

In a transnational organisation, both its partners and sub-units generate knowledge-based resources. Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) consider that there is a positive relationship between knowledge inflow and knowledge output. Mudambi and Navarra (2004) indicate that the greater knowledge bases a subsidiary has, the greater the knowledge output it produces. In their view, the capability for autonomous knowledge generation is an important role for a transnational subsidiary since this sub-unit seeks to achieve the subsidiary's goal and to match the requirements from its parent company or partners. Therefore, in the context of transnational organisations, the knowledge generation in subsidiaries, especially the generation of the knowledge relating to personal experiences and inter-personnel interactions, needs further exploration in order to explain how organisational members are engaged in contributing to transnational competitive advantage.

In this thesis, considering the particular context of transnational higher education, the research will focus on the knowledge generated in international branch campuses, which is strongly related to student experiences. Section 2.3.3 reviews the reason why research into TNHE calls for an RBV approach.

2.3.3 The RBV in the higher education sector

As discussed, the RBV concept is originally implemented in commercial business to identify the ‘bundle of resources’ possessed by a firm that enable that firm to outperform its competitors (Barney, 1991). Further, scholars emphasise the importance of knowledge-based resources in competition due to their tacit and inimitable characteristics (Smith, 2001; Mudambi & Navarra, 2015). The underlying assumption of profit maximisation (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993) has limited the majority of studies on the RBV in commercial organisations. However, further discussion on whether the RBV could be utilised in non-profit organisations especially in the higher education sector has challenged that underlying assumption and debated the reason why non-profit organisations need the RBV. In terms of the literature on higher education management and transnational HEIs, scholars have widely discussed the topics of quality assurance (e.g. Knight, 2007; Stella & Bhushan, 2011; Hou et al., 2018), student satisfaction with the curriculum and facilities (e.g. Price et al., 2003; Wilkins et al., 2012), and organisational embeddedness (e.g. Shams & Huisman, 2012, 2016; Bellini et al., 2016; Guimón & Narula, 2019). However, these studies still lack a comprehensive understanding of what kinds of objectives comprise the education in a transnational environment, how students perceive and understand the education from a variety of perspectives, why student perceptions have connections and mismatches with universities’ provisions and strategy, and whether organisational development has been influenced by the students. This section therefore reviews the literature on the RBV in non-profit organisations and in institutions of higher education. Although the literature is limited and fragmented, previous studies still provide insights into the RBV in transnational higher education. This review aims to answer questions regarding why examination of transnational higher education institutions needs the RBV; why HEIs have only very rarely been explored from an RBV perspective; and why examining HEIs from the RBV could further contribute to current literature.

The literature on the RBV suggests that commercial firms are bundles of resources owned by their shareholders. The duty of a firm is to maximise its profits to benefit its shareholders. In the international business sector, MNCs are organisations that take advantage of dispersed resources to satisfy their shareholders' needs and expectations. In the context of profit-driven firms, as Table 2.3 shows, Peteraf (1993) states that competitive resources in a company must be heterogeneous, possess ex- ante and ex- post limits to competition and be imperfectly mobile. This definition is in line with Barney's (1991) discussion. While all the assets could be considered as resources of a firm, the characteristics of immobility and heterogeneity should be identified when analysing how resources generate competitive advantage of the firm.

Table 2.3 Defining a key concept: competitive resources in a different context

Competitive resources		
Context	Definitions in literature	Preferred definition
In commercial context	Competitive resources in a company must be heterogeneous, possess ex-ante and ex-post limits to competition and be imperfectly mobile (Peteraf, 1993).	Competitive resources in a university must be heterogeneous, possess ex-ante and ex-post limits to competition and be imperfectly mobile (Peteraf, 1993).
In higher education context	Competitive resources in higher education institutions should be heterogeneous, possess ex-ante and ex-post limits to competition but may not be imperfectly mobile (Lynch and Baines, 2004).	

On the other hand, research on non-profit and public organisations indicates that these organisations similarly focus their strategy on particular groups (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002), because it has influence on an organisation's strategy development. Some scholars consider that the RBV could be a solution for public organisations to environmental turbulence. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) point out that an organisation should create public value through its resources and capabilities so as to achieve a desirable fit with its dynamic environment. Bryson et al. (2007) propose a method called 'mapping' for the creation of strategy: managers in a public organisation are enabled to integrate and combine competencies through the aspirations and expectations of the organisation's stakeholders. In their study, Bryson and et al. (2007) demonstrate the strong connection between core competency, sustainable performance and the creation of public value in the public sector. More

specifically, with regard to knowledge-based resources, researchers have identified the importance of knowledge resources in public organisations (e.g. Chan, 2006; Singh Sandhu et al., 2011). Most public organisations require communication skills, creativity, innovation and other tacit resources (capabilities) to create content-based services and intangible ‘products’, to connect and create long-term relationships with a variety of stakeholders, and to perform well. In addition to knowledge-based resources, scholars also illustrate other types of resources in the public sector, such as human resources (e.g. Ridder et al., 2005) and reputation (e.g. Smith, 2008).

Implementing an RBV in public organisations is inspiring in the research on higher education institutions. As with public organisations, HEIs are not generally seen as needing to maximise profits and to satisfy their shareholders; however, these institutions still have to pursue profit-seeking tasks in order to upgrade premises, improve facilities, recruit high-quality staff and students, and enhance reputations. Therefore, while ‘profit maximisation’ may not be a readily accepted terminology in the education sector; however, the foundation of an RBV – improving efficiency and seeking profit – still works with regard to HEIs. The RBV, which focuses on the interior structure of an organisation, could be a possible solution to enable HEIs to enhance their competitive advantage.

Lynch and Baines (2004) are two influential scholars who examine the RBV in the context of UK universities. In their work, Lynch and Baines identify the preliminary competitive resources of UK universities, including reputation, architecture, innovative capability, core competences and knowledge-based advantage. They claim that competitive resources in higher education institutions should be heterogeneous, possess ex- ante and ex- post limits to competition but may not be imperfectly mobile. A comparison in Table 2.3 shows that although Peteraf (1993) states that competitive resources must be imperfectly mobile, Lynch and Baines argue that in higher education institutions, those resources may be imperfectly mobile, or they may not. The central reasoning for their argument is the very high turnover rate of academic staff members. They emphasise that, as a resource, an individual person could be pulled from other universities by salary, investments or new research projects. However, this phenomenon is not unique in the higher education sector. Additionally,

while the mobility of key talents may influence the reputation of organisations, how to manage those people and leverage strategies to exploit the competencies of human resources is a core factor of competitive resources. In other words, at the foundation of both assets and capabilities as organisational resources, as well as of intelligence-oriented organisations, competitive resources should have the key characteristic of imperfect mobility and this immobility should be identified and elaborated from both the resources and the way the focal resource is utilised.

HEIs could compete in a similar way for students (customers for their work), for government and for other resources relying on the unique nature of their competitive resources. To be unique, resources should be sustainable and not easily replicable. Although their work is pioneering and inspiring, Lynch and Baines integrate organisational competency and resources, which causes the considerable overlapping of some concepts and the spanning of multiple levels. For instance, based on RBV logic, organisational resources comprise the core competency and further a series of competences to enhance the organisation's ability to achieve competitive advantage and to outperform other rivals. Categorising the RBV concepts in three layers could lead to confusion about the structure of the organisational advantages generated and developed in the different layers of organisational members. Bobe and Kober (2015) also challenge the approach of Lynch and Baines (2004) with the opinion that the five resources spanned multiple functions and that this could decrease the practical capability of their approach. In response to this difficulty, Bobe and Kober (2015) create a framework that aims at measuring the organisational capabilities of public universities. They identify research, teaching and networking as the three core capabilities that enable universities to be competitive. However, their macro-level analysis does not solve the criticism of the Lynch and Baines framework. On the contrary, Bobe and Kober neglect to consider that a particular resource could have an impact on more than one capability, and splitting resources and capability into two concepts with clear boundaries would be problematic bearing in mind human resources and knowledge-based resources are considered vital in HEIs.

In addition to the challenge on the concept overlapping, Lynch and Baines (2004) also simplify the situation by observing that competitiveness and the value of resources are

only recognised, distinguished and created by the managers and top management members. The work of van Rijnsoever et al. (2008) could be seen as a supplementary to the neglect of Lynch and Baines. Van Rijnsoever and his team lead a specific analysis on the network as one of the resources in universities through which individual researchers could develop their career when the science–science interaction appears at different levels of faculties (van Rijnsoever et al., 2008). This empirical study partially demonstrates that the RBV could be utilised in HEIs and that managers and top management members are not the only groups who recognise and have an impact on organisational resources. Therefore, further research of the RBV calls for an analysis of the connection between different organisational members and organisational resources.

The literature on the RBV has indicated the importance of individuals in an organisation and the relationships between the focal organisation and its various members, both explicitly and implicitly (Pfeffer, 2005; Geppert & Dörrenbächer, 2011; Meyer et al., 2011; Williams, 2011; Barney, 2018). Barney (2018) presents an exaptation. He indicates that various stakeholders should be taken into account in the study of the RBV, although his work only emphasises the importance of distinctive organisational members with the assumption that both shareholders and stakeholders contribute to profit generation. However, those scholars focus mainly on the role of managers in the firm with regard to their initiatives and impact on the recognition and utilisation of organisational resources among intra- and inter-organisations. The initiatives and impacts from other members of the organisation and their contribution to the non-profit aspects have not yet been explored from an RBV perspective. A possible explanation for this oversight could be the underlying assumption of profit maximisation through the RBV. Scholars illustrate that a firm needs to deliver either a set of customer benefits at costs lower than those of its competitors, or benefits its rivals cannot match (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993). The concept of value-added therefore links to the financial metrics in a straightforward manner. However, as Kay (1995) challenges, the profit-maximising assumption is an oversimplification both in commercial and non-profit organisations. The organisational members share responsibilities not only for seeking organisational profit, but also for individual value and social value, such as individual career development, organisational reputations

and public responsibilities. Therefore, expanding the rationale of organisational competitiveness from profit maximisation to value maximisation will not decrease the foundation of the RBV. Instead, this expansion could be beneficial not only to the consideration of commercial and non-commercial organisations as suitable candidates for the application of the RBV, but also the consideration of a wider range of organisational members who could have an impact on the nature and the form of organisational resources.

The higher education sector could be considered as a valuable and beneficial candidate for the utilisation of the RBV in a non-profit context, in a situation where there is a wide range of organisational members. As discussed, several scholars have implemented the RBV research into HEIs. However, the neglect of students – who comprise the largest group of members in a university – is still evident. There are various possible reasons for this neglect. First, following the mainstream of the RBV studies, scholars generally stress that managers and employees are the key members that relate to value creation and the enhancement of competency. Students are not included in the management team or as employees, although they have been metaphorised as partial employees (Hoffman & Kretovics, 2004). In addition, students are generally considered as making a contribution to teaching and pedagogy, since they interact with lecturers in classes (Biggs, 1996). That is to say, ignorance of the impact students may have on managerial improvement leads to the neglect of students in an RBV. The second reason for the neglect of students comes from the influential metaphor model of the student role in universities: students are customers. Lynch and Baines (2004) claim that universities utilise resources so as to compete for customers (students). This view splits universities and students into two elements: universities provide education to students, and students are able to evaluate the education. However, when Lynch and Baines follow this marketing-oriented metaphor (further review of the student role in universities may be seen in section 2.5.2) to utilise the internal-oriented RBV framework, they have already overlooked the active engagement of students due to their having a relatively long-term relationship with universities and share some responsibility for creating their the education, creating an organisation's reputation and adding value to the universities. That is to say, when universities consider students as 'outsiders', it becomes easy to overlook their

contributions to sharing the responsibilities for providing education, improving educational outcomes and enhancing the benefits for both students and their universities. The last reason is in line with the criticism that the foundation for an RBV is more than profit-maximisation. As discussed, the profit-maximisation assumption in an RBV is oversimplified in both commercial and non-profit organisations. Students could be considered as beneficial to universities' income because of the large amount of tuition fees. However, based on the profit-maximisation assumption, this limits student contributions to universities to those of a consumer and to customer-related activities. In contrast, if organisational competitiveness is more than merely profit-oriented, the fragmented perceptions, interpretations and inputs from students could be valuable to the wider conceptualisation of competitive advantage. In other words, it is beneficial and valuable to illustrate the RBV in HEIs, and to consider students as key organisational members who have an impact on the nature and the form of resources, while there is a challenge to identify organisational competency from a wider perspective that includes non-profit-seeking orientation.

To summarise, the RBV is a useful framework with which to evaluate how an organisation gains competitive advantage and outperforms its competitors. In a knowledge-intensive context, HEIs are clearly candidates that could benefit from the utilisation of the RBV. Furthermore, regarding the internationalisation of higher education, some universities have broken through geographic boundaries and established overseas institutions. These transnational entities have been treated as comparable and equivalent to the subsidiaries in an MNC. Section 2.4 thus reviews the literature on subsidiary research in order to explore how a transnational institution competes in a host country, and how the members in a transnational institution engage in daily practices.

2.4 Subsidiary management

The research on transnational organisations and MNCs argues that, from a headquarters perspective, when a subsidiary is initially established by its parent companies, there are defined goals. The ownership-specific advantages related to the headquarters of an organisation are leveraged overseas through the business operations of foreign subsidiaries (Vernon, 1979; Dunning, 1988; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989).

Some recent research no longer treats the headquarters of an organisation as the main source of MNCs' competitive advantage (Mudambi & Navarra, 2004). Scholars who focus on subsidiaries with specialised knowledge and capabilities state that a subsidiary could take the initiative to improve their competency (Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998) and expand their roles within an MNC (Andersson et al., 2001). The studies that focus on the subsidiaries' initiatives indicate that a subsidiary could take its own role and development goals beyond the goals originally defined by its headquarters. Examining what happened in a sub-unit institution is beneficial to the understanding of what intra-subsidary factors are crucial to institutional development, how a subsidiary takes advantage of both local and network-bound elements to be competitive, and the reasons why comparable subsidiaries use distinctive strategies to outperform each other. This section, regarding the research focusing on a joint venture-level analysis, reviews the literature on subsidiaries' initiatives, the evolution of subsidiaries and other relevant topics so as to clarify the importance of the RBV in analysing the development of subsidiaries and to build the connection between the literature on subsidiaries and on TNHE.

2.4.1 The background of subsidiary research

In the mainstream of economic and international business studies on MNCs, Dunning's (1988, 2000) OLI paradigm displays a top-down view of MNCs' management from the perspective of headquarters. This paradigm explains how headquarters treat their foreign subsidiaries and how MNCs reallocate resources to maximise their benefits. Dunning argues that the generic cross-border corporates aim to combine and enhance 'ownership', 'location' and 'internalisation' advantages to improve their operational efficiency and organisational performance. Ownership advantage refers to the capability to retain and disseminate the exclusive resources from the original country to its foreign operational sectors. The capability to disseminate resources is essential to an MNC when it enters a new market environment, as this advantage determines whether the MNC possesses sufficient resources and knowledge, and is able to transfer them to the foreign market. The location advantage indicates the local cost saving factors enabling subsidiaries to break boundaries and culture barriers, and to obtain local market opportunities at a lower cost. The advantage of internalisation is seen as the ability to keep information regarding specific advantages in-house and not to disseminate it. This advantage posits

that an MNC could obtain dramatic benefits if its own production processes are more cost-efficient than the business modes of local competitors.

The OLI paradigm describes how headquarters establish rules during the internationalisation process, and argues that the success of internationalisation relies on the levels of the ownership, location and internalisation advantages observed by headquarters (Dunning, 1988). That is to say, headquarters takes the responsibility for designing how a foreign subsidiary should allocate resources and operate the business to reach their goals. More recently, Dunning and Lundan (2009) expanded the OLI paradigm with regard to knowledge-intensive MNCs. Their work enhances the increasing importance of knowledge-based resources in the transnational context. While Dunning and Lundan have considered both tangible and intangible resources and capabilities that could contribute to the performance of a transnational organisation, their conventional framework from a headquarters-oriented perspective has limitations with regard to unpacking the performances of transnational sub-units, which require more front-line tasks to compete in a new market. For instance, though the location advantage has mentioned the cost saving factors as relevant to local resources, this advantage is still described from a headquarters perspective. They have not explained how the subsidiary absorbs and takes advantage of the specific local resources through its autonomous behaviours. In other words, it should not be overlooked that a subsidiary undertakes active behaviours to enhance both local responsiveness and global integration (Birkinshaw, 1997). Therefore, exploring how knowledge resources are created in a subsidiary and how these resources influence the development of that subsidiary will contribute to the theoretical foundation of the RBV from a micro-level perspective.

Another study of subsidiary management from a headquarters perspective comes from Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989). They analyse four generic roles of national subsidiaries: black hole (strong location advantages with weak competencies), implementer (both weak location advantages and competencies), strategic leader (both strong location advantages and competencies) and contributor (weak location advantages with strong competencies). This typology reflects that subsidiaries are able to take different but interdependent roles in MNCs regarding their ability to access both external and

internal resources. External resources are those that come from the local context, while internal resources come from the other units of an MNC, including headquarters and other subsidiaries. As a top-down analysis of MNCs, this evolutionary theoretical model from Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) has similar limitations to those of the OLI paradigm, though they categorise subsidiaries into four types to compare how the four different situations influence the development of subsidiaries, which is more advanced than the OLI paradigm. Even so, Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) do not clarify how a subsidiary could take initiatives to differentiate itself from its rivals and be more competitive in the marketplace. In short, the evolutionary theoretical model still lacks a micro-level analysis of transnational entities.

In 1994, Nohria and Ghoshal conducted a study on the evolutionary model of subsidiaries that placed greater emphasis on the subsidiary itself (Nohria and Ghoshal, 1994). They propose this view based on the integration– responsiveness (I-R) paradigm, and they posit that a subsidiary has the opportunity to amend certain rules established by headquarters and, thereby, its role within its MNC. Their work contends that differentiated fit and shared values are two alternative approaches to managing subsidiaries both equally and simultaneously.

The I-R paradigm is rooted in Lawrence and Lorsch (1969). Following Dunning's OLI paradigm (1988), the I-R paradigm is extended to cover MNCs by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989), who further explain how to combine the three advantages (ownership advantage, location advantage and internalisation advantage) leveraged by Dunning. The concepts of the I-R paradigm refer to the two extremes of the international strategy spectrum: the 'I' relates to global integration strategy, meaning that MNCs provide similar and standardised products or services through their subsidiaries to different host countries (Levitt, 1993). The 'R' relates to local responsiveness and refers to a strategy by which MNCs provide products or services designed exclusively for the local context (Douglas & Wind, 1987). Based on these two extreme situations, most scholars further explain the I-R paradigm from a neutral viewpoint through which to find a balance between global integration and local responsiveness strategies; however, each scholar has their own take on the paradigm (e.g. Kobrin, 1991; Luo & Tung, 2007).

Supported by the I-R paradigm, the studies on subsidiary management that are based on a subsidiary perspective and that investigate local context are gradually increasing in number (Nohria & Ghoshal, 1994; Birkinshaw, 1997; Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998). As mentioned, Nohria and Ghoshal's study (1994) explains the importance of both the local context and the shared value. The differentiated fit approach means that headquarters should consider the local context and understand the contingencies that such varying contexts present when they apply a formal structure for the management of a foreign subsidiary (Nohria & Ghoshal, 1994). The shared value approach focuses on the creation of an organisational culture. This approach emphasises that sharing a common value within an MNC to combine and hybridise interests is beneficial for both the subsidiaries and headquarters (Nohria & Ghoshal, 1994). They underline that a differentiated fit and shared values are two equivalent choices and both have the potential to be applied simultaneously in MNCs. MNCs are able to gain advantage by applying these two approaches together because the differentiated fit approach increases the degree of autonomy a subsidiary has in decision-making and supports adaptation to foreign markets, while the shared value approach prompts a subsidiary to use its specific local knowledge to pursue the goals set by its MNC and, further, to reduce the possibility of rent-seeking activities in subsidiary managers (Meyer et al., 2011).

The view of differentiated fit and shared value in Nohria and Ghoshal (1994) gives the same importance to local context as to control by headquarters. The study by Nohria and Ghoshal (1994) is of the opinion that a subsidiary should be enabled with autonomous behaviours to affect both its own evolution and the control mechanism employed by headquarters. However, as a common limitation of research from the perspective of headquarters, this study still neglects an in-depth analysis of the initiatives and the internal activities of subsidiaries, in which various organisational members and the subjective nature of their inputs could influence the subsidiary's performance.

To conclude, these prominent studies of subsidiary management focus on how MNC headquarters allocate resources to their subsidiaries and how headquarters access

foreign markets through their subsidiaries, and the awareness of a subsidiary's local context is gradually increasing. The OLI paradigm emphasises location advantages as a key to breaking geographical barriers. The I-R paradigm inspires future research on MNCs that needs to pay greater attention to subsidiary initiatives and internal interactions. A well-coordinated approach results in local responsiveness to customer needs, while retaining sufficient control of operations to ensure efficiency and learning (Dunning, 1988; Douglas & Wind, 1987; Luo & Tung, 2007). With regard to the management and development of subsidiaries, some subsidiaries no longer have a single function (such as manufacture, or sales). These subsidiaries have more potential to take responsibility for an MNC's entire strategy and development. Top-down mechanisms do not highlight the value of local knowledge and internal elements with regard to the effectiveness of subsidiary management. In fact, as the function of international subsidiaries becomes diversified, the autonomous development of subsidiaries will gradually become a separate subject in the research of transnational organisations. In terms of the evolution of subsidiaries, this is described as a process of accumulating or losing resources, and enhancing or atrophying the capability (Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998). According to this definition, the key words for the evolution of subsidiaries are 'resource' and 'capability'. Section 2.4.2 will analyse the literature on the RBV of subsidiaries to explain how a subsidiary maintains competitive advantage and contributes value by exploring its resources and capabilities.

2.4.2 The resource-based view of subsidiaries

The RBV indicates that unique organisational resources are one kind of source for organisational competitive advantage. In terms of MNCs, it is acknowledged by many researchers that the competency of MNCs to organise their geographically dispersed resources and capabilities is a vital source of organisational competitive advantage (Dunning, 1981; Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1990; Nohria & Ghoshal, 1994). A key insight of their research on international business is that an MNC needs to equip its subsidiaries through firm-specific advantages to overcome the burden of being in a foreign environment. This approach indicates that the capability for a certain level of resource diffusion is essential to MNCs when they enter a new market environment. This capability enables their subsidiaries to transfer resources and knowledge effectively throughout the MNC, and to maintain competitive advantage in the foreign

marketplace. Considering the relative independence and different functions of each section of an MNC, MNC network theory supports the identification of how a subsidiary satisfies both local markets and its headquarters. Some scholars regard an MNC as an alliance of several institutions, rather than a unitary organisation (Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998). From an internal MNC perspective, it is apparent to senior managers that a subsidiary's ability to possess resources and to contribute value is important. Therefore, research at a subsidiary level can fruitfully examine organisations from the resource and capability viewpoints.

In 1997, Birkinshaw suggested the concept of subsidiaries' 'initiatives' to explain their autonomous behaviours and creative potential for the whole MNC. He defines an initiative as 'a discrete, proactive undertaking that advances a new way for the corporation to use or expand its resources' (Birkinshaw, 1997, p.207). He emphasises that initiatives, as proactive factors, are essential elements for a subsidiary to expand its resources; these include local market initiatives, internal market initiatives, global market initiatives and global-internal hybrid initiatives. When a subsidiary takes advantage of its initiatives successfully, it is able to expand both the internal resources and the new external markets. Therefore, initiatives have 'the potential to drive the local responsiveness, worldwide learning and global integration, a much broader role than previously envisioned' by headquarters (Birkinshaw, 1997, p.226). That is to say, when a subsidiary has the capability to explore and develop resources, and especially has the initiatives with which to expand its competencies, this subsidiary would be able to acquire greater competitive advantage.

Birkinshaw and Hood (1998) posited three drivers for a subsidiary's development: assignment from headquarters, local environment determinism and subsidiary choice. Headquarters assignment indicates that headquarters has a dominant position in a subsidiary's decision-making process. Local environment determinism refers to local market characteristics that somehow direct and influence a subsidiary's activities. Subsidiary choice focuses on the importance of the network in an MNC (Paterson & Brock, 2002) and is more concerned about a subsidiary's autonomy. In other words, Birkinshaw and Hood (1998) emphasise that the business activities pursued by one actor interact with other activities, and that interdependence and interaction between

internal and external networks builds up the relationship of each unit in relation to its MNC (Andersson et al., 2002). Andersson (2003) additionally proposes that, although resources and capabilities can be shared between different units within an MNC's network, the tacit and socially embedded nature of resources, such as knowledge and individual experience, make capabilities 'sticky' and difficult to transfer. In other words, it is the fact that such resources and capabilities are 'hard to share' that provides a subsidiary the opportunity to retain its uniqueness, to improve its role and to acquire greater power from headquarters.

Enhancing the point of view that a subsidiary can take an active role through initiatives, the process of subsidiary-driven change to an MNC's charter resembles that of corporate entrepreneurship (Burgelman, 1983; Birkinshaw, 1997). Birkinshaw and Hood (1998) propose that subsidiary-driven charter change comprises two situations: subsidiary-driven charter extension and subsidiary-driven charter reinforcement. Subsidiary-driven charter extension refers to a process in which a subsidiary gains a new or enhanced charter by means of which the subsidiary can create greater bargaining power with headquarters. Birkinshaw and Hood (1998) observe that the subsidiary-driven charter extension process comprises three steps. First, a subsidiary uses its initiatives to find new market opportunities, both in the local market and within its network with the MNC (Birkinshaw, 1997). Second, the subsidiary develops the necessary capabilities to pursue those opportunities. Finally, the subsidiary acquires its charter extension from headquarters. This bottom-up 'political' process (Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998) indicates that the internal active behaviours of a subsidiary can prompt it to expand its charter and gain greater bargaining power with its headquarters. Subsidiary-driven charter reinforcement refers to a subsidiary strengthening its current capabilities and thereby manifesting its charter. This situation indicates an entire subsidiary active behaviour that aims to compete with other subsidiaries or external competitors that possess similar relative resources or capabilities. To conclude, these upward processes undertaken by a subsidiary provide a clear indication that the autonomous behaviours of subsidiaries have profound influence on their acquisition of power.

The phenomenon of the centre of excellence (Frost et al., 2002) is an example that explains a situation where a subsidiary inherits more power from its headquarters. The term 'centre of excellence' has been expanded by Meyer et al. (2011): this term indicates that a subsidiary that holds distinctive competitive advantage and is highly influential with head office or other parts of an MNC can become a centre of excellence of within its MNC. The position of a subsidiary can be seen as a bridge between the internal network and the external network due to the subsidiary more or less having the ability to combine resources from both headquarters and the local context, as well as to distribute these resources to different parts of the MNC. Andersson et al. (2002) suggest three factors that link the ability of a subsidiary to become a centre of excellence: a subsidiary's internal resources, the relationship between such resources and other parts of the MNC, and the business context. By taking advantage of its local knowledge and resources, a subsidiary may be able to take more initiative and have the potential to influence other units' business and strategy. In other words, the key determinant of a subsidiary's ability to develop and change its role is derived from its resources and capabilities.

To summarise, the RBV explains that the crucial resources of a subsidiary raise its competitive advantage. The unique resources assist a subsidiary in effective and efficient resource creation, as well as helping it to survive and adapt in a new market (Teece et al., 1997; Capron & Hulland, 1999; Barney, 2001). The unique nature of resources resides in three aspects: rarity, non-imitability and non-substitutability (Ray, Barney & Muhanna, 2004; Barney et al., 2011). These three factors indicate that a subsidiary is able to raise its level of competitive advantage when that subsidiary possesses a resource that other subsidiaries can neither maintain nor replicate, in addition to there being no other comparable resources. Under a flexible operational network, rather than under central control, a subsidiary has more opportunities to improve its competency and to bring greater benefits for its MNC in order to maintain competitive advantage in international markets. However, some resources are inactive and therefore cannot be a direct source of competitive advantage. It is only when resources are harnessed that they are able to become the source of competitive advantage. The capability of a firm represents its ability to transform resources into competitive advantage. Barney (1991) connects resources and capability to value-

added activities. He claims that the competitive advantage is generated from the value delivered by unique resources. This view explicates capability and resources as the sources of a subsidiary's competitive advantages. However, the extent to which such capability and resources can contribute to competitive advantage depends on the level of the value that is added to the subsidiary. In other words, the capability of generating competitive advantage is a process of value-adding activities. The RBV considers that resources and capabilities are fundamental to a subsidiary maintaining its ability to acquire additional resources and political benefits from headquarters. Additionally, from a subsidiary's perspective, in addition to external factors (such as changes in its charter by headquarters and the influence of the local environment), a subsidiary's proactive activities can be seen as the most crucial driver of its development. Section 2.4.3 reviews how a subsidiary may choose its developmental strategy when they are in a position to take initiatives, especially subsidiaries in partnership with local firms.

2.4.3 The subsidiary's choice

A subsidiary could be set up to improve an MNC's 'ability to manage cross boundaries' (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989). But, in addition to being assigned a role by its headquarters, it could also compete with local rivals and its sister subsidiaries to gain, retain and improve its role within the MNC (Birkinshaw, 1996; Mudambi & Navarra, 2004). This means that a subsidiary can play an active and considerable role in the formation of MNC policy and strategy setting (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989; Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998; Andersson et al., 2001) and, furthermore, contribute to an MNC's success (Forsgren et al., 1995). Therefore, a subsidiary can expand its influence when it possesses particular and non-substitutable resources and competencies with which the MNC is able to improve its performance and adapt to diversified environments (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1980; Birkinshaw et al., 2005; Mudambi et al., 2014).

Previous research on subsidiary management from a headquarters perspective (e.g. Dunning, 1988, 2000; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989; Nohria & Ghoshal, 1994) suggests that the role of a subsidiary can be changed due to its possession of specific local knowledge and resources. However, these studies neglect explaining how a subsidiary changes its role. Birkinshaw and Hood (1998) develop a model of subsidiary evolution to fill this theoretical gap by analysing the drivers of change in a subsidiary's role. They emphasise that the assignment of a charter by headquarters, a subsidiary's

capabilities and the process of a subsidiary's evolution interact with each other. Charters are defined as the recognition of a subsidiary in response to which a subsidiary takes on the responsibility of a business, or parts of a business, within the MNC (Galunic & Eisenhardt, 1996). Birkinshaw and Hood (1998) also explain that the capabilities a subsidiary has that are valued by headquarters are the drivers of change to the charter, and change in the charter influences the subsequent evolution of the subsidiary. In addition, the subsidiary takes active steps to promote its evolution. Therefore, it can be seen that, in order to explain how subsidiaries change their roles, the importance of a subsidiary's capability to create value should be the first consideration (Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998). This view dilutes the specific role of a subsidiary in an MNC, still emphasises capability of a subsidiary to create value and exert influence over other sections of an MNC. However, there are still some spaces that need further research, such as which resources are more relevant for a subsidiary to gain influence, how unique resources transform into a subsidiary's competency, and how the internal creation and processes of competency originate.

In contrast to the view that a subsidiary is able to gain power when it can diffuse local knowledge and resources within other units in an MNC, Rugman and Verbeke (2001) have concentrated their research on the difficulty of diffusing the subsidiary-specific resources throughout an MNC. Whereas Birkinshaw (1997) and Birkinshaw and Hood (1998) assume that each subsidiary has a single and well-defined role in an MNC and has, first, to diffuse its resources throughout the entire MNC and, then, to explore global opportunities, Rugman and Verbeke (2001) claim that a subsidiary with unique resources can create value in its location and span the borders of several nations to seek global opportunities.

Scholars have tried to explore how resources and capabilities are related to value-adding activities, and to discover the essential elements between resources and subsidiary competency from a socio-political perspective. Emerson (1962) claims that power is conceptualised on the basis of dependence on both the individual and organisational levels. At the level of individual social behaviour, when Person A controls the resources that Person B requires but cannot obtain from anyone else, Person B is somehow dependent on Person A, because Person A has become the

unique source for Person B's requirement. In this situation, Person B occupies a distant, dysfunctional place in the asymmetric interdependence relationship, which leads to asymmetric power appearing between A and B (Emerson, 1962). In comparison to the situation of individual social behaviour level, that of the institutional level presents a similar power generation process (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). They associate resources with firm-level actions to examine how resources are influential in the implementation of strategy and the decision-making process. More specifically, no organisation is self-sufficient. When a firm lacks unique resources, it has to become involved in an exchange relationship with other institutions in order to access resources, especially when the firm enters a new market. This social exchange between organisations builds a power-relevant relationship in which reciprocity loses the balances (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) state that there are five options for MNCs that can minimise uncertainty in the environment and fully explore the resources: mergers/vertical integration, joint ventures and other inter-organisational relationships, a board of directors, political action and executive succession. The organisational requirement for resources leads to the emergence of resource transactions among organisations, and the unequal distribution of resources brings about inter-dependent organisational relationships (Johnson, 1995). For example, joint venture cooperation is seen as an attempt to access more local resources and reduce risk in the internationalisation process (Stearns et al., 1987; Goes & Park, 1997). This view explains how the resources of organisations affect organisational behaviour and how important intra-organisational cooperation is, through which a subsidiary can enrich specific resources and reduce the uncertainty of the environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Hillman et al., 2009). The RBV supports the belief that inter-organisational cooperation and alliance with other agencies can help organisations gain greater competency (Provan et al., 1980). The literature on power relations within an organisation is inspiring because scholars of this perspective reveal that an individual organisational member, or a group of such members, can have an impact on the process of gaining institutional competency. In a network of headquarters and an international joint venture, the lowest level of knowledge generation has the potential to be transferred to the competency of the joint venture and the whole of the

organisation. However, studies on power relations still place emphasis on the management team and employees, neglecting the fragmented impact from other organisational members who could form a body to contribute to organisational competency.

To summarise, the literature on subsidiary management still leaves room for later research on a more micro-level analysis of competitive resources at a subsidiary level. In terms of the context of THNE, student inputs into organisational resources and their contributions to universities' competency have not yet been explored, especially in the TJVUs. Accordingly, the fragmented perception and interpretation of organisational resources call for more research because students' impact on universities' managerial and educational practices has been largely neglected in both the RBV and the higher education literature. Section 2.5 therefore reviews the literature on TNHE management with an emphasis on managing international branch campuses (IBCs), as well as the student–university relationship.

2.5 Transnational higher education and the student–university relationship

Transnational higher education is a term widely used to describe exported higher education where students are taught face-to-face in a different country from the home base of the institution providing the education (Adams, 1998; Yang, 2008). Building IBCs provides a relatively stable environment in which students may receive their international education. Having been set up by transnational organisations, IBCs have been explored from various perspectives. From an educational angle, managing academic quality and the curriculum (e.g. Cheung, 2006; Edwards et al., 2010; Smith, 2010) are the core aspects; from a strategic business perspective, managing the business operation, human resources and the relationship with different stakeholders are the topics most studied. This section therefore, first, reviews the literature on how to manage IBCs (including managing the mode of market entry for IBCs, managing IBCs as JVUs, and managing the staff and student members) to make clear the rationale that exploring IBCs and international education need the application of the RBV. The section goes on to review and criticise current metaphor models of the student–university relationship, in which the students' active inputs to building educational competency have been largely neglected.

2.5.1 Managing international branch campuses

Learning from the well-established literature on internationalisation (e.g. Vernon, 1979; Dunning, 1988; Dunning & Lundan, 2009), many scholars consider establishing IBCs as the most sophisticated form of the internationalisation of higher education (Lane, 2011; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). Based on Dunning's OLI paradigm, Shams and Huisman (2012) explain the reasons why a university chooses transnational ventures as the method for internationalisation. A university with high-quality teaching and research, a well-known brand, a good reputation and a high level of embeddedness in its home country (Shams & Huisman, 2012) has the opportunity to go abroad and provide services in foreign markets. As Dunning and Lundan (2009) claim, transnational organisations aim to achieve competitive advantage on the basis of their ownership advantages. The host country's location advantages are another key motive for an organisation to establish a transnational venture. The capability to offer education of an equal quality but at a lower price than the home country encourages universities to establish IBCs. Shams and Huisman (2012) emphasise that the effective strategic management of resource transfer is a major issue for the success of a transnational business.

In many contexts, including in China, IBCs are set up as joint ventures either because it is a university's own choice, or because it is a governmental requirement. A joint venture has two or more partners that, together, create a new legal entity to pursue a joint objective (Harrigan, 1985). The joint venture partners retain their separate legal status and share the ownership of the IBC, splitting the financial risk and rewards (Lane, 2011). In addition, the objectives of the university and its local partners may be quite different. Many local partners involved in IBCs only participate in the financial aspects, or the development of the facilities may only focus on profit-maximisation and commercial expansion, rather than educational improvement. When strategic goals and objectives among partners generate differences, some trade-offs or conflicts may occur in their relationship. However, the limited literature systematically explains the complicated relationship between TJVUs and their parent universities, especially how their resources development is influenced through joint venture collaboration.

From a strategic perspective, Shams and Huisman (2016) claim that IBCs aim to maintain close links with their parent universities in terms of their curriculum and identity, tend to localise their staff to reduce operating costs and to establish legitimacy with local stakeholders. First, this strategy has the potential to create tension between the locally hired academic staff, expatriate staff and the managers from the parent university. One type of staff organisation is the ‘flying faculty’, which is sent from the parent university for short periods to support an IBC’s teaching and curriculum quality (Smith & Worsfold, 2014). These staff are managed by the parent university; the IBC does not have formal line management over the ‘flying faculty’, especially when the staff only have short-term commitments with IBCs, or only work at an IBC as ‘academic tourists’. Another type of staff is the locally hired academic faculty. They generally work under inferior terms and conditions in comparison with expatriate staff from their parent universities. This situation of varying staff conditions can create tension between an individual’s career expectation and the level of response that an IBC can provide. In addition, this strategy can also create divergences between a school’s academic strategies and students’ expectation of their educational experience. This is due to locally hired staff generally lacking international academic experience, and perhaps not matching up with students’ expectation that they will study within a completely foreign educational system. As Shams and Huisman (2016, p.2) conclude, ‘staffing will continue to be the biggest strategic challenge faced by the IBCs’. In addition, variations in the aptitude of staff influence student expectations and experiences. Students are the most significant organisational members of a university. Changes in student expectations and experiences may further influence the development of universities’ strategies.

In terms of students in IBCs, substantial research has been conducted on how and why students choose to study at an IBC (rather than at traditional university either locally or overseas) and into student experiences in IBCs (e.g. Harvey, 1996; Wilkins & Huisman 2011a, b, 2012; Wilkins et al., 2012). However, rarely has research been undertaken using students as the central focus to elucidate the role they play in the process of resource development; how knowledge resources generated by students are transferred to different levels in the organisation; and how those resources affect the

performance if an IBC. Section 2.5.2, on the student–university relationship, presents some insights on how students could contribute to universities’ competitive advantage.

2.5.2 Student–university relationship: student-stakeholder perspective

According to the RBV literature, individuals have an impact on organisational development, making an empirical contribution to the individual–organisation relationship. In the context of higher education, the primary role of students is to acquire knowledge in a university. However, the description of students as recipients of education (Lambert & McCombs, 1998), which emphasises a single-direction relation from university to students, has been widely challenged. Scholars who noticed the active role of students observe that students not only receive knowledge from universities, but also contribute to their university’s academic or practical organisational knowledge (Baldwin, 1994; Bailey, 2000; Kotze & Du Plessis, 2003; Hoffman & Kretovics, 2004; Clayson & Haley, 2005). That is to say, students are one of the key groups of organisational members whose initiatives and inputs could have multiple impacts on universities’ performance. The student role and the student–university relationship have been explained from various perspectives: students as customers demonstrating high-participation (Baldwin, 1994; Browne et al., 1998; Bowden, 2011); as clients (Bailey, 2000; Armstrong, 2003); as partial employees (Hoffman & Kretovics, 2004); as co-producers of their education (Kotze & Du Plessis, 2003; McCulloch, 2009; Carey, 2013); and as stakeholders (e.g. McDowell & Sambell, 1999; Freeman, 2010). These metaphoric models shed light on the active roles of students following their education experiences, and have had an impact on development and improvement of the education system. This section therefore reviews and criticises current research on the student–university relationship in which these metaphoric models do not explicate how students can influence the nature and the form of the education provided by universities, as well as elaborate the reasons why the stakeholder perspective is necessary in this study.

As universities have embraced the marketing concept, the most influential and dominant metaphor for students’ role identifies them as universities’ customers (e.g. Bowden, 2011). A key factor highlighted in the literature is the purchase activity of students, which entails the elements of customer expectation and satisfaction (McCullough & Gremler, 1999). Students or their parents purchase an educational

product from a university with expectations regarding improvement in either academic achievement or employability, or both. Eagle and Brennan (2007), placing emphasis on the connections and mismatches between education quality and students' expectations, argue that treating students as customers is a way of making universities more responsive and relevant to the needs of students and other sectors of society (such as employers). Within the relationship marketing approach provided by Bowden (2011), students bond with the brand of universities. In a relatively long-term relationship between students and their universities, 'customer loyalty' is accumulated through a process of achieving students' expectations and, eventually, universities 'serve as students of their brands' (Bowden, 2011, p.222). In other words, the cognitive nature of experience and satisfaction indicates that students' perceptions may be perceived in the resource base of their education. While some student activities may be explained from a marketing perspective, the strong connection with performance and emotional links between students and universities reflects a closer and benefit-sharing relationship between them.

Other researchers who address education as a service product describe students as clients (Bailey, 2000). A more enhanced metaphor than that of a customer, Baily (2000) emphasises that students are more actively involved in the creation of educational services. This model challenges the 'purchase activity' of students, since their degrees are not a product bought from the university; rather, the degree is a goal that may be achieved through the efforts of both the university and the students. This model stresses that universities are providing professional services to their students and that this kind of service is not always intended for students' pleasure. On the other hand, the satisfaction of this service comes from the interactive process of both students and the university.

Scholars who describe students as partial employees emphasise the understanding that students and universities share certain responsibilities and, importantly, students could perform employee-like tasks that facilitate the co-production of the educational process (Hoffman & Kretovics, 2004). As mentioned, Kotze and Du Plessis (2003) identify that both students and universities share responsibility for the educational development process. The fact of sharing responsibility entails students and

universities sharing the ‘value’ as well. As discussed in section 2.3.3, the students share responsibility with a university not only for seeking organisational profit, but also for individual value and social value, such as personal career development after graduation, organisational reputations and public responsibilities. Therefore, when considering how students can contribute to their university’s competency, the element of value maximisation cannot be neglected, which is in line with the utilisation of the RBV in the higher education sectors.

Researchers who describe students as co-producers have identified that students are engaged in the production, dissemination and application of knowledge (McCulloch, 2009; Carey, 2013). These scholars stress the high-level active engagement of students in the generation and improvement of education. For instance, Carey (2013) identifies that students have meaningful engagement in curriculum design, also suggesting that later studies on student co-production activities should relate to student contributions to wider aspects. The co-production concept has been utilised in describing the student role in a university, which stresses the active engagement of students. The co-production perspective emphasises the interactive role of students in the daily operations of universities. In terms of value creation and the co-creation process of products and services, the education in this case, the co-production perspective can be seen as a sub-unit of the stakeholder theory. Scholars from both the co-production and stakeholder perspective stress the value of co-creation by organisations and their co-producers/stakeholders (Freeman et al, 2007). Vorbach et al. (2019), from the co-production perspective, for instance, state that the interactions among different actors in the organisational system (e.g. employees, customers and stakeholders) have an impact on the co-production of organisational value.

All in all, the student-customer/client perspective views students as external to the universities. While this perspective explains students’ initiative through a ‘purchased and served’ logic, it is potentially problematic when consider the negotiation, arbitration activities bound to the school’s contractual policies and obligations. The student-partial employee/co-producer perspective, on the contrary, overstates the tasks of value creation and responsibility sharing but does not explain why students are willing to have such an impact on the university. In addition, the downside of those

perspectives limits the student identity with limits to suit the agenda of the authoring authority. Comparing the downside perspectives discussed above, researchers who state that students are stakeholders not only focus on the extent of impact by students and their specific contributions, but also explain the reason why students take actions: they have a stake and shared interests in universities. For instance, McDowell and Sambell (1999), who stress the legitimate interests of students, discuss the special position of students in relation to assessment processes and consider that students are able to evaluate and judge the fitness of assessments. Their judgement and evaluation can not only be reflective of their personal learning process, but it can also be valuable to the universities' operations and their development of the assessment systems. In this example, students have a stake in and an interest to clarify the quality of assessments, because the results have a vital impact on their educational growth and the start of their future career. McDowell and Sambell (1999) are inspirational in their conviction that student engagement has particular value both to personnel and to an organisation's competence to evaluate the assessment system. It is possible for students to share the responsibility with the university for the quality of assessment as well as contribute to the learning process and the university's educational development (Kotze & Du Plessis, 2003). Universities seek and facilitate resources to obtain competitive advantages. In order to explore the research objective of finding out what students input into creating, developing and strengthening the competitive advantage of a university, it is important to find a more positive and dialogical perspective, in which both the reasons for active engagement and the actions of that engagement are included. It is also important that both the downward and upward interactions between students and the university can be identified, unpacked and analysed.

The concept of stakeholder is complex in nature. Freeman (1984, 2010) defines this term as 'any group of individuals who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives' (Freeman, 2010, p. 53). While his definition is challenged several times for its breadth and vagueness (e.g. Clarkson, 1995; Orts & Strudler, 2009), Freeman provides a fundamental framework that gives researchers a relatively extensive space both to explain the structure of an organisation and to guide its operations. Following Freeman's definition, numerous studies demonstrate the link between stakeholders and organisational performance (e.g. Donaldson & Preston,

1995; Frooman, 1999; Hillman & Keim, 2001; Harrison et al., 2010), especially in situations where an organisation has a variety of participants who affect each other and have at least partial responsibility for taking action (Philips, 2003). Researchers who hold the stakeholder perspective consider stakeholders of an organisation as those who, on the one hand, need to be mapped, controlled and managed (Reed, 1999), and on the other hand, have needs, a voice and rights to the organisation (Freeman et al., 2007). Therefore, if a group of stakeholders is vital to the organisation's success, the resources must be allocated to deal with them, and the question of how an organisation meets its stakeholder concerns should be clarified (Freeman, 2010).

Barney (2018) recently wrote about why the stakeholder perspective should be utilised in the RBV in order to explore organisational competitive advantage. His work is based on a profit-seeking context. In commercial enterprises, the impact of an individual or a group of stakeholders is positively related to whether those stakeholders can become residual claimants (in addition to shareholders) of profits. Both Freeman and Barney recognise the bargaining power of stakeholders that makes them vital to the concerns of a firm when it designs policy and strategies for resource allocation and exploration. Stakeholder theory allows managers to incorporate personal values into the formulation and implementation of strategic plans (Freeman, 2004). Therefore, it is reasonable to state that stakeholders and the organisation share many goals and interests (Zakhem, 2008). Adopting the stakeholder perspective into the RBV is a way to explore and map the stories of stakeholders in the organisation's interests to achieve competitive advantage. These stories contain the stakeholders' interests and the organisational goals, and more importantly, they embody the matches and mismatches between stakeholders' active involvement and organisational compromise. In other words, although the impact of stakeholders has been recognised, no further study has answered the question of how those fragmented engagements influence the nature and the form of organisational competitive advantage.

In the higher education sector, this research question can be better specified as: (1) What is the competitive advantage of a university when it initiates educational programmes; how could the university structure the competitive advantage of its education? (2) How do the fragmented engagements of students, as the largest group

of stakeholders, influence the nature and the form of an education; how could students translate the organisational competitive advantage into individual competencies? Universities are not dollar-for-dollar profit-making organisations although they are considered continually market-driven (McGettigan, 2013). It is widely recognised that the success of a university depends on its ability to take care of its stakeholders and to secure resources to achieve its core missions (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010; Kettunen, 2014). Drawing upon the stakeholder perspective, the shared interests of universities and stakeholders may include overall reputation, academic quality, administrative efficiency and values (Tierney, 1988; Bennett, Ali-Choudhury & Savani, 2007; Knight, 2007; Smith, 2010).

Traditionally, colleges and universities focus their attention on faculty, administrators, trustees, donors, accrediting agencies and students (Burrows, 1999). In 2010, Benneworth and Jongbloed categorised a set of typical stakeholders of higher education institutions. In their work, they place students in the column of clientele. Similar to commercial firms, in higher education institutions, not every stakeholder has the same stake in the institution (Jongbloed et al., 2008; Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010). According to Mitchell et al. (1997), the importance of different stakeholders relates to their salience of the focal organisation. They identify three levels of stakeholder attributes as power, legitimacy and urgency. Even if students are regarded as having the power to influence the university and the ability to bring about their desired outcomes (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974), they, by no means, have the power to impose their willingness and demanding on the university to adopt strategy, policy or principle. In terms of legitimacy and urgency, the small community co-constructed by the university and students, and the immediate actions taken by students during daily classes, demonstrate that students are powerful stakeholders and have a great deal of salience for the universities. Students are surrounded daily by institutional norms and values and contribute to the educational practice of the university. Recently, universities have experienced growing pressure from students to adopt more cost-conscious operating principles (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010), indicating that students increasingly hold power to influence universities. In considering the various aspects of a university such as new tasks, value creation and decision-making at each

level, an individual or a group of stakeholders may have a different emphasis and role in making an education.

The literature on TNHE management and the student–university relationship has recognised the active engagement of students. Students have been described as receivers, customers, clients, partial employees, co-producers and stakeholders of a university. Apart from the analogy of students as receivers of education, most metaphoric models shed light on the active role of students in their pursuit of educational experience and the impact they have on the development and improvement of the education system. Different individuals and student groups at various learning stages, or with distinctive backgrounds and demographic characteristics, have a different understanding of responsibility and a different willingness to actively participate. However, current studies have not yet illuminated how students contribute to the progression, mobility and prestige of the education offered by universities. Based on the foregoing discussion, the student-customer/client perspective considers students as external to the universities, which is potentially problematic subjecting to the negotiation and arbitration activities bound to the school’s contractual policies and obligations. On the other hand, the student-partial employee/co-producer perspective overemphasises the tasks of value creation and responsibility sharing but neglects the ‘internal drive’ of active student input. Given a specific concern for the comparison of co-production and stakeholder theory, scholars from both perspectives primarily stress the co-creation value of organisations and their co-producers/stakeholders. The co-production perspective emphasises the value-creating activities of co-producers, while the stakeholder theory stresses the stake and influence that a specific group of people has. Therefore, in order to explore the research objective of what students’ inputs are in making, developing and strengthening the competitive advantage of a university, it is important to find a more positive and dialogical perspective that includes the complex nature of student identity and identifies, unpacks and analyses both the downward and upward interactions among students and the university. The student-stakeholder perspective, which encompasses various discussions about student-university relationships, is seen as a more enabling than circumscribing concept to develop student identity within a university.

The literature on stakeholder theory emphasises that the competitive advantage is based upon the relationship between various actors around a university instead of at the top-management level only. This study aims to explore the student role in making an education during their daily interaction with universities. Considering the nature of students having a stake in universities and having an impact on university operations, students are discussed as the key stakeholders of a university who define, re-define, make and re-make the education along with the university. Although the understanding of what competitive advantage is in a university could be consistent between or contradicted by students and universities, those matches and mismatches are valuable. Without students, universities cannot establish a competitive education. Looking at the literature on the student-university relationship is not to define a precise role for students but to explore their further active inputs and contributions to the universities' practice and development. Therefore, current literature still needs to answer a question: How do students translate organisational competitive advantage from the university to their individual performance, and how do they take part in this translation process? The distinctive demographic characteristics of students and their fragmented engagements lead to the conclusion that students can only have an impact on a limited number of components of their education – components that are dispersed in different aspects of that education. When evaluating the valuable inputs students can offer, the components that comprise their education should be analysed first. The RBV is, therefore, considered to be a useful and functional framework with which to unpack the education in a university, and to guide the analysis of how student perceptions and interpretations of their experiences contribute to this education.

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided a review of the literature on organisational competitive advantages, the RBV, the management of subsidiaries, and stakeholder theory in higher education. This review considered the body of research on organisational resources, including conceptual debates and the importance of identifying valuable resources. Section 2.2 reviewed the discussion on the conceptualisation of competitive advantage. Based on this conceptualisation, the review considered the RBV to be a

useful and functional theoretical foundation with which to explain the process of how an organisation can obtain competitive advantage. Section 2.3 reviewed the literature on the general RBV, knowledge-based resources and the RBV in the higher education sector, in which the importance of knowledge-based resources and the benefits of utilising the RBV in non-profit organisations were discussed. Section 2.4 drew on the literature on the management of subsidiaries, which still lacks a micro-level analysis of the resources to be found in subsidiaries. Section 2.5 illustrated the transnational higher education literature with an emphasis on the management of IBCs and the student–university relationship. This section identified the gap in the literature that demonstrates that input students can offer with regard to organisational competitive advantages has not been included in previous research. Specifically, there is limited consideration of student inputs in the managerial practice in reaching the organisational competitiveness in the context of TNHE. In order to fill this gap, the research objectives are considered to be:

- identifying organisational resources that were developed to comprise the basis of TJVUs’ competitive advantage;
- examining the diversity of students’ inputs in order to propose a more comprehensive and nuanced RBV framework;
- exploring the subjective elements added to organisational resources in making, developing and strengthening the core competency of an organisation.

Building on this review of the literature, Chapter 3 sets out the methodology with which to explore these research objectives.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, the literature on the RBV and related theories were reviewed. The research gap in the literature indicates that the fragmented inputs from varied organisational members need nuanced analysis. In the context of TNHE, the perceptions, interpretations and engagement from students – who represent the largest body of university members – call for an in-depth exploration so as to fill the current gap in the literature. In addition to the organisational resources, the perceived and subjective elements have an impact on creating competitive advantage: international education, in this case.

This chapter discusses each element of the methodology employed for this study. Beginning with the philosophical assumptions, it presents the rationale for conducting inductive and qualitative research, as well as offering the reasons why a comparative case study is designed. The chapter goes on to present the data collection methods and the pilot study settings used to test the original interview questions. In addition, ethical issues are considered: these include issues such as recording interviews, transcription, and ethical procedures in different universities. The data analysis and presentation are then introduced, and the chapter concludes with some self-reflection on research choices, as well as methodological limitations.

3.2 Philosophical assumptions

The ontology and epistemology are discussed in this section to explain how philosophical considerations influences the methodological approach of this study.

3.2.1 Ontology and epistemology

Ontology concerns the nature of reality and existence (Parkhe, 1993). With regard to the ontological framework, this study presents an inter-subjective reality of the actors involved in a process or a set of processes (Pauwels & Matthyssens, 2004). Here, I lean towards a subjectivist position. Phenomenology asserts that social science should be treated on a case-by-case basis, in the same way as exploring the social nature of human beings through their living and thinking (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Gill and Johnson (2010) claim that individuals are able to access the meanings of the events

and phenomena around them, as well as to reflect and monitor those social phenomena from their perceptions and interpretations. This approach opens up the opportunity for this study to investigate individuals' perceptions and experiences, in which the interpersonal interactions reflect on the subjects' surroundings and phenomena. Subjectivist ontology is suitable for this study because the research is undertaken in a specific context, in which limited work on this research topic has been done. In addition, the focus of this study is on seeking to understand individual experience, interpretation of meanings, as well as the tacit embrained information embodied in individuals.

Epistemology refers to the best ways of investigating the nature of reality (Blaikie, 2007). With regard to the epistemological framework, I take a constructivist stance and adhere to an interpretive approach. The constructivist position assumes that individuals build up their own reality, and the individual's understanding of each reality is emphasised. In this study, I am interested in the complexity of what transpires in interpersonal interactions in a complicated cultural context.

The positivist approach is adopted in many studies on the area of international strategic management and higher education, especially the areas of student engagement and experience (Douglas et al., 2008). By contrast, Wilkins and Huisman (2011a, 2012; Wilkins et al., 2012), have conducted several studies using an interpretive approach to explore the different dimensions of student experiences at the IBCs. They indicate that phenomena such as social relations, interpersonal communications and cultural differences are important in transnational universities, but still fail to undertake a systematic scholarly consideration of interactive experiences between various university members. Based on my constructivist position with an interpretivist approach, I elected to use interviews as the main data collection method.

3.2.2 Axiology

Consistent with my ontological and epistemological approach, I deemed that subjective value has a role in shaping my research (Saunders, 2011). TNHE has been recognised as one of the most crucial sectors of globalisation, as it contributes to the economy and society to a considerable extent. However, there is criticism of the interpretivist approach. While most natural science research is regarded as objective,

in this study, I directly engaged with others to explore how they think. I understand that I interacted with those being studied and that I cannot be separated from what was being studied. While I believe that the research cannot be pure objective, I did not want my personal values to influence the research. In other words, I have been aware of personal axiological assumptions and knowledge throughout the research (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.3 Research approach

Following the discussion on ontology and epistemology, this section explains the rationale for adopting an inductive and qualitative method for my study.

3.3.1 Inductive approach

This research is a phenomenon-based and interactional study that was focused on the participants' points of view. The characteristics of this research determined that my study is unlike deductive research, which uses a highly structured methodology to test a theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Studies on the area of application of the RBV in non-profit sectors, higher education and intra-organisational interpersonal interactions are limited. For example, Wilkins and Huisman (2011b) conducted a deductive approach using a questionnaire so as to explore the rationale for student recruitment in IBCs, but still conducted interviews as a pre-study approach. Their work presented several reasons for a student's decision to relocate their education. However, questions related to how a student makes a decision and how their decision structures their expectations and experiences were not answered. I considered that the inductive approach was most appropriate for my research because it is not possible to know beforehand the issues that may arise when conducting research (Cook & Reichardt, 1979).

3.3.2 Qualitative approach

The inductive approach is generally in line with qualitative methodological strategies, focusing on the generation of individual experience and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Qualitative research is based on a subjective epistemology, an inductive logic and an interpretive stance (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The qualitative method provides a way to dig beneath the surface of the data, which is very dependent on the personal explanation and interpretation of their insights and experiences,

whereas the quantitative research method is more suitable as a statistically based strategy for the exploration of a phenomenon. Table 3.1 presents a comparison between quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative approach thus is more appropriate for my research than a quantitative method because it reveals more in-depth and detailed insights that are hidden in complex cultural and social contexts (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Table 3.1 A comparison of quantitative and qualitative methods

Criteria	Quantitative methods	Qualitative methods
Epistemology	Positivism	Constructivism
Common research approaches	Survey Experiment	Ethnography Case study Grounded theory Archive
	Logical and critical approach	Interpretation and rationale approach
Key characteristics	Deductive process	Inductive process
	More objective	More subjective
	Less in-depth but involving a large number of cases	More in-depth involving a few cases
	Statistical tests for analysis	No statistical tests but emphasis is on obtaining understanding from the respondents' views
	Generalisation by population and membership	Generalisation by comparison of properties and contexts of individual organism

Source: Adapted from Cook & Reichardt, 1979; Yin, 2009; Creswell, 2009).

Rouse and Daellenbach (1999) have emphasised the difficulties in conducting a quantitative approach with secondary data on research related to the RBV. They indicate that a quantitative approach on cross-sectional and large sample observations is unlikely to be able to 'isolate sustained sources of advantages' (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999, p.488) because the sustainability of a resource relies largely on the industrial context. They also stressed the difficulties in categorising and disentangling the effects from a large scale of sources from varied industries and cultures. Armstrong

and Shimizu (2007) reviewed 125 empirical studies relating to the RBV. Although most of the studies they reviewed were quantitative based, they still emphasised the importance of conducting a qualitative study in this area:

Conducting field studies will provide researchers more insights to isolate resources that are valuable and hard to imitate, since those will otherwise not be easily observed or comprehended (Armstrong & Shimizu, 2007, pp.966–967).

My interest is in explaining the specific phenomena within the TNHE institutions from the perspective of their staff and the students who are involved and engaged in its daily organisational practices. In spite of some criticism that qualitative research is sometimes seen as unreliable and not sufficiently scientific (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2004), it is notable that qualitative methods have been widely acknowledged as beneficial to explaining the data generation (Cook & Reichardt, 1979) and to the understanding of participants' points of view. The limited research in this area also led me to choose the qualitative method, which has enabled me to seek multiple dimensions from different organisational members so as to access a variety of perspectives on a specific topic.

3.4 Comparative case study research design

This section sets out the rationale for conducting case study research and explains the reasons that making a comparative case study is suitable for my research.

3.4.1 Definition and rationale for case study

Case study is one of the most influential methods in social science research. This approach has been adopted in many situations and contributes to the knowledge regarding them; for example, situations in the studies of individuals, organisations and other social related phenomena (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) presents a twofold definition of case studies:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. (Yin, 2009, p.18).

The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (Yin, 2009, p.18).

This twofold definition reveals that the case study method can comprise all-encompassing methods in a complete process, including research design, data collection and data analysis. That is, the case study method is a research strategy focusing on dynamic presences within single settings (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The case study method ‘is the intimate connection with empirical reality that permits the development of a testable, relevant and valid’ method (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 532). According to Yin (2009), the case study method is applied when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are asked of contemporary events or phenomena over which researchers have little or no control. When a study focuses on these two types of questions, the unique strength of a case study becomes evident through ‘its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence—documents, artefacts, interviews and observations—beyond what might be available’ (Yin, 2009, p.11) in the other studies.

A case study is appropriate for my study because this method embraces comprehensive exploration and focuses directly on the key elements of research questions (Eisenhardt, 1989; Creswell et al., 2007; Yin, 2009). However, some scholars have mentioned the limitations of this method, such as that it is difficult to generalise (e.g. Bennett, 2004; Flyvbjerg, 2006). The key elements of my research are exploring the individuals’ experience, understanding and interpretation of the specific research questions. This perspective, which is dependent on mental and emotional responses to experiences, indicates that the case study in this research has a qualitative nature and is suitable for achieving the research aim.

In order to understand the complexity of social phenomena, a comparative case study will be defined and designed for my research. Although some scholars (e.g. Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Gerring, 2004) have argued that a single case study has value in

understanding a complicated phenomenon in depth, others (e.g. Saunders, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2015) have explained the advantages of a multiple case study for empirical comparison and theoretical development. A comparative case study is also appropriate for the explanation of phenomena in depth and enables a broad exploration of the reasons behind a particular occurrence (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). In particular, a comparative case study supports me in understanding the ways in which different societies or cultures experience and act on social, economic and political changes. Furthermore, this method has the advantage of explaining how those understandings relate to more general changes, experiences and actions in the face of similar concerns (Eisenhardt, 1989).

3.4.2 Selection of the two cases

Two well-established and comprehensive TJVUs (identified as TJVU-A and TJVU-B) were selected for a number of reasons. They were established by UK universities as an investment from a developed country in the emerging economies of their home base. Besides their parent universities coming from the same country, these two universities were the earliest TJVUs to have been set up in China. Both of them are joint venture entities, and specifically China–UK joint venture universities. Conducting exploratory research in these two TJVUs not only revealed the understanding from individuals' interpretation and behaviours in depth, but also investigated the different rationales regarding the same issue in two entities.

In addition, the reasons why these two TJVUs are typical and revelatory are that first, although they are the first two TJVUs to have been set up in China, they are still new and have not been well studied. While investment from West to East is not new, cooperation in the higher education sector has only arisen in China since the turn of the millennium. These two initial TJVUs are seen as experiments in and adventures with new ways of cooperating. Second, they have achieved a relatively high reputation within similar jointly run schools following their over 10-year development period. Their success inspires interest from scholars in the ways they manage their resources so as to maintain competitive advantage. Finally, the research into the connection between competitive advantage and intra-organisational interactions in the TNHE context in China is underdeveloped. Therefore, these two cases are revelatory and could inspire future research on the relative theory of the TNHE sector and other

professional service industries. Further details about the two cases are presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.5 Data collection

Yin (2009) indicates six sources of evidence that are frequently used in case study data collection: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts. He also emphasises the first principle of data collection, which is that using multiple sources improves the validity and reliability of the case study evidence (Yin, 2009). He explains that using multiple sources of evidence can broaden the range of historical and behavioural issues and provide multidimensional interpretations of the same problem and reduce personal bias. The greatest number of case studies are about 'human affairs or behavioural events' (Yin, 2009, p. 108), interviewing is thus seen as a critical data collection method for these studies due to the need to access the data embedded in brains and social relations. This study, therefore, used interviews as the primary means of data collection. The documentary method was conducted as a way to gain supportive evidence to construct the validity and reliability of the interviewing evidence.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

The interview was the primary data collection method in my research. This section presents the issues relating to the interview method, such as the access issues, interview settings and techniques, as well as the issues of recording and transcription. Daniels and Cannice (2004) define interviews as interactive conversations between interviewers and interviewees around several questions that relate to a specific research topic. Opie and Sikes (2004) claim that not only is the purpose of this method to encourage participants to express their views and ideas fully. It is also to interpret their experiences in a specific context. Interviews have been widely used in research on the RBV and MNCs (e.g. Birkinshaw, 1996; Andersson et al., 2002; Hong & Nguyen, 2009; Iles, Chuai & Preece, 2010).

Gillham (2005) defines three types of interview: unstructured, semi-structured and structured. The unstructured interview provides participants with a high level of freedom to express their overall understanding of the relevant phenomenon or research topics. However, it is criticised as taking too much time and providing limited useful

information (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In contrast, the structured interview has some similarity to the questionnaire method, in that the researcher poses specific questions. However, it has disadvantages in the event there is a need to explore detailed information and specific examples (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In order to avoid the drawbacks of both the unstructured and structured interviews, as well as to explore data in depth over a limited period, I conducted semi-structured interviews. This type of interview affords interviewees a good deal of flexibility in how they reply to the research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Opie & Sikes, 2004).

Choosing semi-structured interviews as the main data collection method in my study is consistent with my subjectivist and interpretivist philosophical position. A participant's activities and engagement should be approached through their own perspective and interpretation. In addition, the semi-structured interview benefits both the concentrated information I hope to elicit with my research questions and the flexibility of participants.

3.5.1.1 Multiple participants and access issues

Considering the diversity and breadth of the participant population, I conducted interviews with various individuals in each university who were likely to provide relevant information to my research. My research, primarily, to explore the student perspective of an international education. In order to determine fruitful insights into the research objectives, I accessed different levels of staff members and students with various demographic characteristics so as to further develop my understanding from both an organisational and a student perspective.

The order in which participants were interviewed in each university was partially determined by who could be accessed. The initial interviewees in each university were selected by my personal connection. In the initial contact, I explained the purpose of this research and asked about their willingness to be interviewed. The snowball sampling method was then used to access as many participants as possible (Patton, 2002). After each interview, I asked the participant whether they would like to recommend some of their friends or colleagues to participate in my research. While a small number of interviewees preferred not to refer others to my study, most of them assisted and helped me to access the relevant people. A few interviewees had already

taken the initiative to inform others about my study before I made my request. In total, I interviewed 61 people (30 interviewees in TJVU-A and 31 interviewees in TJVU-B). Table 3.2 presents the basic demographic features of the interviewees. I have accessed different levels of participants in each category, such as from undergraduate to PhD research students, from administrative assistants to senior managers and from teaching assistants to professors. In addition, their gender and domicile were considered as useful variables that improve the diversity and breadth of findings.

Table 3.2 Demography of interviewees

	TJVU-A	TJVU-B	Total
Students	21 (UG: 15; PG: 3; PhD: 3)	13 (UG: 10; PG: 2; PhD: 1)	34 (UG: 25; PG: 5; PhD: 4)
Admin staff	6	12	18
Academic staff	4	5	9
Gender	Male: 20; Female: 11	Male: 13; Female: 17	Male: 33; Female: 28
Domiciles	China: 27; UK: 2; Sweden: 1; Malaysia: 1	China: 21; UK: 6; Netherland: 1; Nigeria: 1; Mauritius: 1	China: 48; International: 13

Notes: UG = undergraduate, PG = postgraduate, PhD = Doctor of Philosophy.

The process of accessing participants began with the pilot study. The experience of the pilot stage made me aware of the importance of selecting a variety of interviewees. My study needed to interview a range of students and staff in order to explore how they treated the questions from different angles. In both universities, I tried to find as many interviewees as I could so as to guarantee the richness of the data. The participants in my pilot study were the alumni from the universities under this study, for some of whom it was their first experience of a university education, while others had studied and worked on other universities before. Their perceptions were valuable because they enabled me to test the implementability of the interview questionnaire and underlined several issues related to conducting a high-quality interview. For example, a friend who graduated from TJVU-B refused my invitation to an interview because he worried that my research may have a negative influence on the reputation of his university. He explained a previous experience in which a journalist misrepresented him in an online article. This experience reminded me to emphasise

the pure academic purpose and nature of my research, as well as leading me to consider how to position myself in this research and how to build trust with participants so as to obtain reliable and in-depth information.

It was vital to maintain a comfortable distance from the entities under study and the interviewees to gather valuable information and improve the quality of my interviews (Sixsmith et al., 2003). As an outsider, I emphasised the pure academic nature and non-commercial purpose of my research at the start of each interview. In addition, each participant received an information sheet and a consent form prior to their interviews so as to demonstrate the legitimacy of my fieldwork. This was an essential first step in establishing my identity and building trust with my potential interviewees. Another issue that emerged in the fieldwork related to the term ‘comparative study’. Some participants worried that I would determine one university as better (or worse) than the other. Therefore, explaining that my comparative study was not to rank universities was another key to building a productive relationship with interviewees.

Participants had various concerns regarding my research. Before conducting interviews, exploring emotional compatibility with participants was helpful in gaining interpersonal insights. For instance, I shared my on-campus experiences within interviews, such as difficulties I had faced in the past. These individual pieces of background information encouraged students to give me the detailed and in-depth stories of their lives. With regard to the academic staff, they were relatively more interested in my specific research questions and overseas experience, as most of them have similar experiences of overseas study. Positioning myself as an ‘emotional insider’ to show my sympathetic response to participants, therefore, was helpful in exploring their individual insights. I also repeatedly emphasised the confidentiality and anonymity of the interview results prior to an interview taking place and presented myself as an ‘instrumental outsider’ of the universities under study (see more detail in section 3.9). I identified myself as a researcher distanced from the two universities so as to increase my credibility, by reducing participants’ worries regarding whether I knew any person (especially staff members) about whom they might have negative comments. As an outsider, I would not be motivated to share participants’ information and their personal insights within their social community (Sixsmith et al., 2003). To

conclude, providing participants with a comfortable emotional environment was helpful when exploring in-depth personal insights.

3.5.1.2 Interviewing settings and techniques

The choice of location for an interview was also relevant to the comfort of participants, as well. Most of my interviews were face-to-face. Most of my student interviews were conducted in cafés and milk/tea shops on campus. Students felt relatively safe meeting an ‘outsider’ on campus and were relaxed in a non-academic, informal space. For example, after one student interview in an on-campus café, the interviewee immediately introduced me to five further potential participants: four students from different disciplines and engaged in different levels of study, and a teaching assistant. Most staff preferred to be interviewed in their offices. More specifically, one interview took place in a staff common room, making it quite difficult to take an audio recording. The interviewee was often interrupted by the loud speech and enthusiastic greetings from colleagues. The interviews conducted in staff offices were relatively relaxing, and the information I collected was more personal and in-depth.

In addition, I also conducted four internet-mediated telephone interviews with students who were studying in the UK under the 2+2 exchange programmes. These comprised one video call and three voice calls through WeChat, a chatting application via smartphone. Scholars have discussed and compared telephone interviews with face-to-face interviews for some time (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Irvine, 2011), and I agree that both systems provide a useful method by which to collect data. In my research, the data from the telephone interviews were seen to be just as valuable and credible as that from the face-to-face interviews (Miller, 1995). The participants in the telephone and face-to-face interviews were contacted by snowballing and the duration of the telephone interviews was similar to that of the face-to-face interviews, at around one hour. I also found that conducting a telephone conversation in a quiet room to some extent reduced the distraction caused by the environment and made me focus more intently on listening to and noting the content of their remarks.

During an interview, in order to create an informal and relaxing atmosphere for our conversation, I generally started by asking a broad question, such as ‘Could you please tell me the story of how you came to this university?’ Although I had a semi-structured

interview questionnaire, the order in which I posed the questions were varied in each interview, depending considerably on the interviewee's responses. For example, in one interview with an undergraduate student (Participant A-05-UG2), their story about the reasons for being in the TJVU-A was strongly related to their eagerness to study abroad. The interview then continued with the question 'How do you take advantage of the university to get into a high-ranking postgraduate programme?' In another interview, an undergraduate student (Participant B-25-UG1) showed their willingness to improve their English language as their career goal was to be an interpreter. Thus, the latter question would be 'In your opinion, how does your university provide education to improve your language ability?' Both of these examples related to the research question about student perspectives of their expectations. However, the interview with Participant A-05-UG2 unfolded the research question from a personal goal-oriented attitude that reflected the various types of organisational resources, while the interview with Participant B-25-UG1 unfolded the question by discussing the specific English language-based resources. Thus, the flexibility of a semi-structured interview could help improved participants' comfort level, as well as the depth of their personal insights. While participants were answering questions, they were encouraged to explain their personal views by giving specific examples, as well.

Conducting in-depth interviews is challenging and has led me to improve my interviewing and communication skills. First, the pilot experience taught me to avoid academic concepts and terms when interviewing. For example, in the pilot study, I phrased one question as 'Do students possess some knowledge that contributes to the university's change?' My interviewees were confused about the notion of 'knowledge'. Thus, I rephrased the question as 'Is there any change on campus because of students' voice?' so as to improve the clarity of the interview question. Second, individual personality influences the depth and breadth of personal insight. While most of the interviewees responded to my questions with examples and details, some of them answered only with short comments and statements, which sometimes lacked the information required to justify their point.

The fieldwork lasted over four months and took place in two phases. I conducted interviews in the TJVU-A for 24 days before the Christmas vacation in 2017, and in

the TJVU-B for 16 days after the Chinese New Year vacation at the beginning of 2018. This schedule was dependent on the school term calendars. As UK system-based universities in China, they separate the winter vacation into a two-week Christmas holiday and a two-week Chinese New Year holiday. Additionally, the winter examination period was arranged between these two holidays. I was rejected by two student candidates before the Christmas phase of interviews because of their preparation for the examinations. I found it was difficult to arrange interviews during an examination period. While taking a break following the interviews in TJVU-A, I transcribed the interviews I had already conducted and contacted some potential interviewees in TJVU-B. I later spent 16 days in TJVU-B and conducted 29 face-to-face interviews there successfully (two telephone interviews with TJVU-B students had been conducted in November 2017). In addition to the restricted time available, the early contact and arrangement for each specific interview with staff was of great help to me in conducting fieldwork efficiently over a limited period at TJVU-B.

3.5.1.3 Recording and transcription

All 61 interviews were audio-recorded with the interviewees' permission. Recording interviews helped me recall the content after the intense fieldwork period. Reviewing and merging the notes (during the interview phases) and transcribing the text improved the reliability of the data. Scholars consider that recording an interview allows the interviewer to concentrate on the communication and interaction with participants, and there was the added benefit that interviews may then be listened to repeatedly (Bryman & Bell, 2015), though some researchers criticise that this practice may limit the quality and depth of interviews (e.g. Opdenakker, 2006) because participants may worry about divulging personal information. I asked participants' permission to record their interviews and emphasised that information would remain confidential so as to minimise the negative influence of an audio-recording being made.

Recording all the interviews enabled the transcription of the discussions. I transcribed all the interviews myself so as to improve my understanding of participants' insights and to begin the interpretive process. Although transcribing the recordings manually was as a time-consuming task, it led me to develop a familiarity with the data. During transcription, I mentally explored the key words that had been repeatedly mentioned by interviewees and garnered an initial framework of concepts and themes such as

‘springboard’, ‘second-best choice of higher education’, ‘advanced facilities’. I believe that the transcription process improved the depth of my understanding and accelerated the data analysis process.

3.5.2 Documentary sources

Documentation was used as a supplementary source of evidence (Yin, 2009), by which it provided a useful tool to direct and supplement the data collection. Briggs, Morrison and Coleman (2012) described how documents can provide narratives of professional lives as well as personal lives, which not only provide a description of phenomena but also reveal relevant issues and questions. In the organisational studies, the documents are often applied as a supportive role to other data collection approaches. For example, Ferner and his colleagues (2004) launched their research to explore the subsidiary autonomy and headquarters’ dynamic central control in US MNCs that located in the UK. They used the documentary material on the focal firms such as annual reports, companies’ Securities and Exchange Commission, by which they obtained a general understanding of corporate activities, structural characteristics and organisational evolution. Another example of using documentary evidence on the research of IBCs is a study conducted by Jiang and Carpenter (2011). They explored the dynamic market entry modes of higher education internationalisation through critical document-based analysis of various higher education institutions.

In my research, the documentation method was conducted before the pilot study and continually conducted during the fieldwork. I recognised the importance of organisational public documents in enriching my familiarity with the focal entities. Pre-knowledge of the focal entities increased my interests and understanding of the organisations, as well as my willingness to build a connection with the potential interviewees. In addition, a comprehensive understanding of the focal cases contributed to the trust and closeness between interviewees and me. The documents also supplemented the development of the case description.

Before conducting the pilot study, I accessed public documents available electronically as background data so as to support the design of the interview questionnaire (see Appendix 1). Later, while interviewing the six alumni from both universities in my pilot study, I revised several terms and expressions based on the

combination of participants' interpretation and the documents. For example, I used the term 'China–UK branch campuses' to describe the two organisations under study. However, based on the official definition and the sensitivity of several interviewees to the branding and identity of the universities, I amended the expression to 'Chinese–UK joint venture universities' to clarify the organisational nature.

During the period of the formal interviews, helpful documental inputs came from various groups of interviewees. First, the final versions of the interview questions (see Appendix 2) were addressed in relation to the feedback from the pilot study and the openly official documents recommended by several staff interviewees. The updates of policies and strategies, as well as the records of campus development, were helpful in revising the interview questions at the beginning of the formal interviewing process for each university under study. Second, participants at or above senior management level sent me the Service Policy documents, which are open to all on-campus students and staff but inaccessible off-campus. They also sent further supportive documents, such as marketing brochures and empirical profiles of the internationalisation of Chinese higher education. These documents improved my contextual understanding of the TJVUs and inspired new questions that reflected the specific information obtained from participants while they were replying to my scheduled interview questions. In addition, fruitful informal documents – most of them being publicly shared articles relating to on-campus accidents, news and complaints – from student participants broadened my view and inspired different angles and dimensions from which to explore relevant topics.

3.6 Pilot study settings

As mentioned in section 3.5, the experience of the pilot study was very helpful for the formal stage of interviews. The preliminary purpose for setting up the pilot study was to test the interview questionnaire and make initial connections with potential interviewees. I conducted six interviews with alumni of the universities under study and refined my interview questionnaire after completing the pilot study. The pilot study enhanced my understanding of background information and provided new angles from which to explain the data. The experience also revealed that avoiding

academic terms and concepts during interviews could create a more relaxing environment for an interviewee. In addition, four interviewees in the formal fieldwork were directly accessed through those alumni. Finally, I tried both NVivo and a manual coding process to analyse the pilot data, which resulted in my decision to use the manual coding method.

The pilot study was conducted during June – July 2017 after the preliminary research questions and target universities (TJVU-A and TJVU-B) had been established. For the study, I interviewed three alumni from each university. I choose alumni, first, because they have a comprehensive and broad-range experience of studying in a TJVU, so they are able to engage self-reflectively on their experience and their understanding of that experience. Secondly, most of the alumni had experience of studying abroad, particularly in UK universities. Their comparative views on TJVUs and British universities inspired me to think further about resource allocation and knowledge transfer between headquarters and their subsidiaries. Finally, the alumni's ongoing connections with TJVUs had the potential to help access data and interviewees for my formal fieldwork.

All the alumni in this study took the Gaokao in order to enter the TJVUs, and most of them either continued their study in the UK parent universities from their third year as undergraduates or pursued a master's degree. During the pilot study, four of the interviewees were employed in the UK in a range of industries including finance, accounting and architecture, and two were working in China. The research aim of this study is to explore the role of students in making an 'international education' within a context of TJVUs. The key elements of this topic are organisational competitive advantages, organisational resources and student contributions. Therefore, the interview questions of the pilot study, as shown in Appendix 1, are designed to reflect this research aim. Question 1-3 relate to the process of choosing to enter the focal TJVU; Question 4 is a straightforward question about both advantages and disadvantages of TJVUs; Questions 5-7 are aimed at exploring how students interact with the university; and Questions 7-9 give interviewees an opportunity to talk broadly about their understanding of international education, knowledge sharing and transfer, as well as the HQs-subsidary relationship.

During the pilot study interviews, I found that while the interviews gave me an opportunity to hear vivid, dramatic stories about the interviewees' undergraduate experiences and provided me with primary access to the TJVUs, those responses were generally and vaguely related to the research objectives. I realised that there were several drawbacks to the questionnaire, and it should be revised and improved: the academic terminology such as 'resource' and 'knowledge' should be avoided in interviews; interview questions need to be connected more with personal experience and identity; and the interview should be modified from structured to semi-structured to allow interviewees to expand on their stories. The pilot study indicated that all six interviewees had a unique and personal understanding of TJVUs' competitiveness, the elements that contribute to their competitive advantages and the importance of students in operating a new university in a new market.

Consequently, based on the literature review and research objectives, the interview questions should focus on the organisational resources (elements of TJVUs' competitiveness), understanding of TJVUs' concept of an international education, and student input in making this education. Furthermore, to explore the nuanced narratives provided by interviewees, the interview questions should avoid academic terms, demonstrate a basic understanding of and a positive attitude about the focal university, target the answers in accordance with diversified individual experiences and allow enough space for interviewees to elaborate freely. As mentioned in section 3.5.2, the final version of the interview questions (see Appendix 2) largely addressed feedback from the pilot study.

First, the questionnaire was designed in three blocks so as to reflect the three main research objectives: Block 1 to identify organisational resources that were developed as the basis of TJVU competency; Block 2 to examine the diversity of student input in order to propose a more comprehensive and nuanced RBV framework; and Block 3 to explore the subjective elements added to organisational resources in making, developing and strengthening the core competency of an organisation.

Second, all the interview questions were designed specifically for students or staff members. During the pilot study, an interviewee who had studied and then chosen to work at TJVU-A after graduation inspired me to differentiate the questionnaires for students and those for staff. When she described the competitiveness of TJVU-A, she split her answer into two different parts. One reflected how the educational resources from the parent university had attracted her to study in TJVU-A, while the other largely related to the location of TJVU-A, which became the key factor in her decision to work there. The first part of her answer reflected her understanding of the key elements of an international education, while the latter related to work-life balance and cultural distance issues of staff members. Thus, the questionnaire had a ‘dual-lane’ design to achieve a research objective more closely related to the distinct experience and decision-making processes of students and staff members. For both of them, the interview questions could be prepared and adjusted according to the interviewee’s individual role in the TJVUs.

Third, all the academic terms were replaced, especially ‘resources’ and ‘knowledge’, which have different meanings from English when translated into Chinese. As mentioned above, confusion occurred several times during the pilot study, such that the interviewees needed further explanation of those terms. For example, as Question 7 shows in Appendix 1, when I asked the question ‘Do you think students possess any knowledge that contributes to any change in the university?’, most interviewees did not understand the point. However, they could recall examples where student inputs made changes to the TJVUs’ operation. Therefore, in the final version of the questionnaire (Appendix 2), this question was revised as two sub-questions: ‘Do you think students have the potential to promote any change in the TJVU?’ (question for staff members) and ‘Have you experienced any changes in the university’s daily operation or policy that resulted from student requests or demands?’ (question for students).

To conclude, the pilot study was designed to test the interview questions. While the preliminary versions of the questionnaire reflected the key elements of the research objectives, it neglected the diversity of interviewees and the differences between academic expressions and daily conversations. The final schedules of the

questionnaires were, therefore, modified based on the issues revealed in the pilot study, and the questions were split into three blocks to logically explore both the theoretical and empirical research aims.

3.7 Ethical consideration

During this research, ethical issues emerged due to a researcher enjoying a level of ‘freedom of action’ (Sarantakos, 2012). For this reason, researchers should follow certain rules to guarantee the accuracy of data and to protect the confidential information of participants. By following a set of ethical considerations, researchers ensure and improve the trust and confidentiality of the investigation process. As James and Busher (2007) argued, researchers are responsible for maintaining the privacy of participants by, for example, protecting confidential information and anonymising their identity.

My research was carried out in accordance with the Royal Holloway code of ethics. In addition, I obtained the permission of the ethics committee of TJVU-A and was supported by a senior manager in TJVU-B, who introduced the campus and a few potential interviewees to me. I protected all participants’ confidential information and anonymised their identities (see Appendix 7 and 10, for the lists of interviewees).

Before conducting any interview, each participant was provided with a consent form (Appendix 3) and a Participant Information Sheet. I emphasised their right to agree to the interview or to terminate it at any time should they feel uncomfortable (Bryman & Bell, 2015). As this was a small-scale study in which, in each case, the participants were the staff and students from a single institution, their views may reveal their identity. Therefore, the organisations and the participants’ identities were protected by pseudonyms throughout the entire study. I ensured the participants of anonymity and confidentiality so as to avoid any potential risks or harm that could have arisen from any sensitive or private information. In addition, since some interpretations of opinions may reveal a participant’s position or role, these participants were informed of this issue prior to the interviews.

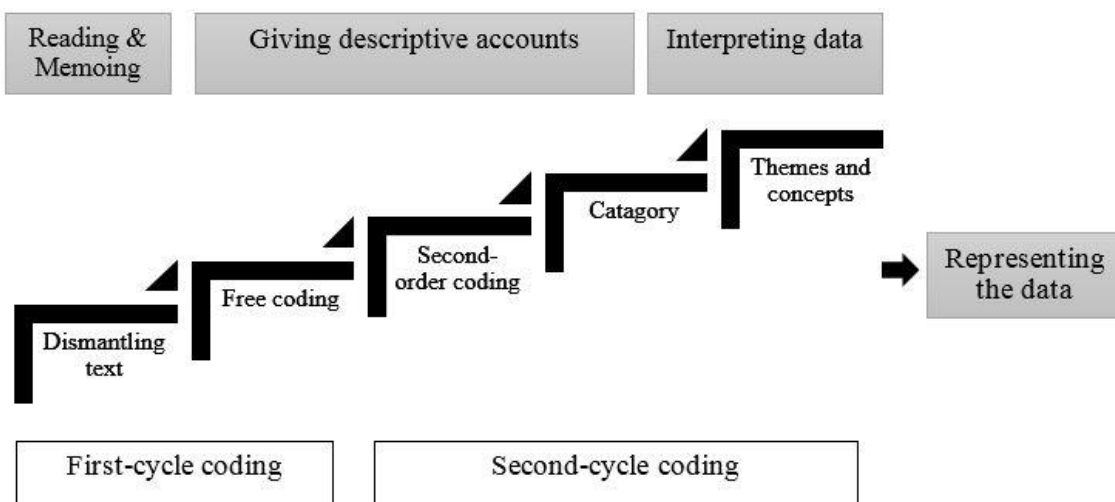
3.8 Data analysis and presentation

The aim of data analysis is to organise a quantity of raw data into themes so as to interpret the meaning of data and to present the findings through a case report or visual mappings (Creswell, 2013). In this section, I present both the within-case analysis and cross-case analysis strategies. Following discussion of the data analysis process, the quality issues of qualitative study and the presentation of findings are reviewed.

3.8.1 Within-case analysis

The four stages of individual case analysis referred to the frameworks set up by Creswell (2013) and Ritchie et al. (2013) are: reading and memoing; giving descriptive accounts by coding and categorising; interpreting data into categories and themes; representing the data. The coding process is guided by *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Saldaña, 2015). Figure 3.1 presents the basic process of data analysis.

Figure 3.1 Process of data analysis



The first stage of individual case analysis refers to reading and deconstructing the interview transcription texts. I chose a manual coding process rather than qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) such as NVivo largely due to suit of the pilot experience. NVivo is helpful for exploring the linkage of data more quickly and easily; however, it does not offer the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of interpersonal interpretation. By contrast, manual coding allowed me to read the data several times and to explore the in-depth emotions and understandings involved in

participants' interpretations. 'First cycle coding' (Saldaña, 2015) was later undertaken according to the order of the interview questionnaire. Table 3.3 presents an example of this coding process. Through this free coding process, I developed several types of code, such as descriptive and terminological codes, to shorten and summarise the insights obtained from participants. This process improved my understanding of each interview and essential dialogues. By drawing together the different staff and student perspectives and noting the informant number after each phrase, I recognised numerous repeated terms and phrases, as well as formed a sense of comparison between staff and student perspectives.

Based on reading the transcriptions and free coding, I summarised the codes to be more in keeping with a resource exploitation structure as a second-order coding process (Saldaña, 2015). These two stages of coding gave the data a descriptive account of a further categorising process. I then developed several categories and themes through which to interpret and represent the data, which moved the process on in a theoretical direction. Appendixes 4 and 5 outline how the data analysis process was applied in relation to the RBV within the two TJVUs.

Table 3.3 An example of the free coding process: data from TJVU-B

Theme	Research questions	Interview questions	Free codes		
			Administrative staff views [participant number]	Academic staff views [participant number]	Student views [participant number]
Organisational competitive advantages	Q01: What are the competitive advantages of this university?	Q01-1: Could you please tell me the story of how you came to this university?	<p>Good reputation in China [B03]</p> <p>Comfortable working environment [B03]</p> <p>Moderation from UK's parent university is a guarantee of educational quality [B03]</p> <p>Student-centred service philosophy [B03]</p> <p>Have a lot of collaboration with local government and industry [B04]</p> <p>Located in Yangtze River Delta, the most developed area in China [B04]</p> <p>A springboard for students to top ranking universities [B04][B07]</p> <p>Various pedagogies [B05][B11]</p>	<p>UB is a combination of East and West education [B10]</p> <p>Courses are localised to enhance students' employability in China [B10]</p> <p>(Because of the UK educational background of interviewees) UB has strong connection with the UK and it is easy to adapt [B10][B14][B15][B16][B19]</p> <p>A pioneer to explore new and advanced higher education system in China [B10]</p> <p>China is a good place for business [B13]</p> <p>UB is not a stable university and can have big changes [B13][B14]</p>	<p>Freedom to choose courses [B01][B02]</p> <p>The diversity of courses [B01][B02]</p> <p>A springboard to top ranking universities [B01][B02][B21][B22][B25][B27][B29][B30]</p> <p>A platform for better career [B21]</p> <p>Beautiful campus and architecture [B21][B23][B25]</p> <p>A comfortable culture atmosphere [B21]</p> <p>Equity between students and teachers [B01][B21][B28]</p> <p>Facing to upper-middle class with open mind [B21][B25][B27]</p> <p>UB located in Suzhou, a developed city with a nice balance of work and life environments [B02][B22][B23][B27][B28][B30]</p>
		Q01-2: Comparing with the traditional	Better working environment (from facility and hardware perspective) [B03]	English based education [B10]	Respect students' privacy [B01] Less political related modules [B01]

		<p>Chinese universities (TCUs), what advantages does this university have?</p>	<p>International education with affordable expansion (to domestic students) [B03]</p> <p>De-layering administrative system [B03][B04]</p> <p>Administrative staff provide support to academic staff and students [B03]</p> <p>Students and graduates have both global view and localised practical ability [B03]</p> <p>Students participate in the educational management [B03]</p> <p>The organisation structure is as a circle that students stay in the centre of while that of TCUs is like a pyramid [B03]</p>	<p>Providing the latest textbook [B10]</p> <p>Cannot modify modules discretionarily by lecturers [B10]</p> <p>Interactive teaching style [B13]</p> <p>Be in the forefront as an international and innovative university [B13]</p> <p>Students have joint degrees [B14]</p> <p>The working environment is not free in TCUs, and be witnessed in every work task [B15]</p> <p>UB has a freer environment [B15]</p> <p>Besides research, UB stresses on teaching as well [B15]</p>	<p>Explore students' actively study ability [B01]</p> <p>Most students have a good family background [B01]</p> <p>Freedom in choosing what to believe [B21][B22][B26][B29]</p> <p>Freedom to do anything you are interested in [B01][B02][B22][B25][B26][B27][B29]</p> <p>A university beyond the Chinese political system [B21]</p> <p>Separate academic and political performances [B21]</p> <p>Respect students' rights [B21]</p> <p>Provide a platform for students to do anything we want [B21]</p> <p>Better quality of academic staff [B21]</p> <p>Less bureaucratic in academic research [B21]</p> <p>A more hybridised culture environment [B21]</p>
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3.8.2 Cross-case analysis and presentation of findings

I developed an in-depth understanding of the individual cases and then moved on to the cross-case comparison. Cross-case analysis is described as the most critical part of case study methodology (Yin, 2009). The analysis was a process of seeking a balance between integrating the understanding of a specific entity and contrasting the findings across several contexts. To enhance the transferability and develop the depth of my understanding (Bryman & Bell, 2015), I undertook cross-case analysis to establish relatively common explanations for the findings collected from the two comparable sites, and also to consider how those findings complemented and contributed to the existing RBV literature.

Thereafter, I considered the manner in which this study should be presented. Case reporting and visual mapping are the opposite ends of the spectrum ranging from particularity to generality (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Here, in contrast to the extremes, I first presented contextual information about the two cases, and used tables and figures to improve the clarity and visibility of the findings.

3.9 A personal reflection on the research process

Before conducting interviews, I considered three points of enquiry: (1) what questions I should ask interviewees, (2) how many interviews I should undertake in each entity and (3) how I could ensure the accuracy of the data. This section describes my personal reflections on the research process.

The objective of my thesis is to explore the role of students in making an international education and, particularly, to analyse the interactions between students and universities. I argue that daily interactions and practices are socially constructed phenomena. Giddens (1984) argues that a socially constructed phenomenon is both a condition and a consequence of social actions. In terms of this study, investigating the daily practices in universities from Giddens' perspective requires an understanding of the relationship between those social interactions in universities, which constitute the day-to-day operations, and the social structure, which includes the policies and organisational resources that both condition the educational practice and are

themselves an outcome of that interactive practice. Thus, considering the nature of a socially structured phenomenon that does not tangibly exist and can only be explored by interpreting the interactions among its participants, I attempted to interpret, understand and give a meaning to the experiences of those social actors, especially the students. The questions, what to ask in the interviews, were addressed according to the nature of the research – the social phenomena, and the research objectives – the relationship between strategic practice and stakeholders' contributions. In the interview questionnaire (see Appendix 2), the questions comprised topics about personal expectations, learning and working experiences, and organisational advantages and disadvantages. Additionally, in carrying out the pilot study, the final version of interview questions was driven largely by the initial feedback (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The fundamental strategy was snowball sampling method (Patton, 2002). I did not establish a target sample number before my fieldwork but sought to seek as many interviewees as I could. For staff members, I sought to include academic, administrative and professional service staff, as well as different management levels, and to see how many interviews I could get. For students, I aimed to cover as many departments and cohorts as possible. I stopped looking for participants when the answers started to be repeated. In other words, while the interviewees did not represent all the departments and cohorts, the answers to a specific topic achieved 'saturation'. For instance, when the participants gave examples of the characteristics of TJVUs' 'international education', more than half pointed out that the campus design represents one of the characteristics of an international education. While different interviewees provided a variety of examples ranging from the library's tables to a building's name, they all considered these to be examples of an 'international education'. Inevitably, the closure of data collection was also driven by time constraints and access difficulties (seen Section 3.10 for further discussion on the limitations of data collection). However, I closed my data collection largely because theoretical saturation was reached.

The last question – how to ensure the accuracy of the data, is about the validity and reliability of data. Since the gathering of empirical research concluded some time ago,

I feel able to reflect upon choices I made in the research process and how they may have impacted the subsequent analysis. Based on this introspection, I consider two issues particularly noteworthy: the use of language in the interviews and the researcher's position vis-à-vis interviewees. My first language is Chinese. Thus, most interviews were conducted in Chinese, but findings and reports were written in English. Students are undertaking an English-based education; staff members use English as their working language. When I asked them to choose English or Chinese for the interviews, all of the Chinese participants considered Chinese to be a better option. Some of them felt that by using their first language, they could offer more details and information and better express their feelings. In addition, a few of them pointed out that they felt weird when two Chinese people speak English with each other.

Cortazzi et al. (2011) conducted research that explores the influence of language choice when conducting interviews with Chinese participants. They state that interviewees usually need more time to adapt to an interview when they are using the second language, English. Therefore, letting participants choose the most comfortable language to speak in may have a positive impact on the interview data. However, the reports and findings from these interviews are in English. In order to minimise the errors and misunderstandings of interview content, I transcribed and translated all the Chinese interviews myself. Interviews with those few people who do not speak Chinese were conducted in English. Some researchers consider that allowing language choice may have negative consequences on the quality of interview data (Temple & Young, 2004; Cortazzi et al., 2011). For instance, Temple and Edwards (2002) argue that the involvement of third-party translators/interpreters may influence the accuracy of the translation and interpretation. In my fieldwork, I was able to take advantage of being bilingual, so I could give participants more space to choose their preferred language and minimise the influence of the interview language. Therefore, because I carried out all the tasks myself of conducting interviews, translating the original transcriptions and analysing the data, I reduced as much as possible any translating inaccuracies, missing information and 'value-adding' from the third-party translators.

On further reflection, I became aware of the issue of the researcher's position vis-à-vis interviewees. This issue regards the balance between the objectiveness of the research and a trusting relationship between the researcher and the researched. To make interviewing an interactive experience and to explore and validate the rich information gained from it, researchers involve themselves in the research relationship by sharing knowledge and experiences, answering interviewees' questions and providing supports to the participants (Cotterill, 1992). While this study cannot be 'purely objective', it is important to avoid biases that might result from personal values. As section 3.5.1.1 shows, I positioned myself as an 'instrumental outsider', and at the same time, an 'emotional insider', in an attempt to build a trusting relationship between the participants and myself. As an 'instrumental outsider', I had no consistent connections with the focal TJVUs; therefore, I had no motivation to share participants' information and their personal insights with their community (Sixsmith et al., 2003). This issue was particularly when talking with student participants. More than one student worried whether I would share the interview content with their mentors. As an outsider, I was in a good position to explore participants' personal experience and opinions that they do not share within the school community. While being an outsider reduced interviewees' worries about privacy, I was also asked pointedly by some participants whether I had obtained a permit to conduct research on campus. Therefore, while I was maintaining distance from the interviewees to avoid bias, I also tried to emotionally close our distance, so I could collect as much data as possible. For instance, I made my identity clear as a 'student' with overseas experience; this helped gain their trust and was helpful to encourage more nuanced responses. Similarly, when conversing with staff members, sharing our similar overseas experiences was a useful starting point. On the other hand, with students, my empathy for student life could always help them relax and feel less stressed. All in all, the main objective of this exercise was to guard against possibility that interviewees would be unduly cautious when being interviewed by a 'stranger'. Hall (1990) states that identity is the inter-personal relationship we are positioned by and positioned ourselves within. The researcher's position, therefore, is to find a 'standpoint' with the interviewees. While the majority of the literature on qualitative methods debates the researcher's position as an insider or an outsider (e.g. Headland

et al., 1990; Merriam et al., 2001; Gioia et al., 2010), I reflected on the idea that there is a balanced position between insider and outsider.

The data analysis process was impacted by the choices I made during the research process. While the data analysing process largely followed the data collection, my experience indicated that the collection stage, is to some extent, interwoven in the analysis stage. When coding and interpreting the interviewees' responses, I found that participants, especially students, did not fully elaborate on the initial theoretical concept of HQs-subsiary relationship. On the contrary, their emphasis predominately lay with how the subsidiaries (TJVUs) gain competitiveness in both local and international markets. This process required the collection of further data. For example, I re-contacted some student interviewees of TJVU-B to explore how student experiences reflected the subsidiary entrepreneurship phenomenon, including details of its innovative five-mentor educational system (for more details see Chapter 5). On the other hand, this case study is based on multiple data resources, including official documents, news reports, related social media posts as well as the dominant interview responses. Different types of knowledge were generated even in the analysis stage; some new inspiration and connections were made between document-based data and interview responses. Therefore, re-contacting my interviewees for new and follow-up questions enriched my database.

To summarise, the case study and interview methods are important and predominant in exploring a socially constructed phenomenon. However, at the same time, the difficulties cannot be ignored. To get the most out of this method, self-reflexivity should permeate the entire data collection and analysis processes.

3.10 Limitations

This section simultaneously reflects on the limitations of my methodology and proposes a different direction for future research.

- Generalisability of the results

The first limitation concerns the extent to which the findings can be generalised. This research explored two TJVUs established by the UK and Chinese partners. These are

the first two TJVUs established in China and house the largest portion of students among all TJVUs. I decided to investigate these two universities because of my intricate understanding of both the UK and Chinese education systems. I investigate only two entities because of the access difficulties and time restriction. However, subsequently the largest proportion of TJVUs in China have been established as partnerships with US entities; therefore, further investigation of Chinese–US TJVUs and other collaborations would enrich the findings related to the Chinese context. Additionally, the research aim and objectives of my study have the potential to be expanded to other partnerships in other countries and regions.

- Reliability of data

The second limitation concerns the reliability of the interview data. Firstly, during the fieldwork, I tried to access as many participants as possible. As table 3.2 shows, in each entity of investigation, student participants range from undergraduates to PhD candidates. In terms of staff members, both academic and administrative members have been reached. The table shows differences in the number of administrative interviewees, six and twelve in TJVU-A and TJVU-B, respectively. When I was interviewing the fourth staff member in TJVU-B, and was fortunate to have made three additional appointments with staff participants, I realised that the number of administrative interviewees in TJVU-B would be larger than in TJVU-A. I continued interviewing staff members until I could not get any further access because it was very tough to get access to them and I valued this opportunity. I planned to go back to TJVU-A to increase the sample of administrative interviews, if it was necessary. However, during the data gathering period in TJVU-B, I did not pick up any new topics from administrative interviewees that I have not gleaned in TJVU-A. I understand that this difference might have resulted in richer and more vivid narratives from TJVU-B. Therefore, to minimise the influence, I carefully compared the data from administrative staff members between the two TJVUs and coded according to the same topics, a similar structure and comparable themes. Another limitation concerns the language and translation process. The majority of interviews were conducted in Chinese, but there were also 13 English-based interviews. Therefore, I acknowledge the possibility that the data may miss information when switching languages and translating the transcriptions. The subjectiveness of the coding process and the

interpretation of findings can also represent a limitation. Additionally, getting access to internal organisational documents relating to the financial details and joint-venture agreement setting proved impossible. This can be considered a limitation in the diversity of data source.

- Investigation on headquarters-subsidiary relationships

To a certain extent, this study is an intra-organisational study that focuses on exploring on-campus phenomena. Given the Chinese–UK collaborations, gaining the perspectives of the parent universities would be helpful in deepening the understanding of resource distribution.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has covered the key methodological issues in my research project. Considering the interpretive nature of this study, I used the case study method to explore the complicated relationships between organisational resources and students, and how students can offer valuable input for a TJVU's competency. Following the introduction of the discussion on philosophical assumptions and research approaches, I explained that the rationale for conducting a comparative case study, rather than a single case study, was to improve the credibility of the findings. In-depth semi-structured interviews formed the main method of data collection, while published documentation provided a supplemental data source. I then presented the process of data analysis in detail. Consideration was also given to ethical issues, personal reflection and methodological limitations. Chapter 4 presents the in-depth case study of TJVU-A.

Chapter 4 Joint-Venture University A: Making a Close Connection with the UK Parent University

4.1 Introduction

Following the data collection and analysis of the field work in the two case universities, the in-depth and detailed findings of them will be presented separately. All the findings derive from the semi-structured interviews with students and staff members, as well as the public documents and on-campus accessed material provided by staff interviewees.

This chapter firstly introduces the background and context in relation to joint venture agreement in the field of higher education in China, then sets out the first case-university — Joint-venture University A (TJVU-A). Setting up joint venture universities is one of the most important way to introduce foreign education systems to China. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education (2018), nine independent Chinese-foreign universities have been established and now are recruiting students through the Gaokao system. TJVU-A and TJVU-B are the only two China-UK TJVUs while there are three with the US, two with Hong Kong and one each with Russia and Israel.

TJVU-A was the first established China-foreign TJVU after the Chinese Ministry of Education released a series of regulations on Cooperation of Foreign-China Running Schools (CFCRS). This university was founded with an agreement between a British Russell Group university (referred to as the UK's parent university of TJVU-A, UKPU-A) and a Chinese private educational group (referred to as the Chinese partner of TJVU-A, CP-A) in the early 2000s. Located in a coastal city in East China which is the most economically developed region, this TJVU launches an UK-style 'international education' in a conceived campus and considered as 'an integral part' of the UKPU-A (QAA, 2012a). This chapter then focuses on its resource basis and the UK-style education it provides with an emphasis on the students' understandings and interpretations along with reflections from staff members. Accordingly, this chapter suggests that the purpose, content and values of the education as projected (and often

defended) by TJVU-A and as expected and demanded by its students have both connections and mismatches.

Following the introduction, section 4.2 introduces the context of TJVU agreements in China with an emphasis on the duopolistic nature of the two cases – TJVU-A and TJVU-B. Section 4.3 provides comprehensive case information, including a brief history on the setting-up process, the student admission and learning process, the institutional structure and operation, as well as the academic quality assurance. Based on background information of this university, section 4.4, through expanding Lynch and Baines's (2004) work on analysing the competitive resources in a UK university, shows the resource basis of TJVU-A. This section then clarifies how the purpose and content of the 'international education' are projected by this university. The following section 4.5 aims to present student perceptions of and inputs into the 'international education'. Following the findings, this chapter concludes by clarifying what an 'international education' means to its students and how they contribute to making the education in TJVU-A.

4.2 Joint venture agreements in the Chinese higher education context

Since the mid-1990s, China has allowed foreign institutions to offer their educational programmes in cooperation with local institutions. These programmes were bolstered when China joined the WTO in 2001. China then set up the Regulation of China-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) for the promotion of privately-run schools and standardisation of their operations. Under this regulation, 'the state encourages CFCRS to which high-quality foreign educational resources are introduced' (CFCRS, 2003), and foreign educational institutions must cooperate with a Chinese educational institution in order to provide their services in China.

The regulation of CFCRS permits two models of collaboration: joint institutions (including joint-venture universities) that operate as a partnership between a Chinese and at least one foreign education institution, and joint programmes delivered at Chinese universities in partnership with foreign providers. The joint-venture universities (TJVUs) have an independent legal status and Chinese degree-awarding

powers. For example, New York University Shanghai is an independent university jointly established by New York University and East China Normal University. Joint institutions are separate institutions affiliated with Chinese partners. The foreign institutions themselves do not hold independent legal status in China nor can they offer Chinese degrees independently of the Chinese partner. For instance, a Sino–British college is an affiliate of the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology. It has nine partners including, among others, the University of Leeds, University of Sheffield, and University of Huddersfield. In terms of the mode ‘joint programmes’, they vary in how their modules are delivered. Most of them operate a block-teaching model in which the foreign partners send their ‘fly-in-fly-out’ faculty, and the students undertake classes fully in the Chinese partner institution.

While joint programmes dominate the majority of China–foreign cooperation in the higher education sector (930 programmes, CFCRS, 2020), out of 70 joint institutions (CFCRS, 2020) nine TJVUs are recognised to be the highest quality and most stable, collaborative providers of international education in China, especially in the competition for enrolling premium students. These TJVUs have the highest requirements for student enrolment among all China–foreign cooperating higher educational institutions and programmes. The Gaokao candidates must meet at least Tier 1 requirements to gain access to those TJVUs, while most joint institutions and joint programmes only require Tier 2 standards.

Two of the nine TJVUs collaborate with UK universities and three with US universities. The two China–UK TJVUs (TJVU-A and TJVU-B) in this study were the first TJVUs in China and were established in 2004 and 2005, respectively. Beginning in 2012, the US began to follow the UK’s lead as New York University Shanghai, Duke Kunshan University and Wenzhou–Kean University were gradually established. Each of them began with a small number of students and increased their recruitment after 2014. For instance, NYU–Shanghai recruited 261 students in 2013 (NYU, 2017), and its student grew to about 1,300 undergraduate and graduate students in 2018 (NYU, 2018). Similarly, Wenzhou–Kean University had a student-intake of 240 in 2013, and it houses over 2,500 students in 2020 (WKU, 2020), while Duke

Kunshan University welcomed its first 262 undergraduate students in 2018 (DKU, 2020).

TJVU-A and TJVU-B, with their first-mover advantage, can be considered the two most established TJVUs operating in a duopolistic competition. As mentioned above, while China–US TJVUs are gradually increasing their market share, their development is still at the preliminary stage. As it seems difficult to compare mature versus relatively immature TJVUs, this study selected only TJVU-A and TJVU-B as cases so the findings will be more comparable. Drawing on the literature of competitive advantage and the RBV, competitors attempt to increase their own market share at the expense of others by exploring and exploiting organisational resources. Duopolistic competition is defined as head-to-head rivalry, ideally between two firms. In a duopoly model, the competitors play a differentiation game and can provide products as substitutes or complements (Dixit, 1979). TJVU-A and TJVU-B, as the first two TJVUs established in China, dominate the Chinese market for undergraduate study in TJVUs, especially for students who are interested in further study in the UK. With similar policies and business models, they are developing their individual merits and differentiating themselves from each other. TJVU-A is under direct academic control from UKPU-A while TJVU-B is accredited by UKPU-B to develop the programmes that lead to the awarding of its degrees (QAA, 2012). That is to say, these two ‘major’ players both provide UK-based higher education while simultaneously differentiating their ‘international education’. This chapter focuses on the case of TJVU-A.

4.3 Case information

TJVU-A is one of the pioneer China-foreign universities in China. Under a collaboration between a UK university and a private Chinese education cooperate, TJVU-A built a comprehensive campus and started to recruit students in 2004 (TJVU-A, 2020a). After almost 15 years of development, TJVU-A has established several new buildings on its conceived campus and has enrolled around 8,000 students including 10% international students (TJVU-A, 2020b). This university aims to

provide its students with the equivalent UK-style ‘international education’ and learning experience based in China.

TJVU-A, as a joint-venture university (JVU), was founded with an agreement between a British Russell Group university (referred to as the UK’s parent university of TJVU-A, UKPU-A) and a Chinese private educational group (referred to as the Chinese partner of TJVU-A, CP-A) in 2004. This TJVU was the brainchild of a key person who possessed a strong willingness to import foreign higher education into China and had connections with several UK universities (QAA, 2012a). After TJVU-A was established successfully, he served as the first chancellor of the TJVU-A. According to the agreement, UKPU-A is charged with designing and delivering both the taught and research programmes (the Chinese MoE approved TJVU-A for delivering research degrees in 2009) as well as all the academic related matters. In addition, the education system and online library resources are shared with TJVU-A. On the contrary, CP-A has responsibility for the architecture, financial, administrative, connection with the government and other non-academic operations, including the services of the student halls, canteens, sport centre and other service facilities (QAA, 2012a).

TJVU-A is located in a coastal city in east China, which is the most economically developed region. Although TJVU-A received some funding from the Chinese government for science and engineering students as well as some from the provincial and municipal governments for education and research support, the main part of their income is derived from student tuition fees (QAA, 2012a). The conceived campus was originally designed as two districts divided by a river. The teaching district contains the main building housing a library, all administrative offices and a clock tower; four teaching buildings embedded with a health clinic, a start-up space, an auditorium, a recently renovated study space and two conference centres. In the student residential district, TJVU-A provides twelve living halls for students, four canteens, an indoor sport centre, outdoor sport facilities and other living-related services.

The management board of TJVU-A is comprised by the two sides of partners. The president of TJVU-A, who emanated this educational collaboration, has also been the

chancellor of the UKPU-A in the period of 2001 – 2012 (TJVU-A, no date). The Vice Chancellor of UKPU-A positions the Executive Chair of the TJVU-A's board of Directors. The leadership and management are the responsibilities of the Provost, who has been one of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors in the UKPU-A. In addition, the Provost of TJVU-A reports to the management board (The Board of Directors). Half of the numbers on the board come from CP-A (TJVU-A, no date), who are responsible for non-academic matters and the relationship with the Chinese government and media.

The UKPU-A has established an integral network among three campuses, including the original UK campus, TJVU-A in China and another international branch campus in Malaysia. According to the Strategic Plan of UKPU-A (UKPU-A, no date), its key aim is to internationalise education through developing a new model of being an international university. TJVU-A as one of its international branch campuses represents the UKPU-A's success in internationalisation.

With regard to student recruitment, the admission of domestic students follows the Chinese higher education system through the Gaokao (National College Entrance Examination in China). They must meet the requirement for overall Gaokao score and 115 (out of 150) English score. The overall Gaokao score required by TJVU-A is above the 'Tier 1' level of traditional Chinese universities and this standard is rising gradually every year (averaging from just above the 'Tier 1' level in 2006 to 40 marks higher than the 'Tier 1' level in 2018) (TJVU-A, 2020b). Because of this relatively high entry requirement, TJVU-A attracts students who achieved a relatively high score in the Gaokao but did not qualify to enter 'Project 985' universities and the well-reputed 'Project 211' universities. In terms of the admission of international students, comparing the introduction of entry requirement in the official websites of both UKPU-A and TJVU-A, the process is similar and the standard is comparable as well between each other. In close connection with the international office of UKPU-A, the international recruitment staff in TJVU-A check the international application materials and makes preliminary decisions firstly and submits these applications and decisions to the relevant divisions in UKPU-A. Staff members of the international office in UKPU-A then review the paperwork and return them to TJVU-A (QAA, 2012a).

The ‘supervision process’ of reviewing the recruitment procedures is also reflected in the approach to hiring academic staff. Whilst most academic staff came from UKPU-A in the first several years of its establishment, TJVU-A now takes more responsibility in recruiting staff (QAA, 2012a). The requirements of new academic staff recruitment are comparable to those in UKPU-A, in order to maintain a staff-student ratio and the best quality of staff. As a staff member [A-02-AD] from the human resource office introduced, TJVU-A are recruiting staff members globally, however, the final decision has to be confirmed by the relevant division in UKPU-A.

According to TJVU-A’s official website, when students enter into TJVU-A, they sign up to start their higher education either from the preliminary year (year one) or the qualifying year (year two) based on their experience and achievements, whilst most of the domestic students start from the preliminary year. The preliminary year provides a series of English language courses, foundation-level knowledge and study skills in order to help students to adapt to English-based UK-style higher education and to meet the demands of their future undergraduate academic courses. From the qualifying year, students start their academic study with various courses which they have chosen through the Gaokao system. Additionally, during choosing the courses, students should consider where either to study in TJVU-A for four years (4+0 programmes) or in China for two years then continue the last two-year’s study in UKPU-A (2+2 programmes, some courses provide 2+2 programmes). As Appendix 6 shows, of 29 undergraduate courses, 12 provide both 2+2 and 4+0 programmes, 4 provide only the 2+2 programmes and 13 operate only 4+0 programmes. It is notable that the entry requirements of 2+2 programmes are slightly higher than those of 4+0 programmes in the same course and students transferring to UKPU-A through the former one are not required to take an IELTS test. There is a very small number of 4+0 programmes where students are capable of transferring into 2+2 programmes. Only the top 1-2 students in the first two-year’s study in China qualify to apply for the transfer and this application has to be approved by the relevant department in UKPU-A. All graduates from TJVU-A receive the same style of degree certificates as that of UKPU-A and the international branch campus in Malaysia while students who spend the whole four-year study in China could receive both a UK degree and a Chinese diploma certificate from the Chinese MoE.

The admission and learning process of postgraduate study follows the UK system. Students apply for relevant courses and are selected by the TJVU-A. The duration of the master's degree is one academic year and that of the PhD degree lasts for three to four years. Students who finish the postgraduate study in TJVU-A achieve a UK degree and could be approved by the Chinese MoE.

TJVU-A contains three faculties (excluding the graduate school) providing 29 undergraduate and 22 postgraduate courses (Appendix 6 lists the courses in TJVU-A). Some courses only have either 2+2 programmes or 4+0 programmes while others have both. As mentioned before, the academic courses are chosen before student enrolment. Students with 4+0 programmes have slight opportunities to transfer into the 2+2 programmes. However, the former intakes have opportunities to exchange to UKPU-A, the Malaysia campus and other collaborative universities for a semester or an academic year in year three.

From the set-up, TJVU-A states that it provides a similar education to that of UKPU-A with comparable quality. The academic standards are determined by the UKPU-A. The academic division of TJVU-A reports to both UKPU-A and the Provost of TJVU-A. Meanwhile, graduates from 4+4 programmes receive a Chinese diploma. That is to say, the academic quality of TJVU-A both follow the UK QAA standards through the university-level review (School Review every five years) and external reviews, and match the criteria of Chinese higher education institutions. In addition, setting up new programmes should also go through the approval process in UKPU-A, including the compulsory modules, programme durations and learning outcomes. However, local variation in titles, optional modules, mode of delivery are permissible in TJVU-A (QAA, 2012a).

In summary, TJVU-A as a China-UK joint venture, aims to minimise the influence of the Chinese partner in academic matters and to be an integral part of UKPU-A. Making equivalent academic quality, learning outcomes and student experiences to that of UKPU-A is seen as the key feature of the 'international education' TJVU-A provides. In other words, the 'international education' in TJVU-A reflects a strong connection

with UKPU-A in this joint-venture alliance. The next section explores how TJVU-A integrates and develops resources through the joint-venture agreement to form its education based on Lynch and Baines's work (2004) on analysing the competitive resources in a UK university. Additionally, individual interpretations from staff informants support and demonstrate the resource basis of the 'international education' in TJVU-A.

4.4 Resource base of TJVU-A

Based upon a description of the common elements of competitive resources of a university identified by Lynch and Baines (2004) and consideration of the transnational characteristics, Table 4.1 below summarises the resource basis of TJVUs. Following Table 4.1, this section presents the resource basis of TJVU-A which includes the location, physical resources, human resources, reputation, network-bound resources and knowledge-based innovation.

Table 4.1 Description of the RBV concepts

RBV concept	Description
Location	'Location' provides advantages on operational cost, culture attractiveness, and links to the specific connection and supports from the local context.
Physical resources	The buildings, equipment, facilities and space to launch the education, including the teaching buildings, study space, research facilities, student accommodation and other service facilities.
Human resources	Qualified academic staff to leverage teaching and research; advanced administrative to enhance service quality
Reputation	Reputation, which is partly from their parent universities and developed partly by TJVUs enables a university to communicate effectively and efficiently with its stakeholders and public.
Network-bound resources	Resources that are highly bound in collaboration with the parent universities.
Knowledge-based Innovation	The ability to take initiatives and autonomy, by which enables the university to be more competitive in the local market, including the tacit and explicit properties possessed by the university, with emphasis on the student experience and understandings, as well as the adjustment of teaching methods.

4.4.1 Location

The choice of location represents cost advantages, cultural attractiveness and specific local knowledge regarding marketing and consumers. TJVU-A's location in a coastal city in the most economically developed region in China gives it advantages not only in terms of establishing itself successfully and obtaining financial support to developing the education it offers, but also in relation to student enrolment and staff recruitment. As mentioned, the choice of location was made by the President, who is originally from this city and keen to improve the quality of local education (QAA, 2012a). Under the umbrella of collaboration between the UK and China, the governmental support TJVU-A receives is also largely at the municipal level (TJVU-A, 2020b). As a staff member who has worked at TJVU-A for over 11 years commented:

The reason why the name of TJVU-A contains the name of the city instead of the province is that the municipal government gives more money than the provincial government. I heard that the original name of TJVU-A was the name of the province plus the name of UKPU-A. [A-17-AD]

His explanation on the origin of the university's name reflected partially that the choice of location invariably involves negotiation and conflict regarding the establishment of the institution, as well as what kind of governmental support could be received. In terms of the recruitment of domestic students, most students did not consider the city essential to their choice, while most staff members emphasised the short distance to their hometown was crucial when selecting their workplace:

I grew up here and graduated through a joint programme. Working here means I can both stay in a familiar environment and take care of my family. [A-01-AD]

One of the staff interviewees considered that the relationship between TJVU-A and local government is closer than before, and that the UK-style higher education has integrated more characteristics from both the UK and China:

He [the President] is an economist and understands how to operate an organisation within a specific context. When he came to TJVU-

A, he began to strengthen the connection with the local government. The collaboration with the government and the investment from it improved our research capability. The government treats us as a new brand, an educational brand of this city, which expands the reputation of the city in China ... Also, why can we attract students? Because they know TJVU-A have a different education from the traditional Chinese universities. The difference is the international education. So we always make sure that students can hear how different we are from both traditional Chinese universities and other TJVUs. [A-17-AD]

To sum up, while seeking support and collaboration with the local government could be an opportunity to expand local knowledge and improve research in the local context, from a domestic perspective the network is still underdeveloped in comparison with that of Chinese traditional universities, especially state-owned universities. In contrast, the relationship between location and international students' choice is strongly related to the Chinese culture and business environment. According to the RBV, the location concept raised several topics that relate to how local resources could be integrated into establishing an international education provider, especially resources related to financial support and local staff.

4.4.2 Physical resources

Physical resources include the campus, buildings and other facilities required to enable TJVU-A to deliver its service and education. TJVU-A has a comprehensive campus comprising two parts separated: a teaching district and the student residential district.

The campus design of the teaching district largely follows the standards and style of UKPU-A: these can be seen in the landmark clock tower and the interior designs of the library, study space, auditorium and classrooms. More specifically, TJVU-A has a similar clock tower to that of UKPU-A. The same landmarks in both the parent university and the TJVU reinforce the impression that they are a united group of educational institutions where students have equal opportunities to experience similar campuses. In addition, this visual consistency in campus design emphasises the corporate identity to students and staff, that they belong to the UKPU-A system and

that they are studying and working with a UK educational system (Olins, 1978). The design of the buildings and spaces comprising the teaching district creates a UK-style environment. They are consistent with those of the UKPU-A campus and reinforce the connection between the two institutions. Through this connection, UKPU-A has strengthened its influence at TJVU-A while TJVU-A has bolstered its impression on UKPU-A. It could be argued that the physical resources could link to the image of international education by reflecting TJVU-A's strong connection with its foreign parent university.

The student residential district on the other side of the river where, for the most part, the interviews were held, is a crucial part of the campus. The CP-A has a strong presence in this district:

The CP-A built the whole campus, all the buildings. But the styles between the teaching district and the student residential district are so different. As you can see, the teaching district is just like a UK university campus; even the road signs are in English. But the student residential district has a quite Chinese-look. If you have been to the local private university established by CP-A, you would find that our student residential district is over 90% the same as that of the private university. [A-27-AC]

The teaching district was constructed in the UK style but the Chinese style is used in the student residential district. In addition, TJVU-A has continued to erect new buildings, renovate spaces and improve its facilities in accordance with the demands and requirements of students and staff. According to its official website, TJVU-A has constructed a new building for research on aerospace engineering in collaboration with the local government and UKPU-A. With funding from the government and CP-A's investment, CP-A conducted the architectural development of this building (School of Aerospace, TJVU-A, no date). Additionally, TJVU-A is establishing a new library in order to expand its study spaces and reading material.

Most interviewees viewed the updating of the buildings positively, perceiving it as the creation of a more comfortable learning environment. Interestingly, a few interviewees

expressed the link between physical resources and international education from either environmental or gender-related perspectives:

The change in buildings and spaces is obvious. The university renovates the spaces almost every summer vacation to satisfy the students ... But it's almost impossible to expand the campus, the university can only organise and reorganise the current campus. If TJVU-A expands the recruitment of students in the future, they would have to destroy the woods left there. It's a home for birds and other little animals. Sometimes I really worry about the conflict between development and the environment. I don't think we should have to give up the environment to develop international education. Concern about nature, understanding about life, sympathy, empathy, a sense of humanity are also elements of education. [A-06-AC]

His interpretation about physical resources seems to add value to those assets in a way that the meaning and significance could be imbued with the distinctive function and utilisation of these resources. As he further explained, an international education should have a wider picture that not only educates students with academic knowledge, but also inspires them to consider 'the people, the animals and the world, and don't be too utilitarian who is caring only about the grades'.

Another member of staff indicated her gender concerns in TJVU-A:

Over half of staff members and students are females at TJVU-A. Especially as it is an international university, some female staff and students come here with their families, with their children. But there is only one nursing room on campus. Sometimes those mums have to find an available meeting room, close the curtains, and lock the door to feed their babies. It's really embarrassing as we call ourselves 'international'. [A-01-AD]

Similar to participant A-06-AC, who unpacked international education with a wider value-added element, participant A-01-AD stressed the gender issue as an aspect in which improvement could be made regarding the internationalisation of TJVU-A. The

gender issue has also been mentioned in relation to the segregation of genders in the dormitories:

The conditions in the halls of residence are different from those in the UK. There is a difference in the quality, of course, but my observation focuses more on gender issues. In the UK you can choose whether your roommates are gender-mixed or not. Here, because four students share one room with one bathroom, it is obviously impossible to mix genders in a room. But my point relates to entire buildings even. A building can only house same gender students. Also, we have flat-based dormitories but, even so, only same-gender students are allowed to share a flat. In terms of the newly built residential hall, there are both female and male dormitories. But girls live on the floors beneath the 12th or 13th floors while male students live in the floors above and are not allowed to go to the lower floors. I think only the PhD student residence is gender mixed because those are single-bed and en-suite rooms. [A-26-UG4]

It is worthy of note that less concern for females and a distinctively gendered residential policy have been related to the understanding, expectations and demands of being in an international university. In short, the objective resources, such as the campus and the design of the spaces, have been given subjective meanings by students and staff members, who are those engaged in relatively long-term use, experiences and observations.

4.4.3 Human resources

The employees in TJVU-A include academic staff, administrative staff and service providers (especially in the student residential district). In TJVU-A, the basic staff recruitment policy is that academic staff and professional service managers should be recruited globally in order to guarantee the quality of education, while most administrative staff members and service providers are recruited in the local labour market (QAA, 2012a). An administrative staff member confirmed this point:

All the academic related staff are recruited internationally and have a similar standard as that of UKPU-A. I think TJVU-A maintains the ratio of international staff members over 50%. This proportion guarantees an international experience for students. [A-01-AD]

She emphasised the relatively equal ratio of Chinese and expatriate academics when I ask her to describe the teaching force in TJVU-A. Her reflection indicated undoubtedly that the intention of TJVU-A to be recognised as international has also been unpacked in the process of recruiting staff members, balancing the nationalities of academic staff as a result. In contrast, administrative staff and service providers are locally recruited, reflecting the cost advantage of the location.

4.4.4 Reputation

A good reputation enables a university to communicate effectively and efficiently with its stakeholders and with the public. In terms of a TJVU, its reputation is partly inherited from its parent university and partly developed by itself. More specific to the case of TJVU-A, the university took advantage of the prestige of UKPU-A to advertise its international education as being close to the UK education system. According to its official website, the name of TJVU-A in Chinese is ‘Name of the located city + name of UKPU-A’, while in English it is ‘Name of UKPU-A + name of the city + China’. No matter in which language, the name of UKPU-A took an important position in the brand of TJVU-A. This means of co-branding a university attracts student attention and creates a desire to discover the nature of TJVU-A (Bengtsson & Servais, 2004), especially attracting those who are willing to study abroad:

The half-English half-Chinese name attracted my attention, though the impression is somewhat negative. I thought that maybe the university was a fake one or just a ‘diploma factory’. But I was attracted by the name and then had the opportunity to lay hold of more information and understand it better. The primary reason why I came to this university is somewhat naïve and childish: the high ranking and good reputation of UKPU-A. [A-04-PD2]

Participant A-04-PD2 explained how she derived her impression of TJVU-A and one of the reasons why she chose this university to start her undergraduate study. This

quote reflected the importance of the co-branding strategy and UKPU-A's reputation in the decision to join TJVU-A as a domestic student.

Another element of reputational resources is that TJVU-A bridges Chinese students to UKPU-A, one of the top-ranking universities in the UK. This prestige provides students with a platform on which to be closer to the UK's higher education system, not only in their daily studying life, but also in the process of preparing for their further studies:

TJVU-A follows the UK system in China, which means students here have relatively fewer modules than students in a traditional Chinese university and would have more time to get a higher grade in each module. Our students are hard-working and good at maths. At such a highly respected university, they are able to take advantage of the reputation and the fame of UKPU-A with their efforts. It's easy for our students to get good offers from top postgraduate programmes. Over 70% of students go abroad every year and 80% of them get offers from the world top-100 universities. [A-18-AD]

It is not surprising that the reputation of the high ratio of graduates studying abroad contributed to the image of the international education offered at TJVU-A. In more than one interview, students also use the word 'springboard' to describe their relationship with TJVU-A. An academic staff member mentioned this point as well:

Basically, no one treats TJVU-A as a 'university'. More than 70% of graduates study abroad for a master's degree, the remaining 30% of students work for two to three years and go for an advanced degree as well. If you look at the official advertisement, the biggest selling point is the standard of the universities our students have entered. It sounds as though we define ourselves by other universities. We are reliant on this high ratio to attract high-school leavers. Actually, most of the students love this university and recognise this is a good university, but majority of them treat our

education as a diploma or a pre-study process before they go on to master's studies. [A-06-AC]

Another staff member who studied at TJVU-A as an undergraduate and in UKPU-A for a master's degree also reflected her understanding of the word 'springboard':

It's easy to get offers [from highly respected postgraduate programmes]. TJVU-A is a good springboard for you to access a better university. But the software here is provided by the UKPU-A, so the educational philosophy, the methods and the encouragement to think independently are consistent with a foreign education. If you study abroad continually when you're a graduate, the two-year master's study in the USA or one year's study in the UK become very easy to adapt to. I had experience of this process before. [A-18-AD]

While good student mobility could be a criterion by which to measure the quality of graduates in most universities, interviewees at TJVU-A specifically emphasised their achievement in 'helping and delivering' students studying abroad. Therefore, it could once more be argued that the reputation of TJVU-A is highly regarded due to its being international and having connections with other foreign educators.

4.4.5 Network-bound resources

As mentioned, the members of the management team come from both parent institutions; the composition of the team was determined in the agreement for the joint venture collaboration (CFCRS, 2003). An interviewee who has been studying here for four years and now works in the student residential college⁵ emphasised that the leadership of TJVU-A reflects the image of its international education:

⁵ The residential college is a new and distinctive section in the student residential district. This department is currently located in the newly built residential building and aims to help students experience cultural integration and to enhance an all-embracing campus life for them. The original plan for the residential college was to separate students according to their interests, personality and motivation, rather than their current cohorts (similar to the Oxbridge college system). However, this plan was delayed due to unsuccessful negotiations between TJVU-A and the CP-A.

The management board was established by the two institutions and the members of the board came from both institutions as well. This composition guarantees that the two parent universities have approved all the decisions they made ... Every Pro-Vice Chancellor was appointed by UKPU-A in order to make sure that the education here is a 'pure British' education. [A-18-AD]

The Pro-Vice Chancellor of TJVU-A that participant A-18-AD mentioned in the quoted passage is simultaneously a Vice-Chancellor of UKPU-A. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor conducts daily operations, is responsible for taking managerial decisions and reports to the board of directors (TJVU-A, no date). This leadership structure therefore highlights the strong connection between TJVU-A and its UK parent university. As participant A-18-AD interprets the situation, the UK Pro-Vice-Chancellor has linked the closeness of TJVU-A's academic style to that of UKPU-A, which indicates that TJVU-A is a very much UK-style university.

Besides the composition of the management board and the appointment of specific leaders – which initially defined the UK's education system as the fundamental pillar of the TJVU-A – a series of academic resources leveraged by the UKPU-A also comprise the foundation required to launch a UK-style international education in China. These include the heritage resources, consistent module design and quality assurance, and ready access to the online library and academic database.

First, during the foundation period of TJVU-A, all the academic staff members were appointed by UKPU-A:

In the beginning, many lecturers and professors came from UKPU-A. They set up the departments, duplicated the courses and started to launch a UK education in China. A few years later, when TJVU-A gradually 'grew up', TJVU-A started to conduct the majority of academic staff recruitment procedures [there is a final review stage in the recruitment process that is conducted by UKPU-A]. But I have to say, the pioneers were brave and contributed a great deal to this university, establishing a new university and the first TJVU in

China. No one knows the future [of TJVU-A], you know. ... So, I think the solid educational foundation for our education, both in teaching and research, was largely established by those pioneers. Also, the very British environment and atmosphere were built up from the beginning. [A-17-AD]

Participant A-17-AD has been working at TJVU-A for over 10 years. As he explained, he witnessed the growth of this university ‘from an infant to an adult’. This quote indicated that the pioneers from UKPU-A during its foundation period brought not only the British teaching settings, but also built a strong link to the culture and tradition perspective to UKPU-A. In other words, while establishing the academic setting is important in creating international education, how to integrate that educational atmosphere with the ethos of UKPU-A is another essential part of creating the education. In addition, participant A-17-AD referenced the importance of the educational atmosphere; other participants also confirmed the importance of students immersing themselves in a British environment. An administrative staff member reflected this point when she was asked about how to describe the relationship between UKPU-A and TJVU-A:

TJVU-A is a branch campus of UKPU-A, I would say. It is the nature of TJVU-A. We deliver the same education with a comparable teaching quality to that of UKPU-A. I feel that I am a part of UKPU-A. We have regular meetings with the corresponding divisions, many decisions are made at UKPU-A. [A-01-AD]

With the understanding that TJVU-A is a branch campus of UKPU-A, she also considered that the education in TJVU-A has the ‘original taste’ of that at UKPU-A. Students also appreciated that TJVU-A is a branch campus of UKPU-A and confirmed the closeness between the education in TJVU-A and that in the UK. A student also echoed that:

TJVU-A is quite similar to UK universities and the educational quality is also very similar to that in the UK, definitely because TJVU-A is a branch campus of UKPU-A. [A-05-UG2]

The wide recognition of the strong connection between UKPU-A and TJVU-A reflects that students and staff members at TJVU-A perceive the international education there as an integral part of UKPU-A's education, and several staff members describe the UK-style education in TJVU-A as having a tendency to be a 'pure British education'. However, there are several different voices about the idea of 'pure British education', such as:

The original intention [of establishing TJVU-A] was to bring British education to China. The pioneers did make an effort to do this. But this school is located in China and the Chinese characteristics are unavoidable. Now, I think the terms 'branch campus' and 'pure British education' are just selling points, or a marketing strategy to compare with TJVU-A other TJVUs. [A-20-AC]

This interviewee explained that relocating education and adding local elements on campus could reduce the characteristics of the original educational set-up. However, most interviewees confirmed that the TJVU-A was keen on maintaining and developing a highly consistent application of the British educational system in both teaching and research.

Recently, all the names of the buildings in the teaching district have been changed so as to strengthen the reflection that TJVU-A provides a UK education (The university is changing signs during my fieldwork). As mentioned, the campus and interior designs are seen as a visual sign of the connection with UKPU-A, and the new names of the buildings, coming from celebrities such as the Nobel laureates of UKPU-A, reinforce such visual consistency:

I think the connection between TJVU-A and UKPU-A is closer than before. Here [at TJVU-A], the new names of these buildings [indicating a new building opened in 2017] remind us that we are in a branch campus of UKPU-A. Also, in the UK, UKPU-A named a new bridge on campus after the CP-A's founder to show respect to her and her contribution to this China-UK collaboration. [A-01-AD]

In terms of the teaching and research, consistent module design and quality assurance is another key element of a network-bound resource and represents the UK-style

international education. Staff members emphasised repeatedly that they are confident in the quality of TJVU-A's education because TJVU-A follows UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) standards and a moderation process both by itself and by UKPU-A internally, and by the UK system externally. As mentioned in section 4.3, TJVU-A follows the UK QAA standards through the university-level review by UKPU-A and the external reviews by other UK universities every five years. Module moderation takes place every year, which is conducted by TJVU-A and UKPU-A internally and goes through external review by other UK universities (QAA, 2012a). A member of the academic staff confirmed this point:

With regard to teaching, we insist on following the British education system. All the course and module designs follow this system and we undergo module moderation [double marking process] every year. [A-20-AC]

In addition, the consistency of module contents with UKPU-A is regulated not only in the policies at the organisational level, but also on a micro-level, in the classrooms. The teaching materials, including textbooks and PPT-slides, are the same as those used at UKPU-A and its Malaysian campus:

UKPU-A and TJVU-A not only have the same logo and website design, but also the same textbooks and other courseware in classes. [A-17-AD]

Another academic staff member who has been studying in TJVU-A and moved to the Malaysia campus explained this point in greater detail:

The course design, textbooks and the content of examinations are the same in all three campuses –in the main campus in the UK and the international campuses. I have exchanged with another international campus and I found even the PPT slides in classes are the same as those here [in TJVU-A]. I can't say that the lecturers deliver exactly the same content in a module because lecturers have different backgrounds and experiences, but I think this replication policy maximises the possibility for students to have a comparable quality of education to those studying at UKPU-A. I can easily see

that I am receiving a similar education as I would receive in the UK. I don't need to worry about whether I have learned less than the students at UKPU-A. I'm not saying that the localised content is harmful. My point is that the localised content should not replace the original content but should instead be seen as extra knowledge. Thus, besides the 'standard knowledge' available at the three campuses, you can expand your understanding of the Chinese context. It's an extra benefit. [A-06-AC]

It is likely that UKPU-A has a relatively strict regulatory framework to operate its international branch campuses and to guarantee the quality of education. Importantly, students also recognised this operation and consider it as one of the criteria of choosing to study in TJVU-A. Therefore, it could be argued that this decision to maintain academic consistency with UKPU-A, considering student expectations of the educational content, has informed the initial design of how to deliver a qualified international education – how to establish a UK-style education successfully in China. Some students predicted that the university would deliver the education in a way that could be anticipated and would match their image of an international education provided by a Chinese–UK TJVU.

The openness of the online library and the academic database of UKPU-A is an essential part of the image of TJVU-A's international education. Students and staff members are able to access all the online resources in UKPU-A's library and to connect to websites blocked in mainland China, such as Google Scholar, Facebook and YouTube, through the campus intranet in the teaching district. In this way, students and staff members are able to acquire the most recent information, the most updated research results, academic journal articles and video-based learning resources. The sharing of online library resources with UKPU-A and the ease of access to the external internet (Waiwang, in Chinese, indicating specifically the blocked websites in mainland China) have been mentioned several times by both student and staff interviewees when they explained what elements are important to an international education in China:

There are no big differences between working in the UK and working here from an academic aspect. I use UKPU-A's library resources to access and download journal papers, I use Google Scholar and I use YouTube in my classes. [A-28-AC]

A postgraduate student also reflected the connection between the UK-style learning process and the ready access to UKPU-A's online library and the external internet:

The ease of access to the internet is the most, most, most crucial resource in TJVU-A. At least, it is for me. I find English-based journal papers on Google, I use UKPU-A's library for online textbooks, and I watch YouTube for fun. It's a kind of treasure trove for students, from both the academic and leisure perspectives. Getting access to prohibited information is a way to understand the world from another angle and accessing the latest news lets me catch up on what happened a second ago, just like when I was studying in the UK. [A-21-PG]

This quotation again indicated that the international education in TJVU-A is recognised by students and staff as keeping the educational experiences consistent with those at UKPU-A, including the regulations, language of instruction, teaching materials and learning process.

As a joint venture between a UK university and a Chinese partner, TJVU-A, predictably, has characteristics from the Chinese side of the institution. While UKPU-A is seen as providing academic support, CP-A aims to take charge in non-academic matters. The Chinese characteristics are in addition to TJVU-A's more specific strategy about how local features influence the international education at TJVU-A. As mentioned, the foundation of TJVU-A relates strongly to a key driving force who had personal connections with UK universities and local educational groups, as well as possessing great determination to bring foreign education to China. The CP-A with which he connected is a local private educational group that runs a private university and a series of training institutions. According to the alliance agreement, the CP-A constructed the entire on-campus infrastructure (see section 4.4.2). In addition, half of the positions on the management board are occupied by Chinese members who take

responsibility for the administrative services and communist office. A member of the administrative staff confirmed this point and indicates that there is something ‘Chinese’ in the teaching district, but students do not notice it:

All the decision-making should be approved by both sides. Students may not care too much about the existence of CP-A outside the student residential district. But, in my daily life, I sometimes answer phone calls from CP-A in which they ask questions, confirm procedures or supervise processes. For instance, a recent call asked how the student recruitment was going and the minimum Gaokao scores for the entry requirement that year. [A-03-AD]

To conclude, the network bond with UKPU-A – which is reflected in the buildings and interior design, reputation and brands, as well as educational resources – reflects dramatically that international education at TJVU-A is not only contained in the pre-arrangement of the joint venture collaboration, but also in the process of strengthening the connection with UKPU-A. In short, at TJVU-A the connection with UKPU-A is seen as a positive element, while the elements connected with CP-A has been largely described as having a negative influence on its international education.

4.5 Stories from students: expecting and experiencing a UK-style international education at TJVU-A

Section 4.4 discussed what kinds of organisational resources TJVU-A possesses and integrates to comprise its UK-style international education. The students who enrolled at TJVU-A are perceiving and experiencing this education. The reasons of why students choose TJVU-A, how they engage with the education there, and the comparisons between their expectations and experiences are valuable information with which to enrich the understanding of the discrepancies between what TJVU-A provides and what students demand in terms of an international education.

There were various reasons why students chose to study at TJVU-A. First, there are several keywords relating to the rationales of their choices of TJVU based in China: failure in the Gaokao; the willingness of the postgraduate to study abroad; and a middle-class family background. As one student stated:

I became familiar with TJVU-A after I got the Gaokao result and I realised I wouldn't be able to go to my dream university [a Project 985 university]. If I hadn't come to a TJVU, I probably would have had to go to a Tier-2 Chinese university or attend Gaokao again next year. At that time, China–foreign universities or other joint programmes became my second-best choice. As I want to study abroad later, I think I'll be able to prepare earlier and better if I study in an English-based education ... although I think the high tuition fee puts me under pressure, my parents said it was not a big deal. [A-08-UG3]

His explanation of how he chose to study in a TJVU reflected perfectly the three rationales already mentioned. Students take TJVU-A as a second-best choice of an institution at which to receive an English-based higher education and to prepare for future study. In addition, the relatively high tuition fee (over £9,000 and approximately 15–20 times higher than that of traditional Chinese universities) leads to the conclusion that only students from middle-class families can afford it. A staff member also reflected these reasons of why students come to TJVU-A:

I think most students here don't treat TJVU-A as their first choice or dream university. They are smart and performed well at high school but just didn't perform well in Gaokao. But they still wanted to get into a relatively high-quality university to demonstrate that they are no worse than the students in the top Chinese universities. Actually, they do have good capability and potential in both study and work. TJVU-A is not in the traditional Chinese university system, so this university gives those students a second chance to compete with their high-school friends who entered the top traditional Chinese universities. Under a new system, they got a chance to improve themselves and demonstrate that the failure in Gaokao didn't mean failure in life, especially when they are applying for master's studies abroad. [A-20-AC]

This quotation again indicated that the personal reasons of most students for being at TJVU-A is that they aimed to bypass the traditional Chinese education system and

took a second opportunity to receive a high-quality education, both in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. According to the entrance requirements of TJVU-A, introduced in section 4.3, most candidates of TJVU-A had a relatively successful performance in high school but did not prepare sufficiently well to relocate to an education abroad at the beginning of their undergraduate study. The next two widely acknowledged reasons why students from a middle-class family background are willing to study abroad later are that they finally choose TJVU-A where they can ‘transit’ their lack of preparedness to going abroad. In other words, TJVU-A has been seen as a trade-off between reality (failure in Gaokao: unpreparedness to go abroad) and their desire (locating to a different educational destination). Therefore, TJVU-A was expected by students (and their parents) to have competitive resources and capabilities to help them achieve their educational aims.

Based on the three fundamental ways to bypass traditional Chinese universities, it is predictable that students will choose TJVU-A and that the education here should relate largely to an international one. According to the interviews with student participants, what attracted them most strongly to TJVU-A is its UK-based education system:

Before I decided to come to TJVU-A, I compared all the China–foreign universities and joint programmes. TJVU-A provides UK degrees and tries to keep the same academic courses as those in UKPU-A. If I want to study in a foreign system, why not choose one that is the most similar to foreign universities? [A-05-UG2]

An academic staff member confirmed the description of ‘most similar to foreign universities’ by emphasising the competitive quality of the education in TJVU-A with its counterpart in UKPU-A, which has been discussed in section 4.4:

We follow the UK system and undertake the moderation process every year to guarantee that we are providing the same, or at least a comparable education, to that in the UK. We aim to maintain the British educational characteristics as much as possible. [A-27-AC]

An important reflection from the attitudes of both the student and staff member was that the strategic target of maintaining a high-purity British education has been well-accepted and understood by students and staff. In this way, the constitution and

formation of abundant resources with UK characteristics contributes to the university's competitive advantage: providing a UK-style international education (Capozzi, 2005) because those characteristics have been recognised and considered as valuable to domestic students.

In contrast, the Chinese elements have been described as localised features and in opposition to an international education:

TJVU-A wants to provide a pure British education. It means that we are trying to keep the system from becoming British and guarantee a comparable and competitive teaching quality as that available at UKPU-A. But it doesn't mean there are no localised characteristics. TJVU-A is located in China, has a Chinese partner, follows Chinese regulations and laws. It's obvious that 'Chinese' is in our genes as well. What we can do is try to keep the academic aspect as British as possible. [A-28-AC]

The interpretation of localisation has been approached by international students from a different angle. The reasons why they choose to study at TJVU-A are quite strongly related to the integration of the location in China and an English-based education. The case information has indicated that provincial and municipal governments give support for education and research, including the support required to recruit international students. It is notable that the location of such an education could add some elements to the nature of an international education from the perspective of international students. An undergraduate student from Malaysia explained that the Chinese element is as important as Western education to her choice of being at TJVU-A:

The word 'international' to me means everything outside my country. So, China is included in the term 'international'. ... My parents do business with Chinese firms, a kind of international trade. And they want me to work in China for several years before I take over the family factory. This is the basic reason why I want to receive an education in China. [A-30-UG3]

While domestic students considered the location of TJVU-A as convenient, because they do not have to relocate their education, international students considered this location to be an element of being international. Put another way, the objective resource – location – has been interpreted variously by students from different backgrounds. Another quotation provided by an undergraduate student from Sweden reflected:

I quite like Chinese culture, but I don't speak Chinese. The university is in China and the education is in English. I can become familiar with the country and culture here but be educated as though I were in England. How perfect is that? [A-11-UG3]

These two international student interviewees either emphasised the family connection with China, or a personal interest in Chinese culture. While most domestic students considered the location in China as a localised element of the international education at TJVU-A, international students chose to study within the UK system but located in China. The importance of a Chinese location was reflected by both domestic and international students during their decision-making process with a variety of perspectives. Additionally, several of them, and international staff members, mentioned that the regional location of south-east China determined their choice, as the relatively developed city represents fewer culture differences and presents fewer difficulties in relocating their career.

When students entered TJVU-A, they interpreted their experiences as a process of engaging and interacting with the international education. A notable feature of TJVU-A is that English is the medium of instruction, which is seen as fundamental to the delivery of a UK-style education (QAA, 2012a):

The entire education being in English is a distinct advantage in China. It especially attracts students who plan to study abroad in the future. [A-03-AD]

Some staff members described the education here as wholly English-based, and a student stated jokingly that, prior to enrolling at TJVU-A she thought that a wholly English-based education meant that everybody on-campus spoke English, including the staff members in the canteens. The fact, however, is that people speak English

during classes and return to Chinese after the lectures and seminars. One student interviewee made her opinion clearer that education and personal life should be separated when I ask her to describe internationalised education at TJVU-A:

The education at TJVU-A came from UKPU-A and this is the main reason why I think the education here is in the British style. But, it doesn't matter what language we speak after class. Even if we're studying in the UK or some other country, we speak Chinese as well, don't we? So, I think the educational system is the crucial measure to gauge what kind of education we are receiving, not the language we speak after class. [A-15-UG1]

Her interpretation, first, reflected the differences and mismatches between the university's description and student imagining of an international education. However, the student quickly adjusted her understanding of a wholly English-based education from speaking English everywhere to an academic related English environment. She made the straightforward link between an international education and British style and valued the education system, rather than the language in daily life. In other words, both the university and students value the British system as a crucial aspect of education at TJVU-A. Students evaluate the importance of the British system and separated the system from the language environment on campus, while the university resides in a wholly English education and bind it to the British system.

Interestingly, although students described the educational system as the most crucial part of their international education experiences, they also largely emphasised the importance of space and architectural style in contributing to their experiences of being at an international university. As mentioned in section 4.4.2, TJVU-A has a similar landmark to that of UKPU-A and designed the teaching district following the example of its UKPU campus. The consistency in campus design aims to reinforce the strong connection with the parent university and the students' sense that they are studying in a branch campus of UKPU-A. A student described that his interaction with the space is an essential aspect of receiving a British-style international education:

I grew up in a traditional Chinese university, and I know what its campus and facilities look like. Here, in TJVU-A's teaching district,

all the facilities are the same as can be found in a UK university. For example, the university can spend over 1,000 RMB [£100] to import a chair simply because UKPU-A has the same design. The new group study space [a renovated basement] was designed in the British style – well, at least not in the Chinese style. Students get a feeling of the differences, and are proud of studying in such an internationalised, advanced environment. [A-16-UG2]

However, the consistency of campus design, especially the same landmark clock tower, has also been described as a ‘copycat’ manoeuvre by a student:

A similar quality of education doesn’t mean everything has to be exactly same. We can have a good design and quality of buildings and facilities as well without needing to copy UKPU-A’s. [A-08-UG3]

Most interviewees mentioned that a good design and quality of buildings contribute to their educational experience, and TJVU-A responded effectively with spatial changes, including new buildings, the renovation of study space and the improvement of the sports facilities:

The campus is changing. The construction of the new library – maybe the school was already planning one – was begun because students complained about the limited space during examination periods. The basement of the teaching building was converted into a group study space from a storage facility. In the sport centre, we got an expanded gym and a professional climbing wall. This improvement was largely because of the President’s eagerness to create and improve a UK-style sports environment for students. And our students are very happy with it. [A-04-PD2]

Student demands and willingness have been delivered successfully to the university and the TJVU-A responded to the demands with campus renovations. In addition, the key driving force – the President of TJVU-A, who was appointed by UKPU-A and had fruitful experience of working at the UK’s university, – is keen to develop a British environment for the students, not only from the academic side, but also from non-

academic perspectives. This quote reflected how the campus was changed by satisfying student demands and by TJVU-A's strategy of providing a UK-style education.

Another impressive interpretation of campus design was related to the clear boundary between the teaching district and the student residential district. According to discussion with on-campus participants, most of them noticed the boundary between the two districts and described this separation as a sign of localisation and a clarification of the responsibilities of the two parent institutions. The student residential district, designed in a style similar to traditional Chinese universities, was described as diluting the international education at TJVU-A:

The residential district is not at all international. It's just like a normal Chinese university. If you look at the private university that CP-A established, not far away from TJVU-A, the dormitories look exactly same. But we don't have any connections with the private university and we don't want the public to feel there is any relationship between TJVU-A and the private university. [A-13-UG4]

That is to say, the teaching district and student residential district were not combined together, and they present a distinct variation in architectural style. As part of the campus, the students have to live in it and deal with it. The description of 'TJVU-A with no relations with CP-A' has been expressed several times by students, and those students consider that the relations with CP-A dilute the impression of UK-style international education at TJVU-A. In addition to the difference in district design, students also mentioned the differences of administrative processing and style:

Interviewer: You are living on campus, so how do you perceive the CP-A here?

Interviewee: CP-A is in charge of the service in the student residential district. I think we receive a British education but live in a traditional Chinese university. The teaching and student residential districts are two different worlds. ... The canteens are like those in traditional Chinese universities; four people share one dormitory

room; the premium dormitories [reference is made here to the shared flats in which four to five students share two to three bedrooms, a bathroom and a living room] are for international students, nothing looks as though it's a UK university. I know CP-A are improving their service to satisfy students, but they [the two districts] are just not same! [A-04-PD2]

Another student described these differences in a more neutral way:

The CP-A don't participate in any academic-related activities. But, TJVU-A is an outstanding outcome of a China-foreign educational alliance. CP-A must be in the picture somewhere to show-off its contribution to this collaboration. Here, the student residential district reminds us that CP-A is a part of TJVU-A as well. The process of internationalisation is also that of localisation. I don't think there are products that are standardised 100%. In terms of a university, we [the Chinese students] need residential halls and canteens on campus in the same way as most of the traditional Chinese universities. It's impossible to be exactly like Western countries, where students can rent a flat near the university. At least, most of our parents won't allow us to do so. And why is this district so Chinese? How can we expect the local staff in canteens to speak English as well? I mean, although I think the education here is in the UK style and internationalised compared with the traditional Chinese universities, it's not realistic to have a 100% English-based campus in China. [A-12-UG4]

In fact, more than half the interviewees had mentioned the differences or conflicts arising between the teaching and student residential districts. The way that A-04-PD2 described the service in the student residential district suggested that CP-A's contribution was not recognised as a part of the international education TJVU-A provides. In other words, when students mentioned the term 'international education', most of them did not consider the service and life in the student residential district as a part of their international educational experience. According to the descriptions from most student interviewees, the CP-A's contribution was seen as a trade-off for giving

an UK education in China, in that UKPU-A have to follow the Chinese terms to have a local partner so as to provide their degree-based education.

However, a student emphasised that this boundary is a way to protect the UK-style education and the international atmosphere based on the Chinese regulation that the providers of a degree-based higher education must have a local partner:

The agreement on establishing TJVU-A is not simple, it's quite top-level and strategic. The integration between the UK and China is actually everywhere on campus. The difference is whether and where students can feel the two distinctive sides. There are managerial staff members from CP-A in the teaching district, but most of us never see them. That's why most students describe the teaching district as so British, because students never meet the managerial people. I think it's very smart to separate the campus into two districts; it allows students to understand their education visually and in a straightforward way, and makes it clear for them how to switch roles between the different atmospheres. Like me, I think I am receiving an international education in the teaching district. When I come into this residential area, it reminds me that I am living in China. Life in the student residential district is not a part of my education. It's just that I need a place to eat and sleep.

[A-22-PG]

This interpretation suggested that the visual identity on campus could be readily perceived by students. The way of visualising the resources from the parent institutions gives students a directly understanding of how TJVU-A operates, how the two parent partners collaborate, and how they integrate and develop the organisational resources. Although those understandings may only partially reflect the collaboration between the parent institutions, the campus design could be the most straightforward way to experience an education. This point makes it clear why CP-A rejected the prospect of establishing the residential college in the student residential district, and why students observed the Chinese style temple in the teaching district confused them and decreased their experience of an international education. Put another way, students expecte and

value the connection with UKPU-A as a positive part of international education, while they describe the localisation in the student residential district and the connection with CP-A as diluting that international education. Taking another example, mentioned in section 4.4, as TJVU-A use the same textbook and course material in the education they offer as is used at UKPU-A, the strong connection with UKPU-A from an academic aspect again reinforced TJVU-A's UK-style international education.

The strong connection with UKPU-A in the academic aspect was also reflected in the two pathways to obtaining a degree. As introduced in section 4.4, students were assigned 2+2 or 4+0 programmes according to their Gaokao result. Students who graduate through a 2+2 programme receive a UK degree from UKPU-A and a diploma from the Chinese MoE. Those who graduate through a 4+0 programme could receive a UK degree from TJVU-A as well as a degree and diploma certificates from the Chinese MoE. The entry requirements of a 2+2 programme are higher than those for 4+0 programmes, and most 4+0 student participants consider a 2+2 programme is better than a 4+0 programme. Students who achieved the criteria entitling them to transfer from a 4+0 programme to a 2+2 programme (generally, these are the top 1% of students in Year 2) would take this opportunity to study at UKPU-A from Year 3. This experiential process relates to the reputation of UKPU-A mentioned previously. The opportunity to study in the UK before sitting the examinations for a master's degree is seen a crucial part of TJVU-A's international education – a springboard to going abroad. While most students and staff members use this description in a neutral way, one fourth-year undergraduate student, who has been moved to UKPU-A for one year, interpreted it from a negative perspective:

When I was in the UK, no one introduced the history of UKPU-A to me, but I did have the feeling of being in a 'university'. But at TJVU-A, the feeling becomes 'I have loads of course work and my friends are preparing for postgraduate study.' All of us treat TJVU-A as a springboard; no one thinks I am from TJVU-A. When they introduce themselves, they would imagine I got my master's from UCL, from Oxbridge. Then say I undertook my postgraduate education at TJVU-A. People around you place greater emphasis on your outcome, rather than your current stage of experience. We do

love our school, and have an identity as well, but we greatly value the outcome. [A-26-UG4]

Most students take TJVU-A as a springboard to study abroad. They could bypass the IELTS, become familiar with UK life and take advantage of the UK system when studying as postgraduates. However, there is an exception. Interviewee A-04-PD2 is a second-year PhD student who chose the 2+2 during the Gaokao process and achieved the top 1% grade at the end of Year 2 at TJVU-A. She then gave up going to UKPU-A and transferred from her 2+2 programme to a 4+0 programme. She emphasised the importance of continuation and coherence of the learning process, and explained the reasons for her having given up:

Before my enrolment, the BSc Computer Science only recruited 2+2 students. We are the first cohort that has both 2+2 and 4+0 pathways. Many 4+0 students wanted to transfer to 2+2. At that time, I considered my options carefully. The lecturer here hoped I would stay because I did well in both academic and student affairs. An important reason for transferring from 2+2 to 4+0 is that I wanted to take maximum advantage of my options. So I founded the first student society in the computer science department, and organised several campaigns and coding competitions. All the staff members were very supportive. This is what I called ‘taking advantage’. Most students left through the 2+2 programme and I could use many resources. My choices have also influenced the next cohorts. Some students who achieved a very good academic performance chose to stay, as well. It is not essential that we go abroad through the 2+2 programme. We have such a high ratio of graduates who get into top-ranked postgraduate study. If you want to go abroad, there are always opportunities. [A-04-PD2]

Although transferring from a 4+0 programme to a 2+2 programme is still competitive at TJVU-A, and most students place greater value on a 2+2 programme – as the closer to the UK, the more international education they receive – undertaking an international education entirely in China is gradually becoming recognised as being as valuable as studying in the UK.

4.6 Chapter summary

To conclude, experiencing an international education at TJVU-A is a process of pursuing and engaging with a UK-style education, which has been both appreciated and contested by students. The TJVU-A case presented the resource base of its UK-style international education and discussed how students experienced this education, with an emphasis on their interpretations and reflections on the UK-style. The within-case findings addressed a number of themes. First, the chapter discussed the varying resources comprising the international education at TJVU-A and how those resources represent the collaboration between UKPU-A and CP-A. The concept of organisational resources was utilised to enrich the understanding of the wide range of student inputs into their UK-style international education. Second, those resources have been perceived, experienced and interpreted by students from particular and intersectional perspectives. Students contribute to the objective notion of resources and influence their international education with their subjective understandings of expectations and experiences. Based on the resource base and the articulations of and confrontations from organisational members, we saw how the competitive advantage at TJVU-A – a UK-style international education – is shaped and re-shaped, and how it may be explored (see Chapter 6). Chapter 5 presents a further case of a Chinese–UK TJVU with a comparable structure, in which the TJVU-B employs a strategy to ‘build a new independent international university’ in China.

Chapter 5 Joint-Venture University B: Making an Innovation of the ‘International Education’

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 showed detailed findings from the case study on TJVU-A, in which the resource base, student experience and the competitive advantage – a UK-style international education – were elucidated. This chapter presents the findings of the second university under study: Joint Venture University B (TJVU-B) and the consideration of its ‘new university provision’ of innovative international education. TJVU-B was established in 2006, shortly after TJVU-A, as another notable CFCRS entity. Beginning as only one building, TJVU-B has established its own campus and educational facilities while simultaneously launching its education. Additionally, TJVU-B has access to the shared facilities (e.g. canteens and student accommodation) in the education town in which it is located in a city in eastern China. TJVU-B continues to innovate its vision and pursue its mission of providing an international education (QAA, 2012b). Hence, this chapter aims to provide a nuanced analysis of the international education it has innovated – once more, stressing that students’ aspirations make sense of the meaning of an education in accordance with various TJVU contexts.

The structure of this chapter follows the pattern of Chapter 4. After the Introduction, section 5.2 presents detailed case information. Section 5.3 addresses the resource base of TJVU-B, with an emphasis on its innovative activities. Section 5.4 analyses how students at this university articulate, tackle and reconcile their international education with their perceived understanding. Section 5.5 concludes the chapter by summarising the meaning of an innovative international education to students, and how the interactive characteristics of the network between people and resources complements the transformation process of organisational resources and competitive advantage.

5.2 Case information

Based on the official documents and as reflected by staff members as well, this section introduces the detailed information for TJVU-B. This university was set up by two universities, both of which are well-established in their respective home countries.

Following the signature of the agreement between the two parent universities in 2004, TJVU-B began to enrol students officially in 2006. After a development period of more than 10 years, TJVU-B had grown from a one-building university with just 164 students (the initial campus building having been leased to TJVU-B by the municipal government on favourable terms, TJVU-B, no date) into a comprehensive university with more than 1,000 enrolled students (TJVU-B, 2020). This university aims to deliver an innovative international education to its students that is based on a UK education but blends the strengths from a variety of higher education systems (TJVU-B, no date).

TJVU-B's international partner is a founding member of the British Russell Group universities (referred to as the UK parent university of TJVU-B: UKPU-B), while the Chinese partner (referred to as the Chinese parent university of TJVU-B: CP-B) is a state-owned university in the C9 league.⁶ According to the agreement for this strategic alliance, UKPU-B was initially charged with delivering the learning programmes of the educational outcome (TJVU-B, no date). In addition, all online library resources at UKPU-B could be accessed at TJVU-B through the intranet (QAA, 2012b). At the same time, CPU-B had responsibility for financial, administrative and other non-academic matters. In addition, CPU-B provides academic support for the Year 1 mathematics and physics foundation courses for undergraduates.

TJVU-B is located in a relatively affluent city from which it takes fewer than 30 minutes by train to reach Shanghai. Its main campus is in the higher education town in Suzhou, where several local universities, research institutions and China–foreign joint programmes are gathered and engage in their activities. In order to import high-quality education, the municipal government established this town in cooperation with the Singapore government. All the universities in this town can lease land and buildings from the government and can share public facilities, such as student residential blocks, canteens and a stadium in it (Suzhou Industrial Park, 2020). In this way, a community led by education formed here. The concept of a mini-society in the

⁶ The C9 league is an elite university group established in 2009 that aims to improve and lead the research capability and reputation of Chinese higher education. (*Source*: Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China).

higher education town supports TJVU-B with a pre-designed environment that is convenient for the community's purpose. TJVU-B only needed to focus on how to structure its international education for both Chinese and international students during its foundation period. Now, TJVU-B has established a comprehensive campus with two teaching districts and plans to establish a new branch campus in a nearby city.

Representatives from both parent universities comprise the TJVU-B management board. According to the description of leadership (TJVU-B, 2017), the Chair of the board of directors has working experience at CPU-B as the Vice-President, and the Deputy Chair is the Vice-Chancellor of UKPU-B. Seven further board members are recruited independently by TJVU-B, of whom four members have working experience at CPU-B and three are international members. The Executive President of TJVU-B is also the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of UKPU-B.

TJVU-B has adopted many characteristics from both the UK and Chinese higher education systems. Its long-term provision is to build an international university in China and a Chinese university recognised internationally for its innovative and unique features of international education (TJVU-B, 2020).

The admission of domestic students at TJVU-B also follows the Chinese higher education system and now takes in students from the Tier 1 level in Gaokao. At this level, TJVU-B attracts the students who, although they have achieved the top-level scores in Gaokao, do not have scores sufficiently high to allow them to enter either Project 985 universities or the publically recognised Project 211 universities; this is especially so in regard to popular courses. International students can apply to this university through an application process similar to that of the UK system with requirements comparable to those required to enter UKPU-B. TJVU-B has witnessed a rapid growth in student enrolment. The first intake in 2006 numbered 164 students, while in 2012 this number increased to over 2,300. In 2018, the total number of enrolled students was over 10,000 (TJVU-B, 2020). Student recruitment is conducted by TJVU-B independently although there are approximate limits on student numbers.

The academic staff at TJVU-B are also recruited independently (QAA, 2012b). Following the rapid growth in student numbers, staff recruitment has been the priority for TJVU-B. With a good international mix of staff from over 50 countries, however, a potential vulnerability is that many staff have limited experience of the UK model of higher education.

The core characteristic of TJVU-B is that all courses related to UK awards are taught and assessed in English, except for some elements of the foundation year and interest-led training programmes. The duration for UK undergraduate degrees is three years, whereas in China they extend to four years. Therefore, most students enter Year 1, although students with particular qualifications may immediately enter at Year 2. The Year 1 curriculum provides a series of English courses for academic purpose (referred to as EAP). Before entering Year 1, students attend a compulsory English test, and are arranged into various EAP categories according to their English capability. The EAP courses are subject-focused, during which students learn the relevant vocabulary and academic skills. The mathematics and physics courses are also provided in Year 1, which combines the traditional Chinese method of teaching with the active learning-oriented approach typical of British universities. These courses enable students to reinforce the foundation of their knowledge so that they can apply it throughout the courses of their degree programmes. It is notable that not all students enrolled at TJVU-B choose a specific academic course; they only apply for a general category of degrees (see Appendix 9) through the Gaokao system. Students in Year 1 have the opportunity to understand the courses in detail and, at the end of Year 1, students choose the specific courses with which they wish to continue and whether to select a 2+2 programme or a 4+0 programme. According to the UK education system, Year 2 can therefore be seen as the first academic year and this is the point from which students will begin their credit-earning study. Academic study has two pathways: 4+0 programmes and 2+2 programmes. At TJVU-B, most courses provide 2+2 programmes (except for five courses provided only at TJVU-B; see Appendix 9). All graduates from TJVU-B receive two degree-based certificates, one from UKPU-B (a UK degree, which can be approved by the Chinese MoE through an additional process) and another from TJVU-B (a Chinese degree). Appendix 9 presents all courses

available at TJVU-B and compares the names of undergraduate degrees on various pathways.

The admission to postgraduate study follows the UK system (TJVU-B, 2018). Students apply for relevant courses and are selected by the TJVU-B. The duration of the master's degree involves 18 or 24 months for full-time study; however, a part-time pathway is also available. The PhD degree lasts three or four years. Graduates of postgraduate programmes earn a UKPU-B degree that is recognised by the Chinese MoE.

At TJVU-B, there are 16 departments with 37 undergraduate courses (see Appendix 9, for details) and 27 master's degree courses (see Appendix 10, for details). At undergraduate level, graduates from all the courses obtain two degrees, although the titles of the degrees could be different from those of 2+2 programmes and 4+0 programmes. Students choose one of the programme types at the end of the Year 1, excluding seven programmes that provide 4+0 programmes only.

Due to the dual degree system, the quality assurance and accreditation process at TJVU-B has a complicated range of features that have to meet the quality standards of both the home and host countries, and requires accreditation processes from both countries (QAA, 2012b). TJVU-B applied dual accreditation to increase the credibility of its educational quality. With regard to UK degrees, this university follows the same criteria as UK universities; with regard to Chinese degrees, the traditional quality assurance agency is called the Higher Education Evaluation Centre (HEEC), although this institute does not take charge of foreign institution matters. The TJVUs were asked to renew their approval from the Chinese MoE, which process is seen as a formality only and not as focused on quality control (Hou et al., 2018).

To summarise, TJVU-B has provision to establish an international university in China and a Chinese university known internationally. This provision is reflected by the means that TJVU-B applied to increase academic quality in multiple accreditations, to widen the connection with various universities, to establish the independent identity of the university and to develop integrated academic resources from both parent

universities. Section 5.3, as with Chapter 4, adopts the work by Lynch and Baines (2004) to explore the competitive resources required at TJVU-B to establish its international education, and to discover how students and staff members interpret their understandings about the education at TJVU-B.

5.3 Resource base of TJVU-B

This section presents the resource base of TJVU-B in light of the six RBV concepts.

5.3.1 Location

TJVU-B is located in a relatively affluent city in east China. Both the publically accessible documents and interviewees' impressions stressed that the location gives TJVU-B advantages in respect of a successful foundation and staff recruitment. TJVU-B, though originally established as a one-building institution, has developed a comprehensive campus in the higher education town of the city. This university took advantage of the location by accessing shared accommodation to house students and facilities to launch its education during the foundation period. These physical and financial supports were largely bound in with the location. A staff member who has been working at TJVU-B for over 10 years explained the importance of its location:

Locating the university in this developed city, in an educational town and near to Shanghai, is helpful in establishing a new university. First, the quality of the living conditions attracted both students and staff to be here. In this educational town, shared facilities helped us to overcome the early years when we had a small number of students and the income could not cover the overheads. Also, the 30-minute train ride to Shanghai means you can explore the most developed city in China but still live in a relatively chilled and relaxing environment. This city is a kind of a 'low-speed' city. We have such a good location! [B-05-AD]

His interpretation linked the location largely with the resources bound to this particular city and especially conceived the educational town. Another staff member also mentioned the support from the municipal government when he emphasised the advantages of location:

The municipal government gave some support, but not financially. For instance, the land. The whole North Campus was free for us. The initial building in the north was established already, as well. The government rented it to us but didn't ask for rental fees for a long time. That was very powerful support. At least in the foundation years, there was no need for us to invest in the campus establishment. [B-06-AD]

Participant B-05-AD also explained the importance of location in staff recruitment. This point has been confirmed by several staff members, who emphasised either the connection with Shanghai, or closeness to their families. Interestingly, almost all the international staff members have mentioned the location when they gave their reason for choosing to work at TJVU-B. Taking an example from an international staff member who comes from the UK:

Where we live, such as here and Shanghai, the east coast, it's similar to the West. It's a safe place for us to come to because it's not too unusual. If I went to Xi'an, that would be different. It's more like how foreigners think a Chinese city should be like. [B-12-AD]

It is likely that, while domestic staff generally link location with local support and resources, international staff members were aware of the problem in adapting to a new environment. This partially revealed why all Chinese–foreign TJVUs locate in the east and south of China (CFCRS, 2020), which areas are the most economically developed and modern.

5.3.2 Physical resources

As the fundamental elements of launching face-to-face education, physical resources of a university partially represent the identity of its education. In TJVU-B's case, three dimensions of physical resources have been emphasised by the university and its staff members: advanced facilities and campus design, historical development of campus establishment, and situating the student accommodation off-campus.

As mentioned before, TJVU-B had only one building during the period of its foundation. All the administrative and academic staff members worked in that one

building, and all the lectures and workshops took place there. With the increasing number of enrolled students, TJVU-B first established the North Campus, which included a central building housing the library and administrative offices, a group of buildings for science and engineering departments, and a conference centre hosting meetings and visitors (TJVU-B, 2020). An administrative member discussed the development of the North Campus:

The establishment of the campus began with the Department of Science and Engineering [a group of buildings designed specifically for this department]. The education of science and engineering is the strength of both UKPU-B and CPU-B. TJVU-B started to develop independently from these disciplines. That is to say, we accepted and absorbed the advantages of our parent universities to expand our own education. The Centre Building is the landmark of our campus. There is a library that extends from the ground floor to the tenth floor, which is integrated with the administrative and professional service offices. You can do almost everything in the Centre Building, from your academic research to day-to-day problem-solving. [B-03-AD]

As suggested by the participant B-03-AD, TJVU-B addressed the dimension of its parents' competitive advantages (Argote & Ingram, 2000), and prioritised the dominant and key disciplinary themes from its parent universities in the design of phase 1 of the campus, the North Campus. This was done so as to strengthen the quality of its science and engineering education when the parent universities were new to China and adapting to Chinese market gradually.

The expanding campus also stressed the concept of a 'comprehensive independent university', as interviewees mentioned when discussing phase 2 of the campus expansion, the South Campus. A lecturer from the business school introduced the newly released South Campus when she was interviewed in her new office:

Look at this office, I just moved in last week. This building [indicating the new building of business school located in the South Campus], the tall building for the movie and art departments, and all

the South Campus are the property of TJVU-B. We eventually had a comprehensive campus in which to provide education. This continually expanding campus is a sign of the growth, development, maturity and independence of this university. [B-10-AC]

The South Campus was first opened in 2016 (TJVU-B, no date) and comprised several buildings for business school and media art departments. In this constantly expanding campus, TJVU-B also planned to have a gym and a stadium to supplement more diversified sport facilities for its students and staff members. A newly recruited member of the administrative faculty raised an interesting point about this development that, again, indicated the link between physical resource development and the organisational strategy of being independent:

The expansion of the space made me feel as though I work in a growing university. Though TJVU-B was born through the cooperation between two parent universities, the new spaces, new campus and facilities don't show too many signs of its parentage. All these buildings were designed and established to a high quality and advanced standard, and they are not similar to those of either the UK or Chinese parent. TJVU-B describes this as an independent university providing an international education with high standards, both in the teaching and the facilities. [B-07-AD]

These two quotes indicate that staff members consider the campus expansion as a sign of independence. More interestingly, TJVU-B also had a plan to establish a branch campus in a nearby city (Xinhua News, 2019). According to the official TJVU-B website, this activity was described as a key movement that influenced the development of its international education. Several interviewees expressed their pride in this strategic plan. They emphasised that this strategy reinforced the independent nature of TJVU-B, because this university, similar to some mature international universities with branch campuses, had the resources and capability to relocate its education.

While participants considered the advanced facilities is an advantage for TJVU-B, more than one interviewee tended to put emphasis on the development process over

time from one building to a campus with numerous teaching and study buildings, canteens and cafés, and sports facilities. Taking an example from a staff member:

The beautiful campus cannot represent our success. The process from ‘nothing’ to ‘everything’ is the success. [B-19-AC]

The reason why they value the process of from zero to one, rather than the presence, relates to their understanding that TJVU-B invests its income and profit in the campus design and expansion, which demonstrates its concept of an ‘independent university’. As a joint venture, TJVU-B was charged with the educational, financial and administrative operations independently (TJVU-B, no date). The development of TJVU-B has had a strong characteristic of organisational initiatives, stressed as critical to the achievements it made to date.

In terms of situating the student accommodation off-campus, TJVU-B took advantage of being in the higher education town. The university outsourced the student residential services to a local company that held several student dormitories and ran a business offering relevant services in the town (TJVU-B Accommodation, no date). While outsourcing non-academic services seems to be a common occurrence in universities, in this case, TJVU-B transferred the threat of potential conflicts related to daily living that can arise between students and university, and also avoided the localised elements on campus that could dilute the international environment. An administrative faculty commented on this strategy:

In this higher education town, all the universities and institutions deliver education and launch research independently. We share facilities such as dormitories and restaurants. The dormitories and student living areas are operated by a state-owned company. TJVU-B only can help students to solve problems that occur in the dormitories, such as by contacting the company. But living related matters are not included in our education. [B-05-AD]

In this way, the external support assisted TJVU-B to separate the international and local elements to the fullest extent.

5.3.3 Reputation

A further notable resource was reputational resources. As a joint venture, the reputation of TJVU-B was established with a relatively complicated status. More specifically, staff members recognised that the ‘big names’ of the two parent universities were helpful in advertising TJVU-B when it entered China, especially that of CPU-B.

Interviewer: What kind of support did TJVU-B receive from CPU-B?

Interviewee: The student enrolment still takes advantage of CPU-B’s brand. CPU-B has put its name in our brand, which was already very supportive of TJVU-B. [B-04-AD]

The name of TJVU-B in Chinese is ‘the abbreviation of CPU-B + the city name of UKPU-B’, while in English it is ‘the name of CPU-B + name of UKPU-B’. In each language, the name of CPU-B comes first, which indicates the strong relationship between TJVU-B and CPU-B. However, a lecturer took a different perspective to this relationship:

Although I’m not aware of any relationship with CPU-B in my daily work, its important name is to some extent a guarantee of quality. At least in China, students and their parents won’t consider that a collaboration with a top Chinese university could be a ‘diploma mill’. [B-16-AC]

However, TJVU-B develops its own independent reputation and brand consistently. The confusion between the nature of a joint venture and the concept of independence occurred in many interviews. Most of participants recognised that this means of co-branding a university has attracted attention from the public, especially from those people who were going to a university, or who have a family member planning to do so. A student reflected this point:

The name TJVU-B did attract my attention. But it is the only function of CPU-B for me. I actually don’t think we have any relationship with CPU-B. [B-29-UG3]

TJVU-B advertised and emphasised the fact of cooperation with CPU-B to reinforce its credibility as a TJVU formed by two well-established universities. However, other than supporting mathematics and engineering courses during the foundation period, CPU-B was not currently charged with any academic related operations and activities ([B-17-MB]). The students and staff explained repeatedly that the cooperation with CPU-B was only evident in the university name, rather than in their day-to-day activities. Reference to CPU-B enhanced the reputation and impact of the TVJU when students were making decisions after their Gaokao.

5.3.4 Network-bound resources

TJVU-B, as a joint venture, unsurprisingly integrated resources from both parents. TJVUs management team of would be established by both sides, in accordance with the regulations for running China–foreign joint venture universities in China. In TJVU-B, the management board was comprised equally of the members from each parent university. In addition, the Executive President was recruited independently by the board, who has a background of studying and working at CPU-B (TJVU-B, 2017). The Executive President took up his position in 2008, when TJVU-B was experiencing a turbulent foundation period and the leadership was unstable. He announced the concept of ‘an independent Chinese university with an international education’ and has continually driven this mission for almost 10 years (TJVU-B, no date). His strategic plan to establish an independent, international, Chinese university was understood and shared by both students and staff. According to the interviews, more than half of the interviewees mentioned the concept of ‘independence’, suggesting that the nature of TJVU-B is that of an independent university, rather than that of a branch campus:

TJVU-B is legally independent, and we don’t want the public to describe us as a branch campus of CPU-B or UKPU-B. TJVU-B has the ambition to be a world-famous university. No branch campus can be recognised as a famous university. So, we never announced that TJVU-B is a branch campus of UKPU-B. We are very independent. There is an expiration date on this cooperation. When the day comes, we hope TJVU-B is still able to operate its education as a widely recognised independent institution. We don’t want to see

ourselves in a position where TJVU-B cannot be operated because of the ‘break-up’ with its parent universities. [B-06-AD]

Another administrative member however considered the term ‘independent university’ as a mere marketing strategy to differentiate TJVU-B in the Chinese transnational education market. Additionally, this strategy can target students who deem that the experiences in a ‘university’ are more valuable than those in a ‘branch campus’:

From marketing promotion, TJVU-B could be claimed to be an independent university. I think this is a branding strategy. The nature of TJVU-B is a joint venture, but in an educational market, we should create a ‘marketing image’ for ourselves so that we can be differentiated from other branch campuses. [B-03-AD]

The university has therefore valued the concept of ‘independence’ attaching its international education in the Chinese market. Understanding the impression of independence is important for exploring the international education at TJVU-B. This wide spread understanding on campus has an impact on how students and staff members perceive the UK education system, and on how they either deliver courses and modules, or receive the education. As TJVU-B is a joint venture, the resources from its parent universities are integrated within it. However, the perceptions of organisational members can add extra elements and value to the resources. From the perspective of an academic education, to the network-bound resources at TJVU-B, including the UK educational system and educational support from CPU-B, can be added the value of independence by students and staff members, so as to (re-)define and (re-)shape the international education in a TJVU. The process of redefining and reshaping an international education in TJVU-B has been reflected partially in the statement of the English-based education claimed by the university and in the ‘dual language’ reality interpreted by students.

First, as mentioned, the academic education system at TJVU-B was imported from UKPU-B, and is related strongly to the library resources, accreditation process and the awarding of a degree. UKPU-B, as one of TJVU-B’s parent universities, provides not only a qualified and international mode of higher education, but also the certifications for graduates who took all the designed modules and passed examinations successfully

(TJVU-B Degree types, no date). This was a crucial part of the network-bound resources that relate to a well-established agreement and to sustained input from the UKPU-B.

The online library, book and journal collections at UKPU-B are accessible at TJVU-B through the on-campus intranet (TJVU-B Library, no date). By providing the learning resources and improving access to the internet and the most updated academic achievements, TJVU-B has claimed a major characteristic of being international. Importantly, the fact there was an evidence base underpinning the example UKPU-B made for the students and staff at TJVU-B to accept and understand this learning resource represented the international educational environment here:

We can access the database of UKPU-B. It allows me to continue my work in the same way I did in my PhD study in the UK. [B-19-AC]

Participant B-19-AC interpreted the accessible online library from UKPU-B as a sign of consistency with working abroad. Another administrative staff member further provided an insight into how the ready access to the internet and journals contributes to the international education at TJVU-B:

UKPU-B's online library and repository are fully accessible here. You can access the entire online library from UKPU-B. That means you can find learning material and reference journal papers, and undertake your assignments and research in the same way as when you study abroad. The openness of the internet and online resources is an important part of our international education. It is the same for the academic staff; this openness helps them to maintain the same research environment as if they were working in a foreign university. [B-03-AD]

Both the academic and administrative staff seemed to be content with the learning resources provided by UKPU-B, emphasising that the open access to the internet and online library through the system of its parent university continued to bring about an education with international elements. This view has been echoed by a student who

has been enrolled for less than half a year but has already recognised and become familiar with the online library:

UKPU-B's library resource is the most crucial resource to me. I was able to use a new way to explore knowledge and information, and all the information is English-based. This is the most obvious aspect through which I feel as though I am studying in a different and unique university, as well as enjoying a sense of studying abroad.
[B-23-UG1]

Moreover, in order to guarantee the quality of education and the legitimacy of the degrees awarded by UKPU-B, all the academic related courses, modules and assessments in this university were moderated through UKPU-B and the UK's education system (QAA, 2012b). Participant B-15-AC graduated from a traditional Chinese university and obtained her PhD in a UK university. She is currently working at the TJVU-B as a lecturer in the business school. As she indicated, there was a particularly strict process to guarantee the educational quality at TJVU-B:

The standard and quality of the education here is extremely strict, more so than both the British and Chinese universities. It's because of the three layers of moderation: internal moderation by TJVU-B, an internal moderation by UKPU-B, and the external moderation, which is similar to other UK universities. [B-15-AC]

An administrator working for the professional service indicated that:

Our [TJVU-B's] academic policy and regulation are in accordance with the Quality Assurance Agency in the UK. We set up the policy and regulation based on this QAA. All the examinations, the course design and approvals are under the moderation and validation of UKPU-B and the British educational system. [B-08-AD]

According to the quotes from these two staff members, and to further explanations from other interviewees, TJVU-B inherited the core of its education system from UKPU-B. That is to say, students who undertook education at TJVU-B should obtain a similar outcome as those who study in the UK. In addition, there extra awards could be achieved here that came from the innovation activities of TJVU-B. Further

explanations regarding how TJVU-B innovates its international education are presented later.

Another network-bound resource came from the Chinese side. CPU-B had supported the mathematics, physics and engineering related courses:

In the foundation period, the course leaders of the Maths and Science Department came from CPU-B. They designed the teaching modes and stayed here for several years, and then they went back to CPU-B. This initial support in maths education is recognised obviously. But we had taken over the whole educational design when TJVU-B is gradually becoming mature. [B-06-AD]

Participant B-06-AD has been working at TJVU-B for over 11 years. He witnessed and put effort into the establishment of TJVU-B, growing it from a one-building institution into a comprehensive university. Both its parent universities had strengths in mathematics and engineering education. This is the reason why TJVU-B focused on establishing the science building in the initial stages of the foundation period (see section 5.3.2). As participant B-06-AD described, TJVU-B embedded the UK system from UKPU-B and absorbed the strength of maths teaching from CPU-B when it was an 'infant'. When TJVU-B adapted those resources gradually in this transnational organisational environment, it began to take charge of the whole education process.

As another academic staff member responded when he was asked whether the education at TJVU-B was a UK-style education:

The first-year study in TJVU-B equates to a foundation year in the UK. However, students take more courses than in the UK. For instance, the maths courses. Originally, the teachers from CPU-B were charged with teaching those maths courses to build a bridge between the Chinese and British education styles, because most students didn't know what kinds of maths they needed under this system, or how the maths was taught and expressed in English. They had to become familiar with them. So, I personally think the foundation year in TJVU-B was designed perfectly by both sides

[the UK and the Chinese universities]. But who designed it? TJVU-B. We learned from the parents and now provide our own independent international education. [B-14-AC]

TJVU-B did not neglect the advantages of Chinese education, especially the fundamental mathematics education. Again, the integration of resources from the parent universities in maths-related courses was described as a heritage resource and the concept of ‘independence’ was reemphasised.

Both the educational system from UKPU-B and the support from CPU-B has been linked to an essential element: the language environment. TJVU-B stated that it provided English-based academic teaching so as to reinforce the student experience of receiving an international education:

The teaching must take place in English. It’s one of the policies of this collaboration. Also, an English-based education is relevant to the meaning of internationalisation. [B-06-AD]

Interestingly, when the administrative staff member described the importance of English in an international education, several academics mentioned that the importance of knowledge acquiring and language learning should be differentiated. They considered that making knowledge understandable to students was the priority, rather than using English on every occasion. For example, a Chinese lecturer from the business school explained why she sometimes switches languages when she delivers modules and answers questions to her students:

All the lectures and workshops are led in English. But during office hour, it depends – depends on what language the students are using. If a student asks questions in Chinese, I will answer them in Chinese; if they use English, I reply in English. I don’t think it has a negative influence on our English-based education. The importance is to guarantee that the students understand the content of the modules, not to be strict about which language they must use. Sometimes when a student asks a question, I know immediately if there is a language barrier. When I explain the academic terms in Chinese, they immediately understand the question. [B-15-AC]

Another academic staff member, the programme director, reinforced the reason for switching languages from a different angle:

I always try to speak English with my students. But if the student doesn't understand, sometimes I switch to Chinese. I don't think it influences the value of the English-based education. Using the native language is a way to help students to learn English concepts and terminology. Just like when we learn English, a pure English environment does help our study, but it doesn't mean we never switch to our native language, because this switch helps in learning the English. We guarantee all the lectures and most of the tutorials are English-based. [B-10-AC]

They acknowledged that these experiences helped students to understand the knowledge itself and to improve English at the same time. Therefore, it is notable that at TJVU-B the adaptation of education from the UK parent university has integrated elements from both the UK and Chinese universities. When the network-bound resources embedded into TJVU-B, this university emphasised the concept of independence so as to strengthen its identity – to reinforce that TJVU-B is a Chinese university providing an international education. This education has integrated different elements and has been innovated according to local conditions.

5.3.5 Human resources

TJVU-B recruits its staff independently (TJVU-B Our Academic Reputation, no date). The academic staff and managers of professional service offices are recruited internationally; meanwhile, administrative staff and service providers are recruited locally. With regard to the tutors of foundation education, originally many were recruited independently by TJVU-B and the course design had been revised and improved numerous times:

The maths course in our foundation year was designed by many experienced professors from [CPU-B]. But the design has changed a great deal from the original course. [B-30-UG4]

According to the interviews, the ratio of international staff members at TJVU-B is maintained at over 50 per cent so as to retain its English-based educational environment.

5.3.6 Knowledge-based innovation

As mentioned, the network-bound resources from the parent universities have added elements to strengthen the image of TJVU-B being an independent Chinese university that delivers an international education. The innovative activities in education have been recognised, presented and emphasised by the participants. A lecturer from the business school, who has been working in TJVU-B for over eight years, discussed her understanding of innovation in the educational system in this university:

The teaching and research here are quite flexible. We deliver education in accordance with the UK quality assurance system, but we have the space and freedom to create and innovate. I lead my modules, I choose the textbooks and I decide the types of examination. As long as I achieve the desired outcome, I am free to make all decisions regarding my modules. This ‘space of freedom’ gives lecturers the right to make adjustments immediately according to students’ reflections and the dynamic environment. Also, as you know, I teach accounting. The regulations of accounting are different between China and the UK. We should carefully consider which content is suitable for our students. We either can deliver 100% of either the British accounting course or the Chinese accounting course. What we should do is explore the knowledge that will help our students to practice in different contexts, countries and cultures. This is what we said: international education. ‘British’ is not ‘international’. The processes of innovation, localisation and creation developed the unique education we provide here. We cannot define precisely what education system we are in because it’s quite mixed and integrated. We would like to absorb advantages from the various educational systems, from the UK, China, the States, and Australia. Then we can create a unique form of

education, to become a Chinese university delivering an international education. [B-16-AC]

This lengthy quote indicates how participant B-16-AC drew on her working experience to understand the educational system at TJVU-B. It is perhaps surprising that she did not place much emphasis on the education basis from UKPU-B, which was the core resource from UKPU-B. As suggested by this quote, the innovation of adapting the UK system was seen as the core so as to develop the education model at TJVU-B. An important part of this model was integrating and innovating the teaching content and methods to define and redefine the nature of an international education in China.

Another member of academic staff stressed the innovative nature of international education at TJVU-B:

TJVU-B encourages innovation in teaching. Last year, I changed the form of the examination from individual essays to a group project. However, I got very negative feedback from the students. The department was still supportive of this innovation, even though it was not a success. They encourage the exploration of what is the best way to teach. We neither sacrifice the educational resources from UKPU-B nor directly copy everything from its system. [B-15-AC]

Overall, the way teaching is delivered and engaged with by staff in relation to the localisation and innovation suggests the value of thinking about the nature of international education in terms of the context of the transnational alliance involved. According to the official website of TJVU-B, this university aims to improve and innovate higher education in China, to achieve which they are exploring a new educational model called 'syntegrative education' (Xi, 2018). TJVU-B does not place too much emphasis on the origin of the educational system; instead, it stresses how the students under the innovated model will be trained with cross-cultural skills and achieve the ability to lead industries in the future. Furthermore, TJVU-B has adapted the UK education in this system and established its independent identity as an international university, instead of a joint venture.

5.4 Stories from students: exploring the innovation and independence of international education in TJVU-B

Section 5.3 discussed the kinds of organisational resources TJVU-B possesses and integrates to derive its innovated international education as an independent education provider. Students enrolled at TJVU-B are experiencing this education. Following the structure of section 4.5 in Chapter 4, this section explores student perceptions of why they choose TJVU-B and how they engage with the education there. The section also discusses the comparisons between student expectations and experiences, which provide valuable data from to enrich the understanding of the discrepancies between what TJVU-B provides and student demand for an international education.

The reasons why students decided to study at TJVU-B varied. The rationales relate to students' personal experiences and prior knowledge about competitive universities. Student participants at TJVU-B addressed and described several common explanations of how they made the decision to be there. The personal related experiences – including previous high-school studying scores, family backgrounds and future plans – were stressed as critical to the choice of attending a joint venture university:

The objective reason was Gaokao score I obtained was much lower than I expected so it was impossible for me to go a Project 985 or Project 211 university. After Gaokao, I heard of this new type of university: China–foreign cooperation programmes, including joint venture universities and joint programmes. So, I thought, I will be able to study abroad for a master's degree in the future, why don't I take the preceding stage. Comparing those programmes with international elements and the Tier 2 traditional Chinese university, the former was a better second choice. My parents were of special support for me. It was important. So, TJVU-B was the best choice at that time. [B-01-UG3]

Participant B-01-UG3, as the first student interviewee at TJVU-B, stated her experience in detail. Subsequent interviewees reflected a similar decision-making process. Commonly, they failed in the Gaokao and lost the chance to enrol in their

dream universities, such as universities engaged in Project 985 and Project 211. Considering their plans to study abroad in the future, TJVUs and the joint programmes became their second-best choice. However, the reasons why they eventually choose TJVU-B focused on two rationales: the university's reputation and its location.

In line with TJVU-B's statement on its official website – that this university provides an international education – student expectations of TJVU-B had a critical dimension of how to be international. The main image was related to the English-based Western education system. A student who studied at TJVU-B for two years and subsequently went abroad for a third year as a member of a 2+2 programme considered:

The whole-English education is the best 'selling point'. It attracts students who are willing to study abroad. I had heard that the academic education is based on the UK system before I enrolled. I could learn both English and academic knowledge at the same time. Also, I could prepare well before studying abroad. Now I am studying in the UK, it has confirmed that the experience at TJVU-B over the last two years helped me to adapt to the new life here very quickly. Sometimes I think I've simply relocated from China to the UK, and everything related to studying is the same as in China. [B-02-UG4]

A student recruitment manager confirmed this point:

The importance of English has been recognised widely in China. Therefore, students that come here are highly attracted because of the English-based education. It matches the students' requirements, and those of their parents and society. Our working language and all the official documents and communications are based on English. Students have to become familiar with using English. And they improve fast. [B-08-AD]

These two quotes indicated that students were attracted by TJVU-B's reputation for providing an English-based education, and that they consider an English-based education to be a primary element of being international. Although most of them did not have any experience of studying in a different language environment, they

considered the English-based Western education as an advantage, because most students related the concept of international education to the Western education. According to their explanations, engaging in an English-based education can improve their Western-based academic knowledge and simultaneously improve their language capability, by means of which they could perform better both in the application for overseas postgraduate study and in the internationalised labour market.

There is another reason for the high ratio of international staff to students in traditional Chinese universities. At TJVU-B, the international staff comprise over 50 per cent, whereas the international students comprise over 12 per cent of the student population. TJVU-B aims to increase the proportion of international students to 20 per cent.

In addition, the network-bound resources, the UKPU-B degree and the opportunity to join the 2+2 programmes, which can study abroad directly in Year 3 without the need for any language tests such as IELTS or Toefl, are also reflected in student reasoning for why they chose TJVU-B. In other words, the connection with UKPU-B was still valued in students' minds.

Broadly speaking, students are willing to connect with the Western education system. Therefore, the high ratio of graduates from TJVU-B enrolled in worldwide top-ranking postgraduate programmes was another critical reason for student choices:

Many people describe TJVU-B as a springboard, a platform for applying to top-ranking graduate programmes. My parents asked me to enrol at this university largely for this reason. [B-01-UG3]

Another student emphasised the term 'springboard' with a link to their unexpected Gaokao result:

I do think most students treat TJVU-B as a springboard. After all, the ratio of students getting into top-ranking postgraduate programmes is attractive. Most students came here because they planned further study abroad. And most of us were able to enrol into a better postgraduate programme than those who are studying in a normal traditional Tier 1 Chinese university. So, even if we did not

perform very well in Gaokao, a better master's degree can become a career advantage. [B-22-UG4]

This quote reiterates a fact mentioned by a staff member – that the closeness to the Western education system made the application process easier than that experienced by students in traditional Chinese universities. While students at TJVU-B had already become familiar with the application process and their academic scores are recognised directly by Western universities, students in traditional Chinese universities have to face problems such as lecturers being unable to provide English-based references and score conversions not being recognised by Western universities. In other words, students value the international education at TJVU-B not only because of the internationalised learning process, but also due to the benefits related to their further study and career.

Another interesting factor that contributed to students' choices was the common understanding of a link between the high tuition fee and advanced quality of education:

The tuition fee here is really, really expensive, about 15 times greater than in a traditional Chinese university. Being here does put me under pressure. Though my parents said they can afford the fees, I have personally added pressure on myself. There is no guarantee that I can achieve more than my high-school friends who are attending traditional Chinese universities. What kind of education and service should TJVU-B provide? Can I achieve qualifications from this school commensurate with how much it has cost for me to attend? How hard do I need to work to offset the costs? Interesting! It sounds very transactional. I always think about these kinds of question. Also, I think the education here should be and must be more advanced than that in the traditional Chinese universities, the Tier 1 universities, otherwise why are the fees so expensive. [B-25-UG1]

However, staff members stated a different view about the tuition fee:

The tuition fee is affordable compared with studying abroad. I don't deny there are some students here with very good family

backgrounds, but a greater number of students come from families earning normal salaries. This is related to the level of economic development in China. For example, if I work in this city, assuming I have a baby at 30, and work until I'm 48 – 18 years, I can save enough money for my child's education. The development of the economy means that family incomes are increasing. So, from a purely economic angle, I don't think TJVU-B is an expensive university. [B-03-AD]

In these quotes, it is possible to discern a sense of the students' pressure regarding whether the high tuition fee is rewarded by the advanced learning experience providing further benefits. While both staff members and students consider the tuition fee is affordable by students' parents, this pressure was part of a realisation by students that acquiring a high-quality education is crucial, and they need to take concerted action.

In terms of the location of a university, it is surprising that more than half the student interviewees mentioned the location as an influential element of being international and prompting their decision-making:

I chose TJVU-B because of its location – mostly because of that. This city is located in the most developed area in China, and it is quite close to Shanghai, around a 30-minute journey on the high-speed train. I can get the latest information here. Enjoy a more international environment than in other cities. But living here is relaxing, not as busy as in Shanghai. So, I think I can not only take advantage of Shanghai – it offers more internship opportunities – but also live in my preferred city at a comfortable pace. [B-02-UG4]

Another international student confirmed his preference of location:

Life in this city is less complicated. What do I mean by this? Because it is more like a cosmopolitan city. You have great mix of international locals here. Every 100 metres, even if you don't see any international students you can come across Chinese students who speak English. So, communication is not really a problem.

Chinese people, by experience, are very supportive people. Actually, I have spent time in 40 countries. I have been for conferences in the USA, Italy, Germany and so on. When I went Munich, I tried to speak English to people but all of them speak German. But when I was in Shanghai, I tried to find someone who speaks English to tell me where to take the coach from Shanghai to this city, I could find someone to help. This city is very friendly, and the quality of the air is very good. [B-24-PD1]

In line with the literature of locational advantages (Dunning, 2000; Le Bas & Sierra, 2002), these two interviewees stated the connections with how the locational characteristic enforced the image of an international education in a university.

When students enrolled at TJVU-B, they experienced their international education there for two to four years. According to student impressions about how they understand and experience their education, it was notable that there were four key aspects relating to their perceptions: the educational system, advanced space, facilities and the diversity of staff members.

As mentioned in section 5.3, TJVU-B was keen to innovate a new education model that combined a British basis with various advantages from other educational systems (Xi, 2018). Students recognised the value of this educational model:

I think we are experiencing an international education. The British system is the basis. But it is only a foundation. There are many innovations on it. The curriculum should reflect the standards of UKPU-B, but the content depends on various lecturers, which means what you learn here is more than what you would learn at UKPU-B, especially the content about China. This education model closes the distance between theoretical knowledge and reality. I do think what I have learned here can be used in my future career. [B-26-PG]

Interestingly, while the official statement emphasised the innovation of the educational model, most student interviewees value the British system from UKPU-B more than the innovated activities:

We get degrees from UKPU-B, we access the database and online library resources from UKPU-B, and we have opportunities to study in UKPU-B as exchange students or enrolled students. Everything relates to the parent university and it can be seen by students as the most relevant element of their learning experience. On these bases, TJVU-B should explore further to strengthen this advantage. [B-21-UG2]

This view was confirmed by more than half the student participants. Their understanding about the basis of their education indicated how close the relationship is between student experiences and the resources from UKPU-B. Innovation of the education model cannot bypass the collaboration with UKPU-B and has to base itself on the fundamental education system from the UK. The connection with UKPU-B has a significant impact on student experience of an international education at TJVU-B. As one student indicated:

The education in TJVU-B relies on UKPU-B. Unless TJVU-B suddenly improves its reputation, or makes dramatic academic and scientific achievements, or wins many Nobel prizes, it is really independent on UKPU-B. Other than that, I don't think the international education here can be very independent. [B-30-UG4]

This quote again reflects confusion between the nature of a TJVU and the concept of independence. However, it could be argued that various inputs from UKPU-B and the Western environment were valued by students. Another student then emphasised the openness and freedom stressed in a Western educational environment:

We are treated as young adults here. The university encourages us to make decisions by ourselves. I really enjoy the open and free atmosphere here. For example, TJVU-B provides opportunities to study at UKPU-B in the third year. But this decision is made after you have enrolled at the university. You have one year to decide

whether studying abroad earlier is beneficial to you. Also, your course is decided after enrolment. You may have enrolled for courses in art, science or engineering at the beginning. So, if you don't have a very clear idea of what you want to learn, you have half a year to explore your interests and choose the specific courses within that category. [B-25-UG1]

An academic staff member presented a similar view to those in the quotes above:

'British' is not 'international'. The educational model in TJVU-B began from a British base. This model is still under development. I don't think this model will give up the resources from UKPU-B because the quality guarantee and the UK degrees are still the most attractive to students. We absorb the positive elements to create a new model of Chinese international higher education. The President does have a huge plan for this purpose. [B-16-AC]

There was an interesting sense of an international education at TJVU-B that, while the university stressed its educational model as an innovation and adaptation in a Chinese environment, and while students had recognised its efforts to do so, most students still value the importance of the UK education system, rather than the one of innovation. This perception was part of a realisation that redefining or innovating a concept for an international education is a complex task. One student indicated his confusion about the organisational strategy regarding how to integrate the Chinese and international elements to establish a new model of international education:

The President states all the time that TJVU-B is creating a new model of international education and building a real international Chinese university. But I still don't have a clear understanding of his concept. His thoughts change. I have chatted with him several times, but the content about international education changes from conversation to conversation. He always has new ideas. The positive aspect you can see is that the management team show initiative with regard to development, but the negative aspect is when they can find a suitable way. TJVU-B is only 10 years old, still in its 'start-up'

stage, so it's allowed to be unclear on some things. But I don't know how long this 'experiment' will succeed. [B-30-UG4]

Another crucial element of an international education was the diversity of staff members. TJVU-B stated that a relatively high ratio of international students is a crucial characteristic of an international education, and that the university aimed to reach a 20 per cent proportion of international students. However, a domestic student presented a contradictory view of international student numbers and commented that a target for an unduly increased number of international students could dilute the international education at TJVU-B:

There are many international students on campus. It creates a diversified atmosphere. We learn from the different cultures and knowledge of our international friends and we have a better understanding of how to respect different people. I think the ratio to some extent reflects the level of internationalisation. But I don't think the university should pay too much attention to recruiting international students. I mean, the recruiting standard should not be lowered. [B-29-UG3]

According to its introduction, TJVU-B has associated the growth of international students on campus with the objective of developing cross-cultural leadership skills and a global view among its domestic students. However, it is surprising that, while local students expected an English-based environment on campus, they did not expect a very high ratio of international students. On the other hand, the ratio of international academic staff and expatriates is crucial to student understanding about an international education:

I don't think the high ratio of international students contributes a great deal to the level of internationalisation. I'm more concerned about the teachers. I don't mean that the Chinese teachers are not international. My point is that a diversified group of staff can enrich the study in class. Whether the lecturer delivers a high-quality lecture, a clear explanation in English and a global view of knowledge, or not, is the core of the nature of an international

education. And these elements have to be contributed by an internationalised staff group. [B-28-PG]

Another element presented by students regarding international education was related to their engagement with space and facilities. As indicated in section 5.3, the university stated that TJVU-B provides a high-standard of facilities and equipment to students. However, their statements did not emphasise the connection between internationalisation and space on campus. Students, as the most critical users, explained their understanding of an international education that relates to the facilities:

The greatest advantage is the educational environment. The campus, especially the new South Campus, is really international. I mean, the design of the building and its interior is fashionable and modern.

The style is similar to that of a modern UK university. [B-23-UG1]

As suggested by student interviewees, the more advanced facilities than those found in traditional Chinese universities, the similar interior design as that found in British universities, as well as dividing areas in the library according to voice level as with foreign universities made them feel they were experiencing an international education. In other words, students experienced the education in several relative spaces, and the design and style of the buildings and the space relate directly to students' understanding of what education they are receiving. Interestingly, one student provided another example of this point:

The level of internationalisation is to some extent reflected by the space. The floor numbering, for instance, starts from the first floor in the fundamental building [the fundamental building was the first building at TJVU-B, which was established by the local government], while it starts from the ground floor in the new buildings. This difference, to some extent, presents a different educational vibe. [B-30-UG4]

Finally, the nature of transnational cooperation had been embedded everywhere on the campus. It is surprising that students always had individual understanding of the nature of the partnership and the relationship between the parent universities and TJVU-B:

The UKPU has made the education international. I can feel the existence of UKPU-B in my daily life, such as the email address following UKPU-B's name, or more than half the students joining 2+2 programmes to study in the UK every year. These facts made me feel I am receiving an international education – at least, not a traditional Chinese higher education. [B-22-UG4]

An academic staff member explained her understanding of international education by emphasising the relationship between the parent universities and TJUV-B:

The close connection with UKPU-B enforces the international nature of the education. The main reason for this is that the undergraduates receive degrees from UKPU-B, so there is more communication between us. There is less connection with CPU-B, especially with regard to the academic aspect. So, from my experience, the alliance with a foreign university already made the education here international. [B-10-AC]

According to the quote, an influential reason why students recognise that they are receiving an international education is the collaboration between the TJVU-B and its British parent university. Students treat the TJVU-B as a means to improve their personal competency. When questioned as to what improved personal competency meant to them, many explained that they expect studying at TJVU-B will improve their prospects of being accepted by postgraduate programmes offered by top universities, which reflected their original expectations when choosing TJVU-B.

5.5 Chapter summary

In conclusion, the case study of TJVU-B presented student experiences and interpretations on an 'independent and innovative international education'. The within-case findings addressed its resource base in order to establish its independent identity and innovative education. Additionally, both students and staff members interpreted their understanding of the international education offered at TJVU-B. The discrepancies between what students demand and what universities claim to provide have contributed to our understanding of how student participation could build subjective social resources to the process of shaping an 'innovative international

education'. Grounded in the descriptive evidence shown in Chapters 4 and 5, Chapter 6, dealing with the resource base and student interpretations of the differentiated international educations, will discuss the relevant topics through comparing the within-case findings from the case studies of the two TJVUs.

Chapter 6 Cross-case Comparative Research Findings

6.1 Introduction

According to the within-case findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5, it can be seen that the two Chinese–UK TJVUs launch their international education with distinctive focuses. While TJVU-A places emphasis on a UK-style education, TJVU-B expands on collaboration, emphasising the elements of an independent and innovative education (QAA, 2102b). This chapter, therefore, further compares the variations between TJVU-A and TJVU-B. According to Lynch and Baines (2004) and de Haan (2015), and together with the impressions of staff and students, several themes showing various dimensions of an international education will be compared in this chapter.

The remainder of this chapter is organised in four sections. Section 6.2 briefly summarises the resource base of the two TJVUs and section 6.3 analyses the competitive environment in the Chinese higher education sector. In this section, the main competitor of TJVUs and the objective of that competition will be explained in detail. Section 6.4 considers how the TJVUs under study interpret and practice their international education in their daily activities and discussing the varying emphases between their styles. In this section, several elements of the different ways in which each TJVU delivers its education will be compared. Section 6.5 concludes the chapter by considering the vital role students can play in shaping and reshaping the content and culture of TJVUs.

The contents of this chapter draw on the first two research questions clarified in Chapter 2:

- (i) What exactly constitutes an international education?
- (ii) How do students articulate, participate, tackle and evaluate an international education in the context of a TJVU?

The analysis between resource-based themes and student perceptions indicates that there are connections and mismatches regarding international education between the provisions made by TJVU-A and TJVU-B and students' impressions and

understanding of them. Importantly, these linkages and differences can be strengthened, undermined, or refreshed through student participation.

6.2 Overview of resource bases of TJVU-A and TJVU-B

Universities require resources to compete with each other and to survive in a varied market context. TJVUs were encouraged as a means to establish IBCs in China. In this way, foreign educators could not only take advantage and make good use of resources with which existing institutions were endowed, but could also survive and thrive in the Chinese market. According to Chapters 4 and 5, there are six categories of competitive resources: location, physical resources, human resources, reputation, network-bound resources and knowledge-based innovation. These categories of competitive resources comprise TJVUs' international education. Table 6.1 summarises the RBV concepts that have been explained in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

Table 6.1 Resource base analysis of China–UK TJVUs

RBV concept	Description	Explanation and example of China–UK TJVUs
Location	Location provides advantages for operational costs, cultural attractiveness, and links to the specific connection with and support from the local context.	China attracts international students; The city attracts domestic students; The location also links to the specific connection with and support from the local context.
Physical resources	The buildings, equipment and space in which to provide the education, including the teaching buildings, study space, research facilities, student accommodation and other service facilities.	These tangible resources include the teaching buildings, space, equipment and the student accommodation.
Human resources	Qualified academic staff to leverage teaching and research; advanced administration to enhance service quality.	International academic staff; managerial professionals.
Reputation	Reputation – which is partly inherited from their parent universities and partly developed by TJVUs – enables a university to communicate effectively and efficiently with its stakeholders and the public.	The reputation of a TJVU is partly that of their parent universities and partly of their own making. Also, resources related to reputation contain the elements that build a trust-related relationship with both local and international students.
Network-bound resources	Resources that are highly bound with the collaboration with the parent universities.	This parameter includes the resources that are highly bound in the collaboration with their parent universities, such as educational resources, dual degrees for undergraduate students and the managerial process.
Knowledge-based innovation	The ability to take initiatives and autonomy, which enables the university to be more competitive in the local market; knowledge-based innovation includes the tacit and explicit properties possessed by the university, with emphasis placed on the student experience and understanding, as well as the adjustment of teaching methods.	Innovation in a TJVU is complicated. With regard to maintaining the standard of education as at the UKPU, TJVUs create innovations from various perspectives, including those related to modules and courses, the accreditation process, and marketing intelligence.

According to the analysis of the resource bases in TJVUs, both TJVU-A and TJVU-B have taken advantage of their organisational resources to inaugurate international education. Both TJVU-A and TJVU-B implemented their education in an English-based environment. All students and staff were asked to speak and write in English on official occasions, such as in lectures, booklets, student guides and other marketing communication material and in daily meetings. This environment fits in well with students' desire to access a Western learning process and for academic staff to conduct research with an international dimension. Also, their policy of dual degrees for undergraduates and a joint accreditation process enhances students' recognition of and confidence in their international education. In addition, the high ratio of international staff and students enhance the international image of TJVU-A and TJVU-B at the same time. While these two universities had several common elements in their education programmes, TJVU-A and TJVU-B have formed different brands and public images, which could be seen as the heterogeneity of delivering international education. However, it can be observed that organisational resources have been utilised interchangeably to describe an international education. Therefore, this thesis leverages a more education-oriented framework regarding the utilisation of resource-based concepts by which this thesis clarifies the discrepancies between the kinds of education universities claim to provide and the demands and experiences of students. Based on a comparison of the common elements in competitive advantage identified by Lynch and Baines (2004) and de Haan (2015), this study uses reputation, academic quality, quality of services, network relationships and experiential knowledge as the key parameters when unpacking and comparing the international education of the two TJVUs in the form of competitive advantage (see section 6.4). Section 6.3 discusses the competitive context in which TJVUs operate in the Chinese higher education market so as to identify the reason why implementing international education successfully in China could be to their advantage.

6.3 Competitive environment in Chinese higher education sector

The higher education environment in China is becoming increasingly competitive. By May 2017, there were almost 3,000 universities and colleges in mainland China, including 39 Project 985 universities and 116 Project 211 institutions (MoE, 2018).

These institutions represent the highest standard of Chinese higher education attainment. The TJVUs, which first appeared in 2004, were a new type of universities in China and were faced with competition from the existing traditional Chinese universities. In this context, understanding the challenges of running educational institutions in China, the most significant competitors for TJVUs and the objectives of such competition comprise an important first step in exploring why inaugurating international education successfully in China can provide advantages.

6.3.1 Challenges for TJVUs as a new type of university in China

As mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5, TJVU-A and TJVU-B each took advantage of a transnational strategic alliance between a foreign parent university and a local partner to deliver their education in China. By developing the resources with which their parent universities were endowed, these two TJVUs have run their education systems successfully for over 10 years. However, they still face challenges as a new type of university in China in relation to new environmental adaptation and competition, especially when they seek to build and strengthen their connection with their students.

First, TJVU-A and TJVU-B face challenges that the public needs to recognise, especially student decision-makers and their parents. Several examples have been given in Chapters 4 and 5 regarding how students initially came to know about the TJVUs. During the interviews, more than half of the participants mentioned that they did not hear about the educational structure of a TJVU before they received their Gaokao score and had to give serious consideration to an educational destination. This phenomenon reflected the fact that these two universities were still facing the challenge of attracting public attention and creating their reputations. The reasons for are varied: these included the small number of TJVUs in the Chinese higher education sector (over thousand CFCRS, 9 of which operate as independent legal entities); and the relatively short length of time for which TJVUs had been in existence, and their exclusion from the traditional Chinese higher education system. In addition, the names of the TJVUs confused students. One student from TJVU-A explained:

The first time I heard the name of this university, I didn't think it was a legitimate university. The name of a foreign university followed by a local city sounds like a diploma mill. I didn't know

this university and I didn't even want to know more about it because of its name. [A-22-PG]

The response to TJVU-B's name was similar, as it contains the elements referencing both parent universities. This form of branding to some extent blocked student consumers' willingness to explore the nature of the TJVUs further. However, staff interviewees largely recognised this branding strategy as an advertising advantage. The quote above reflects that the level of recognition had a dimension of trust-building between students and the university. The inability of students to recognise a new form of higher education institution prevented students from perceiving TJVUs in a positive light. As mentioned in Chapter 4, this trust-building process was reinforced by improving the TVJUs' organisational reputation on the basis of collaboration with a foreign parent university.

During the process of becoming well-known and developing a good reputation, the second challenge is to establish their distinct identities, by which they can be differentiated from each other. TJVU-A and TJVU-B were the earliest TJVUs in China. Both of them were recognised as full-scale TJVUs, meaning that they are legally independent, adopt their own curriculum and offer a range of courses from the foreign parent universities at both undergraduate and graduate levels (Stanfield & Wang, 2012). During interviews, the participants in one TJVU made positive mention of the other when they described the characteristics of their universities. Therefore, as two China-UK TJVUs with many similarities, TJVU-A and TJVU-B have to deal with the challenge of being differentiated by student consumers; through dealing with this challenge, they are able to build a recognisable and distinct image.

The final challenge, which should be addressed cautiously, is that the TJVUs need to be more competitive in the Chinese higher education market. Unlike local universities under the Chinese higher education system, which has a relatively clear vision and mission, TJVUs had to incorporate the dimension of transnationality and internationality. This dimension changed the organisational aim from being competitive to the aim of adapting successfully to the host country. According to the RBV literature, organisations comprise a bundle of resources (Barney, 1991) and those resources are the source of organisational competitive advantage. Therefore, the extent

to which TJVUs can develop their resources under the auspices of transnational collaboration becomes the key to being more competitive.

According to the interviews conducted in the two TJVUs, both TJVU-A and TJVU-B face challenges that relate to the gaps between the home and host contexts during collaboration. More specifically, the administrative relationship between TJVUs and their UK parent universities is not always straightforward. A member of the administrative staff in the Alumni Office of TJVU-A presented her experiences of this:

Administrative issues are fragmented, and they cannot be regulated in every detail. Sometimes we want to launch an activity, but the UK side does not agree with it. Sometimes they can be angry because we did not pass on certain information to them. These issues relate to cultural differences and also relate to the need for a policy that can handle this collaborative relationship in a more detailed way. [A-01-AD]

In terms of the control of educational quality in TJVUs, both TJVU-A and TJVU-B as the great effort they put into curriculum design, faculty qualifications, admission requirements and assessment of the learning outcomes (Lane, 2011). Taking an example of the accreditation process, through which the TJVUs are able to prove they meet with the quality standards of both home and host countries, there are no specific or unified policies of quality assurance in IBCs. For instance, IBCs in South Korea can only be accredited by the foreign parent university while, in Malaysia, both the home and host countries are the accreditors (Hou et al., 2018). In the context of China, the China–UK TJVUs are accredited by the UK QAA, while the Chinese partners take responsibility for a formal review process, by which the Chinese MoE understands that the daily education provided, and the operation of the institutes follows the required regulations. Although TJVU-A is more restricted with regard to teaching material, it follows similar QAA standard. More details on how TJVUs deliver their international education are discussed in section 6.4.

Additionally, TJVUs' competitiveness is also influenced by the challenge related to cultural and social issues. The mixed language and mixed culture of TJVUs provides

them an opportunity to innovate educational methods and improve the level of internationalisation of Chinese higher education institutions. However, this phenomenon also risks the possibility of cultural conflict and requires the acceptance of students regarding the methods used to deliver their courses and their campus lifestyle.

Each of the two TJVUs faced challenges as individual entities during their growth and development. The competition they face occurred relatively recently, once they had structured their educational modes and organisational images. Section 6.3.2 analyses the main competitors of these two China–UK TJVUs, through which the competitive characteristics of this form of education can be revealed later.

6.3.2 Competitors of China–UK TJVUs

In the competitive environment of the Chinese higher education sector, TJVUs face challenges according to their processes of establishment and development. In addition, this new form of educational entity must also compete with several other types of higher education institution.

First, both TJVU-A and TJVU-B treat the traditional Project 985 and Project 211 Chinese universities as their main competitors. The universities in these two projects are seen as being the top 1% of higher education institutions in China. Their entry requirements according to Gaokao are at the very least above the standard of Tier 1 universities, while the specific requirements for each course and university depend on the demand for the courses and their popularity among students. This is relatively the same situation as that of TJVU-A and TJVU-B. Therefore, during the interviews most student interviewees stated that the relatively high standard of entry requirement is a key element that strengthens their determination to choose the TJVU. Interestingly, however, most student interviewees considered TJVUs as the second choice of top traditional Chinese universities, which have similar entry requirements. The reasons why students perceive TJVUs as a second choice are various: financial reasons, lack of preparation for an English-based education, and lack of knowledge and understanding of this form of education. In the meantime, both TJVU-A and TJVU-B are improving their image and reputation as a competitive choice for higher education.

Second, TJVU-A and TJVU-B compete with each other. As mentioned, these two TJVUs had comparative backgrounds of establishment and scale of organisation size. TJVU-A's and TJVU-B's UKPUs are traditional red brick universities in the UK. As the first two China–foreign TJVUs set up in China, they are also the largest TJVUs so far: on average, TJVU-A has an intake of over 7,000 students and TJVU-B has an intake of over 10,000 students. As full-scale TJVUs, both have a large proportion of students that are high-school leavers who are taking a wide range of courses. In addition, their entry requirements of a Gaokao score are above the standard of Tier 1 universities⁷. The tuition fees (80,000–90,000 RMB, about £9,000 – £ 10,000) are about 20 times those of the traditional Chinese universities, and they are both located on the south-east coast of China. All these criteria meant that most student interviewees had perceived TJVU-A and TJVU-B as two of their candidate universities when they decided they wished to be educated in a China–UK TJVU.

There are various reasons why those students finally chose one of the two China–UK TJVUs. For instance, participant B-31-UG4 indicated he chose TJVU-B because it offered a biology course, which TJVU-A did not; participant A-05-UG2 considered that the higher entry requirements for TJVU-A made it likely that it afforded a better quality education; and participant B-27-UG1 planned to work in Shanghai following graduation, thus the short distance between the city in which TJVU-B is located and Shanghai was the key reason for her choice. The reasons for student choices reflect some of the competition objectives found in the Chinese higher education market.

Interestingly, interviewees from both TJVU-A and TJVU-B mentioned that their UK parent universities are also competitors, emphasising differing aspects of the educations they offer. As mentioned in Chapter 4, TJVU-A operates as an international branch campus of its UKPU. TJVU-A has a close headquarters-subsidary relationship with its parent university. TJVU-A has imported its academic courses and teaching material from UKPU-A, and has also duplicated buildings and a landmark from the UK parent university. Using this strategy, TJVU-A competes with both the UKPU-A and another UKPU-A IBC located in Southeast Asia. As participant A-06-AC from

⁷ See page 19, the introduction of Chinese higher education system

TJVU-A stated, the resources inherited from UKPU-A are limited. Both TJVU-A and UKPU-A are seeking quality academic staff, students and research resources. According to the institutions' performance, this endowment can vary. Therefore, the development of TJVU-A competes not only in the Chinese market, but also for the resources from the parent university.

Participant B-03-AD from TJVU-B explained this point, placing emphasis on the student choice between 2+2 programmes or 4+0 programmes:

We [TJVU-B] are competing with UKPU-B for the number of enrolled students. This is not so in TJVU-A, where students have already made their decisions whether to join the 2+2 programmes before their enrolment. We offer students an opportunity to make this decision later. In the first year of study, students take their time to understand, to experience and to consider which choice would be better. Therefore, at the end of the first year, the student choices are highly dependent on their experiences in that first year. We must constantly improve our performance so that we can attract students to stay here for the entire four years of their study. The fact is that the number of 2+2 students is still greater than the 4+0 students is because they still think the degree from UKPU-B is of greater worth than from the degree they receive here. But this ratio is gradually closing to 50/50. We are improving and competition with UKPU-B is also motivating us that pushes us to establish a new and competitive education both in China and internationally. [B-03-AD]

When UKPU-B received less funding from the UK government, TJVU-B realised that students' tuition fee comprised the greatest part of its income. Therefore, the competition for students is not only for financial reasons, but also for the sustainability of existence as a provider of education. Although TJVU-A and TJVU-B compete with their UKPUs from different perspectives, these two examples reflect the multidimensional relationship between TJVUs and their UKPUs. As Birkinshaw et al (2005) state, the relationship between a joint venture and its network is simultaneously 'competitive and collaborative in nature.

Additionally, there are other competitors in the market, such as other China–foreign TJVUs and joint programmes in China, as well as overseas universities. Passing mention was made of these competitors during the data collecting process which indicated they were not seen as main competitors to either TJVU-A or TJVU-B. More specifically, a few interviewees considered other China–foreign universities as competitors; for example, New York University Shanghai and Duke Kunshan University. However, the latter two TJVUs operate fewer courses and have a limited enrolment of students. Therefore, students unless are seeking specific courses or university brands, they consider TJVU-A and TJVU-B as comprehensive and full-scale education providers at which they have more opportunities to choose various courses and experience a relatively mature international campus life.

In terms of being programme-based collaborations with at least two partners, joint programmes that provide an international education have been widely applied in China. However, most of these programmes have relatively lower entry requirements and focus only on delivering education modules to China. Students were concerned about educational quality issues, as well as the stability of the joint programmes' existence. In terms of overseas universities, several interviewees stated that the competition with overseas universities is no longer obvious. However, these TJVU-A and TJVU-B should consider overseas universities as competition in the future. TJVU competitors are various and the competition they bring has different objectives and perspectives. Section 6.2.3 focuses on exploring what the two TJVUs under study compete for in the Chinese context.

6.3.3 Objectives of the competition

Section 6.2.2 presented the main competitors TJVU-A and TJVU-B face. According to the RBV literature, commercial firms take advantage of resources to seek profit maximisation. Therefore, profits could be used to measure the performance of the organisations. However, Lynch and Baines (2004) stated that using profit maximisation to measure outperformance was an oversimplification applied to both business and non-profit activities. Therefore, for non-profit organisations, exploring the objectives of the competition other than profit was not only useful, but also essential in applying the RBV. According to Porter's Five Forces Model (1980) and

Barney (1986), organisations compete for customers and other value-added resources such as financial resources and well-trained staff. In the context of higher education, there are more specific objectives to be seen in the competition.

The first objective is the group of students. Universities have concerns relating to the number of enrolled students and their quality. Basically, there are three types of students in a university: high-school leavers, mature students and international students. These three types of student are attracted by different elements. More specifically, TJVUs set up marketing departments to advertise themselves in order to increase student interest and raise the entry requirements to guarantee their student quality. After more than 10 years in development, both TJVU-A and TJVU-B identified their target group as high-school leaver students.

In contrast, their postgraduate programmes were not launched until 2014. As indicated by participant B-06-AD, the manager of the media service in TJVU-B, the university has aimed to explore the market for postgraduate programmes and expand the range of the programmes they offer in recent years. In the meantime, mature students who had graduated from Tier 2 universities or above and who were eager to receive an international education in China have comprised the majority of the postgraduate students. In addition, the increasing ratio of international students was another crucial element of their competition. TJVU-B has set a goal of international students comprising 20% of its intake to present their degree in internationalisation. This activity can be seen as competing for the international market. Therefore, exploring the willingness, concerns and requirements of different types of student was helpful in understanding the organisational competitive advantages.

The second objective is high-quality international academic staff. This objective strongly reflects the international dimension of their education. Both TJVU-A and TJVU-B stated that they are international joint venture universities in China. The characteristic of 'being international' was, to a certain extent, represented by the number international staff. According to the interviews in TJVU-A and TJVU-B, about 50% of the staff in both institutions comprises international academic staff:

Half the academic staff members are non-Chinese. Students, of course, want to study with the relatively more experienced and senior academics. The School (TJVU-B) also has a policy of supporting international staff; for example, in relation to their accommodation and their children's education. [B-07-AD]

This quote reflects the ratio of international staff as an element of 'being international' to attract students, and TJVU-B has launched policies to maintain, and potentially increase, this ratio in favour of international academic staff.

Third, TJVU-A and TJVU-B also compete for government support, especially that of local government. TJVUs as an international strategic alliance are unlike traditional Chinese universities, which are state-owned and have financial support from central government and from the MoE. Therefore, during the set-up operations, both TJVU-A and TJVU-B sought support from local government which, as mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5, the two universities received. For instance, CPU-A bought the land on which to set up the campus from the government at a relatively low price; the first building in which TJVU-B operated was rented from an industrial park. During their independent operations, it is vital for them to build connections and a network in a local context. As Birkinshaw and Pedersen (2001) mentioned, while analysing the value-added activities of a subsidiary, the 'traditional' local market was naturally under consideration. For example, TJVU-A has established several research centres in collaboration with local government, and the Digital Copyright and IP Research Centre received funding from the local science and technology bureau. In this case, the research funding comes from local bodies but not from the central government.

In addition, as mentioned in section 6.2.2, TJVUs compete with their UKPUs for educational resources and students. This intra-organisational competition with their UKPUs and other TJVUs for organisational resources exacerbates the complexity of a TJVU's role in an internal organisational network. That is to say, TJVUs took a proactive attitude to the allocation of organisational resources, rather than a reactive one. This point reflects the theory of the subsidiary role and subsidiary evolution.

In summary, the competitive environment of transnational higher education in China is relatively intensive. Therefore, exploring the resource base of TJVUs can be seen as a reasonable and meaningful approach to the examination of how TJVUs acquire competitive advantage in the face of complex competition.

6.4 Competitive advantage of TJVUs: making a distinctive international education in China

In such an intensively competitive environment as China, TJVU-A and TJVU-B compete with traditional Chinese universities and other TJVUs, and also between themselves. Competitive advantage is defined as a value creating strategy that is not being simultaneously implemented by any current or potential competitors (Barney, 1991). In this study, both TJVU-A and TJVU-B are developing strategies to provide students with a distinguishable and valuable ‘international education’ as their competitive advantage. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, by adopting the framework from Lynch and Baines (2004), the resource base of TJVUs can be unpacked to identify six resource-based concepts (location, physical resources, human resources, reputation, network-bound resources and knowledge-based innovation). However, the in-case findings show clear limitations to their framework for unpacking the concept of ‘international education’ in TJVUs. Therefore, based on the RBV analysis, this section compares the international educations offered by TJVU-A and TJVU-B, and explores how student interpretations can contribute to such education. Section 6.4.1 discussed how and why the preliminary RBV concepts shown in Table 6.1 is determined, by which Table 6.2 summarises how international education has been presented by the two universities and demanded by their students and, importantly, how the discrepancies between what universities claim to provide and what students demand can shape and reshape the education that is made available. The rest of section 6.4.2 – 6.4.6 explore the discrepancies between the universities’ opinions and the students’ opinions, as well as the interactive activities engaging the two sides, by which the ‘international education’, as a form of competitive advantage, can be unpacked by the re-determined five resource-based parameters shown in Table 6.2.

6.4.1 Unpacking ‘international education’ in TJVUs

Table 6.2 presents the five re-determined resource-based parameters of TJVUs (reputation, academic quality, quality of services, network relationships, and

experiential knowledge). Based on a comparison of the common elements of competitive resources as identified by Lynch and Baines (2004) and de Haan (2015), these newly categorised concepts, firstly, avoid the overlapping of each concept that Lynch and Baines identified, and secondly, clarify the undistinguished items of the sources of competitive advantage (e.g. reputation, quality and experiential knowledge), institutional context (e.g. competitive position of The Netherlands) and performance outcomes (e.g. growth of student numbers and ranking) in de Haan's work.

In Lynch and Baines' framework, the concept of 'reputation' is parallel to the concept of 'resource', including physical resources, human resources and network-bound resources. While scholars such as Lynch and Baines (2004) as well as Smith (2008) discuss reputation as a type of resource, the cases of TJVU-A and TJVU-B show that reputation is more complex than other physical, intellectual and relational resources. For instance, in the case of TJVU-A, the closeness to its parent universities is viewed as a guarantee of TJVU-A's educational quality. This closeness is also reflected in the similar landmark clock towers (physical resource) in both China and the UK, as well as the consistency of academic content (network-bound resource). These descriptions of the close connection to UKPU-A have been interpreted by both staff members and students although each side had a distinct perspective. From the perspective of students as stakeholders of universities, reputation is a shared interest of both sides (Knight, 2007; Smith, 2010). The 'reputation' of a university could be either a positive or a negative element of a university's education which is attributed by both the university and students. Therefore, considering the RBV and the perspective of students as stakeholders, 'reputation' can be presented as a parameter to unpack 'international education', but it also comprises the subjective interpretations of several resources.

The overlap of each parameter also occurred in the discussion of knowledge-based innovation and human resources and between physical resources and network-bound resources. The first two variables were always linked to the teaching and research innovation and to administrative services; the latter two were always given by interviewees as examples of network relations with parent universities and local government.

By considering the overlap between each parameter, Lynch and Baines' (2004) framework separates resources and capabilities that contribute to the competitive advantage of higher education. Research, teaching and network are considered the core and complementary capabilities that enable universities to be competitive (Bobe & Kober, 2015). Because resource and capability are interchangeable (Peteraf & Bergen, 2003) and do not have clear boundaries (Oladunjoye & Onyeaso, 2007), a revised resource-based framework based on Lynch and Baines (2004) is needed to unpack competitive advantage in the higher education sector.

Both Lynch and Baines (2004) and Bobe and Kober (2015) designed their frameworks from a top-down perspective, in which the competitive advantage of a university is determined solely by what the university holds and provides to its students. However, the in-case findings of student experiences indicate that students, as one of the crucial stakeholders of a university, also contribute to the 'international education' through daily educational activities, managerial practice and interactions with the university. In other words, students' experiential knowledge is also an unignorable parameter of unpacking an 'international education'. The in-case findings highlight that both the universities and their students contribute to the process of making an international education, in which the organisational and individual goals, including general reputation, educational quality and student achievement, are developing simultaneously (Tierney, 1988; Bennett, Ali-Choudhury & Savani, 2007; Knight, 2007; Smith, 2010).

With these considerations, the newly re-determined resource-based parameters are shown in Table 6.2. These parameters include reputation, academic quality, quality of services, network relationships and experiential knowledge. They allow the comparative analysis to avoid repeating quotes that mention more than one organisational resource, to focus on the educational context, to reflect the characteristics of HQs-subsidiary network relations (the relationship between TJVUs and their parent universities), and importantly, to highlight the students' subjective interpretation of the resource base and their contributions to constructing the education. Based on the analysis of in-case findings that gives an in-depth view of the TJVU's

resource base, the new framework presents a more concise and feasible criterion to compare insights from the universities and their students, as well as to distinguish the ‘international education’ provided by TJVU-A and TJVU-B.

The new, overarching codes highlight the differing views of the universities and the students in their interpretations of an ‘international education’ as a competitive advantage along the five RBV parameters (see columns 2–5 in Table 6.2). In addition, students, who are considered the most crucial stakeholders of universities, can affect or be affected by the development of the universities’ objectives (Freeman, 2010). They also share many goals and interests (Zakhem, 2008) and obtain their achievement through daily interactions with the universities. The incidents of ‘affect or be affected’ are, therefore, identified and highlighted here as the influence of students as stakeholders in making an international education. These incidents are categorised and their relationship with the RBV parameters are recorded under the theme ‘mode of interaction’ (see column 6 in Table 6.2). Five modes of interaction emerged from this data analysis process. This exercise establishes links between codes, categories and themes developed under different theoretical constructs, piecing together a complete picture (Charmaz, 2000) and exploring comparable incidents between TJVU-A and TJVU-B. Sections 6.4.2 to 6.4.6 then analyse each parameter in the re-determined framework. In each section, the parameters are unpacked from both the university’s and the student’s perspective to compare how each side understands and interprets the elements of their education and the process of achieving it. In addition, the mode of interaction is discussed in order to stress the students’ input in the ‘international education’.

Table 6.2 Unpacking an international education by TJVUs and their students

Resource-based parameters of an international education	Reputation	Academic quality	Quality of services	Network relationships	Experiential knowledge
Presented by TJVU-A	Synergy	Consistency	Investments	Integration	Bridging
Emphasised by students from TJVU-A	Selectiveness	Distinctiveness	Toughness	Identity	Spring-boarding
Presented by TJVU-B	Synergy	Accreditation	Investments	Independence	Bridging
Emphasised by students from TJVU-B	Selectiveness	Innovation	Distinctiveness	Opportunity	Spring-boarding
Mode of interaction	Confrontation	Collaboration	Suggestion	Acceptance	Reinforcement

6.4.2 Reputation

The first parameter, ‘reputation’, represents a university’s ability to communicate with its stakeholders (Lynch & Baines, 2004). According to the literature, the reputation of a university occupies a key position in building a long-term relationship with its students (Lynch & Baines, 2004). Bennett and his colleagues (2007) suggest that universities require strong brands to enhance awareness of their existence and course offerings and to differentiate themselves from rivals in order to gain market share. In the international education market, Shams and Huisman (2012) discuss the fact that reputation is one of the key elements that determines whether a university can go abroad and provide education in a foreign market. The findings challenge the idea found in the literature that a university builds its reputation to maintain a long-term relationship with students. Instead, students in TJVUs have their own interpretations about establishing the university’s reputation, and they contribute to the developing that reputation through a relatively long-term relationship.

In the case of both TJVU-A and TJVU-B, the universities described their reputations as a ‘synergy’ between their UKPUs and Chinese partners by emphasising the connection and relationship with the UK educational system and/or the prestigious local partner. The TJVUs are, in this way, able to attract students and gain market share in China. However, students in the TJVUs value this ‘synergistic reputation’ with their own concerns. While both parent universities contribute to the TJVUs’ reputations, students consider the ‘selectiveness’ of universities’ brands to be more valuable than the characteristic of ‘synergy’, regardless of whether the reputation is developed by the TJVUs themselves or closely related to the connection with their parent institutions. Therefore, in comparing the different perspectives of the TJVUs and their students, the mode of interaction in creating the ‘reputation’ is found to be ‘confrontation’ as there is an argumentative element between the perspectives of the TJVUs and their students.

TJVUs, as a new form of higher education to arise in China since the mid-2000s, took advantage of their parent universities to establish a locally acknowledged reputation. For instance, TJVU-A stated that the university aims to provide a UK-style education to Chinese students, while TJVU-B presented its proposition as ‘an international

university in China and a Chinese university recognised internationally'. The former emphasised the consistency of educational reputation to its UKPU, while the latter stressed its UKPU-B as an important partner in the education it had founded. Students' responses demonstrated that this synergic brand contributed by UKPUs is attractive when they have limited prior knowledge of the concept of TJVUs and are cautious about trusting this new educational mode. The brand of the parent universities could be the most accessible and straightforward information:

The main reason I chose TJVU-A is because it claims the exact same education as UKPU-A, and the UKPU-A's education quality has been certificated as gold standard, the same as Oxbridge and higher than UKPU-B. [A-08-UG3]

While how the UKPUs contribute to the TJVUs' reputations presented distinctive strategies between which to differentiate the two Chinese–UK TJVUs, both participants from TJVU-A and TJVU-B confirmed that the name of the UKPUs' underpinned in the brand of the TJVUs attracted their attention and persuaded them to acquire further information about them. The reputation of UKPUs as a member of the Russell Group meant that students could receive a qualified education in the UKPUs.

With regard to the Chinese partner or the Chinese parent university, the interviewees interestingly presented contrasting understandings according to the reputations of the CPUs. In TJVU-A, participants described CP-A as a trade-off of the strategic alliance because the Chinese regulations require TJVUs have a local partner in order to provide a degree-based education. In terms of TJVU-B, interviewees recognised CPU-B's positive influence on the reputation of the establishment:

Of course, the university's name took advantage of the CPU-B. It is a very good concept of our prestige. When the students' parents heard this name ... The influence of this [attracting attention from students and their parents] definitely exists. [B-03-AD]

However, during the interviews, most participants were proactive in stating that the daily operation and student life at TJVU-B had no connection with CPU-B and that this connection only exists at the strategic level. That is to say, the reputations of UKPU-A and UKPU-B have a positive influence on domestic student recruitment

because, to some extent, their names represent an international education, while CPUs, as the local partners, had an influence on the primary stage of gathering information about TJVUs. However, the findings displayed the mismatch of building the TJVUs' reputation. While the 'synergic brand' was emphasised by the university and recognised by students simultaneously, students presented their expectations of showing the state of their selectiveness in the Gaokao competition and of being in an excellent university rather than how the TJVUs integrated the 'big names' of parent universities.

More specifically, by taking advantage of UKPUs while establishing their reputations, TJVUs were keen on implement a high-quality education and to achieve a reputation of excellence. According to the official websites, TJVU-B stated their education to be 'China-UK Excellence', while TJVU-A described the university as 'teaching quality and academic excellence'. These descriptions indicated that both TJVU-A and TJVU-B aim to impress the public with their 'excellence'. That is to say, while parent universities founded TJVUs' reputation, their 'excellence' has also been interpreted and developed further to stakeholders. Students, as a group of the key stakeholders, had participated in developing the TJVUs' reputations to impose their willingness and demanding and to bring about the outcomes they desire (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974). According to the within-case findings, students emphasised that the high-reputation of TJVUs was largely relevant to whether the university can keep and improve their state of being selective during the recruitment process, the studying and post-graduation periods. That is to say, student expectations of the 'excellent' education and the demands of 'international' education placed on TJVUs related not only to the reputation of UKPUs, but also to the 'selectiveness' of the university they chose. The reason for this demand is embedded in the high tuition fee they paid and the relatively competitive Gaokao score. Therefore, according to their expectations regarding the quality of the education they would receive an international campus experiences, student recipients stated their understanding of how the universities could enhance their reputation as providing an 'international education'.

For instance, both TJVU-A and TJVU-B stated that their education is strongly related to the UKPUs and that the Chinese partner or parent university does not have any

responsibility for academic-related affairs. Students also recognised this point. However, when students were asked whether the local Chinese partners of the joint venture have an impact on the image of the ‘international education’, they separated the Chinese involvement from the academic education (UK-degree related education) through different interpretations and emphasised that the good reputation of international education only relates to the UKPUs. An undergraduate student from TJVU-A explained:

The CP-A does not take charge of education at all. UKPU-A take 100 per cent of the responsibility for education, CP-A’s input is zero. We don’t have any bias against CP-A. We just don’t want the public to mix us [TJVU-A and CP-A] up! [A-09-PD1]

Students from TJVU-B also remarked that the reputation of this university should not take advantage of CPU-B’s ‘big name’:

I don’t want the university to always emphasise the name of CPU-B. There is no educational input from CPU-B and students don’t get a degree from CPU-B. We should build our own name in the public’s eye. [B-01-UG3]

These two quotes reflect that, while both staff and students clearly recognise the influence from parent universities on the building of TJVUs’ reputations, students also take pride in how the TJVUs establish their own reputations. As a further example, staff members and students noted that the number of international students could be a sign of a reputed international university:

We aim to reach a proportion of 20 per cent of international students in five years. This ratio maintains our claim to be as a real international campus. [B-04-AD]

However, several students described this strategy as an advertisement, rather than a means by which to improve the internationalised experience:

When I read the brochures before I joined TJVU-A, there were lots of foreign faces but when you are here for a while you will find that you have your own friendship circle, and Chinese hang out with

Chinese, international students hang out with internationals. [A-09-PD1]

A postgraduate student at TJVU-B reiterated this view:

To be honest, you may know, we imagined that we could hang out with international students. But this just exists in the university's promotional videos. In the real-life environment, I don't think the domestic and international students could mix. [B-26-PG]

Moreover, when asked about TJVU-B's intention to recruit an increasing number of international students, domestic students commented that the lower entry requirements offered to international students would dilute the reputation of TJVUs in China:

There are many international students on campus. It makes the atmosphere diversified. We learn about different cultures and acquire cultural knowledge from international friends, and we understand more about how to respect different people. I think the ratio to some extent reflects the level of internationalisation. But I don't think the university should pay too much attention to recruiting international students. I mean, the recruiting standard should not be lowered. [B-29-UG3]

The above quotes reflected a mismatch between the two sides of universities and their students in building the TJVUs' reputations. It is interesting that students seem do not value the proportion of international students as key to the international education while this ratio was applied largely into the universities' ranking evaluation (e.g. Times Higher Education and The Guardian). As they stated, when the entry requirements offered to the international students are not comparable to their score in Gaokao, they would consider that the high ratio of international students cannot contribute to the 'selectiveness' of TJVUs. In this point of international student recruitment, domestic students are standing in a confronting position to the university, especially when they value the high tuition fees and their own experience in Gaokao.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the tuition fee at TJVUs is 15–20 times higher than that of traditional Chinese universities and students naturally have a high expectation of

studying in such TJVUs. In addition, whilst most students described their Gaokao as a ‘failure’, it is notable that those students still remain in the first tier of all high school leavers. The selectiveness of TJVU-A and TJVU-B can be seen as a claim that they did not lose their self-evaluation as a ‘good student’ and a consolation for their Gaokao ‘failure’. Therefore, when the lower entry requirements offered to international students dilute the TJVUs’ reputation, they partly decreased the sense of selectiveness among students. In this sense, while the universities follow the general criteria to develop their reputations as international educators, students’ experiences and impressions to some extent run counter to and confront an international education that the university claims.

6.4.3 Academic quality

The literature on education management widely recognises the parameter of ‘academic quality’ as the key component of an education (Cheung, 2006; Edwards et al., 2010; Smith, 2010). In the literature on student–university relationships, scholars also emphasise the importance of academic quality with concern for student contributions. For instance, Kotze and Du Plessis (2003), Eagle and Brennan (2007) as well as Carey (2013) argue that student expectations and students’ meaningful engagement in curriculum design and assessment can contribute to improving academic quality. In this study, the in-case findings also reveal how important academic quality is for unpacking the TJVU’s international education. The findings show how the TJVUs comprise each resource-based element given that academic quality is repeatedly mentioned in the different parameters, including network-bound resources (UK education system transformation), human resources (key talent influence on academic quality) and innovative capability (teaching, pedagogy and research innovation).

By using the preliminary resource-based parameters in Table 6.1, the in-case findings demonstrate that the academic quality of a TJVU is made up and contributed by variety of organisational resources, and that it is crucial in making an international education. However, a narrative related to academic quality can be utilised repeatedly as an example of more than one parameter. For instance, a description that a professor incorporated innovative teaching methods based on the UK education system is used as an example for both the parameters of human resources and innovative capability. In this case, the repetition and overlap of in-case findings does not provide an effective

connection between an organisational resource and its competitive advantage– the international education in this study. Using an integrated resource-based parameter relative to the literature on education was, thus considered workable in this study.

However, academic quality has not been utilised and analysed as a resource-based parameter. Educational quality in cross-border higher education has been discussed by evaluating the regulations, policies and qualifications of the education providers (Knight, 2007). As discussed in the literature review, this top-down educational study lacks a comprehensive understanding of how the objectives make the education in a transnational environment, how students perceive and understand the education from the perspective of academic quality, and how students contribute to the education in their daily interaction with the universities. Using academic quality as a parameter in this study to compare the resource base in TJVU-A and TJVU-B is seen as not only complementary to the literature on transnational education management but also empirically enriching the narrative of how the RBV can be utilised in the education sector.

As Chinese–UK TJVUs, TJVU-A and TJVU-B present distinctive emphases on how they guarantee the academic quality of their education. As mentioned in Chapter 4 and 5, the education modes in TJVU-A and TJVU-B are based on the UK system and follow the British QAA. However, the in-case findings show that TJVU-A stresses their education as being consistent with UKPU-A, while TJVU-B points to theirs being accredited by TJVU-B and the UK education system. Under similar education systems with distinctive emphases, students from the two universities presented distinctive perceptions as well. Most student interviewees at TJVU-A described its education as having a ‘distinctiveness’ that retains a relatively high level in the Chinese higher education market by maintaining consistency with the education at UKPU-A. On the other hand, while students at TJVU-B discussed experiencing some confusion with the mode of their ‘international education’, they value its ‘innovation’ and five-tutor system as a demonstration of its academic quality. Echoing the literature that students are able to contribute to academic quality by evaluating and judging the fitness of assessments and other teaching practices (McDowell & Sambell, 1999), as well as the literature on stakeholder theory that the resources must be allocated to deal

with stakeholders (Freeman, 2010), the findings illustrate that students and the TJVUs collaborate in creating the academic quality of international education.

More specifically, TJVU-A had a relatively restrictive policy on course design and module content to maintain consistency with UKPU-A. As presented in Chapter 4, the course material in both TJVU-A and UKPU-A keeps the same to guarantee the consistency of educational content. On the other hand, TJVU-B was more flexible with regarding to its accredited international education:

We take a serious approach to following the QAA and the outcome standards of UKPU-B, and there are three layers of moderation in every module. These processes guarantee that the knowledge level that students receive here is at least the same as in UKPU-B. Also, this flexibility gives us space to think about how to deliver knowledge and how to innovate in pedagogies. For instance, many international students come from Malaysia because they have family businesses in China, and the intention is that they will take over the business after graduation. What they expect from education is to learn how to run a business successfully in China. So, taking a Chinese example as a case study would be useful and attractive. Also, we can innovate the mode of examination. I have switched an essay assignment to a group project assignment because I think Chinese students should improve their ability to work in a group. ... Those adjustments and innovations comprise our advantages, make us understand more fully about what an international education located in China is. [B-15-AC]

According to the quote, at TJVU-B course leaders and lecturers have relatively more space and freedom to modify and innovate the module and course designs so as to localise the content and attract both international students with demands for Chinese context and domestic students who expect to utilise international knowledge in the local context.

In terms of the accreditation process, TJVUs in China to some extent apply a joint accreditation. As introduced in Chapter 4, the Malaysian government applies joint accreditation very strictly, which means that IBCs have to be accredited by both the home accreditor and Malaysian QA standards. In terms of China, both TJVU-A's and TJVU-B's education was reviewed by the British and Chinese accreditors so as to satisfy both international and domestic students, which enhanced their recognition of a quality education being provided in the two universities.

Moreover, different departments and courses had gained multiple professional accreditations. Taking business schools as an example, the business schools at TJVU-A and at TJVU-B were both accredited by EQUIS,⁸ while TJVU-B's business school was also accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).⁹ The graduates from accounting courses in those two business schools could obtain certain exemption papers from the ACCA.¹⁰ These facts indicate that various courses are accredited by international organisations, which emphasised the international dimension of their education. According to the interviews, the home accreditors currently take the majority of responsibility for the QA in TJVU-A and TJVU-B. However, the Chinese government aim to improve their higher education capacity, as well as the reputation of QA. Therefore, an agency called the Chinese Education Association for International Exchanges (CEAIE) has been established. CEAIE is an independent agency supported by the Chinese government. This institution aims to assess the China–foreign cooperative institutions on a voluntary basis (Hou et al., 2018). Chinese partners were keen to assure the educational quality

⁸ EQUIS accreditation is the most comprehensive institutional accreditation system for business and management schools. This system was launched by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), which is a global, non-profit, membership-driven organisation dedicated to management development. The EFMD is based in Brussels, Belgium, with offices in Geneva, Hong Kong, Miami and Prague (EFMD, 2019).

⁹ The AACSB is an American professional organisation. Established in 1916, the AACSB provides quality assurance, business education intelligence and professional development services to over 1,600 member organisations and more than 800 accredited business schools worldwide.

¹⁰ The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) was founded in 1904. This organisation is a global professional accounting body that offers the Chartered Certified Accountant qualification. Its headquarters are in London, with a principal administrative office in Glasgow.

of China–foreign education institutions, as well as to promote the overall quality of Chinese higher education.

Besides the accredited academic education, the innovation in students’ training mode was specifically emphasised at TJVU-B. During the interviews at TJVU-B, both staff and student participants mentioned its unique model for student training: the ‘Five-star education model’ with ‘Four professional mentors’. TJVU-B emphasised that students at this university should not only perform excellently in the academic area but should also have understanding and experience of the real world. Therefore, each student in TJVU-B has four mentors: an academic mentor, a peer mentor, a life advisor and an industrial mentor. Students described this model as an innovation that combined the UK and Chinese styles. More specifically, students can obtain academic and study-related help from the academic mentor, while peer mentors are students in a higher grade that can provide advice from a student perspective. A life advisor’s role was described as similar to that of a *Fudaoyuan* – an administrative role for someone who takes care of a number of students. Generally, a *Fudaoyuan* is a member of the Chinese Communist Party and is concerned with students’ examination scores, their lifestyle and mental health in order to help students adapt to university life in traditional Chinese universities. Therefore, this innovation in the students’ training mode absorbed characteristics from both Chinese and British universities.

The UK’s education system guarantees the quality of education but appears to contrast with students’ demands and understandings. These comparisons suggest a ‘consistent education’ at TJVU-A and an ‘accredited education’ at TJVU-B. At TJVU-A, most students accept their education as being very much in the UK-style and consider that the education in China is distinctive and advanced:

TJVU-A aims to keep the same education quality as in UKPU-A. All the academic-related affairs are the same. It’s exactly a pure British education in China. The consistency makes its education special and competitive in China because it’s different from other universities and gives students the closest experience to studying in the UK. [A-22-PG]

At TJVU-B, while students' impressions reflect their perception that this university is innovating its accredited 'international education', most student interviewees showed confusion and resistance when discussing the educational foundation, the accreditation system and the innovative activities of TJVU-B:

The President's mind is changing. He has many ideas and I have chatted with him several times. What he says is different every time, and every time he has new ideas instead of repeating the same thing, including his journal paper structure, the five-star education system. Although he mentions them all the time, he updates the content all the time. So I think his strategic insight is sort of special ... and I sometimes lost the thread in the conversations. [B-30-UG4]

It is clearly shown in this comparison of academic quality that TJVU-A has reduced the Chinese influence and aims to ensure its education is consistent with that of UKPU-A. Therefore, students seem to accept this philosophy and consider that they study in a joint venture branch campus of UKPU-A. In this way, students, to some extent, ignore the localised elements of their education, or separate those elements from their definition of the 'international education' at TJVU-A. On the other hand, the desire to innovate education at TJVU-B has led it to integrate localised elements as a part of its 'international education' and enhances its identity as an independent university. Accordingly, students have to make more effort to decipher the relationship between the UK-based degree, the integrated education mode and the Chinese context-based student training mode and, importantly, the value of new accreditation.

While the TJVU-A and TJVU-B have reinforced their academic quality with distinctive approaches, students from both universities take the view as shown in this example from a chemistry undergraduate student at TJVU-B:

The education here has been stated to have the same quality as UKPU-B, but this chemistry course receives accreditation from UKPU-B while we don't. We don't think it's fair for us. Many students have been raising this issue with the university for a long time and we have used as many methods as possible to get our message across. Our course eventually got accreditation from the

UK and it is the first time a China–foreign university has received accreditation. [B-29-UG3]

Overall, in order to maintain and improve the academic quality in TJVUs, not only have the universities made efforts to achieve this goal, but students have also joined the process as ‘collaborators’ by making suggestions and requesting that their demands be met in line with their understanding of receiving an international education.

6.4.4 Quality of services

The quality of services in TJVUs relates to non-academic matters such as administrative affairs and student services. According to the literature on the stakeholder perspective in the education sector, administrative efficiency is a shared interest of the university and students (Vorbach et al., 2019). Similar to the parameter of ‘academic quality’, the quality of services is also related to several preliminary parameters shown in Lynch and Baines’ work (2004), such as the location of the universities, their physical resources (campuses and space) and their relationship with the Chinese partners. Again, as a crucial element of conducting an education, the quality of services is mentioned several times in different analyses of resource-based variables. However, apart from the overlap in in-case analysis, the preliminary framework shown in Table 6.1 is also not explicit about the interactive activities between the TJVUs and their students and, therefore, does not clarify how such different organisational resources construct the international education that has been contributed, re-defined and re-made by students.

Both TJVU-A and TJVU-B are invested in maintaining a relatively high standard of educational space and service quality. Both universities emphasise their student-centred services, and the students report that the learning environment, quality of facilities, as well as the student service quality, meet inspection by UKPUs. However, the different campus designs of the two universities lead to divergent interpretations by the students. At TJVU-A, the campus design with separate teaching and residential areas, to some extent, represses students’ ability to experience its international education. Students in TJVU-A spoke of their ‘toughness’ when evaluating the service quality in the making of an international education. Due to the fact that the TJVU-B

campus has grown over time, students point to the university's investment in its facilities and services as being 'distinctive' of being a Chinese international university. The narratives of both the TJVUs and student summarise the mode of interaction in constructing better 'quality of services' as a 'suggestion' because the findings at both TJVU-A and TJVU-B showed that the non-academic services were the most common and widely discussed aspect by students and were in accordance with their suggestions, feedback and complaints. Both staff members and students confirmed that the TJVUs try their best to satisfy their students in their creation of an advanced learning environment and professional service system.

Unlike the state-owned traditional Chinese universities, which receive considerable support and financial subsidies from the government, TJVUs implement a self-financing policy, for which they are responsible to the board of directors. With regard to their locations, both are located in areas near Shanghai where numerous companies are gathered, so they have the geographical advantage of connecting with industry. In terms of government support, participants from the two TJVUs mentioned that local government had provided indirect support, such as the CPU-A purchased the land on which the campus was constructed from the government at a relatively low price, and TJVU-B rented the first building it occupied for a low rent. However, after their establishment periods, the outreach to industry and government at TJVU-A and TJVU-B required different emphases and strategies.

TJVU-A was located in an industrial incubator park where the local government supports start-up projects. TJVU-A took advantage of this and encouraged its graduates to start a business. The university provides spaces and helps them to connect with local companies. In addition, in order to create a close relationship with the locale, TJVU-A connected with several celebrities and philanthropists who were either from the local city or recognised this city as their ancestral home. Those people provided financial support and had a positive influence on the relationship between TJVU-A and the local government. Also, a staff member added that the current president is keen on connecting TJVU-A and the government. TJVU-A will receive a million RMB per year during the period 2019–2024 to develop its education and research. TJVU-B, on the other hand, emphasises that the university helps students to make

connections with large-scale and well-known corporations, and provides opportunities for internships during their study. The ‘industrial mentor’ was one of the reflections of this strategy.

In connection with local government and the self-financing policy, TJVU-A and TJVU-B, students experience a distinctive non-academic-related service. At TJVU-A, some students consider that separating the teaching and residential areas is a means by which to protect the UK-based learning environments during educational hours. However, most student participants seemed to concur, at least partially, with the opinion that the Chinese-style design and operation mode in the residential district diluted the international education at TJVU-A:

The buildings look different from those in the teaching area. It’s already not UK-style education. Also, the broadband service in our dormitory has been outsourced and it is extremely slow. Also we cannot use the ‘Edu’ [the intranet of the university] in the residential district; we can’t connect to the ‘external internet’. How can we say that in this district we still experience an international education?

[A-14-UG2]

Furthermore, another student complained that not only did the operation mode decrease the image of an international education, but that the apparent lack of concern for people in the service is also a significant reason for his disappointment in this district:

Students have to move dormitories several times. It would be convenient if the university could provide a trolley. Also there are no charging facilities for E-bicycles on campus. These provisions can be achieved easily but there are no initiatives for universities to make these changes. They think moving home is just a task that takes a few days. You can feel the thinking mode of the university – that it wants to make a stable environment, just stable... The university provides a standard service but not an advanced service that relates to people, even though it has the capability to do so. [A-12-UG4]

Facing the disadvantages in the residential district, students took initiatives to improve its service and change the current situation. A PhD student who has been at TJVU-A for over five years explained why the students took active responsibility to improve the conditions:

We love our university and it's still very new. What we promote may not be beneficial to us but could be to the next cohorts. Then it's all worthwhile. [A-04-PD1]

Her quote reflects that the identity of students in the university has an impact on their activities in engaging with the education. While students are portrayed as customers and they 'purchase' the education from universities (Baily, 2000), this quote reflects the fallacy of describing students as customers. Additionally, more than half of the student participants in the fieldwork made reference to the residential district and how they engage in its improvement.

In terms of TJVU-B, the university claims that the expanding campus can house over 15,000 students, and considers this is a sign of the growth, development, maturity and independence of an international Chinese university. As TJVU-B seeks to be a Chinese university, maintaining any similarities in the campus layout and interior design between UKPU-B and TJVU-B was not prioritised. Instead, the core activities relate to maintaining the service quality at an advanced level in comparison with other TJVUs and traditional Chinese universities. Taking an example of the interior design in the library:

The library has been improved because of student suggestions. For instance, we asked for USB chargers on the desks, and now we have them. Just after a summer vacation. Also the silent study zone was made separate in accordance with student feedback. [B-09-AD]

Therefore, the image of being international comes not only from the UK and UKPU-B, but also from students' common sense or expectations of an international education. For instance, the personal lockers in American high schools, which are always shown in American TV series, are considered a sign of being international. Therefore, a department in TJVU-B took the suggestion from the students and placed personal lockers in the school for both its undergraduate and postgraduate students.

To conclude, while students from TJVU-A and TJVU-B have distinctive attitudes to the quality of services, their suggestions and engagement contribute to the improvement of service quality. That is to say, for the universities, the potential to learn from students' particular experiences could be highlighted in the aspect of service quality. For students, their contribution in making an international education is also emphasised in this element.

6.4.5 Network relationships

The parameter of 'network relationship' replaces the previous resource-based concept of 'network-bound resource' in Table 6.1. Network-bound resources are defined as those resources that are highly bound in the collaboration with parent universities. The parameter of the revised term 'network relationships' emphasises the importance of Chinese–UK collaboration in the international education provided by both TJVU-A and TJVU-B, in which various resource types are analysed in a single category to avoid overlap. For instance, the landmark of the clock tower in TJVU-A has been analysed as a physical resource but is interpreted as a sign of a close relationship to UKPU-A. As a re-defined framework, Table 6.2 shows that the characteristics of 'network relationships' are described by TJVU-A and TJVU-B as 'integration' and 'independence', respectively. The former emphasises that TJVU-A is designed as an international branch campus of UKPU-A and all its international campuses are integrated into UKPU-A's internationalisation agenda. The latter, on the contrary, stresses its independent legal status in education development, by which TJVU-B is attempting to weaken its image as a subsidiary of its parent universities. In terms of student demands, students from TJVU-A emphasised their willingness to be part of UKPU-A's internationalisation strategy – a member of a China-based branch campus from a UK university. On the other hand, students from TJVU-B recognised the network with their parent universities but emphasised that the 'independence' of TJVU-B could offer more 'opportunities' to enrich their study and benefit their ability to relocate their higher education in the future. In both cases, the findings demonstrate the students' state of 'acceptance' to satisfy the current insights and interpretation of the network relationship from the university's perspective.

According to the within-case findings analysed in Chapters 4 and 5, all the lectures, seminars and tutorials in the TJVUs were delivered in English. This aspect was recognised as one of the most attractive elements for students studying in a TJVU because they can simultaneously acquire academic knowledge and improve their language ability. In addition, the entirely English-based education is seen as the baseline of an international education. The English-based education at TJVU-A and TJVU-B comes from collaboration with their UKPUs so as to meet the criteria and standards of the QAA. English, as the teaching and research language, is embedded in every corner on campus. Staff members who give a lecture in other languages take the risk of exposing themselves to appeal from students. An administrative staff member from TJVU-B also mentioned that he had twice been the subject of an appeal because he did not use English in the on-campus advertising posts. In addition, as has been mentioned several times, the network resources are also reflected in the educational resources and the dual degree policy for the undergraduate courses.

At TJVU-A, the university emphasises the importance of UKPU-A and building up an organisational identity as an international branch campus of its UKPU:

The strongest characteristic of TJVU-A is its ‘original taste’ of a British education. TJVU-A is one of UKPU-A’s branch campuses. Establishing international branch campuses represents the parent university’s strengths in being internationalised, as UKPU-A always claims its high level of internationalisation. Therefore, TJVU-A is a significant sign of this high level. [A-01-AD]

In addition, the university strengthened the concept of the UK-style of its programmes. As mentioned in Chapter 4, TJVU-A has not only achieved the QAA standards, but also maintained consistency in teaching materials so as to maintain and strengthen its UK-style education. While some students with a business background remark that the nature of a joint venture has already defined the fact that the education at TJVU-A will not be ‘pure British’, most student interviewees considered TJVU-A was a branch campus of UKPU-A and that it provides, or aims to provide, a ‘pure British’ education:

There are localised elements in our education, and they are unavoidable. But we are still trying to keep the education the same

as that in the UK. The localised elements can only be additional knowledge but do not replace the original education design. [A-28-AC]

In terms of TJVU-B, this university was seeking relative independence from its parent universities:

TJVU-B is legally independent, and we don't want the public to describe us as a branch campus of CPU-B or UKPU-B. TJVU-B has the ambition of being a world-famous university. No branch campus can be recognised as a famous university. So, we have never announced that [TJVU-B] is a branch campus. It's very independent. [B-06-AD]

In this way, the university attempts to reduce the 'Britishness' of its programmes and explores cooperation with other universities.

Interestingly, while students from the two universities recognise the compulsory Chinese and politics related modules in their education, they expressed a particular attitude to those elements. At TJVU-A, students consider those compulsory lectures to be a trade-off of implementing international education China, since all the universities in China must have those modules. However, most students consider that the politics related modules should not be included in the international education at TJVU-A as the scores for those modules do not relate to the degree that they are pursuing and will be shown in students' transcripts. In contrast, at TJVU-B, when students find themselves in a similar situation, they are likely to describe those modules as Chinese culture-based elements that are included in the education system. This example also reflects how the students consider a similar element in light of the distinctive perceptions of the organisational identity.

Furthermore, from the student perspective, students from both TJVU-A and TJVU-B emphasise that the universities provide opportunities to prepare for study abroad. Students from TJVU-B seem to stress the collaboration with other universities and consider the UKPU-B to be one of the important partners:

TJVU-B is an independent university; we are not a branch campus. There is a great deal of collaboration with other universities in the USA, Europe and Australia. There are many opportunities to study in a different location. [B-01-UG3]

With the collaboration of their parent universities, the two TJVUs reflect distinctive intelligence in making and marketing their international education under the auspices of Chinese–UK collaborations. Students are indifferent to their international networks, which TJVU-A and TJVU-B claim to be substantial achievements.

6.4.6 Experiential knowledge

The last parameter, the mobility of students, is designated as experiential knowledge. This parameter is designed to complement current studies on the RBV in the education sector, adding the non-managerial perspective to current literature on the RBV to analyse how organisational resources constitute the competitive advantage.

Both TJVU-A and TJVU-B provide a platform for Chinese students to support them in relocating their education, either through the 2+2 programmes or through postgraduate applications. As mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5, half of students choose to study in the UKPU through 2+2 or exchange programmes. Additionally, over 70 per cent of graduates from both universities continue their postgraduate study overseas, and around 10 per cent of them enter the top-100 universities in the world. The function of ‘bridging’ China and the UK education was reflected both from the impressive number of students going abroad but also from the relocating UK education to China by which students can receive a distinctive education without going abroad.

Unasked and without any prompting, almost all students made frequent reference to the universities as a ‘springboard’ to top-ranking master’s programmes:

Many people describe TJVU-B as a springboard, a platform for applying for top-ranking graduate programmes. My parents asked me to apply to this university largely for this reason. [B-01-UG3]

Comparing ‘bridging education system’ the universities claim, students seem to value the UK education more than China’s. Students from TJVU-A showed largely their

proud of the consistent education with UKPU-A. In UKPU-B, whilst students evaluated the university as an independent one and its education has been innovated and is not an entire British one, large number of them were still seeking better educational opportunities abroad (emphasised on the UK) and taking advantage of UKPU-B's system to prepare their future overseas study. That is to say, both universities support Chinese students with further education opportunities overseas. The strategic aims of 'bridging education system' and improve the domestic education quality were not in the centre of student concerns. On the other hand, students consider these TJVUs as a springboard to relieve their stress and unpreparedness at going abroad. The achievement of graduates who receive offers from top universities, from the university's perspective, reinforces the 'bridging' education systems between China and the UK, and the rest of the world; from the student perspective, re-convinces students' confidence of entering into the better overseas universities in the future, as being a competitive advantage.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter analysed the competitive environment of TJVUs in China and highlighted the key differences in international education in TJVUs. Both TJVU-A and TJVU-B took advantage of their organisational resources to promote their distinctive international education. While these two universities had several common features in their education system, TJVU-A and TJVU-B formed different public brands and images and could be seen as the heterogeneity of delivering international education. TJVU-A, as the first China-foreign TJVU, can be seen as a replicator of UKPU-A. The curricula, management structure and governance in TJVU-A are largely replicated from its UK parent university. On the other hand, TJVU-B takes a more innovative approach in conducting its education and can be seen as an adapter of UKPU-B. In other words, TJVU-A stresses its international education as having a strong connection to UKPU-A, while TJVU-B emphasises its independency of identity and open-mindedness to absorbing advantages from various educational systems.

In addition, the comparative findings highlighted that the universities' provision (reflecting a top-down value-added process to resources) and the student interpretations (reflecting a bottom-up process of recognising and contributing to

valuable resources) have connections and mismatches. The fragmented interpretations and inputs from students reflected how the subjective elements from the non-managerial participants could be meaningful for the managerial concept of the core competency in an organisation. The connection and discrepancies between what university the claimed and how students interpreted what they received reflected that the international education had been articulated, tackled and reconciled with students' aspirations in accordance with the student expectations, experiences and engagement. The discrepancies between the TJVUs' projection and students' demand for an international education contributed to the development of their education. The re-determined framework shown in Table 6.2 creatively. Chapter 7 discusses those findings with relevant theoretical consideration.

Chapter 7 Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Chapters 4–6, which presented the findings, showed how the two Chinese–UK TJVUs under study were set up and how they expanded over the subsequent decade. Both universities have been successful in attracting a growing number of students from China and abroad. Following the RBV, the analysis suggests that an international education comprising a variety of components is key to their growth. In this chapter, the empirical findings will be discussed in line with the theoretical concepts that were reviewed in Chapter 2.

Current literature on the RBV, together with the relevant theories, provides a useful framework with which to analyse the resource base of an education. The international education provided in both TJVUs was configured by various resources from their parent universities and also developed internally. The TJVUs under study established the structures of their international education and attracted students by their claims that they provide this type of education. In other words, an ‘international education’ is the competitive advantage through which the TJVUs differentiate themselves from each other and compete in a new market. Competitive advantage is not a static notion (Teece et al., 1997; Ethiraj et al., 2005): an organisation maintains its competency by exploring, developing and strengthening its competitive advantage (Barney, 1997; Oladunjoye & Onyeaso, 2007; Teece, 2009). Similar to an international education, while the structure of the education provided has been defined as being internationalised in the two TJVUs from their own distinctive perspectives, the nature of the educations provided is dynamic and staff and students have added new elements to those structures over time. However, while the RBV accounts for the dynamic nature of competitive advantage and individuals’ impact on it (Smith, 2001), the relevant discourse lacks a nuanced analysis that explores precisely what constitutes an international education, although certain exceptions have touched briefly on the fundamental base of a university or its essential competency (e.g. Lynch & Baines, 2004; van Rijnsoever et al., 2008; Bobe & Kober, 2015). In addition, none of these studies answers the question regarding how a dynamic international education that is perceived to have value by the individuals to whom it is provided is made and remade

over time by the different organisational members of a TJVU. This relates especially to how the students – who are not conventionally considered to be active managerial participants – influence, shape and reshape the nature of an international education.

Chapters 4–6 illustrated that the two TJVUs under study state distinctive forms of international education to their students as a competitive advantage. Specifically, TJVU-A described its education as being close to a UK-style higher education, so as to demonstrate its internationalisation. In contrast, TJVU-B underscored its independent identity, so as to claim an innovative international education. As a result, their students were articulating, tackling and reconciling their understanding of the progression, mobility and prestige of pursuing an education through these two TJVUs.

With regard to the concept of international education as a dynamic and ‘living’ entity (Knight & De Wit, 1995), section 7.2 draws together the findings from the two case studies to analyse the key themes that emerged that relate to the RBV. Section 7.3 underlines the importance of perceived value and discusses the nature of student inputs into the international education. Exploring students’ perspectives could be a breakthrough point from which to extend and enhance current literature on the organisational resources of transnational entities from a bottom-up perspective. Importantly, this objective notion of organisational resources will be challenged from the angle that the range of student inputs can influence the nature and the structure of an international education. This chapter then presents a brief review of dimensions of the RBV that have been overlooked in higher education and a future research agenda, and closes with a summary.

7.2 International education and its resource base

Many scholars have shown that the resource base of an MNC contributes to its performance and sustainability (e.g. Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993; Teece et al., 1997; Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998; Birkinshaw et al., 2005). The evidence in this study also underscored the relatively intense competitive environment in the Chinese higher education market. The case studies of TJVU-A and TJVU-B provided nuanced information about how the resources comprised their international education, which is seen as the core competitive advantage of TJVUs. Therefore, this section

assesses the RBV and relevant theories, such as knowledge-based resources and the evolution of subsidiaries in light of the data presented in Chapter 4–6.

7.2.1 International education as a competitive advantage

Identifying an international education as a competitive advantage of TJVUs is helpful in understanding how TJVUs differentiate themselves from each other and operate successfully in a new competitive market. Selznick (1957) suggests that organisational competency refers to an entity's distinctive characteristics, which can be explored as sources of competitiveness. The findings from the fieldwork highlight a competitive context in Chinese higher education in which various types of university are involved, including the respected traditional Chinese universities (particularly the Project 985 and Project 211 institutions), Chinese–UK TJVUs, other Chinese–foreign TJVUs and collaborative joint programmes. Thus, in order to compete with traditional Chinese universities, TJVU-A and TJVU-B must necessarily make clear their international elements. Moreover, they need to emphasise the high-quality elements embedded in their education so as to be distinctive and differentiate themselves from other educators who also claim to provide an international education.

Similarly, Porter (1980) underlines the importance of acknowledging the elements of the environment in which an institution is based that can contribute to a firm maintaining its competitiveness. The findings stress that both TJVU-A and TJVU-B acknowledge the strong competition in the Chinese higher education market. Specifically, highly reputable traditional Chinese universities (all of which are state-owned) are supported by central government by the Double First-Class University Project. This Project aims to improve the education provided and the quality of the resulting research, as well as strengthening its international impact. The increasing number of TJVUs – especially Chinese–US TJVUs with prestigious parent universities (e.g. Duke Kunshan University, New York University Shanghai and CAS-UCLA University) – enhances the competition among TJVUs. Furthermore, TJVU-A and TJVU-B recognise and acknowledge the increasingly restrictive policies on operating joint programmes and their academic accreditation, which could be a potential threat. However, the evidence also illustrates the inadequacy of Porter's outside-in approach for explaining organisational competitive advantage. Recognising

only the external environment and vital competitors is insufficient to explore what precisely constitutes organisational competitiveness.

Subsequent research shows an inward approach to exploring how a firm can achieve competitiveness (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). Barney (1991) provides an integrative framework with which to answer the question regarding exactly what constitutes organisational competitiveness. He describes an organisation as comprising a bundle of resources and considers that an organisation can become competitive by utilising its existing resources and exploring potential opportunities. Inspired by the RBV, the findings build on the research by Lynch and Baines (2004), in which they categorise the six competitive resources of UK universities. They argue that universities compete for students, for government support and for other resources relying on those that currently exist. The evidence highlights the importance of reputation, innovative capability and knowledge-based resources. However, as seen from the findings, it is problematic to present a clear-cut presence of competitive resources simply by categorising them because the concepts they use largely overlap and span multiple levels. For instance, by identifying competency as a type of resource, Lynch and Baines (2004) overlook the fact that core competency is generally comprised of multiple resources. Therefore, the findings revise the work of Lynch and Baines (2004) by categorising the resource-based concepts as location, physical resources, human resources, reputation, network-bound resources and knowledge-based innovation. The revised fundamental structure of resource-based concepts minimises the overlap problems in Lynch and Baines' work.

Newbert (2007) suggests that a firm's performance is driven directly by its products (education, in this case) and indirectly by its resources. In order to further clarify the relationship between organisational resources and competitive advantage so as to understand how resources drive an organisation's performance, the findings identify a new categorisation of five RBV concepts that not only integrate the strengths of the resource-based analysis, but are also better related to the educational context: reputation, academic quality, quality of services, network relationships and experiential knowledge. Applying these categories of findings clarify how organisational resources comprise the elements of an education and further contribute

to it. At the same time, evidence also underlines the significance of the international elements provided in TJVUs' education as they aim to maintain competitiveness in the Chinese higher education market.

Much of the literature on the RBV suggests that only distinctive and hard-to-copy resources contribute to competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Newbert, 2007). In the context of transnational higher education, at one point TJVUs take advantage of the resources of their UK parent universities so as to underscore the 'foreign' concept of the education they provide. Another point relates to the participation of organisational members – including the management team, staff members and students – who are engaged in daily operations and contribute to the heterogeneity of their international education. The evidence illustrates that the organisational members at both TJVU-A and TJVU-B recognise and value their international education. In addition, the universities, together with their organisational members, put effort into strengthening their distinctive concept.

7.2.2 International education as a dynamic process

The findings demonstrate that TJVU-A and TJVU-B certainly recognise their international education – which was embedded initially in their commitment to transnational collaboration – as a competitive advantage. Moreover, in line with the literature on the dynamic characteristics of organisational resources and competencies (Barney, 1997; Teece et al., 1997; Ethiraj et al., 2005), the evidence illustrates that an international education is not a static concept: creating an 'international education' is a long-standing and dynamic process.

Mahoney and Pandian (1992) argue that a firm can achieve rents largely by making better use of existing resources. The findings suggest that the two TJVUs under study take advantage of the educational resources of their parent universities (such as the UK-based educational system, and the UK degrees and accreditations systems) and co-branding the partnerships offered so as to construct the pillars of their international education. Taking the last dimension as an example, TJVU-A conceals the Chinese partner's name in its branding, using the local city's name instead. This is because reflecting the Chinese influence on the institution may dilute the TJVU-A's reputation for providing a high-quality international education: emphasising the connection with

UKPU-A strengthens the image aiming to be international. In contrast, TJVU-B uses the names of both UKPU-B and CPU-B' in its branding, and emphasise the advantage of the alliance between two powerful and influential universities. In this respect, at least, a perspective that acknowledges TJVUs' education as being influenced by universities' intelligence with regard to the utilisation and coordination of the resources of their parent universities (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990), is helpful in explicating these findings.

In an increasingly competitive educational market, TJVUs are also exploring new resources with which to enhance their international education. The evidence illustrates that both TJVU-A and TJVU-B are not satisfied with the existing resources available through the collaboration. Examples of such instances – such as the President of TJVU-A seeking financial support from government and, in the case of TJVU-B, students urging their university to establish collaboration with other foreign educational institutions – suggest the importance of seeking potential resources to the success of achieving a desirable fit with the dynamic environment and diversified stakeholders (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). In addition, while TJVU-A and TJVU-B have similarities in their collaborative commitments, they are not created equal. It is arguable that their international education is formed the instant those TJVUs were established. Creating a successful education requires a considerable length of time, and continual effort not only to utilise existing resources efficiently, but also to engage actively in exploration of new resources.

The findings suggest that the competitive advantage of creating an international education in TJVUs is an ongoing process in which the dynamics of the utilisation and exploration of resources is explicit. Considering the concepts of resources and the capability of developing resources, scholars debate whether there is a clear and sharp distinction between them (Peteraf, 1993; Oladunjoye & Onyeaso, 2007; Teece, 2009). The evidence highlights the dynamics of achieving a competitive advantage that have been stressed in the existing literature. In addition, the findings also illustrate that resources and capabilities are largely embedded in individuals and that it is difficult to separate them from the efforts of those individuals. Therefore, in the specific context of education, firm-level and individual-level perceptions of sources of competitive

advantage are key motives for encouraging the transfer and development of international education from parent universities, in which the resources and capabilities are rarely separated as two clear-cut presences (Smith, 2001).

To summarise, the dynamics of an international education indicate two further dimensions. First, as discussed, the nature of the concept is changing and developing over time due to the turbulence of the competitive external environment and the extent to which the TJVUs can utilise and develop available resources. Second, the dynamic nature of an international education also suggests that emphasis should also be placed on the heterogeneity of similar types of TJVU.

7.2.3 TJVUs' differentiation of their international education

While both TJVU-A and TJVU-B emphasise the nature of their international education, which they are strengthening over time, they certainly aim simultaneously to differentiate themselves from each other. An area of emphasis in the RBV literature is that a subsidiary is initially established with goals defined by its headquarters (Vernon, 1979; Dunning, 1988; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989), subsequently becoming able to develop its own role within its MNC (Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998). The findings suggest that UKPU-A is planning to establish several international branch campuses in order to achieve its goal as a global educator. TJVU-A was therefore initially established as a part of this plan. Similarly, UKPU-B is intent on being a recognised as a global educator. While TJVU-B is the sole international collaborative institution of its UK parent university, UKPU-B also operates a branch campus in London, thereby demonstrating its motivation for providing an international atmosphere. Evidence from both TJVU-A and TJVU-B suggests that they use not only autonomous behaviours to expand the bargaining power with their parent institutions to differing extents, but also their reputation for their distinctive provision of an international education.

The I-R paradigm (Lawrence & Lorsh, 1969, see section 2.4.1) is extended into the research of MNCs as a framework with which to explain how a subsidiary can be competitive in the local market by exploring the extent to which its products are standardised or localised (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989). According to the findings, TJVU-A seems to standardise its education as being consistent with that in UKPU-A,

while TJVU-B takes a more adaptive approach to international education. However, the findings indicate that the TJVUs under study not only seek an optimal trade-off from the I-R paradigm, but also innovate their competitive advantage, which cannot be identified in the I-R paradigm. This situation is evident in TJVU-B: this university provides neither a highly British education to the host country, nor a localised strategy to satisfy domestic students. Instead, the international education it claims to provide is a reflection of its innovative capability, and demonstrates that this university is keen to explore a new model of education that could meet requirements from multiple stakeholders. In this sense, TJVU-B's case challenges the I-R paradigm and emphasises the importance of its autonomous behaviour in innovating its structure for an international education.

The findings illustrate that TJVUs follow their parent universities' strategies in order to maintain educational consistency. TJVU-A, as the first TJVU in China, minimises the local elements in its education so as to maintain its UK-style. This illustrates that the strong parental control of a subsidiary has been utilised to ensure its efficient operation (Whitley, 2001, p. 207). However, it does not mean that it takes no autonomous action. For instance, while UKPU-A considers that the winners of Alumni awards should have demonstrated outstanding achievements in social work or the humanities, TJVU-A presents its dissatisfaction with these standards. TJVU-A has set new standards and grants its own Alumni award to its students, through which graduates can either enrol into top universities for their postgraduate study, or create a successful start-up organisation. TJVU-A considers that the UKPU-A's standards are unfair to such a young university, since the first cohort of students at TJVU-A graduated only 10 ten years ago, in 2009, and it is unreasonable to expect those alumni to compete against someone who has graduated from UKPU-A and been in the workplace for over fifty years. This insight suggests that, while UKPU-A's dominant norms and educational practices are employed at TJVU-A, TJVU-A still takes initiatives to satisfy its students in the local market. Birkinshaw (1997) argues that an initiative of a subsidiary is a 'discrete, proactive undertaking that advances a new way for the corporation to use or expand its resources'. The evidence indicates that, at least, the local market initiative is a key to TJVU-A taking autonomous action.

When a subsidiary takes successful advantage of its initiatives, it is able to expand both the internal resources and the new external markets. The findings from the TJVU-A case study illustrate that its successful operation in China extended TJVU-A's bargaining power with its UKPU. It is unsurprising that a subsidiary follows a similar exterior design or building names to that of its headquarters – the same landmark as at UKPU-A and the renaming of buildings with the names of celebrity graduates from the UK parent university, in this case. UKPU-A, by contrast, constructed a bridge on its UK campus in the name of the founder of the CP-A. This action is seen as a sign that UKPU-A places greater value on TJVU-A's achievements in China, as the UKPU-A side has not shown any similar activities on its other branch campus in Malaysia. This can be explained, in part, by reference to the literature regarding changing the charter (Burgelman, 1983; Birkinshaw, 1997), particularly that discussing subsidiary-driven charter reinforcement, which refers to a situation in which a subsidiary's active behaviours can compete with other subsidiaries or external competitors. In terms of the capability to expand the new external market, by the valuable means of their differentiation, TJVU-A and TJVU-B illustrate that they not only recruit domestic students successfully, but that there is increasing enrolment of international students. As mentioned, TJVU-A stresses the steady growth of its importance among the educational MNCs, through which it attracts students who are interested in obtaining a UK-style education located in China. This strategy can be explained, at least in part, by reference to its centre of excellence (Frost et al., 2002), particularly TJVU-A's fruitful local knowledge and student resources.

TJVU-B expands the new external market by innovating its international education, which is challenging and has double-edged effects. The findings suggest that the Chinese market for TNHE is expanding. Increasing numbers of students express their eagerness to be educated in an international environment, leading traditional Chinese universities and THEIs to reinforce the international elements in the education they provide. Unlike TJVU-A, which emphasises its unity with its UKPU, TJVU-B emphasises that UKPU-B is a crucial partner. The evidence illustrates that TJVU-B aims to dilute its role in the network as a subsidiary. More specifically, the findings suggest that the well-defined role of a subsidiary can be challenged once it possesses unique resources, creates value in its locality and spans the borders of several nations

in search of global opportunities (Rugman & Verbeke, 2001). Considering the increasing student numbers, the enhancement and expansion of campuses, and the reinforced organisational identity as 'independent' over time, it can be seen that, by the time TJVU-B diffuses the increasing number of students to the UKPU-B through 2+2 and student exchange programmes, TJVU-B puts greater effort into creating its own brand and value. The evidence from TJVU-B demonstrates, at least in part, that when a subsidiary engages in creating power of its own (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003), that power can become a process with which to seek self-sufficiency.

However, it has been argued that there is no organisation can be fully self-sufficient and that a firm can minimise environmental uncertainty and maximise resource exploration by cooperating with other organisations. Therefore, the nature of a joint venture has been interpreted as a means of reducing risks by those involved with TJVU-B. However, the strategy of building an organisational identity and innovating educational content cannot be separated from the collaboration process between its parent universities. In other words, the degree-related educational foundation at UKPU-B, as part of its internationalisation, cannot be ignored or devalued by students or staff members. The findings illustrate that staff members and students at TJVU-B consider it independent but, in reality, most of them cannot identify the specific ways in which educational innovation takes place in this university. Furthermore, the perceptions and interpretations of an international education by the university's members are fragmented, diversified and subjective. During the process of creating an international education, the engagement, inputs, interpretations and confrontations of those members have an impact on the nature of that education. The findings demonstrate that the micro-level analysis of individuals' contributions to organisational resources and competitive advantages, which is limited in the current literature, is valuable in understanding the utilisation of the RBV in TJVUs and, potentially, in other knowledge-intensive organisations.

In summary, findings from both cases to some extent illustrate that, while the parent universities have dominant positions in the TJVUs decision-making process, local market characteristics somehow direct and influence the TJVUs' activities (Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998). While findings from TJVU-A illustrate that its initiatives

can enhance its position in the network, evidence from TJVU-B demonstrates the potential for a subsidiary to have its own identity and development strategy. The findings also suggest the importance of individual inputs into international education.

7.2.4 International education and its multiple contributors

The findings suggest that the TJVUs under study take advantage of local knowledge to expand their bargaining power with parent universities. Furthermore, the question of how to take advantage of local knowledge has been illustrated, in that they are providing a distinctive international education that meets both the organisational requirements and local demand. The literature on knowledge-based resources stresses the importance of learning and sharing knowledge in order to achieve organisational goals. Higher education institutions are undoubtedly knowledge-intensive organisations. In significant respects, international education is comprised largely by knowledge-based resources. According to the comparative findings presented in Chapter 6, there are five parameters of the RBV that comprise the international education provided at the TJVUs. The evidence presented in respect of each aspect illustrates the importance of ‘knowing how to put it [the knowledge] successfully into practice’ (Park et al., 2015, p.92), rather than being an explicit description of practices. Joint ventures provide an opportunity to acquire access to partners’ knowledge-based resources. With regard to multiple organisational members and the nature of a knowledge-intensive organisation, this section discusses the topic relating to knowledge-based resources and the RBV in the higher education sector.

First, the findings illustrate that the TJVUs under study take advantage of the collective strengths of their parent universities. Several knowledge-based factors related to the understanding of collective strengths may account for this. Hennart and Reddy (1997, p.11) state that ‘a joint venture is primarily a device to obtain access to resources which are embedded in other organizations’. The TJVUs’ reputations are an example. The reputations of TJVUs are initially based on the reliability of the branding of their parent universities, especially the UKPUs. More specifically, the evidence demonstrates that both TJVU-A and TJVU-B advertise the educations they provide by emphasising the name of their parent universities to some extent. TJVU-A claims a united identity of between itself and UKPU-A, so as to state its educational strengths. TJVU-A, on the other hand, minimises the dominant position of UKPU-B in the

education it provides and borrows the widely known name of CPU-B to reinforce the image of the independence and legitimacy of the education it provides. Combining reputations not only increases the popularity of UKPUs, but also reduces the risks of early entry. Another instance relates to the quality of the education offered. The findings from both cases demonstrate the value of the UK degree-based education system. This education system, which could be seen as explicit knowledge, is transferred through documentation, data bases and other recorded agreements and regulations (Serban & Luan, 2002). Integrating educational strengths from the parent universities – especially at TJVU-B, where the education system was formed by two parent universities – at least partially guarantees educational quality in TJVUs. Collective strengths have been reflected in various aspects of the RBV. A joint venture is an opportunity to transfer knowledge-based strengths from the partner universities. In other words, the immobility and heterogeneity of knowledge can be the sources of competitive advantage for TJVUs, depending on the commitment of the joint venture.

Second, evidence also suggests that the joint venture is not only an opportunity to gain knowledge-based strengths from their parent universities, but also a learning opportunity for both TJVU-A and TJVU-B that enables them to utilise their operation-based and environment-based knowledge. As mentioned, the transference of the education system from the parent universities is the baseline for the quality of the education offered by a TJVU. Another point that requires observation is the manner in which TJVUs operate their education system in the local environment. Kostova (1999) suggests that the process of knowledge transference is costly and not easy to carry out within MNCs. Therefore, it is neither possible nor sufficient to deliver the education system directly from the UK to China as a package. With regard to providing international education in China, the findings suggest that both of the TJVUs under study are learning from the transference process of the UK system to China, so as to maintain the quality of their education. In other words, the UK education system could be seen as a package of explicit knowledge that can be moved and stored (Kogut & Zander, 1992); how to put it into practice successfully (Park et al. 2015) in China is a separate topic for TJVUs. The evidence suggests that, while students and staff members value the education system, they are concerned regarding how the university can better appropriate the system. Specifically, TJVU-A aims to maximise the UK

elements in its education, so as to maintain educational consistency with UKPU-A. This university attracts students who recognise that the UK-style is distinctive and represents, at least partly, an international education. TJVU-B practices its parent universities' systems as a crucial part of its international education, but still explores and integrates other education systems, so as to satisfy students who are curious about international education but are not yet acclimatised to a specific system.

Third, the findings suggest that the boundaries between physical-based and knowledge-based resources could be blurred due to individual interpretations. Although the findings suggest the importance of physical resources, the evidence illustrates that the elements of being international embedded in the physical resources are knowledge-based, which is stressed by various students and staff members. Both TJVU-A and TJVU-B consider the design and construction of the campus as a contract-based investment, and state that they have high-quality hardware and student services. While the universities take a straightforward view that the high-quality of hardware represents their education has a proximity to an international standard, students perceive the nature of internationalisation in an expanded sense based on the physical circumstances. For instance, the landmark of the clock tower at TJVU-A has been explained by both the university and the majority of student participants. However, several students consider this landmark to be an imitation and perceive it as diluting the university's self-confidence in the education it offers. Therefore, whether this physical resource – the clock tower – is related and useful to the international education has already been blurred by various interpretations. Other findings reflect that students emphasise that humanity concerns embedded in the hardware could represent the level of internationalisation, such as concerns related to female students, disability and the natural environment. These findings challenge the point that 'related and useful' resources contribute to organisational competitive advantage – quite the reverse: the nature of 'related and useful' is dynamic and subjective. Whether a resource is valuable and can contribute to competitive advantage to some extent depends on the users' interpretations.

The next aspect relates to inter-firm competition and the network within a TNHE organisation. The findings illustrate that TJVU-A presents its network relationship as

integrated with UKPU-A, while TJVU-B presents there network as tending to be independent. In the view of MNCs, scholars account for the value of resources that are beneficial to an entire MNC. As indicated, UKPU-A shows a determination to be a part of UKPU-A's global network. The dominant position of UKPU-A helps control any opportunistic behaviours at TJVU-A. In this case, TJVU-A is like a resource developer that explores the new resources available locally, and finds a proper way to combine and integrate the existing resources (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993; Ghoshal & Moran, 1996). In term of TJVU-B, there is no doubt that this university contributes to the UKPU-B's income and student mobility. However, some findings suggest that, at least partially, TJVU-B seems to dissolve into existing alliances. More specifically, the evidence clearly illustrates that TJVU-B is seeking additional partners with whom to strengthen the education it provides. In other words, those engaged to some extent in non-equity alliances are becoming TJVU-B's alternative partners to UKPU-B. While those partnerships reinforce the competency of TJVU-B with regard to educational and industrial connections, their contributions to UKPU-B are unclear. From a headquarters–subsidiary perspective, those partnerships could be seen as opportunistic behaviours and the knowledge transference occurring in those alliances is, to some extent, out of control, because the process of knowledge transference from 'outside' partners to the UKPU is too costly and difficult to complete (Argote & Ingram, 2000; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Dellestrand & Kappen, 2011). However, from a student perspective, these partnerships become an opportunity to engage with a wider nature and understanding of international education. In addition, in the context of a shadow of the future, whether TJVU-B has conflicts in its relationships with its parent universities or continues this innovative Chinese–UK collaboration remains arguable.

The last aspect to consider relates to experiential knowledge. The findings suggest that there are intra-firm discrepancies that are relevant to the student experience and to students' perceptions of international education. Individuals' impact on organisational competitiveness has been observed, focusing on the value in individuals' experiences, skills and abilities (Steyn, 2004). So as to be widely shared, personal knowledge needs to be transformed into institutional knowledge. The evidence from TJVU-A and TJVU-B demonstrates that student inputs contribute to their international education.

Those inputs are largely experiential. Students articulate, confront and reconcile their understandings and aspirations on the progression, mobility and prestige of pursuing an international education in a TJVU. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the RBV in the non-profit sector – including the higher education sector, where the significance of individuals and groups of individuals has been emphasised over time – should be utilised from a perspective that is distinct from those found in the commercial sectors. The fundamental rationale of why customers have willingness to be heard by a commercial firm contains their perception and assessment of whether they purchase on a valuable product/service the firm gives (Woodruff, 1997). However, the significance of those individuals on the improvement of products/services and the benefits for the future customers are only recognised by the organisation. In education sector, the evidence demonstrates that, besides the willingness of a valuable purchase (worthy of tuition fees), the significance of improving education quality and the benefits for the future students have also been largely recognised stressed by current students, which is a crucial intention of their active inputs. In other words, whether and how the customers are important relies on how the firm recognises and utilises those voices from them. The relations between resources and organisational competency are perceived and valued on the firm level. Comparing the customer's 'self-benefit' foundation of contributing a firm's competency, students' intention reflects their identity of sharing responsibility with a university so as to contribute its firm-level improvement and competitiveness. The relations between resources and the university's competency – its education – are perceived, or at least partially perceived, by both the university and its students.

To summarise, the findings illustrate that RBV theories and knowledge-based resources can, to some extent, be useful in the context of non-profit organisations – specifically, TNHE institutions. Scholars have identified the importance of knowledge in non-profit organisations (e.g. Chan, 2006; Singh Sandhu et al., 2011). The imperfect mobility of resources and subjective characteristics of them contribute to international education as the competitive advantage of TJVUs. Following the consideration that individuals and groups of individuals are significant to firm-level advantages, section 7.3 focuses on how students contribute to their education as stakeholders.

7.3 Students' perceptions of an international education and their inputs as stakeholders

Based on the literature on higher education management and student–university relationships, this section discusses the student role in shaping and reshaping an international education in TJVUs. Rather than the individual-based knowledge transfer or ‘customer feedback’ of an education, the findings in Chapters 4–6 demonstrate that student inputs are fragmented and that there are connections or mismatches with universities’ provision as international educators. The evidence highlights the inadequacy of the current mainstream, which describes students as customers, to treat their level of satisfaction as a whole (e.g. rating student satisfaction through questionnaires). Instead, the findings illustrate that, to some extent, students participate actively in the process of making an ‘international education’. Not only they are receiving awards for their ‘educational purchasing’, but also they are willing to contribute to organisational improvement and benefits for the next student cohorts. Therefore, it is important to note that the international education created by the university is continually remade and reshaped through the interaction process between the universities and students.

7.3.1 Student–university relationships

The findings suggest the importance of individuals in an organisation and point to the relationships between the focal organisation and its stakeholders, both explicitly and implicitly (Pfeffer, 2005; Geppert & Dörrenbächer, 2011; Meyer et al., 2011; Williams, 2011). Unless focusing mainly on the role of managers in the firm, with their initiatives and impact on forming competitive advantage among intra- and inter-organisations, the evidence illustrates that organisational members, who are largely neglected in the managerial perspective, also contribute to competitive advantage. Barney (2018) has indicated that various stakeholders should be taken into account in the study of the RBV, although his work only emphasises the importance of their inputs with the assumption that both shareholders and stakeholders contribute to profit generation. The findings in this study complement his work by investigating the non-profit aspects.

The literature presents four main definitions of student–university relationships: students as education receivers (Lambert & McCombs, 1998); ‘products’ waiting for estimation from employers (Clayson & Haley, 2005; Obermiller et al., 2005); customers with a high-participation characteristic (Baldwin, 1994; Browne et al., 1998; Bowden, 2011); and co-producers of education (Kotze & Du Plessis, 2003; McCulloch, 2009; Carey, 2013). Additionally, there are also studies that consider students as clients (Bailey, 2000; Armstrong, 2003), stakeholders (McDowell & Sambell, 1999; Freeman et al., 2010) or partial employees (Hoffman & Kretovics, 2004). These descriptions reflect the range of the student role from that of a passive receiver to that of an interactive actor. The findings indicate that students are generally the passive receivers of a university when they initially enrol. However, students seem to play a progressively more active role in their universities during the course of their study. The findings demonstrate that the student–university relationship is dynamic and that, eventually, some students become active because they gradually accumulate experience and begin to share responsibility with the TJVUs.

Lambert and McCombs (1998) emphasise a single-direction relationship from university to students, in which universities are knowledge providers and students enrich their intellect and intelligence through eagerly studying at a specific institution. This description of students as receivers of education has rarely been reflected in the findings of this study, with the exception of a first-year informant. This student stated his willingness to receive an international education from the university and understood, to some extent, that the education he would receive would be international. However, it is worthwhile noting that his explanation reflects his confusion on the exact nature of an international education. As a new student, his experience is insufficient to see situations clearly, form opinions and engage in contributing to the creation of an international education. Similarly, the metaphors of ‘employer’, ‘product’ and ‘client’ are reflected in only one or two specific instances.

The dominant metaphor in connection with a market-driven perspective describes students as customers (Baldwin, 1994; Browne et al., 1998; Bowden, 2011). A key factor highlighted in the literature is the purchase activity of students, which incorporates the elements of customer expectation and satisfaction. The cases align

with this emphasis on the fact that students pay tuition fees for an educational service from TJVUs. In this sense, the consideration and judgement regarding whether tuition fees represent good value for the services students receive while in TJVUs comprises the source of students' active behaviours, through which students present their characteristic of high participation as customers to improve the service quality of universities. However, the cases reflected a different foundation for the student-as-customer metaphor: surprisingly, active student participation is not only to resolve demands for themselves, but also for the next cohorts. In general, purchasing services can be seen as a multiple-purchase activity. Customers expect improvement during the current purchase and in the next. In contrast, 'purchasing education' is, to some extent, a single-purchase activity with a long-term service period. Thus, students expected to see improvements during the course of their study. Students in both TJVUs indicated that the elements of a sense of identity and shared responsibility to improve the education they receive drive them to engage in the development of the university system.

The metaphor of student as stakeholders emphasises that they are sharing responsibility in contributing to the institution's competitiveness: creating an international education, in this case (Kotze & Du Plessis, 2003). It is perhaps unsurprising that, in both cases, student interviewees – especially mature students with work experience, or postgraduates – identified the relatively equal standing of students and the institution. They also appreciated sharing responsibility for creating contracts with industries, improving educational quality with practical implementation. However, in the context of TJVUs, the nature of a new form of education provides the possibility for students to be more engaged due to its nature as an entrepreneurial project. In other words, students can be seen as being part of their TJVU before the university has completed structuring its education system. Therefore, the findings at both TJVU-A and TJVU-B, which pursue the distinctive organisational images, suggest that students are contributing to their international education. However, the evidence also illustrates that current literature on the student as co-producer overemphasises the demographic analysis of students (McCulloch, 2009) who are at various stages of learning, and who have various backgrounds and characteristics. In light of this, the fragmented inputs from students have not been the subject of a

systematic analysis in order to answer the question regarding how individual-based experience and knowledge can be transformed into institutional advantage. Section 7.3.2 therefore discusses the interaction process in creating an international education in relation to the RBV.

7.3.2 Making an ‘international education’: an interactive process between universities and their key stakeholders

Universities build a strong network with their students that emphasises the active role students play in them. Scholars of the RBV have identified the interactive and social-political activities that contribute to organisational development (Geppert & Dörrenbächer, 2011). This section discusses the extent to which student engagement is incorporated in an international education, and how these findings align or contrast with the existing literature.

The process through which a student communicates their thoughts, wishes and impressions to staff members is a process that lends itself to building a connection with the university – a means through which staff members help students to perceive the image and reputation of the university. The managers, employees and other staff, therefore, are seen as interpreters of their university and reflecting student experience and voice through their daily interactions. First, the findings illustrate that students tackle their university in relation to the TJVU’s reputation. Several examples demonstrate this point: students at TJVU-B demand restrictions on the number of international students, and students at TJVU-A consider the landmark clock tower dilutes the reputation. Scholars such as McDowell and Sambell (1999) as well as Kotze and Du Plessis (2003) states that students as stakeholders are engaged in the application of knowledge. In this case, the context in which students evaluate TJVUs as the second-best choice after Gaokao, and how they protect the reputation of their university, is another way to demonstrate selectiveness during the competition in Gaokao.

Second, students collaborate with their university in improving its academic quality. Carey (2013) identifies the fact that students have a meaningful engagement in improving the curriculum, including model design, the learning process and the accreditation process. Critically, they are comprehensive and professional, attitudes

that are embedded in the system and regulations of the transnational alliance. In terms of student interpretations, the academic-related aspects are of the greatest concern in relation to their expectations and learning experiences. Students also stressed that the quality of education under the UK's accreditation process is equally relevant in terms of whether the educational format, curriculum and modules match their personal needs. Therefore, students are as determined to maintain their efforts to acquire the same accreditation programmes as the experienced lecturers in TJVUs. In the case of TJVU-A, this university, as a replicator offering a British higher education, launched programmes consistent with those of UKPU-A, including the module design and in-class materials. Student participants confirmed that the extent of student inputs in the development of the curriculum is limited in order to maintain educational consistency between UKPU-A and its two branch campuses. In contrast, TJVU-B is intent on building its own independent identity in providing an innovative international education. Consequently, the freedom to contribute to curriculum design leads to a relatively high acceptance of students' voice with regard to curriculum development. For instance, the curriculum evaluation process has been enhanced at TJVU-B from an end-of-term online feedback process to a double feedback process that takes place at mid-term and end-of-term. This improvement was brought about due to the continuous feedback from a variety of students through student–staff committees, the online feedback system, online reporting to top leaders, negotiation with relevant professional service staff, and communication with relevant academic staff. Students expressed their willingness to receive feedback on their feedback during their study and provided a workable solution with which to launch the mid-term and end-of-term feedback process. This example reflects the importance of students to universities in terms of managerial practice and educational quality, as well as encouraging students to take initiatives to improve educational quality in TJVUs.

Third, students are making suggestions to their universities with regard to their investment in facilities and services. This is an interesting dimension, particularly given the focus of transformation from tangible resources to value (Birkinshaw, 1997), which emerged from individual social behaviours (Scott, 2015) and subjective inputs, such as complaining, workshop discussions and interactive communication online. The findings with regard to this dimension suggest that the linkage between resources

and competitive advantage emerged from subjective understandings and interpretations. One of the reasons why physical resources were (or were not) regarded by students as components of an international education is because these resources match (or mismatch) students' ability to acknowledge being in an ethos of an international education or occupying buildings constructed and laid out in a style that is different from characteristic Chinese architecture.

Another function fulfilled by students was assistance with the quality of administrative and professional services. Along with the strategic alliance between China and the UK, the administrative and professional services largely integrate the characteristics of both parent institutions. The majority of staff members in administrative and professional services have been locally recruited and include a remarkable number of *Haigui* (who are Chinese graduates who have returned to China after receiving their higher education in the West); few medium- and top-level managers have been globally recruited. This evidence illustrates that students use different methods of communication with managers who have different cultural backgrounds. This means that the experience of an international education can be enhanced, damaged or redefined during these communications. One case, in which an administrative manager avoided giving consideration to student input – which I do not think that a reader would be able to follow on social media, involved difficulty in sharing informal and fragmented knowledge. The literature on knowledge-based resources identifies the importance of tacit knowledge and knowledge sharing among managers (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Smith, 2001). This study therefore enriches the literature with nuanced information about the knowledge sharing between managers and other actors, with emphasis on the suggestion process from students to staff members.

The fourth aspect relates to the student attitude to the joint venture collaboration. The findings indicate that students from both TJVUs under study accept the current status of their universities. Students from TJVU-A are proud of their education being consistent with that of the UK, and students from TJVU-B are proud of making efforts to improve the innovative nature of their education. This evidence reflects the statement that students can be engaged in the dissemination of knowledge (McCulloch, 2009): dispersing the organisational identity in this case.

The last aspect of experiential knowledge considers that students reinforce the international education in TJVUs. Experience-based contribution is highly complex and dynamic, as this process is largely embedded in the communication and socialisation among different actors. Additionally, the value that resides within the flows of insight and interaction sometimes is only passively observed by the actors.

The objective of a successful international education is to provide students with an education of subjective and evaluative worth through which both the university and the students can create a meaningful and unique international education. Attention should be paid to the value that students' perceptions can input into various aspects of resources and, further, are capable of defining and enriching the meaning of an international education: the core competency of TJVUs.

7.3.3 Theorisation of the resources in TNHE: section summary

The discussion in section 7.3 analysed the findings across the case studies to explore how students offer input into their international education in the context of a TJVU. The complex nature of the relationship between organisational resources, the core competency and individuals has been acknowledged and analysed. Drawing on the literature on the RBV and stakeholder theory, this section indicates the inadequacy of the statement that the core competency of an organisation comprises a package of resources with an emphasis on the TJVU context. The argument was then made that, rather than simply exploring the connection between organisational competitive advantage and its resources, a more nuanced understanding of RBV attitudes towards subjective input is necessary. The critically important and varied relationships that a wide range of students can have with their universities, together with the possible impacts the nature of an international education can have on the shape and experience of transnational higher education, have been presented.

The contributions to the RBV literature have been identified. The analysis extends the study by Kong (2007), with its call for a nuanced exploration of intellectual capital as an organisational resource in a non-profit context by demonstrating that the utility of the RBV has a wide application for many types of organisation. This discussion also complemented the current literature with limited concerns about how subjective

elements could be added to a relatively objective concept of resources. Influential work on organisational dynamic capability (Winter, 2003), knowledge resources (Teece et al., 1997) and social-political activities (Dörrenbächer & Gammelgaard, 2006) of medium-level managers has touched on this point. This section, therefore, examined the critical importance and function of perceived value embedded in student cohorts with emphasis on the relational context of educational entities.

7.4 Chapter summary

This chapter draws on the results of the exploratory findings that presented the linkages and distinctions between the meanings of international education to TJVUs and, particularly, to their students. This chapter discussed the dynamic process of how to transfer organisational resources and capabilities to the organisational competency, and how this process has added subjective elements through the interactions between students and the TJVUs. The research for this case study reflected that individuals' can make an impact on organisational development by making an empirical contribution on individual–organisation relationships. The conclusion drawn from this study is that students are a complementary and key group of individuals whose initiatives and inputs can have multiple impacts on universities' performance. Chapter 8 concludes this thesis.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

1 Introduction

Chapter 7 drew together the findings from the two case studies to provide an analysis of the key concepts that emerged relating to the RBV. Particular focus was given to the themes concerned with how students are involved in the creation of an international education. Referring to the literature review in Chapter 2, where the research complements were identified, Chapter 7 also highlighted the new contributions both theoretically and empirically.

This chapter brings the thesis to a conclusion. The research objectives presented in Chapter 1 are restated in this chapter. Section 8.2 reviews the research objectives, and section 8.3 presents the main findings of this study. Section 8.4 presents the empirical contribution and section 8.5 discusses the theoretical contribution. The research contributions are offered based on within-case and cross-case analysis, as well as the discussion provided in Chapters 4–7. This chapter concludes with a consideration of the limitations of the research, which extends the discussion on methodological limitation in Chapter 3. The chapter closes with suggestions for future research.

8.2 Research objective review

The thesis set out to explore student engagement in creating an international education in TJVUs, and to extend theoretical understanding of organisational resources. As set out in Chapter 1, the specific research objectives were empirical and theoretical.

The research objectives from an empirical perspective were to explore:

- How TJVUs are established by integrating resources from their parent universities;
- How an international education is differently provided, based on similar strategic alliances;
- What types of organisational resources comprise the basis of an international education in TJVUs;
- How students and staff members identify and become involved in an international education;

- The complexity of the student–university relationship and the role of students in pursuing an international education;
- How students understand and interpret the education they experience in TJVUs; and
- The discrepancies between the education TJVUs claim to provide and student demands for an international education.

The research objectives from a theoretical perspective were to supplement the bottom-up RBV by examining the interaction between students and universities in order to extend understanding of the complexity of creating an international education, including:

- Exploring subjective elements in those discrepancies; and
- How the subjective elements have been added to the objective notion of organisational resources so as to make, develop and strengthen the competitive advantages of TJVUs.

The research objectives have been fulfilled, as evidenced by the detailed discussion in Chapter 7. For clarity, the main contributions are highlighted in section 8.3.

8.3 Main findings

Grounded in the two case studies, this research explored the connection between organisational competitive advantages (creating an international education) and its varied members (staff and students). The within-case analysis explored the presence of the resource base in each TJVU under study. Both TJVU-A and TJVU-B are joint venture universities with a strategic alliance between a Russell Group British university and a Chinese local partner. In addition, they selected Southeast China as the location in which to launch their educations. They applied the unique strengths of their parent universities to match local needs. Chinese students were curious and looking for an advanced standard of education; also, some of them were seeking to bypass the Chinese higher education system. Lynch and Baines (2004) are the pioneers who applied the RBV to the higher education sector. The within-case analysis, which corresponds with their identification of the competitive resources of a university

Lynch and Baines (2004), extended their work into the two Chinese–UK TJVUs. In this study, the competitive resources in a TJVU were categorised by location, physical resource, human resource, reputation, network-bound resource and knowledge-based innovation. These categories gave a focus to the context of a transnational education and enriched the meaning of each type of resource, which has been overlooked in previous work.

According to the within-case analysis of the resource base in each university, it can be seen that resource integration and the development of TJVU-A and TJVU-B are comparable, largely evident in their distinctive statements regarding their international education even though they have the similar background foundation of an alliance. TJVU-A, as an international branch campus of UKPU-A, was established with the intent of creating a British educational presence in China. TJVU-A states its education to be research-led and in the UK-style. It implements the same courses as those of UKPU-A. A reasonable ratio of international students and staff members comprises one of the key characteristics of its international education. In addition, the Chinese elements that were brought by the local partner and embedded in the geographic area were seen as a trade-off for the internationalisation. TJVU-A claimed that they were minimising the Chinese elements on campus in order to provide a more comprehensive British education to students. In terms of TJVU-B, it is eager to create a different identity, that of being an innovator of international education in China. This university also has an active research agenda but has added a focus on connecting with local industries. Similar to TJVU-A, TJVU-B addresses the ratio of international students and staff members, and English as being the educational language as important aspects of its international education. However, this university was closer to being an adaptor by creating its own identity through the joint strengths of both British and Chinese parent universities, additionally emphasising those Chinese elements as part of its international education. To conclude, TJVU-A is closer to being a replicator of its UKPU-A and highlights its international education as being a pure British education, whereas TJVU-B is more like an adaptor who undertakes innovative activities to create a unique identity for its academic innovation.

The within-case analysis also stressed student experiences and interpretations in relation to the resource base and the international education. Based on the resource-based analysis, it is noteworthy that the presences of international education in the two TJVUs were distinctive. Students, as crucial part of a university, perceive, experience and engage in their education. The findings suggest that students articulate, confront and reconcile their understandings and perceptions in order to pursue an ‘international education’ through TJVUs. Their interpretations consequently connect, match or mismatch with the universities’ statements and the interpretations of staff members.

The comparative findings presented the linkages and differences between the meanings of an international education to academic and administrative staff members in TJVUs and to their students. Additionally, the comparative findings indicated the potential value of student inputs to the meaning of international education during their interactions with the universities. Accordingly, the comparative discussion draws the intersections and overlapping according to a resource-based analysis of a university. Therefore, a more student-oriented framework has been applied to compare the resource parameters (reputation, academic quality, quality of services, network relationships and experiential knowledge) of the two TJVUs and the interaction process between students and universities. These findings illustrate that the universities’ claims and student interpretations have connections and mismatches. The fragmented interpretations and inputs from students demonstrate that the subjective elements – which are generally neglected in managerial practice – can be meaningful for the strategic and managerial concept of an organisation.

8.4 Empirical contributions

This study demonstrates the relevance to TNHE in the research area of the RBV, which most scholars discuss in connection with organisational resources in commercial firms with the purpose of maximising profit (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991). Some researchers have utilised the RBV into non-profit sectors. For instance, Mukamel et al (2002), Short et al. (2002) and Arbab Kash et al. (2014) analysed the resource allocation, strategic influence on performance and the management of healthcare organisations through the RBV; Evans et al (2001) identified the brands of museums as an integrative device from organisational resources. In education sector, Lynch and

Baines (2004) and de Haan (2015) also aimed to identify resources in educational organisations and the related competitive advantages. This approach helps to address the strategic and managerial issues of the international business area in relation to the internationalisation of higher education. Through analysing the resource base of two Chinese–UK TJVUs, this study empirically stated the feasibility of utilising the RBV in this specific non-profit transnational context. The findings complemented the emphasis in the literature on the importance of individuals' engagement having the potential to influence organisational competitive advantage and, especially in this context, how the shaping and reshaping of an international education in a host country was achieved by making use of and adding new meaning to those resources.

The student–university relationship is another area where this study has enriched the understanding of tacit knowledge in existing research (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Smith, 2001; Mudambi & Navarra, 2015) in a relational context. Through discussing student as stakeholders, rather than as customers, this thesis provides nuanced information about how students interpret and input into the various resource-based parameters of an education. In addition, the findings contrast with the main literature on resource management, which focuses either on a top-down path or a bottom-up reverse transfer. The discussion reflects the interactivity, multifaceted nature and multidimensionality of creating an international education.

A final empirical contribution was the use of the China–UK alliance sample of TNHEIs. This approach addresses the issue of transnational education in the specific alliance settings where Chinese–UK collaborations are particularly important to transnational and international business.

8.5 Theoretical contributions

Through examining how students interpret their experiences of an international education, this study reconceptualises the student–university relationship with an emphasis on a relational context, through which students are identified as key stakeholders during their study at a university. Secondly, this study re-defines the key concepts of competitiveness in the context of an international education within the RBV framework. In addition, theoretical understanding of the RBV was enhanced

through examining the connection and mismatches between individual inputs and organisational competitive advantage. Finally, this study applies a conceptualisation of the relational context to the RBV research in the educational sector.

Researchers on student–university relationships describe students through a number of metaphoric models: students as education receivers (Lambert & McCombs, 1998), products (Clayson & Haley, 2005; Obermiller et al., 2005), customers (Baldwin, 1994; Browne et al., 1998; Bowden, 2011), clients (Bailey, 2000; Armstrong, 2003), partial employees (Hoffman & Kretovics, 2004), co-producers (Kotze & Du Plessis, 2003; McCulloch, 2009; Carey, 2013) and stakeholders (McDowell & Sambell, 1999; Freeman, 2010). All the research listed here acknowledged the relevance of student influence when the university delivers its education. However, it appears that the student–university relationship is not a static state of affairs. During a relatively long-term learning process, the dynamics of the student–university relationship have an impact on students’ perceptions and understanding of their international education. This study considered that conceptualising the students as stakeholders could be a more accurate way to describe the student role in a university, because this notion not only reflects various student situations relating to their diversified backgrounds, learning stage and other characteristics, but also places emphasis on the stake they hold to universities, the interests they shared with universities, and the important initiatives they take during their education. Accordingly, this study enriches the understanding of how the differences of individuals or a group of individuals influence their participation in an organisation.

The re-defined key concepts of competitiveness in the context of an international education within the RBV framework are drawn on in a central contribution of the thesis. The in-case findings, based on Lynch and Baines’ (2004) framework, show clear limitations to their framework as the six resource-based concepts (location, physical resources, human resources, reputation, network-bound resources and knowledge-based innovation) overlap, some sources of competitive advantage (e.g. reputation, quality and experiential knowledge) are undistinguished, and the institutional context and performance outcomes are unclarified. The re-defined parameters include reputation, academic quality, quality of services, network

relationships and experiential knowledge. This study, therefore, challenges Lynch and Baines' (2004) work for unpacking an education. The new, overarching codes focus on the transnational educational context that reflect the relationship between the parent universities and its TJVU. These codes avoid the overlap of two or more parameters (e.g. the reputation and physical resources) and the repetition of quotes that mention more than one university. In addition, they highlight the differing views of the universities and the students in their interpretations of an 'international education' as a competitive advantage. Also, by considering the contributions student make to the 'international education' through their daily educational activities, non-managerial practice and their interactions with managerial systems and other aspects of the university, the re-defined framework (Table 6.2: Unpacking an international education by TJVUs and their students) highlights the students' subjective interpretation of the resource base by summarising the connections and mismatches between students and universities. It also highlights their contributions to constructing the education by defining their interactive activities.

In terms of the subjective contribution to the resource base, theoretical understanding of the RBV was enhanced through examining the connection and mismatches between individual inputs and organisational competency. This study therefore complemented the former conceptual framework of the RBV and competitive advantage through focusing on the fragmented perceptions of various organisational members. Individuals' contributions have been mentioned in various works on the RBV and in other relevant areas. Scholars on organisational dynamic capability (Teece et al., 1997; Winter, 2003) indicate the potential contribution of individual capability to transforming organisational resources into competitive advantage. The study on knowledge resources (Smith, 2001) additionally stresses the value of tacit knowledge embedded in individuals' experience and skills. More recent work by Geppert and Dörrenbächer (2011) and Williams (2011) looks at the dimension of socio-political interactions within an organisation, through which they emphasise the role of power in the generation and transformation of tacit knowledge-based resources. However, these studies are still simplistic and neglect the ongoing relationship with the long-term and dynamics characteristics between students and universities, as well as potentially in other service-oriented organisations. Therefore, this study drawing on

the relational context examined how individual contribution was embedded both in individual–organisation and resource–competitive advantage relationships. It is noteworthy that a nuanced explanation of those subjective inputs can contribute to the current RBV literature. Crucial to more nuanced understanding of bottom-up individual contribution in the RBV framework, this study moved a step forward from past studies by categorising the interaction process between universities and their students by using the re-defined resource-based parameters with reference to a relational context in transitional universities, through which the neglected subjective elements regarding organisational resources in past research was drawn on in a crucial contribution of the thesis.

Another theoretical contribution was made by applying a conceptualisation of the relational context to the RBV research in the educational sector. Much research on the RBV was based on a structural context, which emphasises either the conventional resource leverage process, or the bottom-up reversed resource generating and transferring process. By viewing the concept of international education through an RBV lens, this study demonstrated that the organisational competitive advantage – providing an ‘international education’ – needs to be added to some new elements. This study therefore demonstrates that creating an international education is a dynamic, multidimensional and long-term social process involving a variety of contributors; enriches the understanding of the fungibility of resources to be the sources relating to the personnel value-added process; and, additionally, complements the static nature of the RBV by giving a lens to the internal relational context.

8.6 Limitations and future research agenda

The study inevitably has a number of limitations. Considering the organisational size and the number of students and staff members in the universities under study, the sample size of interviewees is relatively small; this was brought about by time constraints and access issues. This is a qualitative study that is conducted from an interpretative approach. Therefore, the research aim is mainly concerned with the depth of the study, rather than its breadth. While this study stresses analytical generalisation to theory, rather than generalisability to a wider population, the sample size on which the fieldwork was conducted could still be improved. The focus of this

study was on the Chinese–UK TJVUs, which restricts the geographic area to China and the transnational strategic alliance between the UK and China. In this setting, the findings may not reflect the conditions within other collaborations. Even though there are only two Chinese–UK TJVUs, the sample includes the successful TJVUs representatively. There would be value in further research with a wider sample of institutions. The re-defined key concepts of competitiveness in the context of an international education within the RBV framework could be tested and implicated in other transnational higher education entities, such as TJVUs in cooperation with other countries, joint programmes as well as affiliated joint institutions. In addition, extending the sample to a wider geographical setting may also extend insights about possible cultural factors at play and how different cultural backgrounds may influence the interaction between diversified actors in an organisation. Further research could address a further direction that draws on the limitation in this study that there no interview was conducted with parent universities’ staff. As joint ventures, the research on these entities inevitably relates to the relationship with their headquarters. This research focuses on presence and interactions within a joint venture; therefore, future study that focuses on both sides of the institution would be helpful to explore reflection from the parent universities and, additionally, could explore the aspects on the headquarters–subsidiary relationship, and the subsidiary role and evolution of TJVUs in the higher education sector.

In addition, there are several other aspects that could enrich the agenda for future research. First, future research on student inputs could draw on the literature on power relations, by which the extent and rationale of student influence on universities could be revealed. Second, identifying the relatively long duration of the student–university relationship, the diary method could be conducted in a future study. A longitudinal study would be valuable for exploring the change and continuity of student inputs and resource development. In addition, further qualitative study could combine with quantitative methods to extend the understanding of student perceptions in a wider population. Finally, there would be value in investigating key actors’ inputs in other sectors, such as the health service, professional services, as well as other service-oriented non-profit organisations.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 The original version of the interview questions for the pilot study

Interview questions

1. How did you find out about this university?
2. How do you make your choice to enrol at this university?
3. Are there any differences between your expectations and experiences?
4. Can you give three advantages and three disadvantages of this university?
5. Can you describe your experience of communicating with staff members?
6. How do you make your voice heard in daily life?
7. Do students possess any knowledge that contributes to change in the university?
8. How would you describe the international education this university provides?
9. Are you aware of the relationships between this university and its parent universities?

Appendix 2 The final version of the interview questions

Type A: Questions for staff	Type B: Questions for students
<p><i>Question 1:</i> What are the main competitive resources and distinctive competencies of the IBC?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think are the most distinct advantages of the TJVU that make it operate successfully in China? • Do you think the TJVU possesses any exclusive resources? • Can you explain any changes or differences between you working here and previous work experience or previous expectations? • Do you think the academic staff has the potential to be one of the competencies in this TJVU? How about the students? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you decided to study at this TJVU, what were the determining factors? • Do you think these factors make the TJVU more competitive in the Chinese higher education market? How about in the international higher education market? • Are there any differences between your expectations and your current experiences? • Do you think the academic staff has the potential to be one of the competencies in this TJVU? How about the students?
<p><i>Question 2:</i> Who develops and possesses the resources and competencies that influence the relationship between the parent university and its branch campuses? What is the nature of this influence?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can describe any differences or changes in the TJVU in the period of your career here? • Can you give any reasons for these changes? • Do you think you or your colleagues have any resources or capabilities that can influence change in the relationship between the parent university and the TJVU? • Do you think the students have the potential to promote any change in the TJVU? • Do you know of or have you experienced any actions that staff or students have taken to try to extend their influence in the school's decision-making? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you experienced any changes in strategy development, such as standard of recruitment for academics, requirements of students, course design etc.? • Can you give any reasons for these changes? • Do you think the staff and students at this TJVU have the potential to influence whether or not these changes take place? Why is this so? • Do you think students are one of the IBC's resources?

<p><i>Question 3:</i> What kind of role do the students play in the process of resource development that affects the headquarters–subsidiary relationship? Do students generate knowledge-based resources and, if so, how does this knowledge transfer to different levels in the organisation?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any experiences of delivering an idea, suggestion, or complaint to a higher-level management team? What was the result? • Do you know any examples of staff or students’ requirements having been accepted by the TJVU? • Can you describe students’ influence on your teaching, on the parent university’s decision-making and strategy development etc.? • What kind of knowledge do you think students can generate that benefits or causes dysfunction for the TJVU? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know of any students’ requests that have been accepted by the TJVU? • If you have an idea, suggestion or complaint about the school, do you have the ability or willingness to deliver your thought to the management team? Who is the first person you would want to talk, or what is your first choice with regard to making your voice heard? • Do you think students have any influence on the parent university’s decision-making and strategy development?
<p><i>Question 4:</i> How do the resources impact on the headquarters–subsidiary relationship in a way that encourages headquarters to achieve its organisational goals and meet the requirements of the key internal stakeholders from TJVU as well?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know of any examples where the parent university adjusted its strategy according to the TJVU’s performance? • Can you give any differences in the relationship between the parent university and the TJVU? And what is the most crucial reason for this difference? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the students’ voice has influenced the development of the IBC, and subsequently benefited students?
<p>Type C questions: Unstructured questions</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask interviewees to expand their view according to their examples. • Ask interviewees to comment on a theoretical idea. • Ask interviewees to give other examples. 	
<p>Type A: Questions for staff</p>	<p>Type B: Questions for students</p>
<p><i>Question 1:</i> What are the main competitive resources and distinctive competencies of the IBC?</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think are the most distinct advantages of the TJVU that make it operate successfully in China? • Do you think the TJVU possesses any exclusive resources? • Can you explain any changes or differences between you working here and previous work experience or previous expectations? • Do you think the academic staff has the potential to be one of the competencies in this TJVU? How about the students? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you decided to study at this TJVU, what were the determining factors? • Do you think these factors make the TJVU more competitive in the Chinese higher education market? How about in the international higher education market? • Are there any differences between your expectations and your current experiences? • Do you think the academic staff has the potential to be one of the competencies in this TJVU? How about the students?
<p><i>Question 2:</i> Who develops and possesses the resources and competencies that influence the relationship between the parent university and its branch campuses? What is the nature of this influence?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can describe any differences or changes in the TJVU in the period of your career here? • Can you give any reasons for these changes? • Do you think you or your colleagues have any resources or capabilities that can influence change in the relationship between the parent university and the TJVU? • Do you think the students have the potential to promote any change in the TJVU? • Do you know of or have you experienced any actions that staff or students have taken to try to extend their influence in the school's decision-making? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you experienced any changes in strategy development, such as standard of recruitment for academics, requirements of students, course design etc.? • Can you give any reasons for these changes? • Do you think the staff and students at this TJVU have the potential to influence whether or not these changes take place? Why is this so? • Do you think students are one of the IBC's resources?
<p><i>Question 3:</i> What kind of role do the students play in the process of resource development that affects the headquarters–subsidiary relationship? Do students generate knowledge-based resources and, if so, how does this knowledge transfer to different levels in the organisation?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any experiences of delivering an idea, suggestion, or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know of any students' requests that have been accepted by the TJVU?

<p>complaint to a higher-level management team? What was the result?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know any examples of staff or students' requirements having been accepted by the TJVU? • Can you describe students' influence on your teaching, on the parent university's decision-making and strategy development etc.? • What kind of knowledge do you think students can generate that benefits or causes dysfunction for the TJVU? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have an idea, suggestion or complaint about the school, do you have the ability or willingness to deliver your thought to the management team? Who is the first person you would want to talk, or what is your first choice with regard to making your voice heard? • Do you think students have any influence on the parent university's decision-making and strategy development?
<p><i>Question 4:</i> How do the resources impact on the headquarters–subsidiary relationship in a way that encourages headquarters to achieve its organisational goals and meet the requirements of the key internal stakeholders from TJVU as well?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know of any examples where the parent university adjusted its strategy according to the TJVU's performance? • Can you give any differences in the relationship between the parent university and the TJVU? And what is the most crucial reason for this difference? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the students' voice has influenced the development of the IBC, and subsequently benefited students?
<p style="text-align: center;">Type C questions: Unstructured questions</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask interviewees to expand their view according to their examples. • Ask interviewees to comment on a theoretical idea. • Ask interviewees to give other examples. 	

Appendix 3 Consent form for participants

Consent form for participants

Title of the project:	A micro-level analysis of the RBV in transnational joint-venture universities: the role of students in making an 'international education'
Student name and contact details:	Jia JIA Jia.jia.2015@live.rhul.ac.uk
Hosting Institution:	Royal Holloway, University of London

"I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher(s) on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission. (The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project.)

Agree

Not Agree

I agree/do not agree to the interview being taped.

My name can be mentioned in this research study.

The name of the organisation I work for can be mentioned in this research study.

I understand that I have the right to ask for the audio/video tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet."

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4 An overview of the data structure of TJVU-A

Theme/ Concept	Category	Sub- category	Second-order Code	Examples of quotation and free code		
				<i>Admin staff views [informant number]</i>	<i>Academic staff views [informant number]</i>	<i>Student views [informant number]</i>
				<i>Free codes [Abbreviated informant number]</i>		
Resource deployment of the parent universities	Heritage resources in the foundation period	Human resource leverage from the parent universities	Setting-up of leadership	‘The management board was established by two sides.’ [A-18-AD]	-	-
			Entrepreneurial effort and personal network of the founder	‘He is the Honorary President and the connector for the original setting-up of the TJVU-A.’ [A-18-AD]	‘The establishment of this university is highly related to the eagerness of <Founder’s name> to reform Chinese higher education.’ [A-06-AC]	-
			The UKPU-A appointed academic leaders to establish several departments	‘At the beginning, many lecturers were from the UKPU-A. After they set up the departments, TJVU-A started to employ staff independently.’ [A-17-AD]	‘In the foundation period, you need someone to build up everything. Now we are more mature than before, so we review the applicants while the UKPU-A makes the final decision.’ [A-06-AC]	‘At the beginning, all the teachers came from the UKPU-A, but now the school hires staff independently. It’s the reason why the teaching quality is decreasing.’ [A-25-UG4]

Exist and continuing resource deployment	Resource leverage from CP-A	CP-A is responsible for infrastructure	‘The CP-A provides the land, constructed establishment, and everything related to the hardware.’ [A-01-AD]	‘The CP-A built this campus, all the buildings. But I have no idea why the styles between the teaching and living areas are so distinctive.’ [A-27-AC]	‘The CP-A only provides the infrastructure and services related to daily life. Only these. The CP-A doesn’t participate in the education.’ [A-21-PG]	
		CP-A provides logistics services	‘JVU-A has a close connection with CP-A. The CP-A manages everything in the residential area and the residential area is of course an essential part of the campus.’ [A-02-AD]	-	‘The canteen belongs to the CP-A and it provides all the services in the student residential area as well – just a service provider.’ [A-04-PD2]	

		Education system launched from UKPU-A	Library/database resources	‘UKPU-A do have some resource support. For instance, they send the library between 10,000 and 20,000 books per year. And we can access their e-resources for free.’ [A-17-AD]	‘We use the UKPU-A’s database but I don’t think it’s enough. The scale and level of book resources here does not qualify as adequate for a so-called leading university. It needs time to expand its book resources.’ [A-28-AC]	‘We use the same database as UKPU-A. It’s convenient for my research. The feeling of unlimited resources and the freedom to access them is perfect.’ [A-09-PD1]
			English-based teaching and research	‘The education being entirely in English is an obvious advantage in China. Especially for the students who plan to study abroad.’ [A-03-AD]	‘Using English is the criterion of our teaching. Also, it attracts student to enrol here.’ [A-06-AC]	‘Knowledge was learned through English. It is helpful for personal improvement both in professional knowledge and the English language.’ [A-05-UG2]
			Unified courseware development	‘UKPU-A and TJVU-A have not only got the same logo and website, but also the same textbooks and other courseware.’ [A-17-AD]	‘The PPT slides of one module are the same on all three campuses.’ [A-06-AC]	-

		Branding advantages from UKPU-A	A springboard for students to seek high-ranking postgraduate programmes	‘Over 70% of our students go abroad every year and 80% of them receive offers from the top-100 universities around the world.’ [A-18-AD]	‘We hope the school can be treated not only as a springboard, but also a competitive option for the final stage of education.’ [A-20-AC]	‘No one really thinks of feeling proud of being here. We always introduce ourselves as I got the master’s offers from Oxbridge, LSE, UCL, and then explain that I graduated from TJVU-A.’ [A-26-UG4]
			A springboard for staff to get promotion	‘UKPU-A is supportive of staff mobility. The staff have the opportunity of training in the UKPU. Some staff take this opportunity for a better career.’ [A-17-AD]	‘Some young lecturers come here to enrich their teaching and research experience. When they go back to the UK, this experience is empowers them to get a better position in universities.’ [A-28-AC]	‘Some lecturers just suddenly left. I personally think several staff take the TJVU-A as a career springboard. They get work experience of the UK system and an international background to promote in a UK university.’ [A-04-PD2]

Resource (capability) development of TJVU-A	Initiative of TJVU-A	-	Local government support	‘Recently, there has been investment from the local government to improve the science and engineering education and research.’ [A-17-AD]	‘The new president is seeking collaboration and cooperation with local government to improve the school’s reputation in China.’ [A-28-AC]	‘Our lab has local government’s support for its projects.’ [A-04-PD2]
			Donation from local philanthropists and entrepreneurs	‘<Name of donator > came here last week, and set up a scholarship to help a greater number of excellent students.’ [A-02-AD]	‘For example, the <name of donator>. This city is his hometown, and he does business in Hong Kong. He has donated a great deal of money to us.’ [A-06-AC]	-
		Constructive development	Sport facilities were improved because of the president’s personal interest	‘The new president likes climbing and boating, so we have climbing wall and boating club now.’ [A-02-AD]	-	‘He (the president) is a popular leader. He likes climbing, so we got the climbing wall in the sports centre.’ [A-08-UG3]
			New buildings and the renovation of	‘We are establishing a new library and another building, and	‘The change is obvious. The school renovates spaces every year to	‘The space has always changed after

			spaces in the limited campus area	then there will be no free space on this small campus.’ [A-01-AD]	satisfy students.’ [A-06-AC]	a summer vacation.’ [A-09-PD1]
			The improvement of the student residential area	‘Students often complain the issues in the residential area. But now the complaints are decreasing, the CP-A has set up an issue reporting applet in WeChat to solve problems.’ [A-18-AD]	-	‘There is improvement in the student residential area. Though the improvement is slow, it does happen.’ [A-04-PD2]
		Academic related development	Research has been localised	‘The number of Chinese academic staff increased. So Chinese-related research topics are increasing as well.’ [A-18-AD]	‘Regarding research, applying funding from government is one part of the localisation.’ [A-20-AC]	‘My research topic is technology-related, but the data came from China. The campus is based here, so why not take advantage of the location?’ [A-04-PD2]
Complexity of	Organisational identity	-	Definition of the university	‘I would say, the nature of TJVU-A is	‘I think the idea of a branch campus and	‘TJVU-A is quite similar to the UK

embeddedness				that of a branch campus of UKPU-A located in China.’ [A-01-AD]	independent university is just a selling point.’ [A-20-AC]	universities and the educational quality is comparable with them, because TJVU-A definitely is a branch campus of the UKPU.’ [A-05-UG2]
	-	-	Separated atmosphere between the teaching district and student residential area	‘It’s obvious that here [in the teaching district] we are in a very Western atmosphere, but when you cross the river [a river on the campus that separates the teaching district from the residential area], it is an entirely Chinese environment.’ [A-03-AD]	‘There is a clear boundary between the teaching district and the residential area – different colours and styles of buildings. I personally think it’s because of the profit issues. The CP-A wants to control more.’ [A-20-AC]	‘The greatest difference is that you almost never speak English in the residential area.’ [A-16-UG2]
	Dual-dimensional educational adaptation	Pure British education	Restricted teaching material	‘Besides the slides, all the course design and course system are the same as	‘The PPT slides of one module are same within each campus.’ [A-06-AC]	-

				UKPU-A.’ [A-17-AD]		
			UK’s QA standards and moderation processes	‘We are under the UK’s QA standards. There is a moderation process every five years.’ [A-01-AD]	‘In teaching, we insist on the British educational system. All the course and module designs follow this system, and we have moderations every year.’ [A-20-AC]	‘TJVU-A claimed that the education is of the UK’s QA standard, and the same as UKPU-A. But students don’t think so.’ [A-08-UG3]
		-	Compulsory Chinese culture module	‘Only Chinese students have to participate in the Chinese culture modules.’ [A-02-AD]	‘Later [following his graduation] the Chinese cultural module was added to the compulsory module list for domestic students. This module provides knowledge of Chinese history, culture and, of course, the politics-related socialism theories.’ [A-06-AC]	‘Only PE and the Chinese culture module are delivered in the Chinese language. The teachers are all Chinese. When I was an undergraduate, we only had the culture module in the first year, but now this module takes two years.’ [A-09-PD1]

	ICT adaptation	Intersection of communication methods	Function of WeChat in interpersonal communication	‘The line manager contacted me on WeChat me to ask if I wanted to work in his department.’ [A-02-AD]	‘I got used to using WeChat. You have to use this because everyone here communicates through WeChat. There are no other ways available instead of WeChat for instant communication, isn’t that so?’ [A-27-AC]	‘I have lots of WeChat groups. Generally, a society has two groups, one is like an information board and you cannot block the notification of this group. Another one is for informal chat and social engagement.’ [A-26-UG4]
			Function of WeChat to solve problems in the student residential area	-	-	‘We report facility repair issues through WeChat. It’s effective and fast because of the rating system in WeChat.’ [A-16-UG2]
			Function of e-mail system in interpersonal communication	‘Students that have a problem can e-mail us, even the president. It’s the official way for them to be heard.’ [A-01-AD]	‘I prefer to communicate with students through e-mail. And students should get used to this method, this manner.’ [A-20-AC]	‘E-mail means it is official. I use it to contact the lecturer for academic problems and the president to complain about

						something.’ [A-15-UG1]
		Social embeddedness	Self-expression on public social media platforms	‘Everyone can write something on an individual public account. An issue may be widely known within one hour by WeChat. Sometimes people just debate a very tiny boring thing.’ [A-02-AD]	‘Students have the right to express themselves publically, but I don’t take them seriously. In fact, if something is really sensitive they don’t discuss in public.’ [A-27-AC]	‘I take a video interview with people who have special experiences or skills on campus, and upload it to my individual account. Currently, I have over 1,000 audiences. [A-08-UG3]
	On-campus culture	Cultural barriers	Interaction between international and domestic students	‘We are engaged in improving the ratio of international students to create a more international environment and to enable students to interact with each other better.’ [A-02-AD]	‘I think the communication is on a superficial level. Chinese and international students rarely talk about sensitive topics, such as the Cultural Revolution. Even if I ask to talk, they don’t take part in it.’ [A-27-AC]	‘I have several international friends, but not too many. I only meet them when playing basketball.’ [A-15-UG1]

		Language barriers	Difficulties for non-Chinese speakers of living in the student residential area	‘It’s impossible to force the local staff, perhaps a 60-year-old man, to speak English. It’s not realistic.’ [A-18-AD]	‘I can speak few words to get food, such as Zhege (this), Bu (no), Duoshaoqian (How much).’ [A-27-AC]	‘I can survive without the Chinese language [in the student residential area], but I cannot engage in more activities.’[A-11-UG3]
			The Chinese language is not allowed in academic conversations	‘If an academic speaks Chinese while teaching, students can appeal about this issue.’ [A-18-AD]	‘[In office hour] Last year, I spoke Chinese if the student did so, but this year I am trying use only English to answer questions.’ [A-20-AC]	‘Lectures are based in English but, in a seminar, we did undertake group discussions in Chinese. It’s not allowed, but the tutor didn’t stop us.’ [A-19-PG]
		A Western–Eastern mixed-culture environment	Clear boundary between the teaching district and the student residential area	‘The buildings in the student residential area belong the CP-A, and CP-A designs here are the same as in any another private university they operate.’ [A-17-AD]	‘The Chinese culture attracted me to be here, while the huge cultural differences stopped me staying here longer.’ [She decided to leave China six months after this interview was conducted.] [A-27-AC]	‘The architectural differences are acceptable, but the cultural gap is a problem. An example, leaving bikes on the ground is not allowed by the CP because CP-A thinks that bikes everywhere make

						the campus look untidy. Students feel it's no problem, so do the international staff. But, it just can't be done.' [A-12-UG4]
Headquarters–subsidiary relationship	CP-A stays at an embarrassing distance	-	CP-A dominates the TJVU-A structure	'There are people on the management board from the CP-A and they take charge of the university's strategy and day-to-day operation.' [A-03-AD]	'I understand from the legal structure that CP-A is stronger than UKPU-A, but, in my daily life, the CP is supportive with regard to education.' [A-06-AC]	-
		Relatively weak imagination	Students don't want to be linked with the CP-A	'The CP-A sounds as though it is not as strong as the CPs of other TJVUs. But to some extent it's to our advantage to keep a pure British education.' [A-01-AD]	'I don't have too much contact with the CP-A. All the systems I'm following came from the UK.' [A-27-AC]	'So we don't have any bias against the CP-A. We just don't want the outsiders to mix these two entities up.' [A-09-PD1]
		Visually explicit	Similar landmark buildings	'The teaching district was designed	-	'The clock tower is just as same as that

	Strong connection with UKPU-A	connections with the UKPU-A		as a modern UK university, to the same standard. And the landmark was copied from the UKPU.’ [A-18-AD]		at the UKPU-A.’ [A-08-UG3]
			Building names refer to the famous constructors	‘When naming our new buildings, we will use the name of a Nobel Prize winner and famous alumni from the UKPU.’ [A-01-AD]	‘All the buildings on campus had new names that refer to the names of significant luminaries from the UKPU.’ [A-06-AC]	‘I heard that the UKPU built a bridge on its campus and used our president’s name as the name of the bridge.’ [A-30-UG3]
			Unified official websites	‘The official websites of three campuses, it’s really hard to tell them apart.’ [A-01-AD]	‘The English version of the official websites is quite similar to the UKPU’s.’ [A-28-AC]	‘Even the official website was designed to be the same as the other two campuses.’ [A24-UG4]
			Following the same strategic plan	‘The strategic plan here is in line with that of the UKPU.’ [A-17-AD]	‘I am the member of this committee [a committee to promote strategy]. It’s a big plan, and needs time to be achieved.’ [A-06-AC]	‘I know the name of the strategic plan, but I don’t think I have any relation to it.’ [A-22-PG]

		Controls of educational quality	Unified courseware development	‘The UKPU and TJVU-A not only have the same logo and website, but also the same textbooks and other courseware.’ [A-17-AD]	‘The PPT slides of a module are same within all three campuses.’ [A-06-AC]	‘We use the same textbooks and other learning materials, but it doesn’t mean we have the same quality of teaching as the UKPU.’ [A-26-UG4]
			Academic staff recruitment should be approved by the UKPU-A	‘We recruit and interview the academic candidates here, but whether to hire him/her or not? UKPU-A makes the final decision.’ [A-03-AD]	‘I am employed by the TJVU-A and under the system of TJVU-A, not the UKPU. The UKPU only deal with the final approval process.’ [A-20-AC]	-
			JVU-A follows the UK QA standards	‘QA standards are the bottom line of our education, and we could do better.’ [A-01-AD]	‘We follow the UK moderation process every year.’ [A-20-AC]	‘Keeping the UK QA standards is one of the reasons why I came here.’ [A-10-UG4]

	Subsidiary role	-	TJVU-A is a demonstration of the UKPU-A's success in internationalisation	'Although TJVU-A is a branch campus, we (TJVU-A and UKPU-A) are the partner; we can be better only by being better together.' [A-01-AD]	'The establishment of international branch campuses is a powerful embodiment of UKPU-A. One feature that has always been advertised is its high degree of internationalisation.' [A-20-AC]	'We take advantage of the UKPU-A to move on to a high-university and the UKPU-A take advantage of the TJVU-A to expand its reputation at the same time.' [A16-UG2]
	Inter-entities competition	-	Competitive relationship between three campuses	'One relation between the three campuses is the competitive relation, especially the competition for students' [A-03-AD]	'Competition exists, of course. This is a pattern for the entire university to improve.' [A-27-AC]	'I came to China, came to TJVU-A, because TJVU-A has a better reputation of than any other branch campus.' [A-30-UG3]
	Student engagement	-	2+2 programmes	-	-	'The 2+2 programme students can feel the strong connection between UKPU-A and the TJVU-A' [A-26-UG4]

Appendix 5 An overview of the data structure of TJVU-B

Theme/concept	Category	Sub-category	Second-order code	Example of quotations and free codes		
				<i>Admin staff views [informant number]</i>	<i>Academic staff views [informant number]</i>	<i>Student views [informant number]</i>
Resource deployment of the parent universities	Heritage resources in the foundation period	Human resource leverage from the parent universities	Setting-up of leadership	‘The management board was set up by the two parent universities. Each side appointed people to be here, and the TJVU-B recruited <the name> as the chair of the board, who had an educational and working background in the Chinese parent university (CPU-B), to take charge of the strategic and daily operations.’ [B-17-MB]	‘The management board has eight members; four come from the CPU-B and four from the UKPU.’ [B-04-AD]	-

		Educational resources from the CPU-B	Mathematics and engineering foundation courses	‘In the foundation period, the course leaders of the Maths and Science Departments came from the CPU-B. They designed the teaching modules and stayed here for several years, and then went back to the CPU-B. This initial support in maths education is obviously acknowledged. But we are taking over the educational design as the TJVU-B gradually matures.’ [B-06-AD]	-	‘The maths course in our foundation year was designed by the professors from the CPU-B. But I think the design has been changed considerably.’ [B-30 UG4]
	Branding	Reputational advantage of the UKPU	A springboard for seeking high-ranking postgraduate programmes	‘It being easier to get offers from top universities is a selling point of TJVU-B. Some students who are in a position to go to a Project 985 university still choose TJVU-B because they think they can receive the same offer here	‘Most students come here because they want to go abroad later. Someone described TJVU-B as a springboard, but I think it is more like a cushion before they are prepared to face a different life.’ [B-19-AC]	‘Many students think this university (TJVU-B) is a springboard to get into top-ranking universities as a postgraduate, such as Oxbridge. Because they were good students at high school, it’s a second

				more easily.’ [B-04-AD]		chance to prove themselves.’ [B-02-UG4]
		Reputational advantage of CPU-B	Students and their parents trust this alliance because of the important name of CPU-B	‘After all, the student enrolment still takes advantage of the CPU. CPU-B put their name on our brand, which is already very supportive.’ [B-04-AD]	‘Although I don’t recognise any relation with CPU-B in my work, this important name is, to some extent, a guarantee of quality.’ [B-16-AC]	‘The name did attract my attention. But just that. I don’t think we have any relations with the CPU.’ [B-29-UG3]
	Educational system from the UKPU	-	Library/database resources	‘The online database resources [of the UKPU] are fully accessible when you are a postgraduate student.’ [B-03-AD]	‘We can access the database of the UKPU, which allows me to continue working in a familiar way [as my PhD study in the UK].’ [B-19-AC]	‘The database from the UKPU is the most crucial resource for me.’ [B-23-UG1]
			English-based teaching and research	‘The teaching must be provided in English. It’s the policy of this alliance.’ [B-06-AD]	‘All the lectures and workshops are led in English. In office hour I may use Chinese to answer questions. I don’t	‘TJVU-B provides a fully English-based education, but I think it can only be described to be a fully English-based

					think it influences the intention of teaching purely in English.’ [B-15-AC]	communication in classes.’ [B-23-UG1]
			Course/module/assessment quality assurance	‘Our academic policy and regulation are in accordance with the Quality Assurance of the UK. We set up the policy and regulation based on the QA, and all the examination, course designs and approvals are under the UKPU-B’s moderation and validation, and the external moderation and validation.’ [B-08-AD]	‘The standard of education quality is extremely strict, more so than the UK and Chinese universities. It’s because of the three layers of moderations: an internal one by TJVU-B, one by the UKPU and an external one, as in other UK universities.’ [B-15-AC]	‘The moderation from the UK is an advantage for students during the postgraduate application process because the UK trusts their system more than China’s.’ [B-22-UG4]
Resource (capability) development of TJVU-B	Locational advantages	-	Located in east of China	‘For foreigners, this city is a soft landing place. It’s developed and easy to settle in.’ [B-18AD]	‘The advantage of the location is obvious. Relaxing for research and convenient for conferences in Shanghai.’ [B-14-AC]	‘This city is close to Shanghai and full of career opportunities.’ [B-27-UG1]

		-	Local government support			
	Autonomy of the TJVU	Constructive development	Campus expansion and facility improvement	‘The biggest change is that our campus is constantly expanding. Now we are in the North Campus, passing the underground tunnel, it’s the South campus, which is the second phase of the expansion project.’ [B-07-AD]	‘Look at this office. I just move in last week. All this building and the South campus is the property of TJVU-B.’ [B-10-AC]	‘I think the facilities here is the best in China and it is continually improving. It’s worth the money.’ [B-21-UG2]
			Building a new branch campus	‘We [TJVU-B] recently established a branch campus in another city.’ [B-04-AD]	-	‘The TJVU-B plans to build a branch campus. I am so proud of it.’ [B-30-UG4]
			Entrepreneurial efforts of the president (charismatic leader)	‘The president wants to change higher education in China and he prompted the development of TJVU-B.’ [[B-06-AD]]	‘The president’s skills in management and strategy are strong, we improved a great deal because of him.’ [B-11-AC]	‘The president is a strategist and he wants to lead the innovation and reform of China’s higher education.’ [B-30-UG4]

		Academic-related development	Localisation of modules	‘We never said we are British. We are part of an innovation in education, which is based on the UKPU’s framework. So, localisation of the modules is just to adapt to students here.’ [B-08-AD]	‘The [teaching] quality is assured by the British system, but some specific content is localised. There are many Chinese case studies in lectures.’ [B-19-AC]	‘I don’t think we are under a pure British system. Besides the Chinese cultural modules, most modules have content about China. The outline of the course is British, but the detail has been changed.’ [B-22-UG4]
			Internationalised teaching or research	‘We follow the QA standard of the UK, but our education is an integrated one. It’s not a pure British style, but absorbs the advantages of every country.’ [B-03-AD]	‘We can follow different index of journals than the public. Not just the SCI in China or ABS in the UK. The index from the USA or Australia is acceptable.’ [B-11-AC]	‘When I came to the UK, I realised that the education at TJVU-B is international, but not British. I can’t describe it very clearly, but I got that feeling.’ [B-02-UG4]
Complexity of embeddedness	Organisational identity	Definition of the university	An independent TJVU	‘We are independent university, not a subsidiary or branch campus.’ [B-04-AD]	‘I can feel the independence of TJVU-B and it’s trying to be more	‘We are not a branch campus, we are an independent university.’ [B-01-UG3]

					independent.’ [B-11-AC]	
		Outsourcing the dormitory services	Separated teaching and residential areas	‘The dormitories and student residential area is operated by a state-owned company. Here, we are in a university town. All the universities located in this town teach and research independently, but they share the facilities of dormitories, restaurants, a stadium and entertainment facilities.’ [B-05-AD]	-	‘The school outsourced the dormitory service. It’s clever because by doing so they placed the potential for conflict outside the campus.’ [B-26-PG]
		Conflict between service quality and social recognition	Tuition fee	‘I don’t think the tuition fee is unfordable. I will work for over 15 years when my child goes to the university, can’t I have 40 for her? I mean, it’s not a big deal for most city	-	‘The tuition fee is quite expensive and increasing almost every year.’ [B-21-UG2]

		of higher education		families with a double income.’ [B-03-AD]		
			Educational quality	‘I do not think the educational quality has decreased. We go through the moderation process successfully every year. It’s already proved its quality.’ [B-08-AD]	‘The teaching quality didn’t decrease but the environment for receiving information decreased because of the huge student number attending lectures.’ [B-10-AC]	‘The educational quality should be maintained at a relatively high standard. But it’s definitely not because the number of students increases year on year.’ [B-26-PG]
	Multidimensional educational adaptation	An international education system -	Integrated course design from various systems	[The education at TJVU-B is] A combination of the Chinese and Western educations, which combines the rules of China, the philosophy of the UK and the flexibility of the USA.’ [B-03-AD]	‘The British style is the outline of the education. We can innovate in pedagogy and content as long as the desired outcome is achieved.’ [B-19-AC]	‘The TJVU-B is willing to provide a British education and “the British style” is the bottom line of the education here. Beyond that, the TJVU-B is innovating and adding other content.’ [B-02-UG4]

			Compulsory Chinese cultural courses	‘There is a dedicated centre to provide Chinese cultural courses, including arts, law and political lessons. And Chinese students have to take it.’ [B-04-AD]	-	‘I don’t think it’s a pure politics related course. It contains history and culture and it’s interesting.’ [B-29-UG3]
	ICT adaptation	Intersection of communication methods	Function of WeChat in interpersonal communication	‘WeChat is used everywhere. Informal communication, of course. For formal communication, the WeChat is supplementary to the e-mail system.’ [B-05-AD]	‘It depends on the lecture size. For the module (4 lectures per week) with 900+ students, I didn’t give them my WeChat number, but for the lecture with 100–200 students, I did. Also, I formed a study group, so students can ask me questions in the group as well.’ [B-15-AC]	‘Communication through WeChat is complicated. This type of communication takes place every second. You can get any information from anyone by WeChat.’ [B-21-UG2]
			Function of e-mail system in interpersonal communication	‘E-mail communication means it is official.’ [B-04-AD]	‘I prefer to communicate with students by e-mail. It’s professional.’ [B-10-AC]	‘Yes, if we want to talk to lecturers or managers, even the president, we can e-

						mail them directly.’ [B-01-UG4]
		Social embeddedness	Students’ self-expression on public social media platforms	‘Students upload anything they want to say on social media. I avoid reading them because I think I can judge with my eyes. I work relying on my experienced observation, not on fragmented information.’ [B-05-AD]	‘I only know students quite often talk to the president online.’ [B-19-AC]	‘I sometimes write in my account reviews about what I have come across on campus and what I think is unfair or needs to improve. I share them in the Moments section in WeChat. But when my friends or parents ask me about these articles, I always pretend that they are not my work, and I’m just sharing something interesting. I don’t want be in trouble.’ [B-21-UG2]
	On-campus culture	Cultural barriers	Interaction between international and domestic students	-	‘In my class, I have noticed that international students sit together,	‘I have a few international friends, fewer than five. Sometimes we climb

					Chinese students sit together. I can feel a boundary between them. At least in my class, the interaction between them is rare.' [B-16-AC]	mountains or jog together, and have some basic conversation. Not close friends. I don't have anyone to eat with me or watch a movie with me.' [B-21-UG4]
			Adaptation of international staff and students	'I don't any very serious problems about life in China. It's largely because I speak Chinese. Not that fluently, but at least I can communicate simply with Chinese people.' [B-18-AD]	'When I used to work in a traditional Chinese university... day-to-day work was all in Chinese. It's struggle. ... But after five years I thought it was time to move on, so I came here. Many things that were difficult for me feel easier here. [B-14-AC]	'I don't speak Chinese so I have difficulties in the canteen. I have to rely on my body language or my friends. I need more time to familiarise myself with everything in China.' [B-24-PD1]
		Language barriers	Switching languages according to the occasion	'I speak English with international students, while I speak Chinese with Chinese students. There is no policy for	'In lectures, we speak English 100% of the time. But when students ask questions after class,	'You are switching language constantly on campus. It's interesting and it's

				administrative staff that regulates language problems.’ [B-04-AD]	such as during the office hour, in Chinese, I reply in Chinese. I don’t force students to speak English. Sometimes it’s easier to explain and understand Chinese market issues in our mother language.’ [B-15-AC]	our characteristic.’ [B-25-UG1]
			Chinese language is not allowed in academic related conversations	‘Sometimes it hard to tell the difference between formal and informal communications. I think they have a right to choose which language is used after formal classes.’ [B-07-AD]	‘Once I went to a lecture out of personal interest. The course leader spoke Chinese but immediately switched to English when he saw me. There had only been Chinese students in the room before I came in.’ [B-13-AC]	‘If we speak Chinese in a lecture, we will be stopped. But this lecturer, well, we were doing a survey project by means of group discussion in a seminar in Chinese, but he didn’t stop us.’ [B-23-UG1]
		A Western–Eastern		‘I quit a traditional Chinese university to come here, seeking a	‘Here, everyone provides service to the students and	‘People respect each other here. Even talking to the

		mixed-culture environment	Delayed and non-bureaucratic atmosphere	non-bureaucratic place. I stayed in the UK for over 10 years. I can't get used to being in a Chinese system.' [B-08-AD]	academic staff to assure the quality of the teaching and research ... a high level of freedom. There is no sense of social standing; anyone who wants to talk with the president can make an appointment.' [B-16-AC]	president, I feel as though I'm chatting with a friend. There's no need to feel stressed.' [B-30-UG4]
Headquarters–subsidiary relationship	Conflicts between organisational structure and identity	-	-	'We are independent, and everything is operated by ourselves. The parent universities just support the establishment.' [B-04-AD]	'We are independent. At the beginning, this was an alliance of two partners. Now, we have our own brand [the Chinese name of TJVU-B is a combination of the initials of the two parent universities].'	'We are an independent university. That's the only thing I can say. We don't belong to any entity.' [B-25-UG1]
	Subsidiary role	-	-	-	'The strategy of TJVU-B is to be more independent, but not to be	-

					separate from the parent universities. Otherwise, we are trying to be more outstanding and have more strength. Do the parent universities have to be better than their branch campus? Maybe not.' [B-11-AC]	
	Student engagement	-	2+2 programmes	-	'The 2+2 is almost the only way to feel the existence of the UKPU.' [B-16-AC]	'2+2 students write only the UKPU name in their CV, but 4+0 students will write down both [the TJVU-B and its UKPU].' [B-30-UG4]

Appendix 6 List of courses in TJVU-A

Faculty	Undergraduate course	Postgraduate course
Faculty of Business	<p>BSc (Hons) Finance Accounting and Management (4+0)</p> <p>BSc (Hons) International Business Management (4+0)</p> <p>BSc (Hons) International Business Economics (4+0)</p> <p>BA (Hons) International Business with Communication Studies (4+0)</p> <p>BA (Hons) International Business with Language (4+0)</p>	<p>MSc Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management</p> <p>MSc Finance and Investment</p> <p>MSc International Business</p> <p>MSc International Management</p> <p>MSc Finance and Investment (Professional Accounting)</p> <p>MSc International Management (Business Analytics)</p> <p>MSc International Management (Marketing)</p>
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	<p>BSc International Economics and Trade (4+0)</p> <p>BSc Economics (4+0)</p> <p>BA English Language and Applied Linguistics (2+2, 4+0)</p> <p>BA English Language and Literature (2+2)</p> <p>BA English with International Business (4+0)</p> <p>BA (Hons) International Communications Studies (4+0)</p> <p>BA (Hons) International Communications Studies with Chinese (4+0)</p> <p>BA International Studies (4+0)</p> <p>BA International Studies with Spanish/German/French/Japanese/Chinese (4+0)</p>	<p>MSc Finance and Investment (Economics, Money and Finance)</p> <p>MA International Higher Education</p> <p>MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)</p> <p>Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD)</p> <p>MA Applied Linguistics</p> <p>MA Interpreting and Translation, Mandarin and English</p> <p>MA International Communications Studies</p> <p>MA International Relations and World History</p> <p>MA International Relations and International Business</p>
Faculty of Science and Engineering	<p>BEng (Hons) Aerospace Engineering (2+2, 4+0)</p> <p>BEng (Hons) Architecture (4+0)</p> <p>BEng (Hons) Architectural Environment Engineering (2+2, 4+0)</p> <p>BEng (Hons) Civil Engineering (2+2, 4+0)</p> <p>BEng (Hons) Chemical Engineering (2+2, 4+0)</p>	<p>MSc Geospatial Engineering with Building Information Modelling (BIM)</p> <p>MRes in Chemical Engineering and Technology</p> <p>MRes in Environmental Science and Engineering</p> <p>MRes in Material Science and Engineering</p>

	<p>BEng (Hons) Environmental Engineering (2+2, 4+0)</p> <p>BEng (Hons) Electrical and Electronic Engineering (2+2, 4+0)</p> <p>BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering (2+2, 4+0)</p> <p>BEng (Hons) Product Design and Manufacture (2+2, 4+0)</p> <p>BSc (Hons) Environmental Sciences (2+2)</p> <p>BSc (Hons) Mathematics with Applied Mathematics (2+2, 4+0)</p> <p>BSc (Hons) Statistics (2+2)</p> <p>BSc (Hons) Computer Science (2+2, 4+0)</p> <p>BSc (Hons) Computer Science with Artificial Intelligence (2+2, 4+0)</p> <p>BSc (Hons) Chemistry (2+2)</p>	<p>MRes in Mechanical Engineering</p> <p>MRes in Sustainable Energy and Building Technologies</p>
Centre of English Education	English courses and Content courses in the Preliminary year	
Graduate School	-	

Source: Adapted from TJVU-A website.

Appendix 7 Profile of interviewees from TJVU-A

	Gender	Source of participants	Position	Work/study length	Interview location
A-01-AD	Female	Zhejiang, China	Assistant in Alumni office	3 years	Lobby of a new building
A-02-AD	Female	Zhejiang, China	Assistant in international recruitment office	2 years (1 year PG; 1 year working)	On-campus Café L
A-03-AD	Female	Zhejiang, China	Assistant in the principal's office	2 years (1 year PG and 1 year working)	Office
A-04-PD2	Female	Anhui, China	2nd year PhD candidate in Computer Science; Student rep.	4 years UG in TJVU-A; 1 year PhD in UKPU-A	On-campus Café S
A-05-UG2	Male	Fujian, China	2nd year undergraduate student in Electronic and Electrical Engineering (4+0)	2 years	On-campus Café S
A-06-AC	Male	Neimenggu, China	Laboratory tutor and Alumni	4 years study + 1 year work	Lobby of a building
A-07-PD2	Female	Heilongjiang, China	2nd year PhD candidate in Civil Engineering	2+2 in UG; 1 year PG in UKPU-A	Staff common room
A-08-UG3	Male	Zhejiang, China	3rd year undergraduate in International Economics and Trade (4+0)	2 years	Lobby of a building
A-09-PD1	Male	Heilongjiang, China	1st year PhD candidate in Engineering	4 years UG	Staff common room
A-10-UG4	Male	Zhejiang, China	4th year undergraduate in Environmental Engineering	2 years (2 years in TJVU-A, 2 years in UKPU-A)	WeChat
A-11-UG3	Male	Sweden	3rd year undergraduate international student	2 years	Lobby of a building
A-12-UG4	Male	Heilongjiang, China	5th year undergraduate in International Communication	4 years	On-campus Café C
A-13-UG4	Female	Zhejiang, China	4th year undergraduate in International Business Management	3 years	On-campus canteen

A-14-UG2	Female	Heilongjiang, China	2nd year undergraduate student in International Business Management	1 year	On-campus milk/tea shop
A-15-UG1	Male	Chongqing, China	1st year undergraduate student in Electronic and Electrical Engineering	3 months	On-campus milk/tea shop
A-16-UG2	Male	Zhejiang, China	2nd year undergraduate student in Architecture	2 years (2 years student TJVU-A, 2 years student UKPU-A)	On-campus milk/tea shop
A-17-AD	Male	Zhejiang, China	Member of library staff	12 years	Office
A-18-AD	Female	Zhejiang, China	Staff of residential college	5 years (4 year UG in UNNC, 1 year PG in UKPU-A, 1 year working in TJVU-A)	Office
A-19-PG	Male	Hainan, China	Master's student in Higher Education	5 years (4 years UG and 1 year PG)	On-campus milk/tea shop
A-20-AC	Male	Sichuan, China	Full-time teaching fellow; Part-time 5th year PhD student	1 year PG in UNUK; 1 year PhD in UKPU-A; 3 years PhD in TJVU-A ; 1 year work	Office
A-21-PG	Male	Zhejiang, China	Master's student in Civil Engineering	2 years (2 years student TJVU-A, 2 years student UKPU-A)	On-campus milk/tea shop
A-22-PG	Male	Gansu, China	Master's student in Civil Engineering		
A-23-UG1	Male	Zhejiang, China	1st year undergraduate student in Electronic and Electrical Engineering	3 months	On-campus milk/tea shop
A-24-UG4	Male	Guangxi, China	4th year undergraduate in International Communication	2 years (2 years TJVU-A, 2 years UKPU-A)	On-campus milk tea shop

A-25-UG4	Female	Hebei, China	4th year undergraduate in Industrial Design	3 years	Working studio
A-26-UG4	Male	Heilongjiang, China	4th year undergraduate in International communication; Student rep.	3 years (1 year exchange in UKPU-A)	On-campus milk/tea shop
A-27-AC	Female	United Kingdom	Professor in Entrepreneurship	8 years	Café off-campus
A-28-AC	Male	United Kingdom	Lecturer in Computer Science	4 years	Office
A-29-AD	Male	China	Member of administrative staff in international office	3 years	Office
A-30-UG3	Female	Malaysia	3rd year student in International Business and Management	2 years	On-campus milk/tea shop

Appendix 8 Undergraduate courses and degree types at TJVU-B

Category of degree	UG degree name from TJVU-B	UG degree name from UKPU-B (4+0)	UG degree name from UKPU-B (2+2)
Business	BMan Accounting	BA Accounting (UACC)	BA Accounting and Finance
	BMan Business Administration	BA Business Administration (UBAD)	BA Business Management
	BMan Human Resource Management	BA Human Resource Management (UHRM)	
	BMan Information Management and Information Systems	BSc Information Management and Information Systems (UIMS)	BSc Financial Computing
			BSc Computer Science (with specialism in Software Development)
	BMan Marketing	BA Marketing (UMKT)	BA Marketing
	BMan International Business	BA International Business with a Language (UIBL)	BA International Business
	BEcon Economics	BSc Economics (UECO)	BSc Economics
	BEcon Economics and Finance	BSc Economics and Finance (UECF)	
Built Environment	BEng Architecture	BEng Architecture (UARC)	BA Architecture
	BEng Urban Planning and Design	BA Urban Planning and Design (UUPD)	BA Environment and Planning
			BA Urban Planning
	BEng Civil Engineering	BEng Civil Engineering (UCEN)	BEng Civil Engineering
BEng Civil Engineering (BEng Architectural Engineering specialisation)	BEng Architectural Engineering (UARE)	BEng Architectural Engineering	
Humanities and Social Sciences	BA English (English and Finance specialisation)	BA English and Finance (UENF)	-
	BA English (English and International Business specialisation)	BA English and International Business (UENB)	BA English and Business
	BA English (English and Communication)	BA English and Communication Studies (UENC)	BA English and Communication Studies

	Studies specialisation)		
	BA English (Applied English specialisation)	BA Applied English (UENS)	BA Applied English
	BA Communication Studies	BA Communication Studies (UCOM)	BA Communication Studies
	BA Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Language	BA China Studies (UCCS)	-
	BA Broadcasting and TV	BA Film and TV Production (UFTP)	-
	BFA Digital Media Arts	BFA Digital Media Arts (UDMA)	-
	BLaw International Affairs and International Relations	BA International Relations (UURL)	-
Industrial Technology	BEng Computer Science and Technology	BEng Computer Science and Technology (UCST)	BEng Computer Science and Electronic Engineering
	BEng Electronic Science and Technology	BEng Electronic Science and Technology (UEST)	BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering (Electronic Engineering pathway)
	BEng Digital Media Technology	BEng Digital Media Technology (UDMT)	-
	BEng Industrial Design	BEng Industrial Design (UIDS)	BEng Industrial Design
	BSc Information and Computing Science	BSc Information and Computing Science (UICS)	BSc Computer Science
	BEng Telecommunications Engineering	BEng Telecommunications Engineering (UTEL)	BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering (Electronic Engineering and Communications pathway)
	BEng Mechatronic Engineering	BEng Mechatronic and Robotic Systems (UMRS)	BEng Mechatronic Engineering and Robotic Systems
	BEng Electrical Engineering	BEng Electrical Engineering (UEEA)	BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering (Electrical and Electronic Engineering pathway; Electrical Engineering pathway)

Mathematical Sciences	BSc Applied Mathematics	BSc Applied Mathematics (UAMA)	BSc Mathematics
	BEcon Actuarial Science	BSc Actuarial Science (UASC)	BSc Actuarial Mathematics
			BSc Mathematics with Finance
	BEcon Financial Mathematics	BSc Financial Mathematics (UFMA)	BSc Mathematics with Finance
			BSc Actuarial Mathematics
			BSc Economics
Science	BSc Biological Sciences	BSc Biological Sciences (UBIO)	BSc Biochemistry
			Bsc Biological Sciences
			BSc Genetics
			BSc Microbiology
	BSc Bioinformatics	BSc Bioinformatics (UBIF)	BSc Biochemistry
			BSc Genetics
			BSc Microbiology
	BSc Applied Chemistry	BSc Applied Chemistry (UCHM)	BSc Chemistry
	BSc Environmental Science	BSc Environmental Science (UENV)	BSc Environmental Science
	BMan Public Affairs Management	BSc Public Health (UDPH)	-

Source: Adapted from the TJVU-B website.

Appendix 9 Postgraduate courses at TJVU-B

Department	PG course name
Architecture	Master of Architectural Design
Biological Sciences	MRes Molecular Biosciences
Chemistry	MRes Advanced Chemical Sciences
China Studies	MA China Studies
Civil Engineering	MSc Civil Engineering (full-time, part-time) MSc Sustainable Construction (full-time, part-time)
Computer Science and Software Engineering	MSc Applied Informatics MRes Computer Science MSc Financial Computing MSc Social Computing
Electrical and Electronic Engineering	MRes Low Carbon Electrical Power and Energy Technology MSc Multimedia Telecommunication MSc Sustainable Energy Technology
English	MA TESOL (full-time, part-time)
Health and Environmental Sciences	-
Industrial Design	MDes Industrial Design (full-time, part-time)
International Relations	-
Mathematical Sciences	MSc Financial Mathematics
Urban Planning and Design	MSc Urban Planning MSc Urban Planning (specialization in Urban Design) (full-time, part-time)
Institute of Leadership and Education Advanced Development	-
International Business School Suzhou	MSc Business Analytics MSc Economics and Finance MSc Finance International MBA (part time) MSc Invest Management MSc Management MSc Operations and Supply Chain Management (full-time, part-time) MSc Professional Accounting MSc Project Management (full-time, part-time)
School of Film and TV Arts	-

Appendix 10 Profile of interviewees from TJVU-B

	Gender	Source of participants	Position	Work/study length	Interview location
B-01-UG3	Female	China	3rd year undergraduate student in UKPU-B (2+2)	2 years at TJVU-B; 1 year at UKPU-B	WeChat
B-02-UG4	Female	China	4th year undergraduate student in UKPU-B (2+2)	2 years at TJVU-B; 2 years at UKPU-B	WeChat
B-03-AD	Female	China	International Development Manager	4 years	Office
B-04-AD	Male	China	International Student Engagement Manager	8 years	Office
B-05-AD	Male	China	Domestic Recruitment Manager	10 years	Meeting room
B-06-AD	Male	China	Manager of University Media and Service	11 years	Meeting room
B-07-AD	Female	China	Executive Education Support Officer	2 years	Meeting room
B-08-AD	Female	United Kingdom	Postgraduate Recruitment Manager	3 years	Meeting room
B-09-AD	Male	China	Student Employability Officer	5 years	Meeting room
B-10-AC	Female	China	Programme Director; Assistant professor	5 years	Office
B-11-AD	Female	China	Manager of External Liaison and Cooperation	10 years	Common room
B-12-AD	Male	United Kingdom	Dean of International Affairs	5.5 years	Office
B-13-AC	Male	Netherlands	Deputy Programme Director	4 years	Office

B-14-AC	Male	United Kingdom	Lecturer in Chemistry	5 years	Office
B-15-AC	Female	China	Lecturer in Finance	4 years	Office
B-16-AC	Female	China	Lecturer in Accounting	8 years	Office
B-17-MB	Male	United Kingdom	Vice-President	4 years (six months in current position)	Office
B-18-AD	Female	United Kingdom	Manager of International Development	10 years	Meeting room
B-19-AC	Male	China	Lecturer in Finance	5 years	Office
B-20-AD	Male	United Kingdom	Manager of International Marketing	3 years	Meeting room
B-21-UG2	Female	China	2nd year undergraduate student	2 years	On-campus café
B-22-UG4	Female	China	4th year undergraduate student in UKPU-B (2+2)	4 years (2 years at TJVU-B; 2 years at UKPU-B)	WeChat
B-23-UG1	Female	China	1st year undergraduate student	Less than 1 year	On-campus café
B-24-PD1	Male	Nigeria	1st year international PhD student	Less than 1 year	Common room
B-25-UG2	Female	China	2nd year undergraduate student	2 years	On-campus café
B-26-PG	Male	China	Master's student	Less than 1 year	On-campus café
B-27-UG1	Female	China	1st year undergraduate student	Less than 1 year	On-campus café
B-28-PG	Male	China	Master's student	Less than 1 year	On-campus café
B-29-UG3	Female	China	3rd year undergraduate student	3 years at TJVU-B	On-campus café

B-30-UG4	Male	China	4th year undergraduate student	4 years at TJVU-B	On-campus café
B-31-UG4	Female	Mauritius	4th year undergraduate student	4 years at TJVU-B	Library