



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Transculturality in higher education

Citation for published version:

Smith, H 2020, 'Transculturality in higher education: Supporting students' experiences through praxis', *Learning and Teaching*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 41-60. <https://doi.org/10.3167/latiss.2020.130304>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.3167/latiss.2020.130304](https://doi.org/10.3167/latiss.2020.130304)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

Learning and Teaching

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Transculturality in higher education

Supporting students' experiences through praxis

Heidi A. Smith

ABSTRACT

One way in which higher education has responded to globalisation and the emergence of transculturality has been to expand its focus on internationalisation at an unprecedented rate. Traditionally this occurred through international students and their contact with local students. A longitudinal case study into the student experience of transculturality in the Erasmus Mundus Transcultural European Outdoor Studies Masters programme found transcultural self-growth and transcultural capabilities of resilience, intelligence and the ability to work through fatigue to be central to their experience. Using Kemmis and Smith's (2008a) themes related to praxis (doing, morally committed action, reflexivity, connection, concreteness and a process of becoming) this theoretical article explores the place of *critical transcultural pedagogical praxis* in supporting transcultural learning experiences of higher education students.

KEYWORDS

critical, education, praxis, transcultural, higher education, internationalisation

In recent decades, higher education across the world has restructured itself to meet the needs of global competitiveness and embraced the knowledge economy (Krause-Jensen and Garsten 2014). Through embracing 'information technology, globalisation, the massification of education, and the marketization of education', higher education has shifted its focus away from an emphasis on preparing individuals to 'live well in a world worth living in' (Kemmis et al. 2014: 27), towards 'preparing people for working life' (Mahon et al. 2019: 463). While it could be argued that higher education's purpose has always been about preparing people for life, including work, over time



the focus has shifted further and further towards education for jobs, rather than education for life.

With globalisation came an increased number of globally mobile students attending university worldwide. This change resulted in a melting pot of cultural diversity in what have become transcultural classrooms. The term ‘transcultural’ refers to students studying in a country or culture other than their own, embodying a worldview not dominated by a single culture. Rather, transculturality results in the creation of a new (hybrid) culture as the sum of all cultures present, in the absence of conflict between cultures, and based on listening and knowing otherness, including our own strangeness (Imbert 2014). This is as opposed to ‘transnational’, where students complete a degree in another country, while remaining in their home country and culture (Montgomery 2014). This article wrestles with the complexities and messiness of transcultural pedagogy (Cadman and Song 2012), educational praxis (Kemmis and Smith 2008a) and critical educational praxis (Mahon et al. 2019) as approaches to support the transcultural learning experiences of students in higher education.

Globally, mobile learners experience different academic systems, communication differences, racial and ethnic distinctions, and often a lack of social interactions with members of the host society (Leask 2008; Soong 2018). Higher education has responded to the emergence of globalisation, migration and transculturality through a rapid expansion of its internationalisation programmes (Killick 2017; Soria and Troisi 2014). Internationalisation has traditionally occurred through international students and their direct contact with local students, largely without the (much-needed) support they require to succeed (Pitts and Brooks 2017); in this model, students assume the central role of internationalising curricula through their presence, and through contributions in class from their individual cultural perspectives (Summers and Volet 2008).

In an attempt to move away from relying on students to lead internationalisation, Meeri Hellstén and Anna Reid (2008: 2) identified the ‘need for the collective global teaching and learning community to identify new pedagogies that engage with the new and future world where assumed old academic traditions may no longer prove effective’. Similarly, Cadman and Song (2012) revealed that internationalisation of higher education has not been able to produce the pedagogy required for international cohorts of students within existing curricula. They argued a need for the provision of ‘equitable and appropriately challenging educational spaces and experiences which will



enable all our students – international, domestic, majority and minority – to find the connectedness necessary to develop their capabilities ... to lead lives they have reason to value in a globalising world' (Killick 2017: 223). More recently, Hannah Soong (2018) has proposed an approach to pedagogy for transcultural learning spaces that focuses on diversity, human rights, civic engagement and a commitment to reformulating the way higher education staff think about and support learners' ways of being, belonging and becoming.

Soong (2018: 411) encourages educators to consider whether they are being 'critical' and 'culturally responsible educators', when learning and teaching are viewed as cultural and political practices. With a whole-institution approach, the possibility for developing connected learning communities, where the transcultural learning space draws on the 'diverse knowledge and cultural background' of learners and educators, has the potential to deepen learning for all (Gomes and Tran 2017: 288). These aspirations are best achieved when made explicit in course and programme goals, objectives, and outcomes (Tran and Pham 2015), ideally beginning with the broader university goals.

A case study of transculturality in higher education

An ongoing longitudinal case study exploring the student and staff experience of transcultural learning in one internationally diverse and mobile Erasmus Mundus Transcultural European Outdoor Studies (TEOS) Masters programme found transcultural self-growth and transcultural capabilities (resilience, intelligence and the ability to work through fatigue) to be prominent determinants of student experience, along with motivations and expectations, equity and diversity, and aspects of learning identified as 'lost in translation' (Smith and Segbers 2018). The findings of this research identified the necessity for student support that attended to the needs of the transcultural cohort; intentional pedagogy; reflective practice; clear communication; and credit-bearing courses to develop language and cultural knowledge about the places in which the learning occurred, and to teach the language in which the programme was taught; these were all absent at the time of study and were deemed essential cornerstones for success (Smith and Segbers 2018).

The TEOS Masters programme was developed on the premise of 'peregrination academia', described by Chris Loynes and Kirsti Pedersen Gurholt (2017: 534), who were behind the programme design and implementation,

as an 'education journey'. The core aim of the programme was to develop transcultural sensitivity (Welsch 1999). Students learned through place-based pedagogy, language, and culture, as they journeyed and travelled together as a learning community across three countries (Loynes and Gurholt 2017). Learning and teaching occurred both within the traditional classroom and beyond in a range of cultural and outdoor landscapes and residential courses hosted by three universities in three countries (Smith and Segbers 2018).

Transcultural self-growth dominated the learning experience of students (Smith and Segbers 2018) and was experienced individually, with a constant questioning of the cultural and ethical assumptions they brought with them to the learning space, allowing them to view and explore otherness as described by Christoph Wulf (2010) through the hearts and minds of others (Slimbach 2005). This learning, located within the affective domain, was achieved largely through the residential learning experiences, experiential learning activities, reflection, place-based learning, peer advising and leadership, travel and case studies (Loynes and Gurholt 2017; Smith and Segbers 2018); these were assessed and accepted as necessary in higher education, as identified by Shepherd (2008), and were core components of learning through assessment in the programme.

Along with transcultural self-growth, transcultural capabilities emerged: transcultural *resilience* and *intelligence*, and the students' ability to work through transcultural *fatigue* (Smith and Segbers 2018). Transcultural *resilience* was the ability to 'bear complex situations emotionally and mentally without acting out of stereotypes' (Wulf 2010: 39). The individual and collective experiences of similarities and differences between cultures that emerged unexpectedly caused significant discomfort and unanticipated culture shock. This unexpectedness and fluidity, of and between cultures, and the 'messiness' of negotiating the new cultures required the development of transcultural *resilience* to find ways through.

Students developed transcultural *intelligence*, an implicit understanding of transculturality, as a result of their experiences in the Masters programme. This translated into an ability to function across cultures and explore the transcultural space, within and beyond the classroom; 'a capacity to work within/between/amongst multiple [cultural dispositions of thinking]' (Casinader 2018: 266).

The constant travelling through places and countries, living and studying within a transcultural context, and the myriad of new experiences, resulted over time in transcultural *fatigue*. While they were deeply connected to many



individuals in their cohort, students did not specifically identify with one place over another, and simultaneously experienced both connection and disconnection to place (Gomes and Tran 2017). A sense of homelessness pervaded and challenged some students' identity.

Motivations and expectations for learning generally have been linked to the affective domain and the emotional state (Shepherd 2008), and unsurprisingly, differed between students. Students sought out the Masters programme because it offered the possibility of a scholarship, because of their passion for outdoor studies and/or transculturality, and because of the travel component, involving moving between countries and universities. The majority indicated great expectations for the transcultural nature of the classroom and curriculum, and for the majority, this was the main motivation for enrolling in the course.

In practice, cultural difference resulted in a complex learning environment. It meant not everyone felt able to share their cultural experiences, knowledge, or ways of doing outdoor studies. Some students never shared, while others felt they were always speaking and if they did not, then there would be silence. Many who did not speak up said they were often unclear on what was expected, and/or culturally uncomfortable speaking out, challenging, or discussing topics in class. With each transition to a new university and country, instances of 'lost in translation' increased greatly.

Students consistently identified their expectations of the programme as not being met. They balanced this directly through their ability to shift their expectations and accept 'good enough' or 'satisfied' experiences (Brown 2004: 1240): experiences that are determined to be satisfactory and sufficient, as opposed to ideal. By accepting experiences as satisfied or good enough, and letting go of expectations, students were able to process more easily the large amount of information experienced while living and studying away from home (Agosto 2002). This is of particular importance to transcultural learning, which has typically been described as learning that is complex and messy, where perfection is not possible and therefore not a choice or option to pursue (Brown 2004).

Student narratives demonstrated that equity and diversity dominated students' experiences in terms of scholarship allocation, privilege and cultural differences. The allocation of scholarship funding differed between students. This disparity often caused tensions when others did not understand the financial motivations of individuals. Privilege was present in various ways; financial, prior knowledge of content, prior experience of practice and

experience of transcultural learning. The structure of the programme was unfamiliar to all students, as were the relationships between staff and students. Course organisers and lecturers expected students to deal with the unknown or strange within and beyond the course, because the students were adults. This assumption proved highly problematic, with individuals coming from a position of privilege (in this case, lecturers in a familiar place) expecting those who did not (students) to deal with unfamiliar and strange situations without support. When brought together, the ways in which students experienced each of the above aspects are represented in Figure 1.

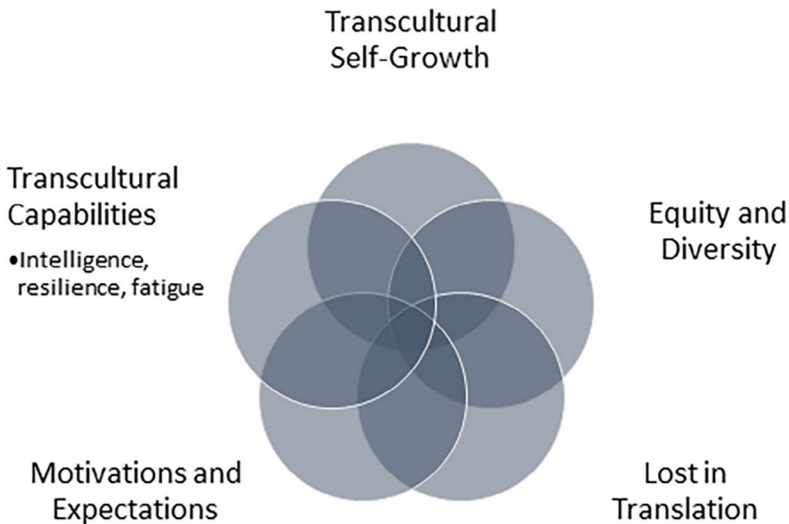


Figure 1. Student experience of transcultural learning.

Clearly facilitated intentional pedagogy was identified by students as necessary for transcultural learning; that is, a pedagogy that supported students in unpacking the what, how, and why of the learning presented. While they understood the independent learning required of a Masters student, they felt that when the transcultural cohort was brought together, more direction and facilitation was required than for a single-culture cohort. All students reported that they had utilised a reflective writing journal to help process their experiences and that they would have appreciated learning how to reflect in a more structured way at the beginning of the course to help guide their reflections (O’Connell et al. 2015) as transcultural learners. The need



for individualised support for students was consistently raised; relying on their adult status was not sufficient. Students also observed the need for staff support in developing an internationalised curriculum and in teaching and supporting transcultural students through transcultural learning.

While this has been a singular case study of a particular Masters programme, these student evaluations help universities understand the transcultural student experience. In addition to this case study, a Masters programme of similar transcultural design, located on a Mediterranean island, reported comparable experiences of students in the transcultural learning space (Mifsud 2015). All students indicated that their motivations for doing the course were largely inspired by the transcultural learning opportunities present and reported the learning experience to be overall highly positive, with individual self-growth central. They explained that in terms of the success of transcultural learning, it was largely up to the students to make the most of the varied experiences, and staff did not modify their practice in order to accommodate the transcultural cohort. In both the example documented by Mifsud (2015) and the Smith and Segbers (2018) case study, bridging the differences between the different higher education organisations' philosophies and practices was challenging for students.

The Mediterranean Masters programme often left students feeling isolated, indicating potential links with transcultural fatigue. The development of community among students was essential for their ability to 'work, study and "be" together' (Mifsud 2015: 59). The community living informally facilitated an increased understanding of each other's cultural backgrounds within the transcultural cohort, highlighting links to transcultural intelligence (Smith and Segbers 2018). The research into the Mediterranean transcultural Masters (Mifsud 2015) supports the findings of the research conducted by Smith and Segbers (2018) and demonstrates the need for carefully facilitated intentional pedagogy, student support, reflective practice, clear communication and language development to support locally and internationally mobile students in transcultural learning contexts.

In order for transcultural learning to be realised, Slimbach (2005: 206–207) elucidated ten propositions organised into a framework of six specific competencies: 'perspective consciousness, ethnographic skill, global awareness, world learning, foreign language proficiency and affective development'. When these are viewed together with Stephen Kemmis and Tracey J. Smith's (2008b) themes related to praxis (doing, morally committed action, reflexivity, connection, concreteness and a process of becoming), a model

for transcultural learning and critical pedagogical praxis emerges: *critical transcultural pedagogical praxis*. Before exploring this model further, it is important to first understand transculturality in relation to culture, globalisation and neo-nationalism, and to interculturality and multiculturalism.

Culture, globalisation and neo-nationalism

Culture comprises the values, beliefs, behaviours, customs and cosmovisions (relationships between the social, natural and spiritual worlds) of a group of people in a permanent state of fluctuation (Dankelman 2002). Wolfgang Welsch (1999) identified how globalisation brings single cultures into contact with each other more often, at times resulting in tension and concern for the loss of individual identities through potential loss of cultural distinctiveness. As global citizens, it is important to recognise that our destinies are intertwined, and our neighbours are everyone. According to Wulf (2010), globalisation is rooted in neoliberal capitalism, in which universal standardisation and cultural diversity are evolving together in non-linear ways and are regularly disrupted in non-uniform ways. Cultural diversity is universal, integral to globalisation, and only valid if human rights are protected, along with creativity and respect for differences and otherness (Wulf 2010). The rise of internationalisation and globalisation has resulted in a neo-nationalist backlash.

Neo-nationalism contests globalisation. The discrimination based on national identity often associated with neo-nationalism may negatively influence international students' experiences of higher education, including those regionally mobile students (Lee 2017a, 2017b). For example, students have experienced discrimination based on nationality, even though they shared the same race as local students. The cultural shift and emergence of neo-nationalism in Western Europe, and across the globe, emphasises the changing space that is Europe. Living in a globalised world requires humans to learn how to work together effectively, within and across cultures and nations (Slimbach 2005). An alternate view of the global society is one that 'can be viewed as the space of diversity of free individuals, rather than that of fixed groups and cultures' (Epstein 2009: 328). In order to move towards transculturality, it is important to first understand interculturality and multiculturalism.

Interculturality, multiculturalism and transculturality

Interculturality explores how one single culture interacts with, appreciates and recognises other single cultures. It maintains a separatist view of cultures and usually maintains divisions between them. Multiculturalism, instead of bridging this gap, further emphasises the differences between cultures within one society, maintaining a ‘faithfulness to one’s own culture/soil/nation’ (Epstein 2009: 335). While interculturality does recognise diversity based on an individual’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes, including understanding others’ world views (Deardorff 2006), it maintains the dominant single culture. In contrast, Bennett’s (1986) model of intercultural sensitivity provides a bridge from interculturality and multiculturalism, in which a single culture remains dominant, to transculturality, which is a process of learning ways of being together. His model identifies the steps required to reach a place where ‘ethical choices will be made on grounds other than the protection of one’s own worldview or in the name of absolute principles’ (Lee Olson and Kroeger 2001: 119). This definition aligns with transculturality, which entails looking outside the box, from all perspectives (Slimbach 2005), and embracing alterity or otherness (Jurkova and Guo 2018), with the single culture receding into the background (Benessaïeh 2010). A process of ‘entanglement, intermixing and commonness’ (Welsch 1999: 205), transculturality promotes conversation and collaboration between people across cultures, welcoming diversity while maintaining individual identity. Transcultural identity is fluid rather than dualistic; one culture does not exclude the other(s) (Imbert 2014; Wulf 2010). Instead, transcultural differences lead to the development of cultural awareness, self-confidence and recognition, understanding of new positionality and reintegration of new perspectives and roles (Mezirow 2009).

Transculturality comprises a ‘stabilising or destabilising effect, social conjunction, historical conditions, integration or disintegration of groups, cultures and power’ (Jurkova and Guo 2018: 177). In order to achieve transculturality, and to open up to new possibilities for understanding alterity in people and cultures, humans need to first be aware of, and then experience, their own foreignness (Benessaïeh 2010). In doing so, humans have the ability to think and see from another’s point of view, with a focus on ‘human rights and global ethics’ (Wulf 2010: 37). Transculturality is acquired at the edges of our own culture and at ‘the crossroads with other cultures through

the risky experience of our own cultural wanderings and transgressions' (Epstein 2009: 330). It is a departure from fixed views of cultures.

We are indelibly marked by the social situations and community in which we are born and socialised; however, transculturality can be created or learned. What is required is a process for learning based within 'real-world understandings', where local language development is available and empathy for all cultures is present, resulting in the empowering of 'learners to take a measure of personal responsibility for making the world a better place' (Slimbach 2005: 227). Transculturality has more recently been identified as a 'promising philosophical perspective on transmission of knowledge and practices' (Horsthemke 2017: 1), offering the possibility of transforming pedagogy in higher education. In this article, a transcultural pedagogy based in educational praxis is proposed: a pedagogical practice that is dependent on individuals having the capacity to see the world from a transcultural perspective and the commitment to act in a way that benefits the common good, through transcultural learning.

Transcultural learning

Transcultural learning is about learning across multiple cultural spaces where culture and identity are fluid (Lange 2015). It is 'oriented toward a better understanding of the other and toward a reduction in violence toward other people and future generations' (Wulf 2010: 43). Transcultural learning occurs when learners bring knowledge from 'within their own cultures to the process of learning' and develop 'relationships and interaction[s] across cultures' (Jurkova and Guo 2018: 179), in 'real space that is immersed, immediate and emotional' (Slimbach 2005: 207). A process of 'perspective transformation', transcultural learning enables individuals who are 'located at the crossroads of cultures to switch between cultures as a mode of being in the world, as a quest for inclusion while considering common values, oppositions, tensions, and power in interactions' (Jurkova and Guo 2018: 183).

Transcultural learning is transdisciplinary, empowering, life-long, and multimodal learning, occurring through the many senses and developing through imagination a new language for transcultural understanding and ways of being. For learning to be transcultural, it must take place beyond the traditional classroom. While the traditional classroom remains a valuable space for learning and teaching, it does not 'stimulate cultural conditions in real space and time'; for learning to be transcultural, fieldwork



that is 'immersed, immediate and emotional' is required (Slimbach 2005: 207). Ideally, this fieldwork needs to be connected to communities, through social engagement as well as through inquiry. Transcultural inquiry is about exploring how human experiences are unique and common all at once and discovering the varied ways in which individuals make sense of the world through their own cultural lens (Jurkova and Guo 2018; Wulf 2010). This can be achieved through sharing of emotions and feelings through storytelling, whereby individuals become aware of how others construct knowledge across 'cultural dimensions, time, and space' (Jurkova and Guo 2018: 182). It is a process of transcending the boundaries of individual cultures in order to better understand them.

Transcultural education

The mission of education for transcultural learning is connection with the other (including nature), in the absence of violence (Wulf 2010). Through acknowledging the otherness of self and cultures, identifying the similarities, and experiencing a transgression of boundaries, it is possible for a hybrid culture to come into being. One's identity emerges because of the similarities with others, rather than through differences, and through engaging affectively with the other (Wulf 2010). Sinela Jurkova and Shibao Guo (2018: 175) agree the mission of transcultural education is about 'holistic development through open and ethical interaction with others and with experiencing alterity', where a new culture is formed through exchanges between individuals. Learners are both products and producers of culture. With the increase in international learners in higher education, there is a need for a 'transcultural model of teaching and learning', and higher education (both its institutions and educators) need to 'create space for inquiry, dialogue, reflection, and action, the core elements of transcultural and transformative learning processes' (Jurkova and Guo 2018: 184).

Transcultural pedagogy

Now is the time 'to argue for another pedagogy in global higher education, one which embraces the *transcultural*' (Cadman and Song 2012: 4). In order to transform pedagogy in higher education, it is important to first turn attention to individual cultural ignorances. As educators, it is important to critically interrogate that which we do not know pedagogically and incorporate

new pedagogies into our teaching practice and curriculum design, and find ways in which to engage learners from cultures other than our own and draw on their knowledge and experience in the design of learning and teaching (Cadman and Song 2012). This approach to pedagogy and curriculum design requires a reflexive investigation not only of one's own judgements and prejudices, but also of the existing expectations, dialogues, and interactions that are value-laden within the culture of higher education and will potentially alienate learners before they enter higher education.

The practice of transcultural pedagogy aims to create a learning environment where all students want to be, have agency and can connect the cognitive and the social. Relationships are at the heart of this community, where educators and students 'change together' (Cadman and Song 2012: 16). Through the learning community, learners' lives are transformed as they navigate the cultural multiplicities within cohorts of students and within the countries in which they live and learn. Transcultural pedagogy focused on individual needs within the transcultural learning space is an effective and practical step towards the self-realisation of internationally mobile learners in higher education contexts. It is therefore timely to reinvigorate 'a global discourse that again sees education as a path to equity and social justice rather than primarily to commercial gain' (Cadman and Song 2012: 15). However, in order to achieve equity and social justice, higher education institutions in some countries need to reconsider their current fee structures, whereby international students pay significantly more, leading to the opposite outcome. To achieve transcultural learning through transcultural pedagogy that also attends to transcultural self-growth, and transcultural competencies (resilience, intelligence and the ability to work through fatigue) including equity and social justice, this paper now explores how praxis, educational praxis and critical educational praxis aid in the achievement of this goal.

Educational praxis

According to Kemmis and Smith (2008d: 264), educational praxis is understood to be 'guided by the intention to do what is best in terms of the good for humankind, but there is no guarantee that this intention will be achieved'. These strong links to transculturality, through making the world a better place and an emphasis on the many facets of being, recommend praxis for transcultural learning and pedagogy. In this section, Kemmis and



Smith's (2008d) themes related to praxis (doing, morally committed action, reflexivity, connection, concreteness and a process of becoming) are utilised as a frame for understanding transcultural pedagogy.

Praxis as doing requires the educator to act 'in the interests of the development and self-development of each student, of the society and communities they serve' (Kemmis and Smith 2008d: 265). In transcultural learning, self-growth is central and learning does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it is situated in real time and place. Similarly, the society, community and culture in which students live and learn needs to be central to transcultural pedagogy.

Praxis is morally committed action when the educator aims to avoid doing harm and avoids 'oppression' and 'domination' of individuals (Kemmis and Smith 2008d: 265). In transcultural learning, individuals and their prior experiences and understandings of being are valued and welcomed in the learning space. Individual knowing, doing and experiences are central and critical to the transcultural learning space.

Praxis embodies agency, subjectivity, being, identity and reflexivity, encompasses acting in a deliberate, considered way to 'avoid harm or domination and oppression' and embodies the 'right action, even if it challenges the traditions' (Kemmis and Smith 2008d: 265). A reduction in violence through getting to know others is central to transcultural learning (Wulf 2010). This kind of action is informed by experiences and by considered reflection on experiences in terms of their short and long-term consequences (Kemmis and Smith 2008d: 266).

Praxis embodies connectedness, relatedness, order and arrangements; 'one's own moral conduct occurs under conditions which always already contain pre-given circumstances and presuppositions from the "dead generations" that enable and constrain, and sometimes disable, one's action' (Kemmis and Smith 2008d: 268). Praxis is situated within the sayings, doings, relatings, and the practice architectures, that are pre-figured. Through collaborative reflection 'the benefits of others' eyes and minds that can help one to see beyond the limits of one's own private experience' (Kemmis and Smith 2008c: 26) are central to transculturality.

Praxis is particular, concrete and material, and occurs in real time and space, often in unpredictable settings where the learner and educator must consider what is required in the here and now for the good of humankind (Kemmis and Smith 2008d). In order to be successful, in transcultural learning, the learner and educator must bring past experiences with them, and

yet be open to otherness, and other ways of doing and being, learning from others within a particular situation or setting.

Praxis embodies our history and our biography, and is always a process of becoming; ‘it is morally-committed action, that draws on the theoretical, technical and practical forms of knowledge that constitute the traditions in a field’ (Kemmis and Smith, 2008d: 270). This aspect of praxis in transcultural learning requires learning from direct experiences, acknowledging the varied forms of knowledge drawn from personal experiences and the cultures that shaped us, and understanding that our own actions are history-making within, and of, themselves (Jurkova and Guo 2018).

Praxis always occurs in real and prevailing situations. When one brings familiar ways of doing and being to a new space, it may lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation (Kemmis and Smith 2008a). This description could equally be applied to transculturality and transcultural learning, in which individuals from differing cultures come together in the transcultural learning space, find themselves needing to accept *good-enough* experiences in order not to be disappointed, and remain resilient in what is a challenging learning space.

Praxis is about actually ‘saying, doing and relating in ways that are wise and prudent, and informed by theoretical knowledge made available in traditions of thought and traditions of living – a way of life’ (Kemmis and Smith 2008d: 282). In the transcultural learning space, languages (‘sayings’) are often not shared; learners instead must find ways to improve their language skills, and find ways of coping with differences in language and the nuances of how different cultures communicate, often needing to learn new skills of communication in order to be heard (Mifsud 2015). Similarly, when individuals bring past experiences and ways of doing to a transcultural space, they find that what might be assumed to be shared practices (‘doings’) are in fact not shared, and that the practices they are experiencing in real time are new and unfamiliar. Finally, shared experiences (‘relatings’), through organised learning (both residential and in traditional classrooms) and social activities (including living together informally or through residential courses), are essential for developing new shared experiences, as each individual and the collective learns and creates new practice architectures in which to operate (Mifsud 2015; Kemmis and Smith 2008a; Smith and Segbers 2018).

While transcultural student groups are in the process of developing a common language, students experience many instances of ‘lost in translation’ (Smith and Segbers 2018). These instances disrupt the sayings, doings and



relatings, and impact the development of practice architectures to support transcultural student learning and experience. What is required is an approach to such transcultural learning spaces that affords different kinds of sayings, doings and relatings, until a transcultural community is developed.

From an educational praxis perspective, the purpose of higher education is to nurture understanding about how to live a good life and how to allow human flourishing as people live a meaningful life with each other, overcoming 'irrationality, injustice, suffering, harm, unproductiveness or unsustainability' (Kemmis and Smith 2008c: 23). Similarly, the complex learning path of transcultural learning requires a considered, moral and reflexive approach from the learners and educators.

Kathleen Mahon et al. (2019) argue that a critical educational praxis is required in higher education and define it as pedagogical praxis that invites and teaches learners and educators to ask critical questions. These authors are concerned that critical pedagogical praxis is largely absent from higher education. This approach to learning and teaching, particularly in light of transcultural learning, is essential if we are to meet the aims of both praxis and transculturality – creating a world worth living in and living for. Mahon et al. (2019) argue that the ecological imbalance present in higher education results in education that is a process of production, with an inhibited state of flow where new ideas and possibilities are hampered by a lack of time and the need for multitasking. Equally, they note how 'academic practices collectively perpetuate and protect, reorient or change aspects of university ecosystems that affect possibilities for critical educational praxis', and that change is dependent on the way in which 'academics respond to these forces in their everyday practice and praxis today', which in turn will enable change in the future (Mahon et al. 2019: 477).

Conclusion

In the current globalised world, there is a need for educational activities and pedagogical encounters between educators and learners that are experiential, are particular to learner needs, offer opportunities for face-to-face connection, acknowledge history and biography and are moral and just for today's world. Transculturality enables critical dialogue and reflexive inquiry as students and educators situated within a learning community of transcultural individuals are challenged to understand the world from a multiplicity of perspectives. Such a community optimises their self-growth through exposure

to the various insights and stories of experience, often of social justice and critical overcoming. Transcultural learners take leave of their own cultures and acknowledge difference and particularity in the transcultural learning experience.

Critical transcultural pedagogical praxis is pedagogical practice that is deliberate, informed, morally committed and reflexive, with a focus on the transcultural learning space that attends to ‘purpose, product, place and pedagogy’ (Slimbach 2014: 59). *Purpose* is a critical pathway to promoting human flourishing through global study, service and research. *Product* is transcultural learning for a better world, which deliberately integrates the cognitive, interpersonal and transcultural for a global perspective. *Place* is interaction and mutual influence – internationalisation abroad and at home with transcultural student cohorts engaged in place-based experiential learning outdoors, indoors and online. *Pedagogy* is worlds of experience, where flexibility, creativity, transdisciplinarity, community and professional judgement are core, with the potential to alter learners’ ways of learning and being in the world.

Through direct experiences in the world, engagement with otherness, language development, community service and research, learners of and within transculturality are able to experience *critical transcultural pedagogical praxis* in an ecology of practice where they ‘relate to one another as living entities in living systems’ (Kemmis et al. 2012: 48). This is a pedagogy that avoids harm and is particular to person, place and time; it is one in which students and educators journey together, and engage in collective learning that pays attention to equity and diversity; one which has the potential to create a better world for all (human and more-than-human).

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the integral role of Teresa Segbers in the research project that explored the student experience of the TEOS programme. I would also like to acknowledge the critical discussions with Kathleen Mahon in relation to critical pedagogical praxis and its place in higher education. These two colleagues have been central to the development of this paper, which emerged because of its presentation at the Higher Education Praxis Symposium at the University of Borås in Sweden, 2019, along with my own wider pedagogical experiences of transcultural learning and teaching in higher education.



Heidi Smith is Programme Director and Lecturer in outdoor learning at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests include transculturality, praxis, outdoor learning, leadership, nature connection and improving learning and teaching through understanding the student and educator experience in higher education from a range of perspectives. Email: Heidi.Smith@ed.ac.uk

References

- Agosto, D. E. (2002), 'Bounded rationality and satisficing in young people's web-based decision making', *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 53, no. 1: 16–27. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.10024>.
- Benessaieh, A. (2010), 'Multiculturalism, interculturality, transculturality', in A. Benessaieh (ed.), *Transcultural Americas* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press), 11–38.
- Bennett, M. J. (1986), 'A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10, no. 2: 179–196. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(86\)90005-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(86)90005-2).
- Brown, R. (2004), 'Consideration of the origin of Herbert Simon's theory of "satisficing" (1933–1947)', *Management Decision* 42, no. 10: 1240–1256. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740410568944>.
- Cadman, K. and X. Song (2012), 'Embracing transcultural pedagogy: An epistemological perspective', in X. Song and K. Cadman (eds), *Bridging Transcultural Divides: Asian Languages and Culture in Global Higher Education* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press), 3–28.
- Casinader, N. (2018), 'Transnational learning experiences and teacher transcultural capacity: The impact on professional practice – a comparative study of three Australian schools', *Intercultural Education* 29, no. 2: 258–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2018.1430284>.
- Dankelman, I. (2002), 'Culture and cosmovision: Roots of farmer's natural resource management', in J. Oglethorpe (ed.), *Adaptive Management: From Theory to Practice* (Cambridge: IUCN), 41–51.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2006), 'Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization', *Journal of Studies in International Education* 10, no 3: 241–266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002>.
- Epstein, M. (2009), 'Transculture: A broad way between globalism and multiculturalism', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 68, no 1: 327–349. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1536-7150.2008.00626.x>.

- Gomes, C. and L. T. Tran (2017), 'International student (dis)connectedness and identities: Why these matter and the way forward', in L. T. Tran and C. Gomes (eds), *International Student Connectedness and Identity: Transnational Perspectives* (Berlin: Springer), 283–290.
- Hellstén, M. and A. Reid (eds) (2008), *Researching International Pedagogies: Sustainable Practice for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (Berlin: Springer).
- Horsthemke, K. (2017), 'Transmission and transformation in higher education: Indigenisation, internationalisation and transculturality', *Transformation in Higher Education* 2: 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.4102/the.v2i0.12>.
- Imbert, P. (2014), 'Linking transculturality and transdisciplinarity', *Semiotica* 202: 571–588. <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2014-0056>.
- Jurkova, S. and S. Guo (2018), 'Connecting transculturalism with transformative learning: Toward a new horizon of adult education', *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 64, no. 2: 173–187. <https://core.ac.uk/reader/236136985>.
- Kemmis, S. and T. J. Smith (2008a), *Enabling Praxis: Challenges for Education* (Rotterdam: Sense).
- Kemmis, S. and T. J. Smith (2008b), 'Praxis and praxis development', in S. Kemmis and T. J. Smith (eds), *Enabling Praxis: Challenges for Education* (Rotterdam: Sense), 3–14.
- Kemmis, S. and T. J. Smith (2008c), 'Personal praxis: Learning through experience', in S. Kemmis and T. J. Smith (eds), *Enabling Praxis: Challenges for Education*, (Rotterdam: Sense), 15–36.
- Kemmis, S. and T. J. Smith (2008d), 'Conclusions and challenges: Enabling praxis', in S. Kemmis and T. J. Smith (eds), *Enabling Praxis: Challenges for Education*, (Rotterdam: Sense), 263–286.
- Kemmis, S., C. Edwards-Groves, J. Wilkinson, and I. Hardy (2012), 'Ecologies of practices', in P. Hager, A. Lee, and A. Reich (eds), *Practice, Learning and Change: Practice-Theory Perspectives on Professional Learning* (Dordrecht: Springer), 33–49.
- Kemmis, S., J. Wilkinson, C. Edwards-Groves, I. Hardy, P. Grootenboer, and L. Bristol (eds) (2014), *Changing Practices, Changing Education* (Singapore: Springer).
- Killick, D. (2017), 'Self-in-the-world identities: Transformations for the sojourning student', in M. Hellstén and A. Reid (eds) *Researching International Pedagogies: Sustainable Practice for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (Berlin: Springer), 205–223.
- Krause-Jensen, J. and C. Garsten (2014), 'Neoliberal turns in higher education', *Learning and Teaching: The International Journal of Higher Education in the Social Sciences* 7, no 3: 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3167/latiss.2014.070301>.
- Lange, E. (2015), 'Transformative learning and concepts of the self: Insights from immigrant and intercultural journeys', *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 34, no. 6: 623–642. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2015.1036944>.



- Leask, B. (2008), 'Internationalisation, globalisation and curriculum innovation', in M. Hellstén and A. Reid (eds), *Researching International Pedagogies: Sustainable Practice for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands), 9–26.
- Lee, J. J. (2017a), 'Global: Neo-nationalism: Challenges for international students', in G. Mihut, P. G. Altbach, and H. Wit (eds), *Understanding Higher Education Internationalization: Global Perspectives on Higher Education* (Rotterdam: Sense), 371–373.
- Lee, J. J. (2017b), 'Neo-nationalism in higher education: Case of South Africa', *Studies in Higher Education* 42: 869–886. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293875>.
- Lee Olson, C. and K. R. Kroeger (2001), 'Global competency and intercultural sensitivity', *Journal of Studies in International Education* 5, no 2: 116–137. <https://doi.org/10.1177/102831530152003>.
- Loynes, C. and K. Pedersen Gurholt (2017), 'The journey as a transcultural experience for international students', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 41, no 4: 532–548. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2017.1337734>.
- Mahon, K., H. L. T. Heikkinen, and R. Huttunen (2019), 'Critical educational praxis in university ecosystems: Enablers and constraints', *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 27, no. 3: 463–480. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2018.1522663>.
- Mezirow, J. (2009), 'Transformative learning theory', in J. Mezirow and E. W. Taylor (eds), *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass), 18–31.
- Mifsud, D. (2015), 'Transcultural encounters on a Mediterranean island: Stories from a dual degree', *Learning and Teaching: The International Journal of Higher Education in the Social Sciences* 8, no 1: 50–72. <https://doi.org/10.3167/latiss.2015.080104>.
- Montgomery, C. (2014). 'Transnational and transcultural positionality in globalised higher education', *Journal of Education for Teaching* 40, no. 3: 198–203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2014.903021>.
- O'Connell, T. S., J. E. Dymont, and H. A. Smith (2015), 'Students' appropriation, rejection and perceptions of creativity in reflective journals', *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 27, no 1: 1–13. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1069797.pdf>
- Pitts, M. J. and C. F. Brooks (2017), 'Critical pedagogy, internationalization, and a third space: Cultural tensions revealed in students' discourse', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 38: 251–267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2015.1134553>.
- Shepherd, K. (2008), 'Higher education for sustainability: Seeking affective learning outcomes', *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 9, no. 1: 87–98. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14676370810842201>.
- Slimbach, R. (2005), 'The transcultural journey', *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* XI: 205–230. <https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v11i1.159>.

- Slimbach, R. (2014), 'Reinventing international education: Purpose, product, place and pedagogy', *International Educator* 23, no 5: 58–63. https://www.nafsa.org/sites/default/files/ektron/files/underscore/ie_sepoct14_forum.pdf.
- Smith, H. A. and T. Segbers (2018), 'The impact of transculturality on student experience of higher education', *Journal of Experiential Education*, 41 no. 1: 75–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053825917750406>.
- Soong, H. (2018), 'Transnational teachers in Australian schools: Implications for democratic education', *Global Studies of Childhood* 8, no 4: 404–414. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610618814907>.
- Soria, K. M. and J. Troisi (2014), 'Internationalization at home alternatives to study abroad: Implications for students' development of global, international, and intercultural competencies', *Journal of Studies in International Education* 18: 261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315313496572>.
- Summers, M. and S. Volet (2008), 'Students' attitudes towards culturally mixed groups on international campuses: Impact of participation in diverse and non-diverse groups', *Studies in Higher Education* 33: 357–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070802211430>.
- Tran, L. T. and L. Pham (2015), 'International students in transnational mobility: Intercultural connectedness with domestic and international peers, institutions and the wider community', *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 46, no. 4: 560–581. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2015.1057479>.
- Welsch, W. (1999), 'Transculturality: The puzzling form of cultures today', in M. Featherstone and S. Lash, *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World* (London: Sage), 194–213.
- Wulf, C. (2010), 'Education as transcultural education: A global challenge', *Educational Studies in Japan: International Yearbook* 5, December: 33–47. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ916673.pdf>.